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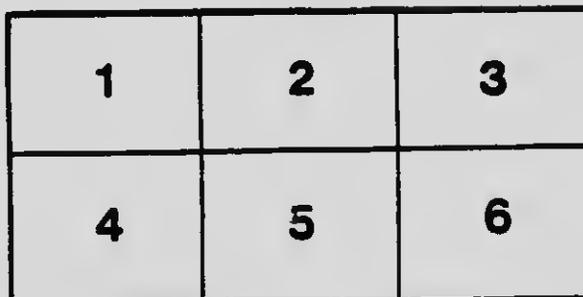
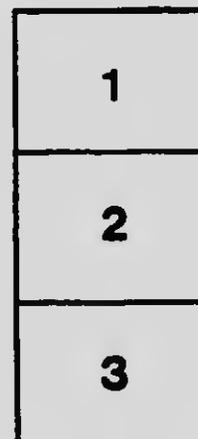
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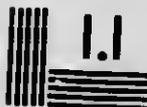
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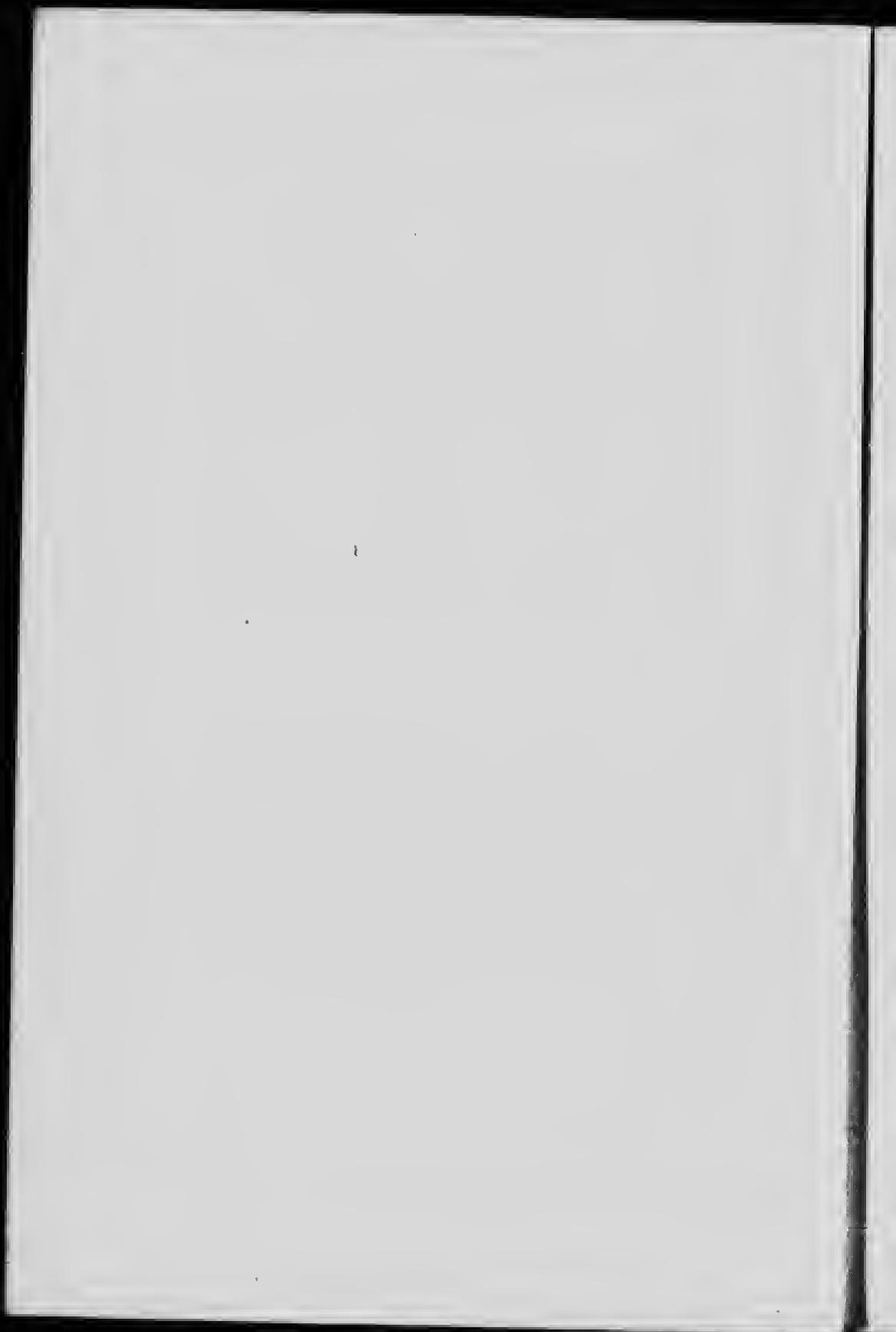


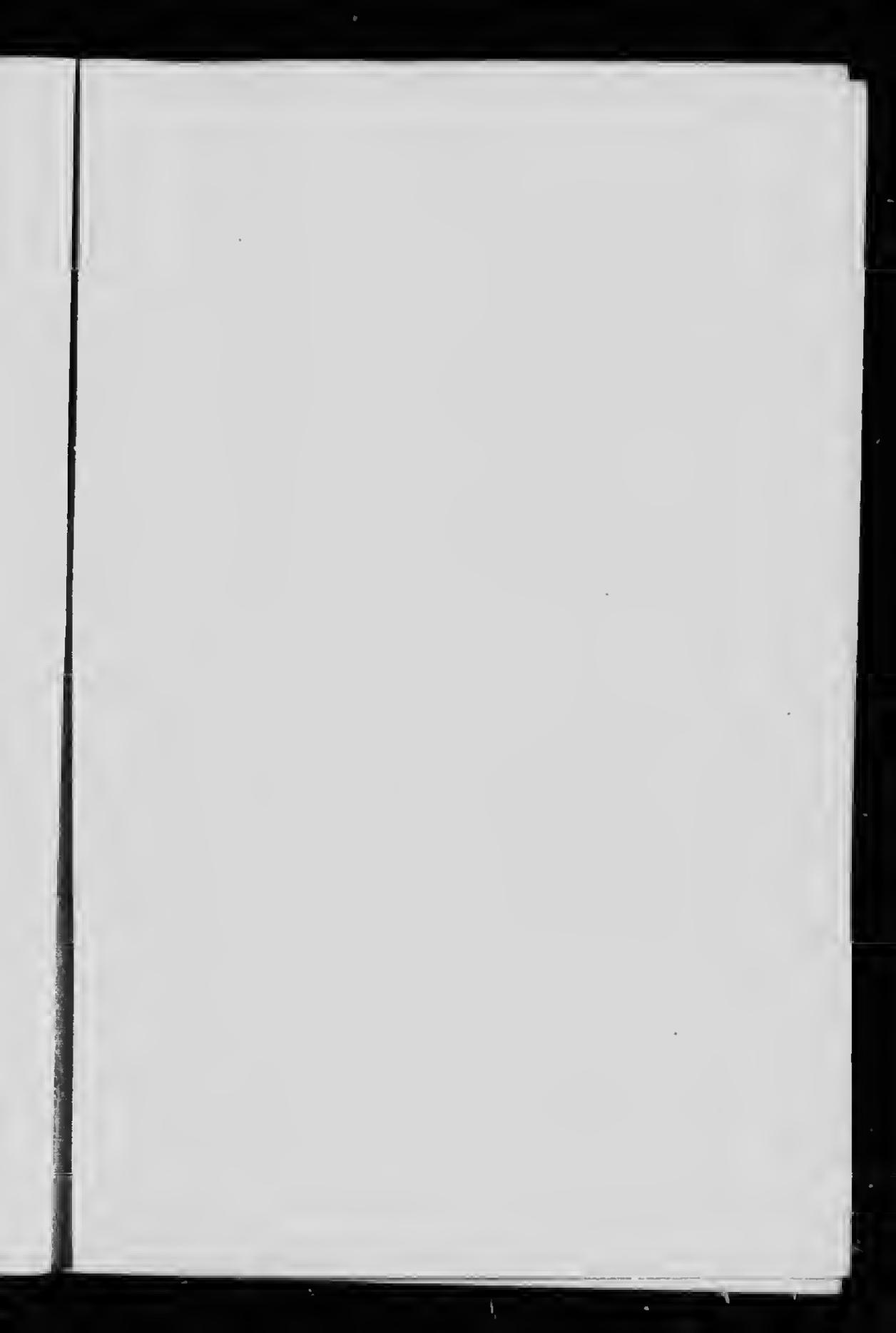
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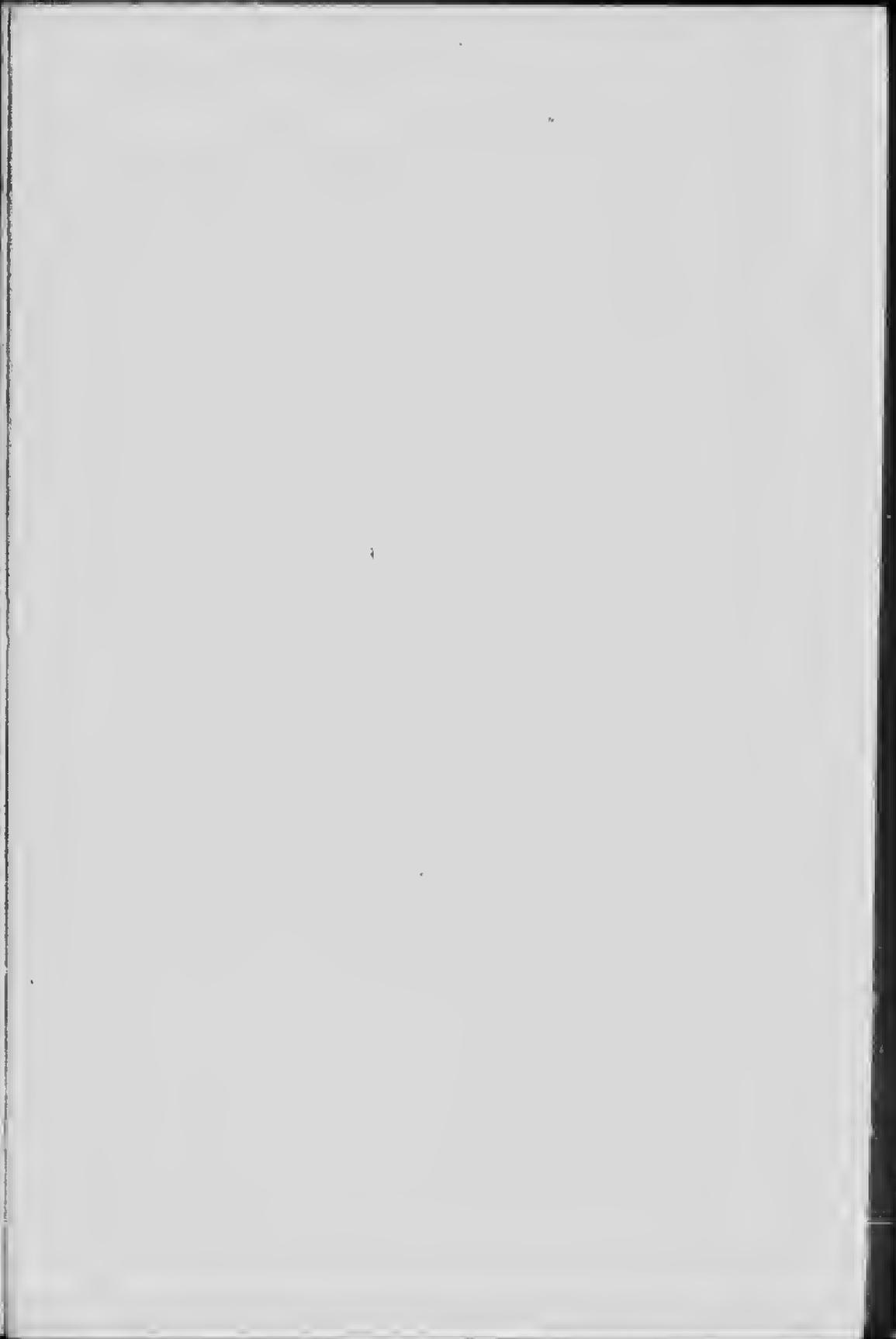
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Barnabetta



Barnabetta

By

Helen R. Martin

Author of "Tillie: a Mennonite Maid,"
"The Crossways," etc.



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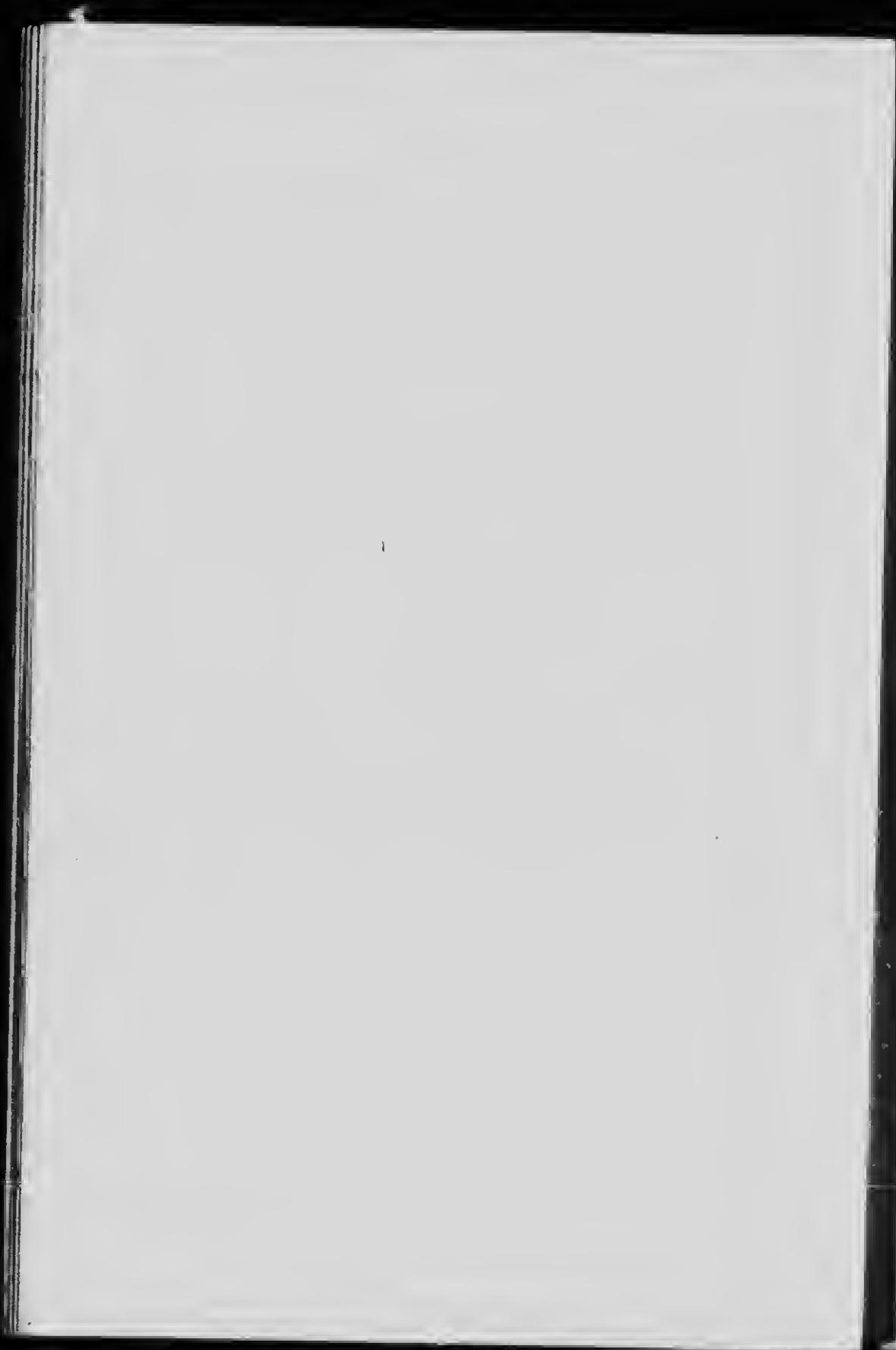
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5

Barnabetta





Barnabetta

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCING THE DREARY FAMILY

MRS. DREARY, a sentimentalist though the wife of a Pennsylvania "Dutchman," had named her daughter from a combination of her own and her husband's names, Barnaby and Etta—Barnabetta. It had been her last "pretty thought" before her death, which had followed almost immediately upon the birth of the baby-girl.

Barnabetta, however, being the only feminine member of the family, had, at a tender age, been called upon to bear heavier burdens than that of her grotesque name. It was when she was only thirteen years old that her father decided to dismiss the housekeeper he had been obliged to employ since his wife's death, and take his little daughter from the village school to keep house for him and her two elder brothers, Jacob and Emanuel—and this in spite of the fact that he was what was known in the village of Reinhartz Station as "well-fixed," having a comfortable bank-account which every year he was able to increase from his big, prosperous tin-shop that ad-

Barnabetta

joined his dwelling-house. But the necessity his wife's death had imposed upon him, of "hiring," had been the most poignant phase of his affliction.

"I hire a washwoman yet a while till you're more growed a'ready, Barnabetta," he told the child. "But the rest part of the work you kin do now. I don't keep no hired girl now you're thirteen a'ready."

However appalled the little girl may have felt at this decree, she did not demur. When Barnaby Dreary announced a decision, no one who knew him ever attempted to move him from it. And certainly the outcome in this case justified him; for in place of the slatternly, wasteful housekeeping of the "hired girl," Barnabetta soon learned to keep things tidy, to cook well, to manage thriftily; and the weekly wages of the hired girl were saved—for they assuredly did not pass to Barnabetta.

That the young girl just budding into maidenhood grew thin and listless under the unceasing toil necessary to achieve these results, could scarcely, in the eyes of a man like Barnaby Dreary, weigh against the results themselves.

When, on one occasion, Barnabetta being then sixteen years old, the village school-teacher, Abel Buchter, took the liberty of warning Mr. Dreary that his girl was growing up *dumm*¹ from overwork and from being denied all the "pleasure-seeking"

¹ Stupid.

Introducing the Dreary Family

natural to youth, he was told to "mind to his own business."

"Hard work keeps girls out of mischief and makes 'em hearty," Barnaby argued.

"But with as much in bank as you 're got, Barnaby, you have no need to work your girl that hard that you won't even leave her go out coastin' still, with the other young folks, till her evening dishes is through all, a'ready. She used to be the smartest scholar I had and now, I tell you, she 's gettin' dumm!"

"She 'd oversleep breakfast time if I left her run evenings."

"You leave Jacob and Emanuel go out every night."

"Yes, well, they don't have to get up so early as what Barnabetta does. Look-a-here, Abel, don't you come tryin' to make up to our Barnabetta—I ain't leavin' her keep comp'ny with no fellah! Us, we need her at home, me and the boys. Fur thirteen years I had to hire and pay wages, and do you think now when at last I got a girl old enough to house-keep fur me, I 'm a-goin' to leave her go git married right aways and me go back to hirin' yet? Well, I guess anyhow *not!* So you just leave our Barnabetta be, Abel!"

Had Mr. Dreary not been a school-trustee of Reinhartz Station, Abel would have delighted in defying him; for in spite of the life Barnabetta led, she was blooming out into a wondrous, flower-like girlhood.

Barnabetta

Not that she was beautiful—no one could have called her that. Her skin was dark, almost sallow; her figure slight, almost thin; but from the softness of her meditative eyes and the sweetness of her mouth, to the dainty shapeliness of her foot, she was so wholly and utterly feminine, so appealingly womanly, that Abel, who had known her since her birth, found to his astonishment that no other maiden had ever seemed to him so lovely, so desirable, though all the buxom beauties of the village had long been throwing themselves at his head; for in spite of his tall length of lank leanness, Abel's slight superiority to his fellow-villagers, in education and in ideals, and his always wearing a collar and necktie, had ever made him, to the damsels of Reinhartz, an object of romantic sentiment.

"I always did think, Barnaby," Abel persisted, "that the reason Missus died for you was because you would n't ever hire for her or leave her go on company any. She just did n't have any more spunk left to get her strength back when Barnabetta was born."

"Ach! Why, after our Jakey was born, Missus never no more spoke nothin' to me about goin' on comp'ny or pleasure-seekin'."

"Yes, for the good reason that till that time you had her so good trained a'ready, she knew it was no use to ask anything off of you! And now Barnabetta is getting just so indifferent like her mother—she

Introducing the Dreary Family

don't even *want* any young pleasures!" said Abel, who was smarting under his own failure to rouse the girl to any interest in himself. "And, mind you, Barnaby, when a young girl don't *want* pleasures, she 's getting awful dumm!"

"Well, so long as she ain't too dumm to cook three good meals a day fur me and the boys, and keeps her good health and is contented not to run any with the other young folks—nor with *you*, Abel—why, to be sure, I don't see what I need to worry about."

Barnabetta was fully aware, with a complete indifference to the fact, that Abel would like to "keep comp'ny" with her and that her father prohibited it. She was, therefore, faintly surprised one autumn afternoon as she moved about the kitchen "making supper," to overhear her father on the back porch urging Abel, who had strolled over with him from the tin-shop, to "come on in the kitchen and eat along."

"It would mebbly make more work for Barnabetta," Abel demurred, though evidently eager to accept the unwonted, indeed unaccountable, invitation.

"What 's a couple more dishes to wash? Come on in! I want to speak somepin wery important to you then. Around five o'clock or so we eat and it 's near that now."

"All right. Then I will once."

Abel's schoolhouse was at the upper end of the one long, sloping street which comprised the village of Reinhartz, while the other end of it was bounded by

Barnabetta

the hotel and the post-office. The brick or frame houses standing between these two limits made, for the most part, some pretension to prettiness, especially those which stood back from the street. But they presented one uniform, inhospitable, uncompromising front of tightly locked shutters. A stranger walking through the village would at first glance have supposed it must be uninhabited; but the well-kept lawns and flower-beds would speedily have transformed this impression into the conviction that the entire population of the place was gone from home for the day on an excursion or a picnic. For in Reinhartz the kitchen was the only part of the house used during week-days. Parlors were entirely consecrated to the sacred Sabbath and to funerals

A few minutes after Mr. Dreary had come, with the school-teacher, into the kitchen where Barnabetta was working, the two grown sons of the family, Jacob and Emanuel, also arrived for the evening meal,—Emanuel, the elder, coming in from the tin-shop in which he was salesman, and Jacob having just returned from his day's work of driving the stage-coach twice over the eight miles between Reinhartz and Lebanon.

The entire family now, with the exception of Barnabetta, gathered with their guest about the supper-table which was, as always, laid in the kitchen, the adjoining well-furnished dining-room being, according to the village custom, kept always closed and darkened, although to have been without the adornment of

Introducing the Dreary Family

a dining-room and "a dining-room suit" would greatly have lowered a family in the village social scale.

Jacob and Emanuel looked as surprised as was Abel himself at finding him at their father's table, for they knew how warily the head of the house guarded their sister from any possible wooers.

Barnabetta, moving about the table to wait upon the four men, listened with but vague attention to their talk. Her deliberate, graceful movements, the far-away gaze of her eyes, her slow, soft, infrequent speech, gave her that habitual air of detachment from her environment which had often brought from her father the reproach that she acted "like a person with ether in her."

"You don't take no interest," he would complain.

"What is there to take an interest *in*?" the overworked girl would dully ask.

Abel, helping himself from the pyramid of hot cakes Barnabetta had placed on the table, remarked, "I certainly am guessing, Barnaby, what you 're wanting to speak to me then!"

"It 's some important. I 'll tell you then."

"Here, Barnabetta," Emanuel ordered, holding out the empty butter dish, "the butter 's all!"²

"Hot cakes does, now, make the butter all awful quick a 'ready," Mr. Dreary shook his head ruefully, as Barnabetta carried the dish away to refill it. "And

² All gone.

Barnabetta

butter comes so high, too! Butter and eggs is raising every day!"

"Yes," said Emanuel, "it would come cheaper to keep a cow and make our butter."

"Who 'd milk and churn?" casually inquired Abel.

"Who?" repeated Emanuel, puzzled. "Well, ain't we got a female keepin' house here? What fur do you ask *who?*"

Emanuel was a great overgrown youth whose easy place in his father's tin-shop was calculated to make him a confirmed loafer. He and his brother Jacob shared their father's view as to the clear intention of Providence in the creation of woman.

"You don't think she's got enough to do already, heh?" asked Abel, "cooking and washing and ironing and cleaning up for you three men-folks?"

"Ach, Abel," laughed Jacob, biting into a huge slice of "molasses bread," "when you git married oncet, we won't hear you talkin' then all the time about a woman's overworkin' herself! Not when it's fur *you* she does it!"

"Barnabetta's got it good towards what some has it," remarked Emanuel.

"Yes, I guess anyhow!" affirmed Mr. Dreary. "Her Mom had always babies to tend as well as all the housework. Barnabetta can anyways always git her night's rest."

"It's wonderful good of you, Barnaby, to leave her sleep all night!" said Abel.

Introducing the Dreary Family

Barnabetta, moving about the table with food and cups of coffee, showed no sign of paying any heed to the conversation.

"A body 'd think, Abel, to hear you, that you was in favor of this here crazy talk you kin read in the noospapers about women's *wotin'* yet!" declared Mr. Dreary.

"Well, I don't see but what it would be a good thing," Abel courageously affirmed, though he knew that in the expression of such a radical sentiment he endangered his position, held for ten years, as district teacher of Reinhartz. "Why *should n't* females vote, Barnaby?"

"Ach, Abel, now you 're just talkin' to show off!" expostulated Mr. Dreary. "To be sure, a woman 's all right in her place. There ain't nothin' nicer than a woman, I 'll give you that much, Abel. A woman," he conceded magnanimously, "is very nice indeed—*in her place*. But there I 'm fur stoppin'. What them English had ought to do with them wild Suffragettys is to have such a whippin'-post fur 'em. That would soon stop their carryin'-on! That 's what I 'd have if *I* was in power over there. In a month's time it would stop 'em a 'ready!"

"Yes, well, but," Abel said, "England, it 's a civilized nation, Barnaby."

"Them Suffragettys don't act much civilized!" scoffed Emanuel.

"No, nor I don't call a nation much civilized where

Barnabetta

holds to Free Trade and Repy-sock-racy!" maintained Mr. Dreary.

"Ach," said Abel, "you 're all ver-huddled! You mean reciprocity and—"

"Will you have more coffee, Abel?" Barnabetta's lifeless voice here inquired at his side.

"I 've had an ample sufficiency, Barnabetta," Abel softly answered, a gleam in his eyes as he looked up into her face. "Thank you kindly, Barnabetta."

"That 's all right, Abel."

She moved away, and Abel, to cover his agitation, made a perfunctory remark to Jacob at his left.

"Many passengers to-day on your 'bus, Jake?"

"Ach, middling few."

"Roads good?"

"Middling. I 'm wonderful bothered, though, with them automobiles—they go over the bridge so hoggish, they 're damagin' it—and one of these here days that there bridge is a-goin' to bust in!"

"Here, Barnabetta," Emanuel again ordered his sister, holding towards her an empty saucer, "bring me another helpin' of that there rice puddin'."

"It 's all," said Barnabetta. "I only made one helping 'round and you 've all *had*."

"I 'm afraid, Barnabetta," said Abel regretfully, "mebby me being here unexpected, I eat *your* helping, heh?"

"That 's all right, Abel."

"I 'm awful sorry, Barnabetta!"

Introducing the Dreary Family

"It makes nothin'," said her father. "She kin do with molasses bread or whatever."

"Say, Barnabetta," Jacob announced, "you 're to iron my Sunday pants right aways then till you 've eat your supper a 'ready."

"Goin' to see your girl, Jacob?" asked Abel.

"Whether I am?" Jacob repeated the question.

"Well, then, if I *am*?" he demanded defiantly.

"It air' anything to me, I 'm sure," answered Abel.

"Only if it 's that Suse Darmstetter you fetched from the meeting Sabbath evening, *she* won't ever iron your Sunday pants for you!"

"You leave me manage my wife myself, Abel!"

"You 're welcome to. But if it 's Suse Darmstetter, Jake, she 'll manage *you*."

"I 'll take care of that there all right, Abel. I guess it would take more 'n Suse Darmstetter to henpeck one of us Drearys!"

"Yes, us Drearys ain't so *easy* henpecked!" Mr. Dreary retorted derisively, his robust frame and fat face, with its suggestion of meanness in the small, closely set eyes, a sufficient corroboration of his statement.

"Jacob," said Barnabetta's low voice as she stood at her brother's side to fill his glass with water, "did you fetch me that ten-cent magazine along I asked you to get me in Lebanon?"

"Naw! What do you take me fur, Barnabetta,

Barnabetta

askin' me to waste my time in town runnin' after such a magazine yet!"

"You ain't to spend any fur such foolishness, Barnabetta," her father objected. "Nor to waste your time with such magazines."

"I knowed Pop would n't leave you have it," added Jacob.

Barnabetta moved away without answering. Abel made a mental memorandum of an errand he would do next time he went to town—he would buy a dozen magazines and slip them secretly into Barnabetta's hands.

"Now, Abel," Mr. Dreary said, pushing back his chair and rising, "if you 're done, come on out on the back porch oncet. Emanuel," he admonished his stalwart son as authoritatively as he would have spoken to a child, "you hurry on over to the shop; I can't come till I speak somepin particular to Abel."

Emanuel, heavy and indolent, rose to obey. Jacob, also rising, sent a curious glance after his father and the village teacher as together they moved out to the back porch.

"Don't forget my pants, Barnabetta," he reminded his sister as he, too, left the room.

Barnabetta seated herself at the cluttered table to take her supper in solitude. Her absent, dreamy eyes showed no least interest in the mysterious confidence-meeting that was going on on the back porch between her father and Abel Buchter.

CHAPTER II

MR. DREARY CONFIDES IN THE SCHOOLMASTER

SEATED in two huge rocking-chairs, in the seductive, warm September twilight, Mr. Dreary and Abel contemplated a wide area of vegetable gardens behind the village houses, while the elder man proceeded to open up his soul to the younger.

"It come over me, here a couple weeks back, Abel, that I feel fur gettin' married. I feel fur it somepin wonderful!"

"Married! *You*, yet! Well, if you ain't! At your age, Barnaby!"

"I ain't just so old neither! Fifty-five. What's fifty-five?"

"Who's the wonderful fortunate lady?" Abel inquired with heavy sarcasm.

"I ain't picked out one yet."

"What? By gosh! What started you up, then, to think about getting married?"

"Two things," answered Barnaby, counting them off on his fingers; "first, seein' our Jacob runnin' with Suse Darmstetter; second, the trouble I got keepin' you and other fellahs from makin' up to our Barna-

Barnabetta

betta. If I had a wife oncet, Barnabetta she could keep comp'ny and *git* married with you or whoever."

"Then did you want to tell me this evening I could go ahead and keep company with Barnabetta?" Abel chokingly inquired.

"Not so fast!" Barnaby hastily checked his eagerness. "I tole you I ain't any lady picked out yet, did n't I? You 're not to make up to Barnabetta till I 'm settled a'ready, mind you! Anyways, she 's full young yet—only seventeen and wery childish."

"What *do* you want off of me, then?" Abel asked doggedly.

"To help me pick out some lady, Abel, that would suit."

"*Me?*"

"Yes; you 're so well acquainted over in Ephrata, I conceited mebby you 'd know some party over there that might suit me pretty good. I don't want to choose some one here where I am raised."

"I know a-plenty that might suit *you*. But how about *you* suiting?"

"Ach, don't git funny! Now leave me tell you what I *do* want. I want you to give me an interduction to some *rich* lady. A lady that owns some property, Abel, or some stocks, mebby. And one that ain't got no other beau, fur I 'm too old to try to cut out another fellah."

"But what would such a lady marry *you* fur, Barnaby?"

Mr. Dreary Confides in the Schoolmaster

"I ain't particular that she 's such a wonderful good-looker, Abel, so long as she 's a good housekeeper and has money."

"Yes, well, but," commented Abel thoughtfully, "how will Jacob and Emanuel like it?"

"I ain't concerned if they like it."

"And what do you expect Barnabetta to do with such a stepmother?"

"Did n't I tell you that after I 'm all settled nice, Barnabetta she kin go git married? Not *till* I 'm settled, though, mind you!"

"But how do you expect Barnabetta and the stepmother will hit it off *till* Barnabetta gets married?"

"Ach, that 's neither here nor there! Do you know any such a lady fur me, Abel?"

"I think mebby I could pick you out one."

"I conceited that mebby you could. That 's why I spoke."

"There 's a party at Reading might suit," said Abel thoughtfully.

"Is there?" said Barnaby eagerly. "How well-fixed is she?"

"Well, here last Saturday I was at Reading and the Secretary of the Young Women's Christian Association gave me an interduction to a lady that 's just what you 're looking for, Barnaby."

"Now you don't mean it! Mebby you 're guyin' me, heh?"

"No, I ain't. And, lucky for you, this lady of which

Barnabetta

I referred to, is after just what *you 're* after—a well-fixed gentleman.”

“That ain’t what I ’m after,” said Barnaby facetiously. “Say, Abel, did she tell *you* she was lookin’ out fur a well-fixed gentleman?”

“The Secretary of the Y. W., etcetery, she told me. The lady had come there to the Y. W. and told them that, being now tired of living alone, she wanted to get *settled*. Well, they did n’t rightly understand what she meant (some of those city-folks are just that slow!) and they got her a good place for such ‘general house-work.’ But to be sure that ain’t what she meant by ‘settled’! Why, she ’s got a thousand dollars a year in her own right!”

“Hi!” Barnaby exploded, looking apoplectic under the shock of such a dazzling bait. “A thousand dollars a year yet!”

“That ’s ’hat!”

“Go ahead!” exclaimed the prospective bridegroom.

“So the lady explained to Miss Evans, the Secretary, that she did n’t want to hire out, she wanted to get settled. And Miss Evans asked her, ‘Settled how, where, why, when?’—and would you believe it, Barnaby, it took the lady a *while* yet to make Miss Evans understand she wanted an interduction to a gentleman that would like to get married? Well, you see, Miss Evans she knew me this while back already and she plagues me, still, when I go to town, why I don’t get married. So she interduced *me* to the lady.”

Mr. Dreary Confides in the Schoolmaster

"And why," demanded Barnaby in quick suspicion, "didn't you *take* such a chance when it come your way?"

"The woman 's old enough to be my mother! She 's *your* age, Barnaby. If I can get Barnabetta, you 're welcome to the old party!"

"When kin you give me an interduction to her, Abel?"

"Take you over to Reading Saturday evening if you want. I 'll 'phone to Reading to Miss Evans to tell the lady she can expect us—if you 'll pay for the telephone."

"Ach, yes, if I must."

"All right then."

"You did n't tell me yet what 's the lady's name?"

"Miss Miller 's her name."

"Miller. Miller 's a common name, ain't? There 's Millers here in Reinhartz a'ready. Say, Abel, don't you think that between this and Saturday some other fellah will mebbly be makin' up to her? I tell you I 'm too old to go cuttin' out anybody."

"But mebbly when you see her, you won't feel for getting married to her."

"Them thousand dollars a year would make a body overlook a good bit, Abel."

"But look-a-here, Barnaby, do you expect she 's a-goin' to pour her thousand dollars right into your paws? It 's *hers*. Times are some changed since you had a wife. I hardly believe this lady would think

Barnabetta

that just because she kep' your house for you and went by your name, you 'd a right to take her money off of her. On the contrary, she 'd expect you to spend on *her*, so long as she worked for you. That 's how it goes *these* days, Barnaby. You 'll mebbly get awful fooled if you don't look out!"

"When a woman 's married it 's her husband's place to handle tae money," Barnaby affirmed conclusively.

"All right. If you think you can manage it that way."

"I certainly ain't afraid I can't manage my own wife," Barnaby retorted scornfully.

"All right, if you think. I 'll take you over then Saturday and give you an interdution to her. The rest is up to you. You can see what you can do."

"I guess," said Barnaby hesitatingly, "you 'll expect me to pay the twenty-five cents car-fare over for you too?"

"That would n't be any more 'n right."

"Well, if I must."

"Say, Barnaby, you better have a boquet along with you for the lady," Abel advised.

"A boquet? Would n't that look some soft, Abel?"

"I guess she 'd expect you to look soft, seeing what you 're after."

"But it 's too late in the season fur a boquet; there ain't no flowers bloomin' now."

Mr. Dreary Confides in the Schoolmaster

"There 's hot-houses in town, ain't there?"

"Whether there 's hot-houses? Yes, well, but! Flowers out of a hot-house I never bought yet."

"You better fetch some along," Abel strongly advised. "It will help a good bit."

"You think?"

"Yes, I think."

"Well, then, if I must," sighed Barnaby. "Now, then," he added, slowly rising from his chair, "I guess I 'll have to be gittin' over to the shop. Say, Abel!"

"Heh?"

"Don't you go on in to Barnabetta now! I ain't leavin' her keep comp'ny till I 'm sure of this here lady. Pass me your promise, Abel."

Abel hesitated. But realizing that in dealing with Barnaby Dreary, discretion was the better part of valor, he reluctantly gave the promise.

As the younger man walked pensively through the quiet village street to the hotel where he lived, he wondered whether, if the spinster who wanted to "get settled" proved to be "such a blamed fool" as to marry stingy, fat old Barnaby Dreary, Barnabetta's situation under the circumstances would have the happy effect of making her turn to him. He hardly dared hope that it would, so passively unresponsive she always was to his ardor.

"To be sure, she 's only a child yet, as her Pop says, and full young to think about getting married—though other girls of her age do think about it. Bar-

Barnabetta

nabetta 's an awful queer girl. I don't rightly *know* her. Nobody does, I guess. Sometimes I think she 's got her own secret thoughts behind that dumam way she has! I wish, though, she had a little more spunk than what she 's got! She would n't *have* to take all she takes. Now, here this evening, why could n't she say to Jacob, 'If you could n't bring me a ten-cent magazine, I can't iron your pants.' But no, she 'll go *iron* his blamed pants! Well, to be sure if she did n't, her Pop would get so harsh, I guess mebbly it 's the easiest way out for her just to *do* what they tell her. And when there 's a stepmother there yet, no doubt it 'll go harder than ever for Barnabetta. Then mebbly she *will* take notice to me a little. Land sakes, would n't she know something different if ever *I* had the chance to take care of her!' concluded Abel warmly.

CHAPTER III

BARNABETTA RECEIVES A SHOCK

BARNABETTA, sitting in the kitchen a few hours later, darning and mending some clothing of her father's and brothers', by the light of a lamp on the table, did not glance up as her father, at nine o'clock, having closed the tin-shop, came over to the house and walked into the kitchen. Had she looked up, she might have been moved to some surprise at the unwonted aspect of embarrassment he wore as, roving aimlessly about the kitchen, he tried to get up courage to tell his daughter something which it was proving not at all easy to tell. He himself was scarcely less surprised than Barnabetta would have been, at finding himself abashed before his own child whom he had bullied all her life. But Barnabetta, bending over her sewing, saw nothing of his perturbation, oblivious, as usual, to everything about her. The deadening monotony of her external world had dulled her very senses to it. She moved through her daily, unchanging routine like a wound-up machine, all the force and fire of her fervent soul turned inward to feed upon itself and thereby either destroy itself or—a

Barnabetta

far-off possibility indeed—lift itself far above the common range.

“I got to speak somepin to you, Barnabetta,” Mr. Dreary at last took the plunge as, pausing in his restless pacing of the floor, he sat down heavily in front of his daughter.

Barnabetta’s sewing dropped into her lap and she raised absent eyes to his.

“It ’ll surprise you some mebby, what I got to say. Leastways it surprised Abel Buchter.”

Barnabetta waited placidly.

“Abel he thinks I ’m some old to be thinkin’ of it. But I ’m only fifty-five. What ’s fifty-five?”

Barnabetta manifested no interest in the conundrum.

“Well,” said her father stoutly, “I ’m gettin’ married, mebby.”

And now the girl showed signs of life. Her gaze came back from afar and fixed itself, with a puzzled contraction between the brows, upon her father’s face.

“What did you say, Pop?”

“I said mebby I ’m gettin’ married oncet.”

Barnabetta looked at him, speechless.

“I can’t give you no particulars yet, Barnabetta. This here ’s only to prepare you a little.”

The girl, still inarticulate, continued to look at him.

“You see,” he said encouragingly, “when I ’m nice settled, you kin keep comp’ny with Abel or whoever. There ’s plenty *wants* to set up with you.”

Barnabetta Receives a Shock

Barnabetta, regarding him as though just making his acquaintance, made no comment.

"Abel Buchter he wanted to keep comp'ny with you this good while a ready. I to'e him to-night I 'd give him dare to set up with you when I was all settled. Not *till*, though! To be sure, after I 'm settled, you kin easy be spared."

"Pop," Barnabetta at last spoke, "so kind-hearted as what Abel is, I 'd be sorry for you to give him false hopes; for I will not keep comp'ny with him."

It was Mr. Dreary's turn now to stare in astonishment. Scarcely within his memory had he ever heard his daughter assert herself to the point of affirming, "I will not."

"What have you agin Abel Buchter?"

"Nothing. But I won't keep comp'ny with any man."

"Ach, that 's just talk. You never kep' comp'ny yet, so you don't know nothin' about it. Oncet Abel has set up with you a couple of times, you 'll be as man-crazy as the rest of the girls."

"I will never marry," Barnabetta serenely stated, but in a tone of finality that sounded strange to her father's ears, accustomed to her unvarying acquiescence to his word.

"Such foolish talk!" he said impatiently. "What makes you conceit *that*, I 'd like to know, heh?"

"I don't like men-folks. They kreistle¹ me."

¹ Disgust.

Barnabetta

“Heh? Ach, well, you ’ll soon get over that foolishness! You will *have* to. Fur oncet I fetch a wife here to housekeep fur me, to be sure you ’ll have to soon go and git married, Barnabetta.”

“Why?”

“‘Why’! Do I need *two* to keep my house?”

“Do you mean,” the girl asked slowly, a long, earnest gaze upon her father’s face, “that you will not keep me here when you bring home a wife?”

“Well, fur a year mebbby, till you ’ve picked out a man. Not longer. What would you do here? There ain’t work here fur two; and you ’re growed up—you have to work.”

“There ’s plenty of work for two, Pop.”

“You do it all.”

“I don’t think you will find any one else that can—or will.”

“Foolishness!” he scoffed.

“But, Pop,” she asked, a dazed look coming into her eyes, “where can I go?”

“I tole you you ’re to git married.”

“But I said I would not do that. I will not marry.”

“What else *kin* you do? You know well enough,” he reproached her, “you ain’t enough educated to git the lower school to teach.”

“No, I ain’t educated. I ain’t anything but your houskeeper.”

“Yes, you’re too dumm to do anything but git married. Abel he says, too, you ’re dumm.”

Barnabetta Receives a Shock

"He says?"

"Yes, often a'ready."

"There 's one thing I could do," she said hesitatingly, looking more and more dazed at this sudden and unexpected crumbling of her world from under her, "I could hire out—if you and Jacob and Emanuel would n't have a shamed face to leave me do that."

"That would make too much talk—with me as well fixed as what I am yet! No, there ain't nothing you *kin* do but git married."

"I will not do that."

"Ach, well," he concluded, rising abruptly, "you 'll git over such a crazy notion. Anyways, the lady ain't said 'Yes' yet. Time enough when she 's here oncet, fur to settle your case."

He took a lamp from the mantelpiece, lighted it and went upstairs to his room.

Barnabetta remained long over her sewing, too stirred out of her customary orbit to think of sleeping. She was confused with the new ideas so suddenly forced upon her. What, she wondered, could be the inducement to any woman to marry her father? Why did women want to marry anyway? The life of her native village made marriage appear to her like the gateway to a bondage far heavier and more hopeless than that under which she herself had always lived. Over and over again had she seen the bloom and brightness of a bride fade in a few years to the haggard dullness of the overworked, over-prolific slave

Barnabetta

of matrimony; and though she had never in all her life asserted her own will, yet there was, deep down in her buried soul, a smoldering force that had concentrated upon one resolve—no man should ever take her for his wife. Barnabetta had never had any “rights,” she had never claimed any; but an unshakable conviction possessed her—born of she knew not what—that she did have an inalienable right to refuse to give her soul and body into the keeping of a man. The bare thought of it was so horrible to her that she had come to think of men as of a lower and coarser order of creation. She could work for them, serve them; but never, while she had any shred of right to herself, should one of them come nearer.

She felt a vague pity for her prospective stepmother.

“She ’ll have it harder than what I have it; for Pop will be her *husband!*”

To-night as she faced the realization that the three brawny men for whom for more than five years she had expended all her girlhood’s vitality, would, as soon as they no longer needed her, begrudge her a place in their home, her wonder at the strange selfishness of the sex, only added strength to her deeply rooted resolution that never should a male creature bind her life to his in the indissoluble bonds of matrimony; for in Barnabetta’s primitive world people still married for life.

CHAPTER IV

MR. DREARY PROPOSES

HALF-PAST eight of the following Saturday evening found Mr. Dreary, somewhat to his consternation, stranded alone with Miss Miller, the lady who desired to "get settled"—seated beside her on a sofa in her own neat little parlor; for Abel Buchter, having brought him to the spinster's house and performed the ceremony of introduction, had immediately, and in Mr. Dreary's opinion, ignominiously, departed, leaving him high and dry in the lady's hands to settle his case as best he might. So long as he had been fortified by Abel's *savoir-faire* in meeting the peculiar situation into which he had gotten himself, he had felt confident enough. But now, abandoned to his fate, his soul trembled—not, as might be supposed, in awe of the fair one herself, but in the fear that the rich prize (her income) brought thus within his reach, might yet, by some inadvertency on his part, escape him.

