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*** START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK THE FAITH DOCTOR: A STORY OF NEW YORK ***

THE FAITH DOCTOR

A STORY OF NEW YORK

BY

EDWARD EGGLESTON

AUTHOR OF THE HOOSIER SCHOOLMASTER, ROXY, ETC.



THIRD EDITION

NEW YORK
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PREFACE.

Though there is no life that I know more intimately and none that I have known for so long a period as that of New York, the present story is the first in which I have essayed to depict phases of the complex society of the metropolis. I use the word society in its general, not in its narrow sense, for in no country has the merely "society novel" less reason for being than in ours.

The prevailing interest in mind-cure, faith-cure, Christian science, and other sorts of aërial therapeutics has supplied a motive for this story, and it is only proper that I should feel a certain gratitude to the advocates of the new philosophy. But the primary purpose of this novel is artistic, not polemical. The book was not written to depreciate anybody's valued delusions, but to make a study of human nature under certain modern conditions. In one age men cure diseases by potable gold and strengthen their faith by a belief in witches, in another they substitute animal magnetism and adventism. Within the memory of those of us who are not yet old, the religious fervor of millenarianism and the imitation science of curative mesmerism gave way to spirit-rappings and clairvoyant medical treatment. Now spiritism in all its forms is passing into decay, only to leave the field free to mind-doctors and faith-healers. There is nothing for it but to wait for the middle ages to pass; when modern times arrive, there will be more criticism and less credulity, let us hope.

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The propositions put into the mouth of Miss Bowyer, though they sound like burlesque, are taken almost verbatim from the writings of those who claim to be expounders of Christian science. While Miss Bowyer was drawn more closely from an original than is usual in fictitious writing, I am well aware that there are professors of Christian science much superior to her. There are, indeed, souls who are the victims of their own generous enthusiasm; and it grieves me that, in treating the subject with fidelity and artistic truthfulness, I must give pain to many of the best—to some whose friendship I hold dear.

For the idea of a novel on the present theme I am indebted to an unpublished short story entitled *An Irregular Practitioner*, by Miss Anne Steger Winston, which came under my eye three or four years ago. I secured the transfer to me of Miss Winston's rights in the subject, and, though I have not followed the lines of her story, it gives me pleasure to acknowledge my obligation to her for the suggestion of a motive without which this novel would not have had existence.

For the comfort of the reader, let me add that the name Phillida should be accented on the first syllable, and pronounced with the second vowel short.

JOSHUA'S ROCK ON LAKE GEORGE, *September, 1891.*

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THE FAITH DOCTOR.

I. THE ORIGIN OF A MAN OF FASHION.

It was the opinion of a good many people that Charles Millard was "something of a dude." But such terms are merely relative; every fairly dressed man is a dude to somebody. There are communities in this free land of ours in which the wearing of a coat at dinner is a most disreputable mark of dudism.

That Charles Millard was accounted a dude was partly Nature's fault. If not handsome, he was at least fine-looking, and what connoisseurs in human exteriors call stylish. Put him into a shad-bellied drab and he would still have retained traces of dudishness; a Chatham street outfit could hardly have unduded him. With eyes so luminous and expressive in a face so masculine, with shoulders so well carried, a chest so deep, and legs so perfectly proportioned and so free from any deviation from the true line of support, Millard had temptations to cultivate natural gifts.

There was a notion prevalent among Millard's acquaintances that one so versed in the lore and so deft in the arts of society must belong to a family of long standing; the opinion was held, indeed, by pretty much everybody except Millard himself. His acquaintance with people of distinction, and his ready access to whatever was deemed desirable in New York, were thought to indicate some hereditary patent to social privilege. Millard had, indeed, lines of ancestors as long as the longest, and, so far as they could be traced, his forefathers were honest and industrious people, mostly farmers. Nor were they without distinction: one of his grandfathers enjoyed for years the felicity of writing "J. P." after his name; another is remembered as an elder in the little Dutch Reformed Church at Hamburg Four Corners. But Charley Millard did not boast of these lights of his family, who would hardly have availed him in New York. Nor did he boast of anything, indeed; his taste was too fastidious for self-assertion of the barefaced sort. But if people persisted in fitting him out with an imaginary pedigree, just to please their own sense of congruity, why should he feel obliged to object to an amusement so harmless?

Charles Millard was the son of a farmer who lived near the village of Cappadocia in the State of New York. When Charley was but twelve years old his father sold his farm and then held what was called in the country a "vendoo," at which he sold "by public outcry" his horses, cows, plows, and pigs. With his capital thus released he bought a miscellaneous store in the village, in order that his boys "might have a better chance in the world." This change was brought about by the discovery on the part of Charley's father that his brother, a commission merchant in New York, "made more in a week than a farmer could make in a year." From this time Charley, when not in school, busied himself behind the counter, or in sweeping out the store, with no other feeling than that sweeping store, measuring calico, and drawing molasses were employments more congenial to his tastes and less hard on good clothes than hoeing potatoes or picking hops. Two years after his removal to the village the father of Charley Millard died, and the store, which had not been very successful, was sold to another. Charley left the counter to take a course in the high school, doing odd jobs in the mean while.

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When young Millard was eighteen years old he came into what was a great fortune in village eyes. His father's more fortunate brother, who had amassed money as a dealer in country produce in Washington street, New York, died, leaving the profits of all his years of toil over eggs and butter, Bermuda potatoes and baskets of early tomatoes, to his two nephews, Charley Millard and Charley's elder brother, Richard. After the lawyers, the surrogate, the executor, and the others had taken each his due allowance out of it, there may have been fifty or seventy-five thousand dollars apiece left for the two young men. Just how much it was the village people never knew, for Charley was not prone to talk of his own affairs, and Dick spent his share before he fairly had time to calculate what it amounted to. When Richard had seen the last of his money, and found himself troubled by small debts, he simplified matters by executing a "mysterious disappearance," dropping out of sight of his old associates as effectually as though he had slipped into some cosmical crack. Charley, though nominally subject to a guardian, managed his own affairs, husbanded his money, paid Dick's debts, and contrived to take up the bank stock and other profitable securities that his brother had hypothecated. He lived with his mother till she died, and then he found himself at twenty-one with money enough to keep him at ease, and with no family duty but that which his mother had laid upon him of finding the recreant Dick if possible, and helping him to some reputable employment—again if possible.

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In Cappadocia Charley's little fortune made him the beau of the town; the "great catch," in the slang phrase of the little society of the village—a society in which there were no events worth reckoning but betrothals and weddings. In such a place leisure is productive of little except ennui. To get some relief from the fatigue of moving around a circle so small, and to look after his investments, Charley made a visit to New York a month after the death of his mother. His affection for his mother was too fresh for him to neglect her sister, who was the wife of a mechanic living in Avenue C. He would have preferred to go to a hotel, but he took up his abode dutifully in his aunt's half of a floor in Avenue C, where the family compressed themselves into more than their usual density to give him a very small room to himself. His Aunt Hannah did her best to make him comfortable, preparing for him the first day a clam chowder, which delicacy Charley, being an inlander, could not eat. His cup of green tea she took pains to serve to him hot from the stove at his elbow. But he won the affection of the children with little presents, and made his aunt happy by letting her take him to see Central Park and the animals.

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As seen in the narrow apartment of his Aunt Hannah Martin, life in the metropolis appeared vastly more pinched and sordid than it did in the cottages at Cappadocia. How the family contrived to endure living in relations so constant and intimate with the cooking stove and the feather beds Charley could not understand. But the spectacle of the streets brought to him notions of a life greatly broader and more cultivated and inconceivably more luxurious than the best in Cappadocia.

The third day after his arrival he called at the Bank of Manhatoes, in which the greater part of his uncle's savings had been invested, to make the acquaintance of the officers in control, and to have transferred to his own name the shares which his brother had hypothecated. He was very cordially received by Farnsworth, the cashier, who took him into the inner office and introduced him to the president of the bank, Mr. Masters. The president showed Charley marked attention; he was very sensible of the voting importance of so considerable a block of stock as Charley held, now that he had acquired all that was his uncle's. Masters was sorry that his family was out of town, he would have been pleased to have Mr. Millard dine with him. Would Mr. Millard be in town long? Dining with a New York bank president would have been a novel experience for young Millard, but he felt obliged to go home the last of the week. Not that there was anything of pleasure or duty to render his return to Cappadocia imperative or desirable, but the pressure he was daily putting on his aunt's hospitality was too great to be prolonged, and the discomfort of

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his situation in Avenue C was too much for a fastidious man to endure.

Though his return to Cappadocia made a ripple of talk among the young women of the village, to whom he was at least a most interesting theme for gossip, he found the place duller than ever. His mind reverted to the great, dazzling spectacle of the thronged streets of the metropolis, with their unceasing processions of eager people. Since he had all the world to choose from, why not live in New York? But he did not care to go to the city to be idle. He liked employment, and he preferred to earn something, though he had no relish for speculation, nor even any desire to run the risks of trade. But he thought that if he could contrive to make enough to pay a portion of his own expenses, so as to add the greater part of each year's dividends to his principal, such cautious proceeding would entirely suit his prudent temperament and content his moderate ambition. After taking time to revolve the matter carefully, he wrote to the obliging Mr. Masters, suggesting that he would like to secure some position in the bank. The letter came at an opportune moment. A considerable number of the stockholders were opposed to the president in regard to the general policy to be pursued. The opposition was strong enough to give Masters some anxiety. What was known as "the Millard stock" had been held neutral in consequence of Charley's minority. If now Masters could attach this young shareholder to himself, it would be a positive gain to the administration party in the stockholders' meetings, and indeed it would put the opposition beyond any chance of doing much mischief.

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When Masters got the letter Farnsworth, the cashier, was called into his room. But Farnsworth could not give him any information about Millard's character or capacities. That he would not do without special training for a teller or bookkeeper was too evident to require discussion. All that could be said of him at first glance was that he wrote a good hand and composed a letter with intelligence. He might be made of assistance to the cashier if he should prove to be a man of regular habits and application. What Masters wrote in reply was: "We should be most happy to have the nephew and heir of one of our founders in the bank. At present we have no vacancy suitable to you; for, of course, a man of your position ought not to be assigned to one of the lowest clerkships. But if an opportunity to meet your wishes should arise in the future we will let you know."

It was only after some years' experience in the bank that Millard, in looking over this letter, was able to conjecture its real significance. Then he knew that when that letter went out of the bank addressed to him at Cappadocia another must have gone with it to a certain commercial agency, requesting that Charles Millard, of Cappadocia, New York, be carefully looked up. Two weeks later Masters wrote that it had been found necessary to employ a correspondent to aid the cashier of the bank. The salary would be two thousand dollars if Mr. Millard would accept it. The offer, he added, was rather larger than would be made to any one else, as the officers of the bank preferred to have a stockholder in a semi-confidential position such as this would be. In village scales two thousand dollars a year was much, but when Charley came to foot up the expenses of his first year in New York, this salary seemed somewhat less munificent.

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Millard's relations were directly with the cashier, Farnsworth, an eager, pushing, asthmatic little man, wholly given to business. Farnsworth's mind rarely took time to peep over the fence that divided the universe into two parts—the Bank of Manhadoes and its interests lying on the one side, and all the rest of creation on the other. Not that he ignored society; he gave dinner parties in his elegant housekeeping apartment in the Sebastopol Flats. But the dinner parties all had reference to the Bank of Manhadoes; the invitations were all calculated with reference to business relations, and the dinners were neatly planned to bring new business or to hold the old. But there were dinners and dinners, in the estimation of Farnsworth. Some were aimed high, and when these master-strokes of policy were successful they tended to promote the main purposes of the bank. The second-rate dinners were meant merely to smooth the way in minor business relations.

It was to one of these less significant entertainments, a dinner of not more than three horse-power, that he invited his correspondent-clerk, Mr. Millard. It would make the relations between him and Millard smoother, and serve to attach Millard to his leadership in the bank management. Millard, he reasoned, being from the country, would be just as well pleased with a company made up of nobodies in particular and his wife's relatives as he could be if he were invited to meet a railway president and a leather merchant from the swamp turned art connoisseur in his old age.

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Charley found his boarding-house a little "poky," to borrow his own phrase, and he was pleased with Farnsworth's invitation. He honored the occasion by the purchase of a new black satin cravat. This he tied with extreme care, according to the approved formula of "twice around and up and down." Few men could tie a cravat in better style. He also got out the new frock-coat, made by the best tailor in Cappadocia, carefully cherished, and only worn on special occasions—

the last being the evening on which he had taken supper at the house of the Baptist minister. If there was something slightly rustic about the cut or set of the coat, Millard did not suspect it. The only indispensable thing about clothes is that the wearer shall be at peace with them. Poor Richard ventured the proposition that "our neighbors' eyes" are the costliest things in life, but Bonhomme Richard may have been a little off the mark just there. Other people's opinions about my garments are of small consequence except in so far as they affect my own conceit of them. Charley Millard issued from his room at half-past six content with himself, and, what was of much more importance to the peace of his soul, content with his clothes.

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At eleven o'clock Millard is in his room again. The broadcloth Prince Albert lies in an ignominious heap in the corner of the sofa. The satin cravat is against the looking-glass on the dressing-case, just as Charley has thrown it down. Nothing has happened to the coat or the cravat; both are as immaculate as at their sallying forth. But Millard does not regard either of them; he sits moodily in his chair by the grate and postpones to the latest moment the disagreeable task of putting them away.

No matter what the subject under consideration, we later nineteenth-century people are pretty sure to be brought face to face with the intellect that has dominated our age, modified our modes of thinking, and become the main source of all our metaphysical discomforts. It is this same inevitable Charles Darwin who says that a man may be made more unhappy by committing a breach of etiquette than by falling into sin. If Millard had embezzled a thousand dollars of the bank's funds, could he have been more remorseful than he is now? And all for nothing but that he found himself at dinner with more cloth in the tail of his coat than there was in the coattails of his neighbors, and that he wore an expensive black cravat while all the rest of the world had on ghostly white linen ties that cost but a dime or two apiece.

Of course Millard exaggerated the importance of his mistake. Young men who wear frock-coats to dinner, and men of respectability who do not possess a dress-coat, are not entirely lacking in New York. If he had known more of the world he would have known that the world is to be taken less to heart. People are always more lenient toward a mistake in etiquette than the perspiring culprit is able to imagine them. In after years Millard smiled at the remembrance that he had worried over Farnsworth's company. It was not worth the trouble of a dress-coat.

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His first impulse was to forswear society, and to escape mortification in future, by refusing all invitations. If he had been a weakling such an outcome would have followed a false start. It is only a man who can pluck the blossom of success out of the very bramble of disaster.

During that dinner party had come to him a dim conception of a society complicated and conventional to a degree that the upper circle in Cappadocia had never dreamed of. He firmly resolved now to know this in all its ramifications; to get the mastery of it in all its details, so that no man should understand it better than he. To put it under foot by superior skill was to be his revenge, the satisfaction he proposed to make to his wounded vanity. As he could not even faintly conceive what New York society was like—as he had no notion of its Pelions on Ossa piled—so he could as yet form no estimate of the magnitude of the success he was destined to achieve. It is always thus with a man on the threshold of a great career.

Among the widely varying definitions of genius in vogue, everybody is permitted to adopt that which flatters his self-love or serves his immediate purpose. "Great powers accidentally determined in a given direction" is what some one has called it. Millard was hardly a man of great powers, but he was a man of no small intelligence. If he had been sufficiently bedeviled by poverty at the outset who knows that he might not have hardened into a stock-jobbing prestidigitator, and made the world the poorer by so much as he was the richer? On the other hand, he might perhaps have been a poet. Certainly a man of his temperament and ingenuity might by practice have come to write rondeaus, ballades, and those other sorts of soap-bubble verse just now in fashion; and if he had been so lucky as to be disappointed in love at the outset of his career, it is quite within the limits of possibility that he should have come to write real poetry, fourteen lines to the piece. But as the first great reverse of Millard's life was in a matter of dress and etiquette, the innate force of his nature sent him by mere rebound in the direction of a man of fashion—that is to say, an artist not in words or pigments, but in dress and manners.

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THE EVOLUTION OF A SOCIETY MAN.

It is the first step that costs, say the French, and Millard made those false starts that are inevitable at the outset of every career. A beginner has to trust somebody, and in looking around for a mentor he fell into the hands of a fellow-boarder, one Sampson, who was a quiet man with the air of one who knows it all and is rather sorry that he does. Sampson fondly believed himself a man of the world, and he had the pleasure of passing for one among those who knew nothing at all about the world. He was a reflective man, who had given much thought to that gravest problem of a young man's life—how to keep trousers from bagging at the knees, the failure to solve which is one of the most pathetic facts of human history. After he had made one or two mistakes in following the dicta that Sampson uttered with all the diffidence of a papal encyclical, Millard became aware that in social matters pretension is often in inverse ratio to accomplishment. About the time that he gave up Sampson he renounced the cheap tailor into whose hands he had unwarily fallen, and consigned to oblivion a rather new thirty-dollar dress-suit in favor of one that cost half a hundred dollars more. He had by this time found out that the society which he had a chance to meet moved only in a borderland, and, like the ambitious man he was, he began already to lay his plans broad and deep, and to fit himself, by every means within his reach, for success in the greater world beyond.

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Having looked about the circle of his small acquaintance in vain for a guide, he bethought him that there were probably books on etiquette. He entered a bookstore one day with the intention of asking for some work of the sort, but finding in the proprietor a well-known depositor of the bank, Charley bought a novel instead. Behold already the instinct of a man of the world, whose rôle it is to know without ever seeming to learn!

When at length Millard had secured a book with the title, "Guide to Good Manners as Recognized in the Very Best Society. By One of the Four Hundred," he felt that he had got his feet on firm ground.

It chanced about this time that Sampson brought an old college chum of his to eat a Sunday dinner at the boarding-house in Eighteenth street. He introduced this friend to Millard with that impressiveness which belonged to all that the melancholy Sampson did, as "Mr. Bradley, Mr. Harrison Holmes Bradley, the author; you know his writings."

Millard was covered with concealed shame to think that he did not happen to know the books of an author with a name so resonant, but he did not confess his ignorance. This was his first acquaintance with a real literary man—for the high-school teacher in Cappadocia who wrote poetry for the country papers would hardly count. The aspiring Millard thought himself in luck in thus early making the acquaintance of a man of letters, for to the half-sophisticated an author seems a person who reflects a mild and moonshiny luster on even a casual acquaintance. To know Mr. Bradley might be a first step toward gaining access to the more distinguished society of the metropolis.

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Harrison Holmes Bradley proved to be on examination a New-Englander of the gaunt variety, an acute man of thirty, who ate his roast turkey and mashed potatoes with that avidity he was wont to manifest when running down an elusive fact in an encyclopædia. At the table Millard, for want of other conversation, plucked up courage to ask him whether he was connected with a newspaper.

"No; I am engaged in general literary work," said Bradley.

Neither Millard nor any one else at the table had the faintest notion of the nature of "general literary work." It sounded large, and Bradley was a clever talker on many themes fresh to Millard, and when he went away the author exacted a promise from Charley to call on him soon in his "den," and he gave him a visiting card which bore a street number in Harlem.

Two weeks later Millard, who was quite unwilling to miss a chance of making the acquaintance of a distinguished man through whom he might make other eligible friends, called on Bradley. He found him at work in his shirt-sleeves, in a hall bedroom of a boarding-house, smoking and writing as he sat with a gas-stove for near neighbor on the left hand, and a table, which was originally intended to serve as a wash-stand, on the other side of him. The author welcomed his guest with unaffected condescension and borrowed a chair from the next room for him to sit on. Finding Millard curious about the ways of authors, he entertained his guest with various anecdotes going to show how books are made and tending to throw light on the relation of authors to publishers. Millard noted what seemed to him a bias against publishers, of whom as a

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human species Bradley evidently entertained no great opinion. Millard's love for particulars was piqued by Bradley's statement at their first meeting that he was engaged in general literary work. He contrived to bring the author to talk of what he was doing and how it was done.

"You see," said Bradley, pleased to impart information on a theme in which he was much interested himself, "a literary life isn't what people generally take it to be. Most men in general literary work fail because they can do only one thing or, at most, two. To make a living one must be able to do everything."

"I suppose that is so," said Millard, still unable to form any notion of what was implied in Bradley's everything. To him all literature was divided into prose and poetry. General literature seemed to include both of these and something more.

"Last week," Bradley continued, illustratively, "I finished an index, wrote some verses for a pictorial advertisement of Appleblossom's Toilet Soap, and ground out an encyclopædia article on Christian Missions, and a magazine paper on the history of the game of bumblepuppy. I am now just beginning a novel of society life. Versatility is the very foundation of success. If it hadn't been for my knack of doing all sorts of things I never should have succeeded as I have."

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Judging by Bradley's surroundings and his own account of the sordid drudgery of a worker in general literature, his success did not seem to Millard a very stunning one. But Bradley was evidently content with it, and what more can one ask of fortune?

"There is another element that goes a long way toward success in literature," proceeded the author, "and that is ability to work rapidly. When Garfield was shot I was out of work and two weeks behind with my board. I went straight to the Astor Library and worked till the library closed, gathering material. When I went to bed that night, or rather the next morning, I had a paper on 'Famous Assassinations of History' ready for the best market. But what I hate the most about our business is the having to write, now and then, a thunder and lightning story for the weekly blood-curdlers. Now there is Milwain, the poet, a man of genius, but by shop girls and boys reading the Saturday-night papers he is adored as Guy St. Cyr, the author of a long list of ghastly horrors thrown off to get money."

"This sort of work of all kinds is what you call general literary work?" queried Millard.

"General literary work is the evening dress we put on it when it has to pass muster before strangers," said Bradley, laughing.

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What Millard noted with a sort of admiration was Bradley's perfect complacency, his contentment in grinding Philistine grists, the zest even that he evinced for literary pot-hunting, the continual exhilaration that he got out of this hazardous gamble for a living, and the rank frankness with which he made his own affairs tributary to the interest of his conversation.

At length Bradley emptied his pipe and laid it across his manuscript, at the same time rising nervously from his chair and sitting down on the bed for a change.

"Millard," he said, with a Bohemian freedom of address, "you must know more about society than I do. Give me advice on a point of etiquette."

Charley Millard was flattered as he never had been flattered before. He had not hoped to be considered an oracle so soon.

"You see," Bradley went on, "the publisher of a new magazine called the 'United States Monthly' has asked me to dinner. It is away over in Brooklyn, and, besides, the real reason I can't go is that I haven't got a dress-coat. Now what is the thing to do about regrets, cards, and so on?"

Fresh from reading his new "Guide to Good Manners," Millard felt competent to decide any question of Bristol-board, however weighty or complicated. He delivered his opinion with great assurance in the very words of the book.

"I believe in my soul," said Bradley, laughing, "that you prigged that from the 'Guide to Good Manners as Recognized in the Very Best Society.'"

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Millard looked foolish, but answered good-naturedly, "Well, what if I did? Have you read the book?"

Bradley rocked his long slender body backward and forward as though about to fall into a spasm with suppressed merriment.

"There is only one good thing I can say for that book," he said, recovering himself.

"What's that?" asked Millard, a little vexed with the unaccountable mirth of his host.

"Why, that I got two hundred dollars for writing it."

"You wrote it?" exclaimed Millard, not concealing his opinion that Bradley was not a suitable person to give lessons in politeness.

"You see I was offered two hundred for a book on manners. I needed the money most consumedly. There was Sampson, who knew, or thought he knew, all about the ways of the world, though, between you and me, Sampson always did do a large business on a plaguy small capital. So I put Sampson to press and got out of him whatever I could, and then I rehashed a good deal in a disguised way from the old 'Bazar Book of Decorum' and the still older Count D'Orsay, and some others. You have to know how to do such things if you're going to make a living as a literary man. The title is a sixpenny publisher's lie. In the day of judgment, authors, or at least those of us doing general literary work, will get off easy on the ground that poor devils scratching for their dinners can not afford to be too high-toned, but publishers won't have that excuse."

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Millard made his way home that night with some sense of disappointment. Being a fine gentleman was not so easy as it had seemed. The heights grew more and more frosty and inaccessible as he approached them. Yet he had really made a great advance by his talk with Bradley. He had cleared the ground of rubbish. And though during the next week he bought two or three of the books of decorum then in vogue, he had learned to depend mainly on his own observations and good sense. He had also acquired a beginning of that large stock of personal information which made him in after years so remarkable. Natural bent is shown in what a man assimilates. Not an item of all the personal traits and anecdotes of writers and publishers brought out in Bradley's unreserved talk had escaped him, and years afterward he could use Bradley's funny stories to give piquancy to conversation.

It was this memory of individual traits and his tactful use of it that helped to launch him on the sea of social success. The gentleman who sat next to him at dinner, the lady who chatted with him at a tea or a reception, felt certain that a man who knew all about every person in any way distinguished in society could not be quite without conspicuousness of some sort himself. This belief served to open doors to him. Moreover, his fund of personal gossip, judiciously and good-naturedly used, made him a valuable element in a small company; the interest never flagged when he talked. Then, too, Millard had a knack of repeating in a way that seemed almost accidental, or at least purely incidental, what this or that noted person had said to him. It was in appearance only an embellishment of his talk, but it served to keep up a belief in the breadth, and especially the height, of his acquaintance. If he had only been presented to Mrs. Manorhouse, and she had repeated her stock witticism in his presence, Millard knew how to quote it as a remark of Mrs. Manorhouse, but the repose of his manner left the impression that he set no particular store by the Manorhouses. He early learned the inestimable value of a chastened impudence to a man with social ambitions.

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Some sacrifice of self-respect? Doubtless. But what getter-on in the world is there that does not have to pay down a little self-respect now and then? Your millionaire usually settles at a dear rate, and to be a great statesman implies that one has paid a war tariff in this specie.

One of the talents that contributed to Millard's success was a knack of taking accomplishments quickly. Whether it was fencing, or boxing, or polo that was the temporary vogue; whether it was dancing, or speaking society French, he held his own with the best. In riding he was easily superior to the riding-school cavaliers, having the advantage of familiarity with a horse's back from the time he had bestrode the plow-horses on their way to water. Though he found time in his first years in New York for only one little run in Europe, he always had the air of a traveled man, so quickly did he absorb information, imitate fashions, and get rid of provincial manners and prejudices. His friends never knew where he learned anything. When a Frenchman of title was basking in New York drawing-rooms it was found that Millard was equal to a tête-à-tête with the monolingual foreigner, though his accent was better than his vocabulary was copious. His various accomplishments of course represented many hours of toil, but it was toil of which his associates never heard. He treated himself as a work of art, of which the beholder must judge only by the charming result, with no knowledge of the foregoing effort, no thought of the periods of ugly incompleteness that have been passed on the way to perfection.

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III. A SPONTANEOUS PEDIGREE.

It was not until the battle was more than half won, and Millard had become a welcome guest in some of the most exclusive houses, that he was outfitted with a pedigree. He knew little of his ancestors except that his father's grandfather was a humble private soldier at the storming of Stony Point. This great-grandfather's name was Miller. Dutch or German neighbors had called him Millerd by some confusion with other names having a similar termination, and as he was tolerably illiterate, and rarely wrote his name, the change came to be accepted. A new schoolmaster who spelled it Millerd in the copy-book of Charley's grandfather fixed the orthography and pronunciation in the new form. About the time that Millard Fillmore became President by succession, the contemporary Millerds, who were Whigs, substituted *a* for the *e* in the name. After he came to New York, Charley shifted the accent to the last syllable to conform to a fashion by which a hundred old English names have been treated to a Gallic accent in America. After this acquisition of a new accent Charley was frequently asked whether he were not of Huguenot descent; to which he was wont to reply prudently that he had never taken much interest in genealogy. Just why it is thought more creditable for a resident of New York to have descended from a Huguenot peasant or artisan than from an English colonist, those may tell who fancy that social pretenses have a rational basis.

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Charley's mother's father was named Vandam. The family had been a little ashamed of the old Dutch cognomen; it had such a wicked sound that they tried to shift the accent to the first syllable. Among the fads that Charley had taken up for a time after he came to New York was that of collecting old prints. In looking over a lot of these one day in a second-hand book-shop, he stumbled on a picture of the colonial period in which was represented one of the ancient Dutch churches of New York. There was a single stately carriage passing in front of the church, and the artist had taken the pains to show the footman running before the coach. The picture was dedicated to "Rip Van Dam, Esq.," president of the council of the colony of New York. As a Christian name "Rip" did not tend to take the curse off the Van Dam. But this picture made Charley aware that at least one of the Van Dams had been a great man in his day. He reflected that this must be the old Rip's own carriage delineated in the foreground of the picture of which he was the patron; and this must be his footman charging along at breakneck pace to warn all vulgar carts to get out of the great gentleman's road. Millard bought the print and hung it in his sitting-room; for since he had been promoted in the bank and had been admitted to a fashionable club, he had moved into bachelor apartments suitable to his improving fortunes and social position. He had also committed himself to the keeping of an English man-servant—he did not like to call him his valet, lest the appearance of ostentation and Anglomania should prejudice him with his business associates. But somehow the new dignity of his own surroundings seemed to lend something bordering on probability to the conjecture that this once acting-governor of New York, Rip Van Dam, might have been one of Charley's ancestors.

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Millard hung this print on one side of the chimney in his apartment, a chimney that had a pair of andirons and three logs of wood in it. But whether this or any other chimney in the Graydon Building was fitted to contain a fire nobody knew; for the building was heated by steam, and no one had been foolhardy enough to discover experimentally just what would happen if fire were actually lighted in fireplaces so unrealistic as these. On the other side of his chimney Charley hung a print of the storming of Stony Point. One evening, Philip Gouverneur, one of Millard's new cronies, who was calling on him, asked "Millard, what have you got that old meeting-house on your wall for?"

"Well, you see," said Millard, with the air of a man but languidly interested,—your real gentleman always affects to be bored by what he cares for,—"you see I put it there because it is dedicated to old Rip Van Dam."

"What do you care for that old cuss?" went on Gouverneur, who, being of the true blue blood himself, had a fad of making game of the whole race of ancient worthies.

"I don't really care," said Charley; "but as my mother was a Vandam, she may have descended from this Rip. I have no documents to prove it."

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"Oh, I see. Excuse me for making fun of your forefathers. I say every mean thing I can think of about mine, but another man's grandfather is sacred. You see I couldn't help smiling at the meeting-house on one side and that old-fashioned, bloody bayonet-charge on the other."

"Oh, that's only another case of ancestor," said Millard; "my great-grandfather was at Stony Point."

"The more fool he," said Gouverneur. "My forefathers, now, contrived to keep out of bayonet-charges, and shed for their country mostly ink and oratory, speeches and documents."

Though Philip Gouverneur did not care for ancestors, his mother did. The one thing that enabled Mrs. Gouverneur to look down on the whole brood of railway magnates, silver-mine kings, and Standard Oil operators, who, as she phrased it, "had intruded into New York," was the fact that her own family had taken an historic part in the Revolutionary struggle. At this very moment she was concocting a ball in memory of the evacuation of New York, and she was firmly resolved that on this occasion no upstart of an Astor or a Vanderbilt, much less any later comer, should assist—nobody but those whose families were distinctly of Revolutionary or colonial dignity. In truth, Mrs. Gouverneur had some feeling of resentment that the capitalist families were of late disposed to take themselves for leaders in society, and to treat the merely old families as dispensable if necessary. This assembly to be made up exclusively of antiques was her countermove. [Pg 33]

It cost her something of a struggle. There were amiable people, otherwise conspicuously eligible, whom she must omit if she adhered to her plan, and there were some whom she despised that must be asked on account of the illustriousness of their pedigree. But Mrs. Gouverneur had set out to check the deterioration of society in New York, and she was not the woman to draw back when principle demanded the sacrifice of her feelings. She had taken the liveliest fancy to young Millard, who by a charming address, obliging manners, and an endless stock of useful information had made himself an intimate in the Gouverneur household. He had come to dine with them informally almost every alternate Sunday evening. To leave him out would be a dreadful cut; but what else could she do? What would be said of her set of old china if she inserted such a piece of new porcelain? What would Miss Lavinia Vandeleur, special oracle on the genealogy of the exclusive families, think, if Mrs. Gouverneur should be so recreant to right principles as to invite a young man without a single grandfather to his back, only because he had virtues of his own?

"I say, mother," said Philip, her son, when he came to look over the list, "you haven't got Charley Millard down."

"Well, how can I invite Mr. Millard? He has no family."

"No family! Why, he is a descendant of old Governor Van Dam, and one of his ancestors was an officer under Wayne at Stony Point." [Pg 34]

"Are you sure, Philip?"

"Certainly: he has pictures of Stony Point and of Rip Van Dam hanging in his room. No Revolutionary party would be complete without him."

Mrs. Gouverneur looked at Philip suspiciously; he had a way of quizzing her; but his face did not flinch, and she was greatly relieved to think she had missed making the mistake of omitting a friend with so eligible a backing. Millard was invited, rather to his own surprise, and taken into preliminary councils as a matter of course. When the introductory minuet had been danced, and the ball was at its height, Philip Gouverneur, with a smile of innocence, led his friend straight to Miss Vandeleur, who proudly wore the very dress in which, according to a rather shaky tradition, her great-great aunt had poured tea for General Washington.

"Miss Vandeleur," said Philip, "let me present Mr. Millard."

Miss Vandeleur gave Millard one of the bows she kept ready for people of no particular consequence.

"Mr. Millard is real old crockery," said Philip in a half-confidential tone. "Some of us think it enough to be Revolutionary, but he is a descendant of Rip Van Dam, the old governor of New York in the seventeenth century."

Miss Vandeleur's face relaxed, and she remarked that judging from his name, as well as from something in his appearance, Mr. Millard must have come, like herself, from one of the old Huguenot families. [Pg 35]

"Revolutionary, too, Charley?" said Philip, looking at Millard. Then to Miss Vandeleur, "One of his ancestors was second in command in the charge on Stony Point."

"Ah, Philip, you put it too strongly, I—"

"There's Governor Cadwallader waiting to speak to you, Miss Vandeleur," interrupted Philip, bowing and drawing Millard away. "Don't say a word, Charley. The most of Miss Vandeleur's information is less sound than what I told her about you. Nine-tenths of all such a genealogy huckster takes for gospel is just rot. I knew that Rip Van Dam would impress her if I put it strongly and said seventeenth century. You see the further away your forefather is, the more the virtue. Ancestry is like homeopathic medicine, the oftener it is diluted the greater the potency."

"Yes," said Millard; "and a remote ancestor has the advantage that pretty much everything to his discredit has been forgotten."

Charley knew that this faking of a Millard pedigree by his friend would prove as valuable to him as a decoration in the eyes of certain exclusive people. His conscience did not escape without some qualms; he did not like to be labeled what he was not. But he had learned by this time that society of every grade is in great part a game of Mild Humbug, and that this game, like all others, must be played according to rule. Each player has a right to make the most of his hand, whatever it may be. He had begun without a single strong card. Neither great wealth, personal distinction, nor noted family had fallen to him. But in the game of Mild Humbug as in almost all other games, luck and good play go for much; with skill and fortune a weak card may take the trick, and Millard was in a fair way to win against odds.

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IV. THE BANK OF MANHADOES.

When a farmer turns a strange cow into his herd she has to undergo a competitive examination. The fighter of the flock, sometimes a reckless-looking creature with one horn turned down as a result of former battles, walks directly up to the stranger, as in duty bound. The duel is in good form and preceded by ceremonious bowing on both sides; one finds here the origin of that scrape with the foot which was an essential part of all obeisance before the frosty perpendicular English style came in. Politeness over, the two brutes lock horns, and there is a trial of strength, weight, and bovine persistency; let the one that first gives ground look out for a thrust in the ribs! But once the newcomer has settled her relative social standing and knows which of her fellows are to have the *pas* of her at the hayrick and the watering-place, and which she in turn may safely bully, all is peace in the pasture.

Something like this takes place in our social herds. In every government, cabinet, party, or deliberative body there is the preliminary set-to until it is discovered who, by one means or another, can push the hardest. Not only in governments and political bodies but in every corporation, club, Dorcas society, base-ball league, church, and grocery store, the superficial observer sees what appears to be harmony and even brotherly unity; it is only the result of preliminary pushing matches by which the equilibrium of offensive and defensive qualities has been ascertained. And much that passes for domestic harmony is nothing but a prudent acquiescence in an arrangement based on relative powers of annoyance.

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This long preamble goeth to show that if the Bank of Manhadoes had its rivalries it was not singular. In the light of the general principles we have evoked, the elbowings among the officers of the bank are lifted into the dignity of instances, examples, phenomena illustrating human nature and human history. More far-reaching than human nature, they are offshoots of the great struggle for existence, which, as we moderns have had the felicity to discover, gives rise to the survival of the tough and the domination of the pugnacious—the annihilation of the tender and the subjugation of the sensitive.

When Millard entered the bank there existed a conflict in the board of directors, and a division of opinion extending to the stockholders, between those who sustained and those who opposed the policy of the Masters-Farnsworth administration. But the administration proved fortunate and successful to such a degree that the opposition and rivalry presently died away or lost hope. Once the opposition to the two managers had disappeared, the lack of adjustment between the president and cashier became more pronounced. Farnsworth was the victim of a chronic asthma, and he was as ambitious as he was restless. The wan little man was untiring in his exertions

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because the trouble he had to get breath left him no temptation to repose. He contrived to find vent for his uneasiness by communicating a great deal of it to others. Masters, the president, was a man of sixty-five, with neither disease nor ambition preying on his vitals. For a long while he allowed Farnsworth to have his way in most things, knowing that if one entered into contention with Farnsworth there was no hope of ever making an end of it except by death or surrender. That which was decided yesterday against Farnsworth was sure to be reopened this morning; and though finally settled again to-day, it was all to be gone over to-morrow; nor would it be nearer to an adjustment next week. Compromise did no good: Farnsworth accepted your concession to-day, and then higgled you to split the difference on the remainder to-morrow, until you had so small a dividend left that it was not worth holding to.

But in dealing with a man like Masters it was possible to carry the policy of grand worry too far. When at length this rather phlegmatic man made up his mind that Farnsworth was systematically bullying him—a conclusion that Mrs. Masters helped him to reach—he became the very granite of obstinacy, offering a quiet but unyielding resistance to the cashier's aggressiveness. But an ease-loving man could not keep up this sort of fight forever. Masters knew this as well as any one, and he therefore felt the need of some buffer between him and his associate. There were two positions contemplated in the organization of the bank that had never yet been filled. One was that of vice-president, the other that of assistant cashier. By filling the assistant cashier's place with an active, aggressive man, Masters might secure an ally who could attack Farnsworth on the other flank. But in doing that he would have to disappoint Millard, who was steadily growing in value to the bank, but who, from habitual subordination to Farnsworth, and the natural courtesy of his disposition, could not be depended on to offer much resistance. To introduce a stranger would be to disturb the status quo, and the first maxim in the conduct of institutions is to avoid violent changes. Once the molecules of an organization are set into unusual vibration it is hard to foretell what new combinations they may form. And your practical man dislikes, of all things, to invite the unforeseen and the incalculable.

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The election of a vice-president would bring a new man into the bank over the head of Farnsworth, but it would also produce a disturbance from which Masters felt a shrinking natural to an experienced and conservative administrator. Moreover, there was no one connected with the direction, or even holding stock in the bank, suitable to be put over Farnsworth. Unless, indeed, it were thought best to bring Hilbrough from Brooklyn. To introduce so forceful a man as Hilbrough into the management would certainly be a great thing for the bank, and it would not fail to put an end to the domination of Farnsworth. But Masters reflected that it might equally reduce his own importance. And with all his irritation against Farnsworth the president disliked to deal him too severe a blow.

If the matter had been left to Mrs. Masters, there would have been no relentings. In her opinion Farnsworth ought to be put out. Aren't you president, Mr. Masters? Why don't you *be* president, then? Don't like to be too hard on him? That's just like you. I'd just put him out, and there'd be an end of his fussiness once for all. *Of course* you *could* if you set about it. You are always saying that you don't like to let feeling interfere with business. But I wouldn't stand Farnsworth—little shrimp!—setting up to run a bank. Ill? Well, he ought to be; makes himself ill meddling with other people. He'd be better if he didn't worry about what doesn't belong to him. I'd give him rest. It's all well enough to sneer at a woman's notion of business, but the bank would be better off if you had entire control of it. The directors know that, they *must* know it; they are not blind.

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There were no half-tones in Mrs. Master's judgment; everything was painted in coal blacks or glittering whites. She saw no mediums in character; he who was not good in every particular was capable of most sorts of devilry, in her opinion.

This antagonism between the president and the cashier did not reach its acute stage until Millard had been in the bank for more than three years. Millard had made his way in the estimation of the directors in part by his ever-widening acquaintance with people of importance. His social connections enabled him to be of service to many men whose good-will was beneficial to the bank, and he was a ready directory to financial and family relationships, and to the business history and standing of those with whom the bank had dealings. Add to these advantages his considerable holdings of the bank's stock, and it is easy to comprehend how in spite of his youth he had come to stand next to Masters and Farnsworth. The dissensions between these two were disagreeable to one who had a decided preference for quietude and placidity of manners; but he kept aloof from their quarrel, though he must have had private grievances against a superior so pragmatical as Farnsworth.

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A sort of magnanimity was mingled with craft in Masters's constitution, and, besides, he much preferred the road that was likely to give him the fewest jolts. The natural tendency of his

irritation was to die away. This would have been the result in spite of the spur that Mrs. Masters supplied—applied, rather—if Farnsworth could have been content to let things take their natural course; but he could not abide to let anything go its natural way: he would have attempted a readjustment of the relations between the moon and tides if he had thought himself favorably situated for puttering in such matters. The temporary obstruction which Masters offered to his fussy willfulness seemed to the cashier an outrage hard to be borne. After he had taken so many tedious years to establish his ascendancy in nine-tenths of the bank's affairs it was sheer impertinence in Masters to wish to have any considerable share in the management. The backset to his ambition made him more sleepless than ever, bringing on frequent attacks of asthma. He lost interest even in the dinner parties, with a business squint, that he had been so fond of giving. Mrs. Farnsworth was under the frequent necessity of holding a platter of burning stramonium under his nose to subdue the paroxysms of wheezing that threatened to cut short his existence. Along with the smoke of the stramonium she was wont to administer a soothing smudge of good advice, beseeching him not to worry about things, though she knew perfectly that he would never cease to worry about things so long as his attenuated breath was not wholly turned off. She urged him to make Masters do his share of the work, and to take a vacation himself, or to resign outright, so as to spend his winters in Jacksonville. But every new paroxysm brought to Farnsworth a fresh access of resentment against Masters, whom he regarded as the source of all his woes. In his wakeful nights he planned a march on the very lines that Masters had proposed. He would get Millard made assistant cashier, and then have himself advanced to vice-president, with Millard, or some one on whom he could count more surely, for cashier. He proposed nothing less than to force the president out of all active control, and, if possible, to compel him to resign. No qualms of magnanimity disturbed this deoxygenated man. It was high time for Masters to resign, if for no other reason than that Farnsworth might occupy the private office. This inner office was a badge of Masters's superiority not to be endured.

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There was one director, Meadows, whom Farnsworth lighted on as a convenient agent in his intrigue. Meadows had belonged to the old opposition which had resisted both the president and cashier. He was suspected of a desire to make a place for his brother, who had been cashier of a bank that had failed, and who had broken in nerve force when the bank broke. Farnsworth, who rode about in a coupé to save his breath for business and contention, drove up in front of Meadows's shop one morning at half-past nine, and made his way back among chandeliers of many patterns in incongruous juxtaposition, punctuated with wall burners and table argands. In the private office at the back he found Meadows opening his letters. He was a round-jawed man with blue eyes, an iron-oxide complexion, stiff, short, rusty hair, red-yellow side-whiskers, an upturned nose, and a shorn chin, habitually thrust forward. Once seated and his wind recovered, Farnsworth complained at some length that he found it hard to carry all the responsibility of the bank without adequate assistance.

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"You ought to have an experienced assistant," said Meadows. This was the first occasion on which any officer of the bank had shown his good sense by consulting Meadows, and he was on that account the more disposed to encourage Farnsworth.

"If, now," said Farnsworth, "I could have as good a man as they say your brother is, I would be better fixed. But an experienced man like your brother would not take the place of assistant cashier."

Meadows was not so sure that his brother would refuse any place, but he thought it better not to say anything in reply. Farnsworth, who had no desire to take Meadows's brother unless he should be driven to it, saw the dangerous opening he had left. He therefore proceeded, as soon as he could get breath:

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"Besides, the assistant's place belongs naturally to young Millard, and he would have influence enough to defeat anybody else who might be proposed. He is a good fellow, but he can't take responsibility. If Masters were not the cold-blooded man he is, he would have made Millard assistant cashier long ago, and advanced me to be vice-president."

"And then you would want some good man for cashier," said Meadows.

"Precisely," said Farnsworth; "that is just it."

"I think we can do that with or without Masters," said Meadows, turning his head to one side with a quiet air of defiance. He was only too well pleased to renew his fight against Masters with Farnsworth for ally. The question of his brother's appointment was after all an auxiliary one; he loved faction and opposition pure and simple.

"I am sure we can," said Farnsworth. "Of course my hand must not appear. But if a motion were

to be made to advance both Millard and me one step, I don't think Masters would dare oppose it."

"I'll make the motion," said Meadows, with something like a sniff, as though, like Job's war-horse, he smelled the battle and liked the odor.

In taking leave Farnsworth told Meadows that he had not yet spoken to Millard about the matter, and he thought it not best to mention it to him before the meeting. But the one thing that rendered Meadows tolerably innocuous was that he never could co-operate with an ally, even in factious opposition, without getting up a new faction within the first, and so fomenting subdivisions as long as there were two to divide. The moment Farnsworth had left him he began to reflect suspiciously that the cashier intended to tell Millard himself, and so take the entire credit of the promotion. This would leave Farnsworth free to neglect Meadows's brother. Meadows, therefore, resolved to tell Millard in advance and thus put the latter under obligation to further his brother's interest. He gave himself great credit for a device by which he would play Farnsworth against Masters and then head off Farnsworth with Millard. Farnsworth wished to use him to pull some rather hot chestnuts out of the fire, and he chuckled to think that he had arranged to secure his own share of the nuts first.

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With this profound scheme in his head, Meadows contrived to encounter Millard at luncheon, an encounter which the latter usually took some pains to avoid, for Millard was fastidious in eating as in everything else and he disliked to see Meadows at the table. Not that the latter did not know the use of fork and napkin, but he assaulted his food with a ferocity that, as Millard once remarked, "lent too much support to the Darwinian hypothesis."

On the day of his conversation with Farnsworth, Meadows bore down on the table where Millard sat alone, disjuncting a partridge.

"Goo' morning," he said, abruptly seating himself on the rail of the chair opposite to Millard, and beckoning impatiently to a waiter, who responded but languidly, knowing that Meadows was opposed to the tip system from both principle and interest.

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When he had given his order and then, as usual, called back the waiter as he was going out the door, waving his hand at him and uttering a "H-i-s-t, waitah!" to tell him that he did not want his meat so fat as it had been the last time, he gave his attention to Millard and introduced the subject of the approaching meeting of the directors.

"Why doesn't old Rip Van Winkle wake up?" said Meadows. "Why doesn't he make you assistant cashier? I'm sure you deserve it."

"Well, now, if you put it that way, Mr. Meadows, and leave it to me, I will say candidly that I suppose the real reason for not promoting me is that Mr. Masters, being a man of sound judgment, feels that he can not do me justice under the circumstances. If I had my deserts I'd be president of the bank; but it would be too much to ask a gentleman at Mr. Masters's time of life to move out of his little office just to make room for a deserving young man."

"You may joke, but you know that Masters is jealous. Why doesn't he promote Farnsworth to be vice-president? You know that Farnsworth really runs the bank."

"It isn't his fault if he doesn't," said Millard in a half-whisper.

"I believe that if I made a move to advance both you and Farnsworth it could be carried." Meadows looked inquiringly at his companion.

"What would become of the cashiership?" asked Millard. "I suppose we could divide that between us." "Won't you try a glass of Moselle?" And he passed the bottle to Meadows, who poured out a glass of it—he never declined wine when some one else paid for it—while Millard kept on talking to keep from saying anything. "I like to drink the health of any man who proposes to increase my salary, Mr. Meadows." Millard observed with disgust that the bank director drank off the wine at a gulp as he might have taken any vulgar claret, with an evident lack of appreciation. Millard himself was a light drinker; nothing but the delicate flavor of good wine could make drinking tolerable to him. The mind of Meadows, however, was intent on the subject under discussion.

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"The cashiership," he said, "could either be filled by some experienced man or it might be left vacant for a while."

Millard saw a vision of Meadows, the discouraged brother, stepping in over his head.

"If a cashier should be put in now," said Meadows, "it would end presently in old Rip Van

Winkle's resigning, and then an advance along the whole line would move you up once more." Meadows thought that this sop would reconcile Millard to having his brother interpolated above him.

"That's a good plan," said Millard, using his finger-bowl; "and then if Mr. Farnsworth would only be kind enough to die in one of his attacks, and the other man should get rich by speculation and retire, I'd come to be president at last. That is the only place suited to a modest and worthy young man like myself."

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This fencing annoyed Meadows, who was by this time salting and peppering his roast beef, glaring at it the while like a boa-constrictor contemplating a fresh victim in anticipation of the joys of deglutition. Millard saw the importance of letting Masters know about this new move, and feared that Meadows would attempt to put him under bonds of secrecy. So, as he rose to go, like a prairie traveler protecting himself by back-firing, he said:

"If you're really serious in this matter, Mr. Meadows, I suppose you'll take pains not to have it generally known. For one thing, if you won't tell anybody else, I'll promise you not to tell my wife."

"And if Farnsworth speaks to you about it," said Meadows, "don't tell him that I have said anything to you. He wanted to tell you himself."

"I'll not let him know that you said anything about it."

And with that Millard went out. The bait of the assistant cashiership was not tempting enough to draw him into this intrigue. The greater part of his capital was in the bank, and he knew that the withdrawal of Masters would be a misfortune to him. Finding that Farnsworth was out, Millard went to the president's room under color of showing him a letter of importance. A man of dignity doesn't like to seem to bear tales with malice prepense. When he was about to leave Millard said:

"I hear that a motion is to be made looking to changes in the personnel of the bank."

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The president was a little startled; his first impression from this remark being that somehow Millard had got wind of the plans he had revolved and then discarded.

"What do you hear?" he said, in his usual non-committal way.

"Nothing very definite, but something that leads me to think that Mr. Farnsworth would like to be vice-president and that Meadows would consent to have his brother take the cashiership."

"No doubt, no doubt," said Mr. Masters, smiling. It was his habit to smile when he felt the impulse to frown. He did not like to seem ignorant of anything going on in the bank, so he said no more to Millard, but let the conversation drop. He presently regretted this, and by the time Millard had reached his desk he was recalled.

"You understand that Mr. Farnsworth and Meadows are acting in concert?"

"I have reason to think so."

"Do you think it would be wise to make Mr. Farnsworth vice-president?"

Millard turned the palms of his hands upward and shrugged his shoulders. He made no other reply than to add, "You know him as well as I do."

"Who would be a good man for the place?"

"Have you thought of Hilbrough?"

"Yes, he would bring real strength to the bank; and, Mr. Millard, there is one promotion I have long had in mind," said the president. "You ought to be made assistant cashier, with a considerably larger salary than you have been getting."

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Millard made a slight bow. "I'm sure you don't expect me to offer serious opposition to that proposal." Then he could not refrain from adding, "I believe Mr. Farnsworth and Meadows have also reached that conclusion."

There was no opportunity to reply to this; Farnsworth was heard wheezing outside the door.

Masters thought rapidly that afternoon. He admitted to himself, as he had hardly done before, that he was growing old and that a successful bank ought to have some more vigorous man than

he in its management; some man of ideas more liberal than Farnsworth's, and of more age and experience than this young Millard. His mind turned to Hilbrough, the real-estate agent in Montague Street, Brooklyn. First a poor clerk, then a small collector of tenement-house rents, then a prosperous real-estate agent and operator on his own account, he had come by shrewd investment to be a rich man. He was accustomed to make call loans to a large amount on collateral security, and his business was even now almost that of a private banker. A director in the Bank of Manhadoes from its beginning and one of its largest stockholders, he was the most eligible man to succeed Masters in the active management of its affairs, and the only man whose election once proposed would certainly command the support of the directors against the scheme of Farnsworth. He was the one possible man who would prove quite too large for Farnsworth's domineering. It was with a pang that Masters reflected that he too would be effaced in a measure by the advent of a man so vital as Warren Hilbrough; but there was for him only the choice between being effaced by Hilbrough's superior personality and being officially put out of the way by Farnsworth's process of slow torture. He saw, too, that a bank with four high-grade officers would have a more stable official equilibrium than one where the power is shared between two. The head of such an institution is sheltered from adverse intrigues by the counterpoise of the several officers to one another.

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If Masters had needed any stimulus to his resolution to contravene the ambitious plans of the cashier, Mrs. Masters would have supplied it. When she heard of Farnsworth's scheme, she raised again her old cry of *Carthago delenda est*, Farnsworth must be put out. In her opinion nothing else would meet the requirement of poetic justice; but she despaired of persuading Masters to a measure so extreme. It was always the way. Mr. Masters was too meek for anything; he would let people run over him.

But Masters had no notion of being run over. He went to the office every day, and from the office he went to his country-place in New Jersey every afternoon. There was nothing in his actions to excite the suspicion of the cashier, who could not know that negotiations with Hilbrough, and the private submission of the proposition to certain directors, had all been intrusted to the tact of Charley Millard. It was rather hard on Millard, too; for though he enjoyed his success in an undertaking so delicate, he regretted two dinner parties and one desirable reception that he was compelled to forego in order to carry on his negotiations out of bank hours.

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The day before the directors met, Farnsworth confided to Millard his intention to have him made assistant cashier. Millard said that if Mr. Masters and the directors should agree to that he would be very well pleased. Considering his evident loyalty to Masters, Farnsworth did not think it wise to tell Millard anything further.

In the board of directors Meadows sat with a more than usually defiant face—with a face which showed premonitions of exultation. Farnsworth felt sure of his game, but he found breathing so laborious that he did not show any emotion. Masters thought it best to soften the humiliation of his associate as much as possible by forestalling his proposition. So at the first moment he suggested to the directors that the bank needed new force, on account both of his own advancing years and of Mr. Farnsworth's ill-health, much aggravated by his excessive industry. He therefore proposed to have Mr. Hilbrough made vice-president with the same salary as that paid to the president, to add a thousand to the cashier's salary, and to promote Mr. Millard to be assistant cashier on a salary of five thousand a year. He said that the prosperity of the bank justified the increased expense, and that the money would be well invested.

Meadows opposed this plan as extravagant. He favored the promotion of Mr. Millard, and the promotion of Mr. Farnsworth to be vice-president, leaving the cashiership vacant for a while. But the directors, accustomed to follow the lead of Masters and Hilbrough, and suspicious of Meadows as habitually factious, voted the president's proposition.

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Farnsworth went home and to bed. Then he asked for a vacation and went South. The bank officers sent him a handsome bouquet when he sailed away on the Savannah steamer; for commerce by the very rudeness of its encounters makes men forgiving. In business it is unprofitable to cherish animosities, and contact with a great variety of character makes business men usually more tolerant than men of secluded lives. Farnsworth, for his part, was as pleased as a child might have been with the attention paid him on his departure, and Mrs. Farnsworth was delighted that her husband had consented to take rest, and "make the others do their share of the work."

V. THE ARRIVAL OF THE HILBROUGHS.

Of course there is a small set who affect not to mingle freely with newly prosperous people like the Hilbrougths. These are they in whose estimation wealth and distinction only gain their proper flavor—their bouquet, so to speak—by resting stagnant for three generations, for gentility, like game, acquires an admirable highness by the lapse of time. Descendants of the Lord knows whom, with fortunes made the devil knows how, fondly imagine that a village storekeeper who has risen to affluence is somehow inferior to the grandson of a Dutch sailor who amassed a fortune by illicit trade with the Madagascar pirates, or a worse trade in rum and blackamoors on the Guinea coast, and that a quondam bookkeeper who has fairly won position and money by his own shrewdness is lower down than the lineal descendant of an Indian trader who waxed great by first treating and then cheating shivering Mohawks. Which only shows that we are prone to plant ourselves on the sound traditions of ancestors; for where is the aristocracy which does not regard wealth won by ancient thievery as better than money modernly earned in a commonplace way? But among a gentry so numerous and so democratic, in spite of itself, as that of our American Babel, exclusiveness works discomfort mainly to the exclusive. The Hilbrougths are agreeable Americans, their suppers are provided by the best caterers, their house has been rendered attractive by boughten taste, and the company one sees there is not more stupid than that in other miscellaneous assemblies.

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People who are Livingstons of the manor on their great-grandmother's side, and Van Something-or-others on the side of a great-great-uncle by his second marriage, and who perhaps have never chanced to be asked to the Hilbrougths' receptions, shrug their shoulders, and tell you that they do not know them. But Mrs. Hilbrough does not slight such families because of the colonialness of their ancestry. Her own progenitors came to America in some capacity long before the disagreement about the Stamp Act, though they were not brilliant enough to buy small kingdoms from the Hudson River Indians with jews'-harps and cast-iron hatchets, nor supple enough to get manor lordships by bribes to royal governors.

I suppose the advent of the Hilbrougths in society might be dated from the first reception they gave in New York, though, for that matter, the Hilbrougths do not take pains to date it at all. For it is a rule of good society that as soon as you arrive you affect to have always been there. Of other ascents men boast; of social success, rarely. Your millionaire, for example,—and millionairism is getting so common as to be almost vulgar,—your millionaire never tires of telling you how he worked the multiplication table until cents became dimes, and dimes well sown blossomed presently into dollars, till hundreds swelled to hundreds of thousands, and the man who had been a blithe youth but twenty years before became the possessor of an uneasy tumor he calls a fortune. Once this narrative is begun no matter that you beat your breast with reluctance to hear out the tedious tale, while loud bassoons perchance are calling you to wedding feasts. Pray hear the modern Whittington with patience, good reader! The recital of this story is his main consolation for the boredom of complicated possession in which his life is inextricably involved—his recouperment for the irksome vigilance with which he must defend his hoard against the incessant attacks of cheats and beggars, subscription papers and poor relations. But the man who has won his way in that illusive sphere we call society sends to swift oblivion all his processes. In society no man asks another, "How did you get here?" or congratulates him on moving among better people than he did ten years ago. Theoretically society is stationary. Even while breathless from climbing, the newcomer affects to have been always atop.

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Warren Hilbrough's family had risen with his bettered circumstances from a two-story brick in Degraw street, Brooklyn, by the usual stages to a brownstone "mansion" above the reservoir in New York. When he came to be vice-president of the Bank of Manhadoes, Hilbrough had in a measure reached the goal of his ambition. He felt that he could slacken the strenuousness of his exertions and let his fortune expand naturally under prudent management. But Mrs. Hilbrough was ten years younger than her husband, and her ambition was far from spent. She found herself only on the threshold of her career. In Brooklyn increasing prosperity had made her a leader in church fairs and entertainments. The "Church Social" had often assembled at her house, and she had given a reception in honor of the minister when he came back from the Holy Land—a party which the society reporter of the "Brooklyn Daily Eagle" had pronounced "a brilliant affair." This last stroke had put her at the head of her little world. But now that Hilbrough was vice-president of the Bank of Manhadoes, the new business relations brought her invitations from beyond the little planetary system that revolved around the Reverend Dr. North. It became a question of making her way in the general society of Brooklyn, which had long drawn its members from the

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genteel quarters of the Heights, the Hill, and the remoter South Brooklyn, and, in later days, also from Prospect Park Slope. But at the houses of the officers of the bank she had caught somewhat bewildering vistas of those involved and undefined circles of people that make up in one way and another metropolitan society on the New York side of East River. Three years before Hilbrough entered the bank his family had removed into a new house in South Oxford street, and lately they had contemplated building a finer dwelling on the Slope. But Mrs. Hilbrough in a moment of inspiration decided to omit Brooklyn and to persuade her husband to remove to New York. There would be many advantages in this course. In New York her smaller social campaigns were unknown, and by removal she would be able to readjust with less difficulty her relations with old friends in Dr. North's congregation. When one goes up one must always leave somebody behind; but crossing the river would give her a clean slate, and make it easy to be rid of old scores when she pleased. So it came about that on the first of May following Hilbrough's accession to the bank the family in a carriage, and all their belongings on trucks, were trundled over Fulton Ferry to begin life anew, with painted walls, more expensive carpets, and twice as many servants. A carriage with a coachman in livery took the place of the top-buggy in which, by twos, and sometimes by threes, the Hilbroughs had been wont to enjoy Prospect Park. The Hilbrough children did not relish this part of the change. The boys could not see the fun of sitting with folded hands on a carriage seat while they rumbled slowly through Fifth Avenue and Central Park, even when the Riverside Park was thrown in. An augmentation of family dignity was small compensation for the loss of the long drive between the quadruple lines of maples that shade the Ocean Parkway in full view of the fast trotting horses which made a whirling maze as they flew past them in either direction.

