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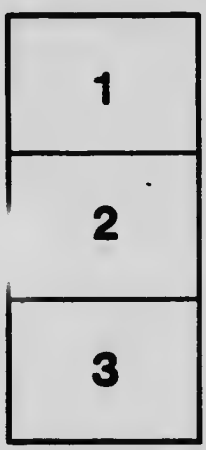

PKJM [Temperance novel] 1509

A WOMAN'S PROBLEM

A Woman's Problem

By KATE SPEAKE PENNEY

TORONTO
WILLIAM BRIGGS
1905

DEDICATED

TO MY MOTHER.

—

THE AUTHOR.

A Woman's Problem

CHAPTER I.

"One cup butter, two cups sugar, six eggs, one cup water, five cups flour, three teaspoonsful baking powder, one teaspoonful salt, and flavoring," said Mrs. Drury, as she measured out the things to Aunt Hannah, who stood waiting to receive them.

"Here, that's all, Hannah; now you cream the sugar and butter while I beat the eggs. Monday morning is a very inconvenient time to make cake, but it will have to be iced this afternoon, for Elinor has set her heart on going to the picnic tomorrow."

Aunt Hannah chuckled: "I speck Mars John Clerton's got up dat picnic jest to git even wid Dr. Kent fer m'nopolizin' Miss El'nor all day Sunday. Dey jest keeps de road ho , fust one an' den de odder, like dey was runnin' a race tryin' ter see which one ob 'em can be wid her de mos'. What you reckon Miss El'nor gwine do wid 'em any-

how, Miss Tildy? She can't keep two strings ter her bow always." Aunt Hannah spoke with the liberty of an old servant who had known Elinor from babyhood, and Mrs. Drury answered as she would a family friend, rather than a family servant.

"Well, really, Hannah, I don't know, and I don't believe the child knows, herself. I hope she won't be in any hurry to marry anyone. I have no particular objection to either one—they are both well spoken of; but I believe Elinor hesitates because she realizes what a serious step matrimony is. It's like making a cake: you want the sugar, to be sure, and I believe that's all young folks think of in this day and time—but what a sticky mess this cake would be if I should leave out the butter and the flour! And that's not a circumstance to the mess a woman makes of her life when she leaves common sense considerations out of her marriage."

"All I knows 'bout 'em is what I sees when dey comes to see Miss Elinor, an' bees is on deir good behaviour when dey's buzzin' roun' a rose—dar ain't no sign ob stingin' den. But Caesar Copperation, he bin wuckin' at Linton a heap lately, an' he say that dere is a heap o' talk 'bout Dr. Kent bein' a little wild. He t'inks a sight o' Dr. Kent hisself 'cause he alluz stops an' gibs

him a pleasant word when he meets him on de street, 'count ob him comin' from Ellsboro, I reckon—but he say, too, dat he's one ob dem kind what's alluz gwine ter tu'n ober a new leaf, but never does git it flopped."

"Oh, I don't suppose Caesar knows anything about it," said Mrs. Drury, with true Southern disregard of the reliability of "negro news." "At any rate, this cake ought to be in the oven right now, for I do want you to get an early start at your washing." And Mrs. Drury beat her eggs with renewed vigor, and in a few moments the cake was ready to bake.

Mrs. Drury was a notable housekeeper. Her neighbors declared that they expected some day to see her out sweeping the roof. Woe to the moth or dust that found lodgment in her house. If she had had a coat of arms, a broom and a dust-brush would have been appropriate emblems; failing this, these useful but unornamental implements occupied conspicuous places in every room in the house. Her windows were marvels in their brilliancy and her polished stove a revelation. An inexperienced little bride who moved into the neighborhood, on returning to her own [illegible]y little home from her first visit to this spick and span abode, was so overcome with her own delinquencies

as a housekeeper that she began to scrub and clean at ten o'clock at night, and might have continued indefinitely but for strenuous masculine remonstrances.

Added to this mania for cleanliness was a horror of germs and microbes which must have rendered her life a burden. Things were washed in her house which no one else dreamed of washing; carpets were ruthlessly ripped apart and washed through a certain number of waters; if a caller happened to pick up a palm-leaf fan, the sound of his retreating footsteps would hardly have died away before it was subjected to a vigorous scrubbing. A little dog, on one occasion, was known to have run away with one of her shoes; on being recovered it was so thoroughly soaked that she could never wear it with any comfort afterwards, but she had the consolation of knowing that it was clean. Pictures were not tolerated in her house because the dust gathered behind them. Odds and ends, letters and newspapers, which accumulated in other houses, were "litter" in her eyes, and were burned or consigned to obscure up-stairs closets.

At the time this history opens she had been a widow for many years; her husband was drowned, and the town wag was heartless enough to remark that it must be a source of great gratification to her to reflect

that he spent his last hours in her favorite element, and that, as "cleanliness is next to godliness" was undoubtedly the main thing in her creed, no doubt she imagined him well on his way to the seventh heaven even before the funeral.

Her trials with help were many and various and would make a book by themselves; but Hannah, an old family servant, was left a widow, and, her two children being married, she decided to go back to "Miss Tildy," and from that day the household machinery moved as if by clock-work. The principal events of the year were the semi-annual house-cleanings which were timed to take place soon after the equinoxes, and events of less importance were grouped in memory around these important epochs. Old Mrs. Townsend died just a week before Spring cleaning, and Jack Edwards and Pearl Reeves ran away and were married just three days after; Mr. Andrews' barn was burned down just at the time—Mrs. Drury and Aunt Hannah distinctly remembered that they were washing windows when they first saw the smoke.

Into this peaceful, orderly household came Elinor Norwood, a pale and sad-faced child of thirteen, with a look in her eyes which went to her aunt's heart, and as Mrs. Drury clasped her only brother's only child in her

arms, an almost maternal tenderness filled her heart. Life's main-spring—love—had come back to her.

In the years which had intervened she had tried to be a mother to the motherless, as well as to give the girl the protecting care which was her paternal inheritance, and of which her father's untimely death had deprived her. She had been more successful in the latter capacity. Elinor relied on and trusted her in a wonderful degree; but, though neither doubted the other's love, their natures were too dissimilar for that full sympathy which her own mother could have given her. Whenever Elinor tried to confide her girlish dreams and vaguely poetical ideas to her aunt, she met with such a lack of comprehension and had to so explain and analyze her meaning to meet Mrs. Drury's point of view that the youthful fancies which had seemed full of beauty through her own rose-colored spectacles, became suddenly unsatisfactory and insignificant in the light of Mrs. Drury's practical mind. So, gradually, she kept her romantic fancies to herself, and Mrs. Drury congratulated herself that her niece was getting more sensible and better suited for life in this work-a-day world.

The greater part of her time Elinor had spent in school, at a convent in a city fifty

miles away, but her vacations were as truly vacations to her aunt and to old Aunt Hannah as to herself. The light and sweetness which came into the house when Elinor came home made their summer-time more real than the balmy sunny weather and the blooming of the roses or the singing of the birds.

Her school days had ended more than two years since and the house had been full of gaiety and life. Mrs. Drury delighted to entertain Elinor's friends and at the same time display her own superior housekeeping.

Aunt Hannah revived her old time culinary skill and added to her fame through much practice in the menu of regulation Southern company teas. Her beaten biscuits were famous, and her waffles and broiled chicken never "happened to bad luck" as other cooks' did. Mrs. Drury herself made the chicken salad and angels' food, the snow balls, ice cream, amber jellies and superlatively sweet fig preserves.

Elinor flitted in and out, arranging flowers and hanging over the bare white walls Jackson vine—a type of grace in evergreen which had no angles and, no matter how you turn it, seems prettier than before.

If a dance was proposed Caesar Corporation was called in to wax the polished floors and when the auspicious evening arrived

the house was brilliantly illuminated by lamps and candelabra. Chinese lanterns lighted the long porches, which were so heavily framed with Jackson vine, Marechal Neil roses whose half-open blossoms looked like great golden globes, confederate jasmine and honeysuckle, that the moonlight could only faintly struggle through.

When the white-robed girls and their escorts began to arrive, the string band, half concealed and half revealed behind a leafy screen, began to play, and pleasure reigned supreme.

White dresses of gauzy texture and fairy-like freshness, worn with huge breastplates of nodding roses, whose heavy heads swayed in time to the twinkling feet, were almost a uniform at Ellsboro dances. Now and then regal Grand Duke jasmines, combined with sprays of a trailing moss which looked like a lace work of emeralds thrown over the white dresses, took the place of roses, but if a girl was inclined to wear too many of these overpoweringly sweet blossoms, the fate of the young lady, who years before had had the temerity to wear seven of them and as a consequence fainted "dead away" on the ball room floor, was held up to her as a warning.

The comparison of a bevy of girls to a garden of flowers is a pretty fancy which is

warranted by truth rather than poetical license. We have all seen piquant faces which reminded us of pansies and "Johnny-jump-ups," the flaunting poppies and peonies, the deep crimson roses with passionate hearts, the modest fragrant violets: each and all have their human prototypes and the sweet serenity and dignity of Elinor Norwood seemed symbolized in the lily. She was tall and fair and slender, with golden gleams in her light-brown hair, a serious look in her hazel eyes, belied by the swift coming smiles of coral lips. She had never been a ball-room belle, for she was quiet rather than gay, and the light in her eyes was that of truth and sincerity rather than of coquetry.

She had many friends among the opposite sex who confided their affaires du coeur to her and listened to her charily given but sympathetic advice with great respect. She often said, laughingly, that when a man grew very attentive to her, it was a sure sign that he was in love with some other girl and wanted to tell her all about it.

It is true, however, that she had had many offers of marriage and the men who had addressed her had put her on a pedestal in their minds and worshipped at the shrine. They had an idea that she was quite "too pure and good for human nature's

daily food," and Ned Morton, an honest fellow whom she had unconditionally rejected, comforted himself like a philosopher and said to a friend, "She's a fine girl, there's no doubt of that, but she expects too confoundedly much of a fellow. I feel as comfortable as a man does when he's been wearing braces and has taken them off. Think how fatiguing it would be to be mentally and morally on tiptoe all one's life. Susie Simpson is more my style anyhow; she's a jolly, good-natured little thing and I don't have to be on my 'p's and q's' with her."

Although Elinor had not been able to decide whom she wanted to marry, she at least usually knew whom she did not want to marry and gave correspondingly decided negatives. But in the case of John Clerton, whom she had known always, and Dr. Kent, who was a comparatively recent acquaintance, she felt very undecided. She had said "No" in each case when the momentous question had been put to her, but in such an undecided way that each felt that this leaden negative might by the alchemic power of love and persistence be transmuted into a golden "Yes."

A man's first idea is to know what the queen of his heart thinks of himself; when the answer to this is unsatisfactory or non-

committal, his next question is whether or not any other man stands in his way.

To both she had answered that she was heart-whole and fancy-free, and each had responded that so long as that was the case he would not despair.

So matters stood at the beginning of our story, and Elinor tripped lightly down stairs that Monday afternoon with a pink gingham dress in her hands which she had just finished and which only required a little pressing to be ready for the morrow's picnic.

Mrs. Drury was busy icing the cake, and Aunt Hannah was deeply engaged in "bluing" the clothes.

"La, honey," she exclaimed, as Elinor came in, "how pretty you is a-gwine to look in dat new dress; you sho will take de shine off dem odder gals; dey'll jes' look scand'lous 'side ob you."

"So you like the dress, do you, Aunt Hannah?" she said; then, laughingly, to Mrs. Drury, "I believe it's all a mistake about the 'blarney stone' being located in Ireland; I'm firmly persuaded it is in Africa."

"I don't know nothin' 'bout no such rocks, but I does know Mars John Clerton's heart gwine to go pit-a-pat when he sees you a-comin' out ob de house wid dat dress on."

"Does Uncle Caesar think more of you when you have on a new dress!" asked Elinor, for the sake of changing the subject. "By the way, Aunt Hannah, how did he get such an odd name as Caesar Corporation?"

"Why, chile, don' you know dat befo' de wah cullud folks all had de name ob dose dey 'longed to? An' Caesar an' a passel ob odder niggers, dey 'longed to the town an' dey was called Corporation. But, la! what I keer 'bout ole man Caesar. He aint got no gumption. What you reckon, Miss Tildy? Las' week when you bought all dem chickens, I was ironin' de fragments,* so I jes' handed de chickens to Caesar, thinkin' ob co'se he'd put 'em in de hen-house. But d'reckly I heerd a powerful squawkin', and when I stepped out to see what the matter was, I see dat fool nigger'd dun put dem chickens under dat goods box what's in de back yard.

" 'Fo' Gawd, nigger,' sez I, 'what you put dem chickens dar fer? Don't you know dey can't git no air ner exercise, shet up in dat box?'

" 'Well,' sez he, 'I 'one gib 'em water an' I gib 'em corn, an' if dey wants exercise, dey can jump up an' down.' "

*Small articles, such as handkerchiefs, collars, etc.

CHAPTER II.

Tuesday morning Aunt Matilda's deft hands packed Elinor's lunch-basket bright and early, and she so lectured her niece on the virtue of punctuality that she was ready and waiting a full half hour before the excursion wagon with its gay crowd drove up.

It was a typical May morning, and the faces of the merry party beamed with youth, health and happiness. The horses pranced off as though conscious of their pleasant task, but slackened their pace when they took the mountain road. Up, up they went, past Cedar Mountain, which is Mount Hygeia's foot-stool, past the dummy line to the Double S—so called from the quick curves in the road. Here each vehicle stopped to rest the horses, and each of the twenty young people exclaimed upon the view in the customary manner. There was a slight fog below them, however, and the church spires pierced through the amethystine mists. The young men pointed out distant localities, the girls exclaiming "Oh!" "Ah, Indeed !" in an interested way, and, as the feminine organ of locality is not

usually highly developed, immediately forgot these topographical points.

Still up they went. They passed under the shadow of the big trees, and everyone spoke of how cool and fresh the atmosphere was. At last they reached Cold Spring and stopped. The horses were unharnessed, and the two chaperones, poor creatures, kept guard over the lunch-baskets while the young people scattered out in search of wild flowers. They returned in time for dinner, with great blue bunches of dog-tooth violets and branches of starry dog-wood blossoms.

This particular picnic differed in no wise from many which we have all attended. Having nothing else to do, the lunch was served early to the accompaniment of much merriment and laughter; however, few of the witty speeches will bear a repetition or awaken a smile when reviewed in memory; robbed of the charm of laughing lips and sparkling eyes, they are very commonplace.

How strange it is that when a crowd of young men and maidens, who are ordinarily sensible enough, get together on an occasion of this kind, the nonsense invariably rises to the top. The young men try to "make fun" and the girls giggle in chorus. The chaperones are probably bored, as are also the more thoughtful of the party, but on

no account must the ball of conversation be allowed to stop, and feeble jokes and teasing personalities keep it rolling. The pleasure excursion becomes a pleasure exertion, and after a while the group breaks up and congenial twos and threes stroll off in different directions.

Mount Hygeia has many points of interest: There is Marion's View, Wild-cat Glen, the Bottomless Well, and, as a matter of course, a Lovers' Walk. The great majority chose this; there was a fascination in the name perhaps, and, besides, it was more accessible to the picnic grounds and did not require hard enough climbing to ruin the girls' dresses and take all the curl out of their hair. The path was narrow and deeply shaded; enormous rocks hedged in the way; little streams trickled merrily here and there; and everywhere were vines and ferns.

Elinor kept close to Mrs. Lewis and John Clerton walked beside them. Mrs. Lewis was very stout, and naturally they soon fell behind the rest of the party.

"Oh," said Mrs. Lewis, stopping suddenly, "isn't this the way to 'Fat Man's Misery' !"

"Yes," said John, laughing, "but don't be uneasy; I think you can get through."

"I don't wish to give anyone a chance to say that I can't," was the reply; "so I don't intend to try." And no amount of

persuasion on Elinor's part—needless to say, John did not urge her,—could induce her to go a step farther.

So they walked on through the "Eye of the Needle," or "Fat Man's Misery," as it is sometimes called, a place in the pathway where giant bounders are so close together that either name is appropriate, until they came to a rustic seat on the other side.

"Stop here and rest a while," he said.

"I am not at all tired," she answered.

"But I have some good news to tell you."

So, reluctantly, she sat down. She disliked to have his suit urged upon her so often and resigned herself with a bad grace to listen to the topic which she supposed he would introduce. Therefore she was pleasantly surprised when he began to speak of his professional prospects.

"Mr. Hardwick offered me a partnership yesterday," he said.

"Indeed !" with warm friendly interest ; "I am so glad. That will be an exceedingly good thing for you, will it not ?"

"Yes, I think so," he said ; "although I am doing reasonably well now, still my income will be larger and not nearly so uncertain as it is now. Mr. Hardwick leads the bar here, you know, and his practice is increasing all the time."

"It is quite a compliment for him to

single you out among so many young lawyers."

"It is very gratifying to my pride, certainly. If you would only reconsider your decision, my happiness would be complete."

"Life is so pleasant as it is, I do not wish to change anything. Why can't you be contented with friendship, as I am?"

"You do not know what love is, or you would not ask," he replied, gravely; and she answered with a smile and sang softly—

> "I cannot tell what this love may be,
> That cometh to all, but not to me."

She sat on a rock a little above him, and the fair face with its frame of rippling hair was vividly impressed upon his memory as he looked up, hoping to see a responsive feeling in her eyes.

But she, trying to keep the conversation from growing too serious, went on, "I am really beginning to believe that I am quite incapable of the tender passion, or perhaps I am expecting too great a revolution in my nature. It may be that I'm a little like the negroes are about getting religion. You know, they think they have to see all kinds of visions, and do not believe they have true religion unless they have passed from Satan's dominion up to Heaven."

He smiled a little, in spite of himself, but answered, "This state of uncertainty in which you keep me might well be likened to Hades. I saw a little poem the other day which reminded me of you. It begins :

"One and twenty, one and twenty,
Youth and beauty, lovers plenty ;"

I forget the intervening lines, but it ends with this :

"Heaven grant you this to do,
To love him best, who best loves you."

Then followed such a flood of eloquent words that she could no longer continue her light tone, and answered earnestly :

"I like you very much ; I trust you and respect you ; but I am not sure of myself ; I cannot promise anything."

With a man's inability to grasp the idea that a woman can be simply indifferent to mankind in general, he asked :

"Do you answer Dr. Kent just as you do me ?"

"Yes," she replied ; "though I do not recognize your right to ask me that question."

"Only the right which anyone has who loves you. I am so glad that you reply as you do, for I believe your life would be shipwrecked with him for a pilot."

"What do you mean ?" she asked, coldly.

"Simply that I heard on unimpeachable authority that he became so much intoxicated at a dance in Linton last week, that the host refused to allow the young lady he had escorted to go home with him."

"Do you think it is an honorable thing to try to influence me against him ?" she asked indignantly.

The strong Saxon face flushed. "Can you so misjudge me ? I would not have told you, but—"

"Elinor, Elinor," called Susie Simmons, "don't you see it is going to rain ? We must all hurry." And hurry they did, but the belated April shower caught them before they could reach any shelter.

"Talk about firing cannon to cause rain," said Ned Morton ; "I'd back a picnic against it any time. I think I'll introduce a bill to suggest it to Uncle Sam, and let him pay the livery bills."

So, amid gay chatter and laughter, the merry party began the descent of the mountain, and the shower seemed to have dampened the spirits of only two of the party, Elinor Norwood and John Clerton.

CHAPTER III.

As Elinor entered the hall she saw on the table a letter addressed to herself in Dr. Kent's well-known handwriting. She felt dispirited and weary, and concluded not to read it until she went to her own room. At tea she was so absent-minded and unlike her usual cheery self as to provoke many anxious inquiries from Mrs. Drury. "Elinor I'm sure you don't feel well; does your head ache?"

The girl protested, but her aunt went on: "It must be the Spring weather. I don't doubt you need a tonic of some kind. I will certainly see Dr. Jones about it to-morrow."

During the discussion Aunt Hannah had come in with warm waffles, and with a familiarity of long standing joined in the conversation. "Yer see dat, now, Miss Tildy: When Miss El'nor won't eat a nice hot waffle dere sholy is somethin' de matter. She ought to hab some boneset tea; I bin a-noticin' dat she benn po'ly fer seb'ral days."

Nothing ever surprised Aunt Hannah: no

matter what took place, it always transpired that she had been expecting it. Even an eclipse of the moon had not found her wholly unprepared. She rushed in one evening, much agitated, and called Mrs. Drury to look at the sky, who, thinking her frightened, explained the phenomenon at some length, only to be met with the dignified rejoinder, "I aint s'prised, not a bit; I was tellin' Mandy las' week dat I spected dar was gwine to be a 'clipse or sumthin,' de moon did look so que'r."

So, on this occasion, Elinor had to listen to a detailed account of symptoms supplied by Hannah's imagination, and, to quiet her aunt's anxiety and avoid a dose of medicine, tried to eat a little more.

"There's nothing in the world the matter with me," she declared. "I am just a little tired; we had such a long tramp on the mountain. I will go to bed early and am sure I will be all right in the morning."

Elinor's room was quite unlike the rest of the house. The chairs were not arranged with such mathematical precision; books and magazines were scattered here and there; and Mrs. Drury had even so far relented as to allow her to have a few pictures on the walls. No greater proof of her love could be given. The furniture was very simple, but the atmosphere seemed to

breathe forth purity and daintiness. White matting covered the floor; the walls were tinted in light blue; and through the lace-draped windows the balmy southern breeze came in, laden with the fragrance of roses and honeysuckle which climbed on the trellised porch below. The western window was partly screened by a spreading cedar tree, from whose branches came each night a flood of melody, for the same mocking-bird came back each summer to his own familiar home.

The letter was not long and its tone was not new, yet somehow it moved her strangely.

"Linton, May 2nd.

"My dear Miss Elinor:

"I am constantly resolving that I will not annoy you by persuasion and entreaty, but, my dearest, I need you so. My life is incomplete and empty without you. All the best and noblest aspirations of my heart centre around you. I am conscious with deep humility that I am not worthy of you, but I am equally sure that were your life entwined with my own you could make me what you wished.

"I love you too deeply to wish to marry you, were I not certain that with you by my side temptations would lose their power. I wonder if others realize the duality of human nature as I do. Good and evil sway me alternately, and you, my guardian angel, are so far away.

"I take long drives to visit my patients and the birds sing 'Elinor' and the breezes whisper it till I am half maddened by the thought of your unattainableness.

"Do you not see, my dearest, that not only my heart but my very soul cries out to you? Can it be that your heart is colder than Pygmalion's ivory statue?

"With earnest and unchanging love,

"RICHARD KENT."

Elinor sat motionless with the open letter in her hand, perplexed, undecided, realizing that the state of suspense in which she was keeping her two lovers must be almost unbearable to them. She liked them both; but had the two men been pleading their cases before her, their arguments could hardly have been more clearly presented to her mind.

Neither of them was rich, but they were both considered promising in their respective professions. However, pecuniary matters had little influence with her; and notwithstanding the outcry against mercenary marriages, I believe that they are comparatively few, since this relation is usually entered into in youth when such considerations have least weight.

She knew that John Clerton's character possessed more strength and stability, but there was a gentleness and suavity lacking,

and Richard Kent's very vacillation had a fascinating quality, but she was sensible enough to realize the danger that lurked in that suggestion. Both were endowed with intellects of high order. She believed that John Clerton's career would be a useful and honorable one, utterly irrespective of whom he married or whether he married at all or not; but she believed that Richard Kent's life here and hereafter depended in a great measure upon herself.

"But am I strong enough to take the responsibility?" she asked herself, with a sense of awe, and answered it with a common fallacy: "Since it is simply a question of influence and he believes in it so thoroughly, his belief makes it real."

While the momentous question of her life was confronting her and arguments pro and con were surging through her brain, she laid aside her picnic dress and began to brush and braid her shining hair for the night. She glanced in the mirror as she did so and pictured to herself her future.

Safe in the shelter of John Clerton's love, it would be peaceful, protected, in many respects not differing greatly from her happy girlhood. She would continue to live in the quiet, conservative, beautiful old town to which she was accustomed. Former friends and neighbors would be friends and

neighbors still ; the pace of her days would not be altered ; the growth of her life would be evolution, not change.

But Linton was an aggressive young city ; one day there was not the measure of the next ; and the character of the two men partook of their environment. John's quiet strength was in harmony with conservative Ellsboro, and Linton's push and rush suited Richard's restless energy. She had heard several times that Dr. Kent was a little dissipated, but public opinion in Ellsboro did not gravely discourage the "sowing of wild oats." True, woeful examples of intemperance were not wanting, but the moral plague had not touched her nearly, and a girl's general opinions are very dependent on her personal experiences. Besides, it seemed disloyal to even for an instant compare Dr. Kent to these besotted men who, with bleared eyes and stumbling steps, passed her on the street, and she shuddered at the bare idea that so fearful a fate as that of a drunkard's wife might befall her.

But this thought was too dreadful to be tolerated, and youthful optimism made a grave and buried it deep under bright visions of the good her influence might accomplish. Her nature was deeply religious, and the thought occurred to her that perhaps this was the path that God

had marked out for her, her mission in life—and could she wish a greater one than to purify and ennoble this brilliant intellect? It was surely a Christ-like work to help to guide and strengthen this noble nature as God should give her strength, to warn him of the pitfalls in his path and point out the way to Heaven.

Tossed about by conflicting hopes and fears, at last she sank on her knees by the bedside, and, her whole being permeated with the feeling, "God cannot let me make a mistake," began to pray for guidance.

The moonlight poured into the room and illumined the white-robed figure by the bedside. The fragrance of the flowers was no more real than the incense of this pure soul, and the melody of the mocking-bird no sweeter than the prayers of praise and supplication which went up to the Throne of Grace.

She prayed long and earnestly, but the burden of her prayer was, "Lord help me to do right; help me to do what is best for Thy glory, best for these men, best for myself." And as she prayed a new feeling filled her breast, for Pity had opened the door of her heart for Love to come in. Her face was radiant with a new light and her pulses beat to a new song. Words are human, and the words of the song were,

"Richard Kent, Richard Kent" ; but music is divine, and the melody to which these words were attuned was consecration to a God-given mission.

To ascribe this feeling of exaltation to the power of an over-wrought imagination or to anything less than a heavenly origin would have seemed sacrilege in her eyes. Her indecision was gone. She was satisfied with all the world. "God could not let her make a mistake."

CHAPTER IV.

To even the most altruistic among us how impossible it is to judge our own motives and deeds by the well-formulated rules which we apply to others. All rules have exceptions, and we are prone to believe that we ourselves are exceptions. The good or evil of others seems to us clear cut and decided; our own deeds are judged by us in quite a different way, for we realize how mixed our motives are, and this misty nebula to our partial selves becomes a mantle of charity.

Let a man commit a deed which the world adjudges a crime—he may realize that it is himself, but he sees so many extenuating circumstances that he thinks he is at least entitled to the "clemency of the court." On the other hand, I fancy that the applause of public approval frequently seems to a benefactor more than he deserves; he alone is conscious of "the rift within the lute," of some motive which is not quite commendable—it may be simply an inordinate love of this very approval. Our characters are made up of gradations. We differ not so

much in fundamental things as in the qualities which predominate. And this is true of qualities which are not strictly right or wrong : take, for instance, sentiment versus common sense.

Elinor was not at all destitute of this latter quality, but if inherently they had balanced each other, sentiment had been so nurtured and encouraged by the circumstances of her life as to distance her more rugged adversary. Common sense thrives better in a harder school.

A convent education gives a girl a very poor idea of the world as it really is. Mrs. Drury, it is true, had lost no opportunity to din common sense maxims into her ears, but these words of wisdom had fallen on uncongenial soil and found no lodgment in her brain. It is often true, too, that to have one idea too persistently urged upon us gives us a strong leaning in the opposite direction. At any rate, the only effect which all this proverbial philosophy had had upon Elinor had been to seal her lips upon ideas not in sympathy with her aunt's mode of thought.

Accordingly she did not take her aunt into her confidence until after her letter of acceptance had reached Dr. Kent, and Mrs. Drury felt then that there was very little to say. Had she been consulted while the mat-

ter was in abeyance, the weight of her influence would have been in John Clerton's favor. She had known him always and trusted him thoroughly. But she knew nothing positive against Richard Kent. She prided herself on not encouraging gossip, and the hint which Aunt Hannah had given of his dissipation was the only rumor of the kind which reached her ears.

She made guarded inquiries about him, but heard nothing to his disadvantage. He was a magnetic, popular man; and Mrs. Drury finally persuaded herself that her vague mistrust had been unfounded, although she felt that he was too much "all things to all men" and that his chameleon-like qualities, though fascinating, were not reliable.

The custom of announcing engagements is little followed in the South. To be known as engaged condemns a girl to the unenviable condition of wall-flower. Elinor was naturally reticent, and so the summer days flew by and the time for the marriage drew near before many people were aware of it.

Dr. Kent's visits grew more frequent, but he had been so often already that this occasioned little comment. Elinor continued to have no lack of attention, and John

Clerton was considered still in the field. She had considered herself in duty bound to tell him of the engagement at the first opportunity, but this opportunity was long in arriving. He had felt much hurt that she had believed his warning against Dr. Kent actuated by jealousy and selfishness, and her hasty accusation of dishonorable conduct had wounded him deeply.

He still called now and then, and the various social functions of the town threw them together frequently, but there were usually others present; and if by chance they happened to be alone he adhered so strictly to impersonal topics that she hardly knew how to introduce the subject. He had not given up hope of ultimate success, but believed it wisest not to annoy her by importunities and comforted himself with the hope that his words must have some effect when she had time to think them over.

