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, by Lettie M. Cummings**

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A Table of Contents has been added.

Professor Huskins

By
Lettie M. Cummings



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TO MY MOTHER

**Whose love and profound interest in my
work was an inspiration and
encouragement**

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PROFESSOR HUSKINS

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CHAPTER ONE

"Here is a complication I know not how to solve and unravel. Three different persons in equally quiescent condition, and equally good 'subjects,' are placed in a comatose state by the same operator, who leaves them unbiased by his personal opinions, thinking to obtain in the mesmerized condition, (with their material bodies completely subjugated and inactive,) truth, upon a subject that man in his normal state cannot positively ascertain nor agree upon. Each of these 'subjects' gives a different opinion, and as all can be argued with more or less fluency, there are, seemingly, reasonable points in all. How can the discrepancies be reconciled? That is the question.

"I have thought the subject over seriously ever since the experiment, and the only way I can see is to mesmerize other persons, until two are found who do agree. It is a scientific problem of which we need an explanation.

"There must be a law of uniformity governing the Universe; otherwise such perfect order would not exist. But who can determine what that law is?

"I cannot understand the cause of so much variance in the answers. If I had held any preconceived ideas upon the subject, it would be different entirely, as I would then know my personal opinion upon it had colored the minds of my subjects. In such a case, however, there would be uniformity of opinion and avowal, while now there is almost utter variance.

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"There seems to be logical reasoning on the part of each of them, but it is impossible to reconcile their statements. One says practically the opposite of the other. Which is right? Are any of them right, and what is the cause of this diversity of opinion? I confess I am as much interested in the cause of their disagreement as in the question itself.

"I believe myself to be a true student of life; that is, a person desirous of obtaining and mastering a true knowledge of the exact laws of existence, and hold myself aloof from all such preconceived

plans of my own brain's concoction as may prejudice me, looking always for reasons and facts which teach me methods better than I know.

"My soul sickens at the word 'consistency.' Some of my colleagues seem to regard consistency as the essence of wisdom, but I cannot understand it that way. To me, consistency implies a clinging to old ideas and customs, and is therefore a symbol of negativeness instead of progression. I want to advance:—to grow in wisdom and knowledge, though that advancement means the abandonment of every past idea, however choice and excellent that idea may have seemed, either at the time of its acceptance or now.

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"A true student aspires to gain truth however much it may wound his past thoughts, and I can only regard life as a school of experience, wherein what to-day we consider precious, may tomorrow become valueless. There is where I differ from my colleagues. I am willing to admit that two of them at least are far beyond me in technical knowledge, but it seems to me the further they advance in technical knowledge, the less pliable and elastic are their ideas.

"Somehow, I cannot comprehend advancement or progression without change,—'change,' of course, means the adoption of new ideas. If I believe the same as when a mere child, how can I have gained in wisdom? I cannot rid myself of the idea that consistency, that is, always believing what you used to believe, instead of being the essence of wisdom, is rather a pronounced indication of ignorance.

"Everything, so far as I am able to distinguish facts from that (to me) inestimable book, Nature, tells me to continually search for and demand new complications and expressions of types of life.

"The same law must hold good with man. How can I plan and work successfully under the same conditions that would have furnished my father success? I cannot do it, for the forces necessary and sufficient, at even that recent date would be totally inadequate and impotent to meet and overcome conditions the present produces. Advancement in science, invention and education has made a corresponding advancement in thought and methods of achievement imperative. Strict consistency to my father's methods might, it is true, bring me some degree of success, but if I wish to be found among the successful men of the present, I must study existing conditions as closely as he did those of his time, striving to keep my methods up to present advancement, appreciating the value of his labor and methods, and knowing the suitability of them as compared to the conditions he was called upon to operate. As he strove to improve upon the methods of his predecessors, so must I strive to improve upon his, adopting those which he demonstrated to be successful, and applying them as stepping stones to higher accomplishment.

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"Such a procedure cannot be called 'consistency,' but I know despite what my colleagues say, that my own deductions upon this subject are correct, for all nature bears me out in the assertion.

"Strict consistency to past methods never led any life to the goal of higher understanding. I am not a man to be satisfied with what others say or have said, though they may have acquired a reputation of infallible authority, beyond whose assertions no man ought to seek confirmation. I want to know personally; I want to know the exact truth, though I renounce every idea men have in the past asserted.

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"I am convinced after my experience of to-day, that there are scientific as well as spiritual martyrs, but I shall, nevertheless, express my opinions if it means social and professional ostracism.

"Lacking much wisdom and many graces my colleagues possess, I have one quality which they lack, that is, absolute fearlessness of any person's opinion. I am acknowledged by so-called experts (I use the term advisedly) to be in advance of their most wisely proficient selves in power, and for that reason I am growing extremely doubtful of their expertness: possibly that is the very reason I doubt their wisdom, for I realize how ignorant I am.

"All I know are facts gained by experience, and the longer I experiment, the more non-plussed and doubtful I become, regarding even the efficacy of that science I once declared infallible. If these so-called experts acknowledge my supremacy over them, always calling upon and consulting me when they know not how to proceed, surely they must have less knowledge than I and they have no right to be called experts, for such a term implies proficiency, and here are several experts completely defeated by these mesmerized subjects whom they consider negative and weak. It does not speak very forcibly for their expertness—this rebuff they have received.

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"My whole life since I entered manhood, has been one long study and experiment; I never allowed any condition to elude me without finding some logical reason for its existence, and this problem shall not escape me without my having determined the principles which underlie the phenomenon. How long it will take, I have no idea, but that is an immaterial point. What am I living for, but to learn?

"Dr. H—, next to myself, the most powerful mesmerist, suggests that we impress the minds of the 'subjects' with the theories so far generally accepted, concerning the questions we ask, but I do not approve of such an idea. There must be some way to determine the truth. This experiment was planned and entered into for the express purpose of trying to discover facts confirmative of old opinions, coming through the organisms of persons totally ignorant of the subject, whose minds must, therefore, be uncolored by past opinions.

"So far, we have met with blank failure, but that fact, instead of discouraging me, as it has some of the others, only adds zest to the work, and though they should all relinquish the task we have begun, I shall go on, alone if need be, until I reach some conclusion that satisfies me. [Pg 11]

"The 'subject' whom I chose for this experiment is the best I have ever used, and I felt positive he would answer the question better than any other, but I am not cast down nor discouraged by this most unlooked for result. Unlike the rest, I look not so much to present satisfaction (especially to the confirmation of my preconceived ideas), as to the acquirement of truth and knowledge.

"My 'subject' really gave less than some of the others, while I expected him to give more, but I am convinced that the cause of this is the fact I left his mind entirely unbiased. Knowing nothing, he could give nothing, in the negative (by his unusual dumbness) he answered the question which I so strenuously advocated, that the soul of man, in whatever stage of unfoldment, contains all knowledge, and all that is necessary to bring this knowledge into material manifestation, is to mesmerize the body allowing the soul to speak forth, untrammelled by the physical influence.

"I am proven to be wrong by this day's work. Of course my pride suffered a little as the truth became apparent that my public teachings and deductions were erroneous, but I hope I am too thoroughly sincere in my quest for truth, by which I may help humanity, to permit any more than transient disappointment to influence me. [Pg 12]

"Strange to say, there was not one other operator present who seemed to notice the great discrepancies between the assertions made in our investigations of mesmerism, and the proofs before us. Had any one of us been teaching a class of students in psychology, he would unhesitatingly have said 'subdue the consciousness of your subject, and he will intelligently answer any question you may give him.' We should have believed it too, but our science, faith and belief has not changed one iota the disappointing result.

"I realize I am entering a sphere of investigation where new revelations are in store for me. I rejoice in the prospect, but earnestly wish I knew precisely the conditions that would be most propitious to usher in the new wisdom. How gladly would I comply with them, even though they should call for much sacrifice on my part. I have consecrated my life to the search for truth, and I will conform to whatever conditions those powers who so zealously guard the realm of wisdom may demand.

"I shall never be satisfied to use any but the subject I chose myself for this experiment, as I am inclined to believe the minds of the others had been somewhat impressed regarding the subject before they came this time. [Pg 13]

"Possibly I made a mistake in selecting my subject after all my care and deliberation upon the work. I know that women are considered the best subjects, but it seemed to me that a man's brain was better suited to receive and transmit scientific problems than a woman's; theirs seeming fitted especially for spiritual work.

"I confess I am at a loss how to proceed, but longer reflection will probably give me some clue to work upon. There is no use lingering over it longer now, for all new suggestions will come to me as the old ones have, unexpectedly and suddenly.

"I will take some recreation. Music always soothes and rests me,—especially singing. There is a renowned singer here, and I will go and hear her, giving my undivided attention to the witchery and enchantment of the human voice.

"I will take Merle with me; he needs the change after having been held so long in the trance condition. I noticed he seemed quite exhausted, and he felt sincere sorrow to learn that our experiment had not been a success, seeming to think our failure might be due in part to some defect in him or his development. I think differently and want him to know I am perfectly satisfied with him as a subject.

"He is a pure, clean fellow, one whose place it would be hard for me to fill. He is always ready to be used for any of my experiments, and every signal success has pleased him even more than myself. It is singular how attached he has become to me. He has unlimited confidence in my powers, thinking no feat too extravagant for me to perform. Every soul hungers for pure love, and his love for me affords me a degree of pleasure I would be loth to admit to anyone. Were he my own boy, I could feel no greater pride in him. [Pg 14]

"There is nothing that affords him so much pleasure as for me to invite him to join me in some excursion where we go alone. It seems to make no difference where we go or what we do, if we are by ourselves. He knows I dislike crowds and empty compliments, and that I only attend social functions when the call seems imperative. We are both happier alone. I will send him word to be ready when I call for him. We shall have a rich treat in music, and forget the work and disappointment of the day. Somehow we will work out the problem as we have others before. Au revoir, care and perplexity, I go to court pleasure and harmony."

CHAPTER TWO

The huge edifice was almost filled when William Huskins and his subject, Merle Millard, arrived. The audience was composed of persons who represented the affluent portion of society in —, drawn together by the fame and genius of the gifted woman who was to entertain them with (reputation said) a matchless voice, under perfect control. This singer had never been heard here, and curiosity and a desire to witness the first appearance of so distinguished an artist in their location were conflicting emotions in every person present. She was a star who had but recently attracted the attention of musical critics, and was now lauded with every variety of praise the ingenuity of such men could devise. This splendid audience was the visible manifestation of their regard and labor to bring her into prominence.

When Professor Huskins, as he was called, and the young man were being shown to their seats, the entire audience was divided between their expectancy of witnessing the beginning of the entertainment, and watching the advent of those who came later than themselves. A man so distinguished as the Professor for wisdom, and a power which, to most persons seemed little short of miraculous, could not fail to create a marked degree of interest and enthusiasm among so many people wholly engrossed in looking for change and excitement.

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He was scarcely less interesting than the artist they had come to see. Many hoped to receive from him some token of recognition, that would declare to those around that they were friends of so famous a man, but few were so privileged, as the Professor's thoughts were upon any subject but his own importance, and his gaze was not traveling in search of acquaintances. He looked straight before him, taking the appointed place with no idea as to what impression he might create.

It was not to be wondered at so many cast admiring glances at the two men, for they were indeed goodly men to look upon. They were a little above the average height, but their height ended all similarity in their appearance. Both had unusual faces, such as, once seen, are never forgotten. The Professor had a vigorous physique of seemingly perfect proportions, and every movement of his body indicated power and strength. His face was difficult to describe, as its great variance from the faces of ordinary men laid largely in the contour of his head, which, to a student of phrenology would have indicated well and evenly developed organs, with few marked points of protrusion; in other words, a man of understanding, who had command of many lines of thought. A well centered brain, showing no abnormal propensities in any line. It was a head pleasant to study, covered with a thick growth of dark brown hair, almost verging on black, which he always wore closely cut and brushed back from his face. He wore no beard, thus bringing his mouth into plain view. He had what might be called a large mouth, with lips set firmly together over a chin that no person could mistake to mean other than firmness and decision. His smile was pleasant, and when he laughed or talked he disclosed a set of even white teeth. But while his physique and carriage were sufficiently marked with grace and symmetry to attract notice wherever he went, it was his eyes more than anything else that lifted him out of the likeness to common men.

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There are no words that will truthfully and fully portray their beauty and brilliancy. In color, they were gray when his more than active mind was in repose, but with each varying emotion, they expressed a different hue, and few persons who knew him agreed upon their actual shade, the most general opinion being that they were very dark or black. They were eyes all children trusted, but many men could not look into them. He was always scrupulously attired.

Merle was as dark as the Professor, but unlike him had rosy cheeks. He was slender in figure, the very expression of grace in movement. He wore no beard, and copied the Professor in the arrangement of his hair—an arrangement that displayed to the best possible advantage their well-shaped foreheads. There was, however, a very marked difference in the shape of their heads, and the color and expression of their eyes. Merle's face was longer and thinner, while his eyes were a decided brown, large, pensive and beautiful, fringed with long, thick, dark lashes. The two men might easily have passed for brothers, and almost any person, if asked for an opinion of the two, would have said, "the younger is the handsomer, and you can approach him easier, but the older is the one I would go to in trouble."

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There was not so great a difference in their ages as many persons supposed, but the firmness and sternness habitual to the Professor's face made him look older than he really was. As you become better acquainted with them, you will be able to picture them far more clearly than my words can possibly do.

* * * * *

There is a perceptible hush and awe passing over the large audience. They are awaiting the rhythmic harmony that only such musicians as those now before them can produce, for these men represent the very acme of excellence in their various lines. They are all in their places, and only await the movement of their leader to burst forth into one of their inimitable performances.

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Instinctively all eyes are riveted upon the stage, and all seem to hold their breaths, as there is borne into their ears such an influx of sweet and soothing symphony as transports them from the present, with all its agitation and conflicting influences, and carries them to that realm where harmony and concord reign supreme. It is over. The Professor and Merle instinctively seek each other's gaze, each drawing a long sigh of satisfaction.

"Wasn't that glorious?" asked Merle, and the Professor, with one of those flashes of his brilliant and dazzling eyes replied "It rewards us for all our arduous work for the day. Let us drink our fill

of this nectar of the Gods, for it will give us new life and courage."

This was said with the joyous candor of a boy, and was the expression of a side of his nature few persons were privileged to witness, or even believed him to possess.

They appeared to enjoy to the full the musical treat, until suddenly Merle was stricken faint and ill, so much so indeed, that, despite the Professor's efforts to restore him to his usual strength, they were obliged to leave the scene.

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Merle had seemed well and happy all through the entertainment and appeared to look forward with keen expectation to the advent of the singer, (her name was Rosalie Earle) but just as she entered, he was looking toward some friends whom he had discovered at a distance, when a loud burst of applause drew his attention to her. He shuddered, grew cold and faint, but as he looked in her direction, he could see nothing clearly; everything became dark and distant and in the fading light he could not see the woman.

He heard singing, but it seemed far away, and indistinct. Where was William? He had the power to restore him. His voice rang out, clear and trenchant—"William! William!" then he sank to unconsciousness.

So enraptured was the Professor with the marvelous singing he did not hear the first cry, and it was hard for him to realize the exact condition of his friend when the second had reached him.

His mind was temporarily absent when Merle's head dropped heavily upon his shoulder, and he even hesitated before he turned his gaze upon him.

After a while Merle stirred and lifted his head, saying he could not breathe nor see. The Professor bade him to be quiet until the song was finished, when they would go out. It was soon over, but Merle was then unable to walk, and the Professor was obliged to help him. It seemed strange to him to be unable to see. His body was trembling and icy cold, and William, who had so often cured him, seemed powerless to dispel the awful sensation which had stricken him so suddenly.

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Still, above all his suffering there came the thought he was depriving William of a well loved pleasure, and as he regarded him with the strongest veneration and affection, he exerted his will to the limit, that he might regain his strength to such a degree his master might stay and hear the beautiful singer whose sweet tones he had heard, but whom he could not see. He strove as never before in his life to gain his lost power over the physical body to animate and control it, but despite his efforts, he sank down at William's feet, inanimate and cold.

William raised him in his arms and helped carry him to a carriage, and they were soon at Merle's home, where his mother and sister were waiting for him. They obeyed the Professor's every command, reverencing him almost to the point of worship, but morning found them still at Merle's bedside, as he revived from one fainting condition only to sink into another, with a season of high fever between.

The Professor's power seemed incapable of producing more than transient relief, and he confessed himself at a loss to understand the illness, unless it might be that Merle had been overworked the day before, but that seemed improbable, as he had been entranced many times for a longer period. Finally he sank into a deep sleep, induced by the Professor's power, and William, advising mother and sister to seek repose, went to his own home, assuring them that all immediate danger was over, and promising to return soon. He instructed them, however, to send for him at once should Merle awake and resume the alternate fever and chills.

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They promised to do so, and went to seek sleep, for their confidence in his power was absolute. He had used Merle as a subject for years, had always been good to him and them, and to question his will never occurred to them, so they left Merle and went to their beds, while William went home to study and think.

CHAPTER THREE

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After leaving Merle, William walked slowly and thoughtfully to his home, which was at some distance, but instead of resting or sleeping, after the labors and excitement of the day, he went immediately to his private study, and plunged into thought. The expression of his eyes at this time was not charming, betokening not only doubt and suspense, but some intensity of feeling that, to an outside observer would have been nameless.

"Let me think. My brain seems in a maze; I cannot command my thoughts! I cannot even speculate. What a day this has been. Will its memory ever be effaced from my soul? My thoughts, even, elude my wishes. I, who prided myself on the cogency of my reasoning, my control over my thoughts, am reduced to the same condition of blank vacancy as is a new born babe, looking, wondering, speculating possibly, but unable to realize or reason.

"I who am acknowledged to be the strongest mesmerist of the age, have twice in one day been completely baffled by my usually passive 'subject,' through no desire of his own to disobey. I am sure of that, as he has been too faithful a subject for me to doubt for one instant his loyalty. He wishes to please me. This night's work mystifies me more than the day's, and I regarded that as

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an epoch in my life.

"Let me think how it all happened, and why I lost all control over him to whom, ordinarily, I have but to suggest a thought or desire, and he hastens at once to obey, whether in a trance or not.

"There is no doubt the boy is very ill, overcome by some powerful influence, which, temporarily at least, is stronger than my will over him.

"I feel shame,—the deepest of shame—that I, who usually glory in the fact of calm nerves, invulnerable to the rudest shocks, should thus be suddenly deprived of all self-control, and that before a multitude of persons who will naturally say 'Professor Huskins must be losing his power to allow his acknowledged best subject to create such a sensation in a public place.'

"No wonder they would think so after all the tests many have seen this same subject put through, he obeying implicitly my every thought, silent or spoken. I could not only not prevent this public portrayal of my weakness, but it required all of the will power I possessed to quiet and subdue the disturbance after I had got him to his home where everything was perfectly tranquil.

"This is not a very flattering picture to contemplate, and I walked home purposely to cool my head and control my thoughts. If sentence of death were to be passed upon me, if I could not tell one rational thought that passed through my brain since I left home, until I arrived here again, I should have to pay the penalty.

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"All is confusion—doubt—chaos. I realize that I have no firm foundation upon which to stand. Where I thought I was strong I find I am weak; miserably and pitifully weak—so weak I feel acute shame for myself.

"Enough of this. I must and will know the cause of Merle's sudden illness. I know that, deny though he may, that sickness had its foundation in the woman's appearance and nowhere else. Just before that he was talking animatedly to me about his sister, and the thought went through my mind 'how well he looks; all the fatigue of the day has gone, and he is his old self again, quaffing enjoyment like a child.'

"I felt a sense of envy that he could be so light-hearted, and for just one moment could have wished myself a negative subject instead of a positive operator, but before that wish had been fully formulated in my mind, the singer appeared and almost simultaneously rang out his distracted cry 'William!' (the name by which he never addresses me except in private) and that in so loud a tone as to penetrate, it seems to me now, every portion of that immense auditorium.

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"I heard the cry, still I seemed unable to turn away from that woman's face; when, immediately there came another cry, so full of suffering it broke the spell that bound me, but I could do no more than to calm and quiet him.

"Was it selfishness on my part to remain that I might hear her sing just once more, or was it really an unselfish desire not to disturb others by going out while she was singing? I hope it was the latter. Is any man capable to analyze correctly his own thoughts? If so, I am not one of them. Why should Merle be stricken so ill by just one fleeting glance at her? She is as beautiful as a poet's dream. There must be something in their lives of more than ordinary acquaintance. He knows her;—he must.—But even so, why should he be so affected? I shall know. He shall tell me— if not waking, I will entrance him.

"It seems impossible that Merle has had any love experience with a woman, yet there is no other way to account for the incident. I must be wrong. He has been my subject now almost ten years; I know that in all that time he has been free from any attachments with women, for he has been continually under my care. Before that time, he was only a boy, incapable of generating any strong attachment, still she would have been a girl about his own age.

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"Probably they met, and, like every other true-hearted man, he has remembered and suffered, while she, with her beauty, has gone on wounding new hearts. I will find out about it. He is too good a boy to be the victim of a designing woman. I have warned him times enough, and thought he heeded me.

"This is another proof of one man's inability to dominate the entire consciousness of another so as to know for a certainty his exact thoughts and emotions.

"I thought I was aware of all the principal traits, wishes and events of Merle's life, while the strongest and most potent force of all probably, was entirely undreamed of.

"I thought before I went to that concert, I had a difficult problem before me,—one that would try my patience, ingenuity and knowledge, but I am likely to find that one simple, compared to the last.

"However intricate, I will solve it. There is only one way to do it; I will go to him as soon as I can get away from the consultation with my colleagues, when we have arranged to talk over our failure.

"They must not notice the ravages that yesterday has made upon me. It is useless for me to try to sleep; neither do I feel any inclination to eat, but I will go and take a good cold plunge. That will restore me to my customary equilibrium of mind sooner than anything else. Then I will walk to Dr. H—'s office. By that time I will get myself into my ordinary shape. William, you told yourself some years ago that you were impervious to shocks; you had control of your nerves and body;

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now here you stand, trying to keep yourself from trembling, and unable, even, to eat or sleep!

"Wonderful power to possess! I congratulate you upon its possession! Only yesterday, you prided yourself in one thing that your colleagues did not possess—fearlessness of public criticism;—You have been as nervous as a woman, thinking what impression Merle's disability will produce upon the persons present at the concert.

"No wonder you are an advocate of inconsistency! You know no better example of it than yourself. You surely have more to learn than you thought."

* * * * *

CHAPTER FOUR

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Punctual to his appointment, William was ushered into the private office of Dr. Harrington, which was a small, gloomy room barren of all beauty; a fitting symbol of the uses for which it was designed, as its interior was only known to those who were drawn there by sickness, anxiety or discouragement. With thoughts dark and grewsome, they sought this place in the hope of obtaining benefit or relief. Like being eternally attracted to like, such persons would be out of place where brightness or beauty or the fragrance of flowers or other cheerful conditions exist, for such things harmonize only with health and happiness, not with sickness and despair.

The doctor greeted William cordially, and with that punctilio that a man offers to one whom he recognizes as his superior. After a few common and casual remarks about the weather and kindred topics, the doctor remarked that William did not look as well as usual, and expressed the hope that he had not allowed a student's anxiety to acquire wisdom (followed by a rebuff) to cause him uneasiness.

"Not at all," replied William, "I have really thought very little about the experiment since I left you. Merle has been very ill, and I remained with him most of the night. I feel grieved he should be stricken just at this time, which is most inopportune, as I calculated to use him every day for a while, that I might finish the book I am working on. I depend upon his co-operation for much of the information I am putting into it, as I am compiling a series of personal experiences with him. Very likely I have used him a little too much, although I have tried to be cautious. As matters stand I think I shall be compelled to drop that work for a time, and give him a good rest.

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"I have been, as I told you before, developing his sister, for the purpose of determining the spiritual qualities and possibilities of man; I have no faith in the dogmas of theology, but still I do not feel that I can avow agnosticism or materialism.

"I took this girl when she was very young, and have developed her with the greatest care I have ever used upon any subject, allowing her mind to be biased by no teachings of faith of any kind, thus leaving her entirely unprejudiced.

"She lives a very secluded life, seeing only her mother, Merle and myself, is ignorant of the world, and is the best instrument that could be found to give clear and unprejudiced answers to the questions that I want answered.

"I shall employ an assistant who will come in after she has been put to sleep, and take down every word she utters, so the public (for I intend to publish her answers and my questions) will not be compelled to accept my unsupported statements. In that case, many would think that I had changed or modified her answers to suit my own ideas.

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"So far, although I have mesmerized her often for many years, I have refrained from questioning her while entranced, permitting her to talk or not as she felt inclined.—That reminds me of a symbol she gave me the last time she was in the trance. She was silent a long time, then she became suddenly very restless, and began to beat something away with her hands. I felt her heart beating very rapidly, and said, 'What is it, Alice? Can I help you? Do you wish to waken?' She answered, 'Yes. I cannot help you now, but I will by and by, for you have been so good to mother and Merle and me. We do not want you to suffer. I can go through it when it comes, but Merle cannot, for I see him failing, while I have a desire to go into it.'

"Go into what?' I said. She answered, 'That awful, black cloud that envelops you so I can scarcely see you. I will find you and bring you out.' I saw she was becoming so agitated I brought her back rather than see her suffer, especially on my account. She, of course, had no remembrance upon awaking of anything that had transpired in the trance, still I knew something would come, as she has always been accurate in her prophecies and symbols.

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"It must be that as Merle's sickness has unfitted him to do the work I had planned, she is going to take it up, rather than have me disappointed. The mother, sister and brother have all loyal hearts. Wonderful, isn't it, what surprises and knowledge the investigation of the science of magnetism imparts."

"Indeed it is," replied Dr. Harrington, "and this age is to be congratulated it has such a man as yourself to elucidate it, who has devoted years to experiments, and speaks, therefore, from accurate knowledge. Only a man such as yourself could afford to devote his entire time and

attention to investigation and research. Few such would do it, and I wish to express my appreciation of the grand work you are doing for humanity.

"Ministers' and missionaries' work pale into insignificance compared with what you are accomplishing. I am proud to be reckoned among your acquaintances. You have done much for me by your advice and instructions."

"There! There! You know my antipathy for compliments. My motives in working as I have are far more selfish than you give me credit for. Baxter is late as usual,—probably he has met some 'charming woman' as he always says, and thinks we 'poor men' should be pleased to wait while he converses with her. Every man has some weakness, and Baxter's most glaring one is certainly women.

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"Women and science do not work well together I have found. Ah, here he is now. Don't apologize, Baxter. It is altogether unnecessary, as we know you intended to be here promptly as you promised, but some perfectly irresistible creature, clothed in the habiliments of a woman, crossed your path, temporarily erasing the memory of so insignificant an affair as a scientific consultation, from your mind. Beauty and love before science is your motto. Come, own up. You are forgiven; the offense is not such a grievous one, after all."

"I own up to the cause of my absence being a woman, and a most charming one at that, but Huskins, I do dislike to admit my estimable self was not the object of her visit and solicitation and imploration. For once, I have you where you have so often had me 'cornered.' Oh, you are a sly fox! We have never been keen enough to discover the scent you were on, but we know now too well to believe that there is now, or has been no woman in your life. I wouldn't take money for this opportunity to return your banterings (whether in private or public). But your day is over. We are quits."

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"Baxter, you are daft. One would think you had been imbibing too liberally if he did not know you as well as I. What do you mean by implying some woman kept you from an appointment for my sake? Go on. Tell all you know, for there is not a woman on the earth I would turn my head to look at, so you can't banter me. We have work to do; Merle is ill, and I am anxious to go to him. He is more to me than your charming detainer. Speak out, for you will not be in a condition to work until you have had your say."

"Proud boaster, how little you appreciate the great boon I have in store for you. You do not deserve it. I would give several years of my life to be in your place. Do not look at me that way; I am going to tell you fast as words will let me.

"I was called away from home early this morning. When I came back, before I had a chance to eat, the colored boy came to me saying, 'There is the most beautiful lady I ever saw waiting for you in the reception room.' She wished to see me immediately, but would send up no card nor name. She told him to tell me she would not detain me long. Her own time was limited.

"As you may imagine, his glowing description of her beauty chased away all fatigue and irritation that would naturally result from a man's not having had anything to eat for nearly a day. I literally flew to her presence, that I might relieve her of whatever pain she might be enduring. Pain is so disfiguring that even beauty shows its ravages.

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"I was prepared by the boy's account to expect something more than ordinary, but I was not quite prepared to see such a vision of loveliness as confronted me. An angel could not be more beautiful. I know, Huskins, I must have stared when I saw her.

"She approached me eagerly, and asked, 'Do I speak to the celebrated Dr. Baxter?' I can feel my heart beat now at the remembrance of the sweet music of her voice. I never realized what a beautiful name I had before. I assured her I was Dr. Baxter, and the thought came to me irresistibly but joyously, 'What have I ever done, that such an angel of beauty has deigned to come to me for guidance and help?' No words can express the joy that pervaded my whole being at the thought of how wise I was in choosing a physician's career which would make me of service to such beautiful and suffering women. When she reached out that little hand for me to grasp in my big—"

"Enough of your effusions, come to the point. I am in a hurry."

"Huskins, you are a great mesmerist, but you lack a touch of sentimentality. I think with that you would be almost a god."

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"Then you had better let your suppositions rest until you are ruminating by yourself. What connection has the woman with me? Please answer briefly. I am in a hurry."

"You are too hasty, but I will endeavor to tell you in a short way what it took us a long time to talk over. She had come to me to implore you (on my bended knee if necessary) to gain your permission to mesmerize her, and you shall do it if I have to hypnotize you in order to make you."

"You must excuse me for laughing, my dear Baxter, but it is really a capital joke. Is it not, Harrington? Cannot you see the point? She has used me as a catspaw to get into your good graces. You are the objective point, not me, otherwise, she would have come to me immediately. I couldn't count the number who have given me urgent invitations to do the same for them. You see, she was a little embarrassed about asking you to do that for her, but she was hoping you would volunteer, for everyone knows that you are accounted an expert professional mesmerist. I

wonder at your denseness of understanding. You are ordinarily very keen and shrewd.

"Harrington and I make no pretensions to gallantry toward the ladies, yet either of us could see through that gauze of deception. Eh, Harrington?" [Pg 37]

"You are right, Huskins. I can see no reason for his attacking you in such a manner."

"But you haven't it all. Do not be hasty in your conclusions. She told me she had long been interested in the study of psychology, and the fame of Prof. Huskins had reached her in several places she had visited. She had always thought she would like to study upon the subject, and the only way to do was to be put to sleep herself. She was not willing to experiment with all persons, but would feel perfectly safe to be mesmerized by such an adept in the science as the Professor. She had likewise been informed that, being a rich man, and only practising the power for his own pleasure, it would be extremely difficult to reach him. Some kind person had told her I was an intimate friend of his, and might be able to influence him to see her, and possibly experiment with her, although she felt she would not be easily influenced. Her stay is brief, and she was not accustomed to sue for favors, as she assured me, but rather to be sued."

"There you are, running off on a tangent again. You may convey to your fair charmer my compliments, and state I am sorry to disappoint her, but just at present, I am too busy to comply with her wishes. If I were to mesmerize all the women who wish me to, I should have no opportunity to benefit science by any valuable experiments. Let us dismiss the subject without further talk." [Pg 38]

"But, Huskins, you have not heard her name. She is a very noted woman."

"That makes no difference to me. I have neither time nor patience to exhaust upon her."

"You must see her, because I have promised to bring her to your home, which report declares to be such an example of beauty and refinement."

"Really, Baxter, you are going a little too far. You know I consider my home a place of refuge and enjoyment, where I am free from all intrusion. You and Harrington are always welcome, as I think I have proven to you, but I do not pose as a curiosity or freak to be exhibited at any time to any of your friends or his who happen to want to look at me."

"I shall tell you her name, whether you wish to hear it or not. She is the famous singer, Rosalie Earle. Oh! You are surprised. So was I, Huskins. Think what a rude thing it would be to refuse her the hospitality of your home. I know you think too much of me to place me in so embarrassing a position as to go to her and say 'My friend, Prof. Huskins, refuses to permit us to enter his house.' Do let her call upon you, even though you do not practice your power for her."

"Pardon my gruffness, Baxter; you may bring the lady by all means. I will make every condition as agreeable as lies in my power. You come too, Harrington;—possibly we can arrange with the siren to sing for us. I must go now. We will talk over the business we have met here to discuss at my house. Baxter has monopolized the time we were to give to it here. I must go to see Merle, and I know Harrington should look after patients. I will look for you both. Let us hope the amiable and distinguished lady will be satisfied with her visit. Au revoir!" [Pg 39]

"How quickly Huskins changed his mind, when he knew who the woman was! I thought I was going to be in a deuce of a fix, he was so obstinate. He is a good fellow. I wish you would come with me to visit a patient. I want your opinion. It is a severe case with conflicting symptoms, and you may be able to suggest something of benefit. Can you go right away?"

"Yes. I will be glad to accommodate you."

CHAPTER FIVE

[Pg 40]

William went directly from Dr. Harrington's to Merle's home, where he was greeted by Mrs. Millard, who said, "I am so glad you have come, Professor, as Merle does not seem at all well. He is feverish and nervous, and has said every little while, 'I wish the Professor would come.' He will be so glad to see you. You look pale yourself; I hope you are not ill."

"Thank you, Mrs. Millard, I am well, but have just come from a professional conference. I am sorry that Merle is not feeling well. I will soon help him. Shall I go right up to his room?"

"Oh! He would get up and dress. He is in the parlor lying down. Go right in."

"See that no one disturbs us until I speak to you. I shall put him to sleep."

"No one will enter; I will see to that. I hope you will have time to see Alice, too—she also acts strangely. I do not like to intrude upon your time; you have been so good to us,—but mothers are nervous, weak creatures."

"It will be a pleasure to do anything that lies in my power for Alice, after I have restored Merle, and I will see her then. You must never hesitate to ask favors of me, Mrs. Millard. It gives me real pleasure to be of assistance to you at all times. Now I will look at Merle." [Pg 41]

"I am sorry to see you looking so weak and sick, Merle. What do you suppose caused your sudden faintness at the concert? You were apparently well and rested before the singer's entrance. It wasn't a case of love at first sight, was it? We may as well jest as look upon the dark side of the picture."

"You don't know how grieved I was to be the means of depriving you of the pleasure of hearing so exquisite a singer as Miss Earle, knowing, as I do, your love of music. I think the very thought of how disappointed you must have been has helped to make me sick. I would like to be instrumental in bringing you happiness, but my weakness robbed you of a special delight. Really, I tried not to give up, but an irresistible wave of power seemed to pass over me."