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"There was some fun in a long Saturday's drive to Coney Island, and round by Fort Hamilton and the Narrows," muttered Jack, as the horses toiled up a steep in Central Park; "this here is about as amusing as riding in a black maria would be."

Ah, Jack! You are too young to comprehend the necessity that rests upon us of swelling our dignity into some proportion to a growing stock balance. It is irksome this living on stilts, but an unfortunate inability to match our fortune by increasing our bulk leaves us no alternative but to augment our belongings so as to preserve the fitness of things at any cost. There is as yet no Society for the Emancipation of Princes, and the Association for the Amelioration of the Condition of the Children of the Rich has no place in the list of New York philanthropies.

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Mrs. Hilbrough prudently spent her first winter on Manhattan Island in looking about her. She ventured a dinner company two or three times, but went no further. She received calls from the wives of those who had, and those who wished to have, business relations with her husband, and she returned them, making such observations as she could on the domestic economy, or rather the domestic extravagance, of those she visited. The first result of this was that she changed her door-boy. The fine-looking mulatto she had installed in imitation of some of her richer Brooklyn acquaintances had to be discharged. The Anglomania of the early eighties cruelly abolished the handsome darky hall-boy, that most artistic living bronze, with all his suggestion of barbaric magnificence, and all his Oriental obsequiousness. His one fault was that he was not English. Fashion forbade the rich to avail themselves of one of the finest products of the country. The lackey who took his place had the English superciliousness, and marked the advance of American civilization by adding a new discomfort and deformity to the life of people of fashion.

The minister of the church in which the Hilbroughs had taken pews sent his wife to call on Mrs. Hilbrough, and two of the church officers, knowing the value of such an acquisition to the church, showed their Christian feeling in the same way. Many of her old Degraw street and South Oxford street friends called at the new house, their affection being quickened by a desire "to see what sort of style the Hilbroughs are putting on now." Some of her Brooklyn calls she returned out of a positive liking for good old friends, some because the callers were those who could introduce her to people she desired to know in New York. She excused herself from calling on the most of her trans-East-River acquaintances by urging that it is so much farther from New York to Brooklyn than it is from Brooklyn to New York, you know. She attended several large evening receptions in New York, and drank five o'clock tea at six in the evening at a good many places. She thus made acquaintances, while with a clever woman's tact she kept her wits about her and began to "get the hang of the thing," as she expressed it to one of her confidential friends. Meantime she was as constant in her attendance at the opera as she had been at the prayer-meeting in former days.

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It was at the beginning of her second winter in New York that she served notice on Hilbrough that she meant to give a reception; or, as she put it, "We must give a reception." The children had gone to school, the butler was otherwise engaged, and there was nobody but a waitress present.

Hilbrough's face was of that sunny, sanguine sort which always seems to indicate that things are

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booming, to borrow a phrase from our modern argot. His plump, cheery countenance, and the buoyant spontaneity of his laugh, inspired a confidence which had floated his craft over more than one financial shoal. But when Mrs. Hilbrough proposed a reception, just as he finished his coffee, he became meditative, leaned his two large arms on the table, and made a careful inspection of the china cup: his wife—Brooklyn woman that she was—had lately made a journey across the new bridge to buy the set at Ovington's.

"You don't mean one of those stupid crushes," he began, "where all the people outside are trying to butt their way in, and all those inside are wishing to heaven that they were well out again—like so many June bugs and millers on a summer night bumping against both sides of a window with a candle in it?" Hilbrough finished with a humorous little chuckle at his own comparison.

"Well," rejoined Mrs. Hilbrough, firmly, "a reception is the thing to give. We owe it to our social position."

"Social position be hanged!" said Hilbrough, half in vexation, but still laughing, while his wife tried by frowning to remind him that the use of such words in the presence of a servant was very improper.

"It seems as though I never could get square with that thing you call social position. I pay all my other debts and take receipts in full, but the more money we have the more we owe to social position. I have a great mind to suspend payment for a while and let social position go to smash. I detest a reception. I don't mind a nice little gathering of good friendly folks such as we used to have in Degraw street at the church socials—"

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"Church socials!"

His wife's interruption took Hilbrough's breath. She muttered rather than spoke these few words, but with a contemptuousness of inflection that was most expressive. Hilbrough was left in some doubt as to whether all the contempt was intended for the church socials in Degraw street, or whether a part of it might not be meant for a husband whose mind had not kept pace with his fortune.

"I am sure there was real enjoyment in a church social," he said, with a deprecating laugh, "to say nothing of the money raised to recarpet the church aisles. And I confess I rather enjoyed the party you gave in Oxford street when Dr. North got back from the Holy Land."

While Hilbrough was making this speech his wife had, by dumb show, ordered the waitress to take something down-stairs, in order that there might be no listener to Hilbrough's autobiographical reminiscences but herself.

"Well, my dear," she said, taking a conciliatory tone, "our walk in life has changed, and we must adapt ourselves to our surroundings. You know you always said that we ought to do our share toward promoting sociability."

"Sociability!" It was Hilbrough's turn now. His laugh had a note of derision in it. "W'y, my dear, there is rather more sociability in a cue of depositors at the teller's window of an afternoon than there was at Mrs. Master's reception last winter."

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"Well, don't let's argue. I hate arguments of all things."

"Most people do, when they get the worst of them," rejoined Hilbrough, merrily.

"You are positively rude," pouted Mrs. Hilbrough, rising from the table. If she hated arguments, her husband hated tiffs, and her look of reproach accomplished what her arguments could not. Hilbrough knew that at the game of injured innocence he was no match for his wife. The question in his mind now was to find a line of retreat.

"You ought to have more consideration for my feelings, Warren," she went on. "Besides, you know you said that whatever widened our acquaintance was likely to do the bank good. You know you did."

"So I did, my dear; so I did," he answered, soothingly, as he rose from the table and looked at his watch. "There's one comfort, anyhow. You don't know a great many people on this side of the river yet, and so I guess I sha'n't have to put hoops on the house this time, unless you fetch all Brooklyn across the new bridge."

Mrs. Hilbrough did not care to contradict her husband now that he had relented. But as for crowding the house she felt sure there was a way to do it, if she could only find it, and she was

resolved not to have fewer people than Mrs. Masters, and that without depleting Brooklyn.

What she needed was an adviser. She went over the bead-roll of her acquaintance and found nobody eligible. Those who could have pointed out to her what were the proper steps to take in such a case were just the people to whom she was not willing to expose herself in her unfledged condition. At last she felt obliged to ask Mr. Hilbrough about it.

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"Don't you know somebody, my dear, who knows New York better than I do, who could give me advice about our reception?" This was her opening of the matter as she sat crocheting by the glowing grate of anthracite in the large front room on the second floor, while her husband smoked, and read his evening paper.

"I? How should I know?" he said, laying down the paper. "I don't know many New York ladies."

"Not a woman! I mean some man. You can't speak to a woman about such things so well as you can to a man;" and she spread her fancy-work out over her knee and turned her head on one side to get a good view of its general effect.

"I should think you would rather confide in a woman." Hilbrough looked puzzled and curious as he said this.

"You don't understand," she said. "A woman doesn't like to give herself away to another woman. Women always think you ridiculous if you don't understand everything, and they remember and talk about it. But a man likes to give information to a woman. I suppose men like to have a woman look up to them." Mrs. Hilbrough laughed at the explanation, which was not quite satisfactory to herself.

"Well," said Hilbrough, after a minute's amused meditation, "the men I know are all like me. They are business men, and are rather dragged into society, I suppose, by their wives, and by"—he chuckled merrily at this point—"by the debts they owe to social position, you know. I don't believe there's a man in the bank that wouldn't be as likely to ask me about what coat he ought to wear on any occasion as to give me any information on the subject. Yes, there is one man. That's young *Millard*, or *Millard*, as he calls it. He's a sort of a dude, and I never could stand dudes. I asked Mr. Masters the other day whether the assistant cashier was worth so large a salary as five thousand dollars, and he said that that man had the entry—the *ontray*, as he called it—to the best houses in New York. He's cheek by jowl with a dozen of the richest men, he's invited everywhere, and is considered a great authority on all matters of that kind. He brings some business to the bank, and he's one of the best judges in New York of a man's character and responsibility. He knows all about pretty nearly every man whose note is presented for discount, and, if he does not know at once, he can generally find out in an hour. I believe he could tell us the name of the grandmother of almost every prominent depositor if we wished to know, and how every man got his money."

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"Is he rich?"

"Well, nobody seems to know for certain. He has a large slice of the bank's stock, and he's known to have good investments outside. He's well enough off to live without his salary if he wanted to. But I am pretty sure he isn't rich. Belongs to some old family, I suppose."

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"I should be afraid of him," said Mrs. Hilbrough, ruefully.

"You needn't be. He's a good enough sort of fellow if he only wouldn't part his hair in the middle. I can't abide that in a man. But it's no use being afraid of him. He probably knows all about you and me already. He first came to see me about coming into the bank, and I don't know but it was his move to get me."

"Would he come up to dinner some evening?"

"He'd rather like to oblige me. I'll have to get him when he's disengaged. What shall I tell him?"

"Tell him that Mrs. Hilbrough wishes his advice, and would be glad if he would come to dinner with us some evening."

"Why do I need to say anything about your wanting advice? I don't just like to ask a favor of such a dude. I'll ask him to dinner, and you can ask his advice as though by accident."

"No; that won't do. That kind of man would see through it all. Tell him that I wish his advice. That will show him that I recognize his position as an authority. He'll like that better."

Warren Hilbrough suddenly discovered that his wife was cleverer—or, as he would have said, "smarter"—than he had thought her.

"You are a good hand, Jenny," he said. "You'll win your game." And after he had resumed the reading of his paper he looked over the top of it once or twice in furtive admiration of her as she sat between him and the dark portière, which set her form in relief against the rich background and made her seem a picture to the fond eyes of her husband. He reflected that perhaps after all managing church fairs and running sewing societies was no bad training for a larger social activity.

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VI. PHILLIDA CALLENDER.

"Hilbrough has sent for me," said Millard to Philip Gouverneur, who was sitting so as to draw his small form into the easy-chair as he smoked by the open fire in the newspaper room at the Terrapin Club. Millard, who had never liked tobacco, was pretending to smoke a cigarette because smoking seemed to him the right thing to do. He had no taste for any more desperate vice, and tobacco smoke served to take the gloss off a character which seemed too highly finished for artistic effect.

"Hilbrough"—Charley smiled as he recalled it—"always gets uneasy when he's talking to me. He takes his foot off the chair and puts it on the floor. Then he throws himself forward on the table with his elbows outward, and then he straightens up. He's a jolly kind of man, though, and a good banker. But his wife—she is the daughter of a Yankee school-teacher that taught in Brooklyn till he died—is a vigorous little woman. She hasn't come to New York to live quietly. She's been head and front of her set in Brooklyn, and the Lord knows what she won't undertake now that Hilbrough's getting rich very fast. I haven't seen her yet, but I rather like her in advance. She didn't try to trap me into an acquaintance, but sent me word that she wanted advice. There's a woman who knows what she wants, and goes for it with a clear head. But what can I do for her? She'll be wanting to give a tea or a ball before she has acquaintances enough. It's awfully ticklish making such people understand that they must go slow and take what they can get to begin with."

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"Why," said Gouverneur, "you can tell her to take the religious or moral reform dodge, and invite all the friends of some cause to meet some distinguished leader of that cause. Bishop Whipple, if she could capture him, would bring all the Friends of the Red Man, just as Miss Willard or Mrs. Livermore would fetch the temperance and woman-suffrage people. You remember the converted Hindu princess they had over here last winter? Between her rank, and her piety, and her coming from the antipodes, and her heathen antecedents, she drew beautifully. Fine woman, too. Even my mother forgave her for not having a drop of Dutch or Revolutionary blood in her veins, and we all liked her very much. Give Mrs. Hilbrough that tip."

Millard shook his head, and smiled. He had the appreciative smile of a man with a genius for listening, which is a better, because a rarer, contribution to conversation than good speech. Philip, crouched in his chair with his face averted from the electric lights, went on:

"Well, then you know there is the literary dodge. Have papers read, not enough to bore people too deeply, but to bore them just enough to give those who attend an impression of intellectuality. Have discussions of literary questions, seasoned with stewed terrapin, and decorated with dress coats and external anatomy gowns. Those who go to such places flatter themselves that they are getting into literary circles and improving their minds, especially if a popular magazinist or the son of some great author can be persuaded to read one of his rejected articles or to make a few remarks now and then. Then there is the musical dodge on the drawing-room scale, or by wholesale, like the Seidl Society, for example. One is able by this means to promote a beautiful art and increase one's social conspicuousness at the same time. Then there is the distinguished-foreigner dodge, give a reception in honor of—"

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"Hang it, Philip; I'll tell Mrs. Hilbrough to send for you," said Millard, laughing as he got up and threw his cigarette into the grate. "I don't like to interrupt your lecture, but it's eleven o'clock, and I'm going home. Good-night."

Philip sat there alone and listened to the rain against the windows, and smoked until his cigar went out. The mere turning of things over in his mind, and tacking witty labels to them, afforded so much amusement that inactivity and reverie were his favorite indulgences.

Mrs. Hilbrough gave a good deal of thought to her dinner on the next evening after the conversation between Philip Gouverneur and Millard. To have it elegant, and yet not to appear vulgar by making too much fuss over a dinner *en famille*, taxed her thought and taste. Half an hour before dinner she met her husband with a perturbed face.

"It's too bad that Phillida Callender should have come this evening. That's just the way with an indefinite invitation. Poor girl, I've been asking her to come any evening, and now she has hit on the only one in the year on which I would rather she should have stayed at home."

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"I'm sure Phillida is nice enough for anybody," said Hilbrough, sturdily. "I don't see how she interferes with your plan."

"Well, Mr. Millard'll think I've asked her specially to help entertain him, and Phillida is so peculiar. She's nobody in particular, socially, and it will seem an unskillful thing to have asked her—and then she has ideas. Young girls with notions of their own are—well—you know."

"Yes, I know, home-made ideas are a little out of fashion," laughed Hilbrough. "But I'll bet he likes her. Millard isn't a fool if he does part his hair in the middle and carry his cane balanced in his fingers like a pair of steelyards."

"If he takes me to dinner, you must follow with Phillida. Give your left arm—"

"I'll feel like a fool escorting Phillida—"

"But you must if Mr. Millard escorts me."

Hilbrough could have cursed Millard. He hated what he called "flummery." Why couldn't people walk to the table without hooking themselves together, and why couldn't they eat their food without nonsense? But he showed his vexation in a characteristic way by laughing inwardly at his wife and Millard, and most of all at himself for an old fool.

Phillida Callender was the daughter of a Presbyterian minister who had gone as missionary to one of the Oriental countries. After years of life in the East, Mr. Callender had returned to America on account of his wife's health, and had settled in Brooklyn. If illusions of his youth had been dispelled in the attempt to convert Orientals to a belief in the Shorter Catechism he never confessed it, even to himself, and he cherished the notion that he would some day return to his missionary vocation. The family had an income from the rent of a house in New York that had been inherited by Mrs. Callender, and the husband received considerable sums for supplying the pulpits of vacant churches. He had occupied the pulpit of the church that the Hilbroughs attended during the whole time of Dr. North's journey to the Holy Land, and had thus come into a half-pastoral relation to the Hilbrough family. Mr. Callender sickened and died; the fragile wife and two daughters were left to plan their lives without him. The sudden shock and the new draft upon Mrs. Callender's energies had completed her restoration to a tolerable degree of health and activity. Between the elder daughter, whom the father had fancifully named Phillida, from the leafy grove in which stood the house where she was born, and Mrs. Hilbrough there had grown up a friendship in spite of the difference in age and temperament—a friendship that had survived the shock of prosperity. Lately the Callenders had found it prudent to remove to their house situate in the region near Second Avenue below Fourteenth Street, a quarter which, having once been fashionable, abides now in the merest twilight of its former grandeur. The letting of the upper rooms of the house was a main source of income.

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Born in Siam, bred in a family pervaded with religious and propagandist ideas, and having led a half-recluse life, Phillida Callender did not seem to Mrs. Hilbrough just the sort of person to entertain a man of the world.

When dinner was announced Millard did give Mrs. Hilbrough his arm, and Phillida was startled and amused, when Mr. Hilbrough, after pausing an instant to remember which of his stout arms he was to offer, presented his left elbow. Despite much internal levity and external clumsiness, Hilbrough played his *rôle* to the satisfaction of his anxious wife, and Phillida looked at him inquiringly after she was seated as though to discover what transformation had taken place in him.

Millard could not but feel curious about the fine-looking, dark young woman opposite him. But with his unflinching sense of propriety he gave the major part of his attention to the elder lady, and,

without uttering one word of flattery, he contrived, by listening well, and by an almost undivided attention to her when he spoke, to make Mrs. Hilbrough very content with herself, her dinner, and her guest. This is the sort of politeness not acquired in dancing-school nor learned in books of decorum; it is art, and of all the fine arts perhaps the one that gives the most substantial pleasure to human beings in general. Even Hilbrough was pleased with Millard's appreciation of Mrs. Hilbrough; to think well of Jenny was an evidence of sound judgment, like the making of a prudent investment.

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Meantime Millard somewhat furtively observed Miss Callender. From the small contributions she made to the table-talk, she seemed, to him, rather out of the common run. Those little touches of inflection and gesture, which one woman in society picks up from another, and which are the most evanescent bubbles of fashion, were wanting in her, and this convinced him that she was not accustomed to see much of the world. On the other hand, there was no lack of refinement either in speech or manner. That disagreeable quality in the voice which in an American woman is often the most easily perceptible note of underbreeding was not there. Her speech was correct without effort, as of one accustomed to hear good English from infancy; her voice in conversation was an alto, with something sympathetic in its vibration, as though a powerful emotional nature lay dormant under the calm exterior. Millard was not the person to formulate this, but with very little direct conversation he perceived that she was outside the category to which he was accustomed, and that her personality might prove interesting, if one had an opportunity of knowing it. He reasoned that with such a voice she ought to be fond of music.

"Have you heard much of Wagner, Miss Callender?" he said when there was a pause in the conversation. He felt before he had finished the question that it was a false beginning, and he was helped to this perception by a movement of uneasiness on the part of Mrs. Hilbrough, who was afraid that Phillida's disqualifications might be too plainly revealed. But if Mrs. Hilbrough was rendered uneasy by the question, Phillida was not. She turned her dark eyes upon Millard, and smiled with genuine amusement as she answered:

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"I have heard but one opera in my life, Mr. Millard, and that was not Wagner's."

"Miss Callender," said Mrs. Hilbrough, quickly, "is one who has sacrificed social opportunities to her care for an invalid mother—a great sacrifice to one at her time of life."

"I don't think I have sacrificed much," answered Phillida with a trace of embarrassment. "My social opportunities could not have been many at best, and I would rather have led,"—she hesitated a moment,—"I don't know but I would rather have led my quiet life than—the other."

In her effort to say this so as neither to boast of her own pursuits nor to condemn those of others, Miss Callender's color was a little heightened. Millard was sorry that his innocent question had led the conversation into channels so personal. Mrs. Hilbrough was inwardly vexed that Phillida should be so frank, and express views so opposed to those of good society.

"You find Brooklyn a pleasant place to live, no doubt," said Millard, taking it for granted that Phillida was from Brooklyn, because of her friendship for the Hilbroughs.

"I liked it when we lived there. I like New York very well. My relatives all live on this side of East River, and so I am rather more at home here."

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"Then you don't find New York lonesome," said Millard, with a falling cadence, seeking to drop the conversation.

"Oh, no! I live near Stuyvesant Square, and I have an aunt in Washington Square of whom I am very fond."

"I am often at the Gouverneurs, on the north side of the Square. I like Washington Square very much," said Millard, getting on solid ground again.

"We visit at the same house. Mrs. Gouverneur is my aunt," said Phillida.

Millard was a little stunned at this announcement. But his habitual tact kept him from disclosing his surprise at finding Miss Callender's affiliations better than he could have imagined. He only said with unaffected pleasure in his voice:

"The Gouverneurs are the best of people and my best friends."

Mr. Hilbrough looked in amusement at his wife, who was manifestly pleased to find that in Phillida she was entertaining an angel unawares. Millard's passion for personal details came to

his relief.

"Mrs. Gouverneur," he said, "had a brother and two sisters. You must be the daughter of one of her sisters. One lives, or used to live, in San Francisco, and the other married a missionary."

"I am the missionary's daughter," said Phillida.

Millard felt impelled to redeem his default by saying something to Miss Callender about the antiquity and excellence of her mother's family. If he had been less skillful than he was he might have given way to this impulse; but with the knack of a conversational artist he contrived in talking chiefly to Mrs. Hilbrough to lead the conversation to Miss Callender's distinguished great-grandfather of the Revolutionary period, who was supposed to shed an ever-brightening luster all the way down the line of his family, and Millard added some traditional anecdotes of other ancestors of her family on the mother's side who had played a conspicuous part in the commercial or civic history of New York. All of which was flattering to Miss Callender, the more that it seemed to be uttered in the way of general conversation and with no particular reference to her.

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Hilbrough listened with much interest to this very creditable account of Phillida's illustrious descent, and longed for the time when he should have the fun of reminding his wife that he had held the opinion from the beginning that Phillida Callender was good enough for anybody.

Mrs. Hilbrough took Phillida and left the table, Mr. Hilbrough rising as the ladies passed out, as he had been instructed. When he and Millard had resumed their seats the cigars were brought, but when Millard saw that his host did not smoke he did not see why he should punish himself with a cigar and a *tête-à-tête* with Hilbrough, whom he could see any day at the bank. So by agreement the sitting was soon cut short, and the gentlemen followed the ladies to the drawing-room. Mrs. Hilbrough had planned a conversation with Millard about her reception while Phillida should be left to talk with Mr. Hilbrough. But Phillida's position had been changed during dinner. Mrs. Hilbrough found a new card in her hand. She drew Miss Callender into the talk about the reception, leaving her husband to excuse himself, and to climb the stairs to the third floor, as was his wont, to see that the children had gone to bed well and were not quarreling, and to have a few cheery words with Jack and the smaller ones before they went to sleep. Receptions were nothing to him: the beds on the third floor contained the greater part of the world.

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Millard was relieved to find that Mrs. Hilbrough proposed nothing more ambitious than an evening reception. He commended her for beginning in new surroundings in this way.

"You see, Mrs. Hilbrough," he said, "a reception seems to me more flexible than a ball. It is, in a sense, more democratic. There are many good people—people of some position—who do not care to attend a ball, who would be out of place at a ball, indeed, which should be a very fashionable assembly. The party with dancing can come after."

This commendation had an effect opposite to that intended. Mrs. Hilbrough hadn't thought of a ball, and she now suspected that she was going wrong. In proposing a reception she was imitating Mrs. Masters, and she had fancied herself doing the most proper thing of all. To have a reception called democratic, and treated as something comparatively easy of achievement, disturbed her.

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"If you think a reception is not the thing, Mr. Millard, I will follow your advice. You see I only know Brooklyn, and if a reception is going to compromise our position in the future I wish you would tell me. I am afraid I can hardly accomplish even that."

But Millard again said that a reception was a very proper thing to begin with. By degrees he drew out a statement of Mrs. Hilbrough's resources for a reception, and he could not conceal from her the fact that they seemed too small, for numerousness is rather indispensable to this species of entertainment. A reception is in its essence entertainment by wholesale.

"If you could give a reception in honor of somebody," he suggested, remembering Philip Gouverneur's suggestion, "it might serve to attract many beyond your own circle, and—and—give you a reason for asking people whom—you know but slightly, if at all."

But Mrs. Hilbrough did not know any proper person to honor with a reception. Her embarrassment was considerable at finding herself so poorly provided with ways and means, and she was slowly coming to the conclusion that she must wait another winter, or take other means of widening her acquaintance. A plan had occurred to Millard by which he could help her out of the difficulty. But as it involved considerable trouble and risk on his part, he rejected it. There was no reason why he should go too far in helping the Hilbroughs. It was not a case for self-

sacrifice.

Hilbrough, in the nursery, had found the youngest little girl suffering with a slight cold,—nothing more than a case of infantile sniffles,—but Hilbrough's affection had magnified it into incipient croup or pneumonia, and, after a fruitless search for the vial of tolu and squills, he dispatched the maid to call Mrs. Hilbrough.

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When they were left alone, Millard turned to Phillida, who had shown nearly as much disappointment over the possible postponement of Mrs. Hilbrough's project as the projector herself.

"You are deeply interested in this affair, too, Miss Callender," he said.

"I don't care much for such things myself, but I should dislike to see Mrs. Hilbrough disappointed," answered Phillida. "She has been such a good friend to me, and in time of the greatest trouble she was such a friend to my family, and especially"—she hesitated—"to my father, who died two years ago, that I am interested in whatever concerns her happiness or even her pleasure."

Somehow this changed the color of the enterprise in the eyes of Charles Millard. The personality of Miss Callender was interesting to him, and besides she was Mrs. Gouverneur's niece. It seemed worth while gratifying Mrs. Hilbrough at considerable cost if it would give pleasure to this peculiar young lady.

"Well, with such a certificate of Mrs. Hilbrough's qualities," said Millard, after a pause, "we must strain a point and get up this reception for her. We must be good to the good. We can carry this through together, you and I, Miss Callender," he said.

"What can I do?" asked Phillida, opening her large, dark eyes with innocent surprise. "I know nobody."

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"You can get Mrs. Gouverneur's countenance, perhaps. That will be a great deal for Mrs. Hilbrough hereafter."

"Perhaps I can get it, with your help, Mr. Millard. My aunt is good hearted, but she has queer notions. She has a great opinion of the social importance of her family." And Mrs. Gouverneur's niece laughed in a way which went to show that she treated with some levity her aunt's estimate of the value of ancestry.

"One couldn't avoid being proud of such forefathers," answered Millard.

"Perhaps she will help if I ask her. She is very obliging to me—I belong to the royal family too, you know," she said archly.

"Together we can get her to lend her influence to Mrs. Hilbrough," said Millard, "or at least to attend the reception. And I think I know how the whole thing can be managed."

"I am so glad, and so much obliged to you, Mr. Millard," said Phillida, a gleam of enthusiastic feeling, almost childlike, suddenly showing itself through the grave exterior. This little revelation of the self shut within the disciplined self without puzzled Millard and piqued the curiosity he felt to understand what manner of young girl this was, habitually so self-mastered, and apparently so full of unknown power or of unawakened sensibilities. An apprehension of potencies undeveloped in Miss Callender gave her new acquaintance the feeling of an explorer who stands on the margin of a land virgin and unknown, eager to discover what is beyond his sight. For Millard's main interest in life lay in the study of the personalities about him, and here was one the like of which he had never seen. The social naturalist had lighted on a new genus.

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Mrs. Hilbrough returned with her husband, and Millard explained to her that a certain Baron von Pohlson, a famous archæologist, was at that time in Mexico studying the remains of Aztec civilization with the view of enriching the pages of his great work on the "Culturgeschichte" of the ancient Americans. He was to return by way of New York, where his money had been remitted to the Bank of Manhadoes, and he had been socially consigned to Mr. Millard by a friend in Dresden. Pohlson was obliged to observe some economy in traveling, and had asked Millard to find him a good boarding-house. If Mrs. Hilbrough cared to receive the Baron as a guest for a fortnight, Millard would advise him to accept the invitation, and, as far as possible, would relieve Mr. Hilbrough of his share of the burden by taking the Baron about. This would furnish Mrs. Hilbrough with a good excuse for giving a reception to the nobleman, and then, without any appearance of pushing, she could invite people far afield.

It was not in the nature of things that a woman in Mrs. Hilbrough's position should refuse to entertain a baron. She saw many incidental advantages in the plan, not the least of which was that Mr. Millard would be a familiar in the house during the Baron's stay. Hilbrough acquiesced with a rueful sense that he should be clumsy enough at entertaining a foreigner and a man of title. Mrs. Hilbrough thanked Millard heartily for his obliging kindness, but what he cared most for was that Miss Callender's serious face shone with pleasure and gratitude.

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Having accepted another invitation for the evening, Millard took his leave soon after ten o'clock, proposing to come at a later time to help Mrs. Hilbrough—"and Miss Callender, I hope," he added with a bow to Phillida—to make up the list. Having but two blocks to go, he declined, in favor of Miss Callender, the Hilbrough carriage, which stood ready at the door.

The close carriage, with only Phillida for occupant, rattled down Fifth Avenue to Madison Square, and along Broadway to Union Square, then over eastward by Fourteenth street, until after a turn or two it waked the echoes rudely in a quiet cross street, stopping at length before a three-story house somewhat antique and a little broader than its neighbors. Phillida closed and bolted the outer doors, and then opened one of the inner ones with a night-key, and made her way to what had been the back parlor of the house. In that densification of population which proceeds so incessantly on Manhattan Island this old house, like many another, was modernly compelled to hold more people than it had been meant for in the halcyon days when Second Avenue was a fashionable thoroughfare. The second floor of the house had been let, without board, to a gentleman and his wife, and the rooms above to single gentlemen. The parlor floor and the basement were made to accommodate the mother and her two daughters with their single servant. The simple, old back parlor, with no division but a screen, had two beds for mother and daughters, while the well-lighted extension made them a sitting room in pleasant weather. Mrs. Callender clung to one luxury persistently—there was always a grate fire in the back parlor on cold evenings.

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To this back parlor came Phillida with a disagreeable sense that Mrs. Hilbrough's retreating carriage was rousing the quiet neighborhood as the sleepy and impatient coachman banged his way over the pavement, the hummocky irregularities of which saved this thoroughfare from all traffic that could avoid it; for only the drivers of reckless butcher carts, and one or two shouting milkmen, habitually braved its perils.

Phillida, as she approached the old-fashioned mahogany door of the back parlor, in the dim light shed by the half-turned-down gas jet at the other end of the hall, raised her hand to the knob; but it eluded her, for the door was opened from within by some one who stood behind it. Then the head of a girl of seventeen with long, loose blond tresses peered around the edge of the door as Phillida entered.

"Come in, Philly, and tell us all about it," was the greeting she got from her sister, clad in a red wrapper covering her night-dress, and shod with worsted bedroom slippers. "Mama wanted me to go to bed; but I knew you'd have something interesting to tell about the Hilbroughs, and so I stuck it out and kept mama company while she did the mending. Come now, Philly, tell me everything all at once."

The mother sat by the drop-light mending a stocking, and she looked up at Phillida with a gentle, brightening expression of pleasure—that silent welcome of affection for which the daughters always looked on entering.

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"What, mama, not in bed yet?" exclaimed Phillida, as she laid off her outer garments, and proceeded to bend over and kiss her mother, trying to take away her work at the same time. "Come now, you ought to be in bed; and, besides, this old stocking of mine is darned all over already, and ought to be thrown away."

"Ah, Phillida," said her mother with a sweet, entreating voice, holding fast to the stocking all the time, "if it gives me pleasure let me do it. If I like to save old things I'm sure it's no harm."

"But you ought to have been in bed at nine o'clock," said Phillida, her hold on the stocking weakening perceptibly under the spell of her mother's irresistible entreaty.

"It will take but a minute more if you will let me alone," was all the mother said as Phillida released the work, and the elaborate darning went on.

"There's a good deal more darn than stocking to that now," said the younger sister. "It's a work of genius. I'll tell you, Phillida: we'll take it to the picture framer's to-morrow and have it put under glass, and then we'll get a prize for it as a specimen of fancy work at the American Institute Fair."

But now tell me, what did you have for dinner? How many courses were there? Was there anybody else there? What sort of china have they got? Do they keep a butler? How does Mr. Hilbrough take to the new fixings? And, oh, say! are they going to give any parties? And—"

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"Give me a chance, Frisky, and I'll answer you," said Phillida, who began at the beginning and told all that she could think of, even to describing the doilies and finger-bowls.

"You said there was a gentleman there. Who was he?" said Agatha, the younger.

"That Mr. Millard that Cousin Phil is so fond of. He is at Aunt Harriet's often on Sunday evenings. He's a good looking young man, dressed with the greatest neatness, and is very polite to everybody in an easy way."

"Did he talk with you?"

"Not at first. He paid as much attention to Mrs. Hilbrough as he could have paid to a queen; treating her with a great deal of deference. You could see that she was pleased. Just think, he asked me if I liked Wagner's music."

"How did you get out of it?"

"I didn't get out of it at all. I just told him I had never heard anything of Wagner's. But when he found that I was Mrs. Gouverneur's niece it made things all right with him, and he made as handsome a speech about my great-grandfather and all the rest as Aunt Harriet could have done herself."

"Wasn't Mrs. Hilbrough surprised to hear that you were somebody?"

"I don't know."

"Well, don't you think she was?"

"May be so."

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"Didn't she seem pleased?"

"I think she was relieved, for my confession that I hadn't heard many operas bothered her."

"You said Mr. Millard was polite. How was he polite?"

"He made you feel that he liked you, and admired you; I can't tell you how. He didn't say a single flattering word to me, but when he promised to meet Mrs. Hilbrough again, to arrange about the people she is to have at the reception, he bowed to me and said, 'And Miss Callender, I hope.'"

"I'll tell you what, Phillida, I'll bet he took a fancy to you."

"Nonsense, Agatha Callender; don't talk such stuff. He's been for years in society, and knows all the fine people in New York."

"Nonsense, yourself, Phillida; you're better than any of the fine ladies in New York. Mr. Millard isn't good enough for you. But I just know he was taken with you."

"Do you think I'm going to have my head turned by bows and fine speeches that have been made to five hundred other women?"

"There never was any other woman in New York as fine as you, Phillida."

"Not among your acquaintance, and in your opinion, my dear, seeing you hardly know any other young woman but me."

"I know more than you think I do. If you had any common sense, Phillida, you'd make the most of Aunt Harriet, and marry some man that would furnish you with a horse and a carriage of your own. But you won't. You're just a goosey. You spend your time on the urchins down in Mackerelville. The consequence is you'll never get married, and I shall have you on my hands an old maid who never improved her opportunities."

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"What stuff!" laughed Phillida.

"You've got a fine figure—a splendid figure," proceeded the younger, "and a face that is sweet and charming, if I do say it. It's a dreadful waste of woman. You wrap your talent in a Sunday-school lesson-paper and bury it down in Mackerelville."

At this point Mrs. Callender put away her elaborate hand-finished stocking, saying softly:

"Agatha, why do you tease Phillida so?"

"Because she's such a goose," said the younger sister, stubbornly.

Twenty minutes later Agatha, looking from her bedside in the dark corner of the room, saw her sister kneeling by a chair near the fireside. The sight of Phillida at prayer always awed her. Agatha herself was accustomed to say, before jumping into bed, a conventional little prayer, very inclusive as to subjects embraced, and very thin in texture, but Phillida's prayers were different. Agatha regarded the form of her sister, well developed and yet delicately graceful, now more graceful than ever as she knelt in her long night-dress, her two hands folded naturally the one across the other, and her head bowed. As she arranged the bed, Agatha followed mentally what she imagined to be the tenor of the prayer—she fancied that Phillida was praying to be saved from vanity and worldliness; she knew that each of the little urchins in the mission Sunday-school class was prayed for by name. She turned away a moment, and then caught sight of Phillida as she unclasped her hands and rested them on the chair. Agatha knew that when Phillida changed her position at the close of her prayer it was to recite, as she always did, the "Now I lay me," which was associated in her mind, as in Agatha's, with an oriental environment, a swarthy nurse in waist-cloth and shoulder scarf, and, more than all, was linked with her earliest memories of the revered father at whose knees the children were accustomed to repeat it. When Phillida rose to her feet in that state of exaltation which prayer brings to one who has a natural genius for devotion, the now penitent and awe-stricken Agatha went to her sister, put her arms about her neck, and leaned her head upon her shoulder, saying softly:

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"You dear, good Phillida!"

VII. THE LION SOIRÉE.

Notwithstanding the romancing of her sister, Phillida built no castles. Millard's politeness to her had been very agreeable, but she knew that it was only politeness. Almost every man's and every woman's imagination is combustible on one side or another. Many young women are set adreaming by any hint of love or marriage. But Phillida had read only sober books—knowing little of romances, there was no stock of incendiary material in her memory. Her fancy was easily touched off on the side of her religious hopes; all her education had intensified the natural inflammability of her religious emotions, but in affairs of this world she was by nature and education unusually self-contained for a woman of one and twenty.

Millard, on his part, had been exposed to the charms of many women, and his special interest in Phillida amounted only to a lively curiosity. Always susceptible to the charm of a woman's presence, this susceptibility had been acted on from so many sides as to make his interest in women superficial and volatile. The man who is too much interested in women to be specially interested in a woman is pretty sure not to marry at all, or to marry late.

Baron Pohlsen arrived, and was duly installed at Mrs. Hilbrough's. He was greatly pleased with the hospitality shown him by this wealthy household, and fancied that Americans were the most generous of peoples. Millard, as in duty bound, took pains to introduce him in many desirable quarters, and showed him the lions of the city in Hilbrough's carriage. But in spite of Millard's care to relieve him, Hilbrough afterward confessed that the panic of 1873 had not taxed his patience and cheerfulness so deeply as this entertainment for two weeks of a great German antiquary. Dutifully the banker attended a session of the Geographical Society to listen to an address made by his guest in broken English, on the ancient importance of Uxmal and Palenque. Hilbrough also heard with attentive perplexity the Baron's account before the Historical Society of the Aztec Calendar Stone, and his theory of its real purpose.

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When the American banker was left alone with the learned High Dutchman, it became very serious business. Von Pohlsen, with all his erudition, was extremely ignorant of the art of banking as practised in New York. He did not know, at least in English, the difference between collateral and real estate security, and "gilt-edged" paper was more foreign than papyrus to him. Nor could

Hilbrough interest him much in the remarkable rise in Brooklyn real estate since 1860. Brooklyn was too new by a millennium for the Baron to care for it. Hilbrough tried the plan of shunting the antiquary to his main lines of American hieroglyphs, aboriginal architecture, and Pueblo domestic economy. But this only shifted the difficulty, for under the steady downpour of Pohlsen's erudition, Hilbrough had continually to change position, now putting the right knee over the left and now placing the left atop, to keep from nodding, and he was even reduced to pinching himself, sometimes, in order to keep awake, just as the learned and ingenious Baron had got his pyramid of inference ready to balance on its rather slender apex of fact. Archæology was new to Hilbrough, and deductive profits so large from inductive investments so small always seemed to the financier to indicate bad security.

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Mrs. Hilbrough, clever woman, appeared to understand it all. She had crammed on a copy of Stephens's "Travels in Yucatan" that had belonged to her father, and she gave Pohlsen no end of pleasure by asking him about such things as the four-headed altars before the great idols at Copan, and the nature of the great closed house at Labphak. If you will look in Pohlsen's book of travels in America (Reise durch Amerika: Leipzig, 1888) you will discover in his chapter on New York that in this metropolis the ladies take a remarkable interest in science, and are generally better informed regarding such matters than their husbands, these latter being deeply immersed in mere dollar-hunting.

But Mrs. Hilbrough was much more interested in her reception to be given in honor of Baron Pohlsen than she was in the four-headed altars of the remoter Aztecs. If she could not fill her house with those very richest and most exclusive people who in a plutocratic society always try to think themselves for some reason or other the best people, she found that under Millard's guidance she could succeed in getting some people of wealth and distinction who were desirous of being presented to a baron, and, what was better, she could get a considerable number from that class of lettered men and their families and the admirers of literature, art, and learning, who, together, form the really best people in every metropolis. Most of these knew little of Pohlsen's researches, and cared less for his title, but since he was vouched for as a foreigner who had acquired distinction in his department of knowledge, they were ready to do him honor with that generous hospitality for which Americans blame themselves while they practise it; as though it were not better for us to be good-hearted, remembering that in the studious preservation of national dignity and social perpendicularity we can never hope to emulate our English cousins.

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How was it all arranged? How, without violating the sanctities of etiquette, did Mrs. Hilbrough contrive to invite people whom she did not know, and how did they accept with no sacrifice of dignity? Millard was an expert adviser; he knew that just as counters are made to stand for money in a game of cards, so do little oblong bits of pastebord with the sender's name upon them pass current under certain conditions as substitutes for visits, acquaintance, esteem, and friendship. By a juggle with these social chips Mrs. Hilbrough became technically, and temporarily, acquainted with a great many people, and that without much sacrifice of time. Do not expect details here; your fashionable stationer is the best reliance in such a case, unless you chance to know Mr. Millard, or can find the law laid down in Mrs. Sherwood's tactfully vague chapters, which, like the utterances of the Delphic oracle, are sure to hit the mark one way or the other.

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Now that Millard had taken Mrs. Hilbrough for a client he could not bear to be balked. The attendance of Mrs. Gouverneur he considered of the first importance, but this was not easily secured. If anything could have persuaded that lady to sacrifice her principles as an exclusive so far as to attend, it would have been her dislike of refusing Phillida; but as it was, she made excuses without positively refusing. In telling Mrs. Hilbrough of her lack of success Phillida took pains to repeat Mrs. Gouverneur's pretexts, and not to betray what she knew to be her aunt's real reason for hesitation. Millard encountered Mrs. Hilbrough at the opera, and heard from her of the failure of Phillida's endeavors. He felt himself put on his mettle.

Knowing that the next day was Mrs. Gouverneur's day for receiving, he made himself her first caller before the rest began to arrive. Looking from the old-fashioned windows of Mrs. Gouverneur's front parlor, he praised the beauty of the winter scene, and admired especially the spotted boles of the great buttonwoods in Washington Square. He thought to make his call seem less on purpose by such commonplace civilities, but Mrs. Gouverneur, who was a soft-spoken lady of much cleverness, with a talent for diplomacy inherited from her grandfather, asked herself, while she replied in the same vein to Millard's preliminary vapidities, what on earth so formal a call and such a waste of adroitness might lead up to. But Millard, even after this preparation, provided an inclined plane for approaching his proposition.

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"I had the pleasure of meeting a niece of yours the other evening, a Miss Callender," he said. "I

found her very agreeable."

"Oh! You met Phillida Callender at Mrs. Hilbrough's, probably," said Mrs. Gouverneur with a flush of pleasure. "She's as good as goodness itself, and very clever. But rather peculiar also. She has a great deal of Callender in her. Her father gave up good prospects in this country to preach in Siam. He might have had the pastorate of one of the best Presbyterian churches in New York, but nothing could dissuade him from what he fancied to be his duty. It only proves what I have always said, that 'blood will tell.' It is related in some of the old books that Philip has upstairs that one of the women of the Callender family, before the Revolution, felt it her duty to go through the streets of Newport, crying, 'Repent, repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.' She was a refined and delicate lady, and the people of the town felt so much chagrin to see her expose herself to mortification in the public street that they shut up their windows or turned away, which I think was very nice of them. I fancy that Phillida, with all her superior intelligence, has a good deal of this great-great-aunt of her father's in her. I was talking to her once about this story of Mary Callender's preaching in the streets, and she really seemed to take more interest in that Quaker lady's delusion than she did in her ancestors on our side; and you know, Mr. Millard, we think a good deal of our descent, though of course we never say anything about it."

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It was inevitable that a courteous man like Millard should meet this speech by saying, "When one has ancestors whose position is not one of mere social prominence but whose acts are a part of the history of a nation, it must be hard to forget so important a fact." It was equally inevitable that even the wary Mrs. Gouverneur could not help appreciating flattery so apropos of the subject in hand.

"But I have a notion," Millard continued, "that if we could get Miss Callender to take an interest in society she would prove an ornament to it and a credit to her family."

Mrs. Gouverneur shook her head doubtfully. "I don't believe it can be done, though I should be glad if it could."

"Did she tell you that she is deeply interested in that reception to Baron Pohlson next week?"

"Yes; she is attached to Mrs. Hilbrough. She makes friends without the least regard to social consequences, and I believe even has friendships among the people with whom she is only connected by her mission Sunday-school class. She stoutly maintained here last night that she knew a real lady living in three rooms with a husband and four children! I declare, I like Phillida all the better for this. Her impulses are very noble, but I can't help wishing she wouldn't do it. It doesn't do for one at her time of life to be too disinterested, you know."

This turn in the talk threw Millard off the track for a moment. The mention of people living narrowly brought to his mind his own early life in a farmhouse, and reminded him of his amiable but socially unpresentable aunt, whom he was wont faithfully to visit on one Sunday afternoon in every month. There was just a little cowardly feeling that should his relations with the family in Avenue C become known among his friends, his social position might become compromised. He did not know that all exclusive people in New York have unpresentable kinsfolk hidden away somewhere, and are ever trembling lest the fact should be known to some other family that is likewise doing its best to hide some never-get-on relatives.

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Mrs. Gouverneur noticed Millard's heightened color, and feared her slighting allusion to Mrs. Hilbrough might have annoyed him. Before he could pull his wits together to reply to her last remark, she added, "I have no doubt your friend Mrs. Hilbrough is a very worthy person, Mr. Millard. But she is new in New York society."

"Indeed I can not call her my friend, Mrs. Gouverneur. Her husband is the real head of our bank at present; he is likely to be a very rich man in a few years, and he has obliged me in many ways. But I have only a few weeks' acquaintance with Mrs. Hilbrough, whose chief recommendation to me, I must confess, is that she is a friend of Miss Callender, who is your niece. But Mrs. Hilbrough seems to have many admirable qualities. She is sure to make herself recognized, and I do not see any advantage in delaying the recognition. For my part, I think she will do a great service at the outset if she adds so attractive and clever a young lady as Miss Callender to society."

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"Now, Mr. Millard, you are playing a strong game against me," laughed Mrs. Gouverneur. "You know my dislike for new acquaintances—for enlarging my circle. But when you propose to persuade my niece to see a little more of the world you are taking advantage of my only weakness. You play a deep game."

"I'll show you my whole hand at once," said Millard, seeing that Mrs. Gouverneur's penetration had left him no resource but candor. "I very much desire to be Miss Callender's escort at Mrs. Hilbrough's reception, if she will accept me. Mrs. Callender, I fear, can not be persuaded to go."

"You want me for chaperon," interposed Mrs. Gouverneur. "What a clever scheme! How could you dare to set such a trap for an old friend?"

"It will prove a clever scheme if it succeeds. But it wasn't clever enough to deceive you."

"Well, you and Phillida together have won. Of course I can not refuse if Phillida consents."

"Thank you from my heart," said Millard, rising at hearing the door-bell ring. "I will see Miss Callender, and if she refuses me for escort you will be able to laugh at me. I'm sure I'm greatly your debtor."

A notion, a mere notion, such as will enter the soberest woman's head sometimes, had bobbed to the surface of Mrs. Gouverneur's thoughts as she talked with Millard. It was that her niece's future might somehow hang on her decision. She was not a matchmaker, but she had a diplomatic faculty for persuading things to come out as she wished. Mr. Millard would be a most eligible husband for any woman whose expectations in life were not unreasonably great. Her practical mind went a step farther and she saw that in the event of anything so improbable happening as that Millard should fall in love with a lady without fortune, say, for example, a clergyman's daughter, his acquaintance with so prosperous a man as Hilbrough, who could help him to lucrative investments, might be very desirable. These thoughts were the mere bubbles of fancy floating in her mind. The consideration which most affected her decision was that the presentation of her niece under the auspices of Millard and herself might prove of great social advantage to Phillida. [Pg 100]

Millard left Mrs. Gouverneur with the intention of calling at once on Miss Callender, but when he reached Broadway he was smitten with a scruple, not of conscience, but of etiquette. Phillida had not asked him to call. After staring for a full minute in perplexity at the passing vehicles and the façade of the ancient theater on the opposite side of Broadway, then in its last days of existence, he presently concluded that Miss Callender, being a young woman somewhat unsophisticated, and having therefore nothing better than good sense for guide, would probably not be shocked by the audacity of an uninvited call from a gentleman whose character was well known to her.

The bell rang as Mrs. Callender was just about to try a dress on her daughter Agatha. Callers were not a frequent interruption to their pursuits, and when the steps of a man ushered into the front parlor were heard through the sliding doors, they concluded that it was some one calling on the gentleman who occupied the second floor. Mrs. Callender and her daughters lowered their voices to a whisper, that they might not be heard through the doors; but Sarah, the servant, came to the back parlor, and said loud enough to be distinctly audible to the visitor: [Pg 101]

"It's some cards for Mrs. Callender and Miss Callender." Then she shut the door and descended the basement stairs, without waiting to carry a reply.

Agatha took the cards and whispered, "Mr. Millard," biting her lower lip and making big eyes at Phillida, with an "I-told-you-so" nod of the head, and then she proceeded to give vent to her feelings by dancing softly about the room, a picturesque figure in her red petticoat and white waist, with her bare arms flying about her head. If the doors had not been so thin her excitement would have found vent in more noisy ways. As noise was precluded there was nothing left for her but this dumb show. In her muffled gyrations she at length knocked a chair over upon the fender, making a loud clatter. She quickly picked it up and sat down upon it in great confusion, with a remorseful feeling that by her imprudent excitement she had probably blasted Phillida's prospects in life.

"Come, mother, you must get ready and go in," whispered Phillida.

"No, please, Phillida. He doesn't really want to see me. It's only a matter of good form to ask for us both. You must beg him to excuse me. I do so want to get this dress done." [Pg 102]

Agatha, recovering from her remorse by this time, helped Phillida to do a little hurried prinking. Luckily the latter had been getting ready to go out and had on the gown that served her on all except extraordinary occasions for both street and drawing-room.

Millard had amused himself while waiting by noting the various antiques about the parlor, heirlooms of former family greatness, arranged with an eye to tasteful effect. On the shelves in the corner some articles connected with family history were intermingled with curiosities

brought from the East. A pair of brass-bound pattens hinged in the middle, once worn instead of overshoes by some colonial ancestress, sat alongside a pair of oriental sandals. Millard thought nothing could be more in keeping with the ancient desk and table than the unaffected and straightforward manner in which Miss Callender greeted him, holding out her hand with modest friendliness and just a touch of diffidence. This last was due to the innuendoes and antics of Agatha.

"I ventured to call without permission, Miss Callender," said Millard, with hesitation.

"I'm glad you did, Mr. Millard." Phillida could not see why any respectable gentleman should wait for an invitation to call on a lady, or how a young lady could ever be so bold as to ask a gentleman to call. She added, "My mother wished me to beg you to excuse her. She has some [Pg 103] troublesome affairs on hand just now."

"Certainly; don't let me interrupt her. I came on business with you. I want to have the pleasure of escorting you to Mrs. Hilbrough's party with your mother, if she will kindly accompany us."

Phillida hesitated. She knew that chaperonage was required on such occasions. "Thank you. I should like to accept your kind offer, but my mother rarely goes out," she said. "I don't believe I could persuade her to go, and I've no other chaperon."

"How would Mrs. Gouverneur do?"

"But Aunt Harriet won't go."

"I've just come from her house, and she assured me that if you needed her for a chaperon—if Mrs. Callender could not go—she would keep us company."

"You have managed Aunt Harriet very well," said Phillida, with some elation. "Better than I could have done."

"I must have done well. Mrs. Gouverneur gives me great credit for my nice little scheme, as she calls it. But if she thinks I wish to be your escort solely in order to get her to attend, I assure you that Mrs. Gouverneur with all her penetration is mistaken."

Phillida colored a little at this polite speech as she said, "It will please Mrs. Hilbrough to have my aunt there."

"Yes, Mrs. Hilbrough also will give me great credit where I do not deserve it. I may call for you with Mrs. Gouverneur?"

"Thank you, it will give me a great deal of pleasure." Phillida said this with a momentary fear of [Pg 104] hearing Agatha overturn another chair behind the sliding doors; but Mrs. Callender had taken herself and Agatha to the basement, from motives of delicacy which Agatha was hardly old enough to appreciate.

Mrs. Gouverneur never did anything by halves. She made herself agreeable to Mrs. Hilbrough on the evening of the reception and complimented her heartily on the distinguished people she had brought together. For there was the learned president of the Geographical, with overhanging brows and slow and gentle speech; there was the foreign corresponding secretary of the Historical, a man better known as a diplomatist and an author, whose long years abroad had liberalized his mind without spoiling his open-hearted American manners. There were some of the directors of the Metropolitan Museum, to which institution Pohlsen had given some Central American pottery. The senior New York poet wandered in his childlike way among the guests, making gentle and affectionate speeches to friends, who wondered at the widely contrary moods to which his susceptible nature is subject. Bolton, known in two hemispheres by his prose and poetry, had come out of complaisance, protesting rather indignantly to his friends that he didn't believe in Americans making such an ado over a mere baron. In him the stranger saw a slight figure full of character and not in any way to be trifled with; only men of letters and his friends knew what pains he could be at to oblige and to help the humblest of struggling fellow-craftsmen, provided he was not forbidden to accompany the unstinted assistance with a little grumbling at [Pg 105] the fearful wreck of his time which all sorts of people, even the tramps of the literary profession, make without remorse.

"Charley," said Philip Gouverneur, when he got Millard into a corner, "what have you been doing? This is society and it isn't; it is more like what Carlyle calls a 'lion soirée.'"

"Well," said Millard, "it's either society or better. You understand that the Baron's reputation as a

scholar has modified things."

"I say, Charley," said Philip, "I was ashamed to find my little self lost among these know-it-alls until I met Mrs. Maginnis. She said, 'Oh, Mr. Gouverneur, I am so glad to see somebody that I know. Who are all these people?' So I pointed out the university president over there; and I told her that St. John was our great sculptor, though I'm not sure she makes any clear distinctions between a sculptor and a maker of gravestones; and I assured her that we had several magazine editors, and writers, and illustrators, and painters, and leading journalists, and some of the very foremost of our German citizens. 'Oh, yes,' she replied, 'newspaper men, artists, and Germans! Just what I thought; but there are not more than a dozen people here who were invited to Marshmallow's great ball last winter.'"

"It mightn't be a bad thing," said Millard, "if Marshmallow, who pretends to be the boss of society, were to include more people of artistic and literary distinction such as we have here to-night."

"Nonsense, Charley! he couldn't do it. There are a few men who contrive to be great and to be men of the world at the same time. But what society wants is polish. You can put gloss on varnish, but some of these men are too original to be sand-papered down to a fashionable uniformity. No, no! Old Red Sandstone and his wife over there are well enough at a lion soirée, but how would their Silurian manners shine at the Patriarchs' ball? You see my cousin Phillida, with all her seriousness, is getting too much of his talk." [Pg 106]

At this hint from Philip, Millard moved away and glanced hurriedly about the room. His eye lighted on Lucas, who is a natural adept as a man of the world though a man of letters. Approaching him, Millard said:

"Mr. Lucas, let me introduce you to an interesting being."

"That's what I've been looking for in vain all the evening," said Lucas.

The two forced a sinuous way to where Phillida was trying to enjoy the small talk of a man who was incapable of profitable speech at a depth of less than fifty fathoms. Millard presented Lucas first to Mrs. Gouverneur on a chair in the corner, and then bowed politely to the geologist as he interrupted his remarks on the curiosities of the Bad Lands, and made Lucas acquainted with Miss Callender. The latter showed her pleasure at thus encountering a favorite writer, but she had the good sense not to assure him that she had "long known him through his books." She reflected in time that such a man must have heard remarks of this sort rather frequently. But when Millard had moved away he turned about to note the change in Miss Callender's countenance under the influence of that stream of sparkling talk that Lucas never fails to give forth when confronted with an inspiring listener. [Pg 107]

Later in the evening when the reception had passed its climax, and the antiquaries, geographers, historical investigators, and other lions, grown sleepy, were looking up their wives and daughters to be gone, Millard found time for conversation with his companion of the evening, who had drifted away from her chaperon, for chaperonage only half flourishes in our society, and is indeed quite out of place at a New York lion soirée, where a maiden's heart is pretty safe without guardianship.

"You have had a pleasant evening, Miss Callender, I hope. I'm sure you've helped the rest of us to a pleasant evening."

"Indeed, I have enjoyed myself, Mr. Millard. I have met my favorite poet, have talked with the editor of my magazine, and have found that Mr. Lucas makes amends for the bores."

"I hope this will not be the last time we shall meet you in society," said Millard. "It would be a pity for one who can do so much to make an evening delightful to others, not to go more into society."

"It takes a great deal of time, Mr. Millard. I don't think society any harm as a recreation, but as a pursuit—" Here she checked herself.

"It gives a great deal of happiness, though."

"Yes; but only to those whose lot is fortunate enough anyhow. It seems to me that we have something else to do in the world than just to amuse ourselves." At this point it occurred to Phillida that in defending her own view of life she was reflecting on her companion's. "I don't mean to find fault with anybody else's pursuits, Mr. Millard, but rather to defend my own." [Pg 108]

The last remark, by focusing what she had said before upon Millard, only made the matter worse. But the talk was interrupted at this point by Mrs. Gouverneur, who came to inquire if her younger companions were ready to go. Millard was a little sorry for the interruption. He could not but feel that he was in some sort under condemnation by Miss Callender, and there was something about Miss Callender which made one respect her moral judgment and desire to stand well in her estimation. But the conversation in the carriage took another turn, and as she approached her own home it occurred to Phillida that Millard's remark at the time of his call implied that his acquaintance with the family might depend on her inviting him. She felt grateful to him for his graceful attentions during the evening, and when he left her at the door she extended her hand and said:

"We shall be glad to see you, Mr. Millard."

When Millard had landed Mrs. Gouverneur in Washington Square, with many polite speeches on both sides, and had reached his bachelor apartment, he sat down in front of the grate with a comfortable feeling of complacency. He had helped Mrs. Hilbrough to launch her little bark without any untoward accident; he had secured for the Baron an honor which the latter would certainly not underestimate. Then, too, he had obliged Mrs. Gouverneur while he gratified his own inclinations in escorting Miss Callender to the reception. Whenever he came around to Phillida he found the only uncomfortable spot in his meditations. He had never dreamed that anybody could think the life of a consummate gentleman like himself deserving of anything but commendation. The rector of St. Mathias, who was a genial man of the world himself, with just the amount of devoutness admixed that was indispensable to his professional character, had never for a moment found fault with Millard, who was liberal in parish affairs and an ornament to the church. Here was a young lady with a very different standard, who thought it a Christian duty to be useful not so much to the church as to people less fortunate than herself. Millard tried to dismiss the matter from his mind by reflecting that Miss Callender's father must have been a peculiar man. But there was an elevation about Phillida's nature that made him feel his own to be something less than was desirable. Yet it was clear to him that Miss Callender misjudged society people from ignorance of them. He would call some day and set her right. Then he laughed at the notion. What did it matter to him whether this young woman judged rightly or wrongly of people in society generally, and of himself in particular. He dismissed the matter from his mind. But by the time he had taken off his ties, which were a trifle too narrow in the toes to be comfortable, he had somehow returned to his first resolution to set Miss Callender right in the matter if he should have opportunity.

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VIII. IN AVENUE C.