Elinor sewed industriously through the long summer days, and grew so pale and thin that her aunt finally exclaimed: "I've always heard that 'prospective brides sewed themselves into fiddle strings,' and I won't allow you to take another stitch. You must pack up your trunk and go straight to the mountains."

It may be remarked, in passing, that

loyal Ellsboro people think that Mount Hygeia is all and more than its name implies, and wonderful stories are told of the beneficial effects of its air and water.

"I believe I'd rather go to see Alice Mayton, Auntie ; you know she has often begged me to visit her at Grandview and I am sure I would enjoy it."

CHAPTER V.

Grandview, Mr. Mayton's summer home, was high up in the mountains, and the smiling loveliness seen from Mount Hygeia's heights is here replaced by rugged grandeur. The house, of native stone, gray and rough, but whose monotone was relieved here and there by the clinging tendrils of the trumpet vine, was situated on a commanding cliff and overlooked a winding glen where cedars swayed in the breeze and the laurel bloomed luxuriantly. Nature here was all beauty; but aesthetic fitness is naturally little considered by the majority of business men, and Mr. Mayton was no exception to the rule; small shanties and mining shafts marred the view.

The mountains teemed with coal, and Mr. Mayton was interested largely in the mines; so business motives even more than the salubrious situation induced him to make his summer home at Grandview. A number of small houses clustered together not far away, and they with the railroad station, a church which was also a school-house, a blacksmith shop, and a combination store

and post-office, enjoyed the ambitious title of Mountain City.

The little hamlet had prospered and the miners had been reasonably well contented until a few months before, when Mr. Mayton had closed a contract with the State, by which he had secured the convicts to work in the mines. As a matter of course, this depreciated the cost of labor, and from that moment scowling faces and angry threats became the order of the day. The war between capital and labor, which, latent or aroused, seems an inherent part of the earth's destiny, seemed in daily prospect of an outbreak at Mountain City.

It was a significant fact that an unusual amount of incendiary, socialistic literature poured into the little post-office, and for several days a suspicious looking stranger had lurked furtively around the place, inoffensive enough in the daytime, but at night he was the central figure of groups of discontented miners, and his inflammatory speeches caused their murmurs of discontent to become louder and more ominous, until at last a strike was declared.

Mr. Mayton had realized the drift of things for some time, and his usually cheerful face had become over-cast and gloomy; but he tried to shake off his depression in the family circle, and to his wife's anxious

inquiries invariably declared that the trouble was slight and would soon blow over.

The disaffection spread among the neighboring mines until the strikers considered themselves strong enough to dictate terms. Accordingly a deputation waited on him at his office and declared their willingness to return to work provided he would agree to no longer employ the convicts and resume the former scale of wages.

"But," replied Mr. Mayton, "that would ruin me utterly. I am under bond to pay to the state a large amount yearly and I have gone to great expense to prepare quarters for the convicts. Besides, the mines which I and my company control are not half the mines in the state, and the same scale of wages prevails in them all. Times are hard all over the country, and even if I should accede to your request and thereby ruin myself, you would not be benefited."

"We are to report, then," said the spokesman of the committee, "that you refuse to accept the terms which we have presented to you ?"

"Of course, I refuse," said Mr. Mayton, testily ; "I have no alternative. You can't expect a man to cut his own throat for nothing."

The committee withdrew, but, once out-

side the door, broke out into angry denunciations, and the harassed man within heard a loud voice cry,—

"Ruint he'd be, wad he? Well, what better wad we want. Whioles our wives an' daughters are at the wash-tub, his is a-playin' the pianny. But our tiome's a-comin'."

Realizing for the first time that the anger of the mob might be wreaked upon his helpless family, Mr. Mayton went hastily home and besought his wife to pack her trunks and, with Alice and Elinor, take the afternoon train for the Springs. But she resolutely refused to leave him, and, much troubled and perplexed, he went to the telegraph office to communicate the state of affairs to the Governor and ask for aid.

That evening, when the convicts under strict guard were marching to the shelter of the stockade, rocks, sticks and rotten eggs were hurled at them from behind the trees until a few shots from the guards dispersed the mob.

The few law-abiding people of the little town awaited with anxiety the arrival of the seven-thirty train and were much relieved to see a company of militia on board when it came in.

Still rumors continued to come in of reinforcements to the miners, and the conductor

reported that only half a mile below the station a large log had been placed across the track, but fortunately the engineer had seen it in time to stop his engine.

Telegrams announced that the trouble, which it had been hoped was local, was wide-spread, and that large bands of miners were flocking to Mountain City; for, as the convicts were located here, this would undoubtedly be the scene of the conflict.

A private message to Mr. Mayton announced the governor's willingness to send all the aid necessary, and expressed a desire to be kept constantly informed of the condition of affairs. In reply he telegraphed the gravity of the situation, and was much relieved when the return message informed him that more troops were under marching orders and would arrive on the next train, and that extra trains would be put on if necessary.

The next morning Mr. Mayton found that so many recruits had joined the miners during the night that he judged it unwise to try to continue work; so the mines were shut down and the convicts kept within the confines of the stockade.

During the morning an attempt was made to set fire to the high close fence surrounding the prison, but was routed by the soldiers. However, so many dusty miners con-

tinued to tramp in from the neighboring mines that Mr. Mayton looked forward to the night with the greatest apprehension and wired the governor accordingly, to which the response came that still more aid was on the way.

Emboldened by numbers, a committee waited upon Mr. Mayton again and offered substantially the same terms as on the day before, except that they now demanded that two convicts, against whom the feeling ran high, should be delivered into their hands.

The men were all united in their conflict with the authorities, but there was a division of opinion among them in reference to the convicts themselves. The brainy minority, knowing that the prisoners had not taken their work willingly, were in favor, if possible, of arming them and thereby making them their allies. But the animal element prevails in mobs, and the masses of the men, maddened by brooding over much-exaggerated wrongs and with a violent desire to wreak their vengeance on anything that fell in their way, swore that the convicts deserved cruel treatment and should have it.

It seems a little strange that the lower classes, from whose ranks the criminal ranks are principally recruited, should have less

sympathy with jail-birds than the refined and cultured element of the community, who pity the criminal while they abhor the crime.

The little town wore quite a martial aspect. The white tents of the soldiers gleamed among the trees; and the men themselves, accustomed to the quiet pursuits of peaceful citizens, excited by the novelty of active service, walked the streets with the air of men on parade.

The long summer day had given way to twilight and the twilight was merging into darkness—when all the powers of evil are let loose—and still the longed-for train did not arrive. Its departure from the foothills had been telegraphed; and although it always made slow time through the mountains, it should have reached Mountain City much earlier.

Mr. Mayton and his sympathizers and the little band of soldiers had grown anxious. Spirits, bright and elastic in the sunlight, are depressed in the darkness, for it is the unseen foe which demoralizes us.

Fancy pictured the relief train lying derailed in some mountain fastness with its freight of humanity wounded and dying, and it was with an audible sigh of relief that its whistle was heard in the darkness.

At last it puffed up to the station, and soldier after soldier descended: it seemed an interminable array.

A plain, unpretentious, middle-aged man, looking a little old among so many glistening uniforms, stepped down and was greeted with cheer after cheer. It was the governor himself; and Richard Kent, being one of the commanding officers, stood near him.

CHAPTER VI.

It is an American prerogative to assail those in high places by slanderous and belittling personalities, until it almost seems that the people have elevated those men only to make them targets for abuse. They are the scapegoats of the nation, and on their shoulders is laid the iniquity of it all; however, the Biblical simile fails in one particular, for they are certainly not unwilling victims, nor are they "led as sheep dumb to the slaughter."

Unquestionably the censorship of the press and the strong calcium light which is thrown upon these "servants of the people" is in many respects a most desirable thing. At any rate, Roentgen and Tesla should be warned against finding out moral obliquities by means of their cathodic rays, lest the reporters prosecute them for infringing upon their rights.

Notwithstanding all this, there is a "dignity which doth hedge a king," and even in democratic America we have a feeling that the office dignifies the man. This is especially true of the lower classes: they instinctively imagine that the rulers of the

nation are a little different from "common folks."

Mr. Mayton was well aware of this feeling and perhaps was not quite free from it himself, in spite of the emancipating influence of the great dailies and cartoonists. Anyhow, he felt that a burden had fallen from his shoulders and all responsibility now rested upon the governor, so the warmth of his welcome may be imagined.

After a short conference it was decided that, in view of the large number of soldiers, the miners would probably await reinforcements before making an attack and that a quiet night might safely be counted upon. Therefore Mr. Mayton pressed the governor and several of the officers to spend the night with him at Grandview, that they might discuss the situation and decide upon a plan of action; and as the stockade was in plain view from the windows, the governor acquiesced, but out of abundant caution ordered that a double number of sentinels be put on guard.

Elinor's mingled joy and anxiety at seeing Dr. Kent may be imagined. I really believe that the spirit which animated Joan of Arc is more usual among women than that of the Spartan mother who armed her son and told him to return with his shield or upon it.

Women believe in arbitration; but if the worst comes to the worst they are apt to fancy that the men who are in the front of the battle, facing physical danger and spurred on by patriotism and deadly peril, really suffer less than those who love them and who bide quietly at home with overwrought imaginations conjuring up unspeakable horrors.

Dr. Kent was first lieutenant of the Linton Guards, and the captain of the Ellsboro Rifles was there also, and several other young officers.

The governor was a friend of the family, and after the ladies had been assured that in all probability this night at least would pass peacefully, the general conversation took on a more cheerful tone, though the half-heard sentences exchanged between the governor and Mr. Mayton could not be considered reassuring. In reply to Mr. Mayton's question as to how he had happened to come on, the governor said:

"Well, Mayton, I've no doubt you have thought you were bearing the brunt of the trouble, but I can share honors with you. Telegrams have poured in upon me from every mine in the State. You have no idea how wide-spread this trouble really is; it is no longer a question between corporations and their employees; it is a question between

law and riot. As the convicts are located here this will undoubtedly be the scene of the greatest trouble. I have been informed that the unions are ordering their men here from all the adjacent country ; but of course we have all the advantage, as we control the railroad and telegraph."

Then followed a conference regarding defenses and the stationing of troops to guard the mountain road.

"Well," said Mr. Mayton, impatiently, "I never can see the reason for a strike in this country. The men who are capable and industrious rise to the top anyhow. Just think how many of the foremost men of the country, financially and politically, have risen from the humblest origin."

"That's true," said the governor ; "but you forget that we have the offscouring of all Europe to contend with. The country is getting along pretty well, considering the enormous strain brought to bear upon our democratic institutions. I would like to know just how many criminals Europe ships over to us annually."

"I've been telling Mr. Mayton," chimed in his wife, who with knitted brow had been listening to part of the conversation, "that he ought to have more negroes in the mines; they are such a contented race, they never strike."

"The negro convicts are the only ones of the race I am able to get there," laughed her husband, "for they have a holy horror of the mines. I was a little short of men some time ago and spoke to one of the darkeys on the place about working there. 'No, sah, boss,' he said, 'I ain't in no sich pow'ful hurry to go to de bad place, an' dat hole in de groun's de road dar sho'.' "

The governor smiled; then, evidently continuing his own train of thought, went on seriously: "There are two sides to every question, and these men, I am sure, see their side even more forcibly than you and I see the other, for education alone can make a man's mind many sided. This leasing of convicts is a puzzling question. I'm not blaming you for leasing them, mind you, for if your company did not, some other corporation would, and the trouble would be all the same; but these men can only see that this depreciates the price of labor. The better class of these men have yet another grievance in connection with it; they feel that working together or in competition with the convicts puts them, in a way, on a level with thieves and murderers. Of course, it will not do to keep the convicts idle; the state needs the revenue and the felons need the work. It is a problem for our next legislature to grapple with, and I

hope that they can cut the Gordian knot."

"What remedy would you suggest?" asked Mr. Mayton.

"Well, you know, every man has his pet theories, and one of mine lies along this line—" began the governor, but was interrupted by the announcement of dinner.

"Dinner is very late," explained Mrs. Mayton, "but we have been in such a state of suspense and anxiety that we have hardly followed the regular routine in anything."

The meal was served much as usual, and Elinor had noticed with delight that Dr. Kent had left untouched the glass of wine before him, when a commotion was heard in the hall, and a servant announced that one of the soldiers said he must speak with the governor instantly.

Almost immediately the governor reappeared and said: "I have been told that the miners are gathered from all points and converging toward the stockade. We must go at once or the way will be cut off."

So the men went hurriedly away, leaving the frightened women almost too bewildered to speak.

The moon had risen and the scene was almost as bright as day, except where trees and buildings cast their inky black shadows.

It had been well understood that the

stockade presented the point of defence and the officers had marched nearly all their men there before the governor and his companions arrived. It seemed that the preparations for defence were complete. The large enclosure presented an animated picture as the troops moved about examining their weapons and making sure that their cartridge-boxes were well filled.

The governor sent Lieutentant Kent into the prison with a message to the keeper, and he was struck with the abject terror of some convicts, while others seemed stoically indifferent.

There were many loop-holes in the palisade, and the numbers of rough, sturdy miners gathering without could be plainly seen. It was evident that their intention was to make another attempt to fire the stockade. At last there came a pause—the lull before the storm, perhaps.

The governor could stand it no longer. "I cannot order those men shot down like dogs," he said; "I'll give them one more chance. Pile up tables and boxes to make a platform high enough to see over the stockade; I want to talk to them."

"You're risking your life," remonstrated Mr. Mayton.

"They're men, not brutes," was the answer; "send up a flag of truce."

The crowd without was dumb with amazement as he stood unarmed before them. Three or four men, among them Richard Kent,—all that the small platform could accommodate,—stood also empty handed a little back of him. Then a whisper went round among the miners, "It's the gov'ner!" while not a man moved.

"Men," he began, "fellow citizens, I've got a few words to say to you. You think maybe because I'm the governor of the state that I do not know how to feel for you, but I do; I'm the poor man's friend, for I've been there myself. There's not a man among you who knows what poverty is better than I do. Many's the time I've trudged, a bare-footed boy, through these very mountains.

"But I did not get up here to talk about myself. I came here to ask you what it is that you propose to do? Did you ever know a strike that did not hurt the strikers more than the other man? Doesn't it make him an outcast and a wanderer on the face on the earth, and reduce his family to beggardom and degradation? What is it you propose to fight? Just these soldiers and myself? Well, perhaps you might whip us, though we're three to one and well armed and drilled; but even if you should do that, you've hardly made a beginning, for there

are myriads more where we came from, and the government can send men until soldiers are thicker than these trees, and cannon will reverberate through these mountains till the voice of thunder seems dumb.

"You are seeking to upset and overturn all the law of all the ages. From the earliest times the best and strongest men have sought to upbuild and uphold this structure that we call the government, and do you for an instant imagine that you, with a few kegs of powder, can destroy all this?

"You can't right your grievances with fire and sword; but I'll tell you how you can,—by wisely exercising the right which is the birthright of every American citizen—the ballot.

"I know you don't want these convicts here in your midst; I'm not surprised at that; but what would you do with them? Send them on to your brother miners? I'm told that there are men from other mines here: ask them if they don't get the same wages that you do, quite irrespective of the place where the convicts are located.

"There is redress for these troubles in the legislature. There's where the laws are made which you and I are bound to keep. I am the governor, it is true, but I am under the law just as much as you are, and I am sworn to execute it and protect it.

"Then, I understand that you have a grievance against Mr. Mayton, and that therefore you are trying by threats and violence to destroy his property and keep him from filling the places you have voluntarily relinquished.

"Now, right is right, whether a man is rich or poor, and if Mr. Mayton should discharge any of you, he would have just as much right, by violence and threats, to prevent any other mine-owner from employing you, as you have to prevent him from employing men who are willing to work for the wages you refuse."

The men listened intently, and many within the stockade had begun to hope that bloodshed might be averted.

The speaker continued: "Then I am told that several of you own your homes—" Richard Kent had fixed his eyes upon a man in the crowd, and said to himself, "What a murderous looking face!" when he saw him cock his pistol and take aim at the governor. Without an instant's hesitation he threw himself before him and the bullet buried itself in his own flesh.

"Fire!" ordered the officers. A volley of musketry rang out on the night air.

The blood-hounds of war were let loose in all their fury.

CHAPTER VII.

The conflict did not last long, as the miners soon withdrew, taking their dead and wounded with them, so the number could only be guessed at.

Within the enclosure several men were slightly hurt by the falling of the insecure platform, Mr. Mayton's dislocated shoulder being the most serious injury received. Richard Kent's wound also proved to be slight, though as the bullet had ploughed its way through his arm, he was (much to his discomfiture) unfit for further service.

The governor, though a good deal shaken up, was not otherwise injured, and Grandview was turned over to him and some of the officers, for Mr. Mayton had at last become convinced that he could do no good by remaining and decided to accompany his wife and daughter to the Springs. So the early morning train bore all the characters in whom we are most interested away from the scene of the conflict. Owing to the fact that travel through the mountains was now considered dangerous because of the attempts to wreck trains, the little party of

five had the car all to themselves, and the ladies overwhelmed the two men, who to them were wounded heroes, with attentions.

Dr. Kent made light of his wound, but he was by no means a stoic, and it would hardly have been in human nature not to enjoy being looked after and taken care of by his sweetheart. A new element was added to her love, and her heart leaped with pride as she thought of her hero's daring and bravery, while love unutterable glowed in his dark eyes in recognition of her gentle ministrations.

The ladies listened with rapt attention as the two men continued to talk over the night's events.

Mr. Mayton said: "I feel sure the governor's speech would have had a good effect if it had not been for that bloodthirsty anarchist. Describe the man again."

Richard had observed him closely and was able to give a minute and graphic delineation.

"Yes," replied Mr. Mayton, "I told the governor that only one man at the mines answered the description, and he's a foreigner who I don't suppose understood a quarter of the governor's speech, and he's half-crazy besides."

"A second Guiteau, so far as his intellect is concerned, I presume."

"Exactly. What a shame it is that such men should be at large! They ought to be treated like mad dogs."

"The governor could take advantage of a military rule and have him shot," suggested Richard.

"Can't get hold of him now," was the reply, "and if he could he's too soft hearted for that. If he ever comes to trial he'll play the insanity dodge and get off Scot-free, like as not."

"You said yourself he was half-crazy."

"Well, that's so, but it's the kind of insanity that requires a rope around his neck, instead of an asylum."

Here they reached the junction where Richard and Elinor changed cars for their respective homes, Linton and Ellsboro, while the Maytons went on to the Springs.

As the girls kissed each other affectionately, Elinor said, "You must not disappoint me, so don't fail to come."

"Oh, I would not miss being chief bridesmaid for anything," laughed Alice.

Richard and Elinor again found very few occupants in the car they took, for at this season of the year the rush of travel is all towards the East Tennessee and Virginia summer resorts and they were Westward bound.

It was now the last of August, and the

date of the marriage was fixed for the middle of October, so the conversation naturally turned upon wedding arrangements, invitations, bridesmaids, ushers, etc. The low-toned conversation, his speaking glances, her lovely face, where blushes, smiles and dimples played hide and seek, soon revealed the state of affairs to their fellow passengers. The negro porter especially showed an appreciation of the situation and considerately seated new arrivals at quite a distance.

"I was so pleased," said Elinor, "to see that you did not take wine at Grandview."

"Oh, that was simply out of consideration for your wishes, little Puritan," he said, smiling. "I don't think myself in much danger in that direction."

"Perhaps not," she said ; "but it is better to be on the safe side."

He gave a nodding assent, but did not deem it necessary to tell her that the restraint of her presence only had accounted for his abstinence.

The ubiquitous porter passed again and gave Richard such a broad and meaning smile that all his wealth of ivory was revealed. Richard laughed, and Elinor was annoyed.

"I'm almost glad we've reached the station," she said, rising.

Ellsboro was off the main line, and she had to take a branch road here for a few miles.

"Is the Ellsboro train late, uncle ?" asked Dr. Kent of an old negro, who doffed his hat and bowed respectfully.

"She am a-comin', young marster, but she have not yet developed herself," was the reply.

The whistle was heard in the distance, and Dr. Kent jumped back on his train, which was slowly moving, with apparent ease, in spite of his wounded arm.

Elinor's entrance disturbed her aunt's afternoon nap, which was never under any circumstances omitted. "I am obliged to have my afternoon nap," she would explain to her more wakeful friends ; "dinner presses upon a nerve which closes my eyelids, and if I just drop down and lose myself for a little while I wake up feeling like a new woman."

Mrs. Drury was much surprised to see her niece, and her first idea was that she must be ill, but a second glance at the smiling face disarmed that fear. Question after question was asked, and while Elinor was still in the midst of an explanation of her sudden appearance, Aunt Hannah came in.

"La, honey, is dat you ? But den I knowed somebody was a-comin', 'cause I

just dropped my dish-rag, an' den I bin a-dreamin' an' a-dreamin' 'bout de dead, an' dat ob co'se means a weddin', so puttin' de dish-rag long-side ob de dream, I knowed in reason you was a-comin'."

When Mrs. Drury heard of the dreadful scenes through which Elinor had passed, she was as nervous and excited as though the girl was still in the midst of danger. "It frightens me to think of it," she exclaimed, "and I have not been feeling well anyhow. My stomach has been in such a predicament."

"Why, what has been the matter?" asked Elinor.

"I took tea with Mrs. Nelson night before last, and she had the greasiest food that eye ever gazed upon, and you know I never touch grease at home, for my stomach is as pure as the driven snow, but politeness compelled me, and," with a dramatic gesture, "this is the result!"

"Subjugated by Greece!" laughed Elinor, who was too accustomed to her aunt's mode of expression to be much uneasy. Then, sympathetically, "But don't you want me to make you a mustard plaster, Auntie?"

"No, thank you. I've had one already. Finish telling me about your visit."

Mrs. Drury never expressed herself in the ordinary manner, and her peculiar speeches

were delivered with such majestic dignity that the effect was very amusing, and she was so accustomed to the smiles of her auditors that she was never offended.

She was a very handsome woman, with aristocratic features and snowy hair, which waved in a way that all the girls envied. She was loved by her own small circle and respected by all, and she seemed oblivious to the fact that her funny speeches were retailed throughout Ellsboro with much laughter, and that "Mrs. Drury's latest" was always eagerly received.

A few days after Elinor's return the charity circle to which she belonged gave a "rainbow party," and one of the amusements of the evening was a sewing contest, in which the young men engaged. The girls wore unhemmed aprons, and each selected by lot her own knight of the needle, whose task it was to hem her apron. A prize was given to the man who showed most skill in this feminine handicraft. It fell to John Clerton's lot to hem Elinor's apron, and with trepidation of heart and unsteadiness of fingers he undertook the task.

He had seen comparatively little of her for months, but the old spell had not lost its power. Rumors of her approaching marriage seemed to him to fill the air, and he felt that he must know whether it was true

or not. Accordingly he asked and received her permission to accompany her home.

"Are all these reports that I heard about your marriage well-founded, Miss Elinor?"

"Yes," she answered, gravely and gently; "I have wanted to tell you sooner, but have had no opportunity."

A long pause succeeded, a silence that might be felt,—the girl longed to say something comforting, but no words would come. Then with an effort John spoke, and the earnestness of his tone redeemed the words from commonplaceness.

"Dr. Kent is the most fortunate man in the world," he said, "and with all my heart I wish you happiness and prosperity in your new life. But if you should ever need a friend, do not hesitate to call upon me."

"Thank you very much. Won't you come in?"

"No. Remember that is a pledge for life." And as she opened the door, he turned and walked hastily away.

Surely the ancients, who depicted Father Time as a decrepit old man, must have had vastly more leisure than our fast century allows us, for the hours flew by so swiftly that Aunt Hannah remarked, "De days ain't no longer dan pie-crust."

Glorious October, the crowning month of the year, had come in all its splendor. Jack

Frost had dipped his brush in Titian's colors and painted the sweet-gums and the maples golden and red and russet, while the spreading sumac bushes were dyed a more intense vermilion, though the sturdy oaks yet retained their living green, awaiting November's chilling winds to assume their tawny hues. What magnificent shrouds the trees are clothed in! The death of the leaves is their hour of victory and exaltation, and they wave their brilliant banners towards a sky of intensest blue, undimmed by a single cloud. In this climate the roses are beautiful from April to Thanksgiving, but October roses are perfection. Great golden Marechal Neils droop from half the porches in Ellsboro; the American Beauties have assumed a queenlier bearing than their summer sisters wore; and the coral buds of La France disclose their blushing sweetness to every passer-by. Ellsboro boasts of many things; and flowers certainly are not the least of her charms, for the humblest negro cabins are festooned w h vines and half hidden by roses, while zenias, marigolds and princes' feathers so elbow each other for want of room that some of them are frequently crowded out into the street. Large elms and maples shade the crooked streets, which follow their own sweet will and wind

in and out utterly regardless of rule or reason, while here and there a giant oak is left undisturbed in the middle of the street.

An enormous spring gushes out at the base of a towering bluff and Ellsborians declare that the supply of clear cold water is enough for a city six times the size. Part of the water is confined by rocky barriers and is so clear that at a depth of several feet the carpet of green moss, where silvery minnows play hide-and-seek, is distinctly seen. The rest of the water makes a channel for itself and gurgles out into the country to the accompaniment of tinkling cowbells and cackling geese. Many steps led down to the spring from the "square," and here nurses are wont to congregate with their little charges. The negro women make themselves comfortable in the shade of the trees and gossip together, or perhaps carry on flirtations with ebony-hued Romeos, while the little ones play on the grass, watched over by their guardian angels probably, as I have never yet heard of a child being drowned here.

The cemetery is another pride of the town and, notwithstanding the healthfulness of the place, is very large, for all who have lived in Ellsboro, no matter where they have wandered, seem to have expressed a desire to be brought back here to sleep

peacefully until the resurrection morn. No stranger wandering here in the dusk of an October twilight can wonder at it. Mount Hygeia's purple peaks, haloed by the glory of the setting sun, tower above it; birds and flowers are everywhere; black-robed figures (for the ladies of Ellsboro do not quickly lay aside their mourning) flit about, uprooting the weeds which have found a foothold, or watering some plant which their own tender hands have planted on the graves of their loved ones. It is a sociable cemetery. Being near the town, its sylvan walks and inviting seats make it a pleasant objective point for an afternoon walk. Lovers' vows are whispered here and friendly confidences exchanged.

Tourists who came to Ellsboro,—for it was so situated as to be something of a summer resort for extreme Southerners and also a winter resort for Northerners,—were charmed by its old world aspect and the kindliness and hospitality of the people.

The professional caterer of the town was Aunt Silla, a mulatto woman of generous proportions and abounding good nature, whose fame had gone out to neighboring towns and even cities. Let the festivity be what it may, provided it was of sufficient magnitude, the customary queen of the kitchen abdicated and Aunt Silla and her as-

sistants took possession. So universal was this custom that the bidden guests could by a little stretch of the imagination see the delicate sandwiches in advance and taste the precise flavor of the chicken salad. The exact number and variety of the elaborate cakes might be safely guessed and the creams and ices appropriately gauged.

The Drurys were one of the old families, and Elinor's wedding was in strict accord with the customs of the town. Hundreds of invitations had been duly sent out. For two or three days the express wagon had been loaded with dainty and elegant bridal presents. The old Drury homestead rang with girlish laughter and merriment, for several of Elinor's bridesmaids were school friends from other places, and they had come days before the wedding that they might help decorate the house and church and have an opportunity to "Oh!" and "Ah!" over the trousseau to their hearts' content.

It was customary for the bride-elect to seclude herself several days before the important event, and Mrs. Drury had a horror of outraging *les convenances*, so, although Elinor thought it quite nonsensical, she stayed at home while the bridesmaids accompanied her aunt to church.

The church bells had ceased ringing, the streets were empty, and a Sabbath stillness

filled the air. Elinor sat with folded hands, looking out of her window on the scenes which had been familiar to her from childhood, but which took on new beauty as she thought how soon she would leave them.

"How beautiful the world is," she thought, "and how kind my friends!" And her heart went up to the Giver of all good in a transport of thanksgiving.

It is said that "all the world loves a lover;" certain it is that the path of the bride-elect is usually made as pleasant as possible. She is so overpowered with affectionate attentions that she hardly believes it possible that the world can ever be cold or cruel to her, or friends and acquaintances inconsiderate.

Monday the house was in confusion with final preparations, and all were so busy that they slept soundly that night. Elinor was waked the next morning by a kiss from Alice Mayton, who cried out, gaily, "How blest is the bride that the sun shines on!" for the bright rays flooded the room.

Dr. Kent, his brother from Virginia, and Mr. Wallisford, of Linton, had arrived the day before, for, in common with the majority of bridegrooms, Dr. Kent had been afraid that some accident might befall the last train and so had "taken time by the forelock."

Long before noon the church was filled

with an eager enthusiastic throng, who craned their necks in unison at any noise in the vestibule; but at last Mendelssohn's glorious wedding march pealed forth, and with measured steps the bridal party entered. In her shimmering satin and filmy veil Elinor seemed like a pure white lily in the midst of "a rose-bud garden of girls," for this had been designated a rose wedding, and each bridesmaid's gauzy dress was in accord with the graceful cluster of long-stemmed roses which she carried. The words which irremediably changed two lives were soon spoken, and in a little while Dr. Kent and his bride found themselves standing under the archway of Mrs. Drury's large parlors, receiving the congratulations of their friends.

It is unnecessary to go into details about the wedding breakfast, which everyone enjoyed more than the bride and groom, or to tell how the laughing girls cut the bride's cake, and all envied sweet Alice Mayton her luck in getting the ring; how she blushed as she took it; and how the Captain of the Ellsboro Rifles, whom she had met during the strike, whispered something in her willing ear, for

"Never yet was any marriage
Entered in the book of fate,
But the names are also written
Of the patient pair who wait."

