CHAPTER I.

At the theatre, Saturday afternoon.

The play was a fairy extravaganza. Nymphs and maidens, elves and goblins, spirits crowned with liquid fire, ghosts with hair of twisted glowing serpents, sylphs and gnomes, Queen Mab and Queen Titania, Puck and Oberon, weird fantastic shapes and shadows, passed dancing and singing, crawling and flying, across the stage in quick succession, meeting each other in impossible positions and moving in an inextricable medley of figures. A dwarf with an immense white beard waved his silver staff before great tropical lilies and gorgeous Eastern roses, and slowly their petals unfolded and disclosed the enchanted beings imprisoned within; and next a giant, whose head towered beyond the moon sailing through the blue vault above him, with a sceptre of iron touched the liberated, and changed them, in the twinkling of an eye, to green-coated toads and hissing vipers and fierce scorpions, to await the arrival of some new genii to release them once more.

Lights sparkled, flowers bloomed, trees waved, meteors flashed, perfumes spread themselves around, fountains splashed, streams dashed over mossy rocks down the mountain side, and under all and through all breathed delicious, bewitching fairy music, melting and maddening and stirring the soul to a state of ethereal ecstasy.

"Aw, yes," drawled a young fellow with a shadow of mustache, who must have been eighteen, and who was therefore blasé, "the ballet is very pretty; I own, but I must beg to be excused from being giddily amused by the west of the entertainment. Man o' the world can't of course be taken in by any illusions. To one — aw, hem, ha, ha! — who knows the green-woom so well — aw — myself, say, there's positively nothing left but the ballet."

In front of the young fellow sat a group who had not yet advanced so far into the world as to find that all is vanity of vanities except the ballet, — a gentleman with his two little daughters. The younger child had never before been at a theatre, and she was wholly absorbed in the wonderful phantasmagoria. She was a brilliant child; from the glory in her face, the waves in her hair, and the electric sparkle in her eyes, you might have guessed that drops of purified fire instead of blood throbbed through her veins.

Her sister was beautiful, like the starlight. It was light, and not fire, which permeated her being. There appeared no trace of resemblance between them; yet is not starlight also fire breathing in a loftier sphere?

The father was a gentleman, and proud; his face was grave, but touched with sweetness in the eyes. To him the little Celia clung, while her eyes dilated — with rapture and her breath came quickly.

The curtain fell, but rose after a moment upon the magnificence of the caverns beneath the sea. Mermaids, with "comb of pearl and golden curl," sported with dolphins; strange, iridescent fish darted through the waters. Then came swimming a great, terrible shark, with bloody jaws and glittering teeth. He swallowed the fairest of the mermaids, and a burst of horror came from the wide-eyed little Celia. Then
As for Celia, she believed so fully in the reality of the play and in the spirituality of Antoinetta that she needed neither the remark of the young fellow nor its interpretation by Alice.

When the scene closed, there was furious calling for the reappearance of Antoinetta, as she did not show herself in the tabernacle with the other actors.

She would not come then, but she came a few minutes later, in another costume, to dance again. The manager had outriveted her by arranging this addenda to the play. Now she consented to the assemblage, evidently seeing no incongruity in doing so before a dance, and thus she gave an opportunity to her admirers to shower her with bouquets.

"Oh!" said little Celia, trembling and almost crying, "why have we brought her no flowers? There are all those Cardinals and geniuses in full bloom in the swamp.

And so the Matinée closed, and they went out from the dazzling theatre into the glad September daylight, and a little tide of the crowd went with them to their own village, just after the sun had set and the clear stars were coming slowly into the blue sky.

Near the gate of their pretty stone cottage they met a sunburnt bright boy, in farmer's dress, who greeted them in the cheeryest of voices.

"So you've been down under the sea!" said he. "And I suppose you couldn't stop to think of the sunset afterwards, so, on the whole, I should n't wonder if I in my cornfield had had more real aesthetic— Isn't that the word, Mr. Wilding?— enjoyment than the rest of you, though I wished so much I had been going too."

"For shame!" said Alice, coloring a little in her earnestness. "If I had not found the sunset more beautiful rather than less so after seeing so gorgeous a play, I would never enter a theatre again."

The boy laughed. "What is art, I wonder? I never saw much of it, but I've always understood that it rather took the edge off nature."

The gentleman only smiled, but Alice again answered:
CHAPTER II.

WILDING did not associate with his neighbors. He had nothing in common with them, and he would not patronize. Neither did he go to church. Sunday morning he entered his study, and gathered his books around him. Alice and Celia, left to themselves, passed through the rustic gate to the meadow behind the house, across through the woodland to the swamp where the cardinals grew. The flashing flowers took root deep in the stream, and even Celia's light foot sank into the black mud, as she stepped from one tuft of rushes to another to gather them. The clear eyes of Alice, with the sunlight in them, sparkled far away among the cotton-grass the yellow azalea of the quiet gentians, and she came back with her arms full just as Celia had come up dripping from the swamp, laden with cardinals. Then they sat on a great rock under the trees, and laid the flowers against the green and golden moss which covered the stones beside the little brook at their feet. They talked in a glad, eager, childlike way of the beautiful Saturday past, the beautiful Sunday present, and the beautiful Monday coming. And still Celia came back again and again, as to a refrain: "Why didn't we carry some flowers for Antoinetta? There were none so lovely as those among all the others thrown to her."

Then Alice remembered that her father was going to the city on Monday, and suggested that they send by him a box of flowers. So they gathered the freshest and brightest mosses, and made a bed for the glowing blossoms to rest in, and at dinner they asked their father if he would do their errand.

"And then we should know just what Antoinetta said to them," remarked Celia.

"WILDING could not himself go to the theatre. He had affairs of importance before him. Still, he would take the flowers to the city and send them."

So the children wrote a note to go with them.

DEAR ANTOINETTA,—We are little girls who live in the country. We saw you at the theatre Saturday afternoon, and wished you too had carried flowers for you. We have gathered our own wild-flowers to send you, for we love you, since you are beautiful and true to art.

ALICE AND CELIA WILDING.

At twilight Wilding called Alice to the study, and talked to her for an hour. Celia was grieved to be shut out, but she loved her father too well to show it; so she opened the piano and played wild melodies, founded on the themes she had heard as the unconscious of the extravaganza. At last Wilding and Alice came into the room, and the moonlight showed their faces grand, glad, and solemn. Alice struck some firm, full chords, and they all sang glorious old masses.

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CHAPTER II.

"Let them bring him in here," she said to Alice, when they reached the house, and opening the door of the father's pleasant little sanctum. "Celia and I will stay here to welcome him."

"But,—but,—ought you—" Alice could go no further.

"Yes; only do let any one stay here to help us."

So Alice went away, intent on doing the little he could for the sisters. He broke the tidings to Dorothy, the domestic, and calmed her paroxysms before the bearers arrived with their mournful burden. Then he motioned that the door should be closed when Wilding was laid on his own bed; for, strange as it seemed to leave the children alone with their father, he believed too fully in Alice not to think that he ought to follow her request.

A wild, terrible cry from Celia rang through the house, and the neighbors who had gathered about would have hastened to her, but Dorothy and Aleck, who know Alice, set their faces against that.

The cry was repeated again and again, but at last grew softer and the voice broke into sobs.

"Darling," said Alice in her still tones, "sit here with me close by father, and watch his dear face, while I tell you just what he said to me last night. Believe that he himself is speaking to you. She would have burst into uncontrollable weeping, but for feeling the need there was that Celia should be calmed. In a moment she went on. "He told me that he had some trouble with his heart, and that he felt it so much lately that he believed it might not be long before what has come might come. He thought we ought not to be unprepared for it, but he would not sadden us by speaking of it."

"I remember," said Celia, "he said some of his own words. Celia. He said: "No grief can be so great as to shatter the heart; we love you, since you are beautiful and true to art."

Celia looked frightened and began to cry. Alice was as pale as the far-off stars just faintly showing in the sky, and as quiet.

"You need not tell us," she said in a low, clear voice. "Celia, by and by I will tell you about it."

There was indeed no necessity for explanation. The compassionate glances directed to the children from the bustling crowd about the station would have told the story without Alice's pale face. Alice guessed what the men were bringing concealed under a cloth, and hurried Celia away before she, too, should comprehend.

"Why didn't we carry some flowers for Antoinetta? There were none so lovely as those among all that were thrown to her."

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So the children wrote a note to go with them.
"Thank you, Dorothy," replied Alice, and she drew Celia, half resisting, into the little parlor, where the fire lighted on the hearth just before they had gone to meet their father still blazed cheerily. They did not think to wonder at it, but Alec had watched it and had been determined they should miss no point of light and cheer which was yet possible in the gloom overflowing them. He was still in the house, and had suggested to Dorothy that she should make ready a little table in the parlor and try to induce the sisters to eat something. He knew it would have been useless to attempt this in the little dining-room where they had expected such a cozy tea with their father. But nothing could urge Celia to taste a mouthful, and she forced herself to eat a piece of toast and drink some tea, solely for the sake of maintaining a semblance of the Buckram family.

She had been still all night. No fever had pulsed through her veins, no horrible racking headache had dominated her, and she had been close enough to the borders of the spirit-world. She had proved her own soul, and her heart had beat responsive to her first full recognition that there is a God.

CHAPTER III.

The Rev. Mrs. Buckram sat with her children around her. The Rev. Mr. Buckram, who belonged to that class of ministers denominated "second violins," was employed in beating a carpet furiously outside the sitting-room window, and by no means in such a way that the dust should enter his consort's eyes, though sufficiently near that she might see and direct operations. The Rev. Mr. Buckram was clad in a faded red-calico dressing-gown, with blue tassels, and his feet luxuriated in some wide leather slippers systematically turned in at the heel. He might have been called a gentle woman, but for a vicious little turning down of the corners of the mouth. The eyes were clear, and the hand refined (her daughter Mary Ann did the housework, assisted by the Rev. B. B.), and you might have guessed her to be a person of culture until you heard her urging Mary Ann to play to you that beautiful new piece of hers, Fisher's Hornpipe, without hesitation, adding that Mary Ann played a great deal of such classical music. However, she was a parson's wife and had never been to the opera, which she regarded as a device of the ill-disposed old serpent.

Mrs. Buckram was not dressed in faded calico or leather slippers; she sat composedly, arrayed in a soft gray gown, which fitted her figure, raised well, and sewed quietly without undue haste or worry. The brow was placid, and you might have called her a gentle woman, but for a vicious little turning down of the corners of the mouth. The eyes were clear, and the hand refined (her daughter Mary Ann did the housework, assisted by the Rev. B. B.), and you might have guessed her to be a person of culture until you heard her urging Mary Ann to play to you that beautiful new piece of hers, Fisher's Hornpipe, without hesitation, adding that Mary Ann played a great deal of such classical music. However, she was a parson's wife and had never been to the opera, which she regarded as a device of the ill-disposed old serpent.

The children, of whom far be it from us to attempt to estimate the number, were faces-similes of the father, all with molasses-candy-colored hair, and watery blue eyes, and opaque white skins, and roundness of the bodies, upon them as good as that of their parents, especially their mother. But as there is no lack, however watched and tended, but one black sheep is there, so among this flock was one tough, wiry little sheep, a dozen years old or thereabouts, with eyes as black as coals, hair blacker yet, and face as brown as a berry. He looked somewhat like his mother; that is, if he had been a woman grown, and "subdued by grace" and the cares of a parish, he might have looked like her. Neverthe-

less, there may have been one more drop of black blood in him than in her, that one being just enough to turn the balance of his life on the other side. At any rate, she was saintly, and Master Frank did not look as if he either was or was likely to be a saint. At present but for a vicious little turning down of the corners of the mouth. The eyes were clear, and the hand refined (her daughter Mary Ann did the housework, assisted by the Rev. B. B.), and you might have guessed her to be a person of culture until you heard her urging Mary Ann to play to you that beautiful new piece of hers, Fisher's Hornpipe, without hesitation, adding that Mary Ann played a great deal of such classical music. However, she was a parson's wife and had never been to the opera, which she regarded as a device of the ill-disposed old serpent.

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siderable sharpness; "there, I'm not go-
ing to correct you again for using that
word. Do you go straight into my bed-
room and stay there till I send for you."

Frank obeyed submissively, but, hav-
ing closed the door, he began a series of
the most extraordinary contortions of
his face ever seen, and shook his fist in
the direction of the sitting-room.

"I hate you, old mother," said he; "and I'll do something before long, you
see if I don't. I'll run away, I de-
clare I will."

But presently essaying a dress of his
mother lying on the bed awaiting re-
pair, he sat down, by trying it on
and attitude in front of the glass.

"O dear! I wish I could swear," said
he, "but I don't quite dare; besides, I
don't know how. I wonder if I shall have
to go to prayer-meeting to-night. I
wonder if those girls will be anything
like Mary Ann; wonder if they'll cry if
I pinch 'em."

Wilding, who were coming to make
visits the Buckram family now wended
their way. It was a dark and dingy lit-
tle room, fitted with unpainted benches,
whose backs were so very upright that
you instinctively wondered if they did not
get tired of standing so straight.

Although the muster from the par-
song was so large, the little room was
not full; in fact, the Buckram family
composed about half the assembly.
But Mr. Benjamin remarked cheerfully
that "where two or three are gathered
together, etc." As his nieces were not
in the habit of attending such gather-
ings, they were totally at a loss to com-
prehend the purport of the "etc.," but
the remainder of the audience appeared
to feel satisfaction in it, so all was prob-
bly right. Mr. Buckram commenced
the service by reading a hymn in a
somewhat shambling manner, and then
pitched the tune himself. One or two
male voices accompanied him, result-
ing from one note to another in a manner
meant, no doubt, to be solemn. Mrs.
Buckram then united her treble to the
chorus, but, owing to an extraordinary
inability which she had always mani-
fested to discern the difference be-
 tween the melodies of "All hail! the power"
and "Sister, thou wast mild and lovely,
except as accompanied by the words,
which it was pleasing to imagine and novel.
For the following verses of the
monotone, which failed to cheer the
spirits of the solemn men. But at this
time Mrs. Deacon Grumm and her hired
girl entered and set in with a vigorous
unusual capacity, for it perceives incon-
gruities without having become so tem-
pered as to overlook them.

"Come on, girls," said Mary Ann;
"we're all ready."

The church was a little white-painted,
green-blinded affair, with a neat spire
pointed with a vase which, while it is
equally ornamental, is supposed by Yan-
kees to be more useful and less Popish
than a cross. The church looked, as all
New England churches do, clean and
pretty, and formed the climax of the vil-
lage scenery which is appropriate. But
though the inhabitants of Buckdale were
of the strictest sect, Puritans, the Rev.
Benjamin's preaching for some years
past had not been of that startling na-
ture which is calculated to draw multi-
tudes to the house of worship; therefore
the prayer-meetings were held in a small
apartment called the vestry, and to this
place the Buckram family now wended
their way. It was a dark and dingy lit-
tle room, fitted with unpainted benches,
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In all the paroxysms of rage with
which Celia went to Alice fifty times a
day, she was sensible of this kind, something wherein her mar-
vellous intuition of beauty and fitness
had been shocked. There is always
something hard and severe in a child of
unusual capacity, for it perceives incon-
gruities without having become so tem-
pered as to overlook them.

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be, the church seems to be in such a low state. Let us pray."

As Alice and Celia had not the acquaintance with certain stereotyped quotations which their aunt's children had, these remarks appeared extraordinary, and though very disjointed and incomprehensible, at least original and startling.

With the "Amen" of Deacon Grumm, a tall, lean man sprang up, and began in a very voluble manner:

"O my dear friends, and my brethren, and my sisters too, I have been edified and refreshed by what I've heard at this 'ere meetin'; it's a glorious thing for brethren to meet together in unity and agree. I feel my heart strengthened and enlarged by it. Nothing, no, nothing should ever induce me to give up the prayer-meetin'. The preached word is good in its place. I'm an ardent supporter of the preached word, and on Sundays I feel a blessed peace, not of the earth, nor of the earth. But the influence of the preached word as compared with that of the prayer-meetin' is but as a sand on the sea-shore or a drop in the ocean. I came in here feelin' that I should get good, and I've got it. I feel it here, and I know I've got it. I think with Brother Pock that I am assured that I am a sheep, for I'm sure that 'I've washed my robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.'

Celia looked surprised, for the metaphor was not a familiar one to her, and she supposed it was to be taken literally, which seemed hardly possible, regarding the extremely ancient-looking linen worn by the brother in question.

"I believe," he went on, "that is the privilege of all on us, to have this blessed assurance, and I praise the Lord that I have it. But I think Brother Grumm is right when he says the church is in a low state. What we need is a revival! Nothing else can have any effect. When I see so many young passions, and the middle-aged, and the old, going straight down to the bottomless pit, I can but hold out a hand to restrain 'em, if so be they will listen to our plain country people to be polished and cultivated like you collegians, and Mr. Pierce is very earnest. When he spoke about going out into the highways and hedges and gathering in the lost, I declare it made the tears come to my eyes, and I felt we should really have a revival here before long."

"But I wish," remarked Jonathan, "that Mr. Pierce would learn to speak grammatically."

"Ah, Mr. Jonathan," said Miss Roby, "I think he holds a wrong doctrine. He thinks it is by showing the horrors of hell that souls are to be won. While I think it is by holding up the terms of salvation, more especially only believe, as I said to-night."

"Yes, I think so too," said Miss Roby. "I hope you'll excuse my saying so, but I liked your remarks particularly. I shall not forget them for a long time. I thought that story was very beautiful and touching, and so appropriate."

"It set forth the way of salvation very strikingly," remarked Mrs. Buckram. "Yes," said Miss Roby; "but still, if people don't want to accept them,—of course I know they ought to, but some people don't, and if they don't, why, then they must have the strongest motives set before them, and there is where such people as Mr. Pierce do good, and I sometimes think that their very ignorance and illiterate manner of speaking may impart a kind of fervor which is more effective with a certain class of minds than the graces of oratory. Now I was most benefited by Mr. Buckram's and Mr. Jonathan's remarks, but there may have been those present most affected by something which was more
within their comprehension,—though I do not mean exactly that either, for your remarks were as simple as elegant, but—Well, you understand what I meant.

At this juncture, Mrs. Buckram sent the children all to bed, as she believed in primitive hours. So they heard no more, and saw no more of Miss Hoby that night, though afterwards they were her pupils for three years.

CHAPTER V.

WHEN the sisters were safe in their own room, Celia spoke out, vehemently as usual, but more in a surprised than an angry way.

"Was n't it strange and dreadful, Alice? I will never go to another. What did it mean?"

"I hardly know," replied Alice, "it was so confused, but I suppose they meant to be a religious meeting. You know this brother has some very strange things, and they can't help talking about them. I only wonder that they do not speak of them oftener. If Uncle Benjamin and Aunt Lydia really think that everybody who does n't agree with them is going straight down to hell, they do not speak of them oftener. If they did, I think of anything but. how to save as such awful and endless suffering, I think that everybody who does n't agree with them is going straight down to hell."

"I don't know," said the child, still passionately; "it only makes me shudder, and if it were not so hideous, I think the very terror might make me believe it some time. Still, you know I never could, for I must have beauty.

I could n't believe anything true which was n't beautiful."

Mrs. Buckram had been endeavoring for the week past to implant some notions of theology in the very uninformed minds of her nieces, and had so far only succeeded in hardening them and making their new home, with all its strange incongruities, jar more and more upon the sensitive hearts so lately wrung by sorrow. Celia, who was by nature as fierce as a little tiger, had been so far subdued by her peaceful years of childhood, and now especially by her father's sudden death, that she kept herself moderately civil to her aunt, but broke out like a whirlwind when alone with Alice, who was suffering untold agonies, bravely as she held herself. It is curious and painful that people of such different natures are sometimes compelled to live together in such close companionship. Alice repressed herself partly because she had a reverent nature and recognized her aunt's position of authority over her, though she knew that even in trivialities it was possible that she could be bound to obey, and yet more because she feared the influence of this mode of life on Celia's fiery spirit; and indeed it sometimes happened and exasperate the child, and develop all the forces of passion which had lain dormant in her heart because she had been so tenderly and lovingly treated.

"I thought," continued Celia, "that religion was meant to make people good; but I don't think Aunt Lydia is very good,—do you?"

"I think," replied Alice, "that people are so differently made that it is impossible for one person to say that another is not good. We can never know the inner life of another fully, and so we can never know the entire meaning of its outward expression."

"Well, Alice," sighed the little one, "I think you are perfect, at any rate; and I wish I was as good, only I know I never shall be."

The next morning Alice sat sewing by her aunt's side, and Celia slipped away down through the woods at the back of the house, and amused herself by gathering great branches of the resplendent October leaves. Where the waters of the brook sparkled clearest, the bending boughs shone most gloriously. I wonder why.

We watched Celia just sitting herself on a mossy log, when she was startled by a gruff, hard little voice issuing from the tree over her head.

"Ho! Celia; how did you come here? Whose let you come? Mother did n't, I know.

"Therewith Master Frank swung himself lightly down and alighted by her side."

"Why not?" said Celia. "I did n't ask her."

"O, you did n't,—did n't you? What do you expect she'll say when you get home?"

"I don't know," said Celia, in amusement.

"I never supposed she would care. I never asked my father when I wanted to go into the woods."

"But then you see you did n't have any mother," remarked Frank, with his hands in his pockets. "That makes all the difference, you know."

"No, it don't," said Celia, indignantly. "I should n't have never wanted to do anything my mother did n't like."

"I thought," continued Celia, "that religion was meant to make people good."

"He was just like the angel Gabriel," said Celia, without any very distinct notions as to the angel in question, except that he was very grand.

"Was he?" asked Frank, softly.

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"Well, Alice," sighed the little one, "I think you are perfect, at any rate; and I wish I was as good, only I know I never shall be."

"Yes," said Celia, instantly and unreflectingly. "I hate it, of course; but I should n't think you would feel so, because you have your father and mother and all."

"Oho! I don't think you would feel so, because you have your father and mother and all."

"I wish they 'd all go off in some nice place where I should never see them again, and have a splendid time."

"I wish they 'd all go off in some nice place where I should never see them again, and have a splendid time."

He laughed a little, and then continued: "Now you 're here and I 'm here, I should like to have a talk with you. Mother says Alice and you are heathen, and don't know anything about good things. And I should just like to know what you used to do at home; for I can't bear good things, only I don't see what else there is to do. Now, Sunday, for instance, what did you do? If you didn't go to church and prayer-meeting and Sunday school?"

"O, we had a blessed time Sunday!" said Celia, with some excitement. "Father used to be here then, though he was often away through the week. But we didn't stay with him in the morning, for that time he spent in the study."

"Why, I didn't know he was a minister," said Frank, with great surprise and disgust."

"He was n't.

"Then what did he have a study for? demanded Frank eagerly."

"My father never goes into his study except to see about his sermons."

"But my father loved to study," returned Celia, proudly. And who was very wise. On pleasant days in the summer Alice and I used to wander in the woods in the morning, and gather wild-flowers and tall stories. Then we came back just in time for dinner."

"Did you have dinner Sunday?" inquired Frank, with new surprise.

"Of course. And then in the afternoon we always walked and talked and read with father, or perhaps went sailing with him in his beautiful boat, and some rare times he took us to ride, and we carried luncheon and
SOMETHING TO DO.

had a beautiful picnic all alone by
ourselves.

"That was n't any great fun, was it?" said Frank. "I like picnics well enough, but I should want somebody there besides father and Mary Ann. Boating must have been good fun, though. But were n't you dreadfully afraid of being drowned?"

"Why, no, indeed; I don't see why. Father knew all about a boat and was very careful, and we only went still days."

"O yes! I don't mean that. But you know it was Sunday. And the Sunday-school books say that all the bad people who go in a boat Sundays are always drowned, no matter how pleasant it is when they start. I don't think I should dare to go."

"Well, I should," said Celia, "and my father was not bad, but the best man who ever lived, so I know it was right."

"Quer, though, that you were n't drowned. I don't think I should be quite so much afraid now. I supposed everybody was drowned who went sailing Sunday. No, come and think of it, there was one boy, Maurice Taylor, who was almost drowned, and that converted him. But I don't want to be converted, either, till the last minute."

"But I don't think it would be such a dreadful thing to be drowned," said Celia. "The water is so beautiful and blue, and the moon sets in it, and there are such lovely seaweeds, and away down there are pearls and gold and ever so many strange things. O Frank, I wish you had just seen little Antoinetta at the theatre play that she was a sea-spirit."

"Did you ever go to the theatre?" I questioned Frank, now fairly aged.

"Never but that once," said Celia. "That was the last Saturday father was with us. And I'm so glad, for I believe it was the very happiest day of all my life."

"You don't suppose that's what made him die, do you?" said Frank.

"Why, no," replied Celia, opening her eyes wide; "how could it?"

"Mother thinks so, I know," said Frank, "for she said he died very sud-
denly and that it was a direct judgment upon him; but she would n't tell me why, though, when I teased her. But you see that's it. It's awful wicked to go to the theatre."

"I never heard of that before," said Celia, "and I don't believe it now. It's perfectly gorgeous."

"But I tell you you'll go to hell if you go to the theatre. There's a book in our Sunday-school, "The Way to the Pit," about a boy who went to the pit of the theatre and ended by going to the bottomless pit, I believe,—stop, let's see, I don't know but he was converted in the end, I believe he was, but if he had n't been, he would have gone there. The first part of the book is real interesting, though. Is n't there a place at a theatre called the pit?"

"No," said Celia, "I don't know of any. But, Frank, I don't believe there is such a place as hell, so of course I'm not afraid of going there."

"But of course there is such a place," said Frank, "and I'm just as afraid as I can be. I tell you what," he added confidentially, "if it was n't for that I should run away, and I'd get into a theatre myself. I know I should think it was splendid, for we had a Sunday-school exhibition once, and I took part, and I had the best time that ever I had, though that is n't saying very much either. But I should like it bully. Only, you see, I don't dare."

"Well," said Celia, with sudden anger, "if I were a boy,—or a girl either,—I should be ashamed to be such a coward, and that 's all!"

Frank flushed to the roots of his hair. "I ain't a coward. Jonathan is a coward. I had a great three-pronged tooth pulled and I never made a whimper; and I can lick any boy in school, though I don't do it when Miss Roby is there, because she'd tell mother. But when it comes to dying and getting into such an awful burning flame forever and ever and ever and ever, I tell you what, it's no joke. And he looked low and wretched.

"But you sha'n't think I'm a coward," said he, suddenly firing. "Tell me all about that theatre, and the little girl who played."

"So Celia, nothing loath, lived over again the happy excitement of her after-

CHAPTER VI.

To last came a day when to Celia's
complaint Alice answered, "You are rich, we cannot live here. we will
go to school."

She had thought of this often and anx-
iously, but she had not wished to go
stir Celia was old enough to be ben-
efited by it, and could realize what it
would be for them to spend the little
money they had, and afterwards be
obliged to work for their support.

"I guess I shan't want to teach," said Celia, thoughtfully. "I'll be an actress, I guess."

"Perhaps so," said Alice, "when you are old enough."

"I'm as old now as Antoinetas was," said Celia.

"Yes," said Alice, "but her mother was an actress, so her home was in the the-

Theatre. But you would have to go alone, and would have no one to guide you in right and wrong."

"I have my own conscience," said Celia, tilting her head loftily. Alice smiled. "Still you want some education and culture aside from the stage; and a boarding-school seems to be the only place where we can afford to go for it. Besides, Uncle Buckram is your guardian."

"But if you said it was best, Alice, I would run away."

Alice laughed. "I don't say so. But you may study elocution at school, and then you will be all ready to be an actress by and by."

"I shall be rather old, though," said Celia; and Alice did not tell her that her ideas of actresses would probably change before that time.

No objection was made to the plan of going to school. Mrs. Buckram vainly hinted that with a little pecuniary aid Mary Ann might accompany the sisters, and consol ed herself by thinking it well, on the whole, that she should be sepa-
rate from such heretical companions, though, as she justly remarked, "Mary Ann was rooted and grounded in the faith, and had no tendencies to free in-
quiry." In her secret heart Mrs. Buck-
ram thought that the sisters were un-
wittingly jumping from the frying-pan
into the fire, though she did not design to direct the places by those terms for she had selected a boarding-school for the
which bore the reputation of never hav-
ing graduated a single unconverted young lady.

Their preparations were not very elabor-
ate, though perhaps it took as long to make over the few simple dresses in a becom ing and tasteful manner as would have been necessary for a fashionable wardrobe. But Alice worked silently and steadily, and no one realized that she was doing anything till it was done. Celia was in such high spirits that she did not dare to express her exulta-
tion except in private to Alice and Frank. Frank, in the depths of his misery, had become an accomplished hypocrite and could conceal secrets.

"I tell you what, Celia," said he, con-
fidentially, "I don't know what I shall
do when you are gone. There's nobody else to have any kind of fun with, darn 'em!" This last was as near as he dared to approach to swearing, and it afforded him a great deal of delight to feel that he was using an expression which would have consigned him to the dungeons if his mother had overheard it.
"I'll tell you what I'm going to do," added he. "No, I won't; nobody can be trusted to keep a secret but myself. We don't know our own enemies" (in a grandiloquent tone); "but mark my words, Celia, and if you hear that I have disappeared, don't you be afraid I'm deserted.

"What!" said Celia. "Are you going to run away now?"

"Never you mind," said Frank, mysteriously; "but there are some places in the world just as bad as hell, I guess. I declare I'd about as soon go there at once, and done with it, as wait. I suppose I've got to go some time."

"For shame, Frank!" replied his cousin.

"But what do you know about it?" urged Frank. "Mother says there's such a place, and it makes her perfectly happy, though she don't want me to go there, — I don't think she cares very much, — and the reason you don't believe it is because you haven't been converted.

"Well," said Celia, "I'm never going to be converted; and I don't care what Aunt Lydia says, I know I love God and he loves me; and I'm not a bit afraid."

"Well, I don't know anything," said Frank, "but I think, if I ever get away from here, I shall be real witty and have a jolly time, and don't care. I don't want to go to hell, but I wouldn't give a snap to go to heaven if mother's going to be there."

"Hush!" said Celia; "I guess that isn't right."

Belmore, in which the boarding-school was situated, was a quiet country place, neat and pleasant. As the carriage drove up the avenue with the two sisters, they saw groups of bright-faced, well-dressed girls gathered about the grounds, or walking arm-in-arm along the shaded paths.

Bright, clean, peaceful — it was a change worth having from the jarring life of Rockdale; yet it was so intensely calm and quiet that Celia, under her breath, "It's beautiful, but isn't it like a convent?"

"I always believed there must be a great deal of the best sort of happiness in a convent," replied Alice; "that is, if one were there from choice, and free to go or stay at will."

A burst of merry laughter came to their ears at that moment and relieved the solemnity of the scene. Mrs. Hennessy, the principal, greeted them formally, and assigned them a room, not elegant certainly, but so neat, and with such a vision of the hills, that they felt contented at once. They felt more at home than they had done at any time since their father died.

Then came the tea, with its thin white slices of sweet bread and the finger's breadth of cake, very simple, but very neat, and only scanty to those who did not like to eat much bread and butter. But for such, as the girls speedily learned, their parents sent huge boxes of cakes and fruits; so nobody suffered, after all.

After tea, some of the older girls came in to welcome the new-comers, and then one of the teachers, Miss Emmons, just before bedtime. Miss Emmons had the face of a saint and a low, soft voice in speaking, which captivated Celia at once. She hoped the girls were not feeling homesick at first coming to a strange place.

"O no," said Celia, and she was going to add that they came from a place they hated; but Alice, seeing the danger, interposed: "We are less likely to be homesick than most girls, as we have really no home, but have been boarding for some time with an aunt."

"I hope we may make it very pleasant for you here, and that you may be very happy," said Miss Emmons, sweetly. Then she kissed them good night, saying tenderly, "I hope you both love the Lord Jesus Christ, and then you can be lovely women."

"I don't," said Celia, with her usual impulsiveness, and Alice said nothing. She had hoped, if possible, to avoid discussions in her new home.

Miss Emmons looked shocked, and said, "O my dear child, I shall pray for you to-night," and left the room.

"Celia looked at Alice in consternation. "Is n't she beautiful?" she said. "O, how I wish she would not pray for me! I want to get acquainted with her, but of course I can't if that's the way she's going to do. But I do love her."

"She is lovely," said Alice, with a sigh. "I suppose we need never expect to find a place where we shall be free from discussions.

It was not many days before Celia was violently in love with Miss Emmons. It is curious, but most boarding-school girls are sure to fall in love with some teacher and endure all the little thrills and jealousies and heart-burnings which usually accompany "_grande passion._"

Celia was perfectly delighted to be in a class of Miss Emmons, though in gazing at her she forgot her lesson and received a bad mark. She spent her spare moments in running upstairs and down on all sorts of errands, — for ice-water, for her lamp, her books, etc., etc., etc. Miss Emmons seldom had occasion to go anywhere without finding Celia close behind her, ready to open the doors and hold them open till she had passed through.

Alice was half amused and half anxious in seeing this. She was glad that Celia's impulsive and passionate nature had found something to love. The sisters' love between them had, of course, been quiet thing, and otherwise there had been a dearth of objects, so that this was a new experience. But to Alice Miss Emmons did not seem so perfect an angel, though she thought her lovely and sincere; but her religion was not Alice's religion, and there was a gulf fixed between them.

Alice, strangely enough, felt most attracted towards a pale, stern young woman, Miss Dixon, who spoke very little and was known to be sarcastic. She was wonderfully learned, and, with all her sarcasm, did not say unkind things to her pupils. Alice fancied that if she could only hear she, she might find points in common; but Miss Dixon was unapproachable, and all Alice's attempts went for nothing.

Alice found herself unable to escape religious importunities as over, and in fact they were harder to withstand than they had been at Rockdale. She had no sooner made friends with a fellow-pupil over something interesting in history or mathematics than the girl would press her hand tenderly and whisper, "We have a dear little prayer-meeting in my room this evening. I should so love to have you come."

Of course all the girls were not invited, but there was not a girl of respectable standing in school with whom Alice could have any sympathy in her studies who was not devoted to prayer-meetings. Every good scholar, every devotedly behaved girl, besides many who were not well behaved, had been converted. The rest seemed to take the general impression of their wickedness as true, and, to make it truer, committed all sorts of enormities, which really frightened the Wildings, who had always believed that a lie was the worst sin and that one should be conscientious in the smallest matter.

To cap the climax, as winter approached, it was clear that preparations were making for a revival on a grand scale. Prayer-meetings thickened; there was one before breakfast, in the morning, that the young ladies might commence the day aright. After breakfast a time was set apart for private devotions, after which the whole school assembled for public prayers in the large dining-hall. Then the business of lessons began and proceeded without interruption till one o'clock. After dinner some of the elect held another little prayer-meeting. Then came a full until evening. Sometimes in the evening there were meetings which the young ladies were all required to attend; the elect assembling earlier and staying later, to pray for those who were still unregenerate. Then there were divers little cliques which met at odd times. Each class held meetings in the interest of its unconverted members. Each teacher invited the young ladies in her corridor to her room for prayer. Several friends fixed upon some one person to be petitioned for by name. Alice avoided all the meetings which were not compulsory; but Celia could not resist the invitation which Miss Emmons, with tears in her eyes, extended to her to join the meeting of the "wayward ones," to whom Miss Emmons talked like an angel, they all agreed.
CHAPTER VII.

A H, Dora the Invincible, do you indeed fancy your position unassailable?

The speaker was a fresh young fellow, with a bloom on his cheek, a wave in his hair, and a bright cordial eye. The spoken to was a beautiful young girl, who was mounted on the top of a hay-cart, where she brandished a long rake and laughed gayly.

"Ah, Mr. Impertinence, I see the terror in your eyes for all your bold speeches."

The young fellow, discerning a challenge, sprang lightly upon the hay in a twinkling, and Miss Dora's tender heart made her rake powerless.

"Here, my dear young woman," said he, kissing her half a dozen times before she could remonstrate, "tell me again that you see terror in my eyes!"

"I dare tell you again, but I won't," said the girl, overrunning with laughter, but trying to look angry.

"Saucy girl!" exclaimed he, repeating his experiment. "I see terrors in your eyes just now."

"I'll go and tell my mother," said the girl, laughing and blushing.

"I'll warn the schoolmaster, and you will do no such thing," said the young fellow, dropping his voice. "You know you get little enough time in the open sunshine now, and you won't shorten it. Besides," he added persuasively, "just think, my dear, how little time I shall be in the village, and you would not be so cruel as not to let me see you while I do stay?"

Dora didn't reply. O no; she would not be so cruel. Cruel to whom?

She did not need to call her mother, for at that very moment the sharp voice of her mother called her. Not that her mother had seen the foregoing. A young gentleman, son of the richest man in town, and straight from the University, might do a variety of things without being too closely looked after. But Dora May was a poor girl, and Dora May's mother did her own work, and there were five younger children. So Dora had not many minutes in the out-door world.

"O dear!" began Dora.

"Dear me?" queried the young fellow, laughing.

"You?" said Dora, scornfully.

"Don't think it, sir. But O dear! there are those horrid biscuit to be made for supper."

"If it is horrid, I agree," said he. "I tell you what, though, put a private mark on one of them and save it for me, and then I shall know you are thinking of me even if I can't see you."

"The idea!" said Dora. "I guess you wouldn't want to eat a cold biscuit if I did save it for you."

"Yes, I should," said he. "I adore cold biscuit."

The mother's sharp voice called through the trees again, and the young gentleman, who had no fancy for any of the May tribe except Dora herself, jumped hastily down and helped her to the ground, that Miss Dora and her another kiss before she had time to defend herself, he mounted his horse and rode away. In spite of the repeated call, when he looked back from the little hill beyond he saw his sister leaning on her rake and looking after him. He was too far away to see her blush at being detected in the act, but her attitude reminded him of a favorite picture, and he whistled thoughtfully to himself.

Then he said beneath his breath:

"Of all sad words of tongue or pen,
    The saddest are these, 'Tis might have been.'"

He added suddenly: "Suppose it had been! Ten to one they'd have sighed over it just as much. Still, she's mighty pretty, and that's one victory! What's the holds so long as you're 'appy?"

Thereupon he whistled to his horse and galloped homewards. Dora meantime made her biscuit, and, as he had requested, thought of him even when he was not at hand.

CHAPTER VIII.

A GIRL stood ironing in a hot kitchen, without a blind, one warm July day. She was young and fair, but her face was pale and weary. She moved listlessly, and seemed to find the iron too heavy for her slender hands to use easily. She looked through the open window and saw the trees in the orchard moving their leaves softly in answer to a little breeze; she saw their shadows lie peaceful and cool on the sweet grass, and down by the fern-bordered little brook she heard the plaintive whistle of the swallow-lark and the saucy piping of the bobolink. She was a girl who loved beautiful things, and her heart fluttered impatiently to get away from her burdensome surroundings to the loveliness so little distant from her. Alice had seen the cream of life just so near her lips, and the cup was always taken away before she tasted it. The meadow-lark, so in sympathy with her mood, might have quivered her if she could have hidden in the long grass and listened to the strain. As it was, it only maddened her. She heard a footstep outside. She started quickly, and listened with wide-open eyes. Alas! no. It was only one of her little sisters who had been out on a ramble, and was coming in laden with all kinds of pretty things.

"See here, Dora," said a little voice, merry enough, but with a certain sharp intonation which showed she had not lived in a happy family. "Is this most beautiful? And I've got lots of curiosities to show you."

Dora put down her iron and went to look at the treasures with a sigh of envy, because when she had been a child, as she was the oldest in the family and all the little ones had to be taken care of, there had been few rambles for her. She had had to help iron every ironing-day since she could remember, even when she had to stand on a stool to reach the board. No wonder that she had clutched at every sunbeam of happier life that had penetrated to her. But sunbeams cannot be caught by clutching at them, and hers had all vanished and left only a sad sense of disappointment, a heavier sadness than if she had never seen them or gazed there was any light beyond the darkness.

"O Dora," called a sharp voice, from the other room, "won't you ever learn not to act like a child? You know I don't want the door all covered with litter, and you stand there and encourage Nelly to bring it in."