"I understand. Do not think of me at all. My concern for you and your health supplanted every other feeling. Merle, your father is dead, and though I am not old enough in years to fill his place, my love and interest in you are sufficiently strong to warrant me a father's privilege of questioning you as to the cause of this undue illness. You know me well enough to be sure that whatever you may say to me will never be repeated. I would not ask you any questions except in the interest of science, but I want to find out what has caused this condition. You were apparently well and happy until the singer appeared, then you were taken suddenly and seriously sick. Merle, what is she to you?"

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"What is she to me? Nothing. I did not even see her."

"Then what made you ill?"

"I do not know."

"Think well, Merle. Tell me every sensation you remember."

"I cannot recall anything but a clutching sensation at my heart, as though some one had it in his hand, and tightened his hold until I could neither see nor hear, and a loud rumbling sounded in my ears."

"What caused these sensations? That is what I want to know. Tell me, Merle, did not the appearance of the woman evoke some painful recollection?"

"How could it? I did not see her. I do not know whether she was young or old, light or dark, large or small."

"I shall be obliged to put you into the trance state to find out the exact cause. You know, Merle, I never permit a result to elude me. Are you willing I should try to find the cause? I confess I am as ignorant of it as you."

"You know I am always willing to be of any assistance to you, and if I knew the cause, I would tell you more quickly than my own father, but I do not."

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"Very well. Now sleep. Speak. Merle, are you all right?"

"Yes."

"I am glad. Now I want to know what was the cause of your physical weakness at the concert."

"I do not know."

"You do not know? Do not answer me that way. I want the truth, and will have it. What made your body faint and sick?"

"I do not know."

"Merle, you have been a faithful, truthful subject for almost ten years. I have always chosen you when some severe and important test was before me. Never yet have you failed to respond to my wishes. Do not let this be the first occasion of your disobedience. You know what made your heart stop beating. Tell me. I demand it. What is that woman to you?"

"What woman? I did not see any woman."

"Merle, you are lying to me. Do you think you can make me believe such an assertion as that? You can not deceive me. Tell me the truth."

"I am telling you the truth."

"Merle, I will you; tell me what that woman is to you."

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"What woman?"

"I cannot tell you how it grieves me to find you so untruthful; no man on earth could have convinced me of the fact that you would ever give me anything but truthful answers. Probably you were afraid I would reprimand you, if you were to tell the exact truth, but I will not. It makes no difference into what conditions you may have been led, or what you have done, I will remain ever your staunch friend. Be frank, be the Merle I have so long loved and trusted. What made you ill?"

"I do not know."

"What is that woman to you?"

"What woman?"

"I have good patience, but you are trying it too far. You shall tell me the truth."

"I am telling you the truth."

"You know the woman who sang."

"I do not know her."

"You do."

"I do not."

"I say you do. Where have you seen her before last night?"

"Nowhere."

"I say you have, and you shall tell me. Merle, why do you not speak? What makes you act in this contrary manner? Speak. You know this woman." [Pg 45]

"Yes."

"I knew it. Did the sight of her make you ill?"

"Yes."

"Just what I thought. What is she now, or what has she formerly been to you?"

"I was her lover."

"Ah!"

"She said she loved me and urged me on, but finally I discovered I was only one of several admirers. When she appeared, the shock of seeing her thus unexpectedly, made me faint."

"Why did you not tell me this when I first asked you?"

"I was afraid."

"You would have pleased me much more in telling the truth. There is no disgrace in loving a beautiful woman. Where did you meet her and woo her?"

"I do not know."

"Of course you know. Tell me the truth."

"I feel as though it were a long time ago, and everywhere there was sunshine and flowers, but I don't know where it was."

"You do;—tell me."

"I cannot."

"Do you hear me, Merle? What ails the boy? I never saw him like this before. Merle, answer me. Where did you first meet the woman?" [Pg 46]

"I never saw her."

"You just told me you were her lover. Where did you know her?"

"I do not know her."

"You do, and I will you to tell me the truth. Again, where did you first meet the woman?"

"I am tired."

"Tell me the truth and then you shall rest."

"I do not know any more. I cannot get it."

"Get what?"

"Where she was."

"Where were you?"

"With you."

"No; with her. Merle, you must be very ill when you talk so irrationally and untruthfully. You, whom I believed to be the soul of honor and rectitude. Sleep awhile. I will return, and then you will tell me truthfully. Whom can I trust, if not Merle? Yet, he persists in telling me lies, and defies my suggestions for truth. This proves to me that I have yet much to learn of men's souls. I would have given much rather than have this occur, for I can never again feel the same degree of confidence in anything he may give me in the trance state. Heretofore I have always put implicit faith in any assertions he made, but I am grievously disappointed at this. Women are the source of all man's iniquity. She has made him this, and yet he tries to shield her. He was a good boy until her influence poisoned him. I will take him in his normal condition and teach him to avoid

women. I will obliterate her memory even from his mind, for he is too good a boy to be ruined by a frivolous woman's fancy. Sleep sweetly till I bid you wake, Merle; I will go and see what ails Alice. It is strange she should also be affected at this time. A few more experiences like this, and I shall have good reason to believe that I have very little knowledge of the human mind and mechanism."

"Mrs. Millard, I have put Merle to sleep. He will waken calm and refreshed. I would like Alice to come here.—Ah! Here she is. Let me see what is troubling you."

"I do not feel ill, Professor. I am just nervous and weak."

"Shall I put you to sleep?"

"I wish you would."

"Mrs. Millard, I will see you before I go. Sleep, Alice. That is well."

"Poor Merle."

"Why Alice, what makes you say 'poor Merle?' He is sleeping quietly, and will awake refreshed and cheerful."

"Poor Merle! Poor Merle!"

"There Alice, that will do. Do not try to talk; just rest."

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"But I want to talk; I know what made Merle sick."

"You do? What did make him sick?"

"You did."

"I? Why Alice, I am making him well, not ill."

"You made him sick."

"What power is working to make you and Merle talk so strangely to-day?"

"I say that you made him ill."

"There, you had better sleep now, you are in no condition to talk."

"You think the beautiful woman's influence affected him, but it was your own that overcame him. That is the reason you could not control him. Had your own mind been at rest and at peace, you could have prevented his present sickness."

"You talk enigmas, Alice. Merle acknowledged while in the trance state that he knew the woman, and that the sight of her overcame him."

"Then he told you an untruth. He does not know the woman."

"Which of you shall I believe?"

"Me."

"Under similar conditions, he would answer the same. I know not which to trust. Balancing the two testimonies, at their intrinsic values, any man would unhesitatingly accept Merle's as the more reliable. How did you get your information that I caused his sickness? If my influence made him ill, what agitated me so, leaving no sign of impression upon me, yet causing another person to suffer? You have given me some strange assertions, which you cannot hope to have me believe, unless you give me logical reasons for so doing."

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"It is very hard to get close enough into your magnetism to sense the exact causes of your emotions, but I know that your own surprise at seeing the face of that woman produced such a shock, the influence was reflected upon Merle's body. You could control yourself by strong will force, but Merle could not guard against the powerful wave of magnetism your surprise generated. You have mesmerized him so much he is sensitive to your every thought, either spoken or silent, and he cannot help it."

"Why should he be so strangely affected just at the present time? He never exhibited such a tendency before."

"You have never been affected so strongly before, as you were at the concert."

"Why was I so affected at the sight of a strange woman as to warrant such an explanation of Merle's sickness as you have given me?"

"She was not a strange woman to you. You were not pleased to see her there."

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"Why?"

"I do not know. It is all dark before me now, but I will yet go into the clouds as I promised you. I told you Merle could not do the work for you, for I saw him falling down before it. I can—after a few times trying. I cannot see the woman myself. I feel just as you feel, almost numb from a severe shock. I cannot get any more now. Do not be impatient nor vexed with Merle. He loves you, and told you the truth, but your stronger will (believing he knew the woman) compelled him

to say that he did. He will not be well again until you become calm in your own mind, for all the sensations that sway your soul will be reflected in him. You are a very powerful man, but even you cannot set aside Infinite Law."

"Before you go, Alice, try to tell me something about the lady. Try to see her."

"I cannot see her. The only sensation is sadness. Oh, so deep!"

"She looked anything but sad, when I saw her. I think you have not gotten into her influence at all. She was the personification of cheerfulness."

"You saw only the body of the woman, which was compelled to laugh, at her desire to appear well. How do you know when a person smiles that it is a sign of happiness? You laugh—I always knew you were not happy. Would anyone have thought to have seen you at the concert, looking so fine, your heart was aching as it did?"

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"Try once more to see her. I will wait patiently."

"I shall not see her until you have again. I feel sorry for her. You are so kind, and I feel you are going to be as cruel as your nature will allow."

"There, Alice, wake up cheerful and strong. You have talked enough. Wake up. There, you are feeling better; I know by the healthful flush upon your face. Merle is still sleeping. Leave him as he is. I will be back again to-day. He will soon be himself again."

"I am glad to hear you say that; mother and I have been quite worried about him; he acted so unlike himself, but we felt you could cure him. I will speak to mother; you may tell her anything you want done."

"Mrs. Millard, you may relieve your mind of all anxiety concerning Merle. See how rosy and well Alice is looking. I will have Merle the same. There is nothing you can do for him, any more than to keep him perfectly quiet. I will come back later in the day. I have an appointment at my home, so I must be going."

"A mother's loving gratitude will follow you, Professor. My constant wish is that you may be as happy yourself as you make others."

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As William walked briskly away from Merle's home to his own, Mrs. Millard's parting words followed him, causing him to think sadly. "Happy—me happy! Does a happy man work as I work, who has money enough to gratify his every whim, but concentrates every thought and interest upon science, experiment and work, just to lose sight of himself? I flattered myself years ago that I had conquered myself; stifled every sensation and emotion common to youth and man, transformed myself into a student of science, and grew gradually to believe myself quite a power in the use of psychology. After all my work, I am, in a day, brought face to face with my great ignorance and weakness, at the very time I seemed nearest to the goal I have so long held before me, while all my boasted calmness and control over my nerves and body were instantaneously dispelled by a woman's presence.

"No man could have made me believe I was so weak. I will overcome this humiliating weakness, as I have similar ones in the past. It must have been the suddenness of her appearance before me that temporarily shattered all my self-control.

"Who would have expected to see her in the famous singer whom everyone is adoring? Praise, flattery and homage! Well, that will make her happy for a while, then she will find how empty and worthless it all is. What reason can she possibly have for coming to see me, of all persons?"

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"I may as well acknowledge the truth to myself. I would have allowed Merle to suffer before I would have gone out, while she stood there. She would have thought I felt shocked to see her, but she will find me entirely calm and collected;—master of myself.

"To think that now, of all times, Merle fails me! If I ever wanted his help, it is now. I ought to be strong enough and shrewd enough to compete with a woman. I cannot collect my thoughts sufficiently to even try to conjecture the cause of Merle's and Alice's inconsistency in talk. Truly, inconsistency, you never had a more ardent and faithful pupil than I. My whole bearing is an example of inconsistency, without modification. I am glad no person can know from my outward appearance, the great tumult sweeping over my soul.

"Happy? Poor woman, she did not mean to be sarcastic, for she was sincere in her wish, but my worst enemy could not give me a keener thrust. Now to tell James. He and Mrs. C— must not be seen by her. I seem pursued by fate, yet I have always been an honorable man. Sometimes I am almost convinced those who try least to be so are blessed with the greatest happiness."

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CHAPTER SIX

[Pg 55]

When William reached his home, he went directly to his private apartment, telling the attendant who let him in to send James to him at once. He had no more than removed his coat, when there was a rap on the door, and in answer to his "Come in" an aged man

appeared, small in stature, but very erect, the personification of neatness and exactness. Looking at this man, one would not suppose he had ever made an error in system, or forgotten any of the rules respecting cleanliness and order.

It was easily to be seen at a single glance his whole soul bowed down in admiration and homage to his master, whom he loved with that degree of fervor that passes the bounds of ordinary affection, and servitude, and enters the realm of adoration or reverence.

The horizon of his present and future was bounded by this man's pleasure and displeasure. His eyes fastened themselves at once upon his master's when he was bidden to enter. The most careless observer would have said, could he have obtained but one glimpse of his attitude and deportment, "that man is a slave to his master, still I would not want to stir the depths of his nature towards me as an antagonist, for he is no ordinary character, but a power whichever way he may incline."

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For a brief interval after he entered, no word was spoken by either. James, the newcomer, was looking at his master, while William hesitated and seemed confused. Finally he spoke, but anyone would have noticed the hot flush which diffused his face, and which was a very foreign expression to his usually pale and colorless hue.

"James, I have sent for you to impart a most unusual command. Ever since you came into my service, you have been faithful, loyal and considerate of my every pleasure and comfort. Not once have I had any occasion to censure you or doubt your loving service. Such faithfulness demands recognition. During the darkest days of my life, you guided and thought for me, when I was unable to think coherently or strongly for myself. Such service can never be rewarded.

"I hope I have proved myself to be, at least, a kind and considerate master. If I have failed in any respect, it is because I lacked wisdom to express myself, as my heart has overflowed with gratitude."

"Do not say any more, Professor. Never was a poor servant blessed with so kind a master before as I have been here. I have been with you too long not to read the expression of your face aright. You are in sore trouble. This is a chance for me to show the depths of my devotion to you. Bid me make any sacrifice, ask me to perform any work, however delicate or dangerous, and you shall see how much James loves you. Believe me, Professor, I know only one aim and object in life,—that is to further and guard your happiness, or I should say your bodily comfort, for I know you are not happy, though the Gods have given you riches, power and wisdom.

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"You are too good a man not to have somewhere in store for you the same amount of pleasure you are always striving to give to someone else. Surely, you are ill—I will bring you some wine."

"No, James, I do not want it."

"But you have eaten nothing at home for a whole day. Your bed has not been disturbed, and you tremble so I know that you are not well. Let me send for Dr. Harrington."

"NO."

"There, I implore you, take some wine. Rest, and I will see no one disturbs you."

"Sleep! I feel as though I could never sleep again. Wine is impotent to restore my calmness, James. Only a powerful exercise of will can do that. By and by I will gain it. I sent for you to help me pass a darker condition than has heretofore entered my most disappointing and troubled life. You have never yet failed me and I do not think you will now. I would not have permitted any other person to see me so unmanned, but when you came in just then, it brought too forcibly for me to control myself, those old times, when your coming was the signal for my happiness, and now the contrast is so great, it for a time overcame me. I will be myself again soon."

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"Pardon an old man's inquisitiveness. You know it can only arise from my love for you, for I have given as good a test as one man can give another of my faithfulness. I have never seen you so agitated and upset since that awful time you forbade me to ever mention. I have been as silent as the grave, but I feel you could not be so upset but by something connected with that or some tidings of it. Forgive my speaking of it when you have commanded my silence, for this is my first disobedience in all these years."

"James, Clarissa is coming here to-day."

"Master—do my ears deceive me? My little Clarissa? My beloved Clarissa? My beautiful lady?"

"James, are you beside yourself?"

"How can I be calm when I shall welcome my blessed lady? You say she is coming. Blessed be the day when her feet cross your—"

"That will do. I see you still love her better than me, who have tried to be your friend, when she forsook and forgot you. Such is the gratitude of this world."

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"There is no test or sacrifice any man can pass through, I would not gladly and cheerfully endure to prove my loyalty to you. You tell me Clarissa is coming here, then condemn me for rejoicing, when there hasn't been a day passed for years I have not prayed for this very thing. How can I help rejoicing at your happiness? Why do you look so serious? I know—My God! They will bring her poor dead body here. Poor child, we will cover it with flowers. I will cut all those we were

saving for the public exhibition. You will not care, will you Professor? It is the last favor a poor old servant can do. You know I always keep one plant of her favorite blossoms growing. There is only one spray of them, but she would like them in her hand. I always felt she would come, and I wanted her to find them in season, or out of season her flowers, a fit sign of the constancy of the love we felt for her."

"Stop! You are giving her more credit than I feel is her due. Your love for her is stronger than I had dreamed. It is well you have not told me before of your keeping a particular blossom among my plants for her, otherwise you would not have preserved the plants, and remained in my service. If your love for her is stronger than for me, I will release you from your allegiance to me, and you had better seek her service."

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"Remember, I am an old man, no longer quick to understand. Let that fact be my excuse. No other master will I ever serve willingly. I know not how to talk or act. You say she is coming, yet you are angry when I feel joy. Why does she come, if not dead?"

"By her own wish."

"I always told you she loved you."

"She is not coming because she loves me. She has heard I am a powerful mesmerist, and wishes me to mesmerize her."

"No! No! You do not mean to say she is coming here unbidden and unwelcomed by you."

"You may be sure I have extended her no invitation. I suppose she thinks she can deal with me as before. If she can come unbidden, I am a very weak man, if I cannot act the part of an hospitable host."

"There must be some mistake here; Clarissa is too proud to place herself in such a place. She does not know whom you are."

"Why doesn't she? She went to Dr. Baxter and solicited his influence to do for her what she knew I would not."

"My poor old brain is numb; but I know that Clarissa has some motive good and true, or she would not humble herself to you. I know she thinks by bending her pride, you will forget and forgive. She knows you too well to believe you will seek her, although we all were to die of lonesomeness and sorrow. That is the way she used to do when she was small. Be imperious and wilful as a little queen, then come and—"

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"There,—reminiscences are not interesting to me. They might be to her. You have the privilege to choose between her and me, as you did once before. There will be the same conditions attached to the bargain. You cannot serve both. Consider yourself entirely free to choose. You have served me well—I appreciate your faithfulness, but could not hope to vie—"

"Do not say any more,—my head is going round and round. Won't you tell me why she is coming here?"

"I have told you."

"Master, you do not think that is the only reason? I know she is hungry to see you. You will not go to her, so she is coming to you. She is proud, and must have suffered awfully before she could do it. When you see her, you will forget what she did, same as I used to when she had picked all my choice—"

"Enough. There is not the slightest resemblance between a man's heart and a flower, though she does seem to think so. I told you Merle was sick, and you professed to be sorry, as you said you thought him to be an unusually fine young man."

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"I meant it. He is, next to yourself, the best man I ever saw."

"What do you suppose caused his illness?"

"How could I know?"

"Your idol of admiration and worship—Clarissa."

"No, it cannot be so. She would not make an insect to suffer. I remember—"

"I do not care to hear remembrances. He told me so himself. He had been her lover at one time, and the knowledge he was only one of several ruined his life. He had not seen her for some time, but, coming suddenly into her presence, being weak from long entrancement, he received such a shock he has been weak and feverish ever since. The same old story, you see!"

"I do not think Merle would lie, Professor, but I cannot believe Clarissa would willingly ruin any man's life. Everything seems to be tending to a more dense darkness. When she comes, I will take her the bunch of flowers I have raised for her, and tell her how perplexed I am. She will explain. She always told the truth, no matter what she did."

"How she must have changed since childhood."

"Do not laugh like that."

"That was a droll remark. She always told the truth, no matter what she did.—Well, time is flying. She will soon be here. Which are you going to be loyal to, her or me? You have not much time to decide. That is her fault, not mine. If you conclude to remain in my service, you must make a quick decision, as I shall insist upon both you and your wife's shutting yourselves up in your own apartments while she is here, that she may neither see you nor know you are here."

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"Not even see her? Not one glance?"

"No. Not and remain in my service; furthermore, your wife must not even know she is coming. I do not trust women. She might promise secrecy, but would yield to the temptation to look at her, to see how she had changed. While she was looking, the famous Miss Earle would see her, and then such a scene would follow as I don't wish Baxter and Harrington to see. What are you looking at me like that for?"

"You do not mean that Miss Earle, the great singer, is Clarissa?"

"None other, James. Time makes many changes. But quick,—you must choose."

"I never did, nor never will condemn or believe anything against her."

"Then you decide to go to her? No doubt she will be glad to have you with her again."

"I did not say that. I said I trusted her, and I do. She had reasons I did not know, and probably never shall, for doing what she did. I shall serve you lovingly and faithfully as long as breath remains in my old body, unless you send me away. I had rather die than know that she was here though, and not hear the sound of her sweet voice, or feel the touch of her soft, white hands, but I will follow your directions, and so shall Nancy. I will keep her working. May I ask just one question?"

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"I have never refused to answer you, have I?"

"Shall you mesmerize her? If you do, may I not take just one look at her? She will not know it."

"I shall have nothing to do with her."

"But, master, everyone says you have wonderful power. I do not understand it. Couldn't you mesmerize her and find out why she left us?"

"Nonsense. I know well enough."

"If you wanted to do so, could you make her tell you in that way?"

"Yes."

"Then why do you not do it?"

"It is not worth the trouble. I want to thank you for your loyalty to me. You will never be the loser, James. I trust you to keep both yourself and your wife from sight while she is here. To reward you, I will tell you the principal account she gives of herself during the interview, after she has gone. I am done with you now. Do not look so solemn, James; your part is far easier than mine."

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"If you should mesmerize her, may I see her?"

"I can easily promise you that—"

"I will put those flowers in the library, under your picture, just where she loved to see them. She will know she isn't forgotten here. When you want me, tell Robert to come to my private room. Nancy and I will be there.—I was only saying to send Robert to my room when you wanted me, as Nancy and I would be there."

* * * * *

As the door closed, William threw himself into the nearest chair, repeating James's words "rather die than know she was here and not hear the sound of her sweet voice, or feel the touch of her soft, white hands." His lips closed firmer and firmer together, as he felt how much easier it was not to see her than to meet her as he must; as a stranger; calm and collected, while his whole being was swaying with emotions so varied and conflicting; he could not separate nor enumerate them himself.

Of all the bitter lessons life had furnished him, this was certainly the bitterest. Then came the thought, "I must control my thoughts. I will be brave and calm—apparently satisfied and happy with my lot in life. If she has the heartlessness to seek me, she shall witness no ravages her perfidy has made upon me. She shall not gloat over my misery. I will dress now. I will show her that there is at least one man who can resist the witchery of her presence, despite her fame."

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CHAPTER SEVEN

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When William had dressed, and entered his library to attend to the writing which the day's excitement had caused him to neglect, not even the most careful observer of human nature could have discovered signs of a disturbed mind in either his face or his bearing. He seated

himself, and immediately began to critically examine the papers which awaited his attention, and before the bell announcing the arrival of his guests rang, he had done quite an amount of work.

He arose at once, and went to the reception hall to greet them. There was not the least perceptible tremor in his voice when he bade them welcome, and acknowledged the introduction to the lady who came with Dr. Baxter.

After the usual salutations were over, he invited them into the adjoining room, and Dr. Baxter said,—

"You see we were right on time, Huskins. One of my pet foibles, you know, is punctuality. Miss Earle, unlike most of her sex, was promptness itself, waiting for me, instead of keeping me waiting for her. Harrington sent his regards, as he was unable to join us. He was suddenly called from town, to be gone several days. I hope I will not prove 'de trop' at this interview; if so, however, consider me yours to direct. I will go into another room, and remain until you have finished. Miss Earle, you look very pale, and you are trembling violently. You are nervous. There is no occasion for fearing Huskins; he is a royal good fellow. Most women are nervous toward him. Eh, Huskins?"

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Miss Earle spoke up quickly. Her voice was calm, though she trembled visibly. "I have no fear of Prof. Huskins. Far from it; but I am troubled considerably with this most distressing form of nervousness. I shall soon recover."

"You work harder than you should, perhaps. It is no uncommon thing for women, and sometimes men, to be seized with a sort of vertigo when they first meet Huskins. They seem to feel that he has some mysterious power; their doubts and fears temporarily control them. You will feel more at ease after you have talked with him a while. His power is just the thing to remove your nervousness. It was wisdom upon your part that prompted you to come to him to be mesmerized. Medicine could not do what he can for you. Would you feel freer to talk if I were to leave the room?"

"You will please me best by remaining here. Both of you gentlemen have doubtless heard, and probably believe, that women are but living types of contradiction and inconsistency. I shall be to you but another proof of the adage. Yesterday, I had but one absorbing thought—to be mesmerized; and I naturally desired to be taken to the most renowned exponent and operator. My exorbitant wish granted, my enthusiasm, strange to state, entirely vanished. I am very sorry that any whim of mine has discommoded you whose time is so valuable."

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"Not at all, Miss Earle, it has afforded me great pleasure to be of service to you, and Huskins has any quantity of time at his disposal. He only works when he feels like it. I am sure your enthusiasm only failed you because you are uncertain of the sensation accompanying the trance condition. It is not unpleasant. I know that you would be a good 'subject' and could be put to sleep easily. Am I not right, Huskins?"

"Miss Earle has a temperament very susceptible to magnetic influence, and would experience no unpleasant sensations while passing to sleep. I am sure I could remove the nervous disorder."

"I appreciate your kindly interest in me, gentlemen, but all my desire for personal experience with magnetic sleep has gone, never to return: I feel now. It may seem strange to you,—I came to you, to two strangers, for such an experiment, without bringing with me an attendant, or obtaining your services through the intervention of mutual acquaintances. The reason for my singular action was, I wanted no one to know about it. Your reputations were both such I knew you to be gentlemen. Really, I did not pause to think how it would look. It seemed to me as though I was going to a physician. It is quite proper to go there unattended."

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"Such an apology is unnecessary. Do not allow such a trifling obstacle to interfere with the accomplishment of your wish, for Huskins' housekeeper is a venerable and estimable woman. She often assists him. She is a woman you would trust as a mother. You may never have such an opportunity again, for I had considerable work to gain the Professor's consent to mesmerize you. I imagine, however, your remarkable singing last night had more to do with it, after all, than any persuasion on my part. Who could refuse anything to the possessor of so matchless a voice?"

"Allow me to express the admiration I felt at the rendering of the first number you sang—doubtless all were equally good. Unfortunately for me, one of my subjects who went with me was taken violently ill, and we were compelled to leave. He is a friend of yours, he tells me."

"You flatter me by your encomiums. I am pleased you enjoyed the song. You say the gentleman who was with you was a friend of mine. May I ask his name?"

"Merle Millard."

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"Merle Millard? That is a strange name to me. I have no recollection of ever having met him. No person who works in public can hope to remember all the estimable people whom they meet. I hope he has recovered from his indisposition."

"I am sorry to say he has not. It is strange you do not recall him at all. He told me today he once knew you intimately."

"I have had few intimate acquaintances in my life. I have no recollection of ever having heard that name before. I may have met him at some reception, and forgotten him; more than that, I do

not know him. I hope he will have a speedy recovery. I will not intrude longer on your time."

"Can we say nothing to induce you to carry out your original intention?"

"No, Dr. Baxter; I thank you sincerely and earnestly for your kindness and courtesy."

"They are ever at your disposal. Would it be overstepping the bounds of politeness to ask you to sing just one song? The Professor is quite a musician, himself, and has a piano in perfect order; for I know he is so susceptible to discords. I have never had the pleasure of hearing you sing. Granting my wish, I shall always regard this day in my memory as one of the most fortunate in my life. I know the Professor will gladly accompany you on the piano."

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"You have been too kind for me to refuse. I owe you both some return for the patience you have shown my varying moods. I will not trouble the Professor to play for me, as I am used to playing my own accompaniments. I will sing you a song from memory, if that will be your pleasure."

"We will adjourn at once to the music room. The Professor is not a married man, but he keeps an establishment of as many rooms as though he had a large family. He is a lucky man:—rich, happy, powerful and talented. How he has managed to escape designing mothers and beautiful daughters, is a continual problem to his friends."

"Science is a jealous mistress, and is at present the wife of my choice; the presiding mistress of the house. I hope, Miss Earle, you will find the instrument in fairly good tune. Had I known I was to be so highly honored, I should have had it especially tuned for you, but I know that you are too gracious not to make allowances for any defects that may be found."

* * * * *

"What an exquisite voice! Words fail to express my gratitude for this feast of music; I shall never forget it. Permit me to offer you these flowers which have been placed beneath Huskins' picture. Such music is only fitly rewarded by flowers."

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"It is a beautiful bouquet. I appreciate your compliment and kindness. These waxy, white tuberoses are very rare at this season of the year. They are beautiful flowers, but their odor affects me unpleasantly. Singers, you know, are very sensitive to the fragrance of flowers. May I ask the Professor if he will kindly send them to the sick gentleman, with my compliments and best wishes? Flowers bring such a cheerful influence to the sick room. Permit me to thank you for your hospitality, Professor, and to apologize for my unseemly intrusion. Believe me, I truly appreciate all your kindness."

"It affords me great pleasure if I have been of any service to you, Miss Earle; may success attend you always. I will call at your office sometime tomorrow, Baxter. Au revoir."

After watching his guests depart, William strode quickly back to the music room. Any person seeing him would have known that some strong emotion was raging in his soul. His eyes flashed with that brightness that only shows itself under stress of strong feeling, and he walked straight to the bouquet which Miss Earle had left upon the table, near where she had stood. He took it up, and throwing it upon the floor, crushed the sweet flowers under his feet until all their beauty was gone, but the whole room was filled with their fragrance.

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"She dared ask me to carry these to her old love. She dared ask me! Me! Is she not satisfied with past torture, and must she add present insult to it? I carry flowers from her to another man? Why did I not crush them here before her? She does not like their odor—they affect her unpleasantly. She has changed her mind since I can remember. Once they affected her differently. She was nervous and trembling like a child. What sent her here? She shall not defy or humiliate me in the future. She is a rarely organized sensitive. I am an expert mesmerist. I will her to come and beg me to mesmerize her. First, I will refuse, then, when I am ready, I will influence her. She shall see, think and act just as I will her. I will put every particle of force in my soul into the work. I will make her my obedient slave. Ask me to carry flowers to your old lover! You dared to look me calmly in the eye, and to say without a quiver, 'Carry them, with my compliments and best wishes to the sick man.' My flowers, I was to carry to him. Think of it! My flowers with her compliments. If there is any power in magnetism, and I have proven its efficacy, I will crush out of your heart the pride that prompted that insult, as thoroughly as I have the beauty of these flowers."

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"Not one throb of pity for you. You are weaving a net for Baxter, too, probably. Make the most of your time, for I solemnly swear I will make you suffer just as much as you have made me. I have made a success of every work I have ever undertaken, and I will make one of this. These flowers make me feel faint and dizzy. I will go and walk and get the air. Her presence has polluted the very atmosphere of the whole house."

CHAPTER EIGHT

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After leaving Prof. Huskins, Dr. Baxter escorted Miss Earle to her temporary home, and by every means in his power, sought to make her cheerful and at her ease. Despite his efforts she seemed a different woman, than she had been when he conducted her to the Professor's house.

He painted in the most glowing colors the remarkable wisdom and power of the Professor, recounting all his virtues, and his singular manner of living, acknowledging him to be the very "prince of men," of all his large acquaintance.

To his keen disappointment, she seemed not at all interested in his narration, and it might have been plainly evident to the most careless observer her thoughts and interests were far from the subject under consideration. His pride had been considerably wounded, but she was far too beautiful and distinguished a woman toward whom to cherish any animosity.

He was conscious of the fact that he had been signally honored by her seeking his aid to reach the professor, and he attributed her sudden change of purpose entirely to womanly fickleness of nature, being convinced in his own mind that, desiring a mesmeric sleep or state of unconsciousness, the presence of so austere and dignified a personage as the Professor had inspired her with a degree of awe and fear that, for the time, was uncontrollable.

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He did not wonder greatly at this, for in all his acquaintance with the Professor, he had never seem him appear to so great a disadvantage. He was always affable and pleasing, especially when he desired to secure a person's approbation to being psychologized. In this interview, he had scarcely been hospitable, speaking only when he was actually spoken to or necessity demanded. He had a degree of deference and respect for Prof. Huskins that he felt for none other of his acquaintances, knowing him to be superior, from a moral standpoint, to all the rest, and he did not want an unpleasant impression to be left in this woman's mind.

Huskins had appeared to a disadvantage, and he endeavored, so far as lay in his power, to remove the unsatisfactory impression from her mind, but the woman did not appear to recover from the agitation, that the sight of the Professor had produced, although to most women, he was not only agreeable but captivating.

Arriving at her destination, she thanked him for his kindness to her, and his intercession with his distinguished friend, in a most charming manner, and he went away feeling well repaid for all his efforts. He felt sure that, had he been the Professor, she would not have refused to be mesmerized.

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It was well for his egotism, and the peace of his mind, that he could not see the woman when she had reached her private apartments.

No audience ever had or ever would see her portray such a tempest of emotion as swayed and shook her soul. Her whole body quivered, like the single petal of a flower that has been drawn into the fury of a gale, and cannot control its action, but is swept hither and yon by an irresistible force. Finally the tempest of tears and grief subsided, leaving her languid and weak. Only then did her thoughts become cogent, and they ran something like this:

"What did he think? What could he think? He must have believed I knew whom he was, and went to see him, hoping for a reconciliation. How cold and stern and unrelenting his whole bearing was! How well I remember that expression in his eyes. I would have passed through any torture, rather than put myself in such a position; even death itself.

"How could I know that the distinguished Prof. Huskins was William? The two persons who quoted him, said he was an old man, a scientist who had experimented years, and was capable of removing all bodily infirmities.

"It was only natural my thoughts should turn to Augustus, who, while gifted with remarkable talent, is afflicted with a weak and impotent body. My one thought and ambition has been to so improve his physical condition as to make it easier for him to express his talent, and hearing of the Professor's power, I thought perhaps he could help Augustus. I would gladly be a martyr to benefit him in any way. He is the one object of my interest and love upon earth. I have tried every kind of physician, and, hearing of this man's marvelous and wonderful powers, I resolved to submit myself to his influence, to test its power and to see what it was, and if it was good, to secure his services for Augustus, even though it required all the money I had.

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"How could I know that he was Augustus' own father? What power, what fate placed me in so embarrassing a position? What have I done that I should be subjected to such humiliation and chagrin? I have been a patient, faithful and devoted mother while he has enjoyed pleasure and renown. If there is a God of Justice, why have I been compelled to enter this cruel, selfish and heartless man's home in search of my poor child's health?

"How well I knew that expression in his eyes. He thought me a woman who seeks men of renown; he was as jealous and exacting as when his taunts and suspicions separated us.

"I thank the Giver of all Good that William did not know the real object of my going to him for the exercise of his powers.

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"If there is a good God, and I sometimes question it, I pray that William may class me as he used to do with wicked and depraved women, for that would be preferable to the truth of a loving mother seeking her child's strength. If he believed Augustus to be his child, he would take him away from me, or I should at least have to divide Augustus' love. I will never do that, if it costs my life. He is mine. All mine. I would gladly suffer the torments of Hades to bring him one throb of joy.