He looked perfectly unnatural to-night in his "Sunday clothes"; he wore them too seldom to have acquired the habit of them; and the little "boquet" of six carnations which he had stiffly carried on entering,

Barnabetta

clenched in one hand like a pistol, had lent him an air more aggressive than conciliatory. The carnations did indeed stand for a battle waged with Abel and the florist, for Mr. Dreary had stoutly resisted Abel's *ipse dixit* that he recklessly squander seventy-five cents on a whole dozen of them and he had hotly protested against the florist's charge of forty cents, instead of thirty-five, for a half dozen. And when, on their arrival at the small two-storied brick house on the outskirts of Reading, where the lady lived, her gushing reception of him and Abel made it seem probable that he would not have needed to go to this expense to win his way with her, he felt sorely injured.

"I might have done just as good without 'em," he thought resentfully, as he watched the thin, elderly, but gaily attired woman bustle in and out of the parlor to put the flowers in water.

Seated now on the sofa beside her, he felt far from equal to the situation. It was, however, characteristic of him that, in spite of his perturbation and suspense, his small, sharp eyes should be busy in appraising every significant detail of his hostess and her surroundings. He saw quite as much to condemn as to commend. In fact, had it not been for that substantial income, he would have felt discouraged, her parlor was so luxuriously furnished in striped plush, crayon portraits framed heavily in gilt, and an upright piano draped at one end with a fringed scarf; and her tall, bony person was so superfluously decorated with lace,

Mr. Dreary Proposes

ribbon, bracelets, rings, a watch-chain and an ancestral portrait in a brooch on her flat bosom. If she accepted him he would certainly persuade her to sell all this "junk" in her parlor and let him invest the money which it would bring, for he felt it would be too painful to him to see that much capital standing around idle in the "front room" at Reinhartz Station.

As for her extravagant apparel—well, once she was his wife, she would n't "have the dare to spend so much at the clo'es."

The maiden lady herself, though scrawny and, to Mr. Dreary's taste, ugly, was evidently, judging from the great friendliness of her manner, a very kind-hearted person and would no doubt take pains to make him and the boys comfortable. Also, things looked as though she were a tidy and capable, if not an economical, housekeeper. On the latter point he felt extremely dubious. Would such a "fancy" person be able to make money go as far as Barnabetta did?

"She 'll have to *learn* to, that 's all," he resolved.

"I understand, Mr. Dreary, that you are a widower; that you have loved and lost!" she remarked sympathetically, with an air and tone that impressed poor Barnaby as disconcertingly high-toned.

"Yes, my wife she died fur me this good while back a'ready."

"Ah," sighed Miss Miller, "I can see it at you that Grief has dwelt with you, that Affliction has been your companion!"

Barnabetta

“Yes,” responded Mr. Dreary uncomfortably, “yes, I felt wery worse when she died fur me. But it’s near eighteen years now. My first grief was over this long time a’ready.”

“Eighteen years! You have been faithful to her memory that long! I fear very few of your sex have such constancy, Mr. Dreary!”

“You think?” said Mr. Dreary, pleasantly flattered.

“I know the world, Mr. Dreary. None better. And I can read men. Your appearance does not deceive me—I can see it at you that you are a diamond in the rough. The Bible says, you know, that oft we entertain an angel unawares and there oft beats in the breast of a humble servant a heart of purer gold than is e’er found in lords and ladies!”

“The Bible says, does it? I ain’t wery Bible-read, I’m sorry to say. To be sure,” he humbly admitted, “I know I ain’t no pretty man; but then I don’t make no demands in that line on you.”

“Not to brag myself up, Mr. Dreary, I used to be pretty. That was before I, like yourself, had loved and lost. For though still unmarried, I was once engaged. He died of a bronkitical cough and I have always revered his memory. I, too, you see, have been faithful. And I do think that takes from one’s looks—to live solitary, sad and sorrowing through long, constant years. That’s why, Mr. Dreary, I am no longer as pretty as what I once was in days gone by.

Mr. Dreary Proposes

Believe me," she protested, lifting a wrinkled, jeweled band, "I am not inviting contradiction."

"I 'm sure," said Mr. Dreary, rising nobly to the occasion, "if you ain't as pretty as some, you 're wery good. And what," he demanded with an inspiration that astonished himself, "is beauty without goodness?"

"Well," Miss Miller responded a bit testily, "goodness somewhat tempered with beauty might be more acceptable to both of us—but alas, in this life it 's not what we want, Mr. Dreary, but what we can get, that has to satisfy us."

"Wery true, wery true," Mr. Dreary solemnly nodded, feeling that the tone of the discourse called for a religious mien.

"And now, Mr. Dreary," Miss Miller announced, "not to occupy the entire evening with conversation, would you like for me to entertain you with a little Vocal? I 've studied Vocal for nearly a year with Professor Schmidt. Two lessons a week, fifty cents per."

"'Fifty cents per?' You mean you paid a dollar a week fur near a year fur just to learn to *sing* yet?" gasped Mr. Dreary.

"Yes," admitted Miss Miller with pride. "Expensive, true. But, as Professor Schmidt often remarked, 'What is life without artistic expression?'"

"And," breathed Mr. Dreary, pointing to the esthetically draped piano, "can you work it, too?"

Barnabetta

"Oh, yes, I play several classics and all my own accompaniments."

"Let's have a sample of the 'Wocal—at fifty cents per,'" Mr. Dreary feebly requested.

Miss Miller obligingly rose and went to the piano. Mr. Dreary sat rigidly on the sofa, his eyes glued to her as she gracefully and elegantly ran her jeweled fingers over the keys.

"If I ever again get engaged," she remarked as she played, "I know what I shall ask of my Intended for a wedding-present."

"A wedding-present, heh?"

"Yes. A baby-grand."

"But," faltered Mr. Dreary, "you ain't just so young, neither, no more—about fifty, I take it? Not that I want to speak impolite to you—"

"Oh!" shrieked Miss Miller, abashed, putting her hand to her face. "A baby-grand *piano*, Mr. Dreary!—with three—shall we say?—limbs."

"Oh, is *that* what you mean?"

"Yes. For a wedding-present."

"How much do they come at?"

"You *can* get one for nine hundred dollars."

Mr. Dreary rose. "Miss Miller," he said sadly, but firmly, "I'm sorry I took up your time. Me, I'm too common for you, I guess."

"Not at all, Mr. Dreary. Now don't disappoint me as others have done! Sit down and let me sing you 'A Child's Unfinished Prayer.'"

Mr. Dreary Proposes

Mr. Dreary sat down. But the display of her marvelous accomplishments as she sang through her repertoire—"It's a Lonely World Without You," "That's How I Need You," "When I Marry the One I Love," and so forth—only added to his discouragement.

"Now, then," she said, coming again to his side on the sofa, "tell me all about your dear children, Mr. Dreary. I am so anxious to know them now that I have seen and admired their father! I'm sure I shall love them and I trust they will love me."

"They're pretty well growed. Barnabetta, the youngest, is near eighteen a'ready. But," he shook his head despondently, "she would seem wonderful dumm to you, so high-toned as what *you* are yet!"

"The dear child! I do love to contemplate the young girl

'Standing with reluctant feet
Where the brook and river meet.'

—don't *you*, Mr. Dreary?"

"Well," he faltered miserably, "I don't know as I do."

"I feel intuitively, Mr. Dreary, that your daughter—what was that pretty name by which you made reference to her?"

"Barnabetta—after me and her Mom—Barnaby and Etta."

"How touching! I feel *instinctively*, Mr. Dreary,

Barnabetta

that dear Barnabetta and I are going to love each other tenderly."

"Barnabetta ain't never got much to say fur herself."

"Her nature is as yet latent, eh? I shall do my utmost to awaken it; to help her—as Professor Schmidt often remarks—to find herself. The one thing we must do, Professor says, is to *find ourselves*. He insists upon it."

"He does, does he? Well," said Mr. Dreary, bewildered, "that is something that I never had to do yet—find myself. I can't remember ever losin' myself."

"Poetic language," Miss Miller disposed of the question. "Is Barnabetta joyful at the thought of my coming into your home, Mr. Dreary?"

Mr. Dreary clutched the arm of the sofa. This *was* taking him for granted! "Whether she's 'joyful'? She did n't *make* any when I tole her."

"Make any—ah, fuss? Feelings too deep for words!—at the thought of having at last a long-lost mother!"

"But," Mr. Dreary stammered, "do you feel sure, Miss Miller, that you 'd suit me?"

"That's your modest way of putting it!"—she tapped him playfully with a fan she held. "You are trying to get up courage to ask me if *you* suit *me*—eh?" she coyly demanded. "There, there, I won't be naughty and tease you! Mr. Dreary, if it was only

Mr. Dreary Proposes

you, I might hesitate. But when I think of those three motherless children—for eighteen years without a mother's love and guidance—the call is too strong—my whole woman's nature responds! Mr. Dreary, I accept your offer."

"But I—I could n't afford such a grand baby or whatever."

"We 'll waive that then"—she waved her fan illustratively.

"Well," said Mr. Dreary resignedly, relaxing his clutch on the sofa and sinking back limply among the cushions, "all right, Miss Miller."

"Juliet. You can call me Juliet."

"That's your first name, is it?"

"Not to deceive you, my name is Susan. But being 'sensitive to the poetry of sound,' as Professor Schmidt says, I just took the name Juliet. Shakespeare, you know. You can call me Juliet."

"Yes, if I can used myself to it. I ain't familiar with that there name."

"It 'a very rare, true. And very soft and tender. I consider it harmonious to my character."

"Well," said Mr. Dreary, finding here something to hold by, "I always did take to soft-hearted ladies like you."

"Oh, *Barnaby!*"

"Well, I did, Miss Miller—Jool-yet!"

"Well, so far as that goes, Barnaby, I always took to men with black hair. I always told our folks,

Barnabetta

'Don't say blond-complected man to *me!* A black-baired man is more manly,' I said."

"You think?"

"Yes, I do!"

"Well, in this here business of marryin', a man kin only take his chances!"

"And a woman, too," sbe agreed.

"Heh? Well, mebby. I guess mebby."

"Yes, indeed!" she asseverated. "Now tell me, Barnaby, when will you bring dear Barnabetta in town to see me? I do so yearn to take her to my heart!"

"She ain't much fur goin'."

"She is a dear little home-body, is she? So devoted to ber *Papa?*"

"I never left ber go on comp'ny."

"You tried so hard to shield her from the pitfalls in the way of the motherless girl? Ah, yes, I see! And now I can relieve you of that care, Barnaby. A mother's watchful eye shall now protect her."

"I tole her that till I 'm oncet settled a'ready, she dare keep comp'ny."

"Innocent pleasures of youth, true. Sbe shall have me to share them with ber, for my beart will ever be young."

"Yes, well, but," said Mr. Dreary dubiously, "if you 'd both go gaddin' how would the work git done?"

"Oh!" laughed Juliet, tapping him with her fan, "you poor, dear men-folks!—*so* helpless without us

Mr. Dreary Proposes

women to make you comfy! You want us clustered close about you all the time, *don't* you?"

Mr. Dreary found it not unpleasant to be purred over like this by the possessor of a big income.

When, in the course of the evening, Juliet took him out to her little dining-room and treated him to delicious cake and root-beer of her own making, his spirits rose even to sportiveness and he made a joke.

"You will come again not *later* than next Saturday evening, won't you?—if you live?" she asked him.

"If I live? Well, I guess I 'll anyways live till I die a'ready!" he playfully returned.

She uttered a genteel little shriek of laughter—whereupon they both laughed until the tears stood in their eyes.

The repast over, Mr. Dreary, unaccustomed to late hours, had to think about getting home.

"Your big clock there, it says only five o'clock—don't it go or whatever?" he inquired, pointing to a grandfather's clock that ornamented one corner of the dining-room.

"Oh, no, it never went since I bought it." She drew her gold watch from her belt and held it out to him. "Ten o'clock. Must you start so early?"

"It takes so long till I 'm home a'ready. But what fur do you keep a clock that won't tell time yet? Better sell it, heh?"

"It's an ancestral heirloom, Barnaby. I paid sixty dollars for it."

Barnabetta

“Sixty dollars yet—fur a clock that ’s not fur use, only fur fancy that way! Yi, yi, yi!” Mr. Dreary shook his head as he rose and followed her trailing skirts into the parlor.

Juliet laughed gaily. “Yes, I do have elegant tastes. It ’s very fortunate, is n’t it, that I have also the wherewithal to indulge them? My tastes are very sensitive.”

“You ain’t used to layin’ by much, I guess?” he cautiously inquired as he picked up his hat from the marble-topped center-table.

“Fortunately, circumstances spare me that sordid necessity,” she returned.

It was with this parting shaft piercing his soul that he left her.

On his homeward ride he felt as though he had been heavily drinking, so insecure seemed the foundations of his being. That a woman so accomplished, so rich, so fashionable, should have consented to marry him as soon as he could be ready to take her to his home; that he, on his part, should have consented to wed a lady of such madly extravagant habits and of such “sensitive tastes,” well, look at it as you would, it was a risky plunge.

Yet he thought, with a cocky pride, of the wonder of his daughter and sons when he should, a few weeks hence, bring this paragon of elegance to Reinhartz Station to preside over his home.

“Talk about your Four Hundred!” he chuckled.

Mr. Dreary Proposes

"It 's good fur her, though, that she 's a-goin' to have a husband to teach her some sense about money," he reflected. "Oncet she 's Mrs. Dreary, she 'll have to git over them sensitive tastes!"

CHAPTER V

THE STEPMOTHER ARRIVES

THREE weeks later the coy bride was brought out to Reinhartz to take her place as mistress of Barnaby Dreary's home.

It had been with scarcely less than her accustomed apathy that Barnabetta had prepared to receive her stepmother. In so far as she was stirred at all by the great event, it was with wonder at the woman, that, of her own choice, she should give up her freedom to come out here to serve her father and his sons.

But from the moment the bride entered the house, the girl's astonishment over her—a woman of a sort so entirely outside her experiences, dressy, sprightly, of a wonderful manner of speech, overwhelmingly friendly—did actually at last rouse her out of herself.

Never before within Barnabetta's memory had any one kissed her. Unacquainted in her circumscribed sphere with such a thing as insincerity, she accepted with the gullibility of a child the woman's lavish endearments. From the instant of that first kiss, given as her stepmother gushingly greeted her, there

The Stepmother Arrives

awakened in Barnabeta's mind, pleasure, wonder, a new-born interest. She hung upon every word "Juliet" spoke, and followed with fascinated eyes every movement she made.

It was five o'clock in the afternoon when the newly-married couple arrived at the plain, comfortable, framehouse, set back a few yards from the village street and adjoining the tin-shop. Supper was served almost immediately and, to honor the occasion, it was set out in the seldom used dining-room.

But when, upon their gathering about the table, Mrs. Dreary saw that no place was laid for Barnabeta, who expected to wait upon them, she simply refused to sit down without her and insisted upon a place being laid beside her own.

She overflowed with approval and delight in everything—the dear, quaint house, her dear "sons and daughter," the delicious supper.

"Ah, this is truly a home to me, a shelter from life's rude vicissitudes!" she said feelingly as, sitting opposite her husband, she viewed his family, the heavy, silent sons, the sweet, shy young girl. "And what is life without a home?"

"And what is home without a Mother?" added Mr. Dreary with what he felt to be great aptness.

"True, Barnaby, love! And in exchange for the home you open to me, I give to you, my dearest and my dears," she said, discriminating between her husband and her adopted olive-branches, "of the rich,

Barnabetta

warm motherhood so long slumbering unawakened in my being!"

Barnabetta, thrilled to the heart by such beautiful words, gazed with glowing eyes upon the plain face at the head of her father's table.

"So long have I been lonely and love-hungry!" said the new wife. "And now to have so *many* dear ones to cherish! Such an abundance of riches!" Her soulful glance moved about upon them all and came back to rest graciously upon Jacob and Emanuel, who stared open-mouthed at such unaccustomed speech—terms of endearment and caresses being unknown among the Pennsylvania Germans.

"Especially," Juliet continued, her jeweled hand patting Barnabetta's shoulder, "*this* dear child. Not only shall we be mother and daughter, my dear; we shall also be little playmates, shall we not?"

"'Playmates?'" Barnabetta questioned, puzzled.

"Even so, my dear. I hope to share not only your girlish griefs, but also your youthful joys."

Jacob, looking scornful, turned his eyes to his plate, and Emanuel followed his example. But to Barnabetta, habituated to somberness in her home, this airy volubility seemed like a breath from heaven.

"Another cup o' coffee!" Jacob gruffly pronounced, shoving his cup across the table to his sister; and Barnabetta rose at once to bring the coffee from the kitchen.

Jacob received it from her without comment, but

The Stepmother Arrives

as she was returning to her own place, Mrs. Dreary, playfully tapping her stepson on the head, prompted him with, "Thank you, little sister! Don't forget the pretty manners, son!"

Jacob flushed and scowled and hung his head low over his plate. But when a moment later Emanuel wanted his cup refilled, it became manifest that the hint given to Jacob had not been lost.

"Saddy,"¹ he awkwardly muttered as he received his coffee.

"Chesterfield!" delightedly exclaimed Mrs. Dreary. "Emanuel, you are a gentleman! Nothing so appeals to me as pretty manners in a man. I was born too late—with my romantic disposition I should have lived in the days of Chivalry."

"Yes, well, but us we 're wonderful common people," Mr. Dreary remarked. "I guess you could tell it at me the first time you seen me, Jool-yet, heh?"

"It was not apocryphal, my love! But at least you did not play the gay deceiver. You revealed the worst at once."

"More bread," Mr. Dreary addressed his daughter, indicating the empty bread-plate with a twirl of his thumb.

"You poor *child!*" Mrs. Dreary called after the girl's departing figure.

"Yes, she could eat more comfortable if she waited till we was through all," said Mr. Dreary.

¹ Thank you.

Barnabetta

“After this,” said his wife, “to avoid the interruption to our table-conversation, we will have the coffee on the table and enough bread cut to last through the repast.”

But the head of the house objected to this. “If you cut so much bread and it ain’t all eat, it wastes still.”

“Better waste bread, dear Husband, than waste that which is of higher worth—our table-conversation; not to speak of the comfort of one of our dear circle.”

Mr. Dreary did not reply. “A body must give her a little more time,” he thought, “to used herself to our common ways.”

After supper he and Emanuel repaired to the tin-shop and Jacob strolled down to the “hotel” to loaf and gossip; and Barnabetta was left alone with the new mistress of the house.

But just before Jacob left, he managed to whisper a word of warning to his sister.

“Don’t you be so dumm as to leave her take you in with all that there guff! She ’s just workin’ you—like what she worked Pop to git him to marry her—such a dried-up old raisin as what *she* is yet! A bed-slat!”

Barnabetta shrank back at such irreverence towards one she felt to be so much above them all. “I ’m wondering,” she said, her quiet gaze upon her brother’s face, “how could such a lady have brang herself to marry Pop.”

The Stepmother Arrives

"She's come to her time of life without ever ketchin' any other fellah, ain't she?" demanded Jacob. "You mind to what I tell you—she's *workin'* you with all that there soft-soap she's spittin' at you!"

Barnabetta turned away. She went back slowly to the dining-room where her stepmother, singing

"In all my dreams I dream of you,"

was briskly clearing off the supper-table.

CHAPTER VI

THE STEPMOTHER STARTS REFORMS

GIVE me an apron, dear child and, working conjointly, we shall soon have all this *débris* out of the way and *then*, my little daughter (ah, how I love to call you my little daughter, you sweet-faced child!) you and I will sit down and have a heart-to-heart talk, shan n't we?"

"I 'm afraid," Barnabetta shyly answered as she produced the apron, "that you 're too fine for common work."

"Oh, my dear," rippled Mrs. Dreary, "all work is noble if executed in a spirit of helpfulness. Shakespeare did not say that, but he might *well* have! Yes, I often have thoughts not unworthy, if I do say it, of the poets. Are you fond of literature, my dear?"

"You mean reading-matter?" Barnabetta asked hesitatingly as they worked together at the kitchen sink. "I love to read, still, when I can get anything to read. But I can't often. Did you—did you bring a book or such a magazine mebbby, in your trunk?" the girl asked with timid eagerness.

"Not in my trunk, my dear. That big box that came out by the stage is packed exclusively with my

The Stepmother Starts Reforms

books—my precious friends! Ah, I could not live without my dear literary loves!”

“That big box is full of *books!*” breathed Barnabetta. “But how did you come by *that* many?”

“My dear, you may find it incredible, but many a time I purchase a literary work in preference to an article of apparel—preferring to endow the mind rather than the *corpus.*”

“You spent the money to buy as many as that whole box-full of books?” repeated Barnabetta wonderingly.

“Yes, and I expect to buy as many more before I die, daughter.”

“Pop won’t favor it,” came involuntarily from Barnabetta. “He’ll be pnt out when he sees how many books you brang already, because he’ll have so afraid I’ll waste my time reading them if they’re around.”

“Waste your time, my child? Time devoted to literary or artistic pursuits is the only time *not* wasted. *This,*” she indicated the sink with a dramatic flourish of her dish-towel, “is wasted time, save as it is indispensable as a foundation to the higher life.”

Barnabetta panned in her rapid work to gaze upon the face of the speaker. “You speak so beautiful!”

“You, I perceive, dear child, are going to appreciate me at my highest worth. Your dear *Papa,* I fear, does not as yet. Few have. Now,” she pronounced, taking off her apron, as the last clean dish

Barnabetta

was put away, "we are free to talk as one woman to another."

"But I have to fetch in the wash, yet, off the lines and feed the chickens and hunt the eggs." -

"Where's Jacob?" demanded Mrs. Dreary.

"He goes, still, to the *hotel* when supper's through."

"What for?"

"Just to sit."

"And Emanuel? He and your father are not both needed at the shop at *this* hour. We'll call Emanuel to take in the wash, feed the fowls, and hunt the eggs."

"But he won't," Barnabetta was moved to one of her rare smiles at the suggestion. "The boys they are used to me doing it."

"It's time they got used to something else, little daughter. Call Emanuel."

Barnabetta, in great uncertainty, went forth to do her bidding. Emanuel, lounging with several men about the front of the shop, came over in astonishment in answer to Barnabetta's beckoning.

"Is the house afire or whatever?" he demanded as he came into the kitchen.

"It's 'whatever,' Emanuel," said Mrs. Dreary. "Kindly bring in the wash, feed the chickens and hunt the eggs. You *sit* so much in that shop that lack of exercise is impairing your complexion and making you dyspeptical. Come, dear daughter, show

The Stepmother Starts Reforms

me over the house," she concluded, hooking her arm through Barnabetta's and leading her away.

"Hi!" called Emanuel when he could get his breath. "What did you say, anyhow?"

Mrs. Dreary paused in the doorway. "I said get an ax and open that wooden box on the porch for me, dear son, and then bring in the laundry, hunt the eggs and feed the live stock."

"Me?"

"You. Unless you 'll summon Jacob from the hotel (observe my pronunciation, please) to do it."

"Is Barnabetta took sick or what?"

"I need her. Hasten, son, before it grows dark."

"I ain't doin' it," Emanuel sullenly affirmed. "I ain't doin' no woman's work."

"Please open the box of books first, dear boy," called Mrs. Dreary as she disappeared from the room, drawing Barnabetta with her.

The latter, knowing that though curiosity might induce Emanuel to open the wooden box, he certainly would not do his sister's chores, and feeling a concern for her chickens, eggs and "wash," went nevertheless with her stepmother.

"I see," said Mrs. Dreary, patting the girl's cheek as they stood in the severely plain "front room," "that we must awaken the dormant æsthetic instinct in our little girl. A wonderful little housekeeper she is; not a speck of dust observable; but the touch of beauty essential to my sensitive taste is lacking."

Barnabetta

The praise of her housekeeping made Barnabetta color with a strange new sense of pleasure. Not since her school-days when Abel Buchter used to praise her good lessons and read her "Compositions" to the whole school, had any one ever given her a word of commendation. It sounded very sweet to the child.

"This room, now," Mrs. Dreary continued, "has possibilities. What a good thing I did not yield to my dear one's importunities that I should sell my own furniture and let him invest the proceeds! I refused to consider doing it until I had first seen how his home was equipped. Well, my piano, my books, my draperies, will transform this into quite a livable apartment. As it is, I could not brook it—could not *brook* it!"

"We don't use it except sometimes on Sundays, or if there was a funeral."

"But we will use it when we've made it usable, dear child."

"A person don't have time, either, to sit much in the front room."

"It is in this room that we shall *live*, my dear—with books, music, conversation. Who are these?"

Mrs. Dreary indicated a photograph of a weird family group on the mantel.

"My mother and her parents and brothers and sisters. My mother was the first one off of that picture to die. The rest are all living yet. I sometimes think—" Barnabetta hesitated.

The Stepmother Starts Reforms

"Yes, my dear?" Mrs. Dreary encouraged her.

"That she was spared a lot. Life is so long," sighed Barnabetta. "And so—so tiresome!"

"You need young company. And frivolity. Yes, *frivolity*—and you are going to have it. I'll take you to town to a moving-picture show."

"But Pop won't leave us go!"

"But he will of course feel perfectly safe about you when you are with *me*, daughter."

"It ain't that—-that he would n't feel safe for me. He would n't leave me let the work."

"But of course we'll do up the work, love, before we go."

"Pop don't favor pleasure-seeking," said Barnabetta, trying gently to convey to the poor lady that she was laboring under a wild delusion as to her spouse.

"Then he need not go with us. We will not force him to enjoy himself if he prefers not to. What room is this?"

They had come up-stairs and had entered a meagerly-furnished bedroom with bare, whitewashed walls.

"This is Pop's bedroom. Yours and his."

"Ah, my dear, you will see how pretty I shall make it with my pink pillow-shams and lambrequins and my bureau ornaments! And you will see how a pretty environment is going to soften the somewhat rude exterior of dear Papa. My love, only one

Barnabetta

towel?" she questioned, pointing to the wash-stand.

"Pop washes down at the pump."

"Where do you keep the towels, dear heart, so that I can help myself and not bother you?"

"There are a few more in the bureau there. I have to use them careful—they wear out so!—and Pop don't like it when I must buy more."

"Never mind, dear, your days for worrying over these degrading trifles are over—I'll take charge of all that now. I see you take it far too seriously."

She opened the bureau-drawer as she spoke and taking out another towel, hung it beside its mate on the rack. "I always require two—one for the face and one for the torso," she pronounced. "Now, then, this next room?"

"This is Jacob's room and this one is Emanuel's," said Barnabetta, leading the way down a white-washed hall and indicating two good-sized, but barren, bedrooms. "And this one is my room."

"And the guest-chamber, my dear?"

"A spare-room?" said Barnabetta. "We have n't one. When each one wants their own room it does take away rooms so fast, ain't?"

"Then we must persuade the two boys to occupy one room and we'll furnish a guest-chamber. I expect often to entertain my Reading friends in my suburban home. Jacob and Emanuel can have separate beds if they so desire, but not separate rooms when there is no guest-chamber."

The Stepmother Starts Reforms

Barnabetta felt appalled at the number of things of which her stepmother seemed ignorant regarding the family into which she had come.

"Pop don't favor comp'ny," she feebly suggested as they now returned to the lower floor. "And the boys mebbly won't feel for rooming together."

"But since we require a guest-chamber, what else is there for the boys to do?"

"You can ask them then, but I'm afraid they won't do it."

"Oh, but I'm sure they're going to be dear good sons to their new Mama! Little gentle sister has spoiled them, I fear! Let us see, now, about the box of books, my dear."

It was as Barnabetta had foreseen—Emanuel had chopped open the wooden box and dragged it into the kitchen, but he had not touched his sister's chores; and the girl, feverishly eager to get at the books, flew to do her unfinished work that she might have, before her father returned from the shop, at least a peep into the coveted treasure which he would be sure to forbid to her the moment he laid eyes upon it.

CHAPTER VII

THE CONFLICT OF WILLS

MR. DREARY'S policy in his new venture of matrimony was to "Go slow."

"I give her her head fur a while yet till she's used a little to me," he told himself. "Then I take the reins!"

When before their marriage she had refused to sell her furniture, he had yielded, because he had not felt it safe at that crisis to insist upon his own way; and he had even allowed the "junk" to be sent, at great expense, out to Reinhartz and set up in his own house. To be sure, she had paid the expense. But as he now looked upon her money as his own, the transaction did, after all, rob him. And good Lord! What she had done to his house!

"A body 'd think, to look around this here house, that he was in the Five and Ten Cent Store yet! You can't stir for fear of knockin' over such an ornament or what—or gettin' tangled up in a 'port-hair' as she calls them rags she's got hangin' to the doorways! Yi, yi, but women are awful silly when you come to think about it!"

He had also yielded to her almost hysterical in-

The Conflict of Wills

sistence that the front room, now a real "parlor," be kept opened up and in use on week-days and that all meals be served in the dining-room, with napkins at every meal. If she wanted to make that much extra work for herself just because she had "tony ways," that was her affair; and the napkins were part of her "junk"—he had not been called upon to supply them. There he *would* have drawn the line.

As for her bookcase full of "such novels and whatever," over which Barnabetta had, during the past week since his wife's advent, wasted time and coal-oil—well, he privately determined that he would, at no distant day, pack the lot of them into a trunk and sell them at the Reading Second-Hand Book Store.

Meantime, though giving in to her in these larger matters, he was taking care that day by day she have her little lesson in adapting herself to *his* point of view. That very first morning after her arrival when she had stopped him as he was going over to the shop, to remind him that he had not yet brought up any coal from the cellar, he had "learned" her.

"I don't do the women's work," he had firmly told her.

"No, but the *men's* work is what you are forgetting, dear love—a few buckets of coal carried up from the cellar. Of course, I know it is only the excitement of our honeymoon that could make you overlook such a thing. Why, you'd never get *over* it if your bride had to carry up a bucket of coal!"

Barnabetta

"I don't do no housework, Jool-yet. I never done any so far and I ain't beginnin' now!"—and before she could reply he had fled.

Then there had been her high-handed proceeding one morning while the "men-folks" were all out of the house, in putting two single beds (part of her property) into Jacob's room and fixing up Emanuel's room for "a comp'ny room."

Emanuel, upheld by his father, had promptly carried back all his clothes to his own room and had been sleeping there ever since. If Jool-yet had a company room, she might be inviting company, which would cost money. So Mr. Dreary stoutly backed his son in his refusal to room with his brother.

She took it all very cheerfully. She did n't "have cross at him."

"To be sure I made certain before I married her that she was nice-dispositioned that way," he complacently told himself, not at all expecting her to resent his "right authority."

He received, however, a genuine shock when on the first wash-day after her arrival, he discovered in the course of the morning, as he glanced from his shop into his back yard, that a hired wash-woman was hanging out the clothes.

"That 's somepin I don't do," he warmly let her know when at noon he went over to his dinner. "Hire the washin' yet, when I have a wife and a growed-up daughter at home! I don't do that there!"

The Conflict of Wills

"Well, then, Husband, we 'll say *I* hired her and let it go at that. I should n't ask you to act against your principles."

"Whether you hired her or me—what 's the difference? I say I won't have it, Jool-yet!"

"Not to argue the matter with you, Barnaby, I have been brought up much too refined for the arduous labor of the Tub."

"Well, Barnabetta ain't; leave *her* do the tub part and you hang out on the line, if that 's more refined!"

"Our little girl, Husband, is quite as delicate-minded as I am. I fear you have never understood her beautiful nature! I cannot permit my daughter to do such coarse, humiliating labor. Rather, Barnaby," she said heroically, "would I do without jewels, art, and literary works and pay the wash-woman myself."

"Well, Jool-yet," he retorted with a dark significance, "you won't git a chanct to pay her wery often! Now," he abruptly added, "fetch in the dinner. It 's gittin' late on me."

"Now, then," he addressed his daughter as they all, except Jacob whose stage-route kept him from the noon meal, gathered about the table, "what was *you* doin' all mornin' if Jool-yet cooked dinner and Emmy Haverstick done the washin', heh?"

But before Barnabetta could speak, her stepmother answered for her. "She did two hours' housework—and took her music lesson!"

Barnabetta

There had been wrought in Barnabetta, during the past week, with its new and wonderful experiences—companionship, affection, and understanding, books and music, not to mention the easing of the heavy burden of work she was used to carrying—a remarkable transformation. Her dull indifference and abstraction were replaced by a gentle animation. Her movements, from being perfunctory, listless, had acquired an elasticity, a grace, that seemed the very expression of youthful hope. She was blooming, lovely.

“*Music lesson, did you say?*” exclaimed Mr. Dreary, recovering from the momentary shock of this communication.

“I am giving her instruction in the rudiments,” answered Mrs. Dreary. “And already I foresee, Barnaby, a beautiful fruition of my hopes for our daughter, though of course her development is as yet in its incipiency. Her progress is such, however, that I shall, before long, have to turn her over to Professor Schmidt at Reading. There, there, Husband, don’t get excited—I ’ll pay for her music lessons!”

“You two foolin’ time at the pie-anner in the morning yet—while a hired person does your work! See here, Barnabetta!” He turned roughly to the girl. “You leave that pie-anner be, do you hear? You have n’t the dare to pound the old box till your work ’s done a’ready after supper! Don’t you leave me ketch you!”

The Conflict of Wills

"Will you have some more of the noodle soup, Husband?" Juliet tenderly interposed. "My chicken noodle soup," she chattered as she refilled his plate from the china tureen in front of her, "is very palatable. So considered by my friends. Don't you find it agreeable, son?" she appealed to Emanuel, who was always too much occupied at the table to be conversational. "There is really a poetic side to cooking," she went on, not waiting for an answer that she knew would not be forthcoming. "A sensitive palate always accompanies refinement of mind. Coarse food I cannot abide. It is the ambition of my life to take a meal at Sherry's. Barnaby, dear, I'll buy you a dress suit and take you to New York and we'll dine at Delmonico's."

"Not if I know it!" retorted Barnaby, noisily busy with his soup.

He had never been a man to bluster in controlling his household. It had not been necessary. And the problem now confronting him, so new in his experience of women, roused in him a cunning rather than the rage his daughter looked for.

"No use sayin' a whole lot," he mused as he ate the good dinner cooked by his wife. "The ready cash she has on hand will soon be *all*; and I'll take good care when her next interest money comes, it don't fall in *her* hands. And then after a bit—I'll 'go slow'—but after she's more used to me, I'll git her to put her capital in my name—so 's she *can't* spend so!"

Barnabetta

After dinner, the men having gone to their work, what was Barnabetta's surprise to hear her step-mother, as she paid the wash-woman, admonish her not to fail to come early the following Monday morning.

"But," Barnabetta reminded her when Emmy Haverstick had gone, "Pop said for us not to hire the wash, Mama!"

"Oh, my dear, you must not take a man's peculiarities too seriously. Now let us get these dishes out of the way and then I've a treat for you."

The treat proved to be a yet more startling proposition than the deliberate disregard of her father's positive prohibition of a wash-woman.

"Now, dearie, the work is all done and you and I are going to have a bit of needed gaiety. We are going to take a country drive."

Barnabetta's eyes shone. "Where are we to get the team, Mama?"

"We'll use that nice little horse of Jacob's that he has bought, my dear."

Barnabetta caught her breath. "We darsent, Mama! He won't even leave Emanuel borrow the loan of it off of him."

"Where does Jacob keep it, my love?"

"He boards it at the livery stable where he hires his stage horses."

"Exactly. We'll use Jacob's horse and I'll hire a buggy."

The Conflict of Wills

"But Jacob ain't here for us to ask him dare we."

"As he necessarily never uses his horse in the daytime, *we* will use it, my dear, whenever we like. Oh, yes, we will!"

"But, Mama, not even when Emanuel offered to *pay* him yet, would Jacob leave him have it. Jacob told him that he saved up to buy that horse and no one dare use it but him. He bought it to take Suse Darmstetter buggy-riding, because Suse would not keep company with any one that could n't take her on a buggy. As soon as he can save enough more he is going to buy his own buggy too."

"Will the female you refer to as 'Suse,' be able, when *married* to Jacob, to induce him to accede to her wishes as now? *That* is the crucial question, the pivotal point. Well, well—that is neither here nor there so far as you and I are concerned, is it, dearie? Come up-stairs now and we 'll dress."

"Mama, we 'd better not risk it!"

"My dear, I paid for the washing of Jacob's weekly laundry and you and I expect to iron it for him. He pays your dear Papa for his board here—but what does he give you and me for all the work we do for him? We are entitled to the use of his buggy. Leave the matter to me!"

Barnabetta, with a sense of excitement utterly new to her, went obediently to change her dress.

"Dear, dear!" Mrs. Dreary shook her head over the girl's poor "best" in the way of clothing. "I

Barnabetta

must take you to town this very week and get you some things—a jacket suit and a silk blouse. You have been too neglectful of yourself, my dear, in your unselfish devotion to the comfort of your Papa and big brothers. A very mistaken policy! Observe, please, that the women whose husbands are most devoted, are the peevish, exacting, selfish women. Here, daughter, let me pin this red ribbon at your throat—a bit of color against the rather gray background of this autumn day!”

At the livery stable Mrs. Dreary selected the better of the two available buggies and gave the order that her “son’s” horse be hitched to it at once.

The stable-man, surprised but unsuspecting, did her bidding.

Ten minutes later, Emanuel Dreary, lounging in front of the tin-shop, was knocked quite silly by the shock of the sight which suddenly met his eyes—a buggy coming up the village street, in which was seated his “high-falutin” stepmother and his sister, the former holding the reins—and *driving Jacob’s horse!*

CHAPTER VII

THE HEAD OF THE HOUSE ACTS

IT was at the livery stable, when Jacob had unhitched his team at the end of his day's route, that, going to inspect his precious possession, the pretty mare he had lately purchased, he saw at once from her condition that she had but just returned from heated exercise, and in angry consternation, he demanded an explanation from the owner of the stable.

"You ain't tellin' me, Jake, that it wasn't by your orders your mare was hitched up fur them two?" the livery man inquired in equal consternation.

"My orders? What orders? What two? What are you talkin' about, Ben Nissley?"

"Your Pop's new Missus and Barnabetta. To be sure I certainly thought, when they said off-hand that way fur your horse to be hitched to my best buggy, that they had got the dare from you!"

"Barnabetta and Pop's wife! They had my horse out! Where to? What fur?"

"Fur such a pleasure-ride, Jake, so far forth as I could tell. I charged 'em fifty cents fur the buggy and they said—or Missus *she* said—they 'd be hirin'

Barnabetta

it, now, reg'lar twicet a week—with your horse! I never conceited they 'd have the cheek to be talkin' like that unbeknownst to *you!*—though it certainly did wonder me at you—fur all, your mare does need more exercise than what she gits, still, and your stepmom she 's a good driver all right and you have no need to—”

“You had n't the dare to give 'em my horse, Ben Nissley!” Jacob, white with anger, declared chokingly. “Them two usin' *my horse* yet! I 'd take her to another livery right aways this minute a'ready if I otherwise could! You ain't to be trusted with her! You ain't got no right to charge me fur keepin' her when that 's the *way* you keep her—hire her out to women!”

“I did n't hire her out, Jake—they did n't pay me fur her! I tell you I thought you sent 'em. 'To be sure it was n't anyways *like* you—but then I *had* been tellin' you that that there mare needed more exercise than what she got and I seen your stepmom she knowed how to drive all right—”

“Aw, dry up! Look-a-here! The next time anybody comes 'round here fur my horse, you kin 'phone fur the constable and arrest 'em! See? Now you mind to it!”

And Jacob flung himself, boiling with indignation, out of the stable and strode towards home.

The odors of the delicious supper that was just being carried into the dining-room as he entered the

The Head of the House Acts

cozy kitchen—fried chicken, waffles, savory coffee—did not allay his just wrath.

“Say!” he violently addressed his stepmother who was at the stove baking waffles. “What do you mean by somepin like this, anyhow, heh? You leave my—”

“But, son, I ’m about to buy a dear little buggy, since I reside in the suburbs, and you may use it to take out the person always referred to as ‘Suse Darmstetter’—in exchange for my use of your horse. That will save you fifty cents a ride—the price I paid this afternoon and—”

“I tell you, you leave my horse *be!* You ain’t got no right to her! I tole Ben Nissley if ever he left you touch her ag’in I ’d leave *him* know! And I tell you right now, if—”

“Jacob, dear boy!”—she suddenly pointed her waffle ladle at him and a drop of scalding batter fell on his hand.

“Ouch!” he bawled, rushing to the sink to wash it off—and Juliet, pushing the waffle-iron to the back of the stove, ran to his assistance with a bottle of peroxide and some sanitary cotton which, by a strange coincidence, she had right at hand. The burn was painful enough to make him submit to her ministrations, which she performed so capably and sympathetically that by the time they all sat down to supper, the young man’s fury had been reduced to a mere sulk.

Barnabetta

Barnabetta looked on wonderingly at her step-mother's management of her brother. So *this* was why, before Jacob had come home, she had been sent up-stairs to fetch the peroxide—"Mama" *intended* to burn Jacob!—had deliberately planned to divert his rage by giving him something else to think about. What a wonderful woman!

But in the end, Barnabetta sadly reflected, the men of the family would certainly bring her, wonderful though she was, to submit in all things to them. Her father would, she knew, find *some* means to put a stop to his wife's reckless spending of money. Yet here was poor Mama planning to buy a buggy and have a bath-room put into the house!

The silence during the supper was portentous. Even Juliet was a bit affected by it and did not chatter quite so volubly as usual. Her wheedling and blandishments, she was beginning to realize, could not rouse these stolid men out of the deep rut in which they lived.

Barnabetta knew, of course, that her father would not ignore the afternoon's high-handed proceeding, but was reserving what he had to say until the boys were out of the way. His relations with his wife were still too new to admit of his admonishing her before his sons who were not also hers. Had she been their own mother or had she been with them longer, such delicate restraint would not have been exercised.

The Head of the House Acts

"You do the supper dishes by yourself this evening, Barnabetta," Mr. Dreary ordered his daughter as soon as the boys had left the table. "I got to speak somepin to Jool-yet. But here!"—he held up his hand to stop her a moment as she was about to carry some dishes to the kitchen. Pushing his chair back from the table, he leaned forward, planted his hands on his knees and fixed his little gleaming eyes upon the girlish figure before him.

"Once fur all, Barnabetta, no more gallivantin' without you ast me first if you dare! I ain't leavin' you run in the daytime when you had ought to be at home here tendin' to the work."

"But, Barnaby, the work is not neglected," spoke up Mrs. Dreary. "Name one thing, if you can, that is not done for your comfort and convenience."

"Yes, when you pay out money to hired people yet, to do what *you 'd* ought to do, then to be sure you git time a-plenty to run. Mind you, Jool-yet, if that there Emmy Haverstick shows up here next Monday, you 'll git a shamed face in front of her, fur I 'll chase her *off!* Barnabetta, you mind to what I say—you stay at home in the daytime and tend to the work!"

He turned to Juliet, and Barnabetta proceeded to the kitchen.

"Set down onect, Jool-yet. Barnabetta will do all."

"Oh, no, I can't think of permitting her to do it

Barnabetta

all. I can hear you as I work," she answered, bustling about to clear off the table.

"Set down!" he commanded.

"Have n't time, dearie—*tempus fugit*, as Emerson aptly says. Run along and amuse yourself until I am at leisure for conversation. Quick, quick!—or I might spill some gravy on you!" she cried, holding the bowl so near his head that he dodged it precipitately.

She flew to the kitchen and began to clatter the dishes so noisily that "conversation" was indeed impossible.

It was not until they had "retired" (Juliet never went to bed, she genteely retired) that the bewildered husband had a chance to relieve himself of what he had to say.

"It 's well you got married," he began when they were at last alone in their room.

"It 's well *you* did, Husband! I 'm not so sure about myself!" she coquettishly retorted.

"Fur the reason that you needed a man to manage your money!"

"Oh, I did n't marry for that. I always have been and always *shall* be able to manage my worldly goods, Barnaby. Note the emphasis, please—always *shall* be."

"You don't manage 'em. You squander 'em. I was just countin' together how much you spent yet since you 're here a'ready, and it mounts up some-

The Head of the House Acts

pin awful! Yes, it's good you have, now, a man to take care of the money!"

"But, Barnaby, I never touch my capital. Of course I've always spent all my income."

"All! You spent a thousand dollars a year all on yourself?" he demanded. "I just suspicioned as much! Yi, yi, yi! Think how much more you'd have a'ready if you'd *saved* every year out of that thousand dollars!" he lamented.

"Oh," she laughed in her sprightly way, "you are so humorous, Barnaby! Don't you worry, honey, about my finances," she said soothingly. "I wouldn't *think* of bothering you with the care of them, though of course I appreciate your chivalry, Barnaby, in desiring to save me the trouble. Only I don't regard it as a trouble, love. Why, I never had a debt in my life."

"Debt! Debts yet! I would guess anyhow not! Well, after this when your interest money comes in, I invest it again at a good interest. You ain't to fling money 'round as if you was one of them Rockefellers or whoever. Yes, I tell you what I done to-day—with the interest money that come this morning, in the mail."

"Oh!" she cried, "it came? I was looking for it. But why didn't you tell me before? You have n't mislaid the check, have you?"

"I ain't in the habit of mislayin' checks fur three hundred and fifty dollars!"

Barnabetta

“Well, where is it?”

“I ’ll tell you what I done with it. I sent it right back to the lawyer and tole him to add it on to your capital and leave it draw such compound interest.”

Juliet turned slowly from the bureau where she was taking down—or more strictly *off*—her hair, and looked at her husband earnestly.

“Unknown to me, you sent back my check to my lawyer for reinvestment?”

“That ’s what I done!”

“But I need it. I am nearly out of money.”

“Well, when you ’re out of money, you can’t anyhow waste it. You can’t go takin’ our Jacob’s horse off with a hired buggy; you can’t cut up *no didos!*”

Juliet looked at him for a moment longer. Then, turning back to the bureau, and beginning softly to hum,

By the blue Alsatian Mountains
Dwelt a maiden wondrous fair.

