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Transcriber's Note:

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BELFORD'S MAGAZINE.

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VOL. II.

MARCH, 1889.

No. 10.

WEALTH AND ITS CONSEQUENCES.

When the government established by our forefathers became a recognized fact both at home and abroad, and for three-quarters of a century thereafter, no one dreamed that the greatest danger which threatened its existence was the wealth which might accumulate within its realm; indeed, no one ever dreamed of the possibilities which lay in that direction.

It is only during the past twenty years that the accumulation of wealth has entered into the problem. Down to the period of 1861, the only disturbing element of any magnitude was slavery. It was the slavery problem which weighed so heavily upon the "godlike" Webster. It was an ever-present, ghastly, and hideous form, appealing to his patriotic soul. It is certain that it cast a

shadow of melancholy over his whole life. But Mr. Webster did not live to witness the dreadful loss of life and treasure, and the awful gloom, of its going out.

There is a question now of far greater magnitude than that which was settled by the sword, and that is the question of the enormous wealth, and its increase in the hands of the few. No reference is now made to the owners of the thousands or the hundreds of thousands—to the industrious and prosperous people scattered all over the land; for moderate wealth, universally diffused, is the prime safeguard of a nation: but I refer to the millions, the tens of millions, and the hundreds of millions owned and controlled by the few.

The ignorant poor and the no less ignorant rich may ridicule or sneer at the expression of fear that harm may come to the Republic on account of great wealth; but ridicule never settled any question. Ridicule is always the weapon of the ignorant and the vicious. None but the ignorant will ridicule the subject, for the history of the world reveals the destruction of nations on account of wealth—never from poverty. [482]

What if a man does have millions—is it any of the people's business? is the query of the ignorant. This is the question that is to be solved. This is, in fact, the supreme question. If the government is a government of the people and for the people, under the people's Constitution the people have the right to protect themselves. If the possession of millions by any person is a menace to the liberties of the people and to the permanence of their government, the people have the right to legislate upon the matter and to protect themselves. That this Republic belongs to the people, no one can doubt. That it was established, by their blood and treasure, as an asylum for the oppressed of all nations and the perpetual abode of free men, every page of American history attests. The protest of our forefathers to British tyranny, the Declaration of Independence, the war which followed, the steps taken for the adoption of a Constitution, the Bill of Rights, and the Constitution all declare, in terms not to be mistaken, the right of the people to protection against foes from within and foes from without. How this menace will be met I have no means of knowing; but that it must be met, or sooner or later the Republic will be destroyed, no intelligent man can doubt.

As matters now stand, bad as they are, it might perhaps be enduring; but wealth accumulates, and the man with ten millions to-day may have a hundred millions in ten years, and the man with a hundred millions may have a thousand. There is not a king or an emperor on a throne to-day that would be safe a single moment with a subject possessing a thousand million dollars; and can it be expected that a Republic would be safer? The wealth of the Rothschilds was for a long time the wonder of the world. They held the purse-strings of nearly all Europe; kings, emperors, and principalities were and are yet at their mercy. But the wealth of the Rothschilds, the accumulations of generations, pales into insignificance before the wealth of the Vanderbilts, the Goulds, the Astors, the Lelands, the Carnegies, and the Spreckels, when the period of acquisition is taken into account. History fails to record any accumulation of wealth so rapid and so colossal as that which has taken place in this country, and during a period of from five to twenty-five years.

The wealth of the Rothschilds has been the marvel of generations until within the past decade; but their wealth ceases to dazzle and bewilder even the youths of America in this generation. Their wealth, however, has been the accumulation of a hundred and twenty-five years, with all Europe for their field of operations. Their accumulations do not represent the robbery of the masses. They never levied a tax upon or demanded a toll upon the necessities of life. Their operations were mainly confined to the negotiation of loans, the placing of investments for the wealthy men of Europe, and to the legitimate sphere of banking. They had a bank in the capitals of France, Austria, Italy, England, and Prussia; but neither of those nations ever gave them the authority to issue money. The toiling millions of Europe are taxed to maintain armies and support dynasties; but they were never the subjects of a moneyed aristocracy, or victims to their cupidity, in the sense that American toilers are. Emperors and kings did indeed make their burdens heavy, and oft-times intolerable, but they taxed to maintain their governments. They were the sole despots or robbers; and there is this difference between the robbers of Europe and those of America: that European despots maintained a government, while the American despots rob the people, by the aid of the government, for purely personal profit. True, the Rothschilds' power was great. They could probably make or unmake kings; but their power was never used to build up towns and cities in one section of country and tear them down in another; to build up manufacturing establishments and great commercial monopolies in one kingdom or state, and destroy them elsewhere. They never attempted to control lines of transportation, corner the price of meat, bread, coffee, sugar, light, fuel, and other necessities of life. No such operations were ever attempted by them, and no king or emperor would have been safe a day upon his throne who would have permitted such crimes as have been and are openly perpetrated by the millionaires of our country in their operations with beef, pork, coffee, oil, coal, sugar, wheat, and almost every other necessary of life. Under an absolute, or even a limited monarchy, these evils can be prevented or remedied; but as yet no means have been discovered to remedy or prevent them under our form of government. [483]

Events of great magnitude crowd fast upon each other in our rapidly growing country. New questions of great importance and new phases of old questions have arisen and assumed huge proportions in a brief period, requiring the highest virtue, intelligence, and patriotism to deal with; and, while yet there may appear no constitutional means for protection against the illegitimate use of wealth under the operation of trusts and syndicates, without infringing upon the constitutional rights of citizens, it is absolutely certain that a way must be found to do so, or [484]

this great Republic, which promised so much for humanity, will cease to exist, and the hope of a "government of the people, for the people, and by the people" will be crushed from out the hearts of men.

N. G. PARKER.

A YOUNG GIRL'S IDEAL.

There are people one meets with now and then who seem so perfectly fitted to their age and condition that it is difficult and almost painful to imagine them in any other—some old ladies, for instance, so sweet-faced, cheery-hearted, and placid-minded that one rebels against the reflection that they were ever crude, impulsive girls or busy matrons; and some busy matrons there are whose supply of energy and capacity seems so admirably to equal the demands made upon it that, for them, girlhood and old age appear to be alike—states of lacking opportunity; and, in the third place, there are crude, impulsive girls who wear these attributes so blithely that one does not want to think of them developed and matured.

Of these was Kate Severn, aged eighteen—a tall, brown-skinned, brown-eyed, brown-haired creature, so richly and freshly tinted that these three shades blended, in a beautiful harmony, in a face of rounded lines and gracious curves such as belong alone to the lovely time of youth. She was an affectionate and dutiful daughter to her widowed mother, whose only child she was, and yet almost everyone who heard Kate Severn talked about at all heard her called cold, the basis of this appellation being a disinclination to the society and attentions of young gentlemen, which, in a girl of her age and appearance, seemed a positive eccentricity. She had had this trait from a child, when she would fly into sudden rages and fight and scratch the little boys who called her their sweetheart; and it had grown with her growth. Every summer, when she and her mother would come back to the old country-place, near the dull little town of Marston, where all the summers of her life had been spent, this determination to avoid the society of young men was more resolutely set forth by her looks and tones. It was not so aggressive as formerly, for she had acquired a fine dignity with her advancing girlhood, and was too proud not to avoid the danger of being called ridiculous. Therefore, her resentment of all masculine approaches was now quiet and severe, where it had once been angry and vehement; but it was as positive as ever, as the youth of Marston had reason to know. They said they didn't mind it, but they did immensely. A favorite remark among them was that, if she could stand it, they could—and stand it she did, magnificently. Who that saw her, driving her smart trap and strong bay horse along the country roads of Marston, with rein taut and whip alert, her erect and beautiful figure strikingly contrasted with her little mother's bent and fragile one, could suppose for one instant that it mattered an atom to her whether those were men or wooden images that walked the streets of Marston or drove about its suburbs, having their salutes to the tall cart returned by a swift, cool bow from its driver, who disdained to rest her handsome eyes upon them long enough to discern the half-indignant, half-admiring gazes with which they looked after her. [485]

She was not, at heart, an unsocial creature, and in her childhood had been rather a favorite with the girls who came in contact with her, but she always was unlike them; and this dissimilarity now constituted a distinct isolation for her, since the fact that she had herself no beaux,—to use the term in vogue in Marston society,—and took no interest in hearing of those of her girl friends, left the latter much at a loss for topics, and forced upon Kate herself the conviction that she had not the power of interesting them. Dr. Brett, the country doctor who was her mother's physician and chief friend when she came to her country home, used to try to adjust matters for Kate, and made many praiseworthy efforts to promote a spirit of sociability between her and the young people of Marston, each and every one of which was a flat failure. At last he had given up in despair and let the matter drop, for Kate, in this her eighteenth summer, was more difficult, as well as taller, straighter, and handsomer, than ever. So reflected Dr. Brett as he drove homeward from his first visit to the Severns, feeling a good deal cheered by the recurrence into his humdrum life of this attractive mother and daughter, who received him into their home with a cordiality and friendliness enjoyed by a few people only. Mrs. Severn was an invalid, and unequal to seeing much company; and Kate, though the very opposite of an invalid, had contrived, as I have shown, to cut herself off from society—in Marston, at least—rather effectually. She liked Dr. Brett, and seemed always glad to see him—a departure in his favor which he was not old enough to relish altogether. Still, the gods had provided him a pleasant spot of refreshment in the midst of a rather dull professional routine, and he gladly made the most of it. Kate, who was extremely fastidious, criticized him severely to her mother, and regretted very often that a man who had some capabilities should neglect his appearance as he did—allowing his face and hands to get so sunburned, his hair to grow so long, and his clothes to look so shabby and old-fashioned. [486]

Perhaps the reason that she was so hard upon good Dr. Brett was accounted for by the fact that this man-repudiating young lady carried about in her mind a beautiful ideal of her own, of whose existence, even in this immaterial form, no being in the world besides herself had a suspicion. His appearance, in truth, was wholly and entirely ideal, but he was founded on fact, and that fact was a certain manuscript which five years ago she had fished up from an old box in the garret. This garret had been for generations the receptacle for all the old, disused belongings of the Severns; and it had been Kate's delight, from childhood up, to explore its old chests and trunks, and invent for herself vivid stories of the old-time ladies and gentlemen to whom had belonged these queer

old gowns and uniforms—these scant petticoats and meagre waists, and these knee-breeches and lace-trimmed coats. There were spinning-wheels and guitars to suggest poses for the women, and cocked hats and swords for the men. As she grew older, these childish games lost part of their charm for her, and these mere suits and trappings of the creatures of her imagination gave her such a sense of lack that she turned to some old papers in one of the boxes, in the hope that she might get some light upon the spirits and souls that had animated them. In her own fair young body there had arisen certain insistent demands which there was nothing in the life she led to supply. The tortures of the Inquisition would not have drawn this confession from her; but so indeed it was, and I must have sketched the personality of this young lady very clumsily indeed if it has not appeared that, beneath this independent, self-sufficing surface, there was a heart full of romance and sentiment, a feeling all the stronger for being denied a vent.

It was an era in Kate Severn's life—that rainy day in late summertime, when she found in the garret the old roll of manuscript from which was formulated the ideal that afterward so wholly took possession of her. It was a budget of closely written sheets, on blue paper turned white at the edges with age. The ink used must have been of exceptionally good quality, for it was still dark and distinct. The writing was clear, and done with a very fine pen—but there were evidences of haste. This, however, was not to be wondered at, for the subject was an exciting one, and Kate pictured to herself, with enthusiasm, the exquisite young gentleman (whom she promptly invested with the blue-velvet, lace-ruffled coat, and the handsome hat and sword which were among the paraphernalia of the attic) bending his ardent, impassioned gaze over the sheets on which were written such beautiful, fervent, reverential love-words. It was not in the form of a letter, though it was a direct appeal, or, rather, a sort of aspiration, from the heart of a man for the love of a woman. There was not a name in it from beginning to end, and there was a sort of impersonal tone in it that made Kate believe that it was addressed to an imagined woman instead of a known one. This thought occurred to her even in that first breathless perusal, and all the subsequent ones (which were countless, for she was subject to certain moods in which this old manuscript was her only balm) confirmed it. In consequence of this conviction, she did a most un-Kate-like thing. It required only a slight effort of that powerful imagination of hers to put herself in the place of this loved and importuned lady; and she actually went so far as to compose and indite answer after answer to this fond appeal—impassioned outpourings of a heart which was full and had to be emptied. These she would lock away in her desk, along with the precious blue manuscript—and read and amplify from time to time.

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She had never told anyone about the finding of this manuscript, though she had questioned her mother frequently and closely about the various contents of the attic boxes, only to hear repeated the statement that they were all belongings of the Severns, and had been in the house long before her occupancy. So this precious manuscript, it must appear, was written by some by-gone relative of her father, who, it pleased her to believe, had died with all these beautiful aspirations unfulfilled. That was a thought that smiled upon far more than the picture of her ideal hero comfortably settled as a commonplace husband and father, with degenerate modern descendants. So Kate, who had no lovers in reality, made the most of this impalpable essence of one. And really he suited her much better. She could endow him with all the attributes that she admired, and even alter these at will, as her state of mind changed or her tastes developed, and a real lover could never have kept pace with her so well. Then, too, she could imagine him as beautiful and elegant as she desired—and she loved beauty and elegance in a man so much that she had never seen one yet who came up to her standard. She invested him with the most gorgeous changes of apparel—the blue velvet coat in the old trunk being one of his commonest costumes. It is true that it did not occur to her that, to fit the wishes of the manuscript to the time of the knee-breeches and lace ruffles, etc., suggested the propriety of his expressing himself in old English, while that of the blue manuscript was quite modern; but an anachronism or two of this sort was a trifling matter in so broad a scheme as hers. One effect of the finding of the paper was to make Miss Kate far more than ever scrupulous in her person, and gentle and courteous in her ways, for, although she had no superstitious idea that he really saw her out of the spirit-world, still it was her pride and pleasure to be what she knew he would have her to be. So she dressed herself in very charming gowns, with a slight expression of old-timeness about them that was not unnatural, and wore her severe, scant coifs and little folded kerchief with a prim grace that was a matter of contemporaneous benefit. Her mother and Dr. Brett got the most of it, for out-of-doors her dress was necessarily conventional, and out-of-doors, also, she encountered so many antagonistic elements that she was often made to feel that her bearing and state of mind were not such as her loyal knight would have approved. That he was a person of the gentlest heart, the kindest nature, the most loving spirit, no one who read those heartfelt words of his could doubt. Very often he would interrupt his rhapsodies to his lady-love to prostrate himself before himself, at the thought of his unworthiness to ask the love of so divine and perfect a being as her whom he addressed. How great, then, was the necessity laid upon her who had appropriated these addresses to be circumspect in thought and act!

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So Kate grew every day more sweet and winning, until Dr. Brett began to wonder how he could ever have thought her hard and conceited—as he confessed to himself, with abasement, that he had. She felt that her knight and lover would have wished her to be kind to this poor, lonely old doctor, who was so good to the sick and humble about him, and led such a cheerless, companionless, bachelor existence; and she used to make his cup of tea in the evenings when he would drop in to see her mother at the close of a hard day's work, and minister to his comfort in a manner that was certainly new to her. Before the finding of that manuscript, it was little enough that she had cared about his comfort; but now it seemed of real importance to her. The more his country-made clothes, and sun-burned hands, and awkward, heavy shoes grated on her, the more

it came home to her how she would be pleasing some one who wore velvet coats, with rich lace ruffles that bordered tapering white hands, and with shapely feet encased in fine silk stockings and fine diamond-buckled slippers—if he could see her! Hers was quite a happy love affair, and she had no occasion to mourn her lover dead, as she had not known him living—so, as yet, he had brought only pleasure into her life.

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It was at the age of sixteen that Kate had found the blue manuscript, and so her *affaire* was a matter of two years' date when she returned to Marston on the occasion of her eighteenth summer. The blue-coated knight had held his own with inviolate security during those two years, and Kate was as indifferent as ever to the approaches of the youth and valor of Marston. So she and her mother settled quickly down into the routine of the old dull life. The usual visitors called, but they, too, were dull, and therefore undisturbing, and life flowed monotonously on. It was only a little less quiet existence than the one she led in winter in the city, for she never went to parties, and not often to the theatre unless there happened to be some unusual musical attraction; and her friends and relatives, of whom there were quite a number, gave her up as an incorrigibly queer girl, whom no one need try and do anything for. It is true she had her music and painting lessons there, which were some variety and diversion, but she practised both here in the country; and the life, on the whole, pleased her better. Her eccentricity, as it was called, was commented on by fewer people, and she had more time for those delicious reveries over the old blue manuscript. She loved, on rainy days, when it was not too warm up there, to steal off to the garret and look at the blue coat, and the sword, and hat, etc., and feel herself a little nearer, in that way, to her knight. It seemed a very lonely time indeed, when she looked back to the years and days before the finding of the manuscript. It had introduced an element into her life almost as strong as reality. And yet there were times—and they came oftener, now that womanhood was ripening—when a great emptiness and longing got hold of her, and the blue manuscript, which had once been so sufficient, would not satisfy her. She hugged it closer to her heart than ever, though, and all it represented to her. She often told herself it suited her a great deal better than marriage, which she had always looked upon as a grinding and grovelling existence for a woman, and expressed and felt a fine superiority to. It was quite too commonplace and humdrum an affair for her, and she told herself, with emphasis and distinctness, that she was quite content with an ideal love. And yet, to mock her, came the thought of the pictured domestic life which the blue manuscript had so tenderly described—with such longings for the fireside, the home circle, the family love that she held in scorn. She got the old blue paper and read it over, and those words of winning tenderness brought the tears to her eyes. She found herself half wishing, for his sake, while a numb pain seized her heart for herself, that he had lived to realize these sweet dreams of home and domestic love. If that was so, her ideal was gone, and how could she do without it, seeing she had nothing else? The tears became too thick, the pain in her throat was unsupportable, she felt the great sobs rising, and, springing up, she rushed down the stairs, flew to her room, bathed her face and adjusted her toilet, and then went down to make tea for her mother and Dr. Brett, after which she played away the spirit of sadness and unrest with all the gay and brilliant music she knew. By bed-time she was her own calm self, and the next day she regarded her strange mood with wonder, but she could not forget that it had been, and she was horribly afraid of its recurrence.

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One morning she was driving herself alone in her pretty cart along a shady road that ran outside the town, when she recognized Dr. Brett's buggy and horse fastened to a tree near a small shady house. This was nothing to surprise her, for he was always working away on poor and helpless people who couldn't pay him, and she would have passed on without giving the matter a second thought, but that, just as she got to the dilapidated little gate, a woman rushed out of the house, with a girl of about fourteen after her, both of them screaming and throwing their hands about in a way that caused Kate's horse to take fright and gave her all she could do to control him for the next few minutes. He ran for a little way straight down the road, but she soon got him in hand and turned back to inquire into the cause of the trouble. The two females were still whooping and gesticulating in the yard, and the scene had been furthermore enlivened by the addition of three or four dirty and half-clothed children, who were also crying. Just as Kate came up, Dr. Brett appeared in the doorway, with his coat off and a very angry expression on his face. He caught hold of the woman and gave her an energetic shake, telling her to hold her tongue and control her children; and just at this point he looked up and caught sight of Kate, gazing down upon the scene from the top of her pretty cart, whose horse was now as quiet as a lamb.

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"What is the matter?" asked Kate, while the whole party suspended their screams a moment to gaze at her.

"I wish to goodness you could help me," said Dr. Brett, half desperately. "I was about to perform a very simple operation on this woman's child and had everything in readiness, supposing I could trust her to assist me, when she began to bawl like an idiot, and demoralized this child who was helping me, too, and simply upset the whole thing. I came out to see if there was anyone in sight who could give me some assistance; but of course—"

"I'll help you," said Kate at once, beginning to get down from the cart. "I suppose if these people could do it I could—at least I won't lose my head."

"Oh, if you only would help!" said Dr. Brett. "I can't stop to tie your horse even. I must see about the child. Here, somebody come tie this horse, and keep out of the way, every one of you! If I hear any more howling out here, I'll box the ears of the whole party!" And with these words he disappeared into the house.

A small boy came up and took the horse's rein, and the woman promised eagerly that they would take care of everything. She was still half sobbing, and began to make excuses for herself, saying she couldn't stay to see it done, not if she'd die for it.

Kate did not stop to listen to her, but ran up the rickety steps, drawing off her long gloves as she did so, and entered the wretched little room. She had only time to take in its expression of squalor and destitution, when she paused abruptly, affrighted, in spite of herself, at the sight before her. On a table in the middle of the room was stretched a little child, dressed in a clean white frock, and with a fair little face, above which gleamed a mass of rich auburn curls. She glanced at the pretty face in its statuesque repose, and then saw that the little legs, bare from the knees, were horribly deformed, the feet being curled inward in a frightfully distorted manner.

"Is it dead?" said Kate, in a hushed whisper.

"Dead? My dear young lady, you don't suppose I've asked you to assist at a post-mortem," said the doctor cheerily, as he chose an instrument out of his case. "It's bad enough as it is. I don't know what I'll say of myself when this thing's over. But tell me! do you think you can stand it? There'll be only a few drops of blood. But I can put it off, if you say so. Tell the truth!"

"I don't want you to put it off," said Kate. "I am perfectly ready to help you. Tell me what to do." [492]

She smelt the strong fumes of chloroform now, and realized that the child was under its influence and would feel no pain, and the knowledge strengthened her. She watched the doctor as he bent over and lifted one little hand, letting it drop back heavily, and then raised up one eyelid, for a second, and examined the pupil.

"All right," he said. "Now, are you frightened or nervous?"

"Not in the least," she answered, calmly, feeling a wonderful strength come into her as she met his steady, confident, reassuring gaze. It was strange, but it was the first time she had noticed how fine his eyes were.

"That's right," he said; "I knew you were not a coward. Now you must watch the child's face carefully, and at the first movement or sign of returning consciousness you must douse some chloroform out of that bottle inside that towel, and hold it cone-shaped, as it is, over the baby's nose and mouth; I'll tell you how long. Don't be frightened; there's not the least danger of giving too much, and the operation is extremely simple and short."

As he spoke the baby contracted its face a little and turned its head.

"See—I'll show you," he said. And wetting the towel from the bottle he put it over the baby's face and held it there a little while, looking up at Kate, into whose face a sweet compassion had gathered, softening and beautifying it wonderfully. She was not looking at him, but down at the baby; and with a wonderful movement of tenderness she laid her fair hand on the poor deformed feet and gave them a little gentle pressure. She was utterly unconscious of herself or she couldn't have done it. Theoretically, she hated children.

The doctor now took his position at the foot of the table, and holding one of the child's feet in his hand, felt with his thumb and forefinger for a second and then made a slight incision. Kate saw one big drop of blood come out and then turned her eyes to the face of the child, as she had been instructed. The little creature was sleeping as sweetly as if in a noonday nap, and looked so unconscious and placid that it seemed all the more pitiful. She bent over and smoothed the bright curls, and then kissed the soft cheek.

"Poor little man!" she murmured, softly. She thought no one heard. Suddenly, behind her, there was a little snap.

"Hear that?" said the doctor, cheerfully. "*That's* all right."

She looked around and saw he was holding his thumb over the little cut he had made, and looking across at her with an encouraging smile. [493]

"You're first-rate," he said, heartily. "I wish that screaming idiot could see how a brave woman behaves."

"Ah, but she is its mother!" said Kate, in a tender voice, "and it's such a little dear. I don't wonder she loves it!"

Was this really Kate Severn? He didn't have time to think whether it was or not, for the blood had stopped, and he now took up the other foot. At the same time the baby moved again and gave a little whimper. Kate promptly doused the towel and put it over the child's face, who, at its next breath, relapsed into unconsciousness.

"First-rate!" said the doctor again. "That will do for this time," and then proceeded with the other foot. Again Kate heard the little snapping sound, as the tendon was cut, though her eyes were fixed upon the placid face of the child.

"Now look, if you want to see a pair of straight little feet," said the doctor. And she turned around and saw, as he had said, instead of that curled deformity, two natural childish feet.

"Wonderful!" said the girl. "Oh, how thankful you must be that you are capable of such a thing as this!"

The doctor laughed his cheery, pleasant laugh.

"Why next to nobody could do that," he said. But it was plain that her commendation pleased him.

He then rapidly explained to her how into the vessel of warm water standing by she was to dip the little rolls of plaster spread between long strips of gauze, and rolled up like bolts of ribbon, and squeeze them out and hand them to him very promptly as he needed them.

"Never mind watching the baby," he said. "If it cries you must clap the towel over its face. You've got enough to do to watch me, and hand me the plaster as I need it."

Kate obeyed implicitly, and in a little while both feet had been deftly and neatly bandaged, from the toes to the knees, with the plaster bandages, and the little creature, appearing suddenly unnaturally long from this transformation, was pronounced intact.