If Phillida could have known the thoughts that occupied the mind of Millard on Sunday afternoon, two or three weeks later, as he started for his monthly visit in Avenue C, she would not have judged his purposes in life severely. His walk lay through a cross-street which steadily deteriorated as he journeyed eastward, condescendingly assimilating itself to the character of each avenue in turn. Beer saloons, cheap grocery stores, carts against the curbstones with their shafts pointing skyward, and troops of children on the sidewalk, marked the increasing poverty and density of the population. Millard wondered at the display of trinkets and confectionery in the shop-windows, not knowing that those whose backs are cheaply clad crave ornaments, and those whose bellies lack bread are ravenous for luxuries.

Being a fastidious man and for years accustomed to the refinements of life, he exaggerated the discomforts of tenement-house living. How people endured such misery and yet seemed so cheerful he could not imagine. And though he did not feel that diffusive benevolence which prompted Phillida to try to ameliorate the moral condition of such of this mass as she could reach, he had a strong desire to lift his aunt and her children to a little higher plane. To this, hitherto, he had found an obstacle in the pride of her husband. Henry Martin was a tinsmith who had come to the city to work in a great factory for a little higher wages than he could get as a journeyman tinker in a country town. He did not refuse to let the children accept presents from "Cousin Charley," but he was not willing "to be beholden to any of his wife's folks," as he expressed it. He resented the fact that even in Cappadocia he had been somewhat outstripped by

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his brother-in-law, Charles Millard's father, and when the "Millard boys" had inherited money from their father's brother, and Martin saw their mother, his wife's sister, living in a style to which he could never hope to lift his own family, it weighed on his mind, and this offense to his pride had helped to fix his resolution in favor of a removal to New York.

During the walk eastward Millard was debating what might be done for the promising eldest girl in his aunt's family and for the two boys. Once, it is true, the throng of children that obstructed his path, as they chased one another round and round in a maze, did suggest to him that from Miss Callender's standpoint he ought to do something "for those less fortunate than himself" even beyond the circle of relationship. But what could he do? He felt that by his very nature he was disqualified for contact and personal sympathy with humanity rough-hewn. And as he crossed Avenue A, and paused to look up and down it, he saw such inexhaustible swarms of people that what one man could do for them seemed of no avail. He might give something to some mission or other agency, and thus get the disagreeables of benevolence done, as he got his boots blacked, by paying for it. Then he wondered what Miss Callender would think of such a device, and whether in the luminous moral atmosphere which enveloped her it would seem mean to substitute a money service for a personal one—to employ a substitute when you have no stomach for the war yourself. [Pg 112]

He climbed the flights of dark stairs to his aunt's dwelling, which occupied half of the next to the top floor of a four-story building; the flat above being the dwelling and working-place of a slop-shop tailor. He was welcomed with sincere affection by Aunt Hannah Martin, and with shouts of delight by the two smaller children—the two older ones had not yet come back from Sunday-school. Mr. Martin, a tallish and rather broad-shouldered man, with a face whose habitual seriousness was deepened into a tombstone solemnity by its breadth and flatness in the region of the cheek-bones, shook hands cordially, but with a touch of reserve in favor of his own dignity, saying, "How are you, Charley? How's things with you?" He was proud enough of his connection with a prosperous man like Millard, and among his comrades in the shop he often affected to settle points in dispute regarding finance or the ways of people in high life by gravely reminding the others that he had superior opportunities for knowing, since his nephew was a banker and "knew all the rich men in Wall street." But face to face with Charley Millard his pride was rendered uneasy, and he generally managed to have some pressing occasion for absenting himself on the afternoons of Millard's visits. [Pg 113]

Millard's attentions were soon engrossed by the little boy Tommy, who of all the children was his favorite. Tommy climbed on his knees and rifled his pockets, certain of finding something hidden there for himself. Presently Millard drew Uncle Martin into talk. With his chair tilted back and his broad hands locked together on his lap, Uncle Martin gave Charley an oracular account of all the mistakes which his employers had recently made in the conduct of their business. From his standpoint the affairs of the company were usually on the high road to bankruptcy, and all because of certain failures of judgment which Uncle Martin could have pointed out in a moment had they taken the trouble to consult a man of his experience. When Charley suggested that the company had paid an eight per cent. dividend during the past year Uncle Martin put on a look of contempt, and shook his head.

"Dividing their capital in order to keep up the price of stock," he said sagely. Then he proceeded to show that if they would only do this and not do the other they might easily crowd their rivals to the wall. He knew three months before it took place that tin would fall in price. But the company laid in a big stock just in time to get caught.

Having done the polite by Uncle Martin, Millard turned to Aunt Hannah. Uncle Martin proceeded, therefore, to fill up the stove; which done, he said:

"Well, Charley, I am going to see one of the men in our shop that got his foot hurt a week ago Friday. I'll see you at supper; you'll take tea with us." [Pg 114]

"Thank you, Uncle Martin, but this time I can't stay so long. I've promised to take dinner with some friends."

He held out his hand, and Uncle Martin said good-by, and good luck to you, and come again, and always glad to see you, Charley, and then made his exit, stooping a little as he went out through the low door, leaving Charley what he wanted most, a chance to talk with his aunt about the progress her children were making in their studies, and to find out what he could do to help them. The mother told him that besides their school they were reading some books brought to them by Dick's Sunday-school teacher, who took a great interest in all the children. Millard always expected to hear the praises of this Sunday-school teacher when he came to see his aunt. Once on this theme good Aunt Hannah could not easily stop.

"She doesn't put on the fine lady or talk to me as though I was somebody different because I am a workingman's wife. I haven't many friends; the people down here are so different from the people up in the country. But I think she is the best friend I ever had. There, she's coming up now," she said, hearing the clatter of feet and voices ascending the stairway.

Millard was a little curious to see the teacher of whom he had heard so much. He figured to himself some one only a little above his aunt in station, and so the more ready to form an intimacy with humble people. When Mary and Dick threw open the hall door of the apartment, so as to make the interior visible from the obscurity of the stair-landing, Millard, who was sitting with his back to the door, holding Tommy on his lap, heard the voice of Phillida Callender say: [Pg 115]

"I'll not go in this time; you have company."

"Do come in; it's only our Cousin Charley," pleaded Mary Martin, a girl of fourteen.

Millard felt himself caught, and he would have liked to sit there and let Miss Callender go down the stairs without recognizing him. But he felt that he must be polite to her above all things, and his relationship to the Martins was not a thing to be ashamed of, and must besides soon be known to Phillida. So he rose with quick decision and said as he walked towards the door:

"Don't let my presence keep you from coming in, Miss Callender; I am on the point of leaving."

"You, Mr. Millard!" Phillida came forward, coloring a little, while Aunt Hannah and the children stood and looked on in amazement. "Who would have believed it! You are the cousin—the Cousin Charley of whom the children here speak as though he were a good fairy. They pronounce the name *Millerd*, you know, and I didn't suspect *you*."

"But fancy *my* surprise!" said Millard. "I ought to have guessed that such a famous Sunday-school teacher could not be anybody but Miss Callender. But I didn't even think to ask the name. So you are the person of whose praises I am so jealous when I come here."

"Don't you think we're lucky to have such a cousin?" said Dick Martin, the second child and the eldest boy, looking up at Miss Callender. [Pg 116]

"Ah! now, Dick, you can't trap me into praising Mr. Millard to his face," said Miss Callender. "Maybe I'll tell you some time when he isn't here what I think of him." She was patting Dick on the shoulder. "But I don't mind telling Mr. Millard right here and now that he is a very lucky man to have such an aunt as your mother."

"Well said and true," answered Millard. "I like that better than anything Miss Callender could say about me, Dick, even if what she should say were to be all good; and that it wouldn't be, for she speaks the truth, and I'll tell you for a secret that she doesn't quite approve of a man that wastes his leisure time as I do. She'd like me better if I were to come down to the mission every Sunday."

"Well, there ain't anybody at the mission as good as you, except Miss Callender," objected Dick.

That young lady only laughed and put her arms about Tommy, who had deserted Millard and was now climbing on her lap.

This encounter advanced Millard's acquaintance with Phillida more than a dozen calls or conversations in formal society. Phillida was pleased to find that Millard was not merely a male butterfly, and he in turn felt strangely drawn to this young woman who had discovered the royal excellence of Aunt Hannah Martin amid the rubbish of Avenue C. Millard, who was "just going" when Phillida came in, sat out the half-hour that she staid, and when she rose to go he asked her if he might have the pleasure of walking with her as far as Second Avenue. It seemed to him, though he did not say so, that a young lady needed an escort in that part of the town; but Phillida, who knew the people better, had no such thought. [Pg 117]

"Thank you, Mr. Millard," she said; "I should be glad of your company. But I am not going home; I am going to Washington Square: I promised my aunt that I would go directly there from Sunday-school, and now I've staid here longer than I intended, and I shall be late."

"Why, I'm expected there too. If you don't object we'll go together."

The two said good-by all around and descended the stairs, holding on to the narrow steps with their heels, as it were. When they came into the light, and breathed the cool salt air blowing into the avenue from the neighboring East River, Phillida, who had something on her mind, said rather awkwardly:

"I did not know that you were expected at Aunt Harriet's this evening."

The speech was one of maidenly modesty; if Aunt Gouverneur had planned to bring the two people together at her table, Phillida wished it known that she was not a party to the plot. But Millard laughed and said:

"If you had known, I am to understand that you would have declined to go."

"I did not say that I should be sorry to have you there," she answered, with the hesitancy of one stepping among pitfalls. [Pg 118]

"Shall we take the Tenth street car?" asked Millard. "It runs through Eighth street on the west side."

"As you please. I should have walked if alone," said Phillida.

"And I would much rather walk with good company than ride. So we will walk."

It took them full three-quarters of an hour to reach Washington Square, though either would have done it alone in a quarter less, for walking is a kind of work that is not shortened when shared with a friend.

Millard purposely drew Miss Callender into talk about the work of the mission, and he was soon rewarded by seeing her break through her habitual restraint and reveal the enthusiastic self within. She told him of the reading-room at the mission, and of the coffee-room where rolls and hot coffee were served to men every day in the week, so as to keep them from the saloons. Her face was aglow with interest as she talked, but Millard would rather have drawn her to speak of her own relation to the work. This she avoided, beyond confessing that she took her turn with the other ladies in superintending the coffee-room. At length, however, as they passed one of those open stairways that lead to thronged tenements above,—like the entrance to a many-chambered ant-hill, save that this mounts and that descends,—she spoke to a lad on the sidewalk, telling him to give her love to his sister and say that she was coming in to see her the next day. To Millard she explained that the boy's sister was an invalid young woman on one of the upper floors, bed-ridden for many years. [Pg 119]

"And you visit her?" asked Millard, with a hardly concealed repulsion at the notion of Phillida climbing these populous stairs and threading the dingy and malodorous hallways above.

"Yes; she thinks so much of seeing me—because I am well, I suppose. She says it makes her stronger just to look at me. And if I can take her a flower, or some little bit of outdoors, it is more in her life than a trip to the country would be in mine. Poor Wilhelmina Schulenberg has not been down the stairs for five years. We talk of trying to get an invalid's chair for her when the warm weather comes, so that her brother can wheel her in the Square."

Millard turned and looked again at the stairway as though noticing all the particulars of its environment. It was a balmy day in the last of February, and they were soon crossing Tompkins Square diagonally towards Eighth street. He had caught the infection of Phillida's exaltation; instead of feeling repulsion at sight of the swarming children in cheap and often shabby clothes, racing madly up and down the broad asphalted walks, instead of turning in aversion from the commonplace people sitting talking, staring, smoking, sleeping, flirting, or courting on the benches, he was able to take Miss Callender's view of the matter and to feel gratified that the poor, and especially the little folk so long winter-cribbed in narrow tenements, were now able to get so much happiness in the open ground.

IX. WASHINGTON SQUARE AND ELSEWHERE.

Mrs. Gouverneur had invited both Phillida and Millard to a family dinner this evening with a notion of furthering their acquaintance and drawing her niece into society. She would not admit to herself any purpose or expectation ulterior. She had engaged each one to come two hours before dinner to make a quiet afternoon of it, and when she found them both unpunctual she

wondered.

"Philip," she said to her son, who was sitting by the window reading a folio volume of Sir Thomas Browne, "I asked Phillida to come early this afternoon, and I can't imagine what keeps her."

"Oh, some leper, or some one who has fallen among thieves. It's a dreadful thing to be a Christian. I have only known three or four, and Phillida is one of them."

"You don't mean to say we are not all Christians?" demanded Philip's father, a taciturn man with a rather handsome face of the broad Dutch type. What history it carried was mainly one of good dinners and fine wines. The senior Gouverneur had been sitting looking into the fire for half an hour without saying a word. His son's way of treating the sacred white elephants of conventionality was the main grief of this dignified, well-bred, entirely commonplace man. [Pg 121]

"Yes, you're all—we're all, Christians in the sense that we're neither Jews, Mohammedans, nor Buddhists. But most of us don't belong to the same totem with Jesus."

"What do you mean by the same totem with Jesus?" said the mother, who could not help shuddering a little at the temerity of her son's paradoxes, though fondly indulgent of his irreverent cleverness.

"A totem among the Indians is the subdivision of a tribe. The Mohawks or Cayugas, for example, were subdivided into totems called the 'Wolf,' the 'Turtle,' the 'Bear.' Every man belonged to the totem of his mother and was akin to everybody in it. If a Mohawk of the Wolf totem stopped in the village of the Cayugas or the Senecas, he was entertained by some Seneca of the same totem who claimed him for a kinsman."

"That's very curious," said his mother.

"I don't see what it's got to do with your cousin Phillida or with religion," said Mr. Gouverneur, who as an elder in the Dutch Reformed Church, and as the descendant of a long line of men and women who had traveled in the same well-worn path since the good old days of the Synod of Dort, felt much annoyed at Philip's waywardness.

"Well," said Philip, leaning back in his chair and letting the folio rest on his knees, "you see there are religious totems that run through all denominations of Christians and even through different religions, and the lines of cleavage between them are deeper than those between Moslems and Christians, or between Jews and idolaters. There is what I call the totem of the Wahahbees—the people who translate religion into dispute or persecution. In central Asia they get rid of an opponent by assassination in the name of Almighty God and his prophet. In the United States doctrine defenders are inconveniently placed, and they have to be content with newspaper and pulpit scolding and with excommunicating those who differ from them. Then there is the most respectable sect of all—the Pharisees, which counts eminent divines and rabbis of every religion among its people. Great church-goers and Sabbath-keepers, great distributors of shalls and shall-nots, great observers of scruples and ordinances. They hold a tight rein over recreations and keep their mint-and-cumin tithes by double-entry. Now, Phillida is no Wahahbee and she is no Pharisee. She is not above enjoying herself at your table on Sunday evening, you see, or going to Mrs. Hilbrough's reception. She takes her religion in the noblest way. Her enthusiasms all have a philanthropic coloring. She's what I call a Jesus-ite." [Pg 122]

"Ah, now, Philip," said his mother, half-amused and half-startled by the irreverent sound of this expression, but full of admiration for Philip's originality.

"And what are *you*, please?" demanded his father with some severity and a slightly heightened color. He knew that Philip must be wrong, for he had never seen anything of this sort in the "Christian Intelligencer" in his life. "What are you?" he repeated.

"Only a poor doubting, mocking, useless Sadducee, I suppose," said the son as he bent again over the Religio Medici. There was a touch of dejection in his voice, which served to disarm that resentment which his father felt towards every view of anything that varied from the consecrated commonplace. [Pg 123]

The door-bell rang, and Mrs. Gouverneur, who had intended that Phillida and Millard should each consider the other a mere coincidence, was a little disconcerted to have them enter together at a later time than she had set, and with an air of slight fatigue, as though they had come from a long walk. And, moreover, without a chaperon. The acquaintance was progressing more rapidly than she had expected.

Millard smilingly explained: "I encountered Miss Callender in a very unfashionable quarter of the city, and I thought it my duty to take charge of her."

At ten o'clock that evening Phillida was escorted to her home, her cousin Philip Gouverneur walking on one side and Millard on the other. She left them with a pleased sense of having passed an uncommonly happy afternoon and evening, but was alarmed, nevertheless, to think what a romance Agatha would build out of the encounter with Mr. Millard in Avenue C and the detected contrivance of Aunt Gouverneur.

And when she had finished deprecating Agatha's raptures and had escaped her sister's further questions by going to bed, Phillida found that her own imagination had at length been set a-going, and her pillow reveries kept her awake. Why was it always Mr. Millard? She had chanced upon him at Mrs. Hilbrough's; his desire to bring Mrs. Gouverneur to the Hilbrough reception had made him her escort; and now most unexpectedly she finds that he and she are intimates and, in a sense, benefactors in the same tenement in Avenue C; they are companions in a walk, and again guests at the same table. It made her superstitious; these coincidences looked like fate—or rather like a special manifestation of the will of Providence—to the mind of Phillida Callender. [Pg 124]

Undeniably there was something in Charles Millard that attracted her. He was not just of her own kind, but if he had been would she have liked him so well? Certainly the young men at the mission, exemplary fellows that they were, did not excite even a languid interest in her mind. Millard took life less seriously than she did, but perhaps that very otherness was agreeable: when one is prone by nature to travel dusty paths and dutifully to wound one's feet on mountainous rocky roads, a companion who habitually beckons to green sward and shady seats, who makes life put on a little more of the air of a picnic excursion into the world, is a source of refreshment. She now knew that Millard was not without benevolence, that he clung faithfully to his aunt in spite of his connections in the great world, and that he was planning to assist in the education of his cousins. If she had not somewhat exaggerated these virtues of fidelity and generosity she would not have been a woman, for it is one of the crowning good fortunes of life that a woman can contrive to make so much of a little virtue in a man.

Having left Phillida, Millard and Gouverneur walked together up Second Avenue, past the closed gateways of Stuyvesant Park. Millard was doing the talking, at a great rate. Philip was silent in regard to everything, or if he spoke he said only so much as a decent courtesy demanded. This soon became tiresome to Millard, who was relieving the internal pressure of his thoughts by mere bubble talk about things of no interest to himself, while it seemed impossible to excite his companion's interest in anything. [Pg 125]

"You and I have changed places to-night, Phil," he said at length; "you make me do all the talking. Come now, it's your turn."

"I don't feel in the humor," said Philip. "Are you going to the club?"

"No; I shall go home and write some letters, maybe, now I think of it. So good-night."

Philip's "Good-night" was more curt than courteous, and he made his way to the club, where, according to his habit, he crouched his small form into one of the great chairs, drawing his head down between his shoulders, which were thrust upward by the resting of his elbows on the chair-arms. Here he sat long, taking no part in any conversation, but watching the smoke from his cigar.

The next morning he came late to breakfast, and his mother lingered after the rest had left the table, to see that his coffee and chops were right and to mitigate his apparent depression.

"Your little match-making scheme is likely to succeed beautifully," he said to her when the servant had gone.

"What do you mean? I'm sure I had no views of that kind in asking Charley Millard and Phillida. I only wished to encourage Phillida to go more into society." [Pg 126]

"Views or no views, what it'll come to will be a match," Philip retorted.

"Well, there'll be no harm done, I suppose."

"Not if you think Charley the best man for her."

There was something of dejection in the tone of this last remark, and a note of reproach to her,

that rendered Mrs. Gouverneur uneasy. When Philip had left the table she revolved it in her mind. Was Philip himself in love with Phillida? Or did he know anything to the disadvantage of Millard?

"Tell Mr. Philip I wish to see him before he goes out," she said to one of the maids.

When Philip came to her room she looked at him with anxiety.

"Do you know anything against Charley, Philip?"

"Nothing whatever," said Philip, emphatically, as he pulled on his gloves.

"Philip, tell me truly, do you care for your cousin yourself?"

"Why, of course. She is my cousin, and a good girl—a little too fearfully good."

"You know what I mean, Philip. Don't trifle with me."

"What would be the use of my caring for Phillida, as you call it? Charley, with his usual luck, will get her, I am sure. You've fixed that."

"Now, Philip, you reproach me unjustly. You've had years of intimacy with Phillida. Why did you never let her know what your feelings were?" [Pg 127]

"I? I haven't said that I have any feelings in the matter. Do you think Phillida would have me if Charley were out of the way? She knows me too well. She's a utilitarian. She would say, 'Cousin Phil is interesting, but he hides his talent in a napkin. He studied law, and now neglects to practise it because his uncle left him two or three thousand dollars a year.' To her I am only an idler, when I'm not a mocker."

"She likes you, I am sure."

"Yes, in a way, no doubt. But I'm a doubter, and a mocker, and a failure, and Phillida knows it. And so do I."

"Ah, now, Philip, why will you be so discouraged with yourself? You're the cleverest young man in New York."

But Philip only smiled and said, "Good-morning, mother," and ran down the stairs and out the door.

When Philip had left Millard in Second Avenue the evening before, the latter was puzzled. He had never seen Gouverneur so depressed and irritable. But when they had separated, Millard was relieved that he no longer had to force a conversation about things of no interest to himself, and that his thoughts were at length free to range where they would.

He turned his footsteps towards his apartment, making a detour through Madison Square to lengthen the stroll. His interest in and affection for the family of his aunt was a fact so paradoxical to the rest of his life that it was in some sense his main secret. It was not a thing he should like to have explained to Philip Gouverneur, his bosom friend, for example. But that Phillida Callender was now in possession of the chief secret of his life gave him a sort of pleasure he had never known before. That she was in friendship with his aunt's family and a sharer in this off-color part of his existence made a sort of community of feeling between him and her. He turned the matter over in his mind, he went over in memory all parts of his encounter with her in his aunt's tenement, he dwelt upon the glow of surprise on her countenance, and in imagination he again took her hand in friendly greeting. He recalled every detail of the walk through Avenue C, in Tompkins Square, and then through the cross-streets. He made himself feel over again the pleasure he had felt in those rare moments when she turned her dark, earnest eyes toward him at some more than usually interesting moment in the conversation. [Pg 128]

This was the pleasant side of the reverie. For the rest, he was tormented with a certain feeling of unworthiness that had never troubled him so much before. The more he thought of the purposes, sweet, high, and disinterested, that moved her, the more was he pained at a sense of frivolity, or, at least, at a want of "worthwhileness" in his own aims. He was a communicant at St. Matthias's, and highly esteemed for his exemplary life and his liberality to the church. But the rector of St. Matthias's did not trouble himself, as Phillida did, about the lost sheep in the wilderness of the lettered avenues. His own flock, well washed and kempt, were much more agreeable subjects of contemplation. [Pg 129]

Millard sat in reverie a long time. He was really afraid that he should presently find himself in love with Miss Callender, and such a marriage was contrary to his whole plan of life. His purpose was primarily to remain a bachelor, though he had dreamed of himself well established, but always with a wife whose tastes and connections should incline her to those pursuits that go with a fashionable career, and he always saw a vision of himself and his wife entertaining the very elect of New York City. Here suddenly a new path, hitherto untrodden by his imagination, opened before him as a possibility. Judged by the standards used among his friends it was an undesirable road. It involved a voluntary sacrifice of that position of social prominence and leadership which he had striven so hard to secure. He resolved to put the thought away from him.

A little later his lights were out and he was abed. But he did not sleep at once, for in spite of the best resolutions he could not help recalling again and again the face and figure, the voice and movement, of Phillida Callender. Again and again he crossed Tompkins Square and walked through Eighth street and Waverley Place with her; and she once more confronted him across Mrs. Gouverneur's dinner-table.

One result of Millard's meditations was a desire to relieve his conscience by sharing a little—if ever so little—in the effort to improve the life of the multitudinous East-siders. To touch them by personal effort and contact was out of the question; he could not bring himself to attempt it, nor would it have availed anything, perhaps, if he had, for the East-siders would have shrunk from his gloves as instinctively as he did from their work-darkened palms. But there was the other resort of his check-book. He sent a check the next evening to the superintendent of the mission. He stated that he remitted this as assistant cashier of the Bank of Manhadoes on behalf of a gentleman who did not wish his name known, and requested that the subscription be announced merely as from "A Well-wisher." One half of the hundred dollars was to go to the expenses of the coffee-room and the other half to be appropriated to the library and reading-room. [Pg 130]

Now it is not in the nature of things that a hen should see a new egg in her nest without cackling over it, or that a man in charge of a benevolent enterprise should have a hundred-dollar check mysteriously and unexpectedly dropped into his hat without talking about it. Such a gift smacks of special divine favor, and offers a good theme for an address calculated to animate those engaged in the work. The very next Sunday, when the Testaments had been shut up and the lesson papers had all been put away, Phillida and the others heard from the superintendent some very inspiring remarks on the subject of the encouragements which ought to make them take heart in their work. He wound up, of course, by telling of this donation from an unknown well-wisher. Had he stopped there—but what talker to young people would or could have stopped there? He whisked out the check and showed it, and then the identical letter from the assistant cashier of the Bank of Manhadoes was held up before the admiring boys and girls and read aloud to show how modestly this benevolent well-wisher had hidden his hand. [Pg 131]

And thus the only person in the audience from whom Millard had particularly wished to conceal his agency in the matter knew perfectly that the anonymous well-wisher was none other than the assistant cashier himself. And she thought what a fine thing it was to have money when there was so much good to be done with it.

X. BROKEN RESOLVES.

Once the check was dispatched, Millard's conscience, which had been aroused—irritated—by the standing rebuke of Phillida's superior disinterestedness, was in a measure appeased. After sitting an hour in slippery meditation he resolved to master his inclination toward Miss Callender's society, for fear of jeopardizing that bachelor ideal of life he had long cherished. Hilbrough's especial friendship, supported by Mrs. Hilbrough's gratitude, had of late put him in the way of making money more rapidly than heretofore; the probable early retirement of Farnsworth would advance him to the cashiership of the bank, and there opened before him as much as he had ever desired of business and social success. It was not exactly that he put advantages of this sort into one side of the scale and the undefinable charms of Phillida into the other. But he was restrained by that natural clinging to the main purpose which saves men from frivolous changes of direction under the wayward impulses of each succeeding day. This conservative holding by guiding

resolutions once formed is the balance-wheel that keeps a human life from wobbling. Western hunters used to make little square boxes with their names graven in reverse on the inside. These [Pg 133] they fixed over a young gourd, which grew till it filled the box. Then the hunter by removing the box and cutting off the end of the stem of the gourd, to make an opening like the mouth of a bottle, secured a curious natural powder-flask, shaped to his fancy and bearing his name in relief on its side. Like the boxed gourd, the lives of men become at length rigidly shaped to their guiding purposes, and one may read early resolutions ineffaceably inscribed upon them. But the irony of it! Here was Millard, for example, a mature man of affairs, held to a scheme of life adopted almost by accident when he was but just tottering, callow, from his up-country nest. What a haphazard world is this! Draw me no Fates with solemn faces, holding distaffs and deadly snipping shears. The Fates? Mere children pitching heads and tails upon the paving-stones.

But if the dominant purpose to which the man has fitted himself is not to be suddenly changed, there are forces that modify it by degrees and sometimes gradually undermine and then break it down altogether. The man whose ruling purpose is crossed by a grand passion may say to himself, like the shorn Samson, "I will go out as at other times before," for the change that has come over him is subtle and not at once apparent to his consciousness. Millard resolutely repressed his inclination to call on Miss Callender, resolutely set himself to adhere to his old life as though adherence had been a duty. But he ceased to be interested in the decorations and amused by the articles of vertu in his apartment; he no longer contemplated with pleasure the artistic effect of his rich portières and the soft tone of his translucent window-hangings. The place seemed barren and lonely, and the life he led not much worth the having after all. [Pg 134]

But, like the brave man he was, he stuck to his resolution not to call on Miss Callender, from a sort of blind loyalty to nothing in particular. Perhaps a notion that a beau like himself would make a ridiculous figure suing to such a saint as Phillida had something to do with his firmness of purpose. But when, a month later, he started once more for Avenue C, he became at length aware that he had not made any headway whatever in conquering his passion, which like some wild creature only grew the fiercer under restraint. In spite of himself he looked about in hope of meeting Miss Callender in the street, and all the way across the avenues he wondered whether he should encounter her at his aunt's. But Phillida had taken precautions against this. She remembered, this time, that the last Sunday in the month was his day for visiting his aunt, and she went directly home from the mission, disturbed in spite of herself by conflicting emotions.

Millard could not but respect her dignified avoidance of him, which he felt to be in keeping with her character. He listened with such grace as he could to Uncle Martin, whose pessimistic oration to-day chanced to be on the general ignorance and uselessness of doctors. His complaints about the medical faculty were uttered slowly and with long pauses between the sentences. Doctors, according to Uncle Martin, only pretend to know something, and use a lot of big words [Pg 135] to fool people. "Now I doctor myself. I know what does me good, and I take it, doctor or no doctor." This was said with a you-don't-fool-me expression on his solemn face. "W'y, one doctor'll tell you one thing, and another'll tell you another. One says bathing's good for you, and another says no; one wants you to get up bright and early, and another says sleep a plenty; one will half-starve you, and the other says the thing is to feed you up."

At this point Uncle Martin rested his elbows against his sides, threw his forearms outward and upward at an angle of forty-five degrees, holding his broad palms toward the ceiling, while he dropped his heavy shorn chin upon his breast and gazed impressively upon Millard from under his eyebrows. The young man was rendered uneasy by this climactic pause, and he thought to break the force of Uncle Martin's attitude by changing the subject.

"Doctors differ among themselves as much as ministers do," he said.

"Ministers?" said Uncle Martin, erecting his head again, and sniffing a little. "They are just after money nowadays. W'y, I joined the Baptist church over here"—beckoning with his thumb—"when I came to New York, and the minister never come a-nigh us. We are not fine enough, I suppose. Ministers don't believe the plain Bible; they go on about a lot of stuff that they get from somewheres else. I say take the plain Bible, that a plain man like me can understand. I don't want the Greek and Latin of it. Now the Bible says in one place that if a man's sick the elders are to pray over him and anoint him with oil—I suppose it was sweet oil; but I don't know—that they used. But did you ever know any elder to do that? Naw; they just off for the doctor. Now, I say take the plain word of God, that's set down so't you couldn't nowadays make any mistakes." [Pg 136]

Here Uncle Martin again dropped his head forward in a butting position, and stared at Charley Millard from under his brows. This time the younger man judged it best to make no rejoinder. Instead, he took the little Tommy in his arms and began to stroke the cheeks of the nestling child.

The diversion had the proper effect. Uncle Martin, perceiving that the results of his exhaustive meditations in medicine and theology, which were as plain as the most self-evident nose on a man's face, were not estimated at their par value, got up and explained that he must go to Greenpoint and call on a man who had lately lost a child; and then, fearing he wouldn't get back to supper, he said good-by, and come again, and always glad to see you, Charley, and good luck to you; and so made his way down the dingy stairs.

Charley Millard now turned to his aunt, a thin-faced woman whose rather high forehead, wide and delicately formed in the region of the temples, made one think that in a more favorable soil she might have blossomed. She was sitting by the window that looked out upon the narrow courtyard below and on the rear house to which Aunt Martin's apartment was bound by a double clothes-line running upon pulleys. In fact the whole straitened landscape in view from the back windows was a vision of ropes on pulleys. Sunday was the only day that Mrs. Martin cared to look on this view, for on week-days it was a spectacle of sheets and pillow-cases and the most intimate male and female garments flapping and straddling shamelessly in the eddying wind. [Pg 137]

Millard, while yet the older children had not returned, broached the subject of their education. He particularly wished to put Mary, the eldest, into a better school than the public school in her neighborhood, or at least into a school where the associations would be better. He proposed this to his aunt as delicately as possible.

"It's very kind of you, Charley," she said. "You want to make a fine lady of her. But what would you do with her? Would it make her any happier? She would want better clothes than we could give her; she would become dependent on you, maybe; and she would be ashamed of the rest of us."

"She could never be ashamed of you, aunt," said Millard. But he was struck with a certain good sense and originality in his aunt which kept her from accepting anything for good merely because it was commonly so taken. What service, indeed, would it be to Mary to declass her? Of what advantage to a poor girl to separate her from her surroundings unless you can secure to her a life certainly better?

"It would be well," he said after a while, "if Mary could prepare herself for some occupation by which she might some day get a living if other resources fail. You wouldn't like her to have to go out to service, or to fall below her family, Aunt Hannah?"

"No; certainly not. But there's the trouble. Her father is like many other men from the country; he can't bear the idea of Mary's earning her own living. He says he expects to support his own girls. And you know Henry won't have her educated at your expense. He's very proud. But if she could somehow get into a school better than the public schools in this part of the city, a school where she would get better teaching and meet a better class of children, I would like it, provided she did not get a notion of being a fine lady. There is nothing worse than half-cut quality, and that's all she'd be. And are you sure, Charley, that rich people are happier than we are? We don't worry about what we haven't got." [Pg 138]

The children were now upon the stairs, and the private talk was ended. They greeted their cousin eagerly, and began as usual to talk of Miss Callender.

"We tried to bring her home with us," said Dick, "but she said, 'Not to-day, Dick, not to-day,' and she stuck to it. I told her you'd be here, and I thought that would fetch her, but she only laughed and said she had to call and see a poor sick young lady that hadn't walked for five years; and then she said, 'Give my love to your mother,' and left us. I sh'd thought she'd 'a' sent her love to Cousin Charley, too, but she never done it."

"Don't say 'never done it,' Dick," broke in Mary. "It's not proper."

Millard accepted his aunt's invitation to tea, and then walked homeward by a very round-about way. He was not quite aware of the nature of the impulse that caused him to turn downtown and thus to trace a part of the route he had walked over with Phillida four weeks before. He paused to look again at the now dark stairway up which lived the bedridden Wilhelmina Schulenberg, and though he shuddered with a sort of repulsion at thought of her hard lot, it was not sympathy with Mina Schulenberg that had arrested his steps at the mouth of this human hive. To his imagination it seemed that these dark, uninviting stairs were yet warm with the tread of the feet of Phillida Callender; it could not be more than two hours since she came down. So instead of following the route of a month ago through Tompkins Square and Eighth street, as he had half unconsciously set out to do, he walked through Tenth street to Second Avenue. This way Phillida must have gone this very afternoon, and this way he felt himself drawn by an impulse increasing in force [Pg 139]

ever as he journeyed. It seemed of prime importance that he should call on Miss Callender without delay, just to consult her about Mary's education. His reasoning in favor of this course was convincing, for logic never gets on so well as when inclination picks all the pebbles out of the pathway.

A long discussion concerning Mary Martin's education was held that evening between the young people sitting by the drop-lamp in Mrs. Callender's parlor. Many nice theories were broached by each of them, but during the whole of the discussion they were both in a state of double consciousness. Canvassing Mary and her outlook in life in one center of thought, they were thinking and feeling more profoundly regarding the outlook in life of two other people in another vortex of brain action. For Phillida could not conceal from herself the fact that Mr. Millard was only half interested in what he was saying, but was utterly absorbed in her with whom he was talking. His passion, so long denied, now had its revenge, and even the training of a man of the world to conceal what he felt and to say what he did not think was of no avail against it. [Pg 140]

Notwithstanding the divided state of their minds, in consequence of which Mary's interests got only a minority of attention, her interests did not fare badly, for the very effort to keep the thoughts and feelings that were eddying below the surface from engulfing their whole mental action forced both talkers to concentrate their minds earnestly upon Mary's schooling.

In the first place both of them admitted the force of Mrs. Martin's objection to declassing Mary in such a way as to leave her segregated from family ties. Then it came out that Phillida did know a school—not a fine school, but a good school—where Mary would not be without companions in sober clothes, and where the teacher, a Miss Gillies, knew her business and had not too many scholars. But how to overcome Uncle Martin's objection to being helped by his wife's nephew?

"If," said Millard "the teacher of whom you speak had given to her a sufficient amount to pay the tuition of some suitable girl from a plain family, she would naturally consult you?"

"Yes; I think so," said Phillida.

"And under such circumstances why could you not recommend Mary?"

Phillida hesitated. [Pg 141]

"I see you are more truthful than we men of business, who could not keep our feet without little ruses. There would be an implied deception of Uncle Martin, you think. Well, then, I will make the subscription absolute, and will leave Miss Gillies in entire control of it. I will advise her to consult you. If she does, and you think some other child than Mary ought to have it, or if it should be refused for Mary, you may give it to some one else. Do you know any one else who would profit by such a tuition?"

"Oh, yes!"

"Well, perhaps a better way would be this. I'll make it double, and you may have the entire disposal of both scholarships, if Miss Gillies will let you. Suppose I leave it to you to communicate the fact to her?"

"That will be very good, indeed"; and Phillida's face lost for a moment the blushing half-confusion that had marked it during the conversation, and a look of clear pleasure shone in her eyes—the enthusiastic pleasure of doing good and making happiness. Millard hardly rose to the height of her feeling; it was not to be expected. Whenever her face assumed this transfigured look his heart was smitten with pain—the mingled pain of love intensified and of hope declining; for this exaltation seemed to put Phillida above him, and perhaps out of his reach. Why should she fly away from him in this way?

"And may I come—to-morrow evening, perhaps—to inquire about this matter?" he said, making a movement to depart.

The question brought Phillida to the earth again, for Millard spoke with a voice getting beyond his control and telling secrets that he would fain have kept back. His question, tremulously put, seemed to ask so much more than it did! She responded in a voice betraying emotion quite out of keeping with the answer to a question like this, and with her face suffused, and eyes unable to look steadily at his, which were gazing into hers. [Pg 142]

"Certainly, Mr. Millard," she said.

He took her hand gently and with some tremor as he said good-evening, and then he descended

the brownstone steps aware that all debate and hesitancy were at an end. Come what might come, he knew himself to be irretrievably in love with Phillida Callender. This was what he had gained by abstaining from the sight of her for four weeks.

When the elevator had landed him on one of the high floors of the Graydon Building, a bachelor apartment house, and he had entered his own parlor, the large windows of which had a southern outlook, he stood a long time regarding the view. The electric lights were not visible, but their white glow, shining upward from the streets and open squares, glorified the buildings that were commonplace enough in daytime. Miles away across a visible space of water Liberty's torch shone like a star of the fifth magnitude. The great buildings about the City Hall Park, seen through a haze of light, seemed strangely aërial, like castles in a mirage or that ravishing Celestial City which Bunyan gazed upon in his dreams. A curved line of electric stars well up toward the horizon showed where the great East River Bridge spanned the unresting tides far below. Millard's apartment was so high that the street roar reached it in a dull murmur as of a distant sea, and he stood and absorbed the glory of the metropolitan scene—such a scene as was never looked upon in any age before our own decade—and it was to him but a fit accompaniment to his passion for Phillida, which by its subjective effect upon him had transformed all life and the universe itself. A month before he had sat and stared a hard-coal fire out of countenance in apprehension of falling in love with Phillida. Now he eagerly drank in the glory of earth and air, and loved her without reserve and without regret. [Pg 143]

XI. IN THE PARK.

Although love had at length come to Millard like an inundation sweeping away the barriers of habit and preconception, he was quite aware that Phillida Callender's was not a temperament to forget duty in favor of inclination, and the strength of his desire to possess her served as a restraint upon his action. He followed the habits of business negotiation even in love-making; he put down his impatience and made his approaches slowly that he might make sure of success. As a prudent beginning to his courtship he called on Phillida at first but once a week. She soon regained her wonted placidity of exterior, and Millard found it difficult to divine how far his affection was reciprocated.

For himself, he kept up his round of post-Easter social engagements. It would be time enough to lop these off if Phillida should require it when his affairs with her should be upon a more secure footing. Phillida, too, kept up a series of post-Easter engagements, but of another sort. Besides the ordinary work of the mission, and the extraordinary work attending the preparations for Fresh Air excursions for the invalid poor which were to be carried on in the heats of summer, she went once a week to the parlor Bible readings of Mrs. Frankland, which were, in fact, eloquent addresses, and which served greatly to stimulate her zeal. Thus these two lovers journeyed upon paths that had no convergence, even while feeling themselves drawn irresistibly toward each other. [Pg 145]

As April wore into May, Millard ventured on more frequent attentions, and from day to day meditated how he might light on an opportunity to tell her what he felt and wished. But at her house he was always held in check by remembering the crash of an overturned chair at the time of his first call, and he could not speak very confidential words with no other screen than those thin sliding doors. When on two occasions he contrived to encounter Phillida returning from her Sunday afternoon mission to the east, he thought he perceived certain traces of debate going on in her mind, and an apparent effort on her part to hold the talk to cool and indifferent topics. That she was strongly attracted to him he readily believed, and had she been a woman of the ordinary type this would have been sufficient. But she was Phillida Callender, and he who would win her must gain consent not alone of her affections but of her conscience as well, and of her judgment. Such a decision as he should ask her to make would be tried by the test of the high life purpose that ruled her and looked on all interfering delights and affections with something like fierceness. For how shall one of the daughters of God be persuaded to wed one of the sons of men?

And thus, by the procrastination that comes of lack of opportunity, and the procrastination that

comes of timidity, the spring was fast passing into summer. Hilbrough had taken Millard into partnership in an enterprise of his own—the reorganization of a bankrupt railway company in the interest of the bondholders. It was necessary to secure the co-operation of certain English holders of the securities, and Hilbrough felt sure that a man of Millard's address and flexibility would achieve more than he himself could in a negotiation abroad. So it was arranged that on the first Saturday in June the assistant cashier should sail for London on a ten weeks' leave of absence from the bank, and that when his business in London should be completed he was to make a short tour over the well-beaten paths of European travel. This arrangement rendered it necessary that Millard should bring his diplomatic delays to an end, and run the risk of an immediate proposal to Phillida Callender. [Pg 146]

Memorial Day came round, and all the land showed its sorrow for the innumerable host that perished untimely in deadly battle and deadlier hospital by keeping the day right joyously. This gave Millard a holiday, and he set off after a lazy breakfast to walk up Fifth Avenue and through Central Park. He proposed to explore the Ramble and meditate all the time how he might best come to an understanding with Phillida that very evening.

He entered the Park at the southeast corner, but instead of pushing straight up to the Mall, a childish impulse to take a hurried glance at the animals deflected him toward the old armory. The holiday crowd already gathering proved quite too miscellaneous for his fastidious nerves; the dumb brutes he could stand, but these pushing and chattering human monkeys were uninteresting, and he went on through the region of wild beasts to that of tame ones, where the patient donkeys were busily employed carrying timid little children and showing their skill in their favorite game of doing the least possible amount of work in any given time. Though the motion of these creatures was barely perceptible, the pace seemed frightful to some of the alarmed infants clinging to their backs. Millard looked at them a moment in amusement, then refusing the donkey path he turned to the left toward the shady Mall. The narrow walk he chose was filled to-day with people, who, having fed the elephant, admired the diving of the seal, wondered at the inconceivable ugliness of the hippopotamus, watched the chimpanzee tie knots in the strands of an untwisted rope by using her four deft hands, and shuddered a little at the young alligators, were now moving away—a confused mass of children, eager to spend their nickels for a ride at the carrousel, and elders bent on finding shelter from the heat under the elms that overhang the Mall. There was a counter-current of those who had entered the Park by remoter gateways and were making their way toward the menagerie, and Millard's whole attention was absorbed in navigating these opposite and intermingling streams of people and in escaping the imminent danger of being run over by some of the fleet of baby-carriages. From a group of three ladies that he had just passed a little beyond the summer-house, he heard a voice say, half under breath: [Pg 147]

"Mr. Millard, I declare!"

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It was Agatha Callender, and as he turned to greet her he saw behind her Phillida supporting her mother.

"Mama is not very well, and we persuaded her to take a holiday," explained Agatha; "and I am trying to find a way for her out of this crowd."

Millard took charge of the convoy and succeeded in landing the party on shady seats at the lower end of the Mall, where the colossal Walter Scott is asking his distinguished countryman Robert Burns, just opposite, if all poets engaged in the agonizing work of poetic composition fall into such contortions as Burns does in this perpetual brass.

After a while Agatha grew as restless as the poet seems in the statue. She had brought money enough to take her party about the Park in the regular coaches, and spending-money unspent always made Agatha unhappy. She now broached the subject of taking a coach, and remembered that it was a free day at the Art Museum. Millard proposed to go to the Fifth Avenue gate and get a carriage for the party. This extravagance the prudent Mrs. Callender would not consent to, and so Millard conducted the ladies to the place where Shakspeare, a little weak in the knees, has long been doing his best, according to his ability, to learn a part in a new play. The first coach that came by had but two vacancies. Millard hailed it, and said promptly:

"Now, Miss Agatha, we shall not find four places in one coach to-day. You and Mrs. Callender get into this one, and take stop-over checks at the Museum. Miss Callender and I will join you there in the next coach or on foot." [Pg 149]

There was no time for debate, and before Mrs. Callender could muster her wits to decide what was best to be done about this, Charley's gloved hands had gently helped her into the coach, put

Agatha in beside her, and handed a half-dollar to the driver for the fare. Just as Mrs. Callender was beginning to protest against this last act the coach rolled away, and Agatha saw Millard and Phillida face about without waiting for another coach and return toward Shakspeare and the Mall.

"I oughtn't to have let him pay for us," murmured Mrs. Callender.

"Oh, you needn't feel under any obligations," whispered Agatha; "he just wanted to be alone with Phillida."

But now that Millard had seized the advantage of an unchaperoned stroll with Phillida, he found himself without the courage to use it. The very suddenness with which they had been left to themselves made Phillida feel that a crisis was imminent, and this served to give her an air of confusion and restraint. In presence of this reserve Millard drew back.

The two strolled along the Mall, admiring the wide, elm-shaded triple avenue, and talking of uninteresting subjects. They were involved once more in the evergrowing holiday crowd, and Millard saw with vexation that his opportunity was slipping away from him. When they had traversed the length of the Mall and were approaching the bust of Beethoven, Phillida said suddenly:

"There is Mina Schulenberg in a wheel-chair. I wonder how she contrived to get one."

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She pushed forward toward the invalid, but Millard hung back a little, and Phillida suspected that he was probably ashamed to be seen talking with Mina, who was wheeled by her brother, a stalwart young man of twenty, in his Sunday clothes.

"O Miss Callender, is it you? Do you see my chair already? It must have been you who managed to get it for me."

"No, Wilhelmina; indeed I knew nothing about it till I saw you in it this moment."

"Then I don't know what to think," said the invalid. "It was sent up from a place down in Grand street already, with my name on a ticket and the word 'Paid' marked on the ticket. I wish I could thank the one that gave it to me wunst already, for I don't feel like it belonged to me till I do."

Phillida turned about and looked at Millard, who still lurked behind her. When he met her penetrating gaze he colored as though he had been caught doing wrong.

"Miss Schulenberg, this is Mr. Millard," said Phillida. "I don't know who sent you this chair; but if you thank him the person who paid for your chair will hear about it, I feel sure."

Mina looked at Millard. The faultlessness of his dress and the perfection of style in his carriage abashed her. But she presently reached her emaciated hand to him, while tears stood in her eyes. Millard trembled as he took the semi-translucent fingers in his hand: they looked brittle, and he could feel the joints through his gloves as though it were a skeleton that thus joined hands with him.

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"You gave me my chair!" she said. "Yesterday I was out in it for the first time already—in Tompkins Square. But to-day Rudolph here—he is such a good fellow—he wanted to give me a big treat wunst, and so he brought me all the way up here already to see this beautiful Park. It's the—the first time—" but shadowy people like Wilhelmina hover always on the verge of hysteria, and her feelings choked her utterance at this point.

Millard could not bear the sight of her emotion. He said hastily, "Never mind, Miss Schulenberg; never mind. Good-morning. I hope you will enjoy your day."

Then as he and Phillida went up the stairs that lead out of the Mall at the north of the arbor by the Casino, Millard made use of his handkerchief, explaining that he must have taken a slight cold. He half halted, intending to ask Phillida to sit down with him on a seat partly screened by a bush at each end; but there were many people passing, and the two went on and mounted the steps to the circular asphalted space at the top of the knoll. Phillida, shy of what she felt must come, began to ask about the great buildings in view, and he named for her the lofty Dakota Flats rising from a rather naked plain to the westward, the low southern façade of the Art Museum to the northward, to the east the somber front of the Lenox Library,—as forbidding as the countenance of a rich collector is to him who would borrow,—and the columnar gable chimneys of the Tiffany house.

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Millard now guided Phillida to a descending path on the side of the hill opposite to that by which they had come up, and which perversely turned southeastward for a while, it having been

constructed on the theory that a park walk should describe the longest distance between any two points. Here he found a seat shaded by the horizontal limbs of an exotic tree and confronted by a thicket that shut out at this season almost all but little glimpses of the Tiffany house and the frowning Lenox. He asked Phillida to sit down, and he sat beside her. The momentary silence that followed was unendurable to Phillida's excited nerves, so she said:

"Mr. Millard, it was a splendid thing to do."

"What?"

"To give that chair to Mina Schulenberg, and all so quietly."

"Miss Callender—Phillida—may I call you Phillida?"

A tone of entreaty in this inquiry went to her heart and set her thoughts in a whirl. It was not possible to say "No." She did not lift her eyes from the asphalt, which she was pushing with the ferrule of her parasol, but she said "Yes," filled with she knew not what pleasure at having Millard use this familiarity.

"Phillida, you have taught me a great deal. It is to you that the poor girl owes her ride to-day, and to you that I owe the pleasure of seeing her enjoy it. I'm not so good as you are. I am a rather—a rather useless person, I'm afraid. But I am learning. And I want to ask you before I go away [Pg 153] whether you *could* love me?"

Phillida kept trying to bore into the pavement with her parasol, but she did not reply.

After a pause Millard went on. "I know you don't decide such things by mere passion. But you've had reason to think that I loved you for a good while. Haven't you?"

"I—I think I have." This was said with difficulty after a pause of some seconds.

"And you must have thought about it, and turned it over in the light of duty. Haven't you—Phillida?"

This address by her Christian name startled her. It was almost like a caress. But presently she said, "Yes; I have." She remembered that her prayer this very morning had been that before she should be called upon to decide the question of marrying Millard she might have some sign to guide her, and now the happy face of Wilhelmina seemed the very omen she had sought.

"And you haven't made up your mind to reject me?" said Millard.

The answer this time was longer than ever in coming.

"No; no, Mr. Millard."

Millard paused before putting the next question. "I'm going away, you know, on Saturday. May I get out of that last answer all that I wish to, Phillida?"

The parasol trembled in her hand, and perceiving that it betrayed her she ceased to push the ground and let go of the staff, grasping the edge of the seat instead. Millard could see her frame tremble, and in his eagerness he scarcely breathed. With visible effort she at length slowly raised [Pg 154] her flushed face until her gaze encountered his. But utterance died on her lips. Either from some inclination of the head or from some assent in her eyes Millard understood her unuttered answer to be in the affirmative. He lifted her hand from the seat beside him and gently kissed it. And then as he held it he presently felt her fingers grasp his hand ever so lightly. It was answer enough. A noisy party was coming down the steps toward them.

"Now, Phillida dear, we must go," he said, rising. "Your mother will not know what has detained us."

Phillida looked up playfully as they walked away, and said, her voice still husky with feeling:

"Agatha will be sure to guess."

PHILIP.

Philip Gouverneur, passing the Graydon on his return from a dinner-party, thought to make a farewell call on Millard. He encountered Charley in the elevator, just coming home from an evening with Phillida, his face aglow with pleasure.

"Fancied I should find you packing," Philip said. "I thought as you would cross the Alps for the first time I'd come and give you a few points. If I were not so lazy and inefficient I believe I should go with you and 'personally conduct' you."

"That would be jolly. Come over in three or four weeks and I'll be quits with London. We'll engage a traveled English valet together, and journey in comfort. I will follow your lead and go anywhere."

"No; I shall not get over this year."

They entered Millard's rooms, where things were in a state of upheaval, but orderly even in their upheaval. Seating themselves for half an hour by the open windows they talked of things to be seen in Europe. Then Philip, remembering that his friend had much to do, rose to go, and Millard said with an effort:

"Well, Phil, I'm going to be kin to you. Congratulate me."

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The color fled from Philip's face as he said:

"How's that?"

"Phillida Callender and I are engaged."

"You and Phillida?" said Philip, struggling to collect his wits. "I expected it." He spoke low and as though some calamity had befallen him. A moment he stood trying to muster his forces to utter some phrase proper to the occasion, and then he abruptly said:

"Good-night; don't come out"; and walked away toward the elevator like a somnambulist doing what he is compelled to by preconception without making note of his environment. And Millard wondered as he looked after him.

The next morning Philip came to breakfast so late that even his indulgent mother had forsaken the table after leaving directions to "have things kept hot for Mr. Philip, and some fresh coffee made for him."

When he had eaten a rather slender meal he sought his mother's sitting-room.

"Aunt Callender called last night, I hear. She must have had something to say, or she would hardly have persuaded herself to leave her sewing so long."

"She came to tell me of Phillida's engagement," said Mrs. Gouverneur, looking at Philip furtively as she spoke.

"I supposed that was it."

"Did you know it, then?"

"Oh, Charley Millard told me last night. These lucky fellows always take it for granted that you'll rejoice in all their good fortune; they air their luck before you as though it were your own." He was looking out of the window at the limited landscape of Washington Square. [Pg 157]

"I'm sorry you feel bad about it," said his mother.

Philip was silent.

"I never dreamed that you had any special attachment for Phillida," said Mrs. Gouverneur.

"What did you think I was made of?" said Philip, turning toward his mother. "Since she came from Siam I have seen her about every week. Now consider what a woman she is, and do you wonder that I like her?"

"Why didn't you tell her so?"

"I might if I'd had Charley's brass. But what is there about a critical, inefficient young man like me, chiefly celebrated for piquant talk and sarcasm—what is there to recommend me to such a woman as Phillida? If I'd had Charley's physique—I suppose even Phillida isn't insensible to his appearance—but look at me. It might have recommended me to her, though, that in one respect I do resemble St. Paul—my bodily presence is weak." And he smiled at his joke. "No, mother, I am jealous of Charley, but I am not disappointed. I never had any hopes. I'd about as soon have thought of making love to any beatified saint in glory as to Phillida. But Charley's refined audacity is equal to anything."

The mother said nothing. She felt her son's bitterness too deeply to try to comfort him.

"I hate it most of all for Phillida's sake," Philip went on. "It can not be a happy marriage. Here they've gone and engaged themselves without reflection, and a catastrophe is sure to follow."

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"Oh, maybe not," said Mrs. Gouverneur, who could not help feeling that Philip partly blamed her for the engagement.

"Why, just look at it. They haven't really kept company. He has been going to dinner and dancing parties this spring, and she to Mackerelville Mission and Mrs. Frankland's Bible Readings. If they should discover their incompatibility before marriage it wouldn't be so bad; but he's off to Europe for the summer, and then they'll be married in the autumn, probably, and then what? Phillida will never spend her time dancing Germans with Charley; and he would make a pretty fist running a class of urchins in Mackerelville. I tell you it only means misery for both of them." And with this prediction Philip mounted to his own room.

Millard was too busy with the packing of trunks, the arrangement of business, and farewell visits to Phillida, to give much thought to Philip's curious behavior; but it troubled him nevertheless. And when, on the deck of the steamer *Arcadia*, he bade good-by to a large circle of friends, including Mr. Hilbrough, who brought a bouquet from his wife, and Mrs. Callender and her daughters, he looked about in vain for Philip. He could no longer doubt that for some reason Philip disliked his engagement. But when the last adieus had been waved to diminishing and no longer distinguishable friends on the pier-end, and the great city had shrunk into the background and passed from view as the vessel glided steadily forward into the Narrows, Millard entered his cabin and found a package of guide-books and a note from Philip excusing his absence on the ground of a headache, but hoping that his friend would have a pleasant voyage and expressing hearty good wishes for his future with Phillida. It was all very curious and unlike Philip. But the truth below dawned upon Charley, and it gave him sorrow that his great joy might be Philip's disappointment.

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When September had come Philip sat one day in a wide wicker chair on the piazza of the old-fashioned cottage of the Gouverneurs at Newport. This plain but ample cottage had once held up its head stoutly as one of the best. But now that the age of the Newport cliff-dwellers had come, in which great architects are employed to expend unsparingly all the ideas they have ever borrowed, on cottages costlier than kings' palaces, the Gouverneur house had been overshadowed, and, after the manner of age outstripped by youth, had taken refuge in the inexpugnable advantage of priority. Like the family that dwelt within, it maintained a certain dignity of repose that could well afford to despise decoration and garniture, and look with contempt on newness. The very althæas, and lilacs, and clambering jasmynes in the dooryard and the large trees that lent shade to a lawn alongside, bespoke the chronological superiority of the place. There was no spruceness of biweekly mowing about the lawn, no ambitious spick-and-spanness about the old, white, wooden, green-blinded cottage itself, but rather a restful mossiness of ancient respectability.

Here Philip watched out the lazy September days, as he had watched them since he was a lad. This was a Newport afternoon, not cloudy, but touched by a certain marine mistiness which took the edge off the hard outlines of things and put the world into tone with sweet do-nothingness. Half-sitting, half-lying, in the wide piazza chair, clearly not made to measure for him, Philip had remained for two hours, reading a little at intervals, sometimes smoking, but mostly with head drawn down between his shoulders while he gazed off at the familiar trees and houses, and noted the passing of white-capped maids with their infant convoys, and the infrequent carriages that rolled by. His mother, with her fingers busy at something of no consequence, sat near him. Each was fond of the other's presence, neither cared much for conversation. Gouverneur, the father, was enjoying a fine day in his fashion, asleep on a lounge in the library.

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"It's just as I expected, mother," said Philip, coming out of a prolonged reverie. "Charley and Phillida will marry without ever getting acquainted, and then will come the blow-out."

"What do you mean by the blow-out?" said Mrs. Gouverneur. "They are neither of them quarrelsome."

"No; but they are both sensitive. Aunt Callender's sickness took Phillida to the Catskills before he got home, and she's been there ever since. I suppose he has gone up once or twice on a Saturday. But what chance has either of them to know the other's tastes? What do you suppose they talk about? Does Phillida explain her high ideals, or tell him the shabby epics of lame beggars and blind old German women in Mackerelville? Or does he explain to her how to adjust a cravat, or tell her the amusing incidents of a private ball? They can't go on always billing and cooing, and what will they talk about on rainy Sundays after they are married? I'd like to see him persuade Phillida to wear an ultra-fashionable evening dress and spend six evenings a week at entertainments and the opera. Maybe it'll be the other way; she may coax him to teach a workingmen's class in the Mission. By George! It would be a comedy to see Charley try it once." And Philip indulged in a gentle laugh. [Pg 161]

"You don't know how much they have seen of each other, Philip. Phillida is a friend of the Hillbroughs, and Mr. Millard once brought her to our house on Sunday afternoon from the Mission or somewhere over there."

"That's so?" said Philip. "They may be better acquainted than I think. But they'll never get on."

Perceiving that this line of talk was making his mother uncomfortable, he said:

"Nature has got the soft pedal down to-day. Come, mother, it's a good day for a drive. Will you go?"

And he went himself to call the coachman.

XIII.

MRS. FRANKLAND.

Mrs. Frankland, the Bible reader, was a natural orator—a person with plenty of blood for her brain, ample breathing space in her chest, a rich-toned voice responsive to her feelings, and a mind not exactly intellectual, but felicitous in vocabulation and ingenious in the construction of sentences. Her emotions were mettlesome horses well-bitted—quick and powerful, but firmly held. Though her exegesis was second-hand and commonplace, yet upon the familiar chords of traditional and superficial interpretation of the Bible she knew how to play many emotional variations, and her hearers, who were all women, were caught up into a state of religious exaltation under her instruction. A buoyant and joyous spirit and a genial good-fellowship of manner added greatly to her personal charms.