—she proceeded very deliberately and thoughtfully to take off the rest of her hair.

CHAPTER IX

A DOMESTIC LULL

THE customary sprightliness of Mrs. Dreary's demeanor was during the week that followed, varied by periods of silent abstraction. She and Barnabetta remained quietly at home, attending so closely to their household tasks that Mr. Dreary complacently decided his troubles were now overcome and he could settle down with a peaceful mind to the enjoyment of hoarding up his wife's interest.

"Now I did n't think she 'd take it that quiet, the first time I held hack her interest money, her hein' so used to handlin' it fur herself," he mused as he worked in his shop. "She certainly is easy-dispositioned that way. To be sure if she wanted, she could make me a lot of trouhle yet. But it seems she ain't a-goin' to try to. After a while I guess I kin easy git her to sign over her capital to me, to take care of fur her."

It was Mr. Dreary's honest opinion that for a married woman to have control of money was next thing to indecent.

Barnabetta, too, decided, as she and Mrs. Dreary worked together day by day, that at last her step-

Barnabetta

mother was coming to see she must submit to the inevitable.

Yet the two women were by no means dull. Barnabetta had never in her life been, as now, cheerful, interested, happy. And Mrs. Dreary, except for those occasional long spells of abstraction, was quite as chirpy, as voluble, and as artistic as ever.

It seemed so strangely beautiful to Barnabetta to feel herself an object of constant concern, of deep interest, to one of her own household; to have any one in the world anxious to give her pleasure, to make her happy. All the unexpressed emotion and fire of her girlhood went forth, in these days, to her beloved stepmother.

Jacob and Emanuel, recognizing quickly their father's growing ascendancy over his wife, soon began to make demands upon her very much as they had always done upon their sister.

"I feel fur eatin' cheese-omelet fur my supper to-night," Jacob stated to her one morning as he was leaving for his stage-route.

"But cheese-omelet, son, does not find favor with any one of the fsmily but you and me. So, as I'm having sauerkraut for supper, I have n't time to-day to make the omelet especially for you. Some other day when I'm not so busy."

"It makes nothing if the others *don't* favor it. I want some fur my supper. Barnabetta always made me what I ast fur."

A Domestic Lull

"All right, you shall *have* your nice, palatable cheese-omelet—if, Jacob, you 'll be a good boy and bring up a bucket of coal before you go."

"That ain't my work," growled Jacob. "And I have the right to have what I ast fur at my meals. I pay my board, don't I?"

"Yes, son, you pay your Papa for your food, but neither you nor he nor Emanuel pay your little sister and me for the work we do for you. So," she added gaily, "bring up a bucket of coal and you 'll get your omelet."

"You see that you make me my omelet!" Jacob retorted as he strode out of the kitchen and went straight off to the livery stable.

It was on that very same day that Emanuel brought his stepmother a pair of his trousers to be pressed.

"But, my dear boy," she protested, "take them to a tailor. That is not a woman's work!"

"Barnabetta always ironed my pants for me. Here," he flung the trousers to his sister, "you do it if she 's too weak—or mebbly too tony!"

"No, daughter," interposed Mrs. Dreary, "you can't do it unless—" she tried her blandishments also on Emanuel—"brother brings up a bucket of coal for us."

"It ain't my work to carry the coal."

"Then, dear son, it is not sister's work to iron your trousers—don't call them 'pants.'"

"You have them pants ironed till I get home

Barnabetta

a'ready," he ordered Barnabetta, "or I'll tell Pop on you."

When he had gone, Barnabetta came and stood before Juliet, who was at the kitchen table paring apples for dumplings.

"I'd better do it, Mama. It's better to iron the trousers than to hear them scold; and Pop—father," she corrected herself, "is getting restless anyhow at me not beginning to keep company with Abel Buchter now that he has you here to keep house. If he gets cross at me he might say I *have* to sit up with Abel."

"Abel Buchter is a nice young man, my dear, but not nearly nice enough for my daughter! I have far other plans for you, my child. Very well," she nodded, "it's a choice of two evils—iron the trousers and make the cheese-omelet, or keep company with Abel Buchter. We'll choose the lesser evil; a merely temporary concession until—" she closed her lips and resumed her paring.

Barnabetta went across the kitchen to put two irons on the stove.

"I shall iron the trousers, dear," said Mrs. Dreary. "You shall not strain your young back with such work. Dear me, how you have *needed* a mother to look after you! Barnabetta, child, how did you ever do all this work by yourself?"

"It was very hard," Barnabetta answered with a long breath. "I got up, still, at four o'clock to get out my washing Mondays. And sometimes I'd iron

A Domestic Lull

till ten o'clock at night. It made me feel so dumm! I never had any thoughts. It seems to me, Mamma, since you come, as if I'm just waking up out of sleep!"

"Yes—yes," Mrs. Dreary returned, looking at the girl fondly, "my efforts are hearing a beautiful fruition!"

When that evening Jacob and Emanuel found that their orders had been carried out, they expressed their appreciation, in the days that followed, by yet more aggressive demands—most of which were meekly obeyed.

It was one evening towards the end of that week of close and hard application to their household tasks, that Mrs. Dreary ventured to request Mr. Dreary to give her some money.

"You tell me what you want it fur," was his ready response.

"Suffice it to say, love, that I am out of money—a circumstance quite isolated in my experience."

She was in the kitchen mixing batter for the morrow's buckwheat cakes and Mr. Dreary, seated near the stove, had been reading the weekly newspaper for which he subscribed. The boys were out and Barnabetta was at the piano laboriously practising finger exercises.

"When you spend my money, Jool-yet, I'm to know what it's spent fur."

"But fie, dear Husband, what impertinent curiosity! My dear, for the sake of argument—merely for



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Barnabetta

that—let me ask you a pivotal question—namely:—do you think you owe me nothing for the work I do here for you and your sons?”

“What you *got* to have, to be sure that I ’ll buy you.”

“My ideas and yours as to what my requirements are, may differ, Barnaby. Certainly refined tastes like mine are not cheap.”

“What do you want to buy?”

“Well, in the first place, Barnabetta sorely needs clothing.”

“Leave *her* come and ast fur ’em.”

“She is shamefully shabby, Barnaby. She has n’t a thing fit to wear to town.”

“She ’s not to go to runnin’ to town. That I won’t have. So I guess her clothes will do yet a while.”

“No, they *won’t* do!”

“She ain’t got no refined tastes like yourn. And she ain’t fancy.”

“I tell you, Barnaby, she must have some clothes.”

“How much would it come to?”

“Not *less* than twenty dollars.”

Barnaby’s feet fell with a thud from the stove where they were propped. “Twenty dollars yet! Huh!” He gave a short, amused grunt. “Do you think I ’m Carnegie, or who?”

“I, too, need—let me see—well, some slippers.”

“That kin wait yet a while till I go to town oncet. I kin fetch you then a pair out mebbly.”

A Domestic Lull

She gave a little shriek of laughter. "Fancy my wearing slippers of *your* selection, you esthetic creature! Well," she concluded quite cheerfully, "you refuse, then, to give me any money?"

"You ain't proved to me you have to have some."

"The proof lies in the fact that I have none."

"That suits *me*; fur if you had, you 'd spend."

"Naturally. What is money? A 'medium of exchange.' Well, well, I shan't argue with you—shan't argue with you at all, foolish man. Run away now—I need the front of the stove here, to set this batter to rise."

Mr. Dreary rose obediently and strode towards the back stairs opening from the kitchen.

"When you can prove to me you *need* somepin," he paused to repeat at the foot of the steps, "somepin I can't git fur you some chance time I am in town, why, then, I 'll *give* you what you got to have."

"Thank you, Husband!"

"Come on up to bed, then, when you 're through all. And tell Barnabetta to come along too—you and her wastes too much coal-oil."

For answer, Juliet broke into song, her warbling and trilling of the lines,

Heart of my heart, I'm pining for you,

following poor Barnaby until he had closed his bedroom door.

CHAPTER X

MRS. DREARY DEALS WITH THE SITUATION

IT was on Saturday night that Mr. Dreary had refused his wife money; but never had he known her to be in higher spirits than during all the following day. Scarcely indeed could she repress herself within the bounds deemed at Reinhartz a seemly demeanor for the Sabbath; her sprightliness bordered upon desecration of the Day.

"Mama, shall we walk out to Emmy Haverstick's," Barnabetta asked on Sunday evening, "and tell her she's not to come to wash to-morrow? You know she thinks she is to."

"Well, so she is to, dear."

"But if you have no money to pay her, Mama? And father will chase her off if she comes."

"Leave it to me, daughter. Don't worry your dear heart about it."

"But," Barnabetta pleaded, "it might drive father to make me keep company with Abel. It would go harder than ever *now* for me to get married."

"Why, lambie?"

"Because *you* are here! I could n't live away from you, Mama!" came from Barnabetta involuntarily,

Mrs. Dreary Deals with the Situation

while a deep color dyed her face at such unwonted expression of feeling.

A sudden light flashed in the eyes of the older woman and Barnabetta saw that they glistened with quick tears, while her bosom swelled and fell with deep emotion. She could not answer the girl—she turned away abruptly and walked out of the room.

It was with an uncomfortable misgiving that Barnabetta opened her eyes on Monday morning. That the day would bring forth trouble for her father's wife was the apprehension uppermost in her thoughts.

But Mrs. Dreary's gaiety of the day before seemed in no wise diminished this morning as she and Barnabetta together got the breakfast. By the time Mr. Dreary and the boys came down to the dining-room at a quarter past six, Emma Averstick had nearly all the white laundry hanging out to dry.

"You and Barnabetta was smart this morning," Mr. Dreary remarked approvingly, as a glance from the dining-room window revealed the line of clothing stretched across the "yard." "I did n't hear you git up so early."

"How doth the little busy bee improve each shining hour!" chirped Mrs. Dreary. "Here's your coffee, Husband."

"Say!" spoke up Emanuel, "make fried chicken fur supper."

"Certainly, son, if you will kill and clean the fowls."

Barnabetta

"See me!" scoffed Emanuel.

"Barnabetta or I will mind the shop for you while you do it."

"Yes, I guess!"

"I have never put to death a hapless, helpless chicken in my life and never shall—though I 'm not above eating it when another does the sanguinary deed."

"Barnabetta she 's used to it," said Jacob. "I feel fur chicken, too, fur my supper."

"Barnabetta used to it? She will tell you far otherwise, won't you, sister? Only she never speaks for herself, that 's the trouble. No, she must not ever again so outrage her feelings. So, boys, if together you 'll behead and denude the chickens, you shall have the desired supper."

"If there ain't Emmy Haverstick out there hangin' clothes!"

It was Emanuel who blurted it out. The shock of it to Mr. Dreary, as one look towards the window confirmed Emanuel's announcement, made his brain swim, so confident had he been that Juliet was now entirely acquiescent.

"Yes," cried Mrs. Dreary happily, "an excellent laundress! I think, daughter," she addressed Barnabetta, "she will be entirely through by ten A. M., which will enable us to get some of the ironing done this morning and thus give us time for a refreshing little jaunt this afternoon."

Mrs. Dreary Deals with the Situation

"You ain't got no money!" pronounced Mr. Dreary thickly when he could get his breath to speak, as he rose heavily from the table, "to pay Emmy Haverstick with! Now I'll show you oncet, Jool-yet, if I mean it when I speak!"

He strode from the room, followed by a tender admonition from his wife not to get his feet wet in the grass if he were going out to the laundress.

While he was gone, she kept up a fire of sparkling chatter, in spite of the solemn silence with which all her remarks were met.

In a very few minutes Mr. Dreary returned—a look of stubborn satisfaction having replaced his apoplectic chagrin—and reseated himself at the table.

"I chased her straight home! And yous two," with sharp glances towards his wife and daughter, "will git at and finish that there wash!"

"Oh, but, Husband," cried Juliet, "what a laugh these simple rural villagers will have at your expense!"

"At *yourn!*" he corrected her. "I tole her *I* did n't hire her and she was n't to work here at my place unlest *I* hired her—and now she should take herself right off, fur you had n't no money to pay her and I was n't payin' a person I did n't hire!"

"You sent her away without any remuneration for what she had done this morning? But it is the law, you know, Barnaby, that labor must be paid."

"Well," he admitted, "I give her a quarter fur

Mrs. Dreary Deals with the Situation

what she done a'ready, but I put it plain that if she done any more work 'round this place she 'd do it fur nothin'! So she ain't likely to come ag'in no matter how much you run after her. You see, Jool-yet, I ain't to be worked like this here! You don't know me yet! You and Barnabetta is going to do up the rest part of that there wash! Do you hear me, Barnabetta?" he sharply demanded of her.

"Of course she hears you, dear, and very interesting conversation it is, too. Is your coffee palatable?"

"And, Barnabetta," he commanded the girl's attention, ignoring his wife's inquiry, "I don't give you dare to go runnin' any this after. You understand. You darsent!"

"Unfortunately the poor child does understand your peculiar style of speech, Barnaby, though I'm sure I wish she didn't, for it is so regrettably far from good English! 'Go runnin'!' " she repeated derisively.

"Whether it's English or whether it's Dutch, she'd better mind to it, that's all!" he commanded as, having swallowed his coffee, he again rose.

No sooner had he and the boys gone than Mrs. Dreary flew to the door of the cellar where, according to previous arrangement, Emmy Haverstick had betaken herself to await developments.

"Come here, Emmy," called Juliet. "Now, then," she stopped her half-way up-stairs, "as to the rest of the laundry, just take out my things and Barnabetta's,

Mrs. Dreary Deals with the Situation

carry them home with you, wash them and bring them back this evening, when I shall adequately compensate you. Leave the men's things exactly where they are—on the cellar floor."

"Mama," pleaded Barnabetta, "leave *me* finish all, won't you?"

"Daughter," said Juliet solemnly, "Emmy shall wash *our* clothing and the rest shall lie where it now is, until your father shall send for Emmy to come and finish it. Let us say no more about it."

The monotony of Mr. Dreary's soldering and hammering that morning in his shop was varied by constant excursions to the window overlooking the backyard, across which stretched the wash-line.

He presently contemplated with satisfaction his wife's wiry figure flitting about to take from the line the "white pieces" when they were dry. But his satisfaction was turned to annoyance when, as the morning moved on, neither she nor Barnabetta came forth to hang up the "colored wash." What could they mean by being so late with this second stage of the job? Why, if a rain came up or the sun got behind a cloud, the clothes wouldn't get dry that day!

By eleven o'clock, as there was still no sign of the work getting done, he could stand it no longer, but strode over to the house to find out what was the matter.

"Barnabetta!" he shouted as he did not find her

Barnabetta

in the kitchen. There was no response; the house was silent. He ran down into the cellar, but no one was there, and the "wash" was lying where Emmy Haverstick had left it.

Going up-stairs again, he at last found his wife in the dining-room setting the table for dinner.

"Where 's Barnabetta at?" he demanded angrily.

"Barnabetta? Where is she? Let me see—oh, yes! She 's gone to town."

"What did you say?"

"She took the—at least I think perhaps she did—eleven o'clock car. That is to say, I hope she caught it, though I can't affirm it positively."

"Town! Barnabetta 's went to town! After what I spoke to her!"

"Don't be anxious about her—I expect to go in myself after dinner and I shall bring her safely home again to her fond family!"

"You stand up and tell me to my face she 's went to town when I tole her she darsent? And the wash layin' down there! Where did she git the *money* anyhow?"

"I advanced it to her. You can pay me back when convenient."

"You gev it to her! Where did you git it? Did n't you tell me you was out of money? Do you tell *lies* yet?"

"Under some circumstances, dear, prevarication is

Mrs. Dreary Deals with the Situation

sometimes resorted to on a higher moral plane than would be the truth under the same—”

“Where did you get some money if you *was* out of money?” he harshly interrupted.

“Oh, fie, you must not ask such personal questions! Run back to your shop, lambie, you hinder me.

Lost! The golden minutes!
Sixty diamond seconds!

sings one of our poets. Browning, possibly, or maybe Margaret Sangster. I want to get done early to go to town.”

“And leave that there wash 'ayin' down the cellar!” gasped the infuriated man.

“Well, mine and Barnabetta's are not there; the laundress took them home with her.”

Mr. Dreary sank into a chair. “Took yourn and Barnabetta's! And mine and the boys' you left layin'! Who's a-goin' to *do* ourn then, heh?”

“That 's what I 'm wondering, Barnaby, inasmuch as you sent away the only available laundress in Reinhartz Station. You 'll have to settle it, now, as best you can.”

“I 'll learn Barnabetta when she 'gits home oncet! She 's been actin' up ever since you come! Now today she 's went *too* far! When she 's livin' in my house she 'll *obey* to me! Oncet fur all, when she comes home she 's a-goin' to git learnt!”

“‘Fathers provoke not your children to wrath,’

Barnabetta

saith the Scriptures. No parents ever had a more dutiful, lovely daughter than ours, Barnaby."

"Yes, till *you* come! Now she 's gittin' spoilt fur me somepin fierce. But I 'll put a stop to that!"

"But I thought I explained to you last Monday, Husband, that Barnabetta and I will not do your washing. Indeed, I may as well state to you now that I will not do any man's housekeeping for my mere board and lodg'ing. I must have adequate compensation for my services."

"You talk like as if you was hired! Ain't it a wife's *dooty* to do the housework?"

"Not without adequate compensation, justly proportionate to the husband's means."

"Aw—stop slingin' big words! What I want to know is, where did you git some more money?"

"Not from you, dear."

Here the clock struck twelve and Emanuel coming in from the shop, Mrs. Dreary went out to the kitchen to bring the dinner from the stove, while Mr. Dreary bitterly related to his son the heavy, tragic fact that his wife and daughter refused to "wash" for him and the boys.

"It will seem odd to you, Emanuel," smiled his stepmother as the three of them sat down to the table, "to have to *pay* some one for doing what sister has always done for you without dreaming of receiving any compensation! All wrong, all wrong, you naughty men! You should have taken far better care

Mrs. Dreary Deals with the Situation

of her. Now that *I* have charge of her, she 's going to have her chance!"

"This here ends it!" reaffirmed Mr. Dreary. "She keeps comp'ny and gits married or either she goes to Reading and takes a job. I ain't keepin' two idle women! And you, Jool-yet, you fooled me when you sayed now your money 's all! Well, wait till it is all oncet and I 'll take care you don't git hold of no more! It can't go *long* now till what you had is all, and then you 'll have to quit this crazy actin'! Yes, any one kin see how bad it goes when women has the handlin' of money!"

"I want my shirts washed and ironed!" Emanuel stated threateningly.

"Of course you do, Emanuel. I think *Benny* Hav-erstick will do them for you if you carry them to her. A nice walk for you; only a mile out the pike, I think. A very good thing, too, for you and Jacob and Papa to learn the financial value of domestic labor. You will find, when you come to pay others, that it is worth rather more than what Barnabetta has received for it!"

Meantime, while this conversation was going on, Barnabetta, hiding in her bedroom just over the dining-room, whither she had been despatched by her stepmother on the approach of her father, could hear, through the register in the floor, every word spoken in the room below. She waited in momentary dread lest her father, provoked too far, should rise up and

Barnabetta

do what she feared he would not scruple to do—use brute force in compelling obedience from his wife. It was not for herself that she was afraid. Not since her childhood had she known the sense of fear, so stultified had she become to either pain or joy. Her nearest approach to suffering had been her sensitive shrinking from the brutality which men seemed to her to embody. But now that, at the touch of kindness and affection, her soul was awakening, she was learning the meaning of suffering in its keenest form—the dread, the pain, of seeing a beloved one hurt.

She marveled at her father's continued forbearance with his wife, though she could see it was in part due to the fact that he felt her still to be a comparative stranger to him and that her "high education" and what Jacob sneeringly called her "tony ways," kept him in awe of her. She did not realize, however, that by something other than all these things was he held in check; by that which always cowed a bully—her fearlessness.

But of one thing Barnabetta was certain. Whatever considerations restrained her father in his dealings with his wife, there existed none that could withhold his hand from enforcing obedience where his daughter was concerned. His threats with regard to herself were not mere words. He would, without doubt, carry them out (as he had affirmed he would) that very night.

CHAPTER XI

A JAUNT TO TOWN

THE moment Mr. Dreary and Emanuel were gone, Mrs. Dreary ran up to Barnabetta's hiding-place.

"As I told Papa you were in town, you must put me in the right, dear, by *going* to town. We will buy a coat-suit for you this afternoon. Get ready at once, daughter."

Barnabetta had reached the stage, now, where without questioning she acquiesced to any proposition her stepmother might make. How, without any money, they were to get to town and buy a coat-suit; why they should recklessly force her father's threat to make her "keep company" with Abel Buchter; how she could hope to escape dire penalties for such open disobedience—these questions passed through her mind only to be set aside to await developments.

Indeed, so little did they trouble her that she was able to extract from this rare experience of an afternoon in town almost as keen a pleasure as she was coming to know in the books over which she now pored night after night. The shops, the new blue cloth suit, the ice-cream soda and finally the picture show, were

Barnabetta

all an intoxication of dissipation. Come what might, she had had her one great fling, and it was worth any price she might have to pay at her father's hands.

"A little youthful gaiety, daughter, is what you need to bring you into tune with life's music," Mrs. Dreary assured her as they sipped their ice-cream sodas.

"Before you came," smiled Barnabetta happily, "I was so dumm, I never even *wanted* pleasure."

Their first call in town had been at a lawyer's office where Mrs. Dreary's colloquy with the lawyer had revealed to Barnabetta that her stepmother had previously written to him countermanding Mr. Dreary's instructions as to the disposal of her "interest-money" and ordering that hereafter this interest should not be sent to her by mail, but held for her at this office until called for by herself.

They went next to a bank where Barnabetta saw with awe fifty dollars counted out into her stepmother's hands. She felt apprehensive, as they left the bank, lest a brigand waylay and knock them down, seize the vast sum and make away with it.

"You see, my love," Mrs. Dreary explained during an intermission at the picture show, "your dear Papa is so unaware of any other view of a woman and a wife than his own weird view, that it never occurred to him my lawyer might not recognize my husband's authority to dispose of my money. Barnaby is lamentably unenlightened as to the laws of

A Jaunt to Town

Pennsylvania relative to a wife's rights in her own property. Were he familiar with these laws he would disapprove of them. But I," she added, "would never have married in a state where the law gave my husband control of my property—if indeed there is any longer in America so uncivilized a state. Poor Barnaby merely wasted a two-cent stamp in returning my check; and a sheet of paper, also, in writing out his instructions to my lawyer; a waste which I am sure will hurt him!"

"Mama," Barnabetta now ventured to ask the question which ever since her father's marriage had puzzled her, "why did you marry father?"

"My dear," Mrs. Dreary readily answered, "I wanted something to love, to cherish. You will say, and rightly, that your dear father was not an especially endearing object. But it was not *he* whom I hoped to cherish. My dear, it was the too long repressed mother-yearning in me that demanded expression. More than for anything else in life I longed for a daughter. In short, it was for *you*, dear child, that I married Barnaby Dreary. And need I tell you how much more beautiful than my dreams has been the fruition of my hopes?"

To Barnabetta the realization that she meant to her father's wife all that this dear mother meant to *her*, thrilled her, made life seem full to overflowing and precious beyond belief.

So illumined was her young face by the light from

Barnabetta

within that it transformed her as completely from the listless, dreary maiden she had been, as did the tailored suit and new hat she wore home alter past recognition her figure and general aspect. So changed was she, in fact, that Abel Buchter, seated opposite and behind her in the car going out to Reinhartz, at five o'clock, entirely failed, during several minutes' contemplation of the attractive-looking girl across the aisle, to recognize her—and when he suddenly did so, the shock of it came perilously near to bringing a shout from his lips. He flushed hotly and for an instant his head swam apoplectically.

When after a few minutes his blurred vision cleared, he scarcely knew whether delight or chagrin were his dominant emotions; it was, of course, pleasant to see Barnabetta looking so happy and dressed "so stylish" that he had mistaken her for "such a swell townner"; but it was at the same time alarming to find her thus radiant quite independently of *him*; for his dream of years had been that he might be the fairy prince to bring about just this very transformation in her.

"I can't believe it's *her* lookin' that tony!" he muttered to himself ruefully. "Why, with these new clothes she's got on she might be passed off for anybody at all! Now wouldn't a fellah be proud to have his wife looking that refined!"

He wondered what could be the explanation of all these unprecedented circumstances? What kind of a specimen of stepmother was this that, so far from

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trying to "get the better" of her grown stepdaughter, went about with her "that friendly"; took her "pleasure-seeking" as never in her life had she been permitted to go; togged her out in new clothing; caused the expression of her face to change so wonderfully as Barnabetta's had changed in the past few weeks?

"Is the old maid as good-hearted as she left on to be then? And is it *her* cash that's fitting out Barnabetta like this, or has she got such a pull on Barnaby Dreary?"

The appearance of the ladies was indeed so elegant that Abel felt abashed at the idea of accosting them. To feel abashed was a novel sensation to Abel, accustomed as he was to being the social and intellectual Beau Brummel of Reinhartz. And to feel backward before little, overworked Barnabetta, his one-time pupil, and before that lanky spinster whom Barnaby Dreary had married! Impatient with himself, he forced himself across the aisle to the seat in front of them, stumbling into it so awkwardly that he almost precipitated himself into Mrs. Dreary's lap.

"Ach, you must please excuse me—I overstepped my ankle yet!" he apologized, blushing furiously as he addressed them over the back of the seat. "I was so surprised to see you *going* for once, Barnabetta."

"I don't wonder it made you stumble!" gaily retorted Mrs. Dreary, while Barnabetta smiled on him with a happy friendliness never before bestowed upon

Barnabetta

him by her. "And now," continued Mrs. Dreary, "that she has made the break, she 'll astonish you yet further, Mr. Buchter, by her 'going,' as you quaintly call it."

"'Quaintly?' I did n't know I talked 'quaint,'" said Abel, on his mettle to show this fine-spoken woman, in Barnabetta's presence, that he could hold his own with educated people. "To be sure, I know I speak much more correct than most around here, seeing I had a year at Normal School. I never spoke incorrect grammar hut twice yet, since I grad-yated, and those two times I knew it as quick as I done it."

"Indeed?" commented Mrs. Dreary sarcastically.

"Yes, indeed. I guess you could easy see it at me that I'm better educated than some at Reinhartz. I write pieces for the newspapers, too, sometimes—such a weekly letter, you mind of, to *The Reading Eagle*."

"Abel," said Barnabetta, "you ought to stop in some time and see all Mama's hooks! I did n't know there *were* that many hooks! I'm reading them, every one, in the evenings when I get time."

"What are some of the titles?" asked Abel, assuming an intellectual frown.

"Augusta Evans' works, Hall Caine's, Myrtle Reed's, E. P. Roe's,—"

"Such novels, you mean? Better he reading instructive works, Barnabetta. Novels are fakes—

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that's what novels are—fakes. I read four or five or so, a'ready, so I know."

"Well," said Mrs. Dreary loftily, "we have also on our shelves Macaulay's *England*, Gibbon's *Rome* (she pronounced it Jibbon), Shakespeare Complete. You'll hardly say they are not instructive works, Mr. Buchter?"

"Yes, Shakespeare Complete," repeated Barnabetta breathlessly.

"Shakespeare?" also repeated Abel critically. "The man that printed plays," he nodded intelligently. "Well, now, I often took notice that Shakespeare uses incorrect grammar sometimes. He both uses incorrect grammar and he both uses Obsolete Expressions."

"Well," retorted Mrs. Dreary testily, "Shakespeare may have said a number of things we would now call *technically incorrect*. But what could you expect—living away back in those olden times? It's quite excusable."

"Oh, yes," Abel generously admitted, "I know he was a distinguished writer. Considered the best writer of his day, I believe. His pieces are all deep anyhow, if they *ain't* so very interesting. Say! Some awful queer things came into his head, still! —some things came into his head that never would have come into *mine!* I don't think I could get together such a play if I tried. Yes, if ever I went to Europe I would certainly visit the tomb of John

Barnabetta

Shakespeare. Have you ever been to Europe, Mrs. Dreary?"

"Not as yet, Mr. Buchter. But Barnabetta and I contemplate going together in the near future."

This was startling news indeed to Barnabetta.

"Why don't *you* go, Mr. Buchter, in one of your summer vacations?" Mrs. Dreary demanded rather severely. "You owe it to yourself as an Educator of Reinhartz!"

"I would, if I was St. Peter and could *walk* across!"

"If one waits until he can *afford* to go to Europe, Mr. Buchter, he will probably never get there. Talking of Normal Schools, there is nothing more educative—or should I say educational?—than travel."

"Yes, well, but," said Abel, feeling bound to uphold an opinion of his own, "if it was always safe to cross over. Look at that *Titanic!*"

"No wonder it sank," retorted Mrs. Dreary, who did not relish the presence of Barnabetta's would-be suitor, her ambitions for her daughter growing larger every day with the growth of her love for the girl. "How could you expect it *not* to sink when they tempted Providence by calling it unsinkable? There was nothing left for God to do but prove His omnipotence and punish their blasphemy!"

"Well, now," said Abel, startled, "that view I never thought of before. That might explain it to be sure."

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But he felt such themes to be rather too deep water for him, and he turned, for refuge, to Barnabetta.

"Been to town to buy yourself a frock or what, Barnabetta?"

"Yes, Abel."

"Your Pop's getting easier with you, is he, since he got married?"

"No—no," Barnabetta slowly shook her head.

"But you've got it better, Barnabetta! Why, I saw you out buggy-riding here last Monday! It surprised me something wonderful!"

"Yes, I guess, Abel!"

"What does your Pop have to say to your going like that?"

"He don't uphold it."

Abel was hardly sorry to hear that. If things were too pleasant at her home, perhaps he could not get her to listen to his wooing, even though her father did now consent to it.

"Mr. Buchter," Mrs. Dreary addressed him, "you being an Educator, I want to ask you to secure for me some school catalogues. Directly after Christmas I mean to send Barnabetta to a college-preparatory school."

This was even more startling to Barnabetta than the announcement of a trip to Europe. Abel, too, looked shocked.

"Why don't you choose Schultztown Normal then?" he asked almost sullenly.

Barnabetta

"That is your Alma Mater, Mr. Buchter?"

"It's anyhow where I studied at."

"Then I prefer another school. No personal insinuation intended," she said with a wave of her hand.

"But I want—not a Normal School—but a college-preparatory, Mr. Buchter. If possible, Barnabetta shall attend college."

"Does her Pop know?" Abel feebly inquired.

"Her father, Mr. Buchter, will be consulted in the near future."

Barnabetta, noting Abel's discouragement, felt a pang for him. He had always been kind to her.

"It looks funny, Abel," she said in an attempt at consoling friendliness, "to see you coming from town on a school-day yet. Did you have to go to a dentist, or what?"

Again Abel blushed. He could not tell her that the package he was carrying contained a new shirt and necktie with which he hoped to win her difficult regard when, on the following evening, he should come to "sit up" with her.

"Saturday was so sloppy I did n't get to town," he answered, "so I went this after."¹

They had now reached the end of their ride and as Abel's walk from the car did not lie in the direction of the Dreary home, he parted from them here—his brain almost reeling with its over-abundant food for

¹ Afternoon.

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contemplation afforded by this unexpected encounter with the girl he loved and her redoubtable stepmother—whose parting words to him were a reminder to write at once for the school catalogues.

CHAPTER XII

MRS. DREARY RESORTS TO HEROIC MEASURES

AT supper that evening, Barnabetta did not appear. She was still away from home, Mrs. Dreary informed Barnaby who, having come in with the firm purpose to deal with his daughter summarily, was daunted, nay, confounded, at not finding her there. The boys, too, found difficulty in adjusting themselves to the unprecedented circumstance of their sister's absence.

"The minister's wife," Mrs. Dreary explained, "at my instigation, invited her to supper."

"She 's to ast *me* if she dare go off on comp'ny!" Barnaby angrily affirmed.

"Abel Buchter is to see her safe home to-night," Mrs. Dreary improvised, tossing a sop to Cerberus. "At least I should not wonder if he did. He came out on the car with us and he and Barnabetta conversed together."

But Mr. Dreary looked only a shade mollified by the sop. "So you *went* to town, did you? Well, Barnabetta is certainly a-goin' to ketch it when she comes home oncet!"

"You 'll have to be careful not to discourage Abel.

Mrs. Dreary Resorts to Heroic Measures

He has enough to discourage him, goodness knows! No young man likes to 'keep company,' as you quaintly express it, with a girl so ill-clad as Barnabetta always is. You 'll simply have to provide better clothing for her, Barnaby, if you want her to marry."

"Say!" broke in Jacob, "where 's the fried chicken I sayed I felt fur? I don't see none."

"Nor me neither," said Emanuel.

"I would n't be so cruel as to fry live chickens with their feathers on, sons!" returned Mrs. Dreary cheerily. "How lonesome it is without sister, is n't it, boys? Dear me, how ever will we bear up when she marries?—though I am inclined to advise her *not* to marry. Marriage is, of course, a very advantageous state for a man, but I fail to see what good accrues to a woman from wedlock. Men should certainly marry, but I am convinced that women should not."

"Me and Emanuel we pay our board and we're to have what we feel fur havin' at our meals, so we are!" Jacob harshly affirmed.

"No doubt you can find some one in the village, dears," Mrs. Dreary said soothingly, "who will kill and clean the chickens when you want me to fry them, since you don't care to do it yourselves; and I don't blame you; it is n't agreeable work. Barnabetta and I," she turned to her husband, "had a *very* pleasant afternoon shopping and enjoying ourselves. The dear child is really learning, under my guidance, the

Barnabetta

meaning of pleasure. I took her to a moving-picture show."

"I 'll learn her to enjoy another kind of moving-picture show, oncet she comes home!"

"Oh, here is a little billet-doux for you, Husband," was her reply, taking an envelope from her pocket and laying it before him on the table. "A little bill. A coat-suit and silk waist for Barnabetta. Foreseeing that we should perhaps come out on the car with Abel Buchter, I had the tact, Barnaby, to clothe Barnabetta, before we joined the young man, in such apparel that he would n't have a shamed face to sit with us."

Barnaby's hand fumbled to extract the bill. At sight of the figures on it his eyes bulged.

"Twenty-five dollars! Twenty-five yet! I send back the things! She darsen't keep 'em! I won't do it to pay it!" he choked.

"As she has them on now, you can't send them back. I will pay the bill on one condition, namely—"

"*How* will you pay it, heh? Ain't I tole you a'ready that I wrote off a letter to that there lawyer tellin' him he ain't to send out no more interest to you! And here you go buyin' without astin' me and chargin' up bills to me! Twenty-five dollars yet!"

"And that reminds me, dear, I had an extremely interesting interview with my lawyer this afternoon. I told him that though I had never yet touched my capital, I might in the near future borrow on it.

Mrs. Dreary Resorts to Heroic Measures

Barnabetta and I might want to take a little trip," she airily announced, "to the Other Side. There 's Paris, the City of Sin—I 've always yearned to see it. A whited sepulchre they say it is, alas!"

Barnaby turned pale. "Is *that* what you are doin' to git ahead of me—usin' your *capital*?"

"Not as yet, Barnaby. If Barnabetta and I decide to go Across," she waved her hand, "it may be necessary."

"You mean to up and tell me you 'd *draw on your capital* fur just such a pleasure-trip?"

"There 's no telling what a woman may do if goaded. By the way, Husband, don't waste any more stamps in childishly writing instructions to my lawyer which he could not legally carry out, inasmuch as you have no authority to direct him as to the disposition of money not your own. That was a most silly letter you wrote him, dear. I was quite ashamed of it. It reflected on your intelligence!"

Barnaby stared—choked and speechless with emotion.

"Of course the lawyer paid no attention to your futile directions, love."

"Paid no attention! Fur why didn't he pay no attention? Ain't I your *man*, heh?"

"But he is in *my* employ and can do nothing with my money without my sanction. I deposited in the bank that three hundred and fifty dollars on which you foolishly wasted a two-cent stamp in returning it

Barnabetta

to my lawyer. Or, rather, I deposited three hundred and kept fifty by me."

The three men gazed at her in silence. For a married woman to thus flaunt in the face of her husband the fact that she was sportively handling huge sums like this without a By-Your-Leave—it passed belief.

"I ain't got no authority, ain't I?" Barnaby demanded when he could get his breath. "Did n't you promise to obey to me?"

"The quaint phraseology of the marriage ceremony, Husband, is merely figurative. Don't be ignorant!"

"When we stood up before the preacher," Barnaby stubbornly reiterated, "to say 'Yes' to each other, you passed your promise to obey to me!"

"A silly promise, Barnaby, is better broken than kept—as Shakespeare might well have said if he had thought of it."

"Well," broke in Jacob threateningly, "if I ain't to have what I ast fur at my meals, I 'm boardin' at the *hotel*."

"An heroic resolution, Jacob, and I hope you 'll adhere to it. A season of boarding at the Reinhartz Hotel will be the best preparation you could possibly make for becoming an appreciative husband to the damsel soon to assume the not wholly inappropriate name of Dreary. Here comes Barnabetta."

They all started at the suddenness of the announcement, and Mr. Dreary promptly rose. But the un-

Mrs. Dreary Resorts to Heroic Measures

familiar figure confronting him in the doorway close by, checked him; this stylish young lady in dark blue skirt and jacket and jaunty blue hat trimmed with a red wing, *this* his girl?

"Why did you come home so early, Barnabetta, dear?" Mrs. Dreary quickly asked. "I was not expecting you yet."

"I was not willing, Mama," Barnabetta quietly answered, "to leave you take all the blame alone."

"Dear heart! But there 's nothing to take, daughter, as I—"

But Barnabetta's familiar voice had broken the spell which for a moment had held her father, and the pent-up indignation of days broke forth as, glaring at her new clothing, he suddenly strode to her side and seized her shoulder.

"I 'll learn her if there 's nothin' to take or if there ain't! She 's under nobody's authority hut *mine* till she 's of age a'ready and I 'll show her oncet if she kin do as she pleases under my roof or—"

As he spoke he jerked her forward into the room, hut instantly Mrs. Dreary, on the alert, flung herself upon his hreast. "Oh!" she exclaimed with an hysterical laugh, appealing to the boys and Barnabetta, "is n't he cute? Now, then, Barnahy," she persisted, clinging upon him with a vise-like hold as he furiously tried to fling her off, "I have a revelation which I must make to you—*about myself!*"

Barnabetta

Her tone was so impressively solemn that even in his rage Mr. Dreary was arrested.

"The crucial moment has come, Barnaby, for me to speak!"

She paused dramatically.

"I must reveal a certain fact about myself which, if you had been aware of before our marriage, might have 'given you pause,' as the poet says. Husband, I am not what I seem! Unsuspected by yourself, you led to Hymen's altar—what? 'Only this and nothing more'—*a woman of staunch resolution.*"

She paused to let it take effect; but her listeners were stunned to silence.

"You are married, Barnaby, to a woman of resolution! If you doubt it, just note that I wished to marry you and I did marry you; I wished to have a child to cherish and," laying her hand on Barnabetta's, "I secured one. And now note also, please, I wish to live with a certain regard for my own comfort and pleasure—*and I shall do it*; I wish to save our dear girl here from a life that would kill all youthful happiness in its bud—and 'neither the angels in the heavens above nor the demons down under the sea can ever dissever' this resolution from my soul. So, Barnaby, make your choice—fall into step, or I go back to my home and take Barnabetta with me and you will be troubled with us no more. It was not, after all, your irresistible charms which led me to marry you, you will remember. In taking Barna-

Mrs. Dreary Resorts to Heroic Measures

beta with me, I take the best that my marriage with you could possibly give me. Therefore, make your choice. If you decide to dispense with us, can you doubt that that decision will be by far the happier for us?"

"Barnabetta ain't of age! She can't leave home without I give her the dare!"

"She can elope with Abel Buchter if you won't let her come with me—so in any case you would have no housekeeper. Come, Barnabetta, we will leave him now to weigh and ponder my proposition; and to-night, ere we retire, he can acquaint me with his decision."

Mr. Dreary and the boys, still stunned by her histrionic eloquence, stood motionless, as with high, dramatic mien, she drew Barnabetta after her from the room.

CHAPTER XIII

ABEL BUCHTER, EDUCATOR

IN the weeks that followed, the now nominal head of the Dreary household and his sons underwent a process of psychic evolution as radical as it was remarkable.

Mrs. Dreary's persistence in her resolution to live with a certain regard for her own comfort and pleasure continued to be met for a time with sullenness and grumbling, but was soon recognized as the unescapable order of things in the household, and so, gradually, came to be accepted as such. It came to pass, therefore, that services which they could no longer obtain for nothing, they grew to appreciate at their true value; what they could not hold cheap, they learned to respect. Slowly they came to look upon their stepmother and their sister with a regard never before given to one of the sex which they had been wont to consider dependent, for they were even progressing so far as to recognize not only the inevitableness, but, in a measure, the justice and right of the new order.

When the virtual head of the family had got them thus far, she decided that the time was now ripe for

Abel Buchter, Educator

announcing her ambitious plan of sending Barnabetta away to school.

It seemed of course to the Dreary men a madness of folly and extravagance. But Mr. Dreary, knowing his helplessness before the "staunch resolution" of a wife possessed of an independent income, no longer opposed very strenuously anything she proposed to do, no matter how wild it appeared to him, though the extreme to which she planned to go in this case—spending money to send a grown-up girl to school—did cast him down for days into a state of sullen gloom from which all Juliet's vivacity failed to arouse him.

"Barnabetta, dear, I want you to go 'round to Mr. Buchter's school this afternoon," Mrs. Dreary instructed 'he girl one day when, the noon dishes having been washed, they were both at leisure for a few hours, "and get from him the addresses of the college-preparatories with which he promised to furnish us. I meant to go myself, but I am in such painful suspense over the novel I'm reading that I'll let you go, though I am aware I expose you, or rather Mr. Buchter, to temptation in thus bringing you together."

"I feel sorry for Abel, Mama, that he takes to me so much."

"My dear, don't waste one thought over a mere man's repining for you! Their affections are ephemeral to a degree!"

Barnabetta

Barnabetta started out on her walk to the school with mingled feelings of happiness and sadness.

A hugely-lettered placard in front of the Evangelical Church which she passed gave direction to her reflections as she went on her way.

“STOP! THINK! COME!
“TWO SERIOUS QUESTIONS:—
“ARE YOU MAKING THE BEST USE OF YOUR
TIME NOW?
“WHERE WILL YOU SPEND ETERNITY?”

It was not, however, the theological purport of these “serious questions” that troubled Barnabetta. The truth was that in the depths of her heart she did not want to go away to school, so happy was she now at home and so appalled at the bare idea of days spent apart from her idolized mother. But she was ashamed to let her benefactor know that she was so unambitious as to prefer ignorance to the loss of their daily companionship, little dreaming of the heartache with which the starved mother-instinct of the odd little woman was also contemplating their separation. That penetrating question, however, “ARE YOU MAKING THE BEST USE OF YOUR TIME NOW?” roused in Barnabetta a realization that merely basking in the sunshine of affection, reading poetry and novels and studying music, were *not* all that she was coming to feel herself capable of in the

Abel Buchter, Educator

new awakening of her mind and heart, and for the first time an ambition for herself alone, apart from the desire to gratify her mother, stirred her to the quick, brought a flush to her cheeks, a light to her dreamy eyes, a spring to her step that, as she presently entered the school-room, set poor Abel's heart to bounding and his knees to quaking under him.

It was only a half hour before closing time and Barnabetta, seated in the visitor's chair on the platform, listened to the "exercises" while she waited until Abel should be free to talk with her.

With a mighty effort Abel got himself in hand, and his pupils looked on in amazement at the animated and superior style of pedagogy by which they all at once found themselves being instructed.

"Now while the C class makes ready to begin to write penmanship, the A class will come up with their readers," he announced with a Commander-in-Chief air that was wholly unusual and entirely affected. "This class," he explained to the visitor, "is reading in the Fourth Reader, but will come soon in the Fifth. Mamie Hoffstiter, I let you choose to-day a piece to read."

Mamie, being of a sentimental turn, chose poetry. But her "rendering" of the lines indicated such a mental blankness as to their purport that the teacher, feeling the necessity of a few frills in honor of the visitor, introduced the innovation of demanding from the pupil an explanation of what she read.

Barnabetta

She there shall dress a sweeter sod
Than Fancy's feet have ever trod,

Abel repeated the last two lines. "*How many feet has Fancy?*" he shrewdly inquired.

"I don't know," said Mamie.

"What is Fancy?"

"I don't know."

"Did n't you ever hear any one say, 'I fancy that automobile'?"

"No, sir."

"Well, that's what Fancy means."

A roguish little girl seated on the platform whither she had been banished to keep her out of mischief, leaned towards Barnabetta and whispered, "He don't always talk like that there—he 's just putting on airs before *you!*"

Barnabetta blushed and hastily looked away, to read the mottoes on the walls—the same which had hung there six years ago when she herself had been a pupil in this school:—

"LOST TIME IS NEVER FOUND AGAIN,"
"SPEAK THE TRUTH. NO LIE THRIVES,"

and other exalted sentiments calculated to develop a high order of citizenship—if they did not drive to villainy.

When at the end of half an hour she and Abel strolled together towards her home through the crisp

Abel Buchter, Educator

November air, Abel sadly admitted to her that her going away "to get educated" was a trial under which he found it hard to bear up. "Though I'm *trying* to wish it to you that you do get educated, Barnabetta," he wistfully told her. "I put my own feelings to aside and wrote a long letter about you to the President of Stevens College over in Middleton, you know."

"You are always kind, Abel. Stevens College! Do you think I know enough to even get *in* at Stevens College?"