How Aunt Silla and her assistants bustled about; how the bridesmaids and ushers rallied Dr. Kent on a small rent in his glove torn in his nervous haste; how, when Elinor went upstairs to put on her travelling dress, she paused on the landing and threw down the bouquet, and the merry scramble which ensued for its possession.

How the merry party accompanied them to the station and affectionate good-byes were said amid a shower of rice; and how, notwithstanding the fact that Alice Mayton carefully brushed off the grains which had lodged on Elinor's dress and hat, and in spite of the efforts of the bridal pair to appear like old married people, their fellow passengers instantly appreciated the situation. Whether this was due to the fact that Dr. Kent's studied unconcern was too great a contrast to his beaming face, or to the evident newness of their attire, "deponent sayeth not." Elinor had insisted on having a "going-away gown" of sombre hue, for gray and tan were altogether too "bridish." Nevertheless, an observant married lady remarked, "I know they are just married, for no one else travels in absolutely new gloves and shoes."

CHAPTER VIII.

The wedding journey ended early in November, and Dr. and Mrs. Kent were "at home" to their friends at the Linton House. Hotel life was new to Elinor, and its novelty made it attractive. Dr. Kent was popular socially and the new little city was very gay, so the days passed rapidly and the evenings were filled with engagements. Her husband's friends, Messrs. Wallisford and Ferris, ate at their table, and the quartette had a merry time over their meals.

"Linton has not had so many brides in many a long day," said Mr. Wallisford. "I wonder why the weddings all happen at once."

"Contagious," said Mr. Ferris; "sweeps over the country like measles or chicken-pox."

"Perhaps the theory of brain-waves may explain it," suggested Elinor; "it is claimed that suicides are so influenced."

"I'll give you a more practical reason still," said Dr. Kent; "everything in the South depends on the cotton crop, and marriages are no exception."

"But the crop is very poor this year," objected Mr. Ferris.

"Oh well, we were dealing in futures when we became engaged."

"Before we wander completely away from the original topic, let me tell how I happened to comment on the number of weddings," said Wallisford. "I've been talking to quite a number of the club, and we're all agreed that we ought to give a reception to the brides who've captured four of our number."

"That's very kind, I'm sure," exclaimed Elinor and Dr. Kent together. And as soon as breakfast was over she went to her room and sat down to write to her aunt and Alice Mayton, telling them of the anticipated reception, of how happy she was in Linton, and repeating what she had said several times before, that Richard was unquestionably the kindest and most devoted husband in the world.

One day at the hotel was very much like another. Her room was filled with wedding gifts and dainty trifles, which she always put in order herself. She did a little fancy work and received and made many calls; but a great part of the time was spent in driving, for whenever the Doctor had country or suburban calls she went with him and held the reins while he paid his professional visits.

The club-rooms were large and elegantly furnished, and on the night of the reception were filled with a gay throng. As a matter of course, the brides in their snowy wedding dresses were the central figures. The great majority of the guests were either very new acquaintances or entire strangers to Elinor, but she greeted one after another with a sweet graciousness that charmed them. She was never an adept in society's current coin. small-talk, but, except by force of contrast, she did not feel this when her husband was with her, for Dr. Kent was never at a loss for a word and touched lightly on a dozen subjects where Elinor's inclination would have been to go into the depths of one. Consequently she did not usually enjoy crowded and miscellaneous assemblages as he did, but much preferred the society of a few congenial spirits. So she admired and wondered at her husband's versatility and wit.

She had often resolved to cultivate this social gift, and this evening she was in such high spirits and, through the medium of her own happiness, so in love with the world about her, that airy nothings well-expressed came more easily than usual to her lips as she listened to the gay badinage and bright speeches about her.

The stream of newcomers had ceased and

the first formality of the evening had worn away. The four young couples found themselves together, when one of the brides, with a mischievous look at her husband, asked Elinor, "Mrs. Kent, do you remember the first words Dr. Kent said to you after the ceremony ?"

"Yes, indeed," laughed Elinor ; "but they were not at all romantic. He stopped in the vestibule and, looking around in the most bewildered way, asked, 'Where is my hat ?' "

In answering the same question similar commonplace remarks were reported. One bridegroom had remarked, "Why, it is raining !" And the other had said, "I wonder what time it is ? We mustn't miss that train."

The merry little lady who had started the discussion and had been a Linton belle,—the other ladies, like Elinor, were from other places,—and therefore knew all the gentlemen well, made a pretense of being quite disgusted at the utter lack of sentiment displayed. "I've been teasing Jack about his brilliant remark," she said, "but really it wasn't so much worse than the others."

"What was it, Mrs. Destande ?" asked Dr. Kent.

She drew down her face until it assumed

as painful an expression as the laughter-loving curves of her lips and the tip-tilted nose would allow, and then with a sudden change of expression, ejaculated, "Whew! but I'm glad it's over!"

Her acting was irresistibly comic, and the room rang with laughter as she continued with an injured air: "Why, really, from his words and expression one might have thought that he'd been having his teeth drawn."

An animated discussion concerning the incidents of their wedding journeys followed. But this "feast of reason and flow of soul" gave way to a more material feast and flow of spirits, which, if more exhilarating, was not so harmless.

The president of the club proposed a toast to the "fair invaders who have subjugated our hearts and conjugated our members, and to the newly made Benedicts who remind us of the trite but truthful saying, 'None but the brave deserve the fair.'"

"None but the brave can live with the fair," said a low-toned, would-be cynical voice at her side, and Elinor turned to encounter a face whose expression belied the words. The remark was evidently a challenge, and she gaily rejoined:

"Oh, Mr. Ferris, such a remark is rank heresy on an occasion of this kind. Just

reserve the idea until you fall in love yourself, and then you can dilate on it to your heart's content."

But her husband brushed her sleeve on the other side as he rose to reply to the toast, and she turned to listen. His short speech was such a glorious eulogy on Womanhood that her cheeks flushed with pride, and many a woman's heart half-envied her such unstinted appreciation.

Many people and topics claimed her attention, but she noted with uneasiness how rapidly her husband emptied his wine-glass, that his voice was growing louder and his face more flushed ; so the movement to leave the table was a great relief to her.

"Excuse me, Elinor," he said, as soon as they reached the reception room ; "I want to speak to a man in the smoking-room."

"Don't leave me," she said, with entreating eyes ; "you know these people are such strangers to me."

"Nonsense," he replied, impatiently ; "I'll be back in a minute," and was gone ere she could utter another syllable.

Astonished, aghast, yet realizing that this deadly heart-sickness must be concealed in her own breast, she nerved herself to smile and talk and listen, and only Arthur Ferris, who had caught her momentary look of dismay, knew that she realized her husband's intoxication.

"Wallisford," he said, going up to his friend, "I wish you'd follow Kent and look after him a little. He's gone to the smoking room and there's lots of liquor afloat there; he's had more now than is good for him. Keep him from taking any more if you can; at any rate, don't let him make a fool of himself before all this crowd. It would mortify his poor little wife nearly to death."

Wallisford acceded to his friend's suggestion and found that Dr. Kent's potations had already rendered him unfit to reappear in the reception rooms, so he asked a gentleman standing near to tell Mr. Ferris that he and Dr. Kent would await Mrs. Kent in the vestibule.

Mr. Ferris had taken his position beside Elinor and, though naturally quiet and reserved, exerted his conversational powers to the utmost in order to spare her as much as possible. He was on the alert for a message from Wallisford, and as soon as it was received said in a low tone to Elinor,—

"Are you ready to go, Mrs. Kent? Your husband is waiting for you in the hall."

She instantly acquiesced, and it was the work of a few moments to assume her wraps; but as she ascended the stairway towards the dressing room the sound of her husband's maudlin laughter reached her

ears, and she clenched her hands in her efforts at self-control.

What a contrast! Earlier in the evening she had felt that she stood upon the pinnacle of happiness, and now she had plunged into an abyss of misery! Life's golden vintage had turned to Dead Sea fruit in her hands. The cup of joy which she had quaffed with smiling lips was now filled to overflowing with wormwood and gall, and she must drink to its bitter dregs. There was no escape. We cannot compromise with fate.

Someone has said that "language was given us to *conceal* our thoughts": our faces, too, are masks when the sentinels of our senses are on guard. So, after the first fleeting gleam of despair which Ferris had seen sweep over her face, Elinor brought to bear the great reserve forces of her nature, and passed through the throng of people with no outward sign of the struggle within.

The world's greatest actresses are not found on the stage, but in dauntless women who go through life with tearless eyes and smiling lips, while "vultures gnaw at their vitals."

Elinor had need of all her self-restraint. Bacchus divides his followers into two classes—fiends and fools. Richard Kent be-

longed to the latter class, and his wife found him in the hall making silly jokes, at which he laughed uproariously, and greeting each passer-by with noisy familiarity. Mr. Ferris stood by him silently, having tried in vain to keep him quiet. Elinor went forward with unfaltering steps.

"Richard," she said, laying her hand upon his arm, "it is late. Let us go." And he obeyed her unresistingly.

"As we are all going to the hotel," we will share your carriage, if you will allow us," said Ferris, as he and Wallisford joined them and assisted the stumbling man into the conveyance.

"By George, she's a cool one!" ejaculated one of the group they had left.

"Bet you the cigars she keeps Kent tied to her apron-string hereafter," was the rejoinder.

The drive was long and remained in Elinor's mind a hideous recollection.

"Isn't she a beauty, boys?" said Kent, leering at his wife and addressing the gentlemen facing them. "Don't you wish you were in my place? There was not a woman there to compare to her," and he attempted to embrace her.

Elinor had thought her humiliation complete before, but she now realized that there were yet lower depths for her to sound, as

she drew herself away from the caresses which had suddenly become loathsome to her.

"Don't dare to touch me," she said, with flashing eyes; "I cannot bear it."

Again Ferris proved a friend in need, by inquiring about one of the Doctor's patients. Dr. Kent was an enthusiast in his profession, and it was easy to divert his mind into this channel.

At last the hotel was reached, and the two gentlemen, having seen Dr. Kent to his room, went on to their own a few doors farther down the corridor.

"It would do me good to horsewhip that fellow!" said Ferris savagely.

Wallisford laughed. "You're making a mountain out of a molehill. There were half a dozen fellows there in a worse condition than Kent."

"That doesn't excuse him. To think of taking his modest sensitive bride there, and then humiliating her like that! Why such women marry such men is a mystery to me."

"Oh, that's to preserve the moral equilibrium," easily responded Wallisford. "If saints only married saints, and sinners, sinners, we'd soon have heaven and hell right here, instead of the spicy mixture we now rejoice in. It's the same way with in-

tellect : people with brains and those without congregate together in the most miscellaneous manner and jog along right comfortably : the dull people serve as brakes, you see. I used to think intolerantly of their stupidity, until it occurred to me that they were the balance wheel to the engine. Since then I have developed a great respect for their—well, not weight, but ponderosity, let us say. Why," warming to his subject, "if all the geniuses were left to themselves we'd have them flying off at a tangent—nobody knows where."

"That's all very well," interrupted Ferris, "but if you had seen the look that I saw on that poor woman's face, you could not philosophize on the subject in that cold-blooded fashion."

"I thought she acted very sensibly, myself," was the reply. "Kent will be ready to go in sackcloth and ashes to-morrow. There isn't a better-hearted man in the town than he is. He is his own worst enemy."

"His own worst enemy indeed !" retorted Ferris, growing more and more indignant. "That phrase makes me sick. Even thieves and murderers injure those who have no claims on them, while a drunkard plunges a dagger into the hearts of those who love him."

"Oh, you're a fanatic. You might apply such intemperate language to the scum of the town, but Kent is a gentleman ; he worships his wife ; he'll turn out all right in the long run."

"I'm sure I hope so ;" said Ferris, and the subject dropped.

Meanwhile Elinor, the picture of despair, still robed in her snowy wedding dress, sat and gazed at the heavily breathing figure on the bed. Her very room had seemed to embody happiness. filled as it was with tokens of love and affection. Every book and picture had some tender association. A magazine lay on the table by her side, and the open page revealed a little poem on love, which her husband had read aloud to her while she finished her toilet. He had kissed her and said : "The words are beautiful, dearest, but they only seem an echo of what fills my heart."

A crystal vase was filled with violets which he had brought her, and they had perfumed the room all the afternoon, but now their fragrance was smothered by the fumes of liquor. She took the faded roses from her breast and thought they typified her evening—so bright and blooming a few hours ago and now drooping and lifeless. Her Eden had been invaded, and "the trail of the serpent was over it all." She had

been overwhelmed with humiliation. Anger and rebellion filled her heart. She looked at her wedding ring, and it seemed like a handcuff. She was chained for life to the inert, insensate figure on the bed, and she felt that she hated him. She caught a glimpse of herself in the glass, and the white, drawn face startled her. A revulsion of feeling swept over her. "Merciful God!" she thought, "Is it possible that I can have such wicked, wicked thoughts?" And in an agony of penitence she threw herself on her knees and implored forgiveness.

On arising she reviewed the whole matter from another standpoint. She remembered how she had prayed for guidance before engaging herself, and how she had pledged herself to become God's messenger, and now at the first touch of trouble she had been tempted to betray her trust. She had thought her love for her husband was great enough for her to make any sacrifice, and instead, at the first intimation that sacrifice might be unavailing, she had felt ready to desert her post.

"I remind myself of the man who professed his willingness to follow the Master, and, having put his hand to the plough, turned back. I should think Christ would be ashamed of such a follower. Consecrate me anew, O God, and put a right spirit

within me." And so her thoughts went on, partly prayer and partly meditation.

She pictured to herself her husband's many grand and lovable traits, and asked herself in actual wonder how she could have imagined that she could desert this noble nature because he succumbed to one temptation, when she herself was so weak and faulty. Love was not vanquished, but confidence was gone, and love without trust is but a lash to scourge us.

CHAPTER IX.

The sun rose over the far away hills, and his golden rays gave promise of a perfect day. Elinor opened her window to let in a draught of fresh air, and witnessed the transfiguration of the morning.

There was a small park opposite the hotel, and the trees were not yet entirely bereft of their splendor, though many leaves had fallen and caressingly covered Mother Earth to shield her from the coming cold. Winter steals upon one gently here and with many moods of relentance. Many November days are chill and drear, but the perfect weather which is now and then vouchsafed us seems all the brighter by contrast. November is the Jeremiah of the year, and its message is "Take warning," "prepare;" but lest one become discouraged by its prophecies, Nature frequently smiles so benignly that one cannot forget that "behind the clouds is the sun still shining."

In common with the majority of imaginative natures, Elinor was sensitive to climatic influences and read subtle messages in the sky and clouds, so her spirits grew

more buoyant as she watched the birds chirping gaily and hopping from bough to bough, while the squirrels frisked through the branches.

The city had waked up. The noise of traffic was heard in the streets. Marketmen and milkmen were going their rounds, and newsboys were skipping about as alertly as the sparrows. But the air was chill, and she closed the window. Notwithstanding her long vigil, she felt no inclination to sleep, so sat down to read until breakfast time. She had decided that she would go to the dining-room early, hoping thereby to avoid Mr. Wallisford and Mr. Ferris, who, owing to the lateness of retiring, would probably sleep late. This programme she carried out. She was a little pale, but otherwise showed no signs of her sleepless night.

As she had expected, the people she knew best had not yet come down, and she ate her breakfast cheerfully, and finally ordered the waiter to take hot toast and coffee to their room for Dr. Kent.

Meanwhile she aroused her husband, and he awaked, miserable both in soul and body. His abasement and humiliation were so complete that she believed he could never again be guilty of last night's sin. She had heard of the depression which follows excesses, but fancying that the strong coffee

would counteract that and ascribing his deep dejection, which was largely physical, to mental and moral causes, she condoned his fault too readily and showed mercy rather than justice to the culprit. She bathed his head with cologne and spoke in gentle, loving tones, and he, keeping at bay the ravening wolf within, called her his "pitying angel" and vowed over and over that he would never again betray her trust.

Surely intemperate men, whether they believe in the theory or not, are all practical homeopathists, for to aid in recovering from one excess they take more of the fiery liquid which has already been their undoing.

Partly to bolster up his own resolutions, Richard continued to make promises, and Elinor believed him. She decided to walk down to the office with him; and perhaps this had something to do with the fact that his way to the office did not lead by the hotel bar, for so strongly did he feel the need of some stimulant that he had begun to debate with himself whether his abstinence should begin then or after he had allowed himself one more drink. Elinor, all unconscious, walked along by his side, talking cheerily.

On reaching the office he found a call to the country awaiting him, so Elinor, enjoying the prospect of a long drive, went

with him. The hazy Indian summer lay over everything, giving new beauty to the landscape. The misty veil gave a languorous loveliness to scenes already pleasing, while it softened and subdued harsh outlines and glaring effects. The bright joyousness of the radiant October days had accorded with the fresh sparkle of Elinor's happiness, and now that the frost and the darkness of the night had passed away, her sun shone again, but with a subdued and mellow light. She realized that she had been wearing Love's magnifying glasses and had endowed her husband with strength he did not possess, but she felt that the cobwebs of her mind had been swept away like the leaves from the trees.

They were driving through a grove of giant oaks. The vivifying green was gone; but she was struck with the beauty of the russet leaves, which still clung to the half-bare branches, and with the ruddy covering which carpeted the ground. The massive trunks and dark gnarled boughs formed in their majesty a magnificent contrast to the delicate lace-like tracery of the twigs against the empyrean blue.

Dr. L[illegible]'s nervousness had succumbed to the invigorating influence of the fresh pure air, and he turned from bitter self-reproaches and began to speak confidently of the future.

Linton was a thriving little city, endowed by a "boom" with "seven league boots." The rapidity of its progress made the old inhabitants dizzy. New buildings sprang up as if by magic. Each train brought in prospectors and investors who had heard of its fame from afar and were relieved to find that everything had not been sold before they arrived.

The price of property per front foot increased inordinately, and the fortunate owners of corner lots beheld them in imagination paved with gold. Real estate agents were everywhere. Men's pulses beat to a faster tune. Capital's characteristic timidity was a dead letter. An enormous amount of the "circulating medium" was planted in the ground, with confident expectation of its bringing forth an hundred fold. Those who went in on the "ground floor" had already reaped a rich harvest, and continued to go in on any floor they could get on, as the structure of speculation grew higher.

Enthusiasm was contagious. Dr. Kent had caught the fever, and Elinor herself had not escaped. How could she, when her husband and Ferris and Wallisford talked of little else at each meal! Wallisford indulged in glowing prophecies and painted the future of the boom in vivid colors; while Ferris discanted more fully on Linton's na-

tural advantages and the solid foundation on which his partner's air-castles were erected.

Dr. Kent had been prosperous in his profession and had saved a few thousand dollars. He had been a little distrustful of the "boom" in the beginning, but the lusty giant had so grown and thrived that hesitation no longer seemed wise. Rather a large stockholder in the Land Company had "for personal reasons" determined to sell out, and about a dozen men with comparatively small amounts to invest had concluded to combine and buy his interest, and had asked Dr. Kent to go into the scheme. He and Elinor discussed it at length and decided that the opportunity was too good to lose.

At last he said, "I was so elated over the prospect that I believe that is one reason I made such a fool of myself last night."

"If it has such an effect as that, for Heaven's sake, keep out of it," exclaimed Elinor in startled tones.

"Oh, that's nonsense, of course," he replied; "it was a folly that cannot be truthfully ascribed to anything but folly, but I promise you faithfully it shall never occur again. My resolution is as firm as the everlasting hills."

He pointed, as he spoke, to the low-lying

hills, whose summits were crowned with the halo of the season's glory. A few clouds cast their shadows here and there on the translucent mist, while in other places the rays of the golden sun shed a more effulgent splendor.

But Indian summer is an evanescent season, and Richard's vows lasted scarcely longer. The first time that he broke his rule of abstinence he felt justified by circumstances. He had been called out in a wild stormy night, and by the time he returned to the hotel he was chilled through. So, as he explained afterwards to Elinor, he only followed the course which his medical knowledge would have prescribed for anyone else as well as himself. Besides, he did not become intoxicated, and Elinor's fears were easily lulled to rest, particularly as she was no extremist on the temperance question. A certain amount of indulgence in bibulous pleasures was regarded quite as a matter of course in the world to which she was accustomed, and she was conservative both by nature and education. An analytic student of mankind might have discovered possibilities of martyrdom in her nature, but as yet there were no traces of the sterner stuff of which reformers and revolutionists are made.

Besides, her faith faltered not. She tried

to school herself to expect and be prepared for disappointments. When depression preyed upon her mind she called to memory scriptural passages concerning the chastening, purifying power of affliction, and we all know they are many. Sometimes she thought that marriage was discipline and that God was trying her. She would have been a little shocked to have so expressed it to herself, yet in reality her mental attitude was this: that in return for a life of self-abnegation and devotion, the Ruler of the Universe would bring about her husband's complete reformation; in short, she believed that she had made a bargain with God, and devoted all her energies to fulfilling her part of the contract. So, while she sorrowed at his delinquencies and the wings of Hope were clipped at each relapse, still Faith stood by her and buoyed her up.

It is [illegible]ary to detail each step downward in [illegible]dder. One has only to look around [illegible]aving instances; in fact, these instances are so common that we become hardened to them.

Like his fellow inebriates the wide world over, Dr. Kent drank when it was cold to get warm, when it was warm to get cool, when depressed to become exhilarated, when cheerful to become more so.

When the descent was a little swifter or

more abrupt than usual, he pulled himself up with a jerk and swore reformation by heaven and earth, only to succumb to temptation once more. Again and again was this programme repeated.

Hotel life had become almost unendurable to Elinor. She was constantly mortified by the publicity of her husband's inebriety, and she believed that his temptations would not be so great if they kept house. Dr. Kent still had his money in Land Company stock and was constantly expecting it to declare dividends; so Elinor sold her Ellsboro property for the purpose of buying a home in Linton.

CHAPTER X.

The sum realized was not large; values differed so widely in the two places, and the cost of living also, that a modest competency in Ellsboro was a mere pittance in Linton. Still it was enough to buy and furnish a suburban cottage located on the electric railway. Contrasted with her Ellsboro home, the small lot and house would have seemed cramped indeed, but several months of hotel life had so changed Elinor's ideas that half a dozen rooms and a few feet of grass seemed quite spacious.

The furnishing of the most palatial residence has no more thought expended upon it than the fitting of this little home. She made a mental inventory of the possibilities of each room, and with a tape-measure painstakingly took the dimensions of the floors and windows. She had just so much money to spend and a truly feminine horror of debt; so before she actually began to buy she made out two lists. One was headed "Must have"; the other, "Would like to have." Opposite each article a suppositious price, gleaned from observant

study of shop windows and advertising columns, was marked down, and her figures balanced so nicely that she began her buying very hopefully.

But alas! the bargains so alluring in the advertisements were not so satisfactory on closer inspection; and the sum total spent for "Must haves" so exceeded her expectations that she saw that the "Would like to have" column would inevitably shrink to half its length. With knitted brow she sat that evening, pencil in hand, and tried to make her stubborn figures more elastic. She so delighted in pretty things and had made such charming mental pictures of how each nook and corner of the little house would appear when complete, that she was loath to give up her cherished plans.

Merely mention a new house to a woman, and it is like pressing the button of a kodak,—her imagination quickly "does the rest." So instantaneous is the process that fairy wands and Aladdin's lamp seem but clumsy comparisons. But Elinor's Pegasus had been brought to a sudden halt by the most powerful check-rein known to an economical mind—lack of money.

Dr. Kent was much less cautious than his wife where money was concerned and was anxious always that her least wish should be gratified. He had left the choice of house

and furniture entirely to her, but had reminded her several times that his credit was good, and told her to let him know when her funds began to run low. However, she had resolved not to go beyond her means and to give her husband no hint that she desired to; but she was so absorbed in the puzzle which the vast majority of us frequently have to try to solve in our own varying fashions—how to cram our large wants and ambitions into the small area of our pocket books—that she did not notice that Dr. Kent had thrown aside his medical journal and was looking over her shoulder with an amused expression.

"What is the matter, little woman?" (It may be remarked in passing that the diminutive was used simply as a term of endearment. Men of very small stature, but with hearts quite out of proportion to their bodies, have frequently been known to address their regal sweethearts and wives as "little pet," much to the amusement of those who chanced to overhear, and the large dears themselves are not apt to be oblivious of the unfitness of the sobriquet. However, to hear a little man, whose head scarcely reaches his wife's chin, address her, in the exuberance of his honeymoon, as "big darling" would hardly sound romantic either. But this has little to do with the

subject under discussion, and is hardly of sufficient importance to warrant interrupting Dr. Kent: so the remainder of his sentence shall be faithfully set down.)

"You seem to be completely stumped. Perhaps I can help you in your book-keeping," he said, as he took the notebook from Elinor's unwilling hand, while she began to explain her dilemma and interpret the meaning of certain cabalistic signs and figures.

"My money isn't holding out as well as I expected," she said, and could not help a doleful intonation; "but," more brightly, "I have put down quite a number of things in this second list that we can do very well without."

"There is no necessity for you to do without any of them if you want them," he said; "there is a prospect of getting another new industry here in Linton, and if that comes to pass Land Company stock will go up with a bound. So get anything you want, and I'll foot the bill."

She shook her head deprecatingly, and began to protest, but he laughingly interrupted: "Linton is distressingly healthy, so I have plenty of time to go with you to complete your purchases."

A plan which he accordingly carried out, and therefore the house was furnished much more lavishly than would have been the case

without his intervention. His generosity pleased his wife, and the shopping expedition was a delight, though her aunt had so inculcated a horror of debt that every little while a qualm of misgiving seized her. However, the sum total of things unpaid for was not very great, and she comforted herself with reflecting on what an economical housekeeper she would be. The task of fitting up the little home-nest which was all her own, was so pleasant that her energy never flagged. Tables and chairs were pushed from one position to another, until no further improvement could be desired, and pictures were hung and re-hung until the most favorable lights were obtained. Dr. Kent had taken care that she should have plenty of help, but she was too much interested in the work to sit with folded hands; so she even tacked carpets with zeal and washed windows with enthusiasm. This state of mind her husband shared, though in a less degree. He was pleased that she was pleased, and they made a joke of the discomforts which they had perforce to endure during the settling process.

Their first meal was a veritable picnic. They had expected to spend another night at the hotel, but chaos had been so subdued that it seemed useless to take the long ride back. Their table-ware and provisions were

not to arrive until the next day, but to be deterred by such trifles did not occur to them. Emma, the maid of all work, was dispatched to the nearest grocery and soon came back laden down with paper bags. To light a fire in the bright new stove was but a moment's work, and the water for the tea was soon bubbling merrily. Here a new difficulty presented itself. The steaming, tantalizingly-fragrant tea seemed destined to "waste its sweetness on the desert air," for they could not drink out of the teapot ! At last Elinor bethought herself of a dainty cup packed away among her treasures. It was a real work of art, altogether too fragile and lovely for ordinary occasions ; but she proudly brought it forth just as Dr. Kent emerged triumphantly from the kitchen with a shining big tin cup.

"I'm going to emulate Dr. Johnson," he said, "if not in verbosity, at least in tea-drinking, for I believe this really would hold sixteen times as much as that dainty little affair you have."

"Perhaps it would," said Elinor ; "but the egg-shell china and Cupids and rose-buds fully atone to me for the other fifteen-sixteenths."

Solid silver they had galore, thanks to the never failing wedding presents,—forks and spoons *ad infinitum*, but the supersti-

tion against giving knives had been observed in their case. However, Emma was equal to the occasion and smilingly proffered the butcher knife, while Dr. Kent's pocket knife also did duty.

They laughed heartily over the incongruity of their table-ware. Shining silver and gleaming cut glass were side by side with plebeian kitchen utensils and paper bags.

"What an improvement on the hotel!" said Elinor, with no intention of being satirical. "Everything doesn't taste alike."

"And I don't have to spend all my small change in tipping the waiters," said Dr. Kent.

"Nor live in constant fear that they will collide in their mad speed and deluge us with soup and gravy," added Elinor.

"Home, sweet home," sang the Doctor,—"the place where Mrs. Grundy is unknown and electric bells don't ring all night—"

"And where I don't have to live in my trunk," said Elinor.

"Where I can even smoke my cigar in the parlor if I wish."

"But the porch is more appropriate on such a lovely June night!" was the reply. And, laughing like children over their possessions, they seated themselves on their moonlit veranda, and Mrs. Kent began to talk of the vines she would train there.

"But you will be deprived of one pleasure," said her husband teasingly,—"you can no longer weave romances about the 'transients.' No more can you draw on your imagination and ascribe a dyspeptic drummer's want of appetite to unrequited love, or fancy that all the bald middle-aged men of aldermanic proportions are capitalists who carry Linton's welfare in their vest pockets, or become deeply interested in the brides, or decoy bewildered toddlers with big round eyes and curly hair into your room by bribes of candy."

"Oh, we have plenty of neighbors to keep my interest in human nature alive; but the best of housekeeping is that I'll always have something to occupy me."

The next day she was busy enough to excite the envy of the much-lauded bee, and about the middle of the afternoon surveyed the result of her labors with a smile of satisfaction. The cozy rooms looked as fresh and bright as newly opened flowers.

The day was warm and sultry and she was very tired, but was too anxious to have everything particularly inviting for Richard's home-coming to think of her own fatigue; so she went to the kitchen and she and Emma held a long and interesting discussion about the bill of fare. Emma could not boast of a great degree of culinary skill;

so Elinor, with the deftness due to Mrs. Drury's training, prepared certain of Richard's favorite dishes with her own dainty hands, and smiled as she thought how she would enjoy the quiet home evening.