"That's all," said the doctor. "As soon as I wash my hands I'll lay it on the bed."

"Let me," said Kate, hastily drying her own hands. And while he pretended to be engrossed in his ablutions he watched her curiously, as she lifted the baby tenderly and laid it on the bed. As she put it down she bent over and kissed it, murmuring sweet words, as a mother might have done. [494]

"You must have the legs very straight," he said, coming over and standing at the bed's foot that he might the more accurately see them. "In an hour the plaster will be perfectly hard, and then they can move it anywhere. That's a good job, if we did do it ourselves," he said, with a bright smile.

"Oh, may I go and tell the mother?" said Kate, eagerly. "How happy she'll be to see those straight little legs!"

She went out and called the mother in. The woman's excitement had changed into stolidness, and she showed far less feeling in the matter than Kate had done. She looked at the child, without speaking, and then said she guessed she'd better clean up all this muss, and proceeded to set things to rights. Kate was indignant, and showed it in the look she cast at Dr. Brett, who smiled indulgently in reply, and said in a low tone, coming near her, "That manner is half embarrassment. I'm sure she really cares."

While he was wiping and putting up his instruments, Kate went back to the bed, a little whimper having warned her that baby was coming to.

"Don't let him move if you can help it," said the doctor, and she dropped on her knees by the bed, and began to talk to the child in the prettiest way, taking out her watch and showing it to him, holding it to his ear that he might hear it tick, and occupying his attention so successfully that he lay quite still, gazing up at her with great earnest brown eyes, and giving a simultaneous little grin and grunt now and then. Dr. Brett came up and stood behind her for a few moments unnoticed, observing her with a strange scrutiny. "Who would have expected a thing like this from this queer girl?" he said to himself. Then, aloud, he informed Miss Severn that the baby might safely be left to its mother now; and she got up at once, and, seeing he was ready to go, followed him out of the house.

He unfastened her horse and brought the cart to the gate, and, as she mounted to her seat and took the reins, she looked down at him and said impulsively:

"I'm so glad you let me help you. Is this your life—going about all the time doing good and curing evil? I never thought how beautiful it was. If I can ever give you help again, let me do it; won't you?"

"That you shall," he said, and seemed about to add more, but something stopped the words in his throat, and she drove off, wondering what they would have been. The mingled surprise and delight in his eyes made her long to know them. As she turned a bend in the road, she looked back and saw Dr. Brett standing in the door among the children, with a hand on the head of one of the untidy little boys, looking down at him kindly. His figure was certainly both handsome and impressive, and his head and profile fine. She wondered she had never noticed this before—but then she had never before been really interested in him. She wondered suddenly how old he was. [495]

All the way home she was thinking about him, and how good, and cheerful, and strong, and clever he was; how everyone loved him, and what a power he had of making people feel better and brighter as soon as he came into the room. She began to recall accounts she had heard, with rather a listless interest, of difficult and successful surgical operations he had performed, and inducements offered him to go to big cities and make money, of which he had refused to avail himself simply because he loved his own people and had his hands full of work where he was. This was a fine and uncommon feeling, the girl reflected. Why had she never appreciated Dr. Brett before? By the time she reached home she had worked herself into quite a fever of appreciation, and she had a glowing account of the operation to give to her mother, who listened with great interest.

"How old is he, mamma?" she said, as she concluded.

"I really don't know. I never thought," said her mother. "He can't be much over thirty."

"Do ask him his age—I'd really like to know. It's wonderful for such a young man to be so much as he is. I never thought of his being young before—but thirty is young, of course."

After that morning's experience Kate and Dr. Brett became fast friends—on a very different footing from the old one. He told her about his patients, and took her with him sometimes to see them, tempering the wind to her with tender thoughtfulness, and refraining her eyes from seeing some of the forms of want and wretchedness that were common things to him; but in what she did see there was opportunity for much loving ministrations; and her visits to those poor dwellings with him were in most cases followed by visits alone, when she would carry little gifts for the children and delicacies for the sick, along with the sweeter benefit of a sympathetic presence that knew, by a singular tact, how to be helpful without obtrusiveness.

In the midst of all these new interests it was not remarkable that the Ideal fell into the background. Sometimes for days he would be forgotten. He didn't harmonize with these practical pursuits; and, even when old habit sometimes conjured up his image in Kate's mind, it always made a sort of discord, and, what was worse, made her feel foolish in a way that she hated. She hadn't been to the garret for a long time. There was something that gave her a painful sense of absurdity in the mere thought of the blue velvet coat, and the cocked hat and sword. What could a man do with those things in this day and generation? She thought of Dr. Brett's brown hands encumbered with lace ruffles in the sort of work he had to do, and in her heart of hearts she knew that she preferred the work to the ruffles.

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But the more the exterior belongings of her Ideal grated on her now, the more she hugged to her heart his soul and spirit, as expressed in the old blue manuscript. She read it more eagerly and more persistently than ever, and, every time, its lovely words and loving thoughts sank deeper in her heart, carrying a strange unrest there that was yet sweeter than anything had ever been to her before. All those longings for a beautiful and perfect love seemed now to come from herself—from the sacredest depth of her soul—rather than to be addressed to her.

One afternoon (it was rainy, and she could not go to drive as usual, and she no longer cared for her garret *séances*, which would once have seemed so appropriate to a day like this) she was sitting at the piano, playing to her mother, when Dr. Brett came in. He had not been to see them for many days—a most unusual thing—and she had felt neglected and hurt by it. Perhaps it was this feeling that made her very quiet in her greeting of him, or perhaps it was the melancholy, wilful strain of music into which she had wandered—plaintive minor things that seemed made to touch the fountains of tears. At all events she did not feel like talking, and she drew away, after a few formal words, and left him to talk to her mother. He explained at once, however, that he had not come to stay, but to ask Mrs. Severn's permission to go up into the garret and look for something in an old box which she had permitted him to store there before he had built the house he was now occupying. Mrs. Severn remembered the fact that he had once sent a box there, and of course gave him the permission he desired.

"Kate will go with you," she said; "the garret is a favorite resort of hers, and she can help you to find your box."

So bidden, Kate was compelled to go; but she felt a strange reluctance possessing her as she mounted the stairs ahead of Dr. Brett. When they were in the great, wide-reaching, low-ceilinged room so familiar to her, she thought of the paraphernalia of her Ideal, and felt more foolish than she had ever felt yet. What an idiot Dr. Brett would think her if he knew of the impalpable object on which she had lavished so much feeling! She thought of the Ideal that had once been so much to her, and then looked at Dr. Brett. How real he was! how strong, capable, living! What a powerful, warm-impulsed actuality, compared to that unresponsive void! She surprised the good doctor by turning to him a face suffused by a vivid blush. He looked at her intently for a second, as if he would give a great deal to find out the meaning of that blush, but he recollected himself, and said suddenly:

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"There is the old box. It had no lock on it, but that precaution was not necessary, for no one would ever care to possess themselves of that old plunder. It was mostly papers, and servants are not apt to tamper with them."

He walked over and opened the box, without looking at Kate, who had turned pale as a ghost and was standing like one transfixed, with her eyes riveted to him. He knelt down and began to turn over, one by one, the parcels of papers, which were labelled on the outside and were principally old deeds and account-books. When he had gone to the bottom of the trunk, he said, without turning:

"I cannot find what I want, and yet I know it was in this box. It was a—a—certain paper of mine, that I put in here years ago. I should know it in an instant, because it was written on some old blue paper, bleached white at the edges with age, that I happened to have at hand, and used for the purpose. I thought I should never want it again, but now I am anxious to reclaim it. It's too bad," he went on, putting the parcels back in the box; "every piece of this old trumpery seems to be here but that."

He got up and closed the lid, and, taking out his handkerchief, wiped his hands, and then began to flick the dust from the knees of his trousers. Kate still stood motionless, and, when at last he looked at her, his countenance showed him so startled by her expression that she was obliged to speak.

"I know where it is," she said; "I've got it. I didn't know it was yours. Oh, how could it be yours? I thought it was—"

"You've got it?" he said; "and you've read it?" And now it was his turn to blush. "Have you really

read it?"

"Oh, yes," she said. "I've read it—and over, and over, and over. How could I know? I thought it belonged to us. I thought all these old boxes were ours, and I thought of course that old faded paper was written by some one years and years ago—some one long dead and buried." [498]

"And so it was," he said—"at least, it was written some years ago indeed, and by a rash fellow, full of the impulsiveness and fire of youth, whom I thought dead and buried too, until these last few weeks have brought him to life again. He's come back—for what, I don't know; but I could get no rest until I tried to find that old, romantic outpouring of my passionate, hungry thoughts, written one night in red-hot haste and excitement, and addressed to a shadowy ideal of my own fancying, and proved to myself how absolutely they were realized at last—" he paused an instant, and then went on impulsively—"by you, Kate!—by you, in all your loveliness and goodness. If you have read those pages, you know how big my expectations were, how tremendous my desires. Then, let me tell you that you realize them all beyond my fondest dreams. I know you don't love me, Kate," he said, coming near and taking both her hands. "I know a rough old fellow like me could never win your love. I didn't mean to tell you about it. I never would have, but for this. I know that you don't love me; but I love you, all the same."

Kate would not give him her eyes to read, but he felt her hands shake in his, and he could see that her lips were trembling. What did it mean? Perhaps, after all—He was on fire with a sudden hope.

"Kate," he whispered, drawing her toward him by the two hands he still held fast, "perhaps you do—it seems too wonderful—but perhaps you do a little—just a little bit—enough to make me hope the rest might come. Oh, if you do, my Kate, my beautiful, my darling, tell me!"

She drew her hands away from him and buried her face.

"Oh, I don't love you a little at all," she said, half-chokingly. "I love you a great, great deal. I know the truth now."

Then he took her in his arms and drew her tight against his heart. When her lips were close to his ear, she spoke again:

"I knew it the moment you said you had written that paper. I loved whoever wrote that, already—but it wasn't that. I knew I loved *you* because it made me so unhappy, so wretched, for that minute when I thought maybe you had written those words to some one else you loved—and then you *couldn't* love me."

"Let me tell you," he whispered back: "'Some one else' never existed. There never was anyone that could command the first emotion of love from me until you came. But, like many a foolish creature, I have loved an ideal, tenderly, faithfully, abidingly, and to her these passionate words were written. Now do you think me irretrievably silly? Can you ever respect me again?" [499]

For answer, she told him her own little story, and even got out the cocked hat and sword and blue velvet coat, and showed them to him, in a happy glee. He made an effort to take them from her and put them on; but she prevented him, indignantly.

"You shall not!" she exclaimed; "I should be ashamed of you! A fine time you'd have wrapping plaster bandages, with those ridiculous lace ruffles! Oh, I like you a thousand times better as you are."

He caught her in his arms and kissed her—a fervent, passionate, happy kiss.

"Go and get the paper," he said, as he released her, "and let us read it together, or, rather, let me read it to you—to whom it was written in the beginning. My ideal is realized."

"And so is mine," she said. "How silly we are!"

"But aren't we happy?" he answered. And then they both laughed like children.

She broke away from him and ran noiselessly down stairs, and get the dear blue paper and brought it to him, and then, seated beside him on a rickety bench, with his arm around her waist, she listened while he read. There were many interruptions; many loving looks and tender pressures; many fervent, happy kisses. As he read the last words the paper fell from his hands, and they looked at each other, with smiling lips and brimming eyes. For one brief instant they rested so, and then both pairs of arms reached out and they were locked in a close embrace. No words were spoken—that silence was too sweet.

And this was their betrothal.

JULIA MAGRUDER.

THISTLE-DOWN.

All silver-shod within a weed's
Dark heart, a thousand tiny steeds

Were tethered in one stall. Each wee
heart
Panted for flight, and longed to start
Upon the race-course just beyond their
walls;
And, while they waited, down the silent
stalls
The wind swept softly, and, with fingers
light,
Bridled the thistle horses for their flight.

ANNIE BRONSON KING.

NOVELISTS ON NOVELS.

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It has sometimes been a matter of pious speculation with literary and dramatic circles what Shakespeare's personal views on art and literature would have been had the enterprise and liberality of "Great Eliza's Golden Days" induced him to formulate them. A simple and credulous few have been disposed to regret the absence of any authentic enunciation beyond the curt maxims and, as it were, fractions of canons scattered throughout his dramas.

These ardent hero-worshippers dream fondly of the light the master might have cast on many important points, which can now only be dimly descried in twilight or guessed at by mere inference, and sigh at the thought of what the world has lost. Others, rationally and soberly agnostic, have been saved the heartache and intranquillity of their brethren, by the very natural and not too profound reflection that it is entirely problematic whether the actor-lessee of the Blackfriar's playhouse could have expressed an opinion worth a pinch of salt on any vital æsthetic question, even supposing him as eager to give as we to receive. Assumption is dangerous; and the possession of the creative faculty by no means implies the possession of the critical.

True, for—

"No two virtues, whatever relation they
claim,
Nor even two different shades of the
same,
Though like as was ever twin brother to
brother,
Possessing the one shall imply you've the
other."

Nevertheless, in certain circumstances, "the high priori road is permissible to the adventurous traveller." With those happily constituted persons who can imagine Shakespeare writing anything quite worthless even in the abstruse and difficult domain of scientific criticism—where so many high qualities are required which are not held to be essential to the mere creative—I disclaim the remotest desire to provoke a quarrel. Rather let me frankly congratulate them on their force of imagination. But those of a simpler faith and a scantier imaginative endowment will probably incline to the belief that the brain which fashioned "Lear" and "Othello" could, under the golden stimulus so potent to-day, have given us pertinent, perhaps even canonic comments on—say, "Every Man in his Humor," or "A Mad World my Masters," or "The White Devil." Would it be heretical to suppose the author of "Macbeth" capable of dissecting an ancient play in as keen and true a scientific spirit as that in which the *Saturday Review* dissects a modern novel? The encumbrance of a conscience might, indeed, be a serious detriment, inasmuch as it would impair the pungency of his remarks. His fantastic notions of the quality of mercy might lead him to exaggerate merits, his lack of a sustaining sense of self-omniscience to a fatal diffidence in pronouncing on defects; so that his judgments would lack that fine Jeffreys-like flavor of judicial rigor which makes *Saturday Review* a synonym for sterling Jedburgh justice wherever the beloved and venerable name is known. He might prove a honey-bee without a sting; a grave defect at a time when the sting is esteemed more than the honey-bag. Yet, it is not improbable that, with a little judicious training and proper enlightenment on the foolishness of sentiment, he would have made a tolerable critic, for, as has been discriminatingly observed of Sophocles, the man is not without indications of genius. At any rate, in later and better appointed times, we have seen the German Shakespeare, and others of the lawless tribe of creators, enter the field of criticism and win approbation. It is true that Scott and Byron, if not exactly categorically related to Mr. Thomas Rymer, were still but indifferent critics; but we could readily tilt the scale by throwing Pope, Wordsworth, and Shelley into the other, and yet have Mr. Arnold, Mr. Swinburne, Mr. Lowell, and Mr. Lang in reserve.

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And, in truth, as there are obvious reasons why lawyers make the best judges, *ci devant* thieves the best detectives, reformed drunkards the best temperance advocates, and the scared sinners (like John Bunyan) the best preachers, so there are obvious reasons why an artist's opinions of the productions of creative art, especially of the productions of that branch of it wherein he labors himself, should have peculiar value. His intimate acquaintance with the principles of art

should not be detrimental to his perspicacity as a critic. Fielding's success with Parson Adams would not, I conceive, be any hindrance to his success in a criticism of the character of Lieutenant Lismahago, nor would the packed essences of "Esmond" prove Thackeray incapable of passing a competent judgment on "David Copperfield."

The fact is, practice has its advantages over theory. To the intelligent, experience is something more than mere empiricism, and some value must be conceded to personal experience. Theory is a wench of great personal attractions, with the coquette's knack of making the most of them; but she bears the same relation to her plainer, plodding elder sister Practice that Mark Twain bore to the invaluable Dan, when that doughty henchman was deputed to take exercise for the languid humorist. Mark might have the liveliest idea of the rugged grandeur of the Alps, but Dan knew the toils of the ascent and the glories of the higher prospects; and though Mark was an invincible theoretical mountain-climber, Dan would be apt to prove the more trustworthy guide.

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It was with the view of securing the directions of practical guides for the reader, in another field of exploration, that the present paper was written. I may say at once that my object in seeking the notes—so kindly and courteously placed at my disposition—was not to gratify idle curiosity with any pungent mess of personal gossip. That dignified office I gladly leave to the accomplished purveyors of the Society papers. But I conceived that the curtest expression of the genuine artist concerning the productions of his own art could not fail to be valuable as well as interesting. The critics, like our creditors, we have always with us, to remind us we are still far from Zion, and the former are just as indispensable to us, in the present state of the world, as the latter. Unfortunately, neither enjoy immunity from the universal law of human imperfection. Creditors are not always generous nor critics always just. One grave difficulty with the latter is the insidiousness of personal predilection, which cannot be wholly excluded from the catholic judgment. Different judges have different tastes. One may have a preference for Burgandy and the other for champagne, while a third may prefer old port to either. The moral is obvious, and points to the prudence of occasionally bringing producers and consumers face to face; having done which I will withdraw for the present.

From Mr. Robert Buchanan.

DEAR SIR: It is difficult to say off-hand what novel I consider my prime favorite. So much depends upon the mood of the moment and point of view. I should say, generally, that the "Vicar of Wakefield" surpassed all English tales, if I did not remember that Fielding had created Parson Adams; but again, I have got more pleasure out of Dickens' masterpiece, "David Copperfield," than all the others put together. Yes, I fix on "David Copperfield"—from which, you will gather that I do not solicit in fiction the kind of romance I have myself tried to weave.

Again, in all the region of foreign fiction, I see no such figure as Balzac, and no such pathetic creation as "Cousin Pons." That to me is a divine story, far deeper and truer, of course, than anything in Dickens, but alas! so sad. While I tremble at Balzac's insight, I have the childish faith of Dickens; he at least made the world brighter than he found it, and after all, there are worse things than his gospel of plum-pudding. When I am well and strong and full of life, I can bear the great tragedians, like the Elizabethan group, like Balzac; but when I am ill and wearied out with the world, I turn again to our great humorist to gain happiness and help.

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ROBERT BUCHANAN.

From Mr. Hall Caine.

MY DEAR SIR: I am not a great reader of novels. My favorite reading is dramatic poetry and old ballads. Few novelists can have read fewer novels. During the last five years I have certainly not read a score of new ones. But I am constantly reading *in* the old ones. Portions of chapters that live vividly in my memory, scenes, passages of dialogue, scraps of description—these I read and re-read. I could give you a list of fifty favorite passages, but I would find it hard to say which is my favorite novel. The mood of the moment would have much to do with any judgment made on that head. When I am out of heart Scott suits me well, for his sky is always serene. When I am in high spirits I enjoy Thackeray, for it is only then that I find any humor in the odd and the ugly. Dickens suits me in many moods; there was not a touch of uncharity in that true soul. There are moments when the tenderness of Richardson is not maudlin, and when his morality is more wholesome than that of Goldsmith. Sometimes I find the humor of Sterne the most delicious thing out of Cervantes, and sometimes I am readier to cry than to laugh over "The Life and Deeds of Don Quixote." So that if I were to tell you that in my judgment this last book is on the whole the most moving piece of imaginative writing known to me,—strongest in epic spirit, fullest of inner meaning, the book that touches whatever is deepest and highest in me,—I should merely be saying that it is the last romance in which I have been reading with all the faculties of mind and heart.

I like, at all times and in all moods, the kind of fiction that gets closest to human life, and I value it in proportion as I think it is likely to do the world some good. Thus (to cite examples without method) I care very little for a book like "Vathek," and I loathe a book

like "Madame Bovary," because the one is false to the real and the other is false to the ideal. I see little imagination and much inexperience in "Wuthering Heights," and great scenic genius and profound ignorance of human character in "Notre Dame." In Gogol's little story of the overcoat, and in Turgeneff's little story of the dumb porter I find tenderness, humor, and true humanity. I miss essential atmosphere in Godwin's masterpiece, and the best kind of artistic conviction almost throughout Charles Reade. It makes some deduction from my pleasure in Hawthorne that his best characters stand too obviously not for human beings only, but also for abstract ideas. I like George Eliot best in the first part of "Silas Marner," and least in the last part of "The Mill on the Floss." Perhaps I set the highest value on my friend Blackmore among English novelists now living. I find Tolstoï a great novelist in the sense in which his fellow-countryman, Vereschagin, is a great painter—a great delineator of various life, not a great creator. Björnson, the Norwegian novelist, in his "Arne" seems to me a more imaginative artist than Doré in his "Vale of Tears." I do not worship "Manon Lescaut," and I would rather read "Les Misérables" than "Germinal." In short, to sum it up in a word, I suppose I am an English idealist in the sense in which (if I may say so without presumption) George Sand was a French idealist. I think it is the best part of the business of art to lighten the load of life. To do this by writing mere "light literature," the companion of an idle hour, a panacea for toothache, a possible soporific, would seem to me so poor an aim that, if it were the only thing before me I think I would even yet look about for another profession. Fiction may lighten life by sterner means—by showing the baffled man the meanness of much success, and the unsuccessful man the truer triumphs of failure. To break down the superstitions that separate class from class, to show that the rule of the world is right, and that though evil chance plays a part in life, yet that life is worth living—these are among the functions of the novelist. In reaching such ends there are few or no materials that I would deny to him. He should be as free as the Elizabethan dramatists were, or even the writers of our early ballads. His work would be various in kind, and not all suited to all readers; but he would touch no filth for the distinction of being defiled. It would not trouble him a brass farthing whether his subject led him to a "good" or a "bad" ending, for he would have a better ambition than to earn the poor wages of a literary jester, and his endings would always be good in the best sense where his direction was good.

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And so in some indirect way I have answered your question; and I would like to add that I foresee that the dominion of the novel must be extended. Fiction is now followed by appalling numbers with amazing fecundity and marvellous skill, which, though mainly imitative, is occasionally original; but its channels are few and very narrow. Already the world seems to be growing weary of feeble copies of feeble men and feeble manners. It wants more grit, more aim, more thought, and more imagination. But this is thin ice to tread, and I would not disparage by a word or a wink the few novelists now living who will assuredly rank with the best in literature. Dugald Stewart said that human invention, like the barrel organ, was limited to a specific number of tunes. The present hurdy-gurdy business has been going on a longish time. We are threatened with the Minerva press over again, and the class of readers who see no difference between Walter Scott and John Galt. But, free of the prudery of the tabernacle and the prurience of the boulevard, surely the novel has a great future before it. Its possibilities seem to me nearly illimitable. Though the best of the novel is nowhere a match for the best of the drama, yet I verily believe that if all English fiction, from Defoe downwards, including names conspicuous and inconspicuous, remembered and forgotten, were matched against all English poetry of whatever kind, from Pope to our own day, it would be found that the English novelist is far ahead of the English poet in every great quality—imagination, pathos, humor, largeness of conception, and general intellect. And I will not hesitate to go further and say that, the art of the novel is immeasurably greater than the art of the drama itself—more natural as a vehicle and less limited in its uses, more various in subject and less trammelled in its mechanism, capable of everything that the drama (short of the stage) can do, and of infinitely more resource.

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HALL CAINE.

From Mr. Wilkie Collins.

After pleading illness and arrears of literary work and correspondence in excuse of the brevity of his note, Mr. Collins says:

Besides, the expression of my opinion in regard to writers of fiction and their works will lose nothing by being briefly stated. After more than thirty years' study of the art, I consider Walter Scott to be the greatest of all novelists, and "The Antiquary" is, as I think, the most perfect of all novels.

WILKIE COLLINS.

From Mr. H. Rider Haggard.

DEAR SIR: I think that my favorite novel is Dickens's "Tale of Two Cities." I will not

trouble you with all my reasons for this preference. I may say, however, and I do so with humility, and merely as an individual expression of opinion, that it seems to me that in this great book Dickens touched his highest level. Of course, the greatness of the subject has something to do with the effect produced upon the mind, but in my view there is a dignity and an earnestness in the work which lift it above the rest. Also I think it one of the most enthralling stories in the language.

H. RIDER HAGGARD.

From Mr. Joseph Hatton.

DEAR SIR: You ask me to name my favorite novel, and if it should happen to be a work by a foreign author to mention my favorite English work of fiction also. I find it impossible to answer you. When I was a boy "The Last of the Mohicans" was my favorite novel; a young man and in love, "David Copperfield" became my favorite. When I grew to be a man "The Scarlet Letter" took the place of David and the North American Indian; but ever since I can remember I have always been reading "Monte Cristo" with unflagging delight. One's favorite book is a question of mood. Now and then one might be inclined to regard "Adam Bede" as the most companionable of fiction; there are other times when "Pickwick" appeals most to one's fancy, or when one is even in the humor for "L'Homme qui Rit." "Don Quixote" fits all moods, and there are moments when a page or two of "Clarissa" are to one's taste. But with Scott, Dickens, Thackeray, Hugo, Dumas, George Eliot, Hawthorne, Smollett, Balzac, Erckmann-Chatrion, Lytton, Lever, Ik Marvel, George Sand, Charles Reade, Turgeneff, and a host of other famous writers of fiction staring me in the face, don't ask me to say which of their works is my favorite novel.

