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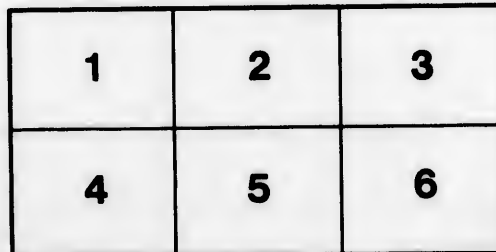
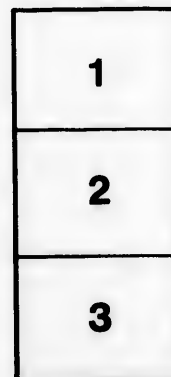
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NEW YORK
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1890

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JEAN GRANT.

CHAPTER I.

SOME philosopher has said that every life has its mystery. Certain it is that mine has. It is strange that it should be so, for no life could have been surrounded by more modest circumstances, or less connected with anything like romance, than mine. Born on a little suburban farm of the village of Seaton, some twenty miles from New York; accustomed in my earlier days to nothing but severe and monotonous farm labor; unschooled in the world's affairs till quite late in life; I found myself in the dawning years of manhood before I fully realized the duties and responsibilities of citizenship in this throbbing republic. My highest ambition was to become a trader in the little village hard by.

At this moment I reflect upon my boyhood days, and find nothing but a solitary blank save the memory of the loud Atlantic which, as it thundered against the rugged coast, awakened my

boyish fancy to a faint conception of the sublimity of nature's poetry. At the little village-school where I received my elementary education, I do not remember having become noted for superior brilliancy or marked dulness. It appears to me I was one of those average boys who give little trouble to their teachers or friends, attract little attention from observers, and give small promise of a future.

My parents were respectable, pious, and well-to-do people, who had no great ambition to attain to wealth or distinction, but were satisfied to live a quiet life, and to leave to me, their only child, sufficient of this world's goods to give me what they called a fair start in life. Before my nonage was over, they had passed, good souls, to their reward. I completed my education at Cambridge, and returned to Seaton at the age of twenty-one, with the intention of selling the little farm, collecting the few thousand dollars which my parents had left me, and going to New York to invest my inheritance in some small commercial enterprise.

It was at this juncture that my life took an unaccountable turn which involved it in perplexity and mystery.

How true it is that we should expect nothing but the unexpected. On a pretty little hill, midway between our farm and Seaton, there stood the

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largest mansion in the place. It was owned and dwelt in by a wealthy and accomplished widow and her two lovely daughters, Jean and Leonore. Mrs. Sherman, I remember, had dwelt in that old brick mansion since the days of my childhood. She had been twice a widow. Her first husband, John Grant, had left her, at his death, this same old mansion which he called Dunmore, an easy competence, and a little daughter, Jean, as fair a creature as one could see anywhere. Her second husband, William Sherman, a relative of the great General, bequeathed to her and Leonore, his daughter, a million or more, the product of his judicious investments in the Southern cotton fields.

Mrs. Sherman had the instincts as well as the manners of a lady; and so she did not allow her immense fortune to turn her head or make her despise her less fortunate neighbors. On the contrary, her beneficence found new and larger channels through which to flow every day. She became a sort of godmother to the town. The poor were her children; the orphans her wards; the sick her care. She superintended the education of her attractive daughters with much wisdom; so that they grew up without affectation, pride or arrogance, the happy possessors of fortune, virtue, accomplishments and beauty. I had gone to school with these girls when a boy; I had played with them on the green hill-side; I had escorted them to chil-

dren's parties; had gone picnicing with them; and had been a close companion to them all through my youth, never dreaming that in the vicissitudes of the future my life should be so mysteriously interwoven with theirs as to make the sorrows and the joys, the tears and the smiles, the pain and bliss, the life and the death of each to interdepend on that of the others. Even now, as I write their names, my memory conjures up a flood of awful recollections which makes my heart palpitate and my brain throb.

It seems like a terrible dream in which the mind passes swiftly through every phase of suffering and enjoyment which lie between the extremes of paradise and hell.

I have said my early life was quiet and retired. It was. Could I have chosen, I would have preferred such a life all through. I love retirement, and every instinct of my nature shrinks from the thought of notoriety. No morbid desire for publicity prompts me to disclose the mystery of my life. I am now too old to seek the paths of fame. Besides, those whose names I shall be compelled to associate with my own in relating this narrative are dearer to me than my life, and nothing but the reflection that my fellow-men may profit by the disclosure, would tempt me, even at the solicitation of those whom I have mentioned, to unseal a mystery which I have hitherto guarded with sacred care.

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It was in the month of June, as nearly as I can remember, when I returned to Seaton from college. I had been absent for several years, and had got my manners polished up a little, and began to have some confidence in my world-wisdom. I had carried off no laurels on commencement day, and was in no way encouraged to believe that my native village would proclaim a holiday on my return. If I had ever had any conceit either in my ability, or my industry, the few years at Boston effectually expelled it. I had never been troubled with overconfidence or vanity. Indeed, I had reason to believe that my friends were sincere when they advised me that I had altogether too little nerve to win my way successfully in these times of rushing activity. I found, however, that my arrival in the village was considered quite an event. I received many congratulations which I took as a matter of course. I took occasion, during the first afternoon, to call upon my estimable friend, Mrs. Sherman.

The years which had passed, since I called to bid her good-by, had in no way detracted from her beauty; on the contrary, they had only woven a few more snowy strands into her hair, making it a soft, silvery crown which well became her clear blue eyes and symmetrical face whose every lineament radiantly beamed with cheerfulness and kindness. She had always taken an interest in me.

She asked many questions about my college-days; and when I had satisfied her on those points, she went on to explain to me that my return at that time had been most fortunate, that her daughters, who had been attending school at New York, were to return on the morrow; that she had taken the liberty, without my consent, to invite her friends to a garden-party, on the Friday evening following, in honor of the return of her daughters and myself.

Now, I desire at the outset to acknowledge to the reader that my character, though not aggressive in any point, is, and will, I presume, always remain extremely weak in one of the very essentials of character—decision. Indecision has been the bane of my life. I want to see the end from the beginning. Hamlet-like, I can see my duty clearly, but I reason, argue, hesitate, postpone, until my heart sickens at its own irresoluteness, and the golden moment ripe for action slips away, leaving me the victim of regret and despondency.

This invitation was an honor I had not expected; an honor which my retiring nature would have counselled me to avoid; but the unassuming frankness of my hostess, and a growing curiosity which I felt to meet her daughters again, and to have an opportunity of observing what time had been doing for them, inspired me with an unusual degree of courage, and led me to gratefully acknowledge and accept it.

And now, long years after that evening, I sit and wonder whether, if I had not accepted that courtesy and had not yielded myself to a curiosity which proved at once fatal and blissful, there should ever have come to that bright and peaceful fireside the blackness of ruin which has since eclipsed its radiance; and whether my life, which, from that evening, has been journeying on such stormy seas, would not have moved on through the unmarred solitude of its own choice, and closed in the same obscurity as that in which it began.

I departed from Dunmore, assuring Mrs. Sherman that I should look forward to Friday evening with the brightest and most joyous anticipations.

CHAPTER II.

FRIDAY evening soon arrived. I left my hotel promptly at eight o'clock for Dunmore. I had never been so particular about my dress as on that evening. My step seemed lighter than ever before. I was in unusual spirits. As I approached Dunmore, I perceived that the wide halls were brightly illuminated, and that the grounds were like a constellation of glistening stars. Every tree was freighted with lanterns of the most elegant designs which threw out their mingling lights of every conceivable color and tint. I entered the gate.

Jean and Leonore emerged from a group of persons standing near a fountain, and came running toward me, and greeted me with their old-fashioned girlish welcome. I thought I had never seen two more beautiful women. They led me to their mother and went to receive the other guests.

An hour passed away. I had met many old friends, and been introduced to many new ones, and at last found myself sauntering along the outskirts of the grounds, admiring the statuary and drinking in the ravishing music which filled the balmy air. For the first time in my life I was

dreaming. Of what? Not of the music or the flowers, but of a fair face,—the face of Jean Grant. It had set itself in my heart. I could see it and nothing but it, in the roses, in the chiselled marble, in the scented hedge, in everything. I could hear the melody of her voice and nothing else, in the stirring music, in the splashing fountains and in the soft summer winds that whispered to the green hedge. Suddenly, I was confronted by Jean and a gentleman who bore her on his arm, and whom she introduced to me as Colonel Windsor. At their request, I joined them. I was amazed at the fondness which this tall, black-eyed soldier showed for Jean. I wondered who he was, and at once put him down as one of her suitors, feeling, at the same time, a sensation akin to envy rising within me.

I suddenly repressed it. I remembered with pain that I could be nothing but a friend to this beautiful woman. We stood for a moment, when Jean, disengaging herself, bowed politely to the Colonel, and said, "I beg you will excuse me, Colonel Windsor. Mr. Garland is a very old friend of mine. I have not seen him for some years. I desire to enquire of him privately how he has been behaving himself." The Colonel with a stiff military bow, replied—"Your pleasure, my dear lady, is my will," and strode off.

I offered her my arm. She accepted.

I felt considerably elated by the preference she showed for my company, but I accounted for it on the ground of old friendship. But I must confess I was glad to be freed from the society of Colonel Windsor. I disliked him from the beginning. His haughtiness was unbearable. His manners were a combination of flattery and affectation. The most repulsive scorn characterized his language. A savage lustre sparkled from his unfathomable black eyes. This was my impression of him; and yet, he was what many would call a handsome man. Tall, magnificently proportioned, erect and graceful, with large, sallow features, and long mustache, his external appearance was as impressive as his expression was cunning and vicious.

When I had led Jean to a seat, I enquired,

"Who is your friend, Colonel Windsor, Miss Grant?"

"Why do you ask with such apparent interest?" she answered.

"I beg your pardon. I was only curious. Perhaps I should not have asked."

"Oh, certainly. I have no objection in the world to telling you all I know about him, which indeed, is very little. Colonel Windsor is a gentleman with whom we became acquainted in New York. We were introduced to him by a letter from Professor Sydney, who taught us music and dancing, at the College. He has been extremely

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attentive to us, and begged us to allow him to escort us to Seaton. I think very highly of him, but Leonore declares that he is positively disagreeable. May I ask what *you* think of him, Mr. Garland?"

"Oh," I replied, "it would never do for me to express an opinion of your friend on so short an acquaintance."

We drifted into other and, to me, at least, more agreeable topics of conversation. It was indeed a most delightful evening. The whole surroundings were inspiring. The deft fingers of love had opened the flood-gates of my young life and awakened every power. The music swelled in loud melody, and then sank into soft cadences which blended with the low whispers of the summer breeze, and then the voice of mirthful conversation and youthful laughter could be heard as an interlude. The splendid collections of exotic flowers threw out their fragrance. The fountains sent their spray dancing in the mellow light.

Dreamily conscious of all these, I sat by the side of Jean Grant, spellbound by her beauty and the silvery sweetness of her gentle words, till the greater part of the guests had departed.

I escorted Jean to the door, where we stood in conversation a few minutes longer.

As I left Dunmore, I perceived that I was the last guest to depart. You can imagine, gentle

reader, what transport filled my breast; for it is not beyond possibility that you have been in love.

I walked with rapid strides towards my hotel. The night was extremely dark. As I passed a clump of trees which flanked the side of a small stream which ran along the foot of Dunmore, and across which a small narrow bridge extended, I was unexpectedly awakened from my reverie by a rude voice which called out—"I would speak a word with you, sir!"

"Good evening, sir," I said with some degree of agitation, as I faintly descried the form of a man standing on the narrow bridge in front of me.

"How extremely polite you can be when politeness becomes your defence."

"Politeness is always the defence of a gentleman."

"It is oftener the pretext of a coward."

"I do not understand your insinuations."

"Since your understanding is so deficient, I shall not further insinuate. I say you are a coward, a base, deceitful coward."

"I demand of you, sir," my anger overcoming my first excitement, "who you are, and what right you have to accost me in this manner. Stand aside."

I essayed to pass by him, but he sprang in front of me, and to my horror, touched me with the point of his sword which he held in front of me to prevent my further progress.

"What do you mean? Who are you? What—"
"Halt! Make no rash motion. Be careful what words you use. My blood is not in temper for trifling. I will tell you who I am. My name is Colonel Windsor. You met me this evening at Dunmore. Without provocation you subjected me to a vulgar, unjustifiable, cowardly insult. I demand reparation, or by heaven, you shall not escape my sword!"

"I, insult you? Impossible. A gentleman will take no insult, where none is intended. I give you my word of honor as a gentleman, I had no intention of injuring your feelings by anything I did or said during the evening. If you will relate the circumstance—"

"You lie!"

"You are not using the language of a gentleman."

"Take care, you unbred rustic! if you repeat that phrase, I shall give you a taste of cold steel with all my heart."

"I repeat, you are not using the language of a gentleman. I asked you to relate the circumstance to which you refer. If you show me that any word or action of mine might have been construed as an affront, I shall apologize to you, though I declare again I had no such intention; more than this one gentleman cannot demand of another."

"I am not your schoolmaster, you impertinent, unmannered churl. It is not my business to point out your stupid blunders. When I was walking with Miss Grant you uncereemoniously thrust yourself upon our privacy. I repeat, it was a gross piece of insolence. I demand an apology."

"You charge me falsely. I joined your company at Miss Grant's request. *She* evidently did not consider it an affront, when she chose to spend the rest of the evening in my company. Your charge is unmanly and false. I shall not so far give color to your groundless imputation, as to offer the slightest apology."

"Coward! Liar!" he hissed through his clenched teeth and lifted his sword to strike.

My anger rose to a white heat, but I controlled it. My position was perilous. My first impression of Colonel Windsor was correct. He was a bully. My courage rose with my anger. I took in the whole situation in a flash. He had not been insulted. He had simply been outrivalled, though not through any conscious effort of mine. It was jealousy which supplied his unreasoning passion. I remembered this, I remembered the looks and the words of Jean Grant, and the thought flashed upon my mind that to perish for her would be a worthy sacrifice. I advanced a pace with determination to meet the falling blow, and shouted—"Strike, coward, I am unarmed!"

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I had no alternative. I could not retreat, and indeed was in no mood for retreating. As the blow descended I advanced on my antagonist, received the thrust on my left shoulder, and grappled with him. He dropped his sword and engaged with me. For a few moments, we struggled with fatal determination. He was enormously strong. He was much the larger and heavier man, but I had some advantage in my hold on him. Watching my opportunity, I raised him by dint of sheer strength, off the ground, and hurled him, with terrible force, to earth where I held him for a minute or more as in a vise. I had no desire to injure him. My anger was fully gratified. I felt the effect of the blow I had received. My left arm began to give out, and I knew I could not much longer hold my quarry pinned to the earth. But what was I to do? To let him rise was but to renew my danger. To disable him would be cowardly; to run from him more so. The gallant Colonel decided the point. He put forth all his strength to dislodge me. My disabled arm failed me. He pitched me into mid-air and rose to his feet. Scarcely had I time to regain my feet, when the flash and report of a revolver awakened me to a sense of new danger. I felt a stinging, burning pain in my right side. I leaped forward to encounter my opponent. I staggered—reeled—fell—I knew no more.

CHAPTER III.

WHEN consciousness returned I found myself at Dunmore, stretched at full length on an invalid's couch. For a time my ideas were confused. I perceived that Jean Grant was sitting by my bedside, reading. By slow degrees I recalled the events of that changeful night on which the mishap befell me.

As I lay there silent, thinking, wondering at my surroundings Jean's eyes fell upon me, and an expression of warmth and gladness shone from her face.

"I am very glad, Mr. Garland, to see you so much better."

"Better! Have I been ill, Miss Grant?"

"Oh, yes, you have been ill for some days. But you are now out of danger."

"What was the matter with me? How did I come here? Am I dreaming, or am I mad? My head feels strange. Please tell me all, Miss Grant."

"Yes, Mr. Garland, let me tell you all; and then you must not give your mind any more trouble about the matter till you are stronger. You remember the evening of the party?"

"Quite well."

"You remember bidding me good-night in front of the conservatory door?"

"Ah, I shall not soon forget that, Miss Grant! I remember it distinctly."

"Well, you had only been gone a few minutes when Colonel Windsor—"

"Colonel Windsor! By heaven, I remember it all!"

"Hush, hush! Mr. Garland. You must not allow yourself to become so excited. It might cause a serious relapse which would deprive me of my reputation as a nurse."

"My dear Miss Grant, I beseech you to forgive me for having made use of such language. My emotions quite overcame me. Pray proceed; I am deeply interested in what you are saying."

"As I was saying, a few minutes after you left Dunmore, on Friday evening last, Colonel Windsor, who was our guest, returned from having escorted some ladies home, and shortly after his return the household retired for the night. An hour or so later we were all awakened by Mr. George Wentworth, who bore you in his arms to the door, and informed us that he had found you lying on the road-side in a dying condition. Since then you have lain at the point of death, Dr. Kent not having until this morning given any hopes of your recovery."

"And have you been my nurse during that time—how long did you say?"

"About four days. Yes, I have sat here nearly all the time, and you have not deigned to look at me."

"Ah, my dear lady, how unkind I have been! I must have been extremely ill when your presence did not restore me."

"Thank you, I appreciate such a neat compliment. But that is not the question. You must tell us what happened you; for the theories as to the cause of your misfortune are about as numerous as the inhabitants of Seaton. Some say you were robbed; some that you had taken too much old wine at Dunmore; some that you went there by appointment to duel with a rival; some that you fell madly in love with a pretty girl, and having been rejected, made an unsuccessful attempt at suicide; others assert that you were laboring under temporary insanity. Now in the midst of such conflicting views every one would be interested in the truth."

"Well, Miss Grant, I think the best way for me to explain it will be to borrow the language of the parable and say: As I journeyed towards Seaton I fell among thieves who robbed me and beat me, and left me lying by the wayside; and in you I have found the good Samaritan who has dressed my wounds and cared for me. I shall relate the particulars later on."

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"Ah, just so. That seemed to me the most probable cause of your misadventure. What a terrible conflict you had to go through! I hope that in addition to your painful injuries you have not suffered loss. But I beg your pardon a thousand times. I am exciting your mind too much by allowing my curiosity to overcome my sense of duty. You must not speak another word; no, not so much as a syllable. You must try to sleep—you want rest. Dr. Kent will deprive me of my case if I am not more careful. In a few days, when you will be strong and well, we shall talk over these matters. You shall not leave us until you are entirely yourself again. I shall ask you to imagine that it is leap year so that it shall be my privilege to make all the invitations and proposals. I shall invite you to go driving with me each morning. I shall swing you in the hammock in the shade of the lilac trees at noon-day. In the evening I shall escort you through the grounds, and hear you giving such interesting descriptions of the trees and shrubs and blossoms. Oh, won't it be jolly! But I must stop. I am such a talking-machine when I get started. What would Dr. Kent say if he heard me?"

"Ah, Jean—it does not seem natural to call you whom I have known so long and so well *Miss Grant*—you are the same good little girl that you always were. You have not changed. Do not be afraid of

saying too much to me. True, I am very weak. This shoulder of mine is, I fear, badly wrecked. I must not speak much, but your words are delightful. They are light to my eyes, music to my ears, hope to my heart, and health to my body. Oh, Jean, how unworthy I feel of your kindness!"

She made no reply, but her pressure of my hand proved an effectual remonstrance. The conversation ceased, and I was soon a citizen of the universal democracy of sleep.

My convalescence was long, but not tedious. Jean fulfilled her promise to the letter. June, July, and August passed like dreams, the cooling breath of the salt Atlantic, and Jean's love, making even these sultry months grateful.

At last my disabled shoulder had healed, my nerves had recovered their accustomed tone, my mind was in a better condition than ever before. I felt strong, ambitious, and eager to engage in the world's affairs. But how did I stand with the Shermans? I feared I had imposed upon their kindness. I came to Dunmore the invited guest of an evening, standing on terms of friendship merely with the family. Uninvited, I had prolonged my visit for months and had profited by my stay by becoming engaged to Jean Grant. Our engagement was not one appropriately gotten up for a novel. It was one of the most old-fashioned, prosy, but withal sensible transactions you can imagine. It was like crossing

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the equator, for I cannot even tell the day or the hour when it took place. At first Jean and I had much to say about the past, about the old school-days with their romps and merriments and adventures and escapades. Then the present began to have considerable interest for us, and for a time we lived solely for the present. Our happiness was synonymous with being together. Separation meant wretchedness.

At this period I strongly suspected myself of being a fool; and I sometimes indulged my observation the honor of believing that Jean, too, was a little too fond. But I argued, as we were both in the same condition of mind, we were fitted only to enjoy each other.

This was the second stage in the incipient comedy. Comedy did I say? Would to God I could say so with truth! Comedy is a drama ending in marriage. *Tragedy*, I should say, for our drama ended in—but I am anticipating.

Forgive me, reader, for introducing the thought of a tragedy into an engagement scene. If you have observed the workings of your own mind, you will have become aware that you have often been strongly inclined to laughter in the midst of your tears. Joy and grief are sisters, and the emotions of one touch the other. Enough of this.

We had done with the past. We had exhausted the pleasures of the present, and the future be-

gan with its siren allurements to attract us thither.

When a young couple begin to converse of the future they are treading on dangerous grounds. Let them beware. There will soon be only one of them. It is always an open question which one of them it will be.

In the long evenings we sat in the conservatory, or out in the lawn chairs, side by side, and talked of our future prospects. We loved each other; and love soon teaches its children to understand its inarticulate, yet eloquent language. A love that can be all expressed in words is a beggarly quality. A love to whose confirmation words are indispensable is either a false love or has a false reciprocal.

I never proposed to Jean. Did she propose to me? Certainly not. We had no proposal. When we had talked about everything else, we chose for a topic the various kinds of homes we had met with, their peculiar forms of discipline and government. Of course we found fault with them all. None of them were perfect. None of them at all approached to our ideal of a home.

"Wait," said I, "my darling Jean," embracing her warmly and pressing my first kiss upon her lovely lips, "wait till you see *our* home. It will be a perfect ideal, will it not, Jean?" "Yes, Arthur dear," she replied, responding to my embrace, and we were engaged.

During the remainder of my stay at Dunmore I heard nothing further of Colonel Windsor, save that the family had received a letter from him announcing his return to New York. It came to be quite a serious problem for me whether or not I should acquaint Jean with the name of my midnight assailant.

On the one hand it was obvious that Colonel Windsor was merely an unscrupulous adventurer who was grossly abusing the confidence and friendship of this worthy family, and that as I was the only one in possession of such facts as would prove him such to them, there devolved an obligation on me as a friend of the family to divulge these facts to them.

On the other hand it was an unpleasant task to perform. Whatever foundation Colonel Windsor had for his belief it was quite apparent that he considered himself a prominent candidate for Jean's hand. The disclosure would be a painful one for the family, and especially for Jean. The facts, if once discovered, would reach the public's ever open ear, and I should have to suffer the needless mortification of being discussed as Colonel Windsor's rival, and a vanquished duellist. Besides, I had already won Jean's love. What more could I desire? I decided to let well enough alone.

CHAPTER IV.

ADVANCED autumn found me ready to terminate what I had intended as a month's visit, but what had really proved a six months' stay at Seaton. The experiences which I encountered during those months were as varied as they were unexpected. I had wound up my father's affairs, converted the little farm into money, and knew the extent of my fortunes to a certainty, which, I may add, amounted only to something over five thousand dollars. I had come; I had seen; I had been conquered. I, the hitherto cold, stern, unimpressionable student who had passed my college days without an adventure, had, within a few months, fallen in love, checkmated a rival, had met my opponent armed with sword and pistol. Alone, unarmed, and taken by surprise, I had overcome my antagonist, wrenching his weapons from his hands and hurling him by sheer strength and courage prostrate to the earth; had thereupon received a bullet wound from his revolver, and been carried in a dying condition to the home of my adorable Jean to be nursed back to life, liberty and love by her tenderness, solicitude and devotion. I had availed myself of my

misfortune by wooing and winning the one woman in all the world whose favor was essential to my life and happiness. This was romance indeed. I realized, as few have had occasion to do, Shakespeare's apothegm that "All the world's a stage."

I was not fully decided where I should go on leaving Seaton, or in what pursuit I should enlist my energies, but I determined, now that Jean and I were engaged, to make a bold and determined strike for fortune. My new relation in life enhanced the measure of my responsibility, but at the same time I felt, actuated by the potency of Jean's love, and inspired by the exalted hope of making her my wife as soon as I could do so, that I was no longer my old self, but a new man, ushered into a newer and higher sphere of existence, with liberated capacities, enlarged ambitions, and a more rational notion of men and things.

After sojourning for a fortnight in New York City without having found any suitable business connections, and chafing impatiently under the tedious discipline of fortune, I suddenly resolved to cross the continent. Another fortnight found me among the thousand thousands of adventurers, speculators, and fugitives from justice who jostled each other in the race for gold, on the Pacific coast.

I had but two correspondents. From Jean I continued to receive more and more affectionate

reassurances of her constancy and fidelity. From George Wentworth I was the occasional recipient of very interesting and newsy letters. Ever since Wentworth had found me stretched insensible by the wayside, and carried me to Dunmore, our friendship had been increasing.

He had visited me daily during my painful illness, though I often suspected that his attentions were prompted more by his desire to see Leonore than to comfort me.

But I thought none the less of Wentworth for this. We grew to be confidential friends, and, indeed, I felt that he would in every way be a worthy brother-in-law should he and Leonore arrive at an understanding to that effect. But Leonore had given very slender encouragement to his suit. His letters to me, however, indicated that he was gradually overcoming her aversion to limbs of the law. He had abandoned some of his idle habits, and devoted himself more rigorously to the doctrines of Blackstone, and had astonished every one by making a clean sweep of first-class honors at his examination.

The incidents thus briefly related extended over a considerable portion of time.

The busy, crowded, frenzied western life afforded me enjoyment and attraction which I had failed to realize among the more cultured communities of the East.

Here were conditions of society unparalleled in the history of the world; robust youth and decrepit age vying with each other; abject misery striving for the prize against sublime happiness; fortune tourneying with fate for the diadem; poverty triumphing over wealth; labor for once holding capital by the throat; crime glorying in its shame, and become the arbiter of justice; liberty and licentiousness synonymous; smiles and tears, sorrow and joy, pain, misfortune, lust and libertinism become boon companions, now creeping in tattered rags, now gorgeous with cloth of gold; distinctions of birth unheard of; social degrees unknown; representatives of every nation and clime, of every color, creed and class, all actuated by the same sordid motive, all worshipping the same god—Gold; all kneeling in devout adoration before the same altar—Self.

I soon became involved in this majestic stream of medley and contradiction. On, on, on, it swept me with its rushing tide. At first, its novelty was the only attraction. Then its study afforded me delight. We grow to resemble what we study and admire. Soon I felt myself impelled by the feverish thirst for gold. Every other thought was banished, save the memory of her I was to make my wife. Her memory, while it quickened my desire for the rapid accumulation of wealth, had also the effect of recalling moments of truer happiness,

and of restraining me from much of the ferocious and barbarous pleasures which characterized the primitive society in which I moved.

In my pursuit of wealth I was eminently successful. True, I had not discovered a gold mine and become a millionaire in a day. But by judicious speculation, I had in less than two years, multiplied my capital many times.

I began to feel that I had had enough of pioneer life in the West, and that the time had come when I should return to my native town to reclaim the heart from which I had voluntarily absented myself. For a considerable time my mind was in a state of indecision regarding this point. A couple of letters which I received, however, determined my course.

George Wentworth wrote me such a long and glowing epistle, in which he announced, with all the poetic effusiveness of a heart victorious in love, his engagement to Leonore Sherman that I almost envied him his happiness. He urged me to return to Seaton, and taunted me good-naturedly with being unfaithful to my affianced.

By the next mail, I received from Jean the following letter:—

"DUNMORE, SEATON, October 1st, — .

"MY DEAR ARTHUR:—

"I received your last letter with a joyous welcome. Like all your letters it was just perfect excepting in one particular! You will not tell me when you are

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coming to me. Oh, Arthur, just think of it! it is nearly two years since we parted. Since then, though I have had everything which used to make me happy, I have not tasted perfect happiness. I have never doubted your love, but my heart craves your presence. What a strange passion is love! it makes us fools and philosophers in turn. Satisfied, it is heaven; yearning for its object, it is sweetened misery. Arthur dear, I have, like a good little girl, tried to be patient, but I cannot live without you any longer. Do come like a darling. You have been so successful that we can now be married and settle down very comfortably. And only think of it, how happy, happy, thrice happy we should be, when you, instead of associating with those awful barbarians of whom you write to me, should be caressing your own little wife; and I instead of sighing, and moping, and scolding, and getting old and ugly, should be exerting my every power to please you and make you as happy as the day is long. But I must not write any more like this, I am now laughing and crying at the same time. Should the words of this letter be marred by my tears, remember, my dearest, they were shed for you. Leonore and George are engaged. They are the best mated pair of spoons you ever saw. They call me the old maid, but wait till you come home and we'll show them what courtship should be when properly conducted. George is turning out a brilliant success at the bar.

"Now darling, my letter is already too long. I shall have no happiness till you write me saying you are coming home. If an extra allowance of kisses will bring you to me any earlier, please accept them from your own loving

"JEAN."

Reader, you have guessed what followed.

I gathered my shekels together, bade my old companions a not very sorrowful adieu, and started on my homeward journey.

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CHAPTER V.

ON my return preparations for our marriage were at once actively begun. The happiest months of my life I spent in Seaton awaiting the advent of my wedding day. I called on Jean each evening, when we both reported progress, and then the active committee of two would adjourn to meet and report again on the following evening. Only those who have been the fortunate participants in such an affair have any idea of its unspeakable delights.

I spent a part of each day in the company of George Wentworth, who was now the junior partner of the law firm "Mitchell & Wentworth." I was pleased to learn from day to day of his increasing popularity. His fortune was in its heyday. Everything he undertook seemed to prosper. He won nearly all his cases. The press, which makes or unmakes every public man, commented most favorably upon his actions. Leonore, and indeed every one else, was proud of him.

We had rooms at the same hotel; and we commonly met for a little while before retiring for the night, to smoke a cigar and have a chat. During these conferences we often compared notes, and

spoke to each other, in confidential terms, of our ambitions and prospects for the future. It was Wentworth's intention to work hard at his profession for two or three years, by which time he hoped his professional standing would enable him to enter one of the large New York law firms; then he purposed marrying Leonore.