"He shall never know his father's perfidy and treachery, if my suffering can prevent it. How glad

he will be to see me! Augustus, it is for you I sing; not for the public who pay me. In me you must find both father and mother. No power but my love for you would have given me strength to resist the magnetism of your father's eye, which, in times past, has so influenced me.

"My body trembled, but when the two loves of my soul were placed in the balance, the mother's love was purer and stronger, and outweighed the wife's. It is useless to deny I love William; the very sight of him set every nerve aquiver, throbbing with an almost exquisite delight. I could not have controlled that condition, had there not come to my mind the memory and presence of one whom he denied, and who depends entirely upon my strength, fortitude and love.

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"This memory gave me the strength to conquer my woman's love, and only manifest a mother's. The love of a wife, that is, of a true wife, is enduring, but that of a mother is the nearest infinite love that can be. A wife's love may wane and weaken by facts of infidelity, but a mother's only strengthens with every token of weakness.

"Just in proportion to Augustus' physical infirmity, does my affection increase in force and intensity. I once thought William the center of interest in the world, but the love I had for him pales into insignificance beside that for Augustus.

"William was jealous of me today; I saw it in his eyes, whose expression I know so well. Once such a look would have controlled not only my actions, but my very thoughts as well. His influence over me has not waned. I am well aware of that by the weakness I manifested;—I actually trembled visibly;—but there has come into my life a newer and stronger influence—a mother's love, and that has rendered the other impotent. I was weak and negative to him until I had placed in my arms a babe who depended upon me for every comfort and shelter as I had depended upon William.

"This dependence has generated in me a love and power he can neither overcome nor remove. He loves me yet. I saw and read the fact in his eyes. He appeared cold and unconcerned, but I know him too well to be deceived. No other woman has filled my place. He would have been glad to mesmerize me, and I am sure that I could never have resisted the power of his influence over me, had it not been for my thoughts of Augustus. A wife may be strong, but a mother is stronger, and I am to Augustus both mother and father. He shall never know the sacrifice I made for him this day. His father denied him, but his mother will be as true as his father is false.

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"I defy the power which has made him famous. My heart refused to beat regularly while I was there. I know it was due to the sudden shock I received. He could not have entranced me against my will, nor made me tell of Augustus.

"He knew my condition when I left him, and he has never tried to find trace of my child, nor whether we both died; still I am weak enough to yield to the magic influence of his presence. Such a weakness shall not be repeated. By all the powers of my soul I defy it. I am Augustus' only natural protector, and my love shall be the insurmountable barrier that shall separate him from his father.

"At the time when my very life blood seemed to stop, there came a piercing cry that stirred the depths of my soul. Since that time, I have known but one object in life—one only ambition and interest:—to be famous for my darling's sake. If I could only purchase by suffering his bodily freedom of action, I would endure the fiercest torture without a murmur. It would be impossible to endure more excruciating agony than I have experienced this day. Why was I, an innocent victim from the beginning, compelled to encounter the humiliation of going to William's house?

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"I had almost rather that my darling Augustus, my heart's idol, remained a hopeless invalid than have him rescued by his father's power. His cruelty made Augustus a cripple, and me a hopeless and despairing woman. That power which has been our scourge, can never be our hope of release. Better the hatred of our crudest enemy than the influence of William's love in our lives.

"I will leave this city. I cannot breathe the same atmosphere I know is feeding him and live. I bid every idol but the image of my boy to depart from my soul. I will go where he is; there I shall find peace and happiness. How sharp love's eyes are! I must calm myself; I will be cheerful and happy; otherwise, Augustus will note the difference, and ask the cause.

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"Never was a mother blessed with so noble a son as mine. I will be his protector though the legions of ignorance and evil conspire against him and me. Nothing can daunt my love. I will calm myself for your sake, Augustus. Mother will come to you, and we will be happy despite your father's influence. I feel it now. I will, Augustus, break this annoying sensation."

Saying this, she arose with a visible effort, apparently suffering from great lassitude, and went into an adjoining apartment to write her son, where we will leave her while we follow the movements of William.

CHAPTER NINE

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Before William left his home after the interview, there came a hurried messenger from Merle, asking his immediate presence, as there was a decided change for the worse in his condition. William knew such tidings must mean a serious state of affairs, as in all the time he had been

using Merle as a subject, he had never before been summoned by his people. On the contrary, Merle had improved physically ever since he had been controlling him.

He hastened to Mrs. Millard's house as quickly as possible, trying to keep Merle in his mind as manifesting strength, health and calmness, yet, when he arrived, Mrs. Millard, who had been eagerly awaiting him, let him in, he saw by the expression of her countenance, which was clearly dejected, that his thought waves had thus far been futile.

Despite his own anguish and torture of mind, there arose the spectacle of what a blow it would be to science, if he, one of its advocates and acknowledged experimentors, should allow his principal subject to sicken and possibly die. He tried to the utmost of his will to focus his mind upon the thought, "Merle shall and is manifesting health."

How many times, when other men's minds had failed and their courage had flagged and waned, had his shone forth like a bright and radiant light, illumining the darkness and bringing out congenial conditions. Somehow he did not seem to really know himself. He no longer felt secure or sure of anything, still he greeted Mrs. Millard with words of encouragement, and asked to be shown immediately into Merle's presence.

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Arriving there, he was astonished to note how weak and feverish Merle was. Even his presence did not seem to awaken him or to especially attract his attention. He asked Mrs. Millard to leave them alone. He would have been loth to admit how long a time it took him to gain sufficient power to put Merle into a peaceful and refreshing sleep, but at length he accomplished it, and passing out of that apartment, asked if Alice was willing to be mesmerized, while her mother went to watch by Merle's bedside.

In that house his word was law, and Alice was soon put into the trance condition. Her first utterances were all of Merle, but by gradual degrees her thoughts were directed into different channels. After several questions, she was able to tell William that he had had two callers, when he had expected three, and the visit of these two had been productive of disappointment instead of satisfaction. He could not find out from his questioning why such a condition existed.

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He asked every variety of question he could think of, but, beyond what he already knew, he could get no enlightenment. This exasperated him greatly, for he was not in search of what he already knew, but striving to obtain information upon a point about which he was ignorant. Why had Miss Earle come to him?—That was the question he wanted answered, but all he could get from Alice was "She came to get help for him she loves."

Such a declaration, repeated over and over, by no means calmed William's troubled mind. Finally she said:

"Do not force me. I do not know whom she loves, but I know she loves someone better than you. Your power, which is strong enough to influence Merle and me, is not strong enough to penetrate through the other love, yet she loves you better than her life."

Realizing how futile it was to force her further, William bade her awaken, and, after looking in to see Merle again, and leaving such instructions as he thought it necessary to follow, left the house and walked toward his own home.

His thoughts traveled rapidly, and the expression of his eyes showed that anger or some kindred feeling was one of the most potent forces operative in his spirit at the time.

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His thoughts ran something like this:—"She came to me to get help for him she loves.—She loves me better than her life, still there is one dearer yet.—My power is not strong enough to penetrate through this other love.—That remains to be proven; I think differently; I prophecy her idol will fall separate himself from her, and she be compelled to come to me for assistance. How she must love herself when she loves me more! Love! She does not know what love is, but she shall know, and shall suffer, even as she has made me suffer—and Merle. The boy is very ill, and is weakening instead of growing stronger. I had hard work to put him to sleep. His illness means the indefinite postponement of our scientific researches. I am in no condition to conduct them now even if Merle were well, so his illness does not really interfere with the matter. I shall know no rest, but devote my every energy and power to the bending and breaking of Clarissa's proud spirit. I will help her loved one. Oh, yes, I will help him—to grow weak and negative, and the very antipathy of her desires, and she shall come to me humbly, and sue for help. She will never again ask me to carry flowers to her past lovers. I swear it."

CHAPTER TEN

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Six months have passed since we last saw William. During that time a noticeable change has taken place in his appearance. He seems many years older, and his eyes appear incapable of expressing anything but sternness. In a way these changes add to his dignity in a manner not altogether pleasant to contemplate.

Since last we saw him, his time has been given to the task of controlling Clarissa's spirit, by silent thought suggestion, but so far he had been unable to bring her to him by their power. Having experimented so long and thoroughly with mesmeric power, he was able to distinguish at a single

glance those persons who were sensitive to his influence, consequently knew her to be a sensitive of an unusually susceptible and refined order, and he naturally thought that by concentrating upon her with the entire strength of his will he would cause her to gravitate to his presence, drawn by an irresistible force, in a very short time, as many others had before.

There had been no lack of interest upon his part, as he had thrown into this work all the force and intensity of his power, but so far as he could see, there was no sign of Clarissa's yielding, and she made no movement to seek his presence.

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Such a result was exasperating in the extreme, and humiliating to him. Almost every day he had questioned either Merle or Alice, after putting them into a trance state, concerning her movements, but he only received the most vague and indefinite replies, not one of which was satisfactory. Alice had said several times that she would never come to him, and told him to go to her, but the idea seemed preposterous to him. He go to her? No—she should come to him. This at first, but after a while he added "or send for him," and now, here he was in search of her.

It was easy to trace her movements, as her singing at any particular place was advertised in all directions. He kept in close touch with her movements, hoping to find a trace of the person whom she wished him to assist, but so far he had been unsuccessful in his search. The last reports he had had of her announced that she was in poor health as the result of overwork, which necessitated a complete rest from all public work.

He was not deceived by this report, as he knew his constant thought was affecting her nervous system and undermining her strength, and this was not wholly unpleasant knowledge. He made a sudden resolution to go to her. It was useless for her to resist, so he immediately started on the journey, and we now find him entering the hotel where he had learned she was stopping.

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All the way, he had been devising plans as to how he should get into her presence. If he sent up his own name, she would claim she was indisposed, refuse him admittance, and he was a man who disliked to be thwarted in his plans. He would be compelled to send some name to her, and it must be someone whom she would want to see, as, naturally in this nervous condition, she would not see many people. She would see him though—in that he was determined.

He had pictured exultingly the shock it would be to her, and trusted a great deal in the fact that the force of the shock would be in his favor.

Finally he decided to send up the name of Dr. Baxter. He had two reasons for the selection,—Dr. Baxter was a noted expert in nervous disorders, a man whom one in her condition would be glad to see, and she had expressed herself as indebted to him for her intrusion upon his time and patience to satisfy her whim. Everything transpired exactly as he had anticipated, and he was soon following a guide to her apartments.

His countenance had that impassive expression that usually characterizes so-called distinguished persons, but he was innately far removed from the calmness and immobility that his appearance indicated. It seemed to him his heart beats might be plainly heard by the young man ahead of him, and pausing when he had arrived at his destination to calm himself, he felt as though his strength were oozing out of his usually vigorous body, and he noticed his hands were actually trembling. He soon regained control over his nerves, however, and gave the signal announcing his arrival.

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The door was opened almost immediately, and as he stepped forward, in the natural perturbation of his mind, he failed to notice who it was who opened the door. All his attention was fixed upon the coming ordeal, but just as he passed the threshold he heard someone say in a hushed and awed tone, vibrant with emotion: "Master William! Master William!!"

He turned quickly toward the speaker, and as he saw the expression of not only wonder but pleasure on the face of the colored woman, his own eyes filled with tears, for he was just in the mood, wrought up and nervous as he was, that any unexpected noise or temporary shock would agitate him. He held out his hands to her, but no words came.

It was different with the woman; her face seemed to beam with happiness, as she carried his outstretched hands to her lips, murmuring, "Master William has come; now mistress will get well. —Augustus will be right back, and Oh, Master William, we have been powerful sad and lonely. Bless your heart, you are looking fine! I will go and tell mistress you are here; You don't want me to tell mistress? Well, joy don't kill even sick people. I reckon your face and love will do her more good than medicine.—That's her voice—She's right in there and you shall not be disturbed only when Augustus comes."

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This unexpected welcome, too honest and sincere to be doubted for a moment, did what nothing else could have done for William. He seemed to break away from the cold sensation that had for so long been clutching at his heart, and held every emotion in its relentless grasp. This expression of faithfulness and these words of welcome when he had schooled himself to look for and expect coldness, hauteur, and possibly defiance, had defeated the man who had come there by dint of force, carrying him back in fancy to scenes of past happiness, and had unwittingly unlocked the volcano of love and emotion, which he had so long repressed.

His whole countenance underwent an immediate change; his eyes shone with a lustre almost dazzling, and his step quickened. He could not control his voice to speak, but he pressed the hand of the servant tightly, and with a quickness and agility of movement a youth might envy

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removed his outer garments, and started for the place that the servant had pointed out to him.

He met Clarissa just at the door, for she had risen to greet Dr. Baxter as she supposed. As his glance fell upon her, he advanced yet more quickly, and before she had time even to think, he clasped her in his arms, drawing her tenderly to him. Neither was conscious of what transpired, and of that scene there only remained in her memory in later times the feeling of such happiness as deprived her of speech and emotion, while in her ear was murmured words to her at the time unintelligible.

The shock was so great she was powerless to resist and when he turned his eyes toward hers, they seemed to hold her irresistibly. It seemed to her he had never before been so handsome. How good it was to feel his arms about her. She was sick and weak.—Closer and closer came his face to hers, and when his lips met hers, there was neither power nor wish to resist or repulse him. Without knowing or realizing what she was doing, she raised her arms and placed them around his neck, and her head nestled closer to his breast, instead of shrinking she gave kiss for kiss.

Just then there came a joyous laugh, which was quickly shut out by the closing of a door, but a large St. Bernard dog leaped upon William with a savage growl. Before the dog entered William felt a change in Clarissa; she was apparently changed from a loving woman to a rigid statue. He had not noticed the boyish laugh, as his mind had but one thought. He only knew he held Clarissa in his arms—the only woman he had ever loved instead of repulsing had yielded lovingly to his embraces and answered his caresses. Her eyes fed his hungry, starving soul, and shed the glances and promises of love.

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The whole world might have quivered and shaken at this time, and he would have still been oblivious, but, looking into her eyes with all the eagerness of his soul, and revelling in the unexpected happiness he felt, he saw a change, that like some magical influence extinguished from her countenance its expression of love, loosened her closely clasping arms, and rendered cold and irresponsive the lips that had been so warm. He did not try to analyze the cause, but instinctively drew her more closely to him.

His eyes gleamed more brightly, as he pressed his lips more firmly to hers, and then came the shock of the dog's attack upon him, and the low sullen growl. Clarissa spoke quickly and sharply, and the dog moved slowly away, while she strove to free herself from William's embrace, but though she struggled, he drew her more tightly to him, and he felt a quiver as of a strong emotion pass over her. Then for the first time he remembered her illness, and a feeling of shame came to him that he had startled her so.

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Probably the shock of his sudden appearance had made her faint. He had been the cause of her suffering—he would remove it. He lifted her easily in his arms, and placed her upon the couch from which she had risen when he entered. Her face was wan and pale, and her body seemed cold and inanimate, but her color returned as a voice said, "Come, Rex—get your supper." Then a door shut, and he heard no more.

With a sudden bound, and eyes flashing, Clarissa arose and confronted him. The change was so sudden he was wholly unprepared for it, and seeing the great struggle she was making to speak, he could only account for it by the supposition she was enraged because he had come upon her so unexpectedly, compelling her to admit by her acts if not by her words that her love for him had not waned any more than his for her. Her pride was wounded. He would not notice whatever she might say;—he would soon have her back in his arms again.

Finally she spoke. Her voice sounded cold and strange, and her words came slowly, and distinctly, but there was an apparent effort:

"You will excuse me if I retire. I am ill.—I will ring for my maid to escort you out, and so long as we live, never enter my home again."

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The expression of William's face never changed. He opened his arms and approached her, intending to draw her to him, but something in her eyes stopped him before he reached her; they stood there looking at one another fixedly and neither spoke. She pointed her finger significantly toward the door. This position, which William made no move to change, became unbearable, and she exclaimed sharply: "If you have any of the instincts of a gentleman, you will not wait to be again asked to leave my presence."

Every word she uttered made a visible change in William's look and manner; all the gladness fled from his face, and he seemed to strengthen and expand, while his eyes glowed like orbs of fire. "I have always understood that the customs and usages of the best society permitted a gentleman to remain in the presence and home of his wife."

"William, go—I beg of you—don't look at me that way.—I feel faint and dizzy."

"Then my arms are your proper resting place. See—I will forgive your sharp words. I know you are not well. There, rest against me.—You won't kiss me? You struggle to get away, but just now you nestled close to me as you used to do. Be still. I have power; you shall be strong again."

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"Mistress, Augustus is home and insists upon seeing you. Shall I let him in?"

"No—I will be out very soon."

When the servant spoke, William released Clarissa, but his eyes did not leave her face. When she had gone, he strode to her, and grasping her arm in no gentle manner, said: "Who is Augustus? Why don't you answer me? Another of your innumerable lovers, I suppose. Well, there have been a few kisses since he left that did not go to him. They were as warm and tender as any you ever gave him, and you may assure him, with my compliments, that they are not the last I shall have either. A fool's paradise is better than none. You belong to me by every law of God or man, and no one shall ever again come between us, for I have the power to slowly kill him.—Do you realize what that means? I will put him or any other person out of my way as I would kill a viper. You need not turn pale—I mean it. Your beloved Augustus shall die. I swear it."

"William, take that back."

"Oh, you plead for him, do you? I register a solemn vow to Heaven—"

"William! You shall not say it—It is too horrible.—Say that you do not mean it.—See, my arms are around you.—Do not speak." [Pg 99]

"Do not speak? I do not need to. My thought has power to blast him, soul and body. Now—this very day. You need not cling to me. I will not share your embraces with him.—He shall die.—I am not the first man who has murdered for the sake of a woman. The sight of you has crazed me. I swear—"

"Mother, Dinah said I might bring you these flowers. May I come in?"

At that word "mother," uttered by a voice in the distance, which kept coming nearer, accompanied by the barking of a dog and the sound of wheels, William stopped abruptly and looked at Clarissa, with severely questioning eyes. Her face lit up at the sound of the voice, then her whole body shivered and shook, threatening to prevent her standing, and her hand went to her heart while she struggled for breath.

"Mother dear, may I come?"

The voice and dog stopped, for the boy would not enter till he was bidden. William's eyes did not leave her face. He said coldly: "Why do you not answer? It is evidently you who are addressed."

No wonder she trembled as she looked at him. She made a visible effort and said, "What is it, dear? I will come presently."

"But, mamma, I want you to wear these, they are so pretty. Just let me put them in your dress, and I will go back to Dinah." [Pg 100]

By this time, William's eyes blazed, and his voice was calm as he said, "Bid him enter." Clarissa seemed under a spell as she said with a vacant expression, "Come, Augustus."

The words had scarcely left her lips, when the voice began, the dog barked, and a young boy, guiding a wheeled chair, came into the room. He was a remarkably handsome child, probably about twelve years old, a cripple. His cheeks were flushed, his eyes glowing, and he looked more like an animated picture than a real boy. Being the personification of refinement and beauty, he needed only a robust body to appear a miniature God.

One glance at the boy, a sudden start, and a complete change took place in William's countenance. All the anger and jealousy and uncontrollable rage faded away, and so kindly a light came into his eyes it attracted the boy's attention. Rolling his chair to his mother's side, he put his arm around her, and rising to his feet, with the other hand he placed in her dress a bunch of tuberose, and gave her a loving kiss. Then he quickly sat down in his chair, bowed to William, and said "Come, Rex," at the same time starting for the door.

"Will you not speak to me, or give me a flower, or at least tell me your name?" said William. [Pg 101]

"Yes, sir. My name is Augustus Earle, and I will buy flowers with all my money and bring them to you,—I won't even buy a picture or anything if you will just cure my mamma. Dinah said you were a doctor, come to cure her, and we are going to have a jolly time when she gets strong again."

"Your father must be very proud of you; such a bright boy as you are."

"I have no father. Didn't mamma tell you? No? Papa is dead, and Aunt Dinah and Rex and I take care of mamma. Aunt Dinah says I look like my father and have his temper, but you must not think he was a bad man, for mamma says he was grand and good and noble. I would like to be like my father when I am a man, only of course he could walk and I can not without crutches. But I don't care, only sometimes. Have you any little boys or girls?"

"Yes; I have one boy."

"I suppose he can walk and run and jump and swim. You just wait, I like you—I am going to send your little boy a present, for you are going to cure mamma, I know. How old is your little boy?"

"He is twelve years old."

"Just the same age I am. How do you suppose he would like a horse? Do you think he would rather have a dog? Oh, I don't mean a truly one—only one I draw. You tell him, when you give it to him, Augustus Earle, a boy who can't run and walk like him, drew it, and sends his love with it.—I will not be gone long." [Pg 102]

After Augustus had left, neither spoke for some time; not till the clatter of his chair was lost, then William said, and his voice was low and gentle:

"Clarissa, why did you not tell me of this years ago?" She made no reply. "Why did you let me remain ignorant that I was a father?—Won't you speak?"

"He does not belong to you."

"Clarissa, you don't realize the significance of what you say. That is my son—I know it, and it is useless to deny it. Why you should try to I cannot understand.—What is the cause of his lameness? I may be able to cure him, and make him so he can walk. He is a handsome boy."

"I say you shall not cure him;—I have cared for him so long, and—"

"Here I am, Dr. Baxter, I think I will send both of these, then he will be sure to be pleased. I am so glad you are going to eat with us—Aunt Dinah has put an extra plate, and made me promise to be on my best behavior. You see, Aunt Dinah forgets that I am not a baby because I cannot walk, but I can play and sing and draw better than boys that can play games. I have a boat—I will go fetch it. Do you know, Rex has learned to swim and sail it for me, and I sit and watch it. It is a good boat, for a fisherman told me so. Rex, go and get my boat. Now Doctor, you just see if he does not fetch it. He knows what I want, for he takes care of me.—There is Aunt Dinah calling. I have to go and let her fuss over me. She rubs my face and hands, and combs my hair just as they do a baby's, and if I get angry and wash myself, she says I am not clean.—If I do not go, she will come for me, and rub soap and water into my mouth and eyes and say, 'You are the perfect acting image of your father, you are.' I will be ready by the time supper is; I am so glad you are going to stay. I will show you my drawings, and sing for you too. Mamma says I sing splendidly.—There's Dinah again.—We will have a jolly time, and you can tell me all about your little boy."

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Various expressions had chased one another over William's face while the boy was talking, and anyone watching his countenance would hardly have believed it capable of expressing any but the kindest of emotions, and solicitude for others. Tears were in his eyes, and his voice trembled as he thanked Augustus for the drawings he had given him, and as he started to wheel himself away, William stooped to kiss him; but, as though she had the power to divine his thoughts, Clarissa, who had remained silent during the boy's last entrance, moved quickly between them, herself kissing his animated face, and pushed his chair toward the door, saying: "Dinah will be cross with you—go quickly.—Remain in your room until I call you—I wish to talk with the Doctor, alone."

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"All right, mamma; do not be long—I want to hear all about his little boy."

Clarissa watched him until he had passed from sight into another room, then turned, like an avalanche, upon William. The intensity of her feelings seemed to lend her strength.

"If there was ever one faint spark of interest—I will not desecrate the name of love by calling any feelings you may have entertained toward me by that title, but if you have ever had even a passing interest, I implore you by the remembrance of it, to leave my home immediately, and so long as my child and I may live, never bring your unwelcome presence to us again. Go.—You don't move? Whatever other feelings I may have had for you, I always give you the credit of possessing the ordinary courtesy of a gentleman.—You will compel me to resort to very rude measures, and as I am not very strong, and this interview is not only taxing my patience, but my strength—"

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"Why should I go, Clarissa? Heretofore, there has been only one loved object in my life; now I find another, unexpectedly, it is true, but none the less dear. Where these two are, there I wish ever to be. You both need me and I need both of you."

"You are mistaken. We do not need you, and love is a sentiment unknown to your soul. Do not longer parley with words. Go—or I shall lose what little respect I still have for you—"

"I cannot leave you ill."

"Who has made me so? I know you have. I know very little about the science that has made your name illustrious, but I know enough of it to know your power lies in the concentration of thought. Have I not been pursued by your image and influence, sleeping or waking, ever since the day I entered your house? Do not flatter yourself this image has been welcome, for it has been far from it, and I have had but one means of banishing it.

"It has been this continual struggle to throw off this unwelcome influence that has shattered my nervous system. I am gaining upon the power to throw it off, however. I thought, one while, I would surely die, as at times my heart would cease beating, and everything begin to turn black. You would have succeeded in your nefarious scheme, but for the remembrance of my helpless boy, who has no one but me to depend upon. I cannot and will not leave him alone.—"

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"Nights, when I have felt your evil power so strong, I could almost see you before me; I would rise and go to Augustus, and, kneeling beside his bed, I would pray for the powers of good to give me strength to live and care for my blessed child. These prayers have been answered; I no longer fear either your image, your influence, or your actual presence.

"A mother's love has strength to overcome every evil for her child's sake. I defy you and your boasted power. I did wrong to ask you not to try it upon Augustus; the power of my love will

counteract any influence you can send him. Will you leave us now?"

"I make all due allowance for your condition, and rather than cause you more suffering, I will go immediately, leaving you by yourself to think it over and reflect if you have not been a little harsh to me. Think over the early days of our marriage; how happy we were. Can you recall one act of mine that was not an expression of my loving solicitude for you? Had I one thought beyond you and our home?"

"Since you went away, I have lived the isolated life of a student. No woman's smile has caused me a moment's thought. I have been as true a husband to you as in those happy days so long ago. The misery and suffering have made me old before my time, but I am clean in every thought so far as women are concerned.

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"Isn't that proof of some love? I see by your face you do not believe me, but I will prove it to you.—Come home with me.—James and Nancy are with me, and always have been. You will believe them, even though you doubt me. They know my life. We will nurse you back to health—possibly I can do much for my son—"

"Stop. I told you before that Augustus was not your son."

"I know he is. His every look and movement proclaims it. It is useless to deny that I am his father. Why do you want to put such a stigma upon the child?"

"I am telling you the truth. His father is dead, just as he told you."

"Then how do you account for his remarkable likeness to me?"

"Probably the dislike I had for you before he was born marked him with your features."

"Clarissa, I do not believe you. If I am not his father, who was?"

"That is nothing to you."

"Nothing to me? Are you mad?"

"No. I was never more sane in my life. I can look you straight in the eye, without the quiver of an eyelash, and say, you, William Huskins, are not the father of my boy. Can a person telling an untruth do that? Would it be natural for a mother to acknowledge her child to be illegitimate, when she might presume upon a man's credulity to claim him as his son and heir, unless she wanted to be honest?"

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"I can only account for your words by that fact."

As he spoke the words he moved toward her, and she kept receding, with her eyes fixed upon his. Paler and paler she grew, and larger and larger became the pupils of her eyes, which were gradually so dilated that they seemed to hide the other portions of them; still he gazed at her with an unwavering and stern expression till, finally, she clasped her right hand over her heart, and sank, without a word. She would have fallen prostrate upon the floor had not William sprung quickly to her as she fell.

Immediately he felt her helplessness, all the stern, steady look vanished from his face as though by magic, and in its place there shone all the eager ardor of a lover. Time and the memory of the past both seemed to have been obliterated from his mind, and he was conscious of but one fact. Clarissa, the only woman he had ever loved or who had ever held either his heart or senses captive, was again in his arms;—was his.

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The thought made him tender and kind as a mother to her first born babe, whom she believes to be the answer vouchsafed to her prayers for a living example of her love for her husband; for this babe she would offer her life, a willing sacrifice, without one thought of hesitation, even if the sacrifice meant physical torture. Her love could generate the power necessary to endure any kind of personal torment if she knew her suffering would purchase the release or happiness of the child which was dearer to her than her own pleasure or welfare.

So William felt, when his arms encircled the object of his love, and he would gladly have endured any discomfort or suffering Clarissa had been subjected to while the combat of their wills had been waging. He realized as only a man whose experience had been as vast as his could realize, that her nervous condition, combined with the unexpected shock of his sudden appearance, had been a great ally to his cause, for without these, despite her naturally susceptible temperament, he would have had a severe struggle.

He lifted her easily and bore her to the couch from which she had arisen upon his entrance. She looked so white and rigid and still and cold—so much like one prepared for burial—that, despite his vast experience with mesmeric sleep, he felt anxious. He was loth to admit, even to himself, he was nervous—supposing she was dead! Supposing her spirit had actually fled, leaving him alone again:—deserted—while her soul was transported into conditions of which he knew nothing, and he could not reach her?

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The thought was agonizing. He immediately drew her to him, thinking to warm her cold, inanimate body by contact with his own which was warm and vigorous. Those lips that had but a short time before responded so tenderly and lovingly to his were now cold and unresponsive. For a time, the scientist was lost, while the husband caressed, loved and suffered.

He kept repeating "Clarissa—Clarissa—Speak to me," and after a long interval of silence she spoke.

"Did you speak to me, William?"

If the voice of one dead had answered him, he would not have been more startled. The shock broke the spell that bound him, and the man of science was once more alert. He lifted her head, looked intently into her eyes, rather at her eyes which were closed, and said—

"Clarissa, do you hear me? Are you awake?"

There was a brief pause, then she replied, but her voice sounded far away. "Yes."

"Do you know who is talking to you?"

"Yes—William."

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"Have you anything to say to me?"

No answer,—then he said timidly but tenderly, "Clarissa, do you love me?" No words passed the cold, impassive lips, but her arms were raised and entwined themselves about his neck, and her head nestled lovingly and confidently against him. The answer seemed to satisfy him, and for a while, he made no effort to talk, apparently quaffing the enjoyment fate furnished him.—The past and future were a blank to him, and the present was fraught with such exquisite bliss, that he heeded not when Dinah spoke to him.

"Master William."

Not receiving an answer, she entered, spoke again, and not now receiving a reply, and seeing her mistress and him in so fond an embrace, she reverted to the rules of the past and touched him instead of speaking to Clarissa. He looked up at the touch and smiled so pleasantly it seemed they were all back in the past.

"Master William, the Doctor is here to see mistress. I have your dinner all prepared. What shall I tell him? He insists upon seeing her. I told him she was engaged. I would not come in. Do not look so cross, Master William, but he said he would have to see her, and you know she has great faith in him. Aint you, Honey?"

"Dinah, tell him to go."

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"But, Master, he is waiting just outside here with Augustus."

"Augustus, my baby, mamma is coming,—mamma is coming."

As these words came from Clarissa's lips, William felt a great change pass over her. He had put her to sleep by his power, but she was no longer rigid, and her arms, which had clung so tightly and lovingly about his neck, loosed their hold, and warmth and animation diffused themselves to every portion of her being. She rose erectly and tried to waken, but encountered a mighty resistance.

"Tell the doctor to remain where he is. I will come to him," said William, while he tried to restrain Clarissa from rising. "Sleep,—Sleep,—Sleep," he repeated, but his mind had been unsteadied by the happiness of thoughts of his brief intoxication. His commands seemed to have no significance for the woman who struggled to free herself from his grasp.

"Augustus—I am coming—mother hears." This was all she said, but it required all William's strength to hold her on the couch, and a feeling of jealousy (which he was at the time ashamed of feeling) overmastered him, and held him in thrall, and he repeated over and over again, "Sleep—Sleep—Sleep" his vigor increasing as his jealousy gained the advantage over his judgment, and she finally collapsed into a comatose state.

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Dinah had watched her struggles, but, feeling her mistress was in safe hands, had not interfered in her behalf, although she could not understand the purport of what she saw. When she saw her mistress settle back again, like one dead, she said—

"Master William, shall I show the Doctor in? She sure has fainted."

She received such a look from William as she was not likely to forget, and he replied:

"Dinah, your mistress is sleeping peacefully and well. Take me to the Doctor."

She offered no objections, but led him to a room where Augustus and a man of mature age were waiting. When he had reached there, William's eyes would have been a study for any man. He acknowledged the usual salutation of introduction, but his head was visibly elevated from the position it should have held considering the august presence of so distinguished a practitioner as Dr. Goullard;—in fact, he could not control his feelings sufficiently to remember they were both gentlemen, and said abruptly, "Dr. Goullard, your services are no longer required; I am here as Miss Earle's representative, and will at once discharge her obligations to you for services rendered if you will advise me as to the amount of her indebtedness."

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"Who are you, who presume to represent Miss Earle? I only accept dismissal at her injunction. I demand to see her. If she bids me to visit her no more, very well, but I must receive some sign from her."

All the time Dr. Goullard was talking, William's face showed a scornful expression, and when he had finished, William said, "I presume her husband has some right to choose a physician?"

"Certainly," replied the Doctor quickly, "but Miss Earle's husband is dead, therefore, as she has called me regularly for a long time, I consider myself privileged to pass into her presence immediately."

"Not without my permission," replied William, and no person could have mistaken the meaning of his expression. The doctor looked at him interrogatively and he continued: "I presume you have heard of William Huskins, the scientific expert upon nervous difficulties, or diseases; I am he. I see you know of my reputation by your expression. Well, I am Miss Earle's husband. Ah, that startles you.—It is the truth.—I am this boy's father."

"I am acknowledged as an expert practitioner for difficulties and disorders of the nerves, consequently, my wife can have no further need of your services. Doubting my claims as husband to Miss Earle, and father to Augustus, you may refer to Dinah, who has been an attendant of Miss Earle since she was a young miss—"

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"Prof. Huskins, I do not pretend to doubt your assertions, but you will, I think, admit that it was quite natural I should make the mistake, as I have been told by Miss Earle personally her husband was dead. I have attended her for some time, and I should be pleased to offer her my congratulations upon having so distinguished a husband as you. I will not long intrude upon the privacy of your glad reunion."

Williams' mind had cleared while the Doctor was speaking. He realized his conduct thus far had not been such as would naturally be expected from one of his reputation. He was too proud to apologize, still he knew some concession upon his part was necessary, and, throwing his head back with that impetuous movement Dinah knew so well, at the same time pushing the hair back from his forehead with his hand, he said, quickly and courteously, "My wife is sleeping now; I have just placed her in a trance condition, from which I shall awaken her shortly, calmed and refreshed, and much stronger. I will take you to her if you desire it."

"I should consider it a great favor for you to do so. I have heard much of your marvelous power, of which I must confess I know very little, but of which I should be pleased to learn more."

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Without another word, William turned and walked from the apartment, followed by the Doctor, leaving Augustus and Dinah alone. While the men had been talking, Augustus' eyes had not left William's face. He made no effort to speak, now that William had gone, but fixed his gaze upon Dinah. She said nothing and there was a long silence.

Finally he said abruptly, "Dinah, *is* he my father?"

"Yes, honey."

"I want to see Mamma."

"Wait, honey, till the Doctor goes, and your father will take you to her. He is a right good man, but he hasn't much patience. You are just like him, honey;—I always said so. No, you cannot go now. We must wait till we are called, child."