Then she exchanged her work-a-day dress for a crisp, fresh lawn, and sat down to await his coming and enjoy a welcome rest. A gust of wind came up and lowering clouds began to gather. A clap of thunder startled her, and she closed the windows as the rain began to fall.

The room grew dark, so she lighted the lamp and tried to read, but was too nervous and impatient to put her thoughts upon her book. She tried to laugh at her fears. "A doctor's wife," she told herself, "can never expect regular hours;" but, in spite of herself, she began to fear that the little home which she had thought would be such a safeguard, might fail in its mission. The bright, inviting little room seemed to mock her. She had pulled an easy chair into the circle of the lamplight and put Richard's slippers beside it. "For the streets will be wet," she reflected.

Now she thought a little bitterly of all her efforts to make home attractive. The thunderstorm had so cooled the atmosphere that she shivered in her thin dress. The dainty dishes that she had prepared with

such painstaking care would be ruined by waiting, which reminded her to go to the kitchen and caution Emma against burning anything. She came back with a few pieces of pine in her hands, and laid them in the grate ready to light when she should hear the welcome footsteps. The minutes dragged on. The summer storm had given way to a steady, monotonous rainfall. She pressed her face against the window-pane, but could only see a sheet of water upon the other side..

Then she heard the click of the gate. The footsteps on the walk were not slow and stumbling, as she had feared, but firm and steady. Quickly she lighted her little fire; the pine flamed brightly; and she rushed with joyful face to open the door.

"Are you very wet, dearest?"

"Not very," answered a deep, well-known voice, half laughing; and John Clerton stepped into the room.

She was so surprised that she stepped back speechless, for a moment; then she too laughed at the warmth of her greeting, while she gave him a cordial hand-clasp. "I thought you were Richard," she explained, quite unnecessarily.

"Evidently," he answered, smiling; though he could not help remembering that such a greeting and such a home, with the

woman before him as its presiding genius, had once been his most cherished hope. But the undercurrent of his thought found no expression in his tone as he continued: "I had expected to find you still at the hotel. I came up to attend Chancery Court, and Mr. Hutton asked me to bring some papers with me for you and Dr. Kent to sign."

Mr. Hutton was the purchaser of her last piece of Ellsboro property, and this was the last of several deeds which she had had to sign consequent upon the sale of her real estate.

"Yes, certainly," she replied, and, in obedience to the well known precept—"Never sign anything without reading it"—glanced rapidly over the document, while her thoughts were still busy with her husband's non-appearance; and the fear, which, like Banquo's ghost, "would not down," that when he did come he would not be thoroughly himself, continued to haunt her.

Aside from this, she was delighted to see her visitor, and questions and answers about her Ellsboro friends kept the ball of conversation rolling. The striking of the clock warned her of the lateness of the hour, and she rang for Emma and told her she would wait no longer for Dr. Kent.

"You know, one can never count on a physician's punctuality," she said with a

forced smile; "I have only been waiting because I so dislike to eat alone; so now, if you will take dinner with me, we will wait no longer."

They began to talk of Alice Mayton's approaching marriage to James Clerton, a cousin of John's, and of what a congenial, happy marriage it bade fair to be. Elinor described their meeting at Grandview, when he looked so handsome in his military uniform, and had commanded his company so ably.

"It seems to me, she said, "that they are particularly well adapted to each other; their characters are such a harmonious contrast; his quiet strength is the necessary complement to her impulsiveness. She is apt to be either on the heights or in the depths. I believe the lines—

> 'A loving woman finds heaven or hell,
> On the day she is made a bride'—

particularly applicable to Alice."

"You don't think that they apply to all women, then?"

"Not unless we substitute 'imaginative woman' for 'loving woman,'" was the reply. "It is probably true, too, that a woman of unusual sensitiveness may be first at one extreme and then at the other, but I fancy that the average woman, married or

unmarried, occupies an intermediate place." Elinor had forced herself many times to take this view of the subject, not because she felt the truth of it, but because she wished to school her heart and make herself feel so.

John Clerton was surprised at the attitude she took, for he had always supposed that she herself was one of the ultra sensitive beings of whom she spoke so impersonally, and he wondered how much of her personal experience was expressed in her abstract ideas, but he answered lightly: "That is certainly a sensible view, but it takes away a great deal of the romance of life. If your idea is the correct one it would alter a man's standpoint very much. It is not flattering to his vanity, it is true, but his sense of responsibility would be decreased."

"Do men feel so much responsibility?" she asked skeptically and wistfully; then, realizing instantly that both the question and the tone were disloyal to her husband, she continued hastily—"I suppose they do, of course; but I like to look at a question from every side."

He saw that she regretted her hasty speech, and, wishing to put her at her ease, appeared to attach no significance to it, and said jestingly: "Why, you're actually guilty of vandalism, to so ruthlessly uproot

cherished ideas and substitute unvarnished common sense. The lines you quote are part of every lover's creed."

"I acknowledge that they are true of some natures," was the reply, "but I cannot believe th .t they apply so universally now as they did to our grandmothers. I am certainly not a 'new woman' and am quite content with my sphere, but I am glad to be able to believe that the mental horizon of the Nineteenth Century woman is so widened that, if any unfortunate sister makes a mistake in her marriage, she can still find solace in outside interests."

"In short," he answered, "you argue that, whereas under the old theory, marriage was simply an episode to a man and all of life to a woman, it is now just an episode to both !"

"Not at all," she said, laughing ; "it is the most important thing in life to either ; but I think there must be more equality in the relationship than in the old days, when the theory was that a man was all head and a woman all heart. But 'a man convinced against his will is of the same opinion still,' and I see you do not wish to modify your views,—so we'll change the sub; . Where will your cousin live after the marriage ?"

"Oh, in the old home place. James' wife

will be the most warmly received by his father and brother; the place has seemed so cheerless since Aunt Lucy's death."

"Alice will be a ray of sunshine in the old house," said Elinor; "but," sn...ng, "she will find the array of 'his uncles and his cousins and his aunts' a little bewildering at first. That is one of the charms of dear old Ellsboro—everybody is kin to everybody else. The relationships were very puzzling to my childish mind when I first went there, and I felt quite lonely when I reflected that I only had Aunt Tilda, for my little associates were related to half the town."

"You must miss your old friends very much," said John.

"Yes; this place is so different. I think there must be people here from every State in the Union. At a reception some time ago twenty-seven different states were represented. You have no idea how homesick I get for the dear friends in Ellsboro whom I have known always."

This was true, with a reservation. When depressed by her husband's dissipated habits, it was a comfort to her to reflect that the people of Ellsboro did not know of her troubles. Sympathy is appreciated, is welcome as a soothing balm when God takes our loved ones to Himself; but pity poured on wounded pride is vitriol to the bleeding

spirit; and Elinor felt that she could not endure to have her husband's degradation known in her old home.

The fear that he would come home intoxicated and meet their visitor had haunted her all evening, quieted to rest now and then when she became particularly interested in the conversation, only to leap up again, stronger than ever, in the lulls of the talk. She had hoped he might come in and go upstairs while they were still in the dining-room, though she told herself with a sinking heart that there was little chance of his keeping quiet under any circumstances; but they had long since returned to the parlor, which was only separated from the front hall by a portiere. She had contrived to seat her visitor so that he had his back to the archway, and, while trying to appear at ease, kept wondering whether it was possible that she could under any pretense keep her husband from entering the room and excuse his non-appearance to Clerton. She felt sick with apprehension and fatigue and most fervently wished for her visitor's departure, while he thought Kent would surely come soon and thus save him the trouble of coming again, for it was necessary to get his signature to the deed.

However, he saw that Elinor was very tired, and arose to go, while her heart gave

a quick leap of relief. She stood giving messages to Ellsboro friends, while he leisurely put on his gloves and took down his hat.

"Here he is at last," he cried, hearing a noise on the porch, while she unlocked the door with trembling fingers. "I am very glad, for Mr. Hutton is anxious to get the business settled."

She turned the key in the lock, and a muddy, maudlin, bleeding figure would have fallen into the hall, but she caught his arm and steadied him. Unutterable repulsion was written in every line of her face, until a step forward brought him into a clearer light and revealed the blood on his face.

"Richard, are you hurt?" she exclaimed, in quick alarm, as she pushed him into a chair and took her handkerchief to quench the blood.

"N' knocked m' head against post, post had n' business middle o' street, would knock'd any man down."

Clerton had stepped forward to examine the hurt, and found it trivial. Elinor called her husband's attention to him, and he roused himself to give him a hilarious greeting.

"Com 'n' take a drink, old boy." And he tried to rise, but his wife's reproachful look penetrated even his foggy brain, and he

tried to apologize. "Ain't had b' one drink, El'nor, just one, 'pon honor," and he winked with a drunken leer at Clerton. "Miz'ble wet night. 'Fraid might take cold."

"Can I help you in any way?" asked Clerton.

"No," she replied; "no one can help me."

"Good night," he said, with a look of tenderness and pity which sank into her soul. Then he turned and left her worse than alone.

Could the Siamese twin, burdened with his brother's dead body, be more unmistakably doomed than a drunkard's wife?

CHAPTER XI.

The rain had ceased, but the streets were very wet. John Clerton strode along, oblivious to the mud, his brow furrowed with anger. Pity is usually a softening thing: but his sympathy for Elinor only intensified his indignation against her husband. In the old days, when he had been her loyal and crown her queen of all. Of all flowers, lover and her loveliness of soul and body had filled his waking dreams, his mind had ransacked the universe for types of perfection, that he might compare her with them hands. So she resolutely kept her head all jewels, all living, breathing things, love's imagery selected only three emblems which suited her, and these came back to him with harrowing pain: for his lily was surrounded with mire, his pearl had been cast before swine, his gentle dove struggled in the cl ..ches of a hawk.

How gladly he would have shielded her from all harm: and now— He ground his teeth in the impotence of his rage, for the pity of it was, her words were so true,— "No one can help me": they rang in his ears like the funeral knell of hope.

And yet she had chosen between them. She had been the arbiter of her own fate. No one had constrained her. She had not even been ignorant, for he himself had warned her; and she had chosen Richard Kent! John Clerton was no vain egotist, but he knew himself; and his healthy self-respect caused him to wonder again, as he often had before, how she could have chosen as she did.

He was accustomed to knotty points of law, but Kent and Coke and Blackstone shed little light upon the complexity of a woman's motives. And such instances were so common; the best and purest women so often allied themselves with men who were utterly unworthy. There must be some occult attraction, something beyond the power of the human mind to fathom. Cupid must be not only blind, he savagely told himself, but one of the devil's own emissaries in bringing about such a match as this.

He had once heard a woman, when asked if she believed that marriages were made in Heaven, angrily reply, "No, in the other place." He began to understand this view, and then he wondered how Elinor's philosophy had stood this shock; but her face had told him that her belief in the intermediate place was only theoretical. It was

hardly to be wondered at, perhaps, that Kent's more attractive qualities did not appeal to him, and the more he thought upon the marvel of Elinor's choice, the greater the wonder grew.

He did not possess the key to the mystery, and had he known the circumstances under which her decision was made, he would not have understood her feelings. That she could have been swayed by a mystical idea that she was divinely called to marry and reform this man, would have been beyond the comprehension of his more definite creed. He would have seen no backbone in such religion. What seemed a revelation to her, would be to him an hallucination, a mental mirage.

As we have seen, Elinor's girlhood had seemed like a smooth unruffled sea ; her few glimpses of the seamy side of life had awakened compassion in her, but any ebullition of anger which came under her notice filled her with surprise : she vaguely wondered why people should encourage such uncomfortable feelings. Now, for the second time in her life, the fiery flame of indignation filled her heart, and the hot wave surged to her brain until her temples throbbed. She felt that she could not touch the repulsive figure that had fallen from the chair and lay prone upon the floor. Besides,

her strength was insufficient to take him to his room, and she could not call Emma and add another witness to her degradation. This gentle creature, who turned sick at the sight of a wounded bird, had so succumbed to vengeful feelings that she went upstairs and left him, taking a grim satisfaction in the thought that, as the night grew more and more chilly, he would grow numb and cold.

Sorrow is a leaden weight which drags us down, but when it is removed and assuaged by time, the elasticity of our natures asserts itself. But anger is a devouring flame which destroys what it touches: it is like the hot wind of the desert, which shrivels and scorches the vegetation with which it comes in contact. History records comparatively few instances of people who have died from grief, unless, indeed, the sorrow has come as a great shock. It is not unusual for sad lives to be long lives; for the tendency of trouble is to chill the current of the blood; the heart beats more apathetically perhaps, but it still does duty as a blood-propeller, and the life, which seems to the mourner not worth living, goes on.

But mortuary and insane statistics are full of instances where the heart or brain has given way under unrestrained, mad passion. Anger is a fever in the blood,

which runs riot through the veins: it reaches flood-tide at the heart, perhaps, and the walls of flesh give way, or the cells of the brain are engorged and apoplexy results, or reason is dethroned. Even when such dire results do not take place the nerves are strained to their utmost tension; alternate relaxation and compression occur; the sins of our mental and moral natures bring on physical suffering.

How little we know our capabilities or our limitations, or those of our friends! Elinor's equable temper had been the envy and admiration of her associates; she herself would not have believed it possible that she could so surrender the fortress of her self-control. Life stretched out before her a burning Sahara: the oases of Love, Faith and Hope were obscured by the red heat which surged through her brain, and she beheld herself a lonely traveller on this barren waste.

She was utterly exhausted, and threw herself upon the bed and sank into a deep, but troubled sleep. A little old woman tormented her in her dreams—a wrinkled, bent, dwarfish hag, who dogged her footsteps and who, though she inspired her with horror, yet possessed a subtle fascination for her, for she could not take her eyes off her, nor keep her mind from dwelling on her.

Where she went the hag went also, always inciting her to evil, and grinning malevolently when her influence triumphed over Elinor's conscience. Her better nature was keenly alive and suffered intensely when, under the spell of this witchery, she obeyed the behests of this incarnation of evil. She lived through days of agony—for dreams annihilate time and space—and always the power of her hated companion grew stronger. She was horrified and aghast at the deeds which she was impelled to do, and felt that she must deliver herself from this bondage or forever surrender her soul ; so, with a desperate effort, she clutched her. She was strong, and her antagonist was small and weak ; but she knew beyond question that if she allowed herself to look at her she would again become as wax in her turned away, although it seemed that strong cords were drawing her, while she tightened her clasp upon the feeble neck. At last she heard the death rattle in her throat and dared to look, and the head of Medusa was not so horrible as the face which met her gaze.

Shuddering, she awoke, and her first feeling was one of intense thankfulness that it was all a dream. She began to consider it allegorically, and now, instead of the witch of her dream, she beheld the Demon of An-

ger which had possessed her. Her provocation had been strong, it is true, but her husband's misdeeds did not excuse her own. She thought with shame and remorse of her conduct, and slipping quietly downstairs, covered him and put a pillow under his head, looking pitifully, as she did so, at the cut in his forehead.

Some natures are naturally religious. Hers was one. She turned to God as instinctively as a flower to the sun. Theologians may argue about the effect our prayers have upon God, but there can be no question of the effect which they have upon ourselves.

As usual, she was tranquillized and strengthened. She began to judge her husband with more charity, herself with less. The writhings of wounded Love had tortured her, but Pity intervened and bandaged up his bruises. She was appalled at her own capacity for anger, and realized as she never had before that "to be wroth with one we love doth work like madness in the brain."

To picture the downfall of struggling humanity as a sort of mental and moral coasting is not altogether an appropriate simile: the incline, it is true, is often steep and slippery, but there are many moments when the unfortunate coaster realizes the

danger of his mad speed and clutches frantically at the trees and bushes by the wayside. Sometimes he fails to grasp his object—it is just beyond his reach ; again his momentum is so great that the frail obstacle is uprooted and borne along with him, but serves to slacken his speed for a little while. Then there is a smooth, level stretch, and the sport is exhilarating ; but again he realizes with a shudder the pit toward which he is tending and skilfully jumps off the sled which he has fashioned of his own evil desires. He painfully begins to ascend ; but his sled seems to have become a part of himself ; its weight is great and drags him down. His will is dulled and lacks the power to cut the cords. Besides he has uprooted the friendly bushes which stretched forth their helping branches, and good resolutions destroyed do not grow so readily again : the soil is not so congenial ; the roots do not penetrate so deeply.

To liken a downward career to a roadway over a succession of hills and graded heights is a better metaphor. Each ascent is more difficult and laborious, though less high ; each descent is steeper and more slippery.

As usual, Richard was humiliated by his fall, and made many promises for the future, which Elinor received outwardly as she had the many which had preceded them,

with apparent confidence, but with many inward misgivings.

Love may flourish like the mistletoe, a parasite, but trust, like the oak, needs a firmer foundation.

Elinor had reflected that on both occasions when she had so completely lost her temper, this had been largely due to the fact that there were witnesses to her humiliation. Accordingly she decided that pride had a great deal to do with it, and thereupon resolved to bring this quality into due subjection. A very unnecessary resolution, by the way; for this quality gets so much hard treatment in the majority of lives that, had it not more than the fabled nine lives of a cat, it would hardly endure to the end.

It was with much repugnance that John Clerton forced himself to go to Dr. Kent's office the next day to obtain his signature to the deed. Added to the righteous indignation which he felt, was the strong man's contempt for the weakness of the other. His reception was hardly more gracious than his own greeting. Kent's nerves were already on edge, and he felt an unreasoning anger that this man of all others—his unsuccessful rival—should have witnessed his degradation. Consequently the interview was as stiff as can well be imagined; the business was soon transacted, and no friend-

ly interchange of thoughts prolonged the conversation.

At luncheon Dr. Kent alluded to the five-minute call, and spoke of Clerton as a "dogmatic, puritanical prig."

Elinor looked up in some surprise. "You would not think so if you knew him better," she replied. "No one in Ellsboro ever speaks of him in that way. He is one of the noblest men I have ever known."

"I suppose you wish you had married him," said her husband, sneeringly.

This remark surprised her still more, for he had never before shown the least intimation of jealousy. The thought crossed her mind that her pathway would have been free from the thorns which now pierced her so cruelly, if she had; but with love's quick diplomacy she asked: "Haven't I proved the contrary in all these months?" And the love-light in the depths of her clear hazel eyes and the tender curves of her beautiful lips were proof conclusive to the husband, whose momentary doubt was only prompted by an uneasy conscience.

Every device that a fond heart could suggest and a fertile imagination conceive, Elinor made use of to keep her husband by her side. His interest in his profession was not due simply to the money there was in it,

but to a deep love for the science. Elinor diligently read medical journals, in order that she might be able to talk intelligently with her husband on the subject which most interested him. She practised the songs which he liked, and spent hours in the stifling kitchen on hot summer days, preparing eatables to suit his fastidious taste.

Unless servants are numerous and proficient, much company entails a great deal of work upon the housekeeper. But Richard was very fond of society: so his wife never complained at the number of invitations he wished to give, and even suggested others. But the greatest sacrifice that she made during the long, trying summer was in giving up a cherished plan of making a visit to Ellsboro, because she was afraid to leave her husband.

The summer passed away amid varying hopes and fears, and autumn succeeded it, but the change of season brought no certainty of improvement. Sometimes days and weeks went by when her husband was all that she could wish him to be, and her hopes grew high, only to be dashed to earth again. Her state of uncertainty and anxiety was very harrowing. She could never feel at ease. When her husband was later than usual in coming home the most

torturing fears assailed her,—fears which were frequently groundless, and then she would reproach herself for want of faith.

At last Christmas morning dawned bright and beautiful. Snow covered the ground. The icicles hanging from the eaves and trees shone like myriads of diamonds in the sunlight. She clasped a flesh and blood Christmas gift in her arms, and her mother-heart whispered that with this little ally to help her, victory must surely be hers.

CHAPTER XII.

Some wit has said that "A pessimist is one who is miserable when he is happy, and an optimist one who is happy when he is miserable." If any one class of people are all optimists, young mothers surely are. The vista of Elinor's life was so widened and brightened that she felt as though she was standing on a mountain top, gazing at endless scenes of beauty irradiated by vernal sunshine. A wife's hopes, no matter how fond, are limited by her knowledge of her husband's capabilities and environment; but a mother's hopes are boundless as the ocean, and reach flood-tide at each fresh proof of unusual infantile intellect.

Mrs. Drury was making Elinor a long visit, and she and Aunt Cindy, the fat black nurse, vied with each other in finding new qualities to admire in the baby.

"Why, Elinor," said Mrs. Drury, "just look at the shape of his head: this boy may be President some day!"

"Hardly probably, Auntie," said Elinor, smiling, though in her inmost heart she thought so herself; "a Southerner would

not be apt to be elected to the highest office in the land."

"There is no telling what changes time may work before he is old enough. By then I believe the South will have regained her rightful place in the Union. Think how many great men Virginia has given to the country,—and this baby has good Virginia blood in his veins on both sides!" Mrs. Drury was intensely proud of her native state, Virginia, and could talk of its greatness and old families for hours. She was a born aristocrat and could not readily adapt herself to changed conditions; and the Virginia home of ante-bellum days was haloed in her memory, although she had not lived there since her marriage, her husband having been born and raised in Ellsboro.

Aunt Cindy also was, as she expressed it, "f'um ole Virginny," and her respect for the family was increased ten-fold when she found that they belonged to "de sho' nuff quality." She belonged to a type which is rapidly disappearing, and had no patience with the younger generation of negroes.

"Speakin' ob dis here baby bein' President, I spec' he will, de precious lam',—but dat puts me in min' ob dat upstart, Sally: my husban', he was her uncle, she ain't no blood kin ter me, t'ank goodness! Wal,

Sally's a lazy, good fer nothin' gal dat's got a little schoolin' an' t'inks she knows it all. She don' hab to work 'cause her ma's got a pension,—de Lawd maybe knows how she got it, I don't, cause ole man Ben (dat's her husban') he died befo' de wah. Howsumeber, a smart lawyer, he told Sally's ma dat ef she'd sign some papers de Guv'ment would pay her eight dollars a month. Ob cose she put her mark whar he tald her to, an' now she gits de money reg'lar. Dey say dar was a heap ob back pay, too, but de lawyer he got dat. So Sally an' her ma, dey don' hab no work ter do an' dey jes' spends all deir time a-fussin' ober de baby. Sally's husban', he's one ob dese eddicated niggers, too, an' dat's what's got him into trouble: he t'ought he could write so good dat he could write an order an' sign a white man's name ter it an' neber git caught up wif, but he wasn't as smart as he t'ought he was; dey foun' him out an' now he's a-working in de coal mines.

"But dat don't put no stop to Sally's high notions. She say she reckin her baby couldn't be Pres'dent 'count ob his color, so she'd rather he'd be black Vice dan anything else. An' Sally's ma, she sets dar as jovial as an ole hen an' 'courages all dem flighty notions. 'Black Vice, indeed,' sez I, 'I speck

he will, fer he sho' is black enuff, an' Vice means somethin' else 'sides Vice-President.' I was 'stonished at Sally's ig'nance, fer she's had schoolin' an' I ain't ; but I knows what's what, 'cause I learnt it back in old Virginny."

Mrs. Drury and Elinor were much amused at Sally's ambition, but continued to indulge in bright visions concerning Baby Harold's future.

Aunt Cindy, in common with the rest of her race, was full of superstition, and insisted that various things should be done to insure good luck to the baby through life. Accordingly, Dr. Kent, though protesting, mounted a table with the baby in his arms, so that he might go up in the world instead of down, and as he was already upstairs and the little house boasted no garret, this was the only way to carry out the superstition. She also advised that his finger-nails should not be cut for fear of his becoming a thief, and that he should wear a boar's tooth around his neck in order that he might cut his teeth easily. But these suggestions, needless to say, were too nonsensical to be followed.

The baby grew and thrived, and cooed and smiled his way into all hearts in the most approved baby-fashion. Mrs. Drury paid loving allegiance to the little monarch,

and, for the baby's sake as well as Elinor's, tried to care more for Dr. Kent, who had, according to his own ideas, only been drinking moderately during her stay; but eyes less keen than hers could easily have detected the baleful influence. Several times she had tried to speak to Elinor of her husband's faults; but the latter so entrenched herself behind a barrier of quiet dignity and gentle reserve that these efforts were futile. So it was with much anxiety for Elinor's future that she at last went home.

Dr. Kent's practice had been steadily decreasing for some time. He recognized the fact, but, making himself believe what he wanted to believe, ascribed it to everything except the real cause. When in a jocular mood, he would attribute it to the increased healthfulness of the place; again, to the pushing, underm[illegible] methods of his professional brethren. [illegible]quently he blamed his wife for it, because she had chosen a suburban home. She could see no reason for this, for his office was still in the centre of the city and they had a telephone in the house.

Communities and individuals may be thoroughly averse to [illegible]perance movements; but the instinct of self-preservation leads them to avoid entrusting their business or their lives to intemperate men. This is es-

pecially true in regard to physicians, for medicine and surgery require a steady hand and a clear brain.

Elinor was well aware that her husband's decreasing practice was due to this cause, and told him so as gently as possible on occasions when the question came up, only to be met with an incredulous or impatient rejoinder, according to his mood.

Although Elinor felt that Aunt Cindy's experience was very valuable and distrusted herself as a nurse because of her lack of knowledge, it seemed extravagant to keep both cook and nurse,—so she reluctantly discharged the latter. To do everything for Baby Harold herself was the pleasantest of tasks, but she often asked herself at the end of the day what had become of the time.

A lady asserted that her accounts never quite balanced; but, no matter how great the deficit, she always felt that it was quite safe to conclude that she had spent it in street-car fare. So, if a mother had to give an account of her time, she could make out her day-book in this way:

Baby, . . half hour;
" . . 10 minutes;
" . . 15 "
" . . one hour;

and so on, *ad infinitum*,—and no one with any knowledge of the subject would question the correctness of her books.

She was also trying very hard to economize in every way, and exerted her culinary skill to the utmost to provide a tempting bill of fare out of cheap materials. She was a genius in a domestic way and succeeded admirably, though her husband teasingly told her one day that they "lived on soup and made hash of the bone."

In after years she looked back on this short period as one of happiness. The baby developed captivating new ways constantly; each day she thought he had reached the acme of sweetness, only to find the record of previous days eclipsed by the succeeding ones, until she became convinced that his resources in this direction were boundless. She had always felt that she loved her husband; it seemed to her now that she had never known her own capacity for loving until the baby stirred the depths of her heart.

Dr. Kent had arrived at one of the halts in his downward career. It may be that his loss of practice caused an amendment; perhaps it was simply the reaction which comes now and then to all such men. His wife believed that it was due to the blessed influence of the baby.

Just at this time a great misfortune befell Linton; the boom collapsed,—not quietly and gradually, but suddenly—in a night

almost. The news, though whispered, travelled with lightning-like rapidity. Men with wild eyes and haggard faces made their way to the telegraph offices and stayed there for hours, trying to dispose of their stock, and only those who were on the "inside" could do so. Instead of the wild fever which had possessed the town, another disease, still more contagious, lurked in the air; it chilled men's pulses and turned their brains, and the name of this dread spectre was "want of confidence." Capital, like a sensitive plant, shrivelled at a touch and drew itself together. Watered stock would no longer float, and when the moisture was squeezed out of the sponge the residuum was small indeed.

Opinions differed as to what had caused the disaster. Perhaps it was the frantic desire to escape it. At any rate, the stockholders of the Land Company precipitated the crash by their mad desire to dispose of the stock, whereas if it had been put upon the market in small quantities, it would have found plenty of buyers. But it is easy to philosophize as to causes after the excitement is over. At the supreme moment self-preservation is the only thing thought of, and that is frequently not wisely managed. It was like the stampede which occurs in a packed building when the alarm of fire is

given, and there was a multitude of victims.

Those who had made fortunes in early days of the "boom" found themselves worse than penniless now. With the money they had received for the property they had sold then, they had bought a great deal more, making the first payments in cash and relying on the property itself to pay the balance. Under the changed conditions all of these men found themselves burdened with a debt which the labor of their lifetime could not pay. The inflation had been so enormous that the huge balloon burst. Large plants suspended; buildings were left half-finished, excavations partly dug and new streets partially paved.

The whole population suffered, but in varying degrees. Dr. Kent's loss was but a few thousand dollars, but, with the exception of his little home, it was his all. He found it impossible to collect what was owing to him, and therefore was unable to meet his own obligations.

Elinor's strict economy no longer sufficed to "make ends meet." She felt that she must enter the already overcrowded field of bread-winners.

CHAPTER XIII.

It is said that "the only thing worse than boarding is to take boarders" ; but Elinor entered the field with a brave spirit. The baby hands, which were so dear, effectually closed most avenues of employment to her, and hers was, too, an essentially home-loving character : so keeping a boarding house seemed the one thing to do. A large house centrally located was necessary for success in this undertaking, and also much new furniture.

Credit was a dead letter in the town, and all efforts to obtain cash by the sale of their house proved unavailing. Where had all the money gone ? Men who had most valuable collateral to put up could not obtain even the loan of a few hundred dollars. At last Elinor, in despair, went to her aunt, and Mrs. Drury succeeded in getting the money from an Ellsboro friend for her.

Elinor had always had a horror of a mortgage ; now she signed it gladly, although the sum she received was a mere pittance in comparison with the amount they had paid for their property. It was

quickly spent in fitting up the house which they had rented. Their attempts to rent their own house were futile; and she left the little home, which she had entered with such high hopes, looking as desolate and forlorn as an empty bird-cage.