Rapidly the days flew past. The happiness of each day was heightened by the anticipations of the next. My life was in its spring-time. Wherever my footsteps turned bright fresh blossoms of beauty and fragrance sprang up, making my existence more ideal than real. There was nothing to mar or interrupt the even flow of my happiness. I was young; I had never known a day's sickness save the occasion when the treacherous bullet of Colonel Windsor's revolver had left me an invalid at Dunmore. Looking back on that episode I could not regret its occurrence. What had it cost me? A slight discomfiture, an occasional pang, a paltry notoriety, nothing! What had it gained for me? The pleasure of basking in Jean's presence for three months, of winning the fairest woman my eyes had ever beheld, of having her promise to be my wife, and of having the marital alliance all but consummated from which I should derive earth's one true bliss—everything!

The days flew rapidly, but yet too slowly for my impetuous heart. With inexpressible impa-

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The happiness of the anticipations of my time. Wherever fresh blossoms of making my existence was nothing to my happiness. I in a day's sickness a murderous bullet of left me an invalid on that episode I What had it cost occasional pang, a t had it gained for in Jean's presence the fairest woman my her promise to be vital alliance all but ould derive earth's

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tience I longed for the arrival of the auspicious morning which should empower me to clasp Jean Grant in my arms and feel and know that she was mine forever; to be able to call her my wife, and to avail myself of our new relationship to show Jean, in ten thousand ways, how dearly, how immeasurably, I loved her, and lived for her, for her only.

I chid my heart for its impatience and bade it be still. The day of days was almost at hand. But what if it had been distant years instead of days! Did I doubt Jean? Was her heart not steadfast? Did her affection seem to waver? Had I a formidable rival? I asked myself these questions and answered them with something like presumption. No, I was sole monarch of Jean's heart, sole arbiter of her wishes, sole centre of her affections. Rivals many I doubtless had had, but not one of them had received the slightest encouragement, not one of them had dislodged me from the impregnable tower of Jean Grant's heart.

Had I suspicions or doubts? No. My confidence was unbounded, I had more faith in Jean than in all the world beside; more than in myself. To my mind she represented the virtue, constancy, fidelity, and beauty of her sex.

"I will be patient," I said to my anxious heart. "Only three days more. Fly, happy hours! Thrice happy moment, haste! I will be patient."

Such were the thoughts I was revolving in my

mind as I walked briskly from Dunmore to my hotel on that Sunday night in June. We would be married on the following Wednesday morning.

The night was peerless. The full moon, surrounded by her galaxy of silvery satellites, rode proudly across the dome of the heavens which seemed more beautifully blue than ever before. The trees by the wayside, with their dewy leaves quivering in the mellow moonlight, and the gentlest of autumn breezes that fanned my fervid brow, and the glimmering church-towers, seemed to share the gladness of my heart, while the low, subdued voice of the mighty ocean, rising and falling in whispering cadences, lent an indescribable charm to the silent hour.

I had scarcely reached my room when Wentworth entered. The unusual expression of his face indicated that he had something of importance to relate to me.

"Would you like to know the latest joke, Garland?" he began.

"I would," I replied.

"Are you quite certain?"

"Of course, I am. Why do you ask me that?"

"Because I do not like to hurt a friend's feelings."

"What do you mean?"

"Oh, nothing very serious. Have a cigar? It will stiffen your nerves a little."

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"Is there going to be a second flood? Have the
lost tribes been discovered? Or has Franklin been
found sitting on the North Pole?" I asked.

"None of these. Something touching your own
particular self."

"All right, let us have it. I know you lawyers
have a special faculty for beating around the bush.
But pray tell me this wonderful joke, or I shall lose
my relish for it."

"I want to tell you, Garland, about a very eccen-
tric client I had yesterday."

"Client?"

"Yes."

"And what has that got to do with *me*, pray?"

"Wait and see."

"Well, go on."

"I was sitting in my office yesterday, when a tall,
dark, powerful-looking man entered and inquired
for Mr. Mitchell."

"He is in the city," I replied.

"Ah, indeed; then you are his clerk, I suppose,"
he said, handing me his card.

"Yes, I help him a little sometimes," I an-
swered, struck by the fellow's downright cheek.

"Have you been with Mr. Mitchell long?"

"Several years."

"Then you are pretty well acquainted with his
business."

"Yes, somewhat."

"‘Perhaps *you* can give me the information I desire?’

"‘I shall be pleased to do so if it is in my power.’

"‘Thank you. Then look at my card, it will help you to understand the nature of my business.’"

"I did as directed, and found the card read, ‘Henry Marlin, Inspector of Trust Estates, Washington, D. C.’

"‘You see my business is of a somewhat delicate nature.’

"‘I should think it would be. I was not aware that the United States Government had instituted such an office.’

"‘Just so. Just so. It *is* a new office. I am the first officer of the kind appointed. It is in the interest of society that some check should be placed upon the administration of estates by trustees, and that the Government should be placed in possession of statistics relating to trust estates. I am led to believe that Mr. Mitchell, owing no doubt to his well-known integrity and ability as a financier, has the management of several estates.’

"‘Yes, I believe so.’

"‘I presume you will be able, with tolerable accuracy, to describe them.’

"‘I fear not. *That* is a part of Mr. Mitchell’s business with which I am very slightly acquainted.’

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"Don't misunderstand me. I do not want *all* the particulars, but simply the amount of each estate, names of the beneficiaries, and of the trustees."

"I began to be suspicious of my visitor, something in his manner suggested insincerity. His face was of such a strange make-up that it excited my keenest scrutiny, not to say antipathy. I decided to act with caution. My curiosity, however, would not allow me to abbreviate our dialogue; I would try to fathom him. As I peered into his face, I half suspected I had met him somewhere before; I tried to recall the occasion in vain; I would lead him on and put his honor to the test.

"I regret to say, Mr. Marlin," I continued, "I am unable to furnish you with the required information, but if there is any particular estate of more interest to you than the others, I might be able to impart to you some facts concerning it."

"Thank you very much. Mr. Mitchell is trustee for the two very valuable estates known as the Grant and Sherman properties."

"I believe so."

"Very well. Let us begin with them. Give me their respective values, names of legatees, and the amounts of the different legacies."

"It is not in my power to disclose these facts."

"Why not?"

"Because I cannot."

"Are not Mr. Mitchell's books and the various wills in the vault?"

"They are."

"Then why not refer to them?"

"I have no authority to do so."

"Come now, my good fellow, don't be obstinate. I have an urgent business appointment in New York this evening and you can do me a great favor. Here is enough to repay you for any risk you may run in letting me read the wills."

"He handed me a fifty dollar note."

"I am not in the habit of taking bribes, I replied."

"I beg your pardon, sir. Don't mention such a thing. My business, as an officer of the American Government neither requires nor tolerates such practices."

"My suspicions were quickened. I now felt certain that my client was an adventurer or a mountebank. I resolved to use every means to get at the bottom of whatever nefarious scheme he was manipulating. I resolved even to accept a bribe, if by doing so, I could entrap my wily interviewer. I led him on. He bid higher and higher. I pretended to weaken. Observing this, he pressed me with heightened zeal. He kept narrowing his requests, until, finally, his requisition resolved itself into, 'What are the respective fortunes of Jean Grant and Leonore Sherman?' At last I was able to compre-

hend his mission. He was a disguised fortune-hunter. I would accept his bribe, and as a practical joke, interchange the young ladies' fortunes. I did so. I placed Jean's fortune at the modest sum of a million, and Leonore's at a small annuity for pin-money. You see, Garland, I had an eye to business in misleading this villain. I did not want to encourage rivalry for Leonore's hand, and I thought what a charming spectacle it would be to see this grovelling wretch competing with you for the woman who is to be your wife in three days. Ha! ha! We shall have rare sport this week, and now, Garland, who do you suppose this distinguished gentleman turns out to be?"

"Do you know? Have you discovered his name? Is he still in Seaton?" I shouted, rising to my feet in a terrible passion. My mind, at that moment, reverted fiercely to Colonel Windsor. All the crowded incidents of my short acquaintance with him came rushing upon my mind, over-riding all control, and throwing me into a perfect frenzy.

"Ha, ha, ha! I thought I could do it. I thought I could work you into a state of ebullition. Sit down, Garland. Keep cool. Wait till you hear my story through. I followed this Government official to his hotel. He went to his room to prepare for dinner. I had only to enter the dining-room under pretence of taking dinner to solve the shallow mystery. It was not long before he

entered the room and took his place at the table. He was no longer the statuesque official, but a tall, black-eyed, polished and complimentary gentleman whom I remember having met at Dunmore at a garden party on the very night on which I found you lying like a dead man by the wayside."

"By heavens! I knew it! It is he! The unmitigated villain! Where is his hotel? I have vowed before Heaven that if ever I met Colonel Windsor again I should beat him within an inch of his life. I shall not sleep to-night till I shall have fulfilled my vow."

"Great heavens, Garland, have you lost your reason? This is getting serious. I meant to tell you a good joke, over which we should both enjoy a hearty laugh, but I am alarmed. Your choler is up. You are climbing up the walls. You are making the chairs dance polkas. You are a hero in high tragedy, leaving Irving in the distance. I shall have to arm myself. That's right, Garland, sit down and let us discuss the situation. We must act prudently. This man, bad as he is, is a friend of Mrs. Sherman and her daughters. Without doubt he will be their guest to-morrow. For the present, at least, we must not disclose his trickery at Dunmore."

"George Wentworth, I adjure you not to speak of Colonel Windsor to me. I abhor his name. If he were here now I should kill him. You have

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told me to-night enough to brand his name with
infamy. Sit down and listen, and I will tell you
what I know about him; and then, if you can har-
bor in your bosom an atom of respect for Colonel
Windsor, our friendship is at an end."

CHAPTER VI.

IF Wentworth's narrative was a surprise to me, what I disclosed during the next few minutes was to him nothing less than a revelation.

For several years I had kept the secret of my encounter on the bridge locked in my own breast. Indeed I had no incentive for discovering it. My affection and esteem for Mrs. Sherman and her daughters forbade me reflecting on the conduct of Colonel Windsor, who, doubtless through some misrepresentation on the part of himself or his friends, yet without any fault of theirs, had been their guest. I had never before mentioned it to any one, and now that I was about to be married to Jean, the unconscious object of our rivalry, I felt that I had gained such a decided advantage over my competitor that I could afford to obliterate his name from my memory, feeling certain that I should some morning have my slumbering vengeance gratified by reading of his having been sentenced for life, or hanged.

But once more we were to meet. Only a few rods from me, he slept that night. He had dared to violate Jean's name by taking it on his false lips.

He had been estimating the incalculable value of my darling's worth, her love, her beauty, her noble womanliness, as a dervise appraises his camel's burden, namely by a money value.

I am not a man of quick passions, but all my nature rose in arms against this villain's intrusion. As I related to the minutest details my encounter with Colonel Windsor on that all but fatal occasion when we met on the bridge, my imagination inordinately warmed by the terrible fire of my anger; as I dilated on his treachery, his cowardice, his unprovoked insolence, and his murderous intentions, George Wentworth rose from his seat and stalked backwards and forwards across the room like a caged lion, his anger rising higher and higher as I unfolded one incident after another with a particularity begotten of fierce hatred.

The tale was told. We were both at white heat. Our plans were formulated. Colonel Windsor must not be a guest at Dunmore. The family must be apprised of the base deceitful character who sought once more to invade the sacred precincts of their home.

But how? Who would bear the ungracious message? Under what pretext could the subject be broached? Wentworth volunteered. He would tell Leonore, and ask her to explain all to Jean.

Wentworth bade me good-night and went to his room.

After pacing my room for several hours, I retired. My rest was brief; my dreams eventful. They were too ridiculous to be related. Once more I engaged my fierce antagonist on the little bridge. His baleful sword flashed in the dead darkness. Fear seized on my every nerve. I stood motionless. Suddenly Jean stood by my side; encouraged by her presence, I rushed on my combatant. We clenched; we grappled with deadly energy. We struggled, we fell, my opponent beneath. My knee was on his chest, my hand clutched his throat. I was pressing the life out of his breast. In my insane passion I smiled to hear him gasp for breath, and to see the horrible distortions of strangulation overspreading his blackening features. Suddenly, with superhuman strength, he pitched me into mid-air; then, methought, he hurled me over the bridge. My eyes caught sight of the black, yawning abyss that awaited me. It seemed miles to the bottom. Down! down! down! to certain death I went. I experienced the agonies of ten deaths. My whole life flashed before my mind. I read it all in an instant. I remembered Jean, my loved, my own, left behind. Left behind? Great God! left with a villain, my murderer. I forgot my own suffering and death in this awful thought. My voice rose clear and loud to the Saviour of the world, that out of His infinite compassion, he might save my loved one from the wiles of this guilty wretch whose

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hands were reeking with my blood; and with the voice of supplication echoing from my trembling lips, I awoke and knew that it was a dream.

Soon I dozed again. This time I was transported in my dream to my old haunts on the Pacific coast. Once more I was surrounded by the rough, out-spoken miners and speculators. I heard them relate their blood-curdling adventures and escapes. Once more I heard the clamorous multitude mutter and shout and shriek, "Gold! gold! give us gold!" Once more I heard the thunderous tramps of motley millions gathered from every land marching on under the glorious banner of progress, and yet having their hearts filled with the basest desires and lusts which ever prompted human actions.

I stood watching the majestic ocean, its waves transmuted by the splendor of the setting sun into molten billows of burnished gold. Its mighty voice was silenced by the din of the feverish throng.

Behold! it is no longer a dream but the magic of a veritable Golden Touch. The mighty rocks, and the winding shore, and the green fields, and the peerless pines, and the river that leaped into the ocean at my feet, and the matchless expanse of water stretching far beyond the reach of my view, had suddenly become gold.

"Gold! gold! gold!" I shouted at the top of my voice. At last I had found it. The goal

of human desire! the reward of human industry!

One thing remained to complete my happiness, Jean Grant, my love, my darling, my wife!

Yes; she would soon be my wife; I would write for her at once and tell her all about my beautiful Golden City, and the palace of pure gold in which she should dwell.

Suddenly I turned, and there, at my back stood my lovely bride, with outstretched arms ready to embrace me.

Before I could move to receive her embrace, Colonel Windsor stood between us, with his naked sword ready to strike me down.

The darkness of night instantly descended from the frowning heavens and involved us in confusion.

I muttered a terrible anathema and awoke to find myself wandering through my room in a state of nervous excitement.

Sleep was intolerable. My brain was on fire.

I lit my lamp; dressed myself; filled my pipe, and for an hour or so, paced my room; my anger meanwhile becoming more ungovernable.

A sudden resolve seized me; I would write to Colonel Windsor.

I sat down and penned the following words:—

“SEATON, Monday morning.

“SIR:—I have just been informed that you are in Seaton. I had hoped never to have seen you or

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heard of you again. We met but twice before—once, a little over two years ago at Mrs. Sherman's garden party; and again that same night, when you attempted to take my life on the bridge as I was returning to my hotel. You met me armed with sword and pistol. I was undefended, unarmed, and taken by surprise. Had you been a man of honor, you would not have taken offence, where none was intended. You cannot insult a gentleman, for he is too noble to impute wrong motives to the innocent. Had you been a man of courage, you would have scorned to take an unfair advantage of even your most detested and unworthy opponent. You are not a man. You are a coward. You met me that night, not to exact an apology, for you knew none was due you; not to fight a duel, for you knew I was not prepared for such an encounter; you went there with the malicious and premeditated intention of murdering me. That you did not do so is no fault or merit of yours. You are a disgrace to the uniform you wear, and a reproach to the noble soldiers of the republic, among whom you claim to move. I have exercised more consideration for your position than you have done for yourself. I set no detectives on your track or, beyond doubt, you would now be serving your country in a uniform, less honorable it is true, but more deserving than the one you wear. Nor have I even done you the discredit of mentioning your felonious conduct among my most intimate friends, some of whom had the misfortune of your acquaintance. But now that your audacity (for it would be a libel on your established character to accuse you of having courage) has led you to intrude your obnoxious presence into this town, I shall no longer feel myself under any

obligation of silence in this matter. I warn you that unless you leave Seaton immediately upon receipt of this communication, I shall swear out an information and have your splendid pretensions of military honor and office gratified by the most punctilious attendance of the officers of the law. I have nothing further to say. Doubtless your wisdom or more likely your cowardice, will suggest the rest. The early train leaves for the city at eight A. M.

"Yours at Phillipi,

"ARTHUR GARLAND."

"COLONEL WINDSOR,
"Eagle Hotel, Seaton."

I congratulated myself that this was a brilliant idea. At least it gratified my anger and relieved my mind of a heavy burden.

It was breaking day. I sent the letter by the hand of the porter with express directions for its personal delivery.

Wentworth had not yet arisen. I threw myself on my bed, and being exhausted, fell into a heavy sleep.

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CHAPTER VII.

WHEN I awoke I found the mid-day sun pouring its full rays through my bedroom window. I glanced at my watch which told me that it was almost one o'clock. I hastily repaired my toilet and descended to luncheon.

I was in a much happier frame of mind than on the previous evening. I was now able to treat the alarm and consternation of last night with levity. I was even amazed at my own puerility. I asked myself, "Why should I fear this coxcomb? Why should I allow his presence to exasperate me? Should I not treat him with disdain? Should I not look at him, if we chance to meet, with the scornful eyes one casts on a red-handed felon? Had I not ample revenge? Was not Jean Grant to become my wife within two days? Had I not made a blunder in addressing any communication to this infamous man?" No; something within me, perhaps it was envy or hatred or desire for revenge, told me I had done right in sending him that letter.

From it Colonel Windsor would learn that I was still alive to witness, if need be, his attempted

crime. He would learn that I had neither forgotten nor forgiven his base attempt upon my life. He would learn that he was still at large on furlough from my mercy, and that his life and liberty were in my hands. He would learn that I was no craven, that I had the determination, when occasion called for it, to prosecute him to the extreme limit of the law; that I was in a position to hold him in defiance; that I had won by honorable means the object which he had failed to gain by the most disreputable tactics and for the most debased purpose. He had sought to gain possession of Jean Grant's fortune, imagining it, doubtless, to be at least one hundred times as great as it was; I had won her affection, her respect, her love.

Where was Colonel Windsor now? As I puffed my cigar I cast up in my mind all the possible effects my note could have had upon his feelings. Possibly he might have got into a violent passion and decided to remain in Seaton at all hazards. This, however, was improbable. More likely he had hastily packed his effects and consulted the railway time-table. Perhaps he may have thought that means of travel too public, exposing him to the risk of arrest. The only alternative would be for him to hire a conveyance or leave town on foot. At this last conjecture I laughed loud and long and wished I had been up in time to have witnessed the highly suggestive departure of this gallant soldier

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of the republic, who fought for blood, but courted for money.

Still, I did not feel entirely myself. I must see Jean as soon as possible, and I longed for the evening to arrive.

I thought I should pass a part of the afternoon with Wentworth if he were not too busy. With this object in view I called at his office, when I learned from his partner that he had taken the early train for the city, but was expected to return on the nine o'clock train that evening.

From the hotel balcony I watched the sun descending until its upper disk just tipped the cloud-robed horizon with splendid fire.

I lit my cigar and started for Dunmore. Arrived there I found the house deserted. Mrs. Sherman and Leonore, as I afterwards learned, had driven out to visit a friend in the country and Jean had gone into the village.

I was in no way alarmed, and as I expected the inmates would soon return, I decided to take a seat in the conservatory and finish my smoke.

As I sat there expelling mouthful after mouthful of the fragrant smoke, and watched its dreamy-white vapors curling up into the deepening twilight and assuming the most fantastic curves, spirals and forms of every kind, the most poetical vision of my future married life slowly took possession of my mind. There I sat in a blissful reverie, scarcely

conscious of my surroundings; pretty much, I must believe, in the same condition of body and mind as an opium-eater when under the charm of his favorite drug.

Suddenly, I became aware that some parties were approaching the conservatory, and that they were engaged in earnest conversation. I was about to make some noise to indicate my presence when I heard Jean's voice rising in a vehement remonstrance.

"How dare you, sir, even mention such a thing?" she said.

I concluded to remain where I was, for a moment, not knowing what better to do. They were now standing close by me, outside the conservatory, and to my unutterable dismay and disgust I recognized the voice of Colonel Windsor who was Jean's companion.

"Consider, Miss Grant, consider for a moment, the sacrifice you are about to make."

"Were I not sure, Colonel Windsor, that you are my friend, I would think you meant to insult me by speaking of my intended marriage to the man of my choice, the only man I ever *could* marry, as a sacrifice."

"True, Miss Grant. You are perfectly right. It was rude of me to call it a sacrifice. Grant me your pardon, I do not wish to cause you any pain; I would rather lose my life than insult you. I only

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wish to be your friend, and as your friend, implore you to stop for a moment and consider. I speak from entirely disinterested motives. I have only your good in my thoughts. I have nothing against Arthur Garland. Indeed, I do not know him. I may have met him once, but I do not know him. I am not passing judgment upon him. It is not my business to do so. But I ask you, Miss Grant, you the possessor of birth, beauty, and social position, to pass judgment on the man you are about to marry. It is your privilege, it is your duty. It is a duty you owe not less to yourself than to your friends, relatives and well-wishers. I will not speak of it as a sacrifice. I shall express it in less offensive, though more emphatic, language. I will ask you to contemplate the solemnity of the altered position you are about to assume."

"Your language, Colonel Windsor, would seem to imply that I have rashly consented to marry Arthur Garland without having weighed the action or its consequences. Now, for your private satisfaction, I beg to inform you that such is not the case."

"Ah, my dear Miss Grant, forgive me once more. What my language lacks my heart supplies. There are thoughts too deep for words. There is a sincerity of affection which even the most finely chosen words cannot convey. I know you have done your duty in this matter. You are talented

as well as beautiful. You have judgment; you have reason; you have nice discernment; you have intuitive knowledge of human nature; you have a pure and lofty mind, unstained by one spot of faithlessness, without one grain of suspicion. You have exercised all these qualities. You think you are satisfied. But why? Because your mind is so pure that you can see nothing but good in others. It is in such natures as yours to love all, to trust all, to forgive all. Such women as you have married men out of compassion though they did not love them. Such women as you have thrown away their lives, their happiness, their hopes of heaven, rather than cause some scheming villain an hour's pain, disappointment, or remorse. Again, even at the risk of incurring your displeasure, I beg of you to beware of yourself. Beware of your own nature; not of its weakness, but of its strength, of its nobility, of its virtue."

"Colonel Windsor, I cannot suspect the purity of your intentions, but I cannot resist laughing at your admonition. Surely if I possess all the good qualities which you attribute to me, you should have more confidence in me in this affair. Really, you have become quite a preacher. I must insist, however, that you will not further prosecute this line of conversation. It is extremely disagreeable. It would be mortifying to Arthur should he become aware of it."

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"He need never be any the wiser. It will certainly do you no good to acquaint him with the subject of our conversation."

"I shall certainly not feel it my duty to conceal this or anything else from Arthur when he shall have become my husband. If it is wrong for me to tell him of it, it is wrong for me to engage in it. Nothing unkind has been said of him. Nothing shall be withheld from him."

"That illustrates what I have just said. Your constancy and faithfulness extend even to trifles. Oh, what a strange world this is, where innocence becomes the means of its own destruction! You are too good for this world, Miss Grant. Such a confiding, honest nature as yours can never fight its way through this buffeting world without pain and loss. Do you think for a moment that this wonderful man whom you mean to marry, this acme of human excellence, this paragon of men, this Hyperion dropped down from among the gods, will observe such scrupulous good faith towards you? Well, this *is* a comical old world!"

"I have not the least doubt but he will. I have implicit faith in his honor. I believe he will keep no part of his life, present, past, or future, hidden from me."

"Ha, ha, ha! Oh, don't be too amusing, Miss Grant. This is carrying faith down to ridicule. What a splendid travesty!"

"It will always delight me to please or amuse you, Colonel Windsor, but I should prefer a more appropriate subject. And, really, I must say that your mirth is an enigma to me. If you can make so light of human faith, I fail to see on what ground you base the sermon on morals which you delivered a few moments ago. You evidently are not a disciple of your own doctrine."

"I beg your pardon, Miss Grant. You cannot see this matter as I do. You have not seen much of the world. You have not yet measured the average man. Oh, I assure you, Miss Grant, he is a fraud, a delusion, and a snare; a monster, in all verity! He brushes his promises aside like cobwebs. He cares nothing for woman but to have her serve him. He has little faith and less honor. If you will not hear me now, remember my words, for they will surely come to pass. Traverse every country in Europe, and follow the Stars and Stripes through half the States in the Union as I have done, and you will observe that this character applies not to one nation or class, but to every class and condition of men. Not one man out of a million can appreciate such a nature as yours."

"I am sorry to observe that you have so little faith in your own sex. I can say a good deal more than that for mine."

"Don't misunderstand me, Miss Grant, I am not speaking of *all* men, but of the *average* man."

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"Then, I am glad to say, it has never been my misfortune to have formed the acquaintance of an *average* man."

"Indeed! Then, I must have been misinformed, Miss Grant. Since coming to the village I have been told on all hands that your intended husband belongs to that class."

"I cannot believe that any resident of Seaton made use of such language. I am not aware that Arthur has a single enemy in this place and none but an enemy would give utterance to such a falsehood regarding him. Arthur was born and brought up here. He is known and esteemed by the whole village as a man of character and worth. I am sure he has never been known to do a mean or a dishonorable act."

"True, quite true; I believe all that. That is not what I refer to. I speak of birth. No thanks to a man for doing right. Perhaps he may never have had an opportunity of doing wrong to his profit. There are higher tests of human character. His best actions cannot give him noble birth. His virtues are merely negative."

Reader, you have already condemned me with your bitterest thoughts for having remained a passive auditor to all this abuse of myself and annoyance to Jean. But have you considered my position? Have you thought that as I heard this villain throw out his subtle insinuations against my

reputation, I was in danger of dashing his brains out with the first weapon I could lay my hands on? Who can describe my feelings? Who can imagine what resentment and murderous anger held sway in my bosom as I listened to this man, who had already attempted to murder me in cold blood, standing beside the woman who within two days was to be my wife, breathing in her ears by the use of every artful agency, the most defamatory accusations against my reputation. How could I endure it? How, or rather why had I suffered it so long? I know not. All I know is that I sat there unmanned by the very force of my own passion, fearing to move, lest in the awful moment which must follow, I should kill this man and myself. Had I not my revenge? What could be sweeter music to my ears than to hear his slanderous falsehoods refuted triumphantly by my true, loving Jean? What transport half so delightful as to hear my praises flowing from her lips and falling like drops of burning lava into the heart of my would-be murderer? My mind was now fully made up. I should listen to all the dialogue. I should hear every libel which this false man had to publish against me. I should witness my love making such a profession of her affection to me as no woman was ever before called upon to make. Mine would be the supreme pleasure of seeing this dastard driven from the field by the piercing shafts of a woman's satire. I

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stancy, and baffled in his vile attempts to turn
awry the current of her love. In his ignominious
defeat I should be more than conqueror, and should
find myself more than ever established in the
unassailable stronghold of Jean's love. Yes; I
would hear it all. That would be my chief revenge.
As a miser rubs his hands in the agony of delight
as he bends above his shining pelf, so I should
gloat over the abasement, defeat, and shame of this
impious wretch. And then? Then what? I had
not yet decided whether to sally forth, overtake him
in his retreat and beat him with my own hands, or to
commit him into the custody of the law for his past
offence. In the mean time I would listen, and trust
my ultimate decision to the course which the dia-
logue which was now waxing warmer should event-
ually take.

CHAPTER VIII.

"NEGATIVE virtue!" Jean exclaimed with unwonted ardor. "Is doing right negative? If so, pray what is positive? You astound me! Noble birth, forsooth! One would think to hear you speak that you were not an American! Is this a land, Colonel Windsor, where distinctions of birth are built on? This is America, the home of the free. I love it! I love this land! What is the foundation stone of our Constitution? If I remember aright, Arthur told me it is this—'All men are born free and equal.' That is the grandest sentiment ever moulded by human lips. It is the true basis of all society; it is the embodiment of the highest philosophy. It is more than half of Christ's teaching. Upon this rock of equal birth, equal rights, and equal laws, we have planted the foundation of this grand Republic, destined to be the greatest nation the world has ever seen. It is this motto, filling the youth of our land with holy aspirations, that lifts the peasant's son from the plough to the President's chair. It is the true principle to which every human heart lends its assent without comment or argument. All men

are born free and equal. It was this sentiment which drove the Pilgrim Fathers to forsake all that was dear to them in the old land, to adventure on a stormy sea, and to found this country, the asylum of justice, the home of equality and freedom, the cradle of progress and fraternity. It was this sentiment that led our brothers to take up arms against each other and sacrifice their peace, their families, their lives, in order to strike the yoke of bondage from off the neck of slavery. It is this sentiment that makes our whole nation applaud true worth and heroism irrespective of birth, creed, or nationality. I am not ashamed of Arthur Garland's birth, I am proud of it; proud to know that he has risen above his birth's invidious bar to occupy a position of promise and honor among his fellows. His parents were not rich; neither were they poor. They had sufficient of this world's goods to make them comfortable, and they were always respectable. Arthur Garland is a true man, a gentleman. I think a man who has sufficient pluck and energy to win his way in the world is much to be preferred to a self-styled gentleman through whose veins there run the hereditary vices of a long line of ancestral profligates, whose only merit is his accidental birth in a palace and whose only wealth is the moiety of a fund wrung from the very hearts of a long-suffering peasantry, rendered feeble, effeminate, and unresisting by centuries of social tyranny and monarchi-

cal extravagance. I must repeat that you amaze me, Colonel Windsor, by referring to distinctions of birth as a ground of preference. I would rather marry the son of our old gardener if he proved himself a worthy man, than a titled snob with nothing but vicious and idiotic tendencies in his composition. So would any American girl."

"What a splendid speech! What an eloquent exposition of the elementary principles of republican government! All men *are* born free and equal. The trouble, is they won't remain that way. Some rise into higher liberty, some sink into slavery, some attain to wealth, some grovel in poverty; some pursue virtue, others revel in vice: some become martyrs, heroes, deliverers, reformers, and philanthropists, while others develop into murderers, cowards, oppressors, fossils, and misanthropists. I am not an American, I must confess I am an Englishman. You Americans are mighty levelers but you are also cunning trimmers. Technically speaking, you level up and trim down."

"I don't understand you, Colonel Windsor."

"I simply mean this. You would have every person who is above you in rank, wealth or influence, brought down to your level. You would level all who are above you. But *there* you would have the levelling stop. You would not have yourself levelled with those who are below you. Each individual begins to trim exactly at that degree in the

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social thermometer opposite which he is the marginal black line. You denounce the titled aristocracy of Europe, because it will not marry and be given in marriage with the offspring of rampant democracy. But when one of your daughters elopes with your coachman, you are humiliated and affronted, and you renounce her as an outcast from your family. Oh, you are indeed a nation of hypocrites! Why not be consistent? Why not acknowledge the propriety of titular distinctions, or if not carry your leveling process down to the lowest point of society?"