CHAPTER ELEVEN

[Pg 117]

After he had seen the doctor leave, William, instead of going to Augustus, returned directly to Clarissa. He only felt secure regarding her when he could see her. All the varied scenes through which he passed seemed like a dream, and he could not rid himself of the impression he would awaken and find Clarissa gone, leaving him alone again.

He had entirely forgotten Augustus, and in his distracted state of mind the thought of the shock and surprise it must have been to the boy to have him declare himself, a comparative stranger, as his father, did not occur to him. His mind seemed incapable of comprehending or holding more than one image; he felt the deepest chagrin that he, an expert thought concentrator, had so lost control of himself as to make such a scene as he had just gone through with Clarissa to mesmerize her. He had been obliged to use upon her that which he had never used before upon any subject he had ever put to sleep:—physical force.

Why was it she resisted his power so strongly, when she had been so loving and obedient to his very thoughts but a short time before?

As he reached the couch and looked down upon her, a long, deep sigh escaped him, and the thought passed through his mind: Suppose she had not been here, but had gone out of his life again: how sad and lonely and miserable it would be. The very thought was unendurable. He quickly sank down beside her, holding her close to him, that he might have the double assurance of sight and touch, of her actual presence with him.

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So engrossed was he with the thought, he was unaware of Augustus' entrance, though the wheel chair made some clatter. He had paused at the door, expecting an invitation to enter, but receiving none, he came directly to them and said:

"Mamma,—"

A tremor passed over Clarissa, so strong as to attract William's notice, while at the same time a hand touched his arm. As he felt the tremor of Clarissa's body, he tightened his hold, even as he turned his head. He was impatient of interruption and his eyes did not express the most pleasant mood as he turned toward the intruder, but when he saw who it was, his entire countenance changed; he quickly noted the pallor of the boy, and the brilliant flashing of his eyes, that told so plainly his intense agitation.

He immediately removed one arm from Clarissa, and before Augustus could divine his purpose, had lifted him from his chair and drawn him close to his heart. [Pg 119]

"My son—my boy and Clarissa's."

Augustus, taken completely by surprise, said nothing for a time, but his eyes traveled quickly to his mother's face, which was cold and white and rigid, then his voice rang out sharp and piercing—"Mamma—mamma—speak to me—I am here—Augustus—speak to me."

There was no response. Never having seen his mother thus, as she always devoted her undivided attention to him, he did not understand her apathy and inattention to his call; he made up his mind she was dead, and this man had killed her. That thought brought such a wave of anger and fury, that for all his frailness of body, he had for the time strength to release himself from William's clasp, and throwing both arms about her neck, he tried to lift her, repeating over and over, "Mamma,—Mamma dear, look at me."

The sight of the boy's suffering brought tears to William's eyes, and he said, "Your mother is sleeping; she cannot hear you. She will waken soon, and—"

"I hate you. She is not sleeping. She is dead, and you have killed her."

"Augustus, you will be sorry for such a speech. She is sleeping; gaining strength to make us both happy. Have you no greeting for your father, who loves you so dearly? I am proud to—" [Pg 120]

"If you were very proud, you would go home, and not stay here where you are not wanted. Mamma—Dinah—Mamma is dead, and—"

"Be quiet, Augustus. Do not shake your mother;—you will? Then I shall be compelled to use force. I didn't want to do that, but you compelled me to. Sit quiet and I will wake your mother."

Anyone having the slightest degree of doubt as to the parentage of this child would have been quickly convinced, if they could have studied their faces as William and Augustus confronted each other; Augustus' excited and distorted face was a perfect miniature likeness of his father's. Eyes flashed into eyes. For all the seriousness of the condition, William thought, "What a perfect counterpart of my own temper. He favors me much more than his mother."

He needed no proofs this was his boy, and he felt a thrill of pride. He had an intense nature that no one understood. Most persons thought him cold and distant, while in truth, he possessed an unusually affectionate temperament, but was too proud to admit to anyone how he really hungered for love. All persons could not supply this want; the whole force of his nature had centered itself upon one object. She became his wife and no other woman had ever had power to sway his thoughts and life. He was regarded as austere and cold, yet could be influenced by this woman's smile, to do anything man could do, and the pitiful, angered face which looked into his was his child,—and hers. [Pg 121]

For all time he must have second place in her heart, and the pleasure of wife and child should be his study from this moment. Such thoughts produced a very different expression upon his face, and he said tenderly and affectionately,

"Clarissa—Clarissa—Awake."

Slowly her eyes opened. Her face pictured happiness and contentment as she saw William's smiling welcome; who would have believed his proud, haughty head could have bowed so humbly as it did when he saw the bright, glad gleam in her eyes? He stooped to kiss her as though she was just awakening from a natural sleep. As his arms encircled her, her own entwined themselves once more around his neck, and with a happy sigh she gave him kiss for kiss.

Augustus was, for the time, forgotten by both of them, but his eyes and ears were active; for a time, he remained silent, then a tempest of jealousy swept over him. He had ever been first in his mother's thoughts; now he was forgotten for a stranger. His spirit had not been disciplined to expect only his proper share of any one's attention, for from the earliest time in his recollection, he had been the principal object of attention in his home. [Pg 122]

His very infirmity and physical weakness spared him criticisms of even the most wholesome nature; one and all around him had known but one object in life—to please him. He was totally unaccustomed to being overlooked in this manner, and his was not a nature to endure this state of things.

With all the might of his uncultivated and ungoverned will, he hated this man who was engrossing his mother's attention and love. He raised himself erect by the help of his hands, and rage nearly choked him as he said—"Mamma!"

Was there magic in his voice? If not, why did she draw so coldly and quickly from William's

grasp?

"Mamma,—send that man away. I hate him."

"Yes, dear. Do not get nervous, Augustus. There—Mamma's little man is not angry—"

"Mamma—I hate him. Send him home. He is not my father, is he? You told me my father was everything noble—everything I loved—I hate that man—I hate him. Mamma, I will not have him for a father—I will not—"

"Hush, dear."

"I will not hush if he stays here. I will not live with him. Come, Mamma, let us go away and leave him here—I will make you a fine picture. Come, Mamma, don't look at him—he is wicked. He sent Dr. Goullard away—I hate him—hate him." [Pg 123]

"Augustus, you will make yourself ill. Hush, dear."

"Don't kiss me all the time. Tell him to leave here. This is our home, and we don't want him. I will get ill. I will get nervous. When I get sick, you will know you are to blame for it. If you do not send him off, I will be ill. He lied. He is not my father—I will not have him for a father."

"No, dear;—there, be quiet. I will take you to Dinah."

"I will not go to Dinah unless you stay with me. Tell him to go home."

"Yes, dear; only calm yourself. There, the bell is ringing. Some one is coming, and my little man must not be seen like this. Be yourself, and you shall have anything you want. Here comes Dinah; let us see who is here. Dinah, who has called? Augustus is nervous. You had better take him, and give him some of that medicine for his nerves at once."

"I will not take it. I will not;—not unless you come too."

"Master William, it be someone to see you, and I let him in. Here he is." William and Clarissa both looked toward the door. There stood James with a parcel in his hand, his face beaming with pleasure. Clarissa quickly reached him, and gave him her outstretched hands. He tore off the covering of the package he carried, offering her a large bunch of her favorite flowers. This token of affection brought joyful tears to her eyes, and, still holding one of his hands, she led him to Augustus, saying, "This is my son, Augustus. Augustus, this is the man of whom I have so often told you, who was so good and kind to me when I was a mischievous and wilful girl. These are my favorite flowers; he always kept them for me, and you will have to hear him tell all about my girlhood. Will you not, darling? James can tell such lovely stories. He will tell you the same ones he used to tell me. I feel as though I were a girl again. Bid him welcome, Augustus." [Pg 124]

"I love you because you were so good to mamma. I welcome you to our home—"

"Bless your heart, honey,—that is what we always called your mother—there were never two persons who looked so much alike as you and your father. I will tell you stories that will make your pretty eyes stick out, all about your mother's naughtiness, picking my choicest flowers. I remember every one. I never expected to be so happy as I am this very minute."

"We will have a jolly time. You can wheel me out and tell me the stories. Do you like my father? Was he a good man? You said I looked like him, so you must have known him." [Pg 125]

"Did I know your father? Was he a good man? There was never his equal. He is the grandest, noblest, wisest—"

"That will do, James; possibly you can bring your thoughts away from the past, to the seemingly insignificant present long enough to tell me what has brought you here, and how you knew where to find me."

At the sound of William's voice, which was severe, James turned at once and replied, "Forgive me, master, but you told me yourself that our Miss Clarissa was the famous Miss Earle, the singer, and everyone knows where she lives. I know no other person would make you leave home and come so far, so I reckoned I would find you where she was. When you stayed so long, and there was a telegram came for you, soon followed by another, I knew it must be something of importance, and I thought I would bring them to you. I hope you are not angry, sir."

"If you believed them to be so important, why did you not give them to me at once?"

"Here they are. I admit I was wrong—but I am so happy to see Miss Clarissa—"

"That is the most disagreeable man I ever saw. He shall not scold you. Do not mind him. You come with me; I want you to tell me all about my mother when she was little. I will show you all my pictures. I am so glad you have come. You just push my chair. Dinah will show you where to go. You will send him away, and come right along, will you not, mamma?" [Pg 126]

"Yes, dear."

"Come: I cannot walk, but I can stand up. I can paint, and draw and sing. Those were pretty flowers you brought mamma—"

The rest was lost by the closing of a door, which shut out further sound. Clarissa had kept her

eyes upon William's face, ever since Augustus left her side; there was little to be gleaned from it. His eyes had not once left the paper before him. As the door closed, he lifted them and looked straight and steadily at her. There was sufficient power there to make her shiver. Her hand went quickly to her heart, but her gaze did not falter—she looked as steadily at him as he did at her. It was an uncomfortable pause, and William was first to break it.

"I have sad news for you. Your lover, one of the numerous galaxy, is very ill. I am sent for to restore him to health. Do not look so shocked and worried. I will not let him die, as he is my best subject, and science would receive too rude a blow if Prof. Huskins' acknowledged best subject should sicken and die, and he be powerless to prevent it. He shall live; but as I stand here talking to you, I have the power and will obliterate the memory of every other man from your mind. Pardon me for so noisy a laugh, but the thought came to me quickly: 'William Huskins, you have devoted the best years of your life to science and won the distinction of being the most powerful demonstrator of mesmeric influence living: now the sole use you find for it is to vanquish the remembrance of past lovers from a fickle woman's mind, that you may enjoy her embraces.' Ludicrous enough to make anyone laugh, isn't it?"

[Pg 127]

"You are talking enigmas. I have and have had no lovers. Your coarse suggestions are an insult to my womanhood and motherhood. I am truly sorry for any man who depends upon you for his life; he had better die—"

"Beware how you try me. You have no idea of the power I possess. Pshaw! You are doubtless tired of him, and would feel better if he were dead. I will that he shall not die. He shall live. Possibly your memory can be refreshed sufficiently to recall the fact that you requested me,—your husband,—to carry him your favorite flowers, which oppressed you at the time."

"I shall answer but one assertion you have made—"

"Mamma, come,—I want you to hear something."

[Pg 128]

"Yes, Augustus, I will be there directly. You said you were my husband; you are not."

"It would not astonish me much if you told me that I was the second man who had passed through the marriage ceremony with you."

"You are the only man who has ever entered my life. It is not necessary for you to wear that sneering and sarcastic smile. I ought to know the symptoms of your unreasonable jealousy by this time. Once it hurt me; now I defy you. I am a mother, but I was never a wife. That is the reason I said that Augustus was not your son. When I told him his father was dead, I told him the truth. His father was the man whom I idolized as men worship gods. Keep away. Do not touch me. That man was not the William Huskins the world knows. He was what I thought you were."

"Your ardor worked upon my ignorant mind, until it created there an image of a man whose only existence was in my heart, while you, who passed for him, was in reality his exact opposite. Now you understand why I say that I am a mother but no wife, for I believe, from the depths of my soul, that marriage only exists where there is mutual love between man and woman. I meant well, but—"

"Clarissa, I am going to forget every word you have just said, and trust you in spite of all the dark appearances; remembering only what you have said of your love for me before we were married —"

[Pg 129]

"I never loved nor married you; it was only the image of a man that I had in my mind. Never for one moment in all your life, have you known what it was to love me, and we were, therefore, never married. My child is illegitimate. As this fact has come clearer to me, I have striven to the best of my ability to bring as much happiness into his life as lay in my power."

"The Bible says 'What God has joined together, let no man put asunder.' I believe that God is love. You never loved me, and I loved only the image of a man who had no real existence. Not you, William Huskins. There was no love in our union, and God never sanctioned it; it was not a real marriage."

"You do me a great injustice, Clarissa, when you say I never loved you. How can you say so, when the memory of the past is in your mind? If I lacked in loving demonstration, it was because of ignorance how to express myself. You have seen a side of my nature no one else knows to exist. Surely I proved myself a loving slave while you stayed with me. In your greatest anger, you must admit I was ever beside you, never bestowing even a passing thought upon any other woman. Your pleasure and presence made up for me the sum of life's happiness, and words can never express the black desolation of my heart since you left me."

[Pg 130]

"Love! What do you know of love! Let me tell you how you have loved me. You were affectionate, happy and kind just so long as we were alone; let me pet an animal, speak to a man or even a woman, with the most common courtesy, and that kindness was replaced by a demon of jealousy that would listen to no reason, but reviled me without—"

"Clarissa, I know I was hasty, possibly cruel; I did not mean to be so. It was my great love for you that made me jealous. I will admit it was torture for me to see you engrossed with any one, but surely there must be some excuse for me when you think it was love that made me so. I do not pretend I am blameless. I know jealousy changed me from a sane man to a mad one, but I swear to you, give me your love again, and you shall nevermore witness such scenes, for, should I feel

the demon's influence coming to me again, I will go away from your presence and only return when I can bring you as much happiness as you give me, when you yield yourself to—"

"That is just it, William,—so long as I yield, so long as I amuse you and gratify your wishes, you are happy, and accept those signs as the offerings of love. Stand where you are till I finish,—your idea is that a woman's love is only expressed by a blind obedience to her husband. [Pg 131]

"What is man, that he expects from a woman that which he will not give in return? You believe now just as you have in the past; that is,—if I loved you, I would see, think, feel and act according to your ideas of how a woman should, consigning to your guardianship and care my conscience and opinions, even as I would my body. You have no right to expect from me anything that you would not do yourself. I learned what love was when I became a mother. Do you think my love for Augustus demands his giving up all his desires and expectations? No;—my love for him is so strong I would endure with a smile and never a moan, if I knew that my suffering would purchase his happiness. I do not want him to see, feel and think as I do; I want him to have perfect freedom of choice. I do and always will find my greatest happiness in witnessing his joy."

"A mother's love is different from a husband's."

"So I have found them. Since Augustus was first placed in my arms, I have known but one thought, one desire;—that was to please him. It is for him I always sing; never for the public. I always feel he will be proud to think, in after life, his mother was a gifted and talented woman." [Pg 132]

"Are you not a little selfish yourself, when you have left me sad and lonely all these years since you have had our boy?"

As he said this, there resounded a peal of boyish laughter, ringing clear and distinct. William hesitated, then resumed: "I make no pretensions to goodness, but there are a few facts I have a right to state. When you left my home, every ray of brightness faded out of my life. I doubted everybody and everything;—I was proud—too proud to want anyone's pity or sympathy, so I sought to hide my suffering beneath a mask of indifference and coldness. What I suffered, no one but myself will ever know. It has made an old man out of a young one;—it has so completely crushed my pride I am willing now to sue for a second place in your affections, when the first is filled by my son. It is impossible for me to go back to my lonely home and endure what I have. If I have been cruel, harsh and unjust to you whom I love better than my life, I ask to be forgiven, and promise that, coming to me again, you shall be the guiding influence of our home. Give me one chance to show the depth and earnestness of my love. Few men have given women the fidelity I have shown you. That ought to be a factor in my favor."

"William, I believe you have been true to me. I have heard you called a woman-hater everywhere, but why have you been? You have not seen another woman who happened to please you as I did. It was no sacrifice upon your part, as you were not strongly attracted to them. I believe I am just and honest with you when I say the feeling you held for me, and which you called love, was only a physical attraction, and that was the cause of your suffering so from jealousy. Do not interrupt me—I know that you do not believe it, but I do, and with good reason." [Pg 133]

"I must have been a most cruel husband indeed."

"No, William, I know you have not meant to be, and I am willing to acknowledge I, too, have made many mistakes; we have both been at fault, but you might at least have come and asked me to stay in your home, when you knew my delicate condition."

"Clarissa! As there is a good Judge in the Infinite, I did not know it."

"You did know it, for I told you so myself, during that last quarrel."

"I will not dispute your words, that would be useless, but will admit much of that interview is a blank in my memory. You know, as well as I, when jealousy or rage controlled me I was not always responsible for what I might do or say. If I were to be weighed in the balance of Infinite Justice, however, I should firmly declare that, had I known your condition, I should have humbled my pride and sought your presence, shielding you from your pain and suffering so far as lay in my power." [Pg 134]

"You are the cause of Augustus' infirmity, and every time I see him looking longingly at other boys who can run and walk and play, how do you suppose I feel?"

"How can I be blamed for that, Clarissa? Surely, I injured you in no way."

"You never struck me with your hands, but you struck my heart; pride, fears, disappointment, anguish of mind, and, yes, I may as well admit it, lonesomeness produced such an effect upon me that, for a while, I was unable to walk; my body would tremble and shake so that I could not support myself."

"When my boy,—my idol came, he was physically perfect. How proud I was of him; but when the time came all other children walk, mine could not stand alone! He was called upon to pay the penalty of our sins. My love for him increased when I knew I was the cause of his affliction; I could not help feeling bitter and angry toward you, for without your senseless and unreasonable jealousy, our boy might have been like others, only brighter, for every one admits that he is unusually talented." [Pg 135]

"If I could take his infirmity from him, I would gladly do so, but I cannot. Every reparation man

can make, however, I will make, if you will give me a chance. You have been in my home. Won't you and Augustus come there to live? I promise upon my honor to be guided by your judgment and wishes. You will not believe me till you test it, but I know my love is strong enough to bear any test. You think a mother's love is purest, but that love which a good man offers the woman he wants to make his life complete, cannot be exceeded by any sentiment possible to souls of earth.

"Show me a test of endurance you would undergo for Augustus;—I will double it for you without a murmur. Will you not give me one trial, Clarissa? Come—how you tremble! I must go and leave you—kiss me before I go. I will go ahead, for Merle is very ill and needs me. I will either come back for you, or you and Augustus may come on with James. Nancy will have everything in readiness. We will begin anew. Which will you do?"

"We will come with James, William."

"When?"

"Just as soon as we can get ready."

"I cannot realize you are really coming to me again, Clarissa;—I fear I will awake and find it is only a dream, as I have so many times before. Look me straight in the eye, and swear you will come.—I believe it now. I will not disturb James and Augustus. He was frightened and thought you were dead. Thinking I had killed you, he disliked me, but you will influence him to love me. Won't you write me while you have to stay here? I will leave a check at my apartments for all you will need. James will fetch it to you. Think of me sometimes, even though I am unworthy."

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When he left Clarissa, William walked quickly from the house, and sought his own apartments, preparatory to going to Merle, who, as the telegrams stated, was seriously ill.

CHAPTER TWELVE

[Pg 137]

Happiness is a great beautifier and youth imparting power, and when William reached home, he looked so different even the servants noticed the change. He made only a short stop at his home, and sending for Nancy, without any explanations broke the tidings that James was shortly to come, bringing Clarissa and her son with him; she must, therefore, have everything in readiness that was best in his home.

Leaving her frustrated and nervous, he hurried to Merle's home, where Mrs. Millard greeted him with visible joy and said, "We are so happy to see you again, Professor,—Merle is much better; we have thought several times he was dying. He seemed to start to improve quite suddenly, and now he is looking almost his natural self. So much so, I am afraid you will think we have intruded needlessly."

"Not at all. Not at all, Mrs. Millard. I am only too glad to know he is improved. How are Alice and yourself? I see you look particularly fatigued."

"That is from so much anxiety about Merle. Alice is the same."

"I will go and see Merle, then I will treat Alice. When they are both better, you will feel better.—Well, Merle, I am sorry to see you here so ill, but am glad indeed to learn you are getting better. You look better than I expected to see you. My thoughts must have reached you soon after I received the news of your sickness."

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"You do not know how glad I am to see you. I was sure it was your power that gave me strength again. I was feeling so despondent and weak and discouraged. I would be ashamed to acknowledge how badly off I was, when, all of a sudden, there passed over me a wave of courage, cheerfulness and hope, and from that moment, I began to gain steadily. Now life looks bright and cheery, and I believe I shall soon be in condition for you to finish our experiments, if you wish to do so."

"Do not worry about them, Merle."

"You have been so kind to me, I dislike to feel I am the cause of any disappointment to you. Is it because you have been away, or is it the fancy born of a sick brain, for really you seem to have changed since I saw you. You look younger and happier and more powerful."

"I think you must be turning flatterer. I have a surprise for you when you are a little stronger. My silent and absent treatments are taking good effect. I will not put you to sleep this time. I am a little hurried, so I will go to Alice, then I must hasten home, as I have some business there, and I will come in and see you again before I go to sleep."

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"Professor, your eyes are fairly dazzling they are so bright. You must be happy, for I feel a desire to laugh or sing."

"I am happy, and I want everyone to participate in my joy. You must make haste and get well, so your family will all be in condition and position to celebrate my happiness. It will be an occasion that does not require the services of nurses."

"I will gain just as rapidly as I can. I am so glad you are happy, and hope you will always be as

happy as you are now."

"Thanks, Merle, for your good wishes. Au revoir. Mrs. Millard, where shall I find Alice? Oh, here she is now."

"Yes, Professor, and we are so glad you have come back. How well you look! Does he not, mother?"

"Yes indeed, sir, you do."

"I am glad to know you think so. Alice, as Merle is not in a condition to be used, and there are some things I am anxious to know about, would you mind my putting you into the trance state? I will not keep you long."

"I would be glad to do it for you. Shall we go into the parlor, or do you prefer that I remain here?"

"We will stay here, and Mrs. Millard will go and sit with Merle."

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Mrs. Millard went out, and William immediately placed Alice in a trance.

"Alice, are you waking?"

"Yes."

"Can you tell me what my wife is doing?"

"I did not know you had a wife."

"Find her. Tell me what she is doing. What is she thinking?" There was a long pause. "Alice, can you find her?"

"Yes. But I do not want to tell you what she is thinking."

"Why not?"

"It would make you unhappy."

"Does she love me, Alice? Do not hesitate to tell me the truth. I want it, and demand it. I am no coward."

"She loves you dearly."

"Then why do you hesitate to tell me what she is thinking?"

"Because you could not understand her feelings."

"Why not?"

"You cannot place yourself in her position. She is trying to discover which she loves better, and Oh, I see so much misery. I want to wring my hands. Please take it away."

"No, Alice, tell me exactly what she is thinking. You must and shall. Who stands between her and me?"

[Pg 141]

"A boy."

"Thank God! Now, Alice, you have been a truthful subject,—I know you love me and wish me well; help me pass this crisis in my life creditably and right, for I begin to suspect my own powers of penetration and wisdom."

"That means you are growing in knowledge. Only ignorant persons place implicit confidence in their opinions. You are a grand man, but all finite beings are fallible. This woman is an equally grand and noble woman, but her thoughts are obscured by doubt at this time. She wants to do just what is right, she is afraid to trust her own desires."

"Desires for what? Be very careful in answering, as the happiness of several lives may depend upon your answer."

"She loves you, and wants to come to you, but the boy does not. She is afraid her desire to be with you is a selfish one. She would do for him what she would not do for herself; unless you use force, he will defeat you—"

"How can he? She has promised to come to me."

"She wants to, but she feels in some way indebted to him, anyway, I know she is struggling between the two influences, and if you do not go to her quick,—right off—she will go away with him, a long way,—where he wants to go, and you will be unable to reach her for a long time. Hurry, for she does not want to go; she is crying, but he will make her go if you do not go right off. She is afraid of him."

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"But, Alice,—she promised to come here."

"And he insists on going there."

"You are sure, Alice, it is a boy who comes between us?"

"Yes."

"Whose boy is it?"

"Her boy,—and if you do not hurry, they will go on the boat. Go to her. She is ill and suffering."

"If she is ill and suffering, she knows where to send for me."

"She dare not."

"Why? She knows I love her."

"No, she does not know it."

"I say she does."

"But she does not. Oh, hurry! Please go to her."

"I will not go a step. She promised to come to me. If she does not care to do so, I shall never urge her more."

"She does want to come, but the boy does not."

"Then let her choose between us."

"No. Go to her. Heed my warning. Go at once. You will arrive in time to save suffering to many. The boy is selfish. He is influencing her to do what she does not want to do. If you go to her, she will mind you."

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"I do not want her to come to me if she is forced to do so."

"She loves you. She is sick. Go to her, and you will never be sorry. Merle is going to be ill again, but do not stay here, for it is your suffering that affects him, and makes him so. You have magnetized him so often, and he is so strongly charged with your magnetism, that whatever affects you, influences him and affects him physically. You will come out all right if you will only heed my warning, and go to her. Remember I told you you were going through a cloud, and I would guide you. You must follow my advice, otherwise I cannot guide you. Go as quickly as you can. She needs you. If you love her, you will put away pride, and go to her."

"Why should I do all the seeking? I have given her proof enough of my love. If she does not want to come to me, and prefers his love to mine, I shall not interfere."

"You shall. You must. She wants to be with you, but she feels it is selfish upon her part to wish to. The boy is selfish, and you will both be miserable. Do not be harsh with her. Show your love. Make her see it is not selfishness to wish to be with you, and that it would cause both herself and you so much suffering to gratify the boy. You need each other, and the boy needs discipline."

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"Alice, are you sure she wants to be with me?"

"Yes, I am sure. Will you not go to her now,—right away? She is sick,—heart-sick as well as physically."

"Yes; I will go. If I find conditions as you say, you have earned my lasting gratitude;—I do not know what to think, what to believe, what to do. You have always been truthful, so was Merle for ten years, then he told me untruths; perhaps you are doing the same. If I find you have deceived me, it will be another of life's lessons well learned. I have always advocated truth could always be obtained from an entranced subject, if their minds were left totally unbiased by the operator's will. I can never again teach that, nor place implicit confidence in any assertions I may receive. My book I have put the work of years into is practically valueless, for all I shall now give to the public will be what Merle gives me, eradicating all my own views upon the subject."

"Why do you not go to your wife instead of staying here? I do not believe you love her after all."

"Alice! Silence."

"You are making her suffer. You want to spare anyone you love from suffering."

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"There is no logic nor reason in your utterances. I seem to have struck a cross tide, that brings me no good. Wake up, Alice."

"Promise you will go to her right away."

"Yes, I will go. Probably I shall find I have been duped, but I will go, for I am weak enough to want to see her before me all the time. Wake up.—Wake up.—There, you are yourself again. I think it would do you and Merle good to go out in the air and sunshine. I will send a carriage for you. Your mother can go with you, too.—Mrs. Millard,—

"Mrs. Millard, I have been telling Alice I think a ride in the air and sunshine would be beneficial to both her and Merle. You had better go with them, and see they do not over-exert themselves. On your way home, call at my house for a luncheon and a bouquet of flowers. I will send a carriage for you and notify Mrs. C— to have the food and flowers ready when you call. I am going away again for a very short time. If you need me, send for me."

"What a good man you are, Professor Huskins,—always trying to make others happy. The good God above ought to shower happiness upon you. We shall miss you while you are away, but we always say, we hope you are enjoying yourself. We can never even hope to repay your goodness

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to us, but a mother's prayers ever follow you, because of the good you have done me and mine."

"There, Mrs. Millard, you praise me beyond my deserts. I must go now. I am glad to find Merle so much improved. Enjoy yourselves as much as possible, and you will soon find me back with you. Do not hesitate to send for me if I am needed. I will not speak to Merle before I go."

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

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When William reached his wife's apartments, Dinah let him in as she had upon his previous visit. Her face seemed to beam with happiness. He put his finger to his lips, and, divining his wish to surprise Clarissa, she said nothing, but pointed to a door beyond and, smiling, nodded and disappeared.

Leaving his outer garments in the hall, he quickly traversed the distance between him and the door, and without pausing to be announced, opened and entered Clarissa's private room. She lay prostrate upon the bed, crying and moaning piteously, and as she had not heard him enter, was only aware of his presence when she felt his arms about her and saw his face as he bent over her.

It seemed like a pleasant dream to feel his lips upon her own,—his arms encircling her, and for a moment, she gave herself unrestrainedly to the happiness she felt. Her perfect abandonment to his embrace was the strongest proof William had ever had of her love for him.

Her greeting left no room for him to doubt her sincerity, and for a while both were oblivious to time and their surroundings. Clarissa was first to speak.

"Did you come in answer to my prayer?"

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"I hope so. Tell me what it was, dear."

"I prayed I might be guided to do what was right, and not be influenced by any selfish motive to gain my own happiness. I do not wish to be selfish."

"Clarissa, let your heart speak, for our future happiness depends upon your answer. Is my love and presence capable of bringing you any joy? Am I ever necessary to you?"

"Always, William—always. I was never truly happy when you were absent. Even when Augustus came, I wanted you to share my joy. I have been so lonely and miserable. You will not leave me again, will you? I am sick;—a weak and feeble woman."

"I never left you, Clarissa; you know that. You left me. I have been thinking it over. I do not doubt my love was often obtrusive and selfish, but I never meant it to be so. Let me now give you the benefit of my riper judgment. All I ask is to see you and to know you are present in my home, which has been so desolate without you. I promise you, I will not obtrude myself upon you unless you ask me to do so. I was selfish, but you know it was only my jealousy that got the better of me. When such tempests come, I have not the power to resist; do not heed my looks nor words, for they are not true to the real man, but come to me, and place your arms around me as you have them now. The touch will restore to me my lost senses. I do not doubt your honesty, Clarissa, but at times, there sweeps over my soul such a wave of power I cannot resist it, depriving me even of my reason. If any man were to come to me and even hint that I should doubt you, I should resent it as a gross insult. I do trust you, still, I do not. You cannot understand me; I do not really understand myself. Just have patience. Help me to overcome this monster. Really, I only doubt my power to please and satisfy you, and I wish to be dearer to you than all else in life. Will you not help me to conquer this Demon who rules and governs me, and renders me insane for the time? The touch of your arms and lips will always dispel him if you will but have patience with me. Try to realize how I love you. Tell me, dearest, why were you sobbing when I came?"

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"I am afraid to."

"If you have one spark of love for me in your soul, never think—much less say that you are afraid to tell me anything. Whatever is to be told, tell me, and let us work out the problem together. I have thought over carefully all you said to me in our last interview, and acknowledge I have often been selfish and exacting, still you were wrong, for God is love, and love has the power to sanction the union of the sexes. My soul was wedded to yours; we were married in the highest sense of the word. I may have made exorbitant demands upon you and your patience then, but, Clarissa, your love will give you patience to restrain my selfishness, and hold me where I ought to be. Whatever I say,—whatever I do, only come and put your arms around me as they are now, and you will find, instead of a dictator, you will have a slave."

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"I believe you, William. The assurance of your love makes me the happiest woman upon earth, but what am I to do with Augustus? I cannot help feeling I am responsible for his infirmity; therefore, I ought gladly and willingly to sacrifice every desire of my heart to be with him, doing what he wants me to do. I do not want to be selfish, William, am I not so when I find my only happiness in your presence and your love?"

"No, dear; love—real love—cannot be selfish."

"You ask me one thing, he asks me another totally different. Each says if I love him, I will do as

he wishes; I love you both, and I want to go to your home, William, I am tired of struggling alone. I want your care and love, but Augustus wants to go elsewhere, and thinks if I do not do as he wishes I do not love him. When I see his helplessness, I feel that I am to blame for it, and ought to do whatever he asks me. I cannot please you both. I cannot do what both want. I love you both far dearer than myself; what shall I do? Can you not help me, William? Am I selfish when I long to put my trust in you,—to have you think for me? Tell me what to do. I want to do for Augustus all that a mother could do, but my soul hungers for you and your love."

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"Clarissa, how can the love of man and wife be selfish? Augustus is our child—I would gladly offer my life for him, but he can never be to me what you are; I may be wrong, but it seems to me the love of husband and wife is the strongest that can be expressed. Can a child's love for its mother outbalance her husband's? Not if she loves her husband. As I understand the Infinite law, man and woman blend their loves to make a complete whole, while a child leaves its parents to unite itself with its opposite. A mother's love may be strong and powerful, but I believe the true love of husband or wife outweighs in power that of a mother, or even of a child. Tell me truly;—which love satisfies you better—a child's or a husband's?"

"Do not ask me, William, for I am so weak a woman, that my soul cries out for your love and appreciation, and will not be stilled, although I know my boy ought to engross every sentiment of my life."

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"Why should he engross your whole attention any more than other children? Are they the sole thought of their mothers? Is it not selfish for him to make us both miserable simply because he took a dislike to me for putting you to sleep? He was frightened. I was to blame for announcing myself as his father with no preparation. He liked me at first, and will again. We will make it the study of our lives to make him happy. Where does he want to go?"

"To Australia."

"Australia?"

"Yes, William. How did you happen to come back just now, when you expected us to come to you? I was just going to write you that you need not expect us, and by the time you would have received my letter, we should have left here. That was why I was crying. Augustus would have made himself ill if I had not promised him he should go.—Now he has gone out, happy; James is with him. He loves James. How did you happen to come now? Is the young man better? James has told me all about his family, and how you have lived since I went away."

"Merle was much better when I got there. I wanted so much to hear from you, and how you were getting on, I asked Alice if I might entrance her; she told me to leave at once and hurry back to you, for you were thinking of going away where I could not reach you for a long time. I left at once, and here I am, for I do not intend you shall leave me again if I can help it."

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"Tell me; how could she know I intended going? I do not understand much of your power."

"I cannot explain it to you now. When we have more time, I will teach you the science. There is Augustus. His voice sounds happy. What makes you tremble so? Surely, you are not afraid of your child! I will deal with him."

"No! No! You must not. It would make him so nervous he would be ill. We have to be very careful not to allow him to become excited. We have tried to spare him suffering in every way since he was a baby."

"You do not think I intend to be cross with him, do you?"

"No; but when he makes up his mind to do a thing, you cannot refuse him, he gets so nervous. William, could not you go to Australia for a journey? You have nothing to keep you here, and that would pacify him,—to know you were willing to please him. I am sure we could soon reconcile him to your going."