And when do you expect that ironing is
SOMETHING TO DO.

A

The time drew near for Alice to graduate, she began to think what to do next. Celia was very sure that everybody who wanted a teacher would want Alice; but, of course, they did not want a heretic at the Seminary, and she was not acquainted with any one else where. She made inquiries of the girls in school, and at last heard of a lady in the city who was looking for a day- governess, to be occupied two hours each day in teaching a little girl. Of course, she could not earn enough for the support of both in that way; still, it would be something, and she believed that in the city there would be opportunities for both Celia and herself to find other things to do, — so she thought herself justified in deciding to go there. They had liked the plan, Celia for the chance of seeing something of art, and Alice because she longed to be in the very heart of humanity, she so wished to help other people.

School closed in August, and they de-
Till September the sisters lived on as best they could, learning all kinds of housekeeping, and spending very little. So work appeared for Celia, but they hoped it might be better they could, learning all kinds of housekeeping, and spending very little. So work appeared for Celia, but they hoped it might be better they could, learning all kinds of housekeeping, and spending very little. So work appeared for Celia, but they hoped it might be better they could, learning all kinds of housekeeping, and spending very little. So work appeared for Celia, but they hoped it might be better they could, learning all kinds of housekeeping, and spending very little. So work appeared for Celia, but they hoped it might be better they could, learning all kinds of housekeeping, and spending very little. So work appeared for Celia, but they hoped it might be better they could, learning all kinds of housekeeping, and spending very little. So work appeared for Celia, but they hoped it might be better they could, learning all kinds of housekeeping, and spending very little. So work appeared for Celia, but they hoped it might be better they could, learning all kinds of housekeeping, and spending very little. So work appeared for Celia, but they hoped it might be better they could, learning all kinds of housekeeping, and spending very little. So work appeared for Celia, but they hoped it might be better they could, learning all kinds of housekeeping, and spending very little. So work appeared for Celia, but they hoped it might be better they could, learning all kinds of housekeeping, and spending very little. So work appeared for Celia, but they hoped it might be better they could, learning all kinds of housekeeping, and spending very little. So work appeared for Celia, but they hoped it might be better they could, learning all kinds of housekeeping, and spending very little. So work appeared for Celia, but they hoped it might be better they could, learning all kinds of housekeeping, and spending very little. So work appeared for Celia, but they hoped it might be better they could, learning all kinds of housekeeping, and spending very little. So work appeared for Celia, but they hoped it might be better they could, learning all kinds of housekeeping, and spending very little. So work appeared for Celia, but they hoped it might be better they could, learning all kinds of housekeeping, and spending very little.
Alice, bewildered.

She could not bear to go away and leave him so, and therefore she answered, with a faint smile, "I am willing, but, of course, I can't."

"I have never seen her," replied Alice, "but I am to be governess to Miss Craig.

"Oh!" said the dwarf, elevating his eyebrows. "Well, she has her sitting-room on the second floor, No. 5, Twigg. I don't want strangers coming here,"

Alice turned to go, but he called out again, "See here, miss, before you go home, come here again. I want to see you.

"Yes," said she; "I shall be here about two hours, I suppose.

She knocked at the door of No. 5, and after a slight rustle within the door opened and Mrs. Craig stood before her. She was a little below the medium height, with a well-rounded form, a fair complexion, an immense coil of brown hair, dimples with every sentence, a manner of clicking her heels with every step, and she wore a perfectly clean, stiff calico dress which had no great pretension either to style or beauty. She was a pleasant-looking person, and yet to Alice, after a few moments of observation, it seemed that she was not exactly pleasant to look at. There was something covert in the dimples, and a peculiar shade of blue in her eyes, which looked as if she might not always be trusted. However, Alice said to herself that it was wrong to be prejudiced, and resigned herself to being pleased.

"Ah, Miss Wilding, good morning. I am glad to see you. I began to fear you were not coming, for it is five minutes late by my clock; but perhaps I am not quite right.

"Yes," said Alice, somewhat disturbed, "I am late, and I am sorry to be so at my very first lesson, but there was a little trouble in the street just before the door as I came up, and I was detained.

"What was it?" said Mrs. Craig instantly on the quiet voice. So Alice told her how she had had a little trouble in the street just before the door. Then she said to Alice, "I am sorry, sir, that you don't believe me. I believe in system and promptness."

"Mrs. Craig?" repeated he, with a half-scorning expression. "Are you one of her friends?"

"Certainly," answered Mrs. Craig, emphatically. "She's an old dear.

Then in a moment she added: "I am so glad to find that there was a reason for your delay, Miss Wilding. I believe in system and promptness.

Alice felt as if she must brace herself up to the standard of this exemplary woman, and inwardly sighed.

"Bessie is my husband's sister," continued Mrs. Craig, "and he wishes to have her well educated in every way.

I began teaching her myself, but I found her so slow that I was forced to give up the lesson, because I am not strong. But I will examine her, and you will see that she is very thorough as far as she has gone,"

So saying, she called Bessie from an inner room. The child was a sweet-flaxen-haired, large-eyed little girl, winning in face and voice.

"Now, Bessie," said Mrs. Craig, "with what appeared to Alice a somewhat needful expenditure of energy, "we will begin with geography. You may mention all the rivers of the United States flowing into the Atlantic Ocean, beginning with Maine."

The child stood up straight, with her hands behind her, and repeated without a mistake a list in which Alice often found herself at fault. Mrs. Craig asked several other questions of the same nature, to all of which Bessie responded promptly and pleasantly. Mrs. Craig smiled satisfaction, and seemed to find so much pleasure in showing off her own teaching that the greater part of the morning was occupied in the examination.

"Now," said the lady at last, "you see just what she knows, and you can tell her what to do for to-morrow." Alice, with some embarrassment, designated a lesson in arithmetic; and then said she had thought that it would be well to read with the child something which she could comprehend. — Natural History, for instance; and that, with the music-lesson, would be sufficient to occupy the next day.

Mrs. Craig was charmed. Miss Wilding's ideas were so original and at the same time so wholly in unison with her own. She promised herself much pleasure in being present at the lessons, which were to be given at Mrs. Craig's.
SOMETHING TO DO.

"The face or form could have nothing to do with my appreciation of any one's character," said Alice, quietly.

"Pretty talk!" growled the dwarf.

"But I am hideous, am I not? Come, there's a poseur for your polite white lies."

Alice hesitated. Of course the truth must be told, but how could she soften it? She hated to give compliments, and yet, to be fair, she felt that she ought to give her best as well as her worst thoughts of him.

"You are deformed," said she, "and you have no beauty of feature except your eyes. Those are expressive, and no one who had in any way the power of expressing the soul within could be hideous to me."

"You are one of the good sort, - are you not?" said he, satirically. "Now for another poseur. Did you ever see anybody who came as near being hideous as I do, - in an idiot asylum, or a side-show at a menagerie, or at an almshouse, for instance?"

"I have never been in either of those places," replied Alice, scarcely repressing a smile. "I have never seen one as much deformed as you, but I have seen many on whom it was more painful to look, - countenances stamped with evil deeds."

The dwarf beat down his fist with a thundering blow on the table, and though it bit his lip he could not force back the tears which filled his eyes and rolled down his cheeks.

He spoke after a moment: "You have said it. Then, with a sigh, "At any rate, you tell the truth, and I shall always believe you. But I know now that the consideration which I get from people, when I do get any, can only come from pity."

Alice shook her head slowly. "I think you are wrong, Mr. Rix," said she. "No one can accept from a man everything. A man is respected and honored for his mind and soul, and not for his form."

"O, how true you are!" exclaimed he, with a shudder of disgust. "Handsome is that handsome does, I used to hear. I'm sick of it, for I know better."

"But I know it is true," said she, with a bright smile flashing across her face. "I believe, Mr. Rix, in never being conquered by circumstances."

She spoke with more energy than usual, and the dwarf seemed to catch a spark from her enthusiasm, for a sad smile flitted over his countenance, and he said, "Sit here a little, miss, and listen."

He jumped off the table and seated himself at the piano. He began to play with more exquisite feeling a sonata of Beethoven. The soft, warm chords crept up and up, and Alice sat in glad amazement, listening to such music as she longed for but had heard only very few times in all her life. The force of the music grew until it seemed as if every inch of the bare and desolate room were alive with it, as if the soul of the listener were separated from the body and floating in that sea of harmony. When it ceased Robert Rix looked round with a softened and glorified expression. He had meant to ask her if his music was as beautiful as that of a perfectly formed man would have been, but he was raised too far above all such pettiness now.

"May I hear you play again some time?" asked Alice, in her sweet way.

"Yes, yes," said he; "you give me faith. Go now."
something for the magazines; but she was so disheartened and discouraged that she had no spirit for it, and after one or two vain attempts she flung her pen aside and declared that she would not try again till she had something else to do by which she could earn her living, and so might feel calm.

Alice, too, was patiently trying to find something to do, but with no better success.

"Wanted.-A female teacher in a grammar school in M---. The committee will examine candidates Friday, at last." Alice read this one evening.

"Here, at last, a teacher is wanted," said she.

"An experienced teacher, of course!" said Celia, in a low-spirited tone.

"It does n't say so," said Alice; and she read the advertisement aloud.

"But you do n't think I can do that, Alice," said Celia, impatiently. "You know I 'm not fit to teach such a school."

"If I were a genius, and could show it to the world the first night, there would be something worth while in it. Then it would be for a teacher. But a second-rate actress — no, Alice, I 'm too proud for that. O, I wish I were a man! There 's nothing a woman can do."

"Yet it would n't help you to be a man," said Alice, thoughtfully. "If your forte is acting, it would be as little respectable to be a second-rate actress as actress. If you have decided genius in one direction, there is that one thing for you to do; and the fact that you were a man, and had your choice in an unlimited number of other callings, would still not help you there. It is only when we have made up our minds to do whatever we can that it is useful to have a variety to choose from."

"Well, well," said Celia, "I know that I should feel so now. It makes me feel wicked, and O, so contemptibly mean, to know that you, with your delicate health, are doing all the work and supporting us both, while I do nothing! I would do anything I could. But I do hate the idea of teaching. It seems to me people ought to do that for which they have a natural gift."

"What is your natural gift?" inquired Alice.

"There, that 's unkind! though you did n't mean it, I know. I know that if I were rich I could find plenty to do. I could write if I were not harassed for my daily bread, and I could paint, and I could act. O, Alice, I wish it was respectable to act!"

"It is," said Alice; "why don't you do it? I believe there you would find your real niche."

"O, Alice, you unworldly child!" said her sister, with a superior air. "If I were a genius, and could show it, I should be something worth while in it. Then I should be a teacher. But a second-rate actress — no, Alice, I 'm too proud for that. O, I wish I were a man! There 's nothing a woman can do."

"Yet it would n't help you to be a man," said Alice, thoughtfully. "If your forte is acting, it would be as little respectable to be a second-rate actress as actress. If you have decided genius in one direction, there is that one thing for you to do; and the fact that you were a man, and had your choice in an unlimited number of other callings, would still not help you there. It is only when we have made up our minds to do whatever we can that it is useful to have a variety to choose from."

"Well, I wish I could die!" cried Celia, passionately. "What does God mean by making creatures and then providing no place for them? Why are we told to work, and yet no work is given to us to do?"

"Ah! I., Said Alice, cheerfully, "now you have done your very utmost; and, as failure is not our own fault, I have faith to believe we shall be taken care of. It is only when we have neglected something ourselves that we have any reason to desire. Our money is not quite gone yet, and something is sure to come to help us."

"No, I wish I could die!" cried Celia, bitterly. "Yet I am more than satisfied; I wish I was dead and going home."

"But all must do some work," said Alice. "And you — you say you would not act, though you feel the power:"

"I 'm proud," said Celia. "Sometimes self-sacrifice seems the highest thing, but then we lose the beautiful expansion into which we might be. And what are we blessed others most. Besides, we can't do well what we don't love."

"That is for geniuses," said Alice. "A painter should paint instead of writing poetry, for instance —"

"Ah!" interrupted Celia. "And though talent is not genius, everybody must have some little germ of genius, — for making paper-dolls, perhaps, and that is his work."

"But the greater comprehends the smaller, just as the moon comprehends the stars. Will come at least be faithful; and that we are greater than the work we do may make us able to do it as well, perhaps better, than he whose legitimate work it is, who stands on the same level with his work, and not above it."

"O dear!" said Alice, anxiously. "I see I can't disguise my duty."

"If I could earn enough for both!" said Alice. "I love so dearly my work, the very work you will hate."

"O, Alice, Alice," cried Celia, "I am selfish, abominably, completely selfish! I 'll do anything. Give me the paper. When must I apply?"

"It is rather sad, when we have brought the whole force of our soul to bear upon making a sacrifice, to have that sacrifice then denied us, not because it has become unnecessary, but because it has become impossible. Yet even this hard-earned hope of success is again and again applied. And it was so in this case. Celia's application bore no fruit whatever, except that her ride in the cars left their stock of money a little lower than before. Among fifty applicants, some with inducements and some with years of experience to attest their capacity, what chance could there be for a lonely little girl like her! She had started with firm lips and a heart beating high, but the courage of self-denial started with firm lips and a heart beating high, but the courage of self-denial started with firm lips and a heart beating high, but the courage of self-denial started with firm lips and a heart beating high, but the courage of self-denial started with firm lips and a heart beating high, but the courage of self-denial started with firm lips and a heart beating high, but the courage of self-denial started with firm lips and a heart beating high, but the courage of self-denial started with firm lips and a heart beating high, but the courage of self-denial started with firm lips and a heart beating high, but the courage of self-denial started with firm lips and a heart beating high, but the courage of self-denial start
there was an end of me, and I should not
be a burden to anybody."

"Never say that again, little sister," said she, kissing
her. "Can that be a burden which we love beyond everything else in the
world?"

"Hope springs immortal in the human breast."

That sentiment is sufficiently hackneyed to prove how true it is. And from day to
day Celia experienced the most exhausting fluctuations of hope and despair.
She searched the papers with trembling eagerness, trusting every day that she
might at last find something she could do. Every day, she turned away sick
at heart, for nothing appeared. Once in a long time a copyist, a compositor,
or something of that nature, would be advertised for, and the proud child
would press her hands on her torn and suffering heart and hasten to apply for
the position. But what could she do? She wrote an abominable hand, and
though she felt sure that if any one would only engage her she would take
such pains to do her work faultlessly as to get perfect satisfaction, how could
she persuade anybody else to think so when twenty other girls stood waiting
each of whom wrote like copper-plate? And who wanted to teach her to be a
compositor, and be responsible for her "compositions sometimes with a certain
pointments sometimes with a certain
unsuccessful application for a school.
Since then she had borne her disappointments sometimes with a certain
composure and other times with her usual "passionate sarcastic fury."
She trembled so that she could scarcely stand. She made no reply to
Alice's questions, but pressed her hand
to her head in a confused way, as if to
stay some raging tumult within. Then
a terrible fit of tremor commenced; her
eyes dilated, her hands were clenched,
and she fell down in hysterics, yet
hardly in hysterics either, for she did
not once laugh, nor did the tears come,
but it seemed like a fit caused by severe
nervous pressure. Alice had been ac-
customed to see her sister in paroxysms
of anger and grief,—for Celia was of such
ardent feelings and such an excitable
temperament that she had never learned
self-control well,—but she had never
seen anything so perfectly awful as this.
She was at a loss to know what to do
for her. It was hours before she was
calm. She refused all food, and did not
speak, although she seemed to try to do
so. At last, however, Alice succeeded
in getting her into bed, and exhausted
by her emotions, she finally slept. It is
a strange and merciful thing, that, the
more violent the emotions have been,
the heavier the drowsiness which creeps
over many people. Alice did not leave
her side, and she slept as if nothing
were closing in Celia awoke with a start
of horror. The recollection seemed to
come back to her, and she wept for a
long time. Then she became more
composed and answered Alice's inquiries
in a calm, subdued voice. "I suppose I must tell you
Alice," said she, "what success I have
met with." Alice waited breathlessly,
and then her sister added,
"I can never tell you what was said
in my ear while I stood waiting with a
crowd of others. I came away in an
instant, without waiting to apply.
Alice, I understand that it is not man-
ual labor which makes a position dishon-
orable."

Alice grew pale, and then said slowly,
"I will not believe that this can be the
case in all such places. I have heard,
think, that they were places of tempta-
tion, but I believed one could always
guard herself."

"I hope it may be so in most places," said Celia, dreamily. "I do not think
any one who spoke to me could have
been one of the proprietors, and yet he
must have had influence with them, be-
cause—Here she stopped suddenly,
an accused penitence overspreading her
face, and then she added in a hurried
whisper, "I am afraid at this moment,
Alice. I shall never have the courage to
roam about the streets alone again as I
have done."

"It is horrible," said Alice, "but I
believe you need not fear. There is
enough honor in Boston to protect any
girl who is not too daring." Celia shuddered. "If I ever see that
man again, I shall die," said she.

"And those poor young girls who
were waiting with you," said Alice,
thoughtfully. "It is terrible, but such a
thing, against our will, makes us sus-
pense a whole class."

"Yes," said Celia. "I shall never see
a girl who belongs to that establishment
without revulsion, and yet she may be
innocent. Also, I came away in an
instant, without waiting to apply.
Alice, I understand that it is not man-
ual labor which makes a position dishon-
orable."

"God gives us lessons so hard that
eye seem actually impossible," said
Alice. "What infinite charity we must
have to bear for those who fall under
temptations which might have been our
own!"

"Yes, yes, charity," said Celia. "Yet
no one need ever fall," she added, with
energy; "there is always the alternative
of death."

"Yes," said Alice, in a compassionate
voice, "death by starvation must con-
tain moments of such horror that the soul
becomes insane and is not responsible.
"Death by suicide, I mean," said
Celia, quickly. "We have that alter-
native, and drowning costs nothing."

"Could suicide ever be right, though?"
questioned Alice.

"If we had our choice between wrong
or death, how could death be wrong?"
asked Celia, with fire.

"If the choice came within a moment
of time, to be sure," said Alice, "we
could not hesitate. But that could
never be except when physical force
was exerted against us, and in that
case we cannot talk of temptation at
all. But where the alternative was
presented to our minds alone of doing
wrong, or the chance, the probability
over, of dying by starvation, we should,
of course, be doing right, and only
right, to choose death; but could we
have an equal right to choose to kill
ourselves?"

"I can't see the difference," said
Celia. "If one is to die at any rate, he
may at least save himself as much pain
as he can. A kind physician would do
that for a patient dying a natural death."

"Yes," said Alice, "if we could ever
be absolutely sure that we should die.
But God, who gives us life, has alone
the right to take it; and at the very moment
we faint, believing we can live no
longer, we do not know what hand he is
about to stretch out to save us, nor
what work there is in the world which
he wishes us to do."

"If people were angels they might
live according to your theories, Alice," said
celia, sharply; "but most of us are
very mortal."

"But though we daily fall bitterly
short of our standard, we have no right
to make it lower," said Alice.
CHAPTER XII.

The weeks went on, and still no hope came to Celia. For many days after the encounter related in the last chapter she hardly dared to leave the house without the assurance that the serenading of her sister, though it had the sincere courage of her sister communicated itself to her also, and she went out as usual, coming back again and again with a slower tread and a more faded glow in her eyes. But the bitter experience was slowly teaching her a strength and composure which she had never learned in any other circumstances. She passionately loved Alice, who understood nature and never irritated her, and, however fretting the incidents of her life were, she was not obliged to be brought in close relations with people whose injudiciousness exasperated her, as when she had been at her aunt's and at school. When we once clearly recognize that there is no individual against whom we can inveigh as the cause of our misfortunes, we suddenly stand still, remembering, if we complain, who it is against whom we complain. The most fault-finding among us all must then be dumb. And so Celia, though she had not risen to that high plane where one can look gladly and fearlessly at all things, knowing that a Father who loves us, though he dwells fearlessly at all things, knowing that a Father who loves us, though he dwells fearlessly at all things, knowing that a.

In time the wardrobe of the sisters began to look very shabby. Alice always wore black, and preferred it. She laid a nicer dress for very rare occasions, not knowing now long it might be before she could buy another, and by great care, and wearing a calico wrapper when she had any work like cooking to do, she made her other only black dress look fresh and neat always, though it had been worn so long. But Celia had no such talent. She had always had a faculty for rushing through things, and tearing her dresses, and all the mending in the world could not make them their original selves again. Besides, although she wore black from motives of economy, and had reluctantly consented to do so usually even at school, she yet hated it heartily, and almost felt a fright in such a sombre setting. If her character was gaining strength and consistency from poverty, she had not gained in beauty, as she worked day by day in their little attic in her hopelessly shabby dress, and with the glow and glitter gone from her eyes, and with patiently she mend and thoughtfully contrived, and made the most of everything; while Celia felt that if she could not have all, a little more or less was of no consequence. She absolutely longed for intense color, liking monstrosity in dress scarcely more than in life; and one day, in desperation, she sent a soiled old school-dress to the dyer's with orders to have it dyed scarlet. The material was a poor one, and the color produced was a dingy brick-red. But Alice could see nothing wasted, and heroically took the dress herself to wear during the hours she passed in the house, that she might save her other one.

"Alice, you look like a clown," said Celia; "do let me sell that dress for rags."

"No," said Alice, smiling. "It's useful, if not beautiful, and I look no more like a clown than you would have done if the color had been brilliant and you had worn the dress into the street."

"But I can wear scarlet," said Celia. "Pshaw! of course I know, though, that it would have made me ridiculous, because everybody nowadays seems to have such an ugly taste as to wish to creep round in such old-colored gowns when there are times and moods as natural herself which they might wear. O dear, dear! it really seems to me that the world is completely asket. At any rate, Alice, I wish you'd take that dress off, for it sets my teeth on edge."

But Alice laughed and patted Celia on the head. "It is one of the consequences of our sists," said she, "that we have
SOMETHING TO DO.

(rewed work, indeed?) and found herself getting excessively ugly and ill-tempered, when an old, almost forgotten friend, dying, begged her to take as a boarder her deformed boy, who was so soon to be left alone in the world. The fountains of her heart were at last stirred. She accepted the trust, and was saved from being a sour old woman. By degrees, as her fortune melted away, she filled her house with lodgers; but Robert seemed to belong to her in a different way from the rest, to be her very own.

CHAPTER XIII.

A t last Celia came home one day with a radiant face. "She has surely found something now," thought Alice; but she would not say so, in order that she might seem to receive the whole glad surprise at once. She was, however, mistaken; the world’s oyster-shell was as hard as ever to open, and Celia was no nearer reaching its treasures mysteries than when she started out. But she had news, notwithstanding, and made Alice guess for five minutes whom she had met unexpectedly on the street.

"You guess wider of the mark every moment," said she, joyously, "and I shall have to tell you. What do you say to Al eck Hume?"

Alice flushed quickly with delight.

"Why don’t you bring him home with you?" she asked. "I would rather see him than anybody else in the world."

"He could n’t come just now, but he is coming very soon, perhaps this very day. I will tell you about it. In the first place, I went to Mather’s for the advertisement. (Of course, it was of no use, I might have known that,) but I went, and I tried, for, if I had n’t, I should always have thought that it might have done some good.) But then I began to walk along slowly, with my usual happy reflections,—rather bitterly she said this,—” till suddenly I heard the heartiest voice close by me say, ‘I tell you the woman question is getting serious.’ This naturally made me look up, and I think, at any rate, the voice would have recalled something to me without the words. At any rate, it would have known Al eck if I hadn’t heard his voice, because he has changed a great deal, and wears a great beard and so forth; but as it was I knew him in a second, and before he had quite passed me I grasped at the perfect terror lest I should miss him. ‘Oh are n’t you Al eck Hume? ’ At that he stopped short and looked straight at me. ‘Yes, I’m Al eck Hume,’ said he, straightforward as usual, ‘and I wish I could remember you, but I don’t in the least.’ The young gentleman with him laughed and said in a low tone, ‘You old ogre! What do you always tell the truth for? ’

But you know, Alice, I never should think of being hurt because Al eck could n’t remember me, though it was disconcerting to have such a grand young man as his companion stand laughing at me, as I said boldly, ‘I’m Celia Wilding, and you ought to remember my name if you have forgotten my face.’

‘O, I can imagine how he looked then,’ said Alice.

“Yes, he looked exactly so!” continued Celia, gavely, “and he shook hands like a perfect tiger, and asked after you. I told him you were in the city teaching (think of that, Alice, but I did n’t say how much), and that I lived with you. I dare say he thinks we are flourishing with an independent fortune. She laughed as merrily as a child. “Another thing, Alice, and I’m afraid you won’t like this so well. I really don’t know how it happened. I have tried to think since, but in some very natural way I found myself inviting Al eck’s friend to come with him.” He seemed to like it, and said at once that he certainly would. What do you think, Alice?"

Alice sobered. “I’d rather see Al eck by himself. Yet he will come often, I hope, and we shall see him alone. On the whole, perhaps, I am glad, because you have so few opportunities for seeing anybody.”

“As many as you, blessing,” rejoined Celia, gavely. “But what do you think of the propriety of inviting him?”

Alice laughed. “The idea of your thinking first of the propriety! Still, of course, as we live here so much alone—But I feel sure that I need not object to any friend of Al eck whom it seemed natural to you to invite; I trust you both too much for that.”

“But I don’t know,” said Celia, thoughtfully. “He was great and grand, yet if I depended on my intuitions as much as you do, I don’t know that I should like to invite him.”

“It must have been intuition which made you invite him at all,” said Alice. “You would never have thought of it otherwise.”

The sunlight seemed brighter all day to the sisters, and they fancied it penetrated into dark nooks and corners of their little sitting-room which had always before lain in shadow. When Alice went to give her daily lesson to little Bessie Craig, she thought Mrs. Craig had never been so kind, and the few words which Robert Rix spoke to her had not an atom of bitterness.

Celia took courage, for the first time in many weeks, to bring out her paints again and copy an ivy-leaf from the bough across the window. And, after the lamps were lighten and they sat cosily sewing by the little table, they heard a free, vigorous step on the stair. And, after the lamp was lighted, they sat cosily sewing by the little table, they heard a faint, vigorous step on the stair, and another behind it, and then a firm quick knock. Al eck opened the door, half expecting, notwithstanding Celia’s description, to meet again the sumbrunt, ruddy boy from whom she had parted. She started back, thinking Al eck’s friend had come first, but the cheerful, hearty voice reassured her. “How do you do, Alice Wilding? You are just yourself.”

“And you are not yourself at all,” said Alice. “I don’t believe I should ever have known your face, though I could not forget your voice. At any rate, there is nobody in the world I could be so glad to see.”

She spoke more impulsively than usual, forgetting that Al eck was not alone. The stranger made his presence known straightforwardly. “Al eck, you ought to be a happy man for six months.”

“Mr. Richard Stacy, Miss Alice Wilding.” In the mean time Mr. Richard Stacy and Miss Celia Wilding had shaken hands.

The visitors could never have guessed that this charming little sitting-room served also for kitchen, dining-room, and sleeping-room. It was so fresh and cozy, so full of cozy little things which even the wealthy cannot buy but only the cultivated, the girls in their black dresses were so tasteful and ladylike, that one might have imagined that the whole house was theirs and this little corner too; and they liked to sit in the evening.

Even Celia’s old black dress, which she so deplored and detested, was made becoming by a jaunty little white apron she had not worn for months; and she had taken her luxuriant hair out of her ugly net, and curled it and cramped it all and the et cetera with hearty interest.

Alice looked always the same, serene, beautiful, blessed.

“Celia was so excited this morning that she did nothing in order,” said Alice, after a few minutes, “and, so far as I can discover, she told you all their whereabouts and occupations without once thinking to ask yours. Have you too come up to the city to live? I could hardly have believed you would have been satisfied to leave the woods and fields.”

“Not I,” replied Al eck. “I am not living here exactly; I am only in the Legislature this winter, and I shall be glad enough to get back to the fields and woods again, you may be sure.”

“Art has not yet claimed you,” said Alice, with a smile, as her thoughts went back to a time years before, when they, as children, had talked of art.

“Hardly. I suppose you couldn’t call the Legislature art, though, could you except that it’s artful.”

Alice said dryly, striking in.

“Al eck’s coming to town is purely philanthropic. He had some slight faith in human nature at the beginning of the present session, and fancied that the State Legislature was the ‘fixed point’ for his lover to move the.”

“A! That faith left still, Dick,” replied Al eck, pleasantly; “that is, faith in human nature, though I must confess my confidence in the Legislature is beginning to totter. As long as people will put such faithless creatures as Dick to make the laws, what hope can there be for the world?”
Dick laughed. "It takes just such as I to keep just such as you from going to pieces altogether. The Conservative element is a little more important than the Radical."

"Ah! as long as you believe that I shall keep in politics, notwithstanding my waning faith in them,—that is, if my constituents will let me."

"The is good, and, Alice," said Celia, flushing and happy. Mr. Richard Stacy looked at her curiously, as if he wondered if it was quite worth his while to raise a little breeze. He apparently concluded that it was not.

"I see Dick is going to all the glory," said he, "and that proves my unselfishness, because nobody is so sure of being lionized as he who takes an unpopular part." He said it so gayly that Celia looked disconcerted, which could not have been, had there not been a trace of bitterness in his words.

"Ah, Mr. Stacy," she answered sweetly, so sweetly that Alice, who knew her usually to be too eager about any point in question, looked up surprised. "I don't retract a bit, but I'm willing to acquire knowledge, and may be people who are nobles on the opposite side, because from their standpoint their way is right. But then," she added, with a sparkle like a laugh in her face, "of course they are fearfully deluded." Dick Stacy was a very free-and-easy young man, and he felt at that moment a wish that he was a little better acquainted with the young ladies, because he thought a pat on the shoulder, or even a kiss (to which he did not object), or anything to start a frolic, would have been the most expressive sort of answer, and good fun, on the whole. However, his sense of the proprieties kept him quiet. He only made a very face as he answered: "So we are deprived of glory, and receive pity as a substitute. Perhaps that's better than nothing, especially at election time, when it makes it more exciting for the candidate to appear in a pathetic light." "I don't think I do pity you," said Celia. "I think you're too wise to be one of the deluded. I'm really afraid you are rather a politician."

"The purport of that seems to be, Dick," said Alice, "You're wicked and you're wise. I'll forget the wicked and remember the wise. Thank you, Miss Celia." Dick bowed gayly, for he was a lawyer, and still two or three hundred years in advance of everybody else."

"O dear!" said Celia, "how am I to convert you if you persist in transmuting all my daggers into roses?"

"I don't need to be converted,—do I, Alice? I've converted in the best manner at camp-meeting last summer. I was done up in the most thorough style, and the old female who inducted me into the various mysteries of free grace and transubstantiation and metaphysics and electoral affinities, or whatever it was, was such an union that I might not only be converted but pickled and salted down so that I couldn't spoil, that I've never had any uneasiness about myself since. I knew such fervent petitions couldn't remain unanswered."

Alice laughed. "We're pretty bad, Mr. Stacy."

"Oh, or pretty good, perhaps," said Dick. "The Radicals are gloriously good, but ridiculous unpractical."

"Alice looks practical, I'm sure," said Celia.

"Listen," said Dick. "Alice not only benefits the world by making (or endeavoring to make) new laws for the happiness of man, but he's also a doctor, that he may cure their sick bodies; and if he finds most of his patients too poor to pay him, he cheerfully supplies the deficiency by pulling off his coat and working on his farm. Actually, I don't know but he works on their farms, and gives them the produce of his own. It would be just like him. Now, is that practical!"

Dick looked very handsome as he spoke, and very proud of his friend also. "Be still, Dick," said Alice. "You have given me a chance to speak a word since we came in."

"I like you to be a physician, Aleck," said Celia, "but I did not expect it of you any more than I expected you to be in the Legislature.""

"But what could I have been—" Dick said "a clergyman or a lawyer?"

"Not a lawyer, at any rate, though that is rather grand too" (here Dick bowed gayly, for he was a lawyer), "and not a clergyman at just this era. I perceive that it was suitable, yet I always think of you as a farmer, pledged wholly to nature."

"So is a physician, Alice. Botany, chemistry, anatomy,—you see it is all nature in one form or another."

"Ah, My Dear boy," said Dick. "Yes," said Aleck. "As I don't live on Juan Fernandez, I must do something to help people more directly than by farming."

"You'll think I'm a heretic," said Celia; "but, Alice, and I are always disputing about that very thing. She believes in rushing out into the highways and hedges and finding some definite work to do for other people. I believe in doing it if it comes to you, and in the mean time I think it best to live your nature, and do that which is to bless the world most."

"You are a cold-hearted transcendentalist," said Alice, laughing.

"Nevertheless," said Mr. Stacy, "Miss Celia is in the right. For, if everybody followed Dick, everybody would be perfect, and there would be a great variety in the world, besides, to give a 'spice to life.'"

"Ah, but they will not," said Alice. "So those who see their own way clear must work for other people, or there will be a vast work left undone."

"But since nobody can be more than perfect," said Dick, carelessly, "where is the overplus to come from which is to do all this?" said Alice, eagerly.

"It may be goodness, but it can't be perfection," said he; "because if everybody was perfect there would be no need of a legislator. And however we are asked now, I suppose everybody was meant to be perfect originally."

"Ah, we don't agree on first principles," said Alice. "I don't quite believe that everybody was good at first and has been growing worse ever since."

"And I don't believe it at all," said Alice. "It's a faithless kind of belief. When we all come to Darwin, things will be clearer."

"I'm not a Darwinian," said Mr. Stacy, "though when I've wriggled through a few more stages I may be. But it's no matter where people start from; if they are ever all going to be perfect, the occupation of doing good will come to an end, so it can't be our ultimate work."

"Here's your boy," said Alice, "a universe which is constantly evolving must eternally continue to evolve."

"Humph!" said Dick, laughing. "That's so grand I don't understand a word. So I know I've cornered you."

"Not a bit," said Alice. "There is an infinite gradation of being below man as well as above him, and there must forever be ultimate particles from.
which the series of evolutions begins, since there is such a thing as infinity. So, however our race improves, there will always be work for us to do in helping others."

"We'll," said Celia, "I guess you are only helping your own waters in another way than I do, so we are disputing about nothing."

"Good!" said Mr. Stacy, "we are all right, and nobody is wrong. Let's talk about something else."

When the young gentlemen went away, the sisters found themselves exhilarated into a talking mood instead of feeling that forbidding settling down of blackness which had invariably accompanied the nightfall for many weeks, carefully as they had striven to conceal it from each other by trivial remarks which they forgot before the answer came.

"I believe, Alice," said Celia, "that, for the sake of being in society one year, I would willingly die at the end of it. Just think of meeting people evening after evening, hearing conversation, riding and driving and travelling, and I have his half as little to do as the old alchemists sold themselves for it from each other by trivial remarks which they forgot before the answer came."

"I know nothing, and have no right to blame you."

"I don't understand that," said he, "but, looking beyond her, said shortly: ""Miss Twigg, said Mrs. Craig, with a boundless curiosity, and though it perhaps 'because it enabled him to look down on people, as if he were really tall and grand."

"Come now," said he, in his hardest, gruffest voice, "you pretend to be religion, don't you?"

"I am not religious," continued Robert, "and I don't want the old alchemists sold themselves for gold. It is the blessing of life. It gives every blessing."

Her face was flushed, her eyes sparkled, and she looked handsome, radiant.

"Such a little tip of society as this is perfect nectar," continued Celia; "there was Ateek with his great, grand theories, and Mr. Stacy with his genial, gentlemanly manner, and I didn't know how good a time I was having till they were gone, and I feel lifted up so many miles beyond the ground I stood on before, O, if such a little sip as this is so sweet, what must it be to drink in the whole!"

Alice might have said, "it might be to drink the dregs." She thought it, but she never said disagreeable things that were unnecessary.

"At any rate, Celia, we are likely to get something more of it than before, for Alice is to be here all winter, on, and if Mr. Stacy took interest enough in him and you to come here once he probably will come again."

"O yes, Alice," he said as he should. "I was very curious that you happened to meet him in just such a way!"

"It is very curious that you happened to invite him here," said Alice, and a very happy inspiration."

"Are you sure of that?" asked Celia, in such a strange, vague way that Alice looked at her closely, and knew that, at any rate, it was not curious that her sister had invited Mr. Stacy.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE next day Alice went as usual to little Bessie Craig, leaving Celia rather cross at the idea of taking up the burden of endless, useless search after work which, during the preceding evening, she had almost forgotten was laid upon her. Mrs. Craig, as usual, sat in the room during the lessons. It annoyed Alice; she could never get over an uneasy feeling that Mrs. Craig had had a hand in it, although it was used to no ill purpose, it was nevertheless offensive. Just as she was concluding her lessons, there came a sharp knock at the door.

"Miss Twigg," said Mrs. Craig, with half a laugh. "I should know her knock in Japan."

And Miss Twigg it was. She paid no attention to Mrs. Craig's greeting, but, looking beyond her, said shortly: "Miss Wilding, Robert will see you when you get through up here, if you please," and shut the door.

"Whether you please or not, I should think," said Mrs. Craig, with her half-smile. "Mother Twigg gets to be more of an ogre every day."

Alice made no reply, so Mrs. Craig was afraid she had said too much, and added, to mend the matter, "She is a bluff, downright old soul, at any rate, and sincere as a looking-glass."

"And she sincerely hates you," thought Alice, "and you hate her as much, but less sincerely."

When Alice knocked at the door of Robert Rix, she heard a heavy scrambling for a minute or two before it was opened by Robert himself. He bowed very respectfully, but did not extend his hand. Nothing would have induced him to touch any one but Miss Twigg. It was one of the saddest things about his calamity that he was endowed with that sensitiveness which accompanies the finest and most delicate constitutions. Ugly, misshapen, horrible as he was, he had too high physical repulsions as powerful as those of Celia. He divined the most useless and the most powerful was that sensitiveness which accompanies the most lonely moment, when his heart was half broken for sympathy. To-day there was in his eyes a painful drawing down of the corners, as in those of a child who has been weeping, but his mouth had a harsh, scornful, sarcastic expression. He closed the door after Alice, and retreated to a seat in the very corner of the room. Then, in his usual way, he wheeled a table crosswise before her, completely blocking her up, and upon this table he mounted! This was a favorite position of his for some unexplained reason, perhaps because it enabled him to look down on people, as if he were really tall and grand.

"Come now," said he, in his harshest, gruffest voice, "you pretend to be religious, don't you?"

"I am not religious," continued Robert, "and I don't want the old alchemists sold themselves for gold. It is the blessing of life. It gives every blessing."

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"O yes, Alice," he said as he should. "I was very curious that you happened to meet him in just such a way!"
I believe I was perfectly happy at the time when I first knew that it was from no nobleness that I was a fool. Lately the boys about the neighborhood have been so respectful to me that I began to think they'd changed, supposed they might not show the rebellion which, of course, they must feel. (Alice sighed within herself, for she remembered her first encounter with Miss Twigg, and feared that it was from no nobleness that the boys had silent.) "I thought, if I went in a hack, nobody need see me except as I was getting out or in, for Ralph had promised me that I might go in the morning, and no one else was invited till afternoon. O well! I went off nicely. I believe I was perfectly happy at the time. I have a strong remembrance of it, though I have lost the feeling completely now. I must have been happy, I suppose, or I shouldn't have been so sanguine. The green-house was gorgeous beyond all I had seen before, and I wanted to see it. I must have been happy to have felt the determination for more happiness. So we went in. I suppose the artist knew what, — what could I have liked enough to stop? — while Miss Twigg and Ralph went on. Just then two ladies came in, and were close by me before they saw me. At the same instant they stopped and half screamed. I heard one say distinctly, under her breath: "there is not such an other monster outside of Barnum's." But the other lady grew white and rigid as if an uncontrollable dread, at which I could guess but too surely, had seized her. They hurried away, and I wish I had died."