"I had their catalogue and it says there 's a Preparatory School right in the college, so you can any-ways get in *that* with the reading and studying you 've been doing in your spare time the past couple of months. As soon as the President answers I 'll leave you know. Here 's the catalogue," he added, producing the pamphlet from his breast-pocket and handing it to her. "It 's the best school, Barnabetta, all considered, I could find for you-- as to price, distance from here, and entrance conditions. It 's near enough for your stepmother (or me) to run over of a Sunday to see you once."

"Yes, if they 'll *leave* me have a gentleman come, Abel? Do you think?"

"If it 's explained I am your former teacher, I guess it won't make much to the President, he being a young man himself and knowing how it is with young men when their heart gets set on a certain

Barnabetta

girl. I only hope *he* won't go making up to you, Barnabetta!"

"I would think," speculated Barnabetta, "a *young* man would not know enough to be the president of a college! I can only now see," she added with a sigh, "how it goes a long time with much hard study, before it gives an educated person."

"If only this getting educated don't make you proud that way, Barnabetta—like your stepmother!" pleaded Abel.

"Why, Mama ain't—is n't—proud, Abel!"

"She talks proud. She's a way-up conversationalist."

"But if she was proud," said Barnabetta simply, "I think she would n't have married father."

"Yes, that's mebbly so too, again," conceded Abel spiritlessly. "You think it *won't* get you high-minded, going to such a tony pay-school!"

"I never was proud yet, Abel, so I don't know right how it feels—but I know I could n't ever feel anything but very *f*'endly and common to *you*, Abel."

"Even if you study French language? Mrs. Dreary she said you were to 'take up French' yet! But I say German is much more use to a body. And there ain't a prettier language, either, than German when it's spoke correct. There ain't really but three languages—American, German and French."

Abel Buchter, Educator

"Why, ain't—is n't—there Italian and Latin, Abel, and Spanish, maybe?"

"Oh, well," he granted, "they 're coming on."

Mrs. Dreary, when informed that Abel had already addressed the President of Stevens College in "a long letter" concerning Barnabetta, was displeased.

"Officious!" she pronounced. "He should have left that to me. I have received many compliments upon my gifts for epistolary correspondence. Well, dear, I shall at once compose a very beautiful letter to the President of Stevens College and counteract any impression of illiteracy Abel's crude communication may have created."

She went immediately to her writing-desk which stood between two windows of the dining-room, and bent her closest attention and highest ability to the composing of her beautiful letter.

CHAPTER XIV

THE PRESIDENT OF STEVENS RECEIVES THE TWO LETTERS

EDGAR BARRETT, the recently-elected young President of Stevens College, an institution of second rank whose diploma admitted to the senior class of first-rank colleges, sat one morning at his office desk in the main college building, reading, with mingled astonishment, perplexity and amusement, two very extraordinary letters which he had just had in his mail.

Stevens College for Women was an old and dignified institution in southeastern Pennsylvania. The extensive campus with its dozen or more buildings was just on the outskirts of the small, conservative, and reputedly aristocratic town of Middleton, the social life of the place centering about a few very old and influential families and the college faculty.

The recent election of a President had been a matter of considerable import, inasmuch as the retiring President, though scholarly, had been, together with his wife, so impossible socially as to have made the trustees ready to swing to an extreme in insisting that his successor must be, first and foremost, "a gentleman"; and they considered themselves especially fortunate

The President Receives Two Letters

in having secured a man who combined this essential (Dr. Barrett being a descendant of the distinguished Barret family of Boston, than which our nation could boast no better blood) with the high qualification of three years' study at Oxford, England. To be sure they had to pay dear for such a precious commodity, with its cultured English accent, for naturally it was in demand. But determined to secure it at any price, they had offered a salary almost double what they had hitherto paid, adding a renovated and newly-furnished President's Residence (which was a large and rather pretentious house on the campus), with the use of an automobile and a chauffeur.

The one slight objection to Dr. Barrett had been the fact that he was unmarried and, as he admitted, not even engaged; there was of course the possibility that the students and even possibly some feminine members of the Faculty, might be diverted from their duties by so dazzling a bait.

The matter of a hostess at the President's Residence was provided for by Dr. Barrett's widowed elder sister's consenting to preside over his household and do the requisite honors.

The widow's daughter, seventeen years old, would, it was assumed, attend Stevens. This gratuitous assumption, however, proved to be very wide of the mark, for only a week after the new President's inauguration, he was reported to have replied to some one who referred to the assumption, "My niece attend

Barnabetta

Stevens? But my niece is a lady! She goes, of course, to Bryn Mawr."

This remark, repeated far and wide, and calculated to damn the young man, at the very opening of his career, in the estimation of every lover of Middleton and of the highly respectable old college which was its pride, was later said to have been made, not by Dr. Barrett, but by his excessively unapproachable sister. However, though this fact modified somewhat the surging tide of resentment against him, a closer acquaintance with him made it clear that even if he had not said that outrageous thing, he was quite capable of doing so; and that, in spite of his ability and his earnest devotion to the interests of Stevens, and in spite of his sister's scrupulous observance of every courtesy expected of her, the attitude of both of them towards Middleton society was condescending.

Now Stevens College and Middleton had demanded, as was their right, the best. But that "the best" would feel that it stooped in fraternizing with Middleton had not been conceivable. The complacent little town—with its college patronage of a well-to-do, upper-middle class coming from all over the country—wholly unused to being regarded condescendingly, scarcely knew how to meet it—whether to resent it or to feel honored at having a president so superior as to *feel* patronizing to such as it.

At the time that we find President Barrett in his

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office reading the two extraordinary letters in his morning mail, he had been in Middleton just three months and it was nearing the end of the first semester, just before the Christmas Holidays.

The appearance of the young man quite bore out the traditions back of him. His features were both fine and strong and his countenance intelligent. He was of a good height and though his shoulders were broad, he had the leanness apt to go with the nervous temperament of the scholar and of the man of extremely cultivated tastes. A barely perceptible superciliousness marked his mouth and his rather cold, though thoughtful, gray eyes.

"Our new President is sure some class!" a Western girl wrote home to her "folks," expressing very adequately, if vulgarly, the general sentiment of the college and of the town.

The older and better students found him an amazingly inspiring teacher; for Dr. Barrett was not only able and highly educated; he was a young man of much earnestness and of serious and high ideals.

The first of the two queer letters bore the postmark of Reinhartz and was written in the copy-book hand of a country schoolmaster.

"REINHARTZ, BERKS Co PA. Dec. 15, 19—
Esteemed Prof I will seat Myself to drop you a few lines. Desirous of placing my friend and pupil

Barnabetta

under the care of a worthy Tutor, I write off this letter to ask you if you will have a vacancy yet. I am the district Teacher Mr Buchter. first name Abel Buchter, Abel after the grandfather he being still living. I hope you won't mind me writing this way, you being a friend to Education yourself. She's very smart at her books, but her father was never a friend to Education, he claims Education tends to make Rogues. He says look at all those educated Grafters at Harrisburg yet. I never was to college but I saw one once that one at Lancaster, Pa. I am helping her to get to go to college because I know she's worthy excepting in Geography which she don't understand very thorough but I tell her it's an important Branch. Is studied in almost all parts of the earth and has been studied since the beginning of the World. Will you leave us know what Barnabetta will have to pay by the year her father has a little laid by and if it don't come too high she will come right on then. I will tell you for a reference that I know Congressman Bowman right well my uncle used to sell them all the milk they use and I neither smoke nor drink so as you can see I am of a good moral character I can prove it by Congressman Bowman. When you are writing about Barnabetta coming to your school then would you mind writing me a piece off for the Debating Society over at Denver, Pa. the question is which deserves the most honor Washington for De-

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fending His Country or Columbus for discovering America, I am on Columbus side and I wish you would write me off a Piece for Columbus if it ain't too much bother they are going to speak on that subject next Saturday night if you please write me off a Piece, Your

“Kind friend

“ABEL BUCHTER.

“P.S. I can write much better than this.”

Now was this piece of writing a practical joke played on him by one of the students, President Barrett wondered, or had it actually been written in good faith by one, Abel Buchter, schoolmaster and friend to “Congressman Bowman”?

The second letter, also bearing the post-mark, “Reinhartz,” was scarcely more convincing as to its genuineness.

“REINHARTZ, Dec. the 15, 19—

“*President of Stevens College,*

“*My Friend,—*

“After quite a struggle against adverse circumstances, we see at length a ray of hope above the horizon of despair. I think we have now so far Surmounted difficulties as to be able to commit to your care our dear daughter at the reopening of your halls of learning

Barnabetta

after Christmas. She is seventeen, but unfavorable circumstances have retarded her education and she will have to enter the Preparatory Class.

“Aided by memory, that magic wand of mind, my thoughts review the long period that has elapsed since I myself was sweet sixteen and attending school. Since then, Time, the scene-shifter, has wrought changes and vicissitudes.

“Well, winter has come again. I suppose chilly breezes, too, have sighed around your more sunny home in beautiful Middleton. Rude blasts are scattering dead leaves, and faded, calling up within the heart sad and painful emotions, reminding us of the irrevocable sentence written upon all things—of the Winter of Life. But dismissing this sad comparison from our minds, what a beautiful panorama of scenery our Nature presents! It seems that an artist from the studios of heaven were giving it an additional tint every day.

“But, President B., I beg pardon if I have wearied you, for I have ideas of every hue intermixed, for while some have brilliant thinking powers I must remain in the background; and again have a beautiful way of expressing themselves and I have often sighed for the talent in that way of Mrs. Hemans, Myrtle Reed, or some other brilliant Star whose name fame delights to immortalize who long after they sink to eternal repose their soaring intellect will be perused with eye and heart entranced.

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"Again I beg pardon, I do not know what you will think of me for writing this long letter, but out of your generous nature ransack for the pardon I crave.

"My love to the Lady Barrett Yours With

"Reverence

"MRS. JULIET DREARY

"nee Miller.

"Pardon rude chirography."

President Barrett touched an electric button on his desk and his secretary, a middle-aged woman, answered it, coming in from an outer office.

"Read and enjoy these," he said with a short laugh, handing her the two letters, "and answer them, please. I shall be curious," he added with an unwonted absence of formality in addressing his secretary, "to see the young lady who will follow them!"

CHAPTER XV

BARNABETTA AND THE PRESIDENT OF STEVENS

CALLED upon to part with his daughter for the first time in her young life, Mr. Dreary discovered, to his own vague, dumb surprise, that the experience was a depressing, even a painful one. Her existence had meant little to him but comfortable meals and a frugally-managed home. But habit is sometimes almost indistinguishable from affection, and so moved was he by the impending separation that when the morning for her departure came, he went himself with her and his wife to the little station to see them off (for Mrs. Dreary was to accompany Barnabetta to Middleton and return the same evening) and he even opened up his heart so far as to pay for their railroad tickets.

"I want two tickets fur South Middleton," he remarked expansively to the ticket-agent. "One fur my wife to go and come back again, and one fur my daughter to go and *not* come back. See?"

"I see. One dollar and thirty cents," answered the clerk, punching and handing out the tickets.

"How do you make it one-thirty yet? This here program," Dreary aggressively argued, holding up

Barnabetta and the President

a time-table, "calls fur two cents a mile and it's twenty mile. That would come to twenty times two is forty and two times forty is eighty. Eighty cents."

"Unless you get a return it's two and a half cents a mile," retorted the clerk. "One-thirty."

Barnabetta realized, when without a murmur her father handed over fifty cents more, that her going away really meant something to him; but the realization moved her to nothing more than a faint surprise, so heavy was her heart with the sorrow of her coming separation from her stepmother.

Indeed, when at the end of that day, the elder woman, alone with the girl in the school dormitory, took her in her arms to bid her good-by, Barnabetta for the first time in her life gave herself up to an abandonment of feeling, clinging to her mother, sobbing, caressing her unrestrainedly.

To Juliet, this spontaneous outbreak of genuine grief and love opened up a heaven of maternal happiness. That the child should care for her so much, should suffer at parting from her, should cling to her—it fed the yearnings of all the years of her womanhood.

With soothing, petting, promises of frequent letters, and even of occasional visits, she at last tearfully, yet with a deep inner joy, tore herself away and turned her face courageously to the loneliness of the Dreary household without Barnabetta; consoling herself on her homeward ride with the reflection that undoubt-

Barnabetta

edly she had launched her dear child upon a career far more in accord with her tender, sensitive nature than would have been her fate had she been left to marry Abel Buchter and spend her years in rearing innumerable children on a country schoolmaster's small monthly salary.

Barnabetta, accustomed through all her girlhood to an unexpressed inner life of complete solitude, a life of her soul entirely independent of outward conditions and relations, did not feel the strangeness of her new surroundings like one to whom the external change would have meant much. In so young a girl this was of course not normal; but an intense nature, feeding for years upon itself, does not develop along the usual lines. Barnabetta was unique.

In so far as her altered circumstances affected her at all, they called forth her astonishment. For instance, not to find the President of the college at the station to meet her, since he had been duly apprised by letter of the day and hour of her arrival, had been a surprise to her. As her mother, however, did not comment upon it, she decided it could not be so serious a breach on his part as to her it seemed. But when, on their arrival at the college he did not open the door to them, and when the entire first day passed by without her mother or herself catching a glimpse of him, she realized that her ideas of the duties of a college president needed reconstructing.

The Preparatory School of Stevens College was not

Barnabetta and the President

separate from the college proper, the only distinction being that the "Preps" were under stricter discipline and had far less freedom than the college students.

Seven new pupils besides Barnabetta had come in with the opening of the second semester and on the day after their arrival they had to undergo a written examination given by the heads of the various departments. The examination in English was given by President Barrett.

It was at this examination that Dr. Barrett for the first time saw the girl about whom he had received those two extraordinary letters just before the Holidays. Among the eight young ladies seated before him in the class-room, his eye had at once been caught by the very unusual face at the end of the line—the fineness of her features, the almost somber earnestness of her rather wonderful eyes, seeming to him incongruously at variance with her countrified, awkward garb, the red roughness of her hands and the clumsiness of her shoes. All this he noticed with a passing interest, not at the time identifying her with the letters.

It was not, indeed, until the next day that he came thus to identify her, when, just a half hour before the students' six-o'clock dinner, being alone in his office on the first floor of the main college building, there was a knock on his door and his secretary entered to announce some one to see him.

"One of the new Preparatory students wishes to

Barnabetta

“speak with you, Dr. Barrett?” she said questioningly, her tone indicating a slight amusement at the boldness of a “Prep” to come asking admission at this holy-of-holies, the President’s Office! The secretary’s tone and manner betrayed also the slightly uncomfortable awe in which she held the President; for though his bearing to her was always extremely courteous, it was invariably formal and aloof—his native New England stiffness combined with the reserve instinctive to a race that assumed itself to be, as a matter of course, far more rare and fine than the common herd.

“You asked her errand of course?” he inquired.

“She won’t say. She insists upon speaking to *you!* She seems to be in some trouble. It is Miss Dreary.”

“Dreary? Ah—Isaacine? Abrahametta? By all means show her in, please.”

The secretary departed and in a moment returned with Miss Dreary.

Dr. Barrett rose as the girl crossed the room to his desk, but he did not see (or did not betray that he saw) her hand outstretched to him, as he placed a chair for her and, motioning her to be seated, re-seated himself behind his desk.

His habitual manner and the cold, direct gaze of his gray eyes were to the average student rather disconcerting. Of this Dr. Barrett was perfectly aware. But as he met the wide, dark eyes of this girl seated

Barnabetta and the President

before him, eyes that seemed to give her a look of detachment from the world about her, he was conscious that though she was manifestly in trouble, she was neither discomfited nor overawed—a circumstance so unusual in his experience that it came to him with something like a pleasant shock. It interested him stirred his curiosity.

“What can I do for you, Miss Weary?”

“Dreary. Barnabetta Dreary. Barnaby after Father and Etta after Mother,” she recited gently, in a voice the quality of which instantly impressed him, to his surprise, as being, somehow, ideally womanly; a cultivated voice that did not go with her accent or her clothing. “I’m their first and only daughter and named after both,” she explained.

He bowed in acknowledgment of the information.

“And your errand?”

“I want to make a statement to you, Mr. Barrett.”

“A statement?”

“Yes, sir. There was a question on your examination paper yesterday—‘Who is your favorite author?’ and I—I wrote—” she faltered and her face flushed with mortification. “I hope you don’t think—I did not know when I put his name down that he wrote such things! I had not read but only *Macbeth* and I liked this *Macbeth* so well, I never read anything I liked better, and that’s why I wrote down that John Shakespeare was my favorite author. But I did n’t know,” her color deepening, “that he wrote

Barnabetta

such things as I seen—saw—in that big book in the library this morning!—and I hope you won't lay it up against me!"

"But what did you see that shocked you, child?"

"They weren't nice things! I wonder at him that he would write out such things! I would n't say them over to you," she affirmed, shaking her head. "And here Mama has his Complete Works in the parlor standing yet! I wanted to tell you I did n't know or I would n't have wrote—written—he was my favorite. I 'm that ashamed!"

Her blushing distress touched him with something more than inward laughter, and he answered her kindly, explaining to her how the decency of one age was the indecency of another, and citing a few passages of Scripture in illustration; he pointed out to her the mistake she made in "laying it up against" Shakespeare that his generation permitted a freedom of speech and a play of fancy upon subjects which in our own age are "not mentioned in polite society," and incidentally he tried to impress upon her the prevailing prejudice in favor of calling the poet William rather than John.

Thus did Barnabetta enter upon her acquisition of "culture."

She listened to him with wide-eyed interest and seemed much relieved to find he was not indignant at her want of propriety in naming the shameless Shakespeare as her prime favorite.

Barnabetta and the President

"I had a notion there for a while to write down Dickens," she said. "But I was afraid you would n't think just so well of me if I wrote Dickens was my favorite."

"Why? And *do* you like Dickens?"

"Yes, sir, *I* do, hut Mama don't, though she says maybe she ought n't to tell it, seeing so many like his books, but she can't like them, the people in them use such coarse words still. That's why I thought I'd better not say he was my favorite. Mama likes better to read 'The Wide, Wide World' than Dickens' books; she says it's got such a nice moral to it. What *I* like hest," added Barnabetta, "is a book that's instructive to the mind."

"Yes? And what, for example, would you call that sort of a book?"

"Well, there's Gibbon's *Rome*—I like to read in that."

Dr. Barrett agreed with her that Gibbon's *Rome* was "instructive to the mind," hut privately he felt a large skepticism as to her appreciation of the fact.

"You *like* to read it?" he doubtfully inquired.

"Yes, sir, except when I come to a page full of words I don't understand. I like to understand all the words when I read a book, don't *you*?" she appealed.

Again he agreed that "understanding all the words" was a condition conducive to one's enjoyment in reading.

Barnabetta

By a little adroit questioning he tried to discover what she actually did know of Gibbon's great history and to his astonishment, the information she displayed was appalling.

"I do now like to read a book!" she remarked when he paused in his catechism; she was leaning back easily in her chair, regarding him placidly, her work-worn hands folded in her lap, a sublime assumption of comrade-like equality in her unwavering gaze and in her simple, unconstrained manner. Why, his own niece was not half so much at ease with him! "Because," she went on, "it's so interesting to see how a book is going to turn out, *is n't* it?"

"Yes?"

"There's another book," she continued sociably, "that I like to read in—for all, it's a terrible book! Its title is *Quo Vadis* and, Mr. Barrett, you just ought to see how they persecuted the Christians in those days! You wouldn't hardly believe it! Mama even said she'd rather not have *been* a Christian than to have been persecuted like that."

"I'm afraid I agree with your mother."

"Mama has a wonderful high education!" said Barnabetta, her face aglow with pride and affection. "Much higher than Abel Buchter."

"So I surmised from a letter I received from her."

"Yes, you could tell it at her letters, could n't you? I never expect to be so educated; but anyhow I want

Barnabetta and the President

to learn enough so I don't give her a shamed face for me still."

"Have you entered the first or second Preparatory class?"

"They put me in the first in some things and in the second in others. I wish," she said wistfully, "I could be in some of *your* classes."

"Yes?" He considered it as he looked at her. "I might try you in my Freshman Shakespeare class. If it seems more than you can manage, you can of course drop back again into the Preparatory English. But I should really like to try you."

"I'll study hard so I can stay in your class, Mr. Barrett," she gratefully promised, her face glowing again with pleasure.

Her point of view in things literary was so refreshing, he promised himself some diversion in having her in his class.

There was a pause, here, in their conversation and he thought of rising to dismiss her. But he did not. He sat still and looked at her. She returned his gaze serenely, deep contentment shining in her eyes. It occurred to him that his secretary would marvel at the length of their interview.

"Are you taking up Latin?" he inquired.

"No, sir. Mama won't leave me. You see," she said gravely, "it's the language of *Poppery* and is spoken by the Romish Pope!"

"Ah?"

Barnabetta

"Yes, sir," Barnabetta gravely shook her head. "Mama is not as narrow as some, but she says we must draw the line somewhere."

"Some day," he said, smiling upon her kindly, "when you have studied history a little while, you'll know that the Roman Church, the great historic Church of Christendom, is very wonderful and beautiful—in spite of some splotches on its grand old face!"

"I thought," she said wonderingly, "that it was anti-Christ and idolatrous."

"Not more so than all other churches are. And it has what none of the rest have—a sublime historic background, the only great religious music that has ever been written, the only great and beautiful ritual. What languages are you studying?"

"I'm taking up French because Mama wants to take me some time to Paris, the City of Sin."

"The City of Sin? Ah, yes. Does she?"

"Yes, sir. Abel Buchter told he she had n't ought to. He says Paris is dangerous for females. He read somewheres that in Paris the gentlemen don't think anything at all of insulting the ladies!"

The electric bells announcing dinner at this moment sounded through the building and Barnabetta rose.

"Well, I must go now," she said reluctantly, as Dr. Barrett also rose. "I feel better now we've talked it over about Shakespeare."

"Then I'm glad you came."

Barnabetta and the President

"Maybe I'll feel for coming again sometime if I have homesick."

They crossed the room together and he opened the door for her and bowed her out. But a formal manner on the part of a man was a thing so unfamiliar to her that she stood spell-bound, fascinated.

"Well?" he curiously asked, holding the door ajar.

"You put me in mind of a gentleman in a moving-picture show Mama took me to see once," she said, a wave of color suddenly flooding her face. "Good-by," she added cordially, even affectionately; and her clumsy soles sounded heavily on the bare floors of the ante-room where his secretary worked at her typewriter.

The young college president closed his door and went thoughtfully back to his desk.

"Well," he said to himself, a smile on his lips, but a softened light in his cold eyes, "such a refreshing absence of self-consciousness. I have never before encountered in one of her sex!"

CHAPTER XVI

INTRODUCING MRS. WINTHROP

PRESIDENT BARRETT'S sister, Mrs. Winthrop of Boston, felt herself somewhat martyred in being obliged to give up a winter at home for one in this out-of-the-way Middleton. But her affection for her brother, who was eight years her junior, no less than her concern lest in a college for women he might be "taken in" and betrayed into an unsuitable marriage (men *were* so stupid about women!) made her a willing martyr. There were compensations, too; she was nearer her daughter than when in Boston, for Bryn Mawr was only sixty miles from Middleton. Also, being of the old, frugal, Puritan stock, she was not above rejoicing, though a woman of considerable wealth, in the fact that by living with her brother, she not only saved her own household expenses, but would add to her income the high rent easily obtainable for her distinguished old mansion on Beacon Street. Indeed, the financial aspect of her brother's proposition that she keep house for him at Stevens College, was what did eventually govern her decision to accept it, for after all, Edgar, unlike most men, could be pretty well trusted not to blunder when it

Introducing Mrs. Winthrop

came to so vital a matter as his marriage. He was fastidious about women and even, some of his friends thought, a bit fanatical in his views as to the value and importance of blood and breeding. He had always been considered, by those who did not understand how such a matter could be a governing and vital principle in a man's life, to be pretty much of a snob. No, it was inconceivable that Edgar could ever be beguiled, by even the most subtly designing of women, into marrying beneath him.

At the same time, women were wily, and men sometimes so gullible; and, too, Edgar was such a home lover that the mere circumstance of his being cut off from all family ties, with only a hired housekeeper over his establishment, might drive him into an indiscretion. So, for a year or two, until her daughter Marion was graduated and ready to come out in Boston, and Edgar had become securely engaged to the right sort of a girl, Mrs. Winthrop would willingly sacrifice herself.

She had the consolation of being followed into her exile by the sympathy and admiration of her friends at home for her heroic unselfishness; for of course as none of them had ever heard of this place called "Middleton," it must be awful! Indeed, they had scarcely heard, in Boston, of any place "back in Pennsylvania," except of course Philadelphia—and perhaps vaguely of Pittsburg in connection with Andrew Carnegie or the Thaw murder trial.

Barnabetta

Mrs. Winthrop early realized that she was not a success in Middleton; that she was criticized, disliked. This, from her point of view, was the highest compliment Middleton could pay her. She certainly did not expect it to take the liberty of being fond of her.

"You don't mean to tell me," she had appealed to her brother after an afternoon spent in receiving visits from the leading ladies of the town and of the college families, "that I am expected to *return* these visits—to call on these people?"

"Send your cards. That's the easiest way to dispose of them," he advised, little dreaming what a sensation such an unheard-of proceeding would create.

One day, at the same hour in which President Barrett was closeted in his office with Barnabetta, Mrs. Winthrop, seated in the drawing-room of the President's Residence, was undergoing her inevitable daily boredom at the hands of afternoon visitors.

This drawing-room, newly furnished in good, substantial, but, to Mrs. Winthrop's taste, very hideous Victorian furniture, domestic rugs and the newest thing in curtains, was in itself so exasperating to her that it could not fail to color her impressions of the "callers" who alone brought her into the room.

A self-centered woman, incapable of feeling another's point of view, her manner with her last lingering visitor to-day, was, as usual, far from calculated to put the latter at her ease. Of medium

Introducing Mrs. Winthrop

height and well-built, Mrs. Winthrop's very elegant widow's black and white made her a distinguished and unusual figure in Middleton. She greatly resembled her brother, having the same cold gray eyes and slightly supercilious mouth. But her countenance lacked both the fineness and the thoughtfulness of his. It was not, as was his, an indisputably high-bred face, inasmuch as breeding is obviously not merely a matter of inheritance or environment, but depends somewhat upon one's spiritual self-discipline.

"How charmingly they have fixed up the dear old Residence!" remarked Mrs. Grayson, the visitor, trying to make talk with her stiff and unresponsive hostess, for Mrs. Winthrop had a very disconcerting way of leaving the whole burden of conversation to the other person.

Mrs. Grayson was a middle-aged, rather pretty woman, clad for the important occasion of her call on the President's reputedly formidable sister, in a costume so faultless as to bring out the best in any woman. And her state of mind did match her perfect clothing, for she felt a complacent confidence in her ability to meet Mrs. Winthrop on her own high plane; perhaps her real attitude was even a bit patronizing—the feeling of an old inhabitant of established position towards a new one who was as yet on sufferance.

"The Committee have shown *such* good taste in the refurnishing of the house, have n't they?" she continued as her first remark was met by silence.

Barnabetta

Mrs. Winthrop, regarding her with a polite tolerance, did not seem to think that these gratuitous comments upon her home called for any reply.

"Many of us felt it did not really need refurnishing," Mrs. Grayson went on, "but of course it was not at all up to date, and the trustees wanted to offer Dr. Barrett every possible inducement to come to us."

Mrs. Winthrop, not responding, looked as though waiting civilly for her visitor to get through with what she had come for, and go.

Mrs. Grayson breathed deep and tried once more.

"You will find that Middleton is in every way a very progressive town, Mrs. Winthrop. Its standards both socially and in a business way are quite those of the large cities."

Mrs. Winthrop, looking unimpressed, murmured a monosyllable.

Mrs. Grayson began to feel queer. These pauses were so absurd! She hastened to cover this one.

"I suppose by this time you are feeling quite at home in Middleton? It is considered a very home-like town. And quite noted for its hospitality."

"Yes?"

The response was not inspiring, but thankful by this time for small favors, Mrs. Grayson went on:

"Of course it must seem a great change from Boston."

Mrs. Winthrop had nothing to say to this.

Introducing Mrs. Winthrop

"But I hope you find it not wholly an unpleasant change?" said Mrs. Grayson, smiling encouragingly.

Still the only reply vouchsafed was the fixed, patient gaze of Mrs. Winthrop's cold gray eyes.

Mrs. Grayson relaxed and sank back in her chair. What did it mean? In any one else she would have put it down to stupidity, ignorance, crudity. She was tempted to abandon her efforts and throw back upon her hostess the responsibility of the conversation. But after an instant the silence was too painful, and again she nervously hastened to cover it.

"Well, we shall have a busy time here next week, shan't we, with the Convention meeting in Middleton? Shall you have yourself transferred to the Middleton Chapter?"

"I beg your pardon?"

"Of course you are a Daughter?"

"A 'daughter'?"

"A D. A. R. I mean, of course," explained Mrs. Grayson wonderingly. "You belong to the Boston Chapter?"

"I am not a Daughter of the Revolution."

"Not a Daughter!" repeated Mrs. Grayson, astonished. "You? But I understood—pardon me—but we all understood that you and Dr. Barrett were descendants of the old Barrett family of Massachusetts!"

"Yes?" Mrs. Winthrop, looking bored, neither confirmed nor denied it.

Barnabetta

"So of course you are *eligible* for membership in the D. A. R.'s."

"No."

"Not *eligible*?" Mrs. Grayson exclaimed with wide-open eyes. Not to be eligible to this honorable and beloved organization was, in her estimation, to be quite outside the pale of "society."

Mrs. Winthrop did not feel it incumbent upon her to reiterate her denial or to explain the damning fact.

"But how can you *not* be eligible?" Mrs. Grayson persisted—thinking to herself, "She 'll at least have to answer a direct question."

"My people were Tories."

Mrs. Grayson stared, realizing in a flash what had never before occurred to her as a possibility—that there could be in America any more distinguished origin than that of the D. A. R.'s. But quickly rallying her scattered forces and summoning all her patriotism, she said firmly, "How *sorry* you must be for that!"

"'Sorry'?"

"That your ancestors had no part in our glorious Revolution and in the forming of our great Republic!"

"Oh," Mrs. Winthrop smiled, "I don't remember ever losing sleep over it!"

Mrs. Grayson felt suddenly convinced that her customary attitude of smug superiority towards non-

Introducing Mrs. Winthrop

eligibles was a justifiable one and that Mrs. Winthrop's true feeling about it was no doubt chagrin and mortification.

"Well," she remarked, rising to go, upon which Mrs. Winthrop looked very frankly relieved, "even if you are not eligible, it need not debar you from the pleasure of attending some of our interesting meetings. I am privileged, as a member of the Middleton Chapter, to invite you to the open session at the Court House next Wednesday afternoon. It will be a very interesting meeting—an historical paper will be read by the State Regent, the Stevens Glee Club will sing 'Pennsylvania, Song of the Keystone State,' and Miss Jamison will recite. I hope you will come as my guest. You can feel perfectly free to, Mrs. Winthrop," she graciously added. "And I am sure the Daughters will make you feel perfectly at home."

"Thank you. I shall be in Philadelphia next Wednesday attending a meeting of the Colonial Dames."

Again Mrs. Grayson stared. She had heard of the Colonial Dames. She had thought of them as one thinks of the Alps—as afar and august. She had scarcely expected ever to see one in the flesh. And here was a Colonial Dame in the very same room with her!

"Are they all descended from Tories?" she asked disparagingly.

"Naturally not."

Barnabetta

Mrs. Grayson took her leave in a state of mental confusion from which she did not soon recover.

An hour later, Edgar Barrett, in evening dress, joined his sister as she waited in the library for the arrival of some dinner guests.

"Well?" he said questioningly, as he noted her elaborate gown. "We are not dining alone?"

"Only Miss Jordan and her brother."

Barrett did not notice how warily she watched him as she pronounced these names. "Good!" he nodded. "How fortunate for you, Elizabeth, to have Theodora Jordan here; *one* congenial acquaintance for you, even though she is years younger—a mere girl, in fact," he remarked, strolling across the floor and standing before the open fire, the spacious, book-lined room making a fit setting for his clear-cut, intelligent face and lean, broad-shouldered figure in his black clothing.

"Yes," responded Elizabeth, "Theodora Jordan is a consolation! For in spite of her rearing in this place, she is wholly like her mother's people in Boston, *is n't* she?"

"Oh, yes, except that she's beautiful, she's an out-and-out Herrick," said Barrett. "Middleton has scarcely fazed her—though note the fact that she is quite sentimentally loyal to it," he smiled.

"I know she is," Elizabeth shrugged. "All the same, she is constantly running off to stay with her Aunt Herrick in Boston."

Introducing Mrs. Winthrop

“‘Miss Jordan and her brother,’ you said; why does no one ever dream of speaking of Judge Jordan and his sister?’ It’s always the other way ’round, you’ll observe—and she such an ethereal wraith of a girl—and he a very able and forceful man, even if he is a bit crude and clumsy. You’ve noticed, haven’t you, how that burly, middle-aged man lets that slender strip of a woman dominate him? Funny, isn’t it?”

“He is an idolatrous elder brother,” Elizabeth granted. “But with good reason—Theodora is a sister any right-minded brother would have to be proud of. And of course he feels like a father to her—he really brought her up, you know.”

“Yes, but she’s not at all a dominating woman—which makes it so surprising that she should rule Jordan the way she does (no one *else* ever ventures to dictate to him, let me assure you!), and that she, apparently, sets the pace in this town for everything going. She’s at the head of every public movement, while at the same time,” Barrett continued in a tone of perplexity, “she’s so feminine, so lovely! Don’t you find it odd?”

“Edgar, nothing escapes you! Yes, the women here defer to her in everything. But naturally, she *would* dominate here simply by reason of her superiority in every way to the rest of them. She is so gifted—like all those Herricks! And as she was born and reared here, the people don’t resent her superior-

Barnabetta

ity as they would that of an outsider, but are proud of it."

"Have you any idea," Barrett casually asked, "how old she is?"

"Twenty-eight."

"She's intellectually mature even for that ripe age," he said musingly.

"And fortunately," Elizabeth added, "while she has the Herrick brains, she does *not*, as you said, inherit their looks!"

"Yes, she's lucky to have escaped that!"

"You think her very good-looking, Edgar?"

"Could there be two opinions as to that? She is exquisite! Do you know," he said, strolling about the room with his hands in his pockets, "mere feminine prettiness, the girlish prettiness, for instance, of these college students, far from attracting me as it does most men, irritates me—it is so often perverted by their silly self-consciousness, their tiresome shallowness. Unlike most men, I could more easily fall in love with ugliness that expressed mind and character. It is most rare for a woman's beauty to so perfectly express her, as Theodora Jordan's delicate loveliness expresses in every way *her* fineness, is n't it?"

"Most rare, Edgar," Elizabeth responded, looking the satisfaction she felt, but not trusting herself to a more enthusiastic agreement with him for fear she should go too far and defeat her own dear desire; for she knew too well her brother's whimsical taciturnity;

Introducing Mrs. Winthrop

overpraise of this woman he so admired would be very apt to satiate him at the very start.

A silence fell between them while they waited to hear the door-bell announce their guests.

Mrs. Winthrop was happily convinced that with so attractive and intelligent a young lady as Miss Jordan in the Middleton arena, in every way a most suitable match for Edgar, her own release from exile here would not be far distant. It seemed, indeed, providential that a girl so preëminently fitted to be Edgar's wife should actually be living in this ridiculous town and even be *fond* of it!—her elder half-brother not only the foremost citizen of the place, but, most fortuitously, the President of the Board of Trustees of Stevens College.

It was fortunate, too, she reflected, that Edgar, observant though he was, did not recognize beneath Miss Jordan's womanly loveliness, that which no one but Mrs. Winthrop did seem to see in the girl—a strain of obstinacy that so often (Heaven knows why!) is the accompaniment of an extreme sweetness of manner. Edgar did not dream that it was by reason of an indomitable stubbornness and an egotism which made prominence and power the very breath of her life, that Theodora ruled her big, strong brother and managed all the important doings of Middleton. Indeed, most of those under her sway did not suspect these qualities and thought their homage due, as Mrs. Winthrop had not quite candidly suggested to Edgar, to

Barnabetta

the young woman's unquestioned "superiority" to every one else in Middleton.

It did not trouble Mrs. Winthrop that such characteristics in a wife might make for her brother's unhappiness. She knew Edgar too well. His own wilfulness and selfishness would certainly be a match for that of any woman—even of one with a will and a self-love as invincible as Theodora's. Yes, there was no doubt about it, these two strong natures, if they did come together, would be well matched, would do each other no end of good.

"A *really* gentle, sensitive woman married to Edgar,—well, I should not envy her! I am sure he will need to be held down a bit in his domestic relations."

Edgar, meantime, his mind reverting to the recent hour in his office with the odd little girl from the country, found himself unaccountably reluctant to speak of her to his sister. Several times he opened his lips to amuse Elizabeth with an account of Barnabetta's apologies for admiring Shakespeare, her horror of "Poppery," her gratuitous information as to ancient Christian persecutions, and, most impressive of all, her refreshingly self-possessed and comrade-like manner with himself. But he closed his lips—and wondered at himself.

"I would only give Elizabeth a false impression of her. She would think her forward, vulgar—and she is n't. One would have to see her to understand that

Introducing Mrs. Winthrop

subtle quality in her of—I scarcely know of what—a sort of spiritual fragrance!”

On second thoughts, however, he doubted whether Elizabeth, of an unsympathetic temperament, would, even if she did meet the damsel, be capable of realizing that quality—elusive and indefinable as it was!

“I hope,” his sister broke in upon his meditation, “that Theodora’s loyalty to Middleton does not go so far as to admire the furnishings of this house!”

But before her brother could reply, the door-bell rang and the butler announced their guests.

CHAPTER XVII

THEODORA JORDAN

NO wonder Judge Jordan's gaze rested so often upon his young half-sister with a pride akin to adoration, thought Barrett, as after their delightful dinner talk, the party of four sat with their coffee about the library fire. So ethereal did the young lady look in her white gown that she seemed to Barrett less like a flesh and blood woman than the diaphanous embodiment of a poet's dream; of an artist's vision; somewhat "too high and fine for human nature's daily food." Her large, pensive eyes, her tender, exquisite mouth, her white forehead crowned with dark hair, her beautiful hands and slim, graceful form, she was herself another expression of the music she would presently play for them so satisfyingly, of the really fine verse she occasionally contributed to leading magazines, of her own high ideals of life and of culture. No wonder that merely by virtue of her lovely personality this tender young creature practically ruled the women of Middleton as well as this virile man, her brother.

It would have been inconceivable to Barrett that the one great worry of Theodora's life had always been

Theodora Jordan

and still was the warding off from her portly, middle-aged half-brother the designing women whom she was constantly suspecting of making love to him. Barrett thought her infinitely removed from the possibility of such commonplaceness.

She was speaking, now, as they sat about the library fire, of a recent exhibit in Boston of Rodin's work. It was significant that invariably the first note of her low, soft voice brought, in any gathering, a hush of expectancy.

"Rodin really does speak to us, you know—he has a great message. His work is not merely brilliant technique—it is so very much more!—it expresses reality! You know what Bernard Shaw says of him? 'Rodin's hand worked, not as a sculptor's hand works, but as the Life Force works.' "

Judge Jordan had a disconcerting way, whenever his dazzling sister talked, of beaming upon her listeners with a countenance that exclaimed "Hear! Hear!"

"Mere brilliancy of technique," she continued, "without a vital content,—in any art,—always has the effect of making me perfectly blue—it seems so empty, so not-worth-while."

"How she can distinguish those that have from those that have n't a 'content,' as she calls it, floors me!" remarked her admiring brother.

Theodora, patiently tolerant of her Philistine relative, neither looked at nor answered him.

"To be sure," argued Barrett, "while one can't

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be simply a stylist and nothing more, since you've got to have something to style about—nevertheless, the *how* it is done does signify tremendously. You don't believe, Miss Jordan, in Art for Art's sake?"

"But," she smiled up at him, "does any one pretend to know what the hard-worked phrase means?"

"Beauty for Beauty's sake, then. That a perfection of artistic expression is a sufficient end in itself."

"'Artistic expression'—yes, but of what? Of the beauty, the sacredness of life?"

"Of its ugliness and devilishness as well," insisted Barrett.

"Yes, if you let the darker phases serve only to throw into relief the glory of the universe. 'Ugliness, devilishness,' are shadows, not realities."

"Not realities? The devil they are n't!" exclaimed the Judge, for whom this statement seemed to be too much. "Ah," he hastily added as he caught his sister's sad, surprised gaze. "I beg your pardon, ladies! I don't *often* swear in the presence of ladies! Well, to be sure," he said, addressing Barrett, "a woman like Theodora can't be expected to realize that ugliness and devilishness are realities. We should n't want our dear women to realize that!"

"There, there, David, darling," Theodora patted his big hand to quiet him as though he were a forward child—and he, looking snubbed, sank back deeper into the huge leather chair which he amply filled.

Theodora Jordan

"Truth and Beauty," she said reverently, turning to Barrett, "are the only realities."

"We don't all agree, however, as to what is truth and what beauty," returned Barrett.

"But there are certain fundamental standards. Those finer phases of feeling and of thought that elude expression must really be the source and the basis of our 'faith' both in art and in religion."

"Now will you hear that!" Jordan's beaming countenance seemed to say. "And she's my little sister!"

Her earnestness had brought a faint flush to her delicate face which stirred an answering glow in Barrett's soul as he gazed at her.

"I wonder," he remarked speculatively, "whether it is possible for us native New Englanders ever to come out from our inherited limitations enough to really understand great art—the *abandon*, the let-go, that is behind all big creations. Personally I don't believe that it is. We are too hopelessly hide-bound, self-conscious, self-righteous, decent, and civilized!"

"But," Mrs. Winthrop interpolated, "you say it as though you were proud of the fact! I know him too well," she informed the others, "to believe in his depreciation of himself and his standards! A New Englander, like an old Englander, believes in himself to the extent of thinking his shortcomings quite superior to other people's virtues."

Theodora's eyes rested upon her absently, while Judge Jordan laughed appreciatively.

Barnabetta

"Too civilized?" Theodora repeated Barrett's words. "But it is only in a high state of civilization that art develops."

"And in the next higher stage of civilization, it becomes decadent," said Barrett.

"It will not when the artist becomes the teacher of truth, of reality, of religion."

"In other words," said Barrett, smiling, "when the artist becomes a cultivated Puritan, then art and civilization are saved, eh? I'm afraid we Anglo-Saxons can't get away from that point of view! We all need—as Mrs. Browning has told us—to live in Italy a few years to be cured of our provincialism."

Theodora, who prided herself on her breadth of view, her freedom from provincialism, winced at this.

"I *hope* I have got beyond the place where one sees only through the medium of a climate!" she smiled.

"Do any of us ever get beyond that?"

"Oh, but that is fatalism!" she earnestly protested.

"Unless above himself man can erect himself, how poor a thing is man!" Emerson says."

"Oh, dear!" thought Mrs. Winthrop wearily, "can't she ever relax? I suppose she'd spurn me forever if I suggested Bridge. Well," she sighed resignedly, "Edgar's enjoying himself—he just loves this strained kind of conversation, thank heaven! If only she does n't overdo it! The prospect of such attenuated mental food for life may scare even him!"

Theodora Jordan

It's well her brother's here to supply an occasional break!"

"Ha!" the Judge at this moment exclaimed, drawing from his pocket a pencil and a note-book. "Let me have that quotation, Theodora! I'll use it for the text of my speech to-morrow night—I'm to talk," he flung an explanation to Barrett and Mrs. Winthrop, "to the Men's Progressive League up in Scranton. I shall have some of their thirty or forty millionaires up there feeling peevish with me before I'm through!"

Judge Jordan was a "self-made" man of great practical acumen, who had built up a fortune fifteen years since, when it could still be done honestly. His mother had died at his birth, and his father, a Western Bishop, had, years afterwards, married a second time, a Boston woman of good old family who had died when her baby daughter, Theodora, was five years old. A year later the Bishop had followed his wives, leaving the child, Theodora, to the care of her half-brother, who was, at the time, making his own successful way as a manufacturer in Pennsylvania.

To this big-hearted, if rather crude, son of the Bishop, his little half-sister had been, from the first, his chief concern in life as well as his greatest happiness. He had surrounded her, as his business prospered, with every possible luxury and had given her every "advantage" in the way of education that she would take. She had graduated at college, had

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studied music and languages abroad, had traveled extensively and had always done exactly as she pleased.

David Jordan had, years ago, when Theodora was in her teens, determined never to marry until she had married,—partly because he knew that his doing so would make her unhappy; and partly because his incomparable sister had always made all other girls and women show up in his estimation as so trifling and shallow that he felt sure any woman he found tolerable would find *him* impossible. Therefore matrimony had long appeared to him an exceedingly far-off possibility.

Naturally of a benevolent mind, Jordan's abilities had been directed of late years to finding a solution of the problem of poverty,—in which genuinely earnest study he did not receive either the approval or the sympathy of his highly cultured sister, who held, with her maternal Boston relatives, that the "lower classes" were providentially created to serve those of a higher order—which, in a sense, Judge Jordan readily admitted would indisputably be a just and beneficent provision. The question in his mind, however, was, how to find a rule by which to determine who constituted this higher order so worthy to be served; how to sift the human wheat from the chaff. Naturally, this problem did not exist for Theodora and her maternal relatives, who considered the matter to have been already adjusted very satisfactorily by Provi-

Theodora Jordan

dence and who held that any attempt to disturb its present beautiful working was nothing short of blasphemous. Hence their deep disapproval of the Judge's activities for the uplift of the struggling submerged. They would not have objected to Philanthropy—that, of course, was always commendable. But to go about preaching (with a dangerously persuasive eloquence) a pernicious doctrine of equal opportunity for all, special privilege for none—it was socialistic, anarchistic, a disgrace to his family!

It was in this one matter, however,—fast becoming his ruling love,—that his sister's wishes had no weight with him; that he resolutely kept, in spite of her protests, to his chosen line.