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JOSEPH HATTON.

From "Vernon Lee."

DEAR SIR: I hasten to acknowledge your letter. I do not think, however, that I can answer in a satisfactory manner. I am very little of a novel reader, and do not feel that my opinion on the subject of novels is therefore of critical value. Of the few novels I know (comparing my reading with that of the average Englishman or woman) I naturally prefer some; but to give you the titles of them—I think I should place first Tolstoi's "War and Peace" and Stendhal's "Chartreuse de Parme"—would not be giving your readers any valuable information, as I could not find leisure to explain *why* I prefer them.

"VERNON LEE."

From Mr. George Moore.

SIR: Waiving the difficulty, if not the impossibility, of a complete and satisfactory answer to your question, I will come at once to the point. You ask me to name my favorite work of fiction, giving reasons for the preference. The interest of such a question will be found in the amount of naïve sincerity with which it is answered. I will therefore strive to be as naïvely sincere as possible.

Works of romance I must pass over, not because there are none that I appreciate and enjoy, but because I feel that my opinion of them would not be considered as interesting as my opinion of a work depicting life within the limits of practical life. The names of many works answering to this description occur to me, but in spirit and form they are too closely and intimately allied to my own work to allow me to select any one of them as my favorite novel. Looking away from them my thought fixes itself at once on Miss Austen. It therefore only remains for me to choose that one which appears to me to be the most characteristic of that lady's novels. Unhesitatingly I say "Emma."

The first words of praise I have for this matchless book is the oneness of the result desired and the result attained. Nature in producing a rose does not seem to work more perfectly and securely than Miss Austen did. This merit, and this merit I do not think any one will question, eternalizes the book. "L'Education Sentimentale," "The Mill on the Floss," "Vanity Fair," "Bleak House," I admire as much as any one; but I can tell how the work is done; I can trace every trick of workmanship. But analyse "Emma" as I will, I cannot tell how the perfect, the incomparable result is achieved. There is no story, there are no characters, there is no philosophy, there is nothing: and yet it is a *chef-d'œuvre*. I have said there are no characters; this demands a word of explanation. Miss Austen attempts only—and thereby she holds her unique position—the conventionalities of life. She presents to us man in his drawing-room skin: of the serpent that gnaws his vitals she cares nothing, and apparently knows nothing. The drawing-room skin is her sole aim. She never wavers. The slightest hesitation would be fatal; her system is built on a needle's point. We know that no such mild, virtuous people as her's ever existed or could exist; the picture is incomplete, but there lies the

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charm. The veil is wonderfully woven, figures move beneath it never fully revealed, and we derive pleasure from contemplating it because we recognize that it is the sham hypocritical veil that we see but feel not—the sham hypocritical world that we see is presented to us in all its gloss without a scratch on its admirable veneer. No writer except Jane Austen ever had the courage to so limit himself or herself. The strength and the weakness of art lies in its incompleteness, and no art was ever at once so complete and incomplete as Miss Austen's.

Every great writer invents a pattern, and the Jane Austen pattern is as perfect as it is inimitable. It stands alone. The pattern is a very slight one, but so is that of the rarest and most beautiful lace. And in all sincerity I say that I would sooner sign myself the author of "Emma" than of any novel in the English language—the novel I am now writing of course excepted.

GEORGE MOORE.

From Mr. Justin McCarthy.

DEAR SIR: I have so many favorites—even in English-written fiction alone: I am very fond of good novels. I couldn't select *one*. Let me give you a few, only a few! The moment I have sent off this letter I shall be sure to repent some omissions. Fielding's "Joseph Andrews;" Scott's "Antiquary," "Guy Mannering," "Heart of Midlothian," and "St. Ronan's Well;" Dickens's "Pickwick," "Barnaby Rudge," and "Tale of Two Cities;" Thackeray's "Vanity Fair," "Pendennis," and "Esmond;" Charlotte Brontë's "Jane Eyre;" George Eliot's "Mill on the Floss;" Hawthorne's "Blithedale Romance;" and George Meredith's "Beauchamp's Career."

And I had nearly forgotten in my haste two great favorites of mine—Miss Austen's "Pride and Prejudice," and Gerald Griffin's "Collegians;" and, again, surely Hope's "Anastasius."

I had better stop.

JUSTIN MCCARTHY.

From Miss F. Mabel Robinson.

SIR: Your question is an extremely difficult one to answer. One likes some novels for one kind of excellence, others for another, and the favorite—the absolute favorite—is apt to depend a little upon the good novel one has read most recently, and a great deal more upon one's mood.

I do not think that I could name any one novel, either English or foreign, as my first favorite; there are at least four of Turgeneff's, the bare memory of which moves me almost to tears; but I could not choose between "Liza," "Virgin Girl," "Fathers and Sons," and "Smoke;" and, of course, Tolstói's "War and Peace" is a masterpiece which every one will name as a favorite (I give the titles in English, as I have read all these in translations only, French or English), and indeed I think I ought almost to name it as *the* favorite among foreign novels.

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To turn to English masterpieces, there are parts of Fielding's "Amelia," which for tenderness, sweetness, and rendering of character and of home life I think finer than anything more modern; but other parts of the book are so unpleasant that I cannot place it first. I think I must plead guilty to four equal favorites: "Amelia," "Esmond," "The Mill on the Floss," and "Villette;" but perhaps I might tell you to-morrow that I place "Vanity Fair" above "Esmond," and prefer "Middlemarch" to "The Mill on the Floss." Still I think to-day's choice is best, so I will stick to it.

It is impossible to know all one's reasons for preferring some books to others—the style, the diction, the subtle way in which the writer makes you feel many things he has left unsaid elude description; and one's own frame of mind when the book first became known may have a great deal to do with it. Unconsciously association has much to do with one's preferences. It is for the character of Amelia, and the charm of her relations with her husband, that I like this novel. Some of the scenes and dialogues between these two are to my mind perfect, absolutely true and beautiful and satisfying. "Esmond" is certainly very inferior to "Amelia" in point of illusion; one always is conscious that one is *reading*, and the characters are like people we have heard of, or who are at least absent from us; but Harry Esmond is, to my mind, the finest gentleman in English fiction, none the less noble for his little self-conscious air. I have always wondered why he is less popular than Col. Newcome. Except perhaps Warrington he is Thackeray's noblest male character; and "Esmond" is, I take it, the best constructed of Thackeray's novels, and exquisitely written. It is only because there is no woman worthy of the name of heroine that I cannot like this novel best of all. For the reverse reason, that there is no hero, I cannot place "The Mill on the Floss" quite first. Maggie is a beautiful creation, and the picture of English country-life inimitable; the Dodsen family in all its branches is truly masterly. But for deep insight into the heart and soul

and mind of a woman where will you find Charlotte Brontë's equal? Her descriptive power and her style are unsurpassable, and Lucy Snowe can teach you more about the thoughts and griefs and unaccountable nervous miseries and heart-aches of the average young woman than any other heroine in fiction that I know of. There is no episode that I am aware of, of such heartfelt truth as that wretched summer holiday she passed alone at Madame Beck's. And every character in the book is excellent; and as for the manner of it, it seems wrung from the very heart of the writer.

F. MABEL ROBINSON.

From Mr. W. Clark Russell.

DEAR SIR: I hardly know what to say in response to your question as to my favorite work of fiction. I am afraid I must go so far back as Defoe, of whose "Colonel Jack" and "Moll Flanders" I never weary. Amongst modern writers I greatly admire Blackmore, Hardy, and Besant. There is great genius and originality, too, in Christie Murray. But with Thackeray, Dickens, George Eliot, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Mrs. Gaskell, and the Brontë's on my shelves, the indication of any one work of fiction as my favorite since the days of "Roxana," "Pamela," "Joseph Andrews," and "Humphrey Clinker," would prove an undertaking which I fear I have not the courage to adventure.

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W. CLARK RUSSELL.

From Mr. J. Henry Shorthouse.

SIR: Your question seems to me to be a difficult, or I might almost say, an impossible one to answer. I do not see how a man of any carefulness of thought or decision can have one favorite work of fiction. To answer your question as simply as possible, I should say that of foreign books my favorites are "Don Quixote" and the novels of Goethe and Jean Paul Richter.

As regards English fiction, I should, I think, place George Eliot's "Silas Marner" first, both as a work of art and as fulfilling, to me, all the needs and requirements of a work of fiction; but I could not say this unless I may be allowed to bracket with this book Nathaniel Hawthorne's "House of the Seven Gables," Mrs. Gaskell's "Cranford," Jane Austen's "Persuasion," Mrs. Ritchie's "Story of Elizabeth," and William Black's "Daughter of Heth"—all of which books seem to me to stand in the very first rank, and not only to fulfil the requirements of the human spirit, but to stand the much more difficult test of being, each of them, perfect as a whole.

J. HENRY SHORTHOUSE.

From Mr. W. Westall.

DEAR SIR: You ask for the title of my favorite work of fiction. I answer that I have no one favorite work of fiction. Among the myriad novels which I have read there is none of excellence so supreme that I prefer it before all others. On the other hand, I have favorite novels—a dozen or so; I have never reckoned them up. These I will enumerate as they occur to me: "Don Quixote," "Tom Jones," "Ivanhoe," "The Heart of Midlothian," "Jane Eyre," "David Copperfield," "Tale of Two Cities," "Esmond," "Vanity Fair," "Adam Bede," "Lorna Doone," "Crime and Punishment" (Dostoieffsky), "Monte Cristo," and "Froment Jeune et Risler Ainé."

I do not suggest that these novels are of equal literary merit. I merely say that they are my favorites, that I have read them all with equal pleasure more than once, and that, as time goes on, I hope to read them again.

W. WESTALL.

J. A. STEWART.

A QUEEN'S EPITAPH.
[IN WESTMINSTER ABBEY.]

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"And her chief charm was bashfulness of face."

There lay the others: some whose names
were writ
In dust—and, lo! the worm hath scattered
it.

There lay the others: some whose names
were cut
Deep in the stone below which Death is
shut.

The plumèd courtier, with his wit and
grace,
So flattered one that scarce she knew her
face!

And the sad after-poet (dreaming through
The shadow of the world, as poets do)

Stops, like an angel that has lost his
wings,
And leans against the tomb of one and
sings

The old, old song (we hear it with a smile)
From towers of Ilium and from vales of
Nile.

But she, the loveliest of them all, lies
deep,
With just a rude rhyme over her fair
sleep.

(Why is the abbey dark about her prest?
Her grave should wear a daisy on its
breast.

Nor could an age of minster music be
Worth half a skylark's hymn for such as
she.)

With one rude rhyme, I said; but that can
hold
The sweetest story that was ever told.

For, though, if my Lord Christ account it
meet
For us to wash, sometimes, a pilgrim's
feet,

Or slip from purple raiment and sit low
In sackcloth for a while, I do not know;

Yet this I know: when sweet Queen Maud
lay down,
With her bright head shorn of its charm
of crown

(A hollow charm at best, aye, and a brief

—
The rust can waste it, as the frost the
leaf),

She left a charm that shall outwear,
indeed,
All years and tears—in this one rhyme I
read.

SARAH M. B. PIATT.

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THE COST OF THINGS.

"Papa, why does bread cost so much money?" asks a child, of its father. Perhaps if the father is indifferent, indolent, or ignorant, he may dodge the question and reply, "Because flour is so scarce." But if he is a thinking and observant man, willing to instruct an ignorant child asking a very natural question, he will not content himself with such a reply, for he must have observed that bread is sometimes high when wheat and flour are very plentiful.

By drawing on his experience he will not fail to recall the fact that, in a season when any particular article is in much demand, the price of that article will rise and will continue to rise

until the demand for the article induces a supply of it from outside sources.

Let him recall Christmas and Thanksgiving times, when, for instance, turkeys are in demand. If the supply is light, up goes the price of turkeys; and, if the demand increases, the price will continue to rise unless some means are found of supplying the demand. If turkeys flow into the market of a city from the surrounding country, the rise in price is first checked, and then, as the supply increases, the price falls, and the demand being less than the supply, the price goes to its lowest figure. This is in accordance with the recognized law of supply and demand, the relation between the two always establishing the price.

If the demand is greater than the supply, the price will go up; if the supply is greater than the demand, the price will go down. But this state of things can exist only where the inflow of supply and the outflow of demand are *free* and *unrestricted*; for if, from any cause, restriction is placed on the inflow, the outflow will be restricted just in the same way. We may liken the operation of the law to what happens when a bent tube with the ends up is filled with water. If, now, more water is poured in at one end, that same amount will flow out at the other. If the whole capacity of the tube at one end is used to supply water, just that amount will run out at the other; but if one-half the tube at the supply end is plugged up, then only one-half the capacity of the tube will run out at the other.

Reverting to the question of the supply of turkeys in a market, let us suppose that a despot, ungoverned by anything but his own will, is in charge of the city when the turkey market is held, and of the surrounding country, and, wishing to have a plentiful supply of turkeys, he issues his ukase that every turkey within ten miles of the town shall, under severe penalties, be sent into market for sale. Is it not plain that the price of turkeys will at once fall, since the supply will at once become greater than the demand? But suppose this despot has turkeys of his own to sell, and hence desires to make his poor people pay the highest price for their turkeys, so that his coffers may be filled with gold. Now, instead of requiring all turkeys to come in under severe penalties, he does everything he can to keep them out, and issues his ukase that none shall come in, under penalty of death to the importer of turkeys. Is it not as plain as it was in the other case, that the price of turkeys will go up, up, up, until the vast majority of men cannot buy at all?

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Suppose that, instead of placing an absolute prohibition upon the importation of turkeys, the despot, convinced that people must have turkeys, and having already arranged to buy all he wants himself, makes a law that every turkey coming into the market shall be taxed one dollar for the privilege of bringing it to market. Now, turkeys will come in if there is still a demand for them, but every one that comes in must pay a tax of a dollar; and, if there are any turkeys already in market, a dollar will be added to their price, as well as to the price of those coming in. For no importer proposes to lose the amount of the tax himself, and is bound to make the consumer pay that much additional for his turkey; and a resident turkey-dealer, seeing that imported turkeys are selling for a dollar above the market price, will at once add that to the price of his turkeys, since it is expecting too much of human nature to suppose any man is going to sell his property for less than he can get for it. The result of the despot's tax, therefore, is to raise the local price of turkeys by just the amount of that tax; and, the higher the tax, the higher the price of turkeys will be to the consumer.

In this way the price of any article in a market is established by the relation between the supply and the demand; and this law is inexorable. If the supply is restricted by taxing imports, the price, whilst higher, will still be fixed by the demand made for the article; and this applies to all articles which are salable—flesh and blood, muscle, labor, as well as to bread, meat, etc. In slavery times, when a great demand existed in the cotton-States for slave labor, slaves were imported from the more northern States, where labor was not so valuable, to the more southern ones, where it was more so; and this gave the border States the name of being the "slave-breeding States" of the Union. The increased demand for slaves threatened at one time to reopen the slave trade with Africa; and it is said that some negroes were, in fact, brought into the country. Under these circumstances, had the States (Mississippi, Louisiana, and others) where a demand for slaves existed possessed the power to lay a tax on slaves imported into them, the price of slaves in those States would have been very considerably increased.

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The work of hands—labor—is a salable article, just as much as bread or meat, and its price is determined in the same way; not only as regards common labor, but also special kinds of labor. Reverting to the question at the head of this paper,—the price of bread,—let us suppose a community where all the elements of bread-making (flour, yeast, potatoes, etc.) exist in abundance, but where there is but one baker. If the demand for bread is so great that one baker will have to run his bakery night and day to supply the demand, and he can fix his own price, limited only by the number of his customers and their ability to pay (the "demand"), although he can buy his flour and other ingredients cheap, he must pay high wages to his assistants and work hard himself. As the demand for bread increases, its prices will rise until the attention of other bakers is attracted, other bakeries will be established, the supply will more nearly equal the demand, and the price of bread will fall, in accordance with the same law as governed in the case of turkeys; whilst bakers' wages, from the very fact of there being more bakers on the ground, will fall. If, notwithstanding the establishment of more bakeries, the demand still remains greater than the supply, the price of bread will still remain up, and an attempt may be made to import bread from without. If the bakers have influence enough with the law-making power, or with our supposed despot, they will have an import tax placed upon bread to keep up their prices, under the plea of "sustaining domestic industry;" but the amount of this import tax will go into the pockets of the owners of the bakeries, although the wages of their workmen will not be

increased, for their wages depend, as has been shown, not on the price of bread, but upon the number of bread-making laborers available. If such laborers increase in number, the wages of the bread-makers may even go very low, though the price of bread (thanks to the import tax) may remain very high. These points are dwelt upon at length for the purpose of exposing the fallacy of a popular delusion—that....

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It is a remarkable fact that, whilst many laboring-men are deluded with the idea that taxing articles which they consume or aid in producing tends to keep up their wages or to increase them, they entirely ignore the real reason for low wages, which is nothing more or less than the presence of plenty of labor. Once convinced of the fact that the price of everything, labor included, depends on the inexorable law of supply and demand, they will not be able to resist the conclusion that *no importation tax can, by any possibility, affect the price of labor, except an importation tax on labor itself.*

This fact seems almost to demonstrate itself; and yet there is no greater delusion in this country, where its falsity is demonstrated every day to anyone observant of the settlement of our vast Western territories. Let anyone go into a Western settlement and note the high price of labor of all kinds, and that it is almost impossible to get a man to do a day's work for love or money; and let him visit the same place a few years later, when perhaps a railroad is running through the place, which in the meantime has grown immensely in population. He will now note the decrease in wages of all kinds. And, if he will go to the same place still later, he will not fail to note a still further decline; for, if the demand continues, labor will, by means of the railroad, flow in to supply it, and the price of labor will fall—for no other reason than that there is plenty of labor to supply the demand. And this lesson is demonstrated over and over again wherever a new settlement is observed. If there is only one bricklayer in the place he can demand his own price, which cannot be affected by the presence of fifty or a hundred carpenters or blacksmiths, nor by a tax on bricks, mortar, or sand.

X.

ASLEEP.

She is not dead, but sleepeth. As the fair,
Sweet queen, dear Summer, laid her
sceptre down
And lifted from her tirèd brows her
crown,
And now lies lapped in slumber
otherwhere—
As she will rise again, when smiling May,
Saying, "Thy day dawns," wakes her
with a kiss,
And butterflies break from the
chrysalis
And throng to welcome her upon her way,
And roses laugh out into bloom for
glee
That Summer is awake again—so she
Who sleeps, snow-still and white, will
waken when
The Day dawns—and will live for us
again.

CHARLES PRESCOTT SHERMON.

A COUPLE OF VAGABONDS.

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Vagabonds, vagrants, tramps,—the class has never been entirely confined to humanity,—those careless, happy-go-easy, dishonest, unterrified beings to whom the world is an oyster, and often such a one as is not worth the opening, sometimes possess an interest to the observer, entirely disconnected with pity. They always lead reprehensible lives, and usually die disgracefully. They are amusing because of the exaggerated obliquity of their careers, and are, beasts and men alike, droll with a drollery that is three-quarters original sin. Among animals, at least, there are few cases of actual misfortune, though sometimes there is that most pitiable and forlorn creature, a dog that has lost his master, or that bit of cruelty and crime which has its exemplification in an old horse that has been turned out to die. Ordinarily the cases of animal depravity one encounters are so by race and ineradicable family habit, and are beyond the pale of charity and outside the legitimate field of brotherly love. One does not care what becomes of them, and least of all thinks of trying to reform them. But they usually take care of themselves, after a fashion

that excludes all thought of pity. Even among the higher animals there are, as with humanity, occasional cases of extraordinary depravity. I know at this moment of a beautiful horse, with a white hind foot, and the blood of a long line of aristocrats in his veins, who wears an iron muzzle and two halter-chains, whose stall is the cell of a demon, who has made his teeth meet in the flesh of two or three of his keepers, and who is yet sufficiently sane to try to beat all his competitors on the track, and to often succeed. I know a little gray family dog, terrier from the end of his nose to the tip of his tail, kind to all whom he knows, who is yet the veriest crank of his kind. He hates everything that wears trousers, will not come when called with the kindest intentions, attacks all other dogs, big and little, who intrude within his line of vision, and confines his friendships exclusively to people who wear skirts and bonnets. He wears his heavy coat all summer because he has said to the family collectively that he will not be clipped; and, when an attempt of that kind is made, shows his teeth, even to the little girl who owns him. He reminds one of the incorrigible youth of an otherwise God-fearing family, and has been let go in his ways because he is too ugly and plucky to spend the time upon. I know a cat, now not more than half-grown, with a handsome ash-colored coat and a little white neck-tie, who is already as much a tiger as though born in the wilds of Africa. His playful bites draw blood, and his unsheathed claws are a terror, even when one is stroking his back. His tail quivers and his eyes have a tigerish expression, even when he is but catching a ball of yarn. He was after mice, and caught them, in his early infancy, and he was crouching and skulking after things when he should have been lapping milk. It is plainly foreseen that he will never be a family cat, and will take to the alleys and back fences before he is grown. He has in him, more than other cats have, the vagabond and depraved instinct—not amenable to Christian influences.

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But the two persons of whom I shall doubtless seem to have as full recollection here as their characters justify belong to the extensive family of natural vagabonds, and first dawned upon me in the days when there was a frontier. I was in those days perfectly hardened to a bed on the ground, and was amused with the companionship of pack-mules. I was dependent for mental stimulus upon the stories of the camp-fire, and for recreation upon the wild realm in which the only changes that could come were sunrise and evening, clouds, wind, storms. There was a lonely vastness so wide that it became second nature to live in it and almost to love it, and a silence so dense that it became companionship. There was then no dream of anything that was to come. The march of empire had not touched the uttermost boundary. We wondered why we were there. And the blindest of all the people about this wonderful empire were those who knew it best. I really expected then to watch and chase Indians for the remainder of my natural life; looked upon them and their congeners as permanent institutions; made it a part of business to know them as well as possible; and wondered all the while at the uselessness of the government policy in occupying, even with a few soldiers, so hopeless a territory. Very often there was nothing else to do. All the books had been committed to memory previous to being absolutely worn out. It was a world where newspapers never came. When the friendship of certain animals becomes obtrusive,—when they take the place to you of those outsiders whom you do not really wish to know, but who are there nevertheless,—you are likely to come to understand them very well indeed, and to find in after years that they seem to come under the head of persons rather than creatures—the casual wild creatures of whom one ordinarily catches a glimpse or two in the course of a lifetime.

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There was a bushy and exalted tail often seen moving leisurely along above the taller grasses that lined the prairie trail. One might encounter it at any hour, or might not see it for many days. I finally came to look upon this plume with something more than the interest attaching to a mere vagrant polecat, and even ceased to regard the end that bore it as the one specially to be avoided, however common the impression that it is so. In civilization and in the books nobody had ever accused the parti-colored creature of other than a very odorous reputation; and the tricks of his sly life—such as rearing an interesting and deceptively pretty family under the farmer's corn-crib, and refusing to be ejected thence; visiting, with fowl intent, the hen-house; sucking eggs; catching young ducks; and forcing the pedestrian to go far around him upon the occasion of a chance meeting, were condoned as matters that could not be helped in the then condition of human ingenuity and invention. With us, on the plains, he had acquired another and more terrible reputation. Nobody knows how information becomes disseminated in the wilderness, but it seemed to be spread with a rapidity usually only known in a village of some three hundred inhabitants, with a Dorcas Society; and we came to know, from authentic instances, that his bite, and not his perfume, was dangerous. In 1873, the *Medical Herald*, printed at the metropolis of Leavenworth, stated that a young man sleeping in a plains camp was bitten on the nose by one of the beasts. Awaking, he flung his midnight visitor off, and it immediately bit his companion, upon whom it unfortunately alighted. Both of these unfortunates died of hydrophobia.

The same year a citizen came to the U. S. Army surgeon at Fort Harker, Kansas, having been bitten through the nose by a mephitis while asleep. He had symptoms of hydrophobia, and shortly afterwards died of that disease. The next case of which printed record was made was that of a young man who, while sleeping on the ground, was bitten through the thumb. The writer states that the "animal had to be killed before the thumb could be extracted." This man also died of hydrophobia in the town of Russell, in western Kansas. Other cases are recorded about this time, with less detail.