"Clarissa, I am surprised that you who were so fearless with me, so impatient of dictation, should be governed by a mere child. Your own boy! If I thought you, or he, either, really needed the change, or that it would do you good, I would gladly go, no matter what I left behind, for it shall be the object of my life to make you both happy.—As it is, this is but a childish whim, and you will both be much more comfortable in my home. You need rest and quiet. Do not look so pained and sad. I will manage the boy easily, and promise that he shall not be ill."

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"You do not know him, William, but I will promise him a pony that he can drive himself. That may please him. He wants one—"

"You never tried so hard to please me.—There;—that was unkind—I will take it back. Now let me make you sleep a while. You will wake rested and calm. Do not resist. I will not make Augustus ill. Sleep. Sleep and gain strength.—Now for Augustus. No wonder Alice said he needed discipline. I shall need all my power to rule my home."

Having arranged her comfortably, William left the apartment, and following the sound of voices, entered without announcing himself, speaking pleasantly to Augustus and James and Dinah. James was delighted to see him, but Augustus' face darkened at once. He did not offer to return his father's greeting, but said quickly to Dinah, "Where is mamma? I want to see her."

He started to leave the room, but William stood in his way, looking him steadily in the eyes with a

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calm, quiet gaze.

"Get out of my way, or I will hurt you. I am going to see my mother. She will send you away."

"Your mother is tired and sleeping. You do not want to disturb her. Have you no welcome for me?"

"I hate you. I will not stay where you are. I will wake mamma. She will make you leave. I will run my chair against you if you do not move. I tell you I want to go to my mother. James, push him away."

"Honey, do not get nervous and sick; if you do, you can not go away."

"James, I tell you to make him move out of my way, or he will wish he had."

Dinah went to the boy and tried to smooth his hair and pacify him. He only pushed her away, glaring all the time with the might of his will at his father. He was becoming very much excited. William had expected an unpleasant scene, but not quite such as this. If it continued long, the boy would make himself ill. What an indomitable will he had! He was fairly choking with rage and anger.

"Dinah and James, you may retire. Leave us alone."

"They shall not go. They belong to mother. You have no right to tell them what to do. You had better go yourself. Move out of my way, or I will hurt you." [Pg 156]

"James—Dinah,—leave us. I do not wish to speak to you again."

The tone of William's voice left no room for doubt he meant what he said, and they closed the door behind them without a word. As they did so, Augustus pushed his chair forward; William's face was white. He stood with folded arms, right in the path, his eyes gleaming brilliantly. They were stubborn wills that conflicted, but William's had all the advantage, as he knew how to direct his thoughts clearly, while Augustus was spending his wildly.

Just as the chair reached him, William put out his hand and stopped it right in front of him. That he should be stopped so enraged Augustus, who had always been accustomed to seeing everyone bow to his wishes, that, raising himself to his feet, and supporting himself with one hand, he struck William with all the force of his strength. William seized the wrist with one hand and holding it firmly, with the other he forced the boy back into his chair. Augustus was trembling in every limb. The unconquered force of will was shining in his eyes, but his body was too frail and weak to support it. He struggled to speak several times before he could articulate.

"Let me go. I will be sick and frighten mamma so she will send you away. Mamma! Dinah! James! Let me go, I say. If I were a man, I would be ashamed to hold a sick boy. Mamma!" [Pg 157]

"I am not holding a sick boy, but a cross one. Do not call your mother or anyone else again. They will not come to you."

"What are you going to do, kill me? Mamma—mamma!"

"Do not dare to call her again. When you and I have finished, we will both go to her. Stop. Stop struggling. You are powerless to get away. Calm yourself and listen to me."

"I will not be calm. I shall be sick, and mamma will wish she had listened to me. She is always scared—"

"You are not going to be ill."

"I will. I am sick. I feel my heart beating fast; that always means I am going to be awful sick. Why are you looking at me that way? You are hurting my wrist. I cannot breathe, I am—"

"You are feeling well. See, you are not trembling so much; Augustus, look at me. There, there,—you cannot get away, so you may as well obey me. Be a good boy and we will go to your mother. Let us tell her we are friends. I know you are tired;—I will carry you."

"What will you give me if I won't be sick?"

"I shall not allow you to be ill. Come; you are exhausted. I will carry you in my arms to your mother. You may rest beside her when you have told me you are sorry for your behavior, and are ready to come home with me." [Pg 158]

"I shall never say I am sorry. We are not going home with you."

"You shall sit right where you are until you do say so."

Suddenly Augustus burst forth into a perfect tempest of crying. He shook from head to foot, and every little while he called "Mamma—Dinah!" William stood beside him, offering no remarks or assistance, but when the fury had spent itself he said quietly, "It is useless for you to try to frighten me. We will stay right here until you do what I say."

"Mamma will come soon. She will hate you for making me sick."

William said no more, but his face showed, even to the boy, he had no intention of changing his mind, and they continued to look at one another. Augustus was weak and exhausted, but he

would not give in and say he was sorry. As time slipped by, his head began to droop; the excitement was too much for him. He was used to winning his battles quickly, and this was a new experience for him. Seeing he was tired, William spoke again.

"Shall I take you to your mother now?"

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"Yes."

"Then say you are sorry and will go home with me."

"I will not. I will never say it."

There was another long wait. Augustus' eyes drooped heavily. At last he gave his head a toss and said: "If you cure mamma, I will go home with you. Then I may be sorry I struck you."

William could not help smiling at this answer. It was hard to give in, and the boy wanted to get away. This was the best compromise he could think of, but, having started to conquer him, William felt it his duty to finish, as it would save that much trouble later.

"That is not what I asked you to say."

There was another silence. William pitied the boy, he was so tired and weak. After a time Augustus said: "I am sorry you made it necessary for me to strike you." As he looked in his father's face, he saw no signs of relenting. This time the pause was longer. Finally he looked up with a pitiful expression and held out his hands, saying: "Please take me to mamma. I will tell her I have been naughty and cross."

William lifted him easily; as he laid his head against his shoulder, Augustus clasped his neck and nestled down, wan and tired. That was the hardest task he had ever done. He was thoroughly conquered, and looked up with a pleasant smile when he felt his father's kiss upon his face, and was soon lying by his mother's side fast asleep.

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William was content to watch them, and as he sat there, he thought what a blessing Alice's advice had been to him. He had his family back now. Could he keep them? If love would hold them he would. He was tired himself, but he must go and consult with James and Dinah. So he left them together and went out to perfect his plans for their future happiness.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

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It was not long before William had his family domesticated in his home. For a while it required most of his time and attention to restore them and Merle to even seemingly well conditions. By the time one was better another would fail, yet this was the happiest period so far in his life, and his contented mind showed forth in his every expression and act. Not that every condition was precisely what he desired, for there were often conflicts between stubborn wills, but he had been disciplined in the stern, hard, rigid school of experience.

The loneliness he had endured in the beautiful home that was the envy of so many, will never be known to any save himself. His wife can never realize it, for she has had her child to occupy her attention. His was a nature hard to understand, as he possessed a pride so deep and strong it was easier for him to endure suffering than to accept pity or sympathy.

The darkest season of his life had been lived alone. In early youth he had been left an orphan, inheriting vast riches. His remembrances of his parents were very vague, and he had neither agreed with nor respected his guardian. He had been practically unrestricted and developed an imperious, haughty temperament, expecting his words and wishes to always command obedience and attention because they always had.

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When he met Clarissa, she embodied, to his mind, just the qualities with which he had endowed his ideal of woman. She was beautiful in person, gracious and graceful in deportment, cultured, refined, and gifted with a glorious voice that cultivation had rendered little less than marvellous in power and richness. He immediately gave her all the love that was in his hitherto unexpressed nature, and cherished only one thought—to call her his.

The force and power of his intense nature was great. From his earliest recollections he had been accustomed to obtain everything he had desired, and this fact lent extra power to his purpose to win this woman for his wife.

Never having learned to curb his desires, nor to experience failure, his thoughts went forth ardent and strong, with never a doubt he should win her, and his thoughts were therefore charged with unusually strong magnetism. His wooing was short and ardent, for his imperious nature was unwilling to await patiently what he might desire, and his world of happiness was encompassed within the radius of her presence and affection. He was impatient of any intrusion upon their privacy, and being accustomed to consider his word and wishes as law, he had believed a husband was master and arbiter of his wife's fate and life, and became furiously jealous, exacting and unreasonable.

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Some women would have yielded submissively to the demands he made upon her, but Clarissa

had herself been nurtured and developed under a regime of independence similar to his own, and likewise thought her wishes should always be consulted. Her beauty and talent had brought her admiration, flattery and homage, and it was impossible that she should be content or satisfied with one person's favor.

She was proud of her husband, loving him beyond all else on earth, but she had ever been used to command—not to obey. Dictation brought forth all the resistance and ire of her nature, and she would not yield. She loved to be noticed, flattered and praised, and William's extreme jealousy was therefore a tax upon her patience. Neither would change to suit the methods of the other, for each thought the other wrong.

Finally there came a climax, unusually severe. Clarissa, thinking herself greatly injured, left him, and taking Dinah, who had been her nurse in childhood, returned to her father. James and Nancy had also been servants in her father's house, following her when she married, and went into her new home. James' sympathy, however, was with his young master, whom he idolized, and he remained with him, trusting in a speedy reunion, but William and Clarissa were too proud to seek each other's forgiveness. Each believed the other to be entirely at fault.

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William never had known he was a father, believing she had left him because she preferred a man whom he bitterly hated, therefore never sought to trace or find her. That people should not think he was weak enough to suffer through a fickle woman, he immediately left the place, and sought a new home, where he devoted all his time, wealth and energy to the study of mesmeric influence, the efficacy of which he had heard much. His pride continually said to him—"She has left you of her own choice.—She has disgraced you.—You must never admit you suffer."

When angry, he was actually irresponsible for many of the things he did, and the words he uttered. To so impetuous a nature, no other feeling could be so strong as jealousy, which seemed to render him temporarily insane.

In the very vortex of his passion, Clarissa told him she was about to become a mother. Under any other conditions, how happy such a revelation would have made him! Under such as those in which she had imparted the information, however, she might as well have gone to a person incapable of understanding as to expect him to remember what she said after they had ceased their quarrel.

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Of course, she believed he remembered what she had told him, and because it did not soften his anger, making him loving and tender to her, she rushed to the conclusion he did not want to acknowledge the child as his own. Such injustice angered and irritated her, and she had returned to her father, telling him her side of the story. Her father, having always indulged her every whim, felt William was unjust, so made no effort to reconcile the conditions. While Augustus was very young, he passed away, leaving them alone, with plenty of money to care for themselves. Thus both she and William suffered, never learning, even in the severe school of life, to curb the haste of their uncontrolled natures.

There could be no better illustration of their attitude toward one another than that of two positive chemicals, which the chemist of love was trying to assimilate and compound into united action. Being equally positive, they held one another at bay, or at least, at such a distance as to preserve their individualities from the influence of the other, consequently were never drawn into concerted action as the object of each seemed to be to enhance his or her individuality.

Neither being wholly right or wholly wrong, both did as well as they understood, and the stern discipline of suffering was needed to refine their souls and bring into prominence their real value and worth.

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In like manner as a diamond when taken from the ground contains within itself all the beauty and excellence it can be made to show, they were obliged to pass through the tests of true love, which declare its real worth, and bring forth such proofs of its superiority over mere physical attraction, as the passage of the diamond through the fierce tests of heat and fire, which proclaim its value beyond that of the ingenious and skillful imitations, for while they become disintegrated and their beauties are destroyed, the real gems only gleam the brighter because of the severity of the test. Like the diamond, the jewel of true love must always possess the ability to rise superior to those conditions which quench and destroy the flame of physical attraction often masquerading under the guise of love. The stronger and purer the love, the greater and more severe the tests it can withstand.

Both William and Clarissa had suffered much; instead, however, of estranging their souls, or, as many would say, their hearts, it only served to draw them nearer together, though they were physically far apart. No other woman could satisfy William's ideals, and no other man could fill William's place in Clarissa's affections, although they were unable to agree or satisfy one another, neither would acknowledge any wrong, so while each longed for the other's love and confidence, neither would make advances toward a reconciliation.

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The fires of the furnace of suffering had destroyed much dross in both their natures, while the real jewel of their loves gleamed brighter and brighter as time passed.

Augustus passed his embryotic development and birth under such conditions, while his mother was suffering and smarting from the wounds of supposedly unappreciated love. Clarissa tried to the best of her knowledge to fill the place of both mother and father to him, going to the opposite extreme, mistaking indulgence for the expression of love. In so doing she was quite as selfish as

William, who had expected so much from her, finding her own happiness in Augustus' pleasure, deceiving herself into the belief she was unselfish.

Such sentiments can never be unselfish, for does not unselfishness mean the unalloyed pleasure of giving, lovingly and generously to another, without consulting one's own aspirations, that the happiness which they enjoy may be for their good and betterment?

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

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Less than a year has elapsed since William's reunion with his family. Merle, Alice and Augustus are visibly stronger and healthier, but Clarissa seemed to fluctuate between better and worse for a considerable length of time. For quite a while after she came to William's home, she appeared greatly improved, almost like a girl again, until after about six months, she suddenly began to show peculiar symptoms.

Usually the soul and life of the home, all, from William to the humblest servant looked to her for approbation, happy when she was happy, and uneasy when she was sad. From her entrance into the home, she had brought sunshine, not only to William's heart, but to his servants and Merle's family as well.

Mrs. Millard and her children rejoiced in William's happiness as though it had been their own, even more. He had been a friend in need, and they regarded him as their adviser and guardian. Gladly would any of them have suffered to purchase or enhance his happiness. The knowledge he had a family was a great surprise to them. They were much pleased to learn of his good fortune in being reunited to them, and would have found anyone whom he had claimed as his family pleasing and agreeable, whatever their characteristics might have been. As it was, a wife and son, possessing as they did talents and qualities of mind that commanded their esteem, had become, if possible, still greater objects of veneration than the Professor himself.

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Clarissa's marvellous voice charmed and fascinated them beyond expression; to them she was more than a mere woman. Augustus' infirmity endeared him to them; he would have been loved had he not possessed other characteristics, but added to that, he possessed more than ordinary beauty, also great skill in drawing and music. They vied with one another to entertain and humor him, and this deference to his wishes was just what he sought and enjoyed. He spent much of his time with them, and in their home he was king. His slightest whim was law. They were so accustomed to bound their lives by the Professor's work, that they recounted to him such marvelous tales of his father's power and skill, the boy had grown to think him the wisest and most powerful man on earth.

When Augustus wanted to gain some favor or especial promise, he appealed to his mother, whom he knew how to coerce, but no words of love or praise she could bestow upon him filled him with such pride and genuine satisfaction as he knew when his father expressed his approbation of what he did. He grew to watch his father's face very closely, soon acquiring the perception to know whether he was pleased or annoyed even though such sensations were never expressed in words.

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He possessed a very sensitive nature. The shock of seeing his mother in a mesmeric sleep, which he had mistaken for death, was an experience he could never forget, and while he was very proud of his father's reputation as the strongest and most powerful mesmerist of the age, he feared seeing anyone in that state; still, his mind was too active and vigorous not to desire to know the principles underlying the phenomena that terrified him, so he frequently questioned his father as to the nature of it, although he could not be urged nor persuaded to either be influenced himself or to see others placed in the trance state.

William was very anxious to place Augustus in a mesmeric condition, believing that by so doing he could restore his physical vigor, and knowing the boy's aversion to being, or seeing anyone else placed there, he strove to control him without his knowledge. He soon found the process did not conduce to improve the boy's health, however, as he became exceedingly irritable and nervous, so much so indeed, that on one occasion, when he had persisted in concentrating his thoughts upon him, Augustus had become hysterical, and nearly gone into convulsions. He would undoubtedly have done so had his father persisted in his resolve.

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This was a condition William did not comprehend. He sought by every method to reconcile Augustus to the idea to be mesmerized willingly, hoping by means of the trance state to obtain some explanation of the strange phenomenon, as the boy's personality promised him an unusual subject if he could only subjugate his prejudice. He was the most difficult subject he had ever encountered. This was not because he did not possess the power to conquer his resistance either waking or sleeping, but he disliked to evoke the conditions necessary to control his individuality by force.

When Augustus sickened, he not only had this condition to combat, but Clarissa and Merle's family and the servants all became agitated and alarmed, and looked upon him as the source of relief. Thus, to control Augustus, he was obliged to control them all. Strange to say, he could control all far easier than he could Augustus. He tried to bribe him to see Merle or Alice in a trance, hoping in this way to take from his consciousness all thoughts of fear, but he was never

successful.

Augustus could not separate the trance state from thought of death. While in a stranger William would not have humored a repugnance, he, like Clarissa, felt the boy's infirmity was due in part to his fault, although unwittingly so, therefore thought it his duty to make all possible excuses for him. His best judgment was never exercised toward Augustus. Thus, when Clarissa began to show the desire to retire by herself, the father and son naturally grew nearer and nearer to one another, in thought and deed, while neither would acknowledge the vast difference they noted in her actions.

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Both were sensitive, we might even say, jealous, because they realized their presence was no longer necessary to her happiness. She sought seclusion, throwing them more and more into companionship, but both were too proud to own the keen agony they felt, and as they realized more and more deeply this lack of the necessity of their affections to her, a common instinct seemed to draw them closer and closer together.

Augustus, like his father, was peculiarly sensitive and loved to be made much of, but they both feared to intrude themselves upon her. It was not because she loved them less, however, she sought seclusion, nor could she have told why she wished to be alone. She only knew she desired complete solitude, where, unmolested by anyone, she questioned and requestioned facts she knew to be true. She was as irresponsible for her actions as a person bereft of mind or consciousness.

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Being shut so much from her presence, William came to confide more and more in Augustus, who opened his heart toward his father in corresponding measure, and each finding the other was not preferred more than himself, they joined in mutual resistance.

As Clarissa drew herself further and further from her husband and her child, she clung more closely to Mrs. Millard and Alice, and it seemed as though she either desired to be entirely alone or in their company. She only sang when begged to do so, and even then did not do herself justice. Dr. Baxter and others of her husband's friends who had been most agreeable to her at first, seemed now to only irritate her—she could not herself tell why.

She had never loved William and Augustus more than now, still they caused her much irritation, and although she meant to be patient and loving, she was the exact opposite, and the more congenial and pleasant and agreeable she endeavored to be, the more her strength deserted her. She was an enigma to herself as well as to her family. Had anyone told her she could ever be wearied or exhausted by Augustus she would a short time before have resented it, now she found his very voice and presence often vexing.

She fought with herself valiantly, and William watched, sad and distressed as her infirmity gained upon her. It was a condition that, with all his skill, he could not meet. He worked patiently and lovingly, picturing her in his mind to represent health, vigor, cheerfulness and happiness, but the harder he worked, the greater became the ravages of nervousness upon her. He had tried mesmeric sleep, but despite his confident thoughts she would wake with calmness, peace and contentment, he could clearly see before she vented her feelings in words that she awoke nervous and irritable, and shrank from his love and embraces. It was inexplicable.

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Once he would have hastened to the conclusion she did not love him, and jealousy would have forced him into unkind measures with her, but when he saw Augustus suffering a like banishment, the boy's suffering was so acute, he felt he must amuse him, and think of him and until Clarissa should again be herself, be both father and mother to him. They were almost continuously together; both suffered, each pitied the other, and tried to make the other forget.

William gave up his scientific researches completely; he had no heart nor interest for it while Clarissa continued in her present state, and despite his vast experience with nervous difficulties, he could not account for the peculiar phases of her sickness. Had she shunned him and clung to Augustus, it would have seemed less inexplicable. In a way he would have suffered more, for his keenest suffering now was modified by the fact that he must amuse Augustus and save him from suffering.

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The boy could not understand why he was forbidden his mother's presence, as he had been taught from earliest infancy to expect his wishes to be regarded as law by her and the servants. Now Clarissa, although still kind, no longer made him the center of her attention or interest. He was sensitive, and his pride as well as his affections was hurt.

One day Clarissa had not appeared at the morning meal, but pleading illness, had gone to Mrs. Millard's and remained till after the time for him to retire. He became so aggrieved he wanted sympathy, and, although during all the time they had been growing nearer and dearer they had neither of them ever referred to what they considered their common sorrow, when it became time for Augustus to go to bed, and his mother had not returned, he went quietly with Dinah without a word, but noting his father's pained expression, after he had been undressed and prepared to sleep, he suddenly resolved to go back to him and tell him that he loved him and not to grieve. Dinah could not control him, but she insisted in wrapping him with shawls to keep him warm, and, placing him in his chair, promised to remain where she was till his return.

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With the help of one of the other servants, he soon reached the room where he had left his father, and entered. William sat quietly looking straight before him, so did not notice him at first, but afterward, hearing the noise of his chair, he looked up, surprised and perplexed.

"Why, Augustus, I thought you were sleeping. Are you ill?"

There was no answer, but William saw the tears in the boy's eyes. He said no more,—his heart ached for sympathy, and it was a relief to have him near to lavish his affection upon. He lifted Augustus from his chair into his arms, and as the boy's head went to his shoulder, his arms wound around his neck in a tight embrace. For quite a time neither spoke, then Augustus, lifting his head and looking piteously into his father's face, said:

"She does not love us any more."

William could not speak; he only held his son closer to him.—So they sat when the door opened and Clarissa entered. They both heard her—neither moved. Each seemed to feel a comfort in knowing that the other suffered too.

There was someone with her,—Mrs. Millard,—and they went directly by the room where father and son were sitting. They strained their ears to hear if she inquired for them, but were unrewarded. Her voice sounded cheerful to them. They instinctively clung closer to each other, and neither spoke. The voices grew fainter and fainter, and finally died away altogether, and left them sitting there,—miserable, unhappy and forgotten. [Pg 177]

William bowed his head over his son until their faces touched; he thought he had known misery before, but as he felt the boy's suffering by the deep drawn sighs which were almost sobs, he realized that only now had he touched the bitter cup. Jealousy was no factor in his sufferings now, and no one could ever know what consolation there was for him in those clinging arms and the companionship of his boy. He knew they made him a better man, and resolved to do for him what he could not do for himself. That close embrace seemed to feed his hungry heart, and after a while Augustus slept. William rejoiced. Still he preferred to hold him rather than be alone with his sorrow.

He tried to think where he had failed to win Clarissa's love. Not only he had failed, but his boy also, who had previously been the center of her interest. Neither of them was now necessary to her happiness. What a void! Who could compass it?—He felt a touch upon his shoulder, and before he could bring his mind to realize her actual presence, Clarissa's arms were encircling them both, and her kisses, warm and fervent, were upon his lips. As he looked up, her eyes gleamed bright and tenderly into his, and his first thought was, "I wish Augustus could see her." [Pg 178]

He knew the boy's heart was as hungry as his own, and that Clarissa, the old loving Clarissa, was before him. He removed one arm from Augustus, placing it tenderly and closely about her, and drawing Clarissa nearer said, "Kiss him."

What volumes the words implied! They proved how his nature had broadened. Instead of thinking of his own happiness, he thought first of Augustus. To be sure he was his child, but the time had been when even his own child would not have come first. Not that he loved her less, for he loved her more, but he was beginning to learn what love really was. The boy did not stir as his mother kissed him, and Clarissa said, "Why is not Augustus in bed?"

"He went," said William, "then came back to comfort me, I think, although he did not say so."

As he said this, he looked up at her with a pleasant smile, and she seemed to recognize its significance, for she bent over and, kissing him, placed her arms above Augustus' around his neck.

A bright flush mounted to William's cheek as he drew her still closer to him; his eyes sought hers eagerly, but hers sank before him. He held the boy nearer and nearer, with a long drawn sigh that made Clarissa sad, and she said quickly: [Pg 179]

"William, do you doubt my love?"

No answer.

"William, tell me;—do you doubt my love?"

There was no response in words, but his arms held her a little closer. The power of speech seemed to have left him. Again she asked, "William,—you know I love you?"

After a pause he spoke.

"If you love Augustus, why do you not remain with him? See, he has come to me for sympathy and love. Clarissa, even though you shun me, give our boy your love. He must not be blamed for his father's—"

"William! William! Do you not understand?"

"No, Clarissa; I do not. I only know my heart is desolate, and Augustus suffers. I have not questioned your motive. Probably, Augustus, like his father, has failed to satisfy you."

"Enough, William. See; I am pleading humbly. No,—do not try to raise me. I promised Mrs. Millard I would tell you the truth. I—"

"Clarissa!"

"Do not—do not touch me. Do not wake Augustus. I want to talk with you,—alone. I love you, William. Do you believe me when I say I love you?" [Pg 180]

"Yes, Clarissa, though I sometimes have my doubts when you shrink from me and my embraces. My love makes me desire your constant presence, but you draw away when I come—"

"Do not say any more, William;—I cannot understand myself. I never loved you nor Augustus more, yet I cannot endure your embraces. Will you not have patience with me, knowing my condition? I want your affection. I feel I must have it. Still, I want to be alone. I do not know why, but Augustus' voice even, makes me irritable. William, I am a very weak woman; will you not help me? You are the father of my children. Have patience. Think for me. Believe me, William, I never loved you as I do now, yet there is some power beyond my control that makes me long to be alone. I long so many times to have your arms around me. I want a lover, not a husband. Do you not understand?"

"I cannot separate the two, Clarissa. I am your husband, and have always been your lover since I first saw you. I am as much so now and more, than ever before. You were never so beautiful to me, so loving—"

"William, if I were suddenly to lose the beauty you love, would you still love me?"

William was surprised to see the concern and anxiety in her face, and said confidently, "Yes, Clarissa. Why do you question me? You have made me very happy by your admission of your coming motherhood. It means a new happiness in our lives. Let me share your feelings now. I was not privileged to be with you before Augustus was born. You have relieved my heart of a great burden. I thought you had grown weary of me, but now I have a new joy. I am so glad you have told me. Lift your head, Clarissa. Let us seal our new joy with a kiss. One for Augustus, too. Poor child, he and I have suffered much. Why have you not told me before?"

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Clarissa suddenly burst into such a torrent of tears that her sobs awoke Augustus; he clung to her, half asleep, half awake; then sank back upon his father's shoulder. William smiled and said:

"Kiss mamma. I will tell Dinah you are going to remain with me tonight. Let her put you in my bed. I will come soon."

Without speaking to Clarissa, he went out with Augustus. Before long he returned and without a word he clasped her in his arms. Soon she ceased her sobbing, and he said:

"Clarissa, let us go and thank Mrs. Millard. I feel she has sent you to me. She knows the strength of my love better than you do. In the future, don't draw away from me; do not fear me. Give me the privilege of sharing all your experiences. I will never obtrude upon you. Come, let us go to Mrs. Millard,—then to Augustus. We three will unite in thanksgiving for the new love we are to have."

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"You are pleased, William?"

"Pleased is a faint word. Knowing the cause of your eccentricities, I shall not grieve, though you exclude me entirely from your presence."

"William, what will Augustus say?"

"He is too much my boy not to rejoice too. Trust us, Clarissa; we are jealous, exacting, and imperfect, but our loyalty and love are unswerving. You are our all. Try to have patience with our shortcomings."

"I am afraid Augustus will be grieved."

"You have made me most happy by your confidence. In all future times come to me with your difficulties, even though I am the cause of them, and permit me to change my methods when I am wrong. Act your own will. Just love us, and I will prepare Augustus for the revelation. I know he will rejoice too. He and I have grown very near one another in these few days. We are much alike. I am glad to see you smile, even if it is at my expense. Just a word, and then we will go to Mrs. Millard."

"Forget the past selfishness upon my part. I will try in the future to do just what you want. Anything but isolation. If you prefer lover to husband, I will be that; when you want neither, I will try to make Augustus happy. Your smile makes me glad. How much I owe Alice and her mother,—yes, and Merle, too! Come, let us go."

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CHAPTER SIXTEEN

[Pg 184]

The revelation which Clarissa had made to William wrought a great change in him. Even the next day he felt cheerful, and upon waking and finding Augustus still asleep, he said to him:

"Come, Augustus, we must rise, for I have some work to do. I promised your mother I would bring you to her early. She is not well, and we are to shield and care for her. Shall I carry you just as you are, and put you beside her while she is sleeping? Perhaps we can surprise her. Shall we try?"

There was such jovial pleasure in his face that Augustus was surprised and he looked at him suspiciously, and asked:

"Did she ask for you or me to come?"

"Both of us, boy. She came in and kissed you after you were asleep, and said she wanted us to come and see her before I went out."

"Where are you going? May I go? I get so lonesome here with only Dinah and James."

"You may go if you wish. I should like to have you. You love Merle. I am going to him, and try to finish my book upon science."

"Father, are you going to make him look dead?"

"I am going to put him in a trance, Augustus. You are too brave a boy to be afraid of anything your father does. Do you think I would injure Merle?" [Pg 185]

"No; but mamma looked as though she were dead. I do not want to go."

"You will always be nervous, Augustus, until you have watched the process of mesmeric influence. When you know what I am doing, you will not feel as you did, when, without warning, you found your mother in a mesmeric state. Come, my boy, be brave. I like to have you with me, if you will come. I will take you to the theatre after my work is done, and we will ask Merle to go with us. Merle loves me. Would he love me if I did him any injury?"

"No; but it makes me nervous just to think of it."

"All that nervousness will go when you see me work. Will you come?"

"May I go away if I do not like it?"

"Yes. Now let's go to mamma; we will not bother with the chair. Let's surprise her. I will put you beside her before she awakes. We will go very quietly."

"Will she want us?"

"I think so. Come."

* * * * *

Later in the day, Augustus went with his father, but not without many misgivings. He wanted to go, but he was afraid. He and Merle were the best of friends, yet he felt a sense of nervousness about seeing him entranced, although he was ashamed to acknowledge it to his father. He did not doubt his father's power nor think that William would hurt Merle, even temporarily, but the first shock he had received had prejudiced him. He was very fond of his father, and had he heard anyone doubt his abilities or powers, he would have resented it. He was glad his father had asked him to go with him, while he was working upon the evidence for his book, still, would have given much to have been somewhere else at the time. [Pg 186]

Arriving at Merle's house, each member of the family vied with the others to entertain him, and after a while William said, "Come, Merle, let's get to work."

"All right, Professor," responded Merle.

They started toward another room, and William said, "Come, Augustus."

Augustus took his crutches and started to follow them. His father was ahead, thus did not see the boy's agitation and paleness, but Alice did, and said, "Don't you think Augustus had better stay with mother and me while you work, Professor?"

William did not turn his head, but said, "No, Alice; he wants to be with me."

Alice said no more; it seemed to her that it was anything but a joyous expression upon Augustus' face. She was accustomed to obey the professor implicitly and without comment. It did not occur to her that the boy was afraid. She thought he was displeased. [Pg 187]

William had just begun to work upon Merle. As he said "You are waking, Merle?" he heard a noise behind him, but did not turn in time to prevent Augustus from falling. He was insensible when his father reached him. William's first thought was "What will Clarissa do if he is dead!" He had not realized the terror the child felt at seeing a comrade pass through the successive stages between consciousness and trance obedience. Custom had inured William to such scenes, but fear pictured each transition in intensified colors to Augustus. When he saw the pallor and rigidity which Merle assumed, he could not help but think he was dead, and fell forward, without a word, in a deep swoon.

Merle was forgotten for the moment, and William was aghast at the condition in which he found Augustus. He called quickly and sharply and both Mrs. Millard and Alice responded. Augustus looked worse than Merle. William rubbed him vigorously and continuously, calling "Come, Augustus;—Augustus; wake up my boy, wake up. Mother is waiting for us."

They gave him air, water and stimulants, and finally he began to show signs of life. William continued to talk to him. "Augustus, my boy,—Augustus, look at me." [Pg 188]

Finally, as William raised him, his eyes opened and looked into his father's, then wandered to Merle. Such a piercing cry rang out as they will never forget, and he sank back, rigid and still. William, the calm man of science, was visibly disturbed. Anxiety was plainly written upon his

countenance, and, holding Augustus closely to him, he bade Merle awake.

Merle was very soon himself again, and astonished at seeing Augustus in his father's arms, with Mrs. Millard and Alice rubbing him. The condition was very soon explained to him, and he took his stand directly beside the boy, so when he regained consciousness he would be relieved of his fears, finding Merle well and smiling.

When Augustus finally revived from this second swoon, and saw all the loving solicitude upon the faces around him, his first feeling was of shame he had shown fear, and although he had a weak body, he had a strong will when he set about a thing, and the thought caused him to try to raise himself. He threw his arms around William's neck, trying thus to support himself, and looking earnestly into his father's eyes, said:

"I do not want to be a coward."

"Do not think about it, Augustus;—Mrs. Millard, will you and Merle and Alice leave us alone for a little while? There, boy; rest. Keep perfectly quiet. You shall not be frightened so again." [Pg 189]

William lifted the child, and seating himself in a chair, held him closely to him. The boy's head drooped upon his shoulder and everything was quiet. After a long pause, Augustus spoke, but without lifting his head.

"Father, are you very much ashamed of me?"

"Not a bit, boy. I only regret I caused you to suffer so. You are a brave little fellow to stand so much without a word. I am proud of you. Try to calm yourself; then we will do whatever you wish."

With a sigh of relief, Augustus relapsed into silence, and William communed with himself. By the expression upon his face it was evident that his thoughts were not altogether to his liking. He had many questions to ask himself that could not be answered satisfactorily. Where now was his boasted calmness? Even now, it was only by the exercise of all his force of will that he kept from trembling, and all because a boy had swooned.

That it was his boy was no reasonable excuse, for love should have made him stronger instead of weaker. Why was it that he could not mesmerize Augustus, who ought to be an unusually good subject? Why did Clarissa draw away from him and Augustus at the time of all others when she should be most dependent upon them for love and care? [Pg 190]

If, before his family returned to him, another man had come to him with similar difficulties, he would, without hesitation, have explained the cause and offered to adjust the condition. He had tried all the methods he knew upon his wife and child, and instead of bringing about the desired results, Clarissa shrank more and more from him. He knew that it was not because she did not love him. There was no other way to account for it than by her physical condition.

He felt an almost irresistible impulse to give vent to a sarcastic laugh. "Science baffled by a pregnant woman's whim and a child's fear. Wonderful exponent of it I am!" As he thought this, William threw his head back quickly and scornfully. Augustus said:

"What is it, father?"

"Nothing, my little man. How are you feeling now?"

"Better. I wish I could go riding out of doors."

"You may. There are your crutches. Go ahead of me, and ask Merle and Alice to join us. They will feel relieved to know that you are well enough to come to them; they were very anxious." [Pg 191]

"Father, I would not want mamma and Dinah to know that I was afraid."