She was the wife of a lawyer of moderate abilities and great trustworthiness, whose modesty, rather than his mediocrity, had confined him to a small practice in the quieter walks of the profession. Mrs. Frankland had been bred a Friend, but there was a taste for magnificence in her that argued an un-Quaker strain in her pedigree. On her marriage she had with alacrity transferred her allegiance from no-ceremony Quakerism to liturgical Episcopalianism, the religion of her husband. She gave herself credit for having in this made some sacrifice to wifely duty, though her husband would have been willing to join the orthodox Friends with her, for the simplicity and stillness of the Quakers consorted well with his constitution. Mrs. Frankland did not relinquish certain notions derived from the Friends concerning the liberty of women to speak when moved thereto. No doubt her tenacity in this particular was due to her own consciousness of possessing a gift for swaying human sympathies. Such a gift the Anglican communion, from time immemorial, has delighted to bury in a napkin—in a tablecloth, if a napkin should prove insufficient. But Mrs. Frankland was not a person to allow her talent to be buried even in the most richly dight altar-cloth. In her, as in most of the world's shining lights, zeal for a cause was indistinguishably blended with personal aspirations—honest desire to be serviceable with an unconscious desire to be known. It is only healthy and normal that any human being possessed of native power should wish to show his credentials by turning possibility into fact accomplished. [Pg 163]

Mrs. Frankland's temperament inclined her to live like a city set on a hill, but the earlier years of

her married life had been too constantly engrossed by domestic cares for her to undertake public duties. It had often been out of the question for the Franklands to keep a servant, and they had never kept more than one in a family of four children. At first this ambitious wife sought to spur her timid and precise husband to achievements that were quite impossible to him. But when the children grew larger, so that the elder ones could be of assistance in the care of the house, Mrs. Frankland's opportunity came. The fame of such women as Mrs. Livermore, Miss Willard, and Mrs. Bottome had long been a spur to her aspiration. She did not set up as a reformer. Denunciation and contention were not proper to her temperament. She was, above all, pathetic and sympathetic. She took charge of a Bible class of young ladies in the Sunday-school, and these were soon deeply moved by her talks to them as a class, and profoundly attracted to her by a way she had of gathering each one of them under the hen-mother wings of her sympathies. That she and they exaggerated the degree of her personal feeling for her individual listeners is probable; the oratorical temperament enlarges the image of a sentiment as naturally as a magic lantern magnifies a picture. In later days beloved Maggies and Matildas of the class, who had believed themselves special favorites of Mrs. Frankland—their images graven on her heart of hearts—were amazed to find that they had been quite forgotten when they had been out of sight a year or two. [Pg 164]

The Bible-class room in the Church of St. James the Less soon became uncomfortably crowded. This was what Mrs. Frankland had long desired. She thereupon availed herself of the hospitality of a disciple of hers who had a rather large parlor, and in this she opened a Bible reading on Friday afternoons. Eloquent talk, and especially pathetic talk and vivid illustrations by means of incidents and similes, were as natural to her as melodious whistling is to a brown thrush, and the parlors were easily filled, though out of deference to church authorities men were excluded. [Pg 165]

The success of this first course of so-called Bible readings was marked, and it determined Mrs. Frankland's career. She was enough of a woman to be particularly pleased that some of the wealthiest parishioners of St. James the Less were among her hearers, and that, having neglected her in all the years of baby-tending and dishwashing obscurity, these people now invited her to their houses and made her the confidante of their sorrows. This sort of success was as agreeable to her as merely social climbing was to Mrs. Hilbrough. For even in people of a higher type than Mrs. Frankland the unmixed heroic is not to be looked for: if one finds zeal or heroism in the crude ore it ought to be enough; the refined articles have hardly been offered in the market since the lives of the saints were written and the old romances went out of fashion.

Two results of Mrs. Frankland's first winter's readings, or preachings, had not entered into her calculations, but they were potent in deciding her to continue her career. One was that her husband's law practice was somewhat increased by her conspicuousness and popularity. He was not intrusted with great cases, but there was a very decided increase in his collection business. At the close of the season Mrs. Frankland, in making her farewell to her class, had, like a true orator, coined even her private life into effect. She touched feelingly on the sacrifice she and her family had had to make in order that she might maintain the readings, and alluded to her confidence that if Providence intended her to go forward, provision would be made for her and her children, whom she solemnly committed by an act of faith, like that of the mother of Moses, to the care of the Almighty. She said this with deep solemnity, holding up her hands toward heaven as though to lay an infant in the arms of the Good Shepherd. The vision of a house-mother trusting the Lord even for the darning of stockings was an example of faith that touched the hearers. Under the lead of a few active women in the company a purse of two hundred dollars was collected and presented to her. It was done delicately; the givers stated that their purpose was simply to enable her to relieve herself of care that the good work might not suffer. The money was thus handed not to her but to the Lord, and Mrs. Frankland could not refuse it. Do you blame her? She had earned it as fairly as the rector of St. James the Less earned his. Perhaps even more fairly, for her service was spontaneous and enthusiastic; he had grown old and weary, and his service had long since come to be mainly perfunctory. [Pg 166]

There are cynics who imagine a woman with a mission saying, "Well, I've increased my husband's business, and I have made two hundred very necessary dollars this winter; and I will try it again." If the matter had presented itself to her mind in that way Mrs. Frankland probably would have felt a repulsion from the work she was doing. It is a very bungling mind, or a more than usually clear and candid mind, that would view a delicate personal concern in so blunt a fashion. Mrs. Frankland's mind was too clever to be bungling, and too emotional and imaginative to be critical. What she saw, with a rush of grateful emotion, was that the Divine approval of her sacrifices was manifested by this sustaining increase of temporal prosperity. The ravens of Elijah had replenished her purse because she trusted. Thus commended from above and lifted into the circle of those who like the prophets and apostles have a special vocation, she felt herself ready, as she [Pg 167]

put it, "to go forward through fire and flood if need be." It would not have been like her to remember that the fire and flood to be encountered in her career could be only rhetorical at best—painted fire and a stage flood.

Among those who chanced to be drawn to Mrs. Frankland's first course of Bible readings, and who had listened with zest, was Phillida Callender. Phillida's was a temperament different from Mrs. Frankland's. The common point at which they touched was religious enthusiasm. Mrs. Frankland's enthusiasms translated themselves instantly into eloquent expression; she was an instrument richly toned that gave forth melody of joy or sorrow when smitten by emotion. Phillida was very susceptible to her congenial eloquence, but hers was essentially the higher nature, and Mrs. Frankland's religious passion, when once it reached Phillida, was transformed into practical endeavor. Mrs. Frankland was quite content to embody her ideals in felicitous speech, and cease; Phillida Callender labored day and night to make her ideals actual. Mrs. Frankland had no inclination or qualification for grappling with such thorny problems as the Mackerelville Mission afforded. It was enough for her to play the martial music which nerved others for the strife. [Pg 168]

It often happens that the superior nature is dominated by one not its equal. Phillida did not question the superlative excellence of Mrs. Frankland, from whom she drew so many inspirations. That eloquent lady in turn admired and loved Phillida as a model disciple. Phillida drew Mrs. Hilbrough to the readings, and Mrs. Frankland bestowed on that lady all the affectionate attention her immortal soul and worldly position entitled her to, and under Mrs. Frankland's influence Mrs. Hilbrough became more religious without becoming less worldly. For nothing could have seemed more proper and laudable to Mrs. Hilbrough than the steady pursuit of great connections appropriate to her husband's wealth.

Mrs. Frankland's imagination had been moved by her success. It was not only a religious but a social triumph. Some of the rich had come, and it was in the nature of an orator of Mrs. Frankland's type to love any association with magnificence. Her figures of speech were richly draped; her imagination delighted in the grandiose. The same impulse which carried her easily from drab Quakerism to stained-glass Episcopalianism now moved her to desire that her ministry might lead her to the great, for such an association seemed to glorify the cause she had at heart. She did not think of her purpose nakedly; she was an artist in drapery, and her ideas never presented themselves in the nude; she was indeed quite incapable of seeing the bare truth; truth itself became visible to her only when it had on a wedding garment. As she stated her aspiration to herself, she longed to carry the everlasting gospel to the weary rich. "The weary rich" was the phrase she outfitted them with when considered as objects of pity and missionary zeal. To her mind they seemed, in advance, shining trophies which she hoped to win, and in her reveries she saw herself presenting them before the Almighty, somewhat as a Roman general might lead captive barbarian princes to the throne of his imperial master. [Pg 169]

Mrs. Frankland could not be oblivious to the fact that a Bible reading among the rich would be likely to bring her better pecuniary returns than one among the poor. But she did not let this consideration appear on the surface of her thoughts, nor was it at all a primary or essential one.

She knew but little of the intricacies of social complications, and her mind now turned to Mrs. Hilbrough as the wealthiest of all her occasional hearers, and one having an ample parlor in a fashionable quarter of the town.

Her first thought had been to get Phillida to accompany her when she should go to suggest the matter to Mrs. Hilbrough. But on second thought she gave up this intermediation, for reasons which it would have been impossible for her to define. If she exerted a powerful influence over Phillida in the direction of emotion, she could not escape in turn the influence of Phillida's view of life when in her presence. Although personal ambitions mixed themselves to a certain extent with Mrs. Frankland's religious zeal, disguising themselves in rhetorical costumes of a semi-ecclesiastical sort, they did not venture to masquerade too freely before Phillida. Mrs. Frankland, though less skillful in affairs than in speech, felt that it would be better in the present instance to go to Mrs. Hilbrough alone. [Pg 170]

It was with a glow of pleasure not wholly unworldly that she found herself one afternoon in Mrs. Hilbrough's reception-room, and noted all about her marks of taste and unstinted expenditure. To a critical spectator the encounter between the two ladies would have afforded material for a curious comparison. The ample figure of Mrs. Frankland, her mellifluous voice, her large, sweeping, cheerily affectionate, influential mode of address, brought her into striking contrast with the rather slender, quietly self-reliant Mrs. Hilbrough, whose genial cordiality covered, while it hardly concealed, the thoroughly business-like carriage of her mind.

Mrs. Frankland opened her plan with the greatest fullness of explanation as to what her motives

were, but she did not feel obliged wholly to conceal the element of personal aspiration, as she would have done in talking to Phillida. Her intuitions made her feel that Mrs. Hilbrough would accept religious zeal all the more readily for its being a little diluted. Mrs. Hilbrough responded with genial cordiality and even with some show of enthusiasm. But if she had less address in speech than the other she had more in affairs. While theoretically supporting this plan she did not commit herself to it. She knew how slender as yet was her hold upon the society she courted, and she would not risk an eccentric move. Her boat was still in shallow water, with hardly buoyancy enough to float a solitary occupant; if she should undertake to carry Mrs. Frankland, it would probably go fast aground. What she said to Mrs. Frankland with superficial fervor was: [Pg 171]

"You ought to have a person that has been longer in New York, and is better acquainted than I am, to carry out your plan, Mrs. Frankland. It would be a pity to have so excellent a scheme fail; that would probably prevent your ever succeeding—would shut you out as long as you lived. It would be a great honor to me to have your readings, but you must begin under better auspices. I regret to say this. Your readings, rightly started, will be a great success, and I should like to have them here."

This last was in a sense sincere. Mrs. Hilbrough was sure of Mrs. Frankland's success if once the thing were patronized by the right people. Here Mrs. Frankland looked disappointed, but in a moment broke forth again in adroit and fervid statement of the good that might be done, mingled with a flattering protest against Mrs. Hilbrough's too humble estimate of her influence in society. While she proceeded, Mrs. Hilbrough was revolving a plan for giving Mrs. Frankland more than she asked, while avoiding personal responsibility.

"I think I can do something," she said, with a manner less cordial but more sincere than that she had previously assumed. "Leave the matter with me, and I may be able to open to you a grand house, not a plain, middling place like mine"—and she waved her hand deprecatingly toward the furnishings which seemed to Mrs. Frankland inconceivably rich—"a grand house with all the prestige of a great family. I don't know that I shall succeed with my friend, but for the sake of the cause I am willing to try. I won't tell you anything about it till I try. If I fail, I fail, but for the present leave all to me." [Pg 172]

Mrs. Frankland was not the sort of person to relish being guided by another, but in Mrs. Hilbrough she had met her superior in leadership. Reluctantly she felt herself obliged to hand over the helm of her own craft, holding herself ready to disembark at length wherever Mrs. Hilbrough might reach dry ground.

Of all that Mrs. Hilbrough had won in her first winter's social campaign, the achievement that gave her most pleasure was the making acquaintance and entering into fast ripening friendship with Mrs. Van Horne. Little Mrs. Van Horne was not in herself very desirable as a friend, but she was one of those whose fortune it is to have the toil of thousands at their disposal. Her magnificence was fed by an army: innumerable laborers with spades and shovels, picks and blasting-drills, working in smoke and dripping darkness to bore railway paths through mountain chains; grimy stokers and clear-sighted engineers; brakemen dripping in the chilly rain; switchmen watching out the weary night by dim lanterns or flickering torches; desk-worn clerks and methodical ticket-sellers; civil engineers using brains and long training over their profiles and cross-sectionings; and scores of able "captains of industry," such as superintendents, passenger agents, and traffic managers—all these, and others, by their steady toil kept an unfailling cataract of wealth pouring into the Van Horne coffers. In herself Mrs. Van Horne had not half the force of Mrs. Hilbrough, but as the queen bee of this widespread toil and traffic, fed and clad and decked as she was by the fruits of the labor of a hundred thousand men, Mrs. Van Horne had an enormous factitious value in the world. How to bear her dignity as the wife of a man who used the million as a unit she did not know, for though she affected a reserved stateliness of manner, it did not set well on such a round-faced, impressionable little woman quite incapable of charting a course for herself. No show of leadership had been hers, but she had taken her cue from this and that stronger nature, until by chance she came in hailing distance of Mrs. Hilbrough. The two were perfect counterparts. Mrs. Hilbrough was clairvoyant and of prompt decision, but she lacked the commanding position for personal leadership. She was superficially deferential to Mrs. Van Horne's older standing and vastly greater wealth, but she swiftly gained the real ascendancy. Her apparent submission of everything to Mrs. Van Horne's wisdom, while adroitly making up a judgment for the undecided little lady, was just what Mrs. Van Horne liked, and in three months' acquaintance that lady had come to lean more and more on Mrs. Hilbrough. The intimacy with so close a friend rendered life much more comfortable for Mrs. Van Horne, in that it relieved her from taking advice of her sisters-in-law, who always gave counsel with a consciousness of superiority. Now she could appear in her family with opinions and purposes apparently home-made. To a woman of Mrs. Hilbrough's cleverness the friendship [Pg 173]

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with one whose brooks ran gold rendered social success certain.

Mrs. Hilbrough was a natural promoter. Her energy inclined her to take hold of a new enterprise for the mere pleasure of pushing it. She felt a real delight in the religious passions awakened by Mrs. Frankland's addresses; she foresaw an interesting career opening up before that gifted woman, and to help her would give Mrs. Hilbrough a complex pleasure. That Mrs. Frankland's addresses if given in Mrs. Van Horne's parlors would excite attention and make a great stir she foresaw, and for many reasons she would like to bring this about. Mrs. Hilbrough did not analyze her motives; that would have been tiresome. She entered them all up in a sort of lump sum to the credit of her religious zeal, and was just a little pleased to find so much of her early devotion to religion left over. Let the entry stand as she made it. Let us not be of the class unbearable who are ever trying to dissipate those lovely illusions that keep alive human complacency and make life endurable.

Mrs. Hilbrough contrived to bring Mrs. Frankland with her abounding enthusiasm and her wide-sweeping curves of inflection and gesture into acquaintance with the great but rather pulpy Mrs. Van Horne. The natural inequality of forces in the two did the rest. Mrs. Van Horne, weary of the inevitable limitations of abnormal wealth, and fatigued in the vain endeavor to procure any satisfaction which bore the slightest proportion to the vast family accretion, found a repose she had longed for when she was caught up in the fiery chariot of Mrs. Frankland's eloquent talk. All the vast mass of things that had confronted and bullied her so long was swept into a rhetorical dustpan, and she could feel herself at length as a human soul without having to remember her possessions. Mrs. Frankland's phrase of "the weary rich" exactly fitted her, and to her Mrs. Frankland's eloquent pulverizing of the glory of this world brought a sort of emancipation. [Pg 175]

Mrs. Frankland unfolded to her a desire to reach those who would not attend her readings at any but a very fashionable house. Mrs. Van Horne, encouraged thereto by Mrs. Hilbrough, was delighted at finding a novel and congenial use for some of the luxurious and pompous upholstery of her life of which she was so tired. Her parlors were opened, and "persons of the highest fashion" were pleased to find a private and suitably decorated wicker-gate leading into a strait and narrow vestibule train, limited, fitted up with all the consolations and relieved of most of the discomforts of an old-fashioned religious pilgrimage.

XIV. MRS. FRANKLAND AND PHILLIDA.

Mrs. Callender would have told you that mountain air had quite restored her, but enforced rest from scissors and sewing-machine, the two demons that beset the dear industrious, had more to do with it than mountain air. The first of October brought her and Phillida again to their house, where Agatha had preceded them by two days, to help Sarah in putting things to rights for their advent. Millard met the mother and daughter at the station with a carriage and left them at their own door.

"Did Mr. Millard say that he would come again this evening?" Agatha asked of Phillida when she rose from the dinner-table.

"No."

"Well, I should think he would. I wouldn't have a young man that would take things so coolly. He's hardly seen you at all since his return, and—that's the expressman with the trunks. I'll go and see about them"; and she bounded away, not "like an antelope," but like a young girl bubbling to the brim with youth and animal spirits.

An hour later, when Phillida and Agatha had just got to a stage in unpacking in which all that one owns is lying in twenty heaps about the room, each several heap seeming larger than the trunk in which it came, there was a ring at the door, and Mr. Millard was announced. [Pg 177]

"Oh, dear! I think he might have waited until to-morrow," grumbled Agatha to her mother, after Phillida had gone to the parlor. "He'll stay for hours, I suppose, and I never can get these things put away alone, and we won't get you to bed before midnight. He ought to remember that you're

not strong. But it's just like a man in love to come when you're in a mess, and never to go away."

Millard was more thoughtful than another might have been, and in half an hour Phillida returned to the back room, with a softly radiant expression of countenance, bearing a bouquet of flowers which Millard had brought for Mrs. Callender. Phillida at once helped Agatha attack chaos. The floor, the chairs, the table, the bed, and the top of the dressing-case were at length cleared, and preparations were making for getting the tired mother to her rest before ten o'clock.

"Seems to me," said Agatha, "that if I were in Philly's place I'd want something more than a brief call on the first evening, after so long a separation."

"Seems to me," said the mother, mimicking Agatha's tone and turning upon the girl with an amused smile, "if you ever have a lover and are as hard to please with him as you are with Mr. Millard, he might as well give it up before he begins."

In the morning early came Mrs. Frankland. She kissed Phillida on this cheek and on that, embraced her and called her "Dear, dear child," held her off with both hands and looked with admiration at her well-modeled face, freshened with wind and sun. She declared that the mountain air had done Phillida a great deal of good, and inquired how her dear, good mother was. [Pg 178]

"Mother is wonderfully better," said Phillida; "I may say, well again."

"What a mercy that is! Now you'll be able to go on with the blessed work you are doing. You have a gift for mission work; that's your vocation. I should make a poor one in your place. It's a talent. As for me, I have a new call."

"A new call—what is that?" said Phillida, rolling up an easy chair for Mrs. Frankland to sit on.

"It's all through you, I suppose. You brought Mrs. Hilbrough to hear me, and Mrs. Hilbrough made me acquainted with Mrs. Van Horne, and she has invited me to give readings in her parlor. I gave the first last Thursday, with great success. The great parlor was full, and many wept like little children."

The words here written are poor beside what Mrs. Frankland said. Her inflection, the outward sweep of her hand when she said "great parlor," brought the rich scene vaguely to Phillida's imagination, and the mellow falling cadence with which she spoke of those who had wept like little children, letting her hands drop limp the while upon her lap, made it all very picturesque and touching. But Phillida twisted the fingers of her left hand with her right, feeling a little wrench in trying to put herself into sympathy with this movement. It was the philanthropic side of religion rather than the propagandist that appealed to her, and she could hardly feel pity for people whose most imaginary wants were supplied. [Pg 179]

The quick instinct for detecting and following the sympathy of an audience is half the outfit for an orator; and Mrs. Frankland felt the need of additional statement to carry the matter rightly to Phillida. She was ever feeling about for the electrical button that would reach a hearer's sympathies, and never content until she had touched it.

"I find the burdens of these wealthy women are as great—even greater than those of others. Many of them are tired of the worldliness, and weary of the utter frivolity, of their pursuits." She put a long, rich, vibrant emphasis on the words "utter frivolity." "Don't you think it a good plan to bring them to the rest of the gospel?"

"Certainly," said Phillida, who could not logically gainsay such a statement; but she was convinced rather than touched by any living sympathy with Mrs. Frankland's impulse, and she still twisted the tips of the fingers of her left hand with her right.

"I hope, dear child," Mrs. Frankland went on, in a meditative tone, looking out of the window and steering now upon a home tack—"I hope that I can serve in some way the cause of the poor you have so much at heart. Missions like yours languish for funds. If I could be the means of bringing people of great fortune to consecrate their wealth, it might fill many a thirsty channel of benevolence with refreshing streams." Ah, that one could produce here the tone of her voice as of a brook brimming over barriers, and running melodious to the meadows below! [Pg 180]

"That is true," said Phillida, remembering how many betterments might be made in the coffee-room and the reading-room if only one had the money, and remembering how her own beloved Charley had helped the Mission and made the lot of the unhappy Wilhelmina Schulenberg less grievous. "I do think it may prove to be a great work," she added thoughtfully, folding her hands

upon her lap in unconscious sign that she had reached a conclusion—a logical equilibrium.

"And I want you to go with me to the readings on Thursday. Mrs. Van Horne knows your aunt, Mrs. Gouverneur, and she will be glad to see you."

Phillida looked down and began to pinch the tips of her fingers again. She shrunk a little from Mrs. Van Horne's set; she thought her dress probably beneath their standard, but with an effort she put away such fears as frivolous, and promised to go.

Thursday afternoon found Phillida sitting by Mrs. Hilbrough in the Van Horne parlor, which was draped with the costly products of distant looms, wrought by the dusky fingers of Orientals inheriting the slowly perfected special skill of generations, and with the fabrics produced by mediæval workmen whose artistic products had gathered value as all their fellows had perished; for other races and other ages have contributed their toil to the magnificence of a New York palace. The great room was spanned by a ceiling on which the creative imaginations of great artists had lavished rare fancies in gold and ivory, while the costliest, if not the noblest, paintings and sculptures of our modern time were all about a parlor whose very chairs and ottomans had been designed by men of genius. [Pg 181]

Once the words of Mrs. Frankland were heard with these surroundings, one felt that it would be wrong to attribute to ambitious motives her desire for such an environment. She might rather be said to have been drawn here by an inspiration for artistic harmony. The resonant periods of Bossuet would hardly have echoed through the modern centuries if he had not had the magnificent court of Louis the Great for a sounding-board. When Mrs. Frankland spoke in the Van Horne parlor her auditors felt that the mellifluous voice and stately sentences could not have had a more appropriate setting, and that the splendid apartment could not have been put to a more fitting use. Even the simple religious songs used at the beginning and close of the meetings were accompanied upon a grand piano of finest tone, whose richly inlaid case represented the expenditure of a moderate fortune. Mrs. Van Horne could command the best amateur musical talent, so that the little emotional Moody-and-Sankeys that Mrs. Frankland selected were so overlaid and glorified in the performance as to be almost transformed into works of art.

Phillida looked upon these evidences of lavish expenditure with less bedazzlement than one might have expected in a person of her age. For she had grown up under shelter from the world. While she remained in the antipodes her contact with life outside her own family had been small. In Brooklyn her mother's ill health had kept her much at home, and the dominant influence of her father had therefore every chance to make itself felt upon her character, and that influence was all in favor of a self-denying philanthropy. To the last her father was altruistic, finding nothing worth living for but the doing for others. Abiding secluded as Phillida had, the father's stamp remained uneffaced. She saw in all this magnificence a wanton waste of resources. She put it side by side with her sense of a thousand needs of others, and she felt for it more condemnation than admiration. Mrs. Frankland's vocation to the rich was justified in her mind; it was, after all, a sort of mission to the heathen. [Pg 182]

And who shall say that Mrs. Frankland's missionary impulse was not a true one? Phillida's people were exteriorly more miserable; but who knows whether the woes of a Mulberry street tenement are greater than those of a Fifth Avenue palace? Certainly Mrs. Frankland found wounded hearts enough. The woman with an unfaithful husband, the mother of a reckless son who has been obliged to flee the country, the wife of a runaway cashier, disgraced and dependent upon rich relatives—these and a score besides poured into her ear their sorrows, and were comforted by her sympathy cordially expressed, and by her confidence in a consoling divine love and her visions of a future of everlasting rest. Mrs. Frankland had found her proper field—a true mission field indeed, for in this world-out-of-joint there is little danger of going astray in looking for misery of one sort or another. If the sorrows of the poor are greater, they have, if not consolation, at least a fortunate numbness produced by the never-ending battle for bread; but the canker has time to gnaw the very heart out of the rich woman. [Pg 183]

Even on the mind of Phillida, as she now listened to Mrs. Frankland, the accessories made a difference. How many dogmas have lived for centuries, not by their reasonableness but by the impressiveness of trappings! Liturgies chanted under lofty arches, creeds recited by generation following generation, traditions of law, however absurd, uttered by one big-wigged judge following a reverend line of ghostly big-wigs gone before that have said the same foolish things for ages—these all take considerable advantage from the power of accessories to impose upon the human imagination. The divinity that hedges kings is the result of a set of stage-fixings which make the little great, and half the horror inspired by the priest's curse is derived from bell and book and candle. The mystery of print gives weight to small men by the same witchcraft; you

would not take the personal advice of so stupid a man as Criticus about the crossing of a *t*, but when he prints a tirade anonymously in the Philadelphia "Tempus" the condemnation becomes serious.

Just in this way the imagination of Phillida was affected by the new surroundings in the midst of which Mrs. Frankland spoke. The old addresses in a Bible-class room with four plastered walls, or a modest parlor, did not seem to have half so much force as these. The weight of a brilliant success was now thrown into the scale, and Mrs. Frankland could speak with an apostolic authority hitherto unknown. The speaker's own imagination felt the influence of her new-found altitude, and she expressed herself with assurance and deliberation, and with more dignity and pathos than ever before. [Pg 184]

With all this background, Mrs. Frankland spoke to-day from the twelfth chapter of Romans on personal consecration. But she did not treat the theme as a person of reformatory temperament might have done, by denouncing the frivolity of rich and fashionable lives. It was not in her nature to antagonize an audience. She drew a charming picture of the beauty of a consecrated life, and she embellished it with wonderful instances of devotion, interspersed with touching anecdotes of heroism and self-sacrifice. The impression upon her audience was as remarkable as it was certain to be transient. Women wept at the ravishing vision of a life wholly given to noble ends, and then went their ways to live as before, after the predispositions of their natures, the habits of their lives, and the conventional standards of their class.

But in the heart of Phillida the words of the speaker fell upon fertile soil, and germinated, where there was never a stone or a thorn. The insularity of her life had left her very susceptible to Mrs. Frankland's discourses. Old stagers who have been impressed now by this, now by that, speech, writing, or personal persuasion, have suffered a certain wholesome induration. Phillida was a virginal enthusiast.

XV. TWO WAYS.

It seemed to Millard that Phillida would be the better for seeing more of life. He would not have admitted to himself that he could wish her any whit different from what she was. But he was nevertheless disposed to mold her tastes into some likeness to his own—it is the impulse of all advanced lovers and new husbands. It was unlucky that he should have chosen for the time of beginning his experiment the very evening of the day on which she had heard Mrs. Frankland. Phillida's mind was all aglow with the feelings excited by the address when Millard called with the intention of inviting her to attend the theater with him.

He found a far-awayness in her mood which made him keep back his proposal for a while. He did not admire her the less in her periods of exaltation, but he felt less secure of her when she soared into a region whither he could not follow. He hesitated, and discussed the weather of the whole week past, smiting his knee gently with his gloves in the endeavor to obtain cheerfulness by affecting it. She, on her part, was equally eager to draw Millard into the paths of feeling and action she loved so well, and while he was yet trifling with his gloves and the weather topic, she began: [Pg 186]

"Charley, I do wish you could have heard Mrs. Frankland's talk to-day." Phillida's hands were turned palms downward on her lap as she spoke; Millard fancied that their lines expressed the refinement of her organization.

"Why doesn't she admit men?" he said, smiling. "Here you, who don't need any betterment, will become so good by and by that you'll leave me entirely behind. We men need evangelizing more than women do. Why does Mrs. Frankland shut us out from her good influences?"

"Oh! you know she's an Episcopalian, and Episcopalians don't think it right for women to set up to teach men."

"I'm Episcopalian enough, but if a woman sets up as a preacher at all, I don't see why she shouldn't preach to those that need it most. It's only called a 'Bible reading'"—here Charley

carefully spread his gloves across his right knee—"there's no law against reading the Bible to men?" he added, looking up with a quick winning smile. "Now you see she turns the scripture topsy-turvy. Instead of women having to inquire of their husbands at home, men are obliged to inquire of their wives and sweethearts. I don't mind that, though. I'd rather hear it from you than from Mrs. Frankland any day." And he gathered up his gloves, and leaned back in his chair.

Phillida smiled, and took this for an invitation to repeat to him part of what Mrs. Frankland had said. She related the story of Elizabeth Fry's work in Newgate, as Mrs. Frankland had told it, she retold Mrs. Frankland's version of Florence Nightingale in the hospital, and then she paused. [Pg 187]

"There, Charley," she said deprecatingly, "I can't tell these things with half the splendid effect that Mrs. Frankland did. But it made a great impression on me. I mean to try to be more useful."

"You? I don't see how you can be any better than you are, my dear. That kind of talk is good for other people, but it isn't meant for you."

"Don't say that; please don't. But Mrs. Frankland made a deep impression on all the people at Mrs. Van Horne's."

"At Mrs. Van Horne's?" he asked, with curiosity mingled with surprise.

"Yes; I went with Mrs. Hilbrough."

"Whew! Has Mrs. Frankland got in there?" he said, twirling his cane reflectively. "I hadn't heard it."

"It isn't quite fair for you to say 'got in there,' is it, Charley? Mrs. Frankland was invited by Mrs. Van Horne to give her readings at her house, and she thought it might do good," said Phillida, unwilling to believe that anybody she liked could be more worldly than she was herself.

"I did not mean to speak slightly of Mrs. Frankland," he said; "I suppose she is a very good woman. But I know she asked Mrs. Hilbrough to let her read in her house. I only guessed that she must have managed Mrs. Van Horne in some way. It is no disgrace for her to seek to give her readings where she thinks they will do good." [Pg 188]

"Did she ask Mrs. Hilbrough?" said Phillida.

"Mrs. Hilbrough told me so, and the Van Horne opening may have been one of Mrs. Hilbrough's clever contrivances. *That* woman is a perfect general. This reading at Mrs. Van Horne's must be a piece of her fine work."

Just why this view of the case should have pained Phillida she could hardly have told. She liked to dwell in a region of high ideals, and she hated the practical necessities that oblige high ideals to humble themselves before they can be incarnated into facts. There could be no harm in Mrs. Frankland's seeking to reach the people she wished to address, but the notion of contrivance and management for the promotion of a mission so lofty made that mission seem a little shop-worn and offended Phillida's love of congruity. Then, too, she felt that to Millard Mrs. Frankland was not so worshipful a figure as to herself, and a painful lack of concord in thought and purpose between her lover and herself was disclosed. The topic was changed, but the two did not get into the same groove of thought during the evening.

Even though a lover, Millard did not lose his characteristic thoughtfulness. Knowing that early rest was important for the mother, and conjecturing that she slept just behind the sliding-doors, Charley did not allow himself to outstay his time. It was only when he had taken his hat to leave that he got courage to ask Phillida if she were engaged for the next afternoon. When she said no, he proposed the theater. Phillida would have refused the invitation an hour before, but in the tenderness of parting she had a remorseful sense of pain regarding the whole interview. With a scrupulousness quite characteristic she had begun to blame herself. To refuse the invitation to the Irving matinée would be to add to an undefined estrangement which both felt but refused to admit, and so, with her mind all in a jumble, she said: "Yes; certainly. I'll go if you would like me to, Charley." [Pg 189]

But she lay awake long that night in dissatisfaction with herself. She had gained nothing with Charley, her ideals had been bruised and broken, her visions of future personal excellence were now confused, and she was committed to give valuable time to what seemed to her a sort of dissipation. Would she never be able to emulate Mrs. Fry? Would the lofty aspiration she had cherished prove beyond her reach? And then, once, just once, there intruded the unwelcome thought that her engagement with Millard was possibly a mistake, and that it might defeat the

great ends she had in view. The thought was too painful for her; she banished it instantly, upbraiding herself for her disloyalty, and replacing the image of her lover on its pedestal again. Was not Charley the best of men? Had he not been liberal to the Mission and generous to Mina Schulenberg? Then she planned again the work they would be able to accomplish together, she diligent, and he liberal, until thoughts of this sort mingled with her dreams.

She went to see Irving's *Shylock*. The spectacular street scenes interested her; the boat that sailed so gracefully on the dry land of the stage excited her curiosity; and she felt the beauty and artistic delicacy of the *Portia*. But she was ill at ease through it all. She was too much in the mood of a moralist to see the play merely as a work of art; she could not keep her mind from reverting to matters having nothing to do with the play, such as the versatility of an actress's domestic relations. And she could not but feel that in so far as the play diverted her, it did so at the expense of that strenuousness of endeavor for extraordinary usefulness which her mind had taken under the spell of Mrs. Frankland's speech. [Pg 190]

"Didn't you like it?" said Millard, when they had reached the fresh air of the street and disentangled themselves from the debouching crowd—a noble pair to look upon as they walked thus in the late afternoon.

"Yes," said Phillida, spreading her parasol against the slant beams of the declining sun, which illuminated the red brick walls and touched the lofty cornices and the worn stones of the driveway with high lights, while now this and now that distant window seemed to burn with ruddy fire—"yes; I couldn't help enjoying Miss Terry's *Portia*. I am no judge, but as a play I think it must have been good."

"Why do you say 'as a play'?" he asked. "What could it be but a play?" He punctuated his question by tapping the pavement with his cane.

Phillida laughed a little at herself, but added with great seriousness: "Would you think worse of me, Charley, if I should tell you that I don't quite like plays?" And she looked up at him in a manner at once affectionate and protesting. [Pg 191]

Millard could not help giving her credit for the delicacy she showed in her manner of differing from him.

"No," he said; "I couldn't but think the best of you in any case, Phillida, but you might make me think worse of myself, you know, for I do like plays. And more than that," he said, turning full upon her, "you might succeed in making me think that you thought the worse of me, and that would be the very worst of all."

This was said in a half-playful tone, but to Phillida it opened again the painful vision of a possible drawing apart through a contrariety of tastes. She therefore said no more in that direction, but contented herself with some general criticisms on Irving's *Shylock*, the incongruities in which she pointed out, and her criticisms, which were tolerably acute, excited Millard's admiration; and it is not to be expected that a lover's admiration should maintain any just proportion to that which calls it forth.

Again the Thursday sermon at Mrs. Van Horne's came around, and again Phillida was restored to a white heat of zeal mingled with a rueful distrust of her own power to hold herself to the continuous pursuit of her ideal. Millard, perceiving that she dreaded to be invited again, refrained from offering to take her to the theater. He waited several weeks, and then ventured, with some hesitation, to ask her to go with him to see one of the Wagner operas. He was frightened at his own boldness in asking, and he kept his eyes upon the ferule of his cane with which he was tapping the toe of his boot, afraid to look up while she answered. She saw how timidly he asked, and her heart was cruelly wounded by the necessity she felt to refuse; but she had fortified herself to resist just such a temptation. [Pg 192]

"I'd rather not go, Charley," she said slowly, in accents so pleading and so full of pain that Millard felt remorse that he should have suggested such a thing.

But this traveling on divergent lines could not but have its effect upon them. He was too well-mannered, she was too good, both were too affectionate, for them to quarrel easily. But there took place something that could hardly be called estrangement; it was rather what a Frenchman might, with a refinement not possible in our idiom, call an *éloignement*. In spite of their exertions to come together, they drew apart. This process was interrupted by seasons of renewed tenderness. But Phillida's zeal, favored by Mrs. Frankland's meetings, held her back from those pursuits into which Millard would have drawn her, and only a general interest in her altruistic

aims was possible to him. Again and again he made some exertion to enter into her pursuits, but he could never get any farther than he could go by the aid of his check-book. Once or twice she went with him to some public entertainment, but those social pursuits to which he was habituated she avoided as dissipations. Thus they loved each other, but it is pitiful to love as they did, while unable to conceal from themselves that a gulf lay between the main tastes and pursuits of the one and the other.

XVI. A SÉANCE AT MRS. VAN HORNE'S.

The Bible reader was no polemic. People of every sect were gathered under the wings of her sympathies. In vain dogmatic advisers warned her against Unitarians who believe too little, and Swedenborgians who believe too much. Mrs. Frankland's organ of judgment lay in her affections and emotions, and those who felt as she felt were accepted without contradiction, or, as she put it, mostly in Scripture phrase, which she delivered in a rich orotund voice: "Let us receive him that is weak in the faith, but not to doubtful disputation."

A certain sort of combativeness she had, but it was combativeness with the edge taken off. It served to direct her choice of topics, but not to give asperity or polemical form to her discourses. Suddenly introduced to the very heart of Vanity Fair, she had caught her first inspiration by opposition, and this led her to hold forth on such themes as consecration. But as her acquaintance with people of wealth extended she found that even they, conservative by very force of abundance, were affected by the unbelieving spirit of a critical age. The very prosperous are partly under shelter from the prevailing intellectual currents of their time. Those whose attention is engrossed by things are in so far shut out from the appeal of ideas. But thought is very penetrating; it will reach by conduction what it can not attain by radiation. An intellectual movement touches the highest and the lowest with difficulty, but it does at length affect in a measure even those whose minds are narcotized by abundance as well as those whose brains are fagged by too much toil and care. When Mrs. Frankland became aware that there was unbelief, latent and developed, among her hearers, the prow of her oratory veered around, and faith became now, as consecration had been before, the pole-star toward which this earnest and clever woman aimed. With such a mind as hers the topic under consideration becomes for the time supreme. Solemnly insisting on a renunciation of all possibility of merit as a condition precedent to faith, she proceeded to exalt belief itself into the most meritorious of acts. This sort of paradox is common to all popular religious teachers.

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Mrs. Frankland's new line of talk about the glories of faith had a disadvantage for Phillida in that it also fell in with a tendency of her nature and with the habits nourished in her by her father. Millard thought he had reached the depths of her life in coming to know about her work among the poor, but a woman's motives are apt to be more involved than a man imagines or than she can herself quite understand. Below the philanthropic Phillida lay the devout Phillida, who believed profoundly that in her devotions she was able to touch hands with the ever-living God himself. Under the stimulus of Mrs. Frankland's words this belief became so absorbing that the common interests of life became to her remote and almost unreal. Her work in the Mission was more and more her life, and perhaps the necessity for accommodating herself a little to the habits and tastes of a lover was her main preservative from a tendency to degenerate into a devotee.

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While Mrs. Frankland aroused others, her eloquence also influenced the orator herself. Advocacy increased the force of conviction, and the growing intensity of conviction in turn reinforced the earnestness of advocacy. Irreverent people applied an old joke and called her "the apostle to the genteels," and in the region to which she seemed commissioned the warmth of her zeal was not likely to work harm. What effect it had was in the main good. But the material in her hands was only combustible in a slow way; the plutocratic conscience is rarely inflammable—for the most part it smolders like punk. Nor was Mrs. Frankland herself in any danger of being carried by her enthusiasms into fanaticism of action. However her utterances might savor of ultraism, she was conservative enough in practical matters to keep a sort of "Truce of God" with the world as she found it.

But to Phillida, susceptible as a saint on the road to beatification, the gradually augmented fervor

of Mrs. Frankland's declamation worked evil. It was especially painful to Agatha that her sister was propelled by this influence farther and farther out of the safe lines of commonplace feeling and action, and that every wind from Mrs. Frankland's quarter of the heavens tended to drift her farther and farther away from her lover. Agatha's indignation broke out into all sorts of talk against Mrs. Frankland, whom she did not scruple to denounce for a Pharisee, binding heavy burdens on the back of poor Phillida, but never touching them with her own little finger. [Pg 196]

Mrs. Frankland's discourses on faith reached their zenith on a January day, when the carriage wheels that rolled in front of Mrs. Van Horne's made a ringing almost like the breaking of glass in the hard frozen snow of the streets, and when the luxurious comfort within the house was the more deliciously appreciable from the deadly frostiness of the bone-piercing wind without. Only Phillida of all the throng found her comfort disturbed by remembering the coachmen who returned for their mistresses before the end of the discourse. It cost those poor fellows a pang to do despite to their wonted dignity of demeanor by smiting their arms against their bodies to keep from perishing. But even a coachman accustomed to regard himself as the main representative of the unbending perpendicularity of a ten-million family must give way a little before a January north wind in the middle of a cold wave, when his little fur cape becomes a mockery and his hard high hat a misery. However admirable Mrs. Frankland's prolonged sessions may have seemed to the ladies with tear-stained cheeks within the house, it appeared far from laudable as seen from the angle of a coachman's box.

The address on this day followed a reading of the eleventh chapter of Hebrews, which is itself the rhapsody of an eloquent man upon faith. If this were written, as some suppose, by Apollos, the orator of the early Church, one may almost fancy that he reads here a bit of one of those addresses wherein speaker and hearer are lifted up together above the meanness and exigencies of mere realism. Mrs. Frankland accompanied the reading of this summary of faith's victory by a comment consisting largely of modern instances carefully selected and told with the tact of a *raconteur*, so as to leave the maximum impression of each incident unimpaired by needless details. Some of these stories were little short of miraculous; but they were dignified by the manner of telling, which never for an instant degenerated into the babble of a mere wonder-monger. [Pg 197]

As usual, Mrs. Frankland, or the oratorical part of her, which was quite the majority of her mind, was carried away by the force of her own speech, and in lauding the success of faith it seemed to her most praiseworthy to push her eulogies unfalteringly to the extreme. You are not to understand that by doing this she vociferated or indulged in vehement gesture. He is only a bastard orator who fancies that loudness and shrillness of tone can enforce conviction. When Mrs. Frankland felt herself about to say extravagant things she intuitively set off her transcendent utterances by assuming a calm demeanor and the air of one who expresses with judicial deliberation the most assured and long-meditated conclusions. So to-day she closed her little Oxford Bible and laid it on the richly inlaid table before her, deliberately depositing her handkerchief upon it and looking about before she made her peroration, which was in something like the following words, delivered with impressive solemnity in a deep, rich voice: [Pg 198]

"Why should we always praise faith for what it *has* done? Has God changed? Faith is as powerful to-day as ever it was since this old world began. If the sick are not healed, if the dead are not raised to-day, be sure it is not God's fault. I am asked if I believe in faith-cure. There is the Bible. It abounds in the divine healing. Nowhere are we told that faith shall some day cease to work wonders. The arm of the Lord is not shortened. O ye of little faith! the victory is within your reach, if you will but rise and seize upon it. I see a vision of a new Church yet to come that shall believe, and, believing as those of old believed, shall see wonders such as the faithful of old saw. The sick shall be healed; women shall receive their dead raised to life again. Why not now? Rise up, O believing heart, and take the Lord at his word!"

Perhaps Mrs. Frankland did not intend that declamation should be accepted at its face value; certainly she did not expect it.

After a hymn, beautifully and touchingly sung, and a brief prayer, ladies put on their sealskin sacques, thrust their jeweled hands into their muffs, and went out to beckon their impatient coachmen, and to carry home with them the solemn impressions made by the discourse, which were in most cases too vague to produce other than a sentimental result. Yet one may not scatter fire with safety unless he can be sure there are no dangerous combustibles within reach. The harm of credulity is that it is liable to set a great flame a-going whenever it reaches that which will burn. A belief in witches is comparatively innocuous until it finds favorable conditions, as at Salem a couple of centuries ago, but, in favorable conditions, the idle speculations of a pedant, or the chimney-corner chatter of old women, may suddenly become as destructive as a pestilence. [Pg 199]

It was in the sincere and susceptible soul of Phillida that Mrs. Frankland's words had their full effect. The lust after perfection—the realest peril of great souls—was hers, and she was stung and humiliated by Mrs. Frankland's rebuke to her lack of faith, for the words so impressively spoken seemed to her like a divine message. The whole catalogue of worthies in the eleventh of Hebrews rose up to reprove her.

"I suppose Mrs. Frankland's been talking some more of her stuff," said Agatha at the dinner that evening. "I declare, Phillida, you're a victim of that woman. She isn't so bad. She doesn't mean what she says to be taken as she says it. People always make allowances for mere preaching, you know. But you just swallow it all, and then you get to be so poky a body has no comfort in life. There, now, I didn't mean to hurt your feelings," she added, as she saw the effort her sister was making at self-control.

Phillida lay awake that night long after the normal Agatha, with never an aspiration of the lofty sort, slept the blessed sleep of the heedless. And while the feeble glow of the banked-down fire in the grate draped the objects in the room with grotesque shadows, she went over again the bead-roll of faith in the eleventh of Hebrews and heard again the response of her conscience to the solemn appeal of Mrs. Frankland, and prayed for an increase of faith, and went to sleep at last reflecting on the faith like a germinant mustard grain that should upheave the very mountains and cast them into the midst of the sea.

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XVII. A FAITH CURE.

The next day the cold wave had begun to let go a little, and there were omens of a coming storm. The forenoon Phillida gave to domestic industry of one sort and another, but in the afternoon she put on her overshoes against icy pavements, and set out for a visit to Wilhelmina Schulenberg, remembering how lonesome the invalid must be in wintry weather. There were few loiterers on the sidewalks on such a day, but Phillida was pretty sure of a recognition from somebody by the time she reached Avenue A, for her sympathetic kindness had made friends for her beyond those with whom she came into immediate contact as a Sunday-school teacher.

"O Miss Callender," said a thinly clad girl of thirteen, with chattering teeth, and arms folded against her body for warmth, rocking from one foot to the other, as she stood in the door of a tenement house, "this is hard weather for poor folks, ain't it?" And then, unable longer to face the penetrating rawness of the east wind, she turned and ran up the stairs.

Phillida's meditations as she walked were occupied with what Mrs. Frankland had said the day before. She reflected that if she herself only possessed the necessary faith she might bring healing to many suffering people. Why not to Wilhelmina? With this thought there came a drawing back—that instinctive resistance of human nature to anything out of the conventional and mediocre; a resistance that in a time of excitement often saves us from absurdity at the expense of reducing us to commonplace. But in Phillida this conservatism was counteracted by a quick imagination in alliance with a passion for moral excellence, both warmed by the fire of youth; and in all ventures youth counts for much.

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"Dat is coot; you gomes to see Mina wunst more already," said Mrs. Schulenberg, whom Phillida encountered on the second flight of stairs, descending with a market-basket on her arm. She was not the strong-framed peasant, but of lighter build and somewhat finer fiber than the average immigrant, and her dark hair and eyes seemed to point to South Germany as her place of origin.

"Wilhelmina she so badly veels to-day," added Mrs. Schulenberg. "I don' know"—and she shook her head ominously—"I vas mos' afraid to leef her all py herself already. She is with bein' zick zo tired. She dalk dreadful dis mornin' already; I don' know." And the mother went on down the stairs shaking her head dolefully, while Phillida climbed up to the Schulenberg apartment and entered without knocking, going straight over to the couch where the emaciated girl lay, and kissing her.

Wilhelmina embraced her while Phillida pushed back the hair from the pale, hard forehead with something like a shudder, for it was only skin and skull. In the presence of sympathy

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Wilhelmina's mood of melancholy desperation relaxed, and she began to shed tears.

"O Miss Callender, you have from black thoughts saved me to-day," she said in a sobbing voice, speaking with a slight German accent. "If I could only die. Here I drag down the whole family already. I make them sorry. Poor Rudolph, he might be somebody if away off he would go wunst; but no, he will not leave me. It is such a nice girl he love; I can see that he love her. But he will say nothing at all. He feels so he must not anyway leave his poor sister; and I hate myself and my life that for all my family is unfortunate. Black thoughts will come. If, now, I was only dead; if I could only find some way myself to put out of the way wunst, for Rudolph it would be better, and after a while the house would not any more so sorry be. Last night I thought much about it; but when falling asleep I saw you plain come in the door and shake your head, and I say, Miss Callender think it wicked. She will not let me. But I am so wicked and unfortunate."

Here the frail form was shaken by hysterical weeping that cut off speech. Phillida shed tears also, and one of them dropped on the emaciated hand of Wilhelmina. Phillida quickly wiped it away with her handkerchief, but another took its place.

"Let it be, Miss Callender," sobbed Wilhelmina; "it will surely make me not so wicked."

She looked up wistfully at Phillida and essayed to speak; then she turned her eyes away, while she said:

"If now, Miss Callender, you would—but may be you will think that it is wicked also."

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"Speak freely, dear," said Phillida, softly; "it will do you good to tell me all—all that is in your heart."

"If you would only pray that I might die, then it would be granted already, maybe. I am such a curse, a dreadful curse, to this house."

"No, no; you mustn't say that. Your sickness is a great misfortune to your family, but it is not your fault. It is a greater misfortune to you. Why should you pray to die? Why not pray to get well?"

"That is too hard, Miss Callender. If now I had but a little while been sick. But I am so long. I can not ever get well. Oh, the medicines I have took, the pills and the sarsaparillas and the medicine of the German doctor! And then the American doctor he burnt my back. No; I can't get well any more. It is better as I die. Pray that I die. Will you not?"

"But if God can make you die he can make you well. One is no harder than the other for him."

"No, no; not if I was but a little while sick. But you see it is years since I was sick."

This illogical ground of skepticism Phillida set herself to combat. She read from Wilhelmina's sheepskin-bound Testament, printed in parallel columns in English and German, the story of the miracle at the Pool of Bethesda, the story of the woman that touched the hem of the garment of Jesus, and of other cures told in the New Testament with a pathos and dignity not to be found in similar modern recitals.

Then Phillida, her soul full of hope, talked to Mina of the power of faith, going over the ground traversed by Mrs. Frankland. She read the eleventh of Hebrews, and her face was transformed by the earnestness of her own belief as she advanced. Call it mesmerism, or what you will, she achieved this by degrees, that Wilhelmina thought as she thought, and felt as she felt. The poor girl with shaken nerves and enfeebled vitality saw a vision of health. She watched Phillida closely, and listened eagerly to her words, for to her they were words of life.

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"Now, Mina, if you believe, if you have faith as a grain of mustard seed, all things are possible."

The girl closed her eyes a moment, then she opened them with her face radiant.

"Miss Callender, I do believe."

Already her face was changing under the powerful influence of the newly awakened hope. She folded her hands peacefully, and closed her eyes, whispering:

"Pray, Miss Callender; pray!"

Phillida laid down the Bible and solemnly knelt by the invalid, taking hold of one of her hands. It would have been impossible to listen to the prayer of one so passionately sincere and so believingly devout without falling into sympathy with it. To the bed-ridden and long-despairing Wilhelmina it made God seem something other than she had ever thought him. An hour before

she could have believed that God might be persuaded to take her life in answer to prayer, but not that he could be brought to restore her. The moment that Phillida began to pray, a new God [Pg 206] appeared to her mind—Phillida's God. Wilhelmina followed the action of Phillida's mind as a hypnotized subject does that of the dominant agent: as Phillida believed, so she believed; Phillida's confidence became hers, and the weak nerves tingled all the way from the nerve-centers with new life.

"Now, Wilhelmina," said Phillida at length, slowly rising from her knees and looking steadily into the invalid's eyes, "the good Lord will make you whole. Rise up and sit upon the bed, believing with all your heart."

In a sort of ecstasy the invalid set to work to obey. There was a hideous trick of legerdemain in the last generation, by which an encoffined skeleton was made to struggle to its feet. Something like this took place as Mina's feeble arms were brought into the most violent effort to assist her to rise. But a powerful emotion, a tremendous hope, stimulated the languid nerves; the almost disused muscles were galvanized into power; and Wilhelmina succeeded at length in sitting upright without support for the first time in years. When she perceived this actually accomplished she cried out: "O God! I am getting well!"

Wilhelmina's mother had come to the top of the stairs just as Phillida had begun to pray. She paused without the door and listened to the prayer and to what followed. She now burst into the room to see her daughter sitting up on the side of her couch; and then there were embraces and tears, and ejaculations of praise to God in German and in broken English.

"Sit there, Mina, and believe with all your heart," said Phillida, who was exteriorly the calmest of [Pg 207] the three; "I will come back soon."

Wilhelmina did as she was bidden. The shock of excitement thus prolonged was overcoming the sluggishness of her nerves. The mother could not refrain from calling in a neighbor who was passing by the open door, and the news of Mina's partial restoration spread through the building. When Phillida got back from the Diet Kitchen with some savory food, the doorway was blocked; but the people stood out of her way with as much awe as they would had she worn an aureole, and she passed in and put the food before Wilhelmina, who ate with a relish she hardly remembered to have known before. The spectators dropped back into the passageway, and Phillida gently closed the door.

"Now, Wilhelmina, lie down and rest. To-morrow you will walk a little. Keep on believing with all your heart."

Having seen the patient, who was fatigued with unwonted exertion, sleeping quietly, Phillida returned home. She said nothing of her experiences of the day, but Millard, who called in the evening, found her more abstracted and less satisfactory than ever. For her mind continually reverted to her patient.

XVIII. FAITH-DOCTOR AND LOVER.

The next day, though a great snow-storm had burst upon the city before noon, Phillida made haste after luncheon to work her way first to the Diet Kitchen and then to the Schulenberg tenement. When she got within the shelter of the doorway of the tenement house she was well-nigh exhausted, and it was half a minute before she could begin the arduous climbing of the stairs.

"I thought you would not come," said Wilhelmina with something like a cry of joy. "I have found it hard to keep on believing, but still I have believed and prayed. I was afraid if till to-morrow you waited the black thoughts would come back again. Do you think I can sit up wunst more already?"

"If you have faith; if you believe."

Under less excitement than that of the day before, Mina found it hard to get up; but at length she

succeeded. Then she ate the appetizing food that Phillida set before her. Meantime the mother, deeply affected, took her market-basket and went out, lest somehow her presence should be a drawback to her daughter's recovery.

While the feeble Wilhelmina was eating, Phillida drew the only fairly comfortable chair in the room near to the stove, and, taking from a bed some covering, she spread it over the back and seat of the chair. Then, when the meal was completed, she read from the Acts of the Apostles of the man healed at the gate of the temple by Simon Peter. With the book open in her hand, as she sat, she offered a brief fervent prayer. [Pg 209]

"Now, Wilhelmina, doubt nothing," she said. "In the name of Jesus of Nazareth, rise up and walk!"

The invalid had again caught the infection of Phillida's faith, and with a strong effort, helping herself by putting her hand on Phillida's shoulder, she brought herself at length to her feet, where she stood a moment, tottering as though about to fall.

"Walk to the chair, dear, nothing wavering," commanded Phillida, and Mina, with much trembling, let go of Phillida's shoulder, and with sadly unsteady steps tottered forward far enough to lay hold of the back of the chair, and at length succeeded, with much ado, in sitting down without assistance. For years she had believed herself forever beyond hope of taking a step. She leaned back against the pillow placed behind her by Phillida, and wept for very joy.

"But, Miss Callender," she said after a while, "the man you read about in the Bible was made all well at once, and he walked and leaped; but I—"

"Perhaps our faith isn't strong enough," said Phillida. "Maybe it is better for us that you should get well slowly, like the man that Jesus cured of blindness, who, when he first saw men, thought they looked like walking trees. Let us be thankful for what we have, and not complain." [Pg 210]

In a few weeks Wilhelmina's mental stimulation and graduated physical exercise had made her able to sit up nearly all day, to walk feebly about the house, and even to render some assistance in such affairs as could be attended to while sitting. The recovery, though it went no farther, was remarkable enough to attract much attention, and the fame of it spread far and wide among the people in the eastern avenues and those connected with the Mission.

This new development of Phillida's life increased her isolation. She could not speak to her family about her faith-cures, nor to Mrs. Hilbrough, and she did not like to confide even in Mrs. Frankland, who would, she felt sure, make too much of the matter. Most of all, it was not in her power to bring herself to say anything to Millard about it. The latter felt, during the three or four weeks that followed the treatment of Wilhelmina, that the veil between him and the inner life of Phillida was growing more opaque. He found no ground to quarrel with Phillida; she was cordial, affectionate, and dutiful toward him, but he felt, with a quickness of intuition characteristic of him, that there was some new cause of constraint between them.

"Phillida," he said one evening, a month after Phillida's work as a faith-doctor had begun, "I wish you would tell me more about your mission work."

"I don't like to speak of that," she replied. "It is too much like boasting of what I am doing." She had no sooner said this than she regretted it; her fierce conscience rose up and charged her with uncandid speech. But how could she be candid? [Pg 211]

"I don't like to think," said Millard, "that so large a part of your life—a part that lies so near to your heart—should be shut out from me. I can't do your kind of work. But I can admire it. Won't you tell me about it?"

Phillida felt a keen pang. Had it been a question of her ordinary work in the months that were past she might easily have spoken of it. But this faith-healing would be dangerous ground with Millard. She knew in her heart that it would be better to tell him frankly about it, and face the result. But with him there she could not get courage to bring on an immediate conflict between the affection that was so dear and the work that was so sacred to her.

"Charley," she said slowly, holding on to her left hand as though for safety, "I'm afraid I was not very—very candid in the answer I gave you just now."

"Oh, don't say anything, or tell me anything, dear, that gives you pain," he said with quick delicacy; "and something about this does pain you."

Phillida spoke now in a lower tone, looking down at her hands as she said, with evident effort:

"Because you are so good, I must try to be honest with you. There are reasons why I hesitate to tell—to tell—you all about what I am doing. At least this evening, though I know I ought to, and I will—I will—if you insist on it."

"No, dear; no. I will not hear it now."

"But I will tell you all some time. It's nothing *very* bad, Charley. At least I don't think it is."

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"It couldn't be, I'm sure. Nothing bad could exist about you"; and he took her hand in his. "Don't say any more to-night. You are nervous and tired. But some other time, when you feel like it, speak freely. It won't do for us not to open our hearts and lives to each other. If we fail to live openly and truthfully, our little boat will go ashore, Phillida dear—will be wrecked or stranded before we know it."

His voice was full of pleading. How could she refuse to tell him all? But by all the love she felt for him, sitting there in front of her, with his left hand on his knee, looking in her face, and speaking in such an honest, manly way, she was restrained from exposing to him a phase of her life that would seem folly to him while it was a very holy of holies to her. The alternative was cruel.

"Another time, Charley, I mean to tell you all," she said; and she knew when she said it that procrastination would not better the matter, and in the silence that ensued she was just about to change her resolve and unfold the whole matter at once.

But Millard said: "Don't trouble yourself. I'm sorry I have hurt you. Remember that I trust you implicitly. If you feel a delicacy in speaking to me about anything, let it go."

The conversation after this turned on indifferent matters; but it remained constrained, and Millard took his leave early.

XIX. PROOF POSITIVE.

The more Millard thought of the mysterious reserve of Phillida, the more he was disturbed by it, and the next Sunday but one he set out at an earlier hour than usual to go to Avenue C, not this time with a comfortable feeling that his visit would be a source of cheer to his aunt, but rather hoping that her quiet spirit might somehow relieve the soreness of his heart. It chanced that on this fine winter Sunday he found her alone, except for the one-year-old little girl.

"I let the children all go to Sunday-school," she said, "except baby, and father has gone to his meeting, you know."

"His meeting? I did not know that he had any," said Millard.

"W'y yes, Charley; I thought you knew. Henry always had peculiar views," she said, laughing gently, as was her wont, at her husband's oddities. "He has especially disliked preachers and doctors. Lately he has got the notion that the churches do not believe the Bible literally enough. There were two Swedes and one Swiss in his shop who agreed with him. From reading the Bible in their way and reading other books and papers they have adopted what is called Christian Science. They have found some other men and women who believe as they do, and a kind of a Christian Science woman doctor who talks to them a little—a good enough woman in her way, I suppose—and they think that by faith, or rather by declaring that there is no such thing as a real disease, and believing themselves well, they can cure all diseases."