"You would better make sure, David, dear," she mildly warned him just now, "that you quite understand Emerson's words."

"I don't care, dearie, what *he* meant by his words. I know what *I* mean by them, and very useful they will be to me—If man can't build himself above the animal that's in him, above his natural greed and selfishness," he scribbled as he wrote, "he'd better become an extinct species as fast as possible; for in his natural state he's not worth the cost of his keep. All that is needed to bring order out of the moral chaos of our day, is that man shall cease to be governed solely by his animal instinct of self-preservation and shall recognize a higher law of human relationship. Then will manufacturers cease to clamor for

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protection which protects their interests at the expense of the people's. Then will the people cease their senseless cry of 'Back to competition!'—competition which means the scrambling of chickens for the best corn, the crowding and pushing of pigs to get to the sty! Then will the race of luxurious, parasitical women pass away, as will also the race of paupers!"

"Don't you feel it very dangerous," said Barrett coldly, who hated the Judge's democratic and radical theories, "to be talking that kind of thing up there in Scranton with its large population of malcontents?"

"Not nearly so dangerous as to keep on in our course of defrauding the 'malcontents' of their human rights."

"Of what 'human rights' is any man defrauded in these all too liberal days?" demanded Barrett, repressing with difficulty the scorn which, as Jordan's host, he could not decently express.

"The human right to a living wage, that's all," returned Jordan.

"A living wage!—when carpenters earn more than college professors; cooks more than school-teachers; when never in the history of the world were such high wages paid to the working classes—with the sole result that never before were those classes so incapable, lazy, and impertinent; never were their demands so unreasonably exorbitant!"

"That is perfectly true," admitted Jordan. "Con-

Theodora Jordan

fict and wrong there will be on both sides until we replace the spirit of selfishness and greed with the spirit of love."

"As if the lower classes can ever be anything else than greedy animals!" said Barrett in a bored tone.

"Exactly—as, for example, Rockefeller, Carnegie, and their ilk, who were once of the lower classes and who, if they had n't been 'greedy animals,' would scarcely have hoarded such a pile! You see, our social system is a system of grab—a football game in which the devil takes the weak! Savage, Dr. Barrett, very savage! We've got to grow more civilized."

"Nothing would so quickly kill civilization, art, all the beauty of life," softly spoke in Theodora's compelling voice, "as this hideous dead-level of equality you so impossibly advocate, David!"

"I am not such a fool as to advocate equality, dearie. I advocate equality of opportunity."

"Well, it is n't practicable." Barrett grandly dismissed the subject. "Any thinking man must recognize that it is n't."

The Judge looked at him curiously. "It seems to me so incredible," he said, "that any true man should not burn with a sense of the wrong of the present order!"

"I do burn with a sense of the wrong of it—the wrong to the cultured classes of being obliged to compromise with and even tolerate dictation from the

Barnabetta

ignorant, the vulgar, the stupid; those whose natural inferiority has kept them low in the scale! I share Alexander Hamilton's opinion of the people. 'The people, sir, the people is a great beast!' he said."

"Well," returned the Judge quietly, "though I am not a professing Christian as you are, I do believe, as you manifestly do not, in Jesus' doctrine of human brotherhood."

"Are you sure, David," Theodora inquired with her faintly patronizing air, "that you quite understand our Lord's doctrine of human brotherhood? He recognized, you know, the authority of the existing order—'Render unto Cæsar.'"

"Whatever He meant by human brotherhood, Theo, He scarcely meant our modern cut-throat relations of capital and labor. And what He meant does not alter the fact that we are at present on the eve of a social order founded upon what no social system has ever yet been founded upon—a *real* human brotherhood—not the mockery which brings forth 'philanthropy,' settlements, and other so-called charitable devices. A *genuine* human brotherhood, my dear—we are not going to stop short of *that!*"

"I'm afraid you are an impracticable dreamer, Judge," Barrett shrugged—while Theodora, to cut short her brother's persistence in discussing what she disapproved, rose from her chair.

"Come," she said to Barrett, "let me play some Beethoven for you."

Theodora Jordan

He acquiesced eagerly. "Ah, if you will be so good! I've been haunted, ever since I last heard you play, by your—may I say unique?—interpretation. It seems to me you opened my mind to new beauties in Beethoven's music!"

Theodora glowed with pleasure. This, the sort of tribute she loved, coming from a source so worth while, made her turn to her host with a sudden impulse and hold out her hand.

"I must clasp hands with you!" she smiled. "Any one who feels Beethoven *just* as I feel him, is my comrade! And genuine comradeship, you know, is the rarest thing in life!"

It was Barrett's turn, now, to glow with pleasure. Though he had by no means a humble opinion of himself, and had been courted and flattered by women sufficiently to have made a fool of a stronger man, yet there was that in Theodora Jordan which made the gracious bestowal of her friendship seem a high, a god-like gift.

"You certainly must find 'genuine comradeship' precious rare in Middleton, Miss Jordan!" Mrs. Winthrop remarked, as they strolled over to the parlor. "How a girl like you has endured it as a *home* all these years!"

"I am very much attached to it," Theodora said. "The dear people here have been wonderfully fond of me, quite wonderfully good to me. And one finds they *are* such good people when one gets below their

Barnabetta

surface crudities and comes into genuine touch with their real selves."

"A thing which," Mrs. Winthrop said to herself, "you 'd be absolutely incapable of doing, you self-deceived, insufferable little prig!"

"No doubt." she answered aloud, "they are very worthy."

When, an hour later, Edgar insisted upon walking home with their guests, Mrs. Winthrop felt very well satisfied that things were destined to take the course she felt to be so desirable.

Barrett, when he had left Miss Jordan and her brother at their door and was walking home under a cold, starlit night, wondered, for a second time, why he had intuitively checked his desire to repeat to Theodora the amusing little talk he had had that afternoon with the country maiden. For Theodora, unlike Elizabeth, would have understood. Yes, surely, *she* would have understood. What was it about "Barnabetta" that closed his lips upon the story which might make him appear to be laughing at her?

CHAPTER XVIII

BARNABETTA AT COLLEGE

BARRETT refrained, in the weeks that followed, as Barnabetta sat before him daily in the Shakespeare class, from calling on her to recite, because he wished to shield her from the amusement she would be apt to create by her answers. He wondered whether she really got anything out of his half-hour's exposition of the text of *Hamlet*. It was obvious that she *tried* hard enough as, leaning forward in her seat with wide, wondering gaze never once removed from him, she listened with apparently deep interest to every word he uttered.

The last fifteen minutes of the period was usually given up to a rapid fire of questioning, and Barrett often noticed how eager she seemed to answer, if only he would give her the chance. But, curious as he felt as to what it all might mean to her, he held back from letting her expose herself.

He had a peculiar consciousness, as day after day she "sat at his feet," that her mental attitude towards him was not that of the other students. Her child-like gaze, so free from self-consciousness or awe, was in marked contrast to that of the conscious maidens

Barnabetta

who blushed if he looked at them, trembled if he pronounced their names, wept at his occasional sarcastic comments on their recitations, and would, he knew, have ogled at him had he given them an opportunity.

There came a day, however, when his kindly purpose to shield Barnabetta was thwarted. Some passages they were reading in which Hamlet derides poor Ophelia and her love, and that of all her sex, brought from Barrett a question which Barnabetta alone, of all the class, volunteered to answer.

Said Hamlet: "*You jig, you amble, and you lisp, and nickname God's creatures, and make your wantonness your ignorance. Go to; I'll no more on't.*"

"*For the power of beauty will sooner transform honesty from what it is to a bawd than the force of honesty can translate beauty into his likeness.*"

"Hamlet, it would appear," said Barrett, "did not hold women, love, marriage, in very high esteem. Does his indictment of your sex suggest to you a certain modern misogynist?"

There was an instant's pause; no hand was raised; but Barnabetta rose.

Barrett winced visibly; he would have feigned not to see her if it had been possible.

"I think you must mean the writer named Bernard Shaw, Dr. Barrett."

"Ah!" he exclaimed, showing the surprise he felt. Certainly he had not expected Barnabetta to be the only girl in her class to answer a question like that.

Barnabetta at College

"You have read some of Shaw's writings, Miss Dreary?" he asked at a risk.

"I have read a play I found in the library—*Man and Superman*."

"And Mr. Shaw's view of woman in that play, Miss Dreary—it suggests Hamlet's?"

"Yes, sir; but Hamlet was out of his head, and this Jack Tanner in Bernard Shaw's play was n't. What Jack Tanner says about women," Barnabetta serenely affirmed, "is not true."

A smile went over the class and every eye was fixed upon the speaker.

"You are quite sure?" questioned Barrett.

"Yes, sir. It is not true."

"Can you prove that?"

"It stands to reason—girls don't force men to marry them—it is the other way. A man seeks marriage because it gives him all his comforts, but it is not natural that a woman would seek what gives her only despair."

The smile of the class broadened and threatened to become an audible ripple, but a flash from Dr. Barrett's eyes smothered it at its birth.

"But, Miss Dreary," he spoke upon a profound silence, "if marriage offers no advantages to a woman, why, in the name of the gods, do women marry?"

"The men coax them. They have n't the will to resist if coaxed overmuch."

Barnabetta

This was too much even for Barrett's gravity and his own smile was the signal for a general laugh.

Barnabetta, as she sat down, looked surprised and puzzled, but not at all embarrassed.

"Your point of view, Miss Dreary," said Dr. Barrett, speaking in a more kindly tone than any student in his presence had ever before heard from him, "is hardly the generally accepted one in our day."

He turned and addressed the class abruptly: "Finish, by to-morrow, Act Third and read also Act Fourth. Dismissed," he nodded.

As Barnabetta walked in line past his desk, he noted the fact that though the weeks at Stevens were giving her a modified accent, a better command of English, and a bit of literary knowledge, she still looked odd among her college-mates by reason of her countrified clothing, her heavy, audible shoes, the unfashionable way she piled her abundant, beautiful hair about her head. He wondered what the attitude of the other students was to her. Though she did not seem to be intimate with any one, he saw with a peculiar sense of relief that she did not wear the look of loneliness, of nostalgia, so often detected in the face of a Freshman. But that so unsophisticated, so "green" a girl should escape being "guyed" seemed to him unlikely.

It was on the next day that he learned how things really stood with her in this respect. He was alone in his inner office, working on a pile of students' papers, when his secretary knocked and entered.

Barnabetta at College

"Miss Dreary is at the door, Dr. Barrett. She says you sent for her."

"A mistake. I did not."

The secretary bowed and started to go away. But he stopped her. "Beg pardon—she says I sent for her?"

"Yes, Dr. Barrett."

"Well, I did n't; but—let her come in, please."

A moment later Barnabetta walked with heavy tread into the office. Barrett rose and placed a chair for her. She sat down and he, reseating himself before her, looked at her inquiringly. But she met his look with a serene though puzzled expectancy and waited for him to speak.

"You wanted to see me, Miss Dreary?"

"Well, if I must."

"If you must?"

"When you send for me, I must come."

"Who told you I sent for you?"

"The girls in the dormitory brought me your message."

"Ah? What was the message?"

"They said I must come right down to your office because you—they said you *had found me out* and were angry that I kept gambling cards and *cigarettes*, yet, concealed *under my mattress*—and that I used such *rouge* on my face and—and laced! But, Dr. Barrett, it is false—I have nothing hid under my mattress and my cheeks are natural. I tell you the truth.

Barnabetta

And, Dr. Barrett," she gravely reproved him, "I wonder *at* you to say such things about me!"

Dr. Barrett stared—she was censuring him for slandering her! Not for the world must he let her discover that the girls had been poking fun at her, the vulgar little fools!

"The young ladies made a mistake," he said. "It was not you—another young lady—who has been guilty of—those items you mentioned. The matron will attend to her."

"Well," she drew a long breath of relief, "I'm glad you know it's not me—I."

She leaned back in her chair, gazing up at him with a soft, bright happiness in her face that held him fascinated.

"I did now wonder *at* you that you could think such things about *me*."

"No, I could n't possibly be so stupid, Miss Dreary, as to think such things of you."

"That's what *I* thought—it seemed as if you could n't be that dumm!"

"Yet you did believe the girls? I should think," he hastily added, "you would have known there must be a mistake."

"I can't think how the girls came by such a mistake. They will be glad to know it was a mistake. They were sorry for me. They thought you would be very severe. They even said maybe you'd *expel* me!"

Barnabetta at College

"Ah? And you—were n't you afraid of my possible severity?"

"Not *afraid*. I only felt disappointed to think that a man with so *much* in his brain to ponder as you have, could bother himself with such trifles."

"You were, then, 'disappointed' in *me*?" he inquired quite gravely.

"But I was in fault to feel so," she said humbly.

"A person ought always to know her friends too well to misjudge them like that. I won't ever again think anything so mean of you, Dr. Barrett," she reassured him.

"Thank you."

"You 're welcome."

They regarded each other for a moment complacently.

"I guess it would be a good thing if we were all like Job," she remarked.

"Job? One of your Reinhartz friends?"

"I mean Job of the Scriptures."

"Oh!" he exclaimed with a short laugh at such familiar conversational handling of the patriarch.

"Yes? How?"

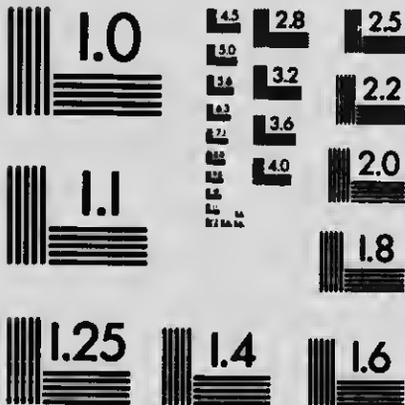
"Well, Job knew in his heart that God was good and nothing that happened to him, *nothing*, could shake his belief in that. Unless we can believe like that in our friends, against all appearances, I guess we are n't worthy a real friend."

"But what do you understand by 'a real friend'?"



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Barnabetta

"One that I feel towards like I feel towards Mama and like I feel towards *you*. Mama and you are the only friends I ever had—except Abel Buchter—but to him I have only given gratefulness, not friendship."

"And how," he could not resist asking her, "do you feel towards me?"

"Just the way I feel towards Mama, Dr. Barrett, only not quite so intimate and near."

"How about your other instructors—you bestow your friendship upon them?"

"Oh, no."

"I am honored. But I am curious to know why you single me out?"

"You are different."

"Ah? Thank you."

"You 're welcome."

Again they regarded each other in silence for a moment.

"It seems," Barnabetta presently remarked thoughtfully, "as if every Shakespeare lesson I have with you, makes me feel more acquainted with you. I like your thoughts so well. And your nice ways. Before I came here, I did not know there were any men like you in the world!"

"Ah, my dear child, there are many better ones!" He rose abruptly, feeling reluctantly the impropriety of prolonging this *tête-à-tête*. There was always his secretary in the outer office.

Barnabetta, also rising, dropped her handkerchief

Barnabetta at College

and instantly Barrett stepped out from his desk to pick it up for her. The look of adoring admiration with which she received this bit of gallantry, so new in her experience of men, made the college president feel, before her guileless candor, a self-consciousness of which the country maiden herself was wholly free.

He wondered long that afternoon, after she had gone, what it was in Barnabetta that affected him in just the peculiar, penetrating way her personality did affect him. It was some elusive quality in her that he could not quite lay hold of or define. But the quest of it charmed him, fired his imagination, lent a zest to the dull routine of teaching intellectual fledglings.

CHAPTER XIX

BARNABETTA IS CALLED TO ACCOUNT

IT was only a week later that Barnabetta did actually commit a misdemeanor of such seriousness that it was reported to the President for discipline. She was discovered to have gone, without permission, alone and unchaperoned, into the town. Being a preparatory student, this offense made her amenable to suspension or expulsion—at the discretion of the President.

To soften the austerity of his necessary interview with the delinquent, the President did not formally summon her to his office, but postponed the ordeal until she should be obliged on the following afternoon to meet an appointment at his office for a personal criticism of her *Hamlet* paper; for the Shakespeare class having finished their study of the play, every student had been required to write a synopsis of the plot with a statement as to what she individually had got from her six weeks' study; also, to undergo a private criticism of her paper, in the President's office—a test which some of them met with tears, some with hysterics, but nearly all with pleasurable, exciting dread.

Barrett wondered, as just before the hour appointed

Barnabetta Is Called to Account

for Barnabetta to come for her *Hamlet* interview, he sat reading her extraordinary paper, how she would meet her intellectual vivisection at his hands—with the additional ordeal before her of being called to account for her high crime and misdemeanor in running away to town without permission.

The reading of students' papers was, of course, a deadly bore. But Barrett found himself surprisingly entertained by the rather awful sincerity of Barnabetta's unique "statement" as to what her study of *Hamlet* had yielded her—annexed to her outline of the play.

"I think I get more education out of one play of Shakespeare's," she wrote, "than out of all else I study at Stevens College. Anyway, I find my mind more awakened by this branch than by any others. The wonderful thoughts this great poet had, rouse thoughts in me such as I never had before. That is because you, our Teacher, make it so clear to us what deep meaning lies in the strange, great words. I always feel excited in Shakespeare class. It stirs my feelings as well as my mind. It makes me long to be a poet also, to pour out *my* feelings in beautiful words. It makes me long for things I never thought of before. I seem to understand, now, what could be meant by the Golden Text, 'Ye must be born again.' I feel, since I came here, as if I were being made all over into another creature.

Barnabetta

"I will write one more thought before I stop. I think *Hamlet* must have looked like you, Dr. Barrett. When I think of him, his face always has features like yours. He was learned like you, he had deep thoughts like you have, and he had fine feelings the kind you have. I understand the play better because I know you so well. Until I knew you, I did not know that any living, real man had such fineness.

"BARNABETTA DREARY."

He scorned himself for the little thrill of pleasure—actually of gratified vanity—he felt at the flattering parallel she drew!

When presently she came to the office, he saw at once as she sat down at his side before her manuscript spread out on his desk, that she looked pale. But her manner was very quiet.

Perfunctorily he went over her paper with her; several points that she had made in her outline of the plot he especially commended—they were points that had escaped the notice of every other student in the class.

He noticed a peculiar thing as they talked—she persistently kept her hands in her lap as though trying to conceal them—those hands which, in their freedom from household toil, were growing, he had recently observed, white and smooth and shapely. Just once in the interest of their interview she forgot herself and lifting one hand, rested it on her paper as

Barnabetta Is Called to Account

she spoke to him—and he saw immediately that it had been professionally manicured—the pointed, shining pink nails looking odd enough in contrast to what they had been a few weeks ago. But in a moment, seeming to recollect herself, she hastily hid the hand again in her lap.

Presently, their discussion of the paper concluded, he folded it, pushed it aside, and turned sidewise in his chair to face her.

She leaned back in her own chair and looked at him pensively, her hands clasped behind her. Then suddenly, as though determined to conquer her cowardice or embarrassment or whatever it was that had prompted concealment of her hands, she resolutely brought them forward and spread them conspicuously in her lap.

Barrett bit his lip, cleared his throat and spoke to her.

“It is my unpleasant duty,” he began resolutely, “to reprove your violation of rule yesterday in going to town.”

She gazed at him, but volunteered no reply.

“I understand that you do not plead ignorance of the rule as an excuse?”

“No, I knew the rule,” she admitted in a low voice.

“What, then, is your excuse?”

“I have n’t any.”

“Do you mind telling me what you went to town for?”

Barnabetta

She colored and her eyes fell. "I'm ashamed to."

"Was your errand so urgent as to make you feel justified in violating the rule of the college?"

"I did n't mind *that*—'violating the rule of the college'—because I did n't think anybody would find it out."

"But how about your sense of loyalty to your college, your sense of honor in keeping its rules?"

She looked at him thoughtfully. "I have n't any," she said, shaking her head.

"No sense of honor or loyalty?"

"Not about any *rules*. They are—trivial."

"But very necessary. You are under our care. We cannot expose you, or let you expose yourself, to harm."

"What harm?" she asked, puzzled.

"You are away from your parents—we are responsible for you—we must know at all times where you are," he patiently explained. "You make it difficult for us, if you deliberately evade the rules devised for your protection."

"But I can't see what harm *could* happen to any one in daylight in Middleton."

The argument was unanswerable; there was probably no spot in the little town less safe than the shelter of the college itself.

"Well, then," said Barrett, crossing his legs with an air of decision, "if neither loyalty nor honor moves you to keep the rule, I ask you as a personal favor

Barnabetta Is Called to Account

to me not to disobey it again—or you will put me to the painful necessity of executing the penalty of the law, suspension or expulsion. You knew the penalty when you went to town?"

"Yes, I knew it; but I did n't think I would be seen or I would n't have risked it."

"You won't risk it again?"

"No, indeed—for Mama's sake; she would be so disappointed; I am sure she is giving up a great deal to let me have this education."

"And," he inquired hesitatingly, "for my sake?"

"For your sake?" she repeated, puzzled.

"To spare me the pain of suspending you," he said curtly.

"You did not make the foolish rule, so I don't see why you would take it to heart."

"You don't see why I should feel sorry to have to send you home when you are doing so well here?"

"Of course," she assured him, "I know how kind-hearted you are. But if I did have to leave here, I think you would soon forget me, Dr. Barrett. There are so many others here."

"I thought," he found himself saying, to his own infinite surprise, "that you considered me your—friend."

"Yes, I do, but I would n't expect you to think as much of me as I do of you. To be sure I guess you would feel some bad to see me go. But you don't need

Barnabetta

to worry, Dr. Barrett—I won't break the rule again, indeed I won't."

"Your errand to town must have been very urgent indeed to make you run such a risk of grieving your mother."

"No," she said, her delicate face flushing, "it was n't—urgent."

"Not urgent?"

"No—it was just something I had set my heart on doing."

"Something wrong—that you did not get permission to go to town with a chaperon?"

"No, it was n't wrong. But—I did n't want any one to know. Because," she said, her voice very low, "it was a vanity. Please," she pleaded, "I'd rather not tell. If you won't make me tell, I pass you my promise I won't do it again."

"For your mother's sake," he repeated. "But you have a father too?" he curiously inquired.

"But he would be glad if I did have to come home, because he don't favor education for females—for all he married Mama and *she* has a good education."

"Why, then, does he send you to college?"

"He don't. Mama sends me against his will. Mama is rich."

"Ah?"

"Yes, sir."

"Then you did not mean—when you spoke of the

Barnabetta Is Called to Account

sacrifices she makes to send you here—material sacrifices? You referred to—your father's opposition?"

"Oh, I don't think Mama minds my father's opposition very much. You see, being so rich, she can just take her own way and he can't help himself. I meant 'material sacrifices.' It costs *so much* to go to college."

"But if she is so rich?"

"Oh, yes, she has a thousand dollars a year all her own," Barnabetta announced breathlessly. "But she spends such a big part of it on me. And before she married father, she had all that for herself alone!"

"But what better could she do with it than spend it on her daughter?"

"That's what *she* says," Barnabetta answered, her eyes softly shining with the light that always came into them at mention of her stepmother.

"You are her only child?"

"I have two older brothers."

"They are not sent to college?"

"Oh, no, they do not favor education."

The situation seemed to him very peculiar. It never occurred to him that it could be a stepmother of whom she spoke with such devoted affection.

There was a step in the outer office and Barrett, glancing at his watch, saw that the next *Hamlet* student was due.

Barnabetta rose and picked up her paper, but

Barnabetta

Barrett checked her, as he also stood. "I'll keep the paper, if you please."

She gave it up, but looked surprised. "The others got theirs back," she said inquiringly.

"Yes. You forfeit yours. Your penalty," he said gravely, "for running away. I'll keep this"—he thrust it into his breast-pocket—"as a guarantee that you'll never do so again, eh?"

She looked at him doubtfully. She did not understand playfulness and Barrett's face wore a Hamlet-like gravity.

"All right," she acquiesced, her highly manicured hand on the back of her chair. "Good-by."

"Good-by." He suddenly held out his hand to her.

The brightness of her eyes as she looked up at him while she laid her hand in his, was like the look with which she always spoke of her mother.

He did not know, however, that her love for that "mother" was the first great romance of her girlhood.

She went away; and the secretary at once announced that Miss Boyer, the next student due, had sent word that she was laid up with a headache and could not come.

Barrett was glad of it. The headache was of course a ruse to get out of her interview with him—she was a poor, stupid thing. He was glad of this momentary respite in which to revel in his novel sense of enjoy-

Barnabetta Is Called to Account

ment—the enjoyment of realizing Barnabetta's perfectly transparent evasions. Her errand to town had of course been to a manicure establishment. She was ashamed of the "vanity" which had led her to prepare thus for the interview she was to have in such close proximity to himself; but she had evidently decided, on second thoughts, that having squandered time and money and run the risk of suspension, it must not be for naught—and so had brought forth her nice-looking hands and shamelessly displayed them!

He was glad he had kept her "essay" on *Hamlet*, for, recalling with pleasure that that evening he and his sister were to dine with the Jordans, he determined to read the child's quaint paper to Theodora. She would enjoy it; she would appreciate the subtle quality of genuineness that gave such a unique charm to everything the girl did and said. Yes, Theodora, he was sure, would quite understand and share his own feeling about Barnabetta.

CHAPTER XX

THE LURE OF THEODORA

BUT in the first place the evening at the Jordans' afforded no opportunity for so intimate a confidence with Theodora as the bringing forth from his pocket of Barnabetta's paper; for though he found himself alone with his hostess several times—once in the music-room while Mrs. Winthrop detained Judge Jordan in the library over the discussion of a magazine article; and again just before leaving as they waited in the hall while Elizabeth went up-stairs to get on her wraps—yet neither of these occasions seemed propitious, he and Miss Jordan being too deeply involved, at the time, in most serious discourse.

In the second place, Theodora's highly rarefied atmosphere and the extremely cultivated background of her beautiful home seemed to remove to a far perspective the atmosphere and image of Barnabetta, making any mention of her seem like an unseemly intrusion, almost an incongruity. Barnabetta stood to him for a sublime simplicity; Theodora for a fascinatingly exalted complexity.

"Do you know," Miss Jordan confided to him as, before his departure, they stood together in the wide hall, he in his great coat, holding his hat and gloves;

The Lure of Theodora

and she, slim and dainty in a violet-tinted dinner-gown of some gauzy fabric, "I am getting quite to depend on these occasional fruitful moments alone with you—they are a stimulus to me! You give me something—something I do not get from any other source—something I am always hungry for! What is it? Is it just—yourself—that speaks to my true self vitally?"

"I should be glad to think so!"

"A feeling like that," she said dreamily, "*must* be mutual, I think."

"It is your music," he smiled, "that discovers the vital spot in me and establishes the current between us."

"And on that current there comes back to me from you as real an uplift as my music seems to yield to you!"

He took it seriously—she was a woman of great beauty and charm.

"That is because," he replied, "you galvanize into life the dormant best in me!"

"The best in us," she sighed, "does have so little stimulus from the day's ordinary routine, does n't it? Life's machinery seems striving always to crush the spiritual in us. But," she added with a sudden glow that made her very lovely, "unless the ideal, the spiritual side of us, does find expression—full and adequate expression—of what worth is anything?"

"One must be actually great of soul in these mod-

Barnabetta

ern days," he said gravely, "to escape the fearful stress of materialism."

"Materialism which means death," she agreed. "Then how we must rejoice to discover one who not only helps us to escape the wretched bondage, but whom we also help to a higher plane!"

It was a crucial moment—but the sound of Mrs. Winthrop's step on the stairs checked the reply Barrett might have felt called upon to make—or rather checked its mere verbal expression, for Theodora, her eloquent, soft eyes raised to his, held out her hand to him and he clasped it as he held also her upward, speaking gaze, for a moment full of significance to them both; a moment that throbbed with their growing sense of spiritual kinship—though there did obtrude upon Barrett's consciousness the slightly distracting recollection of the more substantial, but not less soft, feel of Barnabetta's manicured hand which he had held for a moment that afternoon—the common clay of the people! Theodora was a patrician to her finger tips and he delighted in it.

He did not pause to ask himself whether, had she physically resembled her mother's people, this vital current of spiritual oneness between them would ever have been established.

"It is restful, is n't it, Edgar," his sister remarked as they walked home through the quiet streets in the cold moonlight, "to go into a home like that, where one's taste is n't rasped in any way!"

The Lure of Theodora

"Far from being 'rasped,' it is so satisfyingly gratified," was his reply. "Odd, isn't it, to find in a society like this of Middleton, composed of the insufferably uninteresting middle class, a home like the Jordans' in which there is manifested on all sides such extreme refinement of taste. Theodora's sense of fitness amounts to genius. The beauty of their house is only another expression of the music in her!"

"Yes," Mrs. Winthrop responded heartily, if non-committally.

She was relieved to find that he had not noticed a certain phase of their evening which scarcely could be called an expression of Theodora's innate harmony. The maiden's attitude towards her devoted brother, though veiled always by her refined gentleness of manner and the musical softness of her voice, was, Mrs. Winthrop felt, very cold-blooded. Jordan did so adore the girl, and she did so subtly snub and dominate him! For instance, in the matter of Judge Jordan's evident admiration of Mrs. Winthrop herself—handsome widow that she knew herself to be—how cleverly Theodora constantly prevented a *tête-à-tête* between them, managing always when she got herself off alone with Edgar, to summon David from the widow's side and send him on some behest! Mrs. Winthrop recognized the girl's ever-present fear of David's marrying—another phase of her inordinate selfishness.

"Rich as Jordan is, she does n't want to share her

Barnabetta

inheritance. Nor would she let his happiness weigh an iota against her own greed to keep not only all his wealth, but all his devotion and homage—which is nectar and ambrosia to her, in spite of the way she constantly snubs it!”

Mrs. Winthrop had been secretly amused at the harangue given her by Theodora with, she was sure, deep design to warn her off from any hopes of winning the Judge.

“Women have always thrown themselves at David,” the girl had informed her with a shrug. “Is n’t it amazing how indelicate our sex can be? David has never had the faintest inclination to marry—he is so devoted to me—and I have so filled his life. He would not *dream* of marrying.”

Mrs. Winthrop was sure that Theodora persuaded herself, with that positive genius she had for giving a noble interpretation to her selfish motives, that her reason for “shielding” her brother from matrimony was to insure *his* welfare and happiness.

She was thankful indeed that Edgar did not see the maiden as *she* saw her. For though Edgar’s habitual manner, distant and faintly contemptuous of the vulgarity of things in general, would have led observers to consider him rather a heartless man, *she* knew his deep, strong feeling for his own; and she felt his capacity for a great and passionate devotion. But Theodora, she suspected, had no heart. She loved herself supremely; believed in herself; deified herself.

The Lure of Theodora

These characteristics, however, did not, in Mrs. Winthrop's mind, weigh against the advantages of the girl's blood and the position of her aunts and herself in Boston—not to speak of the minor but not wholly insignificant advantage of her brother's great wealth and influence.

"Do you notice," Edgar remarked to his sister on their homeward walk, "how tactfully Theodora keeps down the Judge when he would bore us with his fanatical theories? She does manage him admirably, does n't she?"

"Admirably."

"It's only consideration for her that keeps me from making short work of him and his ridiculous ideas! She is no more in sympathy with his pernicious doctrines than I am. I think she is remarkably patient with him!"

"Of course his ideas are ridiculous," Mrs. Winthrop granted. "But I suspect, Edgar, that some of them, pernicious though they *be*, have taken such root in the modern mind that they are here to stay. As for instance, what he said about the forces that are making for universal democracy being too persistent, too inevitable, to be put down. He seemed to prove it too, with his illustrative examples—the recent creation of parliaments in countries that have been absolute monarchies—Turkey, Persia, Russia, China, Mexico, Portugal. What scares me is his seeming to prove with such alarming clearness, Edgar, that this

Barnabetta

world-wide wave is, in our western countries, taking the form of Socialism! He almost persuaded me! Life would be horrible if such a thing as Socialism did come to be."

"I thought Theodora answered him effectually. Don't you remember she told him he was behind the times, that really the tide was flowing the other way, that the rule of the people was proving a failure in our country where the Big Interests and the able financiers who control them are too much for the feebleness and stupidity of the masses? She is right—it has always been so and it always will be so—the stupid inefficient masses will be ruled by the strong, the efficient. 'The survival of the fit,' you know. You remember he had no answer for Theodora."

"He never argues with her. He would have had his answer for *you*, I fancy!"

"Well," affirmed Barrett conclusively, "I was precious glad to have Theodora cut in and stop him."

It was at this point in their talk that they reached their own house on the snow-covered campus and Barrett, having opened the door and stepped back to let his sister enter, turned for a lingering look at the beautiful night, the moonlight on the white expanse about him, the bare, motionless trees so spectral in their winter's sleep; and suddenly, as he stood gazing, his eye was caught by a dark figure moving along the outer edge of the field of white, the figure of a woman or a girl; the next instant he recognized,

The Lure of Theodora

with a violent start, the peculiar and quite unmistakable walk of Barnabetta—the slightly awkward gait of a country damsel combined with a swing and lightness singularly her own and oddly expressive (he had always vaguely felt) of her unique simplicity.

“Elizabeth!” he turned into the vestibule to call after his sister, “I’m not coming in just yet.”

“Very well. Good-night. I’m going to bed.”

“Good-night.”

He glanced at his watch before he went out again; it was just past midnight. He frowned indignantly as he hurried down the path to overtake the girl.

Mrs. Winthrop, meantime, as she got herself ready for bed, reflected, with a sense of complacency, upon her brother’s evidently restless and sentimental state of mind, that he should, at this late, cold hour, go wandering about in the moonlight.

“Good symptom!” she pronounced as she brushed her hair.

A faintly sarcastic smile flitted across her rather hard face. “The conflict of their two wills, once he and Theodora are married,” she said to herself, “will certainly be interesting to contemplate! And poor Edgar really imagines her as angelic as she sounds and looks! Well, there’s certainly a little surprise awaiting *him*, dear boy! But it will do him good—no end of good!”

CHAPTER XXI

BARNABETTA AGAIN BREAKS THE RULES

BARRETT saw, as he drew near to Barnabetta, that she was strolling as leisurely, as aimlessly, as though it were midday instead of midnight. Evidently she was not running away; not going anywhere in particular; simply out for a midnight pleasure walk!

At the crackling sound of his steps on the crisp snow, she turned in the path, and seeing who it was that followed her, waited for him to overtake her.

They were far from the college buildings, but he was not sure that they could not be seen in the bright moonlight from the windows of the dormitories if any one chanced to get out of bed and look out. They could not of course be recognized, but their being seen might lead to an investigation! A nice state of things!

His face was stern as he joined her, but she, looking up at him in friendly, frank admiration of his high silk hat and fur-trimmed overcoat, showed not a sign of consternation at being discovered in her unlawful behavior!

She wore a blue coat-suit and a red tam-o'-shanter

Barnabetta Again Breaks the Rules

pulled down over her ears, and the fingers of her mit-tened hands were thrust into the small pockets of her jacket.

"Well?" he coldly questioned.

"Very well, I thank you, Dr. Barrett."

"What on earth are you doing out of your room at this hour of the night?" he sharply demanded in a voice calculated to drive home to her the gravity of his disapproval.

"Just what you are, Dr. Barrett," she answered in gentle astonishment. "Taking a walk."

"How dare you violate the college laws, child, in this high-handed way?"

"I'm sorry to annoy you so!" she said regretfully, as though soothing an excited boy. "Of course I never thought of meeting you. Have you been out on company?" she sociably inquired.

"You seem to require a special guard, a keeper!" he exclaimed irascibly. "Miss Dreary, the rules of Stevens College were made to be obeyed, not defied!"

She looked up at him pensively, her gaze unwavering. "All right," she said quietly. "I'll go in then." She turned reluctantly in the path. "Are you coming too?" she asked over her shoulder.

"I shall follow you to see that you get back to the house unmolested."

"Follow me? Can't you walk with me?" she asked wistfully.

Barnabetta

For answer he stepped to her side. "Come!" he said coldly.

She looked childishly pleased as she strolled at his side.

"Don't you realize the *danger* in your coming out here alone at night—a young girl like you?" he demanded.

"Are there tramps about? But on this campus you could see one long before he could overtake you. I was n't afraid."

"It is not a question of whether you are afraid or not. It is a question of your submission to college law. You *must not* come out alone at night!"

"You are with me now—could n't we stop outdoors a while?" she begged. "It's so lovely—I hate to go in!"

In spite of himself he laughed.

"Child," he exclaimed in despair, "can't you *see* the impropriety of my walking about with you out here after midnight?"

"You mean," she asked, puckering her smooth, white forehead, "they would talk about us—and say you were my Friend?"

"Your 'friend'?" he repeated, not knowing that the word had for Barnabetta a very specific meaning. "If *that*'s all they would say!"

"Would you care," she asked wonderingly, "what they would say—you?" she repeated in a tone which

Barnabetta Again Breaks the Rules

implied with unconscious flattery his elevation above the plane where one need mind petty slander.

"What did you come out *for?*" he demanded impatiently, ignoring her question.

"The night was so beautiful—and I had been reading *Daniel Deronda!*"—she caught her breath with the excitement of it—"and when the lights went out, I knew I could n't sleep—I felt so restless—as if my brain were burning! I just dressed and came out. That book! I could n't keep quiet. I had to *walk!*"

"It is lucky for you that I, rather than some other person in authority, discovered you! Even my interference would not save you from expulsion for a thing like this, Miss Dreary, if the authorities knew of it. It must not—understand me!—happen again!"

"All right," she repeated submissively.

"You 'll really have to make up your mind to fall in line and behave yourself, you know. We can't put up with such things as this! Why, Miss Dreary, I have a niece at a college and if I heard of her disobeying the college laws as you do—if she ever dared to do what you are doing to-night—well," he affirmed, determined to impress her with the seriousness of her offense, "I should be ashamed to own her for my niece!"

"'Ashamed?'" she repeated. "But," she said thoughtfully, "I don't seem to feel I've done anything to be ashamed of. I'm very sorry, though, to be such a worry to you!"

Barnabetta

"You are indeed a 'worry' to me! I don't know what on earth to do with you! I wonder what next I shall find you doing!"

"I wonder too! I certainly did not think you would find me out here to-night!"

"Have you *no* respect for authority?"

"'Respect for authority'?" she pensively considered it. "I can't seem to find that I have. I have been under authority all my life—but I never 'respected' it. I disregarded it when I wanted to very much, and could without being discovered."

"You 'disregarded' the loving authority of your parents?"

"'Loving authority'? No, sir," she said slowly. "I never disregarded any least bit of love that ever came into my life."

"Under whose authority, then, have you been, as you say, all your life?"

"Under my father's."

"And," he asked hesitatingly, "you are sure it was not a government for your own good—born of affection for you?"

"It was born of their need of me—of my work for them."

"Ah! But your love for your *mother*. How about her authority?"

"We are companions, friends. There is no idea of authority."

"But surely when you were a little girl?"

Barnabetta Again Breaks the Rules

"She was not with us then."

"Not with you?"

"She is my stepmother."

"Your stepmother! Ah!"

"Yes. Father married her last spring."

"Last spring! I see! And *she* sends you here to school—against your father's wishes?"

"Yes, sir. I never knew what happiness there could be in the world till she came!"

He pondered it as they walked slowly in silence. It seemed to him a peculiarly interesting situation.

They came now to the President's Residence and Barnabetta stopped in the path.

"Well, good-night, Dr. Barrett."

"I shall see you to your door."

"But you need n't trouble," she protested solicitously. "I pass you my promise I will go right in."

"I shall *see* you in," he insisted, taking a step forward. But she stood still.

"Don't you trust my promise?"

"Of course I do. But I shall see you to your door," he repeated obstinately.

The pensiveness of her face gave way to bright pleasure. "Just for my company? All right! Do you know," she said happily as they strolled on slowly, "I could walk like this all night! I hate to go indoors. Don't you?"

"Yes."

"Then why must we go in?"

Barnabetta

"I have told you."

"Because of 'rules,' because of people passing remarks, we must 'deny the soul,' as that poet says? Oh, I can't think so!"

"I 'm afraid you will *have* to think so, child!"

"But at this rate, there is almost as much in college life to check our growth as to help it!"

He looked down at the young face at his side. What wisdom she spoke sometimes!

"I cannot deny that," he said.

"This is the first time," she remarked, "that a gentleman ever saw me safe home. You 'll be surprised to hear it, seeing I 'm eighteen years old, but I have never kept company. Father would n't leave me."

"'Leave' you? You mean allow you?"

"Yes, allow me. Is it improper to say it like I said it?"

"You must say he would n't *let* you, not 'leave' you. Did he think you too young?"

"Oh, no, not too young; he needed me to keep house; so he would not leave—let—me marry. But when Mama came and he did n't need me any more, then he *wanted* Abel Buchter to come Sunday evenings—but you see, Mama sent me to college."

"To get you away from Abel Buchter?"

"Yes, and to get educated."

"But when you go home in the summer—how about Abel?"

"He will want to come Sunday evenings," she

Barnabetta Again Breaks the Rules

answered, a faintly troubled note in her voice. "And father will want to make me keep company with him."

"Won't Abel and your father be too much for you and your stepmother?"

"Nothing, so far, has been too much for Mama."

"That 's encouraging."

"Yes—for I don't want to keep company with Abel."

"I 'm glad to hear it."

"Are you? Why?"

"I don't believe he is good enough for you."

"That 's what Mama says."

"Your stepmother—is she as fond of you as you are of her?"

"Yes, sir—and it seems sometimes as if it could n't be! I never knew what it was to have any one fond of me before—or to be fond of any one!"

"You had never before in your life been fond of any one?"

"No, sir."

"One would expect, if that is true, to find you hard; and yet you are a—a very sweet and lovable little girl, Barnabetta!" Her odd name slipped from his lips so naturally!

"Thank you!" she said gratefully.

"Tell me," he abruptly asked her, "about *Daniel Deronda*; what especially did you find so exciting in it—that it should drive you out of doors like this?"

Barnabetta

“That strange man,” she answered breathlessly, “Grandcourt! Could there ever have been such a cruel man? Of course I know all men, except you, are selfish and coarse and brutal,” she admitted as though stating an accepted and obvious fact; “but a cold-blooded, cruel man I never saw. He makes me shudder! It’s worse to be like that—a man of education and yet so without feeling—than to be like most other men—just selfish because they’re coarse.”

“What awful ideas you have, child!”

They stopped at this moment at the front door of the dormitory building.

“Good-night,” Barrett at once lifted his hat. “But,” he suddenly exclaimed, “the door is of course locked! How will you get in?”

A vision confronted him of his sister’s consternation if he should be obliged to take Barnabetta back to his own house for the night—which he would certainly do rather than betray the girl’s behavior by rousing those in charge of the dormitory.

“The fire-escape,” Barnabetta coolly explained. “Good-night.”

But he followed her to the side of the house and waited below while she mounted the steep steps to the third floor of the building.

She waved her tam-o’-shanter to him as she disappeared through the window. And he, very slowly and thoughtfully, his nerves tingling with an abundant sense of life, walked back under the stars to his home.

CHAPTER XXII

HER EVOLUTION AT COLLEGE

IN Dr. Barrett's estimation, Barnabetta's mental awakening and unfolding during the remaining months of the term were truly astonishing. She seemed to drink in and to really assimilate knowledge with the thirst of one who has traveled long on a desert waste.

She not only studied very hard—too hard, he anxiously thought; she also read voraciously; and it was evident that, not being a numbskull, she got infinitely more real education out of her promiscuous but avid reading than out of her text-books.

"It worried me there for a while," she once told him in a talk over one of her unique papers, "that I spent so much time reading novels and poetry and anything at all that I found in the library that attracted me, until one day I read in one of Shakespeare's plays:

No profit goes where is no pleasure ta'en,
In brief, sir, study what you most affect,

—and I saw how true that is. Isn't it wonderful the way Shakespeare knew the truth about human beings?"

Barnabetta

He was glad that with the growing of her mind she did not grow sophisticated; did not lose her simplicity. Would any amount of worldly experience, he wondered, rob her of that *naïve* candor which was her charm? It seemed to him that her long habit of feeding her soul from within, in the absence of external sources of nourishment, had given her truer, more absolute standards of life, of judgment; a less artificial outlook, than most of us, in our worldliness, could possibly acquire.

The spring examinations landed Barnabetta, to her own delighted surprise, in the junior class, conditioned only in German, and Dr. Barrett assured her that if she kept up her studies during the vacation, she could easily make the senior class by the second semester and graduate the following spring.

The vacation arrived; the college emptied itself of its two hundred students; Judge Jordan and his sister went away, leaving their house closed for the summer; and the town of Middleton settled down to a deadly stillness.

President Barrett, lingering on at the college for several weeks to finish up some work, found himself lonely and morose. He missed, unspeakably, the stimulating and fascinating relation into which he and Miss Jordan had grown. They had so much in common—music, literature, art—she loved everything that he loved; and with her extraordinarily fine appreciations and insights, she constantly opened up to him

Her Evolution at College

new beauties, new vistas of truth, new elements of worth in life. No woman that he had ever met measured up as she did to the ideal woman of his dreams. Her absence from Middleton, his consciousness that he could not now go to her whenever he would, for a restful or an uplifting hour, made the days long, dreary and dead. Tired as he was of the college routine, he would be glad when the summer was over that he might again have the great privilege and happiness of her companionship.

They wrote to each other of course, and her letters were episodes to him. The day he received one was always a day glowing with life. The delight of responding to her wonderful letters promised to be the recreation of his summer.

And behind and over and through all this high and beautiful relation, ran the consciousness of something else which he missed during this long vacation—the daily sight of Barnabeta's young face, the interesting unfolding of her young mind and soul, her wonder at life, her receptivity, her unexpectedness, her unique truthfulness. He missed it. He was astonished to find what a blank her absence left in his daily life. Yes, he would be glad when college reopened and he could enjoy once more the diversion of studying Barnabeta, as well as teaching her.