I mention these instances, substantiated in cold print in a medical journal, merely to show that what we thought we knew was not a mere frontier superstition. With a righteous hatred did we hate the whole mephitis family. The little prairie rattlesnake often crept into the blankets at night for the sake of warmth; and it is a noticeable fact that he did not "rattle" and did not bite anybody while enjoying their unintended hospitality, and that such things were not much thought of. But

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the sneaking presence of a skunk, usually considered merely a ridiculous and disagreeable creature, would always call out the force for his extermination, promptly, and by some means.

Yet mephitis has the air of seeming rather to like, than to seek to avoid, mankind. It is one of his curious traits. You cannot certainly tell whether he really does; but, if he does not, it is strange with what frequency he is encountered, exhibiting on such occasions a singular confidence, not in any case reciprocated. It is certain that he has crossed a railroad bridge to visit the bustling metropolis of the Missouri Valley, and been seen complacently ambling the streets there at midnight. If, in crossing a "divide" or threading a reedy creek-bottom, there is seen before you one of those imposing plumes before referred to, standing erect above the long grass, without any perceptible attachment, and moving slowly along, it will be prudent not to permit any curiosity concerning the bearer of it to tempt you to a nearer acquaintance. Indeed, should he discover you, in turn, it will be rather out of the usual line of his conduct if he does not at once come amiably ambling in your direction, intent upon making your personal acquaintance, or, as is more likely, of finding out if there is anything about you which he considers good to eat. There is something both amusing and fearful in this desire to make acquaintances regardless of all the forms of introduction and the usages of society; and no other animal possesses the trait. No one, so far as known, has ever waited to see what special line of conduct he would pursue after he came. The chances are that he would stay as long as he had leisure, and then go without offence; yet no one can foretell his possible caprices. He might conclude to spend the afternoon with one; and, as he is known to be a pivotal animal, reversing himself, upon suspicion arising in his mind, with a celerity perhaps not fully appreciated until afterwards, one might find it at least irksome to remain so long idle and quite still. I knew a soldier once who had such a visit while walking his guard-beat. He did not dare to fire his gun in time, for fear of the serious accusation of wishing to kill game while on duty. He could not scare away the cat, and dared not leave his beat. He stood stock-still for an hour or two, and then called the corporal of the guard in a subdued and whining voice. When that non-commissioned autocrat at last appeared, he considered twenty yards a convenient distance for communication, and declined to come any nearer. Mephitis was at the moment engaged in stroking his sides against the sentinel's trousers, while his host did not dare to either move or speak in a voice the corporal could hear. The latter went away and obtained permission from the officer of the day to shoot something, and returned with four more armed men. The visitor here saw an opportunity to make new acquaintances, and started to meet the latest arrivals half way. They all ran, while the sentinel took the opportunity to walk off in a direction not included in his instructions. The animal was finally partially killed by a volley at forty paces, leaving a pungent reminiscence that did not depart during the remainder of the summer, and necessitated some new arrangements for the lines of defence about the post.

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In more recent times an entire company of hunters, with a dog to every man, have been driven from the field repeatedly by the persistency of the innocent gaze, or the foolish confidence of the approach, of this extraordinary bore; for one can't shoot him if he is looking—not because one can't, but because, if one did, a souvenir would be left, at least among the dogs, that would linger with them until the natural time for the shedding of hair should come again, and deprive their owners of the pleasure of their company for an indefinite period. And, in addition, the people with whom one might wish to stop for the night might make remarks accompanied by nasal contortions not usual in ordinary conversation, and would be likely to suggest the barn, or otherwheres out-of-doors, as being good and refreshing places to spend the night in. Even the hunter's own family will prove inhospitable to the verge of cruelty under such circumstances, and conduct unheard of before will become perfectly proper on the part of one's best friends. Such discomfitures have happened ere now to most sportsmen in Western preserves, and for some reason a crowning misfortune of the kind is apt to be considered a joke ever afterwards.

But an uncontrollable desire for human intimacy is only one item of the oddities of this little beast. As a vagabond of the wilderness he was like other vagabonds there, and got on well enough without any human association. Carnivorous entirely, he cannot be accused of looking for the well-filled granary of later times; he invades no cabbage-patch, and is entirely guiltless of succulent sweet potatoes and milky roasting-ears. His presence in increased numbers among the fields and farms of civilization is accounted for by the fact that he has simply declined to move on. He will not retire to the wilds of the pan-handle or the neutral strip, driven thither by the too copious outpour of civilization. His conduct indicates the just conclusion that he can endure all the vicissitudes of the school-house States if they can, in turn, endure him. Doubly armed, this autocrat of the prairies holds in unique dignity the quality of absolute fearlessness, and, aside from any hydrophobic endowments, is now the chiefest terror of the free and boundless West.

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A figure-head seems to be necessary in the conduct of all the larger affairs of life. From this idea have come all the griffins, and the sphinxes, and the St. Georges and Dragons, the hideous caryatids, gnomes, gorgons, chimeras dire, the eyes of Chinese junks, and the wooden cherubs that until later years looked over the waste of unknown waters beneath the bows of every ship that sailed. On the seals of one-half of all the Western States and territories mephitis might figure as the chiefest animal of their natural fauna, and for him might the buffalo and the bear be properly discarded. They are gone: he remains and impresses himself upon the community unmistakably. But mottoes and great seals and epitaphs are things not expected to be governed in their making by anything like actual fact.

It will be conceded that no other beast approaches this in the particulars of his armament. So confident of his resources is he that the idea that he can be worsted never enters his elongated cranium. Though he never uses his phenomenal powers except upon what he considers an

emergency, these supposed emergencies arise quite too frequently for the general comfort and piety of his neighborhood. It is said that the little western church never thrives greatly in a neighborhood that is for some reason peculiarly infested by him. Yet it is a remarkable fact that when he visits the farmer's hen-roost, which he often does, the owner, if he came from some timbered country, nearly always lays the blame upon the much-maligned "coon;" meaning, of course, that pad-footed and ring-tailed creature who is credited with a slyness verging upon intellect, but who never visited a prairie in his life. He does this because there is no penetrating and abiding savor left behind—except in case of accident—in any of these maraudings. It is a mere piece of cunning. He wishes to come again some other time. The victims of his appetite, comprising everything smaller than himself in that region, are never subjected to his caudal essences, and a good reason for this would be that he wishes to eat them himself. Those who know mephitis well, and also know this trait of his character, are impressed anew by the mercifulness of some of nature's instincts and freaks. [521]

And here arises the question of a certain occult power apparently possessed by this creature alone. It seems to be established by undisputed testimony that he is the most skilful packer of meats, with the least trouble and expense, known in the annals of the art preservative. His hollow logs have been repeatedly split in his absence, and found full of dead fowls, killed in a neighboring farm-yard, squeezed in closely side by side for future use, and all untainted and fresh. How does he accomplish this? There are evidently various things to learn from the field of natural history which might be turned to the uses of man. To say nothing of the value of the patent, this would be a very useful household recipe if known. The inference is that there may be an occult quality in his strange and characteristic endowment not heretofore suspected.

Our western friend has an extensive family relationship. There are at least six varieties of him in various latitudes. No one branch of the family is believed to have any fellowship with any other branch, probably for weighty and sufficient family reasons; though to the ordinary human senses there is so little difference in the sachet that one cannot see reason for being so particular among themselves. Two of him are very common west of the Missouri—one as big as a poodle and variously striped, and the other of a smaller and more concentrated variety, more active also in his habits. It is the bigger of these two who goes about waving his plume and seeking new acquaintances, as though he contemplated going into the Bohemian oats business among the farmers, and who courts admiration while he spreads consternation. It is he who lies in ambush in the corn-shocks, in the early days of the yellow autumn, apparently for the express purpose, through the media of the farmer's boys and the district school, of informing the whole neighborhood, and especially the little girls, that he is still about. It is he who is borne oftenest, in spirit and essence, through the open windows of the settler's house, causing the mistress thereof to wish, and to often say that she wishes, that she had never come away from Ohio, or wherever she used to reside, and where she declares mephitis to have been a nuisance utterly unknown. It is he who lopes innocently along the railroad track, declining to retire, meeting death without a murmur, knowing, perhaps, that his dire revenge will follow the fleeting train, whose wheels have murdered him, for many a mile, even across the plains and into mountain passes, and perhaps return with it and add a little something, a piquant mite, to the loud odors of the Missouri River terminus. The passengers all know he has been killed, and know it for the remainder of the journey, or else they wonder at the pungency of the atmosphere apparently pervading a stretch of country as big as all New England, and which they will talk about as one of the western drawbacks after they have returned home. It is he who rather rejoices than otherwise at the number and ferocity of the farmer's dogs, and who is indirectly blessed if they have the habit of going into the house and lying under the beds. Then indeed may he fulfil his mission. When they at first, and through inexperience, attack him, he routs them all without excitement or anger on his part, causes an armed domestic investigation of them, and their banishment without extradition, and through them impresses himself upon the unappreciative western understanding. [522]

The little one, the other common variety, is perhaps more rarely seen, but he is at least frequently suspected. Not much bigger than a kitten, and almost or quite black, he lacks the look of innocence and the appearance of docility so falsely worn by his relative. Once they both hibernated: at least the books say so. Now, as one of the changes wrought by the settlement of the country, this small one becomes a frequent all-the-year tenant of the farmer's out-buildings. His battery is quite as formidable as the other's is, and may, indeed, be considered as an improvement in the way of rapidity and concentration, like the Gatling gun. The barn is not always his residence; and without inquiring if it is entirely convenient he frequently takes up his domicile in or under the dwelling. A mephitis in the cellar is one of the Kansas things. He does not, while there, produce any of the mysterious noises that indicate ghosts. The house is known not to be haunted, for everybody understands quite well who is there. But the owner must not attempt ejection. Peace and quiet he insists upon. You must bar him out some time when he is absent on business, wait until spring, or move to another house. It is the middle one of these remedies that is usually adopted, if any. While he stays, there are no joint occupants with him in the place he has pre-empted. He will catch mice like a cat, and the joy of his life is the breaking of a rat's back with one nip behind the head. He has a most formidable array of teeth, and eschews vegetables entirely. He is the foe of all the little animals who live in walls or basements, or in holes or under stones. Even the weazel, that slim incarnation of predatory instinct, declines to enter into competition with him, and goes when he comes, or comes when the other goes. One of them is suspected, from this fact, of eating the other, and mankind, with the only form of disinterestedness of which we can justly boast, does not care which of the two it is. [523]

The biggest one of the mephitis family lives in Texas, and that empire is not disposed to boast itself withal on that account. He came there from Mexico, possibly on account of his being preposterously considered a table luxury in the latter country. But it is a land of which such eccentricities may be expected. They eat the ground-lizard there,—a variety of the celebrated "Gila monster,"—and some other creatures to our pampered notions not less repulsive; though they seem to avoid, by peculiar management, that quadrennial banquet of crow which constitutes our great national dish. Mephitis is, however, purely American wherever he comes from. Europe knows him not in quadrupedal form. He is one of the things got by discovery, though he may not take rank, perhaps, with the gigantic grass we call "corn," or with tobacco, or even with ginseng or sassafras, or the host of acquisitions which would distinguish us as a people even if we had him not at all. And now that we have got him, we must apparently cherish him; and with our usual thrift we have made many attempts to utilize him. He often appears in polite society under the name of sable, or some such thing, and no odor betrays him. Of the strange fluid, which is one of the most wonderful natural defences ever bestowed upon an animal, pharmacy has concocted a medicine, and the perfumers an odor for the toilet. Yet it must be admitted that one of his chiefest uses, so far, is to furnish the western editor with a synonym and comparative, and a telling epithet in time of trouble. He often caps the climax of a controversial sentence as long as one's arm, and if you take the county paper you need not be long in discovering that while we scientific may call him *mephitis*, he hath another name not often heard by ears polite, or frequently mentioned in the society in which the reader moves.

That other vagabond who may be considered as being vaguely referred to at the head of this chapter has no possible kinship with him who has been desultorily sketched. Yet the two stand together in my mind in a kind of vague relationship of character. I was not surprised at my first sight of a coyote, but he grew greatly upon me afterwards. It was his voice. He is but a degenerate wolf,—the weakest of his family save in the one respect referred to,—but he is an old and persistent acquaintance of every frontiersman, ten times as numerous and prominent in every recollection of that far time of loneliness and silence as any other beast.

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If you visit Lincoln Park, at Chicago, you will find a special pen devoted to the comfort and happiness of this little gray outcast of the wilderness; and I may add that he does not appear there to any advantage whatever. On the wide plains where there was nothing, apparently, to eat, he was, for a coyote, usually in good condition. His coat was tolerably smooth sometimes, and he was industrious and alert. Here, where he is regularly fed at the public expense, he is so shabby that one hesitates to be caught looking at him as one goes by. There is that about an animal that expresses unhappiness as plainly as it is expressed by men, and the Lincoln Park coyote is unquestionably the most abject specimen of his entire disreputable family.

The reader will understand that in all I may have to say about the little reprobate I do not refer for any particulars to that incarcerated and unhappy vagabond just mentioned. On the contrary, he was the first sensation of my earliest border experiences. He came the first night, and every night thereafter, for several years. I grew to know him well, and have had many a brief and solitary interlude of mingled amusement and vexation on his account, when there was nothing else on earth to laugh at or be sorry about. I often have shot at him, usually at very long range, but never to my knowledge killed, or even scared him. It is well understood that he always knows whether or not you have with you a gun, and will be distant or familiar accordingly. But finally exasperated by a wariness so constant, I have sought revenge by a form of murder that I do not now claim, upon reflection, was entirely in self-defence or perfectly justifiable, and which to this day remains a red stain upon an otherwise fair reputation. I killed twenty odd of him in a single night with insidious strychnine and a dead mule, and in the morning was astonished not so much at the slaughter as at the fact that he had not suspected the somewhat worn expedient, and avoided the banquet.

The trouble with him is, that he does not avoid anything that may be imagined to be good to eat. If there was ever an animal preternaturally and continually hungry, it was the old-time coyote of the plains of western Kansas and the mountains and plateaux of southern New Mexico. Yet no one ever saw a starved coyote, or found a dead one. The odor of the camp-fire frying-pan reached him a long way off, and was irresistible. He crept nearer and nearer, as the evening passed, and finally the camp was surrounded by a gray cordon who crouched and licked their jaws, and kept still and waited. But when the little fire was dead and the voices had ceased, and every man lay wrapped in slumber and his blankets, the tuneful side of his nature would get the better of him, and he began to faintly whine. He was getting the key-note, and ascertaining the pitch. The first faint yelp, imprudently uttered, affected his companions as yawning does men, and now a still hungrier one gives utterance to a screech so entirely coyotish that the example is irresistible. Then pandemonium awakes. Each vagabond rises up, sits upon his tail, elevates his chin, and gives utterance to a series of yelps that rise in crescendo, regardless of time, or measure, or interval, or the lateness of the hour. Then, when the camp was new, and the men were beginners in that strange and lonely life that often kept its unexplained and indescribable charm for them ever afterwards, there would be responsive sleeplessness and profanity. The hardest ordeal was to become finally accustomed to this nightly pandemonium, which no effort could prevent, no vigilance avoid. The first effect was to be slightly, though privately, frightened. The next was to intensify the feeling of lonesomeness. One lay in torment, silent, sleepless, wondering if it was a common thing, and if it were possible to yelp a human creature to death in the course of time. Then one talked to his companions, and perhaps expressed himself in a couple of languages. The most futile of all toil would be an attempt to drive the singers away. Silent only for a moment,

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they would all come back again and make up for lost time. This is how the early wanderers in what is destined to be the garden of the Union first made the acquaintance of the most characteristic animal of the country, and this is why he dwells in the memory of every man who ever slept beneath the sparkling dome west of the Missouri the sweet sleep of toil and health—a sleep that by-and-by was uninterrupted by all the night-sounds the wilderness might invent except the stealthy footfall of some human stranger.

And when the gray vagabond had become an accustomed nuisance he began to exercise his real calling; for all his other modes of obtaining a livelihood are mere by-play to his actual business, which is stealing. In this line he is something preternatural. He had in those days a remarkable liking for harness, straps, raw-hide, saddles, boots. He chewed the lariat from the pony's neck, and would steal a saddle and gnaw it beyond use or recognition by the owner. He would walk backward and draw anything that had a rancid smell a mile or so from where he found it. He was accused of deliberately drawing the cork and spilling the horse liniment, and of then lapping the fluid from the ground regardless of consequences. He would chew a belt of cartridges for the sake of the tallow with which they were coated, and spit them out again in a dilapidated pile of sheet metal. Vagabond luck saved him from having the top of his head blown off during this meal; and I have known a Mexican youth to be killed in trying to straighten some of them out again. Whips and thongs were dainties, chewed, swallowed, and digested without danger or difficulty. The owner was under the necessity of looking after his boots more carefully when they were off than when they were on, and axle-grease was a precious commodity stored for safe-keeping with the teamster's spare shirt, in some arcanum of the equipage where the utmost diligence would not reveal it.

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It was a most desolate country, whose silent leagues bore no sustenance, and whose creatures, save him, were few. He was everywhere, and the secret of his existence lay in his one virtue—industry. He gathered a livelihood from the things despised of all others, and he seasoned it with content and made it answer. Never a beetle or a lizard crossed his path unchased. Plainsmen said that when he encountered one of the little land-turtles or terrapins, then common, he staid with it until it died and the shell came off. He killed the virulent little prairie rattlesnake, also plentiful enough, by seizing it in the middle and snapping its head off with a single jerk, as one cracks a whip. But if he had been bitten he would always have recovered. He chased jackass rabbits in pairs, and while one ran straight after the rabbit the other would cut across the angle, and thus the two would run down an animal that, when really on business, is able to fling his heels derisively in the face of the best-bred greyhound. And when they had caught him there was always a controversy. No coyote ever divided honorably. That "honor among thieves," so often mentioned, was not in his education. He sucked eggs—all that he could find; and when anything died within ten miles or so he knew it. He was contemporary with the bison, and was the bison's assassin; for when age and decrepitude overtook the shaggy bull, and three or four lame and grizzled companions went off together, he and his companions literally naggged them to death one by one. If the veteran lay down, they bit him. As long as he remained on foot they followed and teased him. When he died, they fought over and ate him, denying even a morsel to the buzzards and ravens. They followed the Indian hunting-parties, thankful for the morsels that fell to them, which were not many; for the noble red man was himself no disdainer of viscera: he included the whole internal economy under the possible head of tripe, and if in haste ate it raw; and all he left of a dead buffalo was a hard-earned morsel even for a coyote, if he had come far to get it.

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And when the white hunter came, then was the time of feasting for *canis latrans* in all his squalid days. He was the only creature benefited by a ceaseless slaughter of about twenty years; a slaughter which meant nothing but a passion for killing, and which, leaving every carcass where it fell, in about that time exterminated the biggest, most imposing, and most numerous of the wild beasts of America.

By-and-by the railroads began to stretch their lonesome lines across the plains, and the settlers began to come. For a certain time the coyote seemed to retire before them, and there seemed a prospect for his final extermination. Not he. When the cattle-men and pioneers grew too plentiful and meddlesome; when the new-comer began to lie in wait at night for the protection of the pigs and chickens reared in hope and toil; and when the unhesitating shot-gun was the companion of his vigils, sir coyote began to come back east and reoccupy the region he had left. But under changed conditions. He is an animal of mental resource and acumen, and he changed his life. It is almost useless to add that he became worse. Middle and eastern Kansas have him in considerable numbers now, and it is noticeable that whereas he once had the impudence to sit and bark at the intruder like a dog as he passed by, he is now seldom seen or heard. Then he was merely a thief; now he is a freebooter besides. He once burrowed in the hill-top, and launched his family upon the world in a comparatively open and respectable manner, equipped only with teeth, instinct, and perseverance, confident of their future. He has now retired to the woods that line the streams, and joined that disreputable brush society which was never very respectable among either coyotes or men. He is clannish. Generation after generation stick together in the same retired locality, and sally forth at night among a population greatly richer in eatables than any he was formerly accustomed to. He no longer wanders to and fro through a vastness in which his personality was in keeping, and his slanting eyes and three-cornered visage now find furtive occupation beside fence-chinks and through cracks and knot-holes. He knows a thousand devious ways which all in the end lead to the barn-yard. It is a bleak time with him when he is forced to resort to the catching of mice again; but when I see him loafing on the sunny side of the stacks in a distant field I know what he is there for, and wish him luck for old acquaintance' sake.

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Strangest of all, he has almost lost his voice, and the era of free concerts is over. Down at the bottom of a ravine, perhaps immensely tickled at some toothsome find, he sometimes so far forgets himself as to give a yelp or two. This feeble demonstration usually attracts the attention of others than those intended, and perhaps the farmer's boy, the inevitable mongrel dog with cock ears and phenomenal activity, and the frequent fowling-piece harass him greatly for the time being. But it is not to be supposed that he has lost his ancient qualifications for the performance of characteristic exploits. He merely suppresses them for the present because it is his interest to do so. Versatile, persistent, and patient, he almost deserves respect for his uncomplaining acceptance of the conditions of a changed world, his contempt for public opinion, and the common-sense which has led him to decline to follow all his contemporaries into the limbo of extermination. When I see him now, the leer in his eye and the grin on his mouth almost seem those of recognition. As of old, he wags his way along the top of the high divide, but now fenced and full of spotted cattle, with the same pensive, quick-turning, alert head, the same jog-trot, the same lolling red tongue, the same plume trailing along behind, ever mindful of a coyote's affairs, ever thinking of his next meal. Yet he is so much like his cousin, the dog, that know him never so well you can hardly help whistling to him. And when you have passed by, if you will look back you will see him sitting upon his tail and looking after you with the same expression which in the olden time made you know that he was wondering where you were going to camp, and whether, when he had barked you into stupidity or death, there was anything about you rancid, portable, dragable, tough, but perchance coming within the wide range of a coyote's menu.

JAMES W. STEELE.

A MEMORY.

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On Narragansett's storm-beat sand
 We walked with slow, reluctant feet;
I held enclasped her slender hand,
 With loved possession, deep and sweet.
Out on the wave the wild foam swung,
The circling sea-gulls upward sprung;
While o'er the level sand the sea
Came rolling soft and dreamily.

The sunset's glow was on her cheek,
 Where love and heaven seemed to
 blend;
So full our hearts we could not speak,
 As summer's glories found an end.
What tender lights sieved through the
 mist,
As waves and sunlight sparkling kissed,
While o'er the sea, to setting sun,
Swung thunder of the evening gun!

Ah! gentle form, what gift was thine
 To give the sky a deeper blue,
To make the barren sands divine,
 And heaving sea a rosier hue?
'Twas morn of life, and love's sweet
 glance
Gave dreary years their one romance,
When yielding form and tender eyes
Return to earth its paradise.

On Narragansett's dreary sand,
 Now bent and old, alone I stray,
Nor see the lights, nor waves, nor land,
 But one lone grave so far away.
The storm-tossed foam and gulls
 distraught
Return like dreams, with haunted thought

—
"No more, no more, oh! never more!"
Moan the dark waves along the shore.

PAUL DAVIS.

A detective is well used to the unusual and to meeting as cold facts what, when told, seems a tissue of the wildest improbabilities. During my experience I had one case which for certain strange features I have never had surpassed. It seemed to make itself into my hand as clear as a first lesson in reading for a child, until almost the end, and then came points which are hard enough to unravel.

It occurred years ago, on the evening of the French Ball. I was free, and attended it. It was the usual thing. The Academy of Music was filled with gay women and young fellows about town. By twelve o'clock the wanton hilarity was beginning to get well under way. The women were leaning heavily on their partners' arms and indulging in loud laughter, while the steps were more vigorous than decorous. The high-kicking had begun. My attention had been particularly drawn to one young woman. She was not very tall, but was beautifully made. She was dressed like a Columbine. Her short, pointed skirt of yellow silk and blue velvet came hardly to her knees, and the waist was quite décolleté. On her blond hair was perched a conical cap with tiny silver bells on it. Around her face was wound a piece of white lace to serve as a mask. I noticed her because she was such an exquisitely graceful dancer. Her small feet, cased in gold shoes with high heels, twinkled as prettily as possible as they lightly touched the waxed floor. The dancing was an intense pleasure to her evidently. She could hardly keep her feet still during any pause in which she had not to move. They would beat impatiently upon the floor, and she would toss one in front of the other and sway her sinuous little figure, impatiently waiting till her turn to dance came again.

As I was standing near the door looking at her a party of several young men came into the Academy. They stood and looked about and passed remarks on the scene as if they had not yet become acquainted with its features. They had been to a theatre, probably, and came to the ball after it. The eyes and cheeks of two or three of them were bright, as if they had been drinking. One young fellow seemed to be the object of much attention from the others. He was a German, of medium height, with blue eyes and exceedingly blond hair, while a rich color mantled in his cheeks. The others would make some remark or comment on the scene to him, and he would laugh or smile with the air of a philosopher who had come to find a cynical enjoyment in the insane folly of his kind. The others addressed him in German or French, and called him "Graf." From his manner and appearance it did not require much astuteness to conclude that he was a young German of rank who was visiting the country.