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"All except old age and hunger?" queried Millard.

The aunt smiled, and went on. "But father and his woman doctor or preacher don't agree with your Miss Callender. They say her cures are all right as far as they go, but that she is only a babe, unable to take strong meat. The Christian Science woman in Fourteenth street, now, they say, knows all about it, and works her cures scientifically, and not blindly as Miss Callender does."

This allusion to cures by Phillida set Millard into a whirl of feeling. That she had been doing something calculated to make her the subject of talk brought a rush of indignant feeling, but all

his training as a man of society and as a man of business inclined him to a prudent silence under excitement. He turned his derby hat around and around, examining the crown by touch, and then, reversing it, he scrutinized the address of the hatter who did not make it. Though he had come all the way to Avenue C to make a confidante of his aunt, he now found it impossible to do so. She had rejoiced so much in his betrothal to her friend, how could he let her see how far apart he and Phillida had drifted? For some minutes he managed to talk with her about her own family matters, and then turned back to Phillida again. [Pg 215]

"Tell me, Aunt Hannah, all you know about Miss Callender's cures. I don't like to ask her because she and I disagree so widely on some things that we do not like to talk about them."

His aunt saw that Charley was profoundly disturbed. She therefore began with some caution, as treading on unknown ground, in talking with him about Phillida.

"I don't know what to think about these things, Charley. But in anything I say you must understand that I love Miss Callender almost as much as you do, and if anybody can cure by faith she can. In fact, she has had wonderful success in some cures. Besides, she's no money-maker, like the woman doctor in Fourteenth street, who takes pay for praying over you, and rubbing your head, maybe. You know about the cure of Wilhelmina Schulenberg, of course?"

"No; not fully. We haven't liked to talk about it. Wilhelmina is the poor creature that has been in bed so long."

This mere fencing was to cover the fact that Millard had not heard anything of the miracle in Wilhelmina's case. But seeing his aunt look at him inquiringly, he added:

"Is she quite cured, do you think—this Miss Schulenberg?"

"No; but she can sit up and walk about. She got better day after day under Miss Callender's praying, but lately, I think, she is at a standstill. Well, that was the first, and it made a great talk. And I don't see but that it is very remarkable. Everybody in the tenement house was wild about it, and Miss Callender soon came to be pointed at by the children on the street as 'the woman doctor that can make you well by praying over you.' Then there was the wife of the crockery-store man in Avenue A. She had hysterical fits, or something of the sort, and she got well after Miss Callender visited her three or four times. And another woman thought her arm was paralyzed, but Miss Callender made her believe, and she got so she could use it. But old Mr. Greenlander, the picture-frame maker in Twentieth street, didn't get any better. In fact, he never pretended to believe that he would." [Pg 216]

"What was the matter with him?" asked Millard, his lips compressed and his brows contracted.

"Oh, he had a cataract over his eye. He's gone up to the Eye and Ear Hospital to have it taken off. I don't suppose faith could be expected to remove that."

"It doesn't seem to work in surgical cases," said Millard.

"But several people with nervous troubles and kind of breakdowns have got better or got well, and naturally they are sounding the praises of Miss Callender's faith," added his aunt.

"Do you think Phillida likes all this talk about her?"

"No. This talk about her is like hot coals to her feet. She suffers dreadfully. She said last Sunday that she wondered if Christ did not shrink from the talk of the crowds that followed him more than he did from crucifixion itself. She is wonderful, and I don't wonder the people believe that she can work miracles. If anybody can in these days, she is the one." [Pg 217]

Millard said nothing for a time; he picked at the lining of his hat, and then put it down on the table and looked out of the window. His irritation against Phillida had by this time turned into affectionate pity for her self-imposed suffering—a pity rendered bitter by his inability to relieve her.

"Do you think that Phillida begins to suspect that perhaps she has made a mistake?" he asked after a while.

"No. I'm not so sure she has. No doctor cures in all cases, and even Christ couldn't heal the people in Nazareth who hadn't much faith."

"She will make herself a byword in the streets," said Millard in a tone that revealed to his aunt his shame and anguish.

"Charley," said Mrs. Martin, "don't let yourself worry too much about Miss Callender. She is young yet. She may be wrong or she may be right. I don't say but she goes too far. She's a house plant, you know. She has seen very little of the world. If she was like other girls she would just take up with the ways of other people and not make a stir. But she has set out to do what she thinks is right at all hazards. Presently she will get her lesson, and some of her oddities will disappear, but she'll never be just like common folks. Mind my words, Charley, she's got the making of a splendid woman if you'll only give her time to get ripe."

"I believe that with all my heart," said Millard, with a sigh.

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"I tell you, Charley, I do believe that her prayers have a great effect, for the Bible teaches that. Besides, she don't talk any of the nonsense of father's Christian Science woman. I can understand what Phillida's about. But Miss what's-her-name, in Fourteenth street, can't explain to save her life, so's you can understand, how she cures people, or what she's about, except to earn money in some way easier than hard work. There comes your uncle, loaded to the muzzle for a dispute," said Aunt Hannah, laughing mischievously as she heard her husband's step on the stairs.

Uncle Martin greeted Charley with zest. It was no fun to talk to his wife, who never could be drawn into a discussion, but held her husband's vagaries in check as far as possible by little touches of gentle ridicule. But Mr. Martin was sure that he could overwhelm Charley Millard, even though he might not convince him. So when he had said, "How-are-yeh, and glad to see yeh, Charley, and hope yer well, and how's things with you?" he sat down, and presently opened his battery.

"You see, Charley, our Miss Bowyer, the Christian Science healer, is well-posted about medicine and the Bible. She says that the world is just about to change. Sin and misery are at the bottom of sickness, and all are going to be done away with by spirit power. God and the angel world are rolling away the rock from the sepulchre, and the sleeping spirit of man is coming forth. People are getting more susceptible to magnetic and psy—psy-co-what-you-may-call-it influences. This is bringing out new diseases that the old doctors are only able to look at with dumb amazement."

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Here Uncle Martin turned his thumbs outward with a flourish, and the air of a lad who had solved a problem on a blackboard. At the same time he dropped his head forward and gazed at Charley, who was not even amused.

"What are her proofs?" demanded Millard, wearily.

"Proofs?" said Uncle Martin, with a sniff, as he reared his head again. "Proofs a plenty. You just come around and hear her explain once about the vermic—I can't say the word—the twistifying motion of the stomach and what happens when the nerve-force gets a set-back and this motion kind of winds itself upward instead of downward, and the nerve-force all flies to the head. Proofs?" Here Uncle Martin paused, ill at ease. "Just notice the cases. The proof is in the trying of it. The cures are wonderful. You first get the patient into a state where you can make him think as you do. Then you will that he shall forget all about his diseases. You make him feel well, and you've done it."

"I suppose you could cure him by forgetfulness easily enough. I saw an old soldier with one leg yesterday; he was drunk in the street. And he had forgotten entirely that one leg was gone. But he didn't seem to walk any better."

"That don't count, Charley, and you're only making fun. You see there is a philosophy in this, and you ought to hear it from somebody that can explain it."

"I'd like to find somebody who could," said Charley.

"Well, now, how's this? Miss Bowyer—she's a kind of a preacher as well as a doctor—she says that God is good, and therefore he couldn't create evil. You see? Well, now, God created everything that is, so there can not be any evil. At least it can't have any real, independent—what-you-may-call-it existence. You see, Charley?"

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"Yes; what of it?"

"Well, then, sickness and sin are evil. But this argument proves that they don't really exist at all. They're only magic-lantern shadows so to speak. You see? Convince the patient that he is well, and he *is* well." Here Uncle Martin, having pointed out the easy road to universal health, looked in solemn triumph from under his brows.

"Yes," said Millard, "that's just an awfully good scheme. But if you work your argument backward

it will prove that as evil exists there isn't any good God. But if it's true that sin and disease have no real existence, we'll do away with hanging and electrocution, as they call it, and just send for Miss Bowyer to convince a murderer that murder is an evil, and so it can't have any real independent existence in a universe made by a good God."

"Well, Charley, you make fun of serious things. You might as well make fun of the miracles in the Bible."

"Now," said Millard, "are the cures wrought by Christian Science miracles, or are they founded on philosophy?"

"They're both, Charley. It's what they call the psy-co-what-you-may-call-it mode of cure. But it's all the same as the miracles of the Bible," said Uncle Martin. [Pg 221]

"Oh, it is," said Millard, gayly, for this tilt had raised his spirits. "Now the miracles in the Bible are straight-out miracles. Nobody went around in that day to explain the vermicular motion of the stomach or the upward action of nerve-force, or the psychopathic value of animal magnetism. Some of the Bible miracles would stump a body to believe, if they were anywhere else but in the Bible; but you just believe in them as miracles by walking right straight up to them, looking the difficulty in the eye, and taking them as they are because you ought to." Here Charley saw his aunt laughing gently at his frank way of stating the processes of his own mind. Smiling in response, he added: "You believe them, or at least I do, because I can't have my religion without them. But your Christian psychopaths bring a lot of talk about a science, and they don't seem to know just whether God is working the miracle or they are doing it by magnetism, or mind-cure, or psychopathy, or whether the disease isn't a sort of plaguey humbug anyhow, and the patient a fool who has to be undeceived."

"W'y, you see, Charley, we know more nowadays, and we understand all about somnambulism and hyp-what-you-may-call-it, and we understand just how the miracles in the Bible were worked. God works by law—don't you see?"

"The apostles did not seem to understand it?" asked Charley.

"No; they were mere faith-doctors, like Miss Callender, for instance, doing their works in a blind sort of way." [Pg 222]

"The apostles will be mere rushlights when you get your Christian Science well a-going," said Charley, seriously. Then he rose to leave, having no heart to await the return of the children.

"Of course," said Uncle Martin, "the world is undergoing a change, Charley. A great change. Selfishness and disease shall vanish away, and the truth of science and Christianity prevail." Uncle Martin was now standing, and swinging his hands horizontally in outward gestures, with his elbows against his sides.

"Well, I wish to goodness there was some chance of realizing your hopes," said Charley, conciliatorily. "I must go. Good-by, Uncle Martin; good-by, Aunt Hannah."

Uncle Martin said good-by, and come again, Charley, and always glad to see you, you know, and good luck to you. And Millard went down the stairs and bent his steps homeward. As the exhilaration produced by his baiting of Uncle Martin's philosophy died away, his heart sank with sorrowful thoughts of Phillida and her sufferings, and with indignant and mortifying thoughts of how she would inevitably be associated in people's minds with mercenary quacks and disciples of a sham science.

He would go to see her at once. The defeat of Uncle Martin had given him courage. He would turn the same battery on Phillida. No; not the same. He could not ridicule her. She was never quite ridiculous. Her plane of motive was so high that his banter would be a desecration. It was not in his heart to add to the asperity of her martyrdom by any light words. But perhaps he could find some way to bring her to a more reasonable course. [Pg 223]

It was distinctly out of his way to cross Tompkins Square again, but in his present mood there was a satisfaction to him in taking a turn through the square, which was associated in his mind with a time when his dawning affection for Phillida was dimmed by no clouds of separation. Excitement pushed him forward, and a fine figure he was as he strode along with eager and elastic steps, his head erect and his little cane balanced in his fingers. In the middle of the square his meditation was cut short in a way most unwelcome in his present frame of mind.

"It is Mr. Millard, isn't it?" he heard some one say, and, turning, he saw before him Wilhelmina

Schulenberg, not now seated helpless in the chair he had given her, but hanging on the arm of her faithful Rudolph.

"How do you do, Miss Schulenberg?" said Millard, examining her with curiosity.

"You see I am able to walk wunst again," she said. "It is to Miss Callender and her prayers that I owe it already."

"But you are not quite strong," said Millard. "Do you get better?"

"Not so much now. It is my faith is weak. If I only could believe already, it would all to me be possible, Mr. Millard. But it is something to walk on my feet, isn't it, Mr. Millard?"

"Indeed it is, Miss Schulenberg. It must make your good brother glad."

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Rudolph received this polite indirect compliment a little foolishly, but appreciation from a fine gentleman did him good, and after Charley had gone he was profuse in his praises of "Miss Callender's man," as he called him.

XX. DIVISIONS.

Millard went no farther through the square, but turned toward Tenth street, and through that to Second Avenue, and so uptownward. But how should he argue with Phillida? He had seen an indisputable example of the virtue of her prayers. Though he could not believe in the miraculous character of the cure, how should he explain it? That Wilhelmina had been shamming was incredible, that her ailments were not imaginary was proven by the fact of her recovery being but partial. To deny the abstract possibility of such a cure seemed illogical from his own standpoint. Even the tepid rector of St. Matthias had occasionally homilized in a vague way about the efficacy of faith and the power of prayer, but the rector seemed to think that this potency was for the most part a matter of ancient history, for his illustrations were rarely drawn from anything more modern than the lives of the Church fathers, and of the female relatives of the Church fathers, such as Saint Monica. Millard could not see any ground on which he could deny the reality of the miracle in the Schulenberg case, but his common sense was that of a man of worldly experience, a common sense which stubbornly refuses to believe the phenomenal or extraordinary, even when unable to formulate a single reason for incredulity.

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After an internal debate he decided not to call on Phillida this afternoon. It might lead to a scene, a scene might bring on a catastrophe. But, as fortune would have it, Phillida was on her return from the Mission, and her path coincided with his, so that he encountered her in Tenth street. He walked home with her, asking after her health and talking commonplaces to escape conversation. He went in—there was no easy way to avoid it, had he desired. She set him a chair, and drew up the shades, and then took a seat near him.

"I've been at Aunt Martin's to-day," he said.

"Have you?" she asked with a sort of trepidation in her voice.

"Yes." Then after a pause he edged up to what he wished to say by adding: "I had a curious talk with Uncle Martin, who has got his head full of the greatest jumble of scientific terms which he can not remember, and nonsense about what he calls Christian Science. He says he learned it from Miss Bowyer, a Christian Science talker. Do you know her?"

"No; I have only heard of her from Mr. Martin, and I don't think I ought to judge her by what is reported of her teaching. Maybe it is not so bad. One doesn't like to be judged at second-hand," she said, looking at him with a quick glance.

"Especially when Uncle Martin is the reporter," he replied.

Meantime Phillida's eyes were inquiring whether he had heard anything about her present course of action.

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"I saw Wilhelmina Schulenberg in Tompkins Square to-day," he said, still approaching the inevitable, sidewise.

"Did you?" she asked almost in a whisper. "Was she walking?"

"Yes. Why did you not tell me she was better?"

Phillida looked down. At this moment her reserve with her lover in a matter so personal to herself seemed to her extremely reprehensible.

"I—I was a coward, Charley," she said with a kind of ferocity of remorse. This self-accusation on her part made him unhappy.

"You?" he said. "You are no coward. You are a brave woman." He leaned over and lightly kissed her cheek as he finished speaking.

"I knew that my course would seem foolish to you, and I couldn't bear that you should know. I was afraid it would mortify you."

"You have suffered much yourself, my dear."

She nodded her head, the tears brimming in her eyes at this unexpected sign of sympathy.

"And borne it bravely all alone. And all for a mistake—a cruel mistake."

Millard had not meant to say so much, but his feelings had slipped away from him. However, he softened his words by his action, for he drew out his handkerchief and gently wiped away a tear that had paused a moment in its descent down her cheek.

"How can you say it is a mistake?" she asked. "You saw Wilhelmina yourself."

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"Yes; but it is all a misunderstanding, dear. It's all wrong, I tell you. You haven't seen much of life, and you'll be better able to judge when you are older." Here he paused, for of arguments he had none to offer.

"I don't want to see anything of life if a knowledge of the world is to rob me of what is more precious than life itself." Her voice was now firm and resolute, and her tears had ceased.

Millard was angry at he knew not what—at whatever thing human or supernal had bound this burden of misbelief upon so noble a soul as Phillida's. He got up and paced the floor a moment, and then looked out of the window, saying from time to time in response to deprecatory or defensive words of hers, "I tell you, dear, it's a cruel mistake." Now and then he felt an impulse to scold Phillida herself; but his affectionate pity held him back. His irritation had the satisfaction of finding an object on which to vent itself at length when Phillida said:

"If Mrs. Frankland would admit men to her readings, Charley, I'm sure that if you could only hear her explain the Bible—"

"No, thank you," said Millard, tartly. "Mrs. Frankland is eloquent, but she has imposed on you and done you a great deal of harm. Why, Phillida, you are as much superior to that woman as the sky is—" He was about to say, "as the sky is to a mud-puddle," but nothing is so fatal to offhand vigor of denunciation as the confirmed habit of properness. Millard's preference for measured and refined speech got the better of his wrath barely in time, and, after arresting himself a moment, he finished the sentence with more justness as he made a little wave with his right hand—"as the sky is to a scene-painter's illusion."

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Then he went on: "But Mrs. Frankland is persuasive and eloquent, and you are too sincere to make allowance for the dash of exaggeration in her words. You won't find her at a mission in Mackerelville. She is dressed in purple by presents from the people who hear her, and Mrs. Hilbrough tells me that Mrs. Benthuisen has just given her a check of a thousand dollars to go to Europe with."

"Why shouldn't they do such things for her? They hardly know what to do with their money, and they ought to be grateful to her," said Phillida with heat. "Charley, I don't like to have you talk so about so good a woman. I know her and love her. You don't know her, and your words seem to me harsh and unjust."

"Well, then forgive me, dear. I forgot that she is your friend. That's the best thing I ever knew about her."

Saying this, he put on his hat and went out lest he should give way again to his now rising indignation against Mrs. Frankland, who, as the real author of Phillida's trouble, in his judgment deserved severer words than he had yet applied to her. But when he had opened the front door he turned back suddenly, distressed that his call had only added to the troubles of Phillida. She sat there, immovable, where he had left her; he crossed the room, bent over her, and kissed her cheek. [Pg 230]

"Forgive me, darling; I spoke hastily."

This tenderness overcame Phillida, and she fell to weeping. When she raised her head a moment later Charley had gone, and the full confession she had intended must be deferred.

To a man who has accepted as a divine authority all the conventions of society, hardly anything that could befall a young woman would be more dreadful than to become a subject of notoriety. His present interview with Phillida had thoroughly aroused Millard, and he was resolved to save her from herself by any means within his reach. Again the alternative of an early marriage presented itself. He might hasten the wedding, and then take Phillida to Europe, where the sight of a religious life quite different from her own would tend to widen her views and weaken the ardor of her enthusiasm. He wondered what would be the effect upon her, for instance, of the stack of crutches built up in monumental fashion in one of the chapels of the Church of St. Germain des Près at Paris—the offerings of cripples restored by a Roman Catholic faith-cure. But he reflected that the wedding could be hardly got ready before Lent, and a marriage in Lent was repugnant to him not only as a Churchman but even more as a man known for sworn fealty to the canons of fashionable society, which are more inexorable than ecclesiastical usages, since there is no one high and mighty enough to grant a dispensation from them. It had long been understood that the wedding should take place some time after Easter, and it seemed best not to disturb that arrangement. What he wanted now was some means of checking the mortifying career of Phillida as a faith-doctor. [Pg 231]

XXI. MRS. HILBROUGH'S INFORMATION.

Casting about in his thoughts for an ally, he hit upon Mrs. Hilbrough. In her he would find an old friend of Phillida's who was pretty sure to be free from brain-fogs. He quickly took a resolution to see her. It was too late in the afternoon to walk uptown. On a fine Sunday like this the street cars would not have strap-room left, and the elevated trains would be in a state of extreme compression long before they reached Fourteenth street. He took the best-looking cab he could find in Union Square as the least of inconveniences; and just as the slant sun, descending upon the Jersey lowlands, had set all the windows on the uptown side of the cross streets in a ruddy glow, he alighted at the Hilbrough door, paid his cabman a full day's wages, after the manner of New York, and sent up his card to Mrs. Hilbrough with a message that he hoped it would not incommode her to see him, since he had some inquiries to make. Mrs. Hilbrough descended promptly, and there took place the usual preliminary parley on the subject of the fine day, a parley carried on by Millard with as little knowledge of what he was saying as a phonographic doll has. Then begging her pardon for disturbing her on Sunday afternoon, he asked: [Pg 233]

"Have you heard anything about Miss Callender's course as a faith-healer?"

Mrs. Hilbrough took a moment to think before replying. Here was a direct, even abrupt, approach to a matter of delicacy. There was a complete lack of the diplomatic obliquity to be expected in such a case. This was not like Millard, and though his exterior was calm and suave enough from mere force of habit, she quickly formed an opinion of his condition of internal ebullition from his precipitancy.

"I did not hear anything about it until Thursday, two weeks ago, and I learned certainly about it only yesterday," she replied, resting as non-committal as possible until the drift of Millard's inquiry should be disclosed.

"May I ask from whom?" He was now sitting bolt upright, and his words were uttered without any of that pleasing deference of manner that usually characterized his speech.

"From Mrs. Maginnis—Mrs. California Maginnis," she added for the sake of explicitness and with an impulse to relax the tension of Millard's mind by playfulness.

"Mrs. Maginnis?" he said with something like a start. "How does Mrs. Maginnis know anything about what takes place in Mackerelville?"

"It wasn't the Mackerelville case, but one a good deal nearer home, that she was interested in," said Mrs. Hilbrough. "It's too warm here," she added, seeing him wipe his brow with his handkerchief. She put her hand to the bell, but withdrew it without ringing, and then crossed the room and closed the register. [Pg 234]

Millard proceeded in a straightforward, businesslike voice, "Tell me, please, what Mrs. Maginnis had to do with Miss Callender's faith-cures?"

"Her relation to them came about through Mrs. Frankland."

"No doubt," said Millard; "I expected to find her clever hand in it."

The mordant tone in which this was said disconcerted Mrs. Hilbrough. She felt that she was in danger of becoming an accomplice in a lovers' quarrel that might prove disastrous to the pretty romance that had begun in her own house. She paused and said:

"I beg pardon, Mr. Millard, but I ought hardly to discuss this with you, if you make it a matter of feeling between you and Phillida. She is my friend—"

"Mrs. Hilbrough," he interrupted, taking a softer tone than before, and leaning forward and resting his left hand on his knee, and again wiping his forehead with his handkerchief, "my whole destiny is involved in the welfare of Phillida Callender. I haven't quarreled with her, but I should like to show her that this faith-curing is a mistake and likely to make her ridiculous. You said that Mrs. Frankland—"

"Mrs. Frankland," said Mrs. Hilbrough, "through somebody connected with the Mackerelville Mission got hold of the story of the cure of a poor German girl somewhere down about what they call Tompkins Square. Is that the name of a square? Well, on Thursday, two weeks ago, when Phillida was not present, Mrs. Frankland told this story—" [Pg 235]

"Trotted it out as a fine illustration of faith," broke in Millard, with something between a smile and a sneer, adding, "with Phillida's name attached."

"No, she didn't give the name; she spoke of her as a noble Christian young woman, the daughter of a devoted missionary to the heathen, which made me suspect Phillida. She also alluded to her as a person accustomed to attend these meetings, and again as 'my very dear friend,' and 'my beloved young friend.' Mrs. Maginnis listened eagerly, and longed to know who this was, for she had a little girl troubled with Saint Vitus's dance. She had just been to see Dr. Legammon, the specialist."

"Who always begins his treatment by scaring a patient half to death, I believe, especially if the patient has money," said Millard, who, in his present biting mood, found a grim satisfaction even in snapping at Dr. Legammon's heels.

"He told Mrs. Maginnis that it was an aggravated case of chorea, and that severe treatment would be necessary," continued Mrs. Hilbrough. "There must be eyeglasses, and an operation by an oculist, and perhaps electricity, and it would require nearly a year to cure the child even under Dr. Legammon; and he didn't even give her much assurance that her child would get well at all. He especially excited Mrs. Maginnis's apprehension by saying, 'We must be hopeful, my dear madam.' Mrs. Maginnis, you know, is strung away up above concert-pitch, and this melancholy encouragement threw her into despair, and came near to making her a fit patient for the doctor's specialistic attentions in a private retreat. She couldn't bring herself to have the eyes operated on, or even to have electricity applied. It was just after this first visit to the doctor, while Mrs. Maginnis was in despondency and her usual indecision, that she heard Mrs. Frankland's address in which the cure of the poor girl in the tenement-house was told as an illustration of the power of prayer." [Pg 236]

"Mrs. Frankland worked up all the details with striking effect, no doubt," said Millard, with an expression of disgust.

"Well, you know Mrs. Frankland can't help being eloquent. Everybody present was deeply affected as she pictured the scene. As soon as the meeting closed, Mrs. Maginnis, all in a sputter

of excitement, I fancy, sailed up to Mrs. Frankland, and laid her troubles before her, and wondered if Mrs. Frankland couldn't get her young friend to pray for her daughter Hilda. Phillida, by solicitation of Mrs. Frankland, visited the Maginnises every day for a week. They sent their carriage for her every afternoon, I believe. At the end of a week 'the motions disappeared,' as Mrs. Maginnis expressed it."

"I believe it isn't uncommon for children to get well of Saint Vitus's dance," said Millard.

"You couldn't make Mrs. Maginnis believe that. She regards it as one of the most remarkable cures of a wholly incurable ailment ever heard of. The day after Phillida's last visit she sent her a [Pg 237] check for three hundred dollars for her services."

"Sent her money?" said Millard, reddening, and contracting his brows. "Did Phillida take it?" This last was spoken in a low-keyed monotone.

"Hasn't she told you a word about it?"

"Not a word," said Millard, with eyes cast down.

"She sent back the check by the next postman, saying merely that it was 'respectfully declined.'"

"And Mrs. Maginnis?" asked Millard, his face lighting up.

"Didn't understand," said Mrs. Hilbrough. "These brutally rich people think that cash will pay for everything, you know. Mrs. Maginnis concluded that she had offered too little."

"It was little enough," said Millard, "considering her wealth and the nature of the service she believed to have been rendered to her child."

"She thought so herself, on reflection," said Mrs. Hilbrough. "She also had grace enough to remember that she might have been a little more delicate in her way of tendering the money. She likes to do things royally, so she dispatched her footman to Mrs. Callender with a note inclosing a check for a thousand dollars, asking the mother to use it for the benefit of her daughter. Mrs. Callender took the check to Mrs. Gouverneur, and asked her, as having some acquaintance with Mrs. Maginnis, to explain that Phillida could not accept any pay for religious services or neighborly kindness. Mrs. Gouverneur"—here Mrs. Hilbrough smiled—"saw the ghosts of her [Pg 238] grandfathers looking on, I suppose. She couched her note to Mrs. Maginnis in rather chilling terms, and Mrs. Maginnis understood at last that she had probably given offense. She went to Mrs. Frankland, who referred her to me, as Phillida's friend, and she called here yesterday in a flutter of hysterical importance to get me to apologize, and to ask me what she *could* do."

Millard was almost amused at this turn in the affair, but his smile had a tang of bitterness.

"She explained that she had not understood that Miss Callender was that kind of person," said Mrs. Hilbrough. "She had always supposed that ministers and missionaries and their families expected presents. When she was a little girl her father used to send a whole hog to each minister in the village every fall when he killed his pigs. But it seemed Miss Callender and her mother held themselves above presents. Were they 'people of wealth'? That is her favorite phrase. I told her that they were one of the best old families in the city, without much property but with a great deal of pride, and that they were very admirable people. 'You know, these very old and famous families hold themselves rather above the rest of us, no matter how rich we may get to be,' I said, maliciously.

"This seemed almost to subdue her. She said that she supposed people would expect her to do something at such a time. It was always expected that 'people of wealth' should show themselves grateful. What could she do that would not offend such touchy people?

"I suggested that Hilda should buy some article, not too expensive, for a love token for Miss [Pg 239] Callender. 'Treat her as you would if she were Mrs. Van Horne's daughter,' I said, 'and she will be content.' 'I don't want to seem mean,' she replied, 'and I didn't think so pious a girl would carry her head so high. Now, Mrs. Hilbrough, do you think a Christian girl like Miss Callender ought to be so proud?' 'Would you like to take money for a friendly service?' I asked. 'Oh, no! But then I—you see, my circumstances are different; however, I will do just what you say.' I warned her when she left that the present must not be too costly, and that Hilda ought to take it in person. She was still a little puzzled. 'I didn't suppose people in their circumstances would feel that way,' she said in a half-subdued voice, 'but I'll do just as you say, Mrs. Hilbrough.'"

This action of Phillida's was a solace to Millard's pride. But one grain of sugar will not perceptibly

sweeten the bitterness of a decoction of gentian, and this overflow into uptown circles of Phillida's reputation as a faith-doctor made the matter extremely humiliating.

When Mrs. Hilbrough had finished her recital Millard sat a minute absorbed in thought. It occurred to him that if he had not spoken so impetuously to Phillida and then left her so abruptly he might have had this story in her own version, and thus have spared himself the imprudence and indecorum of discussing Phillida with Mrs. Hilbrough. But he could not refrain from making the request he had had in mind when he came, and which alone could explain and justify to Mrs. Hilbrough his confidence.

"I came here to-day on an impulse," he said. "Knowing your friendliness for Phillida, and counting on your kindness, I thought perhaps you might bring your influence to bear—to—to—what shall I say?—to modify Phillida's zeal and render her a little less sure of her vocation to pursue a course that must make her talked about in a way that is certain to vulgarize her name." [Pg 240]

Mrs. Hilbrough shook her head. She was flattered by Millard's confidence, but she saw the difficulty of the task he had set for her.

"Count on me for anything I can do, but that is something that I suppose no one can accomplish. What Phillida thinks right she will do if she were to be thrown to the wild beasts for it."

"Yes, yes; that is her great superiority," he added, with mingled admiration and despondency.

"You, who have more influence than any one else," said Mrs. Hilbrough, "have talked with her. I suppose her mother has said what could be said, and Agatha must have been a perfect thorn in the flesh to her since the matter became known at home."

"Yes," said Millard, ruefully; "she must have suffered a great deal, poor child!"

"I don't suppose Mrs. Gouverneur let her off cheaply," continued Mrs. Hilbrough. "She must have made Phillida feel that she was overthrowing the statues of her great-grandfathers, and she no doubt urged the unhappiness she would cause you."

Millard saw at this moment the origin of Phillida's sensitiveness in talking with him.

"I don't care for myself, but I wish to heaven that I could shelter her a little from the ridicule she will suffer." He was leaning forward with his hand on his knee and his eyes cast down. [Pg 241]

Mrs. Hilbrough felt herself moved at sight of so much feeling in one not wont to show his emotions to others.

"I will see if anything can be done, Mr. Millard; but I am afraid not. I'll ask Phillida here to lunch some day this week."

The winter sunshine had all gone, the lights in the streets were winning on the fast-fading twilight, and Mrs. Hilbrough's reception-room was growing dusk when Millard slowly, as one whose purposes are benumbed, rose to leave. Once in the street, he walked first toward one avenue and then toward the other. He thought to go to his apartment, but he shrank from loneliness; he would go to dinner at a neighboring restaurant; then he turned toward his club; and then he formed the bold resolution to make himself welcome, as he had before, at Mrs. Callender's Sunday-evening tea-table. But reflecting on the unlucky outcome of his interview with Phillida, he gave this up, and after some further irresolution dined at a table by himself in the club. He had small appetite for food, for human fellowship he had none at all, and he soon sought solitude in his apartment.

XXII. WINTER STRAWBERRIES.

Knowing that Phillida was a precipice inaccessible on the side of what she esteemed her duty, Mrs. Hilbrough was almost sorry that she had promised to attempt any persuasions. But she dispatched a note early Tuesday morning, begging Phillida's company at luncheon, assigning the trivial reason, for want of a better, that she had got some winter-grown strawberries and wished

a friend to enjoy them with her. Phillida, fatigued with the heart-breaking struggle between love and duty, and almost ready sometimes to give over and take the easier path, thought to find an hour's intermission from her inward turmoil over Mrs. Hilbrough's hothouse berries. The Hilbrough children were fond of Phillida, and luncheon was a meal at which they made a point of disregarding the bondage of the new family position. They seasoned their meal with the animal spirits of youth, and, despite the fact that the costly winter berries were rather sour, the lunch proved exceedingly agreeable to Phillida. The spontaneous violence which healthy children do to etiquette often proves a relish. But when the Hilbrough children had bolted their strawberries, scraped the last remainder of the sugar and cream from the saucers, and left the table in a hurry, there came an audible pause, and Mrs. Hilbrough approached the subject of Phillida's faith-healing in a characteristically tactful way by giving an account of Mrs. Maginnis's call, and by approving Phillida's determination not to take money. It was a laudable pride, Mrs. Hilbrough said. [Pg 243]

"I can not call it pride altogether," said Phillida, with the innate veracity of her nature asserting itself in a struggle to be exactly sincere. "If I were to take pay for praying for a person, I'd be no better than Simon, who tried to buy the gift of the Holy Ghost from Saint Paul. I couldn't bring myself to take money."

"And if you did, my dear, it would mortify your family, who have a right to be proud, and then there is Mr. Millard, who, I suppose, would feel that it would be a lasting disgrace." These words were spoken in a relaxed and indifferent tone, as though it was an accidental commonplace of the subject that Mrs. Hilbrough was settling.

Phillida said nothing. Here she was face to face with the old agony. If her faith-healing were only a matter of her own suffering she need not hesitate; she would take the cross with all her heart. But Mrs. Hilbrough's words reminded her again that her sense of duty forced her to bind Charley Millard for the torture. A duty so rude to her feelings as the half-publicity of it made faith-healing, ought to be a duty beyond question, but here was the obligation she owed her lover running adverse to her higher aspirations. The questions for decision became complex, and she wavered.

"Your first duty is to him, of course," continued Mrs. Hilbrough, as she rose from the table, but still in an indifferent tone, as though what she said were a principle admitted beforehand. This arrow, she knew, went straight to the weakest point in Phillida's defense. But divining that her words gave pain, she changed the subject, and they talked again on indifferent matters as they passed out of the room together. But when Phillida began her preparations for leaving, Mrs. Hilbrough ventured a practical suggestion. [Pg 244]

"I suppose you'll forgive an old friend for advising you, Phillida dear, but you and Mr. Millard ought to get married pretty soon. I don't believe in long courtships. Mr. Millard is an admirable person, and you'll make a noble wife."

"We have long intended to have the wedding next spring. But as to my making a noble wife, I am not sure about that," returned Phillida. "I am engaged with my work, and I shall be more and more talked about in a way that will give Charley a great deal of suffering. It's a pity—"

She was going to say that it was a pity that Charley had not chosen some one who would not be a source of humiliation to him, but she could not complete the sentence. The vision of Millard married to another was too much even for her self-sacrifice. After a moment's pause she reverted to Mrs. Hilbrough's remark, made at the table, which had penetrated to her conscience.

"You said a while ago that my first duty is to Charley. But if I am wrong in trying to heal the sick by the exercise of faith, why have I been given success in some cases? If I refused requests of that kind would I not be like the man who put his hand to the plow and looked back? You don't know how hard it is to decide these things. I do look back, and it almost breaks my heart. Sometimes I say, 'Why can't I be a woman? Why am I not free to enjoy life as other women do? But then the poor and the sick and the wicked, are they to be left without any one to care for them? There are but few that know how to be patient with them and help them by close sympathy and forbearance. How can I give up my poor?'" [Pg 245]

Her face was flushed, and she was in a tremor when she ceased speaking. Her old friend saw that Phillida had laid bare her whole heart. Mrs. Hilbrough was deeply touched at this exhibition of courage and at Phillida's evident suffering, and besides, she knew that it was not best to debate where she wished to influence. She only said:

"It will grow clearer to you, dear, as time goes on. Mr. Millard would suffer anything—I believe

he would die for you."

Phillida was a little startled at Mrs. Hilbrough's assumption that she knew the exact state of Millard's feelings.

"Have you seen him lately?" she asked.

"Yes; he called here after four o'clock on Sunday afternoon, and he spoke most affectionately of you. I'm sorry you must go so soon. Come and spend a day with me some time, and I'll have Mr. Millard take dinner with us."

As Phillida rode downtown in the street car she reasoned that Charley must have gone straight to Mrs. Hilbrough's after his conversation with her. When she remembered the agitation in which he had left her, she could not doubt that he went uptown on purpose to speak with Mrs. Hilbrough of his relations with herself, and she felt a resentment that Millard should discuss the matter with a third person. He had no doubt got Mrs. Maginnis's story from Mrs. Hilbrough, and for this she partly reproached her own lack of frankness. She presently asked herself what Charley's call on Mrs. Hilbrough had to do with the luncheon to which she had just been invited? The more she thought of it, the more she felt that there had been a plan to influence her. She did not like to be the subject of one of Mrs. Hilbrough's clever manœuvres at the suggestion of her lover. The old question rose again whether she and Charley could go on in this way; whether it might not be her duty to release him from an engagement that could only make him miserable. [Pg 246]

He called that evening while the Callenders were at six o'clock dinner. He was in evening dress, on the way to dine at the house of a friend, and he went straight to the Callender basement dining-room, where he chatted as much with Mrs. Callender and Agatha as with Phillida, who on her part could not show her displeasure before the others, for lovers' quarrels are too precious to be shared with the nearest friend. He left before the dinner was over, so that Phillida did not have a moment alone with him. The next evening she expected him to call, but he only sent her a bunch of callas.

That night Phillida sat by the fire sewing after her mother and Agatha were asleep. During the past two days she had wrought herself up to a considerable pitch of indignation against Millard for trying to influence her through Mrs. Hilbrough, but resentment was not congenial to her. Millard's effort to change her purposes at least indicated an undiminished affection. The bunch of flowers on the table was a silent pleader. If he did wrong in going to Mrs. Hilbrough for advice, might it not be her own fault? Why had she not been more patient with him on Sunday afternoon? The callas were so white, they reminded her of Charley, she thought, for they were clean, innocent, and of graceful mien. After all, here was one vastly dearer to her than those for whom she labored and prayed—one whose heart and happiness lay in her very palm. Might she not soften her line of action somewhat for his sake? [Pg 247]

But conscience turned the glass, and she remembered Wilhelmina, and thought of the happiness of little Hilda Maginnis and her mother. Was it nothing that God had endowed her with this beneficent power? How could she shrink from the blessedness of dispensing the divine mercy? Her imagination took flame at the vision of a life of usefulness and devotion to those who were suffering.

Then she raised her head and there were the white flowers. She felt an impulse to kiss her hand in good-night to them as she rose from her chair, but such an act would have seemed foolish to one of her temperament.

She went to bed in doubt and got up in perplexity. She could not help looking forward to Mrs. Frankland's Bible-reading that afternoon with expectation that some message would be providentially sent for her guidance. The spirit perplexed is ever superstitious. Since so many important decisions in life must be made blindly, one does not wonder that primitive men settled dark questions by studying the stars, by interpreting the flight of birds, the whimsical zigzags of the lightning bolt, or the turning of the beak of a fowl this way or that in picking corn. The human mind bewildered is ever looking for crevices in the great mystery that inwraps the visible universe, and ever hoping that some struggling beam from beyond may point to the best path. [Pg 248]

A SHINING EXAMPLE.

Mrs. Hilbrough and Phillida Callender sat together that day at Mrs. Frankland's readings and heard her with very different feelings discourse of discipleship, culling texts from various parts of the four gospels to set forth the courage and self-denial requisite and the consolation and splendid rewards that awaited such as were really disciples. Now that she had undertaken to look after Phillida in the interest of Millard, Mrs. Hilbrough trembled at the extreme statements that Mrs. Frankland allowed herself to make in speaking of self-denial as the crowning glory of the highest type of discipleship. The speaker was incapable of making allowance for oriental excess in Bible language; it suited her position as an advocate to take the hyperbolic words of Jesus in an occidental literalness. But Mrs. Hilbrough thought her most dangerous when she came to cite instances of almost inconceivable self-sacrifice from Christian biography. The story of Francis of Assisi defending himself against the complaint of his father by disrobing in the presence of the judge and returning into his father's hands the last thread of raiment bought with the father's money that he might free himself from the parental claim, was likely to excite a Platonic admiration in the minds of Mrs. Van Horne's friends, but such sublime self-sacrifice is too far removed from prevailing standards to be dangerous in New York. Mrs. Frankland no more expected her hearers to emulate St. Francis than she dreamed of refusing anything beautiful herself. But Mrs. Hilbrough knew Phillida, and, having known the spirit that was in her father, she was able to measure pretty accurately the tremendous effect of this mode of speech upon her in her present state of mind. While the address went on Mrs. Hilbrough planned. She reflected that Mrs. Frankland's influence could only be counteracted by the orator herself. Could she not talk confidentially with Mrs. Frankland and make her see the necessity for moderating Phillida's tendency to extreme courses of action? But when she tried to fancy Mrs. Frankland counseling moderation in an address, she saw the impossibility of it. Prudence makes poor woof for oratory. It would "throw a coldness over the meeting," as the negroes express it, for her to attempt to moderate the zeal of her disciples; the more that exhortations to moderation were what they seemed least to require. Another alternative presented itself. She would appeal from Mrs. Frankland public to Mrs. Frankland private, from the orator aflame to the woman cool. If Mrs. Frankland could be rightly coached and guided, she might by private conversation with Phillida counteract the evil wrought by her public speech. [Pg 250]

Mrs. Hilbrough's state of antagonism continued to the very close of the address, and then while many were thanking and congratulating the speaker, and receiving the greetings she gave with ever-fresh effusiveness, Mrs. Hilbrough came in her turn, and Mrs. Frankland extended both hands to her, saying, "My dear Mrs. Hilbrough, how are you?" But Mrs. Hilbrough did not offer her any congratulations. She only begged Mrs. Frankland to make an appointment that she might consult her on a matter of importance. [Pg 251]

"Certainly, certainly, dear friend," said Mrs. Frankland, beaming; "*whenever* you wish and *wherever* you say."

"Perhaps you could drive with me in the Park to-morrow, if the weather is fine," said Mrs. Hilbrough. "Shall I call for you about half-past three?"

"With pleasure, Mrs. Hilbrough"; and Mrs. Frankland made an affectionate farewell nod backward at Mrs. Hilbrough as she stretched out her hand to one of her hearers who was waiting on the other side for a share of her sunshine.

Mrs. Hilbrough turned about at this moment to find Phillida, meaning to take her home in the carriage, but Phillida, engrossed with thoughts and feelings excited by the address, had slipped away and taken the Madison Avenue car.

She had counted that this address would give her personal guidance; she had prayed that it might throw light on her path. Its whole tenor brought to her conscience the sharpest demand that she should hold to the rigor of her vocation at every cost. All the way home the text about leaving "father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my sake," was ringing in her memory. Even Mrs. Frankland, in the rush of oratorical extravagance, had not dared to give this its literal sense. But she had left in it strenuousness enough to make it a powerful stimulant to Phillida's native impulse toward self-sacrifice. [Pg 252]

Once at home, Phillida could not remain there. She felt that a crisis in her affairs had arrived, and in her present state of religious exaltation she was equal to the task of giving up her lover if necessary. But the questions before her were not simple, and before deciding she thought to go and privately consult Mrs. Frankland, who lived less than half a mile away in one of those

habitable, small high-stoop houses in East Fifteenth street which one is surprised to find lingering so far down as this into the epoch of complicated flats and elevated apartments.

Phillida was begged to come without ceremony up to the front room on the second floor. Here she found Mrs. Frankland in a wrapper, lying on a lounge, her face still flushed by the excitement of her speech.

"Dear child, how are you?" said Mrs. Frankland in a tone of semi-exhaustion, reaching out her hand, without rising. "Sit here by me. It is a benediction to see you. To you is given the gift of faith. The gift of healing and such like ministrations is not mine. I can not do the work you do. But if I can comfort and strengthen those chosen ones who have these gifts, it is enough. I will not complain." Saying this last plaintively, she pressed Phillida's hand in both of hers.

If her profession of humility was not quite sincere, Mrs. Frankland at least believed that it was.

"Mrs. Frankland, I am in trouble, in a great deal of trouble," said Phillida in a voice evidently [Pg 253] steadied by effort.

"In trouble? I am *so* sorry." Saying this she laid her right hand on Phillida's lap caressingly. "Tell me, beloved, what it is all about?" Mrs. Frankland was still in a state of stimulation from public speaking, and her words were pitched in the key of a peroration. At this moment she would probably have spoken with pathos if she had been merely giving directions for cooking the dinner spinach.

The barriers of Phillida's natural reserve were melted away by her friend's effusive sympathy, and the weary heart lightened its burdens, as many another had done before, by confessing them to the all-motherly Mrs. Frankland. Phillida told the story of her lover, of his dislike to the notoriety of her faith-cures. She told of her own struggles and of the grave questions she might soon have to settle. Should she yield, if ever so little, to the demands of one who was to be her husband? Or should she maintain her course as she had begun? And what if it should ever come to be a question of breaking her engagement? This last was spoken with faltering, for at the very suggestion Phillida saw the abyss open before her.

A person of Mrs. Frankland's temperament is rarely a good counselor in practical affairs, but if she had been entirely at herself she would perhaps have advised with caution, if not with wisdom, in a matter so vital and delicate. But the exhilaration of oratorical inebriety still lingered with her, and she heard Phillida professionally rather than personally. She was hardly conscious, indeed, of the personality of the suffering soul before her. What she perceived was that here was a new and beautiful instance of the victory of faith and a consecrated spirit. In her present state of mind she listened to Phillida's experience with much the feeling she would have had if some one had brought her a story of martyrdom in the days of Nero. St. Francis himself was hardly finer than this, and the glory of this instance was that it was so modern and withal so romantic in its elements. She exulted in the struggle, without realizing, as she might have done in a calmer mood, the vast perspective of present and future sorrow which it presented to Phillida. The disclosure of Phillida's position opened up not the modicum of practical wisdom which she possessed but the floodgates of her eloquence. [Pg 254]

"You will stand fast, my dear," she said, rising to a sitting posture and flushing with fresh interest. "You will be firm. You will not shrink from your duty."

"But what is my duty?" asked Phillida.

"To give the Lord and his work no second place in your affections. He has honored your faith and works above those of other people. Therefore stand unfalteringly faithful, my dear Phillida. It is a hard saying, that of Christ: 'If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he can not be my disciple.' But you are one of those able to receive the hard words of Christ."

All this was said as it might have been in an address, with little realization of its application to the individual case before her. Mrs. Frankland would have been the last person to advise an extreme course of action. She admired the extravagance of religious devotion for its artistic effect when used in oratory. It was the artistic effect she was dreaming of now. Phillida got little from her but such generalities, pitched in the key of her recent address; but what she got tended to push her to yet greater extremes. [Pg 255]

In the hour that followed, Phillida's habitually strenuous spirit resolved and held itself ready for any surrender that might be demanded of it. Is the mistaken soul that makes sacrifice needlessly through false perceptions of duty intrinsically less heroic than the wiser martyr for a worthy

XXIV. THE PARTING.

On that Thursday evening Millard dined at his club. Instead of signing a joint order with a friend for a partnership dinner, he ordered and ate alone. He chose a table in a deep window from which he could look out on the passers-by. A rain had set in, and he watched the dripping umbrellas that glistened in the lamplight as they moved under the windows, and took note of the swift emergence of approaching vehicles and then of their disappearance. His interest in the familiar street-world was insipid enough, but even an insipid interest in external affairs he found better than giving his mind up wholly to the internal drizzle of melancholy thoughts.

Presently Millard became dimly conscious of a familiar voice in conversation at the table in the next window. Though familiar, the voice was not associated with the club-restaurant; it must be that of some non-member brought in as the dinner-guest of a member. He could not make out at first whose it was without changing his position, which he disliked to do, the more that the voice excited disagreeable feelings, and by some association not sufficiently distinct to enable him to make out the person. But when the visitor, instead of leaving the direction of the meal to his host, [Pg 257] called out an exasperatingly imperative, "Hist! waitah!" Millard was able to recognize his invisible neighbor. Why should any member of a club so proper as the Terrapin ask Meadows? But there he was with his inborn relish for bulldozing whatever bulldozable creature came in his way. Once he had made him out, Millard engaged in a tolerably successful effort to ignore his conversation, returning again to his poor diversion of studying the people plashing disconsolately along the wet street. It was only when he heard Meadows say, "You know I am a director of that bank," that his attention was sharply arrested.

"Farnsworth is cashier," continued Meadows. "He ought to have resigned long ago, but he isn't that sort of a man. So he's at last taken to bed, has he? Some complication of the heart, I believe. Won't live long, and—well, I'll have on hand a hard fight about the filling of his place. But I didn't hear of that faith-doctor plan before."

"I don't believe they've carried it out," said the club man who had invited Meadows and who was a stranger to Millard. "Farnsworth wouldn't agree. I used to dine with Farnsworth often, and my sister knows Mrs. Farnsworth; they go to the same church. Mrs. Farnsworth has heard of a Miss Callender that can pray a person up out of the grave almost, and she's nearly persuaded Farnsworth to send for her. His mind is weakening a little, and I shouldn't wonder if he did consent to have her pray over him. The doctors have given him up, and—"

"Who is this Miss Callender?" interrupted Meadows; and though Millard could not see him he [Pg 258] knew that in the very nature of things Meadows's pugnacious chin must be shoved forward as he asked this.

"She's a young woman that won't take any money for her services. That's the greatest miracle of all," said the other. "If anything could make me believe her mission supernatural, it would be that."

"Don't you believe it," said Meadows; "don't you believe a word of it. The dead may be raised, but not for nothing. There's money below it all. Money makes the mare go"; and Meadows laughed complacently at the proverb, giving himself credit for it with a notion that adopted wit was as good as the native born.

"No; she won't have it. I heard that Mrs. Maginnis sent her a check for curing her little girl, and that she sent it back."

"Wasn't enough," sneered Meadows.

"Well, I believe they tried a larger check with the same result. She doesn't seem to be an impostor; only a crank."

"These people that refuse money when it's pushed under their noses are the worst knaves of all,"

said Meadows. "She knows that Maginnis is very rich. She's laying for something bigger. She'll get into Mrs. Maginnis for something handsome. More fool if she doesn't, I say"; and Meadows laughed in an unscrupulous, under-breath fashion, as of a man who thought a well-played trick essentially meritorious.

Millard was debating. Should he protest against these words? Or should he knock Meadows down? That is not just the form it took in his mind. Any rowdy or a policeman may knock a man down. Your man of fashion, when he wishes to punish an enemy or have an affray with a friend, only "punches his head." It is a more precise phrase, and has no boast in it. No one knows which may go down, but the aggressor feels sure that he can begin by punching his enemy's head. Millard was on the point of rising and punching Meadows's head in the most gentlemanly fashion. But he reflected that a head-punching affray with Meadows in the club-room would make Phillida and her cures the talk of the town, and in imagination he saw a horrible vision of a group of newspaper reporters hovering about Mrs. Callender's house, and trying to gain some information about the family from the servant girl and the butcher boy. To protest, to argue, to say anything at all, would be but an awful aggravation. Having concluded not to punch the head of a bank director, he rose from the table himself, and, avoiding Meadows's notice, beckoned the waiter to serve his coffee in the reading-room. When he had swallowed the coffee he rose and went out. As he stood in the door of the club-house and buttoned up his coat, a cabman from the street called, "Kerrige, sir?" but not knowing where he should go, Millard raised his umbrella and walked. Mechanically he went toward Mrs. Callender's. He had formed no deliberate resolution, but he became aware that a certain purpose had taken possession of him all uninvited and without any approval of its wisdom on his part. Right or wrong, wise or unwise, there was that which impelled him to lay the condition of things before Phillida in all its repulsiveness and have it out with her. He could not think but that she would recoil if she knew how her course was regarded. He fancied that his own influence with her would be dominant if the matter were brought to an issue. But these considerations aside, there was that which impelled him to the step he was about to take. In crises of long suppressed excitement the sanest man sometimes finds himself bereft of the power of choosing his line of action; the directing will seems to lie outside of him. It is not strange that a Greek, not being a psychologist, should say that a Fate was driving him to his destiny, or that his Dæmon had taken the helm and was directing affairs as a sort of *alter ego*. [Pg 259] [Pg 260]

When at length Millard found himself in front of Mrs. Callender's, and saw by the light that the family were sitting together in the front basement, his heart failed him, and he walked past the house and as far as the next corner, where his Fate, his Dæmon, his blind impulsion, turned him back, and he did not falter again until he had rung the door-bell; and then it was too late to withdraw.

"You are wet, Charley; sit nearer the register," said Phillida, when she saw how the rain had beaten upon his trousers and how recklessly he had plunged his patent-leather shoes into the street puddles. This little attention to his comfort softened Millard's mood, but it was impossible long to keep back the torrent of feeling. Phillida was alarmed at his ominous abstraction.

"I don't care for the rain," he said.

"But you know there is a good deal of pneumonia about."

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"I—I am not afraid of pneumonia," he said. "I might as well die as to suffer what I do."

"What is the matter, Charley?" demanded Phillida, alarmed.

"Matter? Why, I have to sit in the club and hear you called a crank and an impostor."

Phillida turned pale.

"Vulgar cads like Meadows," he gasped, "not fit for association with gentlemen, call you a quack seeking after money, and will not be set right. I came awfully near to punching his head."

"Why, Charley!"

"I should have done it, only I reflected that such an affray might drag you into the newspapers. I tell you, Phillida, it is unendurable that you should go on in this way."

Phillida's face was pale as death. She had been praying all the afternoon that the bitterness of this cup might not be pressed to her lips. She now saw that the issue was joined. She had vowed that not even her love for the man dearest to her should swerve her from her course. The abyss was under her feet, and she longed to draw back. She heard the voice of duty in the tones of Mrs. Frankland saying: "If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and

children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he can not be my disciple." It was a cruel alternative that was set before her, and she trembled visibly.

"I—I can't neglect what I believe to be duty," she said. She wished that, by some circumlocution [Pg 262] or some tenderness in the tone, she could have softened the words that she spoke, but all her forces had to be rallied to utter the decision, and there was no power left to qualify the bare words which sounded to Millard hard and cruel. A suspicion crossed his mind that Phillida wished to be released from the engagement.

"You do not consider that you owe any duty to me at all," he said in a voice smothered by feeling.

Phillida tried to reply, but she could not speak.

Millard was now pacing the floor. "It is all that Mrs. Frankland's work. She isn't worthy to tie your shoes. She never fed the hungry, or clothed the naked, or visited the sick. It's all talk, talk, talk, with her. She talks beautifully, and she knows it. She loves to talk and to have people crowd around her and tell her how much good she is doing. She denies herself nothing; she feeds her vanity on the flattery she gets, and then thinks herself a saint besides. She exhorts people to a self-sacrifice she wouldn't practise for the world. She's making more money out of her piety than her husband can out of law. And now she comes with her foolish talk and breaks up the happiness you and I have had." This was spoken with bitterness. "We can not go on in this way," he said, sitting down exhausted, and looking at her.

Phillida had listened in silence and anguish to his words, spoken hurriedly but not loudly. What he said had an effect the opposite of what he had expected. The first impression produced by his words was that the engagement had become a source of misery to Millard; the second thought [Pg 263] was that, considering only her duty to him, she ought to release him from bonds that had proved so painful. His last words seemed to indicate that he wished the engagement broken, and after what he had said it was evident that she must break with him or swerve from the duty she had vowed never to desert. Taking up the word where he had left off, she said in a low, faltering voice:

"We certainly can not go on in this way."

Then, rising, she turned to the antique desk in the corner of the parlor. With a key from her pocket she unlocked a drawer, and from it took hurriedly every keepsake she had had from her lover, not allowing herself to contemplate them, but laying them all at last on the ancient center-table in the middle of the room. With a twinge of regret, visible to Millard, she drew her engagement ring from her finger, and with an unsteady hand laid it softly down with the rest.

Millard was too much startled at first to know what to say. Had she misunderstood the intent of his last remark? Or did she wish to be released?

"It is all over, Mr. Millard. Take them, please."

"I—I have not—asked you to release me, Phillida."

"You have said that we can not go on in this way. I say the same. It—" she could not speak for a quarter of a minute; then she slowly finished her sentence with an effort of desperation and without raising her eyes to his—"it is better that it is over."

"Is it over?" he asked, stunned. "Think what you say." [Pg 264]

"We have agreed that we can not go on," she answered. "You must take these. I can not keep them."

"Don't make me take them. Why not keep them?"

"I will send them to-morrow. I can not retain them."

Millard could not take them. He would have felt much as he might in rifling a grave of its treasures had he lifted those tokens from the table. But he saw, or thought he saw, that remonstrances might make Phillida more unhappy, but that it would be perfectly useless. It was better to accept his fate, and forbear. He tried to say something to soften the harshness of parting, but his powers of thought and speech deserted him, and he knew that whatever he would say must be put into one or two words. He looked up, hesitatingly stretched out his hand, and asked huskily:

"Part friends?"

Phillida, pale and speechless, took his hand a moment, and then he went out. She leaned her head against the window-jamb, lifted the shade, and watched his form retreating through the drizzly night until he disappeared from view, and then she turned out the lights. But instead of returning to her mother and Agatha in the basement, she threw herself on the floor, resting her arms on the sofa while she sobbed in utter wretchedness. All her courage was spent; all her faith had fled; helpless, wounded, wretched as a soul in bottomless perdition, she could see neither life nor hope in any future before her. She had believed herself able to go on alone and to bear any sacrifice. But in losing him she had lost even the power to pray. [Pg 265]

About an hour after Millard's departure, Mrs. Callender came up the stairs and called gently:

"Phillida!"

Then she entered the parlor. The shutters were not closed, and the room was faintly lighted by rays that came through the shades from the lamp on the other side of the street.

"I'm here, mother," said Phillida, rising and coming toward her. Then, embracing her mother, she said, "And I'm so unhappy, mother, so utterly wretched."

Such an appeal for sympathy on the part of the daughter was an occurrence almost unknown. She had been the self-reliant head of the family, but now she leaned helplessly upon her mother and whispered, "It's all over between Charley and me."

XXV. MRS. FRANKLAND'S REPENTANCE.

For some time after Phillida had left Mrs. Frankland resting on the lounge that lady had felt an additional exaltation in contemplating this new and admirable instance of faith and devotion—an instance that seemed to owe much to the influence of her own teachings. Her mind had toyed with it as a brilliant having many facets. She had unconsciously reduced it to words; she could only get the virtue out of anything when she had phrased it. Phillida she had abstracted into a "young woman of a distinguished family," "beautiful as the day," "who had all the advantages of high associations," and "who might have filled to the brim the cup of social enjoyment." The lover, whose name and circumstances she did not know, she yet set up in her mind as "an accomplished young man of splendid gifts and large worldly expectations." It would have been a serious delinquency in him had he failed to answer to this personal description, for how else could this glorious instance be rounded into completeness? Incapable of intentional misrepresentation, Mrs. Frankland could never help believing that the undisclosed portion of any narrative conformed to the exigencies of artistic symmetry and picturesque effect. She set the story of Phillida's sacrifice before her now in one and now in another light, and found in contemplating it much exhilaration—spiritual joy and gratitude in her phraseology. How charmingly it would fit into an address! [Pg 267]

But as the hours wore on the excitement of her oratorical effort subsided and a natural physical reaction began. Her pulses, which had been beating so strenuously as to keep her brain in a state of combustion, were now correspondingly below their normal fullness and rapidity, and the exhausted nerves demanded repose. It was at such times as these that Mrs. Frankland's constitutional buoyancy of spirit sank down on an ebb tide; it was at such times that her usually sunny temper chafed under the irritations of domestic affairs. On this evening, when the period of depression set in, Mrs. Frankland's view of Phillida's case suffered a change. She no longer saw it through the iridescent haze of excited fancy. She began to doubt whether it was best that Phillida should break with her lover for the mere sake of being a shining example. In this mood Mrs. Frankland appreciated for the first time the fact that Phillida could hardly feel the same exultation in slaughtering her affections and hopes that Mrs. Frankland had felt in advising such a course of spiritual discipline. Just a little ripple of remorse flecked the surface of her mind, but she found consolation in a purpose to make the matter right by seeing Phillida the next day and inquiring more fully into the matter. Her natural hopefulness came to her rescue, and Mrs. Frankland slept without disturbance from regrets.