"There is no doubt something in what you say. You view us from the standpoint of the individual, I, from the standpoint of the nation."

"Then, Miss Grant, we understand each other on that subject. Seldom do I meet even an American woman who can bring such an eloquent array of facts in support of her position as you have done. I did not know before that you could number among your numerous accomplishments and talents that of the eloquence of a Webster. Would to Heaven you had known who you were and what your talents were before you had promised to throw yourself away on one who is in no way your peer."

"Colonel Windsor, what do you mean? I have a little more faith in my own judgment than I have in yours, and in my judgment Arthur Garland is my peer, and more than my peer. My marriage is a matter of my own private business and I shall

suffer no dictation from any one concerning it. The man I have chosen is the man I love. That settles it. No one has a right to question or criticise after that."

"Yes; that's very well, Miss Grant. But why do you love Arthur Garland?"

"Because he is worthy of my love."

"Very well; there is much sense in an answer of that kind. If he is worthy he must have worth of some kind."

"So he has; he has worth of every kind."

"Indeed! I am delighted to hear it. His education? I suppose he has a finished education?"

"Yes, he was graduated at Harvard."

"With honors I suppose?"

"No, I believe not. If so, he has not told me of it."

"Ah! that's unfortunate. A college course nowadays without honors amounts to little. What profession does he practise?"

"He is not a professional gentleman."

"No profession? You surely would prefer a professional gentleman. A woman of your ambition would never be happy tied to a man without professional aspiration. A man without a profession is like a bird without wings; he cannot rise; he cannot fly; he cannot shine; he cannot move. He must remain stationary all his life. If he has no ambition all the better for him; for then he can

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seek seclusion, and avoiding the curious eye of the world, let his narrow life burn out unused and unnoticed. If he have an ambition, thrice pitiful is he then. His futile and painful attempts to rise against a fate that cannot be assuaged, will evoke the pity, the sympathy and the tears of the world to no other purpose than to kill with sorrow and remorse the helpless object which calls them forth. I hope it is not yet too late for you to recall your vow and save yourself a life fruitless in everything but misery, regret and disappointment."

"I have decided. You have no right to ask me to change my mind."

"My dear Miss Grant, you are perfectly right in what you say. I have no right to ask you to change your mind. I do not ask it as a right. I do not even ask it as a favor to myself. I ask it as a kindness to you. Were I seeking to further any interest of my own, do you think my independent spirit would permit me to insist as I have done on your re-consideration of this solemn relation into which you are about to enter? Never. But I feel that you are too much of a lady to misjudge me, or to construe as an offence anything I may say as a kindness, even though it may be said, as truth and sincerity are always expressed, with bluntness and directness, bordering on apparent rudeness."

"I beg your pardon, Colonel Windsor, if I have been too hasty in replying to your kind counsel. I

have not the slightest suspicion that you are acting from a selfish motive. I know you are advising as a friend. If I cannot accept your advice, it is because it is impossible for me to do so. I love Arthur Garland. I shall marry him. Can we find no other subject more pleasant to discourse? Forgive me, if I have been impatient or ill-tempered."

"You have done or said nothing which requires pardon. I understand your predicament. In truth I sympathize with you profoundly. I presume this young man must be the possessor of great wealth?"

"Do you mean Mr. Garland? I do not know anything about the extent of his fortune. I know he has enough to keep me supplied with whatever I may require or he would not ask me to become his wife."

"Ha, ha, ha! Great heavens! Miss Grant, are you losing your reason? It cannot be true that *you*, a woman among millions, are going to literally throw yourself away on a youth without birth, without education, without profession, without wealth! Impossible! It cannot be! I am dreaming! Oh, Miss Grant, I implore you, do not wreck your life's happiness, by indulging in a whim. Do not act rashly or hastily. You are young yet. Take time. Postpone your marriage for a year. That will give you time to consider, time to reflect. A few days more and it will be too late. All will be over and you will be a prisoner for life, bound in

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"I cannot stop to consider what Arthur Garland possesses. It is enough that I love him. Of one thing I am certain, that he possesses the highest earthly treasures—a Christian hope and a blameless reputation."

"Are you quite sure of that?"

"Absolutely sure."

"Have you known him all his life?"

"I have."

"Has he always lived here?"

"Yes; with short intervals at school and abroad."

"Ah, just so; very good; have—have—have you a particular knowledge of how he deported himself while at college?"

"No; but I have no doubt he conducted himself as a gentleman."

"Miss Grant, I regret to say there are one or two incidents in the life of this young man of which you appear to be entirely ignorant. I fear he has not kept faith with you."

"I am sure he has acted in good faith. No one can say anything against him."

"I admire your fidelity. But facts cannot lie. There are a few things about him you should know. I did not come here to disclose them to you. When you said a moment ago that Garland had never done a mean act, I agreed with you, though

I knew the contrary to be the truth. I did not wish to give you the pain of learning his offences. It gives me pain to think of them. I little dreamt it should ever become necessary for me to speak of them to you. But since this gallant adventurer has not had the honor to tell you of them, I, as your friend, would be recreant to our friendship did I not disclose these damaging escapades of your lover, so that you may be fairly prepared for what may be the sequel to your marriage should you persist in your present purpose."

"Colonel Windsor, stop! Not another word! I will not hear you! Whatever you might say against the honor of Arthur Garland would be false. I would not believe it and I will not hear it. I am beginning to suspect your motives. You cannot be my friend, when you wish to cause me such pain—unnecessary pain and worry."

"Brave girl! My brave trusting Jean!" I thought, and trembled in delirious triumph. "You are the truest and bravest of women," I whispered to my heart. My position was becoming painfully uncomfortable. I chid myself for having sat there in silence so long. I called myself a coward, a weakling, a nobody. Was there ever a man before, since the world began, who would sit covertly by, and listen unmoved to a treacherous rival deliberately coining a fabric of lies about himself and pouring them with all the venom and subtlety of a

I did not wish his offences. It little dreamt it me to speak of t adventurer has them, I, as your friendship did I apades of your epared for what should you per-

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serpent into the ears of his betrothed? Did there ever before live a man who would not defend his lady-love from the unchivalrous attack of a deceiver's insolence?

Never until that moment had I entertained an intelligent appreciation of Shakespeare's "Hamlet." Like him, I had the motive and the intention to act. Like his, my enemy had stained his hands in innocent blood. Like him, I was called upon by all that was good and sacred to avenge a great wrong. Hamlet's guilty, incestuous uncle had found his own brother asleep, and took advantage of the occasion to rob him of his life; my wretched enemy, Colonel Windsor, under almost equally disadvantageous circumstances, satisfied himself that he had murdered me; Shakespeare's model of fiendish crime had pretended to soothe the sorrow of his brother's wife by becoming her most devoted husband. Colonel Windsor was now sitting within a few yards of me, seeking by insult and falsehood to sever me from the one treasure in all the world which I held dear. Yet with all this damning evidence against Colonel Windsor burning at my core, Hamlet-like, I lacked the courage, the decision, the manhood, to strike. But I was now committed to my position. Since I had heard so much I would hear all—then I would confront Colonel Windsor with a terrible reckoning. But while I decided on this definite course of ac-

tion, I could not conceal from myself the fact that my senses were becoming confused and my anger uncontrollable. My brain was on fire, and I dreaded what the next few moments might bring forth.

Celone! Windsor, it became evident to me, had arranged his attack upon Jean's affection with the utmost skill and tact. He had first figured in the rôle of a polished gentleman, too proud and well-bred to impute even a single dishonorable thought to me or any one else. In this character he had exhausted, to no purpose, all his stock in trade of finesse, duplicity and masked hypocrisy.

He had endless resource. He next pretended to honestly and conscientiously weigh me in the balance and declared that he found me wanting—wanting in birth, in education, in wealth, in everything. Here again he was foiled. Then he directed his malignity against my private character. But all in vain.

What course was he now about to pursue? Would he invent specific falsehoods? Thank God, there was nothing in my life which I feared he would disclose. Of one thing I was certain—that Jean Grant would remain steadfast to the end. Her faith would not waver, her love would not swerve, her heart would remain mine. Had I doubted this I could not have sat there one moment. I should have sprung at the villain's throat.

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CHAPTER IX.

"MISS GRANT! Jean! Let me call you Jean," continued Colonel Windsor, affecting the utmost pathos, "in the name of God, do not misread my thoughts. As I live, they are for your welfare. Have I known you and enjoyed your friendship if not your affection, have I thought of you, corresponded with you, yes, even loved you to no purpose? Can you for a moment doubt my sincerity? Have I not lived more for you than for anything else in the world? Yes, and I will do more. If necessary I can die for you. Often have I staked my life on the field of battle for my country. I call Heaven to witness that I love you more than I do my country or myself. Can you, will you, do you believe me capable of any act of infidelity towards you?"

Colonel Windsor had so well simulated a sincere and devoted interest that he was now standing before Jean in a most beseeching attitude. As he delivered this exordium, his voice trembled, his face twitched nervously, his whole frame shook with intense excitement; and, as if his art could excel nature herself, every word he spoke received

emphasis from a fitting wafture of the hand, facial gesture or motion of the body. The devil himself, who sometimes appears as an angel of light, could not have done a better piece of acting.

This well-chosen speech, to my astonishment, had produced the desired effect. It had appealed to Jean's pity. It had touched her sympathy. It disarmed her rising anger and suspicion and afforded her wily companion an opportunity of going to the extreme of vituperation and slander towards which he had been gravitating.

"Oh! Colonel Windsor, pardon me for my unkind and inconsiderate words. Truly, my mind is sorely perplexed. It seems as if I were scarcely myself. So many thoughts crowd into my brain at once, that I am confused, and scarcely know what I say. Forgive me! What could have induced me to address such language to an old and trusted friend? Forgive me!"

"Ah, my dear Jean," continued Colonel Windsor, rejoicing in her perplexity, "I have nothing to forgive. I am glad you will hear me. It is not like you to be uncivil. Your language is usually like yourself, gentle, loving, confiding, full of music and sweetness. You *will* hear me. I rejoice. It is painful to me beyond what I can express. To *you* it will be torture. But hear it. It relates to your love, your happiness, your life."

"I shall hear it," said Jean, almost in tears. "I

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cannot believe anything you may say against Arthur, but I will *hear* it from you as a friend."

I now perceived more clearly than ever the difficulty of my situation. I had compromised myself. Jean, after all, was but human. She had now consented to listen to this man breathing out falsehoods against me. Already I felt myself becoming angry with her. But what if she should believe him! What if she should betray the slightest insincerity or inconstancy toward me! What if she should let drop a word of suspicion or conjecture as to my past life, or discredit, even by her silence, any of the representations I had made to her. The moment was critical. A word, a laugh, a sigh or a tear from Jean might wreck the whole of our anticipated happiness; might fill our lives with the gall of bitterness. Merciful heaven! the test was too severe. Had I not courted the defeat of my fondest hopes? Why had I not made my presence known? Why had I not foreseen what might happen? But now, too late. I had placed my chances on the cast of a die. I had helped to weave my own crown, and, whether of thorns or of roses, I must wear it. Would Jean stand the test? I hoped, I believed she would. If so, my revenge and my victory would be sealed at once. If she wavered in one point all would be lost.

"Yes; I thought you would. That is more like you; more like your sober, intelligent, discriminat-

ing mind. Each of us in life must learn and endure. Better know facts than their consequences. Better know where the adder lies than step on it. Better, Miss Grant, a thousand times better, that you should become acquainted with Mr. Garland's history before marriage, than to have your whole life embittered by learning of it, as you would be sure to do, when you had gone too far to retrace your steps."

"Oh, Colonel Windsor, surely it cannot be anything so bad as that."

"You shall judge. You shall hear. I have no quarrel with Mr. Garland. Believe me, I would not wrong the young man; I am more anxious to extenuate than to aggravate the measure of his offence. I was living at Boston when Mr. Garland was attending school there, and to make a long story short, Miss Grant, I may say that he betrayed and ruined one of the most beautiful girls in that city. Her parents were very poor, but she was admired by all for her beauty and her innocence. She afterwards followed him to California, trudging across the continent encumbered by the token of her shame until she stood before her betrayer. Finding that he closed his heart to her appeals and laughed at her misfortune, she lost her reason and died in a mad-house."

"Oh, Colonel Windsor!" cried my much wronged Jean, and swooned away. When she

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rallied, she found herself in his arms pressed closely to his breast. At once she sprang to her feet and exclaimed,—

"Sir, why do you hold me in this way? You have no right to do so. This, that you tell me about Arthur Garland, is false; it cannot be true. Tell me that it is a falsehood. I know him so well; I respect him; I confide in him; I love him. *He* could not treat any one in such a manner. There must be some dreadful mistake."

"Yes, yes! she denied it. But she hesitates, doubts. Why did she swoon? She must inwardly believe this lie. Can she believe this of me? If so—if so— Oh, I shall go mad. I must strike now! No, not yet!" I thought.

"Ha, ha, ha!" laughed the Colonel, with a most malicious voice. "I scarcely expected you should believe it. But facts cannot lie. I know whereof I speak. It was my misfortune to have been intimately acquainted with this poor, yet worthy family, whose hearth was forever darkened by the man you mean to marry. Miss Grant! My dear Miss Grant! Pause and think. You will not marry this man. You will not share his poverty and his shame. You will not leave your palatial home for the squalid hovel he will furnish you in the meanest city quarter. Say you will not. Are men so scarce? Your mistaken love for this man will perish in a day or two. Then it will be your privilege

to accept the hand of some noble, worthy and wealthy gentleman whose education and social standing will compare with your own. Think what it is to become the wife of such a man; to be the brightest ornament of his home; to be the queen of his heart; the joy of his life; to attract the admiration and to silence the envy of his detractors; to be the leader in the circle in which he moves; to employ the many opportunities of doing good afforded by his virtuous and exalted character, by his vast fortune and his sympathetic devotion to every philanthropic movement."

"Oh, what shall I do?" exclaimed Jean, almost in despair. "How shall I ever meet him again? How shall I ever trust him? Would to Heaven you had not told me this; for though I cannot believe it, it will never leave my memory. What shall I do? Where shall I go for sympathy, for pity, for the truth? I cannot believe it, Colonel Windsor, I cannot believe it. He, of all men most gentle, loving, pious even, to be the author of such infamy! Impossible! Oh, my heart will break! my head is bursting! It cannot be."

"My dear Jean, if I may make so free as to call you that, do you doubt my word?"

"No, no; I do not doubt you. But there must be some mistake. It cannot be he. It cannot be Arthur Garland! He is too good, too true!"

"My dear Jean, I sympathize most profoundly

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with you. Were it possible that I could be mis-
taken, I would not have told you at all. There *can*
be no mistake. There *is* no mistake."

"Then, I shall know all. He will be here in a
few minutes. I shall ask him all about it. I shall
quote you as my authority. He shall explain all
satisfactorily, or forfeit his right to my love!"

"Brave Jean! you are now yourself. That would
be a proper course. But how about me? Must I,
because I played the part of a friend to you, forever
bear the brunt of this vicious man's anger and re-
venge? Surely not!"

"No, no, never; you shall not suffer. I must
not ask him for an explanation. I could not do so
without involving you. What shall I do? Oh, I
pray you, Colonel Windsor, counsel me in your
wisdom; direct my footsteps in this perilous hour.
I cannot marry Arthur Garland and silently nurse
the thought through life, that by doing so, I have
condoned the ruin and death of this hapless daugh-
ter of poverty. I cannot reject his hand without
telling him my reason; and I cannot even mention
the affair to him without betraying the confidence
of my dearest friend. Oh, merciful heaven! what
shall I do!" exclaimed the duped woman, in a
passionate outburst of tears.

It was too late now for me to interpose. The
spell of my love for Jean Grant was irretrievably
broken. My pride, my anger, rose in revolt. She

had heard the wretch's libels; she had more than half believed them. Most cruel of all, she had expressed her willingness to reject my love, refuse my hand and defeat our intended marriage rather than give me the name of her informant. Jean had broken faith with me. No power, no inducement could now have led me to marry her. I would choose rather to roam the earth, a hopeless pilgrim, an outcast from society, hated of all men, and a hater of all. I would prefer to spend the remainder of my life pining in some dungeon, forgotten and unknown. Oh God! what cruel fate! In the midst of my anger, I felt something beyond common sorrow for Jean. Jean Grant! my darling Jean! my poor, lost Jean! duped by a villain! swayed from the true, honest purpose of her innocent heart by the flattery and the falsehood of one of the most degenerate of men! But I tore this pity, this sorrow, this charity, from my heart and threw it beneath my feet. Why had she yielded? Why had she listened? Why had she believed? Fool, fool, fool! and I? What had I done to deserve it? True, I should not have allowed Jean to walk in the path of temptation. When I first heard her in converse with Colonel Windsor, I should have rushed to her side and snatched her to my breast as if she had been playing with a reptile, to touch which would be death. Still I felt a fierce, almost maniacal, gladness that I

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had not done so. Jean was not true. She had
been deceiving me all along, possibly without know-
ing it. Had we been married, her deceit and hol-
low-heartedness must sooner or later have manifested
themselves, with still more awful consequences.

Better now; better, far better, that I should en-
dure my present disappointment, mortification and
resentment, than that we should have, by the union
of unholy hands, entailed upon ourselves the curse
which, by divine decree, as well as by the laws of
nature, is pronounced upon a loveless marriage.

This thought temporarily hushed the storm of my
passion, and cooled my heart so suddenly that it
became a stone. What cared I? I felt like burst-
ing out in a long, loud ring of laughter at the
hideous mockery and the double-dyed hypocrisy
that marked the scene! Without emotion, I saw
Colonel Windsor, through the lattice, taking Jean's
white hand in his own and chafing it tenderly; saw
him examine with scornful scrutiny the large dia-
mond ring I had placed upon her finger to seal the
vows of our betrothal; saw its brilliant scintillations
flash out in the mellow moonlight, as if to appeal
against the touch of his traitorous fingers; without
emotion, I saw him remove it from her finger and
place thereon a much larger and brighter one of his
own. To all this, she, still sobbing, tearfully as-
sented. I did not feel angry or envious or remorse-
ful, as I saw him draw her closer and closer to his

side, until her head drooped upon his breast and his arm encircled her neck. I could even hear every whispering word of endearment with which he tried to win her affection. His plan had worked to a miracle. She had compromised herself. She was now completely within his power; he had only to dictate and she would obey; he had only to suggest and she would act; he had only to lead and she would follow.

His demands grew bolder. His voice became soft, low and plaintive. I heard him exclaim with all the passionate devotion of a rustic making his first proposal—"Jean! Jean! my beautiful, my dearest! Let me aid you, let me direct you, let me love you! Oh, Jean! At last, at last I have found courage and occasion to express my love for you! I love you, I love you! Never man loved woman as I love you! Never woman so lovely, so good, so pure as you. Let me call you mine,—mine for life, my own, my love, my wife! Let me shield you from the perils of this hour, from the intrigues of a designing adventurer, from every rough blast that blows across the desert of this ungrateful world. To-night—yes; to-night even *now*, I am prepared to make you my wife, my queen; to make you the happiest and most loved wife in this great Republic!"

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my fortune; and be my wife. Do not subject yourself to the humiliation of asking an explanation from Mr. Garland. Of course, he would deny it all. Yet, it is true, it is true! Before heaven I have told you the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. I have taken his ring off your finger. I have placed my own upon it. I have sealed our affection by a kiss upon your brow. Let me call you my wife and seal our love upon your lips."

Weak woman! The farce was over. Jean was won by another, and I was lost. She turned her tear-wet face upwards to receive his fatal kiss, and I knew that Jean Grant's life and mine were forever separated.

As soon as he had imprinted the kiss that sealed the compact, he said:

"At once! Veil your face. Accompany me to the village. If you remain here, he may come and cause trouble. Never mind your wardrobe! I shall procure for you in New York a more gorgeous trousseau than the one you leave. In fifteen minutes our carriage shall be ready to start. We shall stop at a small village between here and the city long enough to be married. Oh, my love! my life! even to-night you shall be my wife! Come."

She took his arm. For a moment he paused, and saying in a contemptuous tone, "Like this bauble let Arthur Garland's hopes be lost," he threw my

ring far down into the pine copse that stood in the little valley just outside the lawn.

My passion rose again. Decision at last came to me. In a moment I stood before the horrified pair. Jean uttered a loud, piercing scream and sank insensible to the earth.

Colonel Windsor stood rooted to the ground, unable, in his petrification, to move a muscle.

"Villain! coward! betrayer!" I muttered savagely.

His senses, after an instant, returned; his right hand stole to his hip pocket.

I divined his intention, knowing by painful experience, his unexampled treachery, and quick as a flash, I struck him a terrible blow on the right temple with my clenched hand, and as he fell to the earth, like a dead man, his cocked revolver dropped from his nerveless hand to the grass. I picked it up, and, taking it by the muzzle, threw it far down into the dark clump of pine into which my ring had a few moments before been thrown.

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CHAPTER X.

I TURNED my face away from this scene of my own abasement. I dashed madly along the wide gravel path leading to the street. The moon nearly full, rode high in the starry dome, and made the earth effulgent with her light. It was almost as clear as day. As I hurried along toward the gate, the faces and figures of the sculptures were distinctly visible. These, and every other one of the familiar objects, struck my burning imagination with indescribable pain, recalling days and scenes that never would return; faces and friends dearer to me than my life, now parted forever; hopes enkindled by a woman's love, and shattered by her deception.

Swifter than words can describe, years of happiness and promise rushed through my heart, through my brain, and departed forever, leaving in their stead the dregs of hope, the withered leaves of blighted promise, the black mausoleum of disappointed love and the insatiable void of wasted affection. As I closed the latch of the gate, and took a farewell look at Dunmore's stately and massive form, standing out clear and beautiful; its

glittering turrets reflecting the surpassing grandeur of the constellated heavens, I seemed to hear a voice, sweet but sad, crying, "Come back! come back! Stay thy steps! Return, and all will be well!" "In vain! Too late! too late!" responded my sickened heart.

Onward I dashed down the little hill, at the foot of which there stood the sombre, silent, pine-copse, with here and there a poplar, its silvery leaves trembling as if to imitate the twinkling stars. There, too, purred the little stream, beside which Jean and I had often sat indulging in castle-building, planning ever some new and more transporting delight for our wedded life. Swollen slightly by the summer rains, it gambolled and leaped in mirthful music over its pebbly channel, and crept with muffled ripple into the slumbering copse. Its music and its mirth were the same as of yore, but how changed was my heart! How changed was hers! Oh, God! what misery, what spoliation, what torture may be inflicted upon one human heart by the perversity of another!

I crossed the narrow bridge spanning this stream. To me, this was the bridge of fate. How often, in boyhood's happy hours, had my froward feet crossed and recrossed its narrow span. How little did I then think that this insignificant structure should mark the two great turning points of my life. Here had I been waylaid and left for dead. From here I

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had been carried to Dunmore to be nursed by the woman whose love I wished to win. Her love I had won—perhaps her affected love merely—I will not say, I will not judge. I now crossed this bridge for the last time, having failed in everything, having lost all. This bridge, once crossed, separated me, by more than a metaphor, from Dunmore, from Jean, forever.

A sudden impulse seized me. I must stand on this spot for a minute or two. I must, for one brief memorable moment, stand on this fatal spot, and let the thoughts which its association conjured up, throng on me as they would. I did so. That moment seemed like an awful dream, a phantasmagoria of woe and hate and envy and deformity.

I turned to continue my walk towards the village, but I walked as one not knowing whither he went. I was walking in a dream, a terrible dream, such as Dante depicted in his immortal "Inferno."

I was vaguely aware that a carriage containing two ladies, stopped in front of me, and that I heard and recognized the voices of Mrs. Sherman and Leonore addressing me. I heard them calling my name in accents of terror and surprise. What else they said I remember not. What I did or how I answered them, I know not.

By some strange instinct, I staggered on to the depot, and boarded the city-bound train. I threw myself into a seat and sank into night's oblivion.

CHAPTER XI.

FOR a month, I lay in a state of unconsciousness, my mind raging with the delirium of typhoid. When I came to myself, I occupied a private ward in a New York hospital. For some time my mind seemed wrapt in clouds and mists. I could not realize my position. I spoke to the nurse. "Pray good lady," I said, "how came I hither? What place is this? Observation informs me that it is a hospital. But what brought *me* here? Have I been sick? Have I been the victim of an accident? What has been the matter? What is the name of this place?"

"Pray sir, do not let these trifles give you any concern. You have been ill—very ill. I shall tell you no more at present. In a few days, when you will have recovered more of your strength, I shall answer all your questions. I shall consider it a pleasing duty. At present, Mr. Garland, I must insist upon rest and silence as the proper course for you."

"Mr. Garland?" I muttered to myself. "How does *she* know my name?"

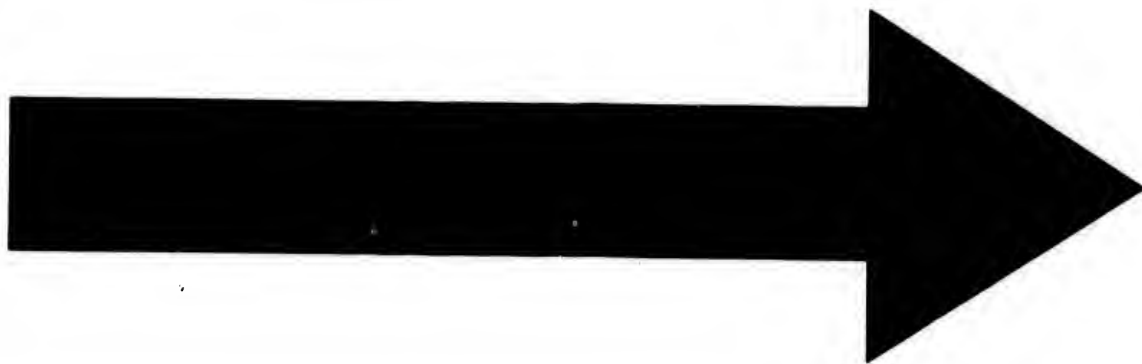
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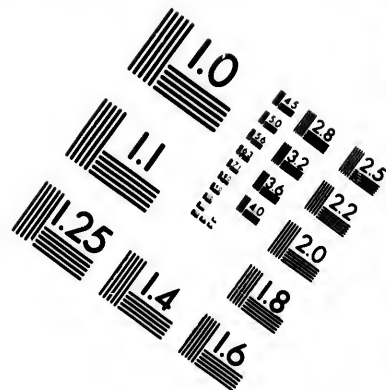
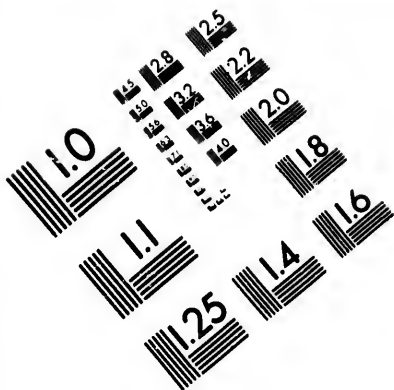
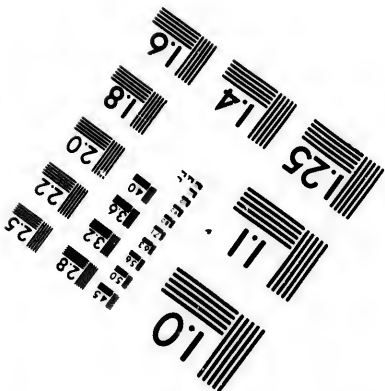
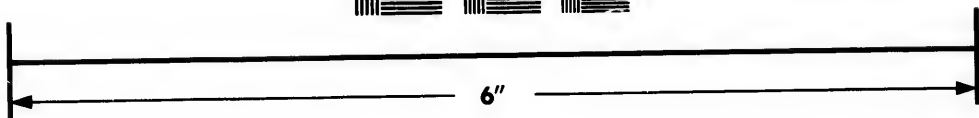
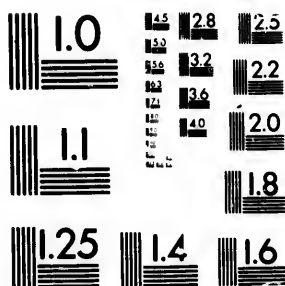


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look upon the girl who, by the way seemed fair, gentle, and sympathetic to a fault, I pleaded—"My dear young lady, you are very kind. I am very glad, whatever my misfortune has been, to have had so efficient a nurse. And now, I crave at your hands a favor, an indulgence. There are some horrid, confused thoughts in my brain which will drive me mad, unless I get them cleared up. Tell me, no matter at what cost to myself, where I am, and how I came to this place?"

"Indeed, sir, I would much rather not. I must not transgress my instructions. But I may say that you are in New York. Nearly a month ago, I understand, you were found in a Pullman coach which reached the city, in a dying condition. You had been stricken down on your journey, by a most malignant type of typhoid. The next day, a young gentleman by the name of Wentworth brought you here. He said he was a relative of yours. He bade us spare no pains or expense in restoring you to health. He remained for a fortnight or more in the city, and called to inquire for you several times daily. As soon as you were pronounced out of danger, he returned home. Each morning's post brings a letter of inquiry from him which I answer by the evening mail. His address is Seaton—Mr. George Wentworth, Seaton, N. Y."

"Wentworth! Wentworth! Seaton! George Wentworth, Seaton! Ah!" I gasped, clutching my

forehead in my burning pains. Slowly, link by link, the horrible phantom revealed itself. George Wentworth! Seaton! Dunmore! Leonore Sherman! Jean Grant! Ah! That's a terrible pang! Jean Grant! What is it? Oh, my brain will burst while I wrestle with some slow—returning memory. What! what! Ah, that's it. Now, now, I've got it! Jean Grant, my Jean! My beloved, my own, my darling Jean! Ah, what a solace in that thought! My brain is cool once more! The fever has left me. I remember all now," I said to my nurse who sat near by patiently watching me. "I remember all."

"That is well," she smilingly replied, you will rest better now."

"Yes; it is well! it is well. Where is Jean? Why is she not here? Ah, how strange! We were to have been married! Why not married? Why not? Could she be false? Had I a rival? No; not now. I had once. Who? Colonel Windsor! Colonel Windsor! By heaven, I will kill him! He has robbed me of my love. He has ruined me. Now, now, I have it indeed! I will kill him! I will kill him," I shouted at the top of my voice, springing from my bed in the strength of my paroxysm.