But there is compensation in all things; and a little money had as great purchasing power now as a good deal during the "boom." There was no lack of boarders. Several hotels had been forced to close their doors; many people had concluded that boarding was cheaper than keeping house; but, above all, she was new to the business, and a new boarding house always attracts numbers of people. Some went because experience had taught them that at first the effort to please is greater and no expense is spared. Others, alas for Elinor! went because they were unable to pay anywhere, and she was young and unsuspicious and gladly took them in. She was sadder and wiser at the end of the first month.

Time, after all, to use an old comparison, is like an omnibus; one can always crowd in one thing more. She had thought that Baby Harold occupied her fully; but now so many things demanded her attention that it was restful to sit down and hold him a little while,—her greatest luxury to have a little time to pet and play with him.

Emma, who loved him dearly, had been installed as his nurse, but had so much else to do that his was no longer an absolute, but a limited, monarchy,—a change at which he rebelled for a while, but soon grew accustomed to the new order of things, and would amuse himself for hours with his little playthings, or, tucked securely in his cradle, learned to go to sleep without rocking. The new cook was much more proficient than Emma; nevertheless, Elinor had to spend long hours each day in the kitchen.

In common with the majority of Southern housekeepers, she gave out each meal and carefully measured each ingredient. It is supposed that absolute bankruptcy will inevitably befall any man whose wife does not lock her pantry and keep a close watch upon the key. It is a relic of slavery, perhaps,—at any rate, there is an almost universal idea among the negroes,—that what belongs to their employers in the way of eatables belongs also to them, and a servant who takes only things to eat is considered quite honest. The fact that so many of the race do little or no work and depend upon their friends and relations who "live out" is, of course, responsible for this state of things.

On one occasion Elinor was measuring out flour, baking powder, etc., and turning suddenly, beheld the cook hastily trying to cram something more into an already full,

but capacious pocket. "What are you doing?" she asked.

"La! Miss El'ner, I jes' stealin' some sweet taters; you neber seed a nigger in yer life dat wouldn't steal sweet taters!" was the candid reply.

But such candor is unusual. Ordinarily the fact that the abundant supply of flour given out fails to make the requisite number of biscuits, or that the coffee runs low, or the occasional glimpse of a well-filled basket being smuggled out at the back way, is the only proof that can be obtained of these petty depredations. Added to the labor of giving out everything, the butter and sugar must be put under lock and key after each meal. If half a boiled ham or roast turkey is forgotten and left on the table, not a vestige of it is ever seen again. It may well be imagined that the task of keeping boarders, onerous enough anywhere, is burdensome in the extreme under such circumstances.

The boarders themselves varied greatly. Mr. and Mrs. Destande were there. Mrs. Destande was a roly-poly little woman, with frank impulsive ways and fun-loving disposition.

"I detest housekeeping," she said; "I glory in being a free-born American citizen. I believe that all men and women were born free and equal, and my proud spirit cannot

brook the dynasty of the kitchen. We endured successively the yoke of Germany, Ireland and Africa, until I got up a little revolution of my own and cast off the tyranny of bondage. Then we flew to Mrs. Kent for refuge."

"We are much indebted to this novel triple alliance," said Mr. Ferris, who had been the first to come to the new boarding-house.

A dashing widow, Mrs. Montine, was popularly supposed to have designs on his bachelor heart, and she and her mother—a hypochondriacal old lady with gout and a poodle—the widow's little boy—an *enfant terrible* of six years, and her sister, Amy Harley, took two of the best rooms in the house. When Mrs. Harley and Mrs. Montine were in a good humor and the household machinery was well-oiled and running smoothly, they treated Elinor with patronizing condescension; but let the least thing go wrong, and their grievances were aired until their hearers grew weary of the subject. They belonged to the not uncommon type who believe that the money they pay for board not only entitles them to food and lodging, but also gives them the privilege of unrestricted fault-finding. Things that they would not have thought of expecting in their own homes were demanded here. As Emma grumbled, "Dey jus' tries ter see how

much trouble dey can give." Let one dish out of the many provided, prove a failure, and it always transpired that that one was the only thing Mrs. Harley happened to care for. She would gaze at it with the air of a martyr and shake her head sadly at everything else that was proffered.

"Poor Mother," Mrs. Montine would say, "her appetite is so delicate!" (Here a young clerk opposite choked in his effort to restrain a smile, and the lady continued:) "I really think we shall have to get a coal oil stove and do a little cooking in our own room."

Elinor was harassed and worn out, and with a pained expression began an apology, but Mr. Ferris interrupted her: "No apology is needed, Mrs. Kent; the fare is perfect."

Mrs. Montine arched her eyebrows, but, as Mr. Ferris had been the speaker, said nothing; and the awkward silence was broken by Willie Montine's loud demand for another biscuit. His Aunt Amy reproved him and the conversation took another turn.

Amy Harley had a monopoly of the amiability of the family, though her sister, Mrs. Montine, had told that she "was simply too lazy to get mad." Her dimples were entrancing to the sterner sex, and her wide open blue eyes, with an infantile expression, wrought havoc in their hearts,

which was still further increased by her confiding, kittenish ways. Other girls wondered what all the men saw in Amy Harley, and declared she hadn't an idea in her head ; but be that as it may,

> "She felled the bearded men at a breath,
> And the youths that grew between."

She could say, "Do you think so ?" in a way that was the subtlest flattery, and her fashion of saying "Don't you know ?" was utterly irresistible. Her presence added very much to the attractiveness of the place ; for if we except Mr. Ferris, who was supposed to be her sister's property, all the marriageable men in the house were in different stages of infatuation with her. Each man imagined that she would make the sweetest, most tractable wife in the world, though each would have admitted that she could not be called "a brainy woman."

Just here masculine judgment is frequently at fault ; it is almost as common an error to suppose that an unusually bright girl must be an unmanageable one, as it is to fancy that ugly people must necessarily be good. Many a man has found that the girl who uttered no opinions before marriage, because she had none in the abstract, expressed very decided ones in a concrete form after the ceremony. And of all forms of obstinacy the stubbornness of stupidity is the worst.

CHAPTER XIV.

Dr. Kent had by no means lost his pride and self-respect, and the presence of so many people in the house had a restraining influence upon him for quite a while. But weak morals are even more subject to relapses than weak bodies. Trying to reform a drunkard is like trying to cure a case of chronic rheumatism; many remedies are a temporary benefit, but the medicine loses its power; as the disease draws and disfigures the muscles, so a man's will and conscience become warped and distorted.

Elinor's pride was trampled in the dust many times by her husband's conduct, but no word of complaint escaped her lips, and only Mr. Ferris and Mrs. Destande guessed how keenly she felt it. She had so many domestic troubles now,—trials with servants, boarders, and bills, that they acted as a kind of counter-irritant. Not after the fashion of a mustard plaster, of course, for the pain was not relieved; if she had expressed herself, she would probably have said that it was aggravated. Still the fact remained that she did not have time to

brood over her great sorrow, as she had once done. Besides, no matter how great her mental suffering, she was so thoroughly tired when bed-time came that she had to sleep.

Christmas morning dawned again—Harold's first birthday, and he had taken his first step as she held out his little stocking full of toys to him. But she had little time to caress her darling. So, taking him in her arms, she hurried down stairs, talking the loving nonsense which comes so naturally to mothers' lips, and to which baby hearts respond. Mrs. Destande and Amy Harley had decorated the house with holly and mistletoe, and Elinor felt more lighthearted than she had for a long time. Christmas cheer was in the air and merry voices filled the house.

"Bring the baby in here, Mrs. Kent," called Mrs. Destande, as she was passing the doorway of the parlor; "we all want to give the little darling a birthday kiss." She took him from his mother's arms and kissed him lovingly, and the rest followed her example, for Baby Harold was a great favorite. He was such a friendly, sociable little fellow that Mr. Ferris called him "the little politician." He bestowed his smiles and kisses lavishly on his little court, and always wanted to share his playthings with whoever stood near.

"We all have gifts for him, Mrs. Kent, and we want to see how pleased he will be. Let's clear off the table and put him on it."

"Oh, wait," cried Mrs. Montine, "I want to try his fortune." And she ran off laughing, while the others wondered what she meant.

Harold was sitting on the table in his little high clair when she came back, and before anyone realized what she was going to do she put a book, several pieces of money and a bottle before him.

"Now," she said, stepping back, "the superstition is, that you can tell what kind of a man he will be by the article which he first picks up."

Every eye was fixed on the baby; he took up the money, played with it a little, then put it in the bottle and began to rattle it in high good humor. Dr. Kent gave a forced laugh and tried to joke about so much money going the same way, when his wife stepped forward. Her power of self-control was great and the habit of silence was strong; but her eyes blazed as she took the bottle away with no gentle hand, and clasping the wondering baby in her arms, left the room.

An embarrassed silence fell over the group, which was relieved by Dr. Kent's departure. Mrs. Montine felt that she had gone too far, and had the grace to look ashamed.

"I meant no harm," she said; "I never dreamed she would take it that way."

"You were very thoughtless, then," said Ferris, gravely.

"She's a regular cat!" said Mrs. Destande in a low tone to her husband, indicating Mrs. Montine. To her surprise, Ferris overheard her whisper and gave her a nod of approval.

"Well," said Mrs. Montine, turning to Mr. Ferris, "I don't wonder that poor Dr. Kent drinks as he does! What a life she must lead him! I have often wondered how such a brilliant man could tolerate such a common-place, insignificant wife, but I never imagined she had such a temper."

"You are altogether mistaken in your estimate of their respective characters," was the reply. "You fail to comprehend the depth and nobility of her nature."

"She is the sweetest-spirited woman that I know," said Mrs. Destande, warmly, "in fact, she is altogether too sweet for her own good; she would stand a much better chance to reform her husband if she would assert herself. I'm glad to see that she can be angry."

Mrs. Montine saw that she had no sympathizers, for Mrs. Harley was not there; so she said, with a little laugh, "It may be possible that you are right; but somehow she always rubs my fur the wrong way."

"I told you she was a cat," said Mrs. Destande in an aside to her husband; and the big, silent man, who admired and adored his impulsive little wife, laughed aloud.

Mrs. Montine continued with an air of great magnanimity, addressing herself to Mr. Ferris, as usual: "I certainly consider myself the injured person, for the look she gave me was like a dagger, and for such a trifling thing! But I'll try to forget and forgive."

"It is natural that she should be very sensitive on a subject which is so painful to her," said he, as he turned and walked off.

Mrs. Destande had taken her husband into the back parlor, and was pouring a flood of indignant words into his listening ear.

"How anyone can have the heart to insult and annoy her, I cannot see. Trouble and hard work are killing her, as it is. I never saw anyone so changed. Don't you remember what a flower-like face she had when she came here as a bride? And now the bloom is all gone; she looks like a drooping snowdrop. I intend to give Mrs. Montine a piece of my mind.'

"You will only get yourself into trouble and do your friend more harm than good," replied her husband. "You will probably succeed in driving Mrs. Montine away, and of course her mother and sister and child

also. Mrs. Kent could not readily fill their places, for the people are leaving this town as rats leave a sinking ship. Righteous indignation is all right; but Mrs. Kent is obliged to consider her position from a business point of view, and she is dependent on her boarders."

"I suppose you are right," rejoined Mrs. Destande thoughtfully. "The Montine contingent are good pay, of course, and the young men in the house are so infatuated with Amy Harley that they would be sure to follow her. I'll try to keep my indignation to myself, or at least only use you as an escape valve when there is danger of boiling over. But there is one consolation! (triumphantly) Mrs. Montine will never succeed in catching Mr. Ferris now, in spite of the efforts she has made."

Meanwhile Elinor had gone to the dining-room and busied herself mechanically with her usual morning work. She tried to persuade herself that Mrs. Montine's act had been thoughtlessness, instead of intentional attempt to wound her. She thought with despair of her helplessness to avenge the insult, if indeed it had been prompted by malevolence. She was so hedged in by circumstances that silent endurance seemed her only course. For Harold's sake, if not for her own, she could not afford to quarrel with their daily bread.

Breakfast was late, but was not as dreary a meal as might have been expected. The Destandes, Amy Harley and Mr. Ferris exerted themselves to keep up a lively conversation. Even Mrs. Montine was patronizingly gracious. Dr. Kent did not come in until the meal was half over. Elinor well knew that he had gone to revive his spirits in the accustomed way, but when he did arrive she found that his potations had only been deep enough to make him forget that the world contained troubles or annoyances.

There is always a ray of comfort in any fate if we will only seek it persistently. We can at least remember that things might be worse. In the light of Mrs. Montine's smiles Elinor began to make excuses to herself for that lady's conduct. She reflected that she could not have understood what a sore spot she was touching so roughly. She knew that the gay widow had always misjudged her, and realized that she herself was somewhat to blame for this. The other's ways had so jarred upon her that she instinctively had hidden her real self, her higher thoughts and finer feelings behind the wall of courteous reserve. She was so constituted that the flowers of her mind and soul only opened in the sunlight of congenial companionship. She always tried to adapt herself to the people with whom she came in contact,

and succeeded so well that those who truly appreciated her, in doing so paid themselves an unconscious compliment, while ruder natures wondered what it was about her that these finer perceptions found so remarkable. She deplored her own sensitiveness; but some people chilled her like a shower of ice-water, and she could no more help it than she could add a cubit to her stature.

CHAPTER XV.

At dinner time things were worse. Christmas egg-nogs had so fulfilled their mission that Dr. Kent was too intoxicated to appear at the dinner table. However, no one spoke of him, and it had been a slight consolation to his wife that she had been able to pilot him to his room unseen. This Christmas day was a contrast to the last; that had been bright and frosty, with sparkling snow and exhilarating air; this was warm, rainy, depressing. But only one heart was in accord with the dreariness without. The rest of the party seemed to have unanimously agreed to make the house as gay as the weather was gloomy. Elinor's silence was not unusual and was not noticed.

In the lull of the fun and repartee, Amy Harley turned to her and asked, "Have you packed Harold's box yet, Mrs. Kent?"

"Packed Harold's box!" repeated a mystified young man by her side. "Is the little fellow going to celebrate his first birthday by taking a journey?"

"Oh, you are behind the times if you

don't know that birthday boxes are one of the latest fads," said Miss Harley. "You see the idea is, to collect different things during the year and put in the box, lock it on his first birthday, and not open it until he is twenty-one. But we have given you no chance to answer my question, Mrs. Kent."

"No, I have not packed it yet," was the reply; "I expect to do so this afternoon."

Several members of the household had made contributions, and all were interested.

Mr. Ferris handed Elinor a silver dime and said: "I have at last come across a ten-cent piece coined during his first year; and I believe that completes the list."

A little later, Elinor stood with aching heart beside the bright new tin box and began wearily to pack away the little treasures piled on the table. She was alone, desolate, for he who should have helped her and been as interested as she was, lay wrapped in a drunken stupor. The letter to her boy which she had penned,—hardly knowing how to word it so that it would be suited, not to the toddling baby, but to the grown man who would open it,—looked lonely, for its companion had never been written. Dr. Kent had postponed it from day to day, and Elinor reflected sadly that possibly this omission typified the future.

With a sinking heart she questioned her own fitness to be father and mother both to her boy. Would the unutterable love, which filled her letter and her life, suffice; or would the lack of his father's guidance, which was his rightful inheritance, leave an aching void in his mind and soul? A few tears fell and marred the whiteness of the envelope and glistened upon the little pile of silver which Mr. Ferris had collected for him. It was bright and new and stamped with the year of his birth. So also were the stamps which had been carefully placed in a dainty case which Amy Harley had painted.

Elinor's face brightened as the articles before her reminded her of kind friends. She folded tenderly the little sacque which her aunt had embroidered, and she knew that loving thoughts of herself and the baby had been interwoven with the stitches. She kissed the tiny shoe and shiny lock of gold, and put away the little ring which was already too small for fat baby fingers. Dr. Kent had brought it home to him one afternoon in the sunny autumn, and had said that it belonged to him by right, for the turquoise had the blue of his eyes and the golden setting the glint of his hair. A few toys and several papers and magazines filled the remainder of the space; and she closed the box and was turning the key, when an

unwelcome knock at the door arrested her. She opened it narrowly and unwillingly held it ajar; but with characteristic impulsiveness Mrs. Destande walked in.

"I have brought you something for Harold's box," she said. Then, as Elinor glanced at the paper with a look of surprise, she continued: "You didn't know that I had the temerity to attempt poetry, did you? Well, you must give me baby the credit—or the blame—, for he was the inspiration. But let me see the box."

She stepped forward, and as she did so, her eyes fell upon the figure on the bed. The situation admitted of no pretense of ignorance or blindness; she glanced hastily at the contents of the box, and then her eyes filled with pity. She threw her arms impulsively around Elinor's neck and kissed her lovingly; then silently left the room.

As wounded beasts seek solitude to die, so Elinor had sought to conceal the torture which consumed her. The pitying glances, which she sometimes saw, lacerated her pride afresh; but this sympathy was so warm, so loving, that it would not have been in the power of human nature to resent it. She had always appreciated and returned Mrs. Destande's friendship, but these feelings were intensified as she opened and read the little poem.

TO HAROLD KENT.

Such a wondrous little charmer
I never saw before;
On everyone he showers
His sunny smiles galore;
He cordial greets each stranger
As by him each takes his place.
Oh! you little politician!
You are training for a race!

"The woman suffrage question
Enters largely in his plan,
Knowing women will be voting
When he becomes a man;
So with coo, and glance, and smile,
He wins each woman's heart,—
Feeling sure that in the future
She'll take a weighty part.

"The 'black vote,' too, he's seeking;
For he'll crow and shout and smile,
With each darkey that comes near him,
Winning all by many a wile.
Then the faces black grow brighter,
As his pretty ways they scan,
And they say, 'I 'clar' I neber seed
Sich a cunnin' little man!'

"With his toys upon the floor
He plays with all his might,
But keeps an eye on all around,
Lest they get out of sight.
And when anyone he loves
Goes out and shuts the door,
He often cries, and seems to think
He ne'er will see them more.

"Why blame you, little one?
With experience so small,
How can you ever know
That they'll come back at all?
For we of larger growth,
And schooled from year to year,
When doors close on our loved ones,
Can only hope—and fear.

"The months roll on apace,
And soon you'll count one year.
May you battle for the right,
And naught but evil fear!
May you fill in life a place
Of great and high degree,
And be to your dear mother
All that a son should be."

The words awakened responsive chords in her breast; but Harold was waking from his afternoon nap, and she took him in her arms and sat down by the window. His cheeks were like twin roses, and his clustering curls were damp from his warmly-cradled sleep. She held him close and pressed her cheek against the soft hair; he looked out gleefully, clucked to the horses in the street, and clapped his hands at passersby.

Heretofore her love for him had been so absorbing and her hopes for him so bright, that not a shadow of apprehension had crossed her mind in connection with his future. When wearied in body and tortured

in mind, the clinging touch of his soft hands had soothed her. His sweet kisses had power, like the mad-stone, to draw the poison from every wound. This one cup of happiness she had held to her lips and drank deeply; yet it was always full and overflowing, sparkling with hope and flavored with joy. But now even it had become tinctured with a drop of bitterness.

She shuddered as she thought of the dread power of heredity, and held her darling yet closer as if she would shield him from all life's contaminating influences. Of course she was not so superstitious as to be influenced by Mrs. Montine's test of the future; but it had awakened a train of thought which she could not stifle. Her confidence in herself, in her influence, had been shaken. Every effort of her life for nearly three years had been for Dr. Kent's reformation. His love for her, which she knew was great; her consecration of every day and hour to the one great purpose; all the fervor and earnestness of her unceasing prayers; all this had been placed on one side of the scales,—and his evil appetite had outweighed them all. She felt suddenly overawed at the great responsibility of raising her child aright. But her nature was healthy, and pessimism is a disease; gradually hope resumed its accustomed place.

Days and weeks went by with nothing of moment to mark their flight. The exodus from the boom-stricken town continued through the winter and spring, and still Mrs. Kent was able to keep her boarders.

Willie Montine was a source of great annoyance. His mother's system of government was alternately over-indulgent and over-severe, and dependent upon her own mood rather than his conduct. Then, his life had been spent in boarding-houses and hotels, where there was always someone to laugh at his naughtiest tricks, and he was so noticed and made much of that it was no wonder he was spoiled. He delighted in annoying the servants. He and the cook were sworn enemies, for he invaded her domain and demolished the choicest fruits of her skill ere they were ready for the table. She would push .him roughly out of the kitchen, and he would go with loud complaints to his mother. The cook would give warning that she would leave unless he were kept out of the kitchen, and Mrs. Montine would say,—"Really, Mrs. Kent, I am surprised that you will tolerate that barbarous woman. We shall be compelled to seek another boarding-house unless you can teach her her place."

Poor Elinor was harassed until she hardly knew which way to turn. She poured oil

upon the troubled waters until she believed she had need of the widow's famous cruse, and often it seemed of no avail. Peacemakers are blessed, no doubt; they have the reward of their conscience and the promise of a reward hereafter. But unless they are able to combine much diplomatic skill with their good intentions, they are apt to liken themselves to the piece of cloth between the blades of the scissors.

In speaking to Mrs. Montine, Elinor would try to extenuate the cook's course; and that lady would interrupt, with offended dignity: "Oh, well, if you are determined to uphold such outrageous conduct, it is useless to continue the discussion."

In the kitchen her well-meant efforts were met in the same spirit, though less grammatically expressed: "Now, Miss El'ner, ef you'se gwine to side wid dat imp o' satan, I'd jes' as well pack up my duds an' leave." Then, until time relieved their grievances, she was made to feel the displeasure of both parties—manifested in different ways, it is true, but equally unmistakable and disagreeable.

One hot June day matters reached a climax. The torrid heat of summer was full upon them, and little Harold drooped before it. Kept awake night after night by fretful cries of the teething baby and her

anxiety for him, and compelled to work beyond her strength during the long sultry days, Elinor felt that tired nature could stand no more. But she must keep on, she told herself ferverishly ; she had no time to be ill.

The cook had at last carried out her oft-repeated threat and gone ; no one had yet been found to fill her place,—but the work had to go on. The three meals a day had to provide as much variety as formerly and be as well and promptly served,—the rooms as daintily kept—Mrs. Harley's and Mrs. Montine's whims obeyed in the accustomed way.

Improvements in household appliances have hardly kept pace with labor-saving devices in other fields. The farmer, who cannot lighten his toil and double the value of his time by machinery, is poor indeed. Every trade and business has its own especial labor-saving machines ; but dishes are washed in the same old way ; the time expended in getting a meal, sweeping a room, or making a bed, is no less than a hundred years ago.

The necessity of keeping her boarders was like a lash to the faltering slave, and Elinor exerted her flagging energies to the utmost. Mrs. Destande had gone away for the summer, and Mrs. Montine had spoken of do-

ing likewise, though she had no intention of going. Mrs. Harley found their present mode of living so comfortable that she was disinclined to change, and Amy's numerous love affairs had attained an absorbing degree of interest for her. Mrs. Montine was compelled to acknowledge to herself that her hold upon Ferris was slight, and was afraid that she might lose him altogether if she went away. Her attempts to captivate him were obvious to the household and disgusting to himself; but his manner betrayed neither encouragement nor discouragement. He and the Destandes were Elinor's truest friends; and though he realized that the presence of Mrs. Montine and her mother was an infliction, still, looking at the matter from a business standpoint, he acknowledged that their absence would be worse. To be the recipient of such open courting was repugnant to him; but he grimly determined to stand it rather than pursue a course which would deprive Mrs. Kent of her main source of revenue.

This particular June day was insufferably hot. The grass and flowers wilted under the blistering sun. Elinor had spent the greater part of the morning in the stifling kitchen, and her head ached intensely. The heat seemed to have gotten into the brains of them all. Even Amy Harley did not look

as cool and amiable as usual. The energy of the grown people was at ebb-tide; but Willie Harley's spirit of mischief was more rampant than ever. He was playing with the hose in the yard, when Emma stepped to the window with the baby in her arms; the temptation was irresistible; he turned it towards them and deluged them and the curtains and carpet as well. Emma raged, and Elinor was alarmed for fear the sudden change might make the already sick baby worse, and felt it necessary to complain to Mrs. Montine. As might have been expected, the complaint was most irritably received and had no effect, except to make Mrs. Montine more fault-finding than usual.

At dinner no one was in a cheerful mood, except Dr. Kent, who was exuberant as a consequence of the exhilarants he had taken. His silly jests and inane laughter annoyed Elinor even more than usual. His intoxication was not sufficient to have any effect upon his gait and but little upon his tongue, but prudence and discretion, the sentinels of the senses, had been overpowered by the enemy. He fancied that his most foolish speeches teemed with wit, and to make sure that no one should miss hearing them, repeated them over and over in a loud voice.

The conversation turned upon many

things, but invariably recurred to the intense heat, like the chorus in a song, and Mrs. Montine remarked, as she often had before, that she really must decide upon some cooler place and make preparations for a summer outing.

"Are you going away, Ferris?" asked Dr. Kent, with a knowing wink.

"No," was the reply; "I'll have to join the 'Can't Get Away Club' this year."

"Well, then," said the Doctor, with meaning glances around the table, "there's no danger of Mrs. Montine leaving, either. We all know who she's set her cap for."

Mrs. Montine crimsoned with anger and mortification, and half a dozen people simultaneously made an effort to change the subject. But it is easier to stop a runaway horse than to control the tongue of a drunken man; and he went on leering at Mrs. Montine—"Good thing for you it's leap year. Come now, tell us what th' old fellow said when you popped the question. Know it's too good a joke to keep."

"Dr. Kent," said Elinor sternly, "you are forgetting yourself."

"Why, my dear, you needn't look surprised. You told me yourself, and so did Mrs. Destande!"

"Mrs. Kent," said Mrs. Montine, rising, "this is insufferable. We will leave this

afternoon." And the justly incensed lady swept out of the room.

"Mad's a wet hen, ain't she? Thought she could take a joke better than that. But you needn't leave, Miss Amy. These young men couldn't get along without you."

"I shall of course go with my sister," was the dignified rejoinder. "Come, Willie," and she and Mrs. Harley followed Mrs. Montine.

"Keeping boarders is no fun, anyhow. I can take care of my wife and baby," with an assumption of dignity and importance; "you all had better find another place; going to shut up this house."

"Is that true, Mrs. Kent?" asked Mr. Ferris.

"If I lose so many boarders, I'm afraid I can hardly afford to keep it," she replied; "but I will let you know later."

The dreaded blow had fallen at last. The *denouement* was irresistibly comic to those who heard of it, but tragic to Elinor.

Notwithstanding her most strenuous efforts, she had fallen a little behind with the rent and the grocery bills, and one of her boarders had failed to pay her, and it was useless to hope to fill the places of those who had gone in the dull summer season.

So she succumbed to the inevitable, and moved back to her little suburban cottage.

Some of the new furniture was sold to settle pressing debts, and the remainder began to melt away, piece by piece, to pay living expenses; but she found, as we all do, that what she had to sell was very cheap, and what she had to buy was very dear.

The change to the cooler, more quiet part of the city was an unmistakable benefit to Harold, and as he improved her heart grew lighter; for this baby life was all of earth and much of heaven to her. Marriage was a failure, but motherhood was a compensation.

CHAPTER XVI.

Elinor had plenty of time to rest now, but her unutterable weariness seemed a part of herself. She grew paler and thinner day by day, and Harold's improvement was a variable thing. At last her husband suggested that she should take the baby and go to Ellsboro for the rest of the summer.

She grasped eagerly at the suggestion. She was home-sick for the mountains and the spring, for the balmy air and the breath of flowers, for the old colonial home with its enormous rooms and spacious halls, and last, but not least, for her aunt's loving care. Harold would certainly gain new strength under the shade of the oaks and magnolias, and Mrs. Drury's and Aunt Hannah's delight in his sweet ways would be boundless.

Her mind full of these pleasant visions, she sat and sewed through the glowing afternoon. Her trunk was partly packed, for she was to start upon the morrow; but she had still some last stitches to take. Baby Harold played at her feet, inviting her sympathy now and then for his mutilated little horse, again running for a book

and making her show him the pictures, occasionally—for he was the most loving little soul imaginable—taking her sewing away and covering her hands with kisses. He could say many words quite distinctly now, but many more required her loving interpretation.

As the thought of her husband's loneliness occurred to her, she began to think of him rather more tenderly than had lately been possible, and hoped that he would be quite himself this last home evening.

The gate clicked. His early home-coming was a hopeful sign. The baby ran to meet him with outstretched arms. He took him up, kissed him affectionately, and began to talk to him in the half-serious, half-laughing way which the majority of people adopt with babies.

"Poor Papa!" he said. "He won't have any baby to-morrow, for Harold is going to leave him. Does baby love Papa?"

Of course he did not expect any answer; so he was much surprised when the baby lips responded, "I love Mama."

The words were sweetest music to Elinor's ears. She put aside her sewing and came and kissed him rapturously, while they exclaimed in delighted wonderment at the unexpected reply.

"You little rascal!" said Kent, laughing,

"I'll teach you to slight your father in that fashion;" and he began to toss him up in the air and catch him as he came down, while the baby laughed gleefully at the fun.

"Don't, Richard," said Elinor; "you might let him fall."

"There's no danger," was the reply, and the frolic continued.

She noticed that his face was flushed and his hands a trifle unsteady, and grew still more anxious. "Please don't," she implored, "you frighten me so."

O, nonsense! See how he enjoys it!" And he threw him higher than ever.

Whether the baby in his glee gave a little jump in mid-air, or whether Dr. Kent simply miscalculated the distance, they never knew; but the little form fell heavily to the floor, and when they picked him up he neither breathed nor moved.