When she awaked in the morning it was with a dull sense that there was something which needed [Pg 268]

to be righted. She had to rummage her memory awhile to discover just what it was. Having placed it at length in Phillida's affair, she suddenly reflected that perhaps Mrs. Hilbrough could throw light on it, and she would postpone seeing Phillida until after her drive with Mrs. Hilbrough in the afternoon. "It is better to give counsel advisedly," was the phrase with which she ticketed this decision and sustained it.

The day was fine, and the drive in Mrs. Hilbrough's easy-rolling open carriage was exhilarating, and in that sort of bird-chatter about nothing in particular in which two people enjoying motion are prone to engage Mrs. Frankland was in danger of forgetting her purpose to inquire about Phillida Callender, until at length, when the carriage was fairly within the Park, Mrs. Hilbrough, whose businesslike brain never let go its grasp on a main purpose, said:

"Mrs. Frankland, I wanted to speak to you about Miss Callender."

"The very person I wished to ask your advice about," said Mrs. Frankland. "She called on me yesterday late in the afternoon."

"Did she?" Mrs. Hilbrough asked this with internal alarm. "Did she say anything to you about her love affair?"

"Yes," said Mrs. Frankland; "I suppose I ought not to repeat what she said, but you are her friend and you will be able to advise me in the matter. I'm afraid I didn't say just the right thing—I mean that I didn't advise her as fully as I should have done. It's hard to know what to say about other people's affairs. I felt worried about her, and I came near going to see her this morning. But I remembered that you were her friend, and I thought it best to see what you would say. It's always best to give counsel advisedly, I think." [Pg 269]

"May I ask what you said to her?" said Mrs. Hilbrough, characteristically refusing to be shunted from the main line of her purpose.

Mrs. Frankland winced at the question, and especially at the straightforward thrust with which it was asked. But she said: "I only advised her in a very general way. It was just after I had finished speaking, and I wasn't able to take up the matter as carefully as I should have liked to do, you know, until after I had rested."

"Did you advise her to break her engagement?" The steadiness with which Mrs. Hilbrough pushed her inquiry was disagreeable to her companion, who liked to find refuge from an unpleasant subject in vagueness of statement. But at least she was not driven to bay yet; she had not definitely advised Phillida to break with her lover.

"No; not that. I only gave her general advice to be faithful to her convictions."

Mrs. Frankland's avoidance of the explicit confirmed Mrs. Hilbrough's suspicion as to the tenor of the advice given. The latter blamed herself for having moved too slowly, and she was impatient, moreover, with Mrs. Frankland; for one is apt to be vexed when a person very clever in one way is conspicuously stupid in other regards. When Mrs. Hilbrough spoke again a trace of irritation showed itself. [Pg 270]

"Phillida is the only person I know to whom I think your Bible readings may do harm."

"My Bible readings?" queried Mrs. Frankland. She had been used so long to hear her readings spoken of in terms not of praise but rather of rapture, as though they were the result of a demi-divine inspiration, that this implied censure or qualification of the universality of their virtue and application came to her, not exactly as a personal offense, but with the shock of something like profanation; and she reddened with suppressed annoyance.

"I don't mean that it is your fault," said Mrs. Hilbrough, seeking to get on a more diplomatic footing with her companion. "Phillida is very peculiar and enthusiastic in her nature, and she knows nothing of the world. She is prone to take all exhortations rather too literally."

"But my words have often encouraged Phillida," said Mrs. Frankland, who had been touched to the quick. "You would rob me of one of the solid comforts of my life if you took from me the belief that I have been able to strengthen her for her great work."

"I am sure you have encouraged her to go on," said Mrs. Hilbrough, desirous not to antagonize Mrs. Frankland. "But she also needs moderating. She is engaged to an admirable man, a man getting to be very well off, and who will be made cashier of our bank very soon. He is kind-hearted, liberal with his money, and universally beloved and admired in society." [Pg 271]

Mrs. Frankland was not the person to undervalue such a catalogue of qualities when presented to her in the concrete. True, on her theory, a Christian young woman ought to be ready in certain circumstances to throw such a lover over the gunwale as ruthlessly as the sailors pitched Jonah headlong. That is to say, a Christian young woman in the abstract ought to be abstractly willing to discard a rich lover in the abstract. But presented in this concrete and individual way the case was different. She was a little dazzled at the brightness of Phillida's worldly prospects, now that they were no longer merely rhetorical, but real, tangible, and, in commercial phrase, convertible.

"True, true," she answered reflectively. "She would be so eminently useful if she had money." This was the way Mrs. Frankland phrased her sense of the attractiveness of such a man. "She might exert an excellent influence in society. We do need more such people as the leaven of the kingdom of heaven in wealthy circles."

"Indeed we do," said Mrs. Hilbrough, "and for Phillida to throw away such prospects, and such opportunities for usefulness"—she added this last as an afterthought, taking her cue from Mrs. Frankland—"seems to me positively wrong."

"It would certainly be a mistake," said Mrs. Frankland. Mrs. Hilbrough thought she detected just a quiver of regret in her companion's voice. "Does he object strongly to her mission work?"

"No; he doesn't object to her work, I am sure, for she was already absorbed in it when he first met her at my house, and if he had objected there would have been no beginning of their attachment. But he is greatly annoyed that she should be talked about and ridiculed as a faith-doctor. He is a man of society, and he feels such things. Now, considering how much danger of mistake and of enthusiasm there is in such matters, Phillida might yield a little to so good a man." [Pg 272]

"Perhaps I had better see her, Mrs. Hilbrough," was Mrs. Frankland's non-committal reply.

"It would be necessary to see her at once, I fear. She is very resolute, and he is greatly distressed by what people are saying about her, and a little provoked, no doubt, at what he thinks her obstinacy."

"Perhaps I had better see her this evening," said Mrs. Frankland, with a twinge of regret that she had not spoken with more caution the day before.

"I do wish you would," said Mrs. Hilbrough. Just then the driver sent the horses into a swift trot on a down grade, and the conversation was broken off. When talk began again it was on commonplace themes, and therefore less strenuous. Mrs. Frankland was glad to get away from an affair that put her into an attitude of apology.

Phillida had passed the day miserably. She had tried to bolster herself with the consciousness of having acted from the sincerest motives, and from having done only what was right. But consciousness of rectitude, whatever the moralists may say, is an inadequate balm for a heart that is breaking. Phillida had not dared to enter the parlor to gather up the little presents that Millard had given her and dispatch them to him until after supper, when she made them all into a bundle and sent them away. The messenger boy had hardly left the door when Mrs. Frankland rang. Her husband had accompanied her, and she dismissed him at the steps with instructions to call for her in about an hour. [Pg 273]

Phillida was glad to see Mrs. Frankland. A cruel doubt had been knocking at her door the livelong day. It had demanded over and over whether her tremendous sacrifice was necessary after all. She had succeeded indifferently well in barring out this painful skepticism by two considerations. The one was, that Millard, who had almost asked to be released, would hereafter be saved from mortification on her account. The other was, that Mrs. Frankland's authority was all on the side of the surrender she had made. And now here was Mrs. Frankland, sent like a messenger to confirm her faith and to console her in her sorrow.

"You are looking troubled," said Mrs. Frankland, kissing her now on this cheek and now on the other. "Dear child, if I could only bring you some comfort!"

"Thank you, Mrs. Frankland," said Phillida; "I am so glad that you have come. I have wished for you all day."

"Maybe I am sent to console you. Who knows? Perhaps, after all, things may turn out better than you think." This was said in a full round voice and an under manifestation of buoyant hopefulness and self-reliance characteristic of Mrs. Frankland; but Phillida shook her head despondently. [Pg 274]

"Since I saw you I have heard a good deal about your Mr. Millard; I get the most favorable

accounts of him; they say he is good, and every way a worthy, liberal, and charming man."

Phillida sat up straight in her chair with eyes averted, and made no reply.

"I have been thinking that, after all, perhaps you ought to make some concessions to such a man."

Phillida trembled visibly. This was not what she had expected.

"You wouldn't wish me to be unfaithful to my duty, would you?" she asked in a low voice.

"No, dear; I don't say you ought to sacrifice anything that is *clearly* your duty. Some duties are so clear that they shine like the pole-star which guides the mariner. But there are many duties that are not quite clear. We should be careful not to insist too strongly on things in which we may be mistaken. There would be no such thing as marriage if there was not some yielding on both sides; I mean in matters not certainly essential to a Christian life."

Phillida was now looking directly at her visitor with a fixed and hopeless melancholy which puzzled Mrs. Frankland, who had expected that she would seize gratefully upon any advice tending to relax the rigor of her self-sacrifice. Phillida's attitude was incomprehensible to her visitor. Could it be that she had resolved to break with her lover at all hazards?

"You know, dear," said Mrs. Frankland, sailing on a new tack now, as was her wont when her audience proved unresponsive, "I think, that as the wife of a man with increasing wealth and of excellent social position, like Mr. Millard, you would be very useful. We need such devoted and faithful people as you are in society. And, after all, your gift of healing might be exercised without publicity—you might, I think, defer a good deal to one whom you have promised to love. Love is also a gift of God and a divine ordinance. In fact, considering how ample your opportunities would be as the wife of a man of wealth and position, such as Mr. Millard, it seems to be your duty to examine carefully and prayerfully whether there is not some reasonable ground on which you can meet him. At least, my dear, do not act too hastily in a matter of so much moment." [Pg 275]

Advice pitched in this key did not weigh much at any time with Phillida. A thin veil of religious sentiment served a purpose of self-deception with Mrs. Frankland, but such disguises could not conceal from Phillida's utterly sincere spirit the thoroughly worldly standpoint of Mrs. Frankland's suggestions. The effect of this line of talk upon her mind was very marked, nevertheless. It produced a disenchantment, rapid, sudden, abrupt, terrible. Mrs. Frankland, the oracle upon whose trustworthiness she had ventured her all, had proven herself one of the most fallible of guides. The advice given yesterday with an assurance that only a settled and undoubting conviction could possibly excuse, was to-day pettifogged away mainly on the ground of Charley's worldly prosperity. Phillida had revered the woman before her as a sort of divine messenger, had defended her against Millard's aspersions, had followed her counsel at the most critical moment of her life in opposition to the judgment of her family and of the man she loved. And now, too late, the strenuous exhortation was retracted, not so much in the interest of a breaking heart as in that of a good settlement. [Pg 276]

When, after a pause, Phillida spoke, the abrupt and profound change in the relations of the two became manifest. Her voice was broken and reproachful as she said, "You come this evening to take back what you said yesterday."

"I spoke without time to think yesterday," said Mrs. Frankland, making a movement of uneasiness. One accustomed to adulation does not receive reproach gracefully.

"You spoke very strongly," said Phillida. "I thought you must feel very sure that you were right, for you knew how critical my position was." The words were uttered slowly and by starts. Mrs. Frankland did not reply. Phillida presently went on: "I don't care anything about the worldly prospects you think so much of to-day. But God knows what an awful sacrifice I have made. In following your advice, which was very solemnly given, I have thrown away the love and devotion of one of the best men in the world." She lifted her hands from her lap as she spoke and let them fall when she had finished.

"Have you broken your engagement already?" said Mrs. Frankland, with a start.

"What else could I do? You told me to stand by my work of healing. I hope you were right, for it has cost me everything—everything. I thought you had come to comfort me to-night and to strengthen my faith. Instead of that you have taken back all that you said before." [Pg 277]

"I only spoke generally before. I didn't know the circumstances. I did not know anything about

Mr. Millard, or—" Here she paused.

"You didn't know about Mr. Millard's property or social position, I suppose. These are what you have talked to me about this evening. They are not bad things to have, perhaps, but, if they were all, I could give them up—trample them under foot, and be glad."

"Don't be provoked with me, Phillida dear. Indeed, I hardly realized what I said yesterday. I had just got through with speaking, I was very much exhausted, and I did not quite understand."

"You may have been right yesterday," said Phillida; "I hope you were. If you were wrong, it was a dreadful mistake." She made a long pause, and then went on. "I thought the course you advised yesterday a brave course at least. But what you have said to-day, about social position and so on, I hate. And it makes me doubt it all."

Phillida thrust out the toe of her boot, unconsciously giving expression to her disposition to spurn Mrs. Frankland's worldly-wise counsel.

"You're excited, my dear," said Mrs. Frankland. "Your break with Mr. Millard may not be so irretrievable as you think it. Providence will direct. If, on the whole, it is thought best, I have no doubt things may be replaced on their old footing. I am sure Mrs. Hilbrough and I could manage that. You ought not to be unreasonable." [Pg 278]

"I sent him in agony out into the rainy night, forsaken and discarded." Phillida could not quite suppress a little sob as she stretched her hand a moment in the direction in which Millard had gone. "God knows I thought I was doing right. Now because you have heard that he has money and moves in fashionable circles you wish me to intrigue with you and Mrs. Hilbrough to bring him back."

Phillida rose to her feet, excitement breaking through the habitual reserve with which her emotional nature was overlaid. "I tell you, Mrs. Frankland," she went on with a directness verging on vehemence, "that I will have none of your interference, nor any of Mrs. Hilbrough's. What I have done, is done, and can never be recalled."

"Indeed, Phillida, you are excited," said Mrs. Frankland. "You reject the advice and assistance of your best friends. You have quite misunderstood what I have said. I only wished to repair my error."

Phillida remained silent, but she resumed her seat.

"Think the matter over. Take time to make your decision. I have acted only in your interest, and yet you blame me." Mrs. Frankland said this with persuasive plaintiveness of tone.

But Phillida said nothing. Not seeing anything else to do, Mrs. Frankland rose and said: "Good-by, Phillida. When you have had time to think you will see things differently." She did not extend her hand, and Phillida felt that her own was too chill and limp to offer. She contrived, however, to utter a "Good-by." [Pg 279]

When she had shut the door after Mrs. Frankland one swift thought and bitter came into her mind. "Charley was not wholly wrong as to Mrs. Frankland. Perhaps he was nearer right in other regards than I thought him."

Half an hour later the door-bell rang, and Agatha answered the call. Then she put her head into the parlor where Phillida sat, back to the door, gazing into the street.

"I say, Philly, what do you think? Mr. Frankland came to the door just now for his wife, and seemed quite crestfallen that she had forgotten him, and left him to go home alone. Didn't like to be out so late without an escort, I suppose."

It was one of a hundred devices to which Agatha had resorted during this day to cheer her sister. But seeing that this one served its purpose no better than the rest, Agatha went over and put her arms about her sister's neck and kissed her.

"You dear, dear Philly! You are the best in the world," she said, and the speech roused Phillida from her despair and brought her the balm of tears.

XXVI. ELEANOR ARABELLA BOWYER.

It is a truth deep and wide, that a brother is born for adversity. The spirit of kin and clan, rooted in remote heredity, outlives other and livelier attachments. It not only survives rude blows, but its true virtue is only extracted by the pestle of tribulation. Having broken with her lover, and turned utterly away from her spiritual guide and adviser, Phillida found herself drawn more closely to her mother and her sister. It mattered little that they differed from her in regard to many things. She could at least count on their affection, and that sympathy which grows out of a certain entanglement of the rootlets of memory and consciousness, out of common interest and long and intimate association.

Mrs. Callender had been habituated when she was a little girl at home to leave the leadership to her sister Harriet, now Mrs. Gouverneur, and to keep her dissents to herself. Her relation with her husband was similar; she had rarely tried to influence a man whose convictions of duty were so pronounced, though the reasons for these convictions were often quite beyond the comprehension of his domestically minded wife. Toward Phillida she had early assumed the same diffident attitude; it was enough for her to say that Phillida was her father over again. That settled it once for all. Phillida was to be treated as her father had been; to be trusted with her own destiny without impertinent inquiries from one who never could understand, though she deeply respected, the mysterious impulses which urged these superior beings to philanthropic toil. For her own part she would have preferred to take the universe less broadly. [Pg 281]

A second effect of this crisis in Phillida's life was to drive her back upon the example and teaching of her father. Having utterly abandoned the leadership of Mrs. Frankland, she naturally sought support for her self-sacrificing course of action outside of her own authority. All her father's old letters, written to her when she was a child, were unbundled and read over again, and some of his manuscript sermons had the dust of years shaken from their leaves that she might con their pages written in the dear, familiar hand.

If she had had her decision to make over again without any bolstering from Mrs. Frankland she would have sought, for a while at least, to establish a *modus vivendi* between her love for Millard and the ultra form of her religious work. But the more she thought of it the more she considered it unlikely that her decision regarding her lover would ever come up for revision. She accepted it now as something providential, because inevitable, to which she must grow accustomed, an ugly fact with which she must learn to live in peace. She had a knack of judging of herself and her own affairs in an objective way. She would not refuse to see merely because it was painful to her that a woman of her tastes and pursuits was an unsuitable mate for a man of society. She admitted the incongruity; she even tried to console herself with it. For if the break had not come so soon, it might have come after marriage in forms more dreadful. There was not much comfort in this—might have been worse is but the skim-milk of consolation. [Pg 282]

To a nature like Phillida's one door of comfort, or at least of blessed forgetfulness, is hardly ever shut. After the first bitter week she found hours of relief from an aching memory in her labors among the suffering poor. Work of any kind is a sedative; sympathy with the sorrows of others is a positive balm. Her visits to the Schulenberg tenement were always an alleviation to her unhappiness. There she was greeted as a beneficent angel. The happiness of Wilhelmina, of her mother, and of her brother, for a time put Phillida almost at peace with her destiny.

Her visits to and her prayers for other sufferers were attended with varying success as to their ailments. The confidence in the healing power of her prayers among the tenement people was not based altogether on the betterment of some of those for whom she prayed. Knowing her patient long-suffering with the evil she contended against, they reasoned, in advance of proof, that her prayers ought to have virtue in them. The reverence for her was enhanced by a report, which began to circulate about this time, that she had refused to marry a rich man in order to keep up her labor among the poor. Rumor is always an artist, and tradition, which is but fossil rumor, is the great saint-maker. The nature and extent of Phillida's sacrifice were amplified and adapted until people came to say that Miss Callender had refused a young millionaire because he wished her not to continue her work in Mackerelville. This pretty story did not mitigate the notoriety which was an ingredient of her pain. [Pg 283]

In spite of the sedative of labor and the consolation of altruism, Poe's raven would croak in her ears through hours spent in solitude. In the evenings she found herself from habit and longing listening for the door-bell, and its alarm would always give her a moment of fluttering

expectation, followed by a period of revulsion. Once the bell rang at about the hour of Millard's habitual coming, and Phillida sat in that state in which one expects without having reason to expect anything in particular until the servant brought her a card bearing the legend, "Eleanor Arabella Bowyer, Christian Scientist and Metaphysical Practitioner."

"Eleanor Arabella Bowyer," she said, reading it to her mother as they sat in the front basement below the parlor. "Who is she? I've never heard of her."

"I don't know, Phillida. I don't seem to remember any Bowyers."

"Where is the lady, Sarah?" asked Phillida of the servant.

"She is in the parlor, Miss."

Phillida rose and went up-stairs. She found awaiting her a woman rather above medium height. Phillida noted a certain obtrusiveness about the bony substructure of her figure, a length and breadth of framework never quite filled out as it was meant to be, so that the joints and angles of her body showed themselves with the effect of headlands and rocky promontories. She had a sallow complexion and a nose that was retroussé, with a prompt outward and upward thrust about the lower half of it, accompanied by a tendency to thinness as it approached its termination, quite out of agreement with the prominent cheek-bones. The whole face had a certain air of tough endurance, of determination, of resolute go-forwardness untempered by the recoil of sensitiveness. Miss Bowyer was clad in good clothes without being well-dressed. [Pg 284]

"Miss Callender, I suppose," said the visitor, rising, and extending her hand with confidence. Her voice was without softness or resonance, but it was not nasal—a voice admirably suited, one would think, for calling cows. Her grasp of the hand was positive, square, unreserved, but as destitute of sympathetic expression as her vowels. "I've heard a good deal about you, one way and another," she said. "You've been remarkably successful in your faith-cures, I am told. It's a great gift, and you must be proud of it—grateful for it, I should think." She closed this speech with a smile which seemed not exactly spontaneous but, rather, habitual, as though it were a fixed principle with her to smile at about this stage of every conversation.

Phillida was puzzled to reply to this speech. She did not feel proud of her gift of faith-healing; hardly was she grateful for it. It was rather a burden laid on her, which had been mainly a source of pain and suffering. But she could not bring herself to enter on a subject so personal with a stranger. [Pg 285]

"I don't know that I am," was all she said.

"Well, there's a great deal in it," said Miss Bowyer. "I have had a good deal of experience. There's a great deal more in it than you think."

"I don't quite understand you," said Phillida.

"No; of course not. I am a faith-healer myself."

"Are you?" said Phillida, mechanically, with a slight mental shudder at finding herself thus classified with one for whom she did not feel any affinity.

"Yes; that is, I *was*. I began as a faith-doctor, but I found there was a great deal more in it, don't you know?"

"A great deal more in it?" queried Phillida. "A great deal more of what, may I ask?"

"Oh, everything, you know."

This was not clarifying, and Phillida waited without responding until the metaphysical practitioner should deign to explain.

"I mean there's a great deal more science in it, as well as a great deal more success, usefulness, and—and—and remuneration to be had out of it than you think."

"Oh," said Phillida, not knowing what else to say.

"Yes," said Eleanor Arabella Bowyer with a smile. She had a way of waiting for the sense of her words to soak into the minds of her hearers, and she now watched Phillida for a moment before proceeding. "You see when I began I didn't know anything about Christian Science,—the new science of mental healing, faith-cure, psychopathy,—by which you act on the spirit and through the spirit upon the body. Matter is subject to mind. Matter is unreal. All merely physical [Pg 286]

treatment of disease is on the mortal plane." Miss Bowyer paused here waiting for this great truth to produce its effect; then she said, "Don't you think so?" and looked straight at Phillida.

"I haven't thought a great deal about it," said Phillida.

"No?" This was said with the rising inflection. "I thought not; mere faith-healing doesn't require much thought. I know, you see, having been a faith-healer at first. But we must go deeper. We must always go deeper. Don't you think so?"

"I don't understand just what you mean," said Phillida.

"You see," said Miss Bowyer, "faith-healing is a primitive and apostolic mode of healing the sick."

Miss Bowyer paused, and Phillida said, "Yes," in a hesitant way; for even the things she believed seemed false when uttered by Eleanor Bowyer.

"Well, ours is a scientific age. Now we practise—we revive this mode of healing, but in a scientific spirit, in the spirit of our age, and with a great deal more of knowledge than people had in ancient times. We reject the belief in evil; we call it unreal. Disease is a mistake. We teach faith in the unity of God the All-good."

Miss Bowyer evidently expected Phillida to say something at this point, but as she did not, Miss Bowyer was forced to proceed without encouragement.

"When I found that there was a great deal in it, I took the subject up and studied it. I studied [Pg 287] mind-cure, or metaphysical healing, which strikes at the root of disease; I went into hypnotism, mesmerism, and phreno-magnetism, and the od force—I don't suppose you know about the *od* which Reichenbach discovered."

"No."

"Well, it's wonderful, but mysterious. Blue blazes seen by the sensitive, and all that. I studied that, and theosophy a little too, and I took up Swedenborg; but he was rather too much for me. You can't quite understand him, and then life is too short to ever get through him. So I only read what somebody else had printed about Swedenborgianism, and I understand him a good deal better that way. That's the best way to tackle him, you know. Well, now, all of these go to explain the unity of truth, and how the miracles of the Bible were worked."

Phillida said nothing, though her interlocutor gave her an opportunity.

"Well," proceeded Miss Bowyer, "this is what we call Christian Science. It's the science of sciences. It's as much above the rude method of primitive faith-cure practised by the apostles as the heavens are above the earth. We understand from knowing the philosophy of miracles the reason why we do not always succeed. We can not always secure the impressible condition by producing the quiescence of the large brain. But if we understand the theory of hypnotism we shall be able to put the cerebrum at rest and secure the passive impressible state of the cerebellum; that is, an introverted condition of the mind. This securing of interior perception is [Pg 288] the basis of all success."

"Then you do not believe that God does it all," said Phillida, with a twitch of the shoulder expressing the repulsion she felt from this incomprehensible explication.

"Oh, yes. Faith in God the All-good is at the root of it all. It is one of the things that induces passive receptivity. We must convince the patient that the unity of God excludes the real existence of evil."

"But still you do not admit the direct action of God?" queried Phillida.

"God works through the forces in nature, according to law," said Miss Bowyer, glibly.

"That is just as true of the action of medicine," said Phillida. "I don't like this affecting to put God in while you leave him out of your mixture. Besides, I don't pretend that I understand your explanation."

"It is somewhat fine; all philosophy of man's internal nature is so. It's not a thing to argue about. Intellect argues; spirit perceives. But if you would give your mind to Truth in a receptive way, Truth would set you free. I am sure you would be convinced after reading the books on the question."

Phillida made no offer to read the books, and this seemed to disappoint Miss Bowyer. After a

pause she began again:

"You might as well know, Miss Callender, that I had a business object in view in coming to see you. Some of our Christian Science people are all enthusiasm, but I am trained to business, and I carry on my practice on business principles. There is no reason why a doctor who treats diseases on the mortal plane by medication should be paid for his time, and you and I not be. Is there?" [Pg 289]

"I don't know," said Phillida, mechanically.

"Well, now, I have given my time to the beautiful work of Christian Science healing. I have an office in East Fourteenth street. It is a blessed religious work. But I can't work without pay; I follow it as a business, and it's got to support me. I have as much right to get on in the world as anybody else. Now I've cleared over and above my office-rent, including what I get for teaching a class in Christian Science, almost eighteen hundred dollars in the very first year since I set up. That's pretty good for a lone woman; don't you think so?"

Phillida slightly inclined her head to avoid speaking.

"Well, now, I haven't got many advantages. My brother kept a health-lift a few years ago when everything was cured by condensed exercise. But people got tired of condensed exercise, and then he had a blue-glass solarium until that somehow went out of fashion. I helped run the female side of his business, you know, for part of the profits. My education is all business. I didn't have any time to learn painting or fine manners, or any music, except to play Moody-and-Sankeys on the melodeon. My practice is mostly among the poor, or the people that are only so-so. I haven't got the ways that go down with rich people, nor anybody to give me a start among them. Well, now, I say to myself, science is all very well, and faith is all very well, but you want something more than that to get on in a large way. I would rather get on in a large way. Wouldn't you?" [Pg 290]

Here she paused, but Phillida sat motionless and stoically attentive. She only answered, "Well, I don't know."

"Now, when I heard that you'd been sent for to the Maginnis child, and that you have got relations that go among rich people, I says to myself, she's my partner. I'll furnish the science, and I'll do the talking, and the drumming-up business, and the collecting bills, and all that; and you, with your stylish ways, don't you know? and your good looks, and your family connections, and all that, will help me to get in where I want to get in. Once in, we're sure to win. There's no reason, Miss Callender, why we shouldn't get rich. I will give you half of my practice already established, and I'll teach you the science and how to manage, you know; the great thing is to know how to manage your patients, you see. I learned that in the health-lift and the blue-glass solarium. We'll move farther up town, say to West Thirty-fourth street. Then you can, no doubt, write a beautiful letter—that'll qualify us to go into what is called 'absent treatment.' We'll advertise, 'Absent treatment a specialty,' and altogether we can make ten thousand or even twenty thousand, maybe, a year, in a little while. Keep our own carriage, and so on. What do you say to that?" Miss Bowyer's uplifted nose was now turned toward Phillida in triumphant expectation. She had not long to wait for a reply. Phillida's feelings had gathered head enough to break through. She answered promptly: [Pg 291]

"I do not believe in your science, and wouldn't for the world take money from those that I am able to help with my prayers." Phillida said this with a sudden fire that dismayed Miss Bowyer.

"But you'll look into the matter maybe, Miss Callender?"

"No; I will not. I hate the whole business." Phillida wanted to add, "and you besides"; however, she only said: "Don't say any more, please. I won't have anything at all to do with it." Phillida rose, but Miss Bowyer did not take the hint.

"You're pretty high-toned, it seems to me," said the Scientist, smiling, and speaking without irritation. "You're going to throw away the great chance of your life. Perhaps you'll read some books that set forth the mighty truths of Christian Science if I send them. You ought to be open to conviction. If you could only know some of the cases I myself have lately cured—a case of belief in rheumatism of three years' standing, and a case of belief in mental prostration of six years' duration. If you could only have seen the joyful results. I cured lately an obstinate case of belief in neuralgia, and another of cancer—advanced stage. A case of belief in consumption with goitre was lately cured in the West. Perhaps you'll look over some numbers of the 'International Magazine of Christian Science' if I send them to you; under the head of 'Sheaves from the Harvest Field,' it gives many remarkable cases."

"I have no time to read anything of the sort," said Phillida, still standing.

"Oh, well, then, I'll just come in now and then and explain the different parts of the science to you. It's a great subject, and we may get mutual benefit by comparing notes."

The prospect of repeated calls from Eleanor Arabella Bowyer put Phillida's already excited nerves into something like a panic. She had reached the utmost point of endurance.

"No," she said; "I will have nothing at all to do with it. You must excuse me; positively, I must be excused. I am very busy, and I can not pursue the subject further."

"Certainly," said the Metaphysical Practitioner, rising reluctantly; "but I think I'll take the liberty of calling again when you're more at leisure. You won't object, I'm sure, to my coming in next week?"

"Yes," said Phillida; "I will not have anything to do with the matter you propose, and I can not see you again. You must excuse me."

"Well, we never get offended, Miss Callender. Christian Science does not argue. We never resent an affront, but live in love and charity with all. That is Christian Science. Our success depends on purity and a Christian spirit. I think I'll send you a little book," added Miss Bowyer, as reluctantly she felt herself propelled towards the door by the sheer force of Phillida's manner. "Just a little book; it won't take long to read."

As Miss Bowyer said this she paused in the vestibule with her back to Phillida. She was looking [Pg 293] into the street, trying to think of some new device for gaining her end.

"I won't read a book if you send it. Save yourself the trouble," said Phillida, softly closing the inner door behind Miss Bowyer, leaving her standing face outwards in the vestibule.

"You had a hard time shaking her off, didn't you, Philly?" said Agatha, issuing from the back part of the dark hall, having come out of the back room just in time to catch a glimpse of Eleanor Bowyer. "I declare, the way you closed the door on her at the last was too good."

"Sh-h!" said Phillida, pointing to the shadow cast against the ground glass of the inner door by the tall form of the Christian Scientist and Metaphysical Practitioner in the light of the street lamp.

"I don't care whether she hears or not," said Agatha, dropping her voice, nevertheless; "she ought to be snubbed. You're a little too easy. That woman is meditating whether she sha'n't break into the house to preach Christian Science. There, she's going at last; she won't commit Christian burglary this time. I suppose she thinks burglary doesn't really exist, since it's contrary to the unity of God. Anyhow, she wouldn't commit burglary, because housebreaking is a physical thing that's transacted on the mortal plane."

Agatha said this in Miss Bowyer's tone, and Phillida's vexation gave way to laughter.

XXVII. A BAD CASE.

Notwithstanding Phillida's efforts to the contrary, the most irrelevant things were sufficient to send her thoughts flitting—like homing pigeons that can ply their swift wings in but one direction—toward Millard, or toward that past so thickly peopled by memories of him. Now that Eleanor Arabella Bowyer, Christian Scientist and metaphysical healer of ailments the substantial existence of which she denied, had cast a shadow upon her, Phillida realized for the first time the source of that indignant protest of Millard's which had precipitated the breaking of their engagement. Her name was on men's lips in the same class with this hard-cheeked professor of religious flummery, this mercenary practitioner of an un-medical imposture calculated to cheat the unfortunate by means of delusive hopes. How such mention of her must have stung a proud-spirited lover of propriety like Millard! For the first time she could make allowance and feel grateful for his chivalrous impulse to defend her.

No child is just like a parent. Phillida differed from her strenuous father in nature by the addition

of esthetic feeling. Her education had not tended to develop this, but it made itself felt. Her lofty notions of self-sacrifice were stimulated by a love for the sublime. Other young girls read [Pg 295] romances; Phillida tried to weave her own life into one. The desire for the beautiful, the graceful, the externally appropriate, so long denied and suppressed, furnished the basis of her affection for Millard. A strong passion never leaves the nature the same, and under the influence of Millard her esthetic sense had grown. Nothing that Eleanor Arabella Bowyer had said assailed the logical groundwork of her faith. But during the hours following that conversation it was impossible for her to reflect with pleasure, as had been her wont, on the benefits derived from her prayers by those who had been healed in whole or in part through her mediation. A remembrance of the jargon of the Christian Scientist mingled with and disturbed her meditations; the case of a belief in rheumatism and the case of a belief in consumption with goitre stood grinning at her like rude burlesques of her own cures, making ridiculous the work that had hitherto seemed so holy. But when the morrow came she was better able to disentangle her thoughts of healing from such phrases as "the passive impressible state" and "interior perception." And when at length the remembrance of Miss Bowyer had grown more dim, the habitual way of looking at her work returned.

One morning about ten days later, while she was at breakfast, the basement door-bell was rung, and when the servant answered it Phillida heard some one in the area, speaking with a German accent.

"Please tell Miss Callender that Rudolph Schulenberg will like to speak with her."

Phillida rose and went to the door.

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"Miss Callender," said Rudolph, "Mina is so sick for three days already and she hopes you will come to her right away this morning, wunst, if you will be so kind."

"Certainly I will. But what is the matter with her? Is it the old trouble with the back?"

"No; it is much worse as that. She has got such a cough, and she can not breathe. Mother she believe that Mina is heart-sick and will die wunst already."

"I will come in half an hour or so."

"If you would. My mother her heart is just breaking. But Mina is sure that if Miss Callender will come and pray with her the cough will all go away wunst more already."

Phillida finished her breakfast in almost total silence, and then without haste left the house. She distinctly found it harder to maintain her attitude of faith than it had been. But all along the street she braced herself by prayer and meditation, until her spirit was once more wrought into an ecstasy of religious exaltation. She mounted the familiar stairs, thronged now with noisy-footed and vociferous children issuing from the various family cells on each level to set out for school.

"How do you do, Mrs. Schulenberg?" said Phillida, as she encountered the mother on the landing in front of her door. "How is Wilhelmina?"

"Bad, very bad," whispered the mother, closing the door behind her and looking at Phillida with a face laden with despair. Then alternately wiping her eyes with her apron and shaking her head ominously, she said: "She will never get well this time. She is too bad already. She is truly heart-sick." [Pg 297]

"Have you had a doctor?"

"No; Mina will not have only but you. I tell her it is no use to pray when she is so sick; she must have a doctor. But no."

"How long has she been sick?"

"Well, three or four days; but she was not well"—the mother put her hand on her chest—"for a week. She has been thinking you would come." Mrs. Schulenberg's speech gave way to tears and a despairing shaking of the head from side to side.

Phillida entered, and found Mina bolstered in her chair, flushed with fever and gasping for breath. The sudden change in her appearance was appalling.

"I thought if you would come, nothing would seem too hard for your prayers. O Miss Callender,"—her voice died to a hoarse whisper,—"pray for me, I wanted to die wunst already;

you remember it. But ever since I have been better it has made my mother and Rudolph so happy again. If now I die what will mother do?"

The spectacle of the emaciated girl wrestling for breath and panting with fever, while her doom was written upon her face, oppressed the mind of Phillida. Was it possible that prayer could save one so visibly smitten? She turned and looked at the mother standing just inside the door, her face wrung with the agony of despair while she yet watched Phillida with eagerness to see if she had anything to propose that promised relief. Then a terrible sense of what was expected of her by mother and daughter came over her mind, and her spirits sank as under the weight of a millstone. [Pg 298]

Phillida was not one of those philanthropists whom use has enabled to look on suffering in a dry and professional way. She was most susceptible on the side of her sympathies. Her depression came from pity, and her religious exaltation often came from the same source. After a minute of talk and homely ministry to Wilhelmina's comfort, Phillida's soul rose bravely to its burden. The threat of bereavement that hung over the widow and her son, the shadow of death that fell upon the already stricken life of the unfortunate young woman, might be dissipated by the goodness of God. The sphere into which Phillida rose was not one of thought but one of intense and exalted feeling. The sordid and depressing surroundings—the dingy and broken-backed chairs, the cracked and battered cooking-stove, the ancient chest of drawers without a knob left upon it, the odor of German tenement cookery and of feather-beds—vanished now. Wilhelmina, for her part, held Phillida fast by the hand and saw no one but her savior, and Phillida felt a moving of the heart that one feels in pulling a drowning person from the water, and that uplifting of the spirit that comes to those of the true prophetic temperament. She read in a gentle, fervent voice some of the ancient miracles of healing from the English columns of the leather-covered German and English Testament, while the exhausted Wilhelmina still held her hand and wrestled for the breath of life.

Then Phillida knelt by the well-worn wooden-bottom chair while Mrs. Schulenberg knelt by a stool on the other side of the stove, burying her face in her apron. Never was prayer more sincere, never was prayer more womanly or more touching. As Phillida proceeded with her recital of Wilhelmina's sufferings, as she alluded to the value of Mina to her mother and the absent Rudolph, and then prayed for the merciful interposition of God, the mother sobbed aloud, Phillida's faith rose with the growing excitement of her pity, and she closed the prayer at length without a doubt that Mina would be cured. [Pg 299]

"I do feel a little better now," said Wilhelmina, when the prayer was ended.

"I will bring you something from the Diet Kitchen," said Phillida as she went out. The patient had scarcely tasted food for two days, but when Phillida came back she ate a little and thought herself better.

Phillida came again in the afternoon, and was disappointed not to find Mina improving. But the sick girl clung to her, and while Phillida remained she would have nothing even from the hand of her mother. The scene of the morning was repeated; again Phillida prayed, again Wilhelmina was a little better, and ate a little broth from the hands of her good angel.

The burden of the poor girl and her mother rested heavily on Phillida during the evening and whenever she awakened during the night. Mrs. Callender and Agatha only asked how she found Wilhelmina; they thought it best not to intrude on the anxiety in Phillida's mind, the nature of which they divined.

When breakfast was over the next morning Phillida hastened again to the Schulenbergs. [Pg 300]

"Ah! it is no good this time; I shall surely die," gasped Wilhelmina, sitting bolstered on her couch and looking greatly worse than the day before. "The night has been bad. I have had to fight and fight all the long night for my breath. Miss Callender, my time has come."

The mother was looking out of the window to conceal her tears. But Phillida's courage was of the military sort that rises with supreme difficulty. She exhorted Wilhelmina to faith, to unswerving belief, and then again she mingled her petitions with the sobs of the mother and the distressful breathing of the daughter. This morning Wilhelmina grew no better after the prayer, and she ate hardly two spoonfuls of the broth that was given her. She would not take it from Phillida this time. Seeing prayers could not save her and that she must die, the instincts of infancy and the memories of long invalidism and dependence were now dominant, and she clung only to her mother.

"You haf always loved me, mother; I will haf nobody now any more but you, my mother, the time I haf to stay with you is so short. You will be sorry, mother, so sorry, when poor unfortunate Wilhelmina, that has always been such a trouble, is gone already."

This talk from the smitten creature broke down Phillida's self-control, and she wept with the others. Then in despondency she started home. But at the bottom of the stairs she turned back and climbed again to the top, and, re-entering the tenement, she called Mrs. Schulenberg to her. [Pg 301]
"You'd better get a doctor."

Wilhelmina with the preternaturally quick hearing of a feverish invalid caught the words and said: "No. What is the use? The doctor will want some of poor Rudolph's money. What good can the doctor do? I am just so good as dead already."

"But, Wilhelmina dear," said Phillida, coming over to her, "we have no right to leave the matter this way. If you die, then Rudolph and your mother will say, 'Ah, if we'd only had a doctor!'"

"That is true," gasped Mina. "Send for Dr. Beswick, mother."

A neighbor was engaged to carry the message to Dr. Beswick in Seventeenth street, and Phillida went her way homeward, slowly and in dejection.

XXVIII. DR. BESWICK'S OPINION.

Dr. Beswick of East Seventeenth street was a man from the country, still under thirty, who had managed to earn money enough to get through the College of Physicians and Surgeons by working as a school-teacher between times. Ambitious as such self-lifted country fellows are apt to be, he had preferred to engage in the harsh competition of the metropolis in hope of one day achieving professional distinction. To a poor man the first necessity is an immediate livelihood. Such favorite cross-streets of the doctors as Thirty-fourth, and the yet more fashionable doctor-haunted up-and-down thoroughfares, were for long years to come far beyond the reach of a man without money or social backing, though Beswick saw visions of a future. He had planted himself in Mackerelville, where the people must get their medical advice cheap, and where a young doctor might therefore make a beginning. The sweetheart of his youth had entered the Training School for Nurses just when he had set out to study medicine. They two had waited long, but she had saved a few dollars, and at the end of his second year in practice, his income having reached a precarious probability of five hundred a year, they had married and set up office and house together in two rooms and a dark closet. There were advantages in this condensed arrangement, since the new Mrs. Beswick could enjoy the husband for whom she had waited so long and faithfully, by sitting on the lounge in the office whenever she had sedentary employment—the same lounge that was opened out at night into a bed. Both of the Beswicks were inured to small and hard quarters, and even these they had been obliged to share with strangers; since, therefore, they must lead a kind of camp life in the crowded metropolis they found it delightful to season their perpetual picnic with each other's society. And, moreover, two rooms for two people seemed by comparison a luxury of expansion. When youth and love go into partnership they feel no hardships, and for the present the most renowned doctor in Madison Avenue was probably something less than half as happy as these two lovers living in a cubbyhole with all the world before them, though but precious little of it within their reach beyond two well-worn trunks, three chairs, a table, and a bedstead lounge. [Pg 303]

Dr. Beswick was profoundly unknown to fame, but he was none the less a great authority on medicine as well as on most other things in the estimation of Mrs. Beswick, and, for that matter, of himself as well. He liked, as most men do, to display his knowledge before his wife, and to her he talked of his patients and of the good advice he had given them and how he had managed them, and sometimes also of the mistakes of his competitors; and he treated her to remarks on that favorite theme of the struggling general practitioner, the narrowness of the celebrated [Pg 304] specialists. When he came back from his visit to Wilhelmina it was with a smile lighting up all that was visible of his face between two thrifty patches of red side-whiskers.

"The patient is not very sick, I should say from your face," was Mrs. Beswick's remark as she

finished sewing together the two ends of a piece of crash for a towel. For this towel the doctor had made a kind of roller, the night before, by cutting a piece off a broken mop-stick and hanging it on brackets carved with his jack-knife and nailed to the closet-door. "I can always tell by your face the condition of the patient," added Mrs. Beswick.

"That's where you're mistaken this time, my love," he said triumphantly. "The Schulenberg girl will die within two weeks." And he smiled again at the thought.

"What do you smile so for? You are not generally so glad to lose a patient," she said, holding up the towel for his inspection, using her hand and forearm for a temporary roller to show it off.

"Oh! no; not that," he said, nodding appreciatively at the towel while he talked of something else. "I suppose I ought to be sorry for the poor girl, and her mother does take on dreadfully. But this case'll explode that faith-quackery if anything can. The Christian Science doctor, Miss Cullender, or something of the sort, made her great sensation over this girl, who had some trouble in her back and a good deal the matter with her nerves."

"She's the one there was so much talk about, is she?" asked Mrs. Beswick, showing more animation than sympathy. [Pg 305]

"Yes; when her mind had been sufficiently excited she believed herself cured, and got up and even walked a little in the square. That's what gave the woman faith-doctor her run. I don't know much about the faith-doctor, but she's made a pretty penny, first and last, out of this Schulenberg case, I'll bet. Now the girl's going to die out of hand, and I understand from the mother that the faith-cure won't work. The faith-doctor's thrown up the case."

"I suppose the faith-doctor believes in herself," said the wife.

"Naah!" said the doctor with that depth of contempt which only a rather young man can express. "She? She's a quack and a humbug. Making money out of religion and tomfoolery. I'll give her a piece of my mind if she ever crosses my track or meddles with my patients."

Crowing is a masculine foible, and this sort of brag is the natural recreation of a young man in the presence of femininity.

Two hours later, a frugal dinner of soup and bread and butter having been served and eaten in the mean time, and Mrs. Beswick having also washed a double set of plate, cup, saucer, knife, and fork,—there were no tumblers; it seemed more affectionate and social in this turtle-dove stage to drink water from a partnership cup,—the afternoon hung a little heavy on their hands. It was not his day at the dispensary, and so there was nothing for the doctor to do but to read a medical journal and wait for patients who did not come, while his wife sat and sewed. They essayed to break the ennui a little by a conversation which consisted in his throwing her a kiss upon his hand, now and then, and her responding with some term of endearment. But even this grew monotonous. Late in the afternoon the bell rang, and the doctor opened the door. There entered some one evidently not of Mackerelville, a modestly well-dressed young lady of dignified bearing and a gentle grace of manner that marked her position in life beyond mistake. Mrs. Beswick glanced hurriedly at the face, and then made a mental but descriptive inventory of the costume down to the toes of the boots, rising meanwhile, work in hand, to leave the room. [Pg 306]

"Please don't let me disturb you," said the newcomer to the doctor's wife; "don't go. What I have to say to the doctor is not private."

Mrs. Beswick sat down again, glad to know more of so unusual a visitor.

"Dr. Beswick, I am Miss Callender," said the young lady, accepting the chair the doctor had set out for her. "I called as a friend to inquire, if you don't mind telling me, what you think of Wilhelmina Schulenberg."

When Dr. Beswick had made up his mind to dislike Miss Callender and to snub her on the first occasion in the interest of science and professional self-respect, he had not figured to himself just this kind of a person. So much did she impress him that if it had not been for the necessity he felt to justify himself in the presence of his wife he might have put away his professional scruples. As it was he colored a little, and it was only after a visible struggle with himself that he said: [Pg 307]

"You know, Miss Callender, that I am precluded by the rules of the profession from consultation with one who is not a regular practitioner."

Miss Callender looked puzzled. She said, "I did not know that I was violating proprieties. I did not

know the rules were so strict. I thought you might tell me as a friend of the family."

"Don't you think you might do that, dear?" suggested Mrs. Beswick, who felt herself drawn to this young lady, for Miss Callender had won her heart by an evident deference for Dr. Beswick's position and professional knowledge, and she was touched by a certain sadness in the face and voice of the visitor.

The doctor relented when he found that his wife would sustain him in it.

"I may answer your question if you ask it merely as a friend of the patient, but not as recognizing your standing as a practitioner," he said.

Phillida answered with a quick flush of pain and surprise, "I am not a practitioner, Dr. Beswick. You are under some mistake. I know nothing about medicine."

"I didn't suppose you did," said the doctor with a smile. "But are you not what they call a Christian Scientist?"

"I? I hate what they call Christian Science. It seems to me a lot of nonsense that nobody can comprehend. I suppose it's an honest delusion on the part of some people and a mixture of mistake and imposture on the part of others." [Pg 308]

"You have made a pretty good diagnosis, if you are not a physician," said Dr. Beswick, laughing, partly at Phillida's characterization of Christian Science and partly at his own reply, which seemed to him a remark that skillfully combined wit with a dash of polite flattery. "But, Miss Callender,—I beg your pardon for saying it,—people call you a faith-doctor."

"Yes; I know," said Phillida, compressing her lips.

"Did you not treat this Schulenberg girl as a faith-healer?"

"I prayed for her as a friend," said Phillida, "and encouraged her to believe that she might be healed if she could exercise faith. She *did* get much better."

"I know, I know," said the doctor in an offhand way; "a well-known result of strong belief in cases of nerve disease. But, pardon me, you have had other cases that I have heard of. Now don't you think that the practice of faith-healing for—for—compensation makes you a practitioner?"

"For compensation?" said Phillida, with a slight gesture of impatience. "Who told you that I took money?"

It was the doctor's turn to be confounded.

"I declare, I don't know. Don't you take pay, though?"

"Not a cent have I ever taken directly or indirectly." Phillida's already overstrained sensitiveness on this subject now broke forth into something like anger. "I would not accept money for such a service for the world," she said. "In making such an unwarranted presumption you have done me great wrong. I am a Sunday-school teacher and mission worker. Such services are not usually paid for, and such an assumption on your part is unjustifiable. If you had only informed yourself better, Dr. Beswick—" [Pg 309]

"I am very sorry," broke in the doctor. "I didn't mean to be offensive. I—"

"Indeed, Miss Callender," said Mrs. Beswick, speaking in a pleasant, full voice and with an accent that marked her as not a New Yorker, "he didn't mean to be disrespectful. The doctor is a gentleman; he couldn't be disrespectful to a lady intentionally. He didn't know anything but just what folks say, and they speak of you as the faith-doctor and the woman doctor, you see. You must forgive the mistake."

This pleading of a wife in defense of her husband touched a chord in Phillida and excited an emotion she could not define. There was that in her own heart which answered to this conjugal championship. She could have envied Mrs. Beswick her poverty with her right to defend the man she loved. She felt an increasing interest in the quiet, broad-faced, wholesome-looking woman, and she answered:

"I know, Mrs. Beswick, your husband is not so much to blame. I spoke too hastily. I am a little too sensitive on that point. I don't pretend to like to be talked about and called a faith-doctor."

There was an awkward pause, which the doctor broke by saying presently in a subdued voice: [Pg 310]

"In regard to your perfectly proper question, Miss Callender, I will say that the Schulenberg young woman has acute pulmonary tuberculosis."

"Which means?" queried Phillida, contracting her brows.

"What people call galloping consumption," said the doctor. "Now, I can't help saying, Miss Callender,"—the doctor's habitual self-contentment regained sway in his voice and manner,— "that this particular sort of consumption is one of the things that neither medicine nor faith was ever known to heal since the world was made. This young woman's lungs are full of miliary tubercles—little round bodies the size of a millet seed. The tissues are partly destroyed already. You might as well try to make an amputated leg grow on again by medicine or by prayer as to try to reconstruct her lungs by similar means. She has got to die, and I left her only some soothing medicine, and told her mother there was no use of making a doctor's bill."

There was a straightforward rectitude in Dr. Beswick that inclined Phillida to forgive his bluntness of utterance and lack of manner. Here at least was no managing of a patient to get money, after the manner hinted at by Miss Bowyer. The distinction between diseases that might and those that might not be cured or mitigated by a faith-process, which Phillida detected in the doctor's words, quickened again the doubts which had begun to assail her regarding the soundness of the belief on which she had been acting, and awakened a desire to hear more. She [Pg 311] wanted to ask him about it, but sensitiveness regarding her private affairs made her shrink. In another moment she had reflected that it would be better to hear what was to be said on this subject from a stranger than from one who knew her. The natural honesty and courage of her nature impelled her to submit further to Dr. Beswick's rather blunt knife.

"You seem to think that some diseases are curable by faith and some not, Dr. Beswick," she said.

"Certainly," said Beswick, tipping his chair back and drumming on the table softly with his fingers. "We use faith-cure and mind-cure in certain diseases of the nerves. Nothing could have been better for that Schulenberg girl than for you to make her believe she could walk. I should have tried that dodge myself, but in a different way, if I had been called."

"Don't speak in that way, dear," interposed Mrs. Beswick, softly, seeing that Phillida was pained.

"Why, what's the matter with that way?" said the doctor, good-naturedly.

"Well, Miss Callender will think you are not honest if you talk about trying a dodge. Besides, I'm sure Miss Callender isn't the kind of person that would say what she didn't believe. It was no dodge with her."

"No; of course not," said the doctor. "I didn't mean that."

"You do not admit any divine agency in the matter, doctor?" asked Phillida.

"How can we? The starting-point of that poor girl's galloping consumption, according to the highest medical opinion of our time, is a little organism called a bacillus. These bacilli are so small that ten thousand of them laid in a row lengthwise would only measure an inch. They multiply with great rapidity, and as yet we can not destroy them without destroying the patient. You might just as well go to praying that the weeds should be exterminated in your garden, or try to clear the Schulenberg tenement of croton bugs by faith, as to try to heal that young woman in that way. Did you ever look into the throat of a diphtheria patient?" [Pg 312]

"No," said Phillida.

"Well, you can plainly see little white patches of false membrane there. By examining this membrane we have come to know the very species that does the mischief—the *micrococcus diphtheriticus*."

The conversation was naturally a little disagreeable to Phillida, who now rose to depart without making reply. She went over and shook hands with Mrs. Beswick, partly from an instinctive kindness, judging from her speech that she was a stranger in New York. Besides, she felt strongly drawn to this simple and loyal-hearted woman.

"If you'd like to come to the mission, Mrs. Beswick," she said, "I'd take pleasure in introducing you. You'd find good friends among the people there and good work to do. The mission people are not all faith-healers like me."

"Oh, now, I'd like them better if they were like you, Miss Callender. I think I'd like to go. I couldn't do much; I have to do my own work; the doctor's practice is growing, but he hasn't been [Pg 313]

here long, you know. I think I might go"—this with a look of inquiry at her husband.

"Why not?" said Dr. Beswick. He could not help seeing that the association of his wife with the mission might serve to extend his practice, and that even Mrs. Beswick must grow tired after a while of conversations with him alone, sugared though they were.

When Phillida had gone the doctor's wife said to her husband that she never had seen a nicer lady than that Miss Callender. "I just love her," she declared, "if she does believe in faith-healing."

"Ah, well, what I said to her will have its effect," he replied, with suppressed exultation.

"You said just the right thing, my love. You 'most always do. But I was afraid you would hurt her feelings a little. She doesn't seem very happy."

XXIX. MILLARD AND RUDOLPH.

Rudolph, coming home from work early on the next Saturday afternoon, saw Millard approaching from the other direction. With that appetite for sympathy which the first dash of sorrow is pretty sure to bring, the young man felt an impulse to accost the person who had thought enough of his sister's sufferings to give her a wheel-chair.

"Mr. Millard!"

"Oh, yes; you are Wilhelmina Schulenberg's brother," scrutinizing the young man. "And how is your sister now?"

Rudolph shook his head gloomily.

"She can not live many days already; she will be dying purty soon."

"What? Sick again? Then Miss Callender's cure did not last."

"Ah, yes; her back it is all right. But you see maybe praying is not strong for such sickness as she has now. It is quick consumption."

"Poor child!" said Millard.

"She has been very unlucky," said Rudolph. "We are all very unlucky. My father he died when I was little, and my mother she had to work hard, and I soon had also to work. And then [Pg 315] Wilhelmina she got sick, and it gave mother trouble."

"Has Miss Callender seen your sister?"

"Yes; she did not tell you already?" queried Rudolph.

"I have not seen her for a long time," said Millard.

"Oh!" exclaimed Rudolph, and went no farther.

"Did she—did she not try to make your sister well?"

"Yes; but believing is all good enough for the back, but it is no good when you're real sick insides. You see it is consumption."

"Yes; I see," said Millard. A rush of feeling came over him. He remembered Mina Schulenberg as she sat that day about a year ago—the day of his engagement—near the bust of Beethoven in the park. She had been the beginning and in some sense she had been the ending of his engagement. Millard walked away from Rudolph in a preoccupied way. Suddenly he turned and called after him:

"I say—Schulenberg!"

The young man faced about and came back. Millard said to him in a low voice and with feeling: "Will you let me know if your sister dies? Come straight to me. Don't say anything about it, but maybe I can show myself a friend in some way. Here's my address at home, and between nine and three I'm at the Bank of Manhadoes."

Rudolph said yes, and tried to thank him, but Millard strode away, his mind reverting to the poor girl whose now fast-withering life seemed to have some occult relation to his own, and thinking, too, of Phillida's unfaltering ministrations. What mistakes and delusions could not be forgiven to one so unwearingly good? Why did he not share her reproach with her, and leave her to learn by time and hard experience? Such thoughts stung him sorely. And this death, under her very hand, of the Schulenberg girl must be a sore trial. Would she learn from failure? Or would she resolutely pursue her course? [Pg 316]

Millard was not a man to lament the inevitable. Once he and Phillida had broken, he had set out to be what he had been before. But who shall cause the shadow to go backward upon the dial of Ahaz? When was a human being ever the same after a capital passion that he had been before? Millard had endeavored to dissipate his thoughts in society and at places of amusement, only to discover that he could not revolve again in the orbit from which he had been diverted by the attraction of Phillida.

Business, in so far as it engrossed his thoughts, had produced a temporary forgetfulness, and of business he now had a great deal. Farnsworth, who had contrived to give everybody connected with the Bank of Manhadoes more uneasiness than one could reasonably expect from a man whose vitality was so seriously impaired, died about this time, just when those who knew him best had concluded that he was to be exempted from the common lot. He died greatly regretted by all who had known him, and particularly by those who had been associated with him in the conduct of the bank from its foundation. So ran the words of the obituary resolutions drafted by Masters, adopted by the Board of Directors of the bank, printed in all the newspapers, and engrossed for the benefit of his widow and his posterity. Posterity indeed gets more out of such resolutions than contemporaries, for posterity is able to accept them in a more literal sense. Hilbrough's ascendancy in the bank, and his appreciation of Millard, in spite of the latter's symmetrical way of parting his hair, the stylish cut he gave his beard, and the equipoise with which he bore his slender cane, procured the latter's promotion to the vacant cashiership without visible opposition. Meadows would have liked to oppose, but he found powerful motives to the contrary; for Meadows himself was more and more disliked by members of the board, and his remaining there depended now on the good-will of Hilbrough. He therefore affected to be the chief advocate, and indeed the original proposer, of Millard for the place. [Pg 317]

The advancement carried with it an increase of dignity, influence, and salary, which was rather gratifying to a man at Millard's time of life. It would have proved a great addition to his happiness if he could only have gone to Phillida and received her congratulations and based a settlement of his domestic affairs upon his new circumstances. He did plan to take a larger apartment next year and to live in a little better style, perhaps also to keep horses; but the prospect was not interesting.

While he sat one evening debating such things the electric bell of his apartment was rung by the conductor of the freight-elevator, who came to say that there was a German man in the basement inquiring for Mr. Millard. His name was Schulenberg. Rudolph had come in by the main entrance, but the clerk, seeing that he was a workingman, had spoken to him with that princely severity which in a democratic country few but hotel and house clerks know how to affect, and had sent him packing down-stairs, out of sight, where he could have no chance to lower the respectability of a house in which dwelt scores of people whose names were printed in the Social Register, they subscribing for the same at a good round price. [Pg 318]

Rudolph had lost his way two or three times before he could find the entrance to the lift, but at the convenience of the elevator-man he was hoisted to Millard's floor. When he presented himself he looked frightened at being ushered into a place accessible only by means of so much ceremony and by ways so roundabout.

"Mr. Millard, my sister has just died. You told me to tell you already," he said, standing there and grasping his cap firmly as though it were the only old friend he had to help him out of the labyrinth.

"When did she die?" asked Millard, motioning the young fellow to a chair.

"Just now. I came straight away."

"Who is with your mother?"

"Miss Callender and a woman what lifs in the next room."

Millard mused a minute, his vagrant thoughts running far away from Rudolph. Then recovering himself he said:

"Have you money enough for the funeral?"

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"I haf fifteen dollars, already, that I haf been puttin' in the Germania Spar Bank for such a trouble. I had more as that, but we haf had bad luck. My uncle he will maybe lend me some more."

"What do you work at?"

"Mostly odd jobs. I had a place in a lumber-yard, but the man he failed up already. I am hopin' that I shall get something more steady soon."

"It will be pretty hard for you to go in debt."

"Yes," with a rueful shrug. "But we're unlucky. Poor folks 'mos' always is unlucky already."

"Well, now, you let me pay these expenses. Here's my card. Tell the undertaker to send his bill to me. He can come to the bank and inquire if he should think it not all right. But don't tell anybody about it."

"I thank you very much, very, very much, Mr. Millard; it will make my mother feel a leetle better. And I will pay you wheneffer I haf the good luck to get some money."

"Don't worry about that. Don't pay me till I ask you for it. Was Miss Callender with you when your sister died?"

"Yes. Oh, yes; she is better as anybody I effer see."