Once more, I relapsed into unconsciousness. It was long before I had completely regained my bodily strength and mental tone. Over and over again, I studied the strange experiences I had passed through at Seaton. I wondered if Jean had

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fled with her guilty abductor. I wondered if Mrs. Sherman and Leonore had become acquainted with the facts of the case. Did they know the cause of my sudden departure from Seaton? Was it not possible that my action might have been misconstrued?

George Wentworth called on me several times in the hospital, but we never allowed our conversation to touch that painful subject. He was too considerate of my feelings; I, too proud to refer to it.

Yet I would have given my right arm to know what happened at Dunmore after I left, and what interpretation my friends, and the world at large, had put upon my conduct. How should I find out? I was at my wit's ends. Suddenly, I thought of the press; of the omniscient eye and the omnipresent pen of the modern reporter. I despatched a messenger for the leading city papers of the date of my departure from Seaton, and waited impatiently for his return. I was not disappointed. The *Herald's* description of the affair was—

"ELOPEMENT.

AN EXCITING ROMANCE AT SEATON.

How a Gilded, Unscrupulous Adventurer from the
South Captured the Belle and Richest
Helress of the Village.

An Engagement Broken—A Valuable Trousseau thrown
aside—A Lover Driven Mad, while a Dashing
Fop carries off the Prize.

"SEATON.—A most exciting romance has just happened in this village. Mrs. Sherman and her two daughters, Jean and Leonore, are the wealthiest family in the county. Jean and Leonore are very beautiful, and are reputed to be worth a million each. Jean has for several years been engaged to Arthur Garland, the highly esteemed son of an old resident of this place. He struck luck in the California gold mines, and returned for his bride. Everything was ready for the wedding on Wednesday of this week. The guests were all invited and the trousseau, which is said to be gorgeous, was fully completed, and sent down from New York last night.

"A few days ago a dashing young Southerner, with splendid black eyes, good appearance and address, and any amount of cheek, fine clothes and jewelry, struck the town, ostensibly on official business. He soon sized up the town. Learning of Mrs. Sherman's circumstances, he manipulated matters so as to procure an introduction to her and her daughters. He laid siege to Jean's heart and stormed that citadel successfully. He dubbed himself 'Colonel,' talked a great deal of twaddle about his birth, parentage and so on, and occasionally hinted, with affected modesty, of his immense wealth and influence. At last Jean succumbed to his persistence. While her mother and sister were out of town last evening, she eloped with the 'Colonel.' But the most exciting part is to follow. Young Garland was on his way to Mrs. Sherman's to spend the evening with Jean, when he met his faithless sweetheart just starting off with 'Colonel' Windsor. Jean fainted, and Garland, who has plenty of muscle and pluck, pitched into Windsor and gave

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him a tremendous thrashing. Garland then took the night train for New York, and the despatches of this morning say that he has become mentally deranged. Windsor gathered up what was left of himself and his bride, drove to New York and was married last night. The affair has evoked intense excitement in the little village. All sorts of rumors are afloat. One is to the effect that Garland once worsted Windsor in a duel and that the latter has now had his revenge. Much sympathy is felt for young Garland, who is a universal favorite, and the opinion is freely expressed that this beautiful young heiress has rejected a very worthy and promising young gentleman and has absolutely thrown herself away on a worthless adventurer."

From this off-hand synopsis, not strictly in accordance with the facts of the case in every particular, yet setting forth in a general way its main features, I learned that the impression left on the public mind was favorable, and, I may say, just, towards me. "Colonel" Windsor was characterized in language indicating that he was known to the public as a notorious, not to say infamous, character. Doubtless, the additional facts necessary to do complete justice to my conduct, would long ere this, have been disclosed to Leonore and her mother, by George Wentworth. I cared little whether or not every particular became known to the public, as I should never again show my face where I was known; but I *was* solicitous, intensely solicitous,

that my good friends at Dunmore should be in the possession of the whole truth. Their good opinion was the only thing, along with the friendship of Wentworth, which I now wished to cherish. On the whole, I was not displeased with the reports circulated by the newspapers. They declared that I was mentally deranged. This would make the public which has no faculty for expending thought on lunatics or imbeciles, discard me from its mind as if I were dead; dead to the public mind, I would soon be forgotten, and, in this way, would be enabled to make a new start in life.

Indeed, such an experience as I had passed through, re-creates a man. I was a new man in all but name. I was starting out with a new birth, a new complexion stamped upon my very nature, new hopes, new ambitions, a new religion even, as far as my relation to my fellow-men was concerned. But I must go where I was not known, where my presence and my name would not revive odious comparisons and painful memories.

I saw Wentworth frequently. From him I learned that the whole truth of the affair was known to Leonore and her mother. I had their sympathy. They wished me to come and see them. They were heart-broken. Jean's conduct had disgraced them. They had lost all trace of her. The pair had been seen in New York. Further than that nothing was known about them. Colonel

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Windsor was not enrolled on the army list. Wentworth believed, with me, that Jean had fallen into a dangerous alliance. Leonore and her mother had tried in vain to ascertain her whereabouts.

"By Jove, Garland," said Wentworth, "I had no idea my joke would prove so very distressing. He thinks he has married an heiress; when he finds out his mistake, he may send her home penniless and disgraced; there is nothing vile he would not do; he may even kill her!"

I was too indifferent to speculate. I only listened. I decided to get out of New York as soon as I could do so. Of my intentions I gave Wentworth no inkling. If I wished him to know where I was, I could write him; otherwise I would be absent, forgotten—dead to the world!

CHAPTER XII.

I LEFT New York and took passage for California. I visited my former haunts. Those of my old friends who still remained to the fore, were much struck with my changed condition of mind and actions. They exercised their curiosity in vain.

This time, I was not seeking to augment my wealth. My income was now more than adequate to a life of travel, and my idea was to pass from country to country, kill time as best I could, and await with indifference life's final doom. I formed no new friendships. Society had no meaning to me. I had little faith in man, and none at all in woman. The more beautiful the woman, the more she disgusted me; and the smile of a female turned my heart into fire. I had no object in life. Even my scheme of wandering was of the vaguest possible character. I had no plan laid out. I knew not when I should leave one part of the earth for another. It might be in a day, in a month or in a year. I had no guide in such matters, save impulse or, vagary, if you like. I knew not what country I should next visit. My ideas of right and wrong had become confused. Sunday might find me

attending divine worship, Monday find me gambling at faro.

After spending several months in the Golden State, I stepped aboard the mail steamer, *Grand Pacific*, bound for Melbourne, Australia. As the vessel swings from the pier, I see among the crowd that wafts us their adieux a tall, dark man, standing with his side face towards me, addressing a lady. It looks like Colonel Windsor. I strain my eyes. He turns towards me. It is he! The lady? I see her clearly. Young, fair, smiling, but it is not his wife; it is not Jean. "Poor Jean! your punishment therefore is greater, I fear, than you can bear!"

Arrived in that great isolated continent, I made a rapid survey of it, passing from Melbourne to Sydney, thence to Brisbane, thence back to Adelaide, thence to Perth, whence I sailed around the western and northern coasts and spent a few days in the small Dutch settlement at the extreme south of New Guinea. From there, I took ship for British India; and, after visiting points of interest in nearly every country of Asia and Europe, I at last found myself in the capital of the world, London.

My travel had done something to restore my shattered energies. I felt stronger and better than ever before. I visited every place of amusement that came in my way in the four continents I had traversed, and had taken a turn, merely for the sake

of inspection, at every gambling table from San Francisco to Monaco, with the result of swelling my income beyond my desire. Fortune seems often most generous to a reckless spendthrift. I was bent on lavishly squandering my income, but the more prodigally I threw my money away, the more indulgently fortune showered her profuse offerings at my feet.

On reaching Melbourne I had wired Wentworth that Colonel Windsor was in San Francisco. But I gave no address and had heard nothing further from Seaton. Now that my morbid melancholy was cured, I wrote a long letter to Wentworth giving him an account of my travels. I received his reply; a long, interesting letter, full of cordial greetings. He was prospering. Jean had not been seen or heard of since her wedding day. Colonel Windsor could not be traced. Wentworth had gone to the Pacific in quest of the strange pair. In vain; foul play was now strongly suspected. Leonore and her mother were in great sorrow.

There was one part of the earth which I wished to visit. My desire, unaccountable as it was, to visit the island of New Guinea, was the strongest I had experienced since leaving Seaton. While passing through Torres Straits, our ship had anchored for a day or two to allow us to have a passing glimpse of the matchless shore of this

island. The impression it made on my mind was one of gorgeous splendor.

By my glowing descriptions of this region, and my offering to furnish all necessary funds, I was soon able to organize a small expedition to explore the interior of this, the richest and wildest island in the world. When a man loses faith in his kind, it is a relief for him to dwell among the most savage and uncivilized tribes and to have his feet rest upon solitary shores where the foot of man has never before trod.

Dr. George Parks, a young English physician with an eccentric but brilliant intellect, accompanied the expedition. His hobby was insanity and kindred diseases. He had read a great deal and had some new and startling theories of his own. About my own age and a little inclined to be ascetic, he and I grew to be warm friends. He diagnosed my own mental condition with accuracy. His careful study in the hospitals and asylums of the Continent enabled him to relate some weird, uncanny stories to which I often listened for hours at a time with absorbing interest.

Through the Straits of Gibraltar; across the Mediterranean; through the Suez Canal; into the Red Sea; out again through the Strait of Bab-el-Mandeb; into the Indian Ocean, across which we sailed into the Malayan Archipelago, we at length moored at the foot of the towering, irreg-

ular mountain-chain which guards the coast of Papua.

We spent some time among the Dutch and Chinese inhabitants who occupy the narrow, explored belt of the island, lying near the shore, whose sole industry seems to be to outrival the Malays in the occupation of obtaining edible birds' nests. As soon as we had ingratiated ourselves into their favor, we ventured to move gradually towards the unexplored interior.

Dr. Parks and I were in our tent packing up for our venturesome excursion. I was going through some old papers when a small photograph fell from their folds. Dr. Parks picked it up with a smile, looked at it, then at me, and as he handed it to me the smile left his face. I looked at it. "Jean's photo!" Taken the day of our engagement! It had lain among this rubbish when I thought I had destroyed everything that would remind me of her. As I looked at it, my face grew stern. I was going to throw it away. I looked at Dr. Parks. He was standing looking into my face with a look I could not understand. I did not wish to let him into my past, so I placed the picture between the leaves of the "Traveller's Guide." Dr. Parks still riveted me with his mysterious gaze. I was annoyed.

"Well?" I said to him not very civilly.

"Well," he replied without taking his eyes from my face. "Who is it?"

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"A woman!" I answered.

"Know her?"

"Yes; do you?" I answered, losing my temper and speaking insolently.

"Yes!" he answered to my surprise. It was now my turn to stare at him.

He turned and walked out of the tent. I did not believe him. "He is only trying to draw me out," I thought.

Thereafter, I used to often find the doctor studying my face with that strange inquiring look. Sometimes he seemed more kind and brotherly, as if he had read the deep abiding sorrow of my life. At others he seemed to regard me with suspicion and distrust, as if he believed me guilty of some great crime. His moods were to me a mystery.

The beauty of scenery which met our gaze baffles description. The even coast of this vast equatorial island-continent, washed by the tepid waters of the great tropical ocean, now rushing in tidal waves of enormous height into narrow channels, between the myriad islands that comprise the huge archipelago, now sweeping in broad expanses along the unbroken contour, presents features of physical beauty and exuberant vegetation, in some respects, unequalled in the world. Nowhere else does nature revel in such magnificent hues and fascinating beauty; every tree drops the most luscious fruit; flowers bedeck the fruitful soil, making the

earth a velvet carpet, and climbing up the fruit-laden trees, cluster like constellations among the dense green foliage.

Insects, radiant with the most brilliant colors, glitter from every object, as they move from place to place, like millions of animated gems. Yonder is the bird of paradise, that strange and most gorgeous of feathered songsters, whose pride of celestial birth will permit it to call no other spot in all the wide earth its home. Beware! here at our feet is a monster boa, whose gigantic curves and folds lie almost concealed amidst the kaleidoscopic blossoms whose startlingly bright colors outshine its own. Only this morning I awoke with a huge python twelve feet long comfortably coiled up on the earth scarcely a foot from my pillow. Here, too, is that strange hybrid capable of swimming in the air,—the flying frog; and here dwells the fierce mias which has given rise to so much scientific speculation as to the origin of our race, and whose strength is so great that no animal in the jungle dare attack it but the crocodile and the python, both of which it literally tears to pieces.

Such wild, surpassing and altogether unusual sights and experiences lent a new interest to my self-outlawed life, and added to the desire I felt to penetrate into the heart of the island.

My companions besides Dr. Parks were three young Englishmen. Two of them had seen

much of the world, yet they declared that there were no such scenes to be witnessed in any other land.

We lived, for the most part, on the excellent food procured by beating and washing the wood of the sago palm until the pith is separated from the trunk. It is afterwards, by a process of kneading, evaporating and baking, made into delicious bread and cakes.

As we moved inland, we experienced no little difficulty in our dealings with the native Papuans who are said to be the most unique race of the earth. In color, they resemble the negro; in features, the Caucasian. Their noses are wide at the nostrils and aquiline. They wear no clothes excepting a primitive garb of palm leaves, loosely fastened together. Without religion, without its substitute, superstition, without any belief in a hereafter, without laws, they are notwithstanding a happy and contented people, free from vice and scrupulously honest.

The native grace and physical development of the men far excel that of any nation civilized or uncivilized of modern times; compared to these, the models of Grecian sculpture which so fascinate the imagination of the visitor to the Parthenon, dwindle into insignificance. We found the females, however, poorly-clad, dwarfed little creatures, owing, chiefly, to early marriage, which prevails on

the island to such an extent that girls are often given in wedlock at the age of ten and twelve years.

It was now the month of May. We were anxious to get as far as possible into the interior and return by the first of September in order to avoid the fatal east monsoon. It was a hazardous journey to undertake, no traveller having hitherto penetrated the island more than fifteen miles from the coast. But what cared I? I feared no danger, since death would have been as dear to me as life. I had no friends to mourn over my untimely decease. I was lost to love, friendship and acquaintance. But I rejoiced when I found a new and worthy ambition rising in my breast, an ambition to explore this most beautiful spot of earth.

My companions were daring fellows. About twenty miles from the west coast of the island, we came upon a broad, clear, swift-flowing river. From its vast volume, and the gestures of the natives, we concluded that this river must have its source many hundreds of miles inland. We improvised a craft, and sailed up its course. Slowly, day after day, we moved through the most enrapturing scenic wonderland.

The beautifully clear waters of the river, winding its serpentine course between its verdurous banks, where luxuriant clusters of wild, brilliant-hued blossoms, white, blue, red, sparkled like prismatic fires from the copious foliage, and high up, among the

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shrubby, the tall acacia and the magnificent orange flower hung their drooping heads like clusters of snow and gold; the towering forests so dense that the richly-hued birds could not fly through them, but fluttered from bough to bough like moving stars in the blue heavens; the immeasurable fields of variegated flowers, thousands of acres in extent, through which we passed, and the multitudinous varieties of animal life which we daily saw disporting on the banks of the beautiful stream, threw an indescribable charm around whatever hardships our voyage entailed.

When about one hundred miles inland, we met a Dyak princess. She was reclining alone on the right bank of the river, and did not notice our approach, until we were quite near her. On seeing us, she sprang to her feet, her features expressing profound amazement. She was for a woman of her race lovely. Her features, though large were clear-cut, and delicately formed. Her eyes were large, round, clear and black. Her body seemed the perfection of womanly grace and beauty. Her hair hung loosely around her naked shoulders. Her arms and bust were bare and shone like polished ebony. Her head was covered with a small turban, consisting apparently of one piece of fabric wound in a spiral form. Directly in front of this toque a small crown of gold graced her broad forehead. Enormous gold ear-rings hung from her ears.

They seemed the shape of, and almost as large as saucers. Her necklace was formed of enormous nuggets of pure gold. Eight bangles of gold adorned each wrist. Above each elbow, she wore an armlet of gold about the thickness of a large walking cane; and three smaller bracelets of gold embraced each arm near the shoulder; in addition to these ornaments, she wore large, golden anklets and bore in her right hand a golden sceptre, not unlike the shape of a small oar. One wondered how she could carry about such a weight of metal.

For a moment only she stood scanning us, and then, lifting her hands towards heaven, she uttered a strange, moaning cry, and fell prostrate to the earth, with her hands clasped above her head. We approached her, and did our best to ingratiate ourselves into her favor; for we perceived that she was the daughter of a royal house, and that her opposition might easily prove fatal to our expedition. She informed us that her father, the king, lived but a few miles away, that she had come to the river to meet her lover and invited us to lodge at the palace. We did so.

The palace was rich and designed with taste and skill. The old king was hospitable. Through our interpreter we learned that he had in his day been a great warrior. He attributed much of his success to his daughter, who since childhood had been a sorceress.

Dr. Parks and I had her tell our fortunes. This she did in the presence of the royal household who, notwithstanding our smiles, viewed the occasion as one of great solemnity. "You have never loved; you are strange; you are married to yourself," she said to Dr. Parks as she read his palm.

To me she said: "You are a traveller; no home; no friends; you are very sad. You are looking for some lost one. Your heart has been burned by love. You will not find. You will travel for a long time. You are in danger of your life. A strong man wants to kill you. She whose love burned your heart is in darkness. She is calling for you, she will die if you do not go to her. Your heart still loves her, but you are proud and would not speak to her. She is in prison and has no friends. If you will seek her you may yet have peace. Your stubborn mind has caused you to lose your best friends."

A few days after, I found Dr. Parks studying Jean's photograph, which he had taken from the directory. "That photograph interests you!" I said. "It does; you also. You are a married man, Garland," he said suspiciously.

"I have not the honor," I answered.

We continued our course, our interest redoubled, on having learned that the king's inestimable treasures had been derived from the source of the river. As we ascended the river, we came in contact with

various Dyak tribes, each governed by an elective king. The scenery, if possible, became more luxuriantly rich; the birds and insects more brilliant; and the kings and their ministers became still more sumptuously attired and equipped.

Strength became more and more the shibboleth of sovereignty. The air became more attenuated, and the tints of the blossoms more delicate. The sound of the mingling voices of the birds at morning and evening twilight, was an orchestra that has never been equalled since the world began.

At length, we descried, directly to the east, the snow-capped peaks of a lofty mountain range, the feeder of the beautiful river we were navigating. On, on! with renewed hopes, pressed we towards our goal.

It was about the first of August, when we reached the source of the stream which we found to be a lake of considerable size, beautifully blue and placid, and swarming with every species of Malayan aquatic birds, situated, our instruments told us, almost in the heart of New Guinea, right at the foot of a chain of mountains twenty thousand feet in height. We spent some weeks coasting around this lake which we named Beautiful. At the extremity of a long, narrow bay which formed its southern extension, we came across vast ruins which showed the traces of an extinct civilization; forts, palaces, temples, aqueducts, amphitheatres and sculptured

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This gigantic structure was a profound mystery to the natives, as it was to us, but it, as well as many other ruins which we saw in the interior, afforded abundant evidence of the fact that at some time, far back in the past, the Papuans boasted of a refined and aggressive civilization which the deteriorating progress of time had trampled to the earth.

Here, a few days after, we were rejoined, much to our astonishment and dismay, by the Dyak Princess whose guest we had been several hundreds of miles below. She was accompanied by a body-guard of dusky warriors.

The name of this princess was Guan. She had fallen in love with my handsome, flaxen-haired, English companion, Dr. Parks. This afforded us infinite amusement for a time, but, in the end, great annoyance and trouble.

Guan was politeness itself. She showed us many new sights and wonders, the most marvellous of which was what the natives called "the mountain of gold," whence they had drawn the abundance of

their wealth and ornament. It appeared to be several hundred feet high and projected like an immense abscess from the side of the snow-covered mountain.

Englishmen and Americans are exceedingly alike in one thing at least,—their love for gold. The first question which struck each of us was, how we could have this mountain removed to London or New York.

By the time we were ready to leave, we had stuffed our pockets, and the seams of our garments and our high boot-legs, with chips of the precious metal, and were walking about like animated bags of stones.

Guan had shown us everything. She now made her request known. She would marry Dr. Parks. Her demand was made with all the imperious pomp and haughtiness of a Princess fully aware of her sovereign power.

Poor Parks! he had been very patient with Guan. He had silently endured, day after day, her affectionate caresses and embraces. He jocosely answered our taunts by saying that it was not every Englishman who had a wealthy princess to pop the question to him.

He tried temporizing. In vain. Her demand was peremptory. Dr. Parks for once looked nonplussed. The most serious part of it was that she had sufficient force at her command to compel

obedience to her wishes. We were given a day to consider the point. Dr. Parks was a strong-headed, cold-blooded Englishman. He would not yield. We were all made prisoners, and preparations were made for our execution next morning.

Matters had reached a crisis. We spent the night in a hut made of bamboo and thatch. It reminded me of the Black Hole, the air was so hot and stifling.

I slept for a few moments, and dreamed that I saw George Wentworth standing on the little bridge at Seaton. He was wounded in the breast and bleeding terribly. He spoke to me. "Garland, my dear friend, I am dying; I am murdered by Colonel Windsor. That was a fatal joke. It is all over with me. Poor Leonore! to-morrow was our wedding-day. Give me your hand, my dear old boy. Be good to Leonore. Remember me." And then he fell dead in my arms.

Morning came. Parks was unbending. Our doom was read. Our chains were tightened. A huge bonfire was prepared on which our bodies were to be sacrificed—no, not *sacrificed*, for these people have no religion, not even idolatry, but simply burnt.

"Garland, dying men have no secrets," said Dr. Parks; "tell me what troubles you so. Tell me all about the woman whose photograph you keep, yet care so little for. Is she not your wife?"

"I am not married; I have nothing to tell that would interest you."

"You are mistaken. I am interested in studying out your case. I would die easier to have bot-tomed it."

"A genuine Briton," I thought. "This imper-turbable genius would like to have a smoke and a drink of whiskey on the scaffold, if he were going to be hanged."

"You said you knew this lady, Dr. Parks."

"So I do, Garland!"

"Then what is the use of my telling you any-thing about her?"

"Because I would learn something about your-self."

"Thanks for your interest in me."

"Moonshine!" I said to myself. "He thinks he can pump me so easily."

"If I ask you one straight question, Garland, will you give me an honest answer?"

"Ask it and see," I replied, smiling at the Doc-tor's eleventh-hour persistency.

"Well, this is the question: Is your true name Arthur Garland?"

"It is; but why in the name of all that is good do you ask me such an absurd question?"

"Very strange!" he muttered to himself, and the conversation ended.

But the Doctor's strange questions, and Guan's

horoscope of my life repainted the old scenes on my memory. In the darkness, in my fears of approaching death, in my dreams, I saw nothing but Jean Grant's lovely face; it was pale, wretched, sad, but appealing and still beautiful. She stood before me in an attitude of supplication with uplifted hands and upturned eyes crying out, "Come back Arthur!" Come back! and all will be well!"

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CHAPTER XIII.

AND so my end had at last come. With my gallant and much-loved comrades I was to perish in the heart of this beautiful land, a martyr to no cause, a sacrifice to no deity.

All at once, life seemed for me to regain its lost sweetness and interest. My mind had for months been so engrossed with the surprising loveliness of the scenes about me as to have recovered from its former depression. I now wished to live; wished to devote my life to the exploration of this island and to making known its manifold resources to the world. In this way I could benefit my kind and live a higher and more unselfish life than I had mapped out for myself even in my brighter days. "If I were only free, if I were only in New York, how easily could I form an exploring party well supplied with baubles for the savage inhabitants; armed with the authority of the great Republic, with the Stars and Stripes flaunting from our masts we could ascend this nameless, navigable river to its source, and take possession in the name of the United States of these stupendous ruins, Lake Beautiful, and Golden Mountain." Nowhere, so

far as I know, has gold been found on the surface of the earth and in such quantity as here.

"To die in the midst of such prospects! For no cause! To perish to gratify a whim of this savage Princess! It cannot be! It must not be! Something must be done. How I wished I were only handsome enough to marry her myself. What odds! It would only be a joke. If the practical side of it should bear too severely on Guan, she would have herself to blame for it. I set my ingenuity to work. But the time was getting short.

I threatened, coaxed and cursed Dr. Parks. "For heaven's sake!" I exclaimed, "marry her, no matter what it may cost you; elope with her; shoot yourself; do anything rather than have us who are innocent of the offence of personal beauty become a sacrifice for yours. What prompted me to allow a dude from Piccadilly, an Oscar Wilde to accompany us!"

Dr. Parks was uncompromising. "I will die," he said, "if it will save the lives of you fellows; I will shoot myself; I will do anything but marry this wench."

But I had underrated the resources of this cool, immovable Englishman.

The moment arrived. We were summoned to our fate. We determined to die like soldiers. Each of us had a revolver and could use it well. If every

other resource failed, we would use them ; but the chances even then were against us, as each of the warriors was armed with a sword and a long sharp spear.

We got down on our knees and implored for mercy. They merely laughed at us.

"The Princess and Prophetess must be obeyed!"

We threatened them with the terrible vengeance of the two mightiest nations of the earth. To no effect.

We asked them to postpone this burning business until we returned with them to Guan's palace, where it could be performed with proper pomp. They remained unmoved.

We offered them toys, money, alliances, pipes and tobacco for our ransom, all of which they accepted apparently as a matter of course, but continued as blood-thirsty as ever.

I offered to wed the *fair* (?) Guan. Her choice was made. She was evidently determined to marry Parks or not at all.

Our resources were about exhausted.

Suddenly, Dr. Parks fell down, to all appearances, dead as a stone. He was something of an actor anyway, but never before had I so admired the acting of himself or any other as now. Irving and Booth were discounted. Restoratives were applied to no purpose. We seized the opportunity. We announced that he was dead. The warriors were

disappointed, but had some doubts as to whether or not the rest of us should be burnt. Guan threw herself on the prostrate form of her dead idol and moaned, sobbed and wept pitifully. So did our party. We rose equal to the occasion and managed to pretend unspeakable sorrow and bitter tears.

Guan decreed that our lives should be spared.

Preparations were commenced for the descent of the river. We carried Dr. Parks on a rudely devised litter to the lake and deposited his living remains in a quiet corner of our boat.

The Papuan's had a fleet of five small boats. They proceeded ahead, Guan's delicate craft, which was a perfect marvel of lightness, strength and elegance, leading. It recalled the lines of Shakespeare,

"The barge she sat in, like a burnished throne,
Burn'd on the water: the poop was beaten gold;
Purple the sails, and so perfumed, that
The winds were love-sick with them; the oars were silver,
Which to the tune of flutes kept stroke, and made
The water, which they beat, to follow faster,
As amorous of their strokes."

Our swarthy companions drew some distance ahead, so that we were, without detection, able to give our corpse food and drink. He also enjoyed an occasional smoke and declared that he rather enjoyed being a corpse under the circumstances.

"I'm like Pat," he continued, "I'd rather be

alive five minutes than dead all the rest of my life."

But we were not out of danger, and jokes were scarcely in order. We wondered what we should do with the lively remains during the night, for we knew Guan would spend the night by their side; and the role of acting dead for about ten hours was a difficult one, even for Dr. Parks to assume. Besides, we could no longer account for the warmth of the body, and it was safe to presume that even barbarians know that dead men grow cold.

Dr. Parks devised a scheme which worked to a demonstration. As soon as our boats were moored, early in the evening, I sprang ashore, seized a bottle of cognac, took a swig out of it, and immediately began dancing, laughing and giving other evidences of excessive hilarity. My comrades, with the exception of the corpse, followed suit. For a few minutes, we danced, wrestled, sang, somersaulted like a band of maniacs, not forgetting to interperse our exercises with loud, uproarious laughter. We passed the bottle from one to another rapidly, and pretended to drink deeply from its contents each time, though in reality, we only touched our tongues to it.

The concert was much appreciated by the Dyaks, who are naturally humorous, and especially by Guan. They requested to be allowed to partici-

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pate in our joyous festivities. We acceded to their request. Half a dozen more bottles were brought from the boat. Our friends drank it with much relish. In a few minutes, Guan showed symptoms of having taken decidedly too much, and acted in a manner scarcely becoming to a princess.

Around went the bottles. On went the dance. After a little while, Guan retired overcome by the powerful effects of the liquor. One by one, her loyal body-guard followed her example, until they all lay around on the green-sward like so many slaughtered innocents, in a state of dreadful intoxication.

Our corpse came back to life. He was now sitting in the boat smoking his long pipe and remarked with a gentle smile, "A little brandy is a very good thing to have on hand when one is travelling. It meets an emergency like a guardian angel." We silently slipped from our moorings and floated down the majestic stream, leaving our stupefied escorts behind.

I knew that I should soon part from Dr. Parks, and I wanted to draw him out, if possible on the subject of Jean's photograph.

We had anchored and were sitting smoking in the early evening. I took it out and looked at it for a long time. For a time he was silent. Then he said, "A pretty woman! She is prettier than her picture. Is she a relative of yours?"

"No; why?"

"She's a badly used woman."

"Badly used? What do *you* know about her?"

"Nothing."

"Why do you speak in riddles?"

"Because you are a riddle. You doubt me. You think I am actuated by mere curiosity. You say to yourself, 'He knows nothing about this woman.' Shall I prove to you my good faith? Shall I tell you her name?"

"Yes; pray do; I am in earnest."

"Jean Windsor, wife of Colonel Windsor, maiden name, Grant!"

I was dumbfounded. "Were you ever in America?" I asked.

"Never."

"Do you know where Mrs. Windsor, as you call her, resides at the present time?"

"I do not."

I concluded now to make a clean breast of everything to Dr. Parks. He was in possession of facts very likely which might help Mrs. Sherman to recover her lost child. But I was disconcerted. I would go out for a walk. I would return to Dr. Parks.

In the course of fifteen minutes I came back. Dr. Parks noticed my disturbed air, and holding me with that strange look, began, speaking to my comrades.

"Yes; brain diseases are as varied as the pebbles on the sea-shore. All men are more or less insane. There are insane persons outside of the asylums, and plenty of sane people in them."

I sat down opposite the doctor, and I noticed, as he proceeded that he cast rapid glances at me, from time to time, as if he expected to read something in my face.

"A painful case came under my notice some time ago. A beautiful young woman had been confined in the best private asylum in London for some years. She was so lovely that when I first saw her, I was anxious to know her history. I talked with her. She seemed rational. 'I am not insane,' she said, 'but I have become so weary of trying to get out of this terrible place in vain, that I submit to it now.' I called on her again and again. She was always the same. She told me her story simply and without variation, and a sad story it was. She had been brought up in a home of refinement. She had married a worthless army officer." Here the doctor stopped suddenly, and flashed his searching gray eyes into my face. Then he went on.