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One of his companions turned to him with a broad smile and made some remark, pointing out one of the dancers. I looked in the direction and saw my pretty blond Columbine pirouetting gracefully around, with her arms stretched out to her partner, a big fellow who was a little fuddled with wine, and who had strayed out of the orbit of the girl in a turn in the dance. She was not going to be balked of her share in the measure, and tripped about by herself quite contentedly till he should come back. It was an amusing touch to see the fairy-like creature smiling good-naturedly, while the lumbering fellow who was dancing with her, or who should have been dancing with her, was gyrating beyond her reach. I glanced at the group of fellows to see if it was she they were observing.

A change had come over the German. His face was as white as death, and his eyes were dilated and fixed. He had fallen a little back of the others, as if he did not wish to be observed. This was interesting, and I felt my professional instincts aroused. He answered their remarks with a rather hard, forced smile. A moment after he made some proposal or said something that seemed to be a surprise to them, and I saw them shake hands with him. He left the hall in a hurried way. I slipped after him. I wished to see what he did. He stood for a moment in the foyer, and I saw his hands clinch fiercely. Then, in a distraught sort of way, he walked around to one of the other entrances to the dancing-floor and looked about among the dancers. He tried not to get where he could be seen, and there was a fierce scowl on his face. I lounged slowly in the neighborhood, and watched him. The deathly paleness had not left his face.

All at once he walked in upon the dancing-floor, with an attempt at careless ease, and addressed a masker who wore the costume of a Franciscan friar, a roomy brown suit, with a rope knotted at his waist for a cincture, and a large hood to it which he had pulled up over his head. He was standing near the entrance. He was masked, so he was pretty thoroughly disguised. The monk was not dancing.

The young German spoke to him, and then drew him out of the hall. In the corridor he spoke more earnestly to him. The man seemed to be declining some invitation or request. But after a few moments of earnest speech from the German the two walked away, and, keeping them in view, I saw the pair leave the Academy.

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I was at first tempted to follow them. But having no more definite purpose than to see what would come of their movements, I concluded to remain and witness the fun at the ball, which always grew fast and furious at the small hours of the morning.

So I resumed my old post and amused myself by watching the reckless extravagance of the mob of revellers. The little Columbine, though she had been taking her share of the champagne, for I had seen her in the wine-room several times, was very firm on her feet. Her eyes twinkled with a lazy sort of brightness. She had a better partner now, a little young fellow dressed in black tights and a short velvet jacket. They were coming down the middle of the room, his right arm around her waist. Every few steps as they advanced, both facing forward, they flung their legs in the air with a wild but graceful vigor. Then they would whirl around to a sort of waltz-step, which the man in tights would wind up by clasping the Columbine firmly around the waist and gyrating so

rapidly that her body was thrown out at right angles to his own.

They attracted a great deal of attention, because the grace of their movements was very great, despite the wild abandon of it. I do not know how I came to remark it, but while they were mid-way on their course I saw the Franciscan monk come in at one of the entrances. He leaned against a pillar, and I saw him watching the pair.

They finished their bacchic course, and the youth in the black tights escorted the panting, smiling girl to a seat, where he made a mock bow of the deepest reverence and went off. I kept my eye still fixed on the girl, who was smiling and fanning herself. Even then her little feet beat the floor to the sound of the music.

While she was sitting thus the monk came up and seated himself on a chair by her side. He made some remarks to her. She coquettishly answered them. Then to another she shook her head with playful determination. The monk pressed the point, for he bent forward, though I noticed that when she turned towards him he seemed to shrink back.

Finally Columbine sprang to her feet, took his arm, and with a half-regretful glance at the merry dancers left the room with him.

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The next day the evening papers had a startling story. I have kept the newspaper account. It was this:

"A SEQUEL TO THE FRENCH BALL.

"Those who were at the French Ball last night in the Academy of Music may have remarked a young woman dressed as Columbine, who excited a good deal of attention by her graceful dancing. The giddy young thing will not dance at the next French Ball. She was lying at the morgue this morning, stone dead, waiting to be identified. It seems a cruel mockery, after her last night's gayety, to behold her now, in her ball dress of black and yellow velvet, lying till someone shall tell who she is. Failing all identification, some doctor's scalpel will dissect the corpse and study the muscles which worked so healthfully in the dance.

"The young girl was strangled to death last night in a carriage. She left the ball with some one dressed like a Franciscan monk, at two o'clock. The monk gave a card to the driver, after printing on it 'No. — 120th Street.' He also gave the driver a twenty-dollar gold piece. All this without a word. He was closely masked. The driver had only remarked that his hand was very white and large, and that he wore a heavy plain gold ring.

"The two got in and he drove off. While he was driving along the upper part of Madison Avenue he heard a sound which attracted his attention. On looking round he saw that the door of the carriage was open. He stopped, reached back with his whip, and banged it to. He supposed the couple inside were probably the worse for the wine they had taken at the ball, and had either failed to shut the door, which had worked open, or that the handle of the door had been fiddled with till it opened, and they were too far gone to notice it.

"At all events the twenty-dollar gold piece had made the driver disposed to be obliging, and he had pushed it to for them, and driven on. When he reached 120th Street, at the designated number, he got off the box and opened the carriage door.

"A lamp-post in front of the house lit up the carriage. The curtains of the carriage windows had been drawn. They were not drawn when the couple got in. What he saw terrified him. Columbine was lying, with her white wraps fallen about her, between the seats, and a monk's frock and a girdle of rope, together with a mask, were tossed on a seat. The monk had disappeared!

"The hackman shook the girl and tried to rouse her, but could not. He pulled her forward, and then saw that her face was frightfully red, and that the eyes were puffed out. On the throat were the marks of fingers where a terrible grip had been taken of her neck.

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"The story was clear enough. The monk, whoever he was, had strangled the girl in the carriage, and had then thrown off his disguise and let himself out at the door while the carriage was still in motion.

"This savage crime was evidently premeditated. The masker had printed the address, had not spoken a word, and had paid the fare before entering the carriage. So there was not the sound of his voice, or his handwriting, to identify him, and his form and face had been completely hidden.

"The cabman drove at once to the nearest police-station and told his story. The body was taken to the morgue. The detectives are at work on the case, which promises to be a very pretty one. *Known*: a man masked as a monk who was at the French Ball, and who had a large white hand, on which he wears, or wore, a plain gold ring. *Unknown*:

the murderer. Who is the detective that will run down the game?"

"Here he is," I said to myself, as I finished reading the account. I had more points than the paper gave. The scenes at the ball came back to me very vividly now. The sudden deathly paleness of the German stranger, and his departure with the Franciscan friar! There was a connection here that was too evident to be passed over.

I determined to find out who had murdered the pretty Columbine, who had won me so by her graceful dancing and smiling good-humor. Early the next morning I went to the morgue. There she lay, the dainty figure stretched out so stiff and cold in the big gloomy room. What a contrast to the scene in which I had seen her last! There was a damp cloth over her face. When it was removed I saw a round, full face, the features small and delicate. I gently pushed back the lids from her eyes. They were a dark blue. Her blond hair was her own, and not a wig. I pictured to myself the smoothly-rounded cheeks with the warm color of life in them. I glanced regretfully at her feet, still in their high-heeled golden shoes. They had tripped to their last dance, the dance of Death, and were motionless forever.

I found that a beautiful emerald which I noticed pinned in her corsage on the night of the ball was gone. It had been rudely plucked away, for the lace about the edge of her dress was torn and hanging. But a large ring of rubies and diamonds had been left on her finger, and was kept at the station-house. I had remarked the emerald because it had an old-fashioned setting in gold, and impressed me as a family jewel. [535]

The people who lived at No. — 120th Street were a most respectable family, and a large one. They deprecated the publicity which the number of their house in the story of the murdered girl had thrust upon them. Inquiry into the character of this family satisfied me on one point, that the monk had given that address simply because it was a distant one, whether he had written it at random or had known the people residing at the number.

I went to all the transatlantic steamers which were in port and got their passenger-lists of the voyage over. In one that had arrived three days before I found a name which I will call in this story Count Hermann Stolzberger of Vienna. He was the only German count who had come over in any of them.

I made a tour of the swell hotels in the city and examined their registers. In one on Fifth Avenue I found the entry, "Hermann Stolzberger and servant." He had arrived three days before.

I engaged a room at the hotel. I wished to be in the neighborhood. I had first inquired if Count Stolzberger had left town, and the clerk had told me no. Where was he to go? The clerk had heard him say to a friend that he expected to be in New York ten days or so. Was he in now? No. He had gone out with friends and would not be back for dinner.

That evening I lounged around the office, sitting in the long corridor into which the door from the street opened. I waited until twelve. No Count! I prolonged my guard for an hour more, and he had not appeared. I wished above all to get a look at Count Hermann Stolzberger. He might, it was true, have gone in at the ladies' entrance, or he might remain out all night. On the other hand, he possibly had delayed with friends and would yet return. I waited.

My patience was rewarded. At half-past one a cab rolled up to the door, and a young man in a large overcoat, somewhat foreign in its mode, sprang out and walked with a quick, nervous tread into the corridor. He walked rapidly by, but my eye had taken him in from the moment he opened the door. My memory of faces is excellent. I recognized the blond fairness of the Count at once, though there was not much color in his cheeks, and his face looked worn and thin. Count Hermann Stolzberger was the young German who had entered the French Ball and turned pale at the sight of the Columbine! [536]

I have said that this case almost seemed to unroll itself for me; but there were two or three connections to be made to constitute proof, and not leave me with a distinct suspicion only.

I visited the morgue daily in hope of some clue, but none came. No one identified the body, and after the allotted length of time it went to the dissecting-table. There were hundreds of visitors to see it, and a great deal of sympathy was expressed; but that was all. Nobody claimed it or seemed to have known the poor girl.

A costumer had claimed the Franciscan's robe. I fancy he did this more through curiosity to find if it were the one he had let than on account of the value of it, for it must have been very cheap. I got the address of this man and called on him. I asked him if he remembered the man who had hired it. He said he did. It was a smooth-faced, dark-complexioned man of about forty. He remembered, because he had made some joke with him about his being clean shaven enough for a monk.

The man had given no address, and he did not know who he was. This was a slight hitch in the proceedings. I was convinced that the murderer in the garb of the Franciscan friar was not the man who had engaged it of the costumer, but the German. He was of much the same size and build as the original monk, and so he had assumed the loose brown habit without exciting my attention. But the fact of the German's turning so pale and calling the monk out from the dance had made me feel that he was the one who had strangled the gay Columbine in the carriage that night.

The Count seemed to grow visibly thinner. There was a drawn look to his face, and during the

time that the dead girl lay at the morgue he seemed to be held by some terrible thought. I had shadowed him closely to see if he ever went to see the remains, but he did not go near them. His terrible secret was telling on him fearfully, however. The color had become faint in his cheeks, and his eyes had a haggard look. When he was with others he would affect a gayety that drove much of this distressing expression from his face; but when he came home alone it was very marked.

Something had to be done if I was to secure the proof that would convict the Count. It was the third day since I had come to the hotel and busied myself in studying him. He had gone to the reading-room, contrary to his usual habit, after finishing his breakfast. While he was there two of his friends came in, and they began conversing together. I slipped across the way and hastily wrote a message, sealed it, and charged a messenger-boy to deliver it, saying that he was to wait and see if any answer would be given. [537]

I hurried back to the reading-room of the hotel again. The Count and his friends were still there. If they only remained till the messenger arrived! I had seated myself in a corner behind some one, but with my eyes commanding a full view of the three. The message did come before they left. One of the hotel clerks brought it in. The Count tore open the envelope and read the note. I could not but admire his self-control. The nostrils expanded and hardened, and a stolid look crept into his eyes for a moment; but that was all. What he read was this: "You know and I know whose hands left those marks on the throat. Why do you not wear your gold ring?"

He remained in thought for a moment. Then he lightly excused himself to his friends and went out, having asked something of the servant. He had gone to see the messenger-boy. I did not fear the description he would get being of much help to him. He was not gone very long. When he returned he talked easily to his two friends, and after a little while they went out together.

When he came in that night a letter was waiting for him which had come through the mail. "What good did it do to kill Columbine?" was all there was in it.

The next morning when he awoke he found a note under his door. Its contents were these words: "Is it harder to be choked to death by ten fingers or by a rope?"

There was a far more guarded expression about his face after these notes than before. He always wore a fixed, stolid calm now. He evidently felt that some eye was on him, and he could not tell when or where.

The evening of the following day he received another message. It ran: "Leave New York at once if you would save your neck."

The Count was too sharp for me. He did not go. But he did not go out so much in the daytime. He could not altogether cloak his feelings. There was a disposition on his part to take quick, searching glances about him.

But the strain on him was telling. It cost him more effort to keep from looking troubled. His face got thinner and paler. I was "shadowing" him closely; but I had to be very careful, for he was trying to discover who it was that was on his tracks. [538]

One morning he went out about the hour he generally left the hotel. It was the fourth day after the note which advised him to leave New York. He went directly to a railroad station and took the train for Chicago. I was prepared for this emergency, and went on the same train.

When it arrived in Chicago, he went to the Palmer House and registered as Karl Schlechter. He had not been in his room half an hour when a note was given him. It had been sent by a messenger-boy. "Karl Schlechter is Count Herman Stolzberger, and the halter is as near him in Chicago as in New York," ran the note.

It seemed almost cruel to pursue him like a Nemesis; but I thought of the gay Columbine whose young life had been mercilessly choked out of her by his smooth white hands, and did not desist.

He left Chicago that night after sending a telegram. Probably it was to his man in New York. He went west as far as Kansas City. A note was handed him in the same way as soon as he had got well settled at his hotel: "The ghost of a strangled girl does not care for place."

He remained here only a day, sending another telegram. When the train had started which carried him away, he walked through the cars deliberately looking at the passengers.

At Denver the old story was repeated: "Eyes sharper than your own are still on you. You cannot escape the hold of your murdered victim."

The next step was to Salt Lake City. He went through the same tactics on the cars, and his sharp eye took me in.

A new note reached him at the Walker House. "It may not be long before we meet again, and then my fingers will be at your throat."

In the evening after dinner he was in the billiard-room of the hotel. He saw me there and finally came and seated himself by my side. He engaged me in conversation. He spoke English in a broken way which there is no need to reproduce.

"Was I from New York?" he began.

"Yes."

"Are you travelling for pleasure or business?" he asked next.

"For pleasure," I answered.

"A foreigner is a little surprised when he sees an American travelling in his own country. It seems as if he must be familiar with it. Where are you going from here?"

"Oh, I am not settled. I drift where the humor takes me."

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I saw I had become the subject of his suspicions. But he did not yet know me as the author of the notes.

He did not remain long in Salt Lake City. I went from the place when he did. He had noticed me once or twice and felt certain I was following him. He went to San Francisco direct. When we arrived there, he gave some order to a hackman, before stepping into the carriage. I engaged another hackman.

"Follow that carriage until the man gets out, but only keep close enough to know where it goes."

The hack in which the Count had got travelled around without any definite termination apparently. He wished to know if anyone was following him, and had told the hackman to see if another carriage was after him. He soon found there was, and then he drove at once to the hotel, and hurried into the office.

I got there a few moments later. I went to the register. His name was not there at all. I looked around the place and found him sitting not far off. He had begun to watch me. I went down stairs and gave a note to one of the boys to take out to the message office, and have it sent to Count Stolzberger. I had prepared it beforehand, so I was only gone a moment. He kept me well in view all he could. When he finally went to register, he signed his right name, Count Stolzberger, and the clerk gave him the message which had been brought in.

He seemed puzzled. He had kept me in view ever since I arrived, and I had had no time to write a note. So for a moment he did not know what to think. The note had said: "The man who lent you the costume of the friar has been found. There are not many more turns for you now. This man will recognize you when he sees you. Other witnesses will prove that you spoke to Columbine, drove off with her in the hack, and that the poor girl was found dead after your disappearance. What lacks to fit the rope to your neck?"

He engaged his room, and soon after he had gone to it a boy came to me and asked me to go to the Count's room for a few moments.

Count Stolzberger was sitting in an easy-chair near a table, on which there was writing-material. He rose, greeted me with dignity, and motioned me to a chair, asking me to sit down.

"You remember that we both came from Kansas City together, and that part of the journey was made in a sleeping-car," he said, with slow deliberation.

"We may have done so," I answered.

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"In the night I went through the pockets of your coat and vest. The result of that investigation, and especially as regards certain notes made by you on a sheet of paper, has shown me that you are a detective, and that you are engaged in working up the case of the girl who was—who died after the French Ball in New York. I am right, am I not?" he inquired, all in the same calm, measured way.

"Yes," I replied. "I have been keeping you in sight, Count, until the necessary proofs were obtained that would convict the murderer."

"You fancy that I am the one who did the deed?" he asked, in the same measured tones.

"I know it," I answered quietly, but with an air of conviction.

"Granting, for the moment, that you are right, what interest have you in bringing home the crime to me? Who has engaged you to do this?"

"The pretty girl who was strangled, and a professional desire to work up the case."

"The several notes I have received were from you, I suppose," he continued, in his easy, careless tones.

"Yes."

"And you have the proof that I am the murderer?" he inquired, turning his eyes unflinchingly on me.

I smiled. "Count, I fear that everything is against you."

"You would be sadly mortified to find that you were mistaken, I presume."

"I should be sadly surprised," I returned, again with a quiet smile.

"What time did the hackman drive off with the monk and the girl?" he asked me.

"At ten minutes past two. The hackman noted the time to see what hour he could hope to get back for another fare."

"Well, let me tell you something that may modify your search in this business. I had made arrangements to go with the girl. I did not wish in any way to be connected with her departure. So just when we were ready to go down to the carriage, I told her to wait for me at the entrance for five minutes. She said she would, and went down.

"I had put on the monk's garb over my evening dress. I threw it off and left it in one of the dressing-rooms. I hurried back to the floor and made it a point to show myself to several persons who knew me. I feared that possibly some one had seen me talk to the monk, and would connect the disappearance of Columbine afterward with a monk with this. This was my reason for conspicuously showing myself after she had gone out with me in the monk's dress. [541]

"I was not away more than six or seven minutes, when I went back to the dressing-room to put on the habit again. It was gone! I searched in the neighboring rooms, thinking some one might have moved it to some other place. I could not find it. I then hastened down to the entrance to go with the Columbine in my dress-suit, with a mask on, for I had slipped that in my breast.

"The girl was not there! I inquired of some of the bystanders, and they told me that a monk had got into a carriage with her not five minutes before. Who that monk was I am as ignorant as yourself. You have followed a false trail. I did *not* go with the girl, and can prove an alibi for the next two hours after she drove off. Several of my friends were with me from then till I went to my hotel, and my man knows the hour when I came home with them. I was terribly shocked the next day when I heard of her mur—her death."

I felt considerably taken back and very foolish. The Count's accents were those of truth, and afterwards his assertions were fully borne out by witnesses. Who it was that murdered the unfortunate girl has remained the closest mystery ever since.

"Will you tell me your relation to the girl? Why did you turn pale when you saw her? And why did you wish to go with her, as you admit having wished to do?"

"That," said the Count, with intense decision, "you will never know from me."

And I never did. There was a twofold mystery about what had seemed to me as clear as the alphabet. Never could I learn what were Count Stolzberger's relations with the girl, nor who had murdered her in the carriage after the ball.

PORTLAND WENTFORTH.

DOES THE HIGH TARIFF AFFECT OUR EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM?

We had, before the war, the system of apprenticeship as practised to a great extent in Europe to-day. Its almost total extinction is laid at the door of concentrated, and still concentrating, capital, aided by improved machinery.

Some may argue that our improved machinery has the tendency to combine capital. This may be true in some measure; but, upon second thought, it will become clear to an impartial thinker that the protective tariff is the chief cause, as is evidenced by its baneful results—the trusts. [542]

Under this new order, the shoemaker has no need of apprentices. The Northern shoe-factory, which employs cheap foreign labor at labor-saving machines, takes away his trade. He has, of course, a few customers for hand-made shoes, but his principal occupation consists in mending the poorly made shoes of the factory. He needs no apprentices for that, but, in order to make a comfortable living for his family and give his children the benefits of an education, he must charge big prices; and I venture to predict that the time is not far off when it will be cheaper to the consumer to buy a new pair of shoes from the factory than to have the old ones half-soled and otherwise repaired by the shoemaker of his town. This holds good in regard to other trades, and the question arises: What condition are we drifting into?

The indications are that we shall have in the near future a manufacturing class, a farming class, and a floating class. This floating class deserves our serious consideration. It consists of a large body of men and women, shiftlessly changing from the merchant class to the professions, and from the professions to the merchant class.

Our educational system helps to increase the confusion. Starting out with the intention of making the schools of the country the foundation of a substantial education in the elementary branches, our educators have allowed themselves to be carried away—through sheer enthusiasm, no doubt—from that simple and substantial basis of operation; and we have to-day, as the necessary result, the most complicated, absurd, and absolutely useless educational system in the world.

There is no branch of human knowledge that is not taught in the public schools of the country; and the most remarkable fact about it is that one solitary teacher is supposed to understand and

to be able to teach this endless variety of branches.

For whose benefit is such an education intended? For the large floating population of the country; for the boys and girls whose parents have no positive intentions as to their children's future career.

In conversation with a public-school teacher I asked why he taught geometry and trigonometry in the school. "Well," he said, "it is of not much use, and takes valuable time from the rest of the scholars; but some of the patrons wish to have their children study it, because *they might have future use for it.*"

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When a few others wish Latin, German, or French taught, the teacher immediately undertakes it, while the great mass of the pupils are actually starving for the most elementary knowledge of the common-school branches.

We have, in consequence, a class, composed principally of young men, who have no education especially suited to any definite trade or profession. This class is constantly growing, to the detriment of the country. The trades are driven to the wall by combined capital, and there is literally nothing to do for many of our young men except to stand in a store as clerk or bookkeeper. Farmers' sons starting out in life with a shallow education received from a shallow system look with aversion upon the occupation of tiller of the soil, and, deluded by the education received at the country school-house into the belief that the world lays at their feet, go from one profession or trade to another, never satisfied, never of any account, and never successful.

If a freer trade has a tendency to break up trusts and combinations of capital, it will, in consequence, distribute the industries of the country more evenly among the people, and, by giving employment to our young men at home, will give them a definite aim in life and do away with the silly demand for a university education in a common public school.

EMIL LUDWIG SCHARF.

MARCH 4th, 1889.

Hail to the new! unto the winner hail!
Hail to the rising, not the setting sun!
So runs the world: success, however
won,
Dulleth, the while, his glory who doth fail.
Yet, as thou puttest off thy proven mail,
Strong soul that didst no issue ever
shun,
Or at entrenched greed's resentment
quail!
Hark to the swelling undertone—"Well
done!"

Unto the canker which thy country's life
Yearly doth make flow more and more
impure,
Thou wouldst, where needed most, have
put the knife,
And from its root the pest begun to
cure.
O brave surgeon! who shall end the
strife
It matters not—thy fame remaineth
sure.

ALFRED HENRY PETERS.

EDITORIAL DEPARTMENT.

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THE SALE OF THE PRESIDENCY.

No better illustration of the power wielded by the press has been given, since the London *Times* took up the Crimean War and remodelled the allied armies, than that of the New York *World* in its assault on the corruptions of the ballot that robbed the people of the United States of their voted will at the late presidential election.

This monstrous crime against self-government would have faded from public memory, and lost its

place in the annals of iniquity, but for the energy and enterprise of this journal, that sent an army of correspondents over the country and gathered the proofs of the open market in which was sold and bought the Presidency.

This fearful exposé of a burning shame was followed by messages from governors, and bills by legislatures, looking, not to the punishment of the wrong-doers, but to the enactment of preventive laws tending to the protection of the people in the future.

It is to be observed, however, that this potent power failed to bring on any investigations, any indictments, or a single effort to punish the guilty. This the *World* demanded, but this the *World* failed to obtain.

The reason for the impotent result in this one direction is easy to comprehend when we get at the facts underlying the corruption. Neither party was, or is, in a condition to demand an investigation, for the leaders of each are alike guilty. It is generally believed that money was corruptly used by both organizations, and that the Republicans, having the larger sum, won in the end. This is true, but it is only true in part. Honest investigation would bring out the startling fact, that the vast sums collected from millionaires, and the very significant amount assessed on office-holders, were for the one purpose of returning Benjamin Harrison to the Presidency and again putting the moneyed power of the country in the keeping of the Republican party.