The heart of Alice was aching with sympathy. She spoke quietly, keeping back her tears: "But they could not feel the same, though they hid it carefully from me. I had almost forgotten that. And, O God, what if my presence there among the flowers, so innocent and free and happy, should determine the life of some one yet unborn to be a life like mine! I should build me a prison cell and see no one, and that when I am starving for human sympathy and love. There was a bad omen, too, to greet me at home. The caterpillar which I tended all the fall, and which, in the winter, had broken its coverings and emerged a moth, but a moth with its wings hopelessly twisted. And I had tended it. Who knows what strange, blighting influence my eyes had upon it? Ah well! It was dead. Do formed moths do not live. Why are not such as I strangled in the cradle? Ah! it would be kind."

There was a sparkle in Alice's eyes, — a sparkle of hope and joy. "Because," she said, "in a thrilling tone, "you must not be so interrupted. We must join in the procession which, feeble as we are, would be incomplete without us; and we wish it too, for we are bound to prove the utmost possible for every moment of the grand eternity God has given us.

His eye flashed responsive for an instant, and then the glow went out. "A pretty theory," he said, scornfully; "but hundreds of sweet little children died every day. How are their places filled?" "If we did not believe in immortality, and an immortality of progress too, there would be no answer," replied Alice; "but, knowing that, we know there are other places and other duties for them, and that there is still no place here among the fellow-creatures, whatever it may seem." "Pooh!" said Robert, "that will do for religions people; but these children die without suffering at all. Why am I made to suffer?"

"There must be conditions in your being," she said, "which make the highest life possible for you, and make you worth the ultimate education." He seemed a little softened as he answered: "Yet you who believe in God believe that every creature is worth to him exactly the same in the end, and is worth the ultimate education; and all do not suffer — alike." "Ah, Mr. Bix," said Alice, eagerly, "it is because you believe in God yourself that you talk to me so; and your faith is the purest, because the problem with which might shake it are to you unsolvable."

He shook his head impatiently. "What can you do towards solving my questions?" he asked.

"I can tell you what I think," she replied; "we do well to know that all do not suffer alike? No one can interpret another's life. And surely, if we have existed before or may exist hereafter in older and newer forms, who can say that the measure of suffering may not be so filled up in a world or condition that all do not suffer alike? And if that is not true, as is very likely, still God has not made all alike. His mind is infinite, and must evolve infinite variety, and for the highest development of each being a totally different education. If we could think that God had really chosen us for so high a destiny that we must suffer beyond our fellow-creatures to reach it, there might be a kind of triumph in that; but if all are to reach exactly the same point, and some are to tread barefoot over thorns while others dance over roses, where is justice?"

"That God has chosen the best possible for all of us at some time does not show that he has not also chosen the best for each of us. We are different, but not differently;"

"You are a good child, Alice Wilding. Now go." And Robert jumped hastily off his table, and opened the door so quickly that Alice was in the street in a second. But she guessed she had left him happy; and Miss Twigg, who had known nothing about what had troubled him in the morning, though she had noticed the cloud of sadness which had unfolded him, knew that the evil spirit had been exorcised when she heard the ringing chords of an anthem from his piano.

Alice pondered with some surprise, on her way home, on the fact that the conversation of the evening before had certainly had an undefined influence over everything she had said to-day. It seemed as if her mind was suddenly expanding, and the text was not strange, for she had come in contact with a great mind.
leisure evenings with them. He would have interested himself in them for their father's sake and for the memory of old times, for he was one of those hearty people who believe that everybody has a claim upon them; but, beyond this, he found an appreciation of his mien and a sympathy with his actions in those two unspoiled girls that he did not meet anywhere else. Even in the special clique of politicians to which he belonged he saw too clearly a spirit of party which often disgusted him. And in Alice he found one whose thought had tended in the same direction as his own, and to whom half a word would convey his meaning as whole sentences could not do to any one else. Mr. Stacy came very often with Alec. He was too impulsive not to follow the whim of the moment, and he had been charmed with Celia from the first instant he saw her. It was new to him to find a person of such high culture who was yet so fresh. He knew enough young ladies, for he understood the art of making himself agreeable; but Celia stood on a middle ground, and was higher than either, to his thinking. She was daring and brave, too, in attaching his politics and ethics, and that he liked, for there is a great fascination in having a person who is too great a stranger to say anything that would mar his conversation. He showed Celia again and again that he had not riper for her theories, and as he was earnest and truthful in believing it himself, she could not help being convinced. Then Dick was handsomely seconded, and had a rich voice. Celia worshipped beauty. Alice would shake her eyebrows, and say, "Well, Mr. Stacy, very likely you are right; but then the world never will be ready unless somebody agitates the matter, so I am ready to be one of those."

At this Dick would draw a comical picture of Alice in bloomers, stumping the State, and Celia would declare herself disgusted.

Nevertheless Dick liked Alice amazingly, though he never felt quite easy with her. He could resist no beautiful woman. Celia was not beautiful, but her charm lay outside of and beyond the shape of her features. His feeling for her was totally new to him, and quite distinct from his admiration of young ladies in general. So it came to pass that he accompanied Alec as often as he thought respectable to see the Wildings, and still little by little sent them invitations to concerts and to the theatre. Alice would not always go to the theatre, and Alec never went. She liked talking to him better than seeing anything below genius on the stage, but Celia was passionately fond of it, and had never had an opportunity to gratify her liking; and Mr. Stacy used to say, laughing, "I believe in always going to the theatre when there is any grand work or grand actor to be seen. If not, I go to see the poor ones."

In this way the burden of life became easier. Celia wanted money more for the pleasure it would bring her than for any other reason, and if she had the pleasure without the money, it was, of course, just as well. But it was very gratifying, calling on any one so to be destitute in many ways, as to be unable to appear as well dressed as other pleasure-seekers. Dick himself cared a good deal about dress, especially in young ladies; but there was a certain glitter about Celia, even in her shabby, unbecoming black clothes, which made it impossible for him to criticize her, though this was by no means the ease with his female acquaintances. Alice was always beautiful, especially in black, and her culture showed itself in every motion. The search for work was still unsuccessful. Alice had found two or three other private pupils through Dr. Celasco, but Celia was still without anything to do. And so a month had passed when she met her employer with Alec.

One morning Celia lay with a feverish sensation. Dick was going to the stake, he would look so perfect a gentleman as if he were being introduced to the queen. And certainly would not go without blacking his boots," said Alice, laughing.

"He is precisely the reverse of you in those particulars. However, he would never go to the stake."

"Are you ill?" said Alice, bending over her anxiously.

"No," said Celia; "only tired of living. What is the use of getting up? I have nothing to do; that is, I can work if I choose, but I can't be paid. I think the struggle is useless."

"O well, Celia, we are better off than we were, for I find more to do, and we are not left without society and pleasure."

"And what is the use of that?" asked Celia.

"I only realize more and more the vast difference between our circumstances and our tastes, and I feel the contrast more keenly. I was perfectly happy at the theatre last night, but now I have to return to the same old thing this morning, though I wouldn't complain if I could return to some real work, but to this fretful fruitless waiting for something to turn up, it is too hard. Alice, I saw some magnificent dresses last night, and worn by people without a bit of taste,—people who looked as ugly in royal purple and sables as I do in my old black dress. I know Mr. Stacy was ashamed of me."

"You know better than that," said Alice, smiling. "Mr. Stacy would never take any one of whom he felt ashamed to the theatre."

"I don't know about that, said Celia, with some spirit. "Mr. Stacy is noble, and he knows I adore the theatre, so he might do many things out of kindness."

"And of course he has n't penetration enough to judge whether you would call that a kindness or not," said Alice, with gentle sarcasm.

"O, you know what I mean," and Celia sprang out of bed. "But I don't understand how Mr. Stacy can help being ashamed of me. He is so high bred."

"And what are you, you absurd child?"

"I haven't the town polish. If Mr. Stacy was going to the stake, he would look so perfect a gentleman as if he were being introduced to the queen."

"And certainly would n't go without blacking his boots," said Alice, laughing. He is precisely the reverse of you in those particulars. However, he would never go to the stake."

"What!" said Celia, with a sudden flush. "I believe, Alice, that you do not think him noble."

"Yes, he is noble," said Alice, replying; "only not noblest."

"There, you are thinking of Alec, said Celia, and Alec is grand. I love him as well as you do. But you know there is a little country mud on his shoes."

"And country air in his breath," said Alice, coloring proudly.

Celia was silent and looked a little vexed. After breakfast she sallied out in quest of a situation, in reply to an advertisement. Alice had noticed the night before. She went in a wrathful enough mood, first vehemently declaring to Alice her horror and detestation of life.

The situation she sought was that of copyist in an office. It made her furious when she saw there were already twenty women in the waiting-room, though it wanted ten minutes of the time that was advertised. She sat down to await her turn, feeling that, if she could be successful, she should be miserable with the memory of twenty disappointments. Just as the clock reached the appointed moment the inner door opened and two gentlemen came out. One was the advertiser, and he beckoned to the girl who sat nearest the door. The other was Dick Stacy! Celia wore a smile that made her force when she saw there were already twenty women in the waiting-room.
that she could not face Alice at present, and turned in another direction, walking fast and impatiently. But she had not spoken a hundred steps when some one spoke her name; she looked up, and saw Mr. Stacy's handsome face. She would have seen any one in all the world with less confusion at that moment. She said to herself that she was not ashamed that it should be necessary for her to earn her own bread, that she had even no right to be ashamed that she was seeking to earn and found her services wholly undesired, and that she need not be ashamed to have any one know what it was so right she should do. Nevertheless she was a born patrician, and though her education and her innate nobleness had given her appreciation for and sympathy with plebeians, in the abstract at least, the patrician blood still tingled in the very veins of her fagures. Then she had so carefully concealed from Mr. Stacy any trace of actual poverty, though he must have seen the sisters were far from rich, that the denouncement was doubly painful to her.

They walked a few moments in silence. Then Dick said, with his easy smile, though perhaps he felt less easy than usual: "Well, Miss Colia, there is no help for it. I suppose I have unwittingly found out a secret which you would rather I shouldn't have known. And perhaps I might have pretended not to know and so have saved you some confusion, but you know I should never have felt very honest in that case."

He looked so handsome and so truthful as he spoke.

"You are right," said Colia, with an effort.

"Besides," continued Dick, "I could have been of no use to you if I could not have told you that I saw you. O, what a confounded noise there is in this street! You don't mind walking on the Common, do you? It is so much quieter there, and I want to talk to you. It is of no consequence if you are not at home quite yet."

"O no!" said Colia, bitterly; "my time is of no value."

"You sha'n't say quite that," said Dick, cheerfully; "but the most valuable thing you can do with the present time is to take a walk with me."

They were silent till they found a quieter spot, and then Dick went on. "I hope you won't think I am importunate if I tell you that I don't suppose you received the situation!"

"No," said Colia; "I should hardly have wished to be fortunate at the expense of so many others who perhaps need it more than I."

"No one can be in greater need," said Dick, "because nobody else is so proud."

Colia had a moment of triumph. She had been half afraid that Dick would think her poor-spirited to go about seeking work in that way. She understood very little what he thought.

"I suppose you really wish to find a place where you can earn something!" he said, wrinking his forehead a little.

"I must find something or die," said Colia, quickly and with a sob hidden in her voice which made it thrill. "Of course I sha'n't die of starvation," she added hastily, "for Alice is so good; but I shall die if there is no place in the wide earth for me in which I can work without being a mischievous clog and burden on other people."

She did not look up; but if she had, she would have seen a strange, heavy cloud pass across Dick's face. He did not answer at first, and when he did the words did not seem much to the purpose. Certainly they were not what he might have said, though Colia did not think much of that.

"One could almost believe in Woman's Rights," said he. "Nevertheless there are men almost as badly off,—though, of course, they don't suffer like women."

"Miss Colia," he said, rounding himself, a moment later, "perhaps I might find you some work to do. I know a good many people here and there, and will do what I can. What would you prefer to do?"

"Anything for daily bread," said she, scornfully. "I hate work of all kinds, and am equally inexperienced in all, so it makes no difference. You are very kind."

She tried hard to say the last words gratefully, but she did not succeed, and they both knew it. She did not understand why she failed, for she did not recognize the instinct which told her he had not, after all, been kind. Yet he had never in all his life been so kind to any one as he was at that moment to her.

"If you were a stout Yankee," said Dick, clearing his face of shadow, "my path would be plain, for I could sound a trumpet detailing your virtues in the ears of every friend I have; but I mustn't like to do just that in your case. You may be sure," he added, sweetly, "that, whether I succeed or not, you shall not be annoyed by any publicity. In the mean time, when you have advertisements to answer, won't you promise to tell me about them, and then perhaps I can help you, and at any rate save you some trouble?"

"Of course not," said Colia, with a miserable attempt at gayety. "Among a dozen applicants, who would choose one who had a protector to bargain for her? No man of mercy, certainly."

The instant she had said these words she suddenly remembered how much she thought of that. Dick saw it, of course, and might have shown his tact by taking no notice; but he paused in an embarrassed sort of way, and the black cloud swept across his face again. Colia thought she had never been so wretched in all her life. She would not risk another moment with him lest she should make the matter worse, so she made it worse by saying abruptly, "I cannot spare any more time. Good morning," and she hurried away in one of her paroxysms of rage like one insane,—one of those fits which she had at times experienced which she had at times experienced in a less degree all through her life, since her very childish days. She perhaps apply himself more closely to business."

Dick did not turn to look after her, as she broke away from him so suddenly. He was not so silly as to think what she supposed he did, but he knew what she supposed, and he could not conveniently contradict her. However, he was thinking of something else, and stood five minutes in the same spot grinding his heel into the snowy pavement. Then he scuttered off to a billiard saloon, and was soon absorbed in a game. He may have found it tedious though, as he never played for money.

CHAPTER XVI.

DICK STACY has been cross to-day," said Aleck, when he called next evening, "and I couldn't persuade him to come with me. He is going to apply himself more closely to business, he says,—which is absurd, I think. Work in the daytime and play in the evening, I say."

"I suspect you don't practise that," said Alice, pleasantly. "Mr. Stacy has whispered to me a secret about you."

The ruddy-faced young fellow absolutely blushed. In fact, he worked very hard in the Legislature, hoping to force through some measures rather too radical to be carried without a struggle, and then doctor poor people in the evening, sometimes even watching all night when the exigency was great. Though he did good modestly and secretly, and though he would have taken every precaution to prevent its discovery, perhaps, after all, he was not troubled to have it found out by those he respected and loved.

"Consistency, thou art a jewel!" said Colia, trying to be gay, though she felt the significance of Dick's absence.

"Exceptions to every rule," said Aleck, laughing.

"But the preacher shouldn't always be the exception.""

"I have done nothing, after all," said Aleck.

"Except overwork," said Alice. "Mr. Stacy told me."
"Well," said Aleck, "I believe in correlation of forces. Momentum can't be gained. It is always quantity multiplied by velocity. If the amount of the work is the same, what difference does it make whether I do it in ten years or seventy?"

"There is a fallacy somewhere," said Alice. "And I suspect it has something to do with protoplasm," only I don't quite know what that is."

Aleck laughed. "You are so bright, I will confess. The vital force can be supplied by protoplasm. But if we exhaust it faster than it can be supplied, we die, and can take no more, and so leave our work undone. But I don't do that. A delicate girl like you can't even imagine how strong and full of life I am. I may talk to weak girls and dyspeptic clerks to the end of time, and yet not mean to advise that great stout creatures like myself should be lazy."

"O Aleck Hume," burst out Celia. "What a despicable thing a woman is! To be dragged down by a little mean miserable body when one might do something noble! Alice may scold you, but I envy anybody who has physical strength to escape his own pettiness."

"Ah, Aleck," said Celia, gloomily. "It is a life of limitation to be a woman.""

"Yes, yes, yes," said Aleck, vehemently; "but we shall live to see woman legally free, and everything else will follow in the train of that good day."

"You can't make us stout like you, though, Aleck," said Celia, gloomily. "By and by," said Aleck, cheerfully. "When the conditions of life are more sensible, a woman may have a constitution with never a flaw, and have bounding health, if not actual raw strength. And the delicate girls of to-day must begin to take care of themselves as a first step to that glory."

"That we do," said Alice. "Neither of us work hard."

Celia looked up scornfully, and caught an expression on Aleck's face which did him in: "You think Alice must work hard to support us both."

Alice, surprised, because they had always sought to conceal their struggles from the young gentlemen, interrupted hastily: "Aleck knows I love to teach, and would do it if we were rich instead of poor."

Celia, however, no longer cared for concealment, and spoke again, boldly and bitterly: "I believe in the future, for want of a better," said Celia, sharply.

"And I believe in the future," said Alice. "We are, in fact, she gave the few inevitable words of explanation. "We are, in fact," she added, "only quietly and privately testing the right and wrongs of the woman question. We bear the burden of our century, and do not complain."

She spoke proudly, with a glance at Celia which was almost severe, she was so hurt at seeming to ask Aleck's sympathy. "I complain, though Alice, who works, does not," said Celia, bitterly. "And till I can find work I have rightfull cause to complain."

"You should have told me before," said Aleck reproachfully. "I might have helped you. And may I tell Dick? He has a great deal of influence, you know."

Celia writhed inwardly, and answered, with curling lip: "He already knows, Aleck. He is the pleasure of meeting yesterday in the office where I made so vain an application."

Here was the key to the riddle then. "Well, said Alice, "we may together devise something for you."

"Devise poison!" said she. "It is the only sure cure. There is an overpopulation of women in Massachusetts, as I know by other means than the census."

"The woman question is a hard one," said Aleck; "but for any individual case we can generally find a remedy, and then we are going to move heaven and earth for her legal rights."

"And I believe what good voting would do," said Celia, drearily. "The overpopulation would be the same," said Alice.

"I thought you both believed in Woman's Rights," said Celia. "I believe in a 'forlorn hope,' for want of a better," said Celia, with a sigh."

"And I believe in the future," said Alice. "How can the race be broadened till woman is 1? But in this century, whoever seeks for happiness had better bear every ill rather than try to stem the current of public opinion. The star to which we look is far down the future."

"In the mean time, what is the use of living?" said Celia. "I am not of the worth of which martyrs are made. I must have love, and not cold reason, to spur me on."

"And that is just the stuff of which most martyrs are made," said Aleck. "But, courage! you won't hate life, once let you find work."

"You are right, Aleck," said Celia, with a gleam of returning hope. "I won't be a coward."

Alek and Dick, without speaking to each other, were both busy for a week in trying to find a place for Celia, and Dick had most money and friends he was successful. A friend of his wanted copying done and would send the work to her in her own home, so she could avoid the publicity she so dreaded. The sum to be paid was not large, and Dick wished to add to it from his own purse; but he had the delicacy not to do it, for he knew what agony of shame it would cause her should she ever find it out. So at the end of the week he called to tell her that he had done it; but, as might be supposed, the interview was embarrassing to everybody till Aleck happened in. "I didn't know Aleck knew you were looking for work," said Dick, so the sisters eagerly related what had taken place."

"Only a week ago," said Aleck. "Wasn't it bad for them not to tell either of us!"

Dick's face beamed a moment; he rather liked it to be taken for granted that he stood on the same footing with so old a friend as Aleck."

"That comes of their being strong-minded," said he. "They think the rough seas are only useless numberers of the ground."

"That is unjust," said Alice, with a smile. "We think the world can never be what it ought to be without woman's help, and we believe that, in spite of her cramped and morbid life, she loves her outweighs most other things; but if we must and stronger."

"Don't desert your colors, Alice," said Aleck. "You know a woman's courage is as common and great a thing as a man's."

"Courage and strength are not the same," said Alice. "And though a woman can endure all things when she feels the purest of both, she feels sympathy without that she dies. And to me, a woman comes a time when she cannot endure silently."

"O dear!" said Dick. "To tell the truth, I must admit I don't know many of the women who endure tremendous trials with a radiant face."

"But they are not so ridiculously, abominably, shamefully morbid as women," cried Celia. "They are grand. There is nothing little about them."

"Certainly not," said Dick, amused. "But I thought you believed in the 'free and equal' doctrine."

"Freedom, yes," said Celia; "but as for equality the Hindoo customs have the right of that. Still, since they are in the world, let them do what they can."

Alice tried to think it strange that Celia should speak so bitterly, just as the work she had been seeking so long had come to her. Dick was uneasy, but thought he had the sense to see that universal sufrage would do no good in this particular case."

"Men and women must meet in a more rational way than they do now," said Aleck, who could never keep still long. "In college, for instance."
CHAPTER XVII.

CElia went to work next day with a lightened heart, and, having so
important an object before her, she succeeded in making her pages look
very neat and distinct, though they were somewhat stiff. Perhaps she
had hoped to show them to Dick in the evening, but Dick came alone, and for
several successive evenings no word was heard of Mr. Stacy. Celia's views of
Woman's Rights veered round suddenly, and she found herself in the mood to
make a most exemplary "vine," especially when the thought came over her
that perhaps Mr. Stacy was more
moored by her radical principles, those
being a part of herself, than at her
working for a living, which he knew to be
brought about by circumstances. Yet, after all, Celia's was not a weak
character. It was ill-balanced, and
that made her seem weak, and it
became only more
slowly turned to the girls. Celia's face
was radiant, the clouds had all gone,
ever fire was thrilling with her apprecia-
tion of the "Ritch" nature of the
young fellow. But as he looked at her
the light in his eyes faded, and he said
uneasily, "Alec, we are staying an uncon-
scionable time. Let us go."

And after he had parted from Alec he walked up and down the street, musing. "Yes, Alec," he said, as he entered his boarding-house at last, "on the
whole, you are right. The woman question is getting serious."
"round into calm," as those of "narrower perfection." But if Dick had made good resolutions not to go to the little room in — Place, perhaps he speedily thought how marked such a desertion would appear, and what a wrong impression it would leave, so he very soon sent an invitation to the sisters to go to the opera with him. There was a great deal of fun in Dick, though he made no fuss about it, and for the rest of "the winter he avoided as much as possible those dangerous little chats at home with the girls. He also invited them oftener to concerts than to the theatre, knowing that Alice would not train the next day, and he reluctantly told him he should be off in the first train, but he reluctantly so said, but suggested that it was possible that he might have changed his mind. When Alice was gone, a feeling of desolation came over the girls, and Alice realized how happy the winter had been to her, but Celia moved restlessly about, unwilling to go to bed, though she had been to her, but Celia moved restlessly about, unwilling to go to bed, though it was too late to expect any one else. She was wakeful and feverish all night, and in the morning there was a fitful gleam in her eyes, and her hair glittered, and her eyes were soft and beautiful. The consciousness of being loved had filled up suddenly, perfectly, every dry and wasted place in her nature.

Yet he leaves me forever. Oh, why?" and with a low, moaning cry she threw herself on the sofa. Are there mysterious beings who live beyond the world of sense and carry by unknown ways the sounds too feeble to beat upon the outer air or what is the magnetic chain which binds heart to heart? Richard Stacy, tearing through the streets in a hack at a furious rate, heard that low cry, though he stopped his ears to escape it; and with a spasm of pain he pressed his foot hard on the floor of the carriage as if he were crushing the very soul of Satan beneath his feet. He had allowed only a little time to reach the station, lest in waiting for the train his courage should fail, and he should not go at all. Once in the cars, there was no stopping-place till he reached home, for the train was express; and there waited his own carriage and the coachman. As he had not arrived in the city, they had sent the carriage the second time. He was angry, though without cause. If the carriage had not been sent, no one would have known of his arrival and retreat would not have been impossible. He might have returned to the city in the evening train. Yet he thanked his favorite sister who had been "sure Dick would come, and would think it pleasant to find some one waiting for him."

CHAPTER XVIII.

SOMETHING TO DO.

SOMETHING TO DO. 51
"Don't disturb your brother," said Mrs. Craig, again sweetly reproving. "It don't disturb him," said Bessie, unconsciously; "not a bit more than your asking him about that apron, only he always answers you and he thinks that I am of no consequence. I wish I had a husband, and then perhaps I shall get answers some times." She pouted a little, and Mrs. Craig glowed with delight. A strong point with her was the 'harmony of herself and husband.' The Doctor seemed annoyed, and, looking up, said, "You know what it means without asking.

"No, I don't," asserted Bessie, with an injured look; "and you have always told me to ask about everything I didn't understand.

"Well, if you don't understand," the Doctor, "you had better put the book away and try something simpler.

"But I do understand the rest of it," said Bessie, persistently, "and I think you might tell me this.

"He is busy," said Mrs. Craig, "but I will tell you when he has time. It is what ministers say when they marry people.

"O, is it?" said Bessie, opening her eyes. "Well, I don't see what it means any way.

"Why, when they are married, you know, God joins them together," explained Mrs. Craig; "and then they must always be together, that is, man mustn't put them asunder.

"Of course that," said Bessie, contemptuously; "I knew that when I was a child. If people once get married, there is the end of it. But I don't understand the first part yet. I don't see what God has to do with marrying them. The minister marries them,"

Mrs. Craig laughed. "Because the Bible tells people to marry," said she. Dr. Craig looked up lastily. "Because God tells people to love each other," said he, "and people should never marry unless they love each other better than everybody else.

"O," said Bessie, "that's it,—is it? Well, I should like to know if all the people who are married do love each other so much as that.

"Mercy, no," said Mrs. Craig, gaily; "not one couple in a hundred.

The Doctor looked sternly at his wife, as if to say, "Why tell the child so! she will know it soon enough."

Mrs. Craig half colored, for she stood in awe of her husband, and he suddenly let fall his eyes on his book as if he regretted the look.

"Bessie's eyes opened wider than before," said Mrs. Craig, again sweetly reproving.

"If I got married to some ugly old man, I should want to get unmarried again, and I should hate him if I couldn't. Shouldn't you, George? Wouldn't you get a divorce if you were in my place?"

George tried to laugh rather unsuccessfully, and answered seriously: "I hope never to live to see you divorced. The time for you to remember that a man is old and ugly is before you are married, and not after.

"You are against me too," said Bessie, in an aggrieved tone. "I think it is too bad. I always thought before that you and I had some — con — geniality." She brought out the long word with a frown. "I am busy now, and you mustn't talk. When you are older you will understand better what you are talking about. In the mean time don't be silly."

"I am not silly," muttered Bessie, with a smile of which no one saw the bitterness.

"It is n't best to interpret the Scripture too literally," said the Doctor, with a smile of which no one saw the bitterness.

"I will tell you what, Bessie," said Mrs. Craig, with great good-humor, "you mustn't go to thinking such things as that, because they are wicked, and I don't know how you will turn out if you go on so. You see, if people don't love each other when they are married, they must learn to do so, and that makes it all right.

"I don't know," said Bessie, stoutly; "there are some people you can't.

"O, you don't understand," said Mrs. Craig, in despair; "but you will when you grow up. When people are married they must love each other; it is their duty, because they have always got to stay married.

"Is n't there any way of getting unmarried?" pursued Bessie, not yet satisfied.

"People can get divorced," said Mrs. Craig, "but I think that is wicked."

"Well, I don't," said Bessie, firmly.

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to wait till afternoon. Can you take the baby?

"O yes," said she; "but I think you are more particular than you need to be about it. You know you will never get a cent of money from him.

"I know he is very sick," said the Doctor with some sternness, "and very likely he can't afford to pay you.

"Well," said Mrs. Craig, with candor, "I always like to have you kind to the poor, though I think you ought not to wear yourself out over them, but when it comes to people who look as if they might pay and won't, it is another thing.

They are just the kind of people who are least able to pay, very often," said the Doctor. "The worst kind of poverty is that which don't show. But, at any rate, it isn't best to let a man wish to remain with Mrs. Craig, nor poverty is that which don't show. But, the Doctor was still away. She did not say the Doctor.

"Dear man!" cried Mrs. Craig, affectionately, looking after him. "Bessie, George is the best man in the world. There never was a couple so happily married as we are."

The clouds on the Doctor's face settled darker and darker. He knew very well that there was nothing in Mr. Winship's case to have drawn him from bright to her.

"Dear man!" exclaimed Mrs. Craig, looking after him. "We must have the city advantages, been so unaccustomed to disagreeable sights."

It struck Alice as strange that one should think of anything else in going into the city.

The shop-windows looked very pretty for a week or two," said Miss May; "but one soon gets tired of those, and my home is beautiful. Nothing could make up for losing that."

"You will miss it when the spring days come," said Alice.

"I miss it now," said Miss May, the tears coming into her eyes; "for it is almost as beautiful in winter as in summer. I am never tired of looking at the beautiful shapes in the brook when it is frozen, and then the water-gurgles under the snow, and the air-bubbles rise to the surface of the ice. And when we have had a few warm days and then comes a cold snap, you can't think how beautiful the crystal looks when we break off great pieces of ice and look below, for we hardly see them at all on top. And then the mosses are green all winter, and some little hardly evergreen ferns grow in beautiful tufts all about."

Color came into the girl's cheeks as she spoke, and it seemed that she was speaking of something which was one of the most important events which had ever happened to her.

She learned that she was the eldest sister of a large family, living in the country. She had had a great deal of care and trouble, and had found that it wore upon her, and had determined to try sewing instead,—a less hopeless thing in her case than in many, for she was not only a rapid sewer, but had particularly learned the manner of lining flannel, which proved not unprofitable. Her health was not so good as it had been in finding a boarding-place. She had tried one or two boarding-houses, but the food had been poor and ill-cooked, and things not neat, and she had been obliged to shift to a room with three others. It was evident from her tone in speaking that her instincts were lady-like, and, however poor her life might have been, that these things annoyed her sorely less than they would a lady.

About this time Miss Twigg, wishing to increase her income, had advertised for a boarder, much against Robert's will; but it had been necessary, as they had lost a portion of their little property in a recent fire. Miss May had thought herself fortunate to receive the place; but she and Robert were both so delicate that Miss Twigg sat so calmly in the same room as usual. Miss Twigg afterwards explained how she had refused previous applications for the place because she dared not trust the people with Robert, and that with Miss May she had felt sure of tact and delicacy that she had ventured to tell her about him and then introduce her to him. Being forewarned, she had betrayed no emotion at sight of him, and had all been well. Although Miss May was very susceptible to beauty, she was not so unacquainted to disagreeable sights as to be affected by them in such a way as Celia, for instance, would have been. Alice could hardly help sighing to think of the great army of seamstresses to escape doing housework, which she felt sure would be healthier and better in every way. Miss May explained to be sure, that her next sister was now old enough to supply her place at home, and that the money she could earn would be more acceptable than her services; but Alice felt sure there must have been something hard in the home life to force a girl like her alone into the city to live by sewing.

"Do you like the city advantages more than the country beauty, then?" she asked.

"Why, I don't think the city has any advantages," said Miss May, if pressed.

"Things are cheaper, perhaps," said Alice, without smiling.

"O," said Miss May, "I didn't think of those.

"It struck Alice as strange that one should think of anything else in going into the city.

She learned that she was the eldest sister of a large family, living in the country. She had had a great deal of care and trouble, and had found that it wore upon her, and had determined to try sewing instead,—a less hopeless thing in her case than in many, for she was not only a rapid sewer, but had particularly learned the manner of lining flannel, which proved not unprofitable. Her health was not so good as it had been in finding a boarding-place. She had tried one or two boarding-houses, but the food had been poor and ill-cooked, and things not neat, and she had been obliged to shift to a room with three others. It was evident from her tone in speaking that her instincts were lady-like, and, however poor her life might have been, that these things annoyed her sorely less than they would a lady.

About this time Miss Twigg, wishing to increase her income, had advertised for a boarder, much against Robert's will; but it had been necessary, as they had lost a portion of their little property in a recent fire. Miss May had thought herself fortunate to receive the place; but she and Robert were both so delicate that Miss Twigg sat so calmly in the same room as usual. Miss Twigg afterwards explained how she had refused previous applications for the place because she dared not trust the people with Robert, and that with Miss May she had felt sure of tact and delicacy that she had ventured to tell her about him and then introduce her to him. Being forewarned, she had betrayed no emotion at sight of him, and had all been well. Although Miss May was very susceptible to beauty, she was not so unacquainted to disagreeable sights as to be affected by them in such a way as Celia, for instance, would have been. Alice could hardly help sighing to think of the great army of seamstresses to escape doing housework, which she felt sure would be healthier and better in every way. Miss May explained to be sure, that her next sister was now old enough to supply her place at home, and that the money she could earn would be more acceptable than her services; but Alice felt sure there must have been something hard in the home life to force a girl like her alone into the city to live by sewing.

"Do you like the city advantages more than the country beauty, then?" she asked.

"Why, I don't think the city has any advantages," said Miss May, if pressed.

"Things are cheaper, perhaps," said Alice, without smiling.

"O," said Miss May, "I didn't think of those.

"It struck Alice as strange that one should think of anything else in going into the city.

The shop-windows looked very pretty for a week or two," said Miss May; "but one soon gets tired of those, and my home is beautiful. Nothing could make up for losing that."

"You will miss it when the spring days come," said Alice.

"I miss it now," said Miss May, the tears coming into her eyes; "for it is almost as beautiful in winter as in summer. I am never tired of looking at the beautiful shapes in the brook when it is frozen, and then the water-gurgles underneath sometimes, and the air-bubbles rise to the surface of the ice. And when we have had a few warm days and then comes a cold snap, you can't think how beautiful the crystal looks when we break off great pieces of ice and look below, for we hardly see them at all on top. And then the mosses are green all winter, and some little hardly evergreen ferns grow in beautiful tufts all about."

Color came into the girl's cheeks as she spoke, and it seemed that she was speaking of something which was one of the most important events which had ever happened to her.

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SOMETHING TO DO.

of the dearest and most intimate parts of her life. To one who loved natural beauty as Alice did, this was a joy to unlock the heart of the lovely girl, and she began at once to take an interest in the handsome girl.

Dr. Craig came in so soon that she had not time to talk longer with her that day, but she took occasion very soon to go and see her again, and before long something of acquaintance sprang up between them. It proved less, however, than Alice at first expected. It was evident, indeed, that Miss May was very lonely; that she was a person needing human sympathy, and not educated enough to have many resources within herself. Moreover, though there was great kindness of feeling between herself and Miss Twigg and Robert, it was certain that they were personally less than nothing to her, though she, with an obliging disposition and many ways of making a home pleasant, soon became much to them. She was quick-witted, and had, besides, a certain way of speaking sarcastically without being bitter, which made her very entertaining, and she was sometimes so bright and gay that no one had more fun in her face in repose might not have believed its pathos. One might have thought that to her Alice would have proved the needed friend, but before they had seen each other three times, she realized that, though Miss May was not a reserved person, she yet held herself singularly in reserve, and that no one could approach her on any except the most external topics. And this was less easy. Alice felt that if they could meet soul to soul, there would be much to say, but they had scarcely any external interests in common. Alice's thorough education and keen mind, her taste for reading, and the wide range of books which she had given herself, were a great contrast to the ignorance of her new friend. Miss May's only education had been at a district school. She could read with feeling, spell well, write a characterless, neat hand, and had no striking faults in language, — though in this respect she deserved great credit, for her pride had taught her grammar, which was a branch totally set at naught in the conversation of her parents. She knew nothing of books, nothing of art, nothing of music, though she sang the popular airs correctly and prettily. She would have liked all these things had she been trained to do so, but they were not such inspirations to her as was the sight of the dearest and most intimate parts of life that she felt the want of them particularly.

Alice took a great interest in her and thought about her often; but when she saw her, she could think of nothing to say. Celia, who was dreadfully homesome, and found it difficult to live without society, wished to become acquainted with the young girl too. Of course, she could not go to see her, on account of Robert; but Miss May went to see the sisters at long intervals. Celia found even less to say to her than Alice had done, though her beautiful, sweet face touched her inexpressibly, and she found herself mentally composing a tragedy of which her new acquaintance was the heroine. Miss May went out very little, and never called except by special invitation; so in time her meetings with Alice became only casual, when the latter went in to see Robert, or insisted on taking the pale seamstress to walk, — for here she thought she saw an opportunity to do good, though not to go into the green-houses and to the picture galleries. Here was common ground, and they enjoyed it heartily, though Miss May was by nature a little shy, and her eye was trained to find more quickly some rare tiny moss under brown leaves, and her heart to love it, than the gorgeous blooms of the conservatories; and for pictures, she liked them, she liked all pretty things, but she could not be said to appreciate many of them. Technically, of course, Alice was not a critic; but the soul of a picture spoke to her soul, and her insight into its poetry was marvellous. And while she was looking at that which was invisible to her companion, she loved to feel that the latter was enjoying some bouquet of wild-flowers or other Pre-Raphaelite sketch at the same moment.

Without these walks, as the summer drew on especially, Miss May might have failed completely, for she seemed not to think of the possibility of rest or recreation; perhaps she hardly felt the inclination for it, unless some one reminded her that she needed it. But

Alice could not ask her very often, for two reasons. In her daily round of duties, Basie Craig was her first pupil, and she therefore had usually to go to all the others from that house, and by that time she had imposed a great a tax to retrace the whole distance in order to commence a walk. Then there was an uncomfortable number for walking, so Celia did not go with them, and Alice not only enjoyed walking alone with each of her sisters most, but she felt how seriously Celia was needing her now. Since the breaking up of the Legislature the child had grown more and more restless and nervous. She worked feverishly, though bravely, for a while. The comfort of the last moments upheld her for a time. In her secret heart, she believed the farewell could not have been forever. But as time passed on, and no word came, her heart sank. She had desired herself. If Mr. Stacy had loved her, as she thought, he could not so hopelessly have left her. But what else could he have meant? She grew weak, thin, and listless. Alice was alarmed about her, and advised that she should do her copying evenings, that she might not lose her situation. But, though Celia longed intensely for the green fields and quiet woods, she did not wish to go. She dreaded to be left alone without Alice to talk to, and she would not give up her work. But Alice insisted, until she told her, in her agony of that last morning. Then, anxious as Alice was for her to try a change of scene, she realized that it would not do for her to be left without work, and that she needed a different remedy; so they stayed together through the hot, stifling summer, and when the first September breezes began to blow, Celia found life returning to her once more. She wrote her copies with a firm hand, and walked with a firm step.

"I will not be conquered, Alice," she said, one day. "The mystery of my sorrow is half its misery. But it cannot be solved, and meantime there must be, I suppose, a use for me in the world, and, though I don't see what it is, I know I never shall be of use till I can stand strong in the midst of my grief and show that it has n't crushed me."

"And when you do that," said Alice, "I believe the very expression of your joy will show people that you have been beloved, and when you can see no more use in living, though there may be some which you don't see. Ah, what a strange, sad world it is!"

CHAPTER XIX.

PEOPLE cannot be wretched forever. Something will happen after a while, even in the hardest lot; something will come, even in the hardest lot, which will make everything seem as nothing, which will be an argument from "analogy" against an eternal hell, if we could find no other. That election day comes in November does not make it impossible for something pleasant to happen then. The day when the election returns were published in the paper was a dull, gray day, and yet two young girls, who glanced anxiously over them, felt a sudden thrill like sunshine, for there, from their respective districts, were the names of Alexander Hume and Robert Stacy. Alice's pleasure was perhaps not so much the previous winter. Celia tried to make herself believe that she did not expect Mr. Stacy to call, and thought perhaps she did not look elated, but still there was a freshness in her voice and a vigor in her step which told that hope had not wholly died out of her heart. Two months seemed a long time to wait for the opening of the session; but when one has hard work to do, the time does pass almost as if you were enjoying yourself. And so it came about that Christmas week was actually
present. Outwardly the sisters were far more comfortably situated than they had been a year before. Alice had as many pupils as she could teach now, though, it is true, they were all more children, belonging to families not wealthy, and her earnings were in proportion, while it made her labor difficult. She went home instead of having them collected in a school; and Celia's copying really proved quite lucrative, as she became more dexterous in the use of her pen.

So it was possible for them to make each other little presents, and the afternoon before Christmas Celia sauntered out in search of something for her sister. She had been looking at things for several weeks, and had nearly decided what to buy, but she had only on that day received her money. To these lingering and thirsting girls a book was worth more than anything else, and a book with close print and small margins and plain binding better than the handsomely illustrated editions of a single short poem; so Celia reluctantly turned away from the handsome and glittering, and bought in strong brown covers a copy of Alice's favorite "Aurora Leigh." She lingered, however, to examine the beautiful pictures and illuminated text of the others, but they were all merely satisfactory to her, and she bought in an enterprise in which others were not involved, and I believed I could not honorably abandon it; but as long as I persevered, I could not say to you that I loved you. Afterwards the others abandoned it of their own accord, and in the delight of freedom I hurried to the city to see you. And yet so involved had I been that I felt it wrong to take any steps to see you; but, as I said at first, a kind fate brought us together, and I knew I was no longer hemmed; so now I may be to you all I wish to be.