Millard said no more, and Rudolph thanked him again, put on his cap, and went out to try his luck at finding the door to the freight-elevator for a descent from this lofty height to the dark caves of the basement—vaulted caves with mazes of iron pipes of all sizes overhead, the narrow passages beset by busy porters bearing parcels and trunks, and by polyglot servants in dress-coats and white aprons running hither and thither with trays balanced on their finger-tips and mostly quite above replying to the questions of a bewildered intruder clad in trousers of well-worn brown denim.

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XXX. PHILLIDA AND PHILIP.

Mrs. Gouverneur concluded not to try her clever hand on Millard and Phillida again. Pessimistic Philip could no longer reproach her for having blasted his hopes, for he had a new chance if he chose to improve it. But to improve any opportunity seemed to be out of Philip's power, except perhaps the opportunity to spend his last available dollars on a rare book. He had of late been seeking a chance to invest some hundreds in a copy of Captain John Smith's "Generall Historie of Virginia," provided that he could find a copy with 1624 on the title-page. The 1626 was rare and almost, if not exactly, word for word the same as the 1624; but it would not do. For there were already several twenty-sixes in this country, and there was no fun in possessing a book that two or three other people could boast of having. When not busy with his books Philip was mostly crouched in an armchair in his library, or for a change crouched in an armchair at the Terrapin Club—in either case smoking and, as his mother believed, making profound reflections which might one day come to something. For how could a bright-minded man like Philip fail to bring forth something of value, seeing he bought expensive books and gave so much of his time to meditation?

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That Phillida should be specially asked to dine at her aunt's was rather inevitable under the circumstances, and Mrs. Gouverneur saw to it that she came when Philip was at home and when

there was no other company. This arrangement pleased Phillida; Uncle Gouverneur was dull enough, but Cousin Philip was always interesting in talk, and a good fellow, if he did spend his life in collecting books mostly of no particular value to anybody but a curiosity-hunter, and in poking good-natured fun at other people's cherished beliefs.

The meal was well-nigh finished when Philip said to his cousin who confronted him—there were only four at the table:

"Phillida, I saw Mrs. Maginnis day before yesterday at Mrs. Benthuyzen's. She is still sounding your praises as a faith-healer, but she confided to me that a pious girl and a minister's daughter ought not to be proud. She suggested that you didn't get that from your father. 'Her pride comes from the mother's side, they tell me,' she said. 'How's that, Mr. Gouverneur?' and she laughed at what she regarded a capital drive at me."

Phillida was not pleased at the mention of Mrs. Maginnis. Since the death of Wilhelmina, two weeks before, her mind had been disturbed as to the substantial value of faith-cures. Dr. Beswick's rationalism on the subject rose to trouble her. Happily she had not been sent for to visit any new cases, the death of Wilhelmina, her first notable example, having a little spoiled the charm of her success, as Dr. Beswick had foreseen. Doubt had made her cowardly, and there lurked in her mind a hope that she might no more be called upon to exercise her gift in the direction of faith-healing, and that she might thus without the necessity of a formal decision creep out of responsibility and painful notoriety in a matter concerning which she could not always feel absolutely sure of her ground. To this shrinking the revolt of her taste against such getters-on as Miss Bowyer had contributed, for her mind was after all that of a young woman, and in a young woman's mind taste is likely to go for more than logic. To Philip's words about Mrs. Maginnis she only replied:

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"Curious woman, isn't she?"

"Yes," interposed Mrs. Gouverneur, desirous of turning the talk away from what she saw was a disagreeable subject to Phillida—"yes; and I don't see the use of taking such people into society in such a hurry, merely because they *are* exceedingly rich."

"Mrs. Maginnis is respectable enough," said Philip, "and interesting," he added with a laugh; "and I thought her the most brilliant of the party at Mrs. Benthuyzen's, taking her diamond necklace into the account."

"Yes; no doubt she's entirely respectable," said Mrs. Gouverneur. "So are ten thousand other people whom one doesn't care to meet in society. It seems to me that New York society is too easy nowadays."

"It's not too easy toward the poor; eh, Phillida?"

"That's no great deprivation to the poor," said Phillida. "They could not indulge in fashionable amusements anyhow, and some of the most sensible among them believe that the families of fairly prosperous workingmen are happier and more content than the rich."

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"Certainly people in the social world are not examples of peace of mind," said Philip. "For me, now, I would have sworn last week that I should be as perfectly happy as a phœbe-bird on a chimneytop if I could only get a John Smith of 1624, which I've been trying for so long. But I got it yesterday, and now I'm just miserable again."

"You want something else?" queried Phillida, laughing.

"Indeed I do. You see the splendid John Smith looks lonesome. It needs a complete set of De Bry's Voyages to keep it company. But I couldn't find a complete De Bry for sale probably, and I couldn't afford to buy it if I should stumble on it. John Smith has eaten up the remainder of my book allowance for this year and nibbled about two hundred dollars out of next year."

When dinner was over Philip said:

"Come up-stairs, Phillida, you and mother, and see my lovely old Captain Smith in the very first edition, with the fresh-looking portrait of Pocahontas as Lady Rebecca."

"You go, Phillida; I'll follow you in a minute," said Mrs. Gouverneur.

"The book is of the earliest impression known," went on Philip with enthusiasm as he led the way up-stairs followed by his cousin, "and is perfect throughout except that one page has been mended."

"Mended?" queried Phillida, as she followed Philip into his library and sitting room. "Do they darn old books as they do old stockings?" [Pg 325]

"Oh, yes! it is a regular trade to patch books."

Saying this, Philip turned up the gas, and then unlocked a glass case which held what he called his "nuggets," and took down the two precious volumes of the bravest and boastfullest of all the Smiths, laying them tenderly on a table under the chandelier. Turning the leaves, he directed Phillida's attention to one that seemed to have the slightest discoloration of one corner; rather the corner seemed just perceptibly less time-stained than the rest of the leaf.

"There," he said; "the most skillful mender in London did that."

"Did what?" said Phillida.

"Put on that corner. Isn't it a work of art?"

"I don't see that anything has been done there," said Phillida. "The corner is ever so little paler than the rest, maybe."

"That is the new piece. The mender selected a piece of hand-made paper of similar texture to the old, and stained the new piece as nearly to the tint of the old leaf as possible. Then he beveled the edge of the leaf, and made a reverse bevel on the piece, and joined them with exquisite skill and pains."

Phillida held the leaf between her and the light, regarding it with wonder, hardly able to believe that a piece had been affixed.

"But, Philip, how did he get a corner with the right printing on it? The line where the two are joined seems to run through the middle of words and even through the middle of letters." [Pg 326]

"All the letters and parts of letters on the corner were made by the hand of the mender. He has imitated the ink and the style of the ancient letters. Take this magnifying glass and you may be able to detect the difference between the hand-made letters in the new part and the printed ones. But to the naked eye it is perfect."

"What a genius he must be!" said Phillida. "I should think that the book would be worth more than if it had never been torn. Do they ever tear a piece out just for the sake of mending it?"

"On the contrary, it would have added fifty dollars to the price of this copy if the original page had been complete, or if it could have been mended without a possibility of detection—say by a process of faith-cure."

Philip said this laughing, as he set a chair for Phillida, and then sat down himself.

"I beg pardon, Phillida. I oughtn't to jest about what you—feel—to be sacred."

Phillida colored, and compressed her lips a little. Then she said:

"I don't think I ought to refuse to hear anything you have to say about faith-cure, Philip. You evidently differ with me. But I want to know the truth; and I—" here Phillida made a long pause, smoothing out the folds of her gown the meanwhile. "I will tell you, Cousin Phil, that I am not always so confident as I used to be about the matter."

Mrs. Gouverneur looked into the room at this moment, but perceiving that the conversation had taken on a half-confidential tone, she only said: [Pg 327]

"I'll have to leave you with Philip a little longer, Phillida. I have some things to see to," and went out again.

Philip went to a drawer of rare old prints, and turned them over rapidly until he came to one of Charles II. touching for the king's evil.

"There," he said; "Charles was a liar, a traitor who took money to betray the interests of his country, and a rake of the worst. You wouldn't believe that he could cure sickness by any virtue in his royal touch. Yet great doctors and clergymen of the highest ranks certify incredible things regarding the marvelous cures wrought by him. If one might believe their solemn assertions, more cures were wrought by him than by any other person known to history. The only virtue that Charles possessed was lodged in his finger-tips."

"How do you account for it?"

"The evidence of a cure is the obscurest thing in the world. People get well by sheer force of nature in most cases. Every patent medicine and every quack system is therefore able to count up its cures. Then, too, many diseases are mere results of mental disturbance or depression. The mind has enormous influence on the body. I know a doctor who cured a woman that had not walked for years by setting fire to the bedding where she lay and leaving her a choice to exert herself or be burned."

"But there are the cures by faith related in the Bible. I am afraid that if I give up modern cures I must lose my faith in miracles," said Phillida. An unusual tenderness in Philip's speech had dissipated her reserve, and she was in a mood to lay bare her heart. In this last remark she disclosed to Philip her main difficulty. With a mind like hers such things are rather matters of association than of simple logic. Religion and miracles were bound up in the same bundle in her mind. To reject the latter was to throw away the former, and this, by another habitual association in her mind, would have seemed equivalent to the moral subversion of the universe. On the other hand she had associated modern faith-healing with Scripture miracles; the rejection of faith-cures involved therefore a series of consequences that seemed infinitely disastrous. [Pg 328]

If it had been merely an abstract question Philip would not have hesitated to reject the miraculous altogether, particularly in any conversation in which such a rejection would have yielded interesting results. But Phillida's confiding attitude touched him profoundly. After all, he deemed faith a very good thing for a woman; unbelief, like smoking and occasional by-words, was appropriate only to the coarser sex.

"Well," he replied evasively, "the Bible stands on a very different ground. We couldn't examine the ancient miracles just as we do modern faith-cures if we wished. The belief in Bible miracles is a poetic and religious belief, and it does not involve any practical question of action to-day. But faith-healing now is a matter of great responsibility."

Philip spoke with a tremor of emotion in his voice. His cousin was sitting at the other side of the table looking intently at him, and doing her best to understand the ground of his distinction between ancient and modern miracles, which Philip, agitated as he was by a feeling that had no relation to the question, did not succeed in clearing up quite to his own satisfaction. Abandoning that field abruptly, he said: [Pg 329]

"What I urge is that you ought not to trust too much to accidental recoveries like that of the Maginnis child. If faith-healing is a mistake it may do a great deal of harm."

Phillida's eyes fell to the table, and she fingered a paper-weight with manifest emotion.

"What you say in regard to responsibility is true, Philip. But if you have a power to heal, refusal is also a responsibility. I know I must seem like a fool to the rest of you."

"No," said Philip, in a low, earnest voice; "you are the noblest of us all. You are mistaken, but your mistake is the result of the best that is in you; and, by George! Phillida, there is no better in anybody that lives than there is in you."

This enthusiastic commendation, so unexpected by Phillida, who had felt herself in some sense under the ban of her family, brought to the parched and thirsty heart the utmost refreshment. She trembled visibly, and tears appeared in her eyes.

"Thank you, Philip. I know the praise is not deserved, but your kindness does me no end of good."

Mrs. Gouverneur came in at this moment. Phillida's eyes and Philip's constraint showed her that something confidential had passed between them, and she congratulated herself on the success of her plan, though she could not divine the nature of the conversation. Phillida would not be a brilliant match for Philip in a worldly point of view, but it had long been a ruling principle with Mrs. Gouverneur that whatever Philip wanted he was to have, if it were procurable, and as the husband of such a woman as Phillida he ought to be a great deal happier than in mousing among old books and moping over questions that nobody could solve. Besides, Phillida possessed one qualification second to no other in Mrs. Gouverneur's opinion—there could be no question that her family was a first-rate one, at least upon the mother's side. The intrusion of a third person at this moment produced a little constraint. To relieve this Mrs. Gouverneur felt bound to talk of something. [Pg 330]

"I scold Philip for wasting his time over old books and such trifles," she said to Phillida. "I wish you could persuade him out of it."

"Trifles!" exclaimed Philip. "Trifles are the only real consolation of such beings as we are. They keep us from being crushed by the immensities. If we were to spend our time chiefly about the momentous things, life would become unendurable."

The conversation drifted to indifferent subjects, and Philip talked with an unwonted gayety that caused Phillida to forget her anxieties, while Mrs. Gouverneur wondered what change had come over her son that he should feel so much elation. The confidence and affection that Phillida had exhibited while conversing with him this evening consoled Philip for the misery of having to live, and his cheerfulness lasted throughout her visit. At its close he walked towards her home, with her hand upon his arm, in an atmosphere of hope which he had not been accustomed to breathe. At the door Phillida said: [Pg 331]

"Good-night, Cousin Philip. Thank you for the kind advice you have given me. I don't think I shall agree with it, but I'll think about it." Then in a low voice she added, "If I have made a mistake it has cost me dear—nobody knows how dear."

After he had left her Philip's buoyancy declined. These last words, evidently full of regrets as regarded her relation with Charley, gave him a twinge of his old jealousy and restored him to his habitual discouragement.

XXXI. A CASE OF BELIEF IN DIPHTHERIA.

It was inevitable that Phillida should turn Philip's talk over in her mind again and again. There were moments when she felt that her healing power might be as much of a delusion as the divinity in the touch of the merry King Charles. There were other times when Dr. Beswick's infecting bacteria germinated in her imagination and threatened destruction to her faith, and yet other times when sheer repulsion from Miss Bowyer's cant of metaphysical and Christian therapeutics inclined her to renounce the belief in faith-cure, which seemed somehow a second cousin to this grotesque science. But the great barrier remained; in her mind faith-healing had associated itself with other phases of religious belief, and she could find no resting-place for her feet betwixt her faith and Philip's ill-concealed general skepticism. She did go so far as to adopt Philip's opinion that an exclusive occupation of the mind with the immensities rendered life unendurable. She came to envy her cousin his eagerness over unreadable Indian Bibles, black-letter Caxtons, and a rare date on a title-page. She envied Millard the diversion that came to him from his interest in people, his taste in dress, his care for the small proprieties, his love for all the minor graces of life. Why should she alone of the three be crushed beneath the trip-hammer of the immensities? But she ended always as she had begun, by reverting to that ancestral spirit of religious strenuousness in which she had been bred and cradled, and by planting herself once more upon the eleventh of Hebrews and the renowned victories of faith that had been the glory of the Church in every age. To leave this ground seemed to her an abandonment by consequence of all that was dearest and noblest in life. Nor was she aware that with each cross-examination her hold on the cherished belief became less firm. [Pg 333]

About two weeks after her talk with Philip she had just concluded a fresh conflict of this sort, and settled herself once more in what she intended should hereafter prove an unwavering faith in the efficacy of prayer, at least in certain cases, even against all sorts of bacteria, when it was announced that Mr. Martin wished to see her. It was eight o'clock, and the evening was a raw and rainy one in March.

"Howdy do, Miss Callender? How's all with you?" said Martin, when Phillida appeared at the door.

"How do you do, Mr. Martin?" she said. "Won't you come in?"

"No, thank you," said Martin, standing shivering in the vestibule, his solemn face looking neither more nor less like mortuary sculpture than it ever did. "Mother wants to know if you won't come down right away this evening. Our Tommy is seemingly sick."

"Seemingly sick?" asked Phillida. "How do you mean?"

"He's got a belief in a sore throat," said Mr. Martin, "and he's seemingly not well. Mother'd like to see you."

After a moment of puzzled thought Phillida comprehended that this way of speaking of disease was a part of the liturgy of Christian Science. She could not persuade Mr. Martin into the parlor; he waited in the vestibule while she got ready to go. Once out on the wet sidewalk he said:

"It's all the fault of the infant-class teacher, down at the Mission."

"What is the fault of the infant-class teacher, Mr. Martin?" asked Phillida with some surprise.

"This seeming sore throat of Tommy's."

"How can that be? I don't understand."

"Well, you see she talked to the children last Sunday about swearing and other such sins of speech. Now sin and disease are cor—what-you-may-call-it. Tommy he came home with that big head of his running on the talk about swearing, and in two days here he is with a—a belief in a sore throat. If I had my way I'd take the children out of Sunday-school. But mother will have her own way, you know, and I ain't anywhere when it comes to anything like that."

Phillida said nothing in reply to this, and presently Mr. Martin began again:

"It ain't my doing, the getting you to come and pray for Tommy. I wanted somebody ruther more scientific; Miss Bowyer she knows the cause and effect of things. But mother ain't enlightened yet, and she declared up and down against Miss Bowyer. And I declared up and down against doctors that can only cure sickness on the mortal plane. So, you see, we comp'omised on you. But I let mother know that if she would be so obs'inate ag'inst Miss Bowyer I wa'n't responsible for the consequences; they'd be on her head. She can't say that I'm responsible." [Pg 335]

Phillida shuddered, and made a motion as of drawing her sack more closely about her.

"Though for that matter," Martin went on, "Tommy's kind of settled the thing himself. He declared up and down that he didn't want Miss Bowyer, and he declared up and down he didn't want a man doctor. What he wanted was Dick's Sunday-school teacher. And neither one of us kind of liked to refuse him anything, seeing he's sick; and so that kind of settled it. And so the responsibility'll be—I don't know where—unless it's on you."

Phillida found Tommy in a state of restlessness and dullness, complaining of difficulty in swallowing. Mrs. Martin was uneasy lest there should be something malignant about the attack; but to Phillida the case seemed an ordinary one, not likely to prove serious. She held Tommy in her arms for a while and this was a solace to the little fellow. Then she prayed with him, and at half-past nine she returned home leaving Tommy sleeping quietly. When she neared her own door she suddenly bethought her that she had not seen the other children. She turned to Mr. Martin, who was walking by her side in silence and with a measured stride that would have been very becoming to an undertaker, but with which Phillida found it quite impossible to keep step. [Pg 336]

"I didn't see the rest of the children, Mr. Martin; where are they?" she asked.

"Well, a neighbor acrost the street come over to-day and took 'em away. She didn't know but it might be dip'thery."

"Have you had any diphtheria in your neighborhood?"

"Well, yes; the caretaker of our flats down on the first floor of the next house lost a child last week by a belief in dip'thery. The neighbor acrost the street thought Tommy might have got it, but we didn't believe it. But it made mother kind of uneasy, and she wanted to see you or a doctor to-night. For my part, I knew that it was the talk of the infant-class teacher that was at the bottom of it, dip'thery or not. Sin oughtn't to be mentioned to a child. It's likely to break out into a belief about sickness."

Phillida's spirits suddenly sank to zero. Alarm at the responsibility she had taken got the better of her faith by surprise, and she said:

"Mr. Martin, get a doctor. It may be diphtheria."

"Why, what if it is?" said Mr. Martin. "It's better to treat it on a spiritual plane. No, I'm not a-going back on my faith in the very words of the Bible."

"But, Mr. Martin, I don't feel sure enough to want to be responsible for Tommy's life. You must

"No, I won't do that; I'd made up my mind already that your treatment wa'n't thorough enough. You haven't had the experience; you haven't studied the nature of disease and the cor-what-you-may-call-it between sin and sickness. I'll call Miss Bowyer if Tommy don't mend before morning."

Just then it began to rain again. The sudden splash of the downpour and Phillida's instinctive impulse to get quickly under shelter interrupted the conversation. A minute later Miss Callender was standing in the vestibule with a weeping umbrella in her hand, while she heard Mr. Martin's retreating footsteps, no whit hurried by the fitful gusts of rain, or the late hour, or the illness at home.

She thought of running after him, but of what use would that be, seeing his obstination against treating diseases on the mortal plane? She would have liked to go home with him and beg the mother to send for a doctor; but she could not feel sure that this would serve the purpose, and while she debated the rain came on in driving torrents, and the steady beat of Mr. Martin's steps was lost in the distance and the rush of waters. In vain she told her mother that the child did not seem very ill, in vain she told herself during the night that Tommy had only an ordinary cold. She was restless and wakeful the night long; two or three times she lighted a match and looked at the slow-going clock on the mantelpiece.

In that hour unbelief in the validity of her cures came into her mind with a rush that bore down all barriers before it. Her mind went over to Dr. Beswick's side of the question, and she saw her success in some cases as the mere effect on the nervous system. In the bitterness of something like despair she thought herself a deluded and culpable enthusiast, worthy of ridicule, of contempt, of condemnation. There were no longer any oscillations of her mind toward the old belief; the foundations of sand had been swept away, and there was no space to make a reconstruction. Scarcely could she pray; unbelief tardily admitted threatened to revenge itself for the long siege by sacking the whole city. She was almost ready to plunge into Philip's general skepticism, which had seemed hitherto a horrible abyss. At a quarter to five o'clock she lighted the gas, turning it low so as not to disturb the others. She dressed herself quickly, then she wrote a little note in which she said:

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I am uneasy about Mrs. Martin's child, and have gone down there. Back to breakfast. PHILLIDA.

This she pinned to Agatha's stocking, so that it would certainly be seen. Then she threw an old gray shawl over her hat, drawing it about her head, in order to look as much as possible like a tenement-house dweller running an early morning errand, hoping thus to escape the curiosity that a well-dressed lady might encounter if seen on the street at so early an hour. The storm and the clouds had gone, but the air was moist from the recent rain. When she sallied forth no dawn was perceptible, though the street lamps were most of them already out. Just as the sky above Greenpoint began to glow and the reeking streets took on a little gray, Phillida entered the stairway up which she stumbled in black darkness to the Martin apartment.

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The Martins were already up, and breakfast was cooking on the stove.

"Is that you, Miss Callender?" said Mrs. Martin. "I didn't expect you at this hour. How did you get here alone?"

"Oh, well enough," said Phillida. "But how is little Tommy?"

"I'm afraid he is worse. I was just trying to persuade Mr. Martin to go for you."

"I came to give up the case," said Phillida, hurriedly, "and to beg you to get a doctor. I have done with faith-cures. I've lost my faith in them entirely, and I'm afraid from what Mr. Martin told me last night that this is diphtheria."

"I hope not," said Mrs. Martin, in renewed alarm.

Mr. Martin, who was shaving in his shirt-sleeves near the window, only turned about when he got the lather off his face to say: "Good-morning, Miss Callender. How's things with you?"

Phillida returned this with the slightest good-morning. She was out of patience with Mr. Martin, and she was revolving a plan for discovering whether Tommy's distemper were diphtheria or not. During her long midnight meditations she had gone over every word of Dr. Beswick's about bacteria and bacilli. She remembered his statement that the *micrococcus diphtheriticus* was to be found in the light-colored patches visible in the throat of a diphtheria patient. At what stage

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these were developed she did not know, but during her hours of waiting for morning she had imagined herself looking down little Tommy's throat. She now asked for a spoon, and, having roused Tommy from a kind of stupor, she inserted the handle as she had seen physicians do, and at length succeeded in pressing down the tongue so as to discover what she took to be diphtheria patches on the fauces.

"Mrs. Martin, I am sure this is diphtheria. You must get a doctor right away."

"I'll attend to that," said Mr. Martin, who had now got his beard off and his coat on.

As he donned his hat and went out the door, Mrs. Martin called: "Father, you'd better get Dr. Beswick"; but her husband made no reply further than to say, "I'll attend to that," without interrupting for a moment his steady tramp down the stairs.

"I'm afraid," said Mrs. Martin, "that he has gone for Miss Bowyer."

"I hope not," said Phillida.

"If he gets her he'll be awfully stubborn. He has been offended that I sent for you last night. It touches his dignity. He thinks that if he doesn't have his way in certain things he is put out of his place as head of the family."

Phillida presently perceived that Mrs. Martin was shedding tears of apprehension.

"My poor little Tommy! I shall lose him."

"Oh, no; I hope not," said Phillida.

But Mrs. Martin shook her head.

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In about half an hour Henry Martin, with a look that came near to being more than usually solemn, ushered in Dr. Eleanor Arabella Bowyer, and then sat himself down to his breakfast, which was on the table, without a word, except to ask Phillida if she wouldn't have breakfast, too, which invitation was declined.

Miss Bowyer nodded to Phillida, saying, "Your case?"

"No," said Phillida; "I have no case. This is a case of diphtheria."

"Case of belief in diphtheria?" queried Miss Bowyer, and without waiting for an invitation she calmly poured out a cup of coffee and drank it, standing. When she had finished the coffee and was ready for business, Phillida said:

"Miss Bowyer, let me speak with you a moment." She drew the psychopathic healer over toward a large old-fashioned bureau that the Martins had brought from the country and that seemed not to have room enough for its ancient and simple dignity in its present close quarters. "Miss Bowyer, this is diphtheria. A child in the next house died last week of the same disease. Mrs. Martin wishes to call a doctor, a regular doctor. Don't you think you ought to give way to her wish?"

"Not at all. The father is enlightened, and I am thankful for that. He knows the mighty power of Christian Science, and he does not wish to have his child treated on the mortal plane. Parents often differ this way, and I am sometimes supported by only one of them. But I never give way on that account. It's a great and glorious work that must be pushed." [Pg 342]

"But if the child should die?" urged Phillida.

"It's not half so apt to die if treated on the spiritual plane; and if it dies we'll know that we have done all that opportunity offered. In all such cases the true physician can only commend the patient to the care of a loving Providence, feeling assured that disorder has its laws and limitations and that suffering is a means of developing the inner nature."

Having reeled this off like a phrase often spoken, Miss Bowyer walked over to the bed where the little lad lay.

"Miss Bowyer," said Mrs. Martin, with an earnestness born of her agony, "I don't believe in your treatment at all."

"That's not necessary," said the doctor with a jaunty firmness; "the faith of one parent is sufficient to save the sick."

"This is my child, and I wish you to leave him alone," said Mrs. Martin.

"I am called by the child's father, Mrs. Martin, and I can not shirk my responsibility in this case."

"Please leave my house. I don't want you here," said Mrs. Martin, with an excitement almost hysterical. "I believe you are an impostor."

"I've often been called that," said Miss Bowyer, with a winning smile. "Used to it. One has to bear reproach and persecution in a Christian spirit for the sake of a good cause. You are only delaying the cure of your child, and perhaps risking his precious life."

"Henry," said Mrs. Martin, "I want you to send this woman away and get a doctor."

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"Hannah, I'm the head of this family," said Martin, dropping his chin and looking ludicrously impressive. But as a matter of precaution he thought it best to leave the conflict to be fought out by Miss Bowyer. He feared that if he stayed he might find himself deposed from the only leadership that had ever fallen to his lot in life. So he executed a strategic move by quitting his breakfast half-finished and hurrying away to the shop.

Miss Bowyer was now exultingly confident that nothing short of force and a good deal of it could dislodge a person of her psychic endurance from the post of duty.

She began to apply her hands to Tommy's neck, but as there was external soreness, the little lad wakened and cried for his mother and "the teacher," as he called Phillida.

Mrs. Martin approached him and said: "Miss Bowyer, this is my child; stand aside."

"Not at all, Mrs. Martin. You are doing your child harm, and you ought to desist. If you continue to agitate him in this way the consequences will be fatal."

Certainly an affray over Tommy's bed was not desirable; the more so that no force at present available could expel the tenacious scientist. Phillida, who somehow felt frightfully accountable for the state of affairs, beckoned Mrs. Martin to the landing at the top of the stairs, closing the door of the apartment behind them. But even there the hoarse and piteous crying of Tommy rent the hearts of both of them.

"You must send for Mr. Millard," said Phillida. "He will have authority with Mr. Martin, and he will know how to get rid of her," pointing through the door in the direction in which they had left Miss Bowyer bending over the patient.

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"There is nobody to send," answered Mrs. Martin, in dismay.

"I will send," said Phillida. They re-entered the room, and Phillida put on her sack in haste, seizing her hat and hurrying down the long flight of stairs into Avenue C, where the sidewalks, steaming after the yesterday's rain, were peopled by men on their way to work, and by women and children seeking the grocery-stores and butcher-shops. Loiterers were already gathering, in that slouching fashion characteristic of people out of work, about the doors of the drinking-saloons; buildings whose expensive up-fittings lent a touch of spurious grandeur to the pinched and populous avenue.

XXXII. FACE TO FACE.

Once in the street, Phillida's perplexities began. She had undertaken to send for Millard, but there were no slow-footed district Mercuries to be had in the Mackerelville part of New York. It was now barely half-past six, and Millard would hardly have risen yet. In a battle against grim death and Miss Bowyer time seemed all important. She therefore took a Fourteenth street car and changed to an up-town line carrying her to the vicinity of the Graydon, debating all the way how quickest to get an explicit message to Millard without a personal interview, which would be painful to both, and which might be misconstrued. Phillida alighted from the car in the neighborhood of the Graydon, whose mountainous dimensions deflected the March wind into sudden and disagreeable backsets and whirling eddies that threatened the perpendicularity of

foot-passengers. She requested a florist, who was opening his shop and arranging a little exhibition of the hardier in-door plants on the sidewalk, to direct her to a district telegraph office, and was referred to one just around the corner. To this always open place she walked as rapidly as possible, to find a sleepy-looking young woman just settling herself at the desk, having at that moment relieved the man who had been on duty all night. [Pg 346]

"Can you give me a messenger right away?" she demanded.

"In about fifteen or twenty minutes we'll have one in," said the girl. "We don't keep but two on duty at this hour, and they're both out, and there's one call ahead of you. Take a seat, won't you?"

But Phillida saw in her imagination Mrs. Martin badgered by Eleanor Bowyer, and heard again the grievous cry of the frightened and suffering Tommy. After all, she could only make the matter understood imperfectly by means of a message. Why should she stand on delicacy in a matter of life and death? She reflected that there was no animosity between her and Millard, and she recalled his figure as he reached his hand to her that fatal evening, and she remembered the emotion in his voice when he said, "Part friends?" She resolved to go in person to the Graydon.

The entrance to the apartment building displayed a good deal of that joint-stock grandeur which goes for much and yet costs each individual householder but little. Despite her anxiety, Phillida was so far impressed by the elaborate bronze mantelpiece over the great hall fireplace, the carved wooden seats, and the frescoing and gilding of the walls, as to remember that she was dressed for a tenement in Avenue C, and not for a west-side apartment house. The gray shawl she had left behind; but she felt sure that the important-looking hall boys and, above all, the plump and prosperous-seeming clerk at the desk, with an habitually neutral expression upon his countenance, must wonder why a woman had intruded into the sacred front entrance in so plain a hat and gown at seven o'clock in the morning. She felt in her pocket for her card-case, but of course that had been left in the pocket of a better dress, and she must write upon one of those little cards that the house furnishes; and all this while the clerk would be wondering who she was. But there was a native self-reliance about Phillida that shielded her from contempt. She asked for the card, took up a pen, and wrote: [Pg 347]

"Miss Callender wishes to see Mr. Millard in great haste, on a matter of the utmost importance."

She was about to put this into an envelope, but she reflected that an open message was better. She handed the card to the clerk, who took it hesitatingly, and with a touch of "style" in his bearing, saying, "Mr. Millard will not be down for half an hour yet. He is not up. Will you wait?"

"He must be called," said Phillida. "It is a matter of life and death."

The clerk still held the note in his hand.

"He will be very much annoyed if that is not delivered to him at once. It is his own affair, and, as I said, a matter of life and death," said Phillida, speaking peremptorily, her courage rising to the occasion.

The clerk still held the note. He presently beckoned to a negro boy sitting on one of the carved benches.

"Washington," he said.

Washington came forward to the counter.

"Wash," said the clerk in an undertone—an undress tone kept for those upon whom it would have been useless to waste his habitual bearing as the representative of the corporate proprietorship of the building—"has Mr. Millard's man come in yet?" [Pg 348]

"No, sir."

"Take this up to seventy-nine, and say that the lady is below and insists on his being called at once." Then to Phillida, as the form of Washington vanished upward by way of the marble staircase, "Will you take a seat in the reception-room?" waving his hand slightly in the direction of a portière, behind which Phillida found herself in the ladies' reception-room.

In ten minutes Millard came down the elevator, glanced about the office, and then quickly entered the reception-room. There were unwonted traces of haste in his toilet; his hair had been hastily brushed, but it had been brushed, as indeed it would probably have been if Washington had announced that the Graydon was in flames.

There was a moment of embarrassment. What manner was proper for such a meeting? It would not do to say "Phillida," and "Miss Callender" would sound forced and formal. Phillida was equally embarrassed as she came forward, but Millard's tact relieved the tension. He spoke in a tone of reserve and yet of friendliness.

"Good-morning. I hope no disaster has happened to you." The friendly eagerness of this inquiry took off the brusqueness of omitting her name, and the anxiety that prompted it was sincere.

"There is no time for explanations," said Phillida, hurriedly. "Mr. Martin has called a Christian Science healer to see Tommy, who is very ill with diphtheria." [Pg 349]

"Tommy has diphtheria?" said Millard, his voice showing feeling.

"Your aunt wants a doctor," continued Phillida, "but Mr. Martin has left the woman in charge, and she refuses to give up the case. Tommy is crying, and Mrs. Martin is in a horrible position and wants to see you." Here Phillida's eyes fell as she added, "There was nobody to send; I couldn't get a messenger; and so I had to come myself."

"I am glad—" here Millard paused and began over—"You did the best thing to come yourself. You will excuse me, but I don't understand. You haven't charge of the case at all, then?"

"No, no, Charley—Mr. Millard; there is no time to explain. Get a good doctor, and put Miss Bowyer out, if you have to fetch a policeman. Get a good doctor at once. If you save the child you must be quick, quick! The horrible woman will be the death of him."

Millard caught the infection of urgency and began to take in the situation. He stepped to the door, drew aside the portière, and said:

"Washington, call a coupé for me. Quick, now." Then he called after the boy as he went to the telephone, "Tell them to hurry it up."

He turned towards Phillida; then with a new impulse he turned again and walked impatiently to the office. "Mr. Oliver, won't you ask if my man is below, and send him here as quickly as possible?"

The clerk moved, without ruffling his dignity by undue haste, to the speaking-tube which communicated with the basement. In the course of half a minute a young Englishman, with a fore-and-aft cap in his hand, came running to the reception-room, in the door of which Millard was standing. [Pg 350]

"Robert," said Millard, "run to the stable and have them send my coupé on the jump. Come back with it yourself."

The well-trained Robert glided swiftly out of the front door, not even asking a question with his eyes.

"You'll go back with me in the coupé?" Millard said to Phillida, who had risen and now stood waiting in embarrassment to say good-morning.

Phillida could not for a moment think of driving back with Millard, not so much on account of the conventional impropriety in it as because her visit was capable of misconstruction; and while she believed that Millard knew her too well to put any interpretation of self-interest on her coming, she could not have brought herself to return to Avenue C in his coupé. If for no other reason, she would have declined in order to avoid prolonging an interview painful and embarrassing to both. She was worn and faint from the fatigues of the night and the excitement of the morning, and she could not think of the right thing to say.

"No; I will go home," she said. Spoken thus, without calling him by name, the words had a severe sound, as of one mortally offended. A sudden access of fatigue and faintness reminded her that she had eaten nothing this morning.

"You will excuse me. I've had no breakfast yet. I've been at Mrs. Martin's since daylight. Good-morning, Mr. Millard." [Pg 351]

This explanation made her perfectly proper refusal somewhat less abrupt and direct; but the words were still cold and severe.

"I will call another coupé, and send you home. You are faint," he said.

"No, thank you," she said, and went out.

But Millard followed her into the street, and hailed a car, and assisted her to enter it, and lifted his hat and bowed in response to her "Thank you," when she had gained the platform. As the car moved away he stood a moment looking after it, and then returned toward the sidewalk, saying softly to himself, "By Jove, what a woman! What a woman that is!"

XXXIII. A FAMOUS VICTORY.

By the time the coupé reached the curb in front of the Graydon, Millard had fixed in his mind the first move in his campaign, and had scribbled a little note as he stood at the clerk's counter in the office. Handing the driver a dollar as a comprehensible hint that speed was required, and, taking Robert with him, he was soon bowling along the yet rather empty Fifth Avenue. He alighted in front of a rather broad, low-stoop, brownstone house, with a plain sign upon it, which read "Dr. Augustine Gunstone." What ills and misfortunes had crossed that door-stone! What celebrities had here sought advice from the great doctor in matters of life and death! Few men can enjoy a great reputation and be so unspoiled as Dr. Gunstone. The shyest young girl among his patients felt drawn to unburden her sorrows to him as to a father; the humblest sufferer remembered gratefully the reassuring gentleness of his voice and manner. But Millard made no reflections this morning; he rang the bell sharply.

"The doctor hasn't come down yet," said the servant. "He will not see patients before nine o'clock."

"At what time does he come down?"

"At a quarter to eight."

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"It's half-past seven now," said Millard. "Kindly take this note to his room with my card, and say that I wait for an answer."

There was that in Millard's manner that impressed the servant. He was sure that this must be one of those very renowned men who sometimes came to see Dr. Gunstone and who were not to be refused. He ran up the stairs and timidly knocked at the doctor's door. Millard waited five minutes in a small reception-room, and then the old doctor came down, kindly, dignified, unruffled as ever, a man courteous to all, friendly with all, but without any familiars.

"Good-morning, Mr. Millard. I can't see your patient now. Every moment of my time to-day is engaged. Perhaps I might contrive to see the child on my way to the hospital at twelve."

"If I could have a carriage here at the moment you finish your breakfast, with my valet in it to see that no time is lost, could you give us advice, and get back here before your office hours begin?"

Dr. Gunstone hesitated a moment. "Yes," he said; "but you would want a doctor in the vicinity. I can not come often enough to take charge of the case."

"We'll call any one you may name. The family are poor, I am interested in them, they are relatives of mine, and this child I have set my heart on saving, and I will not mind expense. I wish you to come every day as consultant, if possible."

Dr. Gunstone's was a professional mind before all. He avoided those profound questions of philosophy toward which modern science propels the mind, limiting himself to the science of pathology and the art of healing. On the other hand, he habitually bounded his curiosity concerning his patients to their physical condition and such of their surroundings as affected for good or ill their chances of recovery. He did not care to know more of this poor family than that he was to see a patient there; but he knew something of Millard from the friendly relations existing between him and younger members of his own family, and the disclosure that Millard had kinsfolk in Avenue C, and was deeply interested in people of a humble rank, gave Dr. Gunstone a momentary surprise, which, however, it would have been contrary to all his habits to manifest. He merely bowed a polite good-morning and turned toward the breakfast-room. [Pg 354]

These men, in whose lives life and death are matters of hourly business—matters of bread and butter and bank-account—acquire in self-defense a certain imperviousness; they learn to shed their responsibilities with facility in favor of digestion and sleep. Dr. Gunstone ate in a leisurely way, relishing his chops and coffee, and participating in the conversation of the family, who joined him one by one at the table. It did not trouble him that another family in Avenue C was in agonized waiting for his presence, and that haste or delay might make the difference between life and death to a human being. This was not heartlessness, but a condition of his living and working—a postponement of particular service, however important, in favor of the general serviceableness of his life. [Pg 355]

Millard was not sorry for the delay; it gave him time to dispose of Miss Bowyer.

Seeing that Phillida had gone to seek re-enforcements, Mrs. Martin had concluded that, in Tommy's interest, a truce would be the better thing. So, while Miss Bowyer was seeking to induce in little Tommy the impressible conscious state—or, to be precise, the conscious, passive, impressible state—Mrs. Martin offered to hold him in her arms. To this the metaphysical healer assented with alacrity, as likely to put the child into a favorable condition for the exercise of her occult therapeutic powers.

"Hold him with his back to the north, Mrs. Martin," she said; "there, in a somewhat reclining posture; that will increase his susceptibility to psychic influence. There is no doubt that the magnetism of the earth has a polar distribution. It is quite probable also that the odylic emanation of the terrestrial magnet has also a polar arrangement. Does the little fellow ever turn round in his bed at night?"

"Yes."

"That shows that he is sensitive to magnetic influences. He is trying to get himself north and south, so as to bring the body into harmony with the magnetic poles of the earth. You see the brain is normally positive. We wish to invert the poles of the body, and send the magnetism of the brain to the feet."

Miss Bowyer now took out a small silver cross and held it up before the child a little above the natural range of vision. [Pg 356]

"Will you look at this, little boy?" she said.

She did her best to make her naturally unsympathetic voice persuasive, even to pronouncing the last word of her entreaty "baw-ee." But the "little baw-ee" was faint with sickness, and he only lifted his eyes a moment to the trinket, and then closed the eyelids and turned his face toward his mother's bosom.

"Come, little baw-ee. Look at this, my child. Isn't it pretty? Little baw-ee, see here!"

But the little baw-ee wanted rest, and he showed no signs of having heard Miss Bowyer's appeal, except that he fretted with annoyance after each sentence she addressed to him.

"That is bad," said Miss Bowyer, seeing that Tommy would not look. "If I could get him to strain the eyes upward for five minutes, while I gazed at him and concentrated my mind on the act of gazing, I should be able to produce what is known in psychopathic science as the conscious impressible state—something resembling hypnotism, but stopping short of the unconscious state. I could make him forget his disease by willing forgetfulness. I must try another plan."

Miss Bowyer now sat and gazed on the child, who was half-slumbering. For five minutes she sat there like a cat ready to jump at the first movement of a moribund mouse. Apparently she was engaged in concentrating her mind on the act of gazing.

"Now," she said to Mrs. Martin in a whisper—for explication was a necessity of Miss Bowyer's nature, or perhaps essential to the potency of her measures—"now I will gently place the right hand on the fore brain and the left over the cerebellum, willing the vital force of the cerebrum to retreat backward to the cerebellum. This is the condition of the brain in the somnambulant state and in ordinary sleep. The right hand, you must know, acts from without inward, while the left acts from within outward." She suited the action to the words; but Tommy did not take kindly to the action of her right hand from without inward, or else he was annoyed by the action of the left hand from within outward. Evidently Miss Bowyer's positive and negative poles failed to harmonize with his. He put up his hands to push away her positive and negative poles; but finding that impossible, he kicked and cried in a way which showed him to be utterly out of harmony with the odylic emanations of the terrestrial magnet. [Pg 357]

With these and other mummeries Miss Bowyer proceeded during all the long hour and a quarter that intervened between Phillida's departure and the arrival of the reinforcement. Miss Bowyer was wondering meanwhile what could have been the nature of Phillida's conference outside the door with Mrs. Martin, and whether Mrs. Martin were sufficiently convinced of her skill by this time for her to venture to leave the place presently to meet certain office patients whom she expected. But she concluded to run no risks of defeat; she had left word at her office that she had been called to see a patient dangerously ill, and such a report would do her reputation no harm.

Mrs. Martin was driven to the very verge of distraction by the sense of Tommy's danger and the necessity she was under of suppressing her feelings while this woman, crank or impostor, held possession of the child and of her house. Not to disturb Tommy, she affected a peaceful attitude toward the professor of Christian sorcery, whom, in the anguish of her spirit, she would have liked to project out of a window into the dizzy space occupied by pulleys and clothes-lines. Footsteps came and went past her door, but there was as yet no interruption to Miss Bowyer's pow-wow. At length there came a step on the stairs, and a rap. Mrs. Martin laid Tommy on the bed and opened the door. Charley beckoned her to be silent and to come out. [Pg 358]

"What is the name of the faith-healer, Aunt Hannah?" he whispered.

"Miss Bowyer."

"Does she still refuse to leave?"

"Oh, yes! She declares she will not leave."

"You want her out?"

"Yes; I want a doctor," said Mrs. Martin, giving her hands a little wring.

"Tell Miss Bowyer that there is a gentleman outside the door who wishes to see her. Whenever the door is shut, do you fasten it inside."

"Miss Bowyer, there's a gentleman inquiring for you outside," said Mrs. Martin when she returned.

Miss Bowyer opened the door suspiciously, standing in the doorway as she spoke.

"Did you wish to see me?"

"Are you Miss Bowyer?"

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"Yes,"—with a wave inflection, as though half inquiring.

"Are you the Christian Scientist?"

"Yes," said Miss Bowyer, "I am."

"This is a case of diphtheria, isn't it?"

"It's a case of belief in diphtheria. I have no doubt I shall be able to reduce the morbid action soon. The child is already in the state of interior perception," she said, seeing in Millard a possible patient, and coming a little further out of the door.

"It's catching, I believe," said Millard. "Would you mind closing the door a moment while I speak with you?"

Miss Bowyer peered into the room to see Mrs. Martin giving Tommy a drink. Feeling secure, she softly closed the door, keeping hold of the handle. Then she turned to Millard.

"Did you wish to see me professionally?" she asked.

"Well," said Millard, "I think you might call it professionally. I live over on the west side. Do you know where the Graydon apartment building is?"

"Yes, oh, yes; I attended a patient near there once, in one of the brownstone houses on the other side of the street. He got well beautifully."

"Well, I live in the Graydon," said Millard.

"Yes," said Miss Bowyer, with a rising inflection, wondering what could be the outcome of this roundabout talk. "Is some member of your family sick?" she asked.

A bolt clicked behind the metaphysical healer, who turned with the alarm of a trapped mouse and essayed to push the door. Then, remembering what seemed more profitable game in front, she [Pg 360] repeated her question, but in a ruffled tone, "Some member of your family?"

Charley laughed in spite of himself.

"Not of my family, but a relative," he said. "It is my cousin who is sick in this room, and I called to get you outside of the door. I beg your pardon for the seeming rudeness."

Miss Bowyer now pushed on the door in vain.

"You think this is a gentlemanly way to treat a lady?" she said, choking with indignation.

"It doesn't seem handsome, does it?" he said. "But do you think you have treated Mrs. Martin in a ladylike way?"

"I was called by her husband," she said.

"You are now dismissed by the wife."

"I will see Mr. Martin at once, and he will reinstate me."

"You will not see Mr. Martin. I shall not give you a chance. I am going to report you to the County Medical Society and the Board of Health at once. Have you reported this case of diphtheria, as the law requires?"

"No, I have not," said Miss Bowyer; "but I was going to do so to-day."

"I don't like to dispute the word of a lady," he said, "but you know that you are not a proper practitioner, and that in case of a contagious disease the Board of Health would put you out of here neck and heels, if I must speak so roughly. Mrs. Martin is my aunt. If you make any trouble, [Pg 361] I shall feel obliged to have you arrested at once. If you go home quietly and do not say a word to Mr. Martin, I'll let you off. You have no doubt lost patients of this kind before, and if I look up your record—"

"My hat and cloak are in there," said Miss Bowyer.

"If you renounce the case and say no more to Mr. Martin I will not follow you up," said Charley; "but turn your hand against Mrs. Martin, and I'll spend a thousand dollars to put you in prison."

This put a new aspect on the case in Miss Bowyer's mind. That Mrs. Martin had influential friends she had not dreamed. Miss Bowyer had had one tilt with the authorities, and she preferred not to try it again.

"My hat and cloak are in there," she repeated, pushing on the door.

"Stand aside," said Millard, "and I will get them."

Somehow Millard had reached Miss Bowyer's interior perception and put her into the conscious, impressible, passive state, in which his will was hers. She moved to the other side of the dark hall in such a state of mind that she could hardly have told whether the magnetism of her brain was in the cerebrum or in the cerebellum or in a state of oscillation between the two.

"Aunt Hannah," called Millard, "open the door."

The bolt was shoved back by Mrs. Martin. Millard opened the door a little way, holding the knob firmly in his right hand. Mrs. Martin stood well out of sight behind the door, from an undefined fear of getting in range of Miss Bowyer, whose calm bullying had put Mrs. Martin into some [Pg 362] impassive state not laid down in works on Christian Science.

"Give me Miss Bowyer's hat and cloak," said Millard.

The things were passed out by Mrs. Martin, who, in doing so, exposed nothing but her right hand to the enemy, while Charley took them in his left and passed them to Miss Bowyer.

"Now remember," he said, closing the door and holding it until he heard the bolt shoved to its place again, "if you know what is good for you, you will not make the slightest movement in this case."

"But you will not refuse me my fee," she said. "You have put me out of a case that would have been worth ten or twenty dollars. I shall expect you to pay me something."

Millard hesitated. It might be better not to provoke her too far; but on the other hand, he could not suppress his indignation on his aunt's behalf so far as to give her money.

"Send me your bill, made out explicitly for medical services in this case. Address the cashier of the Bank of Manhadoes. I will pay you if your bill is regularly made out."

Miss Bowyer went down the stairs and into the street. But the more she thought of it the more she was convinced that this demand for a regular bill for medical services from a non-registered practitioner concealed some new device to entrap her. She had had enough of that young man up-stairs, and, much as she disliked the alternative, she thought it best to let her fee go uncollected, unless she could some day collect it quietly from the head of the Martin family. Her magnetism had never before been so much out of harmony with every sort of odyllic emanation in the universe as at this moment. [Pg 363]

XXXIV. DOCTORS AND LOVERS.

Faint from the all-night strain upon her feelings, Phillida returned to her home from the Graydon to find her mother and sister at breakfast.

"Philly, you're 'most dead," said Agatha, as Phillida walked wearily into the dining-room by way of the basement door. "You're pale and sick. Here, sit down and take a cup of coffee."

Phillida sat down without removing her bonnet or sack, but Agatha took them off while her mother poured her coffee.

"Where have you been and what made you go off so early?" went on Agatha. "Or did you run away in the night?"

"Let Phillida take her coffee and get rested," said the mother.

"All right, she shall," said Agatha, patting her on the back in a baby-cuddling way. "Only tell me how that little boy is; I do want to know, and you can just say 'better,' 'worse,' 'well,' or 'dead,' without waiting for the effect of the coffee, don't you see?"

"The child has diphtheria. I don't know whether I ought to come home and expose the rest of you."

"Nonsense," said Agatha. "Do you think we're going to send you off to the Island? You take care of the rest of the world, Philly, but mama and I take care of you. When you get up into a private box in heaven as a great saint, we'll hang on to your robe and get good seats." [Pg 365]

"Sh-sh," said Phillida, halting between a revulsion at Agatha's irreverent speech and a feeling more painful. "I'll never be a great saint, Aggy. Only a poor, foolish girl, mistaking her fancies for her duty."

"Oh, that's the way with all the great saints. They just missed being shut up for lunatics. But do you think you'll be able to save that little boy? Don't you think you ought to get them to call a doctor?"

"I? Oh, I gave up the case. I'm done with faith-healing once for all, Agatha." This was said with a little gulp, indicating that the confession cost her both effort and pain.

"You—"

"Don't ask me any questions till I'm better able to answer. I'm awfully tired out and cross."

"What have you been doing this morning?" said Agatha, notwithstanding Phillida's injunction against questions.

"Getting Miss Bowyer out of the Martin house. Mr. Martin was determined to have her, and he went for her when his wife sent him for a doctor."

"Miss Bowyer! I don't see how you ever got her out," said Agatha. "Did you get a policeman to put her into the station-house on the mortal plane?"

"No; I did worse. I actually had to go to the Graydon and wake up Charley Millard—"

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"You did?"

"Yes; I couldn't get a messenger, and so I went myself. And I put the case into Charley's hands, and he sent his man Friday scampering after a coupé, and I came home and left him to go over there and fight it out."

"Well, I declare!" said Agatha. "What remarkable adventures you have! And I never have anything real nice and dreadful happen to me. But he might have brought you home."

"It wasn't his fault that he didn't. But give me a little bit of steak, please; I have got to go back to the Martins'."

"No, you mustn't. Mother, don't you let her."

"I do wish, Phillida," said the mother, "that you wouldn't go down into the low quarters of the town any more. You're so exposed to disease. And then you're a young woman. You haven't got your father's endurance. It's a dreadful risk."

"Well, I'm rather responsible for the child, and then I ought to be there to protect Mrs. Martin from her husband when he comes home at noon, and to share the blame with her when he finds his favorite put out and Charley's doctor in possession."

"So you and Charley are in partnership in saving the boy's life," said Agatha, "and you've got a regular doctor. That's something like. I can guess what'll come next."

"Hush, Agatha," said the mother.

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Phillida's appetite for beefsteak failed in a moment, and she pushed her plate back and looked at her sister with vexation.

"If you think there's going to be a new engagement, you're mistaken."

"Think!" said Agatha, with a provoking laugh, "I don't think anything about it. I know just what's got to happen. You and Charley are just made for each other, though for my part I should prefer a young man something like Cousin Philip."

Phillida was silent for a moment, and Mrs. Callender made a protesting gesture at the impulsive Agatha.

"I don't think you ought to talk about such things when I'm so tired," said Phillida, struggling to maintain self-control. "Mr. Millard is a man used to great popularity and much flattery in society. He would never stand it in the world; it would hurt him twenty years hence to be reminded that his wife had been a—well—a fanatic." This was uttered with a sharp effort of desperation, Phillida grinding a bit of bread to pieces between thumb and finger the meanwhile. "If he were to offer to renew the engagement I should refuse. It would be too mortifying to think of."

Agatha said nothing, and Phillida presently added, "And if you think I went to the Graydon to renew the acquaintance of Charley, it's—very—unkind of you, that's all." Phillida could no longer restrain her tears.

"Why, Phillida, dear, Agatha didn't say any such thing," interposed Mrs. Callender.

"If you think," said Agatha, angrily, "that I could even imagine such a thing as that, it's just too awfully mean, that's all. But you've worried yourself sick and you're unreasonable. There, now, please don't cry, Philly," she added, going around and stroking her sister's hair. "You're too good for any man that ever lived, and that's a great misfortune. If they could have split the difference between your goodness and my badness, they might have made two fair average women. There, now, if you don't eat something I'll blame myself all day. I'm going to toast you a piece of bread." [Pg 368]

In spite of remonstrance, the repentant Agatha toasted a piece of bread and boiled the only egg that Sarah had in the house, to tempt her sister's appetite.

"Your motto is, 'Hard words and kind acts,'" said Mrs. Callender, as Agatha came in with the toast and the egg.

"My motto is, 'Hard words and soft boiled eggs,'" said Agatha, who had by this penance secured her own forgiveness and recovered her gayety.

In vain was Phillida entreated to rest. She felt herself drawn to Mrs. Martin, who would, as she concluded, have got rid of Miss Bowyer, and seen the doctor and Charley, and be left alone, by this time. So, promising to be back by one o'clock, if possible, she went out again, indulging her fatigue so far as to take a car in Fourteenth street. Arrived at Mrs. Martin's, she was embarrassed at finding Millard sitting with his aunt. She gave him a look of recognition as she entered, and said to Mrs. Martin, who was holding Tommy:

"I thought I should find you alone by this time."

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This indirect statement that she had not considered it desirable to encounter Millard again cut him, and he said, as though the words had been addressed to him, "I am expecting Dr. Gunstone every moment."

"Dr. Gunstone? I am glad he is coming," said Phillida, firing the remark in the air indiscriminately at the aunt or nephew, as either might please to accept it.

At that moment Millard's valet, Robert, in the capacity of pioneer and pilot, knocked at the door. When Millard opened it he said, "Dr. Gunstone, sir," and stood aside to let the physician pass.

Gunstone made a little hurried bow to Millard, and, without waiting for an introduction, bowed with his usual deference to Mrs. Martin. "Good-morning, madam; is this the little sufferer?" at the same time making a hurried bow of courtesy to Phillida as a stranger; but as he did so, he arrested himself and said in the fatherly tone he habitually used with his young women patients, "How do you do? You came to see me last year with—"

"My mother, Mrs. Callender," said Phillida.

"Yes, yes; and how is your mother, my dear?"

"Quite well, thank you, doctor."

The doctor dispatched these courtesies with business-like promptness, and then settled himself to an examination of little Tommy.

"This is diphtheria," he said; "you will want a physician in the neighborhood. Let's see, whom have you?" This to Millard.

Millard turned to his aunt. She looked at Phillida. "There's Dr. Smith around the corner," said Phillida. [Pg 370]

Dr. Gunstone said, "Dr. Smith?" inquiringly to himself. But the name did not seem to recall any particular Smith.

"And Dr. Beswick in Seventeenth street," said Phillida.

"Beswick is a very good young fellow, with ample hospital experience," said Gunstone. "Can you send for him at once?"

Robert, who stood alert without the door, was told to bring Dr. Beswick in the carriage, and in a very short space of time Beswick was there, having left Mrs. Beswick sure that success and renown could not be far away when her husband was called on Gunstone's recommendation, and fetched in a coupé under the conduct of what seemed to her a coachman and a footman. Beswick's awkwardness and his abrupt up-and-downness of manner contrasted strangely with Dr. Gunstone's simple but graceful ways. A few rapid directions served to put the case into Beswick's hands, and the old doctor bowed swiftly to all in the room, descended the stairs, and, having picked his way hurriedly through a swarm of children on the sidewalk, entered the carriage again, and was gone.

Millard looked at his watch, remembered that he had had no breakfast, and prepared to take his leave.

"Thank you, Charley, ever so much," said his aunt. "I don't know what I should have done without you."

"Miss Callender is the one to thank," said Millard, scarcely daring to look at her, as he bade her and Dr. Beswick good-morning. [Pg 371]

When he had reached the bottom of the long flight of stairs, Millard suddenly turned about and climbed upward once more.

"Miss Callender," he said, standing in the door, "let me speak to you, please."

Phillida went out to him. This confidential conversation could not but excite a rush of associations and emotion in the minds of both of them, so that neither dared to look directly at the other as they stood there in the obscure light which struggled through two dusty panes of glass at the top of the next flight.

"You must not stay here," he said. "You're very weary; you will be liable to take the disease. I am going to send a professional nurse."

This solicitude for her was so like the Charley of other times that it made Phillida tremble with a grateful emotion she could not quite conceal.

"A professional nurse will be better for Tommy. But I can not leave while Mrs. Martin has any great need for me." She could not confess to him the responsibility she felt in the case on account of her having undertaken it the evening before as a faith-doctor.

"What is the best way to get a nurse?" asked Millard, regarding her downcast face, and repressing a dreadful impulse to manifest his reviving affection.

"Dr. Beswick will know," said Phillida. "I will send him out." She was glad to escape into the room again, for she was afraid to trust her own feelings longer in Millard's company. The arrangement was made that Dr. Beswick should send a nurse, and then Millard and Beswick went down-stairs together. [Pg 372]

Phillida stayed till Mr. Martin came home, hoping to soften the scene between husband and wife. In his heart Martin revered his wife's good sense, but he thought it due to his sex to assert himself once in a while against a wife whose superiority he could not but recognize. As soon as he had accomplished this feat, thereby proving his masculinity, he always repented it. For so long as his wife approved his course he was sure that he could not be far astray; but whenever his vanity had made him act against her judgment he was a mariner out of reckoning, and he made haste to take account of the pole star of her good sense.

He had just now been impelled by certain ugly elements in his nature to give his wife a taste of his power as the head of the family, the more that she had dared to make sport of his new science and of his new oracle, Miss Bowyer. But once he had become individually responsible for Tommy's life without the security of Mrs. Martin's indorsement on the back of the bond, he became extremely miserable. As noontime approached he grew so restless that he got excused from his bench early, and came home.

Motives of delicacy had prevented any communication between Phillida and Mrs. Martin regarding the probable attitude of Mr. Martin toward the transactions of the morning. But when his ascending footsteps, steady and solemn as the Dead March in "Saul," were heard upon the stairs, their hearts failed them.

"How's little Tommy?" he asked. [Pg 373]

"I don't think he's any better," said Mrs. Martin.

"Come to think," said the husband, "I guess I'd better send word to Miss Bowyer to give it up and not come any more, and then I'd better get a regular doctor. I don't somehow like to take all the responsibility, come to think."

"Miss Bowyer's given up the case," said Mrs. Martin. "Charley's been here, scared to death about Tommy. He brought a great doctor from Fifth Avenue, and together they sent for Dr. Beswick. Miss Bowyer gave up the case."

"Give up the case, did she?" he said wonderingly.

"Yes."

"Well, that's better. But I didn't ever hardly believe she'd go and give it up."

Mr. Martin did not care to inquire further. He was rid of responsibility, and finding himself once more under the lee of his wife, he could eat his dinner and go back to work a happier man.