He found himself wondering often, during these summer days, about the curious life of which the girl had given him occasional glimpses—the "highly-edu-

Barnabetta

cated" stepmother, who, with her apparently inexhaustible thousand-dollar income, maintained Barnabetta at college and at the same time maintained her own independence of a miserly, tyrannical husband—marvelous woman! Then, the brute of a father, the two big brothers who were evidently chips of the old block, the love-lorn and rejected schoolmaster, the devoted friendship between the "rich" adopted mother and the flower-like girl in her alien environment. How far was Reinhartz from Middleton anyhow? Could he perhaps motor to the place some day and call on Barnabetta and her family? He was not without a sense of humor at the imagined situation—his reputedly finicky, pernickety-nice self in such a setting! Scarcely ever in his life had he "rubbed up against" so-called "common people."

It was at this point in his reflections that the beautiful, ethereal image of Theodora flitted across the grotesque picture he had called up—making him feel unworthy of the high gift of her friendship. A sense of unworthiness was so unfamiliar to him that it reacted in a new sense of reverence for the rare woman that could create it. The man did not walk the earth who would not be exalted by the high gift of Theodora's friendship!

Mrs. Winthrop had been rather keenly disappointed when, ignoring most propitious circumstances, her brother had allowed Theodora Jordan to depart for the summer to join her maternal relatives at their

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Bar Harbor home without, so far as Mrs. Winthrop knew, having betrothed himself to her, in spite of the fact that he seemed to be so extremely attracted to her, to find her so congenial, to admire her so blindly. Why was he so slow in taking the next inevitable step?—for it was manifest enough that he *was* fated to fall in love with the girl. As for Theodora herself, goddess though she considered herself, she could not more effectually (however subtly and delicately) throw herself at Edgar if she were a woman of the streets!

Such was Mrs. Winthrop's coarse, if frank, statement of the case to her own consciousness.

She herself was so uncommonly glad to get out of Middleton and join her daughter at Bryn Mawr, to proceed thence to their summer home at Newport, that she marveled how Theodora *could* be so determined to marry a man destined to live, for some years at least, in this tiresome, vulgar little town—even though he *was* a Barrett of Boston.

Well, she could only hope that Edgar would learn, in this summer's separation, how *much* he was in love with the girl. Theodora, in putting herself, just at this time, out of his reach, had no doubt carefully calculated the salutary effect upon his budding passion, of a season of loneliness in which he would have time to realize what she meant to him.

CHAPTER XXIII

HER SUMMER AT HOME

MEANTIME, Barnabetta at home, was going through a curious phase of her life. The familiar environment of her childhood, viewed now from a newly created outlook, seemed strangely unfamiliar. She had always lived essentially aloof from its sordidness; but while hitherto this aloofness had been merely instinctive, she now quite consciously winced at what had once been to her only something to be hrust away and not thought about. And yet her fuller realization of her own inherent difference from her father and brothers, while she found it unutterably depressing, gave her, somehow, a broader charity for them, a more patient pity.

Fortunately for the one happy feature of her home life, her companionship with her stepmother, her college experiences had not opened her eyes where love had closed them, to the grotesque peculiarities of her father's wife; and all summer long Barnabetta basked in the sunshine of the strong, deep affection she gave and received—and nothing she had gleaned from text-books or from her new associations did more for her development, mentally and spiritually, than

Her Summer at Home

this great reciprocal tenderness that had come into her life to enrich and bless it.

Mr. Dreary and the boys had anticipated Barnabetta's home-coming with a sullen resentment, not un-mixed with curiosity.

"Won't she be a high-stepper anyhow, now she's been at such a college yet!" Jacob had scornfully remarked on the eve of her return.

"Yes, I guess anyhow!" Emanuel had agreed.

"Well, she need n't sling her head around *me!* I ain't taking no airs off her!" affirmed Jacob manfully.

"Your sister is not an acrobat, my son," said Mrs. Dreary.

"She ain't got the dare to be too proud fur to help do the work!" Mr. Dreary threateningly affirmed. "If she's stayin' home all summer, she kin anyways save you hirin' the ironin'."

"You know what our dear daughter wrote us, Husband—if she studies all summer she may be able to graduate next spring. Therefore," Mrs. Dreary announced firmly, "I have engaged a servan. for over the summer, so that Barnabetta, unselfish child that she is, shall not feel obliged to help me with the house-work."

Mr. Dreary choked over the hot coffee he was drinking as he heard this maddening statement, for they were at supper.

"Well, I'm blamed! Are you crazy or what?"

Barnabetta

"I may be *what*—I trust I 'm not crazy, as you gallantly suggest, my dear."

"Gettin' a hired girl *because* Barnabetta's comin' home! Don't that now beat everything! You think I 'm leavin' her *loaf* here all summer on me? What do you take me fur, anyhow?"

"A very-much-married man, Husband, who will have to submit to a servant's presence in his house, however distasteful, so long as Barnabetta is at home. She shall not waste her valuable time doing housework. She is going to be free to study and to go about with me, driving, walking, and so forth. I anticipate the two happiest months of my life in the renewal of my daily companionship with my dear girl of whom I have reason to be so proud; who so richly repays me for all I try to do for her!"

"Repays you! *How*, I 'd like to know! That 's just what wonders me so—what *you* git out of all her learnin' that costs so expensive—and what do I git? That 's what I 'd like to be tole!"

"It depends upon yourself, Barnaby, what you 'll get out of it. As for me, the day I see my daughter stand up at Stevens College to read her graduation essay and to receive her diploma, my cup will be full, my joy too deep for words! I shall feel I have not lived in vain."

"Well, you 're different again to what *I* am," Mr. Dreary unnecessarily stated. "And you 'll live to be sorry *fur* it, too."

Her Summer at Home

"Not so sorry as I would certainly be if I were silly enough to turn all my money over to you, Husband," Juliet cheerfully answered—at the peril of giving her husband another choking spell over his coffee.

"Honest to gosh," Jacob remarked as Mrs. Dreary at this juncture left the room, "if I was married to a woman that sassed me like that, I 'd lick her!"

"Yes, well, but," growled his father, "times is changed so! Women ain't what they was. You lay a hand on a woman these times, and she 'll up and leave you or have the law on you yet!"

When Barnabetta at last arrived, they were greatly astonished to find her, during the first few days, not at all "airy" or "high-minded." Apparently, she was the same quiet, simple, rather dull girl she had always been. Mr. Dreary, at the accustomed sight of her figure moving about the house, experienced, to his own surprise, the unusual sensation of a fond, almost an affectionate, complacency. He had not realized, until her return, how much he had really missed her. He actually found pleasure in just "hanging round" and looking at the child, and this in spite of the fact that her being there brought the irritation of a superfluous "hired girl" installed in the house.

But Barnabetta had not been home many days before both her father and brothers began to feel they had been hasty in their conclusion that she was not changed. They could not have defined what they

Barnabetta

saw—or felt rather than saw. There was something—a dignity, a suggested power—in the mere presence of their quiet, gentle sister, before which they experienced a vague sense of awe that was indeed a novelty in their brute ideas of women, but which had the effect of strangely subduing them.

Barnabetta could find it in her heart to pity her father's helpless suffering over her; at the money squandered upon her; at the presence of the servant; at what he considered her idleness and uselessness. This summer more than ever, her stepmother's daring in having defied and conquered what the girl had always accepted as inevitable, seemed the height of heroism.

Mr. Dreary, however, was not so subdued but that he tried, with clumsy, obvious cunning, to put a stop to the wasteful expenditure upon his daughter by encouraging the suit of Abel Buchter.

Poor Abel hovered wretchedly—feeling how unattainable the girl was now, in the new atmosphere that seemed to enfold her, but unable to conquer his passion for her.

One evening as he sat alone with her in the parlor at her home—Mr. Dreary having diplomatically made the coast clear by getting up a headache which demanded his wife's attendance—Abel spoke to Barnabetta from the depths of his despair.

"I can see it at you, Barnabetta, that you are getting too high-minded for me! Now I like education—

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none likes it better. But I like it used in moderation. Now since you've been amongst these high people, you're getting just like them! Oh, I've had plenty enough of experience to know them when I meet up with them! They're so educated that they live only for this world and forget that Christ died for them and that there's a Day of Reckoning!"

Barnabetta knew how desperate Abel felt when he appealed to religion to help him out.

"You call *me* educated, Abel!" she mildly protested. "But five months at a college can't educate a person, Abel, indeed it can't."

"Well, you're getting there mighty fast, with your German and literature and history and whatever! Do you look to teaching after you grad-yate?"

"I don't know, Abel—it will be a long time before I know enough to teach."

"I've been earning *my* living at it a good many years and I was never to college. How long *are* you going to study?"

"As long as there's anything left to learn, Abel—I feel, now, as if to stop learning would be to stop living!"

"But you certainly expect to settle down some time, don't you?"

"In my coffin when I'm dead. Not before."

"You can't keep on living here on your Pop and Mom, Barnabetta—you'll have to get at *something*—if you won't settle."

Barnabetta

"I 'm not thinking so far ahead, the present is so full. Only think, Abel, what Mama's coming to us has brought into my life!"

"It 's making *me* lose you, though!" said Abel heavily.

"You know before she came how I always told you, Abel, that I did n't want to marry."

"Do you still hold to that—that you won't marry?"

"Well, mebbly not so strongly as I did. I 've seen that marriage with some people is very different from anything I had ever known it to be here in Reinhartz. I 've heard the girls talk and I 've seen some of the college professors with their wives—and I 've seen the way our college president has a respect for women and thinks they have as much right over themselves as men have. Think, Abel, of the happiness a woman could know married to a man who would want to shield her always from everything that was hard to bear!"

"Did he *tell* you that?" demanded Abel in quick suspicion.

"No, but I could see that that 's the way he treats his sister that keeps house for him. We were at his house to a students' reception one night and if his sister so much as felt a draught of air on her, he hurried to close the door—and to wait on her in every little way to save her trouble. His *sister*, mind you, Abel. So you can see," she drew a quick breath and

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her eyes shone like stars, "how he would treat a wife!"

"Barnabetta, is he keeping company with you?"

"Me!" She smiled at the absurdity of it. "No! He keeps company with a beautiful, wonderful lady that has been all over Europe and has studied in Paris and writes poetry that is printed in the magazines! She looks like—like *Beatrice* that Dante loved so miserably."

"Loved her 'miserably,' Barnabetta?"

"So unwholesomely, Abel, and unmanfully. I think his grief for her was just a terrible dissipation with him. He could not have lived without that luxurious grief! If she had accepted him—well, it seems to me that very soon he would have come to feel he had n't anything, now, to put his mind to."

How lovely Barnabetta looked in poor Abel's eyes when her face glowed with the earnestness of her thoughts as she gave them to him!

"And does your President Barrett love this girl of his like *that*?" he asked dubiously.

"I don't know. He is a stiff person, Abel—sometimes I think he is a little proud," she said, doubtfully. "But I've seen him walking in the campus with that lady and he looks at her with—with *homage*!"

"Does it give you jealous feelings?" Abel asked, again suspiciously.

Barnabetta

"Well, but, Abel, I could n't expect him to look at *me* with homage!"

"No, that's so, too," Abel admitted spiritlessly.

It was at this point that Mrs. Dreary swept into the room. She had quickly divined the ruse that had kept her, for the last half hour of this summer's evening, at her husband's side, and she now hastened to check, by her haughtiest manner, any advance Abel may have made in his tiresomely persistent courtship of Barnabetta. For though she was sure Barnabetta would never love the schoolmaster, she did not care to risk the possibly fatal result of an appeal on his part to the gentle maiden's pity.

But much as Mrs. Dreary loved her adopted daughter, she did not fully know her; did not realize the substratum of strength in her character, concealed to the casual observer beneath her mild, dreamy manner—a strength capable of a firm resistance as well as of heroic yielding.

A very small dose of Mrs. Dreary's snubbing proved sufficient to discourage Abel from persisting further to-night. He soon rose and took his leave—determined, however, to return at the first propitious opportunity.

CHAPTER XXIV

HER NEW OUTLOOK

IT was during this summer vacation that there was born in Barnabetta something which life had never before opened to her; a new sense, the delicate, odd pleasure of which astonished her—a sense of humor; and once born, it developed as precociously as did most of her other long-latent powers.

It was the presence of the young maidservant in her home that gave her a standard of comparison which awakened in her that realization of incongruity which, because of its utter novelty to her, was like the opening of the eyes of the blind. Barnabetta knew that this summer at home, by reason of its violent contrasts to her life at school, was educating her more rapidly than her remaining away could have done.

Gladys Spatz, the maidservant, was the daughter of a well-to-do farmer who lived just outside the village, and she was "hiring out" for the summer to raise some money for her marriage which was to take place in the fall. She regarded Barnabetta with a respect amounting almost to consternation because she "attended college."

Barnabetta

"My Friend he 's educated too," she proudly told Barnabetta, referring, of course, as was understood, to her lover. "Yes, he was to Schultztown Normal six months yet!"

"You look so like your sister Sarah," Barnabetta said to her one day, "who used to come in from the farm to Reinhartz to Abel Buchter's school when I was a little girl."

"But I *am* her—I mean that by rights my name is Sarah. But so many Sarahs goes by *Sal* and I do now hate these here nicknames, so I just took the name of Gladys—you can't so handy nickname that."

Barnahetta contemplated, with a speculative wonder, this maiden's complacency, even happiness, in the prospect of her marriage. It seemed so like self-immolation.

"For I *can't* see what she expects to get that can make up to her for giving up her freedom—to become just like a slave to that man who will always think that 's all she 's *for!*"

But there was no detail of the little new house for which Gladys was preparing, that did not yield the girl intense interest and satisfaction.

"Pop he says I have dare to take along the parlor organ when I go to housekeeping, seein' I bought it with my hutter-and-egg money," she joyfully announced one evening upon her return from a Sunday afternoon's visit to her home; "I think it 's so tony—ain't?—to have sich a organ in the parlor settin'.

Her New Outlook

My Friend he says mebbly till we 're all settled oncet, he 'll leave me take a couple lessons then."

She hoarded her wages until she had saved enough to pay for having a new bellows put into the organ and having the instrument removed to her own new home, and one day she brought to Barnabetta, for revision, a letter she had painfully composed and copied, addressed to the music-store that had contracted to mend her organ.

"I was a-goin' to take my letter to Abel Buchter to make it right," said Gladys, "but when I thought to myself, 'Here 's Barnabetta, she 's college-educated yet and she ain't proud—I 'll ast it off of her.' To be sure, there 's Missus, she 's high-educated, too. But she always talks so grand that way, I felt ashamed, for all, to leave her see how dumm I write. My Friend, too, he says I 'm awful dumm. So I come to you, Barnabetta."

"I 'll be glad to help you, Gladys," Barnabetta had responded, taking the letter from the girl and going away to wrestle with it.

"Dear Friends," wrote Gladys to the music-firm, "I would like to know if yous folks entend to fix Our Organ I want to have it fix-ed this weak. So yous are to leave me know till to-morrow. if yous folks Can't fix it leave me know. So leave me hear right aways from yous the money I have ready till the Organ is fix-ed already the money is there for it and I look to

Barnabetta

have a good bellose put in for five dollars I can have one Cheaper than five dollars but I don't look on that if it is a good one and a good Job done of it I don't say a word about the 5 dollars,

"so it will be all right if yous folks put in a good bellose and leave me hear right aways. Please leave me know when yous sent the man to do it.

"Kindly yours truly

"MISS GLADYS SPATZ."

The rather appalling task of revising this writing led Barnabetta to suggest to Gladys that she might as well just telephone to the Reading firm. "I'll give you the ten cents toll, Gladys."

"Ach, no, I get so ver-huddled when I have to talk in a tellyfome."

"Well, then, let me telephone for you," Barnabetta offered, knowing that if she entirely re-wrote the letter the girl would be hurt; "though I'm not used, either, to a telephone, Gladys, but I guess I can manage it."

She wondered, as she walked down to the hotel to use the telephone, why she, who had never had any more chance than this girl, Gladys Spatz, had never been crude in just the same way. And suddenly there came upon Barnabetta, with a thrill of wonder, the realization that there was something *in herself* that made her different, that set her apart, from the people about her; she awoke in that moment to the

Her New Outlook

excitement of a sense of her own power—a power of intellect and of will that could, if she made the best of them, carry her to the heights of life. It came to her like a revelation; she walked on air, her pulses bounding, her brain burning with her new consciousness of herself and with the ambitious visions of life that it brought before her.

There was no vanity in her exultation—only wonder and gratitude and high resolve.

When, after accomplishing her errand at the hotel, she was slowly and thoughtfully strolling home, she recalled something one of the dormitory girls at Stevens had once said to her, which at the time had made very little conscious impression upon her, but which had probably really sunk deep, for she remembered it very distinctly.

“Prexy Barrett certainly does single you out for special notice, Barnabetta!” the dormitory girl had affirmed. “I’ll tell you what—he thinks you’re clever. And I believe he *likes* you, too, with your funny way of saying whatever you think—and your funnier way of not being scared of him as every one else is. *Why* aren’t you?”

“I don’t know. I don’t know why any one should be ‘scared of him,’ Janet.”

“Don’t you *notice* what a sarcastic pig he is to every one but you?”

Barnabetta remembered, as she looked back to-day over her months at college, that Dr. Barrett never

Barnabetta

had treated either her work or herself with the cutting sarcasm habitual to him in his dealings with students. The realization startled her with a kind of shock. Just why was it so?

CHAPTER XXV

CONFIDENCES

MRS. DREARY pondered earnestly over some of Barnabetta's confidences made to her during their daily walks together this summer, taken, usually, just after the latter's long hours of study. She could not quite make out (and she had the good sense to refrain from directly asking Barnabetta) whether or not the child was in love with the College President of whom she talked so often. Sometimes Mrs. Dreary was sure of it; then again the girl's unhesitating way of reference to Dr. Barrett made her doubt.

"I wish, Mama, you could hear the queer way he pronounces his words," she remarked one evening as they walked in the twilight. "The girls say he 'picked it up' at Oxford. They used to practise saying *Yarmouth bloater* the way he pronounced it one day in class. I love to hear his accent. It is so—so genteel. I think I always imagined before I knew him, that it was only weak, womanish men that were so genteel, so *far* away from anything coarse or rough, as he is. But he is a manly man, Mama."

"Is he, my dear?"

Barnabetta

"Yes, he is."

"You have said he is so very sarcastic with the young ladies—don't you call *that* a little rough, dearest?"

"Not the least bit *rough*. I have thought it was—well, kind of cold-blooded."

"I should say, my dear, that he was a woman-hater!"

"I might think so, too, if I had not seen him several times about the grounds with Miss Jordan. He is with her so much. The girls think they are promised—I mean betrothed. They say she is a wonderful woman. She looks like the heroine of a novel or a great poem! He thinks so much of her that I have even seen him, when he was walking with her, *smile* sometimes."

"'Smile sometimes!' Gracious, dear, what do you mean?"

"Mama, he hardly ever smiles. Sometimes in class he 'd say witty things that would make all the students laugh, but his own face would be cold and serious. I think he does n't really like teaching. One day when we went to class, he flung down a book he had been reading as if he hated to give it up, and, jerking his Shakespeare open, he said, with all of us staring at him, 'Well, a bore to you and a bore to me—but we shall have to go through with it!' And I think he gave us that day the most interesting talk on the play of *Hamlet* I had ever heard him give!"

Confidences

"Eccentric!" pronounced Mrs. Dreary conclusively. "A genius possibly, but eccentric."

"He's such a wonderful teacher, Mama! He brings out in me what I certainly did not know was in me."

"Which is the province of the true teacher, I should say," responded her mother, sententiously.

Barnabetta, with all her advancement, was still so unsophisticated as to think it necessary, just before her return to college, to write to Dr. Barrett and apprise him of the train by which he might count on her arrival.

It was on the evening before her departure that she and her mother went to the village parsonage as witnesses of Gladys's marriage, and heard the stolid bridegroom distinguish himself when asked, "Eli, do you take this woman to be your wedded wife," and so forth—by replying rather impatiently, "I come a purpose."

On leaving the parsonage, Mrs. Dreary made the married pair come home with her and Barnabetta to drink grape-juice and cut a wedding-cake; after which they went at once to their own new home on a farm adjoining Gladys's father's. The only remark Barnabetta heard the bridegroom make to Gladys during the evening was an admonition.

"You better redd up your strubby head, Gladys!" he advised her when in her excitement her refractory, curly hair became a bit "strubby."

Barnabetta

It was seeing Gladys depart for the bondage of her new life—so happily, poor girl!—that deepened Barnabetta's sense of thankfulness to her beloved mother for her own escape from such a possible fate.

CHAPTER XXVI

HER RETURN TO STEVENS

MR. DREARY'S consolation for the vague discomfort he felt at Barnabetta's going away again was the departure, simultaneously, of the "hired girl."

Mrs. Dreary's parting advice to her dear child, spoken bravely to cover an aching heart, concerned Barnabetta's "manners" with President Barrett.

"Your demeanor, my love, in his presence, should be self-poised, yet not precocious."

Barnabetta conscientiously considered it during her journey, but failed to make anything out of it. Fortunately not even her desire to gratify every wish of her mother could change the unstudied spontaneity of her "manners."

During the long weeks at home, her imagination had come to endow President Barrett somewhat with the aspect of a poet's hero or a half-god, and she thrilled at the thought that this very day her eyes would again behold him. It seemed too wonderful to be possible that she was actually once more to look upon that fine, noble face, to hear that unforgettable voice and that strange accent, to watch those white

Barnabetta

yet virile hands of his as they turned the pages of a book or wielded a pen. Dr. Barrett's hands had been a startling astonishment to Barnabetta in her first acquaintance with him. It had really seemed to her as abnormal that a man should have smooth, white hands as that he should wear bracelets and earrings.

Although she had apprised him of the time of her arrival (politeness, she thought, required that of her), she did not of course expect him to meet her at the depot. So, when the train pulled into the Middleton station and she actually saw, from the car window, that he was there on the platform, she was frankly delighted.

But just as she was making her way up to him with radiant face and outstretched hand, he turned to greet—Barnabetta stopped short—Dr. Barrett was holding the hand and gazing long into the eyes of Miss Jordan, his own face lit up with pleasure, oblivious of everything but the beautiful, exquisitely gowned woman whose hands he clasped.

Barnabetta drew a quick breath of relief that she had stopped in time, before obtruding herself upon this evidently momentous meeting. She lingered apart for an instant, watching them with fascinated interest. Dr. Barrett looked to her, in that moment, all that her imagination had pictured him; and Miss Jordan's manner, so very attractive as it appeared, would probably, she thought, have been pronounced

Her Return to Stevens

by those who knew, to be "self-poised yet not precocious."

When she had recovered her breath, she proceeded on her way down the platform towards the haggageroom. Dr. Barrett, who stood facing her, saw her as she drew near. But he did not leave his companion to come and greet her. Without a welcoming smile, he gravely lifted his hat as she passed him. That was all. Barnahetta wondered about it as she moved on. She was not hurt. These were the ways and manners of people to whose world she was a stranger. She felt entirely confident of his interest in her and even of his cordial friendship.

What would have been the effect upon her if she could at that moment have read his heart and seen that he was nervous with apprehension lest she stop and speak to him in Miss Jordan's presence, betraying by her inimitable sincerity the really unseemly intimacy to which he had admitted her? Miss Jordan's dignity, her sense of fitness, would he offended by the familiarity with which the child would undoubtedly accost him. Even while, slightly turning as he stood with his companion, his eyes followed the girl as she walked on down the length of the platform, with that peculiarly characteristic gait of hers that had always, somehow, affected his imagination with a thrill, and which just now did not fail to reawaken the pleasurable sensation, he resolved that he must not again yield to the weakness of permitting to Bar-

Barnabetta

nabetta her former intimate footing with him—he must hold her as he did his other students—at arm's length.

But if Barnabetta *could* have looked into his heart and read these thoughts, quite probably she would wholly have failed to understand them. And, meantime, her trust in and admiration of her teacher remained entirely unshaken by his distant greeting of her.

The baggage-room was at one end of the station, in full view of the length of the platform, and here Barnabetta came upon an embarrassing difficulty. A college-football team from a neighboring town, having played against the Middleton team that day, was gathered at this end of the platform, impeding any approach to the baggage-room. They were howling, shouting and jostling in a way that the few officials of the station found it impossible to control. Their train did not leave for three-quarters of an hour, but Barnabetta knew that if she did not take her trunk out to Stevens College with her now, she would be unable to get it out until the next day at this hour. Yet it was impossible to think of trying to wedge her way through that crowd of hoodlums. She looked about her helplessly. She sent one swift glance back along the length of the platform to where President Barrett still stood with Miss Jordan—the only other woman in the station. But though Dr. Barrett must surely realize her plight, he made no move to come to her.

Her Return to Stevens

Well, to be sure, a student's baggage was not his affair.

Suddenly she found herself nearly knocked down by the rough compact of two burly young men, who instantly saved her from falling by grasping her arms and proceeding to apologize with farcical elaborateness, to the accompaniment of shouts and applause from their companions. Barnabetta tried, with fast-beating heart, to wrench herself free and get away. She was overcome with shame at having Dr. Barrett hear the way these young men were speaking to her.

All at once she found a big, dark figure at her side, while with the ease of a professional athlete Judge David Jordan lifted one of the students who clasped her arm, by his collar and landed him out on the tracks; the other one, voluntarily releasing her, did not, however, escape, but found himself also lifted from his feet and deposited on top of his fellow. The shouting and howling of the crowd subsided and they looked on in hushed expectancy, while Jordan, raising his hat to Barnabetta who had backed to the wall in her effort to get away, asked her how he might further help her?

Pale, and mute from loss of breath, she handed him her trunk-check.

"Where shall the trunk be sent?" he inquired, holding his hat.

"To Stevens College," breathed Barnabetta, the childlike relief and gratitude with which she confided

Barnabetta

herself to his care, touching to the quick the big man's sense of chivalry. He was held, for an instant, by the appealing dark eyes of the girl who, in spite of the shock she had just suffered, was not in the least hysterical, but entirely self-possessed.

"I shall see to your trunk," he bowed. "Let me take you, now, to the college bus over here," he added, offering her his arm, while he put forth his other brawny arm to dispel the crowd—and instantly they fell back to make a path to the edge of the platform.

As he helped her into the rickety old omnibus, she saw that at the other end of the platform Dr. Barrett was at that moment assisting Miss Jordan into Judge Jordan's big car.

She turned to the Judge as he stood at the door of the bus, and taking a quarter from her purse she handed it to this millionaire of the town.

"What for?" he smiled. "A fee?"

"To pay for my trunk—we must pay in advance."

"Ah, yes—" he hesitated a perceptible instant, but took it and dropped it into his pocket.

"I thank you for helping me," Barnabetta said, holding out her hand to him in its clumsy cotton glove.

He clasped it, bowing over it as he lifted his hat—then closed the door of the bus and went away.

During her drive out to the college it occurred to Barnabetta to wonder why Dr. Barrett, seeing her

Her Return to Stevens

exigency in that crowd of ruffians as of course he must have done for some minutes before Judge Jordan had come to her help, had not excused himself to Miss Jordan and hurried to protect her. Even his absorbing interest in his "Friend" did not seem to explain his leaving her to struggle alone with such a condition. Not, at least, in the light of all her previous knowledge of him. Perhaps he *had* been about to come to her when Judge Jordan anticipated him?

But for the first time in Barnabetta's acquaintance with Dr. Barrett, his sublimity was faintly overshadowed by the bigger figure of another male creature—the stalwart frame, strong right arm and resolute, kindly face of David Jordan making all other men appear, for the time, mere pigmies.

Jordan, meantime, having attended to the girl's baggage, now walking back slowly to his sister and Barrett, who sat in his waiting car, found himself struck by two things which he knew to be unusual in his very limited experience of girls. He did not recall having ever before assisted a girl in any way whatsoever who had not either blushed and ogled when she thanked him, or else had taken his help as so entirely her due as not to consider any thanks necessary. This girl had not blushed nor ogled, and she had thanked him as a man might have done—simply and appreciatively. Her manner, her voice, her young face, impressed him, somehow, as wholly un-

Barnabetta

usual. They fired his imagination as it had not been fired since the days of his adolescence.

Not only during the rest of that day did the maiden's sweet image haunt and possess him. It continued to stay with him in the days that followed. He could not escape it.

He was indeed startled when in connection with this haunting impression, he suddenly came to the realization that he was, after all these years of rigidly self-imposed celibacy, at last growing restive.

In the ensuing weeks he found himself watching the course of things between Theodora and Barrett with an unacknowledged hope in the depths of his heart. Even to himself his fraternal loyalty hated to admit that he had reached the point where he chafed for his freedom from his sister.

CHAPTER XXVII

BARRETT'S QUANDARY

BARNABETTA was sincerely puzzled by Dr. Barrett's continued aloofness in the days, yes, weeks, that followed. He even refrained, it seemed to her, from calling on her frequently in class. And yet, whether because of her acute intuition, or because so often while he listened to another pupil's recitation, his eyes turned swift, wary glances towards her, she simply knew, in her inmost heart, that between him and herself there was a bond.

Being free, as a junior, to walk out alone, she often saw him in her own long, solitary rambles, strolling over the country with Miss Jordan. Barnabetta viewed with awe this lady who had thoughts worthy to be published in magazines! How grand it would be to be that fit for the constant companionship of a man like Dr. Barrett, who would of course be intolerant of the society (of so much of it, at any rate) of a dull, ignorant person! She herself had found favor in his eyes, perhaps, because he had felt in her what she had so marvelously, if vaguely, realized in herself this past summer—a certain power. But of course she was immeasurably far from being to him

Barnabetta

what such a woman as Miss Jordan was. Why, Miss Jordan had actually gone to school in Paris and Berlin! Wonderful! Barnabetta sighed with longing to be herself so equipped to interest her adored teacher. But there was no touch of jealousy in her longing. Miss Jordan received what was her due and what Barnabetta herself was unfitted to receive.

She wondered especially over Dr. Barrett's new manner of reserve, of manifest self-restraint, when now and then she met him privately in his office to discuss one of her papers. But even on these occasions, though she did sometimes feel a little hurt and disappointed, she was too keen not to realize that his reserve was costing him an effort. Why he thought it necessary she could not imagine.

He, on his part, wondered often at the fact that her association with the other students did not lead to her catching the prevalent infection of awe of him. Nothing affected her perfect self-possession in his presence; her manner of absolute confidence in their relation of equality, of good-fellowship. His struggle to resist its appeal to a relaxation on his own part such as he had never experienced with any human being; to withstand its subtle invitation to an intimacy of comradeship that he had never known even with fellow college students in his boyhood, was the severest discipline he had ever imposed upon himself.

His feeling for Theodora was so vastly remote from that which enticed him to Barnabetta, holding, as it

Barrett's Quandary

did, poetic sentiment, reverence, a sense of romance; yet never with her, as with Barnabetta, did his New England feeling of reserve, of barrier, break down—though the one woman was his equal in birth, breeding, and education, and the other so far removed from him in these things that he could only regard it as a mystery that his spirit should move so freely to meet completely her spirit.

The girl's scholarship continued to be so remarkable as to command the astonished respect of students and instructors. There is nothing like work to avert morbid sadness and it was her deep absorption in her studies, her crowded, busy hours, that probably saved her from falling into a pensive brooding over President Barrett's continued aloofness.

So, the days flew, the Christmas vacation came and went, and the second semester brought the reward of her labor in her promotion to the senior class.

But her really too arduous work was telling upon her. Barrett saw, with an uneasiness the keenness of which secretly astonished himself, how pale and thin she was growing. He delayed her one day as she, with her class, was leaving his recitation-room.

"Will you stop a minute? I want to speak with you."

It was not until they were entirely alone that, seating himself before her, crossing his long legs and thrusting his hands into the pockets of his coat as though to hold himself down, he addressed her.

Barnabetta

"You 'll have to call a halt, Barnabetta—this simply won't do."

It was long since she had heard him call her thus familiarly by her given name. In the presence of others he of course never did so. She knew there was not another student in the school whom he ever so addressed. That fact, with the long, searching gaze in which he vainly tried not to express the pained anxiety he felt, but which Barnabetta recognized acutely, brought a flush to her pale cheeks.

"I want to point out to you," he said, speaking coldly to conceal his real feeling, "how you defeat your own ends in overworking as you are doing. You will weaken, instead of strengthening, your mind. Believe me—quite apart from the question of your health, you will lose mentally the very thing you are striving for so hard. *Why* this avid devouring of text-books anyway? It's rather stupid, you know. You have too much real mentality, too much originality, to turn yourself into a plodder for college honors. I have no respect for college honors myself."

"But I'm not working for college honors, Dr. Barrett. I study because I love to *know*, to find out things. I never had a chance before I came here."

"Well, call a halt. Drop some of your studies. You are carrying too much. You 'll *gain* by dropping a few branches. Do you take your exercise every day?"

"Nearly."

Barrett's Quandary

"Nearly every day? You *must* go out, rain or shine, without fail, every day. I lay my command upon you. Try to remember if you can," he smiled, "that I am the President of the college and must be obeyed. Do you sleep well?"

"Not very."

"It won't do!" he repeated. "I can't have it. Bring your schedule to me at five o'clock to-day and I shall help you eliminate some of your studies. Do you understand?"

"Yes, Dr. Barrett."

"Very well." He rose to dismiss her.

"Please tell me," she asked, her eyes wide with curiosity as she stood before him, "why, if you care for me like this, you think it so important to pretend all the time that you don't? You can't hide it from me that you do care. I can't see your *reason* for pretending."

He caught his lip between his teeth. That she should hold him up like this!

"What do you mean by *caring* for you, Barnabetta?"

"What do I mean? But of course you know what I mean."

"I would interfere in the case of any student I saw damaging herself," he affirmed frigidly.

"But you would not look so worried about another. Why," she asked in genuine perplexity, "don't you want me to *know* how friendly you really feel towards

Barnabetta

me? I can understand hiding and fighting against dislike. But we all need all the affection any one can give us, don't you think we do? Life is empty enough of kindness and love. Why should it ever be hidden and repressed?"

"I value your unworldliness so much, my child, that I am averse, by any word of mine, to educating you into our abominable worldliness. But can't you see that in our relation of teacher and student, under the curious eyes of these swarms of silly maidens, anything but a strictly formal relation between us would cause uncomfortable comment, be exaggerated, misunderstood?"

She looked at him thoughtfully. "But would you really deny a good, true feeling of your heart because it might be misunderstood? Must the few things that are *worth* something in this life be sacrificed for the worthless?"

She was disapproving of him and frankly telling him so! He could scarcely have explained to himself the peculiar sense of exultation he felt in the fact—how he welcomed always any least sign that she held a standard of life superior to his own. Was it because such manifestations seemed to bridge over the social gulf that separated him from her?

"Barnabetta," he said earnestly, "if I, heroically and nobly, lived up to my high regard for you,—well, either you or I would have to leave Stevens! When you know more of the world, dear child, you'll

Barrett's Quandary

understand that however unworthy our caution may be, self-preservation demands that we be circumspect. It really does, Barnabetta!"

"Then I seem to understand what the Bible means when it says, 'He that loseth his life shall find it.'"

"Martyrdom, I've always thought, except for a supremely important cause, is a foolish waste," he replied.

There was a knock on his door, it opened, and Theodora Jordan, in a black velvet coat and beautiful furs, stepped into the room. Barrett flushed deeply as he turned to give Miss Jordan his hand.

"At five o'clock, then," he nodded a dismissal to Barnabetta.

Theodora, not betraying her observation either of his conscious flushing or of the girl whose discovery in his class-room seemed to occasion it, was yet thoroughly cognizant of both. It flashed upon her, as she took the chair which Dr. Barrett placed for her and sent a curious, cautious glance after the figure moving out of the room, that this student's peculiar walk was familiar to her—and she suddenly remembered where she had seen it before; it was on the day of her return to Middleton last September when Dr. Barrett, who had met her at the station, had flushed so unaccountably as he had lifted his hat to this very same young woman.

But Miss Jordan's perfect composure as she sat with him now and discussed the poem she had brought for

Barnabetta

his criticism before submitting it to the literary periodical which highly valued her work, did not by the quiver of an eyelash betray the fact that Barnabetta Dreary had suddenly become for her a factor to be reckoned with. When Theodora Jordan recognized an obstacle in her path, it never long remained there.

CHAPTER XXVIII

A FUNERAL

IT was just before the spring vacation that the sudden death of Barnabetta's father called her home.

A few days after her departure Barrett found in his morning's mail a marked newspaper containing an obituary in which he was sure he recognized the literary style of the letter he had received more than a year ago from Barnabetta's stepmother.

"MR. BARNABY DREARY

"Reinhartz, March ——. Sad indeed and shocking was the gloomy intelligence that Mr. Barnaby Dreary was removed from the family on last Thursday night. This sadness is the social-tie view-point, and a sorrow it is from which none of us wish to be divorced.

"The joyous phase of his demise is the hope that he cherished of a blissful immortality, for he winged to those by his bedside the consoling sentence, 'It is well with my soul.'

"For some time he had been suffering with grippe, but the very sudden death was due to the going into the valley of death through the gateway of Double Pneumonia.

Barnabetta

“Mr. Dreary was the son of Mr. and Mrs. Sam Dreary of Ephrata. About two years ago he came to Hymen’s Altar, but the Ruthless Reaper cut short this brief and happy married life. He is survived by a sorrowing widow, two stricken sons and a grieved daughter.”

(No mention being made of a previous marriage, this statement was the more remarkable.)

The obituary continued:—“Funeral services were held in the Evangelical Church Sunday P. M. Rev. Miller of the Ephrata church assisted by Rev. Kurtz officiated.

“Both ministers preached appropriate sermons. The text was: ‘His sun went down while it was yet day.’ The choir sang three well-chosen selections. The funeral was the most largely attended one since those of Dr. Oberholzer and Harry Tshudy. The streets of Reinhartz were lined with teams. Some think there were two hundred teams in town.

“Mr. Dreary reached his fifty-seventh milestone. Surely here the Reaper Death, ‘with his sickle keen,’ has reaped one just in life’s buoyant period, with pleasant and hopeful anticipations.

“May he LIVE in the good Morning Land, and fully enjoy the full fragrance of the Rose of Sharon, and the purity of the Lily of the Valley.”

A month after her father’s death found Barnabetta and her widowed stepmother living together in a

A Funeral

pretty little cottage in the outskirts of Middleton. Her brother Emanuel had settled his problem by marrying precipitately to secure a housekeeper and Jacob, who, in spite of his fine buggy, had some time ago been "turned down" by Suse Darmstetter, went to board with Emanuel and his bride.

It was found that Barnaby Dreary had had much more "laid by" than any one had dreamed; so that the easy and immediate settling of his estate left his widow and daughter very comfortably off, considering their extremely simple needs.

The natural refinement of Barnabetta's face was much enhanced by the mourning her stepmother insisted upon her wearing. She was not a beautiful girl, but there was a nun-like purity, a lovely womanliness in the pale countenance above the soft black of her gown that was infinitely more attractive than a physical perfection which expressed nothing of the soul.

Mrs. Dreary, strolling forth one day from her cottage to meet Barnabetta on her way home from college, chanced to encounter President Barrett walking in the grounds, and recognizing him, deliberately joined him and introduced herself; and in answer to his startled surprise, to which she gave her own interpretation, she promptly explained, as she strolled at his side, dressed in a gay new spring frock of pale lavender, why she was not wearing mourning.

"Colors are so much more becoming to me and it

Barnabetta

is n't as if Mr. Dreary was my blood relation, President Barrett. Of course it is different with Barnabetta. Anyway, Mr. Dreary would not appreciate my wearing black for him, being so opposed to expenditure for clothing. So I got myself this new spring lavender dress instead."

"Yes?" responded Barrett with an amused glance at the dark, wrinkled face above the grotesquely youthful gown. "Your husband's death," he added, "was very sudden and unexpected, I understand? I hope the shock to Barnabetta is not going to upset her physically—she is already exhausted nervously from overstudy. I trust, Mrs. Dreary, you will discourage her from working too much—especially after this—this bereavement that has befallen you."

"Shock, rather than bereavement, President. My own acquaintance with Mr. Dreary has been of too brief duration for me to have grown accustomed to him, so I shall not greatly miss him. To be sure, if he had died next spring instead of this one, it would have suited me better, for Barnabetta would then have finished her education. However, his death can't rob me of being a *Mrs.* He can't take *that* from me. And as for Barnabetta—well, the child is greatly upset by the newness, the unexpectedness, of it. But bereaved? No, President. Not bereaved."

"Her own father?" he put out tentatively.

"In name, but not in deed. However!" She

A Funeral

waved her hand in dramatic dismissal of an unseemly theme. "How beautiful it is here!" she exclaimed, indicating the grand old trees of the campus. "I do like to live amongst Nature. Don't *you*, President Barrett?"

"This is a very attractive campus, certainly."

"I love Nature because mere man had nothing to do with it."

"'Mere man' is not included in your category of things to be thankful for, then?"

"By no means, President Barrett. I think your sex greatly overrated,—though of course there are exceptions," she graciously conceded. "Barnabetta speaks very well of *you*, for instance. I think of taking her to Europe this summer."

"Ah!"

"Yes. To complete her education—though I myself do not greatly care to go to the old countries where they still retain what I so strongly disapprove of—kings and queens and a titled nobility!"

"My impression is, Mrs. Dreary, that American tourists are not apt to be molested by European royalty and the titled nobility."

"I am certainly glad to hear it, for no doubt if I met up with any of them, I should frankly express my opinions and affront them."

"Which would be a pity, would n't it?—seeing that they are, in these days, through no fault of their own, such a discredited class."

Barnabetta

"Discredited because discreditable," pronounced Mrs. Dreary.

"Barnabetta does want to go abroad, I suppose? She is n't nervous about affronting the aristocracy?"

"Oh, the bare thought of going makes her almost swoon with delight!"

"Mrs. Dreary," he reverted abruptly to what was troubling him, "you do appreciate, don't you, the importance of not allowing your daughter to work too hard during the remainder of this term?"

"It is nice of you to take such a fatherly interest in your pupils, President—mere young man that you are yourself."

"We all take an interest in Barnabetta, she has been such a wonderful little student."

"I confess I am very proud of my daughter, President Barrett."

"You have reason to be, Mrs. Dreary. She has told me how much she owes to you."

"She owes me naught—she has so amply repaid me in her beautiful daughterliness! Ah, here comes the dear child now!"

"Then I will bid you good-afternoon," Barrett hastily said, bowing ceremoniously and moving off in another direction, as he caught sight of Barnabetta's black-robed figure coming towards them in the path.

He felt he did not want to subject the child to the embarrassment of her mother's unique conversation

A Funeral

with himself; for Barnabetta had by now developed to the point, he felt sure, where she must be embarrassed by such a relative.

But he did not realize how the utter loyalty of Barnabetta's simple heart made her incapable of the selfishness, and perhaps the littleness, of such embarrassment.

CHAPTER XXIX

MRS. WINTHROP'S TROUBLED REFLECTIONS

MRS. WINTHROP, in a flowing chamber-robe, sat before a wood-fire in her bedroom, late one night, after having entertained Theodora and David Jordan at dinner—and the troubled thoughts which contracted her brow and compressed her lips were the outcome of the evening's experience.

That a man and woman could talk together in the flagrantly soulful way that Theodora and Edgar addressed each other, and the man not feel bound in honor to follow up such remarks with an immediate offer of his life's devotion—well, she could not see how Edgar justified himself. To lead a girl on to say to him the sort of things he permitted Theodora to say—if it was not open love-making, involving obligations, Mrs. Winthrop would like to know what you *would* call it! Why, the very expressions Theodora used would not be employed in ordinary conversation. And Edgar's complacent acceptance of such expressions certainly implicated him beyond any honorable withdrawal. Theodora had informed him, this evening, in effect (unless Mrs. Winthrop had grossly misunderstood her style of speech) that his

Mrs. Winthrop's Troubled Reflections

friendship was to her "one of great uplift"; that it had the same buoyant effect upon her as had "God's-out-of-doors"; that in "the stress of our modern life" such communion as theirs was "like a benediction." Now, how could a decent man receive such shameless gush (Mrs. Winthrop's word was *slush*) and not propose? And that he loved it, you need only look at his beaming countenance to know. What, then, held him back?

A fearful dread gripped her heart. It had been with her for two weeks, growing greater with every day's developments. It had started with her surprising her brother one afternoon in his class-room, after college hours, in the act of laughing in the most amazingly familiar way (for *him* at least) with one of the students. It was such a rare thing to hear him laugh at all—but to hear him laugh familiarly, boyishly, and with one of his students! Mrs. Winthrop had inspected the young lady keenly as, upon her own entrance, the girl promptly left the room—and she had seen a graceful, madonna-faced, intelligent-looking maiden in mourning, her clothes of village cut and material. Edgar's self-conscious flushing up at his sister's interruption, his failure to explain his unusual attitude towards this student, had instantly roused her suspicions.

Of course she did not take the liberty of questioning him. She would not have dared to do so, even if her native reserve had not prohibited such an imperti-

Barnabetta

nence. But she had at once set herself to discovering what she could about the girl, and had learned that she was living with her mother in Middleton and had, in a year and a half at college, earned the valedictory of this year's graduating class.

Then, at dinner to-night her heart had leapt into her throat upon hearing Edgar name this same young student to Judge Jordan (who was the President of the Board of Trustees of Stevens College) as a suitable candidate for the position, when college reopened in the autumn, of librarian of the college.

"You'll not find a trained librarian, Judge, who knows more about the books on our library shelves than Miss Dreary knows. She's an avaricious reader. I shall recommend her to the trustees as my choice for the place—but I wanted to recommend her to you particularly, beforehand."

"You know, of course, Barrett, that your recommendation to the Board gives her the place."

"I suppose so. But on the bare chance that there might be another candidate, I thought I'd better speak to you. I don't want any one else appointed, Judge."

"I shall take care of it, Barrett."

"Thank you."