This manner of operating by corrupt means has long been well known to the more observant. Corruption has no conscience, no patriotism, and no politics. All rascality rests on a purely business basis. When a merchant seeks a partner, he does not bother himself about that partner's religious belief or party predilections. When rogues wish to form a trust or ring, they in like manner consider only the capacity of their brother-rogues, and when politics is at all considered, it is because of the safety from investigation found in having all sides implicated. Thus, when the great Aqueduct steal of New York was organized, the managers were made up of both Democrats and Republicans. When, therefore, an investigation went far enough to develop two prominent Republicans added to the responsible commission, and one of those Republicans was called to the stand and asked how he came to accept such a position, he responded naïvely that he sought to secure some of the patronage of the public work for his own party. [545]

Now, when we remember that President Cleveland, in the last hours of his illustrious administration, made a deadly assault on a system that oppressed the many for the benefit of a few, we get a clue to a mystery that has puzzled the masses. Vast sums were openly subscribed, and almost as openly used, in the purchase of votes to perpetuate the corruption. And we had developed two startling facts that go to show that our experiment of self-government is well-nigh a failure.

The first of these is that we have so cheapened the suffrage that we have an element in between the two parties large enough to decide a presidential election of what we call "floaters"—that is, men who stand upon the street-corners, and crop out in the rural regions, with their votes in hand, for sale to the highest bidders. The market price varies from five dollars to a hundred, as the demand may rule.

The second fact teaches that the election through States facilitates this infamous abuse. We find that while President Cleveland won in the popular vote by nearly a hundred thousand majority, he lost the presidency. Through the electoral system we have developed two pivotal States, and the market thus narrowed makes the corruption possible.

It is quite evident that we cannot narrow the suffrage, but it is possible to widen the vote; and if the patriotic people of the United States care to sustain the great republic, and give to their children the precious possession of a constitutional government, based on an equality of rights before the law, no time should be lost in wiping out an electoral system that has not only failed of its purpose, but is a source of peril to the government.

It is said of a distinguished politician of Pennsylvania that when called on to contribute money for the purpose of carrying a State election, he, refusing, said, "What's the use of wasting money on the people in an election when you can purchase the legislature with one-fourth the money?" Now, immense as are the sums gotten through monopoly and unjust taxation, they are not sufficient to purchase votes throughout the entire country, to say nothing of the danger attending such an attempt.

We learn this from Col. Dudley's famous, or rather infamous, letter of instruction to his subordinates. He wanted the floaters classed in blocks of five. This, not because the floaters were so numerous as to require such organized handling, but because it was a hazardous venture, and agents willing to transact the business were scarce. That they were found in deacons, class-leaders, bankers, and Sunday-school teachers only shows the desperate condition to which the moneyed power was reduced in its effort to secure again the control of our government.

Had the Democracy planted itself firmly upon honest ground and fought this corruption because it was corrupt and not from a fever of excitement to win at all hazards, it might have been defeated—probably would have been. But in that defeat it would have held a position that would now enable it to investigate, indict, and punish. As it is, we have a great outcry and no efficient work. Col. Dudley goes acquit of all save public condemnation, not because of any difficulty attending a legal condemnation, but because his accusers cannot enter court with clean hands. [546]

This is an ugly statement to make; but for the sake of the political association with which we

sympathize, and in whose cause, as developed in the late election, we are deeply interested, we feel it our duty to assert the truth in the plainest terms. The Democracy should remember that in this corrupt game they must of necessity be the losers. The corruption fund is and must be with their opponents. The gist of the contention lies in the fact that the Democracy seek to arrest a robbery that has already made their opponents rich, and the swag thus obtained affords the means through which it may be held. To enter such an arena is to enter it unarmed.

Senator Plumb, when he made the assertion, subsequently published by authority, that the only class really benefited by our system of extortion miscalled protection should have "the fat fried out of it" to carry on the election, unintentionally uttered a truth we cannot ignore. This again was supplemented by Senator Ingalls's instruction to his State delegation at Chicago to nominate for the Vice-Presidency "some fellow like Phelps who can tap Wall Street." And the evidence closes with Col. Dudley's direction to organize "the floaters in blocks of five."

These are noted and recognized leaders of the Republican party. Senators Plumb and Ingalls are not only prominent as such, but are men of brain and culture. Col. Dudley is known to the country as a prominent worker in the cause of the moneyed power. Now, while we might hesitate to take the word of any one of these gentlemen when advocating any measure of importance to their party, we are bound to accept all they assert against themselves, in accordance with well-recognized principles of evidence.

Their admissions are fatal to their party, as their practice, if continued, will prove fatal to the Republic. We have some twenty-two State legislatures laboring to so amend the machinery of elections as to make this purchase of votes difficult, if not impossible. In this good work the Democracy should be the zealous leaders, not only because it is reform, but because it is the salvation of the party.

If this corruption found in the mere purchase of votes ended with that foul practice we might hope for something; but back of that, hid in the darkness, lies the ugly, snaky form of treachery. The money subscribed by millionaires is not always used in the camp of the party in whose behalf it was contributed. So long as rogues are countenanced in one direction they will be found in others. The startling fact that we cannot have investigations for fear of uncovering our own people is supplemented by another no less startling—that such investigation would expose not only bribe-takers but traitors. We are not asserting this without due consideration, and we give to print only what is known by the more shrewd and observant in our own midst. [547]

The proof of this is not necessary. The knowledge that corruption did exist carries with it assurance that it extended in such directions as the wrong-doers found most efficient. When that sturdy old corruptionist, Oakes Ames, was called upon to account for the stock of the *Crédit Mobilier* with which he had been intrusted, he replied that he had placed it "where it would do the most good," and his keen, incisive remark has passed into a popular proverb. The wretched, degraded creature who sells his vote parts with an infinitesimal bit of power, and he is a saint and a gentleman by the side of the man who, trusted by his party, betrays that trust for a moneyed consideration. However, this carries us beyond our subject.

The truest and best reform that can be attained is the most radical, and that is, as we have said, to elect the President by a direct vote of the people, and do away with an electoral system that survived its usefulness in the death of George Washington. The next best is to secure the secrecy of the ballot. Anything short of this is vain. When we have so arranged the machine that the bribe-taker cannot make open delivery of the stolen goods, we have driven the bribe-giver to accepting the word of a wretch whose oath would be worthless.

In view of the peril in which we find ourselves, with the very foundations taken from under the tottering political fabric known as the Great Republic, the anxiety manifested by our law-makers lest some citizen may be deprived of his vote in this effort to purify the polls would be ludicrous were it not that the subject is of so serious a nature. The very ground is sliding from under us, and these Solons are concerned as to the shoes we may be deprived of in our effort at escape. Indeed, if to perfect the reform it became necessary not only to deprive a few citizens of the suffrage, but to hang Messrs. Plumb, Ingalls, and Dudley, shocking as the sacrifice would be to us, we should say, like a Roman father, let them hang. Indeed, undying fame hereafter would proclaim that in their deaths they had done their country some service.

VACANT PEWS AND WORRIED PULPITS.

The homes, so called, of our larger cities are in a majority of cases without comfort, and in nearly all instances without refinement. The class upon which we once so prided ourselves, made up of families possessed of a competence, and enabled through a reasonable income from steady work to have about their homes some comfort and a few luxuries, is rapidly disappearing. We have left us two classes only, made up of the very rich and the poor. The merchant, the mechanic, and even the common laborer, who once could boast of a humble home of his own, and enough steady employment to make that home comfortable, is rarely met with. We believe indeed that he exists only in the imagination of Senator Edmunds. Well-authenticated statistics inform us that we have a larger percentage of tenantry to our population than any people on the face of the earth. This not only includes our great commercial, mining, and manufacturing centres, but the rural regions as well. We learn that, throughout the agricultural regions, while the farms lessen in number, the farmers increase. [548]

We know what this means. We recognize at a glance that the growth of our country in national wealth, which is claimed to be amazing, is not a healthy growth. For that is not healthy which gives prosperity to a few and poverty to the masses.

This has been so long and so generally recognized that it has come to be commonplace, and people weary of its reiteration. We indulge in this weariness for the purpose of calling attention to a consequence that is not so familiar.

It is remarked by observant lookers-on from abroad that our laboring classes are thoroughly ignorant of art, and take no pleasure in contemplating works of art, as do the like classes in the towns of Europe. The reason given for this is that we have no specimens in our highways, and few in galleries. The latter are closed against the laboring classes on the only day a laborer can have to visit them, and that is Sunday.

The wrong done our people by this can scarcely be overestimated. A taste for art can generally be cultivated. It is quite impossible to educate a people in science and literature, for this depends on intellectual faculties that our heavenly Father, from a wise purpose to us unknown, has been very sparing in distributing. But almost every man is capable of being taught to admire, if not love, the beautiful in art. What an element in the way of social improvement or progress this cultivated taste is we all recognize, and what happens to a race that neglects it we all know.

Now, it is possible for a people to possess the highest appreciation of, and admiration for, art and yet be semi-barbarous, for the Christian element is necessary to bring about real civilization; but it is quite impossible for a race to be without some cultivation in the way of art and be civilized at all.

It is not strange, to a thoughtful observer, to note that as a nation we are on the down-grade. Such an observer from abroad cannot cross Broadway, for example, without learning that life and limb are in peril from a community that has more law and less order than any people the world over. He is prepared to learn then that our galleries of art—such as exist—are closed against the poor, and he is ready to receive without wonder the further fact that our churches also are closed against the poor.

It is this last truth that is somewhat new in the way of being recognized, although quite old as a matter of fact.

At a convocation of Protestant ministers held at Chickering Hall last November, on behalf of the Protestant community of New York, the following was officially stated as to the religious condition of the city:

"The population of New York City has for years been steadily and rapidly increasing, while at the same time the number of churches has been relatively decreasing. In 1840 there was one Protestant church to every 2,400 people; in 1880, one to 3,000; and in 1887, one to 4,000."

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Now, to this startling admission could have been added another, no less deplorable, and that is that the attendance has decreased more rapidly than the churches, and, in such as now remain open a seventh part of the time, there is an exhibit of empty seats quite depressing to the minister. If we consider the Protestant population only, not one-tenth are church attendants—and not a tenth of these are true believers.

The reason for this deplorable condition was much discussed by the good men making up the clerical convention, and the prevailing opinion seemed to be, as gathered from the utterances, that this disheartening result came from the active interference of the Catholic clergy—or papists, as our friends termed them.

There was much truth in this. These zealous "papists" are certainly making great inroads upon our population; but, admitting that they take large numbers from the Protestant churches, there yet remains a vast population of non-going church people that the so-called papists have not influenced, nor indeed as yet approached. What then is the cause of this irreligious condition?

We believe that we can help our clerical friends to a solution of this religious mystery. It comes from a lack of consideration for the masses they seek to instruct. There is a want of sympathy for the poor, that not only shuts the galleries of art from the laboring classes, but closes the Protestant churches also.

These structures, while scarcely to be classed as works of art,—for they are carefully divested of all that appeals to good taste,—are yet luxurious affairs at which the rich and well-born, in purple and fine linen, are expected to attend. They are more social than religious affairs, and there is no place for the ragged, even if such appeared from a public bath, duly cleansed of their offensive dirt. To make this exclusiveness complete, the churches are filled with pews that, like boxes at the opera, are the property of subscribers able to pay for such luxuries. True, certain pews are reserved as free seats for the poor; but the class sought thus to be accommodated are averse to being put in their poverty on exhibition, as it were, even for the luxury of hearing a solemn-toned clergyman whose theological gymnastics are as much beyond the comprehension of the hearers as they are beyond that of the reverend orator himself.

To realize our condition in this respect, let our reader imagine, if he can, our blessed Saviour and his apostles entering bodily, to-day, one of these edifices built to His worship. Weary and travel-stained, clad in the coarsest of garments, the procession would scarcely start along the dim-lit aisle before that austere creation of Nature in one of her most economical moods, the sexton,

would hurry forward to repel further invasion of that most respectable sanctuary of God. Our Saviour would be informed that somewhere in the outlying spaces of poverty-stricken regions there was a mission-house suitable for such as He. [550]

We must not be understood as intimating, let alone asseverating, aught against this form of Christianity. It is so much better than none that we feel kindly toward it. The religious evolution that develops a respectable sort of religious purity, that builds a marble pulpit and velvet-cushioned pews, is all well enough if it quiets the conscience and soothes with trust the death-bed of even a Dives. We regard a Salvation Army, that makes a burlesque of religion as it goes shouting with its toot-horns and stringed instruments, as to be tolerated, because it is better than the Bob Ingersolls. We only seek to inform the well-meaning teachers of the religion of to-day why it is they preach to empty pews.

Few of us are aware of what we are doing when we close our galleries and churches, and open our saloons to the poor. This last, so far, has proved impossible. But let our hot gossippers, whose creed is based on "*Be-it-enacted*," visit any one of the poor abodes of the laborers denied admission to innocent places of amusement on the only holiday they have for such recreation. Such investigator will descend to a subterranean excavation dug in the sewer-gas-filtered earth, where the walls sweat disease and death. These are homes for humanity. Or he will ascend rotten stairways to crowded rooms, heated to suffocation by pestilent air poisoned by over-used breath from men, women, and children, packed in regardless of health, comfort, and decency. These are the so-called homes of thousands and thousands: and the wonder is, not that they die, but that they live. We send millions of money with missionaries to foreign shores: to our own flesh and blood we send—the police. Loving care and patient help are bestowed on distant pagans: poor-houses, prisons, and wrath are the fate awarded to our brothers at home.

A little way from these abodes of misery and crime the saloon is open, with its gilded iniquity, warm, cheerful, and stimulated with liquid insanity in bottles and beer-kegs. Do we wonder that the churches are empty and the saloons crowded?

The advent of our blessed Saviour was heralded by the anthem of the heavenly hosts, that sang "Glory to God on high, and peace and good-will to men on earth." The few sad years of our Redeemer's life among men were passed with the poor, the sinful, and the sorrowing. We have to-day much glory to God on high, and no good-will to men on earth.

Your churches decrease in numbers as the population swells, O brethren, because of your lack of Christian sympathy! [551]

THE TRUTH ABOUT SAMOA.

It would be interesting to know at what precise period in Prince Bismarck's masterful career he first conceived the scheme of colonial empire which has grown to be an absorbing passion of his declining years. Probably it was about the time when he began to proclaim, with suspicious energy, that nothing was farther from his designs than to rival the achievements of Great Britain in the field which that nation had made almost exclusively its own. No modern statesman is better versed in the arts of diverting public attention from the enterprises he has resolved to prosecute with his utmost strength and skill. Events which rapidly followed the exhausting war of 1870 were calculated to admonish him that Germany's resources were insufficient to maintain her in the position of supremacy to which he had led her. The steady increase of emigration to America was one of the discomposing consequences of his splendid triumph, and the hope of retaining under German rule the tens of thousands of fighting men who annually deserted the fatherland may have been a powerful incentive to colonial development in various attractive parts of the world. Whatever the original impelling motives were, there is now no doubt that the plan of extending the German sway indefinitely by establishing vast settlements in regions yet uncivilized, and making them tributary to the glory and wealth of the empire he had created, took possession of the Chancellor's mind, a dozen or more years ago, with a tenacity which no discouragement or dissuasion has ever weakened. It was about that date that the unusual activity of German ships of war in the Oriental seas excited the watchfulness of European governments and provoked inquiries which led to singular disclosures. The methods of diplomatic investigation in the far East are in some respects different from those which prevail nearer home—possibly owing to a lack of facility in employing them where official scrutiny is close and constant; and it might be injudicious to examine too minutely the processes by which it became known that the guardian of Germany's destinies was engaged in maturing a plot of territorial aggrandizement the like of which has been devised by no other European statesmen in recent days, and which has been paralleled only by the vivid imagination of the first Napoleon. It was soon learned that of the numerous islands which constitute what is known as Polynesia, not one of value had escaped visitation by carefully selected explorers, whose errand it was to report upon the feasibility of eventually making the German flag supreme in the Southern Pacific, and delivering over enormous tracts of land to the domination of the German race.

A glance at a map of the world will show how immense the possibilities of conquest in the East are to one who has fixed his resolve upon unscrupulous annexation or absorption. The natives of these regions are incapable of resistance, and nothing but the combined opposition of European naval powers could ever stand in the way of the gigantic enterprise. Such opposition Germany has—or believes she has—little cause to fear. Some of the leading nations are bound to support her interests by alliances which they dare not break. France can interpose no obstacle that would [552]

be regarded with anxiety. Russia has no immediate concern in the Asian archipelagos, and any claim put forward by the United States would be rejected with derision. Great Britain alone remains, and against her interference the German rulers are confident that they have a sure safeguard in the traditional apprehension of Russian encroachments in the north and west of Asia. While England is straining her eyes to scan the slightest movement of the Czar toward China and Korea, and speculating incessantly upon the outcome of supposed intrigues which probably have no substantial existence, Germany considers herself secure from molestation in other quarters. It is quite as likely, however, that the rooted English conviction of German incapacity to conduct colonial operations may more reasonably account for the indifference to Bismarck's proceedings. From some cause, not yet clearly divulged, the Germans have certainly been permitted to pursue their audacious course with singular freedom from remonstrance. It cannot be surmised that the British authorities are ignorant of what is in progress. Even if they were unprovided with direct sources of information, there is enough in the avowed and unconcealed demonstrations of the past ten years to awaken jealousy. Without anything approaching a sound commercial basis for the undertaking, the far-seeing Chancellor has established a huge national steamship line, exceeding in length of route the extremest reach of the most important British maritime companies. From the Baltic ports this line runs southward, one arm extending through the Mediterranean and the Red Sea, and skirting the continent of Asia until it comes to an end in Korean waters, while the other embraces almost the entire coast of Africa, and, starting eastward, touches Australia, penetrates the great Malay group, and finds a convenient terminus in the Samoa Islands, concerning which so much futile discussion has been wasted in the last few months. All along the aforesaid African route the shores are dotted with German settlements, often planted in direct defiance of England's claim to priority, and maintained in spite of every form of protest. The British flag has been affronted under circumstances far more flagrant than the world suspects, yet the outrage has been passed over with careful avoidance of public scandal. Unless it is believed by the English government that Bismarck's mighty conception is destined to an ignominious collapse,—like an ill-balanced arch whose span is too ponderous for self-support,—it is difficult to conjecture the reasons for this prolonged submission to an insolent and unprecedented dictation.

But no apprehension of collapse disturbs the German statesman's undaunted soul. In his cabinet lie the maps of the reconstructed world, upon which the future dominions of his country equal in magnitude, if they do not surpass, those of the most extensive territorial powers. The course of operations with respect to each accession is plainly marked out, and to the fulfilment of the stupendous whole he and those who bear his name are unalterably pledged. It may be generations, even in his ambitious view, before the great result is attained, but no doubt of the final consummation is allowed to take shape among those who know the bent of the iron Chancellor's will. Meanwhile, effective measures are employed to try the temper and test the enduring faculties of the native races to be subdued. Cruelty and barbarity mark the German range of advancement, wherever their footsteps are imprinted. In Africa and in most parts of Asia their name is held in terror and abhorrence. They are uniformly represented by men of Bismarck's own stamp, who shrink from nothing that can accelerate the completion of their plans. The episode of Samoa affords a fair example of their intentions and their methods of execution. What is Samoa? Simply a strategic point of departure—a station that must be owned and held as a rallying-spot, a depot, and an arsenal. Having been once selected, it will never be surrendered, except under a pressure greater than the civilized world is willing or able, in Bismarck's belief, to concentrate upon such an object. The notion that the Washington government can exert the minutest influence is too groundless to be entertained by any person who has studied the situation. It is true that most of the European powers courteously abstain from offering opinions as to the result of American intervention, but the Chinese, who are aware of no reasons for reserve, openly laugh at it. The Japanese, more keenly alive to ultimate consequences, do not laugh, but are grievously concerned at the growing feebleness and irresolution of the only country that has ever permitted considerations of humanity to enter into its foreign policy. Russia—strangely or not, as the observer may choose to decide—is the sole great power that appears to cherish expectations of a future growth of American influence in the Eastern Hemisphere. German agents, acting under well-defined and easily comprehended instructions, omit no opportunity to belittle and degrade the reputation of the United States in all the districts which are included in the scope of Bismarck's magnificent projects.

But the reputation of this Republic, for good or evil, is not the question now under consideration. What we desire to point out is the uselessness of attempting to controvert, by ordinary diplomatic means, a scheme of wholesale aggrandizement to which the most resolute, unshrinking, and pitiless mind of this age devotes all its energy and all the instruments of material force now subject to its control. For a considerable time a certain amount of reticence will be deemed necessary, and the completest ignorance of the movement will be professed, especially by those who have been most actively concerned in the preparations. But the facts are known to so many who care nothing for the realization of Bismarck's hopes that the secret cannot long remain a close one. It is hardly to be supposed, however, that the fullest possible revelation, much as it might irritate him, would substantially modify his arrangements. It would perhaps retard them, and doubtless cause him to noisily disavow the whole proceeding; but the machinery would continue to move as surely and efficiently as ever toward the required end. This being understood, and thoughtfully considered as a firm and fixed purpose of the German rulers, to occupy as much of the coming century as is necessary for its execution, a sufficiently new light will be thrown upon the Samoan complication to show that instead of being a petty incident of international debate, it is in truth the opening scene of a great and portentous historical drama.

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To imagine that the hand which has contrived this colossal enterprise will falter at the first sound of adverse criticism is to totally misapprehend the character of its owner and to blindly disregard the lessons he has been teaching for a score of years.

THE INFANT MIND.

Herbert Spencer holds that while the physical body is being developed, after birth, until puberty, the real and only education is that which comes from common experience through the senses. The mind, like the limbs, is reaching eagerly out to take in the wonders of the new existence, and the only parental care is that which protects the infant being from the abuse found in over-exertion. Now the greatest harm that can happen to the innocent creature is the attempt to hasten information through mental stimulants. If left to itself, the mind, like the body, will have a healthy growth. If, however, it is interfered with through any forcing process, there will be an abnormal growth of some faculties at the expense of others, and disease or deformity will result.

We note, with pleasure, how children race and play like kids or colts the day through, and we fail to perceive that the mind keeps pace with this active life. It is not only alive to its new existence, but enjoys what it finds in its open-air life. To interfere with this through the false system of training we are pleased to call education, is injurious, and often fatal.

All England—at least all the thinking part of the territory under government of Her Gracious Majesty—is in a high state of alarm over the stimulants administered through school examinations and the prizes given in consequence. Authors, scientists, and statesmen have joined in protesting against this abuse as a process that sickens the body and weakens the mind. It is a practice that is filling the hospitals, poor-houses, and asylums for the insane. We call this *cranming*. It is a forced, hot-house system, productive of more evils than good. Man is the only animal that loses his young to an extent that makes life exceptional. A majority of infants die before reaching the age of five years. If we consider the matter carefully, we find that while the young of the brutes seldom have more than one enemy to contend with, an infant has three—the mother who pets it, the father who neglects it, and the pedagogue who makes an idiot of it. Death indorses them all. How common it is to meet a slender, thin-limbed girl with sombre cheeks and lustreless eyes wending her way to school fairly loaded with books. She is being robbed of home, innocence, and health to satisfy the Moloch of education. [555]

A most painful exhibit of—well, we will not say cruelty, but—ignorance or indifference, our dramatic critic calls attention to in the case of "Little Lord Fauntleroy." A child of tender years holds an audience for nearly three hours night after night, nearly all the time upon the stage, by the most extraordinary effort of memory and an instinctive turn for acting. This is a torture that discounts a Roman amphitheatre or the bull-fights of Spain. What is the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children about, that such an abuse should not only continue, but spread?—for the success of the piece is such that we shall have a hundred companies barn-storming over the land and torturing the brains of as many unhappy children. It is on this account that we rejoice with exceeding great joy over the death and final burying of Uncle Tom. This impossible old negro lived on little Eva, and that angelic child has at last been consigned to many asylums for idiots.

From this wanton cruelty it is a comfort to turn to the innocent and natural budding of the infant mind, and several specimens have floated in on us from various sources. Here is one from an indignant germ of a citizen:

"*Mr. Editor*

"DEER SIR—Last nite we had a hie old time at our house next dore. Mr. —, a alderman cam home and broke things and beet his wife—the nabors called the police, and they come and would not take him in the patrol waggon because he was a alderman, is that rite

"Yours to command

"ROBERT"

When our little friend Robert grows to man's estate he will know better the privileges and immunities granted the alderman. That privilege found in his right to beat his wife is not so well recognized and understood as his right to beat the public. When a fellow pays from five to ten thousand dollars for the position of city-father, it is expected that he will find a process through which to reimburse the private coffers of the municipal corporation called an alderman's pocket. There is nothing mean about the citizens of a great commercial centre. All that is asked is that the father aforesaid shall not be caught at it. As for the little luxury of getting drunk and beating his wife, that comes under the head of freedom to the private citizen and a constitutional opposition to sumptuary laws.

From this sunny side of aldermanic life we turn to some verse sent to us by a loving grandpa from the pen of Miss Elsie Rae. Our first and only regret at not being an illustrated magazine is that we cannot reproduce the drawings that accompanied the poem: [556]

THE BROOK.