"He married her for her money, and discovering after the marriage that the fortune belonged to her half-sister and not to her, he had her shut up in this asylum."

I was getting terribly excited. Dr. Parks saw this and now looked at me with a savage scowl as if

he believed me to be the miserable culprit he was describing.

"She was never allowed to go out of her room. She was forbidden to write or receive letters or to receive visitors. I made a study of her case. She was not insane and never had been. When I told her that I would try to get her liberated, I shall never forget how she looked. It made my heart bleed. I got five of the best experts to visit her, without suspicion, and succeeded in the end in getting her out of the miserable hole by threatening the proprietors with indictment and exposure. It took me six months to effect her liberation. As usual, I made an ass of myself by falling in love with the lovely creature; and from the day she kissed my hand and blessed me for my efforts on her behalf, I have never been able to see her or learn where she is. Her wretch of a husband has, I suppose, shut her up in some other den. If I ever come across him, hang me, if I don't shoot him down like a dog." Again his scowl rested on my face and I was almost afraid of him.

Was this the story of Jean Grant's perils? It was almost what I expected to hear. This view, if correct, would account for the manner in which Dr. Parks looked at the photograph and for his strange conduct towards me. Evidently, he believed me to be her cruel husband. I would find an opportunity and exchange confidences with him.

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I was distressed and went alone for a second stroll.

On my return, I met Dr. Parks. He looked gloomy and disturbed.

"Garland," he said quietly, "I have come here to meet you."

"What for?" I enquired.

"To beat you," he answered coolly.

"To beat me?" I asked in astonishment. "We are friends!"

"Yes," he said indifferently, "of course we are friends, but what's that got to do with it? It needn't interfere with our friendship. But my duty is clear. I believe you are a scoundrel, and I'm going to impress that fact upon you with emphasis."

I was at my wit's ends. "The man is mad!" I exclaimed aloud. He took off his coat and hung it carefully on the nearest acacia bush. He removed his collar and tie, and rolled up his sleeves to the elbows with the utmost deliberation. I stood petrified.

He stood before me and said in the most matter-of-fact way,—"Garland, your true name is Colonel Windsor. You married Jean Grant for her money. When you found she had no money, you had her confined in an asylum in London. You learned that I loved her and rescued her. You had her removed to another dungeon. I detected you by

means of her photograph which you accidentally let fall. I have proved you by your conduct. You are travelling in this wild country to escape arrest. You dare not go to London. I swore if I ever met Colonel Windsor that I would shoot him. Being friends, I am going to beat you. If necessary, I will shoot you later. If you have any arms, lay them aside. This is a hand-to-hand encounter."

The riddle was solved. "You are entirely mistaken, Dr. Parks. I am not Jean Grant's husband though I should be God knows: I am her lover—"

"What! you are?" he exclaimed crestfallen.

In a few words, I explained the situation. He grasped my hand warmly, "We are both hunting the same fox," he said.

He told me of his great love for Jean. I told him that my once strong love for her was dead. Together we swore to rescue her and bring Colonel Windsor to punishment. From that moment to the present we have been brothers in all but name.

Rapidly we descended the river, and arrived safely at the coast. We spent a fortnight in the small Dutch villages preparatory to embarking for London.

At this point, our fascinating companion, Dr. Parks, found a cart-load of mail awaiting him, con-

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sisting for the most part of love-letters and London
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I had read the latter over and over again without
observing any items of very much interest. But
one day, while glancing over the American notes in
the "*Thunderer*," I was struck by the following:—

"A great sensation has been caused at Seaton, a
small village near New York, by the cold-blooded
murder of George Wentworth, a rising young attor-
ney of splendid abilities and promise. He was to
have been married on the following day to Miss
Leonore Sherman, the most beautiful and talented
young lady of the district and a rich heiress. All
the detective agencies are at work, and it is believed
the murderer will soon be caught, though, as yet
not even the slightest clue has been found. Mr.
Wentworth left the house of his intended about
eleven o'clock in the evening and nothing further
was seen or heard of him until the next morning,
when he was found with a bullet hole through his
breast concealed under a small bridge at the outer
limit of the village. Several strange incidents have
occurred within the last few years, near this bridge.
A few years ago, Miss Sherman's elder sister eloped
with a stranger and nothing has since been heard of
her. It is conjectured by some that an organized
gang has been formed for the purpose of obtaining
possession of the persons and fortunes of these young
ladies. The whole affair is involved in much mys-
tery. Wentworth was a universal favorite wherever
he was known, and great sorrow is expressed that
his brilliant career has been untimely ended."

I showed this column to Dr. Parks. He took it all in at a glance. "He will soon be arrested," he said. "In this age of rapid communication, he cannot long escape detection, though he be the devil himself. I shall dance a jig at his funeral, for then Jean shall be free to become my wife."

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CHAPTER XIV.

My head swam with mingled feelings of anger and sorrow, as I read these words. My truest, noblest friend, dead! Murdered by unknown hands! Slain in cold blood by the pistol of an assassin! Waylaid and done to death! And on that fatal bridge; Great God! Was that bridge the very gate of hell? At its mention what burning and long-banished memories thronged upon me! I remembered my dream. It was no doubt true; my merry-hearted friend Wentworth was dead. In my trunk lay my will and testament, by which I had made him the sole beneficiary of all my moneys and effects at my death. And he was dead!

By whom had he been murdered? In the light of past events, I fully believed that Colonel Windsor was connected, in some way, with this murder. How foolish I had been not to have given him over to the hands of the law when he committed his first offence? My clemency had been thrown away. He had repaid my consideration with treachery, and in return for my generous silence, he had defamed my reputation, and robbed me of all earthly happiness. Now it might be too late. He had been my suc-

cessful rival in a love affair. Who would now credit my story? Who would now believe that Colonel Windsor had libelled me and attempted my life? Every one would laugh at my allegations, and attribute them to envy or malice. No; I must not now revive old charges. It was too late.

Suddenly I was seized by an intense desire to revisit Seaton, and as I had nothing to live for but the gratification of my desires, I bade my companions adieu, abandoned for the time being my exploring enterprises, and took passage direct for New York.

I shall pass over my homeward voyage. I was so engrossed with the one idea of getting back to Seaton, and if necessary spending my last cent in bringing to justice the murderer of George Wentworth, that no incident or accident impressed me.

It is spring. New York at last! "America, dear land of my birth; land of my fathers; land of freedom!" I shouted with reverent, almost religious fervor, as I set my feet on American soil.

The day following I was received at Dunmore by Leonore and her mother, with as much joy and as hearty a welcome as was compatible with their melancholy condition.

Soon I was made acquainted with the particulars of Wentworth's murder, which differed little from the account of it I had read in the newspaper.

Wentworth, they informed me, had for a con-

siderable time prior to his murder, been the recipient of various threatening letters, which left no doubt in their minds as to who was the actor or at all events the inspirer of the crime.

Poor Jean! she had never been heard from. Evidently her punishment had been greater than she deserved

Mrs. Sherman and Leonore both heartily seconded my determination of ferreting out the perpetrator of these crimes, and offered to contribute whatever funds were necessary for that purpose. I at once set to work. I published accurate pen pictures of Colonel Windsor, describing as minutely as I could, his appearance, size, features and the characters which he had been in the habit of assuming, and had them disseminated throughout the length and breadth of the country. Every detective agency in the United States was set to work; largely augmented detective staffs were equipped at our own expense to operate from the leading centres. The money spent in telegrams alone amounted sometimes to one thousand dollars a week. We offered a reward of one hundred thousand dollars for the arrest and conviction of the murderer of George Wentworth, and the Police Department supplemented this by an additional reward of twenty thousand dollars.

Meanwhile, Dr. Parks was at work in London, trying to find his lost clew. I received a letter from him

which gave me hope and encouragement. He described at great length his efforts to find Jean and concluded most hopefully, "I have at length ascertained where he had her confined whilst we were in Papua. From the proprietor of this institution, who refused to retain Jean on discovering her sanity, I have learned much that will be of importance in prosecuting our search. I have every reason to believe that I shall find her soon."

The threatening letters before referred to, bore the New York postmark; it was in New York that Jean and Leonore first formed the acquaintance of Colonel Windsor; every circumstance indicated that that city was the *locus operandi* of the perpetrator. I had that city, therefore, literally studded with private detectives, who reported to me every Saturday night.

With all these inducements to open the mouths of accomplices, with all these agencies at work, a year had rolled by and nothing had been accomplished. I urged Mrs. Sherman to spend no more of her money in the vain pursuit, lest poverty might be added to the already intolerable burdens she had to bear. She laughed at my remonstrance. What would a mother not give to secure the punishment of an infamous man who had caused her the loss of one daughter and the ruin of the hopes and prospects of another.

During the next year, I continued to operate at

my own expense entirely, but with unabated persistence.

I had, all along, been doing my best to find the whereabouts of Professor Sydney, the teacher of music and dancing at the seminary, who had first introduced Jean and Leonore to Colonel Windsor. I had learned from Leonore the manner in which their acquaintance was brought about. It had been effected by a letter of recommendation and introduction from the Professor.

From what she told me, it appeared that Professor Sydney was a tall, compactly built, dark-eyed man, bearing a rather striking resemblance to Colonel Windsor. At first, I thought little of this resemblance which I considered might be only casual, but when the most diligent search failed to locate Professor Sydney, this idea gradually worked itself into the strength of a conviction that Colonel Windsor and Professor Sydney must have been related to each other. Most likely they were brothers.

So strongly had this notion taken possession of my mind that I felt convinced that if I could find Professor Sydney, I should be able to unravel the mystery.

All at once, a new idea dawned on me. Might they not be one and the same person? I took train at once for Seaton to obtain Leonore's opinion.

I asked her if the resemblance was remarkable.

It was. Not only did it extend to the features and form but also to the movements, voice and deportment. This confirmed to some extent my suspicion.

She had never seen the two men together, though they professed to be intimate friends. Once or twice, Colonel Windsor officiated at the college during the absence of the Professor. At last I communicated my conjecture to Leonore. It was a revelation to her. She at once coincided with my opinion. The college girls had often commented on the unaccountable similitude. This theory, which had never occurred to their unsuspecting minds, would explain the matter most satisfactorily. She felt certain they were one and the same person.

I at once returned to New York and interviewed Professor Weldon, the principal of the college. Sydney had left the employ of that institution several years ago. The principal was at first somewhat reticent, but on being informed of the nature of my mission became more communicative.

"What record, if any, do you keep of your teachers, Professor Weldon?" I enquired.

"None at all—scarcely any, at least. We merely assign each teacher his work on the time-table," he replied.

"Do you not take down the name and address of each teacher?" I asked.

"Oh yes, we do that."

"Do you record any of the past history of your teachers?"

"No; we have not made a habit of doing so."

"Do you not take a minute of where he last taught?"

"No, we do not; of course we generally inquire for these, as well as many other particulars, when a teacher applies for a situation in our school, but they are never committed to writing."

"Then I suppose you will be still less interested as to where he goes after he leaves you?"

"Yes."

The Professor, who was a tall, spare, erect, well dressed, scholarly looking man, with faded, yet piercing gray eyes, pale shaven face, and of an extremely cautious nature, looking at me steadily while I asked him these questions, and having fully satisfied himself that he was not being subjected to imposture, rose from his seat, opened his secretary and drew from one of the drawers a small square diary; with methodical despatch he turned to the index, then to the page on which the teachers in the department of music and dancing, had at his request, written their names and addresses. From this he continued in a studious undertone to recite to me as follows:

"W. Sydney, Professor of music and dancing; entered service Jan'y 1st, 18—. Left service July 20th, 18—, 79 Ford Street."

"That is all," he said, closing the book and turning on me once more his steady, inquiring eyes.

"Will you kindly allow me to see the handwriting of Professor Sydney?" I asked.

"Certainly."

"Is this his own handwriting?"

"I presume so. My rule is to ask each new teacher to come to my library and fill in these particulars."

"Had you ever any correspondence with Professor Sydney?"

"None. None whatever."

"I hope you will pardon my rudeness, Professor Weldon. I assure you that nothing short of the serious business I have in hand, would prompt me to address you in this categorical way. Here is the address of my bankers. Should you desire to learn anything regarding me they will be pleased at any time to satisfy you."

"I am entirely at your service," he said bowing gracefully.

"Thank you. There are a few more things which I should like to know. Have you any memory or record of the recommendations which he submitted with his application?"

"I am sorry to say, Mr. Garland," he continued, with increasing politeness, "that I have not. I have forgotten them, and such papers are not kept on file by our board."

"I suppose, Professor Weldon, that on his leaving your school, he asked you for a testimonial?"

"No, I think not. It seems to me he did not even send in a written resignation. He simply informed me that he would not be back after the vacation. I have never seen nor heard of him since. But I may say, Mr. Garland, that I was glad when I knew he intended leaving our school. There was something about the man which I did not like. He was a deep, designing-looking man. I had no confidence in him. If he is guilty of the offences you charge him with, I trust he may be brought to justice, but I do not know, Mr. Garland, that I can in any way further that object, much as I should like to do so."

After some casual conversation, I bade the Professor adieu. I had gained but one point which might be of any use to me. I had ascertained Professor Sydney's former address. I had also seen his handwriting which might or might not be of service to me.

That evening I presented myself at 79 Ford street. I rang the bell. The door was opened by an oldish woman with a good-natured face. I wished to know if she could accommodate a single gentleman with a room for a few weeks. She had rooms to rent. She asked me to step inside and showed me through the different apartments, garrulously expatiating on their many merits as we

passed through them. I was not hard to satisfy with a room, and I was not sorry to find Mrs. Wood extremely loquacious. I devoted a couple of weeks ingratiating myself into the good graces of the kind old lady. I was a gentleman of leisure, I informed her. Sometimes I travelled. Sometimes I did a little magazine writing. Each time I paid my room-rent, I handed her therewith, a few dollars of a gratuity, which she invariably accepted with as much surprise as gratitude. Like most of persons who follow her business, she was fond of catechising. Her methods of leading from the known to the unknown would have done infinite credit to Socrates himself.

In this way, it happened that Mrs. Wood, who had kept the house she was now residing in for over twenty years, could give a succinct history of almost every boarder she had had.

She found in me an easy victim. I had little to conceal, and much to reveal. I used to sit hour after hour in my small sitting-room, relating the incidents and adventures of my nomadic life to her greedy ears. I even went so far as to tell her the full details of my sad experiences at Seaton. She was a pious, tender-hearted old lady, and so she sympathized deeply with the sufferings of humanity in general, and mine in particular. One thing I kept hidden—the name of the culprit of whom I was in search.

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In this way, I completely won the confidence of Mrs. Wood. But I was feeling impatient. She had described many of her lodgers to me, but as yet none who corresponded with my man.

I desisted as long as I could from direct interrogatories, thinking that a voluntary statement would give me much more reliable information.

One day I introduced the Ladies' College into our talk, by saying that certain of my lady friends were attending that school. My landlady was astonishingly conversant with the institution. Her pew in the church was directly in the rear of the college pews. She had for years kept herself posted, by means of her church connection, in the affairs of the school—even down to the names of the pupils. She knew all the professors well, and one of them, Professor Windsor Sydney, had roomed in her house for several years.

"Professor Windsor Sydney!" My suspicion was correct: another link in the long chain of duplicity and dissimulation; another step towards bringing to punishment this many-named gentleman. My heart beat rapidly at this new revelation. I could with difficulty repress my feelings. After two long years of painful, futile search, I had at last found a clue. I forgot it was but a slender clue; I forgot that I was as far as ever from being able to point my finger at the murderer of my best friend, and say, "Thou art the man!" Already he

seemed to be in my grasp. My talkative hostess did not need to be interrogated; all I had to do was to express myself as being interested in a particular person and she would rattle off his whole life with the volubility of a Dr. Johnstone.

"Professor Windsor Sydney!" I repeated. "He was a fine musician, I believe, was he not? Used to compose and play a great deal, did he not, Mrs. Wood?"

"That's the same—the very same," she began. "He was the handsomest and the cleverest and the intelligentest and the satisfactoriest gentleman as I ever had in under my roof—he was—the same Professor Sydney. But none of us is good—no, not one of us—as the good Book speaketh, and he wasn't *all* good, that same gentleman. He had a temper—oh, such a temper! I often told him he would kill somebody some day—he would—I told him so. He said he was an English gentleman's son. His father was very rich, he said. He was allus awating for his 'ship to come in'—he was. But his ship never come. If it had of come, I would be hundreds of dollars better off—I would. And that's not all—it's not. Since he left me I have been told that he never was the son of a English gentleman—he wasn't. Think of that now, Mr. Garland—think of that now. Such roguery—and from a *Professor*—from a *Professor*! What will

common folks do if a *Professor* will do such things as these—such bad things as these!"

"What did he do with his salary Mrs. Wood?"

"Gambled—gambled—do you know what gambling is? It's playing cards for money—it's betting and losing—betting and losing. He used to tell me he had to give all his money to educate his sister—he did—and he never had a sister. I know that now—I do!"

"I consider that he dealt with you in a very ungentlemanly manner, indeed, Mrs. Wood."

"That he did!—that he did! Mr. Garland."

"I suppose it was bad company ruined him."

"Bad company! There could be no worse company than himself—there couldn't."

"Where has he gone? What has become of him? Has he left the city? Why cannot you get your money from him?"

"That I don't know—I don't."

"Has he ever written you?"

"Never a word. Folks as don't pay their board don't write no love-letters to their landladies—they don't. Never a word."

"Have you never seen him on the streets of the city, nor heard where he went after leaving your place?"

"Never seen nor heard of him—not I."

"Now, my good Mrs. Wood, I assure you I am not asking you so many questions merely to gratify

an idle curiosity. I will be candid with you. I feel that I can trust you with a great secret—"

"Secret! Indeed that you can. I never let a secret slip—I don't."

"Then I must inform you that I know this man, Professor Windsor Sydney, to my great loss."

"Ah, you lent him money—then it's gone money—it is—"

"Worse than that. He has robbed me of—"

"Robbed? The Lord have mercy on him. I told him he would come to that—I told him so."

"He has not robbed me of my money. If that were all, I would think it a small matter. He has robbed me of happiness and hope, of friends and friendships—to be plain with you, Mrs. Wood, I should tell you that I am sure beyond the shadow of a doubt, that this man is the villain who has caused me all the troubles I spoke to you about a few days ago."

"The Lord have mercy on him! Him that lied about you to your sweetheart?"

"Yes."

"And that coaxed her to elope with him so that he might get her money?"

"Yes."

"And that murdered your friend?"

"I believe he has done all these things."

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as I don't know nothing, Mr. Garland, but when I
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"Now, Mrs. Wood, you may be able to help us
bring this man to justice. There is a reward of
\$120,000 offered to any person who will give such
information as will bring him to punishment."

The good woman seemed startled by the mention
of such a large sum. She at once began instituting
inquiries, and promised to do her very best to track
the tiger to his den.

I returned to Seaton, glad to have obtained some
new information to communicate.

CHAPTER XV.

NATURE is stronger than resolution—as the whole is greater than its part, or the actor greater than the act. Beneficent Providence has balanced our sensibilities on such an admirable self-adjusting fulcrum that, throw them out of order as we may; encumber them with loss, danger and doubt; crush them into apparent extinction; paralyze them by misfortune, disappointment and grief; unhinge them, upset them, unbalance them, as we may, they will in time, arrange themselves into harmony, equipoise and symmetry.

Time, if it is the greatest detective of all and the greatest avenger of wrong, is, also, the greatest rewarder of right, the greatest balm for the wounded spirit, the greatest healer of the broken heart, the greatest tonic for the enfeebled nerve, the great elixir of human life.

How bitter a task would life become if the burdens of yesterday's sorrow were not lightened to-day, and the fears of to-morrow burnt, as a sacrifice, on the altar of to-day's hope!

What had time done for me? Much that was beneficent. The itinerant, adventurous life I had

lived, for a few years after my real-life drama at Dunmore, had revealed many hitherto unknown phases of human life and character, and deeply impressed me with the immeasurable vastness of the created system, when contrasted with the infinitesimal littleness of my own, or any other's individual experience. One living in solitude soon considers himself pretty much all there is in the world, and indulges himself in the fretful fancy, that, if his head aches, the solar system should proclaim a condolence-day and cease its unsympathetic revolutions. Moving in the world's great circulation, one thinks of himself as a drop in the ocean, as a grain of sand by the sea-shore, washed hither and thither by the ebbing and flowing tides; and having his relations to men and things thus correctly defined, has broader notions of things in general, is less self-esteemed, more objective, more sympathetic, more cosmopolitan.

Such are some of the changes the passing years had been effecting on me. I had learned, too, to think better of my kind, and that the whole race should not be condemned because one man was a devil incarnate. All these higher and more humane thoughts were largely the result of my improved bodily condition. As a rule, the mind follows the temperament of the body.

Then, again, I had an object to attain; my whole soul was set on getting to the bottom of the wicked

plot which had deprived me and my friends of our happiness; and when a man is working for an object, he will soon cure himself of apathy, misanthrophy and melancholia. Ever since my return from the heart of Papua, which, in memory, seemed then, and seems yet, a vision of unspeakable romance and beauty and luxuriance—the broad, placid river widening into lakes of more than Italian azure and gold; the gently undulating banks covered with flowers of prismatic brilliancy towering aloft in their exuberance like trees; the love-lorn Guan, her palace of gold, her matchless beauty and her truant lover; the Beautiful Lake; the models of sculpture, painting and architecture, still blazing under the torrid sun from the majestic ruins of an extinguished Renaissance, “The Mountain of Gold,”—ever since my return from these striking scenes, my health had been steadily improving, until, once again, I felt I was myself. My body was strong; my step had never been more elastic; my senses and sensibilities were clear.

A second letter from Dr. Parks assured me that he was on the trail and would soon run down his quarry. “There is only one step,” the letter said, “between me and victory. Expect to hear from me in a few days. As I near the end of love’s long labor, I, stoic as I am, am quite upset. When I think of Jean, her beauty, her charm of manner, her

joy at being again delivered from bondage (and believe me, Garland, I can think of nothing else), I am quite beside myself with happiness."

Was there any other cause for my rapid convalescence? Perhaps there was. Looking back in the light of subsequent events, I am strongly disposed to believe that there was a more potent agency at work among the collapsed materials of my moral nature. But at that time I was unconscious of its influence. What was it?

Did I love Leonore? No; not in the ordinary acceptation of that phrase. During the last two years, Dunmore had been my home; Leonore and her mother had been my confidants—more, my sister and my mother.

Wherever my strange mission called me, I never forgot that it was their wrongs more than my own I was seeking to avenge. My own, were forgotten almost so. But I could not remember with less sorrow, or less anger, the terrible fate of poor Jean, the blighted prospects of Leonore, the sorrowful lines that now marred the saintly face of Mrs. Sherman, and the unprovoked, brutal murder of my noblest and truest friend, George Wentworth. I made it a point to spend Sunday, as often as possible, at Dunmore; on these occasions we usually went to church together in the morning, and spent the afternoon and evening in conversation and reading. Leonore and her mother had withdrawn

exclusively from society at the time of Jean's elopement. They were always glad to welcome me on my return to Dunmore, and while there, they treated me with more deference and kindness than I deserved or desired.

I need not say that I did all in my power to alleviate their sorrow and add to their comfort. Sadly and deeply I sympathized with these two lonely women. I could not help contrasting the bright, joyous and lovely group that used to assemble around the family hearth at Dunmore, with the two broken-hearted women who sat there now.

In my silent hours, I inwardly condemned myself for ever having entered that home. Nothing had prospered at Dunmore since that distant morning on which I was brought, a hopeless invalid, within its walls. And, yet, I had done no wrong. I had preserved my conscience void of offence toward all men. The fault was not mine. There existed a plot, a conspiracy to thwart my purposes and defeat my enterprises. Why it should exist or of whom it consisted, I could but conjecture. But it pained me to know that the operations of my enemies should not only be directed towards myself, but also towards my most innocent and unsuspecting friends.

Leonore and I had much in common. Ours was the kinship of sorrow, the bonds woven by the

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hand of affliction. We had each loved and lost. We had each lost, not by the hand of natural death—I, by the tongue of envy, malice and falsehood; she by the assassin's bullet; both by the treachery and malevolence of one and the same man.

We were friends. Our friendship was of the quiet, sad, undemonstrative sort. It was founded on mutual pity, which begot mutual affection.

Leonore was a beautiful woman. It would be hard to describe her. Rather tall, slight, finely formed and lissome; high brows, oval face tapering down to a pretty chin; red lips, transparent nostrils, straight, slender nose, fair complexion, clear amber eyes not too large, but expressive of cordiality, candor and fidelity; eye-brows, brown and well-arched, lashes long; over all, a profuse wealth of golden hair. Her disposition was noble, generous, forgiving, loving. Her manners and deportment were queenly.

Did I love Leonore? I pitied her; I sympathized with her; I admired her beauty; I appreciated her gracious ways; her presence was always with me; I was happier with her than with any other person. I left her with sorrow and returned to her with joy; in a word I labored and lived solely for Leonore Sherman, and yet I did not love her. If called upon to do so, I would have given my life to defend her, and yet we were only friends.

What were *her* feelings towards me? So far as I could judge, much the same as mine towards her. Our hearts were open to each other. Between us, there were reverential respect, open-faced candor, implicit confidence and sincere friendship. We understood each other, which may mean either more or less than loving each other. We were friends.

But all these feelings were spontaneous, unconscious. We did not measure or weigh our feelings. We were engrossed in an all-absorbing pursuit. We did not stop to consider. Doubtless, we grew towards each other, but we knew it not.

But we were destined to undergo an ordeal which should put to the test our affection for each other, an experience more painful than death, blacker than night, terrible as hell.

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CHAPTER XVI.

I HAD only time to announce my clue to the chiefs of the various detective agencies, when a new series of events transpired which expedited, at a painful cost, the results of my long search.

"I received the following epistle from a source whence I could least expect it.

"NEW YORK, —

"SIR:—It is now over six years since I received while at Seaton, a letter from your hand. Various occurrences, of which it is needless that I should speak here, have prevented an earlier reply from me. I cannot, now, however, regret my delay, since it has afforded you ample time to repent of your folly, and to learn that a gentleman should not be addressed in terms of menacing and puerile braggadocio. The consequences of that ill-advised missive, have, no doubt, been as torturing to you, as they have been grateful to me.

"Why, my fond sir, has the celebration of your nuptials been so grievously long deferred? Has your patience not become exhausted? Has your hope deferred not sickened your heart? Have your views of the constancy of woman's affection, may I enquire, not undergone a radical change? You should not be so tardy. Perhaps

your lady-love may renounce you ; perhaps she may weary of waiting ; perhaps some fascinating stranger may deprive you of her affections. I would caution you to hasten your steps.

" But perhaps I am doing your designing nature and your excellent capacity for finessing an injustice. Probably you have set your affections on another woman, with less sincerity, it is true, but with larger hopes of pecuniary advantage. Indeed, I know this to be true. For some time, you have been playing the role of benefactor with admirable diplomacy and with brilliant effect. And now that you have about accomplished your purpose, you will, no doubt, slacken the ardor with which you have hitherto prosecuted your detective functions, and announce yourself willing to accept, as a substitute for the head of an executed criminal, the heart of an unsuspecting and wealthy woman. Your course has been long and crooked, but it has brought you to the desired goal.

" A man with less cunning, but with more courage, would have obtained the coveted reward by more direct means.

" Clumsiness, in your case, has been mistaken for candor, frankness and honesty ; and so it has precipitated the end which it should have frustrated.

" The prize is within your grasp, but you shall never touch it. The crown is prepared for your brow, but you shall never wear it. Like Moses, (forgive the unrighteous comparison) you have viewed the Promised Land, but you will never enter it. Beware, good sir, beware. You have not been alone in your peregrinations ; I have been with you. I have dogged your steps for the last

two years. I have shadowed you everywhere; and while you were vainly searching for me, I was often by your side, laughing in my sleeve at your uncouthness, verdancy and self-deluding smartness. You are a brilliant detective. It is wonderful that you have not lost yourself. *Au revoir*, my faithful friend; leave the country at once, or decide that your fate is sealed. Revenge is sweet, beware.

"Yours fraternally,

"COLONEL WINDSOR.

"ARTHUR GARLAND, Esq.
"New York."

I was completely stupefied by this letter. Who was this man? What was he? Man or devil? Where did he reside? Had he power to disembody and etherealize himself? The keenest detectives of a whole continent at work for several years, spurred on by the largest reward ever offered for the detection of an American criminal, and the wretch living and moving in their midst and daring even to address notes of defiance and ridicule to the one he had wronged most cruelly! And my life threatened! Well, let it go! My head was muddled and my every sense benumbed by the perusal of that daring letter. By the same post I received another letter from Dr. Parks to the effect that he had lost his clue, and that Jean was most likely in New York. As soon as he could verify this theory he would come at once.

"There is no doubt," he added, "that Colonel

Windsor is kept posted as to our doings. Jean has been carried away from London just as I had about reached her."

But I would persevere. There was a possibility that this evil genius would over-reach himself in his fancied security and intangibility.

New instructions and fac-similies of the letter were forwarded without delay to the different detective organizations.

It was an autograph letter. The handwriting was most peculiar. Evidently, it was a hand that had so often disguised itself, that it at last became unique and original, and might afford an easy means of detection. It was Windsor's hand—I had seen it in several threatening letters addressed to poor Wentworth shortly before his death; disguised as it was, I could detect the same hand that I had seen in Principal Weldon's diary, so that there was no longer any room for doubt that Colonel Windsor and Professor Sydney were one and the same person.

I had a vague recollection of having seen it elsewhere, in some library, or visitors' book, or hotel register, but where I could not recall.

Inside of a week from the time I had received Colonel Windsor's threatening letter, another appalling link was forged in the long chain of destruction.

Leonore and her mother had come to the city

in the morning. When they reached the Grand Central Depot, Leonore called a cab; she entered it, and before her mother had time to follow her, the door had been closed and the cab driven off at a furious rate. A sponge saturated with chloroform was held to her mouth and she soon lay senseless and unresisting.

Mrs. Sherman merely smiled at the cabman's hurry, thinking that he would soon be made acquainted with his blunder and return for his other passenger. She waited for half an hour, and nothing further was heard. Leonore had not returned. Mrs. Sherman still thought it nothing more than a slight inconvenience. An hour passed. Nothing had been heard. She spoke to the policeman who occasionally passed through the waiting-room. He shook his head ominously and added:—"Madam, it's a common thing this. It's becoming a very profitable business. It looks bad. I'll communicate with the chief and see what we can do for you."