"All right, boy. You go and ask Merle and Alice to go with us, and I will go and get a carriage."

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

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After the members of his household had retired that night, William sat thinking as he had never thought before. He believed he had solved the cause of various phenomena through the use of mesmeric influence. He was able to demonstrate their basic principles to his friends or indeed to strangers, by the application of his knowledge, without relying upon theories or conjectures, and to perform marvelous feats by the aid of his powers, yet he was completely non-plussed by two members of his own family, who, although they did not doubt the efficacy of his powers, exhibited the very opposite traits to what he desired when he endeavored to work upon them.

While he sat there, deep in thought, he felt a hand upon his shoulder, and, looking up, saw Clarissa standing before him.

"William, why are you not in bed and sleeping? Does anything trouble you? You looked so sad when I came in—"

"I am a little perplexed, but not troubled. How came you here, dear? Can you not sleep? Are you ill?"

"No; I went to sleep, directly I went to bed. I dreamed you were here, alone and troubled, and I have little, if any recollection of leaving or coming here, but here I am. William, did you will me to come to you?" [Pg 193]

"No, Clarissa; I supposed you were sleeping, and I would not disturb your sleep."

"Then how did I come here? I did not know you were here. I remember dreaming you were here; that is all."

"You must have felt I was lonely, and your goodness of heart brought you here to comfort me. That thought makes me happy. You must go back, or you will take cold."

"But, William, when I first asked you, you said that you were not troubled; now you say you are."

"Only troubled to understand myself, and some scientific problems that have been brought to my attention."

"You are wise, William; I wish you would explain to me some of the things I have seen since I have been ill. Oh! I don't mean right now; tomorrow;—any time when you are not engaged."

"Certainly;—I will do my best. Clarissa, are you happier here than you were before you came back to me?"

"Yes."

"Now I will go and stay with you until you are sound asleep. Here is Dinah. Did you think she was lost, Dinah?"

"No, master; but she acted so strange I was afraid that she was sick." [Pg 194]

"Acted strange when?"

"Why, master, she went to sleep right after she retired and seemed so quiet like, I thought I would go and see Augustus. Then I remembered he wanted me to do an errand for him—I promised not to tell what it was,—as I was going back to him, I met Mistress Clarissa coming down here. I spoke to her, but she did not answer me, and said, 'Yes, William I know—I am coming.' I touched her, but she didn't look around, only said, 'Yes, William.' I thought sure she was walking in her sleep, and I ought to watch her, but if I had known you were here, Master William, I would not have come in."

"You did just right, Dinah;—I am glad you watched her. Now go to Augustus. I will stay with her till she sleeps soundly and well."

"William, I do not remember meeting Dinah; surely, you must have willed me to come to you, or I would not have known where to find you, nor failed to see Dinah when she spoke. Did you not call me, William?"

"No, Clarissa; no more than I do always when you are absent. Your image is never away from my consciousness, and whatever subject may claim my attention, you are always present in my mind. I did not will you. I hoped with all the power of my soul you were enjoying a sweet and dreamless sleep." [Pg 195]

"I think it strange. I did not know you were here. I came here without knowing it, and you say you did not call me."

"No; but do not worry about it. I am going back with you, and will stay until you are sound asleep. Do not try to explain your coming here. We will do that together later. I always want you near me; possibly when you were sleeping, you became sensitive to that thought. Come. You will be ill tomorrow."

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

[Pg 196]

The night's experience furnished William with still another problem to study, all the more perplexing because of the fact that Clarissa had come to him without his having concentrated upon her doing so, and apparently of her own will, while she had shrunk away, cold and unresponsive when he had tried to bring her. What was the power that had brought her to him? It must have been strong, although she had no remembrance of coming, nor of meeting Dinah.

Long after she was asleep, he weighed cause after cause; there was no disputing the fact he was becoming nervous, and, when her regular and low breathing proclaimed beyond all doubt she was sleeping sweetly and soundly, he would not move, nor leave her, fearing she might again rise and walk about in her sleep.

If she had come to him at almost any other time, he would not have been surprised, as she was so constantly in his mind; then he would have thought his silent suggestions, finding her negative, had drawn her to him, by the same law that a hypnotist draws a subject, but just at this particular

time he had been very deeply engrossed in other thoughts.

According to his ideas, there was only one way to account for it; that was to ascribe it to her physical condition, making her negative and sensitive; possibly producing a state of somnambulism, and that he was in her mind in her dreaming, she had been guided to him by that strangely inexplicable, but none the less true instinct that guides all somnambulists if left unrestricted in their movements. This nervous state might last throughout the entire period of her pregnancy. At another time she might be drawn to Augustus, or any other person or place.

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Persons have been known to drown themselves in such a state, so he would watch her. He knew somnambulism sprang from nervous excitement, and in her condition, there was no telling what phases might develop.

This had been a harmless and pleasing incident, but there was nothing to guarantee its repetition would be the same. It was not only his right, but his duty to watch over her while she was in this negative condition, for if harm should come to her, he could never forgive himself.

There was danger when she would seek him in an apartment he was unaccustomed to be in,—especially at that time of night. Her very accuracy was, perhaps, the most alarming feature. Women in her condition are apt to exhibit very peculiar traits, and these usually entirely foreign to their natural instincts. He would, therefore, watch her very closely during the interval, doing what he could to help her, but he must be careful she did not discover his surveillance.

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How little he realized what an advancement he was making in true love! Once he would have wanted her to know of every sacrifice he made, and had she not desired his constant presence, he would have become jealous,—perhaps furiously so—and felt she had no love for him. He had learned much. He had learned love means more than attention even more than endearing words and close embraces. These could all be supplied by subterfuge, even while love was totally absent. Real love may exist without these outward demonstrations.

He understood all this as he was compelled to hide his own affections more and more, and as he witnessed Augustus' suffering upon being banished from his mother's presence. He had been educated to believe himself the one object of interest in the home, and it came harder to him, therefore, than it did to William, to relinquish her constant solicitude.

Altogether, it was a dreary season for them, full of heartaches, but to William, even this, compared to the time when he was alone in his beautiful home, was a veritable paradise, for now he had Augustus and his love and Clarissa's presence. Humble indeed were his present requirements as compared to his past exactions, and this state of humbleness proved his great growth in wisdom, for ignorance is always aggressive and egotistic, encroaching largely upon both possibilities and the actual, while real wisdom, like charity, "vaunteth not itself."

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For some unknown reason, William felt he wanted to talk with Alice when she was entranced. Until Clarissa came to him, he had turned to Merle in all seasons of doubt and perplexity, but now, he felt Alice could best furnish him the information he desired. Augustus clung to his father's companionship a large portion of the time, even in the matter of education the family felt that they could best supply him with knowledge, for they were even more sensitive about his infirmity than himself.

They were unwilling he should mingle with boys about his own age, taking especial care in cultivating his taste for music and art, which was far beyond the ken of children of his age. William felt he must also devote more of his time to him, so, on the day following asked him if he would like to go with Merle for a long ride that would occupy some time, calling for him upon the way back, when they would all go to the theatre, where Augustus loved so well to go.

When his mother had swayed and thrilled such vast audiences by the magic of her beautiful voice, she had rarely allowed him to be present; she loved to think she was singing for him, and he was the one object in her mind, but she felt she could do better when he was not actually present. This very fact probably made Augustus all the more fond of public performances, for he always thought "my mother can do better than that."

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He was very proud of her reputation as a singer while his father was extremely sensitive about it. William would have been loth to admit it to anyone, but, growing to believe he had no other rival in Clarissa's affection save this boy, he transmitted his hatred of supposed rivals to her public achievements, and could not endure the thought of them.

What gave Augustus joy in this respect, gave him jealousy. He did not like to think of her as singing to multitude, the object of their unstinted admiration, therefore her reputation as a peerless musician and singer brought him no whit of pleasure.

Few of her hearers could appreciate her singing as he, for he was a fine musician himself, still he could not endure the thought of her singing for public approval or money. Music, to him, was a sacred gift, and although he gloried in her abilities, he deplored the attention it brought to her publicly. Of all things, the knowledge she was working for financial reasons was the most exasperating, and he was particularly and peculiarly sensitive upon this point, not liking to hear her spoken of as a public entertainer, while that was very pleasing to Augustus.

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Whenever he attended a public performance, he invariably said that it was good, but mamma could do better, deriving much pleasure from the thought, though the mere mention of Clarissa's achievements and attempts to win public favor was torture to his father.

Just now, however, William desired to see Augustus happy, so he planned for every condition he felt would add to his pleasure, and while he and Merle were riding, he would talk with Alice, thus both father and son would be occupied and partially happy.

CHAPTER NINETEEN

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William felt relieved when the boys had started upon their pleasure trip, and he was left alone with Alice and Mrs. Millard. The Millards seemed very near to him, and he felt almost as much solicitude for them as for his own family. Alice was glad to be of service to him, and this cheerfulness upon her part was, perhaps, one of the strongest factors in her ability to do good work for him.

Merle was equally desirous of pleasing him, passing willingly at any and all times into the trance state. William had never felt as much pride in his work or the results accruing from it as Merle did, and never had found another "subject" upon whom he could so fully rely. There was no doubt the congeniality of their souls had much to do with the success of their achievements. It gave Merle particular pleasure to know William eclipsed all other demonstrators of mesmeric power, feeling flattered to be chosen by so wise a man as his principal subject.

He never dreaded to pass into the trance state, and had, in so far as it was possible for him to do so, followed the injunctions he had been given at the outset, to try and eliminate all personal opinions, holding no personal prejudices, and offering no resistance.

Not a little of William's prestige depended upon the evidence Merle had given him in the trance condition, and Alice was equally zealous, but had never been used for any public work.

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She, also, felt flattered to think the professor should select her to assist him in his investigations instead of Merle, whom she considered to be her superior as a subject, and whose reputation as a subject was as great as the professor's as a demonstrator.

She had no realization of the difference in the kind or nature of the work done through them, nor, indeed, had she ever speculated upon that point.

Mrs. Millard excused herself, leaving William and Alice alone, and he soon placed her in a trance. She said nothing until he questioned her.

"Alice, are you waking?"

"Yes, Professor."

"Can you see my wife? Tell me what she is doing."

"She looks very thoughtful. I do not know whether she is sad or not."

"Why should she be sad?"

"I do not know that she is sad."

"Then why do you speak of it?"

"I do not know."

"Alice, can you read her thoughts? You ought to. Try."

"Ask her to come here. She will be here soon. I feel she will help you more than I can. There she is."

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"Alice, I cannot bring her. You ought to know that."

"You must. Ask her."

"Her health will not permit it."

Alice shook her head thoughtfully, then she said: "I want to see her."

"But, Alice, I tell you that she is not in condition—"

"I want to see her. Ask her. Did I not help you to get her? Ask her."

That last assertion alone moved William; he remembered how skeptical he had been when she had advised him to return to Clarissa; she was right then, and he had no reason to question her until he had found her advice to be incorrect, at least once.

The first thought to arise in his mind was "Why did Clarissa come here?" She had sent word to him and Augustus she was ill and could not join them in their morning meal, but she was evidently not too ill to visit comparative strangers, so he had no desire to force his presence upon her, but Alice said she wanted to see her. He remained silent for a while, then said, "If you want to see her, go to her."

The words were scarcely out of his mouth, when Alice arose with closed eyes and walked out of the room. William hardly knew what to do; he wanted to follow her to see what transpired, but

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his sensitive pride said "She will think you forced the girl to come," and that thought determined his action. He did not move. He waited and waited, still she did not come. What was she doing? Why did they not come to him, knowing he was waiting? Still he waited, too proud to go to them; then he thought that Alice ought not to be controlled so long. As this thought entered his mind, she came into the room, alone.

She looked wan and tired, and walked past him to the place of her entrancement, and, drawing a long sigh as she laid her head back, said "I am going to her tomorrow. She will not come here," then her head drooped wearily. He did not feel he ought to force her further, although he was filled with a jealous longing to know what had transpired.

She said nothing more, although he allowed her to remain in a trance condition for some time. How keen his disappointment at the result of the interview he had looked forward to was, no one save himself would ever know. He hoped Clarissa was as pleased as he was disappointed. He would have liked to know what had passed between them. As he was thinking thus, he felt arms around his neck, drawing him closely and affectionately, and looking up, surprised and astonished, he saw—Clarissa.

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She bent over him quickly, and drawing him closer still, and said, "Wake her, William, she must be tired." He would have gone cheerfully, even to his execution, while she held him thus, looking into his eyes with that expression of love. His arms went around her, and he said, almost unconsciously, "Wake, Alice. Alice, are you awake?"

He did not notice her answer, and Alice, feeling confused at seeing them in their fond embrace, at once left the room, without being noticed by either. They were engrossed with their own feelings. Clarissa spoke first.

"William,—she helped me so much. Will you not try to help me be what she says I can be? Do not move, dear. I have not finished yet. I promised her I would tell you how much I loved you, but I cannot keep that promise, for words do not express the full sentiment of the heart. I love you more than words can tell. You know that, even if I am irritable and distant."

"Clarissa, you and I have much to thank Alice for;—how little I realized when I was developing her as a subject, what a flood of happiness she would bring into my life! What did she mean when she said that she was going to see you tomorrow?"

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"That is our secret. She is coming to our home. You will entrance her for me and then leave us alone, will you not?"

"With pleasure."

"There is Augustus. Mrs. Millard has invited us to remain and spend the evening. Would you like to?"

"Yes—if you would."

"Then let's go and see what the boys have to say. Before long, William, I will tell you the secret."

It was a happy gathering in Mrs. Millard's house that evening. Each thought the others appeared to the best advantage, and they separated only when Augustus became so tired that, despite his most heroic efforts, his eyes would close. It had been a happy day for him.

CHAPTER TWENTY

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From the day she had talked with Alice, there had been a noticeable improvement in Clarissa. She became less nervous, and, instead of shutting herself away from her family, she devoted most of her time to them, at times appearing almost like a young girl, full of enthusiasm for whatever she was doing.

Nearly every day since that time, Alice had been with her for awhile, but no one except Clarissa knew what transpired. William would have been most impatient at this had it not been for the change that had come over Clarissa;—she was again the light and life of the home.

Three times, when he believed the entire household asleep, he had sat alone, trying to straighten out in his mind the perplexing questions that had presented themselves since that memorable night when he and Merle had gone to hear the great singer who had proven to be his wife. From that time to this, there had been one continual sequence of surprises for him, few of which he was able to satisfactorily explain, even to himself.

Until then, he had logically deduced the cause of every circumstance occurring around him. Now he lacked that degree of confidence with which he had previously undertaken their solution. One point in this long chain of events always held him spellbound; that was his finding Clarissa at the concert. Supposing he had not gone to that concert;—what then?

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It was by the merest chance he had gone, and nothing could have been further from his mind than that he should find Clarissa there. Not going to that concert would have meant living alone for him, as he had done so long. The life had been so lonely and desolate it was only endurable

when he worked continually.

His resolve to go had been hasty and unpremeditated; what good influence had been working in his life just at that particular time, that he now had—

The interruption to this soliloquy was a pleasant one, for Clarissa's entrance had finished his retrospection.

"Why are you here all alone, William? Are you troubled in any way?"

"No; I was only thinking, and was unaware that time was passing. How did you know that I was here? I thought you were sleeping long ago."

"So I was; but I awoke suddenly, and had a strong inclination to know where you were and what you were doing. I suppose it was imagination, but I thought you called me."

"I did not. It would be selfish indeed, to call you from your sleep. You were probably tired and nervous; thus your sleep was not sound nor refreshing. Come, I will return with you, and put you to sleep again."

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On two other occasions, under quite similar circumstances, she had come to him when he had been trying to unravel the same problem. The strangest part of the whole occurrence was that, when he had sat there on several previous occasions, willing her to come to him, he had sent her such suggestions as "Clarissa, come to me," she had failed to respond, although he knew the thoughts had carried sufficient power to draw her.

He was only a man; well meaning, but faulty and imperfect as all men are. It hurt his pride to be thwarted when he knew the strength of his power, so he threw all the force of his will into the demand, ashamed, even while he was doing it, to use so much power upon a sensitive, pregnant woman, but the disappointment was so great he rebelled against reason. He made up his mind he would not stop until she did come. He saw, later, that, while in the first instance, he was really anxious for her presence, as time passed, and she did not come, his feeling was unworthy a loving husband, bringing forth the practiced hypnotist who disliked to be disobeyed by a negative subject.

His strongest efforts were unsuccessful, however, and what was worse, Clarissa sent word she could not join the family at their meals, and made no appearance during the entire day.

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When she came, he was surprised at her appearance; she was pale, and visibly uneasy, and darkly settled under the eyes; she shrank from him when he offered to treat her, saying all she needed was quiet repose alone. The repetition of this furnished another problem for William to solve. Not only his pride but his love was humiliated, and he secretly resolved that his book of personal experiences should not be finished and given to the public until he was a wiser man than he then was; he had thought he knew much, but he now realized that he understood only very little of the science upon which he had worked so zealously.

It was a pitiable condition, when he had no faith in either his subjects or himself, for he had always believed faith and confidence were the greatest requisites for a mesmerist. His years of hard and patient study seemed to have only brought him to this;—a state of general doubt.

Merle, who had been his most trusted subject, had proven false, and he could never again place implicit confidence in any one. In the past, any assertion that Merle had made was accepted without comment or doubt, but now, that he had been untruthful in the trance condition, being honest and trustworthy in his normal state, he knew absolute faith in a subject's assertions would never again be his.

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Time passed rapidly. One night, as he was sitting alone, planning an excursion of pleasure for Augustus and Merle and Alice, knowing Clarissa was with her son, she came to him with a large book in her hand, and said:

"Here, William, is an exact account of all that transpired while Alice was entranced. Read it carefully, and see if she was correct when she told me we would give you knowledge you could not obtain for yourself, because of reasons she has explained. I have not placed one word of my own in it; everything is just as Alice gave it. You will see I have asked very few questions, permitting her to choose her own subjects. I bring it to you now, as I feel I shall soon be ill, and no one knows, at such times, exactly how it will terminate. Do not look so surprised; I am not afraid—I think all will be well, but I wanted you to have this with my explanations. According to Alice's statements, we, working together, have obtained better results in technical points and causes of the various phenomena than you could; we have not obtained the highest nor sublimest wisdom possible, but our united work of love (and that is what this book is) is but designed to be a stepping-stone for you, who have so much more knowledge and power in this line. She says you will glean from it such facts as will enable you to become a still greater power and more illustrious man in the realm of science. It is the work of love of two loyal hearts. I hope it will be to you all that she has prophesied. I cannot help the tears, William;—I am nervous."

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"Come, you had better retire. You are trembling. How much pleasure you have given me by this loving work, I shall not try to express in words, but I will honestly try from the depths of my soul, to be the man you want me to be. It is a very faulty foundation, Clarissa, but with your love and patient help, I will do my best to be worthy of the wife who was never equaled upon earth, I think. You deserve a better man—"

"William, your words fill me with shame, for I am just one mass of weakness.—I am cross and irritable with both you and Augustus, but, William, if anything should happen to me, will you not try to forget all my faults, remembering only my love—"

"Clarissa! Clarissa! I will not listen even to your suggestion. Come, let me try to put you to sleep. I am so happy I want to be with you. You are never going to leave me again."

The next morning Augustus slept later than usual. He had been away with Merle all day. He woke fractious and nervous, and nothing seemed just right to him; dressing him was a slow and patient task to Dinah, who was patience itself. After several prolonged altercations, when she had great difficulty in appeasing him, she said: [Pg 214]

"You just wait, Honey; Dinah has something for you that will make you just the proudest boy she ever saw. You just wait and see what Dinah brings you."

She passed quickly from the room, and soon returned with a small bundle in her arms.

Augustus did not look up when she entered, so did not notice his father was in the room. He was decidedly cross and petulant; he felt he was going to have something he liked to eat proffered to him, and had made up his mind firmly in advance that he would not eat it, no matter what it was. The first thing he knew, Dinah placed the bundle in his arms, and opening the covering, showed him a wee, tiny baby's face.

One expression chased another so rapidly over his face, that, keenly as William and Dinah watched him they were both unable to distinguish the predominating thought. They had all been anxious to know how Augustus would feel toward the little stranger. William wanted to be present when he first saw it, to assure him no one could possibly occupy his place in the affections of either father or mother, and was just about to step forward and speak, when the baby began to cry. At the first sound of that cry, Augustus looked up at Dinah, his face a perfect picture of wrath, and said: [Pg 215]

"If you do not know how to take care of that baby, I do; I tell you it wants something to eat."

This was such an unexpected result William burst into a laugh, and, bending, kissed first Augustus and then the baby, saying, "Well, my son, see what has been given to us to love."

Augustus paid little attention to his father, but turned, instead, to Dinah, holding the baby close to him.

"Is that the way you treated me? It is a wonder I lived. It shall have something to eat, if I have to go and get it myself. You wait; I will go and tell mamma."

From that minute, there was only one anxiety about Augustus and the baby in any of their minds;—that was he would smother it or feed it. He would watch it sleeping, and drew it in every way. If it cried, he was anxious. He was a greater trouble than the baby. It had been expected he would be sensitive and jealous when the baby came, for he had been such an object of attention himself. They were totally unprepared for the real result.

He and Dinah were in a state of perpetual and continual combat, from his rising to his sleeping. It seemed to him there was never such another babe as that; he could not trust Dinah to care for it. All his boyish plans for the future were changed, and everything was gauged by "when sister is big enough." He insisted that she should be named for his mother;—the dearest name in the world to him. [Pg 216]

CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

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During Clarissa's illness, William devoted all the available time he could find to the study of the book she had brought him. He had many interruptions, for Augustus appealed to his father in his altercations with Dinah, when they were too severe for him to conquer by might of his own will.

There were many visitors, who came to inquire the health of Clarissa and her babe. Clarissa seemed very nervous if William was long away, so he did most of his reading near her. She said this uncontrollable desire to know he was close beside her arose from the mental suffering she had endured from his absence when Augustus was born. She suffered keenly then, and the same conditions brought similar sensations. She was perfectly satisfied to remain quiet if she saw him present, but if he remained long from her, she was pursued by fears and thoughts that she would not tell even him.

In her weakened condition, they quickly showed themselves in her physical depletion. She was annoyed at her weakness, but her sufferings were none the less acute because she knew that they were visionary.

She was not a weak woman in any sense of the word, but just now her husband's presence furnished her a sense of security; his absence brought weakness. The fact she had had no long or severe confinement made it still harder to account for her subsequent nervousness. [Pg 218]

Doctors Baxter and Harrington had for some time been trying to get William to perform an experiment in psychology for them. He put them off from time to time by different excuses, because he was unwilling to leave Clarissa for a long enough time, knowing her confinement was near. Not having been with her at the time of Augustus' birth, and having no experience in such cases, he was more concerned about it than he would admit.

After her easy and well nigh painless delivery, he felt so relieved the next day but one, he went with them. He was gone almost the entire day, as the physicians asked him to visit a patient of each, who was suffering from nervous troubles, which eluded their powers, and which they felt he could relieve. They were situated at quite a distance one from the other, so it consumed considerable time to visit them.

William felt perfectly easy in his mind regarding Clarissa. He had told her where he was going, and she said she was proud he could do what others failed to do. She was comfortable and happy, when he left, laughing gaily at Augustus' concern because baby slept so long. She had an arm around each as he took his last look at them before leaving the room. That picture of home and happiness had been with him all day.

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Once he would not have thought that day's work an arduous one, as he sought for years to crush every sentiment and interest but scientific research. The more work he had before him, the more contented he was; now he could not help thinking, even while he worked, of his family.

Both doctors remarked how quickly he placed each subject in a trance state; in the last instance, especially, it was very noticeable, as the sick girl was a peculiarly sensitive person, but being entirely ignorant of mesmeric power was consumed by fear, exhibiting traits bordering upon convulsions. She did the same when William began to work. Her heart exhibited such erratic tendencies of action, the three men united in the verdict it was better not to force her further.

As he witnessed the girl's suffering, he thought of his own baby girl, similarly terrorized, for it was only terror that caused the condition. Immediately the scientist and man of force was submerged, and the father was the predominating man. Without any thought but loving sympathy, he placed his hand upon the girl's head and said:

"Poor child;—do not worry;—you shall not be molested, nor forced by me, any more than I want my baby girl so treated."

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He smoothed her head, and she gave him such a look of gratitude as he could not soon forget, then closed her eyes. He saw she was passing into a comatose state, without his forcible dictation. Once placed there, he gave her the customary suggestions, telling her to wake at a certain time, then left the doctors to return home, feeling tired, but cheered by the knowledge of the presence of the three loved ones who were awaiting him.

How he pitied the two men whom he had just left, who were going to their elegant homes, but for whom there was no wife or children waiting. Often the three had communed together in the past, upon their good fortune in having a place of quiet and repose, where they would be unmolested, and free to think. Now William knew that, whatever conditions of perplexity, even of discord and confusion awaited him in his home, it was infinitely sweeter and preferable to the quiet and peace they had pretended to like, for while he joined them in congratulations upon this condition, his soul had hungered for his wife's presence. How did he know there was no similar episode in each of his two friends' lives?

They believed him when he had lied. Yes. There was no escaping the truth; he might as well own up to himself, if he would not to anyone else. He, a truthful man, in all other respects, lied rather than reveal a heartache he felt to be a weakness. No one but himself knew he lied. How did he know that Baxter and Harrington were not lying too, actuated by the same motive—their inability to secure the companionship of the particular woman they loved.

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As he thought of his own heartaches, when alone, he felt a profound pity for them, while respecting the motives that kept them silent. It was as natural for man to love woman, as it was to breathe the air into his lungs. Yes, there must be some tragedy in each of his friends' lives. His earnest wish was they might terminate as happily as his had.

He had arrived home by the time he had reached this conclusion, and, for all his fatigue, he ascended the steps with the buoyancy and elasticity of a youth, he was so anxious to look at his treasures.

His animation and joy received a rude shock, when he saw James' face, and he happened to be the first person he met. There was such a look of anxiety and sadness there, as was not to be mistaken by anyone who knew him well. Without waiting for William to ask him the cause, he said:

"Oh, Master, I am so glad you have come! Mistress Clarissa was stricken suddenly very ill. We are much concerned about her, long ago sending to both Doctors Baxter and Harrington, thinking to bring them and you. She isn't quite herself, sir. Won't you hasten?"

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No need for this last injunction, for William was already ascending the stairs with rapid strides, not waiting for all the steps. Soon he was in Clarissa's room, where he found both Dinah and Nancy; Dinah was holding the babe while Nancy tried by every means she knew to coax and divert Clarissa's attention.

One glance showed William the condition of affairs. She had a high fever; her face was red, and her eyes sparkled with an unnatural brilliancy. She was talking rapidly but disconnectedly. How he felt, he could have told no one, and, unlike his usually calm and sensible self, he rushed at once to the conclusion this was that dangerous and weakening fever that so often accompanies childbirth.

The sudden reversion from thoughts of happiness to those of acute anxiety was too great for him to immediately overcome, for like most anxious persons, he pictured the worst. Like a horrible panorama, there came before his consciousness, instantaneously, the spectacle of her death. For the time being, he lost sight, entirely, of his power to control such conditions, and instead of being calm and collected, he was anxious, and full of thoughts of doubt and suspense. He spoke in a quick, agonized way:

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"Clarissa—Clarissa."

She listened, then answered: "Yes, William; what is it?"

"Are you suffering?"

"No, William; now you have come. I thought I was alone again. That thought made me so miserable! Will you not sit with me a while until I become calm?"

"You may be sure I shall not leave you again. Now try to sleep."

He was fast gaining control of himself; as he gained in this respect, she grew more quiet and soon was fast asleep.

The doctors both came in answer to the summons, but James told them that their services were unnecessary, so they returned to their homes. After this episode, knowing the cause of the difficulty, William remained almost constantly with Clarissa, taking a large measure of happiness from the knowledge his presence was necessary to her happiness. He kept her as quiet and cheerful as possible.

As he studied the book she had given him, he discussed many points with her, when she was awake, acknowledging frankly his surprise at her quick understanding. He told her the truth when he said he enjoyed talking science with her better than with any man he had met, for her perception was very keen and accurate, though she had little knowledge of mesmerism, as a practical and demonstrated science.

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She proved herself capable to reason, and interpret some points obscure to him, owing to the fact his mind had been trained in a certain groove of thought, and was thus prejudiced and partial; having no certainly defined theories, she could absorb and embrace new and higher facts far more quickly than he. Whenever a new assertion was presented to him, he could not help but compare it with his past work or ideas, and was prejudiced in their favor when the balance was nearly equal, owing to the fact he had performed such feats of power by following the guidance of former schools of wisdom: on the other hand, Clarissa had supreme faith in every word Alice had given her, so she tried to make William believe all the book contained.

Her will was untrained, while his was, and developed to the highest degree. What she lacked in training, she made up in persistence. She was a staunch ally of Alice's assertions, striving by every ingenuity of her mind to successfully pit Alice's ideas against William's tried experiments. Both were stubborn;—William, because he felt actual experience was of more value than theory; Clarissa, because she knew both her own and Alice's mind was unprejudiced when the facts in the book were given.

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William had entranced Alice every time, and, in fact, brought her out. Alice had never known for what reason she was entranced and did not now know she had been instigating intelligence to produce a book upon mesmeric influence.

Clarissa knew her mind had not prejudiced Alice in the slightest, as she knew too little of the science to do so; thus when it came to a conflict of faith between William and Alice, she always advocated Alice's assertions with the full might of her power.

That book had been a work of love, upon their part. Alice had said while in the trance, that the acceptance of those facts would make William a greater and more illustrious man. Clarissa believed it, and used all her power of persuasion and logic to make him understand and accept them.

She was successful, far beyond her hopes. He listened to her arguments and reasons as he would have done to no man's. When their ideas clashed, he tried by all the arguments he knew to convince her.

Take a man and woman of equally developed wisdom, and the woman's mind has been acknowledged by the most competent judges to be the more subtle and intuitive, avowing, often, upon the impulse, precepts and assertions convincing to their listeners, which, if called upon to explain, they would be powerless to do so. This fact has given birth to the axiom "Men reason logically;—women intuitively." Thus it was that Clarissa could confound, perplex and convince William, while the deep basic principles underlying the effects she so strenuously asserted, were entirely unknown to her.

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William never acknowledged, even in after times, how much real knowledge Clarissa imparted to

him, and as her one thought had been to avouch and do justice to Alice's work, she did not give herself the due amount of praise. When she succeeded in convincing William, upon a point of disagreement, she gave the credit instinctively to Alice.

In this communion and the almost constant conflict of wills both were growing immensely, without their consciousness of the fact, but Clarissa could never hope to be the practical demonstrator of the science that William was, and would be. She could acquire through sensitiveness, knowledge he could manifest, but could never gain originally.

This is a good proof of the law that all finite lives are fallible, one excelling in one branch of knowledge or execution, and another, in other branches. One eternally leans upon and depends upon the other for something, as it is only the Infinite that embraces all there is within itself.

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The word "infinite" implies all; therefore, all individual or finite lives are faulty and fallible, furnishing less developed lives with power and knowledge, while they are, themselves, compelled to depend upon other lives still higher in the evolutionary chain of existence for similar favors.

Clarissa and William were both positive and strong souls, and the union of their forces and intellects meant a much stronger power than either could ever hope to reach alone. The very fact they took opposite views of the question was a beneficial factor to both. The conflict of wills drew from both higher wisdom than they knew they possessed. Neither wanted to be defeated, so each tried to bring forth the most persuasive and logical powers. The natural result was that both were benefited and advanced.

CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO

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It is unnecessary to give here all the assertions made by Alice in the trance state. We will simply review and examine the most prominent and salient points, one of which was "Thought, being the offspring or expression of the individual's desire, or, as some persons prefer to state it, the soul's desire; it must partake of all the predominating chemical characteristics animating the generator at the time of its conception and birth; therefore, it was no vague, tangible force, but actual, tangible chemical substance as much as the atmosphere."

One man, if he is in normal condition, can see another one, but he cannot see the potent chemicals that compose the atmosphere; still, the force stored up and vented through the invisible agency (so far as man's sight is concerned), is capable to, and does do much damage to man and all material conditions, by this one demonstration, proving beyond the shadow of a doubt, its superiority as we might say, in chemical substance, as a weaker force can never injure a stronger one.

If there was no substance or substantiality in the atmosphere, it could not affect and destroy substance, for, without tangibility, it would pass through substances, creating no visible disturbance. Vague nothingness never yet compelled obedience from solid matter. That which disturbs and moves is much more powerful than that which is disturbed and moved.

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Thought, upon whatever plane of action we consider life, is the creator and controller of all conditions. There is not, never was, nor ever will be, a type of life so low in the evolutionary scale, as to be devoid of some kind or specie of thought. In the humblest and simplest types, this thought can vent itself in no higher form than a desire for the presence of kinds similar to itself.

Thought is subject to evolution and progression as much as any form of Infinite Life. From this one thought of desire, springs, in diversified and innumerable channels, all kinds and manners of thought. One and all having their primary origin in this humble beginning, the same as all the high achievements and possibilities man can hope to accomplish in the Infinite Ages, lie dormant in the embryo babe.

The babe, while in the state of embryo development, can express very few and limited powers; but its soul, or spirit, must contain all the latent essential powers the man will manifest throughout Eternity. Otherwise, circumstances, however potent and powerful, could not materialize the effects which are observable.

There is no power, be it ever so strong, that can evoke and bring forth from a life, qualities and characteristics foreign to it. Those same characteristics may be magnified, enlarged or intensified, until their true proportions are lost sight of, but is there a new factor infused into the soul? No.

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A hypnotist, or psychologist, when we view them in a scientific light, is nothing but a magnet, which, consciously or unconsciously, influences and controls many, who possess similar innate traits of spirit upon different planes or stages of development.

To the minds of many, a hypnotist or psychologist is one who, by a firm and determined exercise of will, acquires the power, when they choose to assert it, to influence less self-centered minds. It is, of course, to be understood that many men who call themselves wise, believe not at all in the efficacy of one man's mind to control another man's consciousness, but all students of life know it is not what one, many, or indeed, all men believe to be true, that is the motive power of progression, but what the Infinite Law directs.

Those men who deny the creative power of thought, attributing all favorable results to the fiat dictation of a Supreme Personal Intelligence, are to be pitied rather than censured.