As I sat by the brook yesterday,

I heard a voice by me say,
"What are you doing here,
My sweet little dear?
Look around and see your mother,
Also your sweet little brother:
I brought him here because the air is so
soft;

It is so hot up in the loft."
The child turned her head
And very softly said,
"Well, dear little brother,
I am glad you brought him, mother."
"Yes, dear, so am I;
But it is hard to carry him from so high."

THE PASSING SHOW.

The month has been made notable by a high moral monument in the Actors' Club, headed by Augustin Daly. We said moral; we mean theological, for that was the true aspect of the commotion. It seems that some friend of Robert Ingersoll proposed the name of that noted pagan for membership to the club that Edwin Booth has so handsomely housed. This came to the ears of the pious Daly, and immediately his theological soul animated his theatrical body to an indignant opposition. Daly polled the pious body of actors. "What!" he said, "shall we recognize and indorse this dreadful infidel, this unbelieving son of Illinois—have him among us as an associate, to distil his poison of unbelief in our midst? Perish the thought! Let us rally round our altars and our fires [of the Actors' Club], and die, if necessary, as martyrs."

The grotesque part of this lies in the fact that while the pulpit denounces the stage, the stage on the same ground assaults Bob Ingersoll. It reminds one of a comic scene perpetrated in Sheridan's "Rivals," where the master bangs the man, and the man, in turn, kicks the many-buttoned page.

Now, the Actors' Club is the same as any other social organization, and has the comforts and pleasures found in the intercourse of its members, its main purpose. In London and Washington, the only two places on earth where clubs flourish in perfect health, another and more important object is to get the good things of life at cost. These are clubs of a social sort. There are others that have political purposes for an end, but these combine such objects with the more important features of the mere social organizations. To secure the latter, wines, cigars, and viands at cost prices are what John Bull aims at, and persists in carrying out to the letter. Without this your club is a delusion and a snare.

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Now, if in the formation of these social centres it is necessary to have a view to a man's respectability as well as his entertaining qualities, the first requisite of an applicant is to be a gentleman. A whole coat, a clean shirt, and gentlemanly views, if any, are necessary. What the member's views may be on any abstract proposition is of no import whatever. He may consider polygamy allowable; he may even believe in that governmental extortion miscalled "protection," or in mind-reading, and yet be acceptable as an associate. The most fascinating club-man we ever knew was a little gone on *morus multicaulus*. Another had a way of getting up the Nile, and it was almost impossible for his friends to get him down again. When, in his talk, he sailed up that classic river, his hearers, like the Arabs on its banks, "stole silently away."

We have never heard that our modern pagan was anything but respectable, and we are told that socially—if he can be got away from Moses—he is rather entertaining. If the rule applied to Robert the heathen were the measure used by clubs generally, there would not be one left with a quorum in the country.

Nor will it do to apply to this noted person the rule recognized by Mr. Booth's orphan asylum, that the heathen is not connected with the stage. He has won fame and fortune from behind the footlights. We never enjoyed a comedy so much as that given us by the heathen in his lecture on "The Mistakes of Moses." We laughed an hour "by Shrewsbury clock," not so much at what the heathen said, as at seeing a corpulent gentleman in a dress suit prancing about the stage assailing Moses. Now Moses has been dead some years. He has no lineal descendants that we know of, unless Moses and Sons, dealers in antique raiment, can be so considered; and of the two thousand people packed in that theatre there probably were not six that had ever opened the Old Testament or that cared a straw for the dead lawgiver. And yet the heathen seemed animated by a personal feeling, as if Moses had, like Daly, on some occasion blackballed him.

He tore Moses all to pieces; he attacked his knowledge of astronomy; he doubted his correct knowledge of ark-building. He said Moses was defective as to ventilation. The fact is, that when this corpulent, unbelieving son of man got through there was not much left of the eminent Hebrew. But it was a stage performance all the same, and put Robert at the head of low comedians. Hence he is qualified for an association with brother-actors.

No better instance of patient good-nature, backed by a woful lack of culture, can be had than in the performances given at two New York theatres by a couple of society women—we beg pardon: we should say "ladies." Mrs. Potter kills Cleopatra in the first act of "Antony and Cleopatra," by Shakespeare, Bacon, or somebody else; and Mrs. Langtry does to Lady Macbeth what Don Cæsar de Bazan found so objectionable in hanging. "Hanging," cried the immortal Bohemian of aristocratic birth, "is horrible. It not only kills a man, it makes him ridiculous." Mrs. Langtry's *Lady Macbeth* should be relegated to things which amuse. The audiences leave these burlesques with the query put in the mouth of an English sailor at an exhibition of pantomime and fireworks, who, being blown over the adjacent property, got up and asked, "What'll the cussed fool do next?"

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These are the days when there is a dearth of real dramatic art; when a tarnished reputation, superb costumes—or lack of costume—are considered indispensable adjuncts to the star actress; when real water, miniature conflagrations that choke the audience with smoke, or startling electrical novelties, are relied upon as the chief attractions of a new play; when the stage panders to the lowest tastes; when the spectacular supplants art. The question no longer is, "What is the play? What are the lessons it teaches, the ideal thoughts it presents to us?"—but rather, "Who is the actress? What is the latest scandal concerning her? How far does she outstrip her rivals in exhibitions of nudity?" Hence we see such alterations of plan on the part of theatrical managers as the withdrawal of that witty play, "The Yeomen of the Guard," to make room at the Casino for the "leg-show" of "Nadja."

Of course some of the blame for this state of things must rest on the small and noisy portion of the public who manage to control access to the ears of proprietors and playwrights, such as, in the instance mentioned, the dudes and dudelets of the "Casino crowd," who had grown weary of a play whose sparkling humor was above their comprehension. A greater measure of blame rests upon the professional critics, who, with a few very honorable exceptions, gauge praise or blame according to the length of the paid advertisements in their respective journals, or to the favors extended to them at the box-office. Not a score of years ago an actor of very moderate attainments actually bought his way into prominence by giving elaborate dinners to his critics, and keeping open house, with free-lunch counter and bar attachments, for the benefit of every reporter whom he could form acquaintance with. Such methods in a short time placed him on a pedestal of notoriety, and he no doubt hoped to stay there; but a new sensation came, and his star declined. This is a fair statement of the condition of theatrical art in America. We have lost the freshness of originality, and we have not yet attained to the depth of culture and breadth of criticism of the literary centres of England and the Continent. We are very much inclined to pay homage to a name, no matter by what means such a name has been acquired.

Mrs. Langtry's performance of *Lady Macbeth* is an instance of this tendency to hero-worship. It is said in her favor that her characterization of the part shows deep study and hard work. But these are the very things that, were she possessed of real dramatic genius, would never be allowed to show. The height of art is in imitating, refining, and subliming nature. But if you allow all the secret wheels and springs to appear, it becomes no art at all. Mrs. Langtry's effort is a painstaking one, but the effort is too apparent. She attains no high ideal. When she appeared as *Lady Macbeth* at the Fifth Avenue Theatre, after weeks of preparation and puffery, it was expected that she would give us something new, but the result has been only her usual mediocrity.

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The character is a combination of a great degree of unscrupulous ambition and a share of wifely devotion. Lady Macbeth's crime is partly due to a desire for her husband's advancement; but the chief motive clearly is, that through his advancement she may attain power. It is this determination to stop at nothing which may forward her ambitious schemes that makes the character one of the most terrible of Shakspeare's creations. Charlotte Cushman probably came nearer to the great poet's ideal than any actress before or since. Ellen Terry makes the part ridiculous; Mrs. Langtry makes it commonplace. But there is one scene for which she deserves great credit—the sleep-walk, where she emerges from her room in a night-dress that looks like a shroud, her hair entirely concealed by a nightcap that is bound around her chin, her face pallid and expressionless. Then she begins her soliloquy, no longer Mrs. Langtry, no longer *Lady Macbeth*, but a remorseful somnambulist, her words all delivered in the same dull monotone, without emphasis or expression, like the voice of a soulless corpse. It makes one shiver to hear her. But that is the only redeeming feature of her characterization.

The support is by no means good, but the scenery and costumes are well brought out and historically accurate. Mr. Charles Coghlan is a fair reader of his lines, but falls far short of the ideal *Macbeth*. In fact, by far the best acting is that of Mr. Joseph Wheelock as *Macduff*. He plays the character with all the vim and enthusiasm that it demands, and he deservedly receives the largest share of applause from the audience.

While Mrs. Langtry has been reaching out her long, voluptuous arms in an utterly futile attempt to touch the hem of *Lady Macbeth's* garment, Mrs. Potter, arrayed like a queen of burlesque, and behaving like a tipsy grisette at a mask-ball, has been insulting the traditions of Egypt's queen. The performance of "Antony and Cleopatra" at Palmer's Theatre was, indeed, little better than a farce. It would be hard to say which was worse, Mrs. Potter's *Cleopatra* or Mr. Kyrle Bellew's *Antony*. As Brutus was the noblest, so it may be said that Mr. Bellew's *Antony* is the most insignificant, Roman of them all. It would be a waste of time and space to attempt a serious criticism of either of the two impersonations. In a mere spectacular sense the production was pleasing to the eye; but, historically, the scenery and accessories were absurdly inaccurate. To import the archaic architecture of ancient Thebes in Upper Egypt into a city so purely Greek in

its buildings, population, language, and customs as Alexandria was from its very foundation, is about as ignorant a blunder as it is possible for a scenic artist to make. And what business Hindoo nautch-girls had in the Alexandria of Cleopatra is a conundrum which only a New York stage-manager can answer. We give it up. Mrs. Potter, too, seems to be unaware that Cleopatra was Greek, not Egyptian; otherwise she would hardly mispronounce the initial consonantal sound of the name of her Greek attendant, *Charmian*, as she invariably does mispronounce it. Possibly her attention is so deeply absorbed by the fascinations of Worth's millinery that she has no time to spare for such trivial matters as elocution and orthoepy.

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Outside of Mrs. Langtry's and Mrs. Potter's characterizations there has been little of novelty. Nat Goodwin has dropped farce and buffoonery, and essays a higher style of comedy, appearing as *Gringoire* in "A Royal Revenge," an adaptation of Theodore de Banville's play. The character has recently been made familiar by Coquelin. Mr. Goodwin becomes interesting as the starving poet, and his personation gives promise of better things. The Grand Opera House was filled with Nobles of the Mystic Shrine to welcome Mr. Goodwin's reappearance. At the Fifth Avenue Theatre, in March, he will produce a new three-act comedy called "A Gold Mine," by Brander Matthews and George H. Jessop. The latter author, in collaboration with Horace Townsend, has produced for W. J. Scanlan a new Irish play entitled "Myles Aroon," brought out at the Fourteenth Street Theatre. Lady Glover's head-gardener, *Myles Aroon*, is accused of stealing his mistress' bracelet. He falls in love with her daughter, proves his innocence, and exposes the thief, who happens to be his rival. This threadbare plot is treated with Scanlan's inimitable Irish humor, and the play receives the popular appreciation it deserves. Of a similar character is the play "Running Wild," which was brought out at the Star Theatre, and offers abundant opportunity to Mr. John Wild's versatile comic talents.

Farquhar's comedy, "The Inconstant," recently played at Daly's Theatre, is an excellent revival of a good old English comedy. Ada Rehan was at her best as *Oriana*. At Daly's one is always sure of finding good plays, well acted. The company is a very even one, consisting not of one or two stars and all the rest sticks, but of fair actors well used to each other and to the plays they bring out. "The Runaway Wife," produced at Niblo's, is a play that is not wanting in dramatic merit, but it is somewhat spasmodic and jerky. Its authors, McKee Rankin and Fred G. Maeder, have aimed at creating a series of dramatic climaxes rather than a smoothly-running play. Daniel Bandmann has made a success as the *Comte de Maurienne* in "Austerlitz," a revival of Tom Taylor's drama, "Dead or Alive." Marie Wainwright presented us with a very girlish *Rosalind* at the Star Theatre, Mr. Louis James playing *Orlando* very effectively. "Said Pacha," a three-act comic opera, composed by Richard Stahl of San Francisco, has met with success in the few cities where it has yet been played. The music at times is suggestive of Strauss and Offenbach. Herr August Junkermann, who has been delighting our German fellow-citizens at the Amberg Theatre, proved himself a character actor of quite a superior order, and has earned a reputation which will insure him crowded houses whenever he appears in New York.

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The best all-round performance given at any theatre this season is Pinero's comedy of "Sweet Lavender" at the Lyceum. The play is as sweet and pure as a bunch of the fragrant old-fashioned flowers whose name it bears. The dialogue sparkles with wit and repartee of the most delightful sort, and the acting is as charming as the piece itself. Miss Georgie Cayvan may have acted more important characters, but never one in which she offered a more agreeable picture. There is a ring of sweet womanliness through her performance, which, like the delicate ferns and mosses that hide a violet, makes the fragrant blossom more precious. Miss Louise Dillon is so sweet that she is a little cloying. She clings about Mr. Henry Miller, who enacts her lover, in a limp and boneless fashion that is somewhat irritating to one who remembers that a spine and a few muscles go to make up the human anatomy, as well as a heart. Mrs. Whiffen's performance is most agreeable, being all the more admirable from the fact that in the earlier scenes she is, by the exigencies of the piece, somewhat acid and acrid. Now everybody knows that for Mrs. Whiffen to be either one or the other of these things must be clever acting. Mrs. Walcot is far less satisfactory; she does not dress to the level of her character, and she is artificial, mincing, and sour. Lemoyne's work is simply beyond praise. But little finer acting has ever been seen than his portrayal of *Richard Phenyl*. Very good, too, is Mr. Kelcey's performance of a breezy young American; and of almost equal merit is the rendering of the manly young lover by Mr. Miller. A thoroughly disappointing performance is that of Mr. Walcot. His get-up of a prosperous, jovial English banker is admirable. But all cause for admiration began and ended there; his acting never for one moment reached his make-up. When the scene called for feeling, he had none—he was merely feeble and flaccid; in short, Mr. and Mrs. Walcot were the only blots upon an otherwise perfect performance.

When the long and prosperous run of "Little Lord Fauntleroy" is considered, the conclusion is inevitable that the theatre-going public of this city will bear anything. The three scenes that go to make up this fatiguing representation are utterly void of a single principle of dramatic construction, and are entirely without dramatic incident, if we except the appearance upon the scene of a very "scarlet woman." And that is not exactly the sort of dramatic element which is expected or desired. The feat of memory which the child Elsie Leslie performs is remarkable. But it is a very painful exhibition, for it will inevitably destroy the poor little creature, mentally and physically. To point out all the manifold inconsistencies and absurdities of this nondescript entertainment would take up too much space, and bestow upon it much more advertising than it is worth. To instance a few of them: An American, a middle-aged man, a prosperous grocer, himself brings to the house of a customer a basket of groceries. He is ushered into the sitting-room together with a bootblack, who also calls at the same time; they are received as guests and

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friends, and are entertained by the infant hero, aged seven years! Later, this same grocer and the bootblack, both being in correspondence with the infant hero, learn that he is threatened with the loss of his title, whereupon they each offer him a partnership in their business. Ultimately, these two go together to England, where they are received as guests by the haughty Earl who is the grandfather of the infant hero. And these things are offered to the public in a perfectly serious manner without any attempt at or any idea of humor. The mounting of the piece—to call it so, for want of a more fitting title—is as tawdry and shallow as the piece itself. The library at Dorincourt Castle is ornamented by cheap tin toys, fastened upon plaques and hung on the walls. These things are supposed to be the armor and trappings of the knights of old who were the ancestry of this great house. This library, which opens out onto a sort of terrace that overlooks a body of water of about the dimensions of Lake Michigan, is lighted by numbers of cheap gas-jets—a manner of illumination unknown in any English country-house, far less an old feudal castle. A number of good actors and actresses are brought on the stage from time to time, but they have nothing whatever to do, consequently they do nothing. They whirl and maunder through three hours of false sentiment and artificial virtue, ringing the changes on the statement that they are "bland, passionate, and deeply religious." They also paint in water-colors, and "of such is the kingdom of heaven." Silly women sit whimpering at it, servile men sympathize with them, newspapers earn their "ads" by their false and fulsome praise, and the box-office flourishes.

The season of opera at the Metropolitan Opera House has been one of the most successful ever known. A concerted attack has been made on German opera by those who prefer the ballet and the spectacular to the pleasures of music. It was suggested that Italian opera be substituted, and it was hinted that there was a company in Rome open to an engagement. The Wagnerites grew furious, and protested. A comparison of the box-office receipts in former seasons was instituted, and the preponderance of popular favor was shown to be always in favor of German opera, and especially of Wagner. That settled it for a time, but a minor dispute arose. During the production of Wagner's masterpieces, like "Rheingold" and "Die Meistersinger," in the scenes which are supposed to take place at night or in the dark, the stage-manager lowered the lights in the house so that the glare should not mar the appropriateness of the scene. This did not at all suit the young ladies who know nothing about music, but simply come to talk about Mrs. Millionaire's ball or to see each other's latest costumes. Their papas among the stockholders were coaxed into ordering the lights to be turned on. Again the Wagnerites protested, and after three nights the management returned to the old way, much to the satisfaction of real lovers of opera.

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The production of Halévy's opera "La Juive" for the first time this season was coincident with the reappearance of Frau Lilli Lehmann, who acted and sang the part of *Rachel* with vigor and precision. Herr Alvary, who consented to take the part of *Prince Leopold*, with Herr Perotti as *Eleazar*, and the excellent support of the other singers, made the production the best that has ever been given in New York, and one long to be remembered. Frau Schroeder-Hanfstaengl has returned after an absence of four years, making her reappearance in the modest part of *Bertha* in "Le Prophète."

Manager Frohman promises us a number of new American plays for next season, which, he says, will be as good as those now produced abroad. Mr. Louis Aldrich, by the way, has been restrained from using the name or the funds of the Actors' Order of Friendship in furtherance of his ungenerous attempt to exclude foreign actors. A sad scene was that of the sale of the late Lester Wallack's stage costumes. Scarcely a dozen of the actor's old friends were present, and the various garments were sold at ridiculously cheap prices, the greater part to dealers in old clothes! *Sic transit gloria mundi*.

REVIEWS.

The American Commonwealth, by James Bryce (Macmillan & Co.).—The thoughtful citizen of the United States who opens this book from any other motive than mere curiosity will be apt to close it again greatly disappointed. So far as information is concerned, one might as well read a debate of the Senate. If it is from curiosity as to what an Englishman of Professor Bryce's ability and culture may think and say of us that the work is read, then the work will be found of interest. It is so rare for one of Britain's citizens, cultured or uncultured, to care for us, that the novelty alone commands attention. It was surly old Sam Johnson who said to a feminine owner of a parrot, in reply to her query as to whether the loquacious bird did not talk well, "Madam, the wonder is, not that it talks well, but that it talks at all." This great American nation is an object of utter indifference to the people of Europe; and among the so-called upper classes we are under contempt, when noticed, from the rising of the sun to the setting thereof.

Professor Bryce writes of us in a flattering way, but without information. The maze of contradiction that besets him on all sides seems not to have even embarrassed, let alone discouraged, him. Like a locomotive threading its way along a network of rails into a depot, he has his own track and runs smoothly along, as if there were but one, and quite regardless of the many others crossing and recrossing at every rod of progress. Fixing one eye on the central government at Washington and the other on the State governments, he treats us as a people from these two points, and would doubtless be amazed to learn that these political structures not only do not make our government, but are so widely separated from our associations and interests that they might be annihilated to-day without people being aware of their loss, save from the

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relief of taxation found in their destruction.

One can comprehend the consternation of foreigners at this bold assertion, when we recognize the fact that its avowal will bring forth not only denial, but an expression of disgust from about sixty-five millions of citizens born under and naturalized to this republic of ours. Yet it is truth; and to comprehend it we must remember that a constitution is an agreement or compact, entered into directly or indirectly by the citizens governed, whereby all legislation, executive control, and judicial decisions are to be under the control of, and bound and limited by, certain rules of a general nature clearly stated and set forth in said instrument. Now as the trouble attending constitutional law, as that of every other sort, is not in the law itself, but in its application, the constitution, to be at all available, has to be as simple, general, and limited as possible. The most perfect and practical is a mere declaration of principles that leaves all legislation to the wants, habits, and intelligence of the people. As statutory law is merely public opinion defined and promulgated by a legislature, it follows that the mere declaration of rights found in a charter is continually infringed upon by what may be called the unwritten constitution that grows imperceptibly about us, and is in the end the controlling constitution. Let us give a familiar illustration. There is nothing, for example, in our Constitution that prohibits the people from re-electing a President as often as the people see right to indulge in that process. Yet when ex-President Grant saw fit to demand a third term, he was treated as if he were violating the sacred charter given us by the fathers.

We believe in our Constitution—and go on violating its plainest provisions with utter indifference. We resemble that Southern gentleman who had the Lord's Prayer printed on the head-board of his bed, and who every night and morning rapped on it with his cane to call attention to the ceremony, and said solemnly, "O Lord, them's my sentiments."

We are a nation of phrase-eaters. As we have said before, all the fruit of the tree of knowledge has been canned—duly labelled and stowed away for winter use. There is no people on the face of the earth so given to a reliance on an abiding faith in dogmas. Our safety on earth and our salvation hereafter rest on a belief in dogmas. As a man may be guilty of every crime known to the criminal code and yet save his election through an avowal of belief in certain articles of faith, so we may consider ourselves safe if we abide by certain declarations of political principles. The theological and political avowals of faith may be violated with impunity in practice, yet there is a saving grace in words we fail to appreciate.

The origin of this strange condition is not difficult to find. Our continent was settled from Europe by two classes. One of these, the Puritans, fled from England to escape religious persecution. This persecution consisted in forbidding the theological rebels from openly expressing in prayer, hymn, or pulpit certain dogmas. They braved the perils of the seas and the privations of a howling wilderness that they might open their pious mouths and expand their pious lungs in a vociferous announcement of what they believed of abstract theology. The other class was made up of pirates who sought our continent, mainly south, in search of gold-mines and mythical riches in the hands of barbarians. And so between the two we became a race of phrase-eaters. As the theological dogma was considered good for the soul, a like political dogma was, and is, enough for the body politic. And how this is acted on we learn from the beginning. The Puritans, whose peculiar civilization dominated our nation, fled from persecution, not to establish toleration—for they went to hanging Quakers and Dissenters as soon as they landed in New England. Under this sort of government the lawless spirit of the pirates had full sway, and to-day, if we have a national characteristic, it is that we have more law and less order than any people on earth.

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This condition makes us capable of the most extraordinary contradictions. We have, for example, a so-called republic at Washington that is practically a despotism. It is not the despotism of one man or of an oligarchy of men. It is a singularly contrived despotism of office—a bureaucracy that is not only of an irresponsible routine without brains, but enforced by fines, penalties, and heavy taxation. It is so removed from popular control that self-government terminates at the boundary-line of the District of Columbia. The people living under the very shadow of the Capitol are deprived of even the form of government; but practically they are in no worse condition than the citizens of the States. The so-called republic is a heavy, dull, cast-iron, unimpressive concern, slowly moved by public opinion, but utterly insensible to popular political control. We have a President elected every four years. After he is inaugurated he cannot be disturbed for four years except by office-seekers or assassination. We have a Senate representing States, where Delaware or Rhode Island has as much power as New York or Pennsylvania, and its members are returned every six years. The House of Representatives is the one popular body, but its members, returned every two years, are no match for the Senate and Executive, that hold the political patronage which makes and unmakes members of the House.

This, in brief, is our condition politically. There is another significant feature that escapes both native and foreign attention. It is the theory that underlies the foundation of all, and teaches that the sovereignty from which there is no appeal rests in the people. This is a very loose, uncertain, and really helpless affair. The old adage tells us that what is every man's affair is no man's business. We have so multiplied elections that they are almost continuous. This forms party organization, to which the business is intrusted, and again creates a class of professional politicians whose one business in life is politics. It is human nature that they should seek to make their vocation profitable. Here is where money enters; and we have seen the government pass from a mere political structure to a commercial machine dominated by money. The taxes for the support of the government have become enormous, but they make but a trifle to the indirect extortion, based on a pretence of encouraging home industries, which selects such certain

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unprofitable investments, and taxes the entire population for not only their support but their enrichment. The amount thus collected for the benefit of the few is enormous. It would support the standing armies of all Europe.

One searches in vain through the Constitution to find in letter or spirit any authority for such abuse.

This absurd system of government might work in a small, compact community where all the citizens were known to each other, their offices few, and their interests identical. But with sixty-odd millions scattered over a continent that reaches from the Atlantic to the Pacific, and from the Lakes to the Gulf, and with these millions isolated from each other in agricultural pursuits, the system is impossible of practical operation.

This is the philosophy of American politics that Professor Bryce fails to grasp. He devotes his first volume to a consideration of the political structure as given us by its framers, as if such were in power and daily practice. He cannot see that it has gone out of existence as a constitutional government. We have in its stead a government of corporations, with the political machine as an annex and aid.