Vaguely as the explanation was, it satisfied Celia entirely, so complete was her faith in those she loved.

"I may change the old verse," said she, with a happy smile:

"I could not love thee, sweet, so much,
Loved you not honor more."

Again he turned away, and the shadow was deeper than before.

"A lie, a lie, a lie," seemed to echo in his brain. "She is too true to discover it, but it is a lie."

"Ah! why not tell the truth?" sounded a voice in his ear.

"Yes, and lose her," said another.

"She loves you too much for that," said another; "she will cling to you still."

"But never respect you again."

"Yet you would be more worthy of respect than you are now."

"After all, you told no lie. The words were all absolutely true."

Whatever he thought, he said nothing of his thoughts to Celia; but they walked up and down the street, under the starlight, talking of the blessedness which had come to them, so long after Alice had returned home and found Celia out, begun really to be worried, as the evening advanced, last some harm had befallen her. But when they did come in,—Celia with a face so radiant that it seemed as if no care or sorrow had ever laid its hand there,—it seemed scarcely necessary to ask for an explanation. Alice knew before a word was spoken what had happened.

Ah, what a happy Christmas eve it was in that little room! They had an ugly little black stove, to be sure, for the chinaware and the silver solid, for Wilding and his wife had been fastidious, though not rich, and while they had left little to their children, that little had been perfect of its kind. Alice made her work-steady answer for her own tea-table.

Then the dishes had to be put in order, and Dick insisted upon wiping them, and made himself as much at home as he always did everywhere, though he had never before in this place been exactly easy.

Then there were all the days since they last met to be talked over, and all sorts of pleasant things, till Dick reluctantly tore himself away. No more bitter days for Celia! She sprang up in the early Christmas morn, her heart full of blessing on the day when Dick and Love really failed to come.

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hoarding money, when she had not a
cent from her last quarter, and had only
been paid the new one the day before.
On the breakfast-table they laid their
little gifts,—the book for Alice, and a
beautiful, bright, warm worsted jacket
which Alice had herself knit for her sis-
ter. "I shall be presentable, after all," said Celia, joyously, putting it on, "for
which Alice had herself knit for her sis-
ter. I mean to have worn them always
in my vest-pocket, but you see
my intentions are frustrated by their
bulk. Good heavens! how indolent
you must have been to accumulate such
a bundle as this! It is forever the way,
the work of this world is in antagonism
with its sentiment; for though your
work is just as dear to me as if I didn't
laugh, you could n't really expect me to
carry such a huge pile as this continually
next my heart."

"No," said Celia, laughing: "you
know very well I didn't mean that.
You are such a luxurious young man
that you don't understand the nature
of the case. I must explain to you that
I work for my living, and even if your
wallet would contain as many, or as
many, papers, I could by no means
that week.
 "Nonsense!" said Dick, "do you sup-
pose I shall let you work any more now?
You know I am rich, and it is likely
I shall let you go on toiling and delving
like a beetle."

"Yes, sir," said Celia, shaking her
head merrily; and, lightly escaping from
her arzes, she stood firm, and emphasized
with her foot. "I am a free and inde-
pendent young woman, and I will take
care of myself.

"Not to say a free and equal one," added Dick, laughing. "Listen to reason,
ma chère; in my poor, forlorn, despised, subordinate position of cringing de-
pendence, how do you think you would feel?"

"I think I should feel as you do," she answered, with a quick flush; "but I also
know that if we changed places I

would not be able to support myself.

"Not idle," said Dick. "I expect to
occupy quite a large portion of your
time myself. You've no idea what a
person I am, I want to have a ring
of a free and independent young woman, and I will take
care of myself.

"You are incorrigible," said Dick.
"Why should I be idle?"

"I have work enough for others, and not for me."

"You are a woman's right, and proportion-
able to employ so skilful
a woman as yourself to do it."

"You are incorrigible," said Dick. "I

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will not be able to support myself.
the least by having the girl to whom you are engaged for work for her living!"

"Yes, it is pure selfishness on my part," said Dick, with a wicked twinkle. But when she saw her face fall suddenly, he immediately changed his tone. "No, Celia, you know better. I love you and am proud of you, more because you do so than if you did not do it. My aristocracy makes me often impatient of the ignorance and want of cultivation of many poor people, but I never yet failed to respect a man because he was poor or because he labored. I must own I should be ashamed to have people believe that I did not want to help you, though.

"They will not believe that," said Celia; "no one who knows you can ever think so, and I feel that I am right, so my resolution is fixed."

"Well," said Dick, "I won't bother you then, and it will only be for a little while, because the wedding-day must come before next summer."

CHAPTER XX

The day had dawned for Celia, but I suppose that Alice did not see the rosy flushes of the sunrise until a week later, when the Legislature again convened.

"Dick tells me he has been improving the golden moments," said Alice, when the two called the very first evening.

"You should have come yourself and had a little Christmas lark, before the hard work began," said Dick, gayly.

"I don't believe in that for people who have any less excuse than you," said Alice, with a smile. "I had something to do elsewhere."

"Doctoring and farming!" asked Dick.

"And a little political economy," replied Alice, "I don't want to go home again this winter with the feeling that the country would have been as well off if I had stayed there."

"It is only a vain nature which expects to move the world," said Dick, putting him on the back.

"I don't expect it," said Alice; yet we know he did, for he was an enthusiastic young man. "But I do want to do some service."

"They also serve who only stand and wait," said Celia, absently, thinking of Dick rather than of what she was saying.

"That is, if they can't 'pitch in,'" said Alice. "But I don't think I was formed for that."

"No," said Dick; "and if you don't get reformed, you will turn into a reformer. But don't, for you will get abused."

"I wish I had ever done anything worth being abused for," said Alice.

"Combativeness large," said Dick, seizing his head in a phrenological manner. "And in the days of chivalry," said Alice, sweetly, "this individual would have been a knight-errant."

And herewith the quartette resolved itself into two duets.

"I hate the way things go in the Legislature," continued Alice. "Such confusion and intemperance and on minor matters voting at random! I think that is wicked, even if the question is about a cup of tea. And it is sickening and despicable to think how we have to bribe men to gain any point. Not by money," he went on, for he saw Alice's look of horror, "but by appeals to their passions and prejudices."

"I can hardly imagine your doing as much as that," said Alice.

"No," said Alice, "it isn't in me. I believe in open fights, and so lose all my points. The only thing I accomplished last year was to vote for one or two new railroads. I constantly expected the older members to push on the great questions, but this year I shall not be so modest. I shall talk about everything just as many minutes as I can get the floor. I shall be called meddlesome, and perhaps gain nothing, but I shall know I have done as well as I could."

"And that is the utmost gain for ourselves, and others too," said Alice. "Well, Alice," he answered, "I doubt if that would satisfy me. I don't if it ought. That would do to think about last summer when I had nothing to do but rest over last year's work; but when we begin a new year, we must believe in our work."

"I hardly fancy you doing nothing but lament the past all summer," said Alice, amused.

"Oh, not with my handkerchief at my eyes," said Alice. "I had doctoring and farming enough to do; but that is a sort of hand-work to which anybody may be trained. Now, when you have to give your best thoughts to mould higher laws to lift the country, there is the head-work and heart-work.

"So you see the fascination of legislating in ever so small a way, pitifully as we seem to fail."

"Ah," said Alice, "you only seem to fail, because, as you approach nearer your ideal, it becomes so much more glorious that you do not realize that you have already passed the spot where it first shone dimly."

"I know it," said Alice, earnestly. "It is only with you that I seem faithful."

"I arouse your antagonism, I suppose," said Alice, with an uncomfortable smile.

"No," said Dick; "but everybody else has less faith than I, and I feel I must uphold them. But you know I cannot injure, even if I grieve you. That is selfish."

"No," said Alice, after a moment, "yet that would satisfy me. I desire to help anybody I can."

"I am not often so chicken-hearted," said Alice; "for I feel I must do something in that for end is not sickening, but you it must be an ever-present thought."

"I read the other day," said Alice, "of a man in a great city who traded in oil. I read how, by his arrangements, the impurities taken at once, collected and sealed, so that all offence was removed from that quarter of the city, afterwards enriched miles and miles of blooming country. The man had utilized nuisances; and to handle nuisances for that end is not sickening, but heroic."

"I suppose there are manifold uses for everything," said Alice; "and when we know them all, the earth will seem as fresh as a rose without a stain upon it anywhere."

"They are talking now," said Alice, "about preserving the flesh of the immense herd of cattle slaughtered for their hides about Buenos Ayres, which now only disfigure the earth, and so supplying poor people with meat. When we use all our resources, think what a population the world can hold."

"Yet some time it will be more than full," said Alice; "and though you will laugh, I confess it troubles me. I can't believe in a moral and mental millennium with a scarcity for the body."
By that time we shall either have 'developed' into beings who need no food, or emigrate to other planets," said Alice. "I honestly believe in eternal and I don't think "I thought when I struggled with said Aleck. "I honestly believe in must we always be in a mud-food, or emigrate to other planets," " LECK," said Alice, one evening, in this world. And if God does do that, it will of course be right, and in some way best for the universe, though hard for the few individuals on this planet."

"And the few individuals are the ones I am sorry for," said Alice. "I am constantly weighed down by the "Did you expect to stick dismally in the same spot through eternity?" asked Aleck to Alice.

"I expected the circle to expand forever," said Alice, "but that its centre would not change."

"See here," said Aleck, taking up a sheet of paper, and drawing upon it in this wise. "Let $S$ be the sun, $EE$ the earth's orbit, and $x, x, x$, the moon's orbit. The moon seems to go backward sometimes and to be true only to her earthly centre, yet the epicycle is as perfect as a simple curve and graver for its very complication. And when the whole solar system circles round some far-off sun which we may not even see, we may think we have wholly lost the centre. But, if we keep true to our own central sun, which we do see, that is sure to complete the vast cycle for us some day.

"Your joy of enlarging the circle is better than mine of expansion from a single centre; but in science, you know, you have just been teaching me that the circles also contract, that the heat of the sun is maintained by the meteors that fall into it."

"Not yet proven," quoth Dick, from the corner where he was carrying on a parenthetical conversation with Celia. "That is Alice's way," said Celia. "If one theory is a bit tougher than the rest, she always works out that one."

"I can't help following the theoretical suggestions which come into my head," said Alice. "And this theory of the sun's heat is most fascinating because it seems most true; but if it is true, by and by our own world will be drawn into the vortex by the same laws and will be absorbed in the sun."

"Who is afraid?" said Aleck, cheerfully. "When that happens, myriads of ages hence, the powers of the earth will have been developed to the utmost, and the Beacon Street people by that time will be just fitted to enjoy the glorious clash of world with world. It is as sure as that the shock will come."

"Yes," said Alice; "that is not the puzzle. But when the whole solar system becomes a unit and falls into its central sun, and so on and on, no matter how long the time is, in the end the aggregation of the universe, and it is limited, finite."

"You have forgotten that the end never comes to infinity," said Alice. "I know," said Alice. "Since every step is beautiful and the steps are infinite, one need not fear. Yet the consolidation of worlds seems less grand to me than their expansion. It is a cold theory to me."

"Though hatched up to account for all the heat in the universe," interposed Diok. "And the next best theory, that the condensation of the sun produces its heat, is just as selfish, still drawing in towards a centre instead of giving out from it."

"Perhaps the gravity of some yet unseen moon may shake us up in a different direction by and by," said Aleck, laughing. "So we needn't cry yet."

"But for the spiritual analogies!"

"As what?"

"The process of aggregation instead of evolution!" said she. "No atom of matter is ever lost or created, no atom of force, and I suppose we must say, no atom of soul. The infinite must then have been completed from the foundations of eternity. And what is a complete infinity? This is not a new thought to me, but a new realization. Then there is Darwin, whom I can't help believing. The race improves, but I - who am I?"

"You are not an elephant, you are a mastodon," quoted 'Alice, with sparkling eyes."

"We evolve and evolve endlessly, and lose our own individuality, I am afraid," said Alice, doubtfully. "I thought you believed in the immortality of all animate things down to flowers," said Alice; "and began to guess at the vitality of matter."

"The correlation of forces teaches me that no vitality can ever be lost," replied Alice, "and chemistry suggests how faint is the dividing line between the animate and inanimate. It seemed strangely beautiful at first, and gave a force and vigor to the idea of immortality which thrilled me, but the conclusions do not satisfy. The plant dies, and the new one in the spring may be like it, but is not the same."

"But the very leaf that falls must still exist, under changed conditions."

"But in a lower life," said Alice; "and retrogression is worse than annihilation. Whatever life there is in the leaf per se, the life which made it a plant has gone, - whither?"

"Quien sabe?" said Aleck, lightly. "Evidently not into the new seed, for many plants and animals grow to maturity while the plant yet lives."

"Ah!" said Alice. "A plant will grow and grow as long as you cut off the flowers. But once let the seeds ripen, and it dies. That looks as if the individual life had been transmitted."

"How do we get whole acres of a plant from a single parent?" said Aleck.

"That looks like evolution."

"The plant imparts to each of its children the power to absorb nourishment from the earth. It creates nothing, but transforms the earth to higher uses."

"Is it not that enough?" said Aleck.
"It is still aggregation, and not evolution."

"However, since no new spirit is created and since all lower organisms are being transmuted to higher, we must have lived from eternity, and shall live to eternity hereafter."

"I wish I need not believe that," said Alice. "We have forgotten our pre-existence and so lost our identity, and may lose it again in the same way."

"We do not lose what the past has made us, at any rate," said Aleck stoutly. "And that is the main thing."

"Yes, said Alice. "I sometimes find myself admiring the Pilgrim Fathers; rest their souls, though they did their little utmost to keep other people's from resting! for anybody to follow his conscience unflinchingly where it leads is grand, even if it leads him wrong."

"And that is what they really did," said Alice musingsly, "though not what they thought they did. They would not have owned that they were Kaut's disciples so far as to obey their intuitions."

"The trouble was," said Alice, "that they wanted everybody else to obey the Puritan intuition, and that made a mess."

"I like one thing about Christians," said Alice. "They believe in doing absolutely right, and that every transgression is wrong. When they are true to their tenets, they cannot let things slip."

"O Alice," exclaimed her sister, "how you have forgotten! I think we saw slipping enough at school."

"Yes," said Alice, "and so far they were untrue, and owned themselves untrue, to their profession."

"More than that," said Celia. "How many times have you heard those teachers say that no matter what a person did after he was a Christian, Christ had borne all his sins and he would consequently be perfectly safe anyway, though, of course, it was well that he should be decently moral!"

"I don't think the teachers often said that," said Alice; "though the revivalists did. And after all, there is a germ of truth in it, though they disfigured it so. They meant that no sin could shut us out from God, except as we chose to shut ourselves out. It is right to make that the unpardonable sin, and they only failed to see that, if they make it so, there can be no such thing as eternal punishment. For when the will changes, in whatever life hereafter, then that causes to be unpardonable."

"We don't save all our good times till after we are married, Celia; so put your hat on. I have a horse at the door, and we will scour the wildwoods to-day, if you please."

"What a tantalizing creature you are!" said Celia. "Why do you sing such a siren song in my ear when you know I can't possibly go unless I put off my wedding-day a week?"

"Nonsense!" said Dick, "you will be so much fresher after this that you will do two days' work in one to-morrow. And if you don't, you shall have a dressing down!"

"You had better go," said Alice; "you will be quite worn out if you go on sewin so steadily."

"It will only be for a week, though," said Celia, hesitating and flushing. "And then you are to rest till the end of your days! cried Dick rapturously, giving her another kiss. "Still, now is the accepted time."

"Oh, I shall go, of course! said Celia. "I knew I could not resist; but if my wedding-gown is not done, will you agree to—"

"Marry you in a calico dress? Of course I will."

"You know I did not mean that. I mean, will you agree to postpone the wedding?"

"Pooh!" said Dick. "As if you can ever make me believe that you want it postponed. By the way, ma chere, where is the wedding-garment? Please give me a peep at it."

"Of course not," replied Celia. "That is never the way to do. You must wait till I have it on, when you are expected to be dazzled and blind."

"To be sure," said Dick; "but I have a very particular reason for wanting to see it for, I am terribly afraid it will turn out to be a white thing of some sort, and though you are the most beautiful woman in the world, Celia, you know I can't wear white without being hideous."
Celia, laughing. "But, Dick," said Alice, "brides must wear white, you know, and Celia will look beautiful, though you don't believe it.

"I do believe it, though," said Dick, proudly; and then added, playfully, "But I do insist that the rest of the trousseau shall be purple and scarlet.

"You know better than to expect me to have a trousseau at all," said Celia; "you must make up your mind to be satisfied with a plain bride.

Nevertheless she did not look plain as she put on her silken hat with its golden cord and tassel, and ran down stairs to the carriage. She was not beautiful, but a more incongruous word than "plain" could hardly have been used. The day was perfect, and Dick had a pride about horses. The motion was than "plain" could hardly have been more enjoyable.

"Dick, do you see those lovely wreaths of low blackberry, with their perfect white spheres of buds?" she said, in a moment. "I must have some.

So Dick gathered her some garlands of them, saying meantime, "I can't think of anything but bridal wreaths just now, and it strikes me this will be exactly the thing for you next winter.

"If they would only keep fresh," said Celia; "besides, they are full of thorns.

"And so characteristic," laughed Dick.

"Impertinent," said Celia, half smiling.

"Ah, darling child, you know I couldn't love you half so well without the thorns," he said, in an intense voice.

Affectionate as Celia was, she had about her a kind of reserve which prevented her from responding when another said anything affectionate; so she only said, a few minutes later, "I seem to hear the voices of the wood-fairies calling to me now as they literally did when I was a child.

"Literally!" said Dick, not understanding.

"Yes," said Celia. "Father made all legends real to us when we were children. He used to tell us about the good fairy, with two hundred and forty thousand eyes, for instance."

"O, what an imagination!" said Dick. "It was true, though," said Celia. "It was a dragon-fly, you know, and we actually saw her with her eyes and wings."

"Too bad!" said Dick. "You had no room left for fancies."

"O yes. Do you suppose it shook my faith in fairies to have them appear to me in proprieta persona? Every coconut which I kept till it opened became the consummation of a fairy tale to me. The orchid used to call to me as plainly as you could, 'Celia, look here!' I watched the ants-hills, and knew that the castles with their trains of black slaves, which were built by magic in a single night, could be no myth. I found so many of the stories true that I was always searching the fields and woods for the end of the others.

"What a beautiful and poetical childhood!" said Dick, with a happy look. "You see how it happens that I love the natural sciences dearly," said Celia, with enthusiasm.

"So don't I. But I shall love them if you talk to me," said Dick, gayly. "I begin to feel the divine spark already communicated, and by the time we have been married three months I dare say I shall have a butterfly-net and collecting-box and scour the country."

At this absurd picture, more absurd for Dick than for any one else in the world, they both laughed, and they talked no more about natural sciences that day. They found another topic more absorbing to both as they drove at twilight through the sweet woods with the solemn stars above them. Celia was perfectly happy, and Dick perhaps. As they emerged from the last grove, just before they entered the city, the horse suddenly shied, startled, it seemed, by the figure of a girl approaching.

It was not too dark to see her. She looked straight into the carriage, and gave a sudden and convulsive shudder.

"Why, Dick, what's the matter?" said Celia, for she could have averted that Dick too had started.

This confounded horse is afraid of every one," said Dick, harshly, "and that woman thought she was going to be run over."

"I am almost sure I know her," said Celia, perfectly reassured. "I think she is the young lady with the sweet, sad face who lives with Miss Twigg and Robert Nix.

Dick made no reply, but drove into the city at such a rate and with such a clatter that talking was out of the question. He kissed Celia passionately, as he said good by, but he would not go into the house. He was still driving furiously far out in the country, long after Celia was asleep, with her face in a warm, happy glow, remembering, even in her dream, that the gift of the gods had come to her.

CHAPTER XXIII.

The morning of the wedding-day came. Though it had involved so much stir and confusion to the two sisters, who had no one to help them, it was a very simple and quiet affair. Dick, though a great stickler for etiquette, had a far greater love for Celia than for any one else in the world, and his every care was for her welfare.

The marriage was no weeping festival to Celia. She was perfectly happy. She was not like other girls in having home and friends to leave, though it is true that Alice alone had been more to her than home and friends together are to most people. But love was to her a divine elixir which permeated every cell of her being and left her no space for regret.

Alice, standing apart, was able to analyze that day, and a strange, to her an unaccountable, sadness took possession of her.

Dick was handsome and flushed with gladness. Alice knew that he loved Celia wholly, and that he was a gallant and grand young gentleman; but she thought she saw a generic difference between the two lovers, the hopeless difference between genius and talent, and she believed that Dick had not the power to appreciate the deepest depths in Celia. Yet she was mistaken. In actual love there can be no deception, and the two loved each other. Celia recognized intuitively the best of Dick, but it was unconsciously, and she did not yet know him. It was necessary that Alice should know the language before she read the hieroglyph.

The marriage was over, and the party left the church. As the bride and groom passed out, a veiled figure came suddenly from an angle in the porch, and brushed quickly before them. Celia did not know the figure, but as it turned, for a moment the veil was thrown back, and an intense, thrilling, despairing look rested on Dick. It was
so managed that no one else saw the face, no one but the bride saw even the figure, and it had vanished in an instant; but Dick stopped and turned pale, gentleman though he was. Celia could not avoid it. Yet she was so proud of herself and so trusted him that she said nothing and asked no question. He was himself at once, and the incident was not alluded to, though the wife found that in spite of her trust she could not quite forget it.

There was not even a wedding-breakfast. Dick's family made their adieux at the church porch, and Aleck and Alice went home with the newly married couple. Half an hour later, Celia was ready in her travelling suit for her journey, and they went away at once. Dick's family made their adieux at a little inn, and Dick had some hand-bills struck off, announcing that Professor Hippocrates, the renowned character-actor, accompanied by Madam Zucchi, the seventh daughter of a seventh daughter, and the best living clairvoyant, would deliver a free lecture that evening. And Dick read characters to his heart's content, and Celia told fortunes all the evening.

"It is Midsummer to-day," said Celia, one morning. "Let's celebrate." Of course Dick agreed, and they concocted a plan to their minds. The man was sent to a neighboring village to buy groceries, and calico dresses, and candles, and all manner of odd things, and the bride and bridegroom spent the day in making evergreen baskets of most capacious size. At nightfall Celia, dressed in white, cast her hair loosely about her, disguised herself by drooping garlands of green leaves, and they entered the village. Dick filled her baskets with the useful things, and she carefully hung them at door after door, carefully hung them at door after door, 

"Seems to me you're getting concealed," said Dick, with a laugh.

"Yes, it would have been more modest to give them the reference, but of course I don't know it, and I shall be abundantly happy if the quotation itself is right."

They seldom did such expensive things. But they managed to have some fun, for in one village they pretended to be Italiens, and begged a shelter by gestures, and were convulsed with laughter at the remarks made in their hearing about the supposed foreigners.

One day, when their jollity was at its height, they drove up in state to a little inn, and Dick had some hand-bills struck off, announcing that Professor Hippocrates, the renowned character-actor, accompanied by Madam Zucchi, the seventh daughter of a seventh daughter, and the best living clairvoyant, would deliver a free lecture that evening. And Dick read characters to his heart's content, and Celia told fortunes all the evening.

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CHAPTER XXIV.

The honeymoon was over; that is, Dick and his bride had emerged from the wild woods, and done up a tour in proper orthodox fashion, and were on their way home about the last of October. Dick's name was already up as a candidate for the Legislature, and they decided to stay in New York till after election, when they could make their plans for the winter. Mr. Stacy, the elder at last wrote that Dick must come home and make one speech if he wanted to be elected, because nobody had seen him for six months, and they could not realize that he was still in the flesh.

“I don't want to go,” said Dick. “I won't go. They know my opinions now, and my character, and what more do they want? Though I suppose they think I have married a radical wife, and may have progressed,” he added, with his lightest laugh.

Celia looked rather grave. She began to think she had spoiled Dick, because she knew that in previous years he had secured the country making stump speeches and gaining popularity everywhere, and, since her, what harm could there be in his “defining his position”? She wondered if his gay summer had made him unwilling to work, and if she was to blame.

On the contrary, he was ready to work, he believed, but did not think a seat in the Legislature worth any exertion. In fact, he knew of no work just then which seemed worth much, which shows that he was mistaken in supposing himself ready for any. There were other reasons, however, which made him unwilling to go home. Still, he said he would come home if he must, and that night Celia was to stay in New York, and he would rejoin her in a day or two.

She found the day he went away the loneliest of her life. She tried to read a little and gave it up, and lay in the soft dreaming. She did not notice that it was worn and bore a very old postmark. But before she had read three lines by the fading light, she turned hastily to look at the outside, and she was pale as death when she finished the paper.

May 18.

RICHARD STACY. — What do you mean? What are you doing? You are killing me. I heard to-night by chance that you are going to be married. I don't believe it. You are not so wicked as that yet, but you are a villain, and I could murder you. Why do I say that, for I love you still dearer than anybody on earth, but I am chilled through and through and desperate from neglect. You could not have believed when I broke our engagement that I wanted to do it. You know it was because I felt that you were forgetting me; but I might have held you to it, and I must now. You can't be so mad as not to remember that the day you marry all hope is forever cut off from me! You stole my love, and you stole my innocence, and you have wrecked my life. They say your wedding-day is very near, but you must save me, you must do it, if you have a single spark of manhood left, even if you sacrifice every hope of your perjured life. Your sacrifice can never equal mine. Write to me at once, or see me at No. — — Street.
SOMETHING TO DO.

SOMETHING TO DO.

don herself to it like a man, she must remember to be prudent. Doubtless a hundred women would have turned back, and after a night’s sleep would have recovered from the blow, except to taunt their husbands forever after, in any matrimonial quarrels, with the knowledge they held. And many another woman would have buried the bitter and suffered the matter to drop. For one instant the helplessness of the situation so thrilled her that she remembered the possibility of going back, but at the same instant she threw the key of her door as far from her into the darkness as her strength would allow, and then return was impossible. She drew herself into a niche in the wall, and thought, desperately, with all the concentration she possessed. It flashed across her that there was a railroad station only a block away. In the cars she would be safe through that night. She ran swiftly to the station, and found a train safe through that night. She ran.

She trembled and knew not what to do, and in the mean time the money. She trembled and knew not what to do, and in the mean time the money. She trembled and knew not what to do, and in the mean time the money. She trembled and knew not what to do, and in the mean time the money. She trembled and knew not what to do, and in the mean time the money. She trembled and knew not what to do, and in the mean time the money. She trembled and knew not what to do, and in the mean time the money. She trembled and knew not what to do, and in the mean time the money. She trembled and knew not what to do, and in the mean time the money. She trembled and knew not what to do, and in the mean time the money.

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did not offer

gotten such a precaution. She wondered at that instant that she had not thought of fictitious sleep when the conductor came in, but now, at the same instant, she saw it would have done no good. Besides, she objected to deception. The conductor had not a bad face, but he was determined on having his dues.

He held out his hand for the ticket. Celia looked down and said nothing.

"Ticket, ma’am!" he said, not gruffly.

"Ticket, ma’am!" he said, not gruffly. "I want to go through," said she, in a moment of inspiration.

"What! To St. Louis?" said the conductor, seriously. "I’m sorry for you, but I can’t do it. How far do you want to go?"

Poor girl! She had no idea in what direction they were travelling, and if she told him that, what could he think of. Now I must go, and if I ever can, I will pay you.

"It is against the rules," said the conductor, seriously. "I’m sorry for you, but I can’t do it. How far do you want to go?"

Poor girl! She had no idea in what direction they were travelling, and if she told him that, what could he think of. Now I must go, and if I ever can, I will pay you.

"I want to go through," said she, in a moment of inspiration.

"What! To St. Louis?" said the conductor, in surprise and consternation.

Celia was terribly annoyed. She had fancied herself perhaps in a Boston car; but it was too late to retreat, and she answered at once, "Yes, and I must go. If you have no right to let me go free, then I will beg, and I beg of you to give me no money for my ticket.

Her voice, always thrilling, was wild and passionate, though she spoke low lest the others should hear her. The conductor looked thunder-struck.

"What!" said he. "Do I look as if I could afford to give thirty dollars to a stranger?"

Celia was desperate. Her fingers worked nervously, and she felt her wedding-ring. Exasperated as she was, she would readily have given it away, but she thought in reason of the names and dates engraved inside, and did not offer it. She had no other jewel of any kind about her. Even her collar was fastened with a black ribbon instead of a pin.

"If you can’t get off the train," said she, hastily and fiercely, "I will crush myself under its wheels, and you shall remember that every moment till you die and after."

The conductor was an ordinary man. His eyes were honesty, and he had no vices. But he was roused and touched by the appeal of this strange woman at last, and he answered slowly: "If I let you pass free, I should defraud the owners of the line, and I have not so much money of my own here as you need. But I will give you a pass, and when I get home I will refund the money from my own purse. But I can’t afford it, you see; so, if you ever can, you must pay me for it, principal and interest." -

Blessings on an honest man! This man was so honest that he believed it impossible that the woman too was honest, and dared to risk a great sacrifice for her. He thought, with a sigh, that his wife must go without her new dress now, and Tommy could not have the set of tools he had wanted so long, and he did not doubt that he could not be so charitable every day, no matter how much he was moved; but he knew that his wife was a foolish, unworthy woman, and would perhaps uphold him. So he passed on before Celia had time to speak, his commonplace nature for once awakened to the intense romance in the world. He had never been to the theatre in his life. He thought it wrong.

There was, however, one in the car who had been many times. Celia had taken the seat next to the back one, and did not know that some one had come in behind her and taken the very last seat. Low as she had spoken, the dialogue had been too passionate for him not to hear, and he had seen her gestures too, though not her face. And he thought this gentleman. "I expect that tragedy is passion,- justly felt, and its smoke suffocated her; they tore through a pass in the grand mountains, and she woods were on fire. She felt herself with the spirit of the flame, and longed to be whirled up in it to the lurid sky above. She felt herself in hell, and thought it furiously thrilling; she conceived that to one who had lost all there might be a fearful delight in the delight of passion. - that is, if one should purposely, wilfully sin, and suffer for it justly and irrevocably; but her suffering was not that. - she had done no wrong, but a sin had been committed against her, and she moaned aloud like a weak, miserable woman. She felt
that she could have torn herself in pieces the next moment for that betrayal (yet she thought no one heard it), and she sat erect and rigid through the remainder of the night.

It rained the next morning. The conductor brought her some sandwiches to eat, but she felt too ill and wretched to touch them, and told him she would eat nothing. She was thoroughly convinced, yet he did not guess that she had had the same neighbor all the way from New York. Indeed, she would not have thought of him at all, except that in the instant her glance rested on his face she noticed that there was something strangely familiar in his appearance.

The whirl in her brain was beginning to subside, and she wondered in a vacant way where she had seen that face before. An hour passed on, she was still wandering; but for the whole afternoon she did not see his face again, and she began to feel so acutely hungry that she could think of nothing else. When the train stopped for supper, she could almost have stolen bread to satisfy her hunger. She walked on the street. Here, then, was a deeply rooted dramatic element in her which craved teaching, or copying, or almost anything. But she didn't know how to live in the mean time. I believe I could act if you would let me try. I suppose you hardly think I could," she went on rapidly, "but I am almost sure. I have had no practice, but I know something about elocution, and I am determined to succeed."

But the manager knew she could act, as well as she knew herself, and he answered kindly: "If you believe you can act, you look like it. I am in no need of any one now, for my company is merely travelling, and we make up our number from the local theatres; but then in a month we shall go back to Boston again, and I may need one or two ladies for minor parts. The salary will be only a trifle, but it will get you food till you find something better to do."

"You are kind," said Celia, fervently, "though in a distressed voice; "but what am I to do in the mean time?"

"You can travel with the company," said the manager, "if you can sew, you can get odd jobs enough from the actors to pay your way."

"I can sew," said Celia, almost joyfully, "and I thank you from my soul."

Then she went back to her own seat and left him alone. 

The manager was so kind a man that it is very likely he would have given the same aid to any one of whose distress he was so thoroughly convinced; yet he had a feeling that in this case he was not losing by his charity. He saw that there was fire in Celia's veins, and perhaps genius; and though an early training on the stage is absolutely necessary to the highest results, yet she was young still, and genius is omnipotent. At any rate, he believed there were ten chances in eleven that she could make one of the local stars in a few years: time and probably pay her way very soon.

He composed himself to his newspaper, and she sat clenching her teeth to keep back her hunger.

He did not forget her, however, and brought her some food at the next station, which he offered, saying ladies often found it inconvenient to leave the cars at the stations, and if she was to belong to his company, he must provide for her. She was too hungry to be proud, and ate it with an eagerness which almost brought tears to the eyes of the man, who was old enough to be honored to most tragedies, actual or imaginary.

CHAPTER XXV.

At the moment Celia was saying, "Circumstances have placed me alone in the world," Dick sprang gaily from a carriage at the door of their hotel in New York, and rushed lightly up the stairs to surprise her if possible, though he felt sure she was on the lookout for him. If she still wore her black mourning dress, he was going to say, "You are in mourning for my return? And if not, he would say, "That is the way with women; the moment my back was fairly turned, you left off mourning for me and dressed up gorgeously!" and so on. What a jolly evening he meant to have!

He turned the knob lightly, then with all his power, and then laughed to think that he had not reflected that she might be timid without him and lock the door; so he knocked, and shouted through the keyhole, "It is the bellman."

But even now he elicited no reply. He was annoyed as he said to himself, "She knew I meant to come in this train, and I wonder what she went out for. Besides, there is nobody
for her to see, and she don't know the way about."

So he went down to the office and asked for a duplicate key, as his wife had gone out and must have taken hers with her.

He opened the door. The watch lay broken on the floor. He was startled. It could not have come there of itself. What did it portend? He felt that there was a mystery to be solved, and his wife's absence was not accidental, that there must have been force, and that no moment was to be lost. He did not dare to think what he dreaded. He searched their rooms carefully himself. He found that Celia's waterproof and black dress were gone, but everything else was in order. In another hour a detective was in search of her, with such a reward promised that he felt his fortune was made; and it was to be treasured if he brought her back that night. Dick hated gossip, and had the inquiries at the hotel made in the most cautious manner. A week passed, and nothing had been heard of his wife. He had ranged, giving no names, anxious to get any clue. It could not have come there of itself. to that hotel again, and then left New York. The police declared that she could not be in the city; they had searched every spot, and with that half-hope he had to be contented. He cautiously had placards sent round the country, describing her as probably deranged, giving no names, anxious to save any publicity. But, of course, the occurrences soon were known to his circle of acquaintances. He had received the first announcement of his election to the Legislature in a passive way, not realizing it. Afterwards he meant to decline, but Alice urged him not to do so.

"Because," she said, in her pathetic voice, "though we will not lose hope, we can do nothing but wait, and work upon as much as we can do."

Dick and Alice were so troubled and anxious about Celia that they thought of nothing else, and it was not until the beginning of the session of the Legislature that Alice's absence set them wondering where she was. Alice had had a feeling that when he came she should get over the terrible despondency which was settling over her, and which she could not deny when she was alone, though in Dick's presence she was always calm and high and hopeful, knowing the need he had of support. Dick, too, had hoped something from the presence of his friend. So he inquired eagerly where he was, and learned that he had been defeated in the election. Now a seat in the Legislature is not so high an honor that the candidate from "Cranberry Centre" need mourn very long at not receiving the appointment; but Dick and Alice looked at each other in consternation when they heard of Alice's defeat, because they believed he would be acutely disappointed himself. He had tried and failed, and he was sensitive enough to feel that, though not as much as would. Then he ardently desired to be in politics for the sake of his high philanthropy, and he was prevented. Some one said that he had proved too radical for even his radical constituents. "If he would have compromised an inch," said this gentleman, "he might have placarded his most objectionable views for a little while, all would have been well. But instead, he gave them his strongest doses of gunpowder; he said he would have no equivocation, and should do exactly what he thought.

SOMETHING TO DO.

W HEN Celia reached St. Louis, it was raining and smoky and dismal. But she was too unhappy to care for the weather, for she felt that nothing could add to her misery. Dependent upon her, she could make no remonstrance when she found assigned to her a large room with three other ladies belonging to the theatre company. She had begged the manager not to tell any one how nearly she was, so she did not receive the kindness from her new companions that the knowledge of her misfortunes would have inspired. She proved so uncommunicative that she exasperated them, and when she lay down on the outside of the bed with her dress on, for she was entirely destitute of a change of clothing, they openly rebelled and made some very harsh remarks in her hearing. One of them even plucked up courage to ask the manager what he wanted a new hand for, when they had robbed the company as much as possible in order to travel, and complained that Celia was so ill bred that no one wanted to occupy the room with her. The manager was gifted with the power of management, and though he was kind, he would bear nothing like questioning from his troupe, so he peremptorily advised the girl to mind her own affairs, and sent her back in a meeker
I. Ellis had been advertised for the
manager felt his courage rise.

Miss the actors were leaving the rehearsal, a moment she realized that, if she suc-
terribly to fortune, and fortune favored had not chosen such a life for herself,

his he really did not know what to do with pole's opinions. She recognized herself
to him. Still he was troubled, because spirit of daring everything against peo-

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The troupe, who shared Celia's room, was no dull history to be
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herself a tragedy choice, though she had the power of
artful effects., To people are never so witty as when

one more weird, is that one cannot al-
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horse. Now Miss Ellis had been advertised for the comedy at the Saturday Matinees, and of course, the first star, Madame René, who played tragedienne, would not take her place. The other three ladies of the troupe, who shared Celia's room, had all been arranged for the minor parts, and there was really need of some one to take Miss Ellis's place. The manager did not quite feel like trusting Celia in such a responsible position for her début; but he thought that if she could possibly take the part, it would save all wonder among the rest of the troupe as to his motive for engaging her, though of course the circumstances of the engagement would be an intimidating mystery, and, if she did well, they would all be envious. He thought the matter over carefully, and fancied that Celia certainly had genius; even if she failed, it was only the comedy, and excuses could be made for Miss Ellis's nonappearance. It was Thursday now, but he resolved on a bold stroke, and called Celia to him.

"Mrs. Brown," said he (it was the name she had given him), "could you take the part of Kate in the comedy for the Saturday Matinee? It was Miss Ellis's part."

Celia flushed and trembled. The worst of outlawing one's self from one's ordinary course of life, and adopting one more weird, is that one cannot al-
ways live high tragedy, but must do drama. When Celia had thought of being on the stage, she had fancied herself censured by people, but she had thought she should glory in that, and she had imagined herself a tragedy queen, doing startling and wonderful things, and producing artful effects. To play common comedy and sleep in a room with three other women had never entered her head. This disgusted her, and seemed to take away her heroic spirit of daring everything against people's opinions. She repudiated herself once more a weak, miserable woman. But necessity was her master, and she had not chosen such a life for herself, it had been thrust upon her; and after a moment she realized that, if she suc-
cceeded, she took a lead in the step towards living. So she answered, "I will do it. Where is the play?"

The manager felt his courage rise. She believed it would be a terrible task to learn her part, because she had never learned by rule exactly at school; but she was happily mistaken, for this was no dull history to be drilled out at so many pages a day, but a living drama, and by energetically applying herself she had committed her part before the others came home from the theatre in the evening.