XXXV.
PHILLIDA AND HER FRIENDS.

The appearance in the Martin apartment of the trained nurse, who was an old friend and hospital associate of Mrs. Beswick's, relieved Phillida of night service; but nothing could relieve her sense of partial responsibility for the delay in calling a doctor, and her resolution to stay by little Tommy as much as possible until the issue should be known. Every day while the nurse rested she took her place with the patient, holding him in her arms for long hours at a time, and every day Millard called to make inquiries. He was not only troubled about the little boy, but there hung over him a dread of imminent calamity to Phillida. On the fifth day the symptoms in Tommy's case became more serious, but at the close of the sixth Dr. Beswick expressed himself as hopeful. The next evening, when Millard called, he learned that Tommy was improving slowly, and that Miss Callender had not come to the Martins' on that day. His aunt thought that she was probably tired out, and that she had taken advantage of Tommy's improvement to rest. But when had Phillida been known to rest when anybody within her range was suffering? Millard felt sure that she would at least have come to learn the condition of the sick boy had she been able.

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He hesitated to make inquiry after Phillida's health. Her effort to avoid conversation with him assured him that she preferred not to encourage a new intimacy. But though he debated, he did not delay going straight to the Callenders' and ringing the bell.

Agatha came to the door.

"Good-evening, Miss Agatha," he said, presuming so much on his old friendship as to use her first name.

"Good-evening, Mr. Millard," said Agatha, in an embarrassed but austere voice.

"I called to inquire after your sister. Knowing that she had been exposed to diphtheria, I was afraid—" He paused here, remembering that he no longer had any right to be afraid on her account.

Agatha did not wait for him to re-shape or complete his sentence. She said, "Thank you. She has a sore throat, which makes us very uneasy. Cousin Philip has just gone to see if he can get Dr. Gunstone."

When Millard had gone, Agatha told her mother that Charley had called.

"I am glad of it," said Mrs. Callender. "Did you ask him in?"

"Not I," said Agatha, with a high head. "If he wants to renew his acquaintance with Phillida, he can do it without our asking him. I was just as stiff as I could be with him, and I told him that Cousin Phil had gone for the doctor. That'll be a thorn in his side, for he always was a little jealous of Philip, I believe."

"Why, Agatha, I'm afraid you haven't done right. You oughtn't to be so severe. For my part, I hope the engagement will be renewed. I am sick and tired of having Phillida risk her life in the tenements. It was very kind of Mr. Millard to call and inquire, I am sure."

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"He ought to," said Agatha. "She got this dreadful disease taking care of his relations. I don't want him to think we're dying to have him take Phillida off our hands." Agatha's temper was ruffled by her anxiety at Phillida's sickness. "I'm sure his high and mighty tone about Phillida's faith-cures has worried her enough. Now just let him worry awhile."

Certainly, Agatha Callender's bearing toward him did not reassure Millard. He thought she might have called him Charley; or if that was not just the thing to do, she might have made her voice a little less frosty. He could not get rid of a certain self-condemnation regarding Phillida, and he conjectured that her family were disposed to condemn him also. He thought they ought to consider how severely his patience had been tried; but then they could not know how Phillida was talked about. How could they ever imagine Meadows's brutal impertinence?

He was not clear regarding the nature of the change in Phillida's views. Had she wholly renounced her faith-healing, or was she only opposed to the Christian Science imposture? Or did

she think that medicine should be called in after an appeal to Heaven had failed? If he had felt that there was any probability of a renewal of his engagement with Phillida, he could have wished that she might not yet have given up her career as a faith-doctor. He would then have a chance to prove to her that he was not too cowardly to endure reproach for her sake. But, from the way Agatha spoke, it must be that Philip Gouverneur was now in favor rather than he. Nothing had been more evident to him than that Philip was in love with his cousin. What was to be expected but that Philip, with the advantage of cousinly intimacy, should urge his suit, once Phillida was free from her engagement? [Pg 377]

But all his other anxieties were swallowed up in the one fear that she who had ventured her life for others so bravely might have sacrificed it. Millard was uneasy the night long, and before he went to the bank he called again at the Callender house. He was glad that it was Sarah, and not Agatha, who came to the door. He sent in a card to Mrs. Callender with the words, "Kind inquiries," written on it, and received through Sarah the reply that Mrs. Callender was much obliged to him for inquiring, and that Miss Callender had diphtheria and was not so well as yesterday.

The cashier of the Bank of Manhadoes was not happy that day. He threw himself into his business with an energy that seemed feverish. He did not feel that it would be proper for him to call again before the next morning; it would seem like trying to take advantage of Phillida's illness. But, with such a life in jeopardy, how could his impatience delay till morning?

Just before three o'clock the Hilbrough carriage stopped at the bank. Mrs. Hilbrough had come to take up her husband for a drive. Hilbrough was engaged with some one in the inner office, which he had occupied since Masters had virtually retired from the bank. Millard saw the carriage from his window, and, with more than his usual gallantry, quitted his desk to assist Mrs. Hilbrough to alight. But she declined to come in; she would wait in the carriage for Mr. Hilbrough. [Pg 378]

"Did you know of Miss Callender's illness?" he asked.

"No; is it anything serious?" Mrs. Hilbrough showed a sincere solicitude.

"Diphtheria," he said. "I called there this morning. Mrs. Callender sent word that Phillida was not so well as yesterday."

Mrs. Hilbrough was pleased that Millard had gone so far as to inquire. She reflected that an illness, if not a dangerous one, might be a good thing for lovers situated as these two. But diphtheria was another matter.

"I wish I knew how she's getting along this afternoon," said Mrs. Hilbrough.

"I would call again at once," said Millard, "but, you know, my relations are peculiar. To call twice in a day might seem intrusive."

"I would drive there at once," said Mrs. Hilbrough, meditatively, "but Mr. Hilbrough is so wrapped up in his children, and so much afraid of their getting diphtheria, that he will not venture into the street where it is. If I should send the footman, Mr. Hilbrough would not let him return to the house again. I'm afraid he would not even approve of communication by a telegraph-boy."

"A boy would be long enough returning to be disinfected," said Millard; but the pleasantry was all in his words; his face showed solicitude and disappointment. He could think of no one but Mrs. Hilbrough through whom he could inquire. [Pg 379]

"Perhaps," he said, "you would not object to my sending an inquiry in your name?"

"Oh, certainly not; that would be a good plan, especially if you will take the trouble to let me know how she is. Use my name at your discretion, Mr. Millard. I give you *carte blanche*," said she, smiling with pleasure at the very notion of bearing so intimate a relation to a clever scheme which lent a little romance to a love-affair highly interesting to her on all accounts. She took out a visiting-card and penciled the words, "Hoping that Miss Callender is not very ill, and begging Mrs. Callender to let her know." This she handed to Millard.

Mr. Hilbrough came out at that moment, and Millard bowed to Mrs. Hilbrough and went in. Hilbrough had been as deeply grieved as his wife to hear that the much-admired Phillida was ill.

"What are you going to do, my dear?" he said. "You can not go there without risking the children. You can't send James without danger of bringing the infection into the house. But we mustn't

leave Phillida without some attentions; I don't see how to manage it."

"I've just made Mr. Millard my deputy," said Mrs. Hilbrough. "You see, he feels delicate about inquiring too often; so I have written inquiries on one of my cards and given it to Mr. Millard."

Hilbrough didn't like to do things in a stinted way, particularly in cases which involved his [Pg 380] generous feelings.

"Give me a lot of your cards," he said.

"What for?"

"For Mr. Millard."

"I don't see what use he can make of them," said Mrs. Hilbrough, slowly opening her card-case.

"He'll know," said Hilbrough. "He can work a visiting-card in more ways than any other man in New York." Hilbrough took half a dozen of his wife's cards and carried them into the bank.

"Use these as you see fit," he said to Millard, "and if you need a dozen or two more let me know."

Under other circumstances Millard would have been amused, this liberal overdoing was so characteristic of Hilbrough. But he only took the cards with thanks, reflecting that there might be some opportunity to use them.

As he would be detained at the bank until near four o'clock, his first impulse was to call a district messenger and dispatch Mrs. Hilbrough's card of inquiry at once. But he reflected that the illness might be a long one, and that his measures should be taken with reference to his future conduct. On his way home from the bank he settled the manner of his procedure. The Callender family, outside of Phillida at most, did not know his man Robert. By sending the discreet Robert systematically with messages in Mrs. Hilbrough's name, those who attended the door would come to regard him as the Hilbrough messenger.

It was about five o'clock when Robert, under careful instructions, presented Mrs. Hilbrough's [Pg 381] card at the Callender door. Unfortunately for Millard's plan, Mrs. Callender, despite Robert's hint that a verbal message would be sufficient, wrote her reply. When the note came into Millard's hands he did not know what to do. His commission did not extend to opening a missive addressed to Mrs. Hilbrough. The first impulse was to dispatch Robert with the note to Mrs. Hilbrough. Then Millard remembered Mr. Hilbrough's apprehension of diphtheria, and that Robert had come from the infected house. He would send Mrs. Callender's note by a messenger. But, on second thought, the note would be a more deadly missile in Hilbrough's eyes than Robert, who had not gone beyond the vestibule of the Callender house. He therefore sent a note by a messenger, stating the case, and received in return permission to open all letters addressed to Mrs. Hilbrough which his man might bring away from the Callenders'. This scheme, by which Millard personated Mrs. Hilbrough, had so much the air of a romantic intrigue of the harmless variety that it fascinated Mrs. Hilbrough, who dearly loved a manœuvre, and who would have given Millard permission to forge her name and seal his notes of inquiry with the recently discovered Hilbrough coat-of-arms, if such extreme measures had been necessary. Mrs. Callender's reply stated that Dr. Gunstone was hopeful, but that Phillida seemed pretty ill.

The next morning Millard's card with "Kind inquiries" was sent in, and the reply was returned that Phillida was no worse. Her mother showed her the card, and Phillida looked at it for half a minute and then wearily put it away. An hour later Robert appeared at the door with a bunch of [Pg 382] callas, to which Mrs. Hilbrough's card was attached.

"Oh! see, Philly," said Agatha softly, "Mrs. Hilbrough has sent you some flowers."

Phillida reached her hand and touched them, gazed at them a moment, and then turned her head away, and began to weep.

"What is the matter, Philly? What are you crying about?" said her mother, with solicitation.

"The flowers make me want to die."

"Why, how can the flowers trouble you?"

"They are just like what Charley used to send me. They remind me that there is nothing more for me but to die and have done with the world."

The flowers were put out of her sight; but Phillida's mind had fastened itself on those other callas

whose mute appeal for Charley Millard, at the crisis of her history, had so deeply moved her, though her perverse conscience would not let her respond to it.

XXXVI. MRS. BESWICK.

About the time that Phillida got her flowers Mrs. Beswick sat mending her husband's threadbare overcoat. His vigorous thumbs, in frequent fastening and loosening, had worn the cloth quite through in the neighborhood of the buttons. To repair this, his wife had cut little bits of the fabric off the overplus of cloth at the seams, and worked these little pieces through the holes, and then sewed the cloth down upon them so as to underlay the thumb-worn places. The buttonholes had also frayed out, and these had to be reworked.

"I declare, my love," she said, "you ought to have a new overcoat. This one is not decent enough for a man in your position to wear."

"It'll have to do till warm weather," he said; "I couldn't buy another if I wanted to."

"But you see, love, since Dr. Gunstone called you and sent a carriage for you, there's a chance for a better sort of practice, if we were only able to furnish the office a little better, and, above all, to get you a good overcoat. There, try that on and see how it looks."

Dr. Beswick drew the overcoat on, and Mrs. Beswick gave herself the pleasure of buttoning it about his manly form, and of turning the doctor around as a Bowery shopkeeper does a sidewalk dummy, to try the effect, smoothing the coat with her hands the while. [Pg 384]

"That looks a good deal better, Mattie," he said.

"Yes; but it's fraying a little at the cuffs, and when it gives away there darning and patching won't save it. There, don't, don't, love, please; I'm in a hurry."

This last appeal was occasioned by the doctor's availing himself of her proximity to put his arm about her.

"Annie Jackson got twenty-five dollars for nursing the Martin child. Now, if I'd only done that."

"But you couldn't, Mattie. You're a doctor's wife, and you owe it to your position not to go out nursing."

"I know. Never mind; your practice'll rise now that Dr. Gunstone has called you, and they sent a carriage with a coachman and a footman after you. That kind of thing makes an impression on the neighbors. I shouldn't wonder if you'd be able to keep your own carriage in a few years. I'm sure you've got as much ability as Dr. Gunstone, though you don't put on his stylish ways. But we must manage to get you a new overcoat before another winter. Take off the coat, quick."

The last words were the result of a ring at the door. The doctor slipped quickly out of his overcoat, laughing, and then instantly assumed his meditative office face, while Mrs. Beswick opened the door. There stood a man in shirt-sleeves who had come to get the doctor to go to the dry dock to see a workman who was suffering from an attack of cart-pin in the hands of a friend with whom he had been discussing municipal politics.

Fifteen minutes later Mrs. Beswick's wifely heart was gladdened by another ring. When she saw that the visitor was a fine-looking gentleman, scrupulously well-dressed, even to his gloves and cane, she felt that renown and wealth must be close at hand. [Pg 385]

"Is Dr. Beswick in?" demanded the caller.

"He was called out in haste to see a patient, who—was—taken down very suddenly," she said; "but I expect him back every moment. Will you come in and wait?"

"Can I see Mrs. Beswick?" said the stranger, entering.

"I am Mrs. Beswick."

"I am Mr. Millard. My aunt, Mrs. Martin, referred me to you. The occasion of my coming is this: Miss Callender, while caring for my little cousin, has caught diphtheria."

"I'm so sorry. You mean the one they call the faith-doctor? She's such a sweet, ladylike person! She's been here to see the doctor. And you want Dr. Beswick to attend her?"

"No; the family have called Dr. Gunstone, who has been their physician before."

Mrs. Beswick was visibly disappointed. It seemed so long to wait until Dr. Beswick's transcendent ability should be recognized. She was tired of hearing of Gunstone.

"I would like to send a good nurse to care for Miss Callender," said Millard, "since she got her sickness by attention to my little cousin. My aunt, Mrs. Martin, said that the nurse Dr. Beswick sent to her child was a friend of yours, I believe."

"Yes; I was in the hospital with her. But you couldn't get Miss Jackson, who nursed the little Martin boy. She's going to take charge of a case next week. It's a first-rate case that will last all summer. You could find a good nurse by going to the New York Hospital." [Pg 386]

Millard looked hopeless. After a moment he said: "It wouldn't do. You see the family of Miss Callender wouldn't have me pay for a nurse if they knew about it. I thought I might get this Miss Jackson to go in as an acquaintance, having known Miss Callender at the Martins'. They needn't know that I pay her. Don't you think I could put somebody in her place, and get her?"

"No; it's a long case, and it will give her a chance to go to the country, and the people have waited nearly a week to get her."

"I suppose I'll have to give it up. Unless—unless—"

Millard paused a moment. Then he said:

"They say you are a trained nurse. If, now, I could coax you to go in as an acquaintance? You have met her, and you like her?"

"Oh, ever so much! She's so good and friendly. But I don't think I could go. The doctor's only beginning, but his practice is improving fast, and his position, you know, might be affected by my going out to nurse again."

But Mrs. Beswick looked a little excited, and Millard, making a hurried estimate of the Beswick financial condition from the few assets visible, concluded that the project was by no means hopeless.

"I wouldn't ask you to go out as a paid nurse. You would go and tender your services as a friend," he said.

"I'd feel like a wretch to be taking pay and pretending to do it all for kindness," said Mrs. Beswick, with a rueful laugh. [Pg 387]

"Indeed, it would be a kindness, Mrs. Beswick, and it might save a valuable life."

"I don't know what to say till I consult the doctor," she said, dreaming of all the things she could do toward increasing the doctor's respectability if she had a little extra money. "I can not see that it would hurt his practice if managed in that way."

"Indeed, it might help it," said Millard, seeing Mrs. Beswick's accessible point. "You'd make the friendship of people who are connected with the first families of the city, and you'd make the acquaintance of Dr. Gunstone, who would recognize you only as a friend of Miss Callender's."

"I'll speak to the doctor. I'm sure I wouldn't do it for any one else. I couldn't stay away all the time, you know."

"Stay whatever time you can, and it will give me pleasure to pay you at the highest rate, for the service is a very delicate one."

"I'll feel like a liar," she said, with her head down, "pretending to do it all for nothing, though, indeed, I wouldn't go for anybody else."

"Oh, do it for nothing. We'll have no bargain. I'll make you a present when you are done."

"That'll be better," she said, though Millard himself could hardly see the difference.

XXXVII. DR. GUNSTONE'S DIAGNOSIS.

Mrs. Beswick, at the cost of a little persistence and a good many caresses, succeeded in getting the doctor to consent that she should go to the Callenders'. The risk of contagion she pooh-poohed. She called at Mrs. Callender's, and, again by a little persistence, succeeded in laying off her hat and sack and ensconcing herself as a volunteer nurse to Phillida. It seemed a case of remarkable disinterestedness to the Callender family, and a case of unparalleled hypocrisy to Mrs. Beswick, but she could not be dissuaded from staying from the early morning to bedtime, assuring Mrs. Callender that she would rather care for her daughter than for any one else. "Except the doctor, of course," she added. She was always pleased when she could contrive to mention the doctor; no topic of conversation brought her so many pleasurable emotions. Phillida became fond of her and whenever she went away longed for her return.

Robert brought flowers every day in Mrs. Hilbrough's name, and Millard called to inquire as often as he thought proper. The tidings secured on the third and fourth days indicated that the attack would prove a lighter one than that which had almost cost the life of Tommy. On the fifth day it was reported that Phillida was convalescent. Dr. Gunstone had announced that he would come no more unless there should appear symptoms of temporary paralysis, such as sometimes follow this disease, or unless other complications should arise. Millard thought it would be more prudent and, so to speak, realistic, to make Mrs. Hilbrough's inquiries and his own less frequent after this. He and Robert, therefore, called on alternate days. On Monday it was Mr. Millard who called, on Tuesday it was a bunch of flowers and inquiries in Mrs. Hilbrough's name. But Phillida's progress was so slow that it seemed doubtful after some days whether she made any advancement at all. The disease had quite disappeared, but strength did not return. At the end of a week from Dr. Gunstone's leave-taking, the family were in great anxiety lest there might be some obscure malady preying on her strength, and there was talk of taking her to some southern place to meet half-way the oncoming spring. But this would have drawn heavily on the family savings, which were likely to dwindle fast enough; the appearance of diphtheria having vacated all the rooms in the house at a time when there was small hope of letting them again before the autumn. [Pg 389]

Milder measures than a trip were tried first. The arm-chair in which she sat was removed into the front parlor in hope that a slight change of scene might be an improvement; the cheerful sight of milk-wagons and butcher-carts, the melodious cries of old clothes buyers and sellers of "ba-nan-i-yoes" and the piping treble of girl-peddlers of horse-red-deesh were somehow to have a tonic effect upon her. But the spectacle of the rarely swept paving-stones of a side-street in the last days of March was not inspiring. Phillida had the additional discomfort of involuntarily catching glimpses of her own pallid and despondent face in the pier-glass between the windows. [Pg 390]

As for the life of the street, it seemed to her to belong to a world in which she no longer had any stake. The shock of disillusion regarding faith-healing had destroyed for the time a good deal besides. If mistaken in one thing she might be in many. However wholesome and serviceable a critical skepticism may prove to an enthusiast in the full tide of health and activity, to Phillida broken in heart and hope it was but another weight to sink her to the bottom. For now there was no longer love to look forward to, nor was she even able to interest herself again in the work that had mainly occupied her life, but which also she had marred by her errors. Turn either way she felt that she had spoiled her life.

Looking out of the window listlessly, late one afternoon, her attention was awakened by a man approaching with some cut flowers in his hand. She noticed with a curious interest that he wore a cap like the one she had remarked in the hands of Millard's valet. As he passed beneath the window, she distinctly recognized Robert as the man Millard had sent to hasten the coming of the coupé, and when he mounted the steps she felt her pulses beat more quickly.

Her mother entered presently with the flowers.

"From Mrs. Hilbrough with inquiries," Mrs. Callender read from the card as she arranged the [Pg 391]

flowers in a vase on the low marble table under the pier-glass.

"Mrs. Hilbrough?" said Phillida with a feeling of disappointment. "But that was Charley Millard's man."

"No, that is the man Mrs. Hilbrough has sent ever since you were taken ill," said the mother. "He speaks in a peculiar English way; did you hear him? You've got a better color this evening, I declare."

"Mama, that is Charley's man," persisted Phillida. "I saw him at the Graydon. And the flowers he has brought all along are in Charley's taste—just what he used to send me, and not anything out of Mrs. Hilbrough's conservatory. Give me a sip of water, please." Phillida's color had all departed now.

Having drunk the water she leaned against her chair-back and closed her eyes. Continuous and assiduous attention from Mrs. Hilbrough was more than she had expected; and now that the messenger was proven to be Millard's own man, she doubted whether there were not some mystery about the matter, the more that the flowers sent were precisely Millard's favorites.

The next day Phillida sat alone looking into the street, as the twilight of a cloudy evening was falling earlier than usual, when Agatha came into the room to light two burners, with a notion that darkness might prove depressing to her sister. Phillida turned to watch the process of touching a match to the gas, as an invalid is prone to seek a languid diversion in the least things. When the gas was lighted she looked out of the window again, and at the same moment the door-bell sounded. To save Sarah's deserting the dinner on the range, Agatha answered it. Phillida, with a notion that she might have a chance to verify her recognition of Millard's valet, kept her eyes upon the portion of the front steps that was visible where she sat. She saw Millard himself descend the steps and pass in front of her window. He chanced to look up, and his agitation was visible even from where she sat as he suddenly lifted his hat and bowed, and then hurried away.

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The night that followed was a restless one, and it was evident in the morning that Dr. Gunstone must be called again. Mrs. Callender found Phillida so weak that she hesitated to speak to her of a note she had received in the morning mail. It might do good; it might do harm to let her know its contents. Agatha was consulted and she turned the scale of Mrs. Callender's decision.

"Phillida, dear," said the mother, "I don't know whether I ought to mention it to you or not. You are very weak this morning. But Charley Millard has asked for permission to make a brief call. Could you bear to see him?"

Phillida's face showed her deeply moved. After a pause and a struggle she said: "Charley is sorry for me, that is all. He thinks I may die, and he feels grateful for my attention to his aunt. But if he had to begin over again he would never fall in love with me."

"You don't know that, Phillida. You are depressed; you underestimate yourself."

"With his advantages he could take his choice almost," said Phillida. "It's very manly of him to be so constant to an unfortunate and broken-hearted person like me. But I will not have him marry me out of pity."

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"I'm afraid you are depressed by your weakness. I don't think you ought to refuse to see him if you feel able," said the mother.

"I am not able to see him. It is easier to refuse in this way than after I have been made ill by too much feeling. I am not going to subject Charley to the mortification of taking into his circle a wife that will be always remembered as—as a sort of quack-doctor."

Saying this Phillida broke down and wept.

When Agatha heard of her decision she came in and scolded her sister roundly for a goose. This made Phillida weep again, but there was a firmness of will at the base of her character that held her determination unchanged. About an hour later she begged her mother to write the answer at her dictation. It read:

"Miss Callender wishes me to say that she is not able to bear an interview. With the utmost respect for Mr. Millard and with a grateful appreciation of his kind attention during her illness, she feels sure that it is better not to renew their acquaintance."

After this letter was sent off Phillida's strength began to fail, and the mother and sister were thrown into consternation. In the afternoon Dr. Gunstone came again. He listened to the heart,

he examined the lungs, he made inquisition for symptoms and paused baffled. The old doctor understood the mind-cure perfectly; balked in his search for physical causes he said to Mrs. Callender:

"Perhaps if I could speak with Miss Callender alone a few moments it might be better."

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"I have no secrets from mama," protested Phillida.

"That's right, my child," said Dr. Gunstone gravely, "but you can talk with more freedom to one person than to two. I want to see your mother alone, also, when I have talked with you."

Mrs. Callender retired and the doctor for a minute kept up a simulation of physical examination in order to wear away the restraint which Phillida might feel at being abruptly left for a confidential conversation with her physician.

"I'm afraid you don't try to get well, Miss Callender," he said.

"Does trying make any difference?" demanded Phillida.

"Yes, to be sure; that's the way that the mesmerists and magnetizers, and the new faith-cure people work their cures largely. They enlist the will, and they do some good. They often help chronic invalids whom the doctors have failed to benefit."

Dr. Gunstone had his hand on Phillida's wrist, and he could not conjecture why her pulse increased rapidly at this point in the conversation. But he went on:

"Have you really tried to get well? Have you wanted to get well as soon as possible?"

"On mama's account I ought to wish to get well," she said.

"But you are young and you have much happiness before you. Don't you wish to get well on your own account?" [Pg 395]

Phillida shook her head despondently.

"Now, my child, I am an old man and your doctor. May I ask whether you are engaged to be married?"

"No, doctor, I am not," said Phillida, trying to conjecture why he asked this question.

"Have you been engaged?"

"Yes," said Phillida.

"And the engagement was broken off?"

"Yes."

"Recently?"

"Yes, rather recently. This last winter."

"Now, tell me as your doctor, whether or not the circumstances connected with that interruption of your love-affair have depressed you—have made you not care much about living?"

Phillida's "I suppose they have" was almost inaudible.

"Now, my child, you must not let these things weigh upon you. The world will not always look dark. Try to see it more lightly. I think you must go away. You must have a change of scene and you must see people. I will find your mother. Good-morning, Miss Callender."

And with that the doctor shook hands in his half-sympathetic, half-reserved manner, and went out into the hall.

Mrs. Callender, who was waiting at the top of the stairs, came down and encountered him.

"May I see you alone a moment?" said the doctor, looking at his watch, which always seemed to go too fast to please him. [Pg 396]

Mrs. Callender led the way to the basement dining-room, below, beckoning Agatha, who sat there, to go up to her sister.

"Mrs. Callender, there is in your daughter's case an interrupted love affair which is depressing her health, and which may cut short her life. Do you think that the engagement is broken off for all time, or is it but a tiff?"

"I hardly know, doctor. My daughter is a peculiar person; she is very good, but with ideas of her own. We hardly understand the cause of the disagreement—or why she still refuses to see the young man."

"Has the young man shown any interest in Miss Callender since the engagement ceased?"

"He has called here several times during her sickness to inquire, and he sent a note this morning asking to see her. She has declined to see him, while expressing a great esteem for him."

"That's bad. You do not regard him as an objectionable person?"

"Oh, no; quite the contrary."

"It is my opinion that Miss Callender's recovery may depend on the renewal of that engagement. If that is out of the question—and it is a delicate matter to deal with—especially as the obstacle is in her own feelings, she must have travel. She ought to have change of scene, and she ought to meet people. Take her South, or North, or East, or West—to Europe or anywhere else, so as to be rid of local associations, and to see as many new things and people as possible. Good-morning, Mrs. Callender." [Pg 397]

Having said this the old doctor mounted the basement stairs too nimbly for Mrs. Callender to keep up with him. When she reached the top he had already closed the front door and a moment later the wheels of his barouche were rattling violently over the irregular pavement that lay between the Callender house and Third Avenue.

To take Phillida away—that was the hard problem the doctor had given to Mrs. Callender. For with the love affair the mother might not meddle with any prospect of success. But the formidable barrier to a journey was the expense.

"Where would you like to go, Phillida?" said her mother.

"To Siam. I'd like to see the things and the people I saw when I was a child, when papa was with us and when it was easy to believe that everything that happened was for the best. It would be about as easy for us to go to Siam as anywhere else, for we haven't the money to spare to go anywhere. I sit and dream of the old house, and the yellow people, and the pleasure of being a child, and the comfort of believing. I am tired to death of this great, thinking, pushing, western world, with its restlessness and its unbelief. If I were in the East I could believe and hope, and not worry about what Philip calls 'the immensities.'"

XXXVIII. PHILIP'S CONFESSION.

It was evident that something must be done speedily to save Phillida from a decline that might end in death, or from that chronic invalidism which is almost worse. All sort of places were thought of, but the destination was at last narrowed down to the vicinity of Hampton Roads, as the utmost limit that any prudent expenditure would allow the Callenders to venture upon. Even this would cost what ordinary caution forbade them to spend, and Phillida held out stoutly against any trip until the solicitude of her mother and sister bore down all objections.

Not long after Dr. Gunstone's visit, Mrs. Callender received a letter from Mrs. Hilbrough expressing anxiety regarding Phillida, and regretting that her husband's horror of diphtheria still prevented her from calling. She continued:

"I very much wish to do something by which I can show my love for Phillida. Won't you let me bear the expense of a trip southward, if you think that will do good? If you feel delicate about it, consider it a loan to be paid whenever it shall be convenient, but it would give me great happiness if I might be allowed to do this little act of affection."

Mrs. Callender showed the note to Phillida. "It would save our selling the bonds," she said, "but I do not like to go in debt, and of course we would repay it by degrees." [Pg 399]

"It is a trifle to her," said Phillida, "and I think we might accept two hundred dollars or more as a loan to be repaid."

"Well, if you think so, Phillida, but I do hate to be in debt."

Phillida sat thinking for a minute. Then her pale face colored.

"Did the letter come by mail?" she asked.

Mrs. Callender examined the envelope. "I thought it came from the postman, but there is no postmark; Sarah brought it to me."

"Suppose you ask Sarah to come up," said Phillida.

On Sarah's arrival Phillida asked her who brought this letter.

"It wuz that young man with the short side whiskers just under his ears and a cap that's got a front before and another one behind, so't I don't see for the life of me how he gets it on right side before."

"The man that brought flowers when I was sick?"

"That very same, Miss."

"All right, Sarah. That'll do." Then when Sarah had gone Phillida leaned her head back and said:

"It won't do, Mother. We can't accept it."

It was a tedious week after Dr. Gunstone's last visit before a trip was finally determined on and a destination selected, and Mrs. Callender, who had a genius for thoroughness, demanded yet another week in which to get ready. Phillida, meanwhile, sat wearily waiting for to-morrow to follow to-day. [Pg 400]

"Mother," she said, one day, rousing herself from a reverie, "what a good fellow Cousin Philip is, after all! I used to feel a certain dislike for what seemed to me irresolution and inactivity in him. But ever since I was taken sick he has been just like a brother to me."

"He has taken charge of us," said Mrs. Callender. "He has inquired about board for us at Hampton, and he has worked out all the routes by rail and steamboat."

Philip's kindness to his aunt's family was originally self-moved, but, as Phillida convalesced, his mother contrived to send him with messages to her, and even suggested to him that his company would be cheering to his cousin. Philip sat and chatted with her an hour every day, but the exercise did not raise his spirits in the least. For his mother frequently hinted that if he had courage he would be more prompt to avail himself of his opportunities in life. Philip could have no doubt as to what his mother meant by opportunities in life, and he knew better than any one else that he was prone to waste his haymaking sunshine in timid procrastinations. But how to make love to Phillida? How offer his odd personality to such a woman as she? His mother's severe hints about young men who could not pluck ripe fruit hanging ready to their hand spurred him, but whenever he was in Phillida's presence something of preoccupation in her mental attitude held him back from tender words. He thought himself a little ridiculous, and when he tried to imagine himself making love he thought that he would be ten times more absurd. If he could have got into his favorite position in an arm-chair and could have steadied his nerves by synchronous smoking, as he was accustomed to do whenever he had any embarrassing business matters to settle, he might have succeeded in expressing to Phillida the smoldering passion that made life a bitterness not to be sweetened even by Caxton imprints and Bedford-bound John Smiths of 1624. [Pg 401]

He always knew that if he should ever succeed in letting Phillida know of his affection it would be by a sudden charge made before his diffidence could rally to oppose him. He had once or twice in his life done bold things by catching his dilatory temper napping. With this idea he went every day to call on Phillida, hoping that a fit of desperation might carry him at a bound over the barrier. At first he looked for some very favorable opportunity, but after several visits he would have been willing to accept one that offered the least encouragement.

There were but a few days left before Phillida's departure southward, and if he should allow her to escape he would incur the bitter reproaches of his own conscience, and, what seemed even

worse, the serious disapproval of Mrs. Gouverneur.

Phillida and her mother were to leave on Friday afternoon by the Congressional Limited for Baltimore, and to take boat down the bay on Saturday. Philip had arranged it all. It was now Tuesday, and the time for "improving his opportunity in life" was short. On this Tuesday afternoon he talked an hour to Phillida, but he could not possibly cause the conversation to swing around so as to be able, even with considerable violence, to make the transition he desired. He first let her lead, and she talked to him about the East and the queer ways of the yellow Mongolians she remembered. These memories of early childhood, in the blessed period when care and responsibility had not yet disturbed the spirit's freedom, brought her a certain relief from gnawing reflections. When she tired it was his turn to lead, and he soon slipped into his old grooves and entertained her with stories of the marvelous prices fetched by Mazarin Bibles, and with accounts of people who had discovered "fourteeners" in out-of-the-way places, and such like lore of the old book-shop. All the time he was tormented by a despairing under-thought that love-making was just as far from book-collecting as it was from Phillida's Oriental memories. At length the under-thought suppressed the upper ones, and he paused and looked out of the window and drew his small form down on the chair, assuming his favorite attitude, while he supported his right elbow with his left hand and absent-mindedly held the fingers of the right hand near his lips as though to support an imaginary cigar. [Pg 402]

"Philip," said the invalid, embarrassed by the silence, "I envy you your interest in books."

"You do?" Philip moved his right hand as he might have done in removing a cigar from the mouth and turned to Phillida. "Why?"

"It saves you from being crushed by the immensities as you call them. I suppose it has consoled you in many a trouble, and no doubt it has kept you from the miseries of falling in love." [Pg 403]

She laid her thin hand on the arm of her chair as she spoke.

"Kept me from falling in love," gasped Philip, aware that his now-or-never had arrived, "how do you know that?"

"I never heard that you were in love with anybody. Excuse me if I have trodden on forbidden ground."

"I have loved but one woman, and I'm such a coward that I never had the courage to tell her," he said abruptly, at the same time restoring his imaginary cigar to his mouth.

"That's a pity," she said.

"What a figure I'd cut as a lover! Little, lank, nervous, eccentric in manner, peculiar in my opinions, lacking resolution to undertake anything worth while, frittering away my time in gathering rare books—what woman would think of me?"

"Philip, you have many excellent qualities, and I shouldn't wonder if marriage would be good for you," said Phillida, in that motherly tone that only a young woman can assume easily.

"You'd laugh at me as long as you live if I should tell you whom I have dared to love without ever daring to confess." His face was averted as he said this.

"You poor fellow," said Phillida, "you are always doubtful of yourself. Come, I think you had better tell me; may be I can encourage you, and it will give me something to think about and keep away thoughts that I don't wish to think." [Pg 404]

Philip drew a long breath and then said slowly and with a firm voice, but with his eyes on the window fastenings:

"The woman I love and have loved for a long time is my Cousin Phillida."

"You are joking, Philip," said Phillida, but her voice died as she spoke.

"Yes," said Philip, in his old desponding tone, "I knew it would seem ridiculous to you. That's why I never spoke of it before."

He looked out of the window in silence, and presently became aware that Phillida was weeping.

"O God! let me die," she murmured in a broken voice. "I am doomed to work only misery in the world. Isn't it enough to have blighted the happiness of Charley, whom I loved and still love in spite of myself? Must I also plunge Philip into misery who has been more than a brother to me? If

I could only die and escape from this wretched life before I do any further harm."

"I am sorry that I said anything, Phillida. Forget it. Forget it, please." He said in an alarmed voice, rising as he spoke.

"Cousin," said Phillida, "you are the best friend I have. But you *must not* love me. There is nothing left for me. Nothing—but to die. Good-by."

That evening Philip did not appear at dinner and his mother sent to inquire the reason.

"Mr. Philip says he has a headache, and will not come down," said the maid on her return.

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After dinner the mother sought his room with a cup of coffee and a bit of toast. Philip was lying on the lounge in his book-room with the gas turned low.

"What's the matter, Philip? Is your throat sore? Are there any signs of diphtheria?" demanded his mother anxiously.

"No, I am all right. A little out of sorts. Only just let me be quiet."

"Has anything gone wrong?"

"Nothing more than common."

"Something has worried you. Now, Philip, I can see plainly that you are worrying about Phillida. Why don't you speak your mind if you care for her, and have it over with?"

"It is over with, mother," said Philip.

"And she refused you?" said Mrs. Gouverneur, with rising indignation, for she thought it rather a descent for Philip to offer himself to Phillida or to anybody else.

"No, she didn't refuse me. I didn't formally offer myself. But I let her know how I felt toward her. She'll never accept me."

"May be she will," said the mother. "Girls don't like to accept at the first hint."

"No, she was kind and even affectionate with me, and broke her heart over my confession that I loved her, so that I'm afraid I have done her a great deal of harm."

"How do you know she will never accept you, you faint-hearted boy?"

"She let me see her whole heart. She loves Charley Millard as much as ever, but, I think, for some reason she doesn't expect or wish a renewal of the engagement. She called me the best friend she had in the world, next to Charley Millard. That's an end of it. A good deal more of an end of it than a flat refusal might have been."

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"She's a foolish and perverse girl, who has compromised her family and ruined her own prospects," said Mrs. Gouverneur. "Your aunt told me to-day that Dr. Gunstone thinks she is going to die of her disappointment about Charley unless the engagement can be renewed. But Phillida has determined not to allow a renewal of it. She's always doing something foolish. Now, eat a little dinner, or take your coffee at least."

"Leave the things here, mother. May be I'll eat after a while."

Half an hour later Mrs. Gouverneur, uneasy regarding Philip, returned to his library to find the food as she had left it.

On inquiry she learned that Philip had just gone out. Whither and for what purpose he had sallied forth dinnerless she could not divine, and the strangeness of his action did not reassure her. She was on the point of speaking to her husband about it, but he had so little in common with Philip, and was of a temper so fixed and stolid, that his advice would not have availed anything. It never did avail anything certainly in the first hour or two after dinner.

PHILIP IMPROVES AN OPPORTUNITY.

The intimacy between Millard and Philip Gouverneur had long languished. Philip was naturally critical of Charley after he became the accepted lover of Phillida, and their relations were not bettered by the breaking off of the engagement. Phillida's cousin felt that he owed it to her not to seem to condemn her in the matter by a too great intimacy with the lover who had jilted or been jilted by her, nobody could tell which, not even the pair themselves. Moreover Philip had for years taken a faint pleasure in considering himself as a possible suitor to Phillida. He found the enjoyment of a solitary cigar enhanced by his ruminations regarding the possibilities of a life glorified—no weaker word could express his thought—by the companionship of Phillida, little as he had ever hoped for such a culmination of his wishes. But this love for Phillida served to complicate his relations with Millard. So that it had now been long since he had visited The Graydon. Nevertheless on this evening of his sudden and dinnerless departure from home, the night clerk remembered him and let him go up to apartment 79 without the ceremony of sending his card.

Millard, who was writing, received Philip with some surprise and a curiosity mixed with solicitude regarding the purpose of his call. But he put up his pen and spoke with something of the old cordial manner that had won the heart of Gouverneur some years before. [Pg 408]

"I'm glad to see you again, Philip. I began to think you were not coming any more. Sit down," said Millard. "How is book-collecting? Anything startling lately?" he added by way of launching the talk, as he usually did on the favorite subject of his companion.

"No, no," said Philip, seating himself.

"I've not seen much of you lately, anywhere," said Millard, making a new start. "But that is my fault. I've pretty much cut general society this spring, and I think for good. I've been busy and tired, and to tell the truth, I don't care much for society any more. You still go out a good deal. Is there anything interesting?"

"Oh, no," said Gouverneur.

Seeing that Philip was preoccupied and that all attempts to give him direction and set him in motion were likely to prove futile, Charley concluded to let him start himself in whatever direction his mood might lead him. He did this the more readily that he himself found talking hard work in his present mood. But by way of facilitating the start, Millard held out to Philip a bronze tray containing some cigars.

"No, thank you, Charley. I don't feel like smoking."

To Millard's mind nothing could have been more ominous than for Philip Gouverneur to refuse to smoke.

"I suppose I might as well begin at once," said Philip. "If I wait I never shall get the courage to say what I want to say. I ought to have waited till morning, but if I once put off a good resolution it is never carried out. So I came down here pell-mell, Charley, resolved not to give myself time to think what a piece of impertinent impudence I was going to be guilty of." Then after a pause he said: "If you turn me out of the apartment neck and heels, I sha'n't be surprised." [Pg 409]

"Pshaw, Philip, you excite my curiosity," said Millard, trying to smile, but yet a little aghast at seeing his old friend in this unusual mood, and divining that the subject would be disagreeable.

"I come to speak about Phillida," said Philip.

Ever since Millard's hopes had received their quietus from Mrs. Callender's note in which Phillida declined to receive a visit from him, he had recognized the necessity for getting Phillida out of his mind if he were ever again to have any sane contentment in life. If Phillida did not any longer care for him, it would be unmanly for him to continue brooding over the past. But he found that exhorting himself to manliness would not cure a heartache. There was nothing he could have dreaded so much at this time as a conversation about Phillida, and, of all people he most disliked to speak of her with Philip Gouverneur. He made no reply at all to Philip's blunt statement of the subject on which he proposed to converse. But Gouverneur was too much absorbed in holding himself to his plan of action to take note of his companion's lack of responsiveness.

"I want to ask whether you still love her or not, Charley," said Philip, with a directness that [Pg 410]

seemed brutal, his gaze fixed on the wall.

"I have no claims upon her," said Millard, "if that is what you want to know."

"That isn't what I want to know. I asked if you still loved her?"

"I don't know whether even you have a right to ask that question," said Millard with manifest annoyance.

"I am her cousin," said Philip, looking up at Millard with eyes strangely unsteady and furtive.

"If there were any charge that I had wronged her, you, as her cousin, might have a right to inquire," said Millard, who fancied that Gouverneur had a personal end in making the inquiry, and who at any rate did not care to be known as a discarded and broken-hearted lover. "I'll tell you plainly that it is a subject on which I don't wish to speak with anybody. Besides it's hardly fair to come to me as Phillida's cousin, when there is reason to believe your feelings toward her are more than cousinly. I have no claims on Phillida, no expectation of a renewal of our engagement, and I certainly have no complaint to make of her. Nobody has any right to inquire further."

Charley Millard got up and walked the floor in excitement as he said this.

"You're plaguey cross, Charley. I never saw you so impolite before. Didn't know you could be. I suppose you're right, by Jupiter! I went too straight at the mark, and you had a right to resent it. But I had to go at it like a man having a tooth pulled, for fear I'd back out at the last moment."

There was a ten seconds' pause, during which Millard sat down. Then Philip spoke again.

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"I know, Charley; you have misunderstood. You think I wish to get a disclaimer that will clear the way for me. Charley—" Philip spoke now in a voice low and just a little husky,— "if I loved Phillida and believed she could love me, do you think I'd wait to ask your permission? If I wished to marry her and she loved me, I wouldn't ask any man's permission! And I came here not in my own interest, nor in your interest either. I am here only for Phillida's sake and as her cousin, and I want to know whether you love her."

"If you want me to do anything for her, I am ready. That is all I ought to be required to say," said Millard, softened by Philip's evident emotion, but bent on not betraying his own feelings.

"I suppose that means that you don't care for her," said Gouverneur. Then he went on, looking into the fireplace: "Well, that's an end of it. What an idiot she has been! She has thrown you over and alienated your affections, and made herself the talk of the streets. You wouldn't think such a fine-looking woman could make herself so utterly ridiculous. She is a mortification to her relations, and—"

"Now, Philip, stop," said Millard, with heat. "You are in my house. No man shall say a word against that woman in my hearing while I live. I tell you that even her mistakes are noble. If her relatives are ashamed of such as she is, I am sorry for her relatives." Millard made an effort to say more, but his utterance was choked.

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Philip laughed a sardonic little laugh.

"Charley, before God, I was not sincere in a word I said against Phillida. I lied with deliberate purpose. Now I know that you love her. That's what I wanted to find out. I only denounced her to get at your feelings. You wouldn't tell me, I had to resort to a ruse."

"Do you think it—do you think it's the thing to pry into my feelings?" said Millard, still speaking hotly.

"Yes, I do, under the circumstances. In return I'll tell you something worth your listening to, if you'll only cool off enough to hear it."

Millard's curiosity was excited by this, but he made no reply; he only sat still with Philip's eyes fixed upon him.

"Phillida loves you," said Philip.

Millard looked steadily at the smallish figure of his old friend, not shrunken into the chair as usual now, but sitting upright and looking straight at him with a strange look he had never seen before.

"Philip," he said softly, "how do you know this? Tell me, for God's sake!"

"I must not betray confidence," said Philip. "You know me, your friend and Phillida's. I am here to-night—I might say heart-broken, I can hardly say disappointed. I don't blame Phillida for not caring for me except as a cousin, or for preferring you. On the whole, if I were in her place I'd do the same, by George!"

Philip laughed again, that little laugh which pained his friend.

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"Why did you come to tell me this, Philip?" Millard was sitting now with his elbows on the table, and the fingers of his right hand supporting his cheek, as he regarded Philip steadily.

"Well, if one can not contrive to do what one wants, he should, I suppose, do the second best thing. The only thing for me to do—the thing that'll be a comfort for me to look back on—is to render Phillida some service. In short, to save her life and make her happy."

"How do you propose to do that?" asked Millard.

"I've already done it, old fellow," said Philip, with a mixture of triumph and regret in his voice. "Dr. Gunstone said to Aunt Callender, after talking with Phillida, that unless her engagement with you were renewed she would probably not recover. I wouldn't have told you this for the world if I had found you didn't love her. She'd better die now than marry you and discover that you married her from pity."

Millard went to his desk and took out the note from Mrs. Callender in which Phillida had refused to see him. He handed it to Philip.

"I got that last week, and it seemed final," he said huskily. "I have found life almost more than I could carry since, Philip."

Philip read the note and then returned it to Millard.

"That's some of her confounded scruples," he said. "She told me that she had ruined your life. She thinks you wish to marry her from pity, and she'd rather die like a brave girl than consent to that. But she loves you and nobody else." [Pg 414]

"I wish I were sure of it," said Millard.

Philip sat a good while silent.

"Charley," he said, "the end I have in view justifies the breach of confidence, I hope. I have the assurance of her feelings toward you from her own lips, and that not many hours ago. She would have died rather than tell me had she thought it possible I would tell you. And I would have died rather than betray her if I hadn't believed your feelings toward her unchanged."

Saying this he helped himself to a cigar from the tray on the table and lighted it, and then rose to leave.

"What can I do, Philip? I seem absolutely shut out from making any further advances by this note," demanded Millard.

"You mustn't expect any further aid or advice from me. I've done all you can expect," said Gouverneur. "Good-by."

And without shaking hands he went out of the door into the main hall. Millard followed him and, as they reached the elevator, said with emotion:

"Philip, you have done one of the bravest acts."

"Pshaw! Charley," said Philip, half-peevisly and looking over his shoulder at his companion as he pressed the button, "don't put any heroics on it. There isn't enough of me to play such a part. Such talk makes me feel myself more ridiculous than ever."

XL. THE RESTORATION.

How many scores of devices for securing a conversation with Phillida, Millard hit upon during the night that followed Gouverneur's visit, he could not have told. He planned letters to her in a dozen different veins, and rejected them all. He thought of appealing to Mrs. Callender once more, but could not conceive of Mrs. Callender's overruling Phillida. His mind perpetually reverted to Agatha. If only he might gain her co-operation! And yet this notion of securing the assistance of a younger sister had an air of intrigue that he did not like.

About nine o'clock the next morning there was handed to Mrs. Callender a note from Millard inclosing an unsealed note which Mr. Millard desired Mrs. Callender if she saw fit to hand to Miss Agatha. Mrs. Callender gave it to Agatha without opening it.

AGATHA: I wrote to your mother the other day begging permission to call on your sister, and received a reply expressing Miss Callender's desire to avoid an interview. That ought to have put an end to my hope of securing your sister's forgiveness, and for a while it did. But on reflection I am led to believe that her decision was based, not on a lack of affection for me, but on a wrong notion of my feeling toward her. She probably believes that I am actuated by gratitude for her attention to my relatives, or by pity for her sufferings as an invalid. She holds certain other erroneous notions on the subject, I think. I give you the assurance with all the solemnity possible that my devotion to her is greater to-day than ever. Her affection is absolutely indispensable to my happiness. I will undertake to convince her of this if I am once permitted to speak to her. Now if you think that she would be the better for a renewal of our old relations will you not contrive in some way that I may see her this afternoon at three o'clock, at which hour I shall present myself at your door?

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I hope your mother will pardon my writing to you; persuasion exerted by a sister has less the air of authority than that of a parent. I leave you to show this letter or not at your own discretion, and I put into your hands my whole future welfare, and what is of a thousand times greater importance in your eyes and in mine, Phillida's happiness. Whatever may be your feelings toward me I know that Phillida can count on your entire devotion to her interests.

CHARLEY.

The only thing that seemed to Millard a little insincere about this rather stiff note was the reason assigned for writing to Agatha. Her persuasions, as Millard well knew, did not have less of authority about them than her mother's. But this polite insincerity on a minor point he had not seen how to avoid in a letter that ought to be shown to Mrs. Callender.

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Agatha gave her mother the note to read, telling her, however, in advance that she proposed to manage the case herself. Mrs. Callender was full of all manner of anxieties at having so difficult a matter left to one so impetuous as Agatha. For herself she could not see just what was to be done, and two or three times she endeavored to persuade Agatha to let her consult Phillida about it. A consultation with Phillida had been her resort in difficulties ever since the death of her husband. But Agatha reminded her that Mr. Millard had intrusted the matter to her own keeping, and expressed her determination not to have any more of Phillida's nonsense.

Phillida observed that Agatha was not giving as much attention to preparations for the journey as she expected her to. Nor could Phillida understand why the parlor must be swept again before their departure, seeing it would be snowed under with dust when they got back. But Agatha put everything in perfect order, and then insisted on dressing her sister with a little more pains than usual.

"I wouldn't wonder if Mrs. Hilbrough calls this afternoon," said the young hypocrite. "Besides I think it is good for an invalid to be dressed up a little—just a little fixed up. It makes a person think of getting well and that does good, you know."

Agatha refrained from an allusion to faith-cure that rose to her lips, and finding that Phillida was growing curious she turned to a new subject.

"Did mama tell you what Miss Bowyer says about your case, Philly?"

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"No."

"Mrs. Beswick told mama that she had it from Mr. Martin. Miss Bowyer told Mr. Martin the other day that she knew you would get well because she had been giving you absent treatment without your knowledge or consent. Didn't you feel her pulling you into harmony with the odylic emanations of the universe?"

Phillida smiled a little and Agatha insisted on helping her to creep into the parlor. She said she could not pack the trunk with Philly looking on. But when she got her sister into the parlor she

did not seem to care to go back to the trunks.

The door-bell rang at three and Agatha met Charley in the hall.

"She doesn't know a word of your coming," said Agatha in a low voice. "I will go and tell her, to break the shock, and then bring you right in."

She left Millard standing by the hat table while she went in.

"Phillida, who do you think has come to see you? It's Charley Millard. I took the liberty of telling him you'd see him for a short time."

Then she added in a whisper: "Poor fellow, he seems to feel so bad."

Saying this she set a chair for him, and without giving Phillida time to recover from a confused rush of thought and feeling she returned to the hall saying, "Come right in, Charley."

To take off the edge, as she afterward expressed it, she sat for three minutes with them, talking [Pg 419] chaff with Millard, and when she had set the conversation going about indifferent things, she remembered something that had to be done in the kitchen, and was instantly gone down-stairs.

The conversation ran by its own momentum for a while after Agatha's departure, and then it flagged.

"You're going away," said Millard after a pause.

"Yes."

"I know it is rude for me to call without permission, but I couldn't bear that you should leave until I had asked your forgiveness for things that I can never forgive myself for."

Phillida looked down a moment in agitation and then said, "I have nothing to forgive. The fault was all on my side. I have been very foolish."

"I wouldn't quarrel with you for the world," said Millard, "but the fault was mine. What is an error of judgment in a person of your noble unselfishness! Fool that I was, not to be glad to bear a little reproach for such a person as you are!"

To Phillida the world suddenly changed color while Charley was uttering these words. His affection was better manifested by what he had just said than if he had formally declared it. But the fixed notion that he was moved only by pity could not be vanquished in an instant.

"Charley," she said, "it is very good of you to speak such kind words to me. I am very weak, and you are very good-hearted to wish to comfort me."

"You are quite mistaken, Phillida. You fancy that I am disinterested. I tell you now that I am [Pg 420] utterly in love with you. Without you I don't care for life. I have not had heart for any pursuit since that evening on which we parted on account of my folly. But if you tell me that you have ceased to care for me, there is nothing for me but to go and make the best of things."

Phillida was no longer heroic. Her sufferings, her mistakes, her physical weakness, and the yearning of her heart for Millard's affection were fast getting the better of all the reasons she had believed so conclusive against the restoration of their engagement. Nevertheless, she found strength to say: "I am quite unfit to be your wife. You are a man that everybody likes and you enjoy society, as you have a right to." Then after a pause and an evident struggle to control herself she proceeded: "Do you think I would weight you down with a wife that will always be remembered for the follies of her youth?"

Phillida did not see how Charley could answer this, but she was so profoundly touched by his presence that she hoped he might be able to put matters in a different light. When she had finished speaking he contracted his brows into a frown for a moment. Then he leaned forward with his left hand open on one knee and his right hand clinched and resting on the other.

"I know I gave you reason to think I was cowardly," he said; "but I hope I am a braver man than you imagine. Now if anybody should ever condemn you for a little chaff in a great granary of wheat it would give me pain only if it gave you pain. Otherwise it would give me real pleasure, [Pg 421] because I would like to bear it in such a way that you'd say to yourself, 'Charley is a braver man than I ever thought him.'" Millard had risen and was standing before her as he finished speaking. There was a pause during which Phillida looked down at her own hands lying in her lap.

"Now, Phillida," he said, "I want to ask one thing—"

"Don't ask me anything just now, Charley," she said in a broken voice full of entreaty, at the same time raising her eyes to his. Then she reached her two hands up toward him and he came and knelt at her side while she put her arms about his neck and drew him to her, and whispered, "I never understood you before, Charley. I never understood you."

XLI. AS YOU LIKE IT.

The next morning Agatha went over to Washington Square to let Philip know that the trip southward had been postponed for a week or so. And Philip knew that the trip southward would never take place at all, but that drives with Charley in Central Park would prove much better for the invalid.

"Oh, yes, it's all right then. I expected it," he said.

"Yes," said Agatha, "it's all right. I managed it myself, Cousin Philip. I brought them together."

"Did you, Agatha?" he said with a queer smile. "That was clever."

"Yes, and they have not thanked me for it. Phillida wishes to see you. She told me to tell you."

"I don't doubt she can wait," said Philip smiling, "seeing me is not important to her just now. Give her my love and congratulations, and tell her I'll come in the day before she starts to Hampton. There'll be time enough before she gets off, Agatha." This last was said with a laugh that seemed to Agatha almost happy.

Phillida's recovery was very rapid; it was all the effect of driving in the Park. Perhaps also the near anticipation of a trip to Europe had something to do with it, for Millard had engaged passage on the *Arcadia* the first week in June. To Mrs. Callender this seemed too early; it gave the mother and her dressmaker no end of worry about the wardrobe. [Pg 423]

Two weeks after her reconciliation with Charley, Phillida demonstrated her recovery by walking alone to her aunt's in Washington Square. She asked at the door to see Mr. Philip, and when she learned that he was in his book-room she sent to ask if she mightn't come up.

"Busy with my catalogue," said Philip as Phillida came in. He had been busy making a catalogue of his treasures for two years, but he could not get one to suit him. "I hate to print this till I get a complete 'De Bry,' and that'll be many a year to come, I'm afraid. I couldn't afford the cost of a complete set this year nor next, and it's hardly likely that there'll be one for sale in ten years to come. But it will give me something to look forward to."

All this he said hurriedly as though to prevent her saying something else. While speaking he set a chair for Phillida, but she did not sit down.

"Cousin Philip," she said, "you might just as well hear what I've got to say first as last."

"Hear? Oh, I'm all attention," he said, "but sit down," and he set the example, Phillida following it with hesitation.

"If you had pulled me out of the water," she began, "and saved my life, you'd expect me to say 'thank you,' at least. Charley has told me all about how you acted. We think you're just the noblest man we have ever known." [Pg 424]

"Ah, now, Phillida," protested Philip, quite bewildered for want of a lighted cigar to relieve his embarrassment, "you make me feel like a fool. I'm no hero; it isn't in me to play any grand parts. I shall be known, after I'm dead, by the auction catalogue of my collection of rare books, and by nothing else. 'The Gouverneur Sale' will long be remembered by collectors. That sort of distinction fits me. But you and Charley are making me ridiculous with all this talk."

"Phil, you dear fellow," said Phillida, passionately, rising and putting her hands on his shoulder,

"you saved me from life-long misery, and may be from death, at a fearful sacrifice of your own feelings. I'll remember it the longest day I live," and she leaned over and kissed him, and then turned abruptly away to go down-stairs.

Philip trembled from head to foot as he rose and followed Phillida to the top of the stairs, trying in vain to speak. At last he said huskily: "Phillida, I want to explain. I am no hero. I had made a fool of myself as I knew I should if I ever—ever spoke to you as I did that day. Now, of all things I don't like to be ridiculous. I thought that evening if I could be the means of bringing you two together it would take the curse off, so to speak. I mean that it would make me cut a less ridiculous figure than I did and restore my self-respect. I wanted to be able to think of you and Charley happy together without calling myself bad names, you know." [Pg 425]

"Yes, yes," replied Phillida. "I know. You never did a generous thing in your life without explaining it away. But I know you too well to be imposed on. I shall always say to myself, 'There's one noble and disinterested man under the sky, and that's my brave Cousin Philip.' Good-by." And standing on the first step down she reached him her hand over the baluster rail, looked at him with a happy, grateful face which he never forgot, and pressed his hand, saying again, "Good-by, Philip," and then turned and went down-stairs.

And Philip went back and shut his library door and locked it, and was vexed with himself because for half an hour he could not see to go on with his cataloguing. And that evening his mother was pleased to hear him whistling softly an air from the "Mikado"—he had not whistled before in weeks. She was equally surprised when a little later he consented to act as Charley's best man. To her it seemed that Philip ought to feel as though he were a kind of pall-bearer at his own funeral. But he was quite too gay for a pall-bearer. He and Agatha had no end of fun at the wedding; she taking to herself all the credit for having brought it about.

In the middle of the August following, Philip, having come to town from Newport to attend to some affairs, found a notice from the custom-house of a box marked with his address. He hated the trouble of going down town to get it out of the hands of the United States. But when it was opened he found on top a note from Millard explaining that he and Phillida had chanced upon a complete set of "De Bry" at Quaritch's, and that they thought it would be a suitable little present for their best friend. [Pg 426]

Philip closed the box and took it to Newport with him. He explained to himself that he did this in order to get an opinion on the set from two or three collectors whose acquaintance he had lately made in lounging about the Redwood Library. But the fact was, his Newport season would have been ruined had he left the volumes in town. The books were spread out on his table, where they held a sort of levee; every book-fancier in all Newport had to call and pay his respects to the rare volumes and to the choice English bindings.

"A nice present that," said Philip's father, as he sipped his champagne at dinner on the day after the son's return with the books. "I've been looking them over; they must have cost, binding and all, a hundred dollars, I should think, eh?"

"More than that," said Philip with a smile.

"About what?" demanded his father.

"Considering that the set includes both the Great and the Little Voyages, it couldn't have cost less than twenty times your estimate," said Philip.

"Millard must be richer than I supposed," said the father. "A man ought to have millions to make presents on that scale."

But after supper when Philip and his mother sat on the piazza she said: "I never could tell how things were managed between Charley Millard and Phillida. But since your books came I think I can guess who did it." [Pg 427]

"Guess what you please, mother," he said, "I did improve my opportunity once in my life."

THE END.

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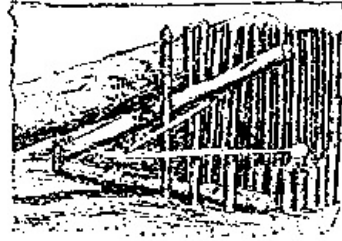
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