"You have killed him!" shrieked Elinor, in horror-stricken tones.

Dr. Kent's face was white with anguish. "My darling, my darling!" he moaned. "Surely he is not dead! I must revive him."

But the little hands lay lifeless, and no heartbeat responded to the father's ear pressed closely against the soft white breast.

"I cannot trust myself," said he, frantic-

ally. "I will go for another doctor," and with long strides he rushed from the house.

Twilight was creeping into the room, though the street was still quite light. Elinor took the still form in her arms and went to the window to try to discover some sign of returning life, but all in vain! As she stood there she glanced out and saw her husband disappear into a saloon far down the street. The waters of Mara swept over her soul, even her great sorrow was submerged in the flood of bitterness. Her husband had not appreciated their child in life as she had done; in death he should be all her own. She shuddered as she thought of the presence of the drunken man profaning the sanctity of the death-chamber.

Perhaps she was mad for a little while. But one burning thought possessed her—to take her darling in her arms and rush away before her hated husband should return. She looked at the clock and saw that she had just time to catch the train. To put on the baby's cap and cloak and gather up her own hat and pocket-book was the work of a moment.

An electric car was coming; she hailed it and soon reached the station. She had heard that corpses had to travel in the baggage-car, and, in a tremor of apprehension lest the precious form would be taken

from her, she resolved to let no one know of its death.

She had bought her ticket, and trusted that if any of her acquaintances were at the station, she might pass unrecognized in the growing darkness, when a familiar voice accosted her and a lady said: "You are going away for the summer, I suppose, Mrs. Kent?"

Elinor assented; and her acquaintance continued, "Oh, you have the baby with you; let me see the little fellow."

Elinor drew back. "Don't disturb him, please; he is asleep." Her voice sounded strained and unnatural to herself, and she wondered that the lady did not notice it.

"I am sorry that our routes lie in different directions. Here is your train now. Goodbye. I hope you will have a pleasant summer."

What a mockery the words seemed! Mechanically she took the first seat she came to, and cradled the little head against her arm. She dared not press the cheek against her own, as she longed to do, for fear the fellow-passengers should see the still, set face and force her to give her precious burden up. Rage against her husband still possessed her.

Who knows but what we all of us—even those who least suspect it—have hidden vol-

canoes in our natures, waiting but the time and circumstances to belch forth their streams of fire and lava ! Even Naples the Beautiful is close by threatening Vesuvius, so the sweetest, calmest natures may some day be buried by an upheaval of the fiery force within.

The noise of the train and talk of her fellow-passengers fell upon unheeding ears. She wondered vaguely that the little hands within her grasp were so long in getting cold and rigid ; but hopes seemed dead within her. Her whole mind was shrouded by the black pall of despair.

The journey to the Junction was quite short ; but this train was a little behind, and she found that she had missed connection and could not go on to Ellsboro until the next day.

CHAPTER XVII.

As we have seen, Dr. Kent walked rapidly down the street. He turned faint and sick as his mind dwelt upon the dreadful accident of which he had been the cause; he felt that some stimulant was a physical necessity. Had his wife watched the saloon a little longer she would have seen him quickly re-appear and continue his hurried walk. Dr. Lee's house was no great distance, and with thanksgiving he noted his horse and buggy hitched before the door. In a few minutes he told him of the necessity for his presence. Both men jumped into the buggy, and soon reached the deserted house.

Elinor had left doors and windows open in her hasty flight. Kent's utter amazement and consternation at the absence of both wife and baby may be imagined Finally he said to Dr. Lee: "My wife was quite beside herself with grief; she must have gotten too impatient to wait for my return and have taken the child to some physician."

Following this theory, he searched the city all night, but as we know, all in vain. In his anxious quest through the darkness and

stillness of the night, he realized as he never had before the strain which Elinor had borne for many months. Visions of her harassed and care-worn face haunted him; he recalled the dreadful headaches of which she had complained, and a settled conviction took possession of him; he felt certain that the shock had unhinged her mind. Perhaps even now her face was as white and still as the baby form which she had clasped so madly to her breast. A horrible phantasmagoria of all that he had heard and read of suicidal mania crowded his brain and left no room for hope, but torturing remorse assumed gigantic proportions and almost drove him to frenzy.

He had sworn to "love, protect and cherish" her, and how utterly he had failed in his trust! For the first time his conduct stood clearly revealed to him, robbed of the clothing of excuse and palliation, and his sin was hideous in its nakedness.

A rosy light suffused the sky. He thought of the "Star in the East" which guided the wise men, and the light of Christianity which has illumined the world with ever-increasing radiance for nineteen centuries. A ray of that light stole into his own soul and lighted his despair. A great resolve went up to Heaven—"God help me to find her, and I will be a better man, a better husband!"

As the morning grew the news of Elinor's disappearance spread through the city. The motorman of the electric car had recognized her ; the ticket agent also ; a bystander had overheard her tell a lady at the station that she was going away for the summer and calmly mention that the baby was asleep.

Much relieved by these things, though still with some misgivings as to his wife's sanity, Kent took the next train for Ellsboro. The idea that her flight was prompted by a desire to escape him never occurred to him.

The affair caused a stir in Linton. Many theories were hazarded and discussed. Dr. Lee's opinion was that Kent's brain had become affected by his excesses. The barkeeper testified that he had been completely unnerved before his wife left. Her intention of going to Ellsboro was generally known ; several people had recognized her with the apparently sleeping baby in her arms ; so the theory that she had realized her husband's mental condition and quickly stolen away gained ground. Baby Harold's injury was supposed to have been conjured up by his father's distorted brain.

Dr. Kent had to wait for a while at the Junction. The convent walls were in full view, and he thought as he looked at them of the descriptions Elinor had given him of

her happy school-life there. But time spent here was wasted; and he chafed with impatience and muttered maledictions upon branch roads and way-stations.

It seemed to him that the train lagged at a snail's pace; but Ellsboro was finally reached, and he stood at Mrs. Drury's door. He had fancied that he would see a piece of white crape hanging there, and that preparations for Harold's funeral would have begun. But Mrs. Drury's face wore an unruffled, though surprised expression as she welcomed him.

"Where is Elinor?" he asked.

"Elinor!" said her aunt, wonderingly. "Why, how should I know? I have not seen her."

"She is dead," he said, with sad conviction, "and you are trying to keep it from me."

However, Mrs. Drury's expression of alarm and amazement was too genuine to admit of the continuance of this belief; and he brokenly, disheartedly, told her all he knew. She took in the details quickly. Her clear common sense quieted him. Her faith in Elinor's mental strength relieved him. Her knowledge of his dissipation enabled her to "read between the lines."

"She intended to come here, I have no doubt," she said. "Perhaps she missed con-

nection at the Junction, though in that case I should think she would have come on the same train that you did. It may be that Harold is not dead, but so injured that she does not dare to travel farther with him. She would naturally go to the convent. We will telegraph there."

Mrs. Drury's anxiety for Elinor and her indignation against her husband were almost uncontrollable; but she saw that his suffering was intense, and forbore to reproach him.

At last the return message came: "Elinor is here and very ill."

Mrs. Drury's mind was made up: "I am going to her;" then, grimly, for her anger grew with its repression, "you can do so as you choose."

"My place is by her side," he said, with the dignity of sorrow. "I do not wonder that you blame me, but even you cannot censure me as I do myself."

There were but two trains a day, and again the delay was almost unbearable. Certainty concerning Elinor having taken the place of apprehension, his mind reverted to the baby, and he marvelled at his stupidity in not having inquired about him also.

He sent off another telegram; but though electricity in its swiftness does not discrim-

inate against small towns, still rural messenger boys are much given to loitering by the wayside. They indulge in games of marbles, and the messages which they carry sink into insignificance in comparison with a dog-fight. So the train bore him away ere an answer was received.

With throbbing hearts and muffled footsteps they entered the convent.

"She is living," said Sister Agatha, "but she is very ill ; she recognizes no one."

Silently they followed her through cool, dim passages to the darkened chamber where the sufferer lay, wild with delirium, racked with pain. Richard took her hand and pressed it to his lips. The fever was so high that it almost burned him, and the whole scene seemed scorched into his brain : the dim, cool room ; the silent Sister ; Mrs. Drury's agonized expression ;—but the central figure in the picture, the love of his life, lay battling with death.

After a while he turned and asked about Harold.

"Come this way," was the reply. He followed, and in a distant room beheld the maimed body of his only child. The little fellow moaned in his sleep ; and he went softly away, awaiting his waking to make a thorough examination of his injuries.

When he and a brother physician made

the examination, his professional knowledge told him that the child would live, but was maimed for life.

Day and night he watched and waited on his loved ones. His periods of rest were so short that Mrs. Drury and the Sisters wondered at his endurance. His fellow-practitioner was impressed with his medical knowledge and his untiring vigilance. Science, love, atonement joined forces and waged war against the fever. Earth affords no more glorious trinity, and it won. As hope for her recovery grew in his mind, he planned a new life and a happy future.

One day Elinor awoke from a deep sleep with the light of consciousness in her eyes. Joyfully, lovingly, her husband leaned over her.

"Take him away," she cried; "he murdered my child!"

CHAPTER XVIII.

Again the conflict between life and death began, and again life triumphed. But this time Dr. Kent was cautious and withdrew from the room at the least sign of returning consciousness.

Slowly—unwillingly, it seemed—Elinor gained strength. She showed affection and appreciation to her aunt and to the Sisters, to whose gentle ministrations she owed so much ; but no smile crossed her lips and she took no interest in anything. Dr. Kent so feared a shock of any kind for her that no one dared to tell her that Harold still lived.

One day Mrs. Drury ventured to remonstrate with her upon her listlessness. "My dear," she said, "you would improve much faster if you would exert yourself. You are too young to be so apathetic."

"Life is not worth living to me without my baby."

This was the first time she had mentioned him. The opportunity was too good to be lost ; though Mrs. Drury was half-frightened at her own temerity as she said :

"But you are not sure that your baby is dead."

Elinor was alert in an instant. "What do you mean?" she asked. "Yesterday I fancied that I heard him crying, but I thought that my imagination deceived me. Do not keep me in suspense; tell me the truth."

"He is alive, dear; he is here: I will bring him to you; but you must not expect to see the laughing, healthy baby that you remember."

Baby Harold seemed to recollect her, for he held out his thin white hands and smiled. She kissed him fervently, and as she did so tears of joy rained on his face.

From this time she improved rapidly; but this grave, sad-eyed woman bore little resemblance to the happy Elinor of other days. She was so anxious to do everything for her suffering darling herself that she was eager to grow strong. If possible, her love for her boy was intensified. Protecting tenderness is always a large factor in maternal love, and this was so increased by her precious child's affliction that her heart yearned over him in unutterable love and pity.

But her bitterness towards her husband did not lessen; when Mrs. Drury ventured to mention him she implored her not to

speak his name, and she herself was so silent concerning him that her aunt and Sister Agatha held many an anxious conference on the subject.

Naturally Dr. Kent was growing impatient to see his wife. Her attendants reported her so much stronger that he believed there was no longer any risk. His patient watching and tender care had so impressed her aunt and the Sisters that they were his ardent advocates, and Mrs. Drury wondered that her gentle niece could be so implacable

It had been taken for granted that they would go on to Ellsboro as soon as she was able to travel, and Mrs. Drury spoke hopefully of the pleasant summer they would have after all, and how Harold would enjoy outdoor life in her large yard.

"Yes," said Elinor; "I will allow myself to rest in the dear old home until the warm weather is over, but I must go back to work in the fall. I wonder if I could get a position in the College, or if it would be better to attempt a little school of my own."

"There is no necessity for you to teach at all. Your husband and I have had several talks about the future, and I have been trying to induce him to come to Ellsboro to live. There seems little prospect of a revival of business in Linton, and I believe he might do well in Ellsboro."

"You do not know him if you think he would do well anywhere," said Elinor, bitterly. "It is such a painful subject that I can not bear to speak of it, but I want him to understand that I never intend to see him again."

There was a pause. Then Sister Agatha said, solemnly, "What God hath joined together, let no man put asunder."

"For better or worse means for misfortune, not for disgrace," was Elinor's reply. "If you knew what I have had to endure, you would not urge me to alter my determination."

Then they told her how gentle and loving he had been during her illness, how constant and untiring; that her recovery was really owing to his unceasing efforts.

The door opened and Richard Kent came in; and the two ladies left him to plead his own cause.

"I am so glad to see you looking so well, my darling." And he went forward to kiss her, but she drew back coldly.

"The life which you have ruined was hardly worth saving," she said, "but for Harold's sake I am grateful. This interview can only be painful to us both. Why do you force it upon me?"

"I realize your right of resentment," he said, "but the punishment is too severe.

Surely you cannot believe for an instant that Harold's fall was anything but an accident."

"An accident which is likely to occur again at any time. When you knowingly and wilfully gratify your appetite at the expense of your senses, you must expect to be morally responsible."

"But I swear to you that I will lead a different life. I have had a severe lesson, and have taken it to heart."

"Your promises weary me. I have heard them so often that my faith in you is dead, and you yourself have killed it, and my love also."

He looked at her in wonder. This hard, uncharitable woman was so different from the wife that he had known. He resolved to try another plan: "But it is cruel to part me from my child," he urged.

"It is for his sake that I do it," she said. "I might be persuaded that it was my duty to endure hardships and trials, but nothing can induce me to endanger my baby. My mind is fully made up; it is useless to argue the matter."

"Name a period of probation," he insisted; "I will prove to you that I can keep my word."

He used all the eloquence of which he was capable, but to no avail. Her stony, un-

yielding manner was so out of character that at last he concluded that her illness had changed her—that her immobility was due to a cloud in her brain which would pass away when she fully regained her health. Convinced that this theory was correct, he left her; but said, as he did so, "I accede to your wishes for the present. But remember, I do not consider this decision final."

The change in Elinor was not only obvious to others, but to herself as well. Faith, more than hope, is the anchor of the soul. Faith had been her guiding star, but the circumstances of her life had so enfeebled it that it shone with a faltering, fitful light. Faith had comforted her when she was miserable—had sung hymns praise and thanksgiving in her soul when she was happy; but now, when she tried to lay hold of it with the confidence of yore, it eluded her grasp, and mutinous questionings confronted her instead. What had she done that happiness should be wrested from her, that discouragement should meet her at every step? Why was her innocent baby doomed to a life of helplessness and invalidism? Why had her earnest, unceasing prayers not been granted? Surely God had promised—"As your faith, so be it unto you"—and her faith had been great. A

sense of injustice and rebellion arose in her. Ideas, which she would have spurned as unworthy of her and in her full vigor would have scornfully thrown off, now that she was weak in body and weary in mind gained entrance and sank deep into her soul. All her elasticity seemed gone. She felt out of harmony with the world, for belief is the keynote of the universe.

Business is based on confidence; the planting of seed is an evidence of faith. All nature teaches the lesson, and only degenerates doubt.

Just before leaving the convent, Sister Agatha had pleaded with her long and earnestly to become reconciled to her husband, for a divorce in her eyes was a heinous sin.

"But I am not a Romanist," said Elinor; "the rules of your church are not binding upon me. Even if your creed was my own, I would find it very hard to go back to my husband; I should wish to spend the rest of my days in the peace and quiet of this secluded life."

Mrs. Drury was impatient to get back to her home, and her two charges were quite able to travel. Elinor had rather dreaded meeting her old friends under such changed conditions; but the home air invigorated her, and to see a faint color coming back

to Harold's pallid cheeks gladdened her heart.

Unbelief and despondency are skulking wolves which can only be routed by strength and courage. In how far mental states are dependent on physical well-being is a question for psychologists and physiologists.

Elinor felt that she had wandered from secure, well-beaten paths into bogs and quagmires. Agnosticism is a trackless waste, where even the points of the compass are lost. What is there for a mind to lay hold of in a creed, which, as a well-known humorist puts it, "doubts whether I am or not, and if I am, why; and if so, wherefore?"

Such a state of mind was unbearable to Elinor. She felt that madness lay that way. She was strong and well again, and resolved by a strenuous effort of will to place her feet on firm ground.

Unquestionably, some people have naturally more faith than others; but the fulness of faith, like any other good thing, comes to no one unsought, nor remains as an unappreciated guest. The qualities of the mind, as truly as the members of the body, need exercise and also an occasional airing. To say that we cannot control our thoughts is nonsense, provided we have not relinquished the reins of will to the reckless

driver, appetite, or fallen a prey to disease. It may be admitted that it is a very difficult task to always keep bright pictures before the mind ; but we can keep dark and gruesome thoughts away ; not by resolving not to think of these things, for in the very resolve our minds dwell upon what we wish to forget,—but when these unpleasant ideas present themselves, we can resolutely turn our thoughts into another channel. If nothing else avails, we can repeat the multiplication table backwards ; or, if that is too easy, we can delve into the recesses of memory and conjugate Greek and Latin verbs. We must be careful, however, not to select too easy a task, for the mind is quite capable of carrying on two trains of thought at the same time, unless the subject requires concentration. After a while these undesirable mental intruders cease to annoy us, or at least change their forms, for they find that the well-beaten paths which they have made have grown flowers of thought which choke their way instead of the poisonous plants which welcome them. So, according to this theory, belief or unbelief is largely a matter of will.

Elinor, perhaps, did not laboriously reason the matter out, but instinctively arrived at the same conclusion. Having begun to fight a brave battle with the foes

which debase the currency of the mind, she was helped in the struggle, as we are usually when we ourselves are in the right attitude.

To go to church was a matter of course with her, though she frequently listened to the sermon in the desultory manner common to congregations. This particular Sunday was no exception to the rule. She noted with some disappointment that the loved pastor of her girlhood was not present, and that a white-haired stranger rose to take his place. Then her thoughts wandered to her past life, and she contrasted the past with the present with some bitterness. Thus she missed hearing the text. Then she endeavored to listen to the preacher; but late-comers distracted her attention. Finally these words fell upon her ear and penetrated her consciousness: "Even as Job questioned God's justice, so men of all ages have cried out in anguish, 'Lord, Lord, why dost thou so afflict thy servants?'

"And God has answered with fire and flood, with whirlwind and with thunderbolt, and men have not been satisfied. Murmurs of discontent and rebellion cause a tumult and questionings fill the air. Very few of us have Paul's spirit; he said that he was chief among sinners. Instead, when misfortune falls upon us, we are apt to remind God of our good qualities and our

excellence of conduct, and to cry out, 'What have I done that this evil should come upon me?'

"Perhaps we say, 'Thou hast promised to answer prayer, and yet the very thing that I dreaded most has befallen me.'

"In our secular relations we recognize that a negative is as truly an answer as an affirmative. The mother who replies, 'No,' when her child wishes to make his meal upon candy, has that child's welfare more truly at heart than the mother who weakly assents, to relieve herself of cries and importunities. We pray for humble and contrite hearts, and yet we resent the very means which Jehovah employs to attain this result.

"Let me give a simple illustration. I have a little flower-garden, in which I take pride and pleasure. My roses and heliotropes, verbenas and mignonettes have always [illegible] and flourished, and yet I have been [illegible]rly unsuccessful in my efforts to get [illegible] lily. It is not a difficult flower to [illegible]; my neighbors had no trouble with it; but something always happened to mine. One time the bulb was rotten; another time I myself drove a spade through it; again the pigs tore down the gate and entered my garden. They did little injury to anything else, but my lily could not be found. My

little grandson mistook another one of my bulbs for an onion, and, thinking it out of place, threw it into the street. Surrounding gardens were white with lilies; but I had almost despaired of having one of my own, when I chanced to walk to an obscure, neglected corner of the grounds, and there, half-hidden by rubbish, the tallest, purest, most luxurious stalk of lilies I have ever seen met my gaze. Of course, the natural explanation was, that the pig which had uprooted it had thrown it down and that the rains had washed it into this neglected corner and had covered it with earth and leaves. I am sure I appreciated the flower more because of its unexpectedness.

"It may be that God withholds his blessings until we are better fitted to receive them; for all of life is but a preparation,—a school in which we learn the A B C's of eternity.

"Then, again, such varying prayers go up to the Ruler of the universe. Many pray for rain, perhaps, while many more are praying for dry weather. Wise human rulers, confronted with contrary petitions, grant that which seems to insure the greatest good to the greatest number. In a sense, I believe that God does this also, and yet that he respects the rights of the minority even more than our American Congress.

I believe that this universal Fatherhood in no way conflicts with His personal love and care for each individual that He has created.

"The products and resources of this great country of ours are so varied that it seems impossible to find a tariff equally adapted to all needs. The wisest men among us clash openly on this subject, that of finance, and many others. We admit that it is almost impossible to rightly adjust these matters, and yet we clamor and rebel because we do not comprehend Infinity.

"And yet God has given us the key—something upon which we may rest and be at peace. If we still the tumult of our souls and attune our ears to the harmony of faith, we may hear the message which, though we are told it was given in a still, small voice, has penetrated through the ages—'It is I, be not afraid.'"

Much more the minister said, illustrating, enlarging upon, explaining the same ideas; but the sentences quoted were the ones which especially interested Elinor, and she felt that she had gotten her message.

Her husband wrote to her often loving, eloquent letters. Mrs. Drury pleaded his cause. The influence of her environment was in his favor, for women who were separated from their husbands were looked

at askance in Ellsboro. It seemed, too, that his punishment had surely been sufficient to work a radical change. We know that it was the natural bent of her mind to think, when in doubt upon any question, that what she did not want to do was probably the right thing to do. She could be a martyr; endurance seemed her forte; but she could not dare—it hurt her even—to outrage *les convenances*.

All this pleaded for her husband; yet her heart hardened within her when she looked at her maimed child and remembered the hardships and humiliations she had endured.

That "straws show which way the wind blows" is a truism; that straws influence the wind sounds absurd; nevertheless, when the scales of indecision are evenly balanced, a trivial thing has weight altogether out of proportion to its intrinsic importance.

Indifference to public opinion was not one of our heroine's characteristics; but her innate truthfulness would have impelled her to declare the stand she had taken concerning a separation from her husband, had it been necessary. However, her friends took it for granted that she was simply making her aunt a visit, and Mrs. Drury exerted all her diplomatic talent to encourage this opinion.

Alice Mayton had some time since married James Clerton, and she alone of Elinor's many friends suspected the true state of affairs. She was speaking enthusiastically of wifely happiness, and Elinor replied with a cynicism which amazed her. Quickly she thought how studiously Elinor avoided the mention of Dr. Kent's name, of the reports of his dissipation, of her long visit and the fact that he had not been to Ellsboro since his wife came.

Elinor was called out of the room by a cry from Harold. She took him in her arms, and sat down on the other side of the portiere to quiet and caress him. Alice, unaware of her nearness, immediately began to question Mrs. Drury. That lady had almost despaired of effecting a reconciliation, and, fancying that Alice's influence might avail much, told her the story.

"I am surprised at Elinor," she said, "she is very unjust to her husband. Harold's injury was unquestionably an accident which Dr. Kent deplores most earnestly. No wonder she grieves over it, but it is very uncharitable to blame Richard as she does. His tenderness and devotion while she lay at death's door gave me a much better opinion of him than I ever had before."

"Of course, it is a sad pity that a woman should be driven to leave her husband,"

Alice replied; "but I am inclined to believe she is right. I have heard many reports of his dissipation. It is said that he has neglected her most shamefully, and that he is not only a drunkard but a gambler."

Elinor felt a thrill of indignation that Richard should be accused of a sin of which she knew him to be innocent. She had thought that her heart was steeled against him. Impulsively she rose to go in and defend him; but her aunt had already begun a vehement denial of the charges, and again she listened; and notwithstanding her high sense of honor, so great was her interest, that it did not occur to her until afterwards that to listen to a conversation not intended for her ears was hardly the right thing to do.

"I am sure you have been misinformed," she heard her aunt say. "That he has been dissipated is true, but not to the extent you mention. He has lost a good deal of money in Linton, but it was through the collapse of the boom, not by gambling. He has suffered so much that I feel sure if his wife goes back to him he will never again give her any cause for complaint. But aside from my sympathy for Richard, I am opposed to the separation on practical grounds. Elinor speaks of being self-supporting, but I do not see what she can do.

for Harold requires all her time, and besides, the world is hard on a divorced woman."

Alice had spent several winters in gay Northern cities; so this view of the case did not appeal to her as it did to the provincial Ellsboro matron. Quite unconscious of the shock her words would produce, she remarked:

"Oh, she is young and lovely; she would probably marry again. John Clerton is still single, and I do not believe he will ever care for anyone else as he did for Elinor."

Mrs. Drury looked petrified with astonishment at the bare suggestion, and Alice, with an affectionate farewell message for Elinor, took her departure.

Elinor felt ashamed and debased at what she had overheard. If her best friend could so readily suggest solace for her wounded heart, what would the cruel world say? Her aunt had urged the same arguments to her that she had mentioned to their visitor; but they had never seemed so convincing before. The helplessness and isolation of her position frightened her.

A woman is frequently the arbiter of a man's destiny, but seldom of her own. Nature and custom have decreed otherwise. The very fineness of womanly fibre unfits her for the ruder struggles of life. Given a

certain character and a certain set of circumstances, and the answer is as assured as a mathematical problem.

That very day brought her an unusually loving and pleading letter from her husband; and he, impatient to end uncertainty, waited for no answer, but came himself to add the potency of personal appeal to the force of written words.

The reader does not need to be told how successfully. Her ideas of an independent existence faded away like an evanescent dream.

CHAPTER XIX.

Many years have come and gone, and the Kent family are still in Ellsboro. The children know no other home. Harold's recollections, of course, do not go back to his babyhood in Linton, and Charlie, Marjory and May were born among the scenes familiar to their mother's girlhood.

Ellsboro itself is a good deal changed, much to the annoyance of the old inhabitants, who detest change, even though it is improvement. But these same old inhabitants were loath to admit that there was any room for improvement. "Do we not already possess the garden-spot of the universe?" they would ask; and the tone of the question was more convincing than the most positive assertion. "Why, then, should we erect unsightly smoke-stacks to pollute our air, or destroy the limpid beauty of the Spring-branch by clogging machinery? These proposed factories will disturb our morning rest by their shrill whistles and bring a most undesirable class of people to the town."

Conservatism is such a good, easy, lazy,

dignified thing; it crushes budding enthusiasm by its weight sometimes, but after all it is inert; it is like a mountain in the path of the invader; but mountains can be tunnelled, and graded, and scaled.

Strangers came, spied out the land, and found that it was good. They built another railway, many factories, a dummy line to Mount Hygeia, and, last but not least, crowned the mountain-height with a mammoth summer hotel.

The town had prospered, but Elinor's fortunes had gone down. Humanity rouses itself to meet the crises of circumstances. What the exigency of the occasion demands, men do, but the crisis passes. Life again becomes a monotonous procession of days, and too often the nature, keyed to the heroic pitch of events, loses tone and sinks back to the level from whence it came.

Richard Kent's next fall from sobriety had too many precedents to awaken much surprise. Mrs. Drury was probably more surprised than anyone else. He had so installed himself in her good graces that she had counted hopefully upon his complete reformation.

She was coming home from a missionary meeting a few weeks after the reconciliation, in the dusk of an October evening, when she saw him stumbling with uneven

steps along the sidewalk. She was filled with disgust and astonishment; but pity for Elinor impelled her to take him by the arm and guide the staggering footsteps to the door. Elinor was on the front veranda, and with Harold was enjoying the twilight and laughing happily at his babyish prattle; but the laugh died on her lips: the scene admitted no mistaking.

"You are very kind, Auntie," she said, as the stately lady with her ill-matched companion drew nearer.

"Not at all," was the dignified rejoinder; "I merely feared that he might fall and crush my chrysanthemums."

Mrs. Drury's plan had been that the Kents should share her large house; but, notwithstanding her efforts, it was impossible for her to conceal her extreme annoyance at Dr. Kent's repeated intoxication. In the years which followed she blamed herself many times that she had so urgently besought Elinor to become reconciled to her husband. She so modified her views on divorce that an autocratic matron—one who helped to form the social code of the town and who believed that ideas which were generally accepted in Ellsboro could not be wrong—shook her head majestically and said in solemn accents to a sympathetic friend: "Mrs. Drury's views are getting ex-

tremely lax; it is shocking to see such a change in her on so momentous a question."

Just precisely what this social code was it would be difficult to define; but any aspirant's fate could be settled by an ominous shake of the head of one of its leaders, and a murmured, "It is not our way of doing," or, "It is not our way of thinking."

In every other respect, on every other question, Mrs. Drury had the happy consciousness of knowing that she would die as she had lived, in full accord with the Ellsboro standard.

But this is in advance of the story.

At the time of which I speak, Harold was sixteen years old; Charlie was about three years younger, but owing to his brother's deformity was head and shoulders taller; Marjory was eleven, and baby May only five.

During Charlie's babyhood the family had moved into a cottage which belonged to Mrs. Drury and was separated from the big house only by a wide expanse of green lawn. Dr. Kent had been anxious for the change. He told his wife that he would rather pay any amount of rent than endure her aunt's stinging speeches; however, the rent was never paid. Elinor found, too, that the presence of the children in the

house, much as her aunt loved them, was incompatible with the immaculate order essential to that lady's peace of mind. Mrs. Drury's income was not large and was derived from several small houses which she rented. So it hurt Elinor very much that, try as she might, she was only able to make living expenses, and the rent remained unpaid.