This was very fortunate, for it took away the necessity of letting her new acquaintances know that this was her first appearance on the stage, and both herself and the manager hoped, if possible, that it might be, that she was an actress of some standing that he had picked up on his travels. The manager knew enough of his business to suppose she would betray herself in some small way, no matter how

she might not show her ignorance at

her a few hints privately as to the use

of her voice and her positions, so that she might not show her ignorance at once. He kept near all the time; and it was necessary, for she had never before become so conscious of her life, and had no idea where to stand or what to do. But she was desperate, and knew how much depended on what she did. Her mind was so clear so terribly in-
tense, that she remembered every word of her part, every hint of the manager; she realized just what tone of voice could be heard in the furthest galleries, and never once turned her back to the empty auditorium. It was a wonderful performance, all things considered, and showed an amount of talent which Celia had never suspected in herself. There was not a break a flaw in it, but it lacked just that divine spark which the manager had counted upon as certain, — the flavor of genius. He could do no better. The placards were already printed, stating that an account of the accident which had befallen Miss Ellis, the part of Kate would be performed by the famous actress Marsa, — a rare fair enough perhaps in a life in which all is pretense.

Now notwithstanding it showed great talent in Celia to do so much in so short a time, she had, after all, done no better than the rest of the people in the play who had performed it from childhood upwards; and, as the clown of the troupe was not very for-
cible, the Kate had been the dependence of the whole.

The manager felt that she had done vastly better for the first time than he had dared to expect, but he felt that the hundredth time she would fall below his expectations. The compagnons de chambre murmured in her hearing, "Stupid! and so old and ugly!" Celia flushed a little, but half smiled to her-

Self they repeated the play again with the same result. She evinced the same care, and made no mistake in any way, but the performance was quite passionless. The manager encouraged her, however; told her she had done well. He had determined to make the best of a bad matter, and he was sorry for her.

The next evening they rehearsed again in the same way. Miss Ellis, who had heard from her companions that the new star was of a very low magnitude, graciously consented that Celia should use her dresses and her paint-brushes for the occasion, by the payment of a small sum.

Celia needed paint to cover the effects of her weariness and sorrow, and she used it without scruple, though she hated herself for the deception. Then she took down her magnificent hair and wreathed it in fantastic curls, which would have been becoming to no one else, but in which she looked as if dipped in living fire. Even then she was not beautiful, but she was a thing of passion, and though ladies might call her ugly still, no man would have done so. When the manager saw her, he said to himself, "After all, she will do something in the way of tragedy. It is not strange a comedy should be so dead a thing to her."

But he had been mistaken. Celia had studiously avoided emotion during each rehearsal, because the stage was so new to her that she needed to bend every energy to making no blunders. Now that her part and her positions were comparatively familiar to her, she determined to throw her whole nature into the play. She thought she should not be likely to make great blunders, and she cared little for minor ones if she could only play with spirit. There was little chance for passion in this drama, but there was a certain wild frolicfulness and abandon which is perhaps most possible to a passionate nature which has thrown off restraint, and Celia plunged into it with her soul, and played it better than it had ever been played to that audience. There was a whirl of enthusiasm in the house, and that not withstanding she forgot her stage manners half a dozen times, stood with her back to the audi-

ence, spoke in a real whisper which could not be heard for an aside, and did twenty things which showed her a novice. But she was bewitching. She
SOMETHING TO DO.

CHAPTER XXVII.

Alice had so few acquaintances in Boston that she could not tell why it was necessary to keep any of these acquaintances. As soon as she returned, she resumed her usual habits, and though she looked paler and more fragile than ever, there was something so magnetic about her face, which would have startled any one who had seen her before.

But one day, early in December, as she was leaving Mrs. Craig's room, Miss Twigg accosted her abruptly, and informed her that Robert was at liberty to see her. Alice blushed a little, for she had never before been seen since her sister's loss, though she had placed herself on the stage.

"You have not been rough, Mr. Rix," said Alice. "I have been inconsiderate to you, but you have not been rough to me. You are no better than I am." Alice laid it. "Ah, Miss Alice, you must forgive me for being so rough."

"If you have not been rough, Mr. Rix," she said, "I am very glad of it."

She hesitated a moment, as she thought whether any harm could be done by her revelation. She decided not, and it was better she should speak of it herself than to wait till rumor brought it to their ears. "I wish you would tell no one but Miss Twigg at present," she said, and spoke distinctly enough for Dora May to hear.

She trusted people, and would exact no promise of secrecy. "When I went away so suddenly for a few days, I went to New York in answer to a telegram from Mr. Stacy, my sister's husband. He had been to his own house for one night to speak preparatory to election, and when he returned, he found my sister gone from the hotel where he had left her.

There was nothing to guide him to her. The watch he gave her on their wedding-day lay broken on the floor, and that seemed to suggest violence; but everything else was undiscovered, and the door was locked and the key was gone. He had left her in perfect health. She may have become suddenly deranged, or there may have been force. No exertions have been sufficient to bring us any clue of her, and we live in torturing suspense." She had spoken in a low, calm, rapid voice; but when she finished she felt as if her whole power of life had gone out from her in the effort. She was pale, and trembled from head to foot. Robert attempted no consolation in words. He brought her wine, which she refused, and then water. It was several minutes before she could move. Then she went away without speaking, and half wondered why she had been moved to tell the story when she might have concealed it.

When she had gone, Robert Rix laid his head on the table and cried and sobbed for an hour. No one noticed the young seamstress, who had fainted. She gradually recovered consciousness, and went away to her little cold chamber, herself cold and rigid.

Alice lay all day on her sofa in a state of exhaustion. She had never stated the matter to herself or Dick in such plain words as she had this day spoken. They had learned by glances, by half sentences, what they wished to say, and she felt as if she had fixed the fate of her sister immutably by relating the circumstances so fully.

At twilight Alice felt cold, and put a little coal on the fire. It flashed up and lightened the room with a hopeful radiance, and some one tapped at the door.

"Come in," said Alice, faintly. The door opened, the light fell full on the figure in black, and in another moment the sisters were in each other's arms.

Celia spoke first, in a tone which was sharply, strangely self-possessed for her to use. "Alice, my dear, I hardly thought how much I made you suffer, but I could not help it. Will you lock the door that no one may interrupt us?" Alice obeyed with fear and dread.

"Celia, where have you been? Dick and I have been too wretched to live."

Celia shuddered at Dick's name, and could not speak. She held out the soiled, tear-stained letter, and sat grimly while her sister read it by the flickering firelight.

"The direction — began Alice, faintly. "Yes," said Celia, in a hard tone. "You see that — that — he knew Dora May. The letter is true. You see by the postmark it should have reached the night he was away."

"And left him of your own will?" asked Alice. Celia told her story briefly, in an indifferent tone.

"Ah," said Alice, distracted. "Can you guess the agony of suspense, and leave him to suffer so?"

"I don't want revenge. It is instinct. I cannot see him again."

"I couldn't," said Alice.
"No one can come between us. I am still his true wife. I love him, and he loves me. You don't understand," she added, as Alice looked surprised, "but if it had been otherwise I could not have married him. And love is eternal."

"Then," said Alice, eagerly, "he could marry only you."

"Alice," replied her sister, sternly, "for to me it is not only our life, but our duty. He could not help loving you, but he could not have married you."

"Then good night, my dear sister," said Alice, in her turn. "I am not feeling very well."

"Then good night," said Dick, softly.

"Yes May I come in?"

"Not to-night," said Alice, gently. "I am only crushed."

"I am not feeling very well."
impelled him to think about any duty for himself. But the few words Alice said seemed to rouse him from his stupor. He had been so taught nobody so taught him how narrow was the chance he should ever know more of his lost wife than he knew now. It showed him that her only sister had given up hope. Then how forlorn must that hope be to which he himself clung. He saw distinctly, at a flash, that if he waited to which he himself clung.

The winter wind blew keenly on his face, the frosty stars shone clear and lighted a path for him through the snow, and he said to himself: “I am a man, and will bear my sorrow like a man, without wining. Instead of the happiness which I longed for and lost, my life shall be spent in work, — work which may perhaps bring to others the blessing I have missed for myself. So help me God!”

Unlike Alice, who began with God always, he began with his manhood and worked upward to the Divine idea. He knew how to carry out his resolutions. He worked early and late on all sorts of legislative business. He listened patiently to all sides of every question, and endeavored to decide conscientiously on all. He introduced bills and made speeches. His days and nights were crowded with labor. In his two previous winters in the Legislature he had made no impression except as a promising young lawyer. Now he began to be talked of as a man of great political ability, and, moreover, as a conscientious man. The combination of the two might have led people to consider him a bona fide, but not his wealth, his patrician manners, and his aristocratic connections made it impossible for any one to laugh at him, everything was gay. He never gave anybody a loophole to call him eccentric. His somewhat conservative ideas stood him in good stead too. If he advocated the justice of a measure, it was a measure which seemed just to everybody, which nobody dared openly disapprove. But there are many things which everybody acknowledges, which still no one seems disposed to advocate; so there was ample space for him to do good. He had not an atom of the Radical about him, so he shocked his prejudices, though he often fought against their practical living, and so made himself a few enemies. He was one of those men who are born with a silver spoon in the mouth. He had all the gifts and all the looks. He was chivalrous, brave, and truthful; but it cost him less to be truthful than if he had, had a deeper insight or on-sight, and had been stirred by the visions of the future to attempt realizing them in the present. He took “short views,” and saved himself from morbidity and his constituents from unmeasurability. Yet for all his gifts, for all his “silver spoon,” this man had missed the perfect rounding of his life, the happiness which one would have said was his birthright, and all through one sin, though he was unconscious of cause and sequence! Perhaps, when he was left alone so cruelly, he sometimes thought how he had left another, and recognized that God had meant his punishment to come in a similar way, though he could not guess how directly.

Work will comfort when everything else has failed, and in the fervor of his own work, the success which attended him, and the surety that through his means many were made happier, he began to recover the tone of his nature, though its elasticity was gone. He no longer bounded up the stairs, and played merry jokes, and laughed and teased. The boyish grace was gone, as, indeed, was right in a man grown. He had left society entirely, and given up all amusements. His friends feared lest his health should give way unless he took some relaxation; but he was better than when he only brooded without working, and any scene of pleasure would have awakened such painful feelings. He had only sung songs that he could sing, and was instead of rest. But a young man who has lived to be seven or eight and twenty without much care to make him prematurely old, who has a vigorous constitution, developed by all sorts of athletic exercises, who has known no illness and has never overworked, has such a stock of health on hand that it must take a heavy blow indeed to prostrate him, and he does not commonly die in a minute.

So all the suffering and work which had now come to Dick did not make a very appreciable difference in his strength. Only those who knew him best detected that he was a shade paler and thinner than in the old days. He said he did not care to go home much. His mother and sisters looked at him in such pity that he was exasperated, knowing that they believed the worst, and the worst to them meant exactly what it did to him. This enraged him, because he thought it the depth of uncharitableness for any one else not to overlook what he knew in his heart he could never overlook himself. Alice was the only person who seemed to look at things except through lenses. To her every person was just what he himself was now, without reference to his past and without reference to what the cruelty, neglect, or force of another might have made him. So, if Dick found himself longing to talk to any one, he soon learned that it was only with Celia, and could find any comfort, and that he must have known nothing before.

She was thus forced to live in some measure a double life, being the confidante of both her sister and her sister’s husband. She wished to write to Celia and toll her she could not bear it, but she did not know how to address a letter. Celia believed that a correspondence, even under a feigned name, might lead to her discovery; and besides, she had never cared to write letters, and felt that it would now be intolerable.

As if to make her position as hard as possible, Dora May had avoided her ever since. As has been said, Dora May had avoided her ever since her sister’s marriage. It was, at first, a relief to her. She felt guilty as if she thought she knew the reason for the passion he could have for such a girl, and the young swinging girl. It was by accident,—an accident so cruel that it had shattered the lives of those nearest to her, — and yet she almost felt as if she were in some way to blame. Then she wondered why this strange sorrow had been allowed to befall her, and she saw it was meant that she should be a friend to Dora May; and she tried so earnestly to be so, that, in spite of the reluctance on both sides, she finally won the young girl to her again. She thought she could not love her much except by drawing her out of her morbid loneliness, and yet sometimes the conversation would take a turn which made it possible for her to say words of real comfort as if by chance. It was impossible for any one to be long with Alice without feeling how sincerely with her the past was actually past, and that she took persons at their present intrinsic value.

Dora began to lose the depressed, shrinking look she had worn, — she could not lose the sadness,— she began to develop new energies and to find new interests. For a long time she had felt that all she could look forward to in the world was simply to earn enough to keep her alive; now she began to question whether it might not be right and well and happy for her to try to improve herself in all ways, even if there was no one to notice her improvement, or to care. So she began to read, and found herself gradually becoming more and more interested in many subjects of which she had known nothing before. The world broadened before her. Yet who shall say it was not hard?

"If I be dear to some one else, Then I should be to myself more dear. Shall I not take care of all that I think, Yet, I am so often used and think, If I be dear, If I be dear, to some one else!"

But to be dear to no one! Besides the sadness of it, how it paralyzes! Poor Dora! She needed all the strength and encouragement which the friendship of a girl like Alice could give her. And Alice, she was poor and alone. The teaching which gained her daily bread brought scarcely anything more, since it would have been hardly possible for her to teach anywhere and gain less. She could, however, find much comfort in her position, and influence was her grand aspiration. She was doing in such incidental ways more to bless her fellow-creatures than she dreamed. If we could calculate influences as we can a logarithm, we might find comfort when we have utterly failed in what we undertook with pure motives.
At last, however, Dick, with his usual kindness, found a place for her in a large private school, where she could teach, and so, instead of being where her salary was sufficient for all her modest wishes. She could indulge quietly in small charities, which made her almost as happy as the large ones in which Celia had revelled on her wedding tour. She could hear as much music and see as many pictures as she pleased. And she could spend a month among the mountains in the summer. She was certainly the most beautiful of teachers, and found in her work the inspiration which a poet finds in poetry or a musician in music. She had all she needed to make her happy. She was happy, and tried to be entirely so; but to a girl of twenty-two a home all alone does not seem a rich and bounteous existence, however good and high it may be.

CHAPTER XXIX.

ALECK'S disappointment in politics was not the only one he had to endure. This in itself was sufficiently keen to a young man who enjoyed political life, and who had courage to believe that the world could not do without him. He was angry, too, that his honesty had proved a stumbling-block; and, if his nature not been so large and genial, he might have become bitterly cynical at this period of his life. But, determined to make the best of the position, he went on with his farm work and his physician's work without stopping to lament over what was irreparable, when he began to discover by degrees that he was rapidly losing his practice. This was not because he was a less skilful physician than he had always been; indeed, with his constant study and practice, he was becoming very sure and reliable in his profession. He was forced to admit to himself reluctantly, because he believed in mankind, that his patrons were deserting him solely because he held such radical views. This was a harder test for him than the defeat upon election day. He could believe that persons might conscientiously differ from his opinions, and think it dangerous to give him the power of making laws for them, but that any one should be so bigoted as to make hatred against himself a ground for hatred of beliefs, and see as many pictures as she pleased. and, had his nature not been so large and keen to a young man who enjoyed poetic study and experience, he was becoming sure and reliable in his profession. He was forced to admit to himself respectfully, because he believed in mankind, that his patrons were deserting him solely because he held such radical views. This was a harder test for him than the defeat upon election day. He could believe that persons might conscientiously differ from his opinions, and

"But I think it's a plea for that smart honest chap like you is down so far now. I 'pose you could 'nt see any new light on the woman question and so on,—could you now?"

Aleck laughed. "I don't see any new light, at any rate."

"O well," said Aaron. "I 'pose you thought you would do what you thought was right, and then be content with it; but if you only could change in some few things, or, at any rate, make up your mind to keep mum about them when it isn't going to do any good to say anything, it would make a sight of difference. Everything, it seems to me, would cost them nothing to desert Aleck, it was right that they too should be aware how they encouraged such dangerous political opinions."

Perhaps Aleck thought rather ruefully sometimes of the cozy little chats of the previous winters and the happy quartette who had assembled in Alice's little sitting-room. Perhaps he sometimes envied the trio, whom he fancied happy without him; for such care had been observed that the news of Celia's disappearance had not found its way into the papers, and Aleck never corresponded with anybody. We do not invariably know what we are owing or in debt. His whole life seemed to stretch before him and the game was apparently lost. "Everybody can't be a knight-errant," said he, cheerfully, "so let anybody who is faint-hearted keep his opinions to himself and get on peacefully; but, for my part, I shall never want any favor which is to be had by sacrificing my right to say what I please when I please and where I please."

Aaron whistled in amazement. "How plague mad they must be at you! I guess they ain't going to forgive you any more."

"They can't forgive me," returned Aleck, looking proud; "for I won't be forgiven, since I don't deserve it."

"Well," said Aaron, with a beaming smile, "I 'll bet on you."

Aleck smiled too. "Perhaps I shall make a fortune off my farm, now that I've nothing else to do."

"And then I can go where I please, and work my way up again."

"You will, if anybody," said Aaron;
and I sha’n’t fret about what the Lord sends.”

Nevertheless, when Aaron had gone home and Alock stood alone looking at his desolate fields, his mouth settled into a sad, grave expression. He walked carefully searching for any flowers, but all the shoots which were not yet quite withered. He found very few, and as he came back to the spot he started from, he sang softly to himself, with a comical look:

“You have passed on and I have not saved a dollar. Evelina still lives in the green, grassy holler; nevertheless, when Aaron had gone home from Mrs. Brown’s house, he came back to the spot he started from, and as he turned to go, he opened the door and stood there, with curling lip. ‘Have I so far forgotten myself, even in a place like the theatre, that a stranger dares to treat me so?—1, the wife of Richard Stacey!’ She absolutely writhed at the thought. She had believed that any woman of purity and spirit could always so act that no man calling himself a gentleman would dare to make advances to her. It was a little thing, to be sure, but it might not blaze out. She was learning to keep a watch upon herself. The applauses prolonged and deep, and her courage rose. She forgot herself entirely and became the hapless one, who represented in very deed. She was called before the curtain again and again, and bouquets of the richest flowers fell at her feet. She had made success before; now it seemed as if she was creating a furore. Night after night, the house was more and more crowded. She had no time to think of anything else, for she was constantly occupied in learning new roles—not an easy thing for a beginner like her. Luckily, she had the genius to improve when she forgot her part. People were all asking, “Who is she?” “Mrs. Brown,” said the manager, “and I won’t have you playing for you. I warn you to be on your guard.”

“You think I shall not be safe alone in my carriage!” said Celia, her eyes glittering dangerously.

“ ‘Mara,’ as I understand you,” said the manager, sharply; “I won’t have you playing for you. I warn you to be on your guard.”

“ ‘Mara,’ is wholly under my care.”

“Then ‘Mrs. Brown’ is only a myth, I suppose,” said the young man, with a sly glance.

“ ‘Mara,’ is wholly under my care,” said the manager, briefly.

“ ‘Oho!’ then I see how things are,” said the young man, with a light laugh.

“I only wanted to be acquainted in a friendly sort of way with a woman of genuine, and you bristled up at once. I think I understand.”

“And I think you are a fool,” said the manager, “and I won’t have you about. I can’t be bothered with you. If you are the puppy who flung the bracelet, you need never expect to advance one whit farther in Mrs. Brown’s good graces than you are now. She is not a bully-girl; she has a temper like wildfire and a will like iron.”

“What language do you use to me?” stammered the young man, red with rage.

“Better than you deserve,” said the manager; coolly; “and if you do not go at once, I shall take measures to put you out.”

The young man deemed it prudent to get out of the building as fast as possible. He saw nothing to prevent his looking in the shade outside as long as he liked. The manager knocked at Celia’s door. He heard a rustling within, but no answer. He knocked again, and this time he spoke. Reassured by his voice, she opened the door and stood there looking haughty and angry.

“ ‘Mrs. Brown,’ said the manager, ‘the fellow who annoyed you so has come to me just now.”

“With an apology?” asked she, proudly.

“No,” said the manager, “he wishes to see you.” I took the liberty of refining for you.”

“Well?” said Celia, wondering why he did not go.

“ ‘He is an estimable sort of fellow, who does not like to be balked,” added the manager; “and I suspect that though I have ordered him out of the building he is still lurking outside, waiting for you. I warn you to be on your guard.”

“You think I shall not be safe alone in my carriage!” said Celia, her eyes glittering dangerously.

“I think the fellow will try to speak to me,” said the manager. “I cannot go home with you now myself, and I therefore spoke to Siedhof, and he will accompany you, if you wish.”

“Thank you,” said Celia, “you are very kind”; and in a voice as low as a breath, she added, “Do such things often happen to actresses who do not encourage them?”

“O, you need not be frightened!” said the manager, good-naturedly.

“There are plenty of silly fellows who can’t be made to understand at first that their attentions can be unacceptable to any one. You will probably be annoyed more or less by such, it is the penalty you pay for acting well; but no harm will be done.”

Celia shut her teeth together that she might not blaze out. She was learning to keep a watch upon herself: “Tell Mr. Siedhof I am ready,” she said in a moment.

Mr. Siedhof was an old, bald-headed musician to whom Celia had been drawn at once by his devotion to music and his beautiful politeness. She was glad the manager had chosen him for her escort. As she went out, leaning on his arm, a figure drew back baffled from the shade, and they seated themselves in the carriage unmolested.

“You needn’t be frightened,” said Mr. Siedhof, with the slightest German accent, “you played well to-night. I found myself glad to use my violin in your service.”

Celia sighed wearily. She meant to say nothing, but her heart was very full. She had not learned much self-control, and she had an instinctive feeling that Siedhof was to be trusted; so, almost before she knew it, she found herself speaking.

“I wish, Mr. Siedhof, that I had not played well. I have believed, that the more genius one displayed, the safer one must be. I have proved the contrary. I never played so well as to-night, and I feel myself the nullification.”

“Ah! you mean the bracelet, said
Mr. Siedhof, quietly. "My dear young lady, you must not lay that to heart. You are not to blame for what some one else does."

"I feel to blame," cried Celia. "That a man who does not know me should dare to give me a present. What must I have done? How must I have acted!"

"You have acted right, young lady," said Mr. Siedhof, who never could call her Mrs. Brown, perhaps because he could not believe it her true name; "your mistake was in believing that genius can be comprehended by those who have not its germ."

"It is no genius then," said Celia, quickly. "That which is really large, and whose soul was so small that he saw to live in comfort; but the whole effect was dreary and lonely in the extreme."

"Tell me the truth, Mr. Siedhof," said she, with a flashing eye; "but not a mean and polished nature, in which there is no nature, but only art."

"Tell me the truth, Mr. Siedhof," said Celia, earnestly, "have I anything more to fear from this man?"

"I do not know him," replied he; "but I fear he will not be contented to fail so entirely in attracting your attention. You need not be afraid of him, but you may be annoyed for a little while."

"So the manager said," said Celia. "What shall I do? Shall I give up my engagement and go away and find something else to do?"

"Not so," replied Siedhof, quickly, to check her impulsiveness. "You are meeting only a type of evil, not an individual. Something of this might assail you everywhere. You will show yourself a brave woman in being above being troubled by it. Overlook it, but do not seem angry.

"That may do for calm natures," answered Celia, "but how can it do for one like me? O Mr. Siedhof, all my impulses lead me always towards flight!"

"It is braver to stay," quoth Siedhof.

"I will stay, said Celia, after a moment of hesitation, "and you must help me to bear what I must."

"Very well," said Mr. Siedhof. "I thought you had courage."

But they had reached Celia's hotel, and the conversation was brought to a close. Celia's room was a good, large, airy one; but as she was to stay in it only a few weeks it contained no little home-like ornaments, simply the hotel furniture and two immense trunks for her wardrobe. The room and furniture were sufficiently handsome, for Celia's success had been such as to enable her to live in comfort; but the whole effect was dreary and lonely in the extreme. She was still dressed as at the theatre, in a costume between a gypsy and a ballerina, and she laughed, danced, and sang with the utmost freedom. She was an arrant coquette, and found nothing easier than to make all the six young men hate each other and love her at once, and each to think that she loved him and regarded all the rest as bores.

Celia, tossing in anger, on her bed, became still more angry as she now and then heard snatches of the flippant conversation. It was actresses such as Antoinetta Hünten who brought about such annoyances to actresses like Celia. It is to be feared that the later did not excuse her even on the plea that she seemed to be thoroughly enjoying herself and entertaining other people, while Celia was gloomy and solitary. There ought to be a little allowance made for that.

The six young men wished each to outstay the other, but Miss Hünten managed very adroitly and sent them all off at once. When they were gone, she locked and bolted her doors, walked up to the parterre and looked at herself intently for a long time. She turned away with a weary and sad face, drank eagerly a glass of wine, and went to bed.

CHAPTER XXXI.

As might be supposed, Celia's annoyances did not end in a single evening. For a week she was persecuted with notes in every shape and by post, left at her hotel, handed her by some of the supernumeraries about the theatre who had heard her to say that they had reached her, concealed in bouquets, till she dared not receive any flowers at all. She could not help reading some of these, for the handwriting was disguised in various ways, and she could not be quite sure, without opening them, what was their origin. The young man declared his passion in sufficiently strong terms, and she was infinitely disgusted and would certainly have taken refuge in flight but for Siedhof's advice.

"Do not lower yourself by letting him see that you troubles you," said he.

At the end of a week the young man gave over the pursuit, finding that he received no sign in reply, and endeavored to take his revenge by hissing Celia off the stage. He was an arrant coquette, and found nothing easier than to make all the six young men hate each other and love her at once, and each to think that she loved him and regarded all the rest as bores.

CHAPTER XXXII.

Celia was left in peace.
Celia was now much less busy than she had been the first of the season. She was appearing in the same pieces she had been playing all winter and had nothing new to learn, so that her days were in danger of becoming tedious. The growing disinclination at her heart forced her to do something to remove the disagreeable sensations which girls who have lost all hope of a happy life sometimes find painful and escape from reflection by going among the poor, and, little as this was to her taste, she determined to do it. Service undertaken from such a motive might do her some good, and perhaps prove dispersive to the recipients; but Celia had in dead truth so warm a heart, was so easily touched by suffering, and so ready to help when she had once conquered her repugnance to entering close, dirty rooms, that she avoided this danger, and though her residence in the city was necessarily so short, she had already found quite a little circle of poor people who welcomed her.

One day she went to visit a little sick boy, the son of a respectable kind of woman who supported herself by taking in washing. Celia carried a basket of grapes and oranges, and also a bouquet which some of her admirers had sent her the evening before, little guessing what its destination would be.

"O, how beautiful!" said the little boy, "and how kind you are, Mrs. Brown!" She was called "Mrs. Brown" among the poor, and they never dreamed that the kind lady in black was really a popular actress.

"I hope you won't care," said the boy, "but if you don't, I wish you would let me give these flowers away."

"Of course, Charley," replied Celia, "I shall be glad to have you do just what you like with them. To whom do you want to give them?"

"Mrs. Pritchard is sick," said the boy; "she's been sick ever so long, and now I expect she's in consumption. She was raised in the country, and I expect maybe flowers would look good to her. She lives in the next house."

"Yes," said Celia, "I have no doubt she would like some flowers; but I have a great many at home, more than I can find a place for, so you can keep these, and I will bring her some more. If she has lived in the country perhaps the wild-flowers will please her, and I have a whole basket full of mosses and little spring-flowers. Do you think she would be willing to have me call, or shall I send the things?"

"I think she would," said the boy.

Celia was glad of it. It would help to wear away the tedium of the day. So she went out and purchased another basket of fruit, and, returning to the hotel, took also the bunch of flowers.

She found Mrs. Pritchard quite alone. She lived with her daughter, who supported them both by working in a millinery establishment and had to be away all day. Of course the invalid was very lonely. She did not absolutely need Celia, for she was the child of another family living in the house looked in, from time to time, to see what she needed.

"And them," added she, "there is a good, kind young man who goes about among the poor, who come here to see the children, and, when I am able to sit up, he comes in and reads to me such sweet books."

She was delighted with the fruit and flowers, especially the flowers, because they were such as she had found when a girl. Celia was touched by her loneliness and stayed some time, talking with her, and promised to visit her again the next day.

Now it so chanced that Celia had scarcely gone home before the young man spoke of some other flowers, on which his eyes rested was the basket of flowers, at which he gazed in a somewhat bewildered way, as well he might, for his name was Mr. John Home and he had himself arranged every leaf and petal the evening before, and had seen to it that they were conveyed intact to the actress with whom he was so violently in love.

"Oh," said Mrs. Pritchard, "you did in some respects, making a stay of some weeks in Baltimore. She noticed, the very first night she played, a small man sitting near the stage, who seemed quite carried away by the play. He had a good pleasant face, of much strength and also real sweetness. She felt at once that it was a face she could trust; and as her powers always increased when she saw her audience enthusiastic, she naturally found herself playing almost at him. He was in the same place the next night and the next, still intent and earnest. She began to find real comfort in seeing him. He did not look like an habitué of the theatre, and yet he was always there. On the fourth night she saw that he held a bouquet in his hand, and when, at the close of the fourth act, several bouquets were thrown to her, she marked well which came from him. It was the sweetest and most delicate of all, of white spring flowers and petals just tinted and veiled with pink and blue, mimosa and pansies and violets. She looked at it and said, "He is a pure, good man," said she to herself, "and he has chosen evidently knows so little of the world

"I will wait," said the little man. So the manager knocked at Celia's door again. "There is a gentleman," said he, "who wishes to know if you will send her my card, and perhaps she will consent to see me. Will you give it to her for me?"

"Yes," said the manager, more graciously than usual.

"I will wait," said the little man. As he showed him the way, the little man spoke again.

"You knew very well what I should say."

"I knew what I will do," said the little man. "I will send her my card, and I will send her my bouquet, and perhaps she will consent to see me. Will you give it to her for me?"

"Yes," said the manager, more graciously than usual.

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"You knew very well what I should say."

"I knew what I will do," said the little man. "I will send her my card, and I will send her my bouquet, and perhaps she will consent to see me. Will you give it to her for me?"

"Yes," said the manager, more graciously than usual. 
n't expect to see such beautiful flowers here,—did you?"

"Why, no," said Mr. Home, still in a maze. "Where did they come from?"

Then, of course, followed the story of the flowers. Massachusetts. Mrs. Pritchard had said she knew nothing about the lady, except that her name was Miss Brown, and that she visited the poor a great deal. She dressed in mourning, and had said that she was only staying in the city a little while. Mr. Home was more unsophisticated than the young man who had asked if Mrs. Brown was a myth. He had never heard the actress called by any name but "Mara." By that name she appeared upon all the play-bills, and he never had thought of falling into conversation with any of the other members of the troupe in regard to her. If he had thought of it, he would have at once scooted the idea as dishonorable. So the name "Brown" with Mrs. Pritchard's mispronunciation of the prefix, conveyed no idea to him; but he was too sure of the flowers to doubt that either directly or indirectly they had come from "Mara," and he was quite on the qui vive with excitement. It is to be feared that he read the Sunday-school book that he had brought for Mrs. Pritchard without due appreciation of its excellent moral. But he read it nevertheless, for he was a conscientious young man, and would let nothing interfere with doing a kindness to another. He managed to find, before he went away, that Miss Brown was expected the next morning again, though he could not learn the hour.

Accordingly he made his appearance very bright and early, hypocritically alleging as a reason that he had more leisure than usual, and would be glad to finish the book he began the day before, thus allowing himself a long time to stay. Mrs. Pritchard was, of course, delighted, and everything went on smoothly.

About eleven o'clock he found himself upon the last page of the book, and was dismayed at the idea that all his manoeuvring had been in vain, when a light step came up the stair and a gentle and knocked at the half-open door.

Poor Mr. Home! He blushed violently, and could hardly sit still as Mrs. Pritchard said, "Come in," and the stately figure in black approached. Celia wore a heavy cape veil, and she did not see that a stranger was present until she took a seat. The instant she saw him she recognized him, and knew that he recognized her, but it was too late to retract.

"Miss Brown," said Mrs. Pritchard. "This is Mr. Home, the young gentleman as I told you about. Is it so good to me?"

Celia bowed very distantly, and Mr. Home dared not show that he knew her. His courage sank so many degrees in an instant that she had gone away immediately if he had not been head over ears in love; so he could do nothing but stare at her.

Celia inspired compositely after Mrs. Pritchard's health, gave her some more fruit, and then said she was too busy to stay longer, but would try to come in again, purposely making her promise indefinite. Then she went away.

Poor Mr. Home! He was in a desperate state, and yet he dared not follow her. But then it came home to him almost with agony that this meeting had been a most extraordinary coincidence, and that it was not probable that fortune would ever so favor him again, and he screwed his courage up, and, bidding an abrupt adieu to Mrs. Pritchard, followed the lady of his love as fast as he could go.

"Miss Brown," he said, as he reached her side, "I beg your pardon, but I must speak to you."

Celia turned. She could not find it in her heart to look haughtily at him, because she felt how pure and simple he was.

"Well!" said she, pausing. "I don't know what you will think," said he, with an agonized blush; "but you must understand that I—"

"I know you would not see me when I asked the manager to take my card to you, but, now you have seen me, it is different. I have tried to make up my mind, and I believe you would satisfy me, though angry.

"Mr. Home," said she, looking full in his face, "I am in the habit of reading character, and I know yours now as well as I should in a year's acquaintance. Those traits which I cannot comprehend now I never could, if I should know you a lifetime. We part here."

"O, do not say that!" cried Mr. Home, plunging up a spirit. "How can you know me? You do not know half how I love you."

"Mr. Home," said Celia, her eyes full of trouble, "I will tell you what I think I mean to say to you. You have not yet seen enough of life" (it was true, though he was a year her senior, and she had seen life) "to know precisely what your own aims and intents are. You are dazzled by the thought of yourself, but now it seems as if we had met almost providentially.

"Well," said Celia, as coolly as she could, for she felt that she trembled, "since we have chosen to be introduced, if you have anything of importance to say to me, I don't know that I have any objection.

Mr. Home stopped short. It was not easy to say what he had to say after such a business-like beginning; but he knew it was his only chance, and so he said it.

"Miss Brown, don't think I expect you to understand me, or feel the same, and I know I speak very abruptly, but I have seen you play, and—and—and—why, I love you. Don't speak quite so fast as if you were afraid. I do not suppose you care anything about me ever, but you see you don't know me at all now, and so you can't be sure." Celia's troubles had been less real, she would have laughed aloud at this. As it was, she was insensibly touched, though angry.

"Mr. Home," said she, looking full in his face, "I am in the habit of reading character, and I know yours now as well as I should in a year's acquaintance. Those traits which I cannot comprehend now I never could, if I should know you a lifetime. We part here."

"O, do not say that!" cried Mr. Home, starting back; and, to do him justice, it was not the feeling that he had wholly lost her which made him so distressed, but the thought that he had unwittingly committed a sin.

"Forgive me, if you ever can," said he. "I thought they called you Miss Brown. I never thought of this. Can you forgive me?"

"Yes," said Celia, heartily. And when the time comes, as it surely will, and soon, that you understand that your feeling to-day was only a feverish hope, if you can, you will see me and tell me so. I do not want to think that I have spoiled, or even maimed, your life."

"You are very noble," said he; "and I will not even go to the theatre again to see you play, or to Mrs. Pritchard's while you stay in town."

"We go next week," said Celia, half smiling upon him. "Good by, my friend."

"Good by," faltered he, and there they parted.

Celia said farewell to herself. "Why do I never touch happiness in myself or others?"
ONE day in spring Alice saw an announcement in the papers to the effect that one of the theatres had made an engagement for the closing weeks of the season with "Mara," the new tragedienne, and with the Queen of the stage, the well-known Antoinetta. "The announcement produced a strange effect upon her. She was glad that she might have a chance to see her sister again. She feared that though the Legislature had adjourned, something might occur to bring Dick to town at the wrong time, and she found herself wondering what influence "Antoinetta," the idol of Celia's early dreams, had had upon her when brought into actual contact.

On the morning of the very night when they were to appear, she received a little note in a disguised handwriting, saying that the players had arrived in the city only the evening before, and that owing to the pressure of the rehearsals, she would see Celia till after the play. But a ticket was sent to her, and Celia promised her a special reference to Antoinetta, who was represented on those alone in this case. Antoinetta had the reputation, not only among the new tragedienne, and Antoinetta was a perfect dancer. It was a play not at all according to Celia's taste, it was not a tragedy, though it ended with the suicide of Leonora, who was represented as a boy; but she had had only a few months' practice. Alice looked at her with a great deal of curiosity to see how well she fulfilled her early ideas of her. She found that she was absolutely fasci

and the climax of the play was destroyed. However, both the actresses had done so well that the drama was an overwhelming success.

If Alice could excuse Antoinetta's manner it was her necessary to her rendition of Elva, she found it harder to escape the impression of her face. It was exquisitely chiselled and sparkling and brilliant in its beauty; but it was painfully apparent how highly it was wrought, and there was a mocking expression on the lip which almost hid its intense pathos.

At the close of the fifth act one of those peculiar attendants at the theatre called Supes appeared at Alice's side and told her that Mrs. Brown was ready to see her. She started at the name, she had forgotten that Celia had assumed it; but she rose and followed him behind the scenes. Her sister, with her hair dishevelled as in the last suicide scene, drew her into her dressing-room.

After the first greeting was over Celia said, "Now, Alice, what about my acting?"

"It was grand," replied Alice, "yet it makes me shudder to think of it." "But why do you feel so?" asked Celia, half smiling. "I tell you, Alice, you can't guess how I have learned what it is to be happy. From the moment I began to act in tragedies I have known a fixed delight which supplies the place of what I have lost — no, no, no, but it is glorious!"

"That was not the trouble," said Alice. "You did not seem happy to me to-night, you seemed vindictive. I felt if your hatred for Elva was a real thing."

"It is," replied Celia, proudly. "Elva is the incarnation of Antoinetta herself. The play was written expressly for her, and it is exactly like her." Alice said in astonishment, "do you hate her so much? Is she so very different from your early dreams?"

"Alice," said Celia, "first tell me this. You know the object of the play is that Elva shall carry the house by storm by showing her actual purity under very suspicious circumstances. Now did the play to-night fulfil this object?"

"No," said Alice, "your genius frustrated it, for everybody felt your own truth, bad as you were, and to me, at least, there seemed a suppressed yearning of feeling that, notwithstanding the triumph of the character of Antoinetta, which had seemed against Elva during the whole affair, she was somehow wrong; and yet she played truthfully too, but I had an uneasy feeling that she was, after all, standing on a lower level than yourself, incapable of the same heights. But I am your sister, and may have misjudged."

"I don't think you have," said Celia, coolly, "for you were prejudiced in favor of Antoinetta, and I must have accomplished my aim if you would not have guessed it. Her genius is too great for me to overcome it wholly, and, more than that, she is true in her acting, and especially true to herself, for she does not stand on a very high plane; and in showing myself instead of playing the part given me, I have only put her just where she belongs."

"I don't understand you," said Alice, in a grieved tone. "Your life in theatres must have changed you very much if you find pleasure in injuring a rival."

"A rival!" said Celia, with an angry flush. "Alice, you ought to know me better than to believe me so mean as that. It is not with the hope of eclipsing her that I play as I do, but because I believe her character false and rotten as the character of the Elva she represents, and I will do the little thing to stem the current of corrupt taste which can applaud that."

"But why do you feel so?" asked Alice again. "May it not be that your instinctive feeling about her is a wrong one, and that you are injuring one who needs your pity?"

"My feeling would be as strong if I had depended only on my intuitions," replied Celia, "though I might be mistaken; but then I have not depended upon those alone in this case. Antoinetta has the reputation, not only among actors, but in the world at large, of being in every sense of the word a ballet dancer. Just as you see is the mistress of an idle, artistic sort of a young fellow who wrote the play of Elva."
"Not blame me much!" interrupted Celia. "Why do you blame me at all? Would you have been pleased to find me a friend to Antoinetta?"

"Sure enough," answered Celia, "and there is a reason for that, for, though she might hate me as much, I suppose she is incapable of hating my character as much. But, Alice, what do you mean?" "Oh," said Alice, "I meant your faults. Why are you so ready to judge your poor little desolate sister, wilful and wrong as she may be, for a stranger?"

"I am not doing that," said Alice, "though I don't like to see you so harsh, and perhaps you are not, after all. What you have told me of Antoinetta is so terrible that I cannot blame you much, though I think her sins may not be without palliation."