For the first time, a suspicion of foul play flashed across Mrs. Sherman's mind. She uttered a low moan of fear and grief and sank insensible at the officer's feet.

As soon as she had recovered, she was driven to my hotel. With tears and sobs, she told me her story—a hint was enough. I knew it all. Leonore had been kidnapped. She would be murdered,

or meet a worse fate still, and be tortured to distraction.

What could I do? I had done all in my power to unearth this murderous conspiracy. In vain. I was baffled, foiled, defeated. The next act in the tragedy would be my murder. I knew that. What this villain threatened, he carried out.

I opened his letter and read:—

"The prize is within your grasp, but you shall never touch it. The crown is prepared for your brow, but you shall never wear it. You have viewed the Promised Land, but you will never enter it."

I now clearly apprehended the dark import of this metaphoric statement. That part had been fulfilled to the letter. Further on, I read:

"Beware, good sir, beware. You have not been alone in your peregrinations. I have been with you. I have dogged your steps for the last two years. I have shadowed you everywhere, and while you were vainly searching for me, I was often by your side, laughing in my sleeve at your uncouthness, verdancy and self-deluding smartness. Leave the country at once, or decide that your fate is sealed. Revenge is sweet. Beware."

This part was yet to be fulfilled. Doubtless it would soon be attempted. I was infuriated. I rushed out of my hotel cursing myself and the detectives, and vowing condign punishment upon the head of Colonel Windsor. I armed myself with

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revolvers and a short sabre which I concealed at convenient reach under my coat. I trebled the reward. Once more, the whole American press blazoned forth the history of this unfortunate family. My name figured prominently in all the reports. Among all the theories propounded, the most explicable was that I was at the bottom of the whole business. I was arrested, tried and acquitted. This increased my mortification and minimized my usefulness in fathoming the conspiracy.

I need not say that Mrs. Sherman, broken-hearted and despairing as she was, never wavered for a moment in her friendship for me or lost her faith in my honor. She was now more than ever to me, and I to her. Could I have brought back to her side her two beautiful daughters, I would willingly have laid down my own life.

Six months had elapsed since Leonore had disappeared, and no tidings had been heard. The detectives had abandoned the fruitless search in disgust, and contented themselves by saying that there existed a huge ring or cabal of criminals in New York who so helped and shielded each other that detection was impossible.

I called on Mrs. Wood, thinking there was a slight possibility of her having obtained some information for me. She had not. As I bade her good-bye she handed me an old letter which I had by

oversight left in the room I had occupied in her house.

I turned to go. "Mr. Garland," said the good lady, "just look into that letter—just look well at it! It looks like Professor Sydney's hand, very like it—it does; I didn't like to look into it—I didn't. But says I to myself, that's his hand, if he's livin'—that is. He allus did write a spidery hand, he did. It's like himself, it is, crooked and disguised like—very like himself. Wherever that letter came from—he's there—he is."

I glanced at the envelope. A peculiar hand! Some letters crowded together; others far apart; some large and well-formed; others scrawled and diminutive! Colonel Windsor's hand! Ah God! What does it mean? Quick as thought, I drew the letter from the envelope. It was dated at the police headquarters, New York, a year and a half back, and was signed "Colonel John Abbott, Detective."

I crushed it into my pocket and hastened to my room. Once there, I fell on my knees and in a spirit of fervent devotion supplicated the God whose attributes are "merciful and just," that in His mercy He would have compassion on Mrs. Sherman and her daughters, if they yet lived, and in His justice bring the wrong-doers to punishment. I arose, locked the door, spread the letter on my study-table and pondered over its contents.

It briefly stated that its author had energetically

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pursued a certain line of action which he hoped would soon bring the perpetrators of the crime to justice. It requested a remittance of a few hundred dollars to defray the extraordinary expenses the writer had incurred, in the anxious discharge of this important duty, and concluded by expressing the certain hope that before many days I should have the satisfaction of having the murderer of Wentworth suffer the extreme penalty of the law. I had remitted the money, but in the excitement of the moment the character of the writing had escaped my observation.

I drew Colonel Windsor's letter from my pocket and placed the two side by side on the table. It was obvious that both had been written in a feigned hand, but the most vicarious character will repeat itself. The similarity was convincing. There was no doubt the same hand had penned both.

"At last! At last! I have a clue! Colonel Windsor, my dexterous villain, you have proved too clever for your own good, you have overreached yourself," I shouted aloud almost crazed with delight.

CHAPTER XVII.

I DIRECTED my steps to the police headquarters where I found Chief Symonds in his office. I was well acquainted with the chief, my unenviable vocation having frequently brought me into contact with him.

"Good morning, good morning, Mr. Garland. I hope you are well," he said as I entered his office.

"Good morning, Chief," I replied, endeavoring to conceal the tremor in my voice.

"Found your man yet?" he asked.

"No; but I believe I have found his trail," I answered.

"Ah, indeed; glad to hear it; very glad to hear it, Mr. Garland. I hope you may catch the scoundrel. There must be a nest of them. One out, all out, will be our game. If we get our hands on one, if we can only catch one of them, it will be a dark day for the lot. How about the reward? Who gets that? A gold mine for some lucky devil; wish I were he," he continued, trying to draw me out.

Whether rightly or wrongly I had been losing faith in the whole police system. I reached the

climax of distrust and suspicion when I found that its ranks might often afford refuge to the basest outlaws, and the eyes of justice might in this way be turned aside. I had not gone there to make a confession. I was not to be drawn out. I had learned something of human nature in the last few years. Somehow, I could not resist the feeling that if I should convey my clue to the chief or to any member of his force, its whole influence would be turned against me, and its guilty member spirited away beyond detection.

"Pardon me, Chief, I have not quite completed my clue yet; it is, I may say, of so very slight a nature that unless I can fortify it by certain facts, it will be useless. Later on, I shall be pleased to confer with you as to what course I had better adopt," I answered.

"Do you know a member of your detective force whose name is Colonel John Abbott?" I enquired.

"Colonel John Abbott? Well, I should say I do. I count Colonel Abbott the cleverest detective in America. He has unearthed thousands of crimes and mysteries. He is known from the Atlantic to the Pacific. He never loses a trail. He will stick to it for years with the tenacity and perseverance of a sleuth-hound till he tracks the culprit to his den. His only failure which I can recollect is the Wentworth case. That has defied us all. George Wentworth's murderer will, I believe, never be de-

tected. . In all likelihood he is dead by this time. But till Abbott abandons the case, I will not entirely lose hope. In extreme cases, he often lies low for years, and just when the delinquent thinks all has blown over and ventures out from his seclusion, he finds himself handcuffed and arraigned for trial."

"Can you oblige me with his address?" I asked. "I wish to call on him in reference to this very case."

"I cannot. Detectives have no address; no complexion; no clothes; no appearance; and no character. Detectives are the star actors of the age. They play a different role every day. They assume all characters; wear all kinds of clothes; chum with all kinds of men. They have no identity. They are the shadows of other men. They are everybody, everywhere, and everything. I cannot give you his address. Besides, Mr. Garland, besides, he is not on the force now. He resigned some three months ago. He was offered a large increase in his salary which he would not accept."

I felt a chill creep through my veins at this intelligence. Had this prodigy of deceit and crime again evaded me? Had he felt the chains of justice tightening about him and made good his escape?

I kept as steady as I could and went on. "Indeed, I regret to hear that. Abbott is an old acquaint-

ance of mine. He has worked very zealously in this Wentworth affair. I should like to see him."

"An acquaintance, is he?"

"Yes; at least, I think so. I think he is the man whom I knew some years ago. Is he a tall, ponderous man?"

"Yes; that he is, very tall."

"Compactly and proportionately built?"

"The same; the very same."

"With striking features?"

"Very striking; Very large, prominent features."

"Sallow complexion?"

"The same."

"Large black eyes?"

"Yes; the same; a terrible pair of eyes, that would look clear through a man."

"Long black mustache, black hair, heavy black eyebrows?"

"The same, the very same. Altogether a remarkable make up. He is the same. An acquaintance of yours, Mr. Garland? He is well worth knowing, the same Abbott, and once known he is never forgotten. He is the cleverest fellow I ever knew. He could accomplish anything. The finest address, most polished manners, best reader of character, of any man of my acquaintance. He could walk with the majesty of a king, or creep along the street like a hopelessly deformed cripple, till he extracted tears from the passers-by. He would write me from San

Francisco and be in New York before his letter was posted. Dozens of times, he has accosted me on the street without my recognizing him, and afterwards told me about it. An actor, a magician, a ventriloquist, a soothsayer, a clairvoyant, a mesmerist; men were matter in his hands. He has played practical jokes on the cleverest detectives, such as picking their pockets, dressing them in other men's clothes, and all such tricks; and when they were at their wit's end, he would come to their rescue and laugh at their simplicity."

"That's the man. He was always fond of playing such pranks. Has he left the city?"

"Yes; you will not likely see him for two or three years, if then. He has gone to the Arctic Seas. Gone to discover the North Pole. If he does not discover it, then there *is* no North Pole—that's all. What he can't do, can't be done."

"But there's no telling what he's up to. My own opinion is that he is shadowing the murderer of George Wentworth. He's after some big game!"

My heart sank. My hopes were dashed to earth. Two years! Two years or more of this killing suspense for me! Two years or longer for poor Mrs. Sherman to endure the awful torture. Two years or longer for the blood of George Wentworth, of Leonore Sherman, perhaps of Jean Grant, to cry to heaven in vain for vengeance. Two years longer for this incarnate fiend to ply his nefarious

arts upon the unsuspecting sons of Adam. Every doubt of his identity was now removed. Colonel Windsor, Professor Sydney and Detective John Abbott were one and the same person. He must have become aware that his identity was suspected. He must have felt that the hand of justice could not much longer be averted. Cunning villain! He had gone beyond recall. He had gone to the region where no country holds sway; where no sceptre is regnant; where no laws exist; where no courts have jurisdiction; where crimes are forgotten and injuries forgiven in the fierce struggle for life against the rigors of a hyperborean climate. Would he ever return? If so, possibly he would come back laden with the spoils of victory snatched from Polar hardships, and, like Alcibiades of old, tearfully implore his fellow-countrymen for forgiveness. If he never returned what then? Should my own wrongs, the taking off of my noble friend and the ruin of the home, the hopes and the happiness of Mrs. Sherman and her daughters remain forever unavenged? Should a day of retribution never come? Should the seal of mysterious silence never be broken? The very thought drove me almost to madness.

CHAPTER XVIII.

AN examination of the registered list of those who had joined the exploring expedition satisfied me that Colonel Windsor, under the name of John Abbott, had accepted an officer's commission in the party, and was now some distance in the Northern latitudes.

It was a time of bitter and memorable experiences for me. Like a pendulum, my feelings were alternately swinging through every phase of mortal joy and pain which compass the awful chasm between hope and despondency.

I turned from the naval office sick at heart. An indescribable numbness seized my spirit and paralyzed my body. In a state of semi-consciousness, I staggered to the nearest police officer and asked him to send me to my hotel. I have a dim, dream-like remembrance of having been placed in a vehicle and of having been assisted to my rooms. A potion of strong spirits rallied me a little, and I vaguely realized my unfortunate dilemma.

All was lost! I was pursuing a shadow, and when I thought to grasp it, it eluded me and was gone. An hour ago, I had told myself that my long, per-

severing labors were about to be crowned with success. Now, apparently, I was further than ever from success. All was lost. My ambition was wrecked; my hopes dashed to earth; disaster, defeat and confusion were the only fruits which my life had yielded; for these I cared not. The ardent love and affection of my youth had died long ago; I mourned not for that. I thought not of myself. I was a man with a mission—a mission so great and absorbing that my feelings, my aims, my hopes, my ambition and my identity had become merged in it. In all verity, I was not concerned about myself or my feelings; painfully, and with inexpressible sadness, my tormented mind reverted to Seaton—to Dunmore.

Where was my once much loved Jean who had planted in my bosom love's blessed flower, only to be plucked therefrom by a cruel hand before its blossom had matured to fruition; whose worst sin was a too confiding and credulous heart, a disposition to surrender to present exigencies, and a desire to please everybody, which prompted her, or rather, coerced her to prefer the near and the present to the distant and the absent? Gone! ruined! lost! dead! Begging on the streets, or in the mad-house! Long ago had I forgiven her for the wrong she had done me. Where was George Wentworth, my friend, my brother, as true a man as God ever made? above reproach; gentle, yet

strong; firm, yet generous; warm-hearted, open-handed; talented above most men, and destined for a glorious career; noble; dead! murdered! His blood was still unavenged. His murderer still at large, untracked, unwhipped of justice. Where was she on whom these blows fell with direst severity—Mrs. Sherman? At Dunmore; the solitary occupant of her lonely palace; widowed; childless; nursing through dreary days and sleepless, frightsome nights, the burden of a mysterious sorrow, too heavy for human heart long to endure; robbed of all save her hope of heaven; each day deepening and multiplying the deep lines of anguish on her beautiful face, and weaving about her high, placid brow, a crown of more snowy whiteness. To me, to me alone could she now look for the offices of a son. And I, baffled, dismayed, stupefied, not more by the prolonged ardor of my task, than by its futility, its hopelessness, its barrenness.

Where was Leonore? Lost! ruined! At that thought, my blood rising to the height of unconquerable passion, surged madly through my veins. I clutched my brows in despair; I rushed madly from side to side of my room. "Oh, Leonore! Leonore!" I exclaimed, while the perspiration oozed in large beads from my brow, "come back to me, come back, come back! I love you! I love you! Never till now did I know it. Now, now, I know that I love you! Come back! you are not lost!

You are not dead! It cannot be, it cannot be."

I fell prostrate. The servants of the hotel heard my frantic cries and alarmed the house. My door was forced. I lay there more dead than alive. It was like a long agonizing dream of hell. Dark spirits haunted the air about me; I seemed to have entered a new world inhabited by ghouls and monsters who snarled and jeered at my wounded spirit. But at last, it seemed, the beautiful Beatrice of my Inferno, Leonore, approached me and placed a soothing hand on my brow and I slept.

I rose more calm. I determined to control my feelings. I called a hack and drove for hours through Central Park. In the evening I was more composed.

What should be my next step? What should I do? Arctic explorations, all at once, interested me. Eagerly I studied the history of that subject. I would fit out an expedition of my own. I set about this. I found plenty of daring men who would undertake the perils of the frozen North. But money, money was the drawback. I interviewed members of the Government and endeavored to enlist their sympathy in the scheme. I was informed that the Government contemplated a second expedition which should leave New York one year after the departure of the first, with a fresh supply of provisions.

I at once sought out Captain Dalton, who was to have the command, and offered to join his party, an offer which was readily accepted.

Dr. Parks had written me that he had ascertained beyond doubt that Jean was in New York, and that he meant to reach America as soon as he could arrange plans. I had written to him from time to time keeping him advised of all that happened. I now wrote to him asking him to join the "Search" expedition. He wired an affirmative answer. I succeeded in getting him the post of assistant surgeon. He arrived in March, and was duly enrolled.

I spent what appeared an endless winter between New York and Seaton, and during the following spring, our expedition left New York.

Our boat, the "Search," schooner-rigged and specially adapted for her perilous work, was the strongest ever built. Six and a half inches of solid oak planking upon her sides; her bow almost a solid mass of timber, heavily coated with iron, ending in a sharp iron prow; her screw capable of being quickly unshipped and placed on deck out of danger of the ice; supplied with extra blades, rudder, spars and sails, and a splendid equipment of boats. The boats were marvels; some of them would carry between four and five tons, weighed only two hundred and fifty pounds, could be folded up in a minute's notice and conveyed on a sledge to meet the emergency of portaging.

Thousands stood on the shore to bid us God-speed, as we left port. Bands played; salutes of ordnance were given, and a sea of waving handkerchiefs rose above the thronging scene, as the "Search," with the Stars and Stripes flying cheerily from her mast-head, breasted the blue billows of the Atlantic, and steered her course for the North.

Although my hopes were somewhat raised, I could not resist a feeling of sadness and depression at the commencement of the long, perilous voyage. An undefined apprehension, such as I had never experienced before, seemed brooding over my spirits. Indeed my long-taxed diligence had begun to tell heavily upon my health. Never again should I feel that buoyancy and vigor that used to support me in the most hazardous situations; in their stead, came a shrinking from encounter, a worse than superstitious dread of the future, a timidity and solitariness which led me to exchange seclusion and retirement for the pleasures of society. I had scarcely reached my thirtieth year, yet I became sensitively conscious of the fact, that my hair was quite gray; that my face looked old enough for fifty; that my step was feeble and uncertain, that my constitution was prematurely wrecked. It appeared to me now that I was about to consummate the melancholy tragedy, in which I had been a leading actor for so many years, by the sacrifice of my life.

What hope lay before us? Little, if any. Hundreds of the bravest and best navigators and explorers had preceded us into that inhospitable region, with no other result than to leave their starved and frozen bodies on its bleak, barren ice-fields. If the strongest and most skilled veterans fared thus, what hope for me? But then it mattered not.

But the stout heart of Dr. Parks, and his carefully stored medicine chest kept up my health and spirits.

I still kept my mission secret. What was my mission? To bring Colonel Windsor to justice? No; I had no longer much hope of that. He was beyond the region of law and legislators. The chances were one hundred to one that he would never return. My one desire and hope was to set my eyes upon him; not for vengeance, not for punishment; but that I might learn from his false traitorous lips the fate of Jean Grant and Leonore Sherman. If I could only find *them*, I would be satisfied. If I found him dead, I would rifle his pockets and preserve every vestige of his garments, that I might, by some happy accident, be led thereby to the coveted information. If I found him living, I should spring upon him with the fury of a wild beast and wring from his wretched heart a dying confession of his horrid crimes.

When the "Search" reached St. John's, New-

foundland, we were cordially saluted by the Governor and citizens. Thence, with our prow pointing straight to the north we entered Davis Straits and on July 31, reached the coast of Greenland. Continuing our course, we found Baffin's Bay freer from ice than it had been for years.

Difficulties might now be expected. We were replenished with additional stores and supplies, donned our heavy furs and purchased a number of sledge dogs.

Slowly the "Search" threaded her way northward among the numerous ice-floes drifting southward in the Arctic current. We touched at Upernavik and on the 23d of August reached Tessuisac, in latitude $73^{\circ} 30'$, the uninviting capital of the most northerly settlement in the world.

So far, our inquiries for Captain Fenlon's expedition of the previous year, had been fruitless; no tidings had been heard. Northward, still northward, we kept our course, each day contending with new dangers. Our progress became slower, and still no tidings of the missing crew. All we could learn from the Innuits was that the expedition had gone still further North. November passed. The cold became intolerable. The winter, with its two months of unbroken night, was approaching. At last, our way was completely blocked. We fastened our hawsers to the ice-bound coast, waiting and hoping that the huge ice-fields which impeded

our further progress, would move southward. Winter came on. For weeks, the sun swept around the bleak horizon, till at last his upper disk alone was visible all day long.

At last the ice drifted aside, and we were enabled to continue our course. When we reached latitude $82^{\circ} 16'$, we espied the wreck of a vessel crushed between two huge ice-packs. Half a dozen of us launched a boat and inspected the wreck. It was the "Northern Eagle," Captain Fenlon's boat.

Next day, Assistant-Surgeon Parks, whose extended travels rendered him an invaluable acquisition to our party, discovered, by the use of his powerful glass, a man standing on a lofty ice-pack some miles to the north. This was glorious news. We steamed a little way northward, when we saw two men running down to the water's edge in frantic joy to greet us.

We were not long in abandoning the "Search," and soon reached Captain Fenlon's camp, where a scene of the wildest joy and thanksgiving ensued. "God bless you! God bless you! our brave deliverers," fell from the lips of our new-found acquaintances. Men embraced and kissed each other; knelt and fell prostrate before each other in idolatrous thankfulness.

As I approached the camp, my heart beat wildly. Mingled joy, sorrow, anger and terror seized me. What would the next few minutes bring forth?

Would Colonel Windsor be among the survivors of the wreck? Had he gone down to the sea with his crimes unconfessed?

Never shall I forget the scenes which met my gaze. Only ten of Captain Fenlon's party were found alive. The condition of these was such that they could not have lived more than a few days longer. A strong wind had blown their tent down; they had not strength enough to raise it again. The survivors, too feeble to help themselves, with two or three exceptions, had lain there for three days and three nights, stretched out in their sleeping-bags, pressed close to the damp, cold matting which formed the floor, by the heavy poles and material of the tent. They had no provisions. They were emaciated and pale; and looked more like skeletons than living men. Captain Fenlon was cold to the waist; his pulse could hardly be felt; the grim expression of death overspread his features; he was wholly unconscious.

The condition of his comrades was scarcely less critical; only a few of them were able to speak.

The surroundings were most desolate and disheartening. The ice all around the tent was strewn with old clothes, cans, jars and debris. The most expensive and delicate scientific apparatus, such as chronometers, barometers and glasses, were to be seen scattered about.

My heart was melted even to tears, although my

mind was far more intent on its wearisome mission than on anything else.

Where was Colonel Windsor?

As we bent above the forms of these dying heroes, and saw their faces revealed in the dim unsteady light of blubber-lamps, I peered with wistful, painful, almost distracting expectation into each pair of wildly-staring eyes which looked forth from the mass of rubbish, in the hope of finding the man whom I sought. In vain. He was not among the living.

We rendered our best services to the sick and dying explorers. We removed them to more comfortable quarters in our capacious boat. Later on, Dr. Parks accompanied me back to the camp. The *Aurora Borealis* burst forth in all the magnificent beauty in which it is seen in these northern latitudes, transforming the dreary, northern night into day. A little way from the camp, we found the remains of the dead heroes, partly covered in a mound of snow. A track led from the camp to this lonely little graveyard. At once, we began overhauling the corpses, thinking that if we should find among them the body of Colonel Windsor, we might be able to obtain some clue, however slight, on his person.

Horrid to relate! the bodies had been carved and nearly all the flesh removed. Nothing was left but the white, shining bones and the swollen faces.

The survivors had been driven to cannibalism. With sickening hearts, we scanned each face, but even here, among the dead, we found no trace of Colonel Windsor.

Investigations which must necessarily be made, prevented the "Search" from turning homeward for at least a fortnight. Large tents were pitched on the ice some distance from our boat, in which the invalids were laid, and most of our provisions stored, lest a treacherous iceberg should crush our boat to pieces.

Impatiently, I awaited the slow recovery of Captain Fenlon. At last, Dr. Parks gained for me an admission to the Captain's sick bed. I enquired for the fate of Colonel Abbott.

"Ah," he said feebly, "the poor Colonel is no more. We were starving. He was one of a party of three brave fellows who volunteered a trip of fifty miles to recover a quantity of beef cached some five years ago by Captain Nares, at Cape Isabella. None of them ever returned. We found one of them, poor Laing, lying dead within a mile of the camp. The others have never been heard of. They were lost and frozen. The beef was never recovered."

All feeling left me. All hope was gone.

CHAPTER XIX.

FORTUNATELY for us, all our supplies and stores were removed from the ship to the camp. A glittering iceberg whose crystal turrets rose hundreds of feet, broke into fragments, tumbling into the water with a terrific crash which seemed to shake the shore for miles around, and left the "Search," notwithstanding her magnificent strength of construction, a shattered wreck which drifted along the dark tide, locked in the embrace of the splendid fragments of the glacier.

The despair which fell upon us cannot be described, cannot be imagined. We looked into each others faces speechless, horrified. Our vessel crushed into atoms almost, left without access to the civilized world, without help, without hope, we could only resign ourselves to the certain fate of that deadly climate and prepare for death.

Each day saw the death of some hapless victim to the fatal scurvy. Each day, life became more intolerable, and death more welcome. Each day the irksome monotony tended more and more to deaden our feelings of humanity and reduce us to the level of the brute creation. The dense, unin-

interrupted night of two months which deepened upon us, scarcely symbolized the darker and more awful night that brooded over our desponding spirits. The strongest and bravest were perishing day by day; and I, feeble, depressed and heart-sick from the beginning of the voyage, lived on. And yet it was not I who lived; it was my *purpose*. I was no longer a man; I was a living, incarnate purpose. And yet why should I still hope? My mission had failed. My purpose had been baffled. What hoped remained? None. Still something bade me live. Something told me that success yet awaited me. If I were only home again! Alas! that hope was vain.

Colonel Windsor was only one of an organized confederacy of guilt. *He* was dead. Alone, friendless, homeless, he had perished with his sins unfessed. His body, stark and stiff, lay, unmarked, on the bleak Arctic desert. True, *he* was gone. But *others* remained whose hands had been imbrued in innocent blood. Some day, discord would lead to exposure; exposure to conviction. Some day, in the distant future, it might be, some penitent member of the cabal would in a death-bed confession, discover the horrifying details of a life of crime. Some day, all would out. Oh! merciful heaven! if I were only home. I would wait for long years; wait till my life had run its course, that I might expose the dark conspiracy

which had robbed me of home, of felicity, and of friendship, and condemned me to the uneasy life of a foot-sore and heart-broken pilgrim, on the shores of a world of infinite pain and sorrow.

Dr. Parks was apparently as much at home amidst these perils as if he were in "Merrie England." Given a gun, ammunition and something to kill, he was contented. He had several hair-breadth escapes which he enjoyed hugely. "This is a blooming fine country for sport," he used to say whilst all the rest of us had the blues. "A man who can't live for a year on brandy and ice with good tobacco for dessert, isn't fit to be a traveller." And other times when he and I were alone, he would take Jean's photograph, which I gave him as a souvenir and looking at it say, "Garland, I don't mean to die till I find Jean Grant. If I have to walk to New York or go by balloon, I'm going to get there."

The marvels of this continuous Arctic night were not for me. I had seen, but without appreciation, the matchless magnificence of the Arctic sunset wrapping the snow-covered mountains and the towering ice-dome with all the glories of color. The moon, shining serenely beautiful, through the attenuated air, wheeled her continual circles around the horizon for days, surrounded by trooping constellations of stars, brighter than are visible in any other part of the world. Under her bright beams,

the landscape, as far as the eye could pierce through the transparent, lustrous atmosphere, was one immense uniform desert, shrouded in garments of white; but the most magnificent spectacle beheld in these sterile regions is the magical grandeur of the aurora.

It is night. The moon has retired beneath the horizon. Down through the dense darkness which prevails in these higher latitudes, the watchful stars are peering brilliantly upon us. A long, brilliant bow of light pushes itself up from the northern horizon. It rises and falls like the flowing and ebbing tides. Now it sinks out of sight. Now it raises its luminous crest high into the misty heavens. For a few moments it dances with a pulsating, trembling motion. Suddenly its upper rim bursts. Behold! the whole northern heavens, clear to the zenith, are flooded with streams of dancing, radiating light. It is like a wide expanse of sea on fire, its surface of brilliant waves assuming new positions and combinations every instant. Another change. The transparent beams assume new colors. Near the horizon, they are a clear blood-red; higher up, a pale emerald tint. Still higher, they are of a light yellow color. The earth glows under their magical light. Yonder, the dark, slumbering sea assumes a beauty surpassing its own, as it absorbs the many colored beams and pencils of light. The spreading streams

begin to converge at the top. They are all moving, dancing, changing, like a host of light-clad genii. Nearer and nearer their yellow branches grow towards each other, till, finally, the phenomenon attains its climax, by the formation of a resplendent copula of light. The earth is silent, as if spellbound. Gradually, the crown disappears; the bow dissolves; the streams of light shorten; their merry motion becomes slower; their color melts into faint yellow; fainter, fainter they shine, till they disappear, leaving the ice-bound desert in its silence, solitude and darkness.

The long night of winter was about over, and the re-animating effects of returning spring and twilight began to be felt. All day long, the sun, like a mighty wheel of fire, seemed to roll along the terrestrial horizon. For about six hours out of the twenty-four it was behind the great mountains of snow and ice to the North—this we called night—during the rest of the time it was morning twilight. This change had not come too soon; our provisions were almost exhausted; our numbers had decreased to twenty-five, all told. Brave Captain Fenlon had been numbered with the dead. Our only course was to commence a hazardous retreat along that barren, desolate shore, so as to reach some point accessible to navigation. But how could we do so? We had only two or three small boats left. We were too weak to contend with the extraordinary

perils of a southward march. Now the bitter north wind drove the massive pack crashing against the shore; now the south wind drove it again into the narrow channels, making navigation impossible; now the dense fog turned day into night. Our position was indeed critical.

One night, we were awakened from our miserable sleep by a tremendous upheaval of the earth and a long resounding series of rumbling noises, resembling distant thunder. We were dreadfully alarmed. It seemed as if the whole earth were breaking to pieces. "An earthquake!" we all exclaimed simultaneously. We prayed for morning. When it came, we perceived that the huge iceberg, on which we had encamped believing it to be *terra firma*, had been dislodged by the swelling undertide and was moving slowly southward in the treacherous current. "A good idea," said Parks. "We're all right now. We'll reach the Equator and sit on it till we're picked up. I always liked the Equator. It holds the balance of power."

"Southward with fleet of ice
Sailed the corsair Death;
Wild and fast blew the blast,
And the east wind was his breath.

"His lordly ships of ice
Glistened in the sun;
On each side, like pennons wide,
Flashing crystal streamlets run.

"His sails of white sea mist
Dripped with silver rain ;
But where he passed there were cast
Leaden shadows o'er the main."

Southward, southward we drifted slowly, through weary days and horrid, sleepless nights. We were able to kill an occasional seal, thanks to the daring and skill of our native hunter, Joss, which helped us to stay the ravages of scurvy. Our supplies were almost gone ; we began to live on sealskin.

Southward, still southward we move. The ice is getting thinner, and we fear every moment that the expansive field on which we are drifting will break in pieces. We are killing and eating our dogs. We cook our meals over the lamp.

The sun shines beautifully. We love to see it. It reminds us of our own fair homes. It brings out a fine large seal which falls a victim to the unerring aim of our good spirit, Joss. This rejoices our hearts for a few days, but we have no reprieve from our ominous apprehensions. The warm sun which brings out the seals will also dissolve our crystal ship. Everywhere, as far as the eye can reach, there is nothing but icebergs and floes, breaking, crashing and colliding, with a noise like the roar of battle. We expect the floe to break into a thousand pieces every moment.