"I trust the daughter is an improvement upon the mother?" Jordan inquired, to Barrett's surprise.

"You have met the mother?" he quickly asked.

Mrs. Winthrop's Troubled Reflections

"Yes, but not the daughter. They rent a cottage from me. The mother's an extraordinary fool! To be sure, in these days, that would not prevent the daughter from being both a lady and a scholar!"

"She's Barnahetta's stepmother."

"Whose?" exclaimed Mrs. Winthrop. "What a name!"

She was deeply shaken to hear him refer to the girl thus familiarly by her given name—it suggested an alarming relation between them.

"And," added Barrett quietly, his face grown pale, "grotesque as Mrs. Dreary may be, Judge Jordan, she is a woman of whom I would say, as Mrs. Browning said of Napoleon—since she has the genius to be loved, let her have the justice to be honored. Her daughter is devoted to her!"

"'Barnahetta Dreary!'" Theodora softly repeated, smiling. "Weird, isn't it? But, Edgar," she mildly suggested, "doesn't the applicant for the librarian's position here have to be a *trained* librarian?"

"It is n't compulsory."

"If it is advisable," said Judge Jordan, "the girl could spend July and August at a summer school for librarians."

"No," said Barrett, "she could n't. She is in need of rest; she has been working too hard; she's valedictorian, you may have heard. Her stepmother takes her to Europe a month after Commencement."

Barnabetta

That will equip her better in mind and health than a summer school for librarians would do."

Theodora sipped her wine and was silent. Mrs. Winthrop wondered, in consternation, whether her brother and this girl with the grotesque name had fixed it up between them that her graduation should not permanently separate them; that he would bespeak for her the easy, good-paying position of librarian which should keep her here at Middleton.

"The young lady asked you to recommend her, did she, Edgar?" she casually inquired.

"No."

"You suggested it to her?"

"I have not yet, but I am going to."

"But why do you recommend her to Judge Jordan before you ask her whether she *wants* the place?"

"It is rather putting the cart before the horse, is n't it? Do you know," he turned to Theodora, "your sonnet looks even better to me in the *Monthly* than it did in manuscript."

"It is the finest thing she has ever written!" exclaimed the proud brother of the poetess.

"Which is poor, dear David's opinion of everything I write," remarked Theodora, snubbing his opinion as she always did, even when it was a compliment to her own work.

Mrs. Winthrop had not, after that, been able to bring the talk back to the subject of Miss Dreary.

"I suppose," she meditated as she sat before her

Mrs. Winthrop's Troubled Reflections

bedroom fire, "it is only my anxiety for Edgar that makes me see anything in the least suspicious in these trifling circumstances. They probably *don't* indicate anything."

Meantime, Edgar, returning in the spring night from walking home with the Jordans was wondering whether he *had* gone too far in recommending Barlabetta for librarian without first consulting her. The purpose to do so had possessed him ever since a talk he had had with her a week ago in which the sense of blankness that had come upon him at hearing her statement that she and her mother would perhaps remain in Paris for a year to learn together the French language, had revealed to him how loth he was to have her go so far out of his life. What warrant had he for assuming that she would consent to give up a year in Paris for a position as librarian in Middleton? He knew she did not need the salary, for limited as her means evidently were, they were abundant for her absurdly simple needs. So, at least, she had assured him in reply to his inquiry as to what she meant to do upon leaving college.

"I had supposed you would remain in your little cottage here in Middleton," he had suggested.

"No; we took the cottage only so that Mama could be with me until Commencement."

"You are not going back to Reinhartz to live?"

"No. My brother Jacob did think I would of course stay at home and keep house for him—I can't

Barnabetta

tell you how astonished he was when he learned that I would not dream of doing that."

"It would be too great a sacrifice?" Barrett had dubiously inquired.

"Yes."

"But my sister made just such a sacrifice in coming here to take care of *my* house. Are you, perhaps, Barnabetta," he asked half playfully, "not strong in the domestic affections, unsisterly? It has not been my idea of you, you know."

"I can see," she answered gravely, "how a sister would lay down her life for a brother like *you*, and count it nothing. But there are some kinds of self-sacrifice that are not reasonable, even weak-minded, and that don't do the least good to the person you make the sacrifice for. All my life, until Mama came to us, I sacrificed myself like that; but," she announced quietly, "I shall never do it again. I *harmed* those I sacrificed myself for. I know that Jacob will be a better man and, if he marries, a better husband, because I refused to give myself up, body and soul, that he might be taken care of—without, on his part, the least obligation to take any care of me."

"You reason it out like a modern, clear-headed, entirely unsentimental Suffragist, Barnabetta!"

"Jacob would not appreciate the sentimental side of a sisterly sacrifice. He took it as a matter-of-course that I would now attend to my natural duty and stop at home to keep house for him. He was dumb-

Mrs. Winthrop's Troubled Reflections

founded when he learned that I would not think of it."

"My dear child, it would seem to *me* to be your natural duty—to make a home for your brother."

"If he felt an equal obligation to make a home for me. *You* could not understand, Dr. Barrett, how my brothers have always looked upon me—you with your tender, devoted chivalry to *your* sister, to Miss Jordan, to me, to any woman you have a regard for. You don't know anything about *using* women for your own comfort and convenience—as the Indians used their squaws!"

There was no bitterness in her tone; she was only quietly explaining to him how it had been, and was, with her.

"I can understand, too," she added unexpectedly, "how happy Miss Jordan would be in doing everything for *her* splendid-looking brother."

"Ah?" commented Barrett drily, "'splendid-looking'? You think so? Rather too heavy for that."

"But he looks as though his mind and heart were as big as his frame! I think he has the *kindest* face I ever saw. And do you know nothing in this world seems to me better than that—just kindness?"

"Jordan's a bit boorish, however," Barrett had responded in a bored tone.

"Boorish? What is a boor?"

"Don't you know?"

"Not if Judge Jordan is boorish."

Barnabetta

"Ah! You have in mind, I suppose, the time he took care of you at the station!—just getting in ahead of me as *I* was about to come to you, Barnabetta!"

"Yes!"

"He is, of course, a gentleman," Barrett had shrugged.

"I am sure he is."

Barrett had parted from her with two haunting thoughts—her impending departure from Middleton and her reference to his own "tender, devoted chivalry" to herself! Quaint, ingenuous Barnabetta!

To-night, walking home in the soft spring air from the Jordans', he realized how deep was his desire that she should accept the position he would suggest to her.

CHAPTER XXX

THEODORA ACTS

BUT in that very hour when Barrett was realizing how greatly he hoped Barnabetta would consent to come back to Stevens College in the fall, Theodora Jordan, lingering in the library of her home with her brother after Barrett had left them, was pointing out to Judge Jordan that he must not, on any account, make the mistake of permitting Miss Dreary to receive the appointment for which Dr. Barrett so thoughtlessly commended her.

“We must have a trained librarian, David,” she pronounced, in the conclusive way which always blocked any objections, not only from David, but from most people with whom she dealt. Perhaps no one in Middleton, least of all Judge Jordan, knew that for years no teacher had been elected to the Faculty of Stevens College, nor been retained there, except at the will of the gracious, exquisite sister of the President of the Board of Trustees. There was no one, either in the town or in the college, who did not admire her disinterested public spirit. Mrs. Winthrop alone (and she was of course an outsider) realized the power Miss Jordan wielded.

Barnabetta

"The librarian we've had is not a trained one," David suggested, not argumentatively, but merely as inviting his sister to give reasons for her mandate.

"I know it," Theodora lamented, "and I was so glad, because of that fact, to hear she had resigned. We must not again commit the error of showing ourselves so behind the times as to elect another untrained one."

"I wonder why Barrett recommends her, dear, if she is not a suitable candidate?"

"His kindly desire to help a very worthy young girl. But we shall have to find her another place. I can easily get her a position in Boston as nursery governess."

"Nursery governess? One of our graduates?"

"Our dear Stevens College, David, is of course merely a high-grade girls' school. You *know* that our diploma admits only to the senior class of the real colleges. And this Miss Dreary, I understand, is a common little Pennsylvania Dutch country girl—another strong reason against her being elected to the Faculty of Stevens—for the librarian, you know, is a member of the Faculty. I should think the other ladies on our Faculty would quite resent her meeting with them on terms of equality."

"Very few of them, Theo, dear, are 'ladies' in *your* sense."

"But none of them are of quite such humble rank

Theodora Acts

as this Barnabetta Dreary. Did you ever hear such a name!"

"What can Barrett be thinking of?" said Jordan. "He usually has his wits about him in his management of things at Stevens. And, my dear, believe me, the man is, at heart, such an insufferable snob that I can't understand his partiality to this girl if she is the sort of person you think her. There's a mistake *somewhere*."

"No, there is no mistake," returned Theodora firmly. "Give me credit, David, for usually knowing whereof I speak. The girl must not receive the appointment."

"But she will receive it, you know, if Barrett recommends her."

"Not if you have another candidate (and I shall look one up for you) who is a regularly trained librarian. You can speak to Edgar about it and tell him you can't conscientiously recommend his candidate and that he would better not present her name."

"Very well, dear, if you think so."

"I do think so. Good-night, David."

She strolled, with her easy grace, over to his chair by the fire and offered her cheek for his kiss.

And the big man was incapable of conceiving that his incomparable sister, whose favor must honor the most exalted of men, was stooping to stratagem to displace a possible rival.

But Theodora was also incapable of conceiving such

Barnabetta

a thing of herself. She had preëminently the gift of self-deception—a faculty for twisting facts, or for reasoning around a fact, to fit her desires, that amounted to genius. She had quite succeeded in persuading herself that her objections to Miss Dreary were wholly due to her unselfish interest in the welfare of Stevens College, and to her sudden realization that a trained librarian was absolutely essential to the reputation and the well-being of Middleton's beloved institution of learning.

CHAPTER XXXI

COMMENCEMENT DAY

THE election of the new librarian, among other business, was to take place at a meeting of the Board of Trustees during the week following the graduation exercises.

It was at these graduation exercises that Judge Jordan met the candidate so objectionable to Theodora. His position on the Board and as Middleton's foremost citizen obliged him to be present at the Commencement, seated on the platform—an obligation which, being a man of some brains, he found infinitely soporific, especially as, unlike the usual big man of a small town, he was not at all fond of figuring large before his petty public.

He had postponed the unpleasant duty of informing Barrett that he must not present Miss Dreary's name to the Board, though he knew he ought to have spoken to him of the matter long before this. But he disliked exceedingly dictating to the College President how to manage his own "job." Though Theodora had quite persuaded him to her own view and had presented him with the name and address of another *suitable* candidate it did seem to him a bit like

Barnabetta

an impertinent interference into Barrett's own province. Still, it must be done, for he had promised Theo that he would speak to Edgar immediately after this morning's ordeal.

While the graduates delivered themselves of their orations or essays, Jordan occupied himself in gazing down fondly from his high place on the platform of the auditorium upon his beloved sister sitting with Mrs. Winthrop in the audience. And when at length the valedictorian, Miss Dreary, stepped forth to the front of the stage to speak her little speech, it was with but a faint interest that he glanced at her. But his attention was instantly caught and held—first, by the girl's appearance; she was not the "common little Pennsylvania Dutch country girl" he was prepared to see. Tall and slim, dressed all in white, and wearing for the first time in her life dainty slippers, silk hose and long white kid gloves (in which latter, to tell the truth, Barnabetta felt most elegant) she looked so far from common or countrified, but on the contrary so lovely and so distinguished, that Jordan glanced at the program to make sure he was not mistaken in her identity.

Not noticing that President Barrett, seated at his side, was gazing at the young figure in white with fire in his eyes and tensely compressed lips, he nudged him and asked, "Is *that* your Barnabetta Dreary?"

Barrett, not taking his eyes from the girl, nodded curtly.

Commencement Day

The maiden's voice, falling upon the stillness, thrilled the Judge with its peculiarly poignant sweetness and with the sudden realization that he had heard that voice before; not only in reality, but in his dreams. And then suddenly he recognized her. Her clothing and the absence of a hat had, for the moment, held him off. She was the girl he had rescued from that mob of students at the station!

The discovery came to him with such a sharp thrill that he sank back in his chair limp with astonishment.

He had not meant, as he sat on that platform, to be guilty of the imbecility of seriously listening to one of these girlish effusions called "essays," but while yielding himself to the spell of that penetratingly feminine voice, he again found himself, all at once, sitting up sharply to catch her surprising words.

"Paternalism" was her theme and she was holding up an ideal of government in which the State should be a fostering parent to all her sons and daughters alike, without partiality. But it was the manner of the girl's speech—her beribboned paper hanging unheeded at her side while, her eyes sparkling, her face flushed, her young bosom heaving with her burning earnestness in what she had to say, she spoke forth into the sea of faces before her like a young prophetess. Jordan saw that it came with a shock to the audience, accustomed to the perfunctory, conventional delivery of the usual graduate.

Barrett, sitting far back in his chair, clutched the

Barnabetta

arms of it until his knuckles showed white. He had not dreamed that Barnabetta was going to distinguish herself like this. The editing of the graduation essays had been left entirely to the assistant instructor of his department. His feelings, as he heard the girl, were a strange mingling of chagrin and pride—chagrin at the unconventional conspicuousness of her vital delivery and radical, nay, revolutionary, sentiments; and pride in her equally conspicuous ability and charm.

But Jordan, leaning forward with tense attention, triumphed unqualifiedly in the maiden's fearless, astonishing utterances, so entirely in harmony with his own strong convictions. The domestic isolation in which his convictions flourished made his big heart bound with a sense of fellowship with this earnest, intelligent young woman.

Her oration was merely a rhetorical, poetic flight in which she foresaw a nation where the joy of life should not be perpetually overshadowed by the fear of want; where motherhood should not be, as now it is to thousands, a menace of starvation, of horror; where none should go hungry and cold except chronic parasites and idlers (the class which now monopolized all luxury); a nation which should give to all children born under its flag an equal chance to equip themselves for participation in the world's accumulated stores of intellectual and artistic wealth; where there should be absolutely equal opportunity for all to de-

Commencement Day

velop the highest capacity for both happiness and usefulness.

And *this* was the young woman (Jordan marveled while, the valedictory having been spoken and the diplomas distributed, the few concluding exercises were being performed)—this was the young woman whom Theodora had been led to believe was too common, countrified and “Dutch” to be their librarian? Of course Theo had not seen the girl when she had thus pronounced against her. Now that she had seen and heard her, however much she might disagree with the socialistic sentiments Miss Dreary held, she would of course withdraw all objections to her; for what was a paltry training in a book-cataloguing system against such originality and character as this girl manifested? Why, Miss Dreary would be (he knew Theo would agree with him) a notable addition to their Faculty—dull lot that they were, with the exception of Barrett!

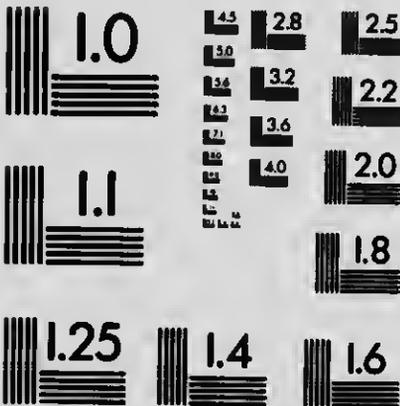
“And even Barrett is, God knows, limited enough—for all his Oxford ‘culture’!” concluded Jordan as, the morning’s performances ended, he rose with the general breaking up of the stiff phalanxes on the stage and made straight for the valedictorian.

“Miss Dreary—Mr. Jordan,” he introduced himself, offering his hand, “though we have met before, haven’t we? Never in my life, until to-day, Miss Dreary, I swear to you, have I voluntarily listened to a girl graduate! Your oration was fine—fine!”



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Barnabetta

he exclaimed, assisting her, as he spoke, to gather up her belongings—her flowers, her diploma, her essay, a gauze scarf, her white gloves (which she had prudently removed the moment the benediction had been pronounced).

“I don’t believe *many* people liked what I said, though,” responded the thrillingly feminine voice. “I didn’t expect that they would. I know that the ideas I have come to hold about some things are not popular. But how little that matters when one is convinced of a thing!”

“Exactly!” cried Jordan enthusiastically, gazing with ardor into the dark eyes lifted to his. “It is so refreshing to meet, in *Middleton*, an individual who has a live opinion about anything! They live by their prejudices here—the deeply-intrenched, strongly-fortified prejudices of the self-satisfied middle classes—perfectly impregnable to a new idea! So, while they could not escape the spell of your eloquence, they are humping their shoulders at your ideas, Miss Dreary!”

“You think they didn’t like it?”

“I am sure they didn’t. You had, however, *one* sympathetic listener—I believe in your ‘Paternalism.’”

“Do you?” she said eagerly. “But,” she added, puzzled, “you are a capitalist, a very rich man?”

“Not very rich, Miss Dreary, inasmuch as I have never made a dollar except through service I have

Commencement Day

given—and you can't get very rich on that line in these days."

"No, it is the other way now—by damaging, not by helping society, that men grow rich."

"Exactly! So," he added, "you are going to be our librarian next term, I understand?"

"Yes; Dr. Barrett is so kind as to offer me the place. I am very glad. And he is going to let me do post-graduate work with him, too!"

"What do you think of taking a course, during the vacation, in a summer school for librarians?"

"But I am going to Europe this summer."

"That could not be postponed?"

"No, I would not postpone it."

"Not if it made you a more efficient librarian?"

"It would not do for me what a trip to Europe will do—even in fitting me to be a good librarian, I am sure."

"I am inclined to agree with you."

They had started to move together across the stage towards the wings, when Barrett, emerging from a group of trustees, came up to them.

"Tut, tut—tut, tut, Barnabetta!" he frowned down upon her. "How you did spread yourself this morning, didn't you, child! How did you dare take such a liberty," he shook his head at her, "without consulting me! I didn't know your foolish socialistic ideas had carried you so far, or I should have taken you in hand! I shall have to talk with you—seriously

Barnabetta

talk with you, you know! You really must not mar your beautiful progress with these wild theories!"

"Shut up, Barrett—the child's entirely on the right track and it's *you* that are side-tracked. You let her and her theories alone! Don't let him persuade you, Miss Dreary, that you are wrong. When do you sail?"

"Next month."

"To-night you will be at the alumnae dance—but may I come to see you to-morrow and bring you some books I know you'll like?"

"Now, look here, 'Jordan,'" interposed Barrett, "you shan't poison her mind with your stuff! I won't have it!"

"Ah, my dear daughter!" suddenly exclaimed a shrill voice and Mrs. Dreary, advancing from the wings, swooped down upon the little group and clasped Barnabetta to her bosom. "Gentleman!" she exclaimed, holding the girl off again and appealing dramatically to Barrett and Jordan, "was it not a most pleasing address? To think that she could acquit herself so precociously before an assemblage of fashion and learning—oh!" she concluded, tearfully sentimental, "if only her dear father could have been here to hear her!"

Barnabetta laid her arm about her mother's waist as she spoke to the two men. "Does n't this diploma mean," she asked, smiling and holding it up, "that I at least know poison from food?"

Commencement Day

"It ought to!" retorted Jordan. "So you 'll have to trust her, Barrett, to read whatever interests her. Look for me, Miss Dreary, to-morrow—I 'll be bringing you some pernicious literature!"

"Well," she acquiesced. "Good-by." She smiled impartially upon the two men as, taking her mother's arm, she turned away.

CHAPTER XXXII

BROTHER AND SISTER

THEODORA had assumed, upon seeing David, Miss Dreary and President Barrett in conference on the stage, that the promise she had exacted from her brother that morning before he had left her was being carried out and that he was telling Dr. Barrett of the impossibility of his permitting Miss Dreary to receive the library appointment.

So, when an hour later she met David at luncheon, feeling assured that the matter was concluded according to her instructions, she was only mildly curious to hear an account of how Barrett had received the defeat of his purpose.

"Well?" she inquired as they sipped their soup.

"What, dear?" David absently returned.

She glanced at him in surprise. She was accustomed to his alert attention when she spoke. "Your talk with Dr. Barrett, David?"

"My talk—with Barnabetta? Oh, with Barrett? I did n't have any. Well, yes, a word or two, I believe. For a man of intelligence, the fellow is certainly insufferably prejudiced!"

"You mean so prejudiced in favor of that girl?"

Broth and Sister

"Eh? No, not at all. He scolded her roundly under my very nose for the views she put forth in her oration."

"I should think he might!"

"But what a surprise you had, dear, did n't you, in finding the young lady so different from what you had supposed?"

"Young 'lady'?"

"I mean Miss Dreary of course. Isn't it she you 're speaking of?"

"Certainly."

"What led you to get the impression, my dear, that she was 'a common Dutch country girl'?"

"Her father was a tinsmith, Mrs. Winthrop says, at that Dutch village, Reinhartz, and until the girl came here to college a year and a half ago, she had never been on a railroad train."

"Astonishing!" exclaimed the Judge with an enthusiasm his sister considered wholly irrelevant. "What a bright and shining example of my democratic theories, and what a blow to your superstition of 'good blood,' my dear, is that young lady's personality! Not another girl on the stage could hold a candle to her. Were n't you astonished at her?"

Theodora had indeed been astonished, and more than that—she had been appalled at her realization of the girl's "vital significance," as she expressed it; at the deep, quiet force one felt embodied in that wholly feminine personality. To be sure, there was some-

Barnabetta

thing primitive, even crude, in an earnestness which could make a young woman so unconscious of herself as almost to reveal her naked soul to a startled audience; yet, Theodora had to admit, Miss Dreary did not seem either primitive or crude.

"Dr. Barrett did not protest, then, against your decision not to accept Miss Dreary as a candidate?" she inquired.

David glanced at her in questioning surprise. "But of course nothing was said about that after I found that you had been mistaken about her," he replied.

"Nothing was said?"

"Naturally not, when there was no necessity."

"No necessity to keep your word to me, David?"

"Why, my dear, you don't suppose I'd interfere with Barrett unless he were really making a serious blunder? And you saw, as well as I did, what an excellent candidate he *has* picked out."

"That is not the point. The girl is clever and unusual of course—though very eccentric. But the point is, as I thought we had decided quite conclusively, that we must have a *trained* librarian. No up-to-date college employs anything else. You must see Dr. Barrett at once, David."

"I should n't think of opposing Miss Dreary's appointment, Theo."

Theodora laid down her spoon and looked at her brother. When had he ever told her he "would not think" of doing a thing she requested of him?

Brother and Sister

"You would not think of keeping your promise to me, David?"

"A promise made under a mistaken impression, my dear."

"But a promise I *want* you to keep, David!"

"But why, dear?"

"Because I think it best for the college."

"My dear, we would search far before we 'd find a librarian who would be better for the college than Miss Dreary will be—in my estimation."

"You don't seem to understand, David, that I don't *intend* to have this girl appointed; that I *wish* you to speak to Dr. Barrett at once as you agreed to do."

"But, my dear," he asked in surprise, "why lay so much stress upon a matter of no vital importance?"

"I consider it of *most* vital importance."

"I am sorry for that, dear, for I cannot agree with you."

"But you will do as I wish, David? You will see Dr. Barrett and tell him of *our* candidate?"

"My dear, I can't think of it."

"Oh, yes, you can, David. For if you don't, I shall ask for the position for *myself* and shall spend the summer at a school for librarians! That is how important I consider it to have a trained librarian!"

"*You* take the position of librarian, my dear?" he laughed. "Very well, if it would amuse you! But it would scarcely seem worth while, I think, for you

Barnabetta

to rob that little girl of the position, which, as she told me, would give her a chance to do post-graduate work with Barrett."

Theodora bent her face over her plate. "I would scarcely place her interests before those of the college," she said.

"Shall I, then, tell Barrett that *you* want the place?" he asked incredulously.

"I don't want it. But I shall take it rather than have an untrained librarian. I shall take it if you will not tell Dr. Barrett that you will not support Miss Dreary."

"We might have Barrett up and talk it out with him?" Jordan suggested.

"I told you, David, that I did not wish Dr. Barrett to know this came from me—he is too sensitive about dictation from a woman."

"I see," said Jordan slowly. "I see. Very well, dear, very well."

Jordan was a man of open mind and few prejudices. But there was one prejudice he had never outgrown and that was that a woman should have what she wanted if it was in the power of man to give it to her. He found himself, therefore, just now, between the devil and the deep sea and he could not, for the life of him, see any loophole of escape.

CHAPTER XXXIII

AT THE DANCE

IT was at the alumnae dance that night that the little drama revolving itself about our unsuspecting Barnabetta developed to a climax.

Though Barnabetta did not of course dance, she was not a wallflower, for she was honored by the unprecedented distinction of having the College President lead her off during the first dance to an alcove to talk with her—the other alumnae looking upon Miss Dreary with mingled envy and respect.

“I have a most disagreeable thing to tell you!” Barrett, in an annoyed tone, announced to her when they were seated together. “Judge Jordan called to see me this afternoon about you.”

“About me?”

“He’s taken a fool notion into his head that we’ve got to have a trained librarian. Insists upon it!—has his candidate ready to hand! I explained to him that the last librarian used an up-to-date library system which you had learned from her. But he refused,” said Barrett irritably, “unreasonably and obstinately refused, to support you.”

Barnabetta

"Why," said Barnabetta, looking daunted, "this morning he seemed so friendly!"

"It is such very great nonsense! Why should he meddle in my affairs like this?"

"But this morning, while he did suggest that I go to a summer library school, he afterwards agreed with me that I 'd do better to go to Europe."

"He usually knows his own mind! I can't understand this freak he has taken."

"And he did n't say a word to *me*," added Barnabetta, "about another candidate. I think he was insincere with me, Dr. Barrett!"

"Insincerity is not a characteristic of his, I must admit."

"Does his objecting to me," she asked anxiously, "mean that I won't get the position?"

"Yes—unless I decide to fight it out with him in the Board—openly opposing my candidate to his."

"But that might be very bad for you perhaps—as Judge Jordan is president of the Board which appoints you?"

"It might be very bad indeed for me—in more ways than one."

"Yes," responded Barnabetta understandingly, "he is also Miss Jordan's brother. Then you must not do it for me, Dr. Barrett."

"Don't you know that you are quite worth a man's risking his neck for you?"

At the Dance

"But that little library position would not be worth your risking *your* important position!"

"Having you come back to Stevens, however, might be worth a considerable risk."

"I don't want you to take the risk—I shall refuse to be an applicant for the place!"

"Don't do anything rash! Wait. I am going to resort to diplomacy. I shall appeal to Miss Jordan to use her influence with her brother. *She* will help us out. If any one can influence him, she can; I'll talk to her about it here to-night when she comes."

"I'm not sure I want the position if I'm not *wanted!*" said Barnabetta dubiously. "I'm like Mama's negro servant who says she would not go to a party she was n't invited to if she never got anywhere!"

"Jordan is n't the whole Board. The rest of them never dream of objecting to any one I name for any position whatsoever. Leave the matter to me, Barnabetta."

"I shall be very glad to."

"I only mentioned it to you to-night to prepare you in case he does carry his point."

"I shall be very much disappointed if he does carry it!" said Barnabetta wistfully.

"I shall do *my* best!" affirmed Barrett grimly. It was evident that opposition had stirred his fighting blood.

There was, just here, a little stir in the room, then

Barnabetta

almost a hush—and every eye was turned towards the door as at this moment Miss Jordan entered—with her brother as an adjunct. She was robed in a clinging black crêpe gown, against which her white neck and shoulders gleamed like alabaster. A large red rose heaved and fell on her breast.

As she moved across the room with her brother to the “receiving committee,” her gracious bowing on all sides in response to the awed or admiring greetings she received did not suggest to one single person in that room, except Mrs. Winthrop, how she reveled in the homage she received; how scarcely one look or tone directed towards her was lost to her soft, swift glances about her; how her position of grand lady in Middleton fed her soul—as companionship with her equals or superiors in Boston could never do. Yet nothing whatever in her countenance or bearing betrayed this overweening egotism. Not even when her glance swept the two—Dr. Barrett and Barnabetta—seated together in the alcove, did the gentleness of her smile, the dreamy look of her dark eyes, waver in the least.

“What a mask she wears!” thought Mrs. Winthrop as she watched her. “And she does n’t herself suspect that she is a *poseuse*.”

“Is n’t she beautiful!” breathed Barnabetta as Miss Jordan with her brother moved past them with a gracious bow and smile to Barrett.

“It is the loveliness of her spirit that makes her

At the Dance

beautiful, Barnabetta!" Barrett fervently responded.

"Yes," Barnabetta as fervently agreed; "all the other women look so—so *common* beside her!"

"Except *you!*"

It came from him involuntarily and surprised himself even more than it did Barnabetta. He looked at her suddenly, with a new keenness. It was really true—even Theodora's soft radiance could not dim that subtly fine, spiritual quality embodied in Barnabetta, which made strangely impossible any idea of "commonness" in connection with her.

"By the way," he said abruptly, "do you know I very strongly disapproved of your oration this morning? If I had known that you were *seriously* harboring these pernicious theories, I should long ago have set you straight."

"Pernicious?"

"To take the control of affairs out of the hands of the efficient few and place it in the hands of the incompetent masses—impossible! Control of the big interests of this or any nation always has been and always will be in the hands of a few, no matter what form of government you establish."

"I know that, Dr. Barrett. But should those 'few' be allowed to control the big interests for their own benefit—or for ours?"

"They should at least be free to reap the rich benefits of their own high ability!" he maintained.

"Where did you come by your ideas?"

Barnabetta

“I found Henry George’s *Progress and Poverty* in the library one day—that started me. Since then I’ve been reading everything in that line I could find. I don’t understand much about social economy—but I do get hold of some big general principles that seem to me so true I wonder the whole world does n’t believe them. I seem to myself to have been asleep all these years that I have never questioned the right and justice of things as they are. To be sure, living all my life in a place like Reinhartz which is never touched by the great world-movements—”

“Ah, here you are!” interrupted a deep voice, as at this moment Judge Jordan suddenly appeared before them, looking, in his evening dress which revealed the outlines of his splendid frame, both handsome and powerful. “Barrett, I’m going to take this little girl away from you—I have to talk to her. May I, Miss Dreary?” he inquired, bending to offer his arm. “Pardon me, Barrett, but it’s important.” And before either she or Barrett quite realized what was happening, the big man had swept her to her feet and was leading her down the length of the room — leaving Barrett in a state of astonishment and chagrin which was ill-concealed from curious onlookers.

CHAPTER XXXIV

THE APPEAL TO THEODORA

IT was not until the evening's festivities were nearly over that Barrett found himself alone with Theodora, though he had been trying to find an opportunity to talk with her ever since Jordan had taken away Barnabetta. But Miss Jordan had been so much in demand that he had been unable to speak with her except as one of a group; and Edgar Barrett did not fancy being one of a group. Neither did Theodora, for that matter, except as the center and pivot of the group.

He finally decided to get in his chance by taking her out to supper; but he was again foiled by her brother's appearing and bearing her off to the dining-hall.

Mrs. Winthrop had been watching these manœuvres, with a sense of satisfaction in her brother's persistence. The revelation, that morning, of the personality of the girl with whom she had one day discovered Edgar familiarly laughing and talking, his honoring that same maiden to-night with a *tête-à-tête* in an alcove, had rasped her nerves with anxiety. That he should publicly make himself so cheap with

Barnabetta

a little nobody from a Dutch village! Where was his judgment?

It was during the supper in the college dining-hall, as she watched Theodora with David, that for the first time in her acquaintance with that young woman, she saw her lose, for a moment, her marvelous self-control, her perfect mask of dreamy, gentle loveliness, and turn upon David a look of black anger that made him draw back appalled. Mrs. Winthrop breathed deep with thankfulness that Edgar was not by to witness this sudden, momentary transformation of the woman he idealized—it would too completely have disillusioned him. Judge Jordan's shocked amazement was testimony enough that Theodora was not wont, even in the privacy of home, to give way like that. What could he have done to his sister to infuriate her so?

Suddenly a grotesque possibility flashed upon Mrs. Winthrop that made her almost laugh aloud. Judge Jordan had sat out two dances in very earnest conversation with Miss Dreary—was Theodora troubled and angry about *that*? Oh, *would n't* it be funny if after "protecting" her brother during all these years from "designing women," she should have to stand by and see him fall a prey to an obscure "Dutch" girl by the name of Barnabetta Dreary, from Reinhartz Station! Poor Theodora! Mrs. Winthrop's shoulders shook with silent laughter. If only that *would* happen! It would at least insure

The Appeal to Theodora

Edgar from a madness of folly! And if it came to a choice, on Barnabetta's part, between Edgar and Jordan—well, from the standpoint of the Dreary girl, of course Jordan with his wealth would be far the better match.

"Anyway," Mrs. Winthrop grimly concluded, "if it actually comes to the worst, if Edgar *does* lose his head and want to make a fool of himself, this Barnabetta is a simple country girl — she can be managed — and disposed of. I'd stop at *nothing* to save Edgar from such an enormity!"

It was just after the supper that at last Barrett managed to lead Theodora away with him to a far corner.

"You are pale," he said solicitously as soon as they were alone. "You are not feeling very fit?"

"A bit tired," she smiled. She had entirely recovered her momentary loss of self-control.

"I want to enlist your help, Theodora, in a little matter. I have run up against a snag in your dear brother's character that I had never suspected! He has a streak of blind obstinacy, has n't he?"

"You have just discovered it?"

"I have never until to-night known him to stick to a point without a reason that seemed, at least to himself, to be a good one!"

"What is it all about, Edgar?"

"He has n't told you of his call on me this afternoon?"

Barnabetta

“You mean concerning a new librarian?”

“Yes.”

“He did casually mention it.”

“You did n’t know, then, that he insists he wants a ‘trained librarian,’ won’t consider any other sort and will strenuously oppose my candidate, Miss Dreary, with one of his own selection? Now, of course, *you* know, Theodora, how simple, even trifling, is the work of our college library—and that the present librarian uses the identical system a graduated librarian would use. What’s more, she has taught this system to Bar—Miss Dreary.”

“Yes?”

“In vain I explained all this to the Judge! ‘A trained librarian’ he would have if he scaled the Alps to get her! Do you think *you* could make him see reason? I know how much influence you do have with him.”

“But I don’t quite catch your point, Edgar,” she gently questioned. “Why should you object to a trained librarian?”

“I don’t. Don’t you see Miss Dreary is practically trained?”

“But what difference can it make to you,” she laughed, “*who* has the position?”

“It would give Miss Dreary a chance to do post-graduate work, and I am naturally interested in her progress—she has been an extraordinary student.”

“I should n’t, myself, want her to be in a position

The Appeal to Theodora

where she could propagate among the students such ideas as she gave forth this morning, Edgar."

"That would not be your brother's objection to her, however. I counted on your help, Theodora."

"You should have it, Edgar, if it were in my power to give it to you—you know that—my friend!" she added earnestly. "But I am afraid my intercession would come too late."

"Why, no, the Board does n't meet until next week."

"I am afraid," she said very sadly, "that David's opposition was purely personal and selfish, Edgar."

"How do you mean? How could it be?"

"He actually told me when we were at supper that he had engaged this Miss Dreary as his assistant in propagating his dreadful anarchism! She will assist him in preparing his lectnres, in collecting data and literature; in the revision of his magazine and newspaper articles on Socialism—or whatever it is he thinks he believes! Oh, Edgar," cried Theodora, sorrow in her sweet voice, "the girl must be a most snbtly designing creature!—she is robbing me of all the influence I ever had with David! He seems *infatuated* with her!"

"Ah?" exclaimed Edgar darkly, a deep flush covering his face and neck. "Why," he said, bewildered, "he never met her, to really know her, until this morning, did he?"

"He *must* have—though he never told me! But

Barnabetta

otherwise, how could they have hatched up this plot between them?"

"Plot?"

"To oppose your candidate, and all the time both of them *knowing* that she intended to be his assistant!"

"Oh, no, *she* did n't know it. He must have offered her the position only to-night. She was as puzzled as I was when I told her this evening of his opposition to her."

"Edgar," she protested gently and with much apparent reluctance, "are n't you a bit gullible where girlish simplicity is concerned?"

"One could n't exaggerate the girlish simplicity of Barnabetta Dreary, Theodora! It is your brother's want of candor in dealing with me that I don't understand. Apparently, he only really came to know Miss Dreary this morning, yet he had *his* library candidate all ready; had been corresponding with her; and has now engaged Miss Dreary as his 'assistant.' Do you make it out?"

"I think Miss Dreary has misled you—they must have met often before."

"You are sure of that—or is it only a surmise?"

"Hardly a surmise. The thing is so *evident!*"

"She has accepted the position he offered her?"

"With enthusiasm, he tells me."

"And without consulting me!"

In spite of himself there had been all along a tone

The Appeal to Theodora

of hurt in Barrett's voice that did not serve to soften Theodora's sentiments towards Barnabetta.

Before she could reply, David suddenly appeared at her side. He bent down to her and spoke gravely.

"Theo, dear, I'm going to take Miss Dreary home in the motor. Do you want to come now—or shall I come back for you?"

She raised her dark, soft eyes to his face, then lowered them and Barrett saw tears on her lashes.

"Don't bother about me, David—Dr. Barrett will take care of me—or I'll get home *somehow!*"

"I shall come right back for you, if you don't want to go now with—with us."

She did not answer, did not raise her eyes—and Jordan, after an instant's waiting, went away.

"Oh," breathed Theodora, the red rose on her bosom heaving tumultuously, "it is hard—hard—to feel myself so displaced! Edgar!" she appealed to him almost piteously, "you are my friend—help me to bear it!"

But Edgar, as from the window at which they sat he saw Jordan hand Barnabetta into his limousine, felt that he, too, needed help; and he was vaguely conscious that in his response to Theodora's appeal, he did not do justice to their high friendship; did not rise to the level expected of him.

CHAPTER XXXV

AN AFTERNOON CALL—AND AN ENCOUNTER

THE next morning a messenger brought a note to Barrett from Barnabetta in which she announced with manifest satisfaction that she had accepted a position offered her last night by Judge Jordan—as his assistant.

“I know you will be glad for my good fortune,” she wrote, “that I have found a place of usefulness; a Cause to work for; an object in life. And though I know you are not in sympathy with what I believe I must tell you that to me it seems a very great work—to help to bring home to people that the time is ripe for a real human brotherhood. Judge Jordan has set me quite afire with his own enthusiasm. I had been longing so for this very thing to happen—that my life should be given some direction, some definite purpose. I can hardly believe I have really found it!

“You will see that it is much better than the library position, glad as I would have been for that if *this* had not come to me. Judge Jordan says *any* one can do that library work—the matron or the janitor!”

An Afternoon Call—and an Encounter

Barrett found himself much offended by this note. Barnabetta should have consulted him before accepting the position; she should not so readily, so joyfully, so almost contemptuously, have discarded the position he would have secured for her at the risk of his own.

He sulkily stayed away from her for a whole week after getting her note—though he suffered in the consciousness that each day brought nearer her departure for Europe. He missed unbearably his daily meeting with her in college classes.

At the end of a week, suddenly deciding he would stand it no longer, he went late one afternoon to call on her. It was the first time he had been inside the cottage in which she dwelt with her sprightly step-mother and while he waited in the "parlor" for her to come down stairs, he contemplated with a shudder the awful get-up of the room—the "art rug," chromos, tidies, and other gay and festive appointments. Fancy his sister or Theodora discovering him paying a social call in a setting like this! He grinned at the bare idea.

But when Barnabetta appeared, he no longer thought of the room. He was amazed at the quickening of his whole being as once again, after a week, he found himself alone with this girl who had taken such strange, such absurd possession of him. He wondered whether *she* felt new life in this renewal of relations between them.

Barnabetta

She was, he recognized, that unusual type among her sex—a woman possessing great charm and entirely unconscious of it. The power of a woman to charm was, ordinarily, he was sure, in pretty close ratio to her realization of it. Until she did awaken to a sense of her power, her sword was apt to be sheathed. But the delicate fascination of Barnabetta seemed to lie in this very unconsciousness—like the charm of a child.

Almost as soon as they were seated, she began to talk eagerly of the work she was to do for Judge Jordan when she returned from Europe in September. It was plain to him that that theme occupied her to the exclusion of any sense of wrong to her Friend and Well-Wisher, Edgar Barrett. Before her ardent young enthusiasm, it seemed impossibly petty to broach his own sense of injury in her ignoring of *him* in this whole matter.

“But you know,” he ventured to say, “this ‘Cause’ you consider so important—it’s all great tommy-rot, Barnabetta—I’m sorry to tell you.

She regarded him in thoughtful silence for a moment. “It is hard for me to understand how any one can be blind to what seems so obvious—at any rate after the obvious has been pointed out.”

“The ‘obvious’ is never the real truth—don’t you know that?”

“The seemingly obvious, you mean. But I’m talking about the really obvious.”

An Afternoon Call—and an Encounter

"You've been carried away by Jordan's sophistries!"

"No, not by 'Jordan's sophistries'—but by the injustice I feel in life."

"Don't you know, child, that we all get pretty much what we deserve out of life, *whatever* the social structure?"

"No," she shook her head, "I don't know that."

"Judge Jordan will spoil you," said Barrett irritably, "with his absurd theories about the masses!"

"I was already 'spoiled' before he got hold of me. All he has done has been to point out to me some possible remedies for the wrongs under which we struggle."

"Remedies?" Barrett shrugged ironically.

"Don't you think the remedies will be found just as soon as enough of us realize the unfairness that there is?" asked Barnabetta.

Before he could reply, a ring at the front door-bell interrupted them and she, excusing herself, left the room to answer it.

Barrett felt intensely annoyed at the interruption. He was sure that if given the chance, he could convince Barnabetta of the error of these socialistic ideas she had so unfortunately imbibed. Surely he had *that* much influence with her! He strongly hoped he was not going to be driven away by another visitor—possibly Jordan!

A murmur of voices at the front door, Barnabetta's

Barnabetta

greeting of some one in a tone of surprise, in which Barrett thought he caught the name Jordan—then in reply, speaking now inside the hall, his startled ear caught the visitor's voice—the familiar voice, not of Judge Jordan, but of Theodora!

If Miss Jordan felt any surprise at finding Dr. Barrett in the parlor, she did not betray it in the tenderly gracious greeting she had for him, now as always. Though her presence here was inexplicable, and his perfectly natural, he was the one who showed embarrassment.

He wondered, as they all sat down, whether he were awake or dreaming! Miss Jordan calling on Barnabetta! What could be her purpose in such a condescension? The incongruity of these two in juxtaposition struck him—Theodora's exceeding complexity of thought and expression before Barnabetta's simplicity and directness!

He observed, with secret surprise, that Barnabetta in her black gown did not suffer in the least by comparison with the exquisite elegance of Theodora's appearance. He was struck also by the fact that the unstudied sincerity of Barnabetta's manner lent her a distinction not less marked than that of Theodora's polished grace. Every theory he held dear, of caste and heredity, was being challenged!

Theodora's conversation betrayed no hint of an explanation of this astonishing visit. Barnabetta seemed surprised and pleased, but not overwhelmed:

An Afternoon Call—and an Encounter

She was, in fact, the most self-possessed of the three. Barrett felt immensely entertained by her manifest inability to grasp the fact that she was being honored.

"We were all so surprised, Miss Dreary," Theodora remarked, after she had uttered the usual perfunctory amenities of a first call, "by your startling graduation oration!"

There was a subtly veiled amusement in her tone in referring to the oration and an equally subtle note of patronage that made Barrett wince.

"'Startling?'" repeated Barnabetta. "But my ideas were not new. They were already old in the days of Plato!"

"I see that my brother has been talking to you," said Theodora, her amusement, now, quite open.

"Yes, he has talked to me a great deal. We have splendid talks."

"Indeed?"

"Yes, indeed!"

Miss Jordan turned from the girl as though dismissing her from her presence, and spoke to Barrett.

"I have the score of Strauss's new opera, Edgar. Can you come up to the house soon and let me play it for you? I know I can convert you to a love of Strauss if you will open your mind and heart to him!—though it is a far-cry, is n't it, from Wagner to Strauss?"

She had swung the talk quite out of Barnabetta's reach, obliging the girl to sit by in silence while she

Barnabetta

and Barrett chatted—an exclusion which would have been very awkward to one more sophisticated. Barnabetta, however, seemed perfectly content to lean back placidly in her chair and listen, taking in what she could, which was not much; for her forced, hot-house, get-educated-quick course at Stevens had not included the higher forms of any art except that of letters.

Barrett was the first to feel the discourtesy of her exclusion from the conversation. At the first possible chance he turned to her.

“Almost ready, are you, for your voyage?” he asked.

“Yes—and two ladies of Middleton who go abroad nearly every summer are going to let us travel with them; we are glad; for Mama and I did feel a little timid.”

“Who are they, Barnabetta?”

He saw the slight stiffening of Theodora at his calling the girl by her Christian name. Well, no wonder she thought it incongruous!

“Miss Jane and Miss Eliza Good,” answered Barnabetta.

“Good? Who on earth! Where did you run across them?”

“They live in the next cottage. They have always lived here. They are such lovely and intelligent women, I am sure *you* must know them, Miss Jordan?”

“No.”

An Afternoon Call—and an Encounter

"Oh, what you have missed! I don't believe there are any people in Middleton more *worth* knowing."

Theodora glanced at Barrett with a smile. "But, Miss Dreary," she explained patiently, "the Miss—Goods, is it?—are not people one meets anywhere!"

Barnabetta looked puzzled. "I met them at the college library one day and then they called to see me. I am sure they would not object to meeting you, too, Miss Jordan. Why should they?"

Miss Jordan laughed softly. "I dare say not," she answered kindly—then again turned to Barrett. "I have a bit of manuscript to submit to you, my long-suffering friend!"

"Ah? Fine! I'll call to-morrow morning, if I may?"

"I shall be at home."

"I suppose you know," Barrett asked Barnabetta, "that Miss Jordan is a poetess?"

"Oh, yes. Every one knows that."