One might as well deny a rose seed will bring forth a rose, if it brings forth any result at all, as to say "thought is not the motive cause of every expressed result." Without a foregoing cause, there would be no motion or action of any kind. Man never moves his limbs without a thought "I want to go to such a place"; he would not have food in his stomach, if there was not the thought of hunger, which causes him to carry food from his hands to his mouth, and so on. There might be the most bountiful of feasts spread before him, and if his desire could not inspire activity and motion in his arms and hands, he might starve with plenty of edibles in sight, unless some person were inspired to feed him. His arms, hands and limbs will not operate until there has been a foregoing thought.

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If his thought or desire is strong, the physical members are but humble instruments that obey his will as operator.

Enough of this;—a hypnotist or psychologist influences and controls not only those persons they will to obey their desires, but many others whom they have not the slightest desire nor intention of influencing. They are in precisely the same position as is a material magnet which is surrounded by a large number of negatives; it becomes the centre of attraction to whatever negatives are within the radius of its magnetism or influence. It may not want those negatives, but there is no escape from their vampirage unless there is the conscious knowledge on the part of the psychologist of how to throw off undesirable influences or negatives.

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It is possible for so many negatives to attach themselves to a material magnet they draw away, or sap, all the individual magnetism and strength of the magnet, making that which was previously strong and forceful to become weak and impotent itself; so a man who has been a strong and powerful psychologist, may become a centre of attraction to so many negative lives he may be drained of his self-centered energy, thus, instead of being a commanding life, he assumes the position of a negative himself.

Those men who are familiar with the modes and characteristics of material magnets know that, after a certain number of negatives have attached themselves to it, the magnet must either be recharged from a lodestone, or it will become a negative itself.

Every negative person within the radius of a psychologist's influence feels the same draw toward them, that material negatives do toward a magnet. The reader, of course, understands that both the material magnet and the psychologist can only draw or attract similar natures, or chemicals to themselves. There was never yet a hypnotist so strong he could draw or attract to himself persons who were endowed with varying or opposite characteristics from his own.

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You can control another's personality in those qualities or habits you could control, did they come into your own life; possibly you might, by force of will, govern and control, a condition you had never faced nor felt an inclination for in your own life, but you may be sure you cannot control this in another person's life, if you could not have conquered the same condition, had it arisen in your own.

Many persons measure what you may do by what you have done; such is neither fair nor accurate judgment. No man knows surely and positively what he would do under the severe and stern test of temptation, until he has been actually subjected to the same. He may have many theories and ideas, but these dissipate and vanish like mist before the sun, when stern realities appear. The man who thinks he would do best, often does the worst, while he who doubts his ability to rise superior to temptation, will, because he wants to prove himself better than his judgment, rise superior to the wave that wrecks and drowns him who was too confident of his personal abilities.

In answer to the question (from whence flowed the wisdom and knowledge voiced by Alice?): she gave this seemingly ambiguous answer to persons who have no knowledge of the science of thought and creation—(I glean from the highest wisdom generated by man as a mass, then for higher knowledge I am limited to the kindness and wisdom of those individuals among whom I am thrust by the will of the temporary projector.

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If the question is one that is cogent to, and can be answered by embodied man, I am instinctively attracted to him, from his aura or influence, attaining the answer desired; if not, I am compelled to seek higher from disembodied individuals, but by far the strongest factor is the public thought or prejudice. The reason I give higher wisdom to Professor Huskins' wife's thought is, being unprejudiced, but desirous of wisdom, she draws from my spirit more power to probe and penetrate into the aura of those persons who possess the knowledge requisite to answer the questions from a standpoint of experience rather than theory.)

The acquisition of all known facts can only be by the absorption from a higher source.

The height of the plane of absorption depends on the state of receptiveness of the hypnotist more than the subject.

It is impossible to control the consciousness of another individual and not prejudice and limit him to a certain degree by the opinions of the operator.

The operator may have no desire to do so, and may strive to the full extent of his will to leave the subject free and untrammelled by any of his preconceived opinions, but if he did not project a certain amount of his personality into the being of the subject, he could not control him.

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The subject therefore cannot hope to rise in execution above the capacity of the hypnotist, provided the hypnotist has developed his full powers.

A mesmerized subject is irresponsible for whatever sentiments he may express in a trance.

In that condition he is no longer a normal person but acts as a sensitive plate to picture and reproduce the strongest influences bearing upon him at a given time.

He is the reflector of the thoughts and opinions of others and no more to be censured for what he gives forth than is a mirror that pictures the likeness of an ugly and exceedingly unpleasant face. The fault is not the mirror's, for another, stopping before it, will reflect a handsome and pleasing picture. The mirror is limited to, and bound to reflect just such peculiarities as the object which is before it may possess, and the mesmerist's subject acts as just such a reflector for thought impressions. Several psychologists, using the same subject equally desirous of obtaining knowledge upon the same lines, can and frequently do receive very dissimilar results; so widely different in sense as to make assimilation between them impossible. This is due to the fact each directing will, compelling the subject to go forth in search of knowledge, varies in its capability to send him to a certain point or location.

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The magnetism then absorbed which deadened their own consciousness, limits their search for knowledge to just those spheres of action where they find similar kinds and classes of chemicals operative. No two men generate precisely the same kind of magnetism; therefore, no two can bring forth the same results from the same subject, unless they, by the exercise of will force, compel them to utter words and assertions they wish them to.

One must also take into consideration the varying susceptibility of the subject to the influences of different persons. A negative and good subject will manifest very different characteristics under different persons' influence.

The concord and harmonious feeling between operator and subject means more than most men think, if real wisdom is to be gleaned. The psychologist who uses only will power, considering his subject in nearly the same light he would a material object, that could further his plans, and wishes, will never acquire progressive wisdom upon abstruse subjects that elude his own or his colleagues' understanding. He can to an attentive audience who are ignorant of the principles governing psychology, or mesmerism, perform through his subjects what I call "physical phenomena," confounding the audience with facts of power they can neither understand nor deny. He can fill them with awe, even horror or fear, but he is limited to feats of physical prowess, or those that are familiar to the majority of men. Request him to have a subject perform some mental feat equally wonderful, and wholly beyond his (the operator's) knowledge, and there follows a dismal failure. To be sure, the subject may answer it to the understanding and satisfaction of both questioner and operator; but compare that answer with demonstrated scientific facts, and it will often be found faulty and inaccurate, because the projecting will had only the power to force the subject into the aura of persons possessing little knowledge upon the desired subject.

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A small amount of knowledge is always faulty and defective, being tinctured so much with ignorance.

In the case we are considering, Clarissa had not the power to entrance Alice, as she had never practiced in this line, and knew almost nothing of the science. Like everyone who becomes interested in its efficacy, having no experience by which to gauge her aspirations, she expected more than demonstrated facts could illustrate. Her buoyancy of faith in Alice's utterances while in the trance state, furnished the best of conditions for Alice to work in, considering especially the refinement and goodness of Clarissa's soul.

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Her natural aspirations and desires were high and worthy of attention for their own sakes. She was ambitious, progressive and desirous of learning, she had little prejudice to overcome as she had almost no knowledge of the efficacy of thought and she loved Alice for her own pure self.

Alice had had a peculiar life and development. She had been kept quite isolated; and knew little of the turmoil of material life, while the love she bore Clarissa bordered upon worship. All her family loved William, and had looked to him for years as the zenith of their lives; he embodied to them all that was noble, excellent, grand and good. Never once had he failed to be a loyal, staunch foundation. Both Merle and Alice looked to him as they would their father, having supreme and unflinching faith in his every declaration.

Their love may not have been wise and judicious, but it was sincere and earnest. The fact they made such excellent subjects was due to their love and the desire to do whatever he wished. It was never a task nor an inconvenience for them to do what he desired. They found their greatest happiness in working for and pleasing him. Whenever either of them went into a trance, it was gladly and willingly, and with the thought of being honored by being selected by so distinguished a man as the Professor.

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They thought him not only the most honorable, but the wisest and most powerful man living. Their sole anxiety was to please him and to do his bidding, if by their quiescent obedience to his desire or will force they could bring contentment or satisfaction, they were not only satisfied but happy.

Alice was favored beyond Merle in this respect. She had not been forced nor coerced, even in a

trance. William had been a long time developing her, but he had never asked her many questions, nor presumed upon her negative state to yield him desired knowledge.

With Merle it had been different; he had been used, from the beginning, to acquire knowledge of which the Professor was either ignorant, or about which he had his doubts; Merle consequently partook of more of the Professor's characteristics than Alice.

If Clarissa had tried to use Merle, although he was the acknowledged best subject, he could not possibly have given her the same knowledge Alice did.

Loving the Professor as they did, Merle and Alice actually adored his family; Clarissa and Augustus were not common individuals in their eyes. You can see what an effect of inspiration or almost superhuman power this produced in Alice's life. She enjoyed any test imposed upon her for the Professor's sake, through him or his family. He was wise and good, his family were more. Her sincere love and admiration for Clarissa made her an obedient slave, through love and not force.

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Both subject and operator being actuated by sentiments of love, were enabled to gather facts William, with all the force of his powers could not obtain, owing to the fact he drew limits to possibilities and actualities, judging by past or previous experiences, while Clarissa, having no past theories, offered no prejudices to obstruct the flight of Alice's imagination or inquiry.

She only waited patiently for answers to questions she furnished, having the most complete faith and belief in the facts Alice avouched. Not having definite ideas or theories upon the subject, she accepted without comment, or prejudice, what William would have disputed. William's mind brought into the balance, would have outweighed any new facts that she gave.

Alice and Clarissa were actuated by love both for William and for science, and the desire to do the best that lay in their individual spirits, prompted them to rise above the limits, temporarily, of their own possible achievements. Neither of them, reading the accounts of what they had done, would have or could have valued it the same as he did, or as any other person who possessed knowledge upon that line of thought.

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They could acquire this knowledge, but could not practice it owing to the same principle that causes the mirror to be capable of producing the reflection, but not the tangible object which it may transiently picture.

Clarissa did not pretend to understand the laws governing the phenomena Alice avouched. This fact made her cling all the more tenaciously to them. She knew her own mind or will had not, consciously or unconsciously, influenced her, and her confidence and faith mounted higher because of this fact.

William did not like to acknowledge the fallacy and fallibility of thought as a creative power, and Clarissa, knowing less of its power, gave full credence to all that Alice said. The united action or combination of these two loving and loyal souls produced a large amount of evidence or truth of life's actual manifestation. This truth, William could neither deny nor condemn; he could not understand all the narrated assertions or facts at once. Upon those points where he felt to disagree, there was always some assertion or illustration he could not refute, which drew his mind away from old theories, compelling him to accept, even against his desires and will, the assertions as given.

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He never acknowledged the advance in wisdom he made at this time; possibly it was well he did not, as, if he had acknowledged himself in error or faulty, they might have ceased to contemplate him as their hero. This hero-worship was the principal factor that had brought about the best results, lifting their souls out of the ordinary grooves, and endowing them with momentary powers they could not live up to, but he, their hero, gleaned knowledge of these facts, could live up to and practice them.

Studying life closely, we find that the most fluent talkers lack executive ability. Both are needed to materialize the most perfect results. There must first come the realization of possibility beyond all phases of expressed life that have been. It is the province of a concentrator to materialize these possibilities.

CHAPTER TWENTY-THREE

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As William and Clarissa talked over these scientific problems, the mother's anxiety and perplexity kept presenting new problems to William. His love for Clarissa, as well as for his children, made him negative and receptive to many thoughts and conjectures of theirs he would not have noticed in a stranger. One of the principal factors and questions occurring to Clarissa's mind was, having children of her own, a boy and a girl, would she wish to see them influenced and controlled by another and outside influence from their own, the same as Merle and Alice were?

She knew her husband's motives were worthy and excellent, that he would not impel them to do any deed he would not inspire his own child to do, but he was only one man, and all men are not as honorable and trustworthy as he. Many men, having the same degree of power, would have

used it for less honorable purposes. She knew just enough of it, to know that the subject is not responsible and ought never to be blamed (where justice is rife,) for the motive or intent that inspired the operator.

Before her range of vision was continually rising the picture of Augustus or her baby girl, controlled and influenced by some powerful mind concentrator. How did she know what such a person might make them do? [Pg 244]

This one thought haunted her like an unwelcome and unbidden guest, and as her latest darling, the baby girl, lay close to her breast, she pondered upon the subject more than she ever had with Augustus. Once there had been a time when she had courted this influence, thinking it might possibly, by some agency not known to her, restore strength and vigor to his limbs. To obtain the power of locomotion for him had been her supreme thought and desire. To gain this, she would have offered herself a glad and willing sacrifice upon any altar that might have presented itself between her and her goal.

When her girl baby was given her, for her keeping, its presence, enriched by her husband's love and solicitude, her thoughts instead of passing into the groove or channel of personal disappointment, roamed into the path of conjecture and speculation of what might happen in the babe's life.

She was still prejudiced by the popular thought, that will excuse in a man's life that which they will not endeavor to condone in a woman's. As she would hold that small, helpless baby close to her, finding satisfaction in the intimate association of touch, she could not help but think of the time or season when Augustus and this child would mature and reach conditions proximate to those of Merle and Alice. [Pg 245]

Somehow, there was an innate horror in her mind, when she thought of their being in as complete subjection to the will and dictation of others as Merle and Alice were to that of her husband.

This thought did not arise from anything she had seen either suffer, or pass through at her husband's dictation; on the contrary, so far as man's sight is privileged to scan material conditions, they had been benefited and assisted by his presence and power in their lives; still, that was no guarantee that every mesmerist wrought equally good effects in his subjects' lives.

For a while, she kept these conjectures to herself, but the more she reasoned, the less certain she felt, and finally she concluded to consult William upon the subject. She knew he would laugh at her, and that was the reason she had not consulted him before; possibly his ridicule might relieve her anxiety.

One morning, they all (except Clarissa, who was still confined to her bed,) sat watching Dinah wash and dress the baby. Augustus was now always up and present at that occasion, causing Dinah no end of trouble and annoyance by his countless questions and absurd directions. He seemed to think the babe was his particular charge, and suffered keen jealousy if he were not allowed to hold her as long as he thought the rest did. She was the one topic of interest and conversation of which he never wearied, although he tried the patience of others recounting her excellence. [Pg 246]

This morning, he had been unusually quiet and docile, so much so, that when the baby was dressed, Dinah put her into his arms, kissed him and patted his head before she went out. To her faithful heart, he would never be anything but a baby of a larger growth. She knew something was troubling him, and thought the baby would do him good.

His father and mother were quietly watching what was to them a lovely picture, for Augustus was an unusually handsome child, and the baby gave promise of being equally attractive, even at this early stage of its development, although it must be confessed, it (of course) looked similar to other equally young babies.

For quite a time, nothing was said. The parents were filled with pride and happiness as they looked at that fair picture; those darlings were theirs; the offsprings of their love for each other. The thought caused each to seek the other's eyes. William rose to go to Clarissa, meaning to tell her how happy he was. As he passed his children he stooped to kiss them, for his heart was very warm just then.

Naturally, he kissed Augustus first and was surprised to see the boy trembling, and as he turned to look in his face, he found the child's eyes swimming in tears. He drew his arm more tightly around him and said: [Pg 247]

"My boy, what is it that troubles you? Tell me. Let me share your grievance, or remove it."

The look that answered his loving inquiry haunted William for a long time, and he was glad that Clarissa had not seen it. It was a look of torture as keen as one might expect to see in some animal, wounded to the death, and who makes no moan while its life blood oozes away. The cause of such a look was more than he could divine. He drew both children closely to him, and spoke again:

"Augustus, tell me."

The tears which ran down the boy's face were his only reply, while William plainly felt the

trembling of the child's body increase. The sight of the boy's suffering was excruciating torture to him. He loosed his hold upon Augustus, taking the baby from him, and carrying it to Clarissa, who looked wonderingly at him for an explanation. He had none to offer.

Augustus had not tried to resist when his father took his charge from him, which was a new thing for him. Placing the babe beside its mother, William returned quickly to Augustus, without kissing them both as was his wont, and lifting the boy out of his chair, bore him in his arms to his own private room. He let the tempest of tears vent itself without comment, contenting himself by holding the boy close to him and stroking his head. When he felt that Augustus was becoming calmed, he said:

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"Now, Augustus, will you tell me of your sorrow?"

No answer, but Augustus' arms clung closer about his neck, and his head nestled restlessly from one place to another, but he would not look his father in the face. William waited patiently, knowing the boy's nervous temperament, then spoke again, tenderly and lovingly:

"Can not my boy trust his father's love?—"

He never finished the utterance; the answer was so unexpected, and so poignant of torture, it deprived him, temporarily, of both speech and logical thought.

"Father, will she be ashamed of me when she gets older?"

"Ashamed of her brother? What an odd question! She will be proud of you,—what thought prompted such a question?"

"Father, do you think she will ever walk?"

"Yes, my boy."

"When she sees all the other boys walking, will she be ashamed her brother has to be wheeled around?"

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William answered promptly:

"No; my son."

But that was the keenest pain he had ever felt, to witness the boy's suffering, who was paying the price or the penalty of his own ignorance and selfishness. The boy suffered keenly, but the father more as he had a larger capacity for suffering. There was one thought that brought a small degree of light; it was that Clarissa was spared this suffering. How his heart ached for the boy, words cannot express.

They had tried in every possible way since Augustus' birth to reconcile him to his infirmity. When he had expressed envy for boys who could run and play, they had told him of the gifts and talents he possessed, and that they were far more estimable and valuable than those the boys whom he envied had. So much care had been taken with him, he had not thought of his inability to walk in the light of shame, until he had thought of what that tiny babe, whom he idolized and whom he wanted to think he was as dear to as she was to him, would think of him, who could not guide her faltering steps, because he could not steady and control his own.

He could not endure the thought that others could do for her what he could not; no one loved her better (he thought, none so well,) yet they could do for her what he could not; following this train of thought, it flashed upon his consciousness she might be ashamed of him because he was not like other boys.

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The thought was too strong and horrible for him to bear without giving some sign of suffering. She was his idol; all his plans were made from the point of her supposed pleasure or displeasure; if she pitied him, he could not endure it. He would rather she hated him. He could endure pity from some one he did not care for, but never from Baby Clarissa. He had not realized the enormity of his affliction until now. In the past, he had been petted and loved, indulged and looked up to, and accustomed to this homage from his birth, he had grown to believe it to be only his due; his just deserts. Now there was a new factor and force come into his life, dearer far than himself. He had felt, since the baby's coming, he must watch over her and care for her, and his anxiety for her comfort so far transcended his own, he forgot himself, a thing he had never done before, and probably never would even now were it not for this helpless little stranger who had come into his life.

Never having walked nor played, he did not fully realize the many pleasures from which he was debarred, but it was borne home to his consciousness suddenly and forcibly by the fact that the might of his love would not permit him to do what a common stranger with no personal interest in her might do. It was unbearable. Stinging horror filled his soul at the thought of the comparison she might draw between himself and other boys. He longed so ardently to be her ideal and hero among boys, the same as she was and would always be among girls, that jealousy became a fiery tormentor.

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There was a time when his mother had been the principal object of his interest and inspirations. It seemed as though all the force of his nature, disappointed in his mother's loyalty to him as the one point of interest on the earth, had been transplanted to this babe, gaining intensity from the change, rather than losing it. Not even his parents realized the strength of this devotion.

He could not help but partake of all the ardor and enthusiasm of their souls, and this ardor, in the present state of his development, showed itself in the admiration he felt for his baby sister, and as a consequence, his suffering was both keen and loyal.

When his father, whom he considered the grandest and wisest upon the earth (having heard so many eulogies upon his powers and prowess,) assured him that Baby Clarissa would esteem him, and honor him, he brought forth a deep sigh of satisfaction. He believed more fully in what his father said than what his mother did. This was probably due to the fact that his father had compelled from him that which his mother never tried to exact.

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Those persons who have made life a deep and profound study, have ever found masters to be admired while servants are endured. Augustus had governed and ruled, thus made servants of persons whom he had come in contact with, until he had met his father. His father conquered his imperative will, consequently his admiration had increased in proportion to the degree he was conquered.

When he was a little more himself, William told him how proud Clarissa would be of his art and music. Those boys who could romp and play could not do what he could, and his sister would be as proud of his talent as his parents were. He soon became cheerful and contented again. Then with a mutual promise of secrecy concerning this interview, they returned to Clarissa's room.

The baby was sleeping, but Clarissa was anxious to know what had disturbed Augustus, still, being told that the interview was to be a secret between father and son, and seeing Augustus cheerful, she desisted from her inquiries, thinking it was some boyish whim William had granted.

William had, however, received a pang of remorse he would not soon forget. Augustus was the innocent sufferer for a lifetime for his own hasty, unreasonable temper, while he, the cause, was a physically perfect and happy man, coming forth from his past sufferings a better one, while his boy paid the heavy price of his baseness.

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The thought was nearly unbearable. From that time he became very sensitive to Augustus' affliction. He resolutely made up his mind the boy should walk if there was remedial virtue in magnetism. It should become his one duty and ambition to study those limbs until they should bear up, unsupported, the boy's body. He would never rest until he had accomplished it. He was the cause of the boy's suffering, and he would be his healer. If it was possible, his love increased for Augustus from this time.

CHAPTER TWENTY-FOUR

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Merle came to take Augustus out, and William and Clarissa were left alone; for a time both were silent, each wanting to impart to the other the thoughts that were troubling them, but scarcely knowing how to begin. Before the recent interview with Augustus, William would not have hesitated referring to his condition and declaring his intention to try to remove it, but now he felt a sense of embarrassment hard to explain, and none the less excruciating because of that fact.

He could not overcome the thought he was a coward to let an innocent child suffer for him, and felt deep shame. Unconsciously a deep sigh escaped him which attracted Clarissa's attention. She was likewise deep in meditation, wondering how William would receive her avowal of dislike to have either of her children mesmerized. Hearing the sigh, she said:

"What is troubling you, William?"

"Nothing," said William.

"But you gave such a deep sigh—something unpleasant provoked it surely.—Probably you think I cannot understand or appreciate it. Well, I hope it will not trouble you long."

"I hope not, Clarissa;—I am going to try and make Augustus walk. The cause of his inability to do so is nerve enervation. Thus the chords and muscles are not supplied with sufficient energy to support his body. I believe by the infusion of new and powerful magnetism, they will perform the necessary and customary functions. It would be vastly different were he not perfectly formed. His limbs are as perfect as any child's could be; they are simply weak and impotent. Another great factor to his disadvantage is his thought and the thought of all those around him that he cannot walk. I intend to eradicate that thought from his consciousness, making him have faith in the ability of his limbs to support him. I think, Clarissa, I never suffered so, thinking of our boy's weakness, as I did just now when he went out with Merle.—Merle buoyant and well, but a needed support to my son, who is physically perfect as he. I will take from Augustus the thought he cannot walk. I will will myself to see him walking, running, and playing like other children, then I will make him see himself as I see him. Think how happy we shall be, Clarissa, when that boy steps. I feel responsible for his weakness; therefore, I am glad I have studied Mind Power so thoroughly; if I had not done so, our boy, whom we love so well, would have suffered all his life; now I believe I can cure him—"

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"Shall you hypnotize him to do this?"

"Certainly."

"Then I prefer him to be as he is—"

"Clarissa! You do not know what you are saying."

"Yes, I do, William;—that is why I say that I should prefer him lame or impotent rather than have him mesmerized."

"I do not know what to make of that assertion.—It sounds as though you doubted my ability to do what I have in mind."

"I do not doubt your ability in the slightest degree, but I do not want Augustus nor our baby mesmerized as you do Merle and Alice."

"Clarissa, you astonish me.—I gave you credit for possessing intellectual powers beyond the ordinary woman. Now you object to what most women would hail with joy. Why do you not want our children mesmerized by their own father, who loves them not one whit less than you do? You imply by your remark I have in some manner injured Merle and Alice by my power. I cannot help resenting that remark, as I have been using Merle for years, and he has not, in all that time, done one thing but was worthy of a gentleman. I kept him well until the time when I suffered so acutely at seeing you so unexpectedly, that my mental torture reflected upon him. Even that experience taught me a valuable lesson, so a similar condition will never occur again. Go to the Millards; ask them if I have brought anything into their lives they regretted, or anything but good. Mrs. Millard is not afraid to trust her children to me after our long experience together, but you, the mother of my own children, do not dare to trust me with yours. Think of it! Would I not gladly, think you, offer myself, a living sacrifice, before harm should come to either of them? My desire is to remedy the evil and wrong I unconsciously did years ago, and for which an innocent and irresponsible person is suffering. Why, even you, yourself, came to me, a stranger, and wanted my help to do the very thing I propose to do now. You would have trusted our boy to a stranger, but will not to his own father. I—"

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"That is enough, William. I can see that you are still the same William I married. Hasty—rushing to conclusions—"

"Who would not rush to conclusions? I never pretended to be a saint—"

"If you did, persons would not believe it who saw you just now—"

"Probably they would give that distinguished title to you, who are so much more estimable in all ways. My memory is sufficiently clear to remember you always sought—"

"William, have you no sense of either love or shame? You talk to me this way when I am ill, and our baby here beside me."

"What love have you for me, when you do not trust my own boy to me?"

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"I love you as my husband, but I am not willing my children shall either of them be mesmerized, even by their father."

"You are not willing? May I ask you how you are going to help it if I feel inclined to do so? I can mesmerize you any time I want to. How are you going to protect your children from what you cannot protect yourself from?"

"By the might of my mother's love."

"Ha—ha! So you think a mother's indulgent, negative love a secure protection from positive and well directed thoughts. Wonderful logic, that. It is worthy a woman's brain. You may be, as I know you are, a proficient musician, but you have much to learn about science. Like all ignorant persons, you talk loquaciously where you know nothing, and possess no power. It is really ludicrous. You, a negative sensitive, defy me. Why, I could, if I chose to exert the might of my will, make you shrink from the embraces of both of your children, as though they were serpents; yet you say I shall not mesmerize my own children.—Excuse me, I cannot help laughing."

While William had been talking, he had not been looking at Clarissa. When she spoke, he turned his eyes to her, and he would not admit to anyone his surprise at the strength of character he found there. He was too thorough a master of his work, not to recognize positive resistance when he met it. If anyone had told him Clarissa could have looked him firmly, unflinchingly in the eye, and dared him to use his will, he would not have believed it. She spoke calmly and slowly: "I defy your power; now when I am sick and weak, or at any future time, to influence me in the slightest degree. You may be sure you will never affect my children by any thought suggestions while my brain is clear and in normal condition. Try it.—Begin upon me.—I not only do not fear you.—I defy you and your boasted power.—You shall never mesmerize Augustus. If I knew you had the power (which I doubt) to make him walk, and that was the price to pay, I should say, 'Leave him as he is; a cripple,' but you cannot mesmerize him."

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As she spoke, Clarissa had risen to a sitting position in the bed. Her eyes shone with a feverish lustre. An impartial observer would have recognized the fact that here were two positive souls clashing in no ordinary encounter. Undoubtedly they would have given the credit of the final outcome to William, as he was working from the tried basis of experience, while she was voicing the natural sentiments of a loving mother's heart. Scientists have seen equally zealous mothers

changed so they would have felt very similar to William. He thought he knew Clarissa, but he had yet some points to learn about her. The baby woke, disturbed by the unwonted voices, and began to cry.—Clarissa reached down, and drew her close up to her, then looked defiantly up at William, and continued:

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"You—you brave man of science, say you can make me dread my baby's influence. Do it. Now is as good an opportunity as any man could ask, for we are alone. I hold her lovingly to me—I defy you to make me put her down. You are a coward—I see by your eyes you do not intend to try. Only cowards talk without acting. Your words sound well to any person who is afraid of you; I am not. I only feel I am chagrined and ashamed to look my children in the face, and say, 'I chose and gave you such a coward of a man for a father.' I—"

"Clarissa, stop; you will make yourself ill."

"I will not stop. I will tell you my opinion of you.—I defy you and your power to influence me, or my children. You have yet to learn what power and might there lies in a mother's love. I have not your power or experience. I may not use my thoughts as scientifically as to furnish my name with the lustre which surrounds yours, but I have power to protect my children from yours, or any other man's thoughts, or the united thoughts of them all. Put your mind upon me. You can hypnotize me any time, can you? Do it now. Make me fear my baby. Do not dare approach my bed, nor touch this child.—I do not care to listen to your further conversation. This is my apartment. If you have left the faint shadow even, of a gentlemanly instinct, you will leave it now, and forbear to thrust your unwelcome presence upon me again until I am able to take my children and leave."

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"Clarissa—Clarissa!—You will not—"

"Have I not asked you to leave me and my baby alone? If you come one step nearer—"

"But, Clarissa, you are making yourself ill. I cannot leave you in this way."

"I cannot breathe the same air with you. My children appear serpents to me! You are the serpent. If you do not leave this room at once, my child and I will."

"Calm yourself."

"Not while you are here. I have all the strength of a lioness battling for her young. Openly or secretly, you can never control or mesmerize a child of mine. Try it, if you think you are stronger than I. You have taunted me with negativeness. Words are easily spoken. I ask you to substantiate that claim. Negatives, as I understand it, cannot look a hypnotist in the eye without quailing. We will see who has the stronger power, you or I. I am looking at you fixedly. Why do you not influence me? You who are so proud of your power, ought not to falter when only confronted by a sick woman."

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"Clarissa, you will really make yourself ill. I did—"

"Do not talk to me.—Your presence is unbearable. Go by yourself; put your mind upon me and my darlings, but never thrust—"

"I will not listen. You will not banish me again?"

"So long as Eternity lasts, may I never—"

"You shall not say those words."

"I will—"

"I say you shall not."

"See your face—"

"Clarissa, you are not yourself. I will go. Calm yourself."

"May this be the last time my eyes rest upon your form."

"My God! You do not mean that—"

"I mean every word—"

"You will not leave me again?"

"Not one step nearer. Do not dare try to touch me nor one of my children. With all your boasted power, you will have no difficulty making me do what you want me to. Just now, while you are getting there, I prefer your room to your company; if you persist in remaining, I shall leave."

"I cannot go without—"

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"Your excuses are unnecessary.—Go.—After you reach your apartments put your whole power of science upon me and my children; you will not affect one of us three."

"Clarissa! I wanted to help Augustus—"

"Leave here now, or I will."

"Do not try to rise, dear—"

"Then leave me; and so long as life lasts, never enter my presence again, unless you have me under such perfect mesmeric influence, I am as you have said, 'Afraid of my own children.' Will you go or shall I?"

"Do not rise. You are not able."

"Then leave me."

"Not this way.—You misunderstood me—"

"You are mistaken. I understood you perfectly."

"Clarissa, do not banish me."

"Coward! I thought you were going to do all manner of things with me.—Go;—either you or I leave here. I cannot endure your presence. I cannot—"

"I cannot live without you again—"

"Where is the power of which you have boasted so much? I thought you said you could mesmerize me any time you chose. This pleading does not balance well with your large assertions; I must have some proof of them. I throw you a challenge. We will see who has the stronger power; I say I shall leave you and your home just as soon as I am able to do so. If you are as strong as you pretend, capable of controlling me at any time, you need not worry. If you want me to stay, all you have to do is to will me to, making me dislike my children.—Go.—Your presence is like a pestilence to me. I do not want my babe to breathe it.—Go—"

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"I cannot—"

"Then I have more power than you."

Before William could divine her purpose, she had risen from the bed, and, with the babe in her arms, she left the room. He started after her, alarmed at the results that might follow; but he met Dinah, who resisted him, by saying:

"Mistress Clarissa is anxious to stay in Augustus' room, and does not want to see anyone."

To the servant, this seemed to be only one of the vagaries of the sick woman. She had heard it said: "A very sick person turns against the one he loves best." So when her mistress said that only Augustus was to be admitted to see her, she felt her master's banishment was only one of the symptoms of her sickness. She was loyal to both, but Clarissa's sickness naturally appealed to her more than William's opinions and prejudices.

How precious this sympathy was just at this time, nobody knew but Clarissa herself. Clarissa naturally felt that she was the sole protector and guardian of her children, whom she loved better than herself. She had no reason to doubt William's affection for his family. Her present attitude toward him was the result of her fear of mesmeric influence, not her husband himself. He, being the strongest exponent of the science of whom she knew, and telling her of his intention to mesmerize Augustus had caused her (fearing that he would do so) to picture in William, all the possible evil to be wrought by such a power, exercised by an unscrupulous man.

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Fear was the artist and conjurer that distorted to her eyes even William's visage, as well as his intentions. Without her being conscious of the fact, her fears had produced a state of self-psychology, consequently, she could not see clearly nor truly, but beheld only those points in William of which she was afraid.

A little knowledge of anything is often productive of harm. Clarissa had but a limited knowledge of her husband's power, thus gave him credit for possessing more than he really had. While defying him, she exaggerated his possible power, but was sincere in her assertions she would protect herself and her children. She was not afraid of him; it was her children she worried about. Unconsciously, William had been responsible for this condition. When he said he could make her shrink from her children's embraces as though they were serpents, he gave her such a shock of horror, to think there was any power that could so change the channel of natural affection, she went directly to the opposite extreme, and saw William as the serpent because he had suggested the possibility of so horrible a thing.

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It is impossible to talk and reason with a psychologized person when they have an opposite opinion in mind, and Clarissa, being self-psychologized, by fear, was no more amenable to reason than if she had been put into the condition by another person.

She loved William, but in this highly wrought nervous state, she could not see her kind and loving husband, who was an indulgent and thoughtful father. She could not believe he was actuated by a worthy motive when he spoke of mesmerizing Augustus. She pictured him selfish, commanding and cruel, and no amount of reasoning could change her.

If the children were not with her all the time, she felt he had taken them away to punish her. Keeping Augustus confined so much made him restless and nervous when the baby was sleeping. He was contented enough while he could hold her. When he began to manifest unrest, Clarissa imagined his father's mind was upon him, trying to draw him away from her, and she struggled with all the might of her soul to amuse and please him.

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To Augustus, his father was a wonderful man. He loved to talk of him and what persons said of

him. He often said "Let us call father." He did not understand his father's banishment from his mother's room, for he had been almost a constant presence there. Every time he mentioned his father, Clarissa thought "that is William's mind affecting him."

Finally, she would not permit the boy to leave the room, telling him that, being sick, she enjoyed having him always with her. This pleased him, so he would draw while the baby slept, or Dinah and his mother would tell him stories of their past life.

The sound of William's step or voice affected Clarissa's nerves so visibly as to be plainly observable to anyone. Sometimes she saw him right before her, then she would draw the baby close, set her teeth firmly together, looking at the image defiantly until it would disappear, when she would sink back, weak and despondent. Life was a perpetual nightmare and horror to her, and she often thought "How long can I live this way?" Then "I must gain strength for the children's sake. We will go away soon now."