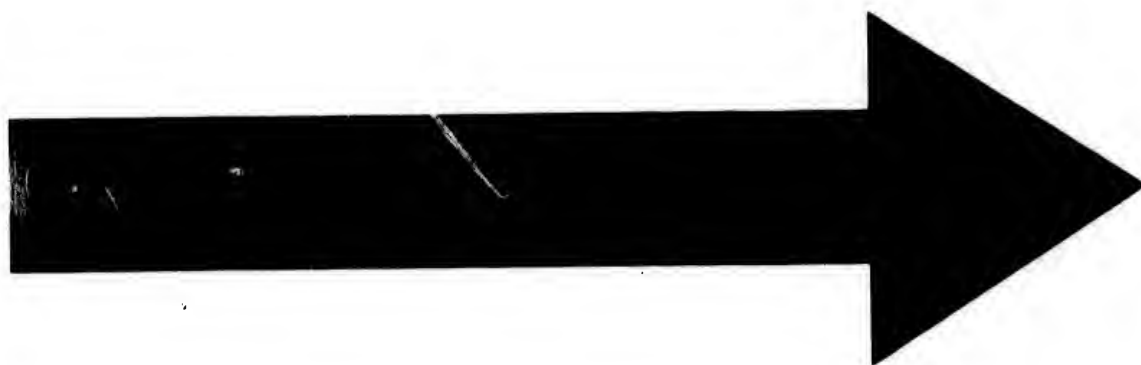
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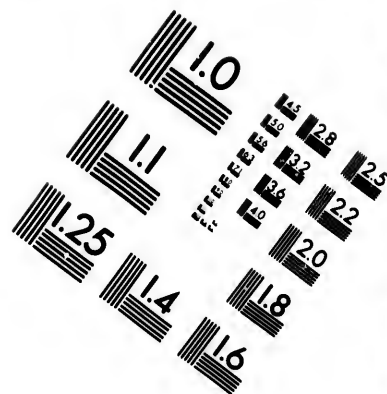
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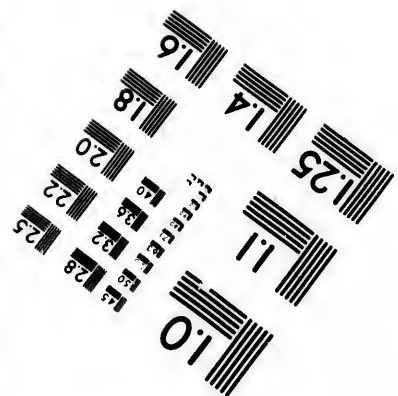
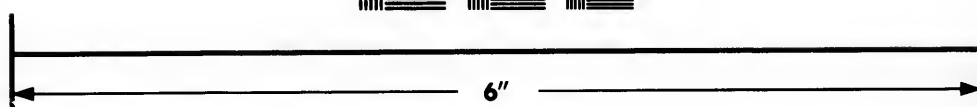
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A resolution test chart featuring various patterns of vertical and horizontal lines. The patterns are arranged in a grid-like fashion. Each pattern is accompanied by a numerical value indicating its resolution. The values include 1.0, 1.1, 1.25, 1.4, 1.6, 1.8, 2.0, 2.2, 2.5, 2.8, 3.0, 3.2, 3.6, 4.0, and 4.5. The patterns consist of groups of lines of varying thicknesses and spacings, designed to test the ability of a system to resolve fine details.



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week. We are all too weak to help ourselves. Joss stands it better than any of us. The end is near. Joss goes off in search of food. Thank God! he has killed another large seal. A wild storm on the sea. The floe begins breaking up. Our camp, our kyack, and most of our utensils are swept overboard. In the morning, the floe drifts against the coast of Greenland at Cape Farewell. Again we drift seaward.

Southward, southward, ever southward. Seals are abundant. We have plenty to eat. Terrible storms prevail. Our health is bad. Our heads, faces and hands are swollen to twice their usual size.

The sun shines warmly and brightly from a cloudless sky. The ice has cleared away. We can now see the gorgeous appearance and enormous dimensions of the iceberg on which we float. It is sixty miles long, and almost as wide, while its crystal towers rise glittering with prismatic splendor three hundred feet above the sea-level. The bases of these burnished columns shone like Parian marble studded with gems of opal. From out deep Cimmerian caverns, shone twinkling stars like the eyes of luring spirits. Where the edge overhung the water, every shade and tint of the emerald is interspersed with streaks of cobalt-blue. Down icy mountain-sides, leaped and gambolled streams and cascades, shining like molten-silver. Now and

then, a tall column trembles for a moment, falls with a tremendous crash on its sloping foundations, and tumbles in fragments into the ocean.

Southward, yet southward. New difficulties interpose; again we are face to face with starvation. A violent storm. We are camped near the edge of the ice-field so that we may the better keep a lookout for passing boats. Before we can change our position the sea strikes us, washes over us and carries away everything, leaving us drenched, benumbed, perishing. Again and again, the cold heavy waves wash over us. It takes all our strength to keep ourselves from being washed overboard. One of our number dies. We are forced to accept cannibalism. God pity us! It is awful!

Dr. Parks declared that human flesh wasn't half bad. "If one half of the world knew how good the other half tasted the economic question of increasing populations would be solved," he said. But we all feel stronger now. Joss is himself again. He goes off and shoots a huge bear. His gun, which he prizes above all things, is the only thing saved. Without it, we must inevitably have perished. Our spirits revive. Joss kills two seals. We have food in abundance. My own health has improved under the generous and almost fatherly treatment of Dr. Parks. I am able to walk again. We go off, Dr. Parks and I, on a hunting expedition, with Joss. The day is serenely beautiful. We are several

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miles from the rude camp which we improvised.
Joss sees a seal, dodges off among the tall cliffs and
columns, and leaves us. We wait. He returns
not. He has forgotten us in the eager chase. We
begin to retrace our steps. We cannot. We are
lost!

"Gad, old fellow!" exclaimed Dr. Parks, "we
are elected; we are between the devil and the deep
sea with a strong bent towards the devil. Let's get
up a toboggan and slide down these slopes to keep
ourselves warm."

CHAPTER XX.

DR. PARKS was an experienced traveller, and I trusted that he would be able to find our way back. But he was quite as much at sea as myself. The compass afforded no help, since our gigantic ice-ship often performed one or more revolutions in a day. Night was approaching, and we knew that a night's exposure would mean almost certain death; yet we were so inured to hardships and dangers, that we could endure much more than ordinary men. We struggled on aimlessly. Night-fall found us lost on this frigid, shelterless iceberg. We dared not lie down to sleep on the bare ice. Our only hope of surviving the coldness and humidity of the air of that night, was by keeping constantly on the move. We wandered all night. Without food, our bodies began to give out. Dr. Parks had with him a small phial of brandy which he used as a medicine in emergencies. Several times during the night we moistened our lips with this.

Morning came. We were too weak to walk further. We could only lie down and perish. As the dawn appeared we climbed on to one of the

high bases of ice, in order to be more easily detected by our companions. We sat down and resolved to submit to our fate.

Dr. Parks took out his small phial in which there yet remained a few ounces of liquor. "We may as well live as long as this will keep us alive, old man," said he, humorously, for he was one of those jolly Englishmen who can die with as much composure as they can live.

I raised the phial to my lips, but dropped it again before I had tasted the liquor. Something in front of me a few rods, which looked like a bundle of rags, attracted my attention. "Look! what's that?" I exclaimed; and we both rose to our feet at once by sheer strength of excitement. We staggered forward, and there, in an elevated cavern formed by a projecting ice-front, lay a man, in a most deplorable condition. His body was sewed up in a bag after the manner of Arctic voyageurs. His frame was reduced to a skeleton; his fingers were like pipe stems; and his face was swollen and distorted. His long, dishevelled hair, as white as snow, fell far down on his shoulders; and his beard was also extremely long and white.

He did not seem to realize our presence for a time. He was in a horrid condition of filth, misery and suffering. We took in the situation in a flash. This poor wretch was also a member of some exploring party who had wandered away from his company

and got lost; beside him lay a large quantity of pemican which had sustained him through the terrible ordeal. He had lain there for months, unable to move his body or help himself in any way. Dr. Parks felt his pulse and administered a few drops of brandy. His feet and legs up to the knees had literally rotted off, and his right arm lay withered and dead by his side. It struck us little less than miraculous that life should still burn within this wasted, putrefying form.

Into this sheltered cave the sun shone warmly, so that Dr. Parks immediately took out his knife and began ripping open the sack which encased our unfortunate fellow-sufferer. His clothes, matted and rotten, clung to the sack and exposed his naked chest to our view, on which I observed a black star, marked with India ink. Suddenly, the man revived a little. I saw him open his eyes—such eyes, black, piercing, terrible, eloquent of joy, pain, alarm, despair. Never had I seen a pair of eyes express so much. Those awful black eyes! Where had I seen them before? "Colonel Windsor! Colonel Windsor! Colonel Windsor!" I shouted, overcome with delirious joy and excitement, "At last! at last! at last!"

I snatched up the phial and fiercely, madly, thrust the contents into the dying man's throat. I knelt above his face. I put my lips close to his ear and cried—"Colonel Windsor! I am Arthur Garland!

You are dying! tell me, I pray you, why you murdered George Wentworth. Tell me, before you die, where are Jean Grant and Leonore Sherman?"

He rallied for a moment, and on hearing those names mentioned, opened his eyes widely and looked at me. His lips were moving. I put my ear close to his mouth that I might catch every syllable he uttered.

"Too late! too late!" he whispered. "All is over now. I shall say nothing," and a calm, defiant smile overspread his ghastly features.

"Not yet too late," I exclaimed fervently, "to repent of your wrong-doing. Not yet too late to undo much of the wrong which you have inflicted on your innocent and unsuspecting wife and her family. Not yet too late to tell me where and how I may find your victims if they still live, that I may deliver them from their chains of fire. Not yet too late to confess your sins before God and die in the peace and happiness of his sovereign forgiveness. Speak! for God's sake speak, ere it be too late."

He muttered, in a hoarse whisper, "I robbed you of a wife; I murdered George Wentworth; and Leonore— Ah! yes; I did it all; Arthur Garland you have had your revenge; I have been punished, let me die in peace."

"You *are* a cool villain; you must have had a chill!" exclaimed Dr. Parks with some little emotion.

"Think not of *me*, Colonel Windsor. I freely forgive you. I seek no revenge. Think not of *me*. Think of Jean! Think of Leonore! Think of poor Mrs. Sherman! Tell me about *them*. Speak, man, speak! You are dying. Do not meet a despised and outraged God with your sins unconfessed. One word! Quick! Where is your wife? Where is Leonore?"

"They are both living. They are both—"

A loud roar. A trembling of the ice beneath us. A long resounding crash. The ice-field had at last split asunder. It parted beneath the dying man's miserable couch. In an instant, Colonel Windsor and myself were precipitated into the black, angry waters. "O Christ," I prayed aloud, "save us! save us!" I clung with a death-grip to my helpless companion. I must save *him*. I must hear one more word from his lips. Better die than live, losing all I had to live for. Down, down, down, into the surging billows. A thought, a terrible thought of my loved Leonore, a swift ecstatic panorama of all my past life—I remembered no more.

I found myself, some hours later, lying on the ice, with Dr. Parks bending above me. He had leaped into the water and rescued me in the nick of time.

My senses returned slowly; and as they quickened, the terrible realization of my predicament was borne in on my soul. Colonel Windsor had

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gone down into the deep, silent sea, to return no more; truly his punishment had been more severe and long-tormenting than human laws ever inflicted, than human minds ever conceived. For that I cared not. The excruciating pangs of his long death had not restored the love, the happiness and the friendship which his criminality had blasted forever. Who can contemplate for a moment, without experiencing the profoundest sympathy and sorrow, the luckless result of my long quest. To have devoted the best years of my life to my self-imposed task; to have crossed continents, oceans, mountains and deserts; to have banished myself from friends, and wandered, an exile, in foreign lands, among savage people; to have endured the fever-laden sun of the tropics, and dared the untold hardships of Arctic night and winter; to have drifted for six long, perilous months on this piece of ice, with death staring me in the face all the time; to have done all this for the sake of those I love, and for the punishment of a man who had inflicted such unspeakable wrongs upon them; to have abandoned hope a thousand times; and to have found him when hope had perished, and in a place where no mortal would be sought for; to have heard him confess his crimes and ask that he might die in peace; and, hardest of all, to have heard his lips just beginning to tell me how I might undo some of the evils of his career of

crime; and then, then, before the words were uttered to have had him snatched from my arms and hurled headlong into the hungry billows!

"I hate you. I curse you, Dr. Parks, for having saved me; why not let me go down with him? Why not let me escape from the hell of my own fruitless existence? Why should I live? What have I to live for?"

"'Pon my soul, old boy," he answered, "you are a grateful fellow. I nearly lost my own life in getting you out of this scrape, and this is my reward. I want to see all the other fellows buried decently before you and I kick the bucket."

For a while longer I lay in a condition of mind resembling a horrible nightmare.

After a little, I began to feel more comfortable. I had gained something, at least. I had obtained *some* reward for my labors. I had found Colonel Windsor. I had met him face to face and had extorted a full confession of his crimes from his dying lips. I had seen him lying in a condition of privation, squalor, disease, and agony, that human lips dare not express, and human hearts would shrink from contemplating. Better than all, I had learned that Jean and Leonore were still alive. After all, I might yet be able to find them. If I were only in New York! But of reaching a place of safety, there was little hope.

The iceberg had been broken into fragments.

Suddenly, we heard a low, dull sound, something like the splash of some large body falling into the water. We could see nothing. The sound was repeated at intervals. We partook of a small quantity of Colonel Windsor's pemican. We were strengthened. The sounds continued to be heard by us every now and then.

Dr. Parks climbed to the top of the highest fragment. He descried, distant about a mile, a small column of smoke curling into the air. When the smoke had cleared away, he saw a man standing on another summit. It was Joss, brave, magnanimous Joss. He had been in search of us all night. The sound we heard was that of his gun, which he was firing off every few minutes, in the hope of attracting our attention. Dr. Parks hoisted his handkerchief for a signal and shouted at the top of his voice. Joss answered the signal, and in less than an hour he had reached us. Later on in the day, we were brought, amidst great rejoicing, into camp again.

Evening came down upon us again. Near dark, we observed a light as of a passing boat. We hoisted burning torches, made of rags steeped in blubber, and Joss turned our single firearm to the best account. A heavy fog, however, soon obscured the light, and though we sat up all night no help came. In the morning no trace of the vessel was to be seen.

We have now been on the ice nearly seven months, and have travelled nearly two thousand miles. The immense ice-field has crumbled and melted. Our tent is pitched on a small, unsteady floe, liable at any moment to break to pieces or turn over and engulf us in the brine.

Night again. We dare not sleep. The ice is dissolving rapidly. Our end seems near. The fog is so heavy that morning comes late. About ten o'clock, the sun high up in the heavens, peers through for the first time. Brighter and brighter shines the day. The heavy mist has been dissipated. What is that moving near us? Is it a ship? We can scarcely see it yet. It looks like a vessel. The mists have all gone. "A ship! a ship! a ship!" We all exclaimed at once. "God be praised, a ship!"

In a few minutes, she stood near us. Boats were lowered from her side which conveyed us from our icy home. At last we were safe! At last!

"We've had a devilish lot of fun on that old hulk," said the imperturbable Doctor, "it's been rare sport, I tell you, and I wouldn't mind going on another such shooting excursion. But the brandy was getting low and a fellow likes to have a few swigs to steady his aim, you know. By Jove, Garland, I feel sorry to leave the old decks!"

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CHAPTER XXI.

WE were shown great kindness by Captain Forbes and the other officers of the "Leonidas." The health of the rescued party improved rapidly.

We were within a few days' sail of New York. Dr. Parks wished to speak with me privately. On our going apart he said:—

"Garland, I have a little book here that may be useful to us, when we reach New York."

"In what way?" I asked.

"I cannot say just now," he replied.

"What is it?" I asked with some impatience.

"Nothing much; it is not an Esquimaux Bible; it is only a diary," he answered, with teasing nonchalance.

"A diary; yours?" I queried with abruptness.

"No; not mine," he responded, mechanically, turning over the leaves and stopping now and then to look at something of interest to him; "not mine; I have not the patience and punctuality adequate to the task of keeping a diary. This is a devilish queer-looking book. I found it on the ice the

other day. It is a relic of the late Colonel Windsor."

"His diary?"

"I think so; but I am sorry to say he was a very unmethodical book-keeper. While you and he were having a little race to see who would drown first, and praying that the Undines would transport you to the bottom of the ocean with more than their ordinary alacrity, I cast about to see what I could lay my hands on to further our search."

"Bravo! Dr. Parks; you are a genius indeed," I exclaimed with a degree of delighted enthusiasm which almost impelled me to embrace the doctor.

"Keep cool; don't be a fool, Garland. Don't expect too much. I fear there is nothing in the book that will promote our inquiries very much."

I sat beside him. With eyes almost bursting from their sockets, we examined together every page, sentence, letter and hieroglyphic which the book contained. Here was a little note of an incident; here a catalogue of camp rations; here a message to Captain Fenlon which never reached its destination.

This message related minutely to the fate of the little company who had volunteered to bring in the pemican cached by the Nares expedition. A storm had befallen them. They had lost their way. One of the party had been frozen to death. Colonel

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Windsor had had his feet and legs frozen so that he could not walk. The third had set off for help and never returned. Colonel Windsor had had plenty to eat. He had taken refuge in the ice-cavern. He said nothing about his awful sufferings. Quite as a matter of course, he informed Captain Fenlon that both his feet and his right hand had rotted off, but that he meant to live as long as he could.

But this was all. Not a woman's name; not a word of love, or farewell, or regret, or desire, or fear; not a wish for safety, not a prayer; not a man's name or initials or address. He had preserved his mysterious character to the last.

On the title page was a large black star. Above it were written in a bold hand "From No. 1," and under it, "To No. 19."

I remembered at once having observed the same mark on Colonel Windsor's bare breast.

This was our only clue. What was its import? We both concurred in the opinion that it meant, if anything, that Colonel Windsor was a member of some secret organization whose talisman was a black star, and whose members were known not by their names, but by numbers understood only by fellow-members.

Dr. Parks suggested that I should pass among the list of survivors of the ill-fated "Search" under an assumed name, so that the members of this supposed organization would be led to believe that

I had perished in the Northern seas, and would possibly be thrown off their guard and lured into a fancied security. Accordingly, I was announced as Lieutenant Conroy.

We arrived in New York. We were welcomed by the whole nation. Not for me, the splendid naval demonstration; not for me, the heavy line of grim, slow-moving men-of-war, with gold-clad officers on their decks, and gallant tars saluting from their riggings, with welcomes thundering from their mighty lips; not for me, the glorious strains of "Home Sweet Home;" and "Home Again," played with such effect as to bring tears from all eyes; not for me, the smiles and waving handkerchiefs and thrown kisses of the fair daughters of America; not for me, the land-procession, the brilliant banquet, the matchless panegyrics uttered by the lips of the most eloquent statesmen. I saw and heard as one in a dream. I was a stranger in my own home. No fair hand grasped my own and welcomed me back again. No loving heart met me to soothe the fatal pain that preyed on my own.

The pomp and show of public praise were cold, empty forms which only added to the wretchedness of my life.

"Leonore, Leonore," my heart kept whispering, "oh, my lost, my loved one, if I could see you even for a moment; if I could hear you speak one word of encouragement and welcome, I should

be the happiest man on earth. Leonore, I love you; death itself cannot quench my love; hardships and sufferings but increase its potency. Leonore, my love, I shall find you. I have not come through all the experiences of these long years for nothing. I shall find you yet. I shall find you, love you and make you my wife. God wills it, or I should have died long ago. God wills it. I shall find you."

The turmoil over, the Doctor and I planned our campaign. We soon found that there existed in the city a club known as the "Black Star League." We set out to find it, expecting that it would be located somewhere among the slums of the city. Judge of our surprise, when we discovered it to be one of the most elegantly and expensively furnished restaurants in the city, occupying a prominent place, right in the midst of the great thoroughfare on the corner of Blank Avenue and Old Street.

At first we were afraid to connect our clue with this magnificent establishment. For several days, we watched the class of persons who frequented it. They were sports. We procured for ourselves sporting suits of the most approved fashion, bottle-green, tight and conspicuous. We completed our attire with an abundance of cheap, flashy jewelry and the highest silk hats in the trade. For a few days, we contented ourselves with taking merely a few refreshments. We became acquainted with

the attendants. Next, we ventured to take an occasional lunch in the dining hall, with its mosaic floor, frescoed ceiling and exquisite drapery, mirrors and silver.

We were soon regular frequenters of the place. We had plenty of money and improved every opportunity of showing it. There were evidently a dozen or more proprietors. We could learn nothing of what constituted membership. By this time, we had concluded that it was a secret association, that the membership was limited, and that the proprietors and members were gamblers. We often passed through the dining-room into the splendidly equipped billiard-hall and had a game. To attract as much attention as possible, we played for pretty heavy stakes. We often pretended to lose our tempers. We were good game.

Our hosts marked us for their own. We played with them for money and lost. Finally they invited us into a secret room, in which a large number of small tables and easy chairs invited the unwary to a game of cards. We played and drank night after night with varying results, on the whole, however, losing pretty heavily. Our host's affections were commensurate with the depth of our purses. We had abundance of money, and so we were the most welcome guests. All the time we had associated with these men, we never heard a name, nor did they inquire for ours. This increased our suspicions.

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One evening, after the game was over, we sauntered about the room freely. At the upper end of the room, stood a large table. We moved towards it. In a figurative sense, it recalled King Arthur's Sixty Knights of the Round Table. It was surrounded by twenty chairs which were attached to the floor. This council-table was of mahogany, inlaid with a star of black marble in front of each chair, numbered in gold figures from one to twenty. My heart bounded with sudden joy and expectation at this sight, for now, beyond peradventure we were among the comrades of Colonel Windsor.

We were morally certain that we were on the right trail. But to follow it to ultimate success required more patience and tact than I possessed. I knew this. I had less confidence than ever in myself. For the very joy which I found awakening within me, increased my impatience and seriously interrupted my equanimity. Dr. Parks constantly cautioned me to be patient. He was *always* a man of ice.

CHAPTER XXII.

DR. PARKS found it necessary to leave the city for a few days to attend a meeting of Travellers and Geographers at Boston. I promised him when we parted not to visit the "Black Star" till he returned. But time hung heavily on my hands. My mind constantly preoccupied with its one absorbing theme, refused to find amusement, interest or occupation in any other.

It was a pleasant evening, when, an hour or so after nightfall, I found myself sauntering aimlessly along Blank Avenue.

Something like instinct drew my steps toward the "Black Star." I passed and repassed its brilliantly lighted windows. I heard the sound of jest and laughter issuing from its interior. I surveyed with more precision than ever before, its massive proportions, its immense length and breadth, its towering form, reaching far above the surrounding buildings, and the wealth of architectural skill and beauty lavished upon its imposing façades. Far up, it seemed at the very top of the structure, a dim, flickering light struggled through the lattice of a small window, the only evidence of life in the lofty garret.

As I looked long and earnestly at the feeble rays of light which streamed from that solitary casement, a desperate curiosity to see whom or what that lonely room contained, seized me.

On the impulse of the moment, I formed a daring resolve. I forgot I was alone and unaided. I forgot that the odds were a hundred to one against me. I forgot all the perils which my resolution involved. Something seemed to say to me, that the occupant of that room was Leonore Sherman, and that was enough to banish from my mind every thought save that of reaching her, of redeeming her.

I entered the "Black Star Restaurant." I played a game of billiards with unusual dash and success. I was soon in the secret room sitting opposite "No 19," at the council-table, playing *ecarté* for large stakes. I drank freely, or rather pretended to do so. I wanted to lose all the money I had and feign drunkenness as a solace for my heavy losses. But luck always favors a man who *can* be indifferent. I won everything.

My affected intoxication increased somewhat rapidly, but my luck kept pace until my pockets were filled with crisp bills and I. O. U.'s. The game ceased. My companions were in a state of malicious indignation. Their secret nods, winks and signals betokened danger to me. But I knew it was only my money they wanted, and by simulating a condi-

tion of insensible inebriation, I could afford them an easy opportunity of possessing themselves of my wealth, without the necessity of their resorting to personal violence.

I leant forward above the table, threw my head on my folded arms, and acted, as best I could, the part of a stupidly drunk man. For a time, my boisterous companions continued their play, then, noticing my condition, several of them approached me, slapped me on the back, shook me, and, having convinced themselves that I was helplessly drunk, left me and informed their comrades that there was "good game about." Then the lights were turned down, and the members of the Black Star League assembled in silent conclave in that part of the room most remote from me.

Now and then, a whisper reached me, from which I gleamed that they meant to rob me. In half an hour I heard the locks being fastened. The lights were turned out. Stealthy steps approached me. Half a dozen men, one of whom carried a dark lantern, surrounded me. They gave me a few rough shakes and slaps to satisfy themselves of my utter unconsciousness. One of the men rifled my pockets, counted the money on the table before me. Nine thousand six hundred dollars! He proceeded, with criminal deliberation, to divide the booty, allotting to each of his coadjutors his equitable share of the inequitable spoil.

Next, they carried me up two flights of stairs, threw me on a bed, turned the key and left me to my fate.

For hours I lay there motionless as a corpse, almost afraid to breathe, lest these fiends should return and complete their night's work by taking my life. Where I was, I knew not. Many were my conjectures as to what final disposal they meant to make of me.

All that long night supreme silence seemed to reign. Not a step, not a word was to be heard. At length, I rose to a sitting posture, removed my shoes and lit a match. I was in a large, well furnished bedroom. A lamp stood on a small table beside the bed. I lit it and turned the light as low as possible. I tried the door and found it locked. For a time, I contented myself with examining closely every article within my comfortable prison. Noiselessly, I rummaged the drawers, examined the bed-clothes, the table and chairs, but found nothing of an unusual character.

While thus occupied, I bore the lamp in my left hand. I was about returning it to the small circular table, when I discerned, right in the centre, a diminutive, black star, scarcely an inch from point to point, and underneath it, in small characters, "No 19." Great God! Colonel Windsor's room! It was here he secluded himself in comfort, wealth and retirement, all those long years, whose every day

was numbered in characters of fire on my heart. It was here his base, designing mind had contrived those dark operations of villany and crime which had nonplussed the combined vigilance and espionage of the continent's detective force. It was here he had matured the bloody project of murdering poor George Wentworth, and the scarcely less heinous undertaking of cajoling Jean Grant into a mock marriage, and of abducting Leonore Sherman.

My blood ran cold, as the thoughts of all the crime that had been concocted within the precincts of this room, rushed like a horrid phantasm through my brain. What fate had brought me hither?

I took a bunch of keys from my pocket and soon found one which fitted the lock. I drew open the door, after extinguishing the light, and looked out. All was darkness. To my right, however, a broad stairway leading to the next flat above, was rendered visible by a small gas jet which sent forth a most feeble, sickly light.

I ascended the steps and saw another flight leading still higher. At the head of this flight another small gas jet was burning dimly. I ascended, and stood in a large, open court, surrounded by several suites of rooms.

A wretched old woman instantly sprang from a couch, near by, and uttered a loud, piercing scream of fear and alarm.

"Hush! hush! For God's sake, woman, keep quiet. I will do you no harm. Speak low! Don't be afraid of me! I am a guest of the house, I am a member of the club. Speak a word with me and I will give you money enough to make you rich, rich, rich, for your life!"

"You must not come here. Who sent you here? Go back, sir, go back, right away, or I shall alarm the house! Begone! Begone!"

"One word, my good, my kind, my gracious woman! One word, and I shall go." I put my hand in my pocket, with the intention of offering her a large bribe, but alas, my pockets were empty. I snatched a valuable pin from my tie, drew a ring off my finger; these with my valuable watch and chain, I thrust into her bony hands.

"To-morrow, to-morrow, I shall give you more; I shall give you more gold than you can hold in your apron. Now listen. Speak not! Listen! *You have a woman under your charge here, a young and very fair woman. How is she? Is she living? Speak not; wait till I have done! Is she living? Is she well?*"

The woman was paralyzed. She stood speechless before me, like a statue of stone.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE gray light of the morning was just beginning to steal through the great, rich windows, and fill the room with vague, impenetrable shadows. For a few moments, we stood motionless and speechless, my overmastering solicitude forbidding me to say another word, and the ghost-like figure of the woman remaining rooted to the floor by the dangerous position into which she had been forced.

"You are wrong, sir, you are mistaken. What do you mean? I am the only woman here. Here, I must not take these. I dare not!" she said, reluctantly offering me the articles I had given her.

"No; I do not want them; I do not need them; I have plenty; I am rich; keep them, my good woman. When I shall come again, I shall fill both your hands with gold. But in the name of God, speak the truth. Where is this beautiful young woman? I shall never leave this room, till I have seen her. Do not trifle with me. Do not speak falsely. I am desperate; I *shall* see Leonore Sherman. Have you a child,

a daughter? Would you like to have *her* torn from your heart, by a band of robbers, and chained in darkness and thralldom? Think, woman, think what you are doing!"

"Hush! Some one is coming."

Footsteps were heard ascending the stairs.

"Oh, sir!" she exclaimed in tones of low, suppressed terror, "conceal yourself, quick, quick, quick! They are coming, they will kill me! Oh, for the love of mercy, sir, hide yourself!"

She pointed towards a room with half-open door.

With noiseless steps, I entered it. I had my own safety and interests to further as well as those of this wrinkled, wretched hag. I closed the door and quietly secured the lock.

For a couple of hours, footsteps were to be heard passing and repassing frequently, so that I did not dare to stir out of my hiding-place. Then followed a long silence, during which, I busied myself formulating various schemes by which I could reach the heart of the woman who kept watch at the head of the stairs.

Suddenly, I heard a woman's voice—a voice of such strange, sad sweetness, that its lowest tones held me spellbound—singing a song I have never forgotten, a song the memory of whose first two words, "No more," even, as I write, fills my heart with indescribable pain.

"No more sweet morning comes to me,
With golden light and music low;
All day, my cell is dark as night;
All day, my heart is full of woe.

"When shall the hour of freedom come,
And my lost hope return to me?
Oh, when shall Heaven hear my prayer,
And set me free, and set me free?"

When the last line, with its trembling, soul-rapt appeal, fell from the lips of the singer, I knew, beyond doubt, that the prisoner whose forlorn heart thus poured out its early plaint, was Leonore Sherman. "Leonore! Leonore! you shall be free! I swear it!" I whispered to myself.

The song continued—

"Vainly my dear old mother yearns
To fold me to her kind, true heart;
May God forgive the cruel hands
That tore our trusting hearts apart.

"Oh, gentle sister, loved and lost,
Thy gracious prayers ascend for me;
Oh, may thy pleading tears avail,
And set me free, and set me free."