It had seemed, at first, that Dr. Kent might build up a large and lucrative practice. When a new doctor moves into a town he is besieged by numbers of old chronic cases which have exhausted the skill and patience of other physicians. Richard Kent had been fortunate enough to cure one of the most notable of these, and public confidence in his ability rose high accordingly. In all the years which followed, belief in his medical skill did not falter, and he might easily have led his profession in the town, had people felt sure that he would be "at himself" when called. So much uncertainty existed upon this point, however, that his brother practitioners, who, if not so brilliant, were more reliable, got the bulk of the practice. Sometimes Mrs. Drury thought it a pity that he got as much as he did, since his funds seldom ran low enough to force him to abstinence, though he contributed but very little to the support of his

family, which was chiefly dependent upon Elinor's needle, a frail and slender reed to lean on.

Early and late she toiled. She was up with the sun in the morning, and sewed at night till her back ached and her eyes grew dim, till the noise of the machine seemed like a cataract in her ears and the treadle seemed a tread-mill from which there was no escape. But a smile curved the drooping lips and dimpled the wan cheek when she thought of her children. Was ever a mother so blessed in her boys and girls, she wondered. They were such bright and beautiful children, so loving and eager to help her.

Had they been prosperous, Charlie and Marjory might have been selfish and inconsiderate; but the discipline of their circumstances and the warmth of their loving hearts so curbed these traits that they rarely showed themselves. These two seemed hardly so spiritually minded as Harold and May, but perhaps for that very reason the world would be more kind to them; they were more in accord with the spirit of the age. Sometimes Elinor realized that their very hardships were beneficial to the children's characters, but more often the tender mother's heart ached at their deprivations, for love's natural environment is a rosy-

hued air-castle of boundless proportions, rather than the prescribed limits of philosophical reasoning.

In a place where position is gauged by the pocket-book, or even among strangers, the Kents would have been much lower in the social scale than they were in Ellsboro, but Ellsborians were loyal to their old families, and to openly slight Mrs. Drury's niece would have required some temerity. Several of Elinor's old friends treated her as they always had done; many more were (or she imagined they were) patronizingly kind. Gradually, almost imperceptibly, she dropped more and more out of the lives of those she had known so well. Her pride and sensitiveness forbade her to accept hospitality which she could not return. Her work and her family fully occupied her. For her own part, she cared little for anything outside the four walls of her home; but the children had gotten old enough to be sensitive about their poverty and their father's drunkenness. More than once Charlie had come home bruised and bleeding from a fight. School children can be very cruel; and inquiry developed the fact that the boys had taunted him with his father's disgraceful conduct, and he had, as he expressed it, "pitched into them." Another time teasing

remarks concerning his worn clothes had been the cause of trouble. But he was strong and brave beyond his years, and the boys soon learned to let him alone.

Poor little Marjory, however, could not fight out her battles as he did, and the happiness of her school-days was marred by the shabby dresses she was compelled to wear and by the remarks that her companions made upon them, which came to her ears. Boys, as a rule, settle their difficulties by a knock-down argument; but little girls are prone to whisper together while the object of their low-toned innuendoes and sidelong glances stands near, feeling outcast and miserable.

There was a good public school in Ellsboro, but to attend it was supposed to entail loss of caste, for the factory children went there. As has been said, Mrs. Drury was orthodoxically Ellsborian in her ideas, and when the question of what schools the children should attend was being discussed, she had been so shocked when Elinor suggested sending them to the public school, that she protested vehemently and offered to pay their tuition herself.

"But, Auntie," said Elinor, "you do too much for us already; I cannot bear for you to stint yourself for our comfort."

"I had rather live on bread and water

than have the children associate with the scum of the town, as they would have to do at the public school," was the characteristic reply of this F. F. V. descendant. "But the situation is not so desperate as that. You know, my dear, that the town is much more prosperous than it used to be; consequently I get much better rent for my houses."

Elinor was forced to acquiesce; though she realized that her aunt's abhorrence of the public school was the result of prejudice, still it was a prejudice in which she had been raised and which she shared in some degree. Consequently Marjory attended a private school, which was patronized principally by the well-to-do people of the town; so her worn and faded dresses were in conspicuous contrast with the attire of the other pupils.

A school is a world in miniature, and the opinions of this little world are of as much importance to the children as the praise or censure of the universe to those of larger growth. The qualities which dominate the characters of men and women are all here, but sometimes in embryonic form. Discretion is less highly developed, but candor is more so. Envy and malice are here also, and Marjory had been unfortunate enough to excite these qualities in one of her school-mates. She had won a prize which

Mary Roland had striven for in vain. Mary was already jealous of her beauty, and friendship with two of the little girls, who were leaders in their own small set—for schools have their select coterie as well as society.

John Clerton had married long ago. His wife had been a prominent society girl from a city in a neighboring state. She had never been contented in Ellsboro: the place was too small, and she missed the round of gayety to which she had been accustomed. The people were slow and humdrum, from her point of view; in short, they bored her, and she held herself quite aloof. Her hauteur was in great contrast to the demeanor of James Clerton's wife, for Alice retained all the vivacity of her girlhood and had the cordial unconventional ways which we are apt to think so charming in those of wealth and station, and yet so inconsistent are we that we characterize this same lack of ceremony, which was so admired in Alice Clerton, as ill-bred when we see it in the masses.

Mrs. Drury said to Elinor one day: "I cannot help believing that Mrs. John Clerton's people have but recently risen in the world. It always seems to me that a woman, who makes such strenuous efforts to show her superiority to the rest of the

world, cannot feel very secure of her own position. See how differently Alice Clerton acts; and everyone knows how wealthy her father is and what good blood flows in her mother's veins."

John Clerton's oldest child, Margaret, was about Marjory Kent's age. Her cousin, Annie Clerton, was a little older than the other two, and the three girls were in the same classes and were devoted friends. Annie was soon to celebrate her thirteenth birthday by a party, which all the children fancied would be a grand affair. Little else was talked of over lunch-baskets at dinner recess, and the momentous question of what they should wear occupied their girlish minds.

Marjory had been most cordially invited and looked forward to going with delight She knew that she had nothing suitable to wear, but with the happy hopefulness of childhood she supposed that an appropriate new dress would be forthcoming as soon as she mentioned it to her mother.

To refuse her children anything was painful to Elinor, but it was such a struggle to get necessities that the luxury of a party dress, such as Marjory had set her heart on, was absolutely out of the question. The poor child was bitterly disappointed, but dried her eyes and checked her sobs when

her mother explained to her lovingly and gently how impossible it was for her to afford it.

So Marjory sadly told her two friends the next day that she could not go, and when they questioned her told them the reason. The little girls were sympathetic and distressed, but Annie quickly decided that Marjory should have a new dress, and said impulsively to her cousin, "Come over here, Margaret, I've something to tell you."

The two girls ran off, leaving Marjory feeling lonely and deserted. There was a large burr-rose bush in one corner of the playground, and the two charitable little conspirators went to hold their conference in its shadow, never noticing that Mary Roland, book in hand, was on the other side, though all three were in plain view to Marjory.

"I tell you what let's do: let's buy a pretty dress ourselves and give it to Marjory; I know Mama will give me half the money, and you can get the other half."

Margaret hesitated. "I'd love to do it dearly, but my Mama don't like for me to be friends with Marjory, 'cause she says her father is a drunkard and her mother takes in sewing; but," her face lighting up, "I know what I'll do; I'll ask Papa. I know he'll let me have the money."

So the two cousins planned what a pretty dress they would buy and how delighted Marjory would be; while Mary Roland, with malicious craftiness, fortunately unusual to childhood, saw her opportunity to humiliate the girl who had gained the prize, and used it.

Marjory stood forlorn where the cousins had left her. Mary came up to her and said with much affected sympathy: "I'm so sorry you can't go to the party, Marjory. I heard Margaret and Annie talking about it; and they say they're not going to be friends with you any more. Margaret said her mama said she mustn't associate with you, 'cause your father's a drunkard and your mother takes in sewing."

"I don't believe it, you cruel, cruel girl!" cried Marjory, with flaming cheeks; but the bell rang and they had to go into the schoolroom.

In spite of her expressed incredulity, Marjory noted the meaning glances which the cousins exchanged and in which she had no part. The homes of the three girls lay in the same direction, and they always went together; but to-day Margaret and Annie, full of their plan, ran on without waiting for their friend; and poor little Marjory trudged sadly home alone, with a lump in her throat and a heart that felt like lead.

CHAPTER XX.

"Why, here's your mama's carriage at our gate, Annie. Come in and we can see about the dress right away."

The girls found Judge Clerton in the sitting-room with his wife and cousin, and eager Annie began to detail their plan to her mother. Mrs. James Clerton most smilingly assented, and Judge Clerton put his hand in his pocket and drew it out filled with bills and silver, when his wife hastily interposed:

"John, I am astonished that you should encourage the child to spend money so foolishly. Margaret has no discretion,—she would like to feed and clothe all the beggars in town."

"Oh, we'll draw the line before we reach that point," said her husband, good-naturedly, "but she shall have what she wants this time. How much will it take to buy this wonderful dress, little girl?"

"Why, we thought Cousin Alice would select it for us," faltered Margaret, afraid of her mother's displeasure.

"Of course, you can do as you choose, Alice," said Mrs. John Clerton, angrily;

"but Margaret shall have nothing to do with it. It is useless to try to help such people. Everyone knows that Dr. Kent spends every cent he can get his hand on at the saloon."

"That is all the more reason that Mrs. Kent's friends should do what they can for her," said Judge Clerton. "Besides, it is too bad to disappoint these children. Here, Alice, take this, and get the dress."

His wife's face grew still more angry, and Alice, seeing this, said: "The children shall not be disappointed, Cousin John; but I would rather buy the dress myself. You know how sensitive Elinor is; she would feel dreadfully if she thought that her friends considered her an object of charity. She has always been my dearest friend, and I feel sure that she would accept a gift from me rather than from anyone else."

"Possibly you are right," he said, in a tone of but half-conviction, and his wife added, placably: "I am always willing to give her plenty of work. I had expected to take Margaret's new dress for her to make this very afternoon."

Alice arose to go. "Well, while you go there, I will buy this much-talked-of party gown. The children can come with me and help select it."

Meantime Marjory had sobbed out her

tale of woe on her mother's shoulder. The whole family grew angry and excited at the recital. Unfortunately Dr. Kent was at home. Naturally he had an unusually good disposition; but now he was just getting over a spree and had no money to buy more liquo. He was gloomy and nervous enough already, and Marjory's narration aroused in him a degree of anger which his family had rarely seen.

Just then some one knocked at the door, and a glance from the front window revealed Mrs. John Clerton's carriage at the curbstone. Elinor admitted her with the subdued manner which had become habitual to her.

"I have come to see you about making a dress for Margaret. The last work you did for me was very unsatisfactory, but I have concluded to let you do this, in the hope that you will do it better." Mrs. Clerton spoke in a loud, commanding tone, plainly audible through the half-open door of the next room, and ere Elinor could answer, her husband came in and, much to her surprise, greeted the lady with the Chesterfieldian manner of other years.

"Ah! you have more work for my wife to do, I see. I really cannot allow her to take it; she has more already than she has strength or time to do."

Elinor was too much amazed to contradict this statement, and naturally shared her husband's resentment,—so no more was said upon the subject. With a sentence or two on the weather—that convenient padding for awkward pauses—Mrs. Clerton left.

Dr. Kent supposed she had driven away and took up his hat to start to town, but as he stepped outside he saw that Mrs. James Clerton's carriage was at the gate also. She had descended with a package in her hand, but her cousin had stopped her, and the two ladies were engaged in earnest conversation. Taking it for granted that she also had work for Elinor to do, and with the sting of his litt'e daughter's story fresh in his mind, he repeated what he had said to Mrs. John Clerton.

"You are quite right not to let Elinor work so hard," said Alice; "but this is simply a little present for Marjory."

The concatenation of circumstances was most unfortunate. All the pride and independence latent in his nature had been aroused at the words which Marjory had repeated—"Your father is a drunkard and your mother takes in sewing." Mrs. John Clerton's mingled air of hauteur and condescension had still further irritated him; and this direct offer of charity was too much.

"You must have been misinformed, Mrs. Clerton. We are not dependent upon the bounty of the town."

"Why, certainly not!" Alice exclaimed. "I never thought of such a thing for an instant. But surely I may be allowed the privilege of making a trifling present to the child of my dearest friend."

Had Mrs. John Clerton not been present the outcome would doubtless have been different; as it was, her expression counteracted Alice's words. So he replied, though more amicably: "Your motives are kind, I have no doubt; but under the circumstances I think it right to refuse to accept it."

Mystified, Alice would probably have continued the argument by asking to see Elinor, had not her cousin interposed: "Come, Alice, we are forgetting the time. We shall be late at the meeting of the benevolent society."

Even this allusion was unfortunate. As the ladies drove off, Dr. Kent followed them in imagination, and he morbidly fancied that they would give a detailed account of their charitable intentions towards his family and the rebuff they had met with; it was a comfort at least, he reflected, that he had been at home to convince them that he was no beggar.

But his fit of independence was as short-

lived as it was unusual, for he straightway went to hang around the saloons in the hope that some one would give him a drink.

Alice Clerton heard, without heeding, her cousin's indignant comments on the "insufferable airs those Kents gave themselves." She was quite at a loss to explain Dr. Kent's unwonted position, but fancied it must be due to something Judge Clerton's wife had said before her arrival. She resolved to see Elinor the next day and clear up the misunderstanding. But

> "The best laid plans o' mice and men
> Gang aft' a-gley."

When the morrow came scarlet fever had invaded her household, and for many weeks she had no thought of anything save her sick children.

As soon as Mrs. John Clerton left, Elinor had gone back to comfort the still weeping Marjory, but this was a difficult task. The well-known truism concerning slights, "that no well-bred person would and no other could," was rather too abstract for the aching childish heart.

Alice Clerton's friendship had been so true and tried, and Annie was so much like her mother, that Elinor thought Mary Roland must have been mistaken in saying that both girls had made the cruel remark which had so wounded Marjory.

"But it is true," cried the child. "Oh, Mamma, Mamma, what ever made you marry him?"

Elinor was struck dumb by the question. Had it come to this, that her own child sat in judgment upon her? How could she explain that the father they knew was an altogether different man from the Richard Kent whom she had married? He had been so long dominated by his lower nature that they could have no idea of what he had been. She had tried earnestly to teach them to respect him; but it had been a hard task, for there was such a slight sub-stratum of love to build upon.

This was especially the case with Charlie and Marjory. Harold had a higher sense of duty, and little May loved her father because it seemed her nature to love everything and everybody. Dr. Kent did not conceal the fact that she was dearer to him than the others, and yet from her innocent lips he had received perhaps, the hardest judgment ever passed upon him.

It had happened one Sunday morning. Elinor was going over the Sabbath School lesson with the children before they started to the church. The subject was the miracle of casting out devils, and May had listened most intently. She was sitting in her father's lap, and he was amused at her interest.

"Are people possessed with devils nowadays, Marjory?" asked Elinor.

"I don't know, I guess not," said Marjory, doubtfully.

"Why, yes dey is, Margy," cried little May. "My Papa's 'sessed wif a devil;" and she nodded sagely, evidently proud of her own superior wisdom. "Des see how nice an' dood he is now, but sometimes he's des as mean."

The children had all been impressed with the idea. Even Harold tacitly accepted it, and Elinor rather encouraged it. They were obliged to consider their father either a criminal or a victim, and the latter was unquestionably the more merciful interpretation. She had prayed for her husband through all the discouragements of the years, and the children prayed as she had taught them, but more hopefully. Charlie and Marjory often grew impatient for their prayers to be granted, but Harold's faith and patience seemed never to waver. Indeed, he had never seemed like other children. Perhaps it was that he missed youth's heritage of joy. The bent shoulders supported a head which impressed all who knew him, by the intellectuality of the broad forehead, the height of the region where phrenologists tell us the moral qualities are located, and the well-developed will-

power, without which intellect counts as naught.

What he was to his mother, and she to him, no tongue nor pen can tell. He seemed to have inherited the intellect of both parents. He had all his mother's gentleness and sweetness, combined with wonderful strength and firmness. He was the real head of the household. His mother consulted him in everything : the other children instinctively appealed to him. Elinor had taught him herself, as far as she was able. The greater part of the time, especially as a little child, he had not been well enough to go to school, and when he did go he learned with such marvellous rapidity that he soon completed the common school curriculum. College, of course, was out of the question, but for more than a year the minister had been reading with him.

But he was sixteen. The dominant spirit of dawning manhood was strong within him. He wanted to be out in the world in the ranks of the bread-winners. It hurt him to see his mother work so hard, and he spent sleepless nights trying to solve the problem of what he could do to help her. He had tried handicrafts of various kinds. A bracket-saw had so far been his most efficient aid, for the work he did with it brought in many shining dollars ; but he

felt often that people only bought his work out of sympathy and this worried him. He wanted to do something for which there was a real demand, and had for months been trying to devise some way to buy a typewriter. He had started a little fund for this purpose, to which Elinor added when it was in her power; but living expenses were so many and typewriters cost so much!

It was necessary to keep this little hoard concealed from his father. He would not have sympathized with the purpose, and would have considered himself defrauded of his just rights had he known that there was money in the house to which he did not have access. Besides, it was his habit to thwart Harold's cherished plans.

Sins are gregarious; it is an exceptional case when one flourishes long alone in a man's nature. As a rule, when the bars are let down for one, a host of others crowd in.

Richard Kent had almost grown to hate his own child. The sight of his deformity was a constant reproach to him. He had lost the power and almost the desire to reform, and yet his conscience was not dead. Now and then he felt that he was doomed, and the devil which possessed him vented itself upon his maimed boy—not often in blows, but in cruel words, taunting sneers, open neglect. He felt that his place as head

of the house had been usurped by this half grown boy. He knew that the love his wife had borne him had long ago grown cold, that all the wealth of her heart was lavished upon her children, upon this boy in particular.

Charlie and Marjory treated their brother with loving deference, while the respect which their mother exacted from them towards himself but thinly veiled the contempt which even children feel toward the wicked weakness of the drunkard.

"The noblest study of mankind is man," and the rules which we lay down for our guidance in this science are generally based upon the supposition of healthy human nature; but unhealthy human nature has its rules also, and one which we frequently meet with is that men of warped morality or stunted mentality hate those whom they have injured, and the hatred grows with what it feeds on. Mental science has probably as many branches as natural science, and a lateral truth, though not exactly parallel, is met with in the fact that dishonest debtors—men who have no intention of paying what they owe—almost all vilify and calumniate their creditors. And the monetary debts of the world are but a small part of humanity's obligations. Debts of gratitude are continually going to protest.

All this feeling grows out of the extreme sensitiveness of the ego, self-extenuation, the universal desire to find an excuse for one's own misdeeds, the wish that not only suffering but responsibility also shall be vicarious.

Elinor did not possess the key to her husband's feeling; to her it was utterly incomprehensible, and to Harold himself a source of the keenest pain.

Elinor sometimes thought that she had gone through the gamut of sorrow, and each successive step had seemed unbearable. She felt that in one regard she had gained a victory. A certain self-effacement had rendered less keen the poignancy of her individual grief. Since duty had mounted guard over love's sepulchre, the depth of her sorrow in her husband's degradation had become a more impersonal thing. But all the armor which she could assume availed her nothing where her children were concerned, for there is nothing in the width and depth of the universe so vulnerable as a mother's heart. Its capacity for love seems but the measure of its anguish.

This was strikingly exemplified rather more than a week after Marjory's unpleasant experience at school. One of Dr. Kent's few remaining patients had paid his bill, and he had, as usual, made use of the

money to indulge in excessive and prolonged intoxication. His money gave out, but his unquenchable thirst still raged.

Frantic for liquor, he commanded his wife to get him some money. She tremblingly replied,—"I have no money, Richard."

But little May also had heard the answer, and she cried out in wonderment, "Why, Mamma, don't you know Harold has dot a whole heap o' money in his desk?"

The infuriated man rushed into the next room, where Harold sat doing some copying which he had obtained with difficulty, and dreaming of the time when the typewriter he hoped to buy would enable him to get plenty of work.

"Where's that money you've been hiding from me, you infernal scoundrel?" he cried, jerking the frail form from the desk.

Harold grasped his treasure firmly. "It is mine," he said resolutely. "I made it; I have a right to it."

"You insolent young rascal, give it to me this instant, or I'll beat you within an inch of your life."

Elinor threw herself before her son, but the dipsomaniac dashed her ruthlessly aside and sprang upon the dauntless boy. He tore the hard-earned money from his grasp and began to wreak his anger upon the frail body; but Elinor's screams and those

of little May had brought aid, and Robert Elder's manly strength prevented Harold receiving any serious injury.

The two men went out upon the porch and several passers-by witnessed an angry altercation and heard snatches of the talk.

Elder was determined not to leave the defenseless family until Kent left also ; so they walked down the street together for a short distance, and he said, as they separated, "If I ever hear of your maltreating that boy again, I swear I'll have you arrested."

CHAPTER XXI.

The Elders had but recently moved to Ellsboro and taken a house near the Kents. Mrs. Elder was an aunt of Mrs. Destande's, and through her Elinor learned of her friend's continued happiness and prosperity, of Mrs. Harley's death, and of Mrs. Montine's second marriage to a widower with a houseful of children. The bridegroom was that most odious character, from a woman's standpoint,—a domestic despot, and his unruly children nearly drove their stepmother crazy. Amy Harley had been married for several years, and was as fair and placid, and much fatter than ever. Mr. Ferris, it seemed, would remain a bachelor to the end of the chapter. He was still in Linton, and it was mentioned incidentally that the place was at last recovering from the effects of the boom.

Elinor saw but little of these new friends, who had brought her a letter of introduction from Mrs. Destande, but Mrs. Drury extended them many courtesies, and through her influence they were soon quite at home in Ellsboro's charming society.

Mr. Elder was reputed to be a stern,

severe man in his business dealings, but nothing of this was visible in the family circle, for he was tenderness itself toward his invalid wife. There were two girls, debutantes, who filled the house with gayety and whose fresh smiling faces bore no lines of heart-history. Altogether they were a most happy family; but perhaps Robert, the oldest child and only son, a young man of twenty-five, was the central figure in the domestic radiance. He lightened his father's business cares and brought new life in with him when he entered the room of his delicate mother. He was the loving guide and counsellor of his inexperienced sisters, and his frank, manly ways made him a general favorite.

He was a very outspoken man, and he told several [illegible] of Kent's assault and expressed his [illegible]nation in no measured terms. There is no community without its due allotment of tale-bearers, so, as a matter of course, his comments reached Dr. Kent's ears. The spirit in which they were received can readily be imagined, for there is no surer road to the enmity of our fellowman than to witness, be it ever so innocently or accidentally, his crimes and misdeeds. The mere fact that Robert Elder had seen him in his wild fury was enough to raise a spirit of resentment in Richard

Kent, which was intensified by the reports he heard of what Elder had said. He had never acquired the habit of bridling his tongue, and it was but natural that he should recriminate by bitter speeches. Still, there was no open demonstration of hostility, and to all outward seeming the families were on the same footing as before.

Harold's conflict with his father had made him actually ill, not because of any physical injury, but because of the intense excitement succeeded by harrowing anguish. His mind was too strong for his body, at the best; consequently his physical well-being was unduly influenced by his emotions. That his mental state should react upon his body he regarded as an evidence of babyish weakness, but even the strength of his will could not relieve the tension of his over-wrought nerves, and he struggled in vain against the sickness which overpowered him.

Mrs. Drury's heart and home were open to him always, and his mother at last succeeded in persuading him to go over there for a few days. Her aunt had joined in the entreaties, for she came over just after seeing Dr. Kent leave the house. She avoided meeting Richard as much as possible, for which he was devoutly thankful, as an encounter with her was like a scramble

through a blackberry thicket,—her words were fruity with wisdom and good sense, but stung and pricked him at every turn.

Mrs. Drury had for years been anxious for Harold to make his home with her, but his presence in the house had been a tower of strength to his mother, and neither of them could bear the idea of separation which even such a short distance involved. But now Elinor began to consider her aunt's oft repeated request as she had never done before. It was so evident that the sight of the boy's deformity awakened the antagonistic elements in her husband's nature, that to divide the family seemed best for all concerned. Yet the mother-heart rebelled against the cruelty of parting from her beloved son, and in her agony she cried out as hundreds of stricken human hearts have done before, "O God, help me, for my burden is greater than I can bear !"

Then another alternative came to her mind. It would be easy, she knew, to get a divorce from her husband. Public sympathy would uphold this course, as well as the majesty of the law. She thought that she had settled this question once and forever when she returned to her husband after Harold's injury ; but matters had gone from bad to worse until it seemed that it could surely be her duty to endure no more.

But Charlie's entrance interrupted her train of thought, and the decision remained in abeyance.

"Oh, mamma, read this," cried the eager boy, thrusting a scrap of newspaper into her hands.

She read with little faith an advertisement which claimed to cure drunkenness. It was skilfully worded and spoke of the vice as a disease and gave many testimonials to prove that the preparation was a specific. She had read such advertisements before, but had given them no heed; but Charlie and Marjory both besought her so eagerly to allow them to get the medicine and try the experiment, that she consented.

Hope has the buoyant qualities of cork and rises to the surface on the least provocation, and then it lays hold of floating straws to sustain itself.

She gave Charlie a large bundle of sewing which she had completed, to carry to the owner, and told him he might take the money he received for the work and buy the wonderful preparation.

That night the children watched anxiously for their father's return. They had so earnestly read the guarantees and testimonials wrapped around the package that they had no doubt of its efficacy and built many plans upon the changes which would

ensue. They put a powder in the bottom of their father's coffee-cup and ran to the window many times to look for him, but when he did come he was too drunk to drink any coffee, so they were forced to postpone their experiment.

The next day he was gone to a saloon before they were awake, and his spree lasted as long as Harold's money. The little hoard was not large, and a drunken man can get rid of a good deal in a short time; so before many days the gloomy silence, or cross, sharp words, which marked their father's periods of sobriety, had succeeded the maudlin laughter, the silly talk and the drunken stupor.

They waited hopefully for the medicine, so faithfully administered to the unsuspecting man, to take effect, and even Elinor began to believe with them that there must be something in it, for his abstinence lasted longer than usual.

During this time Robert Elder was taken alarmingly ill in the middle of the night. It happened that the State Medical Association was in convention at Linton; Ellsboro had been particularly healthy, and nearly all the physicians were away. Mr. Elder went for one doctor after another, only to be met with the same response at each door: "The doctor is not in; he has gone to Linton."

Returning to the home, he found his son growing worse and his wife in an agony of apprehension about him.

"Please go for Dr. Kent," she said; "you know everyone speaks well of his medical skill, and I am sure he is sober, for he passed here this afternoon, walking quite steadily and going to his home."

There seemed nothing else to do. So the anxious father knocked loudly at their door, and Dr. Kent was soon by the bedside of the sick man. He was thoroughly sober,—the man was lost in the physician,—and the alarming symptoms soon yielded to his practised skill.

He called again in the morning and found his patient doing well. "It was undoubtedly a congestive chill," he told the family; "but with proper treatment and precaution there is little reason to fear another."

He wrote a prescription; and as Mr. Elder had remarked that he disliked to leave his son, the doctor offered to take it to the drug store himself and also to send over some quinine from his house. He lingered in the front hall to give more minute directions to Mr. Elder, and, as he did so, both men overheard a sentence or two exchanged by a passing porter and the housemaid, who was sweeping the porch. The man's voice said:

"So they called in Dr. Kent, did they?"

"Yes," responded the girl, "and Mr. Robert hates him like poison. But they couldn't get no other doctor. None of 'em wanted him, and Mr. Elder hunted the town over for somebody else, but all the rest of 'em was at the convention. I've heard Mr. Robert talk about Dr. Kent, an' I know he'd ruther have a rattlesnake 'round him than him."

Mr. Elder crimsoned with confusion and began a stammering apology, but Dr. Kent gave him no time to invent an explanation and hastily left the house.

However, he stopped at the drug-store, as he had intended, and ordered the prescription filled and sent to the Elder residence. He was turning away when a man who had just come in stopped him, began to describe the symptoms of his little child and asked his advice. He prescribed for him also, and received a dollar in return.

All his money flowed in the same channel; so, as usual, he turned his footsteps toward a saloon; and as he stood there, emptying one glass of liquor after another, one of the habitues of the place said:

"Say, Kent, I hear you saved Bob Elder's life last night. That was pretty good of you, Doc, after the way he's talked about you. I heard him say, myself, you ought to be sent to an inebriate asylum."

"The lying scoundrel?" said the doctor, angrily, "he deserves to die. But that reminds me, I promised to send some quinine over there."

He picked up his change, went home, filled some capsules with white powder, and sent them over by Charlie.

He could not rest until the remainder of the money had gone the way of the beginning. The liquor did its accustomed work. He came stumbling home at mid-day and spent the afternoon in a drunken stupor.

About one o'clock Elinor noticed a great commotion at the Elder house. People ran in all directions in search of physicians. The train from Linton had arrived in the meantime, and in a few moments two or three doctors were at her neighbor's house. She heard a piercing scream ring out and knew that it came from the stricken mother's lips. Then she saw Mrs. Drury go to the house, and in a little while she came to her and told her what she had already divined—

"Robert Elder is dead."

"I knew he must be when I heard his mother scream," replied Elinor.

"How sudden it must have been!" exclaimed her aunt. "I saw him on the street yesterday."

"Congestive chills are generally sudden," was the reply. "He had one last night, and

I suppose must have had another, notwithstanding all that Richard did to prevent it."

"Perhaps," said Mrs. Drury, shaking her head doubtfully; "but there is some mystery, I feel sure. I caught a glimpse of Mr. Elder, and instead of being bowed down with grief, as one would naturally expect, his face wore the most angry, vindictive look I ever saw in my life. Look!" excitedly, "There go two more doctors. Did you ever hear of physicians staying so long with a corpse and sending out for others?"