"Alice blushed deeply with the effort of speaking to a stranger, but, summoning all her courage, she said in her own sweet way: "Miss Hunten, I saw you play when you and I were both children, and I have always wished to thank you for the enjoyment you gave me, but I have never seen you again till now. So I begged my friend Mrs. Brown to introduce me."
CHAPTER XXXIII.

A LADY to see you, miss," said the maid-of-all-work in the lodging-house next to Alice. "She did n't send her name, but she is dressed in black.

"Ask her to come to my room," said Alice, thinking it must be her sister, but wondering why she had not come directly up stairs.

The lady entered and bowed profoundly, but did not raise her veil till the door had been closed behind her. Although in black, she was dressed very differently from Celio, who, always perfectly neat, cared nothing for any dress except a gorgeous one, and for that, now, only on the stage. The visitor's dress was plain, yet it had a very imposing air, for her train was of enormous length and she managed it with the utmost grace. Her veil was of crepe, and so thick as wholly to conceal her countenance, while in length it almost matched her train. Every article she wore was of great elegance, and though she was not tall, her figure and bearing were very striking. She raised her veil and showed a proud, clear, beautiful, pallid face. The contour of the features was exquisite, and seemed strangely familiar, yet Alice could not tell where she had seen it before.

"Don't you know me, Miss Wilding?" said the young lady. "Well, I am not painted to-day." Her delicate lip curled with scorn.

"Antoinina!" said Alice, quickly, holding out her hand.

"Antonia?" said the young lady, without taking the offered hand. Then, glancing around the room, she added, "Do you really live all alone in this sweet, quiet, pure little room?" She perched herself on a little table, with her curling lip and her mocking smile.

Alice was at a loss what to do, and said nothing.

"Wont you talk to me?" continued Antonina. "It is impolite to make me talk for myself. I can address the least, I am not accustomed to a little girl.

Alice was looking at her, and in an instant she half colored and said in a vexed tone, "At least, I have had few enough little girls with women. I see you are like the rest of them. Perhaps you are sorry you invited me here.

"No, indeed," said Alice, earnestly. "I should not have asked you to come if I had not really wished it. If I don't talk to you, believe it is owing to my awkwardness, and not from want of interest in you.

"Want of interest! By no means," said Antonia, sarcastically, and with an expression of wormwood on her face.

"The sainly benevolence with which young ladies who are immaculate look at ballet-girls should not be called want of interest, for from it. She drew the last three words in her most stage-struck manner. Most people don't approve of ballet-girls, though they stare themselves blind looking at them.

"That is wrong," said Alice; "every one should be judged for himself, and not for his occupation.

"Good sentiment," said Antonia.

"A very proper thing to say, but con- fess that you think yourself a good deal purer than I.

Alice was in despair. It seemed as if she was not going to be able to say anything.

"Antonia was on such dangerous ground.

"Oh, I laugh!" exclaimed Antonia.

"You are a Pharisee. A you to understand. I wish you to do me good. That shows a despica- ble, contemptible nature. You wished me to be humbled, to be made to feel your superiority, and to have yourself the pleasure of feeling how much better you are than I. I have come purposely to tell you what a Pharisee you are. You would be very kind, I have no doubt. I suppose you never thought what unkindness it is to trample down one's pride.

"You wrong me," said Alice, looking very much disturbed. "And I believe, as you do, that one can hardly do much good to anybody if drawn to the work by no other motive than to do good."

"Ah, said Antonia, lifting her eyebrows, "that is not what most persons think. It is all the more meritori- ous for those who despise, and I guess you believe so too; you look like one of the 'universal brotherhood' kind of people.

"I can hardly explain how I do feel," said Alice. "I would help any one whom I had power to help. But then I feel this too,—no one has power to help everyone, and we should re- spect the reserve of any nature not in sympathy with our own, and not force ourselves upon it in the mistaken hope of doing it good.

Antonia's face softened for a moment. "You are a little better than the rest. I suppose that is the reason I took the trouble to tell you your faults. Yet, and she grew hard again, "that does n't affect the fact that you meant to do me good, and whatever you meant to be rude enough to gain my confidence or not. And I tell you, you are a Pharisee. A few people in the world have arrogated to themselves the business of settling what is the unpardonable sin. Let one make the least slip in that direction, though pure as an angel in every other, let one yield to a temptation which might make the sun stand still, and the doom is announced forever. They are people we pious, cruel, mean people will do good to them. We will let our dainty feet walk through the mud to them, we will flash our white robes through their grimy dwellings, and be glad to do you the satisfaction of feeling that they are mud and that we tread on them."

With color in her cheeks, Alice spoke. "Because we know that the mud is of clay and sand and soot and water, and clay crystallizes as a sapphire, and sand as an opal, and soot as a diamon- and, water as a star of snow, and we know we may walk in white in the house whose foundations are garnished with all manner of precious stones."

An Antonia looked thunderstruck for a moment. Then she chassèd across the room, then she stopped, and, pulling her dress over her arm so as to show her exquisite arched foot, she began a most difficult pas, which was so irresistibly funny that even Alice laughed. Antonia, however, preserved perfec- tly gravity till she had finished. Then she stopped short in front of Alice with her hands on her hips, and remarked: "How much do you get for line for your poetry, Miss Wilding? They ought to pay you well, for it is really very charming. I am deeply interested in your fascinating conversation. Pray, go on."

"How can I go on," said Alice, "if you believe me insincere?"

"That sounds well," said Antonia, bowing in a patronizing way. "Do go on."

Alice was silent, really vexed that she was so wishing misinterpreted. Antonia folded her arms. "Miss Wild- ing," said she, "your pretty little illustration was calculated to throw me off the track, but I have n't yet forgot- ten what I came to ask, and I am going to say it till I make it plain enough for you to understand. I wish you to..."
know that one sin is as much a sin as another, and that you are no better than I am, than I should be if the stories about me were true. You sin according to your temptations, and some one else according to his. Because you live a life which Phœnixes like yourself have agreed to call right, you think you are right. It is arbitrary. You are as bad actually in the sight of Heaven as any girl of the town. That is what I am determined you shall understand."

"Yes," said Alice, with a half-smile. "But what if I had not yielded to my temptations as others have to theirs? What then?"

"Ah! now you begin to show your nature," said Alice, scornfully. "I thought you would not endure that without asserting yourself."

"Remember," said Alice, with pride, "that I have not yet said that I have not yielded; but you know nothing about it either way, and have no right to say that I have. I should be a hypocrite if I said I believed myself the greatest sinner on earth," (she now spoke gently again) "I am true when I say that I know enough evil of myself to make me think that perhaps in the eyes of God I may be the greatest sinner of all."

Antonia looked at her searchingly. "I almost believe you are sincere. What did you mean by saying you thought little good could be done except to those in sympathy with one, or something of that kind? I suppose you don't fancy yourself in sympathy with me, do you?"

"I thought I could understand you perhaps," said Alice. "I don't mean that I thought myself able to read you, or learn any outward act of yours which you do not choose to tell; simply that I could comprehend much of your nature."

"M-m," said Antonia. "Don't you think, on the whole, that it was rather presuming to take it for granted that you would do good instead of my doing you good?"

"I think all good done is mutual," said Alice.

"Pooh!" said Antonia. "Whatever might have been the result, the motive is the main thing. I hardly think your motive was the good I was to do you; if so, it was a mighty selfish one."

"What motive may I have then," asked she, with a smile, "if I may neither wish to bestow or to receive good?"

"You may make no attempt to know any one from any motive at all, except that you are attracted. Get over the everlasting desire to pry into other people's affairs."

"I suppose I must have been wrong," said Alice, perplexed; "I must have been, for I fancied I might understand you, and I am totally at fault."

"Perhaps I might give you a clue, though, broke in Antonia. "But as she added no more, Alice said, sadly, "I hope you will forgive me if, by want of tact, I have wounded you, and believe that it was not wilful unkindness on my part."

Antonia began whistling thoughtfully. Then she stuck her bonnet on one side of her head and began a gay little procession, singing meantime a comic song for which she had gained great applause. As before, she stepped before Alice with her arms akimbo, and with the same mocking look she had worn in playing the part of Mephistopheles in the burlesque drama of Faust, she said: "On the whole, Miss Wilding, I don't mind giving you the clue. O, you are a jolly green 'un!"

"If you are not, I am," continued Antonia, bowing in an exaggerated manner. "You lack ordinary understanding. I dare say you would read character admirably except for the fatal fact that you don't suppose it possible to tell a lie. I guess you might have managed to understand even me, if those unfortunate tales about me had been true; and to make the matter clear to your one-sided comprehension, I don't know but I may as well state that they are true, and worse ones, I dare say."

She looked at Alice and laughed to see her distress. "What if they are?" she continued. "Just as wrong things are true of you, though not the same things probably. What do you make of that?"

"I believe it may be so," said Alice, "but I have no right to judge you. And yet I should be untruthful if I did not say that I think you are doing very wrong. If I do wrong too, that cannot make you right, and I have certainly listened patiently enough while you have been repeating your claim that you will let me speak to you."

"Yes, you have," said Antonia. "I will forgive you on that account. It is only fair; you have earned the right to lecture me on the heinousness of my sins, though it is supremely foolish, because you know nothing about them. Suppose I do fulfill the popular notion of a ballet-girl, just take the harm?"

She spoke carelessly enough, yet Alice thought she detected an undercurrent of earnestness.

"In degrading the holiness of love."

"I'm-m," said Antonia. "That may be an open question. As for the holiness of love, who are married care about that? Yet they act as pure as snow, and have a right to turn up their lofty noses at us, poor creatures."

"Then they degrade it too," said Alice; "but that does not prove you make that."

"What a queer chick you are!" said Antonia, pretending to be lost in contemplating Alice. "What a funny world this would be if everybody were as logical as you and acted up to his own convictions! I really begin to think that you cannot believe that custom and tradition have the power to make one thing right and another wrong arbitrarily."

"I certainly don't believe that," said Alice; "yet (and her voice became full of earnestness) my whole nature is crying out to me that you are doing very, very wrong, and I beg you, I entreat you, by all the nobleness in you, that you will be true to yourself."

"A quick, impatient flush creased Antonia's features and then faded again. She echoed, with a withering look: "I can't be myself. You had better urge me, as the Methodists do, to change my nature, if you hope to do me any good. Nothing less than a complete metamorphosis of soul and body would answer."

"O," said Alice, "I believe that there are possibilities in your nature which you hardly suspect. Only be true to the highest in you."

"Miss Wilding," said Antonia, bending forward in her earnestness, "if you had told me that you were unjust and cruel, yet I know - O Miss Wilding, I would gladly lay down my life this moment if I believed myself worthy to touch your hand!" She turned suddenly, and left the room and the house before Alice could speak to her.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

CEILIA stayed only a very short time in the city. She had not dared to make a long engagement, as she could not be certain of Dick's movements, and she had an excessive repugnance to playing with Antoinetta. The latter, however, was engaged for some weeks, and so it happened that one day, walking on the Common, Alice met her face to face. She wore the same black suit she wore when she had made her memorable visit, and was effusively disguised so as to be as much a stranger girl, except in answer to the most obvious question. It vexed Antonia to see her, as she had an excessive repugnance to playing with Antoinetta. The latter, however, was engaged for some weeks, and so it happened that one day, walking on the Common, Alice met her face to face. She wore the same black suit she wore when she had made her memorable visit, and was effusively disguised so as to be as much a stranger girl, except in answer to the most obvious question. It vexed Antonia to see her, as she had an excessive repugnance to playing with Antoinetta. The latter, however, was engaged for some weeks, and so it happened that one day, walking on the Common, Alice met her face to face. She wore the same black suit she wore when she had made her memorable visit, and was effusively disguised so as to be as much a stranger girl, except in answer to the most obvious question.
Alice hesitated. She hated herself for it. She wanted to be true to her belief that nothing external can injure us, and yet it was hard to be asked to walk in open day with such a woman as this. True, it was not probable that her companion would be recognized by any one. Still Alice thought it would be insincere to agree to do anything she should be ashamed to have known. And with Antonia sincerity was her only hope.

"I will walk with you," said she, "but you know that it could not be pleasant for me to have my friends know it. Will you go home with me and talk with me there?"

A spasm of pain passed from head to foot of the ballet-girl; but she answered, "You tell the truth, and that is some comfort. Yes, I will go with you."

They said nothing more till they were in Alice's room. Then Antonia threw back her veil and began.

"You ask me to be good, that is, good according to your ideas. And yet you show me how the past must always drag me down by being unwilling to walk with me."

"The past or the present?" said Alice.

"What do you know of my present, -- or my past either, for that matter," said Antonia, impatiently. "Suppose, for the sake of the argument, that I had determined, just after our last talk, to change my way of living entirely, and had kept my resolution till now, it would have made no difference with you when I asked you to walk with me."

"Because I can see such a little way," replied Alice. "I can't read your heart, or know your motives. It would be unnatural that you should feel that I am unjust and that you have been hurt; but I think the comfort of knowing the reality would have sustained you."

"Ah, I wonder if it would!" said Antonia, musingly. "Perhaps so, because I am proud. Listen to me," she added. "I am going to tell you something about my life. You are unjust, but less so than other people, and so I have a fancy to tell you that which would make some people pity me."

"And you are determined that I shall not pity, but justify you," said Alice, quietly.

"Perhaps. Listen, at any rate. My mother was a ballet-dancer, a good dancer, but not a good woman, nor yet a very good one, -- as good to me as mothers in general, I suppose, bringing me up in the only way it is possible for any mother to bring up a child. I loved her. I have not always loved her since, when I have reflected what a difference it would have made to me if she had been a different woman. But I know now that she was not so very much to blame.

Her mother had been a ballet-dancer, and so back through generations. We have a proud pedigree, though obscure in name, since we trace it entirely through the female side of the house, -- house, by the way, we have had none."

There was supreme bitterness on her lips and in her voice, and she could not resist the impulse to tuck her dress into her belt and begin a swift, whirling dance, twirling her fingers above her head to imitate tutus. She stopped in a moment, however, and said, "Is it best to go on?"

"I wish you would," said Alice, "but you must do as you like."

"Well, in a word, we have all been illegitimate children, with the usual characteristics of such. It would be mean and cruel in me to blame my mother for having been like me because she was trained as I have been. She was excessive in her prettiness and a great flirt, that is, she would have been a great flirt if she had been a rich man's daughter; but, as it was, she was worse, -- what people call worse, but I suppose her motives were about the same, love of admiration and pride in the same traits, I find it very jolly to flirt."

"Thus the lassitude that came in to her eyes as she spoke did not make it seem as if her words were true.

"At fifteen I was familiar when a child with many things which I shall not describe to shock you by repeating. They seemed natural enough, and not hideous as they would to a child who looked at them only after learning something better. If there had been any purity in my nature, I should have turned from them instinctively, of course."

"O the bitter, bitter smile!"

"However, I did not turn away, possibly because I never saw anything to contrast with my life I learned music and dancing and writing, but as for reading I had no great taste for that except in a dramatic point of view, and we never had any books. The plays I took part in were scenic entirely, and I never heard a single word spoken, not even a comedy with a word, till I was fifteen."

There were plenty of such plays at the theatres, of course; but I liked admiration, and unless I was going to play myself! I thought I would be stupid to go to the theatre, which I knew only in its dismal look behind the scenes. I had a great many gay things in my life, but I never had one element of what you would call purity till I was fifteen."

"And what did you think? asked Alice.

"I was quick and bright, but it was in me to think much, so while I seemed to have seen a great deal of the world, I was in absolute ignorance of any mode of life except my own till I was fifteen."

"She stopped here, as if astonished at having said so much in a sober manner, and whistled the Mocking Bird with the most exquisite and comical variations."

"And when you were fifteen? asked Alice anxiously, when she paused.

"Ah," said Antonietta, lifting her eyebrows, "you expect the love-story is coming in here. That is the part that interests all sentimental young ladies so; and then they pity us, O, so, -- and then marry our loves. I did not fall in love at fifteen, and I guess I never did. I don't know as I can tell you what happened to me when I was fifteen."

"Alice dared not ask.

"On the whole, I will tell you what happened when I was fifteen."

She paused again, and Alice almost believed she had gone to sleep, for she had leaned back in her chair and closed her eyes for so long a time. Suddenly, however, she resumed, but without opening her eyes.

"I sprained my ankle one night, not badly, but enough to make it impossible to dance for several days. I had never been ill a day in my life, and it was very irksome to stay by myself. Somebody asked me to go to the theatre with him to while away the time. He said that he would bring a carriage for me, and as I could walk with a little help, it was easy enough to go. It was strange that I had never been before to see any play in which I had not a part; and I was so ignorant that I did not know that the young gentleman had a very good play, he called it, and if I had not been a total stranger in the city. I thought I should enjoy going.

"O well, the play was a third-rate sort of a thing, and the scenery was very good; but the story seemed to me absolutely new. It was of a girl who kept herself pure through all temptation, and married the only man she loved at the close. Original, was n't it?"

"She opened her eyes and laughed a bitter laugh.

"And what did you think?" asked Alice, almost breathlessly.

"What did I think! Oh! There could be no mistake. A blush, a real blush, swept over Antonia's face. There must have been reserve in her nature to make it so hard for her to tell that which had affected her so much.

"I thought that if I could start pure, then I could do as the heroine did. I knew I had will and pride enough for that, and then -- I knew the past was irrevocable."

"Her voice suddenly quivered. She seemed to try, almost with agony, to prevent herself from faltering in her pride, but she gave way entirely, and with her face bowed in her hands she cried aloud, still struggling to control herself, but sobbing in terrible, half-repressed waves.

"Alice felt her whole soul overflow with sympathy, and she could not resist the impulse to throw her arms about the convulsed figure; but Antonietta pushed her away, and through her sobs articulated "Wait."

"It was many minutes before she became quiet, but at last she was able to speak.

"I would have died before I would have spoken to you, if I had known that I should show you this," said she; "but now that I have spoken, I must
say the rest I have to say, and you must not say anything.

"I was not ignorant in every way, but I had never known before the price the world puts on what it calls virtue. After this, my senses were sharpened, and I soon learned the whole. I knew that I might go on as I had done for a hundred years, and that in the eyes of other people I should be no worse than I was then. I had done wrong, and that was the end for me."

"The world is severe," said Alice, "but not so hard as that. All are ready to forgive one sin,—at least, all charitable people."

"Possibly," said Antoinetta, with darkening eyes; "but mine had not been one sin. I had loved no one. No one can forgive that kind of sin!"

She raised her voice as if to ask a question while she made the assertion. Alice found it harder and harder to say anything of comfort to her. She was forced to reply: "It is right that the distinction should be made between love and that which defiles it. It is, I ought to confess, a matter to which I have merely trespasses upon a legal right which than that is in itself wrong. There may be a true marriage. When the tie has not been sanctioned by a clergyman, though I believe it is not often—but, so—"

"You need not say what," said Antoinetta. "I know very well what you mean. That is what makes me so horrible to myself. If I had sinned from love alone, do you suppose I should count myself impure?"

Alice thought sadly of Dora, and knew that the remorse would have been as bitter, though the sin would have been so much less. Is it when we have done a deeper wrong that a lesser one seems nothing?

"I have that in me," continued Antoinetta, "which would make me able to stand up gayly against the whole world if I felt myself right. If I had sinned for love, even if I counted it sin, I should hold my head up high; but I am ashamed to have done a—low thing."

Her voice sank, her head drooped, she looked hopeless in her sad beauty.

"It is not the sin, you see, which weighs upon me," she continued, "nor the shame before the world, but the shame to myself."

"If that is it," said Alice, suddenly, "you need not lose hope. Be what you wish you were."

A strange look crossed Antoinetta's face. The spirit of caprice again possessed her, and silently, in a musing way, she danced about the room for three or four minutes. Then she said: "I didn't finish my story. I told you that I thought all these thoughts at that time and concluded that I was completely gone. If I had been pure then, I think I should have stayed so; but I saw no particular reason for changing my way of life, since nothing could change the past. I liked the gayety of it too. But since I am telling the truth for once" (she began to laugh again) "I will confess that from that moment to this I have never found myself thoroughly enjoying it. I have liked the glitter and excitement, have purposely involved myself deeper and deeper to keep from thinking, but I have not enjoyed it."

"And now you are sorry," said Alice, simply.

"I do not know," said Antoinetta, with an impatient gesture. "I don't believe I want to change. No other kind of life could suit me so well, miserable as this is. I was born for a dancer. See here!" She raised her long black dress above the ankle. It was an exquisite ankle, and her foot was beautiful, slender, and arched.

"You see I was meant to dance. It is in every fibre of my being, mental and physical. You are beautiful, Miss Wilding; that is, your face is beautiful, but what can a dancer with a flat chest and an ankle with a bone in it like yours (she glanced at the foot of Alice, who wore a short dress and stout loose boots)? "Know about the thrill I feel when the bowing music begins and I find myself flying through space with an ecstasy as if I had wings, and see dimly the thousands of eyes which glow as I float, and feel the soft rain of roses about me?" She had spoken with great excitement, and the color came quickly. Then she stopped as suddenly as she had begun, and seemed ashamed to have said so much of her feelings. But she tossed her head and went on: "I suppose you may think I am ridiculous, but I have genius, though of a kind you can't appreciate, and it is presumption in you to ask me to give up my life."

"I should not dare ask it," said Alice. "You are mistaken in thinking I ever have. Every one who has genius fulfills his duty only when he is carrying out that genius. You ought to dance. Do you feel dancing and the rest of your life to be inseparable?"

"How can they be separated?" said Antoinetta, with energy. "The same traits which make me a good dancer ought to make me a thousand other things. I might be converted, or something, but all my old friends would give me up, and of course no church body would patronize me while I dance."

"You would not wish it," said Alice, smiling.

"No, I should not," said Antoinetta. "but you see I should lose all companions, and that would kill me. I am social in my nature. I could have been the greatest belle in the country if I had only been brought up differently. It was my fate; but O, I beg you to be true to the rest of your life to be inseparable I".

"Ah, yes! " said Antoinetta, with a quickening voice. "Do you suppose I ever could feel that if I lived pure for a hundred years?"

"Yes, I know you would," replied Alice; "you would learn that God has made it impossible for any past to crush us."

"Miss Wilding," said Antoinetta, in a thrilling tone, "I never believed that such hope and faith could come into my heart as you bring to it, but O, you do cause what ails me! It is that I should put away all pleasant dreams out of my life. I was born to love, and I can never marry."

"O, you cannot tell," began Alice, but Antoinetta stopped her sternly.

"I am not speaking at random. You won't understand, because I must seem so different to you; but I could never marry a man who did not respect me. Even in the wild life I have lived I have been so proud that I have forced people to respect me. You think there might be some large-souled man who would pity me perhaps enough to marry me. I think there are no such, and, if there were, I would die before I would marry any man like me like a star above him. You see that could never be."

"Perhaps not," said Alice. "I think I was wrong. You must not look for happiness, though I am sure it will come to you when you look for it least, or something higher. Just think what it would be to be really as high as a star, though no one called you one. And how much higher is the star which rises from the earth than the one which has always shone in the heavens!"

"I fancy the mould would always cling to it," said Antoinetta, curving her lip. "Moreover, to change the subject, I have a lover at this present moment. I suspect I would have been the greatest belle in the country if I had been brought up differently. So you see my way would not be an easy one. Good night."

She rose so swiftly that Alice had barely time to seize her hand and detain her while she said: "I do not ask your confidence, I do not ask a promise; but O, I beg you to be true to the noble life awakening in you, and I promise you that I will always and everywhere be a friend to you, that I will love you, and respect you, and help you if I can."

"You have helped me; but we walk different ways. I do not want for a friend. It would be ridiculous for me to make a promise which would break to-morrow. By-by."

She laughed and waved her hand coquettishly as she broke away from Alice's grasp and ran lightly down stairs.

Nevertheless, when her lover next came to her he received the unprecedented message that she was engaged, and would be the happiest not to repeat his call. As the worst construction is often put on the best deeds, he believed she had proved faithless to him.
CHAPTER XXXV.

"ROBERT," said Miss Twigg, "that carrying with it a tiny woman's glove.

"Yes, you do," said Miss Twigg.

"You shall go in a close carriage, and I will take care that nobody sees you.

Robert looked at it sharply and passed.

"If you promise not to look at me," said he, "you are playing me a trick. There is somebody here, some one who will see me, though you know how I feel about it. Tell me the truth; a silly woman's fancy, you have promised to give her a sight of the hideous dwarf!"

"Good Heavens!" said Nickerson, "you must know I am a monster to conceive such a thing. You shall know the truth, rather than believe that. There is a lady in the next room who came to me very unexpectedly to-day, and she wishes not to be seen as much as you do. She also wishes to leave this house at once. If you will promise not to look not at her while she passes through this room, as she must, she will promise not to look at you.

"And how shall I know whether she keeps her promise?" asked Robert, suspiciously.

Nickerson was about to reply angrily, but the sight of the dwarf's piteous face touched him, and he said, "Conceal yourself behind that drapery, and that will answer the purpose."

Robert did as he was requested, and Nickerson went into the inner room, and spoke earnestly for several minutes with some one within. Then Robert heard footsteps in the room, and then—

"What is the matter with him?" said Miss Twigg.

Robert's attention was attracted to the curtain, and he asked Nickerson, "Why should I marry you? I am not rich enough, either. I have enough money to live in an exceedingly easy style as a bachelor, but not enough to live in such good style with a wife and a parcel of children. My painting will never bring in enough for that, and I don't think I am fitted for blacksmithing or anything else that would provide pennies. Besides, Robert, being a bachelor is an extremely comfortable way to live. I have a cook who knows every peculiarity of my taste, and I suppose, if I had a wife, the poor thing might want half her earnings. But, as it is, so there would be a complication to begin with. And so on and so on, there would be some new anxiety coming up every day, and I am sure I should yield, of course, all the time, and be wretched and miserable accordingly. I like my freedom rather too well."

"How is it?" asked Robert, in a nervous, timid way. "Did 't you ever fall in love?"

"Bless your heart, fall in love with every pretty woman I see! I have lost my heart to thousands of girls, but it has a remarkable faculty, like some of those horrid crawling things you read about in natural histories, of being too fairly gone that it sprouts anew in as good condition as ever, all ready to be conquered by the next charmer."

"But you know what I mean," said Robert, beginning to lose his temper again.

"I am not at all sure that I do," said Nickerson, with composure. "I suppose you have some ridiculous idea of love gained from novels. I have never experienced it, so, of course, my evidence is only negative; but I guess I am justified in calling it both, because I have a peculiarly susceptible temperament, — a peculiarly susceptible temperament, — a peculiarly susceptible temperament, — a peculiarly susceptible temperament, — and you can't expect me to be good according to your standard. I am pretty much like the rest of mankind. I just told you that I don't pretend to belong to a superior race."

Robert stood for a moment with an air of dejection, and then answered mournfully: "The possibility that it shall be returned; that beauty to compensate for his deformity.

"Well, well," said Nickerson, after a moment, "what is the matter with you?"

Robert looked over from head to foot that tall woman, graceful figure of the young man, "You call yourself a man," said he, in his roughest tone.

"Exactly," replied the young gentleman. "I am apparently not a woman, and I don't pretend to belong to a superior race.

"I hate you," growled Robert.

"Come, come," rejoined Nickerson, impatiently. "I can't be insulted, even by you."

"Even by you," Robert winced. Nickerson had never said anything so unkind to him before. The dwarf's head dropped on his breast, and the tears filled his eyes. Nickerson saw it, and with his usual careless kind-heartedness said: "Ah well, Robert, you mustn't be vexed. You don't know the world, you will all be men of the artistic world, and you can't expect me to be good according to your standard. I am really much like the rest of mankind.

Robert forced himself to be calm, and then answered mournfully: "The power of love has been taken away from me. I long for it in a sick, wishful way; but to me it can never come. A great tear gathered and rolled slowly down Robert's cheek. He dashed it angrily back, ashamed that his weakness and deformity had taken from him even that sign of manhood, tearlessness.

"What is the matter?" said Nickerson, now in genuine astonishment. Robert forced himself to be calm, and then answered mournfully: "The power of love has been taken away from me. I long for it in a sick, wishful way; but to me it can never come. A great tear gathered and rolled slowly down Robert's cheek. He dashed it angrily back, ashamed that his weakness and deformity had taken from him even that sign of manhood, tearlessness.

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that one cannot believe his soul less so, O Ralph, that such a man should so have debased his soul that his power of loving is also lost, that power for one grain of which I would cheerfully lay down half my life, is enough to make the very stones weep!"

Ralph paced impatiently up and down the studio. "Well, Robert," said he, in a few minutes, "I don't mind confiding in you (still that repulsive emphasis of yours), you are proved enough in general. I am vexed to the core to-day. The young lady who was just here came on a far more moral errand than you think. She has been lecturing me too, and between the two you may suppose I am beginning to realize my sins, or, at any rate, my sufferings." He smiled sadly, and rather languidly.

"Nevertheless, Mr. Rix, you have hit the nail quite on the head. I have been in love so many times that I have no power of loving. I should be ennuyed to death by any woman in a week. The only reason that any flirtation of mine lasts longer is that I know the character of the women, so that I am as punctual in seeing how long I can keep her from turning traitor to me. A woman I was sure of,—bah! how insipid she would be! I should have no call to exert myself to please her, and should therefore miss that healthful activity which all natures require." said Robert, indignantly.

"And to justify this evil passion you will not only debase yourself, but mislead those you pretend to love!" said Robert, indignantly.

"Not so fast, my dear sir," said Ralph. "That is just the way with all you saintly creatures, because a man has done one wrong thing, you straightway suppose him to have done all. I won't plead guilty to more than my actual share of sins. I have debased myself enough, I allow, but as for misleading any of the actresses and ballet-dancers, and so forth, that I have known, I have a higher opinion of their snowliness than to think I have revealed any new depths of iniquity to them."

"You own you do wrong, and yet keep on," said Robert, wonderingly.

"Why, yes, most people do, though some palaver and persuade themselves that they don't do wrong. To tell you the truth, though, I was just going to reflect on my ways as you came in, having had, as I told you, already one lecture on my evil courses to-day. But, after all, eat bonzo!"

"Why not?" said Robert, with eagerness.

"O bother!" said Ralph, "for the reason I just mentioned. I have lost the power of actually loving anybody, and therefore marriage would be too irksome an experiment to try, and you can expect such a wretched as I to reform under any other conditions."

"But perhaps you would feel differently in a little while," urged Robert. "Perhaps, if your mind were turned in a different direction from what it is now, you would find among the many pure women you know some one whom you would love."

Ralph laughed with a little bitterness. "My dear Robert," said he, "I see no women. The world is still a little askew in this nineteenth century. If you are as rich as Croesus, as handsome as Apollo, and as talented as Webster, that I may stand a chance of getting into society, such as it is; but what is that? A dance at midnight, and a call with kid gloves on in a drawing-room next day. Intensely stupid; yet there have been some saints who have persevered (I was taught that) till they have pierced through the social strata and come to a rational acquaintance in the end. But generally even such perseverance is not rewarded by finding anything very attractive, and there is too much drudgery in the perseverance for me, even if I were sure of being well paid. A person out of society might as well be out of the world so far as any opportunity of becoming acquainted with modest young girls is concerned. I see plenty of faces which look attractive, but though I have confided as much as my heart's desire to accomplishes and small-talk at hand, never a one do I get acquainted with. Of course not; men and women are not thrown together in any rational way. However, that is not the rub with me, for though I have demonstrated the impossibility of knowing anybody in a decent way, I suppose I should believe it possible, however contrary to reason, if that were the only obstacle."

He paused with a shadow on his handsome countenance, and Robert waited anxiously.

"Support me make a clean breast of it to you," said he in a moment, lightly laughing. "I have known one girl of whom I did not tire. She was new and original every moment, and fresh and beautiful and charming and witty and affectionate and fifty more things."

"And did not she love you?" asked Robert, in a voice full of sympathy.

"O you simpleton!" said Ralph, kindly. "Well, yes, perhaps she loved—loves me. I have no proof to the contrary. I shouldn't in the least wonder if she would marry me. On the whole, I think she would, though I am not sure of it."

"What then?" asked Robert, wondering.

"O well, I wouldn't marry her. I would marry any old maid—Miss Twigg, for instance—quickly, Robert. My innocent, this girl, the only girl I never got of, is, in common with a dozen more whom I have tired of,—sumpt."

"Well," said Robert, boldly, "so are you, if you come to that. I believe, from what you say, you must have been as bad as she."

Ralph flashed in an instant, but did not look angry. "Very true, Robert, and there the matter lies in a nutshell. If I were a reformer, or a philanthropist, or a milksop, I suppose I might say we took one for what he now is, and not for what he has been. And then most of them will bow down and worship without inquiring about the respect at all. The poor things in general have such a deathly stupid life that they are glad of any change; and then they like to sacrifice themselves, and, besides, children are a compensation. So a man may set his standard as high as he pleases, and he need not fear that the ideal she will object to him because he don't come up to her standard. I fancy there is something intrinsically in the nature of the case which makes it not wrong for a woman to do wrong than for a man; at any rate, so the world thinks, and I am satisfied."

"But you don't seem satisfied," said Robert, doubtfully.

"True," answered Ralph, with a flitting smile. "Such is the contradiction of human nature. Virtue is its own reward used to be in the copy-books. I don't know how true that is, having never tried it; but I know its contrary, that I don't need the world to punish me for my sins, said sins having brought their own punishment. I can look forward to a pleasant animal life, eating, drinking, smoking, and so on, but I have insensitized myself from any very high enjoyment. Some men get to my pass and are saved by marriage, but marriage is not for me. I have an indefinite remembrance of a pre-existent state in which I understood what marriage might be, and that prevents me from undertaking any sham. So here I am, and you see my pitiable condition, Robert." He smiled slightly, and with a tinge of bitterness.
"Can nothing help you?" asked Robert, earnestly.

"No," said Ralph, with composure. "I have thought the matter over, and I find it can't be done. I have n't energy and will and goodness enough to help myself up, and the only person who could help me—as I said before, she can't help me. So I shall drift along, and get as much fun out of life as I can without too much exertion. Come, Robert, look at my pictures, or that ogre Twigg will be back for you before you have seen them."

"I don't care about them," said Robert, slowly. "They are only landscapes, and they don't mean much."

"Yes," said Ralph, moodily. "Of course I shan't attempt to paint faces with such a soul as I have. And I suppose my landscapes lack something, that I have n't perception to discover the heart of a scene. Well, well, well, look at them, at all events, so that Twigg may not think you have been idle, and worm out of you what I have been saying."

Robert looked at the pictures without speaking till the carriage returned; Ralph, meantime, sat coolly smoking a cigar of the choicest brand.

"I said I was cursed beyond everybody," said Robert, as he turned to go; "but I would rather be myself, monster as I am, than live for one day like you."

"Vive verum," remarked Ralph in an undertone at the door closed. But his face was very grave, he looked weary, and he painted no more that day.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

ONE chilly evening in the fall, Aleck sat by his open fire studying as usual, when Aaron came in with the announcement that one of Squire Jameson's children was sick, and that the Squire had sent for Aleck to go there at once. He could hardly suppress a chuckle as he said so, for it had been many a month since Aleck had been summoned into any family who were able to pay for his services.

"Tell him I can't go," said Aleck quietly, hardly taking his eyes from his book.

Aaron was thunderstruck, and insinuated something about the child's danger, knowing his employer too well to use other arguments.

"Their regular physician is a good one," said Aleck. But an hour later the messenger returned and insisted on seeing Dr. Hume himself. The child was very sick, and Dr. Armstrong had declared he dared do nothing more without a consultation. Had the Squire been a poor unflinching man, though twice his enemy, Aleck would not have hesitated an instant. Now all his pride was roused. And yet this strange young man cared so much more about doing right than for what the world thought, that he answered in a moment, "I will drive back with you."

The child was really in a critical state, and the only possible remedy was so dangerous a one that Dr. Armstrong had not dared to risk it on his own responsibility.

"It must be risked," said Aleck, decidedly.

The other brightened at this confirmation of his own view.

"We must not let the Squire know," said he.

"We must," said Aleck. And when the other shook his head he added, "I will take all the responsibility."

"No, no," said Dr. Armstrong, ashamed. And Aleck could not but be grateful to him.

The child recovered. The danger was past that night, and Aleck did not go to the house again. He had not spoken to the Squire while there, though the latter had evidently wished to come to an understanding. But the illness of the child had made it easy to silence conversation.

At last, one evening, the Squire, finding that Dr. Hume did not call, or send his bill, felt compelled to go to him and thank him for his services and offer payment.

"I should prefer to be paid nothing," said Aleck, proudly.

"What?" said the Squire, looking angry.

"You know that no money could have tempted me to enter your house," said Aleck.

The Squire grew purple in the face.

"I will pay you. It is lawful. I won't be under such obligations to you."

"I supposed not," said Aleck. "I don't force the matter, of course."

So he made out his bill as usual.

"But that is n't enough," said the Squire. "I told you, when I sent for you, that I would make it anything you wanted. Of course it was different for you to come than for any one else."

"Yes," said Aleck, "but the difference was not a money difference. I shall not take another cent."

"Suppose," said the Squire, fidgeting uneasily, "suppose—a-ah!—well—what if I make you an apology?"

"I don't want an apology," said Aleck. "I suppose you did what you thought right."

"O, confirmed it!" said the Squire, more and more discomposed. "You are so everlastingly radical. I always liked you well enough."

Aleck smiled in a queer way. "No doubt. But I confess I have yet to see what difference my radical opinions can make in my value as a physician."

"Confirmed it!" said the Squire again, in whom the leaven of gratitude had been working for days, and who was by this time fairly ashamed of himself.

"Let bygones be bygones. I wish I had n't done it now. But there is enough business in town to keep you both busy. If you would only give up two or three things that are of no practical importance, I would see that you went to Congress next year,—by George, I would!"

"I should have no wish to go to Congress except for those very two or three things," said Aleck. "And I would never accept any appointment due to your influence. I never will bind myself to any views, and I do not wish you to sacrifice your conscience on my behalf."

"By George! I believe you could be trusted. I can't vote for you, especially as you don't want me to, when you have such horrid opinions. But I can say, and say it heartily too, that you are a man to be respected and that you are the best doctor in the world. There, won't you give me your hand on that?"

Aleck half smiled and held out his hand. He did not believe that dignity ever consisted in refusing to forgive another.

From that day his affairs prospered. Strange, is it not that a wholly upright and honorable man can yet be injured or helped so much by a man of meaner mould? That is that there may be hope for the mean men, you see. The Squire's good word brought a troop of Aleck's old patients back to him, and, as far as money was concerned, he found himself in a flourishing condition. He knew, however, that he should have to live a noble life for many years before that district would trust a man of his opinions to represent them in politics, and he felt how surely the vision of his youth had passed away to return no more.

"Ah well, the worker dies, but the work goes on," he said to himself, and comforted himself thereby.

Dick Stacy, meantime, was elected to Congress,—a man of massive intellect, honorable nature, and broad but not dangerous views. He still believed that woman was made out of a rib of man.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

The actor of high comedy connected with the troupe with which Celia performed fell ill. It was a question who should take his place.

"Mrs. Brown," said the manager, "the Minstrels are having a little vacation now, and I might get one of them till their building is repaired. Would you object to that very much?"

As Celia believed in high tragedy, she could not avoid an expression of disgust. The manager had suspected how it would be; but her services were so valuable that he did not want to engage any obnoxious person to act in a play with her without saying something to her about it.

"I really don't see what I can do," continued he; "there is a perfect dearth of comic actors just now, and there is one fellow, Catherty by name, in that troupe who is irresistibly funny."
"It takes something more than being funny to act a witty part," said Celia, with supreme scorn.

"Well, I believe this fellow has more in him. But, if you don't like my plan, suggest another." The manager was a little provoked.

"Do as you like," said Celia. "It doesn't matter much to me. I don't suppose it will do me any harm to exchange a few sentences on the stage even with a man I can't respect.

The manager laughed a little, as he went away, at the curious ideas people have of what makes a man worth respecting or not.