Never since the world began, did a song of prayer rise from a woman's lips, with more sweetness, sadness and sense of need than this. It seemed to me that no mortal could have sung so exquisitely. It was not the words of the lips; not the language of the heart; it was the voice of a spotless soul,

injured, pinioned in darkness, yet conscious of its own divine origin and destiny, the sound of whose spiritual woings, as they beat against the walls of its prison in its attempts to fly Light-ward, God-ward, ascended before Heaven with the sweetness of angelic adoration.

Tears were bursting from my eyes: my heart was palpitating wildly; my whole frame trembled.

Again the soft, low, swelling voice floated like a spirit across the lonely, untenanted court.

"Behold a wandering pilgrim moves
From place to place; he seeks in vain
My love that was so freely given—
Love which he ne'er shall find again.

"Oh, gentlest, noblest, best of men!
Could thy life buy my liberty,
Thy love would hazard life's sweet hope,
And set me free, and set me free."

The sound of this melancholy matin came from the remotest part of the uppermost flat. I marked well the direction, and was about to venture out in quest of the singer, when heavy footsteps ascended the oaken stairs. I retired. In a few moments some dozen or more men entered the room adjacent to the one I occupied. They spoke not a word until all were seated.

"This business must be finished," said one;
"this woman must be put out of the way."

"Yes," said a second, "it's getting to be a devilish dangerous business."

"She's pure whalebone; she will not surrender," added a third.

"The thing has been delayed too long," resumed the first speaker, "No. 19 had a foolish idea that she would marry him and so give him control of her money. It was no go."

"No use debating," chorused a new and brutal voice; "our way is clear. A million isn't to be fooled with. Garland, he's dead; Wentworth, he's dead; there ain't nobody now but the old lady. The matter's simple. Make the girl sign the deed, with a revolver to her head. That done, give her a glass of something that'll send her off easy. The old woman can be managed. She lives alone. A short visit some night, a sort of professional call. That'll settle *her*. Then sell the property and divide the money. How does that strike you?"

"Very well," responded a number of voices simultaneously.

"Not at all," answered one in a low, determined voice, "we can get her money without blood. Blood is a bad thing to deal in. It sticks. It won't wash. Let us wait a bit. Let's give the young woman a chance for her life."

"Ha, ha, ha! No. 7 is getting chicken-hearted," shouted one.

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"He always talks like an angel, but acts like a devil," said another.

"Well," said the brutal propounder of the plan, "I believe in doing things right. I'm no coward."

"Nor am I," responded No. 7. with decision. "I say a man as talks that way *is* a coward."

"I say I am not a coward."

"I say you are."

"You lie!"

Both men sprang to their feet. The report of a revolver rang out. A member of the party fell heavily to the floor.

"That settles that question," said the man with the coarse voice.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE party, a few minutes after, left the room and descended the stairs. For some time, I remained in silence. Soon, the low, moaning sound which came from the room in which the conspirators had assembled convinced me that the unfortunate victim of the short encounter lay there dying. The agonizing moans and mutterings of this dying wretch went straight to my heart.

But Leonore! Leonore! was she not near me? Had I not heard her voice pleading for deliverance? I more than suspected that I was the knight of her old-time affection to whom she had paid such an eloquent song-tribute. Now, that I might see her, even if one short glance, one word of recognition should cost me my life, should I not aim straight at the mark? Why should I lose even one precious moment in consoling the dying man? Life was of as much value to me as to him. I was, even now, in the very jaws of death. What hope had I that I should ever escape from the "Black Star" alive? None.

But the inarticulate appeals of a dying man com-

mand the tenderest and most reverential sympathy of hearts much harder than mine.

This poor, dying wretch had lost his life by speaking a word of mercy for Leonore. He had showed that he had yet alive in his bosom a spark at least, of manhood.

I entered the room. What a sight! The tall, dark man I had so often seen playing at the club, lay on his right side, in a pool of blood. The fatal ball had passed through his neck, severing the jugular. I tried to stem the tide. It was useless. He opened his large, dark eyes, now full of fear and supplication, and looked into mine. "What! you here?" he muttered hoarsely "I am dying. Only a minute! I liked you. Will you do me a favor?"

"Yes; what is it?"

His hand clutched mine firmly, expressive of his gratitude and confidence.

"There's a woman in the garret of this house—a prisoner—an heiress They have been making her believe she's insane—beautiful—lovely—young. To-night—to-night—they will kill her for her money—they are murderers and robbers. For months I have tried to get her out of their clutches—have saved her thus far—from insult—outrage—death! She is still pure in life—as she is in soul! Save her—save her! I loved her—I loved Leonore Sherman! Save her—to-night—to-night! Save

her—tell her—Harry Nellis died to save her. Key—key—promise me, promise—”

“I promise you, brave fellow; I promise you before God that Leonore shall be saved this day or I shall follow you into eternity.”

Tears were gushing from my eyes. I felt a pain at my heart which almost killed me. His head rested on my arm. I was kneeling above him. I took a large key from his left hand. With his right, he gave mine a short, convulsive squeeze. A calm smile stole over his pale face. “Leonore, Leonore!” he whispered, in delight, as the lovely prisoner appeared in the sweet, swift dream which carried him from life to death.

It was not long before I found an opportunity of moving out into the open court. Another flight of stairs had yet to be climbed, before I reached the garret. This means of ascent I was glad to find unguarded. I approached the corner of the garret from which I had judged the morning song to have proceeded. The end remote from the street was partitioned off from the main body of the flat. A door stood open. I entered it as quietly as possible, and found that a hall ran completely around the inner room which, as far as I could perceive, had no means of entrance. I examined this inner partition with the keenest scrutiny, but could find neither door nor means of ingress of any sort. The key which I had received from the murdered man

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was in my hand. I was prepared to enter that room at all hazards. I believe I should have entered it though I knew it were the gateway to perdition. But of what use was my key? There was no door.

Then I heard a sound within, as of soft footsteps moving about the sealed apartment. Who can describe that moment! Leonore's footsteps! Leonore! I had sought her all those weary, painful years, and, at last, I was so near her! Great happiness of the true sort rises to religion. Mine did. I clasped my hands and said, "Father, I thank Thee." I could say no more. My very soul went out in those few words.

The soft footsteps continued to move about the room. My patience was sorely taxed. But every part of my nature had been disciplined. What could I do? I would call her name in a low tone. She could hear me. She would recognize my voice. She might tell me how the room could be entered. The word was on my lips. I could not utter it. I tried in vain. Again and again. The word "Leonore" was too sacred to be spoken in that terrible haunt of sin and crime. All at once I heard a woman's voice, the same voice I had heard in the morning, singing a low, sweet, tender refrain such as a woman sings above a sleeping child.

"Come Death! Thou art my kindest friend,
And lay me in some valley green,
Where clover and sweet violets bloom,
Where smiles the sun with warming sheen.

There, shall I fear no tyrant's wrath ;
Here, shall the soft winds tenderly
Lull me to sleep. Kind spirit, come
And set me free, and set me free."

Before the last note had died in my ears, a loud noise attracted my attention. It was some one entering the room.

The hurried, crowded scenes to which I have briefly alluded in the last few paragraphs, filled the terrible hours of that memorable day; and the evening twilight was now folding its deepening and uncertain shades around the objects in the narrow hall in which I stood. I took advantage of this to venture sufficiently near the new visitor to observe how the room was entered. He touched an electric spring in the outer partition, when, at once, the large, closely-fitted door rose automatically to a height of some six or seven feet, exposing an inner wall of strong iron bars.

Into the ponderous iron door a huge key was thrust. The door was pushed open. The visitor again touched a spring in the iron wall and the wooden side-wall descended to its place. The visitor at once began conversation with the inmate.

"Good evening, Miss Maynard. How are you feeling this evening? Better I hope," said he, with grave politeness.

"Thank you, Doctor," replied Leonore, "I am as well as usual. Did you not promise yesterday

that you would not again call me *Miss Maynard*? My name is Leonore Sherman."

"Oh yes; I had quite forgotten. You must excuse my bad memory," said the doctor, "you see, my poor child, the nature of your terrible malady is such that any unusual excitement may prove instantly fatal to you. I assure you, that your true name *is* Miss Maynard, but to humor you, I shall be most happy to call you any name you may choose for yourself. Your trouble often takes a turn of that kind. I have known many persons whose minds had been affected just as yours is; and I have invariably had occasion to observe that the most striking symptoms of the disease manifest themselves in this way. Some imagine themselves Queen Victoria, or Abraham Lincoln, or General Grant or the Czar of Russia. Others fancy themselves great actors,—Modjeska or Terry, Booth or Irving. Still your case is by no means incurable. If you will try to compose yourself, and quietly obey your guardians, I think you will, before long, be able to return to your home in Boston."

"My home is not in Boston. Why do you try to deceive me? I am not a lunatic. I know it. *You* know it. For years, you have visited me in this horrible place almost daily; and for all those years, you have been acting a lie, a cruel, infamous lie. Are you not wearied of deceit? You know

I am not insane. You know I have been confined in this cell by a confederacy of wicked men, who wish to drive me mad by the infliction of every species of torture. You know that you are the only person who can free me from this awful condition. Surely, by this time, you know that you cannot make me believe that I am mad."

"Ah, my dear lady," he continued, "that is the worst feature of your case. Those who are insane never know it, never believe it, never admit it. They always believe themselves especially wise, discerning, and inspired to lead and guide others. If you would only once admit that you are insane, the chances of your recovery would be immensely increased."

"Admit that I am insane? Why should I? Put me to any test you will. My memory is good. Can I not reason as well as others who are sane? Try me. I have five fingers on each hand. I can read and write as well as I could formerly. At least, I believe I can do so, though you have never let me see book or pen since I entered this place. I have counted the days of my imprisonment. They are fifteen hundred, less fourteen; without aid of any kind, I have kept track of the days, weeks and years of my bondage. To-day is Tuesday, the twenty-first day of July, A. D. 18—. Next Monday will be my twenty-seventh birthday. Are not these dates correct? Could an insane person

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do this? Put me to any test you choose. Oh, Doctor, for the thousandth time, I pray you to have pity on me. Deliver me from this place. The world will honor you for it. I will give you all I have, a ransom for my liberty. These men mean to take my life, in order to obtain my property. God knows I would freely give it all to them if they would let me free. But they are afraid to give me my liberty, lest their crimes should be brought home to them. Unless you deliver me, I shall never again see the light of heaven. These men, when the proper time comes, mean to take my life. Oh, Doctor, take pity on me. Remember, I am a woman and *you*, a man. Devise some means whereby I may escape from these wicked tyrants."

"Ha, ha! I fear your case is getting more hopeless. These men, tyrants! These men who have cared for you, and paid your doctor-bills for many years, without having received a single cent, or a day's service from you! You are very much worse to-day. I must give you stronger medicine. These men, tyrants! They are your guardians, your friends."

"Don't pollute the name of friendship, by calling them my friends. Would my friends leave me to pine in this wretched, filthy dungeon, all these long years without a cause? Would my friends have, forcibly, and for the love of lucre, dragged me away

without occasion, from home, from my aged and widowed mother, from my kinsmen and friends, from society, and from the blessed light of day? Would my friends have starved me, and chained me, and drugged me in their desire to drive me to madness? Would my friends have made me dwell in a place like this where my companions are criminals of the basest type; where my betrayers have constituted themselves my guardjans; where the light of day is never permitted to enter; where my youth has become wrinkled age and decrepitude; my splendid fortune my unpardonable crime; my life, a very hell?

"It is over four years since I was smuggled into this dark cell. During that time, I have not heard the voice of music or of mirth; I have not seen the familiar face of a friend or acquaintance; I have not beheld the blessed sun, nor the silvery moon moving across the brow of night, nor the merry stars twinkling in the blue heavens; I have not been allowed to leave this dungeon one solitary time; I have been forbidden what the poorest and most despised slave is allowed, to breathe the pure, sweet air which blows from the mountain and flowery valley; this poisonous air is killing me slowly but surely.

"Oh, Doctor, I appeal to you, by the love you bear to your wife, your mother, your sister or your child, deliver me from the yoke of this bondage. *You* are not one of this wicked gang.

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You cannot be. *You* look like a kind man. *You* know I am not a lunatic. *You* know that such surroundings as these, would have long ago converted me into a raving maniac, were it not for the extraordinary strength and endurance of my body and mind.

"Oh, sir, as you hope to obtain mercy from your Heavenly Father, have mercy on me. Think of my terrible sufferings. Think of my awful fate; alone, friendless, helpless, utterly in the hands of my cruel betrayers. Oh, sir, have pity on me! Have mercy on me! Deliver me! God will bless you for it. I shall be your friend forever. I shall make you so rich that you will not need to depend on these wicked men for your practice. You and yours shall ever be my first thought, my tenderest care. Oh, Doctor, will you not help me? Oh, I know you will. *You* cannot be one of my captors. *You* cannot be so bad. *You will* help me!"

"Now, my dear Miss Maynard, do try to compose yourself. You are very much worse this evening. I must insist that you shall not indulge in such foolish speeches. I am here to help you. Have I not been your friend since ever you knew me? Has not your life been sustained by my skill and care? Have I not—"

"No, it has not; I needed no medicine. I knew that, and to be candid with you, Doctor, I have

never taken a single dose of your medicine. I knew what I was kept here for—my money. These men have been trying to drive me to madness. I suspected that your medicine was to further that end. I know I shall never again be at liberty. I know I shall never leave this cell, alive. I know I must die by cruel and unjust hands. I am prepared. I shall speak the truth. You, sir, are the worst of these evil men. I know it. You are not a doctor; you are a designing, untruthful man. None of them know my wretched condition as well as you do. To none of them have I appealed so often in vain. It has been in your power to succor me, but you have a heart of stone. My indescribable bodily suffering and anguish of mind, during those four awful years, my oft repeated appeals for help, for deliverance, for kindness, my entreaties, my prayers, my tears, would have touched the heart of a Nero; yet, you have remained indifferent to them all. You may kill me. I shall tell you the truth. You are not a man. You are destitute of kindness and pity. You have no humanity. You have spoken words of pretended sympathy. Why? To drive me to desperation. You have prescribed for me. Why? To kill me. Why not kill me with your revolver? Would it not be true kindness and mercy? I have never tasted your drugs. Not that life has any value for me in this place, but that I resolved not

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to die by your slow poison. Have you the spirit of
a man in you? I shall test it. Listen. I ask you
now, here, to deliver me or kill me. I am ready to
die. I shall accept either alternative with un-
feigned gratitude. Which shall it be? Speak.
You may well tremble. I tell you, God shall pun-
ish you for your callous, sinful treatment of me.
Look what your plotting has done for me. My
hair is white as snow. My cheeks are wrinkled, my
eyes sunken. I look like a woman of eighty, and
you have been my *physician*! You have not
allowed me enough food for a child. Look at my
bony fingers. Look at my wasted form. I have
not had a pen in my hand, or read a book or news-
paper for four years. My request for a Bible you
have treated, like all my other petitions, with mock-
ing disdain. Oh, God, merciful and loving! Why
hast Thou forsaken me?"

CHAPTER XXV.

SHE ceased. No answer. This unexpected outburst of truthful indignation and scorn had evidently made his coward's heart quail.

I could scarcely restrain myself from throwing open the doors and strangling this fiend. But, no. Patience! The noise would call others. I should be slain and all would be lost. Patience! He would soon go. Then, I should reach her, clasp her to my breast for a solemn, joyful, silent moment. Then I should take her in my arms like a child and rush down the stairs at all hazards.

But this was not to be. The plot thickened. Another member of the "Black League" entered the room.

"How's your patient this evening, Doctor?" he inquired.

"Very much worse," was the reply.

"Ah, sorry to hear it," said the new-comer with an air of severe indifference. "We must get her out of this place. This air does not agree with her."

"Oh, sir, let me free!" she pleaded.

"That's exactly what brought me here, madam."

Please sign this paper and you shall have your liberty."

"What is it?" Leonore enquired.

"It is a paper which all the inmates of this place sign before getting their discharge."

"Will you please read it?" Leonore asked timidly.

"No; it's too long. You need have no fear. Sign it, please, without delay."

"Will you let me see it, before I sign it?"

"No; we cannot do so. All you have to do is to sign it."

"I should like to read it or have it read. It might be my own death warrant; or it might be a gift of all I own to some one I hate."

"Well, and even if it were, what of it? Have you not offered all you have, for liberty?"

"Yes; give me some assurance of my liberty, and I shall gladly give you all I own. But if I sign this document, giving you my fortune, how do I know that I am to be set free? I would still be in your power."

"Will you, or will you not, sign this paper?"

"No; ten thousand times, no. You mean to get my signature to aid you in the recovery of my possessions, and then put an end to my life. You shall not have it. I am ready for death. But I shall not sign."

A short, sharp whistle was sounded, and clumsy steps approached.

A third man entered the apartment.

"Aha! the gal's a bit obstinate is she?" said the murderer of Harry Nellis.

A terrible, creeping dread came upon me. The situation was indeed critical. I had already learned the savage decision of this rough character. I knew the object of his visit to Leonore's cell. I had but a short time for contemplation.

"This'll make her more pliable. This old friend of mine has persuaded lots of gals against thar wills."

I crept to the spring in the wall.

"Neow, my gentle duck, take this pen in yer hand. Yer can sign this or not as yer likes. I will give yer two minutes. If it isn't signed then, I will blow yer brains eout—that's all."

"No, no! I shall not sign! I know you mean to kill me whether I shall sign it or not. I know my time has come! I am ready to die! I shall never sign it! But you will give me ten minutes to pray for you all—to pray that God may forgive you for the great sin you are about to commit."

"Herry up, gal. I've had my say. Half yer time's gone. I never use blank cartridge. Herry up, gal."

The sound of hurrying footsteps came from the stairway. The whole gang was coming. The moment had come. God be praised! I would die

with Leonore! I touched the spring. Noiselessly, the wooden wall arose. The iron door was open. What a sight! A woman in rags, kneeling in prayer; her hands, clasped and uplifted; her wasted, death-pale face, glowing with radiant worship; the once fair neck, now smeared with dirt, swelling tremulously under the terrible strain; the fine, beautiful lips moving in words, so low and fervent that they were only audible to the ear of the Omnipotent: her snow-white hair, coiling about her neck and shoulders, and lying like a cast-off shroud in masses on the floor! A coarse, brutal man standing by her side, holding the muzzle of a revolver close to her head!

Quick as a flash, I threw myself against the would-be murderer; wrenched the weapon from his grasp; pointed it at his head, and fired! He fell to the floor, like a log. "Villains, devils!" I shouted, while the other two fiends crouched, in terror, before me. "Leonore! come!"

With a wild scream of joy, she sprang to her feet. I caught her by the hand; snatched her from the dungeon; drew the door shut and turned the key, leaving the three wretches, locked in the cell.

"Arthur!" "Leonore!" were the only words spoken. We reached the head of the stairs. A dozen or more men came rushing up. I drew my revolver and was about to fire, when the faint gas-

light revealed the features of the leader—Dr. Parks! And a posse of police! We were saved!

Dr. Parks, on his return from Boston, learned that I had been missing for a day or two. He at once suspected foul play, and, going to the "Black Star" early that morning, had heard the report of the fatal weapon upstairs. This served to confirm his suspicions. He at once set about organizing a body of police strong enough to capture all the occupants of the place. They had finished handcuffing the men down-stairs, when the report of the revolver invited them above. Had they not made such a timely visit, there is little doubt that I should have failed in my long task, and that Leonore Sherman and myself should have perished.

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CHAPTER XXVI.

THE dark plot had, at last, been fathomed. The whole gang was sentenced to penal servitude for life, and its effects handed over to the Treasury. I had not killed the murderous rascal at whom I fired, the bullet having glanced off his thick skull.

Poor Leonore! she was in a truly pitiable plight. It took months of careful nursing to restore her to health and strength.

I shall not even attempt to describe the meeting between Leonore and her mother. The pent-up feelings of maternal and filial love which found vent in broken words, and choking sobs, and exclamations of tearful joy, when the broken-hearted mother, once again pressed her long lost child to her heart, are beyond human power to depict.

Now that my life's mission had been fulfilled, I seemed ready to die. Had I anything more to live for? My hand had lost its cunning. My constitution was hopelessly wrecked. I was yet a comparatively young man, but the withering age of privations and disappointments had set its seal upon me. My hair was as white as poor Leonore's. Now that

the long, severe strain, under which my nerves had been stimulated to superhuman energy, was removed, a terrible prostrating reaction set in, which made my life a continual burden. During Leonore's convalescence, I used to visit her daily, walking with the aid of a cane, for my health was such as to cause my physician grave alarm.

On these occasions, I was always welcomed by Leonore and her mother, with the most cordial and unaffected warmth. Indeed it seemed as if they spent much of their time, in devising means of expressing their gratitude.

As Leonore's strength increased, my daily visitations became correspondingly longer. I had, long ago, learned how passionately I loved Leonore. It was these visits which now kept me alive. How lovely she was becoming! Each day, as her lost vivacity and hope returned, I could see her becoming more and more beautiful. The long white hair seemed to bring out with amazing effect, the perfect loveliness of the youthful face.

I was waiting patiently, though painfully, for her complete recovery. Would she love me? When she was lost, I fancied that if I could only be the means of her redemption, her love would be the certain reward of my diligence and bravery. Now that she was found, and growing day by day more like her old self, my chances seemed to become less, and my misery greater.

The dreamy, distant look in her eyes seemed to speak of some great unspoken love buried in the past. I knew she had loved George Wentworth. I could not expect such love as she bore to him. We had both lavished in vain that strong first love that never comes back to the heart.

I resolved in no way to take advantage of my position. Leonore's happiness was dear to me. I would have scorned to have demanded her heart as the price of my services and sacrifices on her behalf. "Is it not the bounden duty of a true man to stand up as the liberator, guardian and friend of woman?" I avoided, as well as I could, showing my great love for Leonore. I wanted to learn if she loved me. I wanted to watch her returning life, and see if it spontaneously turned towards me. On this point, I could not satisfy myself. One day, my spirits rose to bliss; the next, they went down to despair. She was as affectionate toward me as any woman dare be toward a man not her husband; but there were so many other sources, besides love, from which such actions might flow. We were old friends and schoolmates. I had been as a brother to Leonore, ever since George Wentworth's death. More than this, I had, at great danger and cost, rescued her from death and dishonor. How could she help being kind and thankful?

At last, Leonore was perfectly well. I spent most of my time with her now.

I resolved to put my doubts at rest. I would ask Leonore for her hand and heart. But it was no easy task. A hundred times I attempted it, and as often turned my conversation aside to some other subject. It seemed unfair, if not positively cruel. It looked like tying a person's hands, and then asking him to fight me. She was not in a position of independence. Days went by. My wavering purposes never seemed to come to a settled decision.

We were sitting alone in the parlor one evening, in October.

"What shall I play for you Arthur?" she asked, rising to her feet, and putting her soft palm on my cheek. "You seem so sad to-night. Don't look so downcast. Cheer up, Arthur. We have both endured so many real hardships, that we should never create imaginary ones. Let me sing you something cheerful."

She sat down before the piano and dashed off in an airy, graceful, girlish fashion, Alice Carey's pretty lines—

"Oh, don't be sorrowful, darling,
And don't be sorrowful, pray,
Taking the year together, my dear,
There isn't more night than day."

"What next?" she asked, turning towards me with queenly face radiant with smiles.

"Anything, anything you may do, or say, or sing, or play, will make me happy to-night, since *you* are happy," I replied, feeling truly happy to see Leonore so much like her charming self again. "Leonore, I never thought I should see you so cheerful and buoyant as you are to-night. It makes me feel better than I have for years."

"Ah," she replied, "only for the faith, love and courage of my hero, I should never have had all these delights. Deprived of them so long, I now enjoy them tenfold. How different to-night is, from the time when you first heard me sing this!

"Behold a wandering pilgrim moves
From place to place; he seeks, in vain,
My love that was so freely given—
Love that he ne'er shall know again.

"Oh, gentlest, noblest, best of men,
Could thy life buy my liberty,
Thy love would hazard life's sweet hope
And set me free, and set me free."

"Yes, Leonore, matters looked very serious that morning. That was an eventful day."

"That was the day of my second birth. I shall keep it sacred every year of my life. And I shall always want to have you with me on that day, so that I can look on the brave man who saved me."

"Thank you, Leonore. These are dear words to me. I only did my duty. But—but—may I ask you—ask you a question, Leonore?"

"Why, yes, Arthur, what is it?"

"To whom did you refer, in that verse you have just sung?"

She blushed a deep crimson. Her head drooped, and she made no reply. I felt provoked. I fully believed now that the words were not addressed to me. My heart went down to the abyss of disappointment.

"Pardon me, Leonore, I should not have asked you that question. You will make some allowance for my abruptness.

"I took her hands in mine. I drew her close to me and said, 'Leonore! Leonore! I am miserable. Will you make me happy?'"

"If it is in my power," she replied.

"It is; it is in your power. But do not make me happy by making yourself otherwise. Leonore, you know me. I am nothing now but the wreck of a man. I am prematurely old; my fortune does not amount to what would buy me a burial plot; my spirits are inclined to be gloomy and morose; my health is very unsatisfactory; I have neither trade nor profession; I am a gentleman pauper. You know also, Leonore, my darling, that I have a kind disposition; that I would rather endure affliction than see others afflicted; that I have a fair education; that I have a heart that loves honor and contemns meanness. Now darling, I want you to forget that I was your friend long ago; that I often

counselled your mother and you, when you were in trouble. I want you to forget that I have sought you out and saved you. I want you to forget all that I have ever done for you—and tell me, tell me, Leonore, my love, did you—can you—do you—will you love me and be my wife?"

In another moment, she was sobbing on my cheek, with her arms clasped closely around my neck.

"Arthur, I have loved you for years. You have made me the happiest woman in the world."

I clasped her to my heart, and the first time for twelve years, I knew what joy and happiness meant.

On the New Year's Day following, Leonore became my wife.

We went to Europe for two years, and returned with our health greatly recuperated.

Our united efforts to discover Jean, had so far proved unavailing. Dr. Parks was growing into a fine city practice. We had almost decided that Jean was dead, but Dr. Parks never gave up hope. An exceedingly life-like oil-painting of Jean hung above the mantle in his library. He cherished no new affections. He spent many of his evenings at Mrs. Sherman's. He was a true gentleman at heart, and we were greatly attached to him.

On our return to New York, we were welcomed by many friends. Mrs. Sherman and Dr. Parks en-

tered the carriage with us. On our way to our elegant new home overlooking Central Park our carriage struck a pretty little news girl, breaking her arm. I sprang out of the vehicle and picked her up, a poorly-clad, poorly-fed, but fine-featured little waif. We drove to Dr. Parks' surgery, only a few blocks away, and had her arm dressed. I waited until the operation was over, carried her into the carriage, with the intention of taking her home, and leaving enough money to keep the little thing in food and clothing until she got better.

"What's your address, my child, where do you live?" I asked her.

"29 Bleak Street, sir."

I gave the driver the address, and entered the carriage.

"What is your name, my dear?" asked Mrs. Sherman.

"Lena, ma'am," was the answer.

"Lena *what*, my pet?"

"Lena Windsor."

We looked at each other.

"What is your father's name?"

"I don't know. Mamma will not tell me his name."

"What does he do?"

"I don't know. Mamma says he is dead."

"Who buys your clothes and food, my dear?"

"Mamma; I earn the money selling papers; I

take it home and give it to mamma, and she buys everything with it."

"Does your mamma not earn any money?"

"No; my mamma is sick all the time. The doctor says she will soon die, and then I shall have no mamma and no home," and the child burst into tears.

"Don't cry, dear, don't cry; we shall be good to you, and give you a home," said Leonore in her tenderest voice. We were all too much absorbed in thought to speak during the next few minutes. Involuntarily, I looked towards Dr. Parks; for a moment his face was deadly pale. Then the flush of a great joy seemed to brighten his features. His eyes flashed triumphantly. I had never seen this man of iron moved till now. It was wonderful. He seemed almost transfigured. We sat in silence.

When the carriage stopped before a small frame house, scarcely ten feet square, I lifted the child out and carried her in, followed by Leonore and her mother and Dr. Parks. Our fears were too well founded; there lay poor Jean, wasted away to a skeleton. She was dying. In a moment, we had all kissed her, and were bending above her, in tears. She opened her eyes and recognized us. She could not speak, but whispered, "Forgive!"

For a brief moment, she rallied. Dr. Parks flew to the nearest drug-store. Taking Leonore's hand she placed it in mine, and holding them together,

whispered much louder than before, "Forgive! Forgive! My child!"

Leonore stooped and kissed her dying sister, saying, "I shall be her mother. I shall be Lena's mother."

A smile of placid peace and joy overspread Jean's features. She sank into a stupor like death. Dr. Parks, terribly excited, entered the hovel, opened the narrow windows to let in the air, administered restoratives. Her pulse was still quick with life. We all stood back, moved to pity by the agony on the man's face. He held her hand in his. He smoothed her poor pinched brows with his hand. His eyes were fixed on her wasted features. Mute, tender affection was expressed by his every attitude and gesture. In a few moments she revived. She looked at him in wonder. I went near and said: "Dr. Parks, Jean, who was your friend in London." "Oh, thanks, thanks," she sighed, and tried to smile.

Leonore and I have enjoyed an ideal wedded life. No woman could have a tenderer heart or a more queenly disposition. Her own unspeakable sufferings have rendered her naturally warm and generous heart magnetic to the slightest manifestations of pain or misfortune in others. Her hand is ever open; her feet are swift to bear the message of help and joy to the sick and the poor; her heart is ever reaching out in humane sympathy for the bur-

dened and downcast. But amidst all her labors of love and duty, I am not neglected. No woman ever graced a home or delighted the heart of a husband, with a more even and unaffected display of gentleness and love. Our elegant home is only a slight external type of the peace and contentment that preside within.

We spend our winters in Washington where it is my honest pride to serve my country as Congressman, and where Leonore, uniting her hospitality, her humanity and her affability, shines, at once, as the queen of society, philanthropy and beauty.

Dr. Parks enjoys one of the largest practices in New York, and has also become a famous contributor to the literature of science and exploration. By his nursing, by his love, more than by his medicine, he won Jean back to life, and she is now his happy wife.

Joss, the brave Innuït who saved our lives so often, while we voyaged on the ice-floe, I educated for the ministry. He is now conducting successful missionary work, among his fellow-natives in the bleak North.

Magnificently elaborate marbles mark the sleeping-places of George Wentworth and Harry Nellis. Leonore and I often visit these sacred spots to see that the flowers we planted there are kept in order; and I have often on these occasions, kissed

the falling tears from Leonore's eyes, as I said to her, "Those are gracious tears, Leonore; but let us forget the dark past, my darling, and make the happy present the promise of the happier future."

THE END.

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