The two ladies continued to look out of the window, to wonder and to sympathize, but no suspicion of the truth glimmered in Elinor's brain.

About dusk she sent Charlie on an errand, and before it seemed possible that he could have accomplished it, he rushed into the room with a horrified look. "Oh, Mamma, Mamma," he cried, "everybody says that Robert Elder was poisoned and that Papa did it!"

Speechless with amazement at the terrible charge, Elinor stood motionless, until a knock at the door aroused her. The half-light of the dying day revealed the sheriff and his deputy.

"Is your husband at home, Mrs. Kent?" he asked, and in the grave face and solemn

tones the wretched wife read deep pity for herself.

"Yes," she replied; "he is asleep."

"I must wake him," was the response. "I have a warrant for his arrest. Perhaps you have heard that he is charged with poisoning Robert Elder."

"My son has just told me," she answered; "but it is not true—it cannot be! There is some dreadful mistake—an accident perhaps."

While she spoke the sheriff succeeded in arousing her husband, and the dazed man questioned stupidly, "Wha'zer want 'ith me?"

"Robert Elder is dead," was the reply, "and I have a warrant for your arrest."

The latter part of the sentence did not penetrate his torpid brain, for his mind was absorbed in the first half. He repeated in drunken tones the words he had uttered in the morning, "Lyin' scoundrel, 'served to die."

Then, as the sheriff clasped the handcuffs on his wrists, the gravity of the situation dawned upon him. "Let me 'lone," he cried; "I had nothin' t'do with it."

CHAPTER XXII.

Public sympathy was almost entirely for the Elders. Even Elinor's warmest friends, while they grieved for her sorrow, felt that her husband's imprisonment was for her truest good. The judge of probate had fixed Kent's bond so high that his wife felt and was advised that it was useless to try to get him out on bail. Besides, his trial would occur in about two months. Robert Elder's death took place in the latter part of September, and Circuit Court convened early in December. Not a long imprisonment according to the calendar, but no truer words were ever written than, "We measure time by heart-throbs, not by figures on a dial."

In retrospect that week seems longest which contains the greatest number of events—the most varied incidents, for memory records the happenings, not the minutes and the hours; but in actual living the time which passes in a dreary routine of many successive monotonous days seems an eternity.

So the wretched prisoner behind the bars

had time enough and to spare to review his whole life. The first few hours were filled with rebellion against fate; then a state of wonderment became uppermost in his mind. That the people of the community in which he was so well known could for an instant entertain the belief that he was guilty of anything more than gross carelessness filled him with amazement and indignation. Then his perspective changed. He began to see himself as others saw him. The mind sat in judgment upon the man. A state of reflection had succeeded feverish unrest, and he saw clearly, link by link, the chain of circumstances which had fettered him. Intemperance and anger had forged a strong chain; he knew it, and his attorney recognized it.

It has been said that it is a good thing to employ an old doctor, because of his experience, and a young lawyer because of his enthusiasm. Mr. Gray, the defendant's lawyer, had the enthusiasm of youth and an absolute belief in his client's innocence of malice or intent; but he also had the wisdom of experience, and he was inclined to believe that a continuance of the case would be to his interest, or, failing that, a change of venue.

The death was so recent and the sympathy of the town for the bereaved family

was so intense, that he gravely questioned the advisability of a trial at the impending term of court. He explained a fact which is so well known among lawyers that they accept it as a truism, that at first when the charge of murder is brought in a community, the preponderance of public feeling is for conviction; after a while interest flags, the animosity of the masses fades away, sympathy veers around, the sacredness of human life, which has formed the text of countless street-corner harangues, forms the text still, but with this difference, that the principle which has been applied against the prisoner at last is urged for him.

"Finally," said Mr. Gray, "when a case has been continued from term to term, the very men who have been hot for conviction begin to quote the old saying, that 'it is better for many guilty men to escape punishment than for one innocent man to suffer."

"That may be all very true," said Kent, "but I prefer to have the case decided and I do not want a change of venue. I wish to be tried right here among the people who know me."

"I think it probable that we cannot escape the trial," said Mr. Gray. "I only spoke of making an effort to do so; the

other side are anxious to push matters. So, if your decision is made, we may as well consider our defense."

"There is but one defense," was the answer, "that it was purely an accident. Morphine and quinine look very much alike; many instances are known where druggists have unwittingly substituted the one for the other."

"The sheriff will swear that you were dead drunk when he arrested you. We might plead that you were *non compos mentis* through intoxication."

"I was sufficiently intoxicated for my mind to be clouded. Liquor has been the bane of my life," he added bitterly, "but I hate to make my disgrace my defence."

"Drunkenness is a less crime than murder," said Mr. Gray tersely; and they went over, step by step, the incidents of the fateful day, as they have already been recorded.

The weeks flew by to the outside world, though they dragged to the weary prisoner. Circuit Court convened in due season. The Grand Jury found a true bill against Dr. Kent, and the case was entered upon the docket—"The State *versus* Richard Kent."

The first two weeks of the term were devoted to the civil docket, and the last two weeks to criminal cases. The case against

Richard Kent was so far down on the docket that Mr. Gray hoped it might not be reached. But case after case which preceded it was continued, and it was called Monday afternoon of the last week of court.

The counsel on both sides announced themselves ready. Mr. Gray was pitted, single-handed and alone, against quite an array of legal talent, in addition to the District Attorney. Mr. Elder had employed Capt. Thompson, a noted lawyer from a neighboring city, a man so famous in the annals of criminal law that prisoners whom he prosecuted trembled at his name, while those whom he defended were emboldened, no matter how bad their cases. His knowledge of law was not of such great depth,—many lawyers much less successful had more,—but his knowledge of human nature was wonderful. He was pre-eminently a jury lawyer; in a case decided by a judge alone he sank to mediocrity, but before a jury he seemed invincible. He swayed them until they believed as he believed, and prejudiced them against the arguments of the opposing counsel.

Mr. Gray did not underrate the forces with which he had to contend, but he was resolved to fight the battle for all there was in it.

The empanelling of the jury occupied a

long time. One man after another was rejected by first one side and then the other; but finally "twelve good men and true" were sworn in, who affirmed that they had formed no opinion upon the case, and were not related either to the defendant or to the deceased by "consanguinity in the ninth degree or affinity in the fifth degree."

Mr. Gray having already tried in vain to pick a flaw in the indictment, the witnesses were now examined.

The physicians testified to the dying condition of Robert Elder when they were called in, to the unmistakable symptoms of poisoning, and to the fact that the remaining capsules contained morphine instead of quinine. Mr. Gray had but one question to ask these witnesses; and he asked each in turn, "Doctor, is it true that these medicines look so much alike that one might easily be mistaken for the other?" And each replied in the affirmative.

This point evidently impressed the jury; but Capt. Thompson, by skillfully worded questions, brought out with such emphasis the fact that the prisoner did not obtain the so-called quinine at the drug-store, where he had the prescription filled, but instead got it at his own home and sent it to the Elder house, that the favorable impression which had been given was not only nullified but overbalanced.

Unfortunately for Dr. Kent, there were many witnesses to the antagonistic feeling between the two men and the heated words he had uttered.

Mr. Gray introduced several witnesses to testify to the character of the prisoner. Without exception, these men stated that his dissipation was well-known, but that he had never had the reputation of being either quarrelsome or malicious.

Mr. Gray was now reduced to his last and strongest evidence for the defense, and the question of degree of the intoxication of the prisoner at the time the deadly capsules were prepared occupied the attention of the court.

This closed the testimony. Nothing remained but the speeches of the lawyers and the charge of the judge.

The District Attorney made a long speech. He quoted precedents, dwelt on facts, and poured a torrent of denunciation upon the prisoner. But the crowd listened to his forensic eloquence a little impatiently. They were anxious to hear the great man from a distance,—the man whose fame haloed, to the average man, his most commonplace utterances.

But Mr. Gray arose to reply, and was listened to attentively. He spoke respectfully and regretfully of the great sorrow which had fallen on the Elder home, "a cloud

which had not only obscured the happiness of that family, but had fallen like a pall of midnight upon another home and enshrouded with a darkness which might be felt the life of the man before us." Many facts he did not attempt to controvert, but he contended that the proof submitted was not conclusive either of motive or malice. He spoke touchingly of the wife and children of the accused; but he laid greatest stress upon the fact that the prisoner was known to have been intoxicated upon the day the fatal medicine was administered.

"The proof clearly shows," he continued, "that he was thoroughly sober when he was first called to Robert Elder's bedside. If he had intended to poison him, why did he not do it then? Instead, he exerted his medical skill to the utmost, and the family of the sick man all believed that he saved his life. This fact alone is sufficient to convince me that the morphine was given, not intentionally, but by mistake."

And he concluded impressively: "Beware, gentlemen of the jury, lest you, too, make a mistake, the fatal mistake of convicting an innocent man. A fearful and awful responsibility rests upon you. Be careful how you use it. Should you by your verdict fasten the crime of murder upon the guiltless man before you, you would regret it to

your dying day; even beyond the grave remorse would follow you, as sure as there is justice in Heaven!"

A penetrating silence filled the court-room. Then Capt. Thompson arose to reply, and the relief from the tension, which bound the dense mass of people, was audible.

"Gentlemen of the jury," he began slowly and deliberately, "you are all reasonable men. I have no desire to bias your judgment or distort the facts of the case by flowers of speech.

"The witnesses, who have been examined before you, are well-known to you; you know whether or not they are reliable, truthful men. Your verdict must hinge, not upon what my eloquent brother at the bar has said, nor upon what I say, but upon what these witnesses have sworn.

"Doubtless you know better than I can tell you that your duty is a matter of justice, not of sentiment or sympathy. The latter has little part in a court of law, but since my learned opponent has largely based his argument upon sympathy for the prisoner and his family, I will say a few words along that line.

"As you are all aware, I am a stranger in the community, consequently my knowledge of the facts and the parties interested in this case is based upon what has been

sworn to in this court-room, supplemented by a few remarks I heard outside. All these people are known to you, either personally or by reputation; therefore, if anything I say has not been proven or is not susceptible to proof, you will recognize the fact and leave that out of the account in reaching your verdict; but you may be interested in knowing how the facts brought out here strike an unprejudiced observer.

"It has been stated that Dr. Kent has not supported his family for years; that task has devolved upon his wife. Consequently, they have been as well provided for since his incarceration as before. Look at Mrs. Kent, haggard and careworn, bent with toil! You all remember the bloom and beauty she possessed not many years ago. A dozen people have spoken to me about it. What has wrought the change? Not age, but grinding poverty, sleepless nights of anxiety, days of wretchedness and toil! And the prisoner at the bar is responsible for this. Your pity has been invoked to avert from him the punishment of the chain and ball of the convict; but the chain is only a clog, the ball an inert weight. But the woman who is married to a drunken brute is clutched in the claws of a vulture, which gnaws insatiably at her heart and brain. And yet my merciful brother at the

bar implores you, in pity to his wife, to set the prisoner free, that he may return to her side !

"It has been proved that this man has not been a kind and loving father. In fact, there is not a shadow of doubt that Robert Elder first provoked the prisoner's anger by defending the humpbacked son, maimed by his father's own hand. But this clement counsellor pleads with you to have compassion upon the children and send him back to them, though they cower at his approach and cringe as he draws near !

"But the accused will have to answer at the bar of Heaven for his sins against those whom, by every law of God and man, he is bound to protect, even with his life. You are only called upon to decide whether or not he is guilty of the crime of which he is accused—the murder of Robert Elder.

"It is urged that the substitution of one medicine for another was simply a mistake. I grant that a child might make such a mistake, or any person ignorant of drugs,—but Dr. Kent's fellow-physicians have testified here in open court that he is skilled in medicine, expert in practice. His admitted inebriety is pleaded in his defence, but the degree of intoxication is not proved. To my mind, this plea would have more force if the blunder were more glaring. The mere fact

that the two powders look so much alike evinces an amount of subtlety and cunning of which a thoroughly drunk man would be incapable. But it is unnecessary to go at length into this branch of the subject. If the juries of the land make drunkenness an absolution for crime, we may as well tear down our jails and penitentiaries, call our saloons reformatories, our grog-shops schools of virtue, and our distilleries Utopias !

"Again, the defence claim that the proof of motive or malice is not decisive. Several reputable witnesses have testified to hearing the deceased threaten the prisoner with arrest upon the street ; two others have sworn to Kent's angry reply, when he was told in the bar-room that Robert Elder had said that he ought to be sent to an inebriate asylum. Does the evidence convince you that the prisoner is of such a gentle and forgiving disposition that these threats would not awaken anger or malice in his heart ?

"Only one man ever lived who, when he was reviled, reviled not again, who 'blessed those who persecuted him and loved those who despitefully used him.' The merciful Jesus is a just judge also, and in His name I adjure you to avenge the murder of Robert Elder !

All this and more Capt. Thompson said.

His speech lasted until daylight died out and the gas was lighted, when court adjourned until the next day.

"There is no doubt that the prosecution has a strong case, Mrs. Kent," said Mr. Gray, at the close of the day's proceedings; "but I have not given up hope yet. A great deal depends upon the judge's charge."

These words rang in Elinor's ears as she went home in the deepening gloom of the December twilight. The sky was overcast; hardly a star was visible between the clouds. She debated with herself whether or not she should make a personal appeal to the judge.

The days of her youth came back to her, and she remembered how earnestly John Clerton had asked her to come to him if she ever needed a friend. Surely she needed one now, and yet she hesitated. She had almost resolved to get a divorce from her husband, when fate, by his imprisonment, separated them. She had been horrified at this charge which had been brought against him, though she did not question his innocence. Mr. Gray had assured her that there was little probability of the jury finding him guilty of murder in the first degree; therefore there was little reason to fear capital punishment. But she shuddered at the thought that he might be imprisoned

for life; that she would be branded as a convict's wife, and her children stigmatized as the sons and daughters of a murderer. She was ignorant of law; and what his sentence would probably be, should the jury find him guilty, she knew not; but the recollection of the strike at the coal mines and of the terror-stricken convicts haunted her.

But try as she might, she could not disguise from herself the fact that her husband's absence was a relief to them all. Charlie and Marjory expressed this feeling openly, while Harold felt the disgrace of the charge which had been brought against his father so keenly that it told upon his health. Here lay the real gist of the matter; her intercession with the judge, if it proved effectual, would bind her more firmly to the life which was abhorrent to her; the return of the unloved husband meant the banishment of her idolized son.

But this book, which was begun to chronicle the events of a woman's life, has already, perhaps, become rather a record of a woman's heart; but motive is to action what the steam is to the engine. And tossed about by doubts and fears, the conflict in her mind went on. Her high sense of justice and duty impelled her to intercede for the wretched prisoner, but her heart re-

belled at her hard taskmaster—Conscience.

"Why should my life be one long martyrdom?" she questioned. "Surely it is an exaggerated idea of duty which constrains me to doom myself and my children to a continuation of the baneful influence which has blighted their youth and made me old in wretchedness. Can it be wrong to wish to spend the remainder of my days in peace and quietude?"

Thus she argued with herself, answering her children's questions abstractedly, until Harold, to whom her preoccupation had been evident from the moment she entered the door, said: "Have you told me all, Mother? Aren't you worrying about something you have not mentioned?"

Then Elinor told her wavering doubts and fears to the boy who was counsellor as well as son, and his opinion settled her indecision.

"I am surprised that we did not think sooner of a personal appeal to the judge," he said. "It seems to me that there can be no question that we ought to do everything in our power to obtain a favorable verdict. Even self-interest prompts it. Of course, no court in the land can make a man guilty who is innocent, but the world at large will accept the judgment as correct, and I do not believe I could ever hold up my head

among men if I was pointed at all my life as the son of a murderer. Besides, I feel confident that my father will be a changed man after this."

Harold's reply did not surprise his mother. His nature was like her own, and she knew him too well to expect a different answer. Her own hesitancy had been mainly for his sake, but he had, as she would have done in his place, immolated self on the altar of duty. Her prayers had not ceased through all the years, and she clung desperately to her faith, but hope of her husband's reformation had well-nigh died out of her heart. She had finally settled down into the belief that for some good but occult reason God had seen fit to deny her earnest petitions. So her son's hopeful words awakened no echo in her heart as she prepared to go to Judge Clerton's house.

Harold arose from his couch with the determination of going with her; but she stopped him in a tone of authority which she rarely used toward him: "You must not go, my son; the weather is bad and you are far from well."

"But, Mother," he replied, "I cannot let you go alone; it is my right to go with you and add my petitions to yours."

"You shall not risk your health so rashly. I will not go at all unless you consent to

stay at home. However, I do not expect to go alone: I will take Charlie with me."

"I don't want to go," said Charlie; "I don't want father to come back. He will kill Harold if he does,—I know he will, and we are getting along so nicely without him."

Marjory began to cry in anticipation of the dreaded return, and while Harold was trying to convince them of their unfilial conduct, Elinor, realizing that to drag either of them unwillingly before the judge would have a bad effect, slipped unobserved out of the side door and went alone into the chill darkness of the deserted streets.

The night was not stormy; there was no exhilarating ozone in the atmosphere, but, instead, a slow, cold rain was falling. The frigid mist penetrated her worn clothing and seemed to freeze the marrow of her bones. She shook with cold and nervousness, but the way was not long, and with stiff, trembling fingers she unlatched Judge Clerton's gate.

To her dismay the house was brilliantly illuminated. Some festive social function was evidently in progress.

Falteringly she raised her hand to ring the bell, and then, fearful of meeting some of the guests in the hall, thought better of it, and stole silently, like some timid,

hunted creature, by a side-porch to the kitchen door. The way led by the dining-room window, and she saw the majestic figure of the judge seated at the head of the table, which sparkled with silver and glittered with cut glass, while the snowy damask gleamed through masses of hothouse flowers and opalescent fruits.

And she who might have been mistress of it all, the loved and honored wife of the man whose stately bearing and giant intellect commanded the respect of all who knew him, cowered without and shivered in the cold, a beggar at his door, a suppliant for the wretched man behind the prison bars!

Changes of fortune are generally so gradual, and the gradations so mercifully prepare the mind and heart of those who suffer such vicissitudes, that the sharpness of the contrast is only realized in flashes of consciousness. Such a moment of vivid retrospection came to Elinor then. The flashlight of memory presented the happy picture of her girlhood at the same instant that she realized most keenly the depth of the abyss of poverty and despair into which she had fallen. The one picture was bright as noonday; the other, black as midnight. The inky pall of a starless heaven rent in twain by the dazzling effulgence of the

lightning presents no greater contrast. And yet her mission there that night was to perpetuate the darkness of her home! Conscience had mastered her so long that the power of habit was added to the inherent influence, and she resisted the impulse to turn back.

Surely Christ's heart must be full of love and compassion for drunkards' wives, for they, as He did, drain to the dregs the bitter cup of vicarious suffering.

The kitchen door opened in response to her knock, and Elinor went in.

Negroes have the most undisguised contempt for those whom they designate as "po' white trash," and the shrinking, careworn woman in rusty black—that livery of gentlewomen who have seen better days—with toil-hardened hands, was, to Judge Clerton's servants, one of this numerous class. The old-time negroes of the town, who knew that Elinor belonged to "de sho' nuff quality," treated her with deference; but these servants were unknown to her and vouchsafed her scant courtesy. They told her roughly that the judge could not be disturbed, and if she persisted in seeing him she must wait. They were accustomed to seeing the judge besieged by supplicating relatives of the prisoners; so, after a few rude and curious glances, they paid no attention to her presence.

She gathered from their conversation that Judge Clerton was entertaining the members of the bar, and fancied from a remark of one of the waiters that the dinner was in special compliment to Capt. Thompson. It seemed the irony of fate that she should sit in his kitchen, ignored and scorned by his servants, while he gave a feast in honor of the man who was prosecuting her husband.

The "white folks' dinner" was over, but a second banquet, far more noisy and unrestrained, was taking place in the kitchen. The time of waiting seemed an age to Elinor, and she was beginning to believe that she would have to go home without seeing the judge, for the servants persistently refused to disturb their master, when a bell nearby rang sharply. The peal was unheard, or at least unheeded, by the servants, for a loud dispute had arisen between the cook and the coachman. Again the bell rang loud and long, but the quarrel had grown more vociferous and absorbing. A third time the sound rang out clearly and distinctly, and it was evident to Elinor that the ringer was growing impatient.

Then she heard a firm step in the hall, the door opened, and the master of the house stood before them.

"What is the matter here?" he asked. "Why has no one answered the bell?"

At his appearance a sudden hush fell on the noisy crowd ; one and another began to mumble excuses. Elinor stepped timidly forward, and the cook, wishing to divert the judge's attention, said : "Dis here 'oman's bin waitin' a hour or two to see you."

"Why ! Mrs. Kent !" he exclaimed, in surprise ; then, in grave courtesy, "I am very sorry you have been kept waiting."

Then, in a tone of marked displeasure to the discomfited servants, "You should have told me instantly. I would not have had this lady inconvenienced or detained on any account."

"I dislike to take you away from your guests," began Elinor, apologetically.

"That is of no importance," he said. "Come into the library."

One of the domestics, suddenly grown obsequious, opened the door and bowed respectfully as she passed.

"Doubtless you understand what brings me here," she said, as soon as the privacy of the library was gained ; and with all the eloquence of which she was capable she pleaded for her husband's cause. He listened with courteous but grave attention, and compassion for the frail woman before him showed itself at his every glance.

"The verdict rests with the jury, not with me," he said. "It is probable that they

have already decided the case from the evidence. The object of the judge's charge is simply to explain impartially to the jury the law which bears upon the case. My charge is not a matter of volition. I am bound by everything which I hold sacred. by my oath of office, my duty as a citizen, as a God-fearing man, to uphold the law by every means in my power. If I can be of any service to you or your children in my individual capacity, I shall be glad to serve you, but as a judicial officer I have no choice."

Elinor felt that there was no more to be said, and arose with the disheartening consciousness that in coming she had made an unavailing sacrifice.

"It is such a disagreeable night," said Judge Clerton, "you must allow me to send you home in a carriage."

She protested ; but he rang the bell. The summons was answered immediately this time, and the servant announced that her son had come for her.

Charlie had repented and made amends as best he could, so they rode home together, while the judge went back to his guests, misunderstanding her motives and wondering at the depth of her devotion.

CHAPTER XXIV.

The ringing of the court-house bell the next morning seemed a funeral knell to Richard Kent, and the cry of the sheriff, "Oyez ! Oyez ! come into court !" sounded like the voice of doom.

Elinor sat, pale and downcast, beside her husband, whose nervous movements betrayed his unrest.

In measured tones the judge began his charge :

"Gentlemen of the jury, a solemn duty confronts you. It is not your province to wander out into the fields of imagination or speculation, to be swayed by sympathy or biased by prejudice, but to base your verdict upon facts. You are to decide whether or not the witnesses are veracious ; if conflicting testimony has been given, it devolves upon you to judge which has the greater weight.

"In order to convict a man of murder in the first degree, motive or intent must be clearly proven. The prosecution urges motive ; the defence pleads mistake. It rests with you to determine between them.

If you are convinced beyond question that the prisoner at the bar maliciously, with motive, intent, or premeditation, substituted poison for quinine, it will be your duty to find him guilty of murder in the first degree. Penalty would be death.

"On the other hand, if you believe that the substitution of one drug for the other was a mistake, pure and simple, it will be your duty to clear the prisoner.

"If found guilty of murder in the second degree, the law fixes the penalty at imprisonment in the penitentiary for not less than ten years. If found guilty of manslaughter in the first degree, the sentence would be imprisonment for not less than one nor more than ten years; if of manslaughter in the second degree, he could be imprisoned in the county jail or sentenced to hard labor for the county for not more than one year and might also be fined not more than five hundred dollars."

The judge defined the law clearly and at length, but much of the charge was too technical to be set down here. In conclusion he said:

Stress is laid upon the prisoner's intoxication. The law regarding drunkenness is about as follows: If a man makes himself voluntarily drunk, it is no excuse for any crime he may commit whilst he is so; for

he takes the consequences of his own voluntary act, or most cases would go unpunished. The most that can be claimed in such cases is, that the fact of excessive drunkenness is sometimes admissible to reduce the grade of the crime (as from murder to manslaughter) where the question of malice, intent or premeditation is involved. The true rule in this regard is, that inebriety, which may in extreme cases have the effect of reducing a homicide from murder in the first degree to a lower grade of the offence, must be so excessive as to paralyze the mental faculties and render the accused incapable of forming or entertaining the design to take life.

"I have given you a brief summary of the law which bears upon the case, and I adjure you to remember the deep solemnity of the duty which devolves upon you."

The twelve men filed out of the box and marched to the jury room. They were long in returning, and Mr. Gray began to hope that the result would be a mistrial through a hung jury. But no! The packed throng at the door gave way; the dense crowd in the court-room grew more compact to make room for their re-entrance, as with measured tread and serious faces they returned to the box.

A breathless silence filled the room. Every

eye was fixed upon the foreman of the jury, and each ear was strained to catch the words he uttered.

Slowly, steadily, monotonously he spoke: "We the jury find Richard Kent, the prisoner at the bar, guilty of murder in the second degree."

The hush of awe did not diminish as the judge turned to Richard Kent and said: "Prisoner at the bar, you have heard the verdict of the jury. Have you any reason to give why sentence should not be pronounced upon you?"

The wretched man rose to his feet, and facing the dense throng, said clearly:

"I deserve to suffer, for I have sinned most grievously against God, my family and myself; but by all my hopes of Heaven, I swear that I am innocent of intentionally causing Robert Elder's death. My mind was clouded by liquor. I did not know what I was doing. I do not plead this as an excuse, for the prison will be to me the inebriate asylum which is my fitting portion. For my own sake, I have no protest to enter against the punishment which will be meted out to me, for the remnant of my ruined life is worthless. I gave myself up, soul and body, to the fiend which has destroyed me; but it cuts me to the heart to know that my faithful wife and my inno-

cent children will be branded through life as the wife and children of a murderer.

"Again I swear, by all my horror of a drunkard's hell and by all my hopes of a penitent's heaven, that I am innocent of the terrible crime which this jury has fixed upon me !"

The intense earnestness with which these words were spoken visibly affected Richard Kent's auditors. The judge's voice was husky with emotion ; but he cleared his throat and said :

"Richard Kent, in accordance with the laws of the state and the verdict of the jury, it becomes my duty to sentence you—"

A scream of affright from Elinor interrupted him, as she tried in vain to catch the falling body of her husband ere it sunk heavily on the floor.

Instantly all was confusion. Two or three physicians were in the room, and they hurried forward.

"Is he dead ?" asked the judge.

"I cannot tell yet," was the cautious reply. "I see no sign of life, but he cannot breathe here ; we must get him into the air."

"Life is certainly extinct," said the second doctor, rising from the floor, where he had been listening vainly for a heartbeat and feeling ineffectually for a throb of the pulseless wrist.

The judge rapped upon his desk, and the motionless figure at his feet was no more still than the vast concourse of people.

"The Supreme Judge has pronounced sentence," he said, in solemn tones. "Let the friends of Richard Kent remove him from the court-room."

A dozen men stepped forward to obey, and the judge himself supported Elinor's trembling form to his carriage which stood without.

She pillowed the unconscious head upon her breast. The two physicians rode away with her.

The judge returned to the court-room and made his way to the bench.

"Clerk, call the next case," he said. And the mill of the law ground on.

Meanwhile the two physicians watched anxiously for any sign of returning life and used every vivifying means within their power, and at last their faithful efforts were rewarded, for Richard Kent's judgment day in the High Court of Heaven had not yet come.

The deathlike swoon gave place to a stertorous breathing, which the physicians regarded as ominous.

"He may live for years," said one doctor to the other, as they left the stricken man hours afterwards; "but he will probably be a helpless paralytic all his life."

"I agree with you," was the reply; "the fainting fit in the court-room was probably induced by the intense nervous strain of the past few days; but the paralytic stroke is the natural result of the life he has led. He has been 'burning the candle at both ends' for years, and overburdened Nature could bear no more."

The revulsion in public opinion was sudden and complete. Censure gave place to pity, criticism to sympathy.

Judge Clerton wrote a strong letter to the governor, detailing the circumstances and asking a pardon for the convicted man. A petition to the same effect was gotten up among the citizens. It was signed by all the members of the bar, including both the prosecuting attorneys, and even implacable Mr. Elder was satisfied and signed it.

The day that the pardon was received was a day of rejoicing in the Kent household, and Mrs. Drury rejoiced with them; for to behold the strong man as helpless as a baby was enough to soften the hardest heart.

Little May resigned her position as household pet in favor of the stricken father, and the family vied with each other in lavishing attentions upon him, and grew to love him as they had not believed they could.

How much he realized of the past or present they never knew, for he never recovered the power of speech; but his face wore

an expression of ineffable peace, and the dark eyes glowed with a love and gratitude they had not known in his days of health and strength.

Harold, freed from the harrowing influence which had maimed his body and goaded his mind, grew much stronger. He studied law in Judge Clerton's office, and the name and fame of the humpback lawyer was known through all the country round.

Elinor found a fountain of youth in the peace and happiness of her home. Much of her bloom and beauty came back to her, for she was old in misery—not in years.

Her fears that her boys might inherit a tendency to dissipation came to naught; or, if the tendency were there, it was crushed ere it came to life. Their father had made himself an example to be avoided; and when she saw her sons pass unscathed through temptations to which other young men succumbed, and her beautiful daughters shrink from the attentions of dissipated men, her heart sang in its joy the same words which had comforted her in its wretchedness,—

"All things work together for good to them who love God."