The time came for rehearsal. Celia sat in an arm-chair, soliloquizing in a tragic style, when her lackey, the obnoxious minstrel, appeared to deliver a message. Celia started up to receive him, but suddenly stopped short, transfixed. All the metamorphosis of dress could not deceive her. In the coal-black eyes and hair of the pretended Catherty she recognized the eyes and hair of her dismal cousin, Frank Buckram. He recognized her at the same moment, and consternation entered his soul. He had been away from the parental roof for many years, but the wholesome maternal discipline had been so effectual that he shrank with terror even now at any reminder of it.

Celia recovered in an instant. She was not sure Frank knew her, and she hoped he would not. So she advanced and said the words of her part without any further token of recognition; but Frank, with trembling knees, whispered to her, while she was speaking, "Don't tell of me,—will you, Celia?"

She almost laughed outright to see how ridiculously timid he forgot that she had any interest in keeping quiet as well as himself. "Don't be a goose, Frank," said she, between her sentences. "Don't let anybody see we know each other. I will talk to you by and by." Frank was irresistibly funny, notwithstanding his perturbation. Even Celia, in the most tragic scenes, could hardly keep a straight face. She had not thought her lugubrious cousin ever had half the wit in him.

"What do you think of Catherty?"

Frank looked abashed. "I did think I had one friend," said he, in an injured tone. "I am sure you used to like jolly things, and now you look disgusted because I am a comic actor."

"Well, I must say I am," said Celia. "I think the Minstrels are decidedly low.

"I don't believe you ever went to hear them," said Frank, puckering up spirit.

"I am thankful to say I never did," replied Celia.

"Then you don't know anything about them," said Frank. "I tell you it is the jolliest place in the world. I never had a single good time in my life till I ran away and got into that company; and now,—Jiminy!—don't we get off jokes, though? and all the people laugh. O, I tell you what, it is fun! I suppose you would call it coarse, though," added he, in a moment of candor.

"I should think you would get tired to death of it," said Celia. "How can you keep saying over the same jokes night after night?"

"Just the same as you pretend you cry every night," retorted Frank; "only it is a great deal better fun to laugh. But then the rest of them do get tired of it; but I never do. I suppose it is because I had such an awful dull time when I was little that I can never get enough of the other kind."

"Yes, I suppose so," said Celia, relenting. "I don't blame you much when I think of your childhood. But I think from the way you played to-day you might do something better than low comedy. I think you might play comic parts some, but those which have pathos in them for sure.

"St. Peter!" said Frank, "you don't suppose I want to take to smuggling again, just after I have wiped my weeping eyes of all the tears I shed when I was a small boy? No, you don't, sir! Not if the court knows herself, and she think she does. I tell you, Celia, (he dropped his voice, mysteriously,) "it is no great fun to me to think about sober things, for I suppose the horrid things they used to say when I was little are all true, though I don't believe a word of them. I suppose the old fellow will be after me some day, sure, but then I don't know as I can help it. Before I ran away I tried tremendously to be converted, and I found I couldn't. So then I concluded that since I had gone to swing for it anyway, I might as well enjoy myself the little time I could, and I ran away. I suppose it is my own fault that I ain't elected, but you see, I can't help it, so what is the use of thinking about it?"

"Shall I ever go home again?" asked Celia, with some curiosity.

"I don't believe I shall," said Frank. "I have pangs once in a while and think I will; but then, you know, I couldn't stand mother's tongue. Yet she is an awful good mother. My conscience pricks sometimes when I think how good she is, and how hard she tried to bring me up straight, and how disappointed she must be. I sometimes think I will go and see her; but, you know, if I did, there would be the end of me. I should have to be converted and be a Sunday-school teacher the rest of my life. Well, I know it is a good thing to be a Sunday-school teacher and have a through ticket to Paradise, but, you know, that ain't my style. It would n't do to run away again, but I know I should have to if I once showed my face at home. So I guess I shall let 'em slide."

Celia had always felt some interest in Frank, because he was the only wicked one in her aunt Buckram's family, and she trusted now that her influence might be sufficient to turn him from his evil ways, i.e., to act high instead of low comedy. But the mischief of his education proved ineradicable. Having had everything good and high always presented to him in nauseating doses, he was forced to believe that he liked low things best; so at the end of a week, when the building of the Minstrels had been repaired, he returned to its congenial shades, and turned somersaults "on the flying trapeze," danced a hornpipe in a hoop-skirt and sang "Captain Jinks," and enjoyed himself.

Celia was disgusted, but kept a little warm corner in her heart for him on account of the old days.
CHAPTER XXXVIII.

WEARILY Alice turned the corner of the little square on which was her lodging. It seemed as if her vitality had been drained to the dregs that she had imported to others without receiving for so long that her life-power was wholly spent.

A quick, healthy step rang behind her. She did not look up. A hand was laid lightly but firmly on her shoulder, a voice which always spoke cheerfully and heartfelt, "Alice, I love you."

Alice started as by an electric shock. She turned and saw Aleck standing close beside her. Though it was almost dark, the deepening moonlight showed her fully his grand, courageous face, and she noticed his sudden half-withdrawal from the moment he had spoken; and he added, half with the air of a naughty child who has been caught in mischief, "Oh well, Alice, I didn't mean to begin so, but I vow I couldn't help it; and now, perhaps, to pay for it, you won't let me in, though I came to town purposely to see you."

"I couldn't be so inexcusable, then, as to lock you out," said Alice, shyly and sweetly. "Come in." But she held herself away from him, and ran up stairs so quickly that he could not reach her.

The little room was neat, beautiful, and pure in its arrangements, as it always was; but there was something almost severe about it, perhaps because the night was chilly and there had been no fire in it since Alice went away to town.

She noticed his sudden half-withdrawal and felt a voice which always spoke cheerfully and heartfelt, "Alice, I love you."

Alice only grew more scarlet. "That is expecting me to meet you halfway," said Alice, joyously.

"What shall I say?" said Alice, with a sudden little dimple in each cheek, an unworldly sight, so long had the cheeks been thin and pale.

"And the same words I said to you," said Aleck, joyously.

Alice hung her head and blushed violently. "Won't you speak to me?" said Aleck, in an amused and yet anxious tone.

"What shall I say?" said Alice, with a sudden little dimple in each cheek, an unworldly sight, so long had the cheeks been thin and pale.

"Say the same words I said to you," said Aleck, joyously.

Alice only grew more scarlet. "That is expecting me to meet you halfway," said Alice, joyously.

"And that is right," said Alice, proudly.

And if you do love me you will not find it so very hard to say; and if you don't, why, then—"

He stood erect, and Alice looked up at him. The firelight fell upon him, and the moonlight streamed through the window over her. The color receded from her face, and she was calm and pure as always. "Well, then, Aleck," said she, and the little dimples played more upon her mouth, "I do love you."

That is enough to know about that evening.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

THE spring came, and with it Alice's wedding-day. It was early in June, nearly as Celia's had been, and even simpler than that. They had no guests whatever, and Alice wore a plain, white muslin, and a delicate lace veil. Her pupils had sent her many little tokens made by their own hands, with which she might adorn her new home; but she had no costly gifts, nor did she need them. The best gifts had come to her.

They had decided to take no wedding-tour. Aleck was not yet rich enough to do things simply because he wished it, and Alice was worn out with the city and teaching, and could imagine nothing pleasanter than to be quiet in the beautiful country town where she had passed her childhood. So they went home that very day, after the wedding.

How well Alice remembered the last days she had spent in that place! She seemed to feel her father's spirit near her, as she drove in on her marriage day. Aaron, dressed in his best suit, was waiting with a carriage, and in the beautiful twilight they drove along the little street.

"Where are you taking me?" said Alice, suddenly.

"We just passed your house. Oh, oh!" and she seized his arm to still her emotion, for they were driving up the carriage-way of the stone cottage, every room of which she loved so well.

Aleck smiled. The carriage stopped. He alighted, and held out his arms to her. "This is our home, Alice," said he, with a happy face, "—my bridal gift to you."

"O, Aleck, how thoughtful you are!" said Alice, as he drew her gently into the house.

What dews of peace descended upon that cottage! Since her father died, Alice had always cared for others, but though she had received large measures of love always, as such beautiful natures must do, she had never known what it was to be taken care of till now. Aleck peremptorily forbade her, underscoring his commands because he was a doctor, from doing anything that could weary her, and so by degrees vitality came back to her slight and over-tasked frame. She busied herself in arranging her rooms in the prettiest and freshest ways, in contriving the most beautiful adornments of flowers, in practising once more the pieces she loved of the grand old masters, from whom she had been exiled almost during her busy life of the last few years, and in taking long rides with Aleck through the June woods.

"But remember, Aleck," said she, one day, "this is not going to last, or I would n't do it at all. It is very pleasant and blessed, I know, and as long as I can pretend I do it for my health I do n't have many pangs of conscience. But with so much work to be done in the world, no one has a right to be idle, and some day you shall see me a noleable farmer's wife."

"Never," said Aleck, drawing her close to him. "If that had been right for you, I should not have lived here alone two or three dreary years. At least, I should have asked you to come with me. Of course, I don't know what you would have said."

Alice laughed happily. "I think you might have asked me then, when I might have helped you, instead of waiting till you could give everything."

"For you this work was not the best," said Aleck.

"Quote the rest, if you dare, sir," said Alice, stroking his hand softly. "I will quote it, properly changed:—"

"'Your love be a sweetest, And able to commend the kind of work For love's sake merely.'"

So, if the world had n't prospered with you, you would have deformed me. I thought you were too broad to believe in useless self-sacrifice."

"It was n't needless," said Alice.

"I could n't have borne to see your life crushed."

"I quote the rest, if you dare, sir," said Alice. "I could n't have borne to see your life crushed."

"As if it could do anything but expand and blossom and grow and be with you!" exclaimed Alice.

No man, conservative or radical, transcendental or evangelical, could resist that. So Aleck kissed her before he went on.

"But now, you see, when you are quite well, you will feel free to do whatever you like in the heavens above or the earth beneath, only don't choose the first, or the angels would lay claim to you."

"You know well what I want to do," said Alice. "I want to make my home beautiful, in the first place, and I would gladly, gladly do the actual work if it were necessary; but as it is I shall have time to teach a little too, something like literature or botany to the young girls in town, two or three times a week."

She was so it was. The blessing Alice proved to those half-cultivated young girls cannot be estimated. The world must have been always better for the sweet influences which flowed out of that quiet cottage.

Quiet, and yet there were old and new friends constantly coming there; and life was a hearty, healthy, happy thing in that same little cottage.
No life worth living is without its moments of pain. Alec's great hope in the world seemed to be dashed to the ground forever, and Alice had her sister to mourn over. But the greatness and peace of a true love overshadowed them, and they trusted always in God.

CHAPTER XL

RICHARD STACY walked with a nodding step through the streets one winter night. He turned from the broader thoroughfares, and found the narrow one in which Robert Rix lived. The effect of the room, aside from its perfect neatness, was dependent entirely on the flowers in it. Tyes and other vines covered the bare walls from floor to ceiling. Hanging plants, so luxuriant that they hid completely the rude boxes in which they grew, hung from the windows and from hooks in the wall above, and roses and heliotropes and violets bloomed all about the room. She had made the floor to ceiling, hanging plants, so luxuriant that they hid completely the rude boxes in which they grew, hung from the windows and from hooks in the wall above, and roses and heliotropes and violets bloomed all about the room.

He knocked, and Dora said, "Come in," rising as she did so. Her face surprised him as much as her room. He had guessed she would be thin and pale, and so she was, and his conscience reproached him bitterly as he saw it. From that he knew of her he had guessed she would be careless in dress; but the simple and rather rusty black alpaca fitted her wasted form with scrupulous neatness, and she wore a white apron and delicate blue ribbons which relieved the wanness of her face. It was the face itself which relieved the wanness of her face, the face which showed that, though still young, she must have seen very bitter sorrow and care; but it was very sweet and peaceful, with a certain indwelling happiness which seemed as if it could never be disturbed. That was the first impression only, for the moment she recognized her visitor the face changed, it hardened visibly, the corners of the mouth and eyes were drawn down with pain, the pathetic mouth grew bitter and proud, and all the peace was gone. Her work fell from her hands, and she stood still without speaking.

"Dora," said Dick, "in his sad, grand voice, "I have come to ask you to forgive me."

"I have forgiven you," she said, in a dead way, without looking at him.

"I have thought sometimes," re-announced Dick, "and lately I have thought so very often, that, although you broke our engagement yourself, it was not done willingly, but because I had first neglected you, though I had held to the bond."

"You know that," said Dora, bitterly.

"I told you so in the letter I wrote you before you were married."

Dick's astonishment was genuine.

"What!" said he; "I received no letter."

Dora raised her eyes and looked at him closely for a minute, and then said, "Ah! well, then, I ought to forgive you."

"What was it?" said Dick, anxiously. "It can't be that you renewed the engagement. Though it had been my wedding-day, I believe I should have heard that."

"I believe you would," said Dora, wearily, "and you robbed me of all faith when you did not send me a word in answer. But you were not to blame, and it is better as it is. I forgive you. O, do go away!"

The last was said with sudden energy, as if she could not breathe another moment in his presence. All the old agonies were welling up so fiercely in her heart, yet possibly she was glad he lingered.

"Dora," said he, in his most persuasive tones, which were nearly irresistible, "you must first hear what I came to say. I want to prove to you that I wish to be forgiven. You know that I have no wife?"

Dora bowed her head.

"Dora, be my wife," said he, "as you should have been years ago. He attempted to seize her hands, but she suddenly drew herself back, her face scorched and her eyes sparkling with indignation.

"Richard Stacy," said she, "I did not believe you would insult me. I have forgiven you very grievous wrongs, but this is something I can never forgive."

Richard was thunderstruck. He had imagined that he might receive reproaches; but he had not thought his great sacrifice could be so misunderstood. He saw at once that he had been in error, though he could not tell exactly where the fault lay. "Believe me, Dora," said he, sadly, "I do not understand what I have said to insult you. I mean from the bottom of my soul to be perfectly true and honorable with you."

Dora was silent for a moment. She had had long practice in keeping silence, but she remembered that she had never cared to exercise it except when she was happy, and he expected to find her forlorn. She had first neglected you, though I had had to look for her forenoon. The effect of the room, aside from its perfect neatness, was dependent entirely on the flowers in it. Tyes and other vines covered the bare walls from floor to ceiling. Hanging plants, so luxuriant that they hid completely the rude boxes in which they grew, hung from the windows and from hooks in the wall above, and roses and heliotropes and violets bloomed all about the room. She had made the floor to ceiling, hanging plants, so luxuriant that they hid completely the rude boxes in which they grew, hung from the windows and from hooks in the wall above, and roses and heliotropes and violets bloomed all about the room.

So he rang the bell. Miss Twigg opened the door and glared at him as if she had a pistol in her pocket ready for any emergency.

"Does Miss May—Miss Dora May—live here?" asked Dick.

"Yes, she does," said Miss Twigg, suddenly appeased; and most inconsistently forgetting her usual causticness she added, "I suppose you are the brother she expected. Right up four flights of stairs, and her door is directly in front of you."

It was fortunate for Dick that Dora was expecting her brother, otherwise tortures would not have induced Miss Twigg to let him see her without warning.

"If you are not to blame, and it is better as it is. I forgive you. O, do go away!"

The last was said with sudden energy, as if she could not breathe another moment in his presence. All the old agonies were welling up so fiercely in her heart, yet possibly she was glad he lingered.

"Dora," said he, in his most persuasive tones, which were nearly irresistible, "you must first hear what I came to say. I want to prove to you that I wish to be forgiven. You know that I have no wife?"

Dora bowed her head.

"Dora, be my wife," said he, "as you should have been years ago. He attempted to seize her hands, but she suddenly drew herself back, her face scorched and her eyes sparkling with indignation.

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are not a villain, — you must — be — making — a — sacrifice."

She turned round again and looked at him steadily. He could say nothing, she had divined the truth so perfectly.

"Mr. Stacy," she said, "I will never marry you, and so you can tell me the truth. Tell me, now, you came here after you did not come seven years ago."

She spoke imperatively and he was obliged to obey.

"I have realized the wrong I did you, and I believed that all which I could offer belonged of right to you. I believed, in short, that our old engagement was binding."

"But you did not always believe that?" said Dora, quickly. "Why not?"

There was a painful pause before he answered.

"Though you broke the engagement yourself, I know it was really I who did it, though I would never have broken its letter. The truth was that I saw my wife and loved her."

"More than that," said Dora, slowly; "you did not love me. Before you saw Celia Wilding, I knew that, though I tried not to believe it. But I think you were honorable and would have married me if you had not seen her."

"Yet — you did not love me, and you don't love me now."

"There are different kinds of — " began Dick.

"Yes," said Dora, breaking in, with some harshness, "and that has nothing to do with it. You pity me, and your conscience will not let you rest. If you had never loved your wife, you might have married me if you had not seen her."

"But I thought I was doing wrong, and that made it wrong. Besides, we ought to keep the laws which are necessary for society."

"I shall always bless you for what you have said tonight. My sin is a thousand-fold greater than yours, yet for me, too, it is true that all depends on what I am now. I am willing to bear what it seems may have been sent in judgment, and Dora, though it is no palliation of my offence, I may still receive the comfort of knowing that it was not allowed to crush you, but has made you so high and pure that I am unworthy to touch your hand. If I can ever serve you, be sure and let me know it. Nothing could be too hard. God will keep you, as he has. Good by."

Dick seemed almost to hear Alice speaking.

"I know myself to be pure now," said Dora, "and I must suffer, for I did wrong, but I will not be crushed. I will not lose my self-respect; and though I find it hard to understand why God could let me have this weight to bear, I try to help and pity others so much that I may some time be thankful even for a sin in my life."

Through Dick's brain floated the lines:

"Standing on what so long we have
With shoulders bent and downcast eyes,
We may discern, unseen before,
A thousand noble hearts, all vanquished,
Nor deem the irrevocable past
As wholly wasted, wholly vain,
If, rising on its wrecks, at last
To something nobler we attain."

"And so, Mr. Stacy," said Dora, with more sweetness in her tones than before, "were you actually free, you could not help me. I can be satisfied only by what I am myself, not by any outward form. Even if you knew your wife to be dead, that you do not love me would make it a sin in you to marry me. And as for me, I would not resign the life I now lead. I loved you, I hated you, I do not care for your friendship now. I do not love you; you are as the dead to me."

"Yet — you did not love me, and you don't love me now."

"I know myself to be pure now, only, and that she neither loved nor hated me."

"But you did not always believe that?"

"Why not?"

"You can tell me which is true. Were you conscious or not?"

"I was determined not to be," said Dick in a broken voice.

"I thought so," said Dora, cold and pale. "One need not sin in the matter of love. Ah! well! you would have done wrong to marry me after you knew. Perhaps you were wrong to marry any one else. But all this is not the lesson these years with all their remorse and shame have taught me. I know now that the wrong I did was not in itself a sin, because I loved you. With you there was sin."

"But I thought I was doing wrong, and that made it wrong. Besides, we ought to keep the laws which are necessary for society."

"I shall always bless you for what you have said tonight. My sin is a thousand-fold greater than yours, yet for me, too, it is true that all depends on what I am now. I am willing to bear what it seems may have been sent in judgment, and Dora, though it is no palliation of my offence, I may still receive the comfort of knowing that it was not allowed to crush you, but has made you so high and pure that I am unworthy to touch your hand. If I can ever serve you, be sure and let me know it. Nothing could be too hard. God will keep you, as he has. Good by."

Dick went away, and Dora — she had done her duty and was happy in it, she would not have altered her decision, but still she had been mistaken in saying that she neither loved nor hated Dick, and that he was to her as the dead.
he could not fail to know her. It was
made the necessity for being quiet would have
fluence of that rigid gaze. She grew
ence
of its place, immovable. Dick, too, had
on the stage, the same face was in
end of the first act; but there was
as a framework to it. She dreaded the
rium,
and grow till it filled the whole audito-
not look at it, but it seemed to grow
one,
did. Among all the faces she saw but
respite was past, and she began to speak.
agony, it was bliss. The moment of
really met before. He
have realized his presence if they had
for her to
heavy cloak about her, she left every-
black dress in the
before she had had an instant to think
Act after act slipped on. They seemed
spell, and acted with redoubled energy.
have found it impossible to be so. But
 acclaimed. Then he shuddered as he
seen his wife as if it had been only
SOMETHING TO DO.

CHAPTER XLI.

W

hen Celia again opened her
eyes, she found herself in a bed,—
a soft white bed in a neat, airy room.
Surely there is kindness in the world,
so many a wanderer who falls ill in the
street wakes in a comfortable home;
but alas for those who wake where
they fell!

There was a cheerful wood fire in the
room, and in front of the fire a cushioned
arm-chair in which a girl was sitting
with her back turned to the bed. There
were several windows in the room, and,
looking through one, Celia saw a gray
sky with idly drifting snow-flakes. It
seemed to be growing dusk, but the fire-
light played over the dark dressings of
the chamber with inexpressible cheer.
A vase of dark-green holly with red
berries stood on a little table near the
girl, and by it lay a book, which she
had evidently been reading until the
darkness began to fall. Now she was
looking at the fire, and in a moment
she half turned, so that Celia could
able to see her profile. It was a striking,
almost a startling face. It looked
like the face of the dead, and yet con-
tained suggestions of unconquerable
vitality. The skin was of unshaven
ness, with a sickly pallor. One might have
called them lifeless, yet there was intensity in them.
The brown hair was pushed careless, back,
and showed the perfect brow of a wo-
man who had a soul, and the large
mouth had a pathetic curve. The face
was far from handsome, but such that,
once seen, it could never be forgotten.
Celia, whose penetration was quick,
watched it with interest, though she
was too weak and confused to think
much. Naturally she would have
asked "Where am I?" but she could
not bring herself to disturb the deep
gaze into the fire. And then as her
consciousness came back to her, and she
remembered what had happened, the
idea of her position compelled her to
thought, "Why should I ask? What
does it matter where I am,—I who
have no business among the living?"

So neither spoke, and the moments
passed on. Celia looking at the girl and
the girl looking at the fire. At last
she rose suddenly and began to walk
the floor, with her hands tightly clasped
and Celia heard her say below her
breath, "O God, I cannot, cannot bear
it! It is killing me by inches. Father,
take home thy weary child."

Celia began to feel that she was
doing something dishonorable in lying
there and hearing it, but she could not
let the girl know that she had heard
her, so she closed her eyes, that no one
might suspect her of having been awake.
The girl paced up and down, up and
down, and Celia, following, knew
that the door opened softly and some one said in a
low voice, "Is she still asleep, Clara?"
Mother says you are to come down now
and let me stay awhile."

"I don't want any tea," said Clara,
impatiently, "and I like sitting here
by the fire."

But the other voice insisted, and
Clara went down. Celia heard the
SOMETHING TO DO.

Scraping of a match, and a gleam across her closed eyelids told her that the new-comer did not care so much for twilight musings as the other; and naturally she opened her eyes, without remembering she had meant to counterfeit sleep. Her new nurse stood directly in front of her. She was a plain, lively-looking girl, with a neatly fitting dress,—a very homelike-looking body.

"O dear!" said she, as she saw with surprise that Celia was awake, "did I wake you? How thoughtless in me!"

"Nothing at all, and all you said was so disjointed that if the quotations had not been familiar we should not have guessed what you were talking about. But the doctor said I was not to talk to you when you woke, so positively not another word!" and she playfully laid her fingers on her tightly compressed lips.

Celia would have been glad now to ask more. She wondered what she had said from Shakespeare.

She inwardly fretted and chafed, but she put a powerful restraint on her feelings, for she remembered that another attack of delirium would expose her to new dangers. Her nurse took out a piece of elaborate embroidery, and began to work, with a thoughtful happy light in her eyes, till her sister came back.

"She is awake," said she, as Clara entered. The latter started, and Celia pitted her; but in a moment the other sister, who was sewing too busily to notice the start, innocently relieved her by adding, "I lighted a lamp, and that woke her."

"I was glad to be waked," said Celia, feebly, "and I don't care to go to sleep again."

"The doctor said you mustn't talk," said the seamstress, with authority. "Nothing is the matter with my eyes."

"O, I forgot that you haven't been sick a long time," said the girl. "You must excuse me, for I have never had the care of sick people at all, and of course I make blunders all the time."

"Why, I suppose only since yesterday," said the girl. "At any rate, we knew nothing about it till yesterday. I suppose you know how you felt before but yesterday, you got out of the cars here, and were attempting to walk somewhere,—to the hotel, I guess,—and you fainted away, I suppose, and father happened to be there, and he said you couldn't have any cares at the hotel and so he had you brought home. The doctor said you hurt your head when you fell, for you were delirious last night, and—"

"What!" said Celia, in alarm. "What did I do and say?"

"O, nothing bad," said her nurse, with a reassuring smile. "You quoted Shakespeare all night, that is all.

"You are sure I said nothing else?" said Celia in excitement, her pulses beginning to throb and a terrible thundering to come rushing through her brain.

The other saw in a moment that she had been inexorably careless, but she had tact enough to answer sweetly, "Nothing at all, and all you said was so disjointed that if the quotations had not been familiar we should not have guessed what you were talking about. The doctor said I was not to talk to you when you woke, so positively not another word!"

"Hush!" whispered Sue. "She is awake."

Clara had turned away from her mother with the first words she had spoken, but her face was exactly in the line of Celia's vision. She saw that every tinge of color was gone even from the lips and nostrils, but that she controlled herself with a great effort to answer quietly: "I am determined to sit up, but I can just as well take the directions from you.

"No," said her mother, "it is best to have them at first hand."

So Mrs. Fuller and Sue went down, and it was a minute before the former returned with the doctor. In that minute Celia saw Clara go to the fireplace and stand tightly clutching the mantel while she bit her lip to keep herself from betraying emotion. Her face was turned nearly away from the bed, yet the attitude of passion was too familiar to Celia for not to guess with the clow she possessed that a mighty conviction was going on in the girl's soul.

"It was turned nearly away from the bed, yet the attitude of passion was too familiar to Celia for not to guess with the clue she possessed that a mighty conviction was going on in the girl's soul."

The doctor entered, grave, handsome, and some man, perhaps thirty-five years old. With her first glance at his face, Celia felt the blood shrinking from every part of her body and gathering round her heart. It was years since she had seen the face, and it had never been familiar to her, but she knew even before Mrs. Fuller pronounced the name that she could not be mistaken.

"Dr. Craig!" she forgot to notice that Clara's grasp was tightening on the shelf, and that she exchanged no salutation with the physician, so intent was..."

The physician looked fixedly at her, and then, as he heard her mother's returning footsteps, he added simply, "You will not be too tired for that. I shall expect you."

Celia made no reply. She stood quietly till her mother and the physician were both gone, and then Celia saw her sink, trembling in every fibre, into the chair by the fire. Her evident agony made Celia forget her own. She said to herself, "I must help her, yet she must not know that I suspect anything."

The Doctor gave no sign of recognition. He looked at her, felt her pulse, and then said gravely, "Some one has been talking to her since she woke."

"Was it you, Clara?" asked her mother.

"No," said Clara, in a cold voice. "Sue said something to her, I believe."

"It did no harm," said Clara, trying to speak coolly, "I only wanted to know how I came here."

"But it has agitated you too violently," said the Doctor. "You must not ask even the simplest questions till I give you leave, if you wish to get well."

"Humph!" said Celia, forgetting her acquired caution. "I don't much care about getting well."

Clara bent eagerly forward and looked at her. Mrs. Fuller looked as if she thought the delirium had returned, and the Doctor's face grew still graver.

"At present you are my patient," said he, "and you must obey me." Celia recognized in him a man of power, and shut her eyes and her mouth resolutely. Why should she trouble to oppose him when she did not care either way? If he chose to make her well, why, she would submit. He began to write some directions for the night, and Mrs. Fuller was meanwhile called away. He finished his writing,

"Sue and Clara—on some parish committees together. I think I cannot be there," said Clara, in a low, nervous tone. "I shall feel tired after watching."

The physician looked fixedly at her, and then, as he heard her mother's returning footsteps, he added simply, "You will not be too tired for that. I shall expect you."

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CHAPTER XLIII.

The minister and his two daughters entered Mrs. Ellery's parlor after most of the guests had gathered. Clara, like a flash of light, blinding her to everything else, that Dr. Craig stood leaning on the piano and that his eyes were fixed on her. Mrs. Craig, who was a fine pianist, was sitting on the piano-stool, though it was too early for music. Like Clara, she wore blue silk; perhaps both had remembered it was the Doctor's favorite color. But one would have thought there was any similarity in dress for Mrs. Craig's was perfectly plain, and the softest, most delicate sky-blue. Her form was round and beautiful as always, her cheeks full of dimples when she smiled (but ah! when she smiled; you saw the false smile, the complexion white and rosy, and the luxuriant hair simply and modestly coiled. A sweet, fresh creature she looked, artless as a child. A pang thrilled through Clara, as she re-

membered her last glance at her mirror, the sharpness of her outline, and her lustrous eyes, and then a worse pang as she thought how wrong it was for her. She ought to wish beyond everything that Mrs. Craig should form the most decided, most beautiful contrast to herself. Yet, though she conscientiously tried, she could not help a feeling of repugnance as to the Doctor's choice. She felt, with her sweetest, most childlike smile, took her hand, and said: "Ah, good evening, Clara. I am so glad to see you for once during my visit. You don't remember, I dare say, but I do, that I owe it to you except at church since I have been in town. Sue said you had a bad cold and could not call with her, and you were away when I called at your house. It is very naughty in you not to make more of an effort to see your old friends. You are looking well." "I am very well," said Clara, feeling as if she should die every moment. "I have been very busy; you know we have some one ill at home." "Yes, I daresay," said Sue. "I shan't tell you all the pretty things the Doctor says about your nursing, I don't want you to make you vain." Clara grew cold. The idea of Dr. Craig saying "pretty things" about her — and to that woman! "He says you make quite a martyr of yourself," continued Mrs. Craig, innocently. "He said he advised you to come here to-night, for he really thought you needed the change." What! thought Clara, could this man be so foolish as a deceiver as to represent to his own wife so falsely why he had asked Clara to the Ellery's? Or was she mistaken? had her own blind, beating heart so far misled her? Which was worse, that she should be humiliated herself or that she must respect for him? O, the last was infinitely worse! Yet she must believe what she had herself heard, and what the cruel, smiling woman before her was saying. Mrs Craig forgot to tell her how she had with many quaint sentences, as she thought how wrong it was for her. She had refused to go to Mrs. Ellery's solely because she wished to avoid Dr. Craig. Once there, she had seated her-
be flying about; she had not spoken to her. The Doctor about her, and would think it at that, for she knew what she thought. She found herself blushing again still. She tingled. How it would she would have advised her to said she was held sake of the meeting would science would probability of the now, with her seat any moment and go entrenched have been blameless. The old ladies, and she felt absolutely safe. No, no, no, she would stay where she was, come what might. Clara trembled. She braced herself in her chair. Nothing should stir her. Still the pitiless eyes looked at her, and she knew that the moment was coming swiftly, surely. The time came for the entertainment. Dr. Craig, as one of the impromptu waiters, brought a tray of entables to the corner where the old ladies sat, "so thoughtful of the aged," his wife said; and, speaking in his ordinary tone, he said, "Miss Clara, your ser\

vice would be acceptable in the other room." What would have been said if she had refused an invitation so worded? Yet, when she rose to accept it, she was conscious that she was deliberately premeditatedly doing wrong, as much as if she had left home with that expression. The physician conducted her through a long entry which opened on one side into the dining-room, and on the other directly into the open air. The door leading to the dining-room was open, but no one was in the entry. A shawl hung there. He took it down, opened the outside door, and drew her out into the moonlight. He wrapped the shawl round her, returned to the dining-room with his tray, and in another moment rejoined her. Here, too, was an instant of time in which she might have escaped, and the torture of her soul consisted in this, that, tempest-tossed as she was, she still clearly knew, moment by moment, what was the pressure of temptation for that moment. She was clear-eyed; her nature was full of genius and poetry, and she had been taught the faultless Cuv\n
nistic logic. There is something sublime in the attempt to live up to the gospel. They stood in a little side yard. On the other side of the fence, and near a hedge, was a little uncurtained cottage, a poor though clean abode. An old lady with her back against the window partly intercepted the view, but they could see, in the farther part of the room, a child lying on the bed, and an indistinct figure bending over it. Clara mechanically remembered that the child was a foundling which had been left at old Mrs. Dayton's door several years before, and she vaguely wondered who was caring for it, for Mrs. Dayton lived alone and had few visitors. The Doctor and herself stood in shadow, and could not be seen. He laid his hands firmly, un\n
tremblingly, on her shoulders. He was a strong man. "Clara," said he, with unfaltering voice, "I have determined at last to do what you may call wrong. I will not live a lie any longer; I cannot see you day after day and let you guess only by a look or a tone that I love you—love you—love you—" He drew her close to himself, and kissed her in sudden emotion. She was horror-stricken, paralyzed; her tongue refused to speak; yet, alas! she could not urge her powers to help herself in extremity, for she knew that she was destitute of the will to speak. She felt a wild gleam of rapture in the midst of her distress and humiliation. But the Doctor was a strong man, and it was a great moment. He spoke again: "I knew when I married my wife that she did not satisfy my ideal of love. But she bewitched me; I knew she loved me, and I had lost faith in the possibility of a true marriage. That was sin, a thousand-fold the sin I am confessing now. Having sinned, I am willing to bear the punishment, I am willing to protect her and care for her, but I want to ask you a question. Can it be right for me to live with her or not? Can it be right for me to live with her when I do not love her? Is not that cementing the old sin with new sin? The more kind and tender I am, the more false, and then, if I love you, and if you too love me (I do not ask you to tell me whether you do or not), I should feel an overpowering guilt in heaven which ought to separate us?" "Yes, yes, yes," exclaimed Clara, in a whisper, bringing her whole energy to bear that she might now speak, and shrinking away from him. He looked grave and sad, and said slowly, "Putting aside what the world thinks, I mean. If you love me, and if you were sure you were not doing wrong, would you be willing to face all the world might say or do?" "All," replied Clara, faint and white. "But it is wrong." "I thought you would feel so," said he. "I should possibly have loved you less had you answered differently. But by giving you up I am paying the penalty of my sin. I am willing to do that, but can it be still right for me to live with my wife? Does not truth, does not purity, compel me to leave her?" "O, have pity on her!" moaned Clara. "She is sinless." "Yes," said he, gloomily; "her nature was too shallow to have done so great a wrong consciously. But ah! here a man has a worse fate than a woman. She need, in her perplexity, only receive passively the affection bestowed, he must be the beaver, he must actively, systematically, deceive. Can it be right?" "It must be," said Clara. "I feel it, though my reason is paralyzed." "Then my fate is decided," said he, grinding his heel into the sod. "I love you-love you—love you—"
and may go with us into eternity as an essential part of ourselves."

As he spoke, the door of the cottage opened, and a figure in black left the house. The old lady held the lamp so that its light shone full on the features of her visitor, and the two who stood in the shadow saw distinctly an exceedingly beautiful, wild, and faceless figure. The door closed and the figure moved swiftly away toward the railway station.

When the sound of her footsteps had died away, Dr. Craig once more drew Clara to himself and held her close, close for minutes. There was exultation, joy, consecration, in the embrace, the consciousness of mutual love, the certainty that each was too pure to yield to its force, and that the object loved was a worthy one! Then the Doctor put his softly from him, and she moved to the window, the moonlight blessing her high, pathetic, still features.

So few minutes had passed since she left the house, yet she was wholly a new creature! Life, death, and heaven had assumed new meanings to her henceforth, and she could never know between the two. Helped to pour the coffee, she had been away so little that there were still many unserved, and she moved calmly through the rooms, though her soul was far away.

CHAPTER XLIV.

CELIA was deceived by the calm of Clara's face next day. Even when Dr. Craig came she seemed quiet and self-possessed, and her patient fancied that Sue had been right in saying that Clara had stayed in the house and moped till she had become morbid, and that an evening out had done her a great deal of good. Still she could not think that all the agony she had seen only from a diseased fancy.

The Doctor said it was necessary that he should return to the city immediately, but that Celina would probably require no more medical attendance, if care was taken of her.

She was in good hands. Mrs. Fuller was a sympathetic lady, who found it a delight to minister to the sick, and Sue was like her, though she had no experience. Clara seemed particularly drawn toward Celia, and loved to do everything for her.

Yet the shock to Celia's nervous system had been so great that she lay in a low fever for weeks. Assured that her secret was safe for the present, she did not try to think, but let herself drift on in a semi-conscious state, and found herself almost enjoying it. Such a glimpse of pleasant home-life was a new thing to her. Beautiful as her childhood had been, she could not remember it all, and her father had been too silent and studious to attend much to the details of daily life, so she and Alice had been left to themselves a great deal of the time. At Mr. Buckram's, setting aside the hatred she had entertained for the whole family, there had been such a bitter pressure of poverty that it had prevented them, even among themselves, from being what they might be as a family. Next had come the boarding-school, and then the one room with Alice, and an interval of happy, happy time, both before and after her marriage, but not a day of actual home-life, and for the last seven years the theatre! It thrilled her with an inexpres- sible feeling to see the thousand innocent pleasures and surprises which the father and mother prepared for their children, and the children for each other and their parents. The thousand little household plans which the girls talked over in her room, when she was strong enough to bear their conversation, the bits of fancy-work to adorn the home, and the quiet books of Miss Mu- look and Miss Yonge which they read aloud to each other, all seemed very charming, and though the commonest experiences of life, they were to the sick girl the most strange. Clara, too, was passionately fond of poetry, and in the evening twilight, while the fire danced on the walls, and in a soft, strange tone, many and many a sad, sweet poem, and even sometimes would add a stanza or two of her own, which taught her listener that depth lay under the very quiet exterior which might perhaps, if she did not fade too early, make her one of the world's sweet singers.

SOMETHING TO DO.

To Celia, who had passed her life principally in boarding-houses and restaurants, the fresh, carefully cooked food, arranged on the most delicate china with the whitest linen, and the little wreaths of evergreens and scarlet berries which the tasteless fingers of the young ladies prepared each day, were a delicious change. At last she was well enough to lie on the sofa in the sitting room part of the day, and she found herself becoming fairly interested in the family affairs, which all the family dis- cussed very vigorously and with great good-humor, though Clara and Sue could not always refrain from a stinging epithet at the meanness or hypocrisy of one and another. Had Celia been an actor in the scenes around her, they would have been intolerably tedious to her; but being only a spectator, she found them amusing and healthful.

Mr. Fuller was growing old, his hair was already gray, and he had never quite regained the elasticity of his spirit that had given him so much joy in the last seven years. He was a true pastor, a shepherd who gave his life for the sheep. Every household in the town welcomed him as a father. He was a man to whom every one could speak of joy or sorrow and be sure of sympathy. His prayers were so simple and earnest that even Celia, with all her heroines, did not find them tiresome.

The family of a quiet country minister! There was something like heaven in its calm.

As Celia grew stronger she began to speculate as to her future. To return to the stage, even if it were possible, would involve an explanation which she was very unwilling to make. Then, too, even this little illness had forced to a culmination all the ills brought on by her sorrowful and irregular life for the last seven years, and she found herself so shattered, so overcome with lassitude, that it seemed impossible to undertake again anything in which nerve-power was required; and still further, after her last shock, she felt a repulsion for the theatre, and determined to play no more if it could be avoided. Yet she realized that something must be done soon. Her habit of carrying quite a sum of money always with her in a secret pocket had served her in good stead now, and she had ample means to repay what had already been done for her. But her stock was dwindling, and she felt that it must be replenished.

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All the family had been too delicate to inquire in any way her history, or hint at what she should do, yet she felt that they were eagerly curious on the matter, as most people would be in such circumstances, and especially people in a small village where such an event as Celia's introduction was almost the only living romance they had ever seen.

So she broached the subject herself the first moment she felt able to bear it. She had previously given her name as Mrs. Brown, and now she added a few particulars. She was from Boston, had been in the habit of supporting herself in a printing-office, had no friends except a sister to whom she had already written (this was true, for the first day she was able to walk she had found the printing-office, and had gone away, and sent a line to Alice, without showing the direction to any one), had been going on a journey when she felt ill and stopped in the village, where she had fainted before she reached the hotel, did not now care to continue her journey, but would like to find some means of an honest livelihood where she was.