"And yet," said Theodora pensively, "my limitation is that my message is for the few—the elect, if I may say so without egotism. I yearn, at times, to speak a more universal message—one that could reach to the depths as well as to the heights!"

She looked very wistful; and Barnabetta replied consolingly: "But I am sure the commonplace people do understand and enjoy your poetry, Miss Jordan."

Barnabetta

There was an instant's rather awful silence—and Barnabetta added innocently: "*I do, for one.*"

Neither Theodora nor Barrett offered a reply.

"We may be thankful, I think," Barnabetta continued, still consolingly, "if even a few will listen seriously to what we have to say! *I shall* be when I take up my work with your brother, Miss Jordan."

"Yes?" said Theodora with a slight lift of her eyebrows. "You feel you *have* a message for your fellow-men?—and you are quite sure the call to deliver it is a vital one?"

"Oh, no," laughed Barnabetta, "I don't at all feel I am a Joan of Arc or a John the Baptist!"

"It has always been so deeply horne in upon me," said Theodora solemnly, "that before one dares go forth with a message to humanity, one must make long and earnest, yes *prayerful*, preparation!"

"But," replied Barnabetta, rather appalled, "I could n't take myself so seriously, so importantly, Miss Jordan, as that! The best I can do will be so insignificant."

"But how can you have courage to speak to humanity at all until, like the knights of old, you have spent *your* night in fasting and prayer before going upon your search for the Holy Grail?"

Barnabetta gazed at her in such childlike, puzzled wonder that Barrett suddenly had a most unseemly desire to laugh—and for the first time, with a sharp

An Afternoon Call—and an Encounter

shock, he felt in the wonderful Theodora a bit of a *poseuse*.

“To tell you the truth, Miss Jordan,” said Barnabetta, “I think our Cause much more ‘vital,’ as you say, and important to the world than finding the Holy Grail ever was; but in these days we should think fasting and loss of sleep a bad preparation for good work of any kind.”

“Don’t blaspheme, *please!*” pleaded Theodora.

Barnabetta looked at her in silence.

“Miss Jordan simply means,” Barrett unnecessarily explained, to cover the awkward pause, “that rashness, crudity, in dealing with the ignorant emotional masses is criminal.”

“It is because of long centuries of rash, crude dealing with them (in spite of our Christian doctrine of love and human brotherhood) that there *are* ignorant, ‘emotional masses’—isn’t it?” asked Barnabetta.

“That,” responded Barrett, “is the superficial view, of course. When one thinks more deeply, one sees how shallow, how impossible, is the superstition taught by a few demagogues, of universal equality.”

Just here, the opening of the front door, followed by the entrance, in street garb, of Mrs. Dreary—to Barrett’s intense embarrassment—cut short their discussion.

CHAPTER XXXVI

ENTER, MRS. DREARY

MRS. DREARY greeted the visitors with a graciousness not a shade less patronizing than Theodora's own, apologizing for not having appeared sooner and explaining that she had been out to get some medicine for her bron-*kit-i-cal* cough.

" 'T is the irony of fate," she affirmed tragically, "that you two aristocrats should call on us on the very day when our colored hired girl didn't turn up—after all my pains to teach that ne-gress the genteel and proper manner of admitting visitors!—and either our crude wash-woman or Barnabetta herself had to answer the door-bell! The Scriptures tell us, 'Put not your trust in kings.' It should read, 'Put not your trust in coons!'"

Barrett had placed a chair for her and she had sat down in the midst of them. He watched Barnabetta narrowly as Mrs. Dreary chatted and he saw, from the soft light of happiness in her countenance as they rested upon her stepmother, that, fortunately enough, love blinded her to the oddities of her adopted parent.

"I, also," Mrs. Dreary continued conversationally,

Enter, Mrs. Dreary

"have been engaging in social intercourse this afternoon. Calling on the Miss Goods—Eliza and Jane; also on our neighbor, Mrs. Spankhof—*a woman*," she added disparagingly, "of an insincere and worldly mind!"

"What leads you to think that, Mama?" Barnabetta asked in surprise.

"Because, darling, she invariably asks me to 'step over to the library,' a sitting-room behind the parlor without a single book in it. Yet she has the effrontery to call it 'the library'! I suppose she thinks it more *dressy* to call it a library. But I should think she'd put at least *one* book in it."

"I've been telling Miss Jordan," said Barnabetta, "what lovely women our friends are—Miss Eliza and Miss Jane. She has never met them. She has got the impression, somehow, that it is difficult to meet them. But I am sure a number of people know them."

"Oh, you would find them very sociable, Miss Jordan," Mrs. Dreary said reassuringly. "And they are very high-toned ladies. You would undoubtedly find it, as I do, a great advantage to know them."

"I do not doubt it," Theodora bowed.

"I always feel," said Mrs. Dreary, "that any one misses a great deal, if I may say so without conceit, in not knowing *me*."

"They certainly do," said Theodora earnestly.

"And no doubt, Miss Jordan, you feel the same

Barnabetta

about yourself. So I shall make it a point," she promised kindly, "to introduce you and the Miss Goods to each other. No thanks necessary!" she protested, raising her jeweled hands.

"You are most kind." Miss Jordan rose to go. "I want to ask you, Mrs. Dreary," she said as she offered her hand in-parting, "whether I may have the pleasure, before you and your daughter sail, of having you both lunch with me? Next Friday at half after one?"

Mrs. Dreary, in very flowery diction, promptly accepting this invitation, seemed as innocent as Barnabetta herself of the distinction it conferred. Barrett, in his astonishment, wondered again what could be Theodora's idea. Mrs. Dreary lunched at the Jordans'!—the widow of a village tinsmith, who called you an 'aristocrat' to your face!

During his walk home with Theodora, no slightest reference was made by either of them to the singular experience of the last half hour. They talked, not of the Drearys, but of Wagner and Strauss.

That night, at dinner with his sister, determining to find out whether the thing looked as strange to her as to him, Barrett carelessly mentioned that having had an errand at Miss Dreary's, he had met Theodora there paying a call, and that she had invited the Drearys to lunch with her the following Friday.

Mrs. Winthrop met it with almost a shriek of laughter—which she instantly checked.

Enter, Mrs. Dreary

"But," inquired Barrett, annoyed by her laugh, "you have never met either Miss Dreary or her step-mother, have you?"

"Naturally *not!* Are they people one would meet?"

"Then why your amusement?"

"My dear! Theodora Jordan calling on people by the name of Dreary!—from Reinhartz Station—tin-smiths or blacksmiths or something!"

Edgar bit his lip until it pained.

"Exactly," he said when he could find his voice. "Why do you suppose she did it? That's what I'd like to know. Also, you understand, she invited them to lunch with her."

"I shall not be surprised, now, if she goes so far as to invite me to meet them! To meet Mrs. and Miss Dreary!"

"Her reason can't be, you know, that she wishes to aid and abet her brother in his employing Miss Dreary, for Theodora holds herself absolutely aloof, on principle, from the cause Jordan works for."

"Don't you see, my dear? She is afraid of the little Jezebel—her brother is so evidently infatuated!"

"Nonsense!" retorted Edgar, flushing hotly.

"He's old enough to be her great grandfather. You have no ground for such an assumption! And Miss Dreary is as far from being a Jezebel as Theodora herself!"

Barnabetta

"Which," Mrs. Winthrop inwardly commented, "is n't very far!"

When, a few days before, Edgar had told her of his bewilderment over the apparently dishonorable behavior of Judge Jordan in regard to the library position, she had at once recognized Theodora's hand in it and had realized at the same time how fatally that young woman's scheming had defeated the very ends she had schemed *for*; had, in fact, played right into the hands of the enemy—necessitating further and deeper scheming to swing things back as she wished to have them.

"Theodora's idea, I think," she explained, "is to show up these people to David in all their crudity, as it will inevitably come out at the luncheon. The girl of course has a bit of education. But the mother is, I suppose, very bad!"

"She is not Barnabetta's own mother, remember."

"Her own mother was probably much worse!" retorted Mrs. Winthrop.

"Theodora is above such petty manœuvering, Elizabeth!"

Mrs. Winthrop repressed another laugh. "Theodora is only acting in self-defense, Edgar," she answered earnestly, "and trying to protect her brother from a great mistake—and save for herself and her future husband her own rightful inheritance—instead," she added warmly, "of standing by and letting it pass into the hands of the Drearys! I'm sure she

Enter, Mrs. Dreary

is not to be criticized in the least for resorting to a bit of diplomacy for such legitimate ends!"

"I suppose not," said Edgar coldly, his fingers unconsciously crushing hard a piece of bread. He looked so white and miserable that Elizabeth was moved to compassion. But her recognition of the seriousness of his feeling for the person called "Barnabetta," strengthened her resolution to prevent, at all hazards, his "ruining himself."

CHAPTER XXXVII

BARRETT COMMITS HIMSELF

BARRETT did not see Barnabetta again until the day after the luncheon at the Jordans'—when they happened, that morning, to meet on the street. He stopped her and, acting impulsively, asked her to go with him for a country walk.

He noticed very soon, as they talked, that a change had come over her—a bright radiance seemed to envelop her, a gentle joyousness to possess her.

He was curious, knowing she had never in her life seen anything better than her stepmother's taste, to learn her impressions of the Jordans' beautiful home.

"It is like a fairy palace, is n't it?" she said almost with awe when she referred to this, her very first, social experience. "To live in such a house would be like a dream to me—it could n't seem real! People like the Jordans—and you, Dr. Barrett—that have always had beautiful things, can't get the wonderful pleasure from them that a person like me gets when now and then they come to me."

"One's pleasure becomes negative—we chafe at the *absence* of beauty and comfort. An effete state, perhaps!"

Barrett Commits Himself

"Then—" she hesitated—"there is another thing in which a person like me has the advantage of people like you and the Jordans."

"Well?"

"Do you know—" she seemed to grope for an expression of her thought—"I don't believe I ever dream of feeling superior to any one—except perhaps," she added most unexpectedly, "to those little people who feel superior to *me!*"

Barrett did not at once respond. Was she thrusting at *him*? They walked in silence for a few moments along the narrow path that ran through the woods which skirted one end of Middleton.

"Have you ever," he casually inquired after a moment, "met any who took that tone to you—of superiority?"

"There was something of that among the college students—at first."

"I am sure there was none of it at the last?"

"I did n't really notice when it began to disappear. It never hurt me much. The girls who acted that way seemed to me just vulgar and unkind. And when *you*, from the very first, gave me your friendship, how could I care what the others felt about me?"

"There is, I grant you, Barnabetta, in good society, a lot of what I know would seem to *you* just conventionalized vulgarity."

"To me? Surely to you too?"

Barnabetta

"Our point of view is perhaps hardly the same."

"About *real* things?" she protested.

"I 'm afraid some things seem very real to me that have never entered into your philosophy of life, Barnabetta!"

"I 'm afraid so too. I 've often thought so," she agreed with a little sigh.

"Oh, you have?" He felt it expedient to get away from such thin ice. "Tell me more of your visit to the Jordans," he suggested.

"Poor Judge Jordan!"

"What?"

"In his own home he seems nothing but a detail of the furnishing! I could not get the big collie idea out of my head as I watched him and his sister. I think his sister's real feeling about him if put into words would read something like this:—'I sometimes think I won't keep a dog—they're handy to have about a house, but a great care!'"

"Barnabetta!" Barrett grinned—though at a certain intensity in her tone he felt far from being amused.

"Mind, I don't say that Miss Jordan does n't faithfully see that he gets his dog-biscuit and his bath once a week! Otherwise, Mr. Boffin *would* come up! The sister is so sentimentally genteel,—and the man yearning, I thought, for a large littered room where he might be comfy if he chose!"

Barrett glanced down at the flushed face at his

Barrett Commits Himself

side. He had never seen her like this. What new phases she daily developed!

"'Genteel' is hardly a word one would apply to Miss Jordan!" he objected.

"Not to her; to her sentiments; she oozes genteel sentimentality from every pore!"

"You don't like her then?"

"She gives me too much the impression of having been always a big person among little people. It has made *her* little."

"Miss Jordan 'little'?"

"Too little, anyway, to recognize how very big her brother is, poor dear man!"

"Your sympathy for Judge Jordan seems to me quite uncalled for," said Barrett coldly.

She raised troubled eyes to his. "Does it?" she asked with a momentary sadness. "Miss Jordan has always been on a pedestal in my imagination, but it now seems to me I have found that my idol has feet of clay—while her brother is just pure gold all through—the dear!"

"You will be misunderstood if you talk like that!" he reproved her almost sternly.

"By you? I am talking to you."

"I am not at all sure that *I* understand this misplaced enthusiasm over a fat, middle-aged, foolish—"

"Oh!" she protested, "he is n't fat, he is n't foolish!"

"You can't deny he is middle-aged!"

Barnabetta

“Why should n't he be middle-aged?”

“To be sure,” shrugged Barrett, “no one has a better right!”

They had stopped in the path, in the solitude of the dense woodland, and were regarding each other antagonistically. She did not dream that her unwonted flash of anger made her in his eyes—too much accustomed to subservient flattery—more alluring than he had ever found her before.

Suddenly—he could not resist her—he took her two hands into his and drew her to him, enfolded her, lifted her startled face and pressed upon her lips a long, lingering kiss. Again and again he kissed her—self-condemnation at what he was doing mingling with ecstasy in doing it; for it was this that he had been hungering to do ever since his eyes had first beheld her; and here, in the solitude of the woods, her dear head on his breast, he fed to the full his passionate hunger for her lips.

CHAPTER XXXVIII

BARRETT'S STRUGGLE

THAT afternoon, shut up in his own room, Barrett, pacing the floor by the hour, fought it out with himself. His sister herself could not more keenly have felt the incongruity, the madness, of what he was tempted to do; her pride of heritage was not more inordinate; her prejudices not more deeply rooted, than his own.

Yet he realized, as his sister's spiritual obsessions would never permit her to do, that Barnabetta's appeal was to the best, the finest in him—to those cultivated instincts which had recognized, from the first, beneath all her crudity, her essential quality; the something exquisite and true in the girl's soul that penetrated, haunted, possessed him.

He was so constituted that he shrank instinctively from any least physical contact with low-born, vulgar people. But about Barnabetta he had always had a whimsical fancy that the beauty of the soul informing her young body, transformed her very flesh to that rare being—one of Nature's aristocrats—so much more rare and fine than the species the world creates and fosters!

Barnabetta

"And yet," he writhed, "Mrs. Dreary my mother-in-law! Great God!"

From the depths of his soul, he wished that Barnabetta had never crossed his path. He knew, of course, that it was only his feeling for her that had held him back from long since having put to the test his chance with Theodora. For, as an accompaniment to the purely intellectual admiration Theodora inspired, her beauty and charm had always roused in him delicate thrills of passion, strong enough, perhaps, to have justified marriage.

Barnabetta, however, awakened in him an elemental force of feeling which he had not dreamed he was capable of—tethered as it had been through all the years of his manhood by the restraining, subduing influences of culture. And now, reacting from the long repression of his emotional life, his whole being fiercely demanded possession of the woman of his desire, and would not be denied. Why, if she, simple child that she was, could know *what* he felt for her, how savagely he yearned for her, surely she would draw back afraid, appalled!

"The curse upon man," he bitterly reflected, "was not that he should earn his bread by the sweat of his brow—there's no curse in that—but that he should be pursued, goaded, hounded, by the passion of love!"

For Barrett had reached the point where he knew he could hold out no longer. The lure of Barnabetta

Barrett's Struggle

had won against odds he had considered the unconquerable elements of his soul. He simply could not go on living without her—without this unsophisticated daughter of a village tinsmith!

It was with strangely mingled relief and despair that he came to this conclusion. Perhaps there is always a sense of relief in despair—the acceptance of the inevitable means the relaxing of a strain.

He knew, as clearly as his sister knew, that in the future he would regret a thousand times what he was about to do. With passionate sorrow he would regret it—for Barnabetta's sake as for his own. But he knew, too, that nothing under the sun could hold him back.

It was in this frame of mind that at last, towards the end of the afternoon, white and resolute, he came forth from his room to go straight to his sister.

He found her on the wide, shady piazza overlooking the campus, reading her blessed *Boston Transcript*.

His struggle with himself had been so strenuous, so fundamental, that by comparison, his conflict with Elizabeth, long and painful as it was, was easy to meet with unwavering self-control.

"Go to see her, Elizabeth, and you will understand," was his reiterated advice—though he did not believe, really, that anything could make her understand.

"Go to see Mrs. and Miss Dreary? I? Be as-

Barnabetta

sured that if you persist in bringing this mortification upon our family, neither my daughter nor I will ever recognize these people as connections! And you have the effrontery, Edgar, to ask me to call on them! Why should I, please?"

"Then don't, Elizabeth. Nothing you do or leave undone can alter my decision."

"This is the consideration you think due me for exiling myself for two years for your sake, in this miserable little town?"

"My sense of obligation will not take the form of allowing you to choose a wife for me!"

"You have, in honor, already chosen! Your devoted attentions to Theodora for two years do not leave you *free* to marry this country girl!"

"I am not at all sure that Theodora cares for me in that way."

"*Are n't* you?—poor innocent lamb!" she retorted scathingly—but she quickly repressed this injudicious scorn of his blindness as to Theodora. "And you are sure, are you," she continued ironically, "that the tinsmith's daughter does reciprocate the ardent passion of—Edgar Barrett of the Boston Barretts? Great heavens, Edgar, you must be crazy!"

"Love is a madness!" he readily granted.

"You mean to tell me you don't feel at all bound to Theodora?"

"Not even apologetic."

"Where is your sense of honor?"

Barrett's Struggle

"Departed with my prudence and common sense, perhaps. Understand, Elizabeth—*nothing* can weigh with me against my determination to marry Miss Dreary."

"Fancy your wedding announcements—'Mrs. Barnaby Dreary announces the marriage of her daughter, Barnabetta, to Dr. Edgar Holmes Barrett!'—she broke off with a derisive peal of laughter.

Edgar did not turn a hair.

"Can't you *see*, Edgar, the wild amusement of our clan?"

"To the devil with the clan!"

"I see the effect already," she remarked coldly, "of your vulgar associations!"

Before he could reply, their attention was suddenly caught by a slouching figure coming up the long path leading from the public highway to the piazza where they sat—a country youth in holiday attire, as was attested by his spick and span "store suit" of awkward cut, his festive looking necktie and hose, and his shoes of glaring yellow.

His shyness in accosting the lady and gentleman on the piazza took the form of a surly gruffness.

"Is this here where the boss of the female institoo-tion lives at?" he demanded rather than inquired.

"The President of Stevens College lives here," answered Barrett.

"Are *you* him, then, mebbly?—heh?"

"Yes. What is it you want?"

Barnabetta

"Why, fur to ast you to show me where my sister and my stepmother lives at."

"How should I know, young man?"

"Did n't you know they had a fittin' and that they come here to live?"

"A 'fittin' '?"

"Yes, from Reinhartz to Middleton over."

"Your sister and your stepmother?" Mrs. Winthrop quickly interposed, a touch of eagerness in her tone, while Barrett felt himself turn cold.

"Yes, I come from Reinhartz over to anyhow see 'em oncet, and I don't know right where they live at."

"You mean Mrs. and Miss Dreary?" Mrs. Winthrop demanded, repressing her elation at this unlooked-for development, this powerful argument embodied in the flesh, against her brother's folly. The hand of Providence was in it, she piously recognized.

"To be sure," returned the young man, "it's Barnabetta Dreary where's my sister. I'm her brother Jake. She's been comin' here to this here female cemetery this good while back a'ready to git good educated."

"And you have come to visit your sister?" Mrs. Winthrop kindly inquired. "Sit down, won't you?" she urged, determined to make the most of this happy chance to show Edgar *what* he was letting himself in for.

Barrett's Struggle

"Naw—I can't set a while. It's near time to eat. Don't you *know* where the folks lives at?"

"Dr. Barrett knows—he will show you. Shall you stop in Middletown long?"

"Whether I stay long? Well, I don't know if I do. I have to see oncet. I lived at my married brother's there fur a while, but his Missus she's so ugly-dispositioned that way—she must be paid extry fur washin' and ironin' and mendin' fur me and she didn't want to pack my dinner-box no more—she sayed now I was to buy my dinner at the *caffee* in Lebanon—*she* would n't be bothered. So I just up and sayed I'd go at boardin' then! But at the new boardin'-house they was full up. And at the *ho-tel* it costs too expensive. So I come to git Barnabetta to come back and housekeep fur me—now she's *through* gittin' this here education a'ready. If I kin git her away from my stepmom oncet, she's better manageable."

"Why don't you get married yourself?" Barrett curtly suggested, his face stony.

"Well, there for a while I conceited I *would* yet. I set up three or four Sunday nights with Liz Schnabel and oncet I took her buggy-ridin'. Then here one day, our Emanuel he says to me, 'Jakey, did you *ast* her yet?' 'No, we ain't promised,' I says. 'I ain't sure, yet, that I'll *feel* fur astin' her.' 'Well,' he says, 'if you ain't done it yet, don't did it. Women ain't what they was! These days,' he says, 'they're

Barnabetta

just an *extry expense*,' he says. Well, that gimme cold feet and I quit goin' to see Liz Schnabel."

He was checked by the noise of an automobile coming around the driveway to the front of the house—and the next instant, to Barrett's further petrification, Theodora alighted and came up the steps.

Barrett rose to give her his chair and Mrs. Winthrop, with ill-concealed malice, at once presented the young man from Reinhartz.

"The brother of your new friends, Theodora, my dear—Mr. Dreary."

"Pleased to make your acquaintance," said poor Jake bashfully, his eyes held by the slim, graceful figure and fine, beautiful face of the young lady before him.

Theodora, as she distantly bowed, gazed at the bucolic youth mournfully.

"Well," said Jake, "I ain't used to sich tony folks, so I guess I better be goin' then. It's anyhow near time to eat; ain't it?"

Edgar promptly stepped to the edge of the piazza and directed him to the Drearys' cottage; and Jacob took his leave.

When Barrett turned back to the piazza, he found that his sister had excused herself and gone indoors—he was alone with Theodora.

Meantime, Mrs. Winthrop, in her own room, dressing for dinner, was assuring herself that in a reaction of utter disgust, Edgar would certainly now insure

Barrett's Struggle

himself against any further temptations to idiocy, by promptly betrothing himself to his eminently suitable mate, Theodora Jordan.

But when later, she met him again at dinner, his still stony aspect told her nothing.

"Edgar?" she said questioningly.

"Well?"

"You have nothing to—to tell me?"

"As to what?"

Their eyes met challengingly.

"You have n't changed your mind?" she demanded. "You mean to ask the sister of that hoodlum to *marry* you?"

"I told you there was nothing that could stop me. Am I given to speaking idly?"

Mrs. Winthrop knew, then, that so far as checking *him* was concerned all hope was over.

Next morning, however, at the earliest permissible hour, she would go to the girl herself.

CHAPTER XXXIX

HE TAKES THE PLUNGE

BARNABETTA sat in a low chair before the draped mantelpiece of her mother's cottage and Barrett, tall and distinguished-looking in evening dress (for he had come straight from dining with his sister), stood before her, his elbow on the draped mantel, his eyes upon the young girl in the low chair at his feet, his face grim, determined, white to the lips.

Barnabetta gazed up at him, a troubled sympathy in her eyes. "You look so unhappy to-night," she said solicitously. "Would it help you to tell me what 's the matter?"

"What disposition have you made of your brother, Barnabetta?"

He felt a pang for her as he asked the question, for surely she must suffer much mortification in such a relative. But though his question brought forth a tired sigh, she did not seem to wince.

"Jacob told us he had seen you and had poured out to you all his troubles! We have had a hard time convincing him that he will have to make up his mind to the expense of living at the Reinhartz Hotel until

He Takes the Plunge

he decides to marry. He can easily afford it, but he is what my people call 'close.' I tell him that his having to pay his board at the hotel will help him to get over my long years of spoiling him; it will make him *fit* to be some nice girl's husband. He won't be fit until he gets over my spoiling."

"He goes back, then, at once, to Reinhartz?"

"To-morrow morning."

"I once criticized you in my heart, Barnabetta, for seeming unsisterly. I understand now."

"Yes?"

"Of course," he said deliberately, a slight hardness in his tone, "I can't help being thankful that your relations with your people are not very close."

"It is better so," she agreed, "for them and for me."

"Decidedly."

They were silent for a moment. Then she asked gently, "Can't you tell me what is troubling you?—making you so unhappy?"

"I am here to-night to tell you that, to tell you everything—to lay bare my soul to you, Barnabetta! Surely you expected me—after this morning?"

"Yes—I expected you—after this morning."

She spoke so quietly, so assuredly! She did not even change color. Unacknowledged to himself was his secret feeling that she would be overwhelmed and transported by the condescension, the heroic self-sacrifice, of his love for her. He did not dream that she

Barnabetta

would take any other view of it. Then why this unruffled demeanor, this serene confidence with which she informed him that of course she had expected him—after this morning? Was she so entirely sure of him?—he wondered with a twinge of bitterness. But no!—his truer self defended her. It was her ideal of his honor that had made her sure he would not fail her—after this morning. Her confidence was the highest compliment she could pay him.

“I am here to ask you to help me, dear—we must help each other!” he broke forth from the depths of his harassed soul. “Dearest, we ’ll *need* to help each other!—yes, all the rest of our days!”

Her troubled eyes still gazed up into his, but their sympathy was changed, now, to bewilderment.

“I would rather give up everything else in the world, Barnabetta, than give up you! It would be insincere and indeed useless for me to try to conceal from you what you must all along have seen for yourself—my long, hard struggle with myself. But I love you too deeply! My life would be worthless to me, dear, without you at my side!”

“I have seen your ‘long, hard struggle’?” she repeated wonderingly. “No.” She shook her head. “What do you mean?”

“You must know what I mean, dear,” he insisted with puritanic truthfulness; “the conflict of my overwhelming love for you against the—the differences between us, Barnabetta! I would not hurt you,

He Takes the Plunge

dear, but for the sake of our future peace, we must not begin our life together with any lack of candor."

She considered this for a moment with puckered brow.

"What you mean by our 'differences' would be, after all, unimportant, would n't they?" she asked, "in the light of such a real thing as a great love?"

"Darling!" he said tenderly, "you don't need to plead for yourself! Have n't I told you that love has conquered?"

"But conquered what? I see our differences—yes, indeed, I see them—they are plain enough. But that they should call for 'struggle,' for 'conflict'? Have you really, as you seem to say, struggled hard and long against your—'overwhelming love' for me?"

The childlike innocence of her face as she puzzled over it, convinced him of the sincerity of her question. She actually did not quite understand.

"And you speak," she continued, "of being willing to give up things for the sake of having me at your side. What things?"

"Nothing I could count against the happiness of cherishing you, dear!"

"But, then, why was there a conflict, a struggle? Do you really mean that the trivial differences in our up-bringing led you to fight hard against a great and real experience of your soul?—such as I should think 'love' would be with—with a man like you?"

Barnabetta

His ardor underwent a slight chill at her cool, analytical catechism.

“‘Trivial differences,’ dear!” he repeated dubiously.

“They don’t seem to you trivial?”

“I am afraid they do not, dearest!” he replied very tenderly. “Better for all our future if you recognize at once that they are not trivial; that the difficulty of adjusting our lives harmoniously, will lie in just that—our mutual recognition of our differences.”

“It is ‘our differences,’ then, that make your—‘love’—a terrible thing to you? You have struggled hard against falling in love with a green country girl?”

“I will be perfectly honest with you, Barnabetta—I love and honor you too much not to be so—yes, the strength of my love for you is measured by the realization I have of all that stands in the way of its happy fulfilment. That my love does not blind me to those impediments and yet is too strong to let them conquer—*that* is my reason for being here to-night.”

“I see.”

“I knew that you must see, dearest.”

“And you do not see,” she smiled a bit sadly, “that what is really contemptible is not my origin and ‘difference,’—but your feeling about them!”

He flushed painfully. How often had her unconscious thrusts pierced his self-esteem with a sense of his own littleness!—and how invariably when so be-

He Takes the Plunge

littled in his own eyes, she had become to him more than ever desirable!

"Suppose, Dr. Barrett, you should suddenly discover that your grandfather had been a—well, a tinsmith—would you be any the less *you?*"

"Had my grandfather been a—a tinsmith—I should n't be I at all!"

"Perhaps not. Possibly you 'd be spiritually more robust. Less—flimsy, perhaps."

He looked at her fixedly for an instant.

"I came here to-night, Barnabetta, to ask you to be my wife!"

"I have gathered that from your remarks." Her tone was all sweetness.

"Well, Barnabetta?"

"Well, Dr. Barrett?"

"What is my answer, Barnabetta?"

"You are now 'proposing,' as they say—to me, are you, Dr. Barrett?"

"Dear! You have understood that all along!"

"Some things you 've said have almost misled me! You see, I am as inexperienced in proposals of marriage as in many other things. This is my first. Except Abel Buchter's."

"Barnabetta! I am perfectly sincere in asking you to marry me."

"I am sure you were never insincere in your life."

"I would devote my life to making you happy."

"A poor purpose in life for a man! I 'm not worth

Barnabetta

it—a tinsmith's daughter. But I'm afraid your realization of 'our differences' would make happiness in marriage impossible to us, Dr. Barrett."

"I shall be infinitely happier than I could be without you—I know *that!*" he affirmed confidently.

"I see how well you have weighed it. How much it sounds like my brother Jacob's way of looking at marriage!"

He flushed deeply.

"Dearest!" he said after an instant's eloquent silence, "do you *doubt* that your happiness would be the first and dearest object of my life?"

"And you start out by pointing out our great differences? Oh, no, no, Dr. Barrett, we could never make each other happy! I see, now, with you, that those differences are indeed real—you have made me *see* how real. A few weeks ago I think I would have felt that you honored me far, far too much in asking *me* to be your wife! But now—"

"And now?"

"Well, you will be surprised to hear it, but—I look higher."

"Higher?"

"For a husband who shall think me at least his equal. Who will not feel that he can love me only at a fearful cost. Who does not come to me, to ask me to marry him, with the pale, grim look of a man about to be hanged!"

"Barnabetta!" He took a step towards her, but

He Takes the Plunge

rising, she stood at a distance from him—and he stopped.

“I have hurt you!” he miserably pleaded.

“No—indeed no. Be comforted—you could not hurt me—now.”

“I have offended you by my too great frankness!”

“I thank you from my heart for your frankness—in opening my eyes to our differences.”

“You say you ‘look higher’?” In spite of himself there was a note of incredulity in his voice.

“Much, much higher, Dr. Barrett.”

“You do not love me, Barnabetta?”

“No,” she gravely answered.

“But surely you have known how I love *you*?”

“Until this morning, I thought you loved *Miss Jordan*.”

“It is you I have always loved—since the first hour I ever looked into your face! Surely your friendship *can* ripen into love, Barnabetta?”

“It might have—until this hour. But you have revealed yourself to me as seeing life so strangely—seeing big things small and small things big—that you do not seem to me the friend I have thought so wonderful—and almost worshiped! I see now how far apart you and I are—and always would be. We would be very, very unhappy together!”

To Edgar Barrett, the bitter hour that followed, during which he strove with this maiden who—to his consternation, to the upheaval of his very being

Barnabetta

—would have none of him, left him, at the end of that evening, aged by years.

And when later that night, Barnabetta found herself alone, feeling worn and sad after her long hour of painful and pitying but firm withstanding of Barrett's passionate wooing, she little dreamed that her refusal to marry him had enthroned her forever, as the queen of all women, in Edgar Barrett's soul.

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CHAPTER XL

MRS. WINTHROP AND BARNABETTA

PROMPTLY next morning, with firm, relentless purpose, Mrs. Winthrop betook herself to the Drearys' cottage.

She suspected that Edgar had been there the night before. She had not seen him since. He had not come to breakfast. Doubtless if he actually had gone and engaged himself to the girl, he was ashamed to show himself! And well he might be! Well, she would save him from himself, from his awful folly—and some day how he would thank her!

Her ring at the Drearys' cottage was answered by a negro maid. Mrs. Winthrop, who had decided that she did not care to have her visiting card displayed by the Drearys, merely asked to see Miss Dreary, and passed into the little parlor. But the maid, thoroughly drilled by Mrs. Dreary for the solemn ceremony of "tending the door," followed her into the room and thrusting a china saucer at her, demanded, "Tickets, please!"

"Tell Miss Dreary, '*Mrs. Winthrop.*' I have no cards."

Barnabetta

While she waited, she occupied herself in wondering whether it had been possible that in such an awful room as this, her brother *could* have offered to marry the girl? Why, she would have been perfectly confident that a room like this combined with that equally awful "brother Jake," would have frozen the most ardent love of which Edgar were capable! How little one could count on the mysterious passion!

Barnabetta glided into the room with that peculiarly charming movement that was characteristic of her. Mrs. Winthrop feigned not to see her outstretched hand as, bowing distantly, she turned to a chair in the middle of the room. She decided, as Barnabetta sat down before her, that it was the girl's mourning which lent her such a look of refinement—really of breeding and distinction, strange to say! Her manner, too, was, to Mrs. Winthrop's surprise, perfectly self-possessed; not at all self-conscious. She was quiet, waiting for her visitor to state her errand. Apparently, she did not assume this to be a social call. And suddenly, something about the girl, some peculiar quality one felt in her presence, made Mrs. Winthrop, to her own astonishment, feel, for the first time, an embarrassment in what she was going to do—a rare sensation in her experience! She looked at Barnabetta uncertainly.

"Miss Dreary," she at last began, "to be perfectly frank with you, I have come here to interpose in my brother's behalf."

Mrs. Winthrop and Barnabetta

Barnabetta gazed at her steadily, though her face flushed. She waited in silence.

"My brother is most unhappy, Miss Dreary."

"I hope," said Barnabetta sympathetically, "he will soon get over that."

"He will never get over it—unless *you* save him from himself!"

"I am afraid I can't do that. It is asking too much, Mrs. Winthrop—that I should so sacrifice myself!"

"Of course you are ambitious to do the best for yourself—but I am sure you will be as wretchedly unhappy as he will be!"

"But I am not unhappy—and I am quite sure *he* will not be after a while."

"I realize," said Mrs. Winthrop coldly, "the uselessness of pleading with you to sacrifice yourself for his good!"

"Yes—it is useless."

"You are remarkably candid, Miss Dreary!"

"It seems so strange that you should expect me to sacrifice myself for your brother!"

"I don't expect it. It *would* be strange for me to expect it—and I am not a fool. I appeal, then, not to your womanliness, your tenderness, but to your ambition. Don't you know that you will *ruin* his career?"

"Oh, he will not take it so hard as that!"

"It will ruin him! Don't deceive yourself. Let

Barnabetta

me be as frank as you are and tell you plainly that none of his family would ever recognize you!"

Barnabetta smiled. "But how," she asked innocently, "can their resentment affect me? I have lived nearly twenty years without the—'recognition,' did you say?—of the Barrett family. So I think I shall be able to worry through."

"What is more," Mrs. Winthrop resolutely continued, coloring at the girl's cool effrontery, "my brother has very good prospects of a fine diplomatic appointment—the dream of his life! In such a position, his wife should be a woman of the highest social culture, Miss Dreary."

"But," reasoned Barnabetta, looking puzzled, "if things like that should decide a man's choice of a wife, Miss Jordan would make a far better—diplomatesse, is it?—than I could be."

"Exactly. Your common sense must recognize that. And in standing in *his* light, don't you see that you stand in your own?—that he will come to regret bitterly the mistake he has made?—that you will not be raised to his level, but will pull him down to yours?"

Barnabetta gazed at her as, slowly, the comprehension dawned upon her that they were both laboring under a mistake. Then, after a moment, she spoke—deliberately, distinctly.

"I think your brother understands, Mrs. Winthrop, that I am quite unwilling to be dragged down to his

Mrs. Winthrop and Barnabetta

level and that I could not hope to lift him to mine."

It was Mrs. Winthrop's turn, now, to stare in perplexity. "Miss Dreary," she abruptly demanded, "has my brother asked you to marry him?"

"Hadn't you better ask *him* that, Mrs. Winthrop?"

"Well," thought Mrs. Winthrop, "she's certainly a match for me!"

"If Dr. Barrett has not yet asked you to marry him," she succinctly affirmed, "you are perfectly aware that he means to!"

Barnabetta did not reply.

"And I have come here to point out to you that in marrying him, you will gain nothing you hope for."

"It is well, then, that I hope for nothing."

"You think his love alone will satisfy you? But *he* will not long remain satisfied with love alone! I know him as you do *not*, Miss Dreary."

"I am sure you do."

"Then be warned by me—my brother will not make you happy!"

"If I loved your brother, Mrs. Winthrop, it would not be in the power of any of his family to keep me from marrying him."

"Do I understand that you are determined to marry him?"

"I suppose I may as well tell you that when Dr. Barrett asked me last night to marry him, I refused

Barnabetta

him. So," said Barnabetta, rising, "there is no use saying anything more."

But Mrs. Winthrop kept her seat, glaring at the girl incredulously, vindictively. That a little nobody like this should have the audacity to stand there and say she had refused to marry Edgar Barrett!

"Then why," she demanded, "did n't you say so in the beginning?"

"I thought you were asking me to take back my refusal of your brother!"

The absurdity of her mistake suddenly overwhelmed the girl and she laughed helplessly.

"You thought I had come here to urge you to marry my brother?"

"Yes," laughed Barnabetta, wiping her eyes, "when you had really come to warn me of his weakness, his unfitness for marriage!"

"You actually mean that you *did* refuse him?" It seemed wholly unbelievable. "But *why*, in the name of goodness?"

"I told him why."

"You are engaged, then, to Jordan!"

The vulgar impertinence of the woman was a revelation to Barnabetta of the ways of what her step-mother called "high life." She ignored the remark.

Mrs. Winthrop glared for a moment longer—then abruptly she also rose.

"Well!"—she came to a characteristically impulsive conclusion—"I declare I must say I can't wonder

Mrs. Winthrop and Barnabetta

that Edgar is crazy about you! You certainly *are* a little trump! I'm half sorry I'm *not* going to have you for a sister-in-law!"

"I'm sorry I can't say the regret is mutual," replied Barnabetta with a quaint primness.

"Miss Dreary, may I ask a favor?—My brother, you know, would be very angry if he learned of my having come here like this!"

"Oh, I don't know—he told me pretty much the same things last night that you have said to me this morning—when he asked me to marry him."

"Mercy!"

"Yes," smiled Barnabetta, "he really did."

"As a family, you must think us—well, very disagreeable!"

"I am sure," said Barnabetta sympathetically, "you can't help being as you are."

"You pity and despise us? Well, we shall have to try to bear up under it."

Mrs. Winthrop offered her hand. "Good morning, Miss Dreary. I've fallen in love with you myself!"

When, a little while later, Barnabetta, to relieve her feelings, strolled out for a long walk in the woods, where yesterday morning she had strolled with Edgar Barrett, she reflected that while good manners, or rather correct manners, were confined to the topmost social stratum, good breeding seemed to be rather a matter of temperament and of character than of class.

CHAPTER XLI

THE FATE OF WOMAN

SHE had taken a book with her, and when David Jordan discovered her, she was stretched out on the grass under a tree, *not* reading the open volume in her hands. It was Carlyle's *Frederick the Great*.

"I thought it might improve my mind, but," she complained, as he sat down beside her, looking radiant at having found her, "with the thermometer at its present height, I can't manage to take in more than a sentence in every three and a half pages. I can easily believe all those stories about Carlyle's abusing his wife! Any man that could write in such *large capitals!* Look at this page!"—she held the book open at a page very generously strewn with the offending big type. "Think of the state of mind that could make a page like that! It's dangerous. I should be afraid to be married to it!"

He laughed, took the book from her and tossed it away. "Glorious old Scotchman!—but we don't want anything to do with him this hot summer's day, do we?"

"He reduces me to pulp!" she sighed. "I shall

The Fate of Woman

struggle no longer to be great! At least not while the thermometer is three hundred and sixty degrees in the shade!"

"No, don't struggle to be great—talk to *me*. I followed you here," he stated superfluously.

"And I was wondering how we *both* happened to come to this woods this morning," she said quite insincerely.

"Such odd and happy coincidences are usually pre-arranged—like Mark Twain's 'impromptu' speeches. I had to see you this morning—I always have to see *you*, you know, to revive my faith in humanity after I've dined formally with a party of our leading citizens of Middleton!—As I did last night. The Barretts had the courage to stay away. Very risky! Their absence was not favorably received!"

"But the Barretts' objections to the Middleton dinner-parties would not be the same as yours, would they?" Barnabetta asked.

"No. Their objections are—snobbish; mine, moral; the veneer that encrusts the real self of the average highly-esteemed American in a town like this, makes dinner-talk (to put it mildly) difficult! I often wonder what would happen if, at one of their genteel gatherings, I came right out with my true opinions about anything at all! It would crack the dishes, I dare say! In communities like this, strewn all over our broad map, nobody is ever known to think below the surface. They don't want to. They haven't

Barnabetta

time. Most people can't see a truth until it's universal property. An unfamiliar truth is resented as heresy—merely because of its unfamiliarity. Big movements, in their incipiency, are always looked upon as ridiculous; as were Woman Suffrage, Socialism, Christianity itself! Do you *know* what you are to me, little woman? I realized what, last night as I sat among those Philistines, longing for you as a thirsty man longs for a spring! You are my safety-valve, my comrade! What troubles me, though, is—”

He paused, and she looked up inquiringly. “Don't stop—I'm so interested,” she remarked.

“I've been thinking of a name for you—*my* name for you. I can't call you by that ponderous name with which your baptism afflicted you. And I refuse to address you longer as 'Miss Dreary,' since you are the only acquaintance I have who *isn't* dreary. To me you are to be—Betty. It's a quaint, winsome name—it's just *you!* May I?”

“If you like to. But it is n't my 'ponderous' name that you were going to say 'troubled' you?”

“No. Look here, Betty! There *must* be something of reciprocity in a real comradeship. Now I know what you are to me—but what troubles me is, am I anything at all to you?”

Her reply was unhesitating and from her heart. “You are to me the truest man I have ever known—the only true one.”

The Fate of Woman

"If you 'd had a larger acquaintance, I might take comfort from that. But Barrett and I, I believe, make up the list?"

"No matter how long the list, probably you would still be the one true man among them. I've learned how scarce true men are!"

"Betty, are you happy?"

"I doubt," she slowly answered, "whether people are ever very happy when circumstances or disposition forces them to take life seriously. And yet, why shouldn't we be happy? I will be happy! I like the world; there are books, people, flowers, children, poetry, music, pictures! How can we not find happiness in such a lovely world? I did n't always feel so, but I do now."

"You do have a way of taking Don Quixotic leaps, don't you? It's an exciting game to keep up with you, Betty!"

"Well, just now, I'm at the pass of hating humdrum. Now that I've done with college, I want to be a vagabond and 'roam at large o'er all this scene of man.'"

"And I, Betty, have always been a vagabond at heart! So you see we *are* mates—by the ruling of the gods! Would that I dared to hope you would consent to 'roam at large' with me!"

The color deepened in Barnabetta's cheeks and her eyes were softly bright as they rested on the big man at her side—big, she felt, in so many ways; in his

Barnabetta

simplicity; in his humanity; in his abundant kindness; in his fidelity to himself; in his courage.

"I have so little to offer you, Betty! A commonplace, middle-aged, clumsy elephant!—while you, dear, are so brilliant, so beautiful, so—"

She laughed involuntarily. "Oh, no, *I'm* not beautiful! Please," she earnestly urged, "don't be so deceived in me!"

"Are n't you, Betty? I suppose I must take your word for it, but to me you are altogether lovely!—I love your straight brown hair, your hands that seem, somehow, to express you, your voice, your sincere eyes, the sweetness of your lips!—And I love the mind and the heart of you! You are the only woman I have ever known with whom I am absolutely *at home!* Could you care for a ridiculous old fellow like me who—"

"Take care—if it's my future husband you are describing! I'm easily affronted!"

"—who has nothing to offer you, dear Betty, but his utter devotion!"

"May I ask you a few questions?" she gently inquired.

"I'll try to answer them."

"First, then, have you 'struggled long and hard against this overwhelming love'?"

"Only a few feeble kicks—because I felt it was n't fair to ask a radiant young girl like you to throw herself away on an old—"

The Fate of Woman

"Now!" she stopped him. "Second question—the 'differences' between us—your rearing and mine—are you sure you 'recognize' them? You know that my father was a tinsmith and that my brother is a stage-driver?"

"You have mentioned it. What has that got to do with you and me and our love—if you do love me, Betty?"

"Third—you have a deep sense, have you, of all that you will have to give up in marrying me?"

"I have a sense of unworthiness in the thought of all I shall gain—if you do stoop to me, fair lady!"

"I shall not 'stand in your light,' 'ruin your career'?"

He suddenly took her chin in his hand and tilted up her face.

"It sounds damnably like the Barretts! *Have* they been at you?"

"Yes, they have been 'at' me!"

"The whole effete Barrett tribe is n't worth *you*—you true, wholesome, beautiful young thing! A pair of snobs, I've always thought them!"

"Snobs? What are snobs?"

"People who substitute false values for real ones, Betty. A very persistent tendency, I've noticed, of petty minds."

She considered it thoughtfully. "Yes," she said at length, "I believe, then, they are snobs."

Barnabetta

"I'm glad you know it! But don't let us waste time talking about them!—Betty!"

"What?"

"I love you and I want, more than I ever wanted anything in this world, to have you for my mate. Will you take me, Betty?"

"Yes."

He laid his hands on her shoulders and looked into her face. "You will?"

"Yes, I will," she answered, her eyes meeting his with solemn earnestness.

"You love me?"

"Yes—I love you."

"You are sure that you know what love is?"

"I didn't know until I knew you. I know now."

"I believe you do, Betty!"

"Yes, I do."

"But you don't know *all* that it can mean!"—His voice trembled as he took her into his arms.—"We shall spend the rest of our lives in discovering that!"

THE END

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