She wondered if her voice had been affected by the birth of her babe. She almost dreaded testing it, still, if it had entirely gone, her children were more to her than her voice. Her joy was complete when, upon testing it, allowing for physical weakness, she was aware that her tones were, if anything, richer than of old. That fact gave her courage. She was not afraid to face life alone again, nor did she regret having returned to William, for she now had another treasure added to her life. The thoughts of how William would suffer, being left alone again, did not occur to her. Her whole thought was bounded by her children's presence.

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CHAPTER TWENTY-FIVE

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William's feelings during this time would be impossible to portray in words. Sometimes anger, sometimes love, sometimes discouragement, sometimes hope swayed him. There was only one fact of which he was always sure; he had never before known what abject misery was. He used to think his home desolate; now he knew the much keener torture of having his loved one in the same habitation and yet being sternly and completely banished from her presence. It was even more disheartening than to have her at a distance.

He worried about Clarissa's health, and the effect so much excitement might have just at this time, especially, when she had gained strength so slowly under happier conditions. Sitting alone, he would work himself into a rage thinking of her injustice to him, when he had meant to do Augustus the most good that lay in his power. Then the thought would come "this nervous shock may make her sick, possibly take her from me." Dinah's assertions did not satisfy him. He wanted to see her. Dinah told him how his voice and step affected her, and he therefore used extreme caution about walking within range of her hearing, or speaking loudly.

Augustus' companionship would have been a welcome relief, but he dared not insist upon it, knowing Clarissa well enough to know she would misconstrue his motive and come after the boy, if the exertion meant her death.

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Twice he reached the limit of his patience, and he made up his mind to hypnotize her. He would rather be with his family if they were all hypnotized, than to be isolated from them. How could he tell what she would do? She was liable to go away, even before she was able, taking the children with her.

This thought haunted him until he dared not leave the house. He felt that he had been a good, loving father and husband; a sick woman's whim should not separate them and ruin their lives again. It surprised him to know that Merle and Alice, who had always been such welcome visitors, were not admitted to see her or the children, and that Augustus was not permitted to go with them to their home.

He felt he had been lenient long enough. She needed discipline, and he would give it to her. Never before had he so completely thrown his whole heart and soul into concentration, as he did now, thinking "She shall do me credit. She shall send for me." The whole force of his soul was put into the demand.

Before beginning, he had made up his mind he would not pause nor rest till Dinah came with a message from Clarissa for him to come to her. One thing that enraged him to use his power was he had himself plucked her some rare blossoms, putting them, fraught with the influence of love, beside the food Dinah was carrying to her. He felt those flowers would carry to her the thought of his loneliness, and surely she would send him some token of remembrance. He watched, expecting Dinah would have at least a message for him when she returned.

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He saw her coming, but did not wait for her to reach him, as he saw his flowers, lying undisturbed where he had placed them. Disappointment, so keen that it became rage, consumed his soul. He vowed he would break that haughty, and (he felt) unjust spirit, so he set himself to the task. How long he sat there he never knew.

He waited for Dinah to call him, and did not notice the approach of Augustus. He started up as a man in a dream when he heard the agonized cry:

"Papa, come quick; mamma is dying. Quick. Something is the matter with baby; that is what

frightened mamma so. Do not let them die."

William heard the words. He saw distinctly the boy's horrified and suffering face, but he could not bring his mind back to the actualities of the present.

"Papa,—mamma is dying, and sister is dead—"

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Without stopping to console or speak to Augustus, William strode rapidly from the apartment, ascending the stairs with long bounds, and was soon in his wife's room. No wonder they thought she was dying. He will never forget that drawn, suffering face. She was sitting up in the bed, sustained by pillows, panting and gasping for breath, and holding closely to her, her rigid baby, lifeless and cold. She did not notice him when he entered, for despite her own suffering, her eyes never left the baby's face.

"Clarissa."

At the sound of his voice, new strength seemed to come to her. Her eyes flashed, even while her breathing came shorter and shorter. The words were separated owing to her difficulty to breathe, but they were clear and calm.

"You have killed one. Are you satisfied?"

"Clarissa! My God! You think I killed my child?"

"I know it."

"My God! Oh, my God! Clarissa, do not look like that. You shall not die.—I say you shall not die. Clarissa—Clarissa—You shall not die cursing me. Clarissa, I defy death to take you. My will is stronger than yours. Live.—Breathe. Clarissa, I will you to breathe regularly. Breathe, I say. Breathe. You cannot and shall not leave me. I will you to breathe."

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With his right hand placed upon her heart, he repeated over and over this command, telling Dinah occasionally to give her stimulants. It was a fierce struggle, and more than once he felt the utter cessation of her heart's action. He shook her roughly, even, rubbed her and willed her to breathe, until he was finally rewarded by noting the heart's action was becoming more normal and regular, though her eyes had set fixedly, and her arms refused to support the babe, as in one fierce struggle to breathe, she put one hand to her throat. That let the baby fall, and Dinah caught it. She was so distracted herself, she did not think when she gave it to Augustus, who had just entered.

The boy thought she was dead and his mother was dying. He hugged her close to him. She was cold; he tried to warm her by the heat of his own body; he was so frightened he felt no sense of terror, which would have been the natural sensation with him under different circumstances. He wanted sympathy he was so frightened, so he held his sister clasped tightly to him, with his eyes fastened upon his father and mother.

William worked as never before in his life, and gained the victory, seeing Clarissa pass into a natural sleep.

Then only did he realize the amount of strength he had expended. When he saw a natural perspiration break out upon her forehead, and her eyes close in sound, refreshing sleep, he was seized with a strong vertigo.

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Dinah brought him a stimulant, and even while he was drinking it, his eyes did not leave Clarissa's face, and the unmistakable symptoms of returning physical vigor, as evidenced by her regular breathing, did more to restore his equanimity than the stimulant itself. The thought of his children had not once occurred to him.

Augustus had been watching him closely, and knew by the expression upon his face his mother was not dying, but better. That fact had no more than made itself clear to him, relieving him from one horror, than he became aware of the cold dead babe in his arms. His idol, his sister was dead!

As that thought bore itself home to him, there came an accompanying one. "Mamma was dying," he thought, "father saved her. He can do what other men cannot. He can bring her back to life."

His faith in his father was supreme. Death and science were both mysteries to him, but he had faith in his father's ability to conquer; he had seen him do it just now. Knowing his mother was all right by the expression on his father's face, he felt a strong resentment no one, not even Dinah, had noticed the baby. He was her only friend. He thought of her if no one else did. He would see to it she had as much attention as his mother. Women could take care of themselves better than babies. He hugged it closer to him, growing angry instead of sad, as he felt how cold she was. He had not one doubt as to his father's ability to do as well for it as for his mother.

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He quickly directed his chair, with one hand, to his father, who did not look up as he approached, but stooped over Clarissa to test her heart's action again, although he knew from her breathing it was all right. He had been under such a tension, such a nervous strain, he was in just that mental condition where one goes from one extreme to the opposite, therefore feeling a touch upon his arm, he looked around to see Augustus with such a look of injured pride upon his face as caused him to feel a sense of humor. A glad smile brightened his face and he spoke cheerfully.

"She is going to stay with us a long time yet, my boy. If you had been a little later—My God!

Dead!"

Without a word, Augustus passed the baby forward for his father to take. William had not thought of the baby. There it lay in his arms, inanimate, cold—undoubtedly dead. That was what Clarissa had meant when he entered. Why should she condemn him for murdering it? He had not thought of the baby so much as he should have done. What would Clarissa say when she awoke and found her baby dead? One thing he knew; she would always hold him responsible for her death, though he was as innocent of it as Augustus.

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The dead baby between them meant the loss of Clarissa forever. The children had always come between them. Her best love was theirs. He at once made the resolve Clarissa must find that babe alive and warm beside her when she awoke. He never paused to consider he could not raise the dead.

This new obstacle restored to him his customary self-control, and stooping with the babe in his arms, he kissed Clarissa softly and tenderly, and without a word, placed the baby back in Augustus' arms, who clasped it tightly to him, looking at his father with that same injured look William did not try to explain or understand. His mind was too busy with other thoughts.

He had determined the child should waken. He could not, and would not bear the unjust stigma of its death. He hastily explained to Dinah he would soon bring the child to her, and commanded her not to leave Clarissa, telling her to let him know if there was any change in her.

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Dinah's faith in William was as strong as that of Augustus, and, as he had said that he would bring the baby to her well, she believed him implicitly. That feat would be no more wonderful than what he had just done for Mistress Clarissa.

After giving his directions, William leaned over with a pleasant smile, and took both children in his arms, carrying them to his private room. On his way, he met James and a strange gentleman. They were going towards Clarissa's room. To William's surprised look, James answered, "Master, this is the doctor Mistress sent for. She told me to bring him to her at once."

A hot wave of emotion passed over William's face, that a strange physician should be consulted, and have the privilege of entering his wife's room without his consent. Without looking at the doctor, he said:

"Show him into the reception room. I will be there soon."

"Mistress Clarissa said for me to bring him to her at once."

"She is sleeping. I just left her, and do not wish her disturbed. I will come to the doctor in—"

"Father! She moved—she moved!"

There was such exultation in Augustus' voice when he spoke, that James and the stranger, despite their best efforts to look and appear unconcerned, could not help showing astonishment.

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"It is gone now, but she did. Hurry, father, hurry. Make her move again."

The boy was beside himself with emotion. He was sure he had felt a nestling motion in his idol. He was impatient to see her eyes open. She was still cold. He thought she was not quite so cold as she had been.

William noted the looks of astonishment, but felt no desire to explain. He spoke sharply to James:

"Take the Doctor to the reception room. I will come there as soon as I have attended to Augustus, who is nervous and excited."

James dared not disobey his master, so he led the physician back, while William, with his children, went into his study. Augustus was so excited that his face flushed and his whole body trembled; his eyes flashed brilliantly.

"She did move, father,—I felt it. Make her move again. She is not so cold as she was. I want to see her eyes open, father."

"Yes, my son. Now remain quiet. What! You will not trust her to me?"

"I want to hold her."

"Do not hold her so tightly. I cannot work on her if you do. There; now you can rub her feet, while I do her spine."

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"She moved again, father. I felt it. Make her open her eyes."

"No, my boy, we will be content if she sleeps, like her mother. She is becoming less rigid. Rub them vigorously. There. Her eyes opened just as her lungs did. We cannot feed her. What shall we do?"

"I knew you would save her, father. I love to hear her cry. She shall have something to eat. Will you carry us back to mamma, now?"

Without comment, William took them up, and started back, happy that Clarissa would find her baby beside her, warm and living, when she woke. Just before they reached her room, Augustus spoke:

"Father, I think sister will have as bad a temper as mine. I like to hear her cry, but I think she is angry; do not you?"

"It sounds like it, my son."

"I expect she does not realize she would have died if you and I had not taken care of her. It's a wonder I ever lived to grow up when Dinah is so careless."

Hearing the baby crying, Dinah immediately took her from Augustus, and put her beside her mother, who was still sleeping. William put Augustus in his chair, where he could watch both mother and babe. He turned toward the bed just in time to see the glad surprise upon Clarissa's face as she heard the fretful cry of the baby. Never was music so sweet as that. She drew the baby to her, and as she leaned to kiss her, William left the room.

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He went directly to the reception room, where the doctor was waiting for him. He was by no means pleased a strange physician had been called in. If she was ill and unwilling to have him treat her, why did she not send for Baxter or Harrington? What would they think if they heard of this? What a position it placed him in. He could not, and would not explain to any person (even them) this last estrangement in his family. He would conquer Clarissa's haughty spirit. Now was a good time for him to begin. Entering the room, he bowed and said:

"I am happy to inform you the indisposition from which my wife was suffering when she summoned you, has passed away. She is now resting comfortably. We appreciate your compliance. I will now discharge our obligation and indebtedness to you, if you will apprise me of the amount."

The doctor was surprised at his dismissal, without even a look at the patient, but no more so than at the summons to go to the Professor's house. He thought it very strange that he should be called there, knowing the Professor was the intimate friend of several prominent practitioners. He felt greatly flattered at the call, but now he was dismissed without so much as seeing the patient.

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He quickly took his leave, after expressing gratification at the recovery of Mrs. Huskins, and receiving a larger fee than he had asked "as a reward for his promptness," as William told him.

Relieved of his presence, William went back to his study to try to work out to his own satisfaction, the cause of the horrible scene he had just passed through. That seemed the only word capable of expressing the torture of mind he endured when he saw that look so closely resembling death upon Clarissa's face. How he had fought to conquer that condition. How many more such problems must he meet? Could he always conquer them as he had this?

CHAPTER TWENTY-SIX

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Think as he would, William could not account for this latest condition of Clarissa and her babe. The thought of the babe had not once recurred to him. From the time of her birth she had appeared to be physically a well child. What could be the cause of this close resemblance to death, which had temporarily deceived such keen eyes as his.

This was not the most perplexing problem either, although this was unanswerable in his present state. The child's passing into this deathlike state was not so remarkable, owing to Clarissa's physical weakness and nearness to death, (for he knew how much the condition of the mother affects the small and negative babe) as was its return to health and vigor, without apparent labor upon his part first, for Augustus had declared, while his mind had been taken up with James and the strange physician, that the babe had moved. To be sure, he had worked hard upon it after he had taken the two children alone to his room, but what made her move before he had worked upon her? He believed Augustus when he said she did move.

How to account for this apparent death and recovery was what baffled him. Had he been the only one deceived, he would have thought his fears and anxiety for Clarissa had rendered him temporarily nervous and fearful, but Dinah and Augustus were equally deceived, and united in the assertion.

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It was the baby's coldness and rigidity that had alarmed and produced in Clarissa the condition of a seeming death struggle. What could it be that had caused this? He asked himself that one question until his mind and brain was a complete tangle of conjecture, but not one plausible or satisfying answer came to his consciousness.

While he was seeking the solution to it, let us try to account for the same. William was a practised and proficient psychologist. He was accustomed to control the individuality and personality of others, by force of will, or, as some persons prefer to say, mind suggestions; use whatever words you will, it all resolves itself to one point. He temporarily dominated the consciousness of others, making them, for the time being, obey and express his own thoughts and desires.

Being shut out from the association and companionship of his family, he chafed, fretted and suffered as only such a nature as his can suffer. He was pursued by pictures of Clarissa's leaving

him again and misery of the darkest type settled upon his soul.

His wife was the one object of adoration in his life. He loved his children as well as any man loves his children, and would gladly have suffered to spare them suffering, but never could they occupy their mother's place in his affections, or satisfy his soul's hunger. They could do this better than another woman could, because they were hers; they were a part of her—an expression of their mutual love; therefore, he prized their comfort and welfare beyond his own, but Clarissa was the object of his veneration.

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Her smile and approval gauged his happiness. That he was not equally necessary to her tortured him.

Never had she bestowed upon him the same degree of affection he had proffered her. He was satisfied and happy if he had her, but she was not equally contented; after the children came, her first thought was of them, and their happiness, and what time and affection they did not require, she gave to him. He was an unusually jealous and exacting man, and could not help feeling jealous of even his children, for he wanted to be first in her affections and interest, and the thought she should again leave him alone was simply maddening.

This second separation would be incomparably worse than the first. His love for her as a bride had not approached the degree and depth of the ardor he felt for the mother of his children. Having for so many years been deprived of her presence and love, he prized it more highly now than he could possibly have done in their early married days.

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When he found no man had stepped between them in that first separation, he felt so relieved, so happy, so proud of his boy, he thought at first, he would be content with second place in her love; when little Clarissa came, she was only another object upon which to bestow his warm love, and he fervently believed her coming would cement and strengthen Clarissa's love for him, the father of her children.

His hopes had been rewarded in her early sickness, furnishing him a degree of happiness he had never before known; to be thus positively assured his presence was necessary to their happiness, and then, without warning, when he was planning to do his boy the greatest good possible to perform for him, she turned upon him like a tigress, banishing him from her presence, threatening to take her children and leave him again.

The first desolation had been bad enough, but the second would be infinitely worse. Had he been selfish, cross, jealous or exacting, he could have endured this new and unexpected banishment better, but so far as he knew how, he had striven to make his family happy, consulting, in every instance, their pleasure before his own.

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Since she had returned to him, Clarissa herself had been the dictator; he had faithfully kept his promise she should reign and not he, only intruding upon her presence and life when she gave him permission. They had both, he knew, been happier in their reunion than in their first union, or marriage.

Clarissa had proven her love to him many ways. He could not doubt her loyalty to him, and that was what puzzled him. He had not the smallest shadow of a doubt she loved him only, considering other men as his opponents but why—why did she threaten to leave him, when he spoke of trying to heal Augustus?

He repeated over and over to himself that he would not be jealous of his own children, knowing he had no occasion to be jealous of anyone else. He was sorry he had spoken so harshly to her. She was ill and nervous and knew very little about mesmeric influence.

Truly, he had no real distinct memory of what he had said. When she was a little stronger, he would go to her and ask her pardon and assistance to help Augustus, that he, an innocent victim, should not pay his father's debt of jealousy and injustice. As William thought this out, he did not realize what a growth in real true love it proclaimed.

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Studying them from a psychologist's standpoint, it is easy to understand the cause of the phenomena that disconcerted and puzzled him. He was, at the time of the baby's sickness, throwing the full and complete might of his practiced will into the thoughts of demanding his wife to send for him, thinking he would rather be in her presence even though she were psychologized than banished from it as he was now.

She was holding the baby close to her, just at that time, thinking how she should plan out the future so her darlings should be best situated. Suddenly she felt the strong, magnetic power which she knew so well from her experience with it, producing in her head, a dizzy sensation.

Believing he was going to carry out his threat to make her fear her children's presence, (for she knew it was his thought waves), she drew her baby still closer to her, in defiance, while her eyes at once sought Augustus' face to see if he was in any way affected.

She had no concern for the baby who was feeding from her breast; her one thought was of Augustus. He was the one his father had threatened to mesmerize; he should not do it while she was alive. Augustus sat drawing before her. He was irritable and cross, for he had wanted to go and see Merle, but his mother had insisted upon his staying with her.

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Well as he loved to draw, the enjoyment vanished when he was crossed in his desires and

compelled to draw. His face was the picture of disappointment. His mother's anxious scrutiny marked the pallor and symptoms of yielding to what she thought his father's mesmeric influence.

She could not fully understand and comprehend the boy's reluctance to forcible restraint. She watched his face eagerly and saw that he was nervous and uneasy, and strove to defeat the dreaded condition by the might of her will.

Augustus finally threw down his utensils impetuously, and said, "I am going to my father"; starting to move his chair back. This was a perfect confirmation of her fears. She instinctively tried to rise, saying in a harsh tone, "You cannot go." But as she arose, she became suddenly aware of the babe and that it had stopped nursing, and looking down, she saw it lay quiet and limp in her arms.

Her anxious, overwrought nerves rushed her to the quick conclusion that William's power had killed her baby. Being weak, this sudden shock threw her into such a vertigo her heart became erratic in its movement, and she was fast sinking away, believing that her baby had preceded her, when William came, compelling her to live and breathe normally.

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Coming to consciousness and finding both children well, and hearing Augustus' and Dinah's glowing accounts of William's powers, which were largely exaggerated by their love for him and their ignorance of what had produced these results, she began to feel her ire towards him vanishing, and it was soon supplanted by a longing to see him.

Why should he work so to save her and her baby, if he had no love for them? She longed for his presence, whether as father, husband or hypnotist. Should she send for him? She was proud, and hesitated and promised herself to do so the next day. She would not admit how nervous she was, even to Dinah.

She fought with her inclination to see William all day. She had no more trouble with Augustus, for he could not be coaxed from the room. When it came time for him to retire, his mother granted his request that he might this once sleep with the baby, and as she was sleeping he clasped her close to him, seeming to be nervous about her.

Clarissa felt such pride in seeing the children sleeping, she wished William could see them too. That was the most beautiful picture she had ever seen. Augustus had the baby close to him in a loving embrace; looking at her treasures, she wondered if any other mother had such cause for pride as she. She turned over upon her side, that she might look easily at them. The picture of their happiness soothed her troubled nerves, and she fell into a refreshing sleep.

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How long she slept, she did not know. She was vaguely conscious of an arm passing around her shoulder, and holding her lovingly and close. She knew that it was William's, without opening her eyes. She felt such a sense of security in that embrace, she would not open her eyes, though she was awake and conscious whose arm it was. She felt if she spoke, she must censure him, and she was, at present, so content she did not want to argue, or even talk; so she seemingly slept on.

William had felt so strongly he must see his treasures, he had sent word to Dinah to apprise him when they were asleep. She did so. He told her to lie down in her own apartments and he would call her when there were any signs of their awakening. She was glad of a reprieve, and he was happy to be with his family.

For a time, it seemed enough to look at them, then he felt a longing to touch Clarissa. Sitting beside the bed, he leaned over, resting his head near hers, while one arm passed over her. Afraid to waken her, he did not dare to draw her to him, so his head moved closer to hers. He thought her sleeping, and unaware of his presence.

His position soon became uncomfortable, yet he was afraid to change it, for fear she should awaken and banish him. She seemed to be sleeping soundly like the children, and he ventured as she made an uneasy movement of the head, to as easily as possible pass the other hand and arm under her head, at the same time, forsaking the sitting posture for a reclining position beside her.

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Her back was toward him, as she faced the children, but there was a certain security in feeling his arms close around her. She must be asleep, as she made no movement.

The pride of both prevented their speaking, and perfect quiet reigned until the baby began to cry, waking Augustus, who was all concern for his sister. Without speaking to William, nor attempting to move from his embrace, Clarissa reached over and took the babe to her. William did not speak nor move, except to reach out his hand and draw Augustus as well as the baby into his embrace.

To Augustus' query "Is that you, father?" he answered "Yes, my boy. Now go to sleep, that you and sister may be good natured tomorrow."

Putting one arm around his sister, and hearing her regular breathing, Augustus was soon fast asleep. Neither William nor Clarissa spoke; each was waiting for the other to make the first advances; both too proud to acknowledge themselves in error. Finally, Clarissa fell asleep from sheer exhaustion. Dinah found them so when she came, early the next day.

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William offered no objections, when she ordered him to leave, for he felt his banishment would not be long. Clarissa knew that he was there before she went to sleep; she did not censure him, nor bid him depart, therefore, she did not hate him. It was probably her sickness that had made

her hasty and harsh to him. That sickness was largely his fault, so he would be patient.

Small babes are but sensitive plates upon which are reflected the strong emotions of the mother. Clarissa was nervous and weak, and feeling the strong magnetism flowing from William's thought, she was consumed by actual fear, in her secret soul giving him credit for more power than he possessed. The nursing babe imbibed all her nervous condition, but, unlike her, had not sufficient power to throw off the depression, and therefore it succumbed to a swoon. Clarissa thought she was dead, and her anxiety produced an effect deeper still, owing to the fact that it was only picturing her thoughts.

All physicians know that many of the illnesses of small babies are the result of the nervousness or real sickness of the mothers; set the mother's mind or body at rest and ease, and the baby revives as quickly as a dry and parched plant, supplied with water. So much for the cause of babies' sickness.

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The cause of its resuscitation and movement, without visible aid, was due to precisely the same cause that had made it sick;—its mother's thought.

When William had succeeded in placing Clarissa in a sound, refreshing sleep, there was no further depressing magnetism flowing towards it. Dinah and Augustus had perfect faith he could restore the babe, and he was determined she should not die, knowing Clarissa would always hold him responsible for its death, though he was as innocent of it as the baby herself.

Like any negative, a babe will reproduce the strongest power coming to it at a given time. As it had no power to put away thoughts of depression, it was equally powerless to thrust from it cheerful and healthful ones. The strongest waves of thought at that time said "Live," and it began to manifest symptoms of life, while in close contact with those two who had insisted it must and should live;—Augustus and William.

It was only a case of temporary suspended animation, as the child was physically well. Many psychologists would have made a similar mistake as William, for while they can easily dominate the consciousness of others, there are many subtle phases of thought and action they cannot understand nor account for. The realm of thought action is as infinite in its scope as is the Universe.

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CHAPTER TWENTY-SEVEN

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The next day Clarissa thought William would come to her, knowing she was waking while he was there the night before, as she did not rebuke him nor send him away. This thought pleased her and she determined he should feel proud of his family when he came. Dinah marveled at the orders she received, but she said nothing, thinking her mistress ill and notional. She was too glad to have her mistress improved to care how much work she was called upon to do.

First, there was the baby and Augustus to wash and dress, with Clarissa directing and insisting upon their being arrayed with unusual care and elegance. This was no easy task, for mother and son did not always agree, especially about the baby. This over, Clarissa insisted upon having herself robed with great care, and having her room changed in several ways; finally all was arranged to her fancy, and Dinah drew a long sigh of relief. It had been a trying time to her.

Baby was asleep, and Dinah left mother and son talking; Augustus coaxing to go and see Merle. Clarissa was continually listening for William's footsteps, believing, with her usual faith in conquering conditions, he would come early to see her. She wanted him to find both children there. Few fathers had such beautiful children. He must be proud of them as she was; so she coaxed Augustus to remain, under one pretext or another, but there were no signs of William.

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She grew restless and uneasy. Suddenly it dawned upon her that he expected her to ask him to come to her. He wanted to make her humble herself; her pride arose at once. She would not do it. Thinking it over, she grew restless and feverish—even anxious. Augustus kept plying her with questions. He wanted to go to see Merle; he would come home by the time baby sister would wake. Why could he not go?

Thinking it over, Clarissa thought "Here is a chance to reach William without really sending for him," so she said cheerfully:

"You may go ask your father if Merle is at home and disengaged to-day, also if he does not think baby sister ought to have some of James' choice flowers."

Before she could say more, Augustus was out of range of her voice. She lay thinking how she would greet William when he came in; she was sure he would bring the flowers as a peace offering to her. He had been rude and harsh to her; she would appear cold and distant to him to show that she resented his conduct, and she would tell him just what she thought of his mesmeric power. She was not afraid of him; he should see that. If she acted pleased to see him, he would think his power had influenced her, and that was not the impression she wanted him to have, so when she heard Augustus' chair coming, and the boy talking animatedly to his father, she quickly turned her back toward the door, and feigned arranging the baby more comfortably.

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The chair soon stopped beside the bed, and Augustus said, "See, mamma, what father sent to sister. James did not want to cut them yet, but father said that nothing he owned was too good for her, and of course he owned them, so James had to do it. He said he was growing them to get a prize from the public exhibition, but father said sister's pleasure was more to him than any prize. Are they not beauties, mamma? This one is for you; he told me I could have it to give you. You are to wear it while we are gone, and think of me. Father is going to take Merle and me to see all the lovely pictures somewhere. I forget where. Then we are going to have dinner and go to the theatre. Won't that be jolly? He says I look very nice this morning. He wants me to kiss baby for him. Good bye, mamma."

Before she had time to remonstrate, he was gone. How deep was her disappointment, she was unwilling to admit, even to herself. She had been sure William would come with the flowers himself. He had sent the baby rare flowers and allowed Augustus to give her one (they were her favorite tube-roses, which James always kept in bloom). He had sent her nothing, and was going away to stay all day, seeking pleasure with Augustus and Merle, leaving her at home, ill in bed, without even a question as to how she had recovered from her indisposition of yesterday.

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This thought produced anger that supplanted all the softness and tenderness she had so lately felt. She heard them go, and drew her baby to her with a sigh of injured pride. They were forgotten; she was ill, but he could go and enjoy himself.

She did William an injustice. He thought if he went to her without an invitation, she would consider it as an intrusion, after what she had said at their last interview. When Augustus came with his request to go to Merle, and said mamma asked him for flowers for sister, he thought he saw signs of Clarissa's forgiveness, and he would have given anything his money could have bought to prove to her how glad he was that she had sent to him for a favor.

He had not dared to leave the house after her threat to leave him, for, being there, she could not go;—even if it was necessary to use force. He would not be left again. He knew she would not leave without Augustus, so he thought to please her by making the boy happy therefore he had planned to give Augustus and Merle a holiday.

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He knew if Clarissa had intended to see him or send for him, she would have sent her message by Augustus. He thought she would see his love in the selection of the flowers. He was disappointed not to have been called in when he went to the very door of her room with Augustus; she knew he was there, for he had purposely talked all along the passage. He was anxious to see how fully she had recovered from yesterday's illness, and was not satisfied to take Augustus' and Dinah's words concerning her health.

She might be taken suddenly ill again while he was gone, and die before he could be reached. Augustus was away now, if he had not come to him so quickly, she would have died.

These unpleasant thoughts began to haunt him about as soon as he closed the door of his house. He said nothing to Augustus, for the boy was all enthusiasm, but long before father and son had reached Mrs. Millard's, he had concluded to go back at once. He would run no risk.

Arriving at the Millard's, he pleasantly asked them to join Augustus in a day of recreation and pleasure, doing so in such a way he seemed to consider it a favor for them to care for Augustus, and entertain him. He planned out the programme, gave them the necessary money, and departed, telling them that he had business that should be attended to, but must first go home for something he had forgotten. He would send the carriage back.

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Arriving home, he ran up the steps, he was so anxious to know that all was well. He met no one. Removing his street garments as quietly as possible, and hoping that he would not be heard, he ascended the stairway that led to Clarissa's room, looking for Dinah, whom he wished to tell he was at home, and would remain there; thus she was to call him if anything was wrong.

The door was open, but no Dinah was in sight. He hesitated then approached the door, trying to make no noise. He wanted to look in;—and did, undiscovered. Clarissa had been crying; that was easily seen. There was too much color in her face. Was it fever or nervousness? He was glad that he had come home. His gaze was so steady she looked up quickly and saw him just as he tried to dodge from her sight. She was so surprised she spoke before she thought.

"William!"

At the sound of his name, he stepped back into the room.

"Where is Augustus?"

"At Merle's."

"Why are you not with him? He said you were going with him."

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"I did."

"What brought you back?"

"You want to know the exact truth?"

"Yes. Of course I do."

"You."

"Me?"

"Yes; I was afraid you might be ill again—"

"Probably you mean you wanted to work upon me again. Well, I am not afraid of you."

"What do you mean?"

"You need not get angry; it was you, and you alone, that almost killed baby and me."

"Clarissa, you do not know what you are saying. I make you sick!—Never. It was I who cured you."

"William, let us not get angry with each other, but try to find out the truth. Were you or were you not thinking of me when I was stricken yesterday?"

"I was."

"I knew it. I told you you made me ill."

"I deny it. I was thinking of anything but your being ill. I swear my only thought was you should send for me to come to you. I wanted to be with you. I was lonesome and desperate at the thought you would leave me again. I never thought of the baby. I am as blameless of the cause of her sickness as you."

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"It was the sight of her that frightened me so."

"I do not wonder, Clarissa. I have tried and tried to account for her close resemblance to death, when she is physically such a perfect specimen of health. Try to do me justice. I am not so unnatural a man as to torture any person."

"You threatened to make me fear my children."

"I did no such thing. Only a vicious coward would do that. What a husband I must have been to you, when you suspect me of doing such things!"

"You did say so, William; that was what alarmed me."

"I say I did not. I said I could do it."

"I say you cannot."

"I shall never try. You are no more proud of the children than I, and you may be sure if they never suffer injury or injustice at any but their father's hands, they will have a pleasant life. Tell me why you were so angry, when I wanted to help Augustus. Can you not realize how I feel, when I know he is passing through life maimed for my sin? Is it not a duty I owe him to use every means in my power to assist him to walk? No person has ever been injured by my influence."

"Merle has."

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"Merle? How?"

"You made him lie."

"That very experience brought me wisdom. I was jealous. I could not account for his sudden sickness upon seeing you. Can you not forgive me my indiscretions?"

"Knowing the cause;—yes. But has your gain in knowledge given Merle any more power? William, think well. Think well. The power you use, I am afraid of. Do not speak yet. Listen. You are a good man. Merle is a truthful boy. You made him tell a lie, and then believed it, placing the responsibility upon an innocent person. If a good man can make such a blunder, what great evil a bad man could do with it! Knowing what you do now, would you want Augustus or baby or me to be mesmerized, and subject to the thought of any man you know? Think what it means, William. Would you? Answer from the depth of your spirit."

The thought of the children did not so strongly impress him, but when he thought of Clarissa's being subject to the commands of any man he knew, he started as though he was stung by a wasp.

"No."

"What right then, have you to influence other men's wives and children?"

"None, I suppose. I had never thought of it that way. I honestly believed I was doing good. Help me to unravel this problem. You have shown me a picture I know is faulty, but I cannot detect the weak points. Alice has said, and you seemed proud enough of it, that I should be an illustrious exponent of science. I used to think it an infallible power; now I do not know what to think of it. If it is true that I have made my best subject lie, and almost killed my wife and babe—I who am considered an expert in practice,—you are right. I do not want to think of its force in the use of corrupt men. After all my study, and all my work, I admit I know nothing. I am discouraged."

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"Come look at baby. She has just awoke. Is she not a treasure? You have not kissed her for days. Do you not want to?"

"Nor her mother either. Clarissa, what shall I do? I want to be just the man you respect and

admire."

"Wait until I am well, William, then you shall explain to me the science of mesmeric control, and we will work together with Alice to find out those facts that you do not know. Somehow, I feel you are really stronger and wiser than you have ever been, though you do feel discouraged just now."

"Clarissa, you will not leave me?"

"No. I took you for better or worse, and I shall stand by the contract. I have been trying to think how you could help Augustus." [Pg 305]

"How, dear?"

"By magnetic treatments the whole length of his spine and limbs. He is only weak there; not deformed. I was the same before he was born; but you will not mesmerize him, will you?"

"Never."

"Has she grown since you have seen her? She looks much as Augustus did at her age, Dinah and I think, so she must look like you."

* * * * *

Peace was restored, and a happier family would be hard to find than that of William Huskins. With his wife's help, he became a noted writer and exponent of mesmeric influence, reasoning from the effects or phenomena, back to the basic principles which produce them.

They worked together, and he told his friends she was the inspiring genius; he but the crude expresser. They both grew in character, making it a study how they should and might do for others, as they would wish their children done by.

Augustus, through his father's treatment, acquired sufficient strength in his limbs to forsake the wheel chair and crutches, as manhood approached, and was able to walk with a cane. He gave promise of being unusually talented in art and music. His parents sought in every manner to develop it. [Pg 306]

Baby Clarissa was a mischievous child. James said she was the exact counterpart of her mother. The entire household set their happiness by her. The wonder is she was not spoiled and wilful, but, instead, she was winsome, and charming, doing her mischief in such a way it added, rather than detracted from her excellence.

Having passed through the fiery furnace of suffering, and coming forth grander and nobler for it, let us leave William and Clarissa with our best wishes that their children may represent them in worthiness of heart and character.

*** END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK PROFESSOR HUSKINS ***

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