They looked as if they wished to ask her some questions, but a certain repel- lant medium seemed to diffuse itself around as a shield, and they found it impossible; so, instead of that, they set themselves at work to find something for her to do. Could she sew? Yes, and she would be glad to embroider. But this would be a rather uncertain means of support, because most of the ladies of the village did their own sewing. Could she teach? That seemed the only other alternative in an unprogressive country town. She said faintly that she had never taught, and Sue declared it was not necessary, because most of the ladies of the village were too busy, and she was herself half strong enough.

I used to get so tired myself, last summer, in that horrid hot room with those dull children all day, that I was fit for nothing afterwards.

"Yet you liked it," said her moth-er.
"Yes," said Sue, "because I do love children, in all forms and at all times; still it was too much for my strength, and of course it would be for Mrs. Brown's."

"Stay," said Mrs. Fuller. "I think I have a plan. As you have been educated, the little girl (though Celia had not said so), perhaps you have learned some of the accomplishments. Do you draw?"

"Yes," replied Celia, eagerly. "I both draw and paint, and I have been taught elevation too."

"That is fortunate," said Mrs. Fuller, with satisfaction. "Some years ago a little girl was left at the door of a Mrs. Dayton, who took her in and cared for her ever since. A note which came with the child stated that the person who received her should be amply repaid for her education, and money is regularly sent, and directions too, it seems. The child must be eleven or twelve years old now, and the last information here to take her away from the district school, where she is a great favorite, as she is a very bright child and has great talent in mimicry and singing, and find a private teacher, not a governess, but some one who resides in town, who will give her the education of a lady. It is especially desired that she should be taught drawing and painting, for which she already shows a great capacity. I thought one of my girls might teach her, but Sue is too busy thinking of other things just now, who hung the romance of a mystery, and though Celia had met many native Italians, and had become familiar with all the operas; so, though she knew but little of the piano, and had no special talent or cultivation as a singer, she was able to teach both the language and the music in a very offhand, inexact manner to the child, who did not at first see him, and as all his old friends greeted him as John, and she had never heard the family call him anything else, she was not at all prepared to escape her confusion when Sue, in a voice any return of strength which should stir in her a yearning for other than the passive life she now led.

Ah, poor weary one! she was yet to be startled into consciousness once more.

The time glided tranquilly on. Celia perceived this, less embarrassed. Celia perceived this, and she found herself once more earning her own support in a manner vastly different from the little girl was left at the door of a Mrs. Brown's."

"That is fortunate," said Mrs. Fuller, "and the time was occupied in reading and writing, and wished to do nothing else, Celia agreed, finding it easy and pleasant to spend the greater number of the school-hours in that way. Mathematics, aside from the most imperative problems in arithmetic, were wholly discarded, and the time was occupied in reading poetry and the habit of looking at things from a dramatic point of view) and that it was time she became calm and smiled, saying that it was of no consequence. And, in truth, she cared very little what was said so long as no one guessed right.

"I have a letter from John," said Clara, pleasantly. "They are usually not pretty, and to-day they shine so that I call them love-lighted watch-fires."

The people came to tea, and Celia, out of regard for the family, overcame her reserve, and introduced Mrs. Brown to Mr. Home. It was the first time she had been introduced to any of the towns-people except Mrs. Dayton and her pupil.

Notwithstanding the current gossip, they all treated the stranger with respect, and appeared, in fact, rather overawed by her superior air and elegant and somewhat haughty (though she tried to be affable) manners. Sue's lover could not arrive till after tea, and Celia saw Sue peering eagerly out into the night when she heard the whistle of the approaching train. A quick step came up the walk. Sue ran out to meet him, and it was astonishing how many minutes passed before she opened the door and returned with him in the parlour. Celia did not at first see him, and as his old friends greeted him as John, and she had never heard the family call him anything else, she was not at all prepared to escape her confusion when Sue, in a voice any return of strength which should stir in her a yearning for other than the passive life she now led. Ah, poor weary one! she was yet to be startled into consciousness once more.

Sue came in one morning with such a glow that her usually plain face was fairly beautiful in its radiance. "I have a letter from John," said she. "And he promises to be home to-night. He can spend a week in town.

"O, what a pity that we have company invited for to-night?" said Clara.

"I don't care," said Sue. "He will enjoy seeing his old friends, and I shall enjoy being home. We are not exclusive kind of people, and I can't see, for my part, why people who are engaged should want to shut themselves away from the rest of the world. Loving John only makes me love everybody else all the more." And thereupon she gave her sister a hearty hug, and went flying about the house for the rest of the day with a sparkle in her eyes.
in a distressed, vexed tone, "Why, John!"

"O, it is nothing," said John, turning scarlet. "Sue, mayn't I have some supper? I am so hungry!"

Celia was beside herself with apprehension. Sue's last remark led her to believe that Mr. Home had already spoken of her, and that Sue guessed who she was. The more she thought of it, the more she was convinced of this, for she remembered the truthful, manly nature of Mr. Home, and she thought he might deem it due to his reticence to give a complete account of his past life. She was vexed with thought he might deem it due to his manly nature of Mr. Home, and she of it, the more was she convinced of

believe that Mr. Home had already

supper? I am terribly hungry." Sue was not satisfied, but she had something of a maiden's pride, and she saw her lover did not choose to tell her anything; so she asked no more questions, though she could hardly help showing herself hurt, by a little uncommon reserve through the evening, which she struggled against as best she could.

"The secret is out," said Celia to herself warily, as she watched the lovers, "and I suppose this haven of rest can be a haven for me no longer." She determined she would speak to Sue herself, and let matters take their own course. She could not see her that night, however, for John stayed purposely to see his fiancée after the others went away, and Celia thought it kinder to her to retire and leave the family to their own happiness. But next morning she found the opportunity she wished.

"Perhaps," said she, "Mr. Home has already told you that he has met me before."

"No," said Sue, blushing; "he said you looked like some one he once knew."

"It is not strange he should not be certain who I was," said Celia, "for I must have changed since then, and I did not give any sign of having met him before."

"Except by blushing," said Sue. "I guessed at once that you were the Mrs. Brown of whom he had before told me.

Celia caught her breath. "And what had he told you?" said she.

"I don't care to tell you," said Sue, in an irritated tone. "I would like to have you tell me what you intended, and what you owe it to me to tell, without reference to what I already know."

Celia was very angry. She felt, what was indeed true, that Sue's suspicions were aroused, and that she wished to show how the two stories corresponded. It would have been like Celia to have closed her lips forever and gone away without any explanation. But she remembered in time that it really was due to Sue that she should be told, and she said: "As I expect to tell the

truth your precautions are useless; but I will tell you. I was an actress. I played well, and Mr. Home in those days used to go to the theatre occasionally. I hope you will not be too much shocked by that, for I believe he may have given up the practice now. At any rate, he liked my playing; and when he afterwards met me at the house of a poor sick woman whom we had both chanced to befrien, he recognized me, and so we became acquainted."

"And you think he did not recognize you last night?" asked Sue, in the same suspicious tone.

"I am sure I don't know," answered Celia, impatiently. "I thought he did at first, but I am not surprised that he concluded himself to be mistaken. Still he may have felt that for my sake he would not speak of it. This I can tell you, Miss Sue, and you ought to know it sooner than any one else, or you are not fit to marry him, that he never did, and never could do, an untrue or unmanly thing."

Sue looked ashamed. She realized that she ought, indeed, to have had a deeper faith in the one she loved. She said in a persuasive tone: "But, after all, Mrs. Brown, you cannot blame me for feeling so, because I do love him so dearly, and it is such an awful thing to—"

"To say that one has been acquainted with an actress!" said Celia, coolly. "I suppose it does seem so to the rural populace, and, in fact, there is some occasion for it; but you know Mr. Home well enough, putting aside the fact that you also know me, not to be disturbed by that."

"Oh!" said Sue, horrified. "I am not so base as to feel so. You know me very little if you think it possible for me to suspect John of ever doing anything wrong. But he told me—"

Here her voice faltered, "that he once loved you and asked you to marry him; and—"

"Oh! I feel sure that when he sees you again he may not find that he loves you still."

"You need not fear that," said Celia.

"His love for me was a very different thing from his love for you. It was only a temporary fancy, and I am sure it was entirely past before he told you of it. Besides, I suppose it has now become necessary for me to go away from here, and so you need not be disturbed by me."

Sue, hastily, "I am not so mean as to wish you to go away. Indeed, and she sighed, "if it were possible that John should ever love you better than me, I would rather know it now. O no, you must not go away on my account."

"But I suppose your father and mother will not consent to keep an actress in their house," said Celia.

"O," said Sue, eagerly, "if you are truly sorry for your past life, they would be the first to encourage you in a new one."

"But I am not sorry," said Celia, with supreme scorn. "I think it a grand and noble thing to have been on the stage as I have been, and it seems to me the most petty narrowness to consider life in the theatre a sin to be repeated of."

"You should not talk so," said Sue, redening. "It is insulting to us."

"But more insulting than your remark to me," said Celia; "but it is a principle with the Orthodoxy to insult other people. To say 'I am converted, I wish you were,' is only another form of 'I am better than thou.'"

But yet," and she stopped in her wrath, "it is true that I ought not to speak so to those who have been so kind, so truly Christian, in their treatment of me. I am sorry for what I have said, but I perceive I must go."

"No," said Sue, after a pause, in which she struggled with her vexation; "if you were to go, there would have to be a reason why."

"It seems to me there is a reason why now."

"But father and mother don't know it, and if you tell them—"

"I supposed you would tell them."

"I can't do it without also telling them about John's knowing you, and that I couldn't bring myself to do, even if he had not first seen you at a theatre. But what would they think of him if they knew that?"

In spite of her anger, Celia could hardly refrain from laughing; and it amused her too, bitter as it was, to
see how constantly Sue's thoughts turned over everything with reference to what would be best for John, apparently thinking and caring nothing about what happened to Celia.

"The average female," thought Celia, turning up her nose; "yet, after all, she is far more generous to me than most women would be under similar circumstances."

So it was finally decided that Mrs. Brown should stay where she was for the present; and when Mr. Home came that day, Sue related all the circumstances to him, and he convinced her that his passion for Celia had been a mere fitful flame which had blazed up before he was converted, and before he was old enough to realize that he really wished for a Home goddess and not a tragedy queen. They laughed a great deal over the pun, and had so fine a time that they concluded to forgive Celia entirely for disturbing for a few hours the current of their happiness.

CHAPTER XLV.

A beautiful summer sunset.

The doors and blinds of the little stone cottage were all flung wide open that the sweet air might penetrate every nook of the dear rooms. The piano stood open in the parlor, and Alice had been playing, and would play again when Alec came home. Now she sat by a window, drinking in the fragrance of the honeysuckles, and sewing meantime. It was plain common work on which she sewed, for they were not rich enough to have expensive clothing, but the stitches were beautifully set, and perhaps something of the serenity of the face which bent over them found its way to the garments, as if the needle with which she sewed were magnetic; for they always fitted magically, and there was always peace in the hearts of those who wore them.

Though Alice had enough to do to keep her very busy, she was not hurried; and she paused from time to time to look out through the gleaming trees at the rosy billows of the western clouds; and as she looked she saw a carriage stop at the gateway. A lady, very plainly and inconspicuously dressed in deep mourning, descended, and, after giving some direction to the driver, walked in a firm, queenly way up the path.

The window by which Alice sat opened down to the ground, and she formed a full-length picture among the creepers. As the lady perceived her, she turned to the driver and waved her hand, at which he drove away. Then she came to the window, and said calmly, without any preparation, "Alice Wilding, do you remember that you once promised to be always my friend?"

Alice started with surprise at the voice. She could not fail to recognize it, though years had passed since she heard it.

"Antonia Huntten!" she exclaimed.

"Yes," said the lady, lifting her veil. "There were the same clear, beautiful features, the same pale complexion, but an expression far different from that of the old days. The face was thin and worn, there were deep lines of care in it, but there was also an expression of rest.

Alice dropped her work and held out both hands. "I am glad to see you. Come in."

Antonia stepped gracefully through the window. She did not sit down. She was still her old self in many, many ways.

"I wondered," said she, in a calm tone, "if you would remember me. If you had not, I should never have trusted mortal more."

"How could I help remembering?" said Alice, in a voice full of emotion.

"I did not make my promise lightly, and I have kept it in my heart though you told me you did not want my friendship."

"Did I?" said Antonia, with a surprised look. "Oh, well," she added, sweetly, "I have forgotten what I said the last time we met, but I think it was true that I did not want your friendship then. I did not want anybody who knew the intolerable burden I was bearing to talk to it over with me. I wanted nothing to make me think. My nature is not often morbid, and it is easier to act and be dumb inwardly as well as outwardly. I did not want to be bound by any promises, or do anything for the sake of anybody's opinion. Still I have kept myself pure since then."

"I believed you would," said Alice, with a beaming face. "And yet I could not understand you. Will you tell me about yourself during these years?"

"Yes," said Antonia, "I have come on purpose to tell you. I said to myself that day that I would make no vow since I might break it, but I would see what a life I could lead. I began. I refused to see him who was my lover. I did not see him once till I was ready to leave the city. Then I went to him. He had been angry with me because he believed me capricious, but he had a noble nature and understood me when I told him that I was turning over a new leaf. I laughed when I said it, and told him it probably would not last. I was determined not to make a serious matter of it, but I knew he believed me, for he said not a word to detain me."

Alice flushed angrily, and said under her breath, "Ah, that was not noble in him!"

"It was," said Antonia, angry in turn. "If you were a man, you would not marry a woman like me, you would not give such a mother to your children."

"The mother and father were alike," said Alice, still indignant. "He was as guilty as you."

"O yes," said Antonia, "but a proud man cannot stoop so, and I am too proud to bear to be the wife of one who did not respect me. Yet I had cared for him more than for the rest, and if he had detained me I might have listened to him. He showed himself to be very noble. I suppose he cared for me too," she added, in a musing way, "for he has never married. Neither of us has broken our heart for the other. We did not meet till our hearts were in ashes, but I rather think if we had met sooner and I had not been a ballet-dancer, that we might have died for each other." She spoke with the utmost calmness, as if it were a matter of very little consequence.

"And what did you then?" asked Alice. "I have looked carefully for traces of you in the newspapers, but I have never seen your name after that engagement you were fulfilling when we last met."

"No," said Antonia; "I know, if I appeared in my own name, it must also be in my own character. I could not set up for a saint without being talked about. I had a chance to go to Europe then, and I told the manager that I would go only on condition that no one but himself should know my name. He was angry at the freak, for of course it seemed like that to him, and told me that my name would be worth more to him than my dancing. I agreed to take half what he had offered at first, and he let me have my own way. I did my very best after that, and the new name has been worth more to me than the old one. I have been in Europe almost all the time since. I have thought it better to break from old associations. I have come here to the United States some time in every year, but only to look about me, never to play."

"And you have been steadfast heroically," said Alice, with shining eyes. "O, I believed that you had that power in you!"

Antonia pirouetted round the room in her old way. She never liked to admit she was touched. But she said in a moment: "Yes, it takes heroism to live the life I have lived,—a lonely life for one who loves society, a sober life for one who loves gayety, a reflective life for one who hates to think and whose thoughts have in them only remorse and shame. There has not been much to regret the loss of in my past, but it is hard to live without excitement."

"You have had your art," said Alice. "Yes," said Antonia; "I like dancing while it lasts, and I like acting too, and that takes more time, for I don't have to practice much for the ballet now, and I do have to rehearse and learn my parts in my play. But my talents are for burlesque acting, and I find I don't feel like that very often."

"You could do other things, I know," said Alice. "Perhaps you could not once."

"I could do other things," said An-
was familiar to her in
pure though the past was impure, and
times, but I am, I suppose. Then I.
think of calling myself happy at such
here if I had not," replied Antonia. "I
ties great," said Alice.
other person."

"It is better to look an emotion
steadily in the face till it becomes calm," said Alice.

"Very likely," said Antonia, "but
easy at first, nor even after so many
at any rate, a ballet-girl I was
born and a ballet-girl I must be to the
e nd of the chapter. It is an interesting
puzzle to me to see what it is possible
to make of one so born and so bred.
I like to watch myself as I would an-
o ther person.

"And you have found the possibili-
ties great," said Alice.

"I suppose I should not have come
here if I had not," replied Antonia. "I
have found out two or three things, at
any rate; one in, is of no particular
consequence whether I am happy or not."

"But you are happy when you feel
that most."

"Yes, in a sort of way. I shouldn't
talk of thinking myself happy at such
times, but I am, I suppose. Then I
have found that the present may be
pure though the past was impure, and
I have found out " (a long pause here)
"that sin is not wholly evil.

Alice seemed almost startled. The idea
was familiar to her in some forms, but
she could hardly believe that it had
come to Antonia fully worked out in
these, and, if not, it seemed a dreadful
thing to say. She waited for the ex-
planation.

"I don't want to excuse myself," re-
sumed Antonia, "though I often have
to muster all possible excuses to keep
me from killing myself; but I have
wondered many times whether there
was any God who was a Father over us,
and thought there couldn't be or he
surely would not let us do such wrong
things; so I have worked away at that
problem, you know. I dare say, if I had been edu-
cated, I might have had a taste for
metaphysics.

"And you have decided — asked
Alice.

"As I said, that sin is not wholly
evil. It is at the time, and every
wrong act makes it harder to turn back.
You have to suffer more and more be-
cause, I suppose, God means for every-
body to turn back some time; and when
you do turn, the sin you have done your-
self and suffered for makes it possible
for you to help others. That is the
only thing that makes the past support-
able."

She spoke vehemently and her eyes
flashed. "I have helped others; if I
had not, perhaps I would have been as
wandering in my crooked paths, tending towards
the fust and best life in the end, and
that the Father's hand is clasped in ours
even when we tread the by-ways. But
when I speak of sin between us, it is of
only one phase of it. As I have thought
about you all these years, I have re-
pented that I used to be arrogant. I be-
lieve now, what you used to say, that,
according to the blessings and helps I
have had, my life has been a worse one
than yours, which struggled in such
dark ways.

"I don't believe it," said Antonia,
"and I never did, though I chose to say
so."

"What are you doing now?" asked
Alice, after a little pause.

"I have taken a new engagement," said
Antonia. "I have an engagement in
Paris for the fall, but I wanted to come
to this country to see you and —"

She stopped suddenly. Alice could
never question her, but she added in a
minute, of her own accord, "I have a
child in this country."

Alice was surprised, for Antonia had
never alluded to this before.

"You are married," said Antonia,
abruptly. "To a Dr. Hume, some one
told me. Have you any children?"

"Yes," said Alice, with a happy look.
"I have a little boy who has gone with
his father this afternoon to visit a sick
person two or three miles away."

"So I can't see him?" said Antonia,
earnestly, for Alice showed in her face
that she felt what a loss it was to her visitor.

"Well," she added, very gravely, "since
you have a child you know how a moth-
er loves a child, and you will not won-
der that I come across the ocean every
year to see my little girl."

"Oh," said Alice, with feeling, "you
ought to have her always with you!"

"With me!" said Antonia, starting
back. "I never was bad enough to
dream of that. The child is twelve
years old now, though I am not thirty,
and I have hardly seen her a dozen
times in the seven years. It is not easy
for me to be her ideal of a mother. And
even if I could make her happy, do you suppose
that I would do by her as my mother
(who loved me too) did by me?"

"No," said Alice, "you would not
do the same. I can understand that at
first, when you led your old life, you
ought to have a right to go. But now,
when you have proved yourself,
it seems to me you do wrong to put
away this blessing from you."

"Don't tempt me," said Antonia,
with a tortured expression. "I suppose
I might leave the stage, and make a
home for her, and I love her well enough
to do that, though my tastes are not
domestic; but in that case I must tell
her the truth about myself, though I
have never hesitated to deceive her in
every way before this."

Alice nodded. "I see what you mean,
but I think you mistake. You believe
in your present self, and you know well
that no shadow from the past will ever
fall on her. Why distress her by speak-
ing of it? The only one in the wide
world to whom one can ever owe that
is your own son."

"Perhaps so," said Antonia, thought-
fully; "but, disguised as I am, I can
never be sure that I shall not be recog-
nized. I have been in public so much
that thousands of people must know
my face, well though they are strangers
to me. And suppose she should
know after a time?" Antonia covered
her face with her hands.
"I see," said Alice, in a moment. "But do not decide too hastily not to have a child. As you yourself know, the noblest part of your life has grown from this very sorrow which you would conceal. Why not educate your child to know that it is really noble? Why not let her know that the distinction of right and wrong is the highest and truest distinction?"

"Because I know what sin is," cried Antonia, passionately, "and while I will use every excuse for it to myself and to others, I would not palliate it one jot to my soul were at stake. I want her to hate and abhor it, and I want her to love me.

"And the sinner," said Alice, finding nothing better at hand than the hackneyed phrase. "least of all, by my own child." "Never," said Antonia, loudly. "I cannot stay, because, much as I love you, you lift me, you cannot bear such intense feeling long at a time. In your presence there would always be this strain upon my nature, because all we have ever had in common has been connected with the deepest meaning of my life. But I thank you from my very heart that you have believed in me enough to ask me to stay, and you must have married a great and noble man. You are happy, and you should be. I, least of all, ought to envy you." She bent down and kissed the white hand of Alice, and was gone in a moment.

Alice sat thinking as the shadows gathered, and the sky grew rosy and then violet, and stars began to show in it. She heard carriages-wheeling in the street, and in another moment Alaska's hearty voice, telling little Harry to scamper in and tell his mother what a good time they had had, and that they were as hungry as bears. She ran to meet the little fellow, who was almost tottering under the weight of a huge bunch of azaleas which made him look like a great Birmam wood coming to Macbeth.

MRS. CRAIG was in the country for the summer, and spent considerable time at the minister's house. She was an inveterate gossip, but said everything with so sweet a face that Mrs. Fuller and Sue, neither of whom had particular intuitive power to read character, found her quite entertaining, and if they did not say they had spent a whole afternoon in speculating about their neighbors, they believed that they themselves, and not their visitor, must be blamed.

Clara, of course, could not speak of her repugnance to the lady, and attempted to treat her with an extra amount of cordiality, which no one but Celia was bright enough to see through.
Celia, too, felt unable to say anything against one who seemed agreeable to her kind entertainers. She hated Mrs. Craig heartily, and, in truth, dreaded her, though she reasoned with herself against that, for she had never seen Mrs. Craig before, nor been seen by her, so far as she knew, and, with all the inquisitive- ness in that lady's character, she believed there was no danger of discovering the truth about Mrs. Brown.

One evening Mrs. Craig appeared in a state of great excitement. "You will wonder at seeing me so late," said she, "and if my dear husband were here I need not have come. But in an affair of such a nature I want to speak to some one, and it seems to me that my minister is the fittest person."

"Dimples!" said Celia, in a scornful whisper to Clara, taking care that no one else should hear.

"I have made a discovery," pursued Mrs. Craig, with great satisfaction. "I have unravelled a mystery. Mrs. Brown, I have discovered who is the mother of your little Elf."

"Ah!" said Celia, indifferently. "I felt it was due that you should know it first of all," said Mrs. Craig persuasively, and pausing with an affectionate glance at Celia, who, however, deigned no reply, though she thought, "Oh, well, now, I know who originated the scandal about me."

"That child has always impressed me singularly," said Mrs. Craig. "I have always noticed a resemblance in her to some one, but who it was I have never been able to remember. I am always noticing such resemblances. There is such an one in Mrs. Brown herself. Now we have milk from Mrs. Dayton's, and to-night I thought I was so pleasant an evening that I would go for it myself. It was just about the time the train came in, and just before I reached the house, I saw a lady in black coming from the direction of the station. She did not see me, and turned directly in at Mrs. Dayton's gate. I was surprised, for Mrs. Dayton never has any visitors, and somehow, I can't tell how, it suddenly occurred to me that this might have something to do with the child; of course, however, I walked on as if nothing had happened.

The curtains were not drawn, and I could not avoid seeing the interior of the room." (She neglected to state how many minutes she had stood watching outside before she entered.) Well, in the first place, the lady went in without knocking, which you will acknowledge was in itself suspicions. Then the child sprang to meet her as if she were an old friend. She raised her veil and I saw her features. In an instant I recognized them.

Surprising her auditors wrought up to a sufficient state of curiosity, Mrs. Craig paused to take breath. Clara sat trembling like a leaf, remembering when she too had seen the lady in black. Celia was too indignant and Mr. Fuller too calm to speak, but Mrs. Fuller and Sue instantly untreated to be told the dénouement.

"I shall have to expose some of my own sins," said Mrs. Craig, laughing, "in order to explain; but you must make allowances for us city people who do not have the simple pleasures of the country to make us happy. To tell the truth, the Doctor and I have sometimes been to the theatre, that is, we used to go occasionally years ago. Well, we used to see on the stage at that time a girl called Antoinetta." (Celia gave a convulsive start, and though she immediately regretted her self-control.) Mrs. Craig had seen the start), "who had been educated for the ballet, but who also played a great deal besides. This woman at Mrs. Dayton's I knew at once to be the very same, though she looked much older and thinner; and then, directly after, it occurred to me that the last time she played, the character she took was called Elva, the very name of this child. So there is proof positive for you. She played 'Elva' against an actress who went by the name of 'Mara.' They hated each other, and it was rare fun to see them play."

Celia moved the luscious eye of Mrs. Craig observed her. Celia was conscious of the observation, and became more and more embarrassed. A sudden flash of recognition shone in Mrs. Craig's eyes. Celia raised her hand, pretending to shield her eyes from the light. Mrs. Craig watched every movement, but continued to talk.

"Well, I knocked at the door, and it was several minutes before Mrs. Dayton opened it, and then the woman had disappeared. Elf stood there, as brazen-faced as usual; you would never have guessed from her manner that anything had happened. I only stayed a minute, and then came straight to you. Now what shall we do about it?"

All looked at the minister, who answered quietly: "I do not see, Mrs. Craig, that we have anything to do with the matter whatever. Even if this actress is the mother of the child, as seems probable, that surely only gives her a claim to see the child as often as she chooses, and we cannot interfere.

My advice would be that we should keep the discovery a secret, and not give the scandal-mongers anything to talk about."

"But for the child's sake," remonstrated Mrs. Fuller. "She ought not to be contaminated by intercourse with such a woman."

"Probably she is not," said Mr. Fuller. "The fact that the mother chose so good a woman as Mrs. Dayton to care for her child would show that she wishes Elva to grow up in the right way; and as she probably does not see her very often, she can easily show her only the best side of her character. At any rate, we could not interfere if we wished it; we can only take care that all the influences we ourselves throw around her are of the best."

Mrs. Craig professed herself delighted to find such a perfect agreement between her own ideas and those of the minister, and took her leave less chagrined than she might have been; for she thought she had made discovery number two, and possibly number three, that evening.

The next morning Celia was unable to rise. She had been very weak before, and it had only been by the strongest effort of her will that she had been able to perform her daily duties; and the agitation of the preceding evening, the certainty of being recognized by one who would be pitiless, had so wrought upon her that her vitality seemed all gone. She was not in pain, but it seemed as if her life was ebbing fast. In the afternoon Mrs. Craig was announced. "I won't see her," said Celia, feebly. "$ But, my dear," said Mrs. Fuller, "she says she has something of importance to say to you; and you know she is a doctor's wife, so she will understand what is best to do for you."

"Well, let her come," said Celia, in a tired way. It may as well come first as last, she thought.

"Good morning, Mrs. Brown," said Mrs. Craig, dimpling. "I am so sorry you are not well!"

Celia made no reply. The lady tried again with some commonplace remark, but, getting no answer, she determined to plunge boldly into the matter.

"My powers of observation are very good," said she, "and with a sidelong glance at her victim. "I seldom forget a face I have once seen." Still no reply. "Mrs. Brown, in you I recognize the 'Mara' who acted in Elva with 'Antoinetta.'"

She paused. Celia played nervously with a curious blue-enamelled ring on her finger, but said nothing.

"Well, Mrs. Brown, do you deny it?"

"No," said Celia, "of course not. It is true."

"Mrs. Craig was nonplussed. "Then I suppose the Fullers know it," said she. "No," said Celia; "but you can tell them, if you like."

"But I have something else to tell you first," said Mrs. Craig, bending forward, with the expression of a serpent.

"You are not only 'Mara,' you are the wife of Dick Stacy, the Congressman, the wife who disappeared so mysteriously seven years ago, the wife who was so mourned for, and who, it seems now, must have run away of her own accord."

Celia was now really surprised and alarmed; but she knew that to show it would only place her more fully in the power of her persecutor.

"How did you learn that?" said she, outwardly calmly.

"You wonder," said Mrs. Craig, "because you think I never saw you before. It is true I did not recognize you when I saw you on the stage; but you know you often used to come to our door with your stepson, and I have seen you from my window. And I don't mind telling..."
you how I know you. The ring you wear on your first finger belonged to your sister Alice, and I have seen it every day for years.

"This ring," replied Celia, "was my mother's dying gift to me, and I have never taken it off my finger; though, when I first had it, my finger was so tiny that it actually had to be tied on."

"Then she also gave one like it to Alice Wilding," said Mrs. Craig, fearing she should lose her client.

"Very well," said Celia, who was completely exhausted with the conversation. "That is true. What next?"

"Would you like me to tell the Fuller's that bit of scandal too?" said Mrs. Craig, with a sinister look.

"What scandal?" asked Celia.

"That you ran away from your husband and joined a theatrical company." "For whatever I did I had reasons," said Celia, proudly. "Reasons which I will explain to those to whom an explanation may be due."

Mrs. Craig hesitated. Much as she had had Celia in her power, she had not yet produced apparently so little effect that her plans were completely baffled. She felt little to gain by any further disclosure, and her illness in relating Antoinetta's secret had little to gain by any further explanation.

"I will explain to those to whom an explanation may be due."

Mrs. Craig hesitated. "Much as she had Antoinetta in her power, she had not yet produced apparently so little effect that her plans were completely baffled. She felt little to gain by any further disclosure, and her illness in relating Antoinetta's secret had little to gain by any further explanation.

"I could not quite make out the whole," said Mrs. Craig. "But she was angry, because it seems they ought to have been married years ago, even before your wedding, Mrs. Brown, and she should have taken advantage of that, because he was free to live with him, and while the chances were that his wife lived no respectable woman would take him. But he softened her till she thought he was all honorable and fair, but she would not marry him, after all, so I suppose she did not actually trust him."

"I had before seen, for he is a prominent figure entering the garden with Harry, Alice when she would wish the world did not know me now will be surprised at my bearing," Celia said. "I used to bear my old reputation with dignity, but I now take care that her circumstances are such that I might once have gone on one of the real high-bred ladies which I would be and which I might once have been."

"If you would like that best," said Alice, "her fancy is probably not so strong that it needs interfere."

"But I should hate it," said Antonia. "Only I would do anything for her sake. We would both enjoy acting so much more, but I can't bear the idea of seeing Elva grow up a ballet-dancer." "Do you fear the influence of the life on her?" asked Alice. "Oh, no," said Antonia. "I know what I might have been with a pure childhood and a mother who would guard me."

"What then?" asked Alice. "I don't mind myself much," replied Antonia; "nevertheless, the people who know me now will be surprised at my bearing, and I shall write, though I used to bear my old reputation with dignity, but there might come a time when she would wish the world did not know all about her. She might be in love."

"Well," said Alice, "she would be too proud to marry a man who did not love her just as much when he knew the truth."

"Yes," said Antonia, with light in her eye, but a sigh in her voice. "I don't know as I have done right to lay such a heavy burden on such slender shoulders. It has made her ten years older, yet she didn't seem shocked. I told everything as lightly as I could, but, not, I know, for my own sake, but I would not stain her soul. She really wanted to go with me. But she wishes to be an actress. What shall I do?"

"Why should she not be?" said Alice. "It is inborn."

"I should prefer not to cultivate her hereditary tendencies," said Antonia, in a harsh voice. "If they are wrong," said Alice; "but genius has its rights."

"Ah," said Antonia, "she would be like me, and choose dancing and hereditary tendencies," said Antonia, in a harsh voice. "If they are wrong," said Alice; "but genius has its rights."

"Ah," said Antonia, "she would be like me, and choose dancing and hereditary tendencies," said Antonia, in a harsh voice. "If they are wrong," said Alice; "but genius has its rights."
son, but she hurried on. "My pride torments me and drags me hither and thither. At one moment it makes me write that what I am and whatever I appear, if the world knew the whole, I should be such a blot before its eyes forever. I would sacrifice everything, not to be better, not to be thought better, but to be what the world thinks better. That is what I would do for the same for my child. Now I must say, I know what I am now, and the past can't alter it. The ballet is beautiful, and I will dance. I won't leave the stage and conceal that the world has a right to its judgments. I won't own that no repentance can wash out my sins. You see how I am tossed about. One who has sinned as I have is diseased and cannot decide. Decide for me."

"I can't," said Alice, slowly. "Let Elva decide it."

"Oh, she has decided," said Antonia, "but she may repent by and by. I suppose we shall go on the stage. But, if I should die, she must leave it. She must be in the theatre without her mother till she is of age. Will you see to that? I will leave money invested in such a way that you can have the control of it. And I should then want her to be educated in some quiet family."

"Yes," said Alice, earnestly. "I shall love to help her in any way I can, if it should be necessary, as I hope it may never be. One thing—do not wish to be impertinent—does her father know anything about her, and do you wish he should?"

Antonia's face flushed red, and her cheeks were white. She was silent for some minutes, but at last she answered in a low voice: "He used to go and see her when she was very little. He knew the woman who brought her up. The woman was his old nurse. He cared for me enough to see that I was comfortable, and the woman took care of me. Since I parted from him, seven years ago, he has not seen the child, though he was fond of her. She sends her money still, enough to support her. I have asked the nurse not to tell him that I have taken Elva with me unless hearas there. It would annoy him, and, besides, I think it better, as it seems he did, that all connection between father and child should be severed. If he ever traces her out—but I hope he will not. If I were dead—but even then, I don't think I should be wrong to her while he is all right. Besides, he would never acknowledge her as his child. O, I tell you, Alice Wilding," continued she, with a weary look and tone, "God must be very good to make life ever bright and hopeful to one so crushed by the past as I am. Yes, he does. I see glimmerings of light in the distance, and I half believe that in the life beyond the weight may be lifted, and I may be able to breathe long breaths of pure air."

She called Elva to her, and they went away. This was the morning after Mrs. Craig had escaped. Antonia embracing her child.

That evening Alice had put Harry to bed, and sat sewing by her little table. Alice had gone away to visit a patient. She heard the front door open without warning, and in another moment the door of the sitting-room. She glanced round, supposing it to be the domestic, when she uttered a cry of amazement, for there, on the threshold of the very room which they had left together with such and hearts sixteen years before, stood her sister Celia, a mere skeleton of her former self, with white, pale face and hollow sunken eyes. "O my darling!" cried Alice, throwing her arms about her sister's neck. "How came you here?"

Celia sank down exhausted, for she was still weak and ill; but there was a peaceful look in her face.

"I have something very pleasant to tell you," said she. And when she grew stronger she told her story from the time when she had seen Dick at the theatre.

"And now?" said Alice, half doubtfully and half hopefully, when she concluded.

"Now," said Celia, raising herself on the sofa where she was lying, "I shall see Dick. He has been noble, he has done all in his power—little enough, I know—to repair the old wrong. And Dora May cannot and will not be helped by the sacrifice of others. He has expiated, and I will send for him to come here."

Alice kissed her thoughtfully, but was silent.

"I know what you think," said Dora, in some excitement. "I think he has something to forgive as well as I. You never thought I did right to make him suffer so; but remember I did not do it because I wanted him to suffer, but because I could not help it. I had in my nature which made it impossible for me to do otherwise. Perhaps it was wrong. I know it, and I say, 'I know at any rate, that it was very, very hard for him and for me."

When Alice came home, Alice prepared a telegram for Dick. "Come at once. I have news for you." It was a mere skeleton of her former self, with seven years of torture upon her husband.

She knew, however, that she must speak first.

"Dick, I went away from you of my own free will. You know I have been an actress, because you saw me on the stage. But through all I have loved you.

"I don't understand," said Dick, in a strained, far-off voice.

Celia hesitated, and then drew from her bosom a yellow paper, written with faded ink. "The day you went away, Dick," said she, "just at dusk, this letter was brought to me, and by mistake I opened it. Read it. You see it was written with tears."

Dick took it with a feeling of horror. He knew the handwriting at once, and knew well what letter from that writer had failed to reach him.

There was deadly silence in the room while he read the words mechanically.

"You were just," he said, with pale lips, and letting fall the hand which he held in his.

But Celia seized his hand, and spoke quickly, "If I do not know, Dick, I was beside myself, I think; I did everything from impulse. I thought I could never bear to see you again, for you had caused willy nilly such suffering."

"Not selfishly," said Dick, "it was thoughtlessly. I had fancied myself in love, and even when I found out my mistake I meant to be true to her, because I knew I owed her faith. Even after I saw you, you remember, you must remember, how I restrained myself, how I let you suffer when I longed to save you, how I tore myself from you when I loved you better than all the world."

She saw that I had ceased to care for me, and released me from engagement, or I swear to you I would have fulfilled it. This letter did not reach me. Perhaps, if it had, I should not have heeded it then.

"You justify yourself!" said Celia, withdrawing her hand.

"No," said Dick, sadly; "I tell you only the simple truth. In my years of
lonely life, I have had plenty of time to think over things. I begin to judge the magnitude of the sin according to the magnitude of its consequences. I know now what the consequences have been to me, though I did not understand before that my punishment was the direct result of my deed. But all these years I have thought only of the consequences to Dora, and when I have thought of those I have not tried to justify myself to myself, and I shall not attempt it to you."

Celia again took his hand. "I was harsh," said she. "I know what you have felt, I know how you have expiated too. I begin almost to think I was wrong at first."

"No," said Dick. "I cannot be sorry for the suffering, though it has been hard. They say that it is only when a man is willing to suffer for his sin that he has really repented of it."

Celia threw her arms about him and kissed him. "Ah, Dick, you are noble!"

"But scorched by the world a little," he said, quoting her old words, and trying to smile.

"Not scorched, — purified by fire," said Celia, energetically, in her quick, poetic way.

They talked together long. It was a sorrowful story which each had to tell of the long years that had succeeded that brief, bright honeymoon, and they had met only to part again. Dick's father was just at the point of death, and the son had promised to return by the afternoon train, little dreaming that he was to find Celia. She urged him to go. She could wait tranquilly and happily for his return.

"Aleck," said Dick, "do you tell the people who will tell everybody as briefly as you can that there was trouble between my wife and me; that she could not endure it, and went away suddenly without an explanation, but that we are reconciled now. I will tell my family the truth, I will see that Mrs. Craig is hushed. Say, too, that she told her sister where she was soon after she went away. It will prevent gossip."

CHAPTER XLVIII.

THE elder Mr. Stacy was dead. Dick stayed for the last sad rites, and then telegraphed that he would be at the cottage in the evening.

The hour for the train approached. Celia was quiet, because she was happy, but she grew excited, and her cheeks glowed and her eyes glittered.

Then the hour passed and no whistle was heard, then the clock slowly and severely ticked away minute after minute, and Celia became restless. Five minutes passed, then ten, fifteen. Aleck took up his hat and went to the station. Quite a crowd had collected there, but there was no news of the missing train.

Two hours before, a young man with a grave, handsome face had stood eagerly on the platform of the car, and had said to himself, with the gladdest feeling he had ever known in his life, "The past is wholly blotted out, the sin is expiated, the expiation is received, a new life begins from this moment, and our love is beyond earth."

A shriek, an unearthly yell,—a yawning gulf of fire which receives him into its midst,—a dash of ice-cold water on his handsome, happy face,—and then—

The magnetic links which bind heart to heart may be invisible, but are no less certain for all that. The seven years of voluntary separation were over, soul had met soul; there could be no more parting. And Celia lay still and cold in the little parlor, with no trace, except in the yet fierce glitter of her hair, to tell of the tempestuous electric life which had throbbed through her veins. She had proved that love is something beyond earth.

THE END.