To understand this we must remember that a government is that active organization which directly affects the citizens' rights to life, liberty, and the uses and benefits of their labor, called property by some, and "the pursuit of happiness" by the Declaration of Independence. How the corporations have come to usurp this power a few statistical facts teach us. We have, for example, a hundred-and-sixty thousand miles of operating railroads. These network the entire land, and have the almost exclusive distribution of all our products. This vast instrument, possessed of sovereignty through the franchise, enters every man's business and pleasure. It is under the control and virtual ownership of less than sixty families.

We have the telegraph, which science gave us as the poor man's post-office, consisting as it does of a pole, a wire, a battery, and a boy, made a luxury for the rich in the monopoly that gives it to one man.

All that one eats, wears, and finds shelter under are, through this same process of corporation monopoly, enhanced in cost for the benefit of the few privileged men who grow rapidly into millionaires, while the masses suffer.

This is our government.

Our readers must not charge us with exaggeration. We have statistics, not to be disputed, as to the existence of the power, and we have high authority for the charge regarding the despotic use of the power. Speaking of the railroad corporations, Messrs. Conkling, Sherman, and Windom said, years since, in their celebrated report to the Senate: "They [the railroad companies] can tax our products at will in a way Congress never dare attempt." Now the fiscal agency found in the power to tax is the highest attribute of sovereignty. Because of the usurpation in a British parliament accomplished in the attempt to tax colonies of Americans without their consent we had the War of Independence. Our fathers marched shoeless, tentless, and in rags under muskets for seven years to vindicate a principle that we surrender to the corporations. "They rise above all control, and are a law unto themselves," said President Garfield. "They rob the producers on one side and the stockholders on the other," cried the late Jeremiah S. Black, "and sit on our highways of commerce as did the robber barons on the rivers of Europe. They make members of the House, purchase seats in the Senate, select for us candidates for the Presidency, and own our courts."

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Another attribute of sovereignty, found in furnishing a currency for the people, has been seized on by something over two thousand corporations, called banks, and they can contract or expand to further their own selfish greed or that of their favorites and dependents. For thus favoring themselves they are paid a sum that would have supported the national government previous to the late war.

How this condition affects us every citizen can realize if he will reflect. The writer of this lives in a quiet valley of Ohio. He never would know that a political government exists except for the assessor and collector. His police consists of a revolver, a shot-gun, and four dogs. Wrong-doers may threaten his life, restrain his liberty, enter his stables at night, or his house at any hour, and, so far as government goes, he is his own police.

So much for our political structure. How is it with the corporations? They are with him at all hours. He cannot sell a grain of wheat nor an ounce of meat without their consent and toll. The fuel he burns has its toll, that is an extortion. The clothes he wears, the food he eats, the oil he burns by night, the glass that gives him light by day, the walls that shelter him, the shingles or slate upon the roof—in a word, all that he has to purchase or use, pays an uncalled-for tribute to extortion and monopoly.

The political structure could be annihilated, and the citizen would not know of its disappearance but for the absence of assessor and collector, and for the fact learned from the press.

This is the condition of the dweller in a rural district. The denizen of a town is not much better off. If he comes in contact with the political structure at any point, it is to his injury. He is taxed enormously to drain, pave, and light the streets. The draining is a source of peril to health, the pavements are infamous, while the light only makes darkness visible. So far as the police is

concerned, it is a political body, organized and used to further the ends of professional politicians. The citizen is in more peril from the club-inclined police than he is from thieves and ruffians.

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A most startling illustration of the subserviency of the political power to the moneyed combinations incorporated to ride, booted and spurred, over popular rights, as Jefferson expressed it, was given by the late tramway strikes at New York. When the conductors and drivers threw up their employment because of the starvation wages and overwork decreed by the combine, thereby putting a stop to all transportation, instead of arresting the presidents and directors, and fetching them into court to show cause why their charter should not be taken from them for a failure to fulfil their duty to the public, the entire police force was taken from duty to the public and put under control of these corporations. The rebellious laborers were clubbed into submission, while for a week New-Yorkers were forced either to walk or to trust their necks to those artfully constructed death-traps called the elevated roads.

We are not siding in this one way or the other. It may be that the laborers were all in the wrong and the corporations right, or the case may have been the reverse. To decide this is precisely what we want in a legal tribunal commanding the respect of the public. This is not to be had. The policeman's club is in the pay and under the control of the corporations, and it decides.

All these comments will be decried as unpatriotic. Patriotism with us is something akin to the love a mother has for a sick or crippled child. We are like beggars on the highways of the world, exhibiting our sores to excite, not pity, but—heaven save the mark!—admiration. Of course we cannot be expected to cure cancers that we boast of.

In the space allotted us for a review it is impossible to do justice to Professor Bryce's entertaining ignorance. His book is an amusing one, not only because the author is clever in his way of expressing himself, but because we take a strange delight in hearing opinions about ourselves and our institutions. In his first introductory sentences the author says: "What do you think of our institutions?" is the question addressed to the European traveller in the United States by every chance acquaintance." The citizen who puts this question little notes that he is making confession of the melancholy fact that our so-called "institutions" are open to doubt. It is not complimentary to our national character that we hang with breathless interest upon the opinion and judgment of any chance foreigner regarding what we are wont to assert, among ourselves, is simply perfect.

Kady, by Patience Stapleton (Belford, Clarke & Co.).—The fetid realism of recent American fiction—the realism which, fortunately for the honor of human nature, is wholly unreal—has become fatally tiresome from persistent reiteration of one theme. Even the most morbid readers must in time weary of an endless sequence of immoralities, all of the same family, and all whitened with the scales of the same moral leprosy. When the Saxon mind descends to sensualism it becomes merely gross and brutish; for it lacks the airy sprightliness of Latin licentiousness which turns evil to gayety and compels a smile at the corners of the mouth, even while the forehead corrugates into the frown of reprobation. American blood is essentially moral, and when overheated becomes clogged and thickened, producing the antic vagaries of delirium in the oppressed brain. An American cannot be *just a little* wicked, as a Frenchman can. He must be sound-hearted and clean-thoughted, or he must throw off all pretence to decency and descend into the sheer obscene. This is why American erotic fiction is hysterically immoral and not delicately suggestive, and why, instead of the filmy *double entendre*, which you can innocently laugh at for its wit, or, with more hardihood, enjoy for its tingling spice, we have the bald, unclothed picture, whose fiery coloring and sharp outline leave no chance for doubt as to its meaning.

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When this order of fiction was flung, naked and ogling, into the midst of an astonished public, there was a gasp of surprise and a general halt of indecision; while, like the monkey burned with hot molasses candy, the common countenance was petrified into a curious mixture of horror and delight. Like a hanging, a dissection, or the details of a murder, it has presented a fascination for a large number of minds; but if there were to be a man hanged every day in each of the city squares, it would not be long before people passing by would say to each other, "Pooh! only a hanging! revolting business anyway!" and walk on without so much as a second glance. And so it is, or is getting to be, with that class of fiction which has only the erotic for its cause of being. When volume after volume, issuing from the press, offers as a central point and motive a microscopic analysis of the animal side of human nature, taking for text that all men are libidinous and all women unchaste in various degrees, the ordinary reader, seeking merely for amusement, at length finds himself suffocated in the steam of moral turpitude, and craves for a breath of purer, cleaner air. Such an atmosphere, cold, fresh, and bracing as the winds which blow over the mountain region where its scene is chiefly laid, surrounds this sweetest and most delightful of recent novels, "Kady."

"Kady" is the work of a mind at once refined and vigorous. The author labors at the exposition of no trite moral. There is not a line of preaching in the book, and yet it would be a hardened nature which could rise from reading it, with his heart full of the simple nobility of Abner Clark, and commit a mean action. To recognize the reality of such a character as that of the old pioneer, simple, uneducated, and rude, yet, in the inborn impulses of his nature, nobly delicate, loftily honorable, good in the best and manliest sense—to recognize that such men have lived and do live, is to put aside into the limbo of the vacuous all philosophies of negation and sophistries of

pessimism. Abner Clark is unquestionably one of the few grand creations of American fiction. He is religious, but his religion is such that an infidel might respect it. It is the broad and simple creed of love—love, with its concomitants of charity, forgiveness, and wide sympathy. The simple prayer which he offers up over the grave of the artist Harrison's mother is a masterpiece. "An' we who must keep on in the round of toil and trouble need not wish her back, who was so weary with work and pain. The hand that reared these mount'ins, that laid the lake, that colors the sunset sky, is reached down to human creeturs, to the weakest or the strongest, and takes them into His keepin'. There's a dreary life here and a happy life hereafter; ... and there's a home for us all beyond these mount'ins tall."

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It is the religion of nature, the simple faith of the patriarchs of old, the belief that finds its strongest support in a noble pantheism, in the love of the Creator's handiwork, in a perception of the Omnipotent in the marvellous grandeur of material beauty. And yet this old man is neither superstitious nor weak. In order to save his young son from moral ruin and the clutches of card-sharpers, he can drink and gamble—aye, and play a game of poker like a bunco-steerer, and beat roguery before its very eyes. This game of poker, by the way, is one of the gems of the book. How the author, whose refinement of mind and heart is visible in every line of the whole story, has been able to study such scenes and such personages as this poker-party and these border roughs to such wonderful purpose, it is hard to understand. The whole incident stands out with the stern light and shadow of Salvator. It is almost brutal in its realism, but is touchingly relieved by the simple remorse of the misguided son and the rugged nobility of his father.

"I come here ternight ter save my boy an' teach him a lesson.... Now git in the boat," said Abner, "and I, a father of sixty, will row his son, a drunkard and a gambler, home."

"Oh, father," sobbed the miserable boy, "I—I never can forgive myself! I will never touch cards again!" At the shore his father laid his hand on Seeley's shoulder. "Seeley, I love ye too well to be mad with ye, but try to take the decent road, an' foller it straight."

The old man's death in the pursuit of his duty, the single word, "Forgive," to his weak and repentant son, the wild grief of his daughter Kady, touch the very centre of true pathos. Kady herself, poor, loving, wild little Kady, half savage and true woman, is a beautiful character. Greatly tempted, misunderstood, slandered, and neglected, she never, by one weak or wilful act, loses the entire sympathy of the reader. As truthful in her character of border heroine as M'liss, Kady is a much more touching and lovable creation, without the occasional repulsive traits of Bret Harte's portraiture. As her father is a true and noble gentleman, despite the accidents of birth and environment, so is his daughter, under her uncouth garb and rude speech, a true and noble woman.

Clopper, with his serene optimism, Leddy, his wife, Miss Pinkham and the cap-border, Levi Bean, Tilford Harrison the egotistical and self-persecuting artist with his miserable family, the Dennisons, Louisy and Emmeline, Madam Ferris, and Aunt Mary—a whole gallery of masterly portraits, are all instinct with life, all painted from evident sittings of originals.

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If there be any marked defect in the book it is in the excess of dialect and the thinness of the background of more cultivated life. It is much to say that this book, whose style is chiefly dialect, rarely ceases to charm and never tires. The author, whose pen has so long run in the uncouth speech of this border district, occasionally forgets her own English and drops a rude construction of sentence, or a primitive term into her own lucid phrases. But these slips are rare, and it is almost hypercriticism to notice them.

On all accounts "Kady" is one of the most remarkable books of the time. Purely American, without one taint of animalism though dealing with the most primitive humanity, true, sweet, and yet masculine in its power, it is a work which will take its place in the literature of the country as a model which cannot be too closely studied or too much admired.

'Twixt Love and Law: A novel, by Annie Jenness Miller (Belford, Clarke & Co.).—Literature which neither refreshes, amuses, nor instructs has no proper place in the world of letters; and assuredly that class of literature which enervates the mind and beckons beyond the noon-mark of propriety has no rights which the critic or the moralist is bound to respect. It is a marked characteristic of that order of recent fiction which takes for text the more or less unlawful relations of the sexes, that the style should be punctuated with shrieks, and the movement be a series of hysterical writhings. A woman with keen feelings does not, at every small anticlimax of her existence, perform a hand-spring and somersault as a means of giving vent to her emotions. Neither does she go about with a nose reddened with weeping, exploding in vociferous adjectives as a means of expressing her grief. "To be always and everywhere starved! starved! starved!" wails Mrs. Miller's heroine, as a sort of footnote to a proposal of marriage which she has just declined. "Oh, how cruel it is!" Thereupon "she shivered in the clutch of her despair, and, moaning, threw herself face downward upon the bosom of Mother Earth," very much to the amaze of the rejected suitor, who promptly picks her up and "holds her against his breast." She is intense, superlatively intense. "Her white bosom tossed and rose and fell; the burnished masses of her hair escaped and rioted on the midnight air. 'Spare me! spare me! Alex! Alex! Alex!' Out of the unyielding density of the night a voice of ecstasy breathed her name." A meeting takes place in this "unyielding density" with "Alex," a married man. The heroine being in love with him and he with her, it follows as a necessary element in this class of fiction that the wife should be all that is mean, evil, shrewish, and generally detestable. In such a state of affairs a wife is a difficult

problem, a nuisance, and yet very useful; for if there were no wife to interpose her uncomfortable personality between the lovers, there would be no reason for all these meetings in the "unyielding density," no exclamatory passages, no daring escapades along the very verge of the questionable, and, hence, no novel—which, all things considered, might not be so great a misfortune after all. In the course of this story, which includes much outcry, many combats with tempestuous passion, some sacrifices, a trial for attempted murder, and a divorce, the unpleasant marital impediment is comfortably put out of the way, and the lovers are safely married. [572]

"Twixt Love and Law" is one of those books, "not wicked, but unwise," which, whatever their ostensible moral may be, add to the perplexity and difficulty of social adjustment. Admitting that our marriage and divorce laws are unjust and ineffectual, still, to bring contempt, open or implied, upon the marriage relation, can only impede, not advance, a rational solution of the question. In nine cases out of ten vanity and loose morals are the primary causes of marital unfaithfulness in desire or act. In writing such a book as "Twixt Love and Law," clever and often brilliant as it is, the author has not used her graceful pen and clear head to the best interests of her sex.

THE APPEAL.

Cold, bitter cold beneath the wild March
moon,
The winter snow lies on my frozen
breast;
And o'er my head the cypress branches
croon
A sad and ceaseless dirge, and break
my rest.

I hear the bell chime in the dark church
tower,
The rising wind, a passer's hasty tread;
But no voice wakes the silence, hour by
hour,
Among the uncompanionable dead.

Perchance they lie in deep, unconscious
calm,
Regretting nothing in the world above;
Alas! for me it has not lost its charm—
There is no peace where thou art not,
my love!

Oh! bid me come to thee, and I will rise
From my unquiet couch and steal to
thine,
And touch thy cheek, and kiss thy
sleeping eyes,
And clasp thee, as of old, till morning
shine!

And I will murmur in thy drowsy ears
Sweet utterances of love and olden
song,
Till thou shalt half awake in blissful tears,
And cry "My love, why hast thou staid
so long?"

CHARLES LOTIN HILDRETH.

A COVENANT WITH DEATH. [1]

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A NARRATIVE.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "AN UNLAI D GHOST."

To E. P. T.

"So little payment for so great a debt."

CHAPTER I.

"O Death in Life! the days that are no more."

It would have been no surprise to his friends had Loyd Morton speedily followed his young wife to the grave. Their brief union had been a very communion of souls—one of those rare experiences in wedlock for jealousy of which Destiny may almost be pardoned. Small wonder, therefore, that his grief was of that speechless description which "whispers the o'er-fraught heart, and bids it break." For a time it was thought he could not survive his dumb despair; or, if he did, that melancholia would claim him an easy victim. It is needless to affirm that he escaped the wreck of both life and reason, since the existence of this chronicle attests so much.

The manner of his escape does not appear; though it was astutely surmised, and perhaps with some show of probability, that, being an expert and practitioner in disorders of the nervous system, he healed himself, albeit physicians of experience may entertain contrary views concerning the feasibility of the feat. At all events, he came forth to face his world again, a sad, pallid being indued with indomitable perseverance and fortitude; more than ever zealous in the discharge of his engagements; as never before devoted to his profession. But a sympathetic eye could not fail to detect the feverish abandonment of self, the positively voracious hungering for constant activity, which were in themselves a pathetic commentary upon the frame of mind in which his bereavement had left him.

He had become the wraith-like semblance of the original young Doctor Morton, once so buoyant, so pampered by favoring Fate—in a word, so worthy of righteous envy. Alas! what eternities to him were those hours of lonely seclusion when there were no visits to pay and no clients to awaken the sepulchral echoes of his house with summons at the bell—dark hours of nothingness, blank eras of forlorn distress!

Yet, let there be no suspicion that Loyd Morton's was an unmanly grief; it was no more a lachrymose distemper than it was a stubborn setting of his face against his lot. His sorrow was far too genuine to be self-conscious, and, if he brooded in his despair, it was simply because something had gone out of his life infinitely more precious than life itself; something that he would have given his life to recover, since absolute annihilation seemed to him preferable to this existing condition of death in life.

His love had been a first, all-absorbing passion; it had introduced into his hitherto prosaic existence a light and genial warmth that had set the soft glow of the rose upon its humblest attributes; it had afforded him an object to live for, a goal worthy his ambition, and had filled the void of indefinable longing with that sense of completeness which is ever the result of a perfect alliance between sympathy and sincerity of purpose.

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He had met his affinity during his student-days; had wooed, and won, and married her in the first flush of that youthful affection. Possibly the old-time shades of Stuttgart lent a quaint and fascinating glamour to the courtship; but, if glamour there were, it became the permanent atmosphere that hallowed their marital relations when the work of life began at home, stripped of all romantic association. Indeed, their honeymoon never waned to setting; it simply suffered total eclipse.

It was fortunate that, at the period of his overwhelming bereavement, the young physician chanced to be in vogue. American nervous systems are notoriously more subject to disorder than any on the face of the earth; and he who ministers successfully to, or rather deciphers cleverly, these occult riddles of the human anatomy of the West, is not only an exceedingly busy, but an eminently fortunate, man. Day and night he is at the beck and call of those whose unstrung nerves require tuning; while, if his patience is forced to pay the penalty of his devotion, the shade of Midas, by way of recompense, seems indefatigable in its superintendence of the filling of his coffers.

To repute and popularity had Loyd Morton attained in an exceptional degree; and, for the reason that a host of wayward nervous systems could not be induced to respect the season of his grief, he was fairly dragged out of his seclusion, and made to identify himself with the real or imaginary woes of his patients. And it was fortunate that it was so, since on this account, only in the solitude of those chambers, about which clung the memory of his lost one like a benison, had he opportunity to listen to the lament of his anguished heart. And the monotonous cry of that heart was ever, "Paula, Paula, Paula! My wife!"

Surely there could have been no rest for her soul if that wail of affliction penetrated the celestial sphere to the enjoyment of which her blameless life entitled her. Far from contributing to her repose, such grieving emphasis must have fettered her spirit to earth.

"I feel," he told himself at the close of his first year of widowhood, "as though I was environed by a sere wilderness, over whose trackless wastes I must trudge until I meet the ashy horizon and find the end. No ray of light, no star to twinkle hope; always these weeping clouds of grizzled pallor! Only one comfort is vouchsafed me—fatigue. Fortunately, fatigue means sleep, and sleep oblivion!"

Lost in dreary reverie, he sat by the window of his study one April evening, with the melancholy spring-tide gloaming about him. A nesting-bird twittered, and the scent of the sodden earth filtered in at the half-open casement.

Two years ago that day he had watched a German mother raise the bridal wreath from her daughter's brow, the happy ceremonial over, and had listened, as in a rapturous dream, to the words: "She is thine. Take her; but, oh! my son, guard, guide, and cherish her, for the sake of her fond mother, when the boundless sea shall roll between us!"

One year ago to an hour, and in the dismal after-glow of a rainy sunset, he had stood beside the open grave, his agonized heart-throbs echoing the wet clods as they fell upon the casket that contained the last fragment of his shattered hopes—his broken idol screened from his yearning gaze by hideous glint of plate and polished wood.

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Nuptial and burial rites celebrated with the self-same ghastly flowers within a twelve-month! A wreath for a bride, a chaplet for a corpse, fragrant tokens for the quick and the dead—and so the chapter ended!

The monotonous drip of the eaves, the fitful sough of the miasmatic wind, the odor of the humid garden-plot, the blood-red hem of the leaden clouds whose skirts trailed languidly along the western horizon—all, all so vividly recalled that grievous hour of sepulture, so painfully accentuated its anniversary, that, in very desolation of soul, he exclaimed,

"My God! how unutterably lonely and wretched I am! What would I not give for one word, one glimpse, for the slightest assurance that we are not doomed to eternal separation; that the closing of the eyes in death does not signify instant annihilation!"

The sudden clang of the office-bell interrupted his utterance and almost deprived him of breath, so significant seemed the punctuation to his thought. He rose hastily and, contrary to his custom, preceded the servant through the hall.

Upon throwing open the outer door, he found himself confronted by a woman, closely veiled and clothed in black, her tall and slender figure standing forth in strong relief against the lurid gloom of the evening.

For an instant silence prevailed, save for the retreating footsteps of the servant as he returned to his quarters.

"You are Doctor Loyd Morton," the woman began in a tone low yet perfectly distinct, a tone of assertion rather than inquiry. "Can you give me a few moments' consultation?"

"These are my office-hours, madam," he replied, a feeling of mingled curiosity and repulsion taking possession of him.

"I know; but I am told that you are in great request. Shall we be undisturbed?"

"Quite so. Will you come in?"

He stepped aside and she entered, raising her veil as she did so, though the darkness of the hall prevented his determining what manner of countenance she wore. The twilight that penetrated the office through uncurtained windows, however, discovered a delicate, pale face framed in tendrils of soft chestnut hair and alight with eyes of the same indescribable tint. It was not a strictly beautiful face, according to the canons of beauty, yet it was one of those faces one glance at which invites another, until the spell of fascination claims the beholder.

Loyd Morton had had impressionable days, but for obvious reasons they were at an end. Still, he was interested; and the better to study his visitor he was about to strike a match for the purpose of lighting a lamp, when the woman, with swift divination of his intent, exclaimed:

"I prefer the twilight," adding, "I shall not detain you long."

Morton hesitatingly replaced the unignited match, and glanced at his visitor in a manner eloquent of his desire to learn the object of her call.

She noted the silent interrogation in her keen way, and, after a swift survey of the shadowy apartment, continued:

"I believe you assured me that we should be undisturbed."

"I did, madam."

"We are not alone, however."

"I beg your pardon; we are quite alone."

"No, no! there is a presence here beside our own—a presence so real, so powerful, as to be almost tangible. Oh, I understand that look of quick intelligence in your eyes and that wan smile lurking about your lips. You think me deranged; but I can easily prove to you that I am not."

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She had spoken with unexpected fervor, and now paused, pressing her slender hand upon her eyes, as if to compose herself.

"I did not think to encounter one of my so-called crises here," she resumed presently; "but it is just as well, since by this means you can better form some diagnosis of my case. Do—do I afford you any hint? Perhaps, though, I do not interest you?"

His unresponsive silence seemed to dispirit her, for her eager eyes fell dejectedly.

"On the contrary, you interest me very much," he answered gently. "Will you be seated, and give me some information regarding your symptoms?"

She sank into the depths of a reclining-chair that faced the western window, while Morton seated himself directly before her.

The blood-red ribbon below the rainy clouds had faded and shrunk to a filament of pale olive that gave forth a weird, crepuscular glimmer. Objects as white as the pallid face among the cushions seemed to absorb the sensitive light and to grow yet more spectral through its aid.

"First of all," remarked the young doctor, "kindly give me your name and such information as you please concerning your manner of life."

The voice that replied was low to drowsiness.

"My name is Revaleon—Margaret Revaleon. I am an Englishwoman by birth, and have been for three years the wife of a Canadian. Until my child was born I enjoyed, if not robust, at least excellent, health. For the past year I have lost ground; while these crises, as I call them, have debilitated and depressed me. Thinking a change would benefit me, I have come to visit friends in this neighborhood. In the hope of relief from my peculiar ailment, which I believe to be purely nervous, I have sought you out, attracted by your fame as an expert in disorders of the nervous system. Ah, doctor," she added, struggling against the lethargy that oppressed her, "do not tell me that I am incurable, since I have so much to live for!"

She seemed as ingenuous as a child; her unaffected manner being such as speedily wins its way to confidence. The sense of mingled repulsion and curiosity, which in the first moment she had exerted upon Morton, vanished, giving place to a feeling of genuine interest, perhaps concern.

"I see no reason for pronouncing the doom you dread, Mrs. Revaleon," he said; "not, at least, until you explain the 'peculiar ailment' you allude to."

Her eyes rested upon him with singular intentness—singular, because they appeared to lack speculation; that is to say, they were dilated, and luminous with a strange yellow light. At the same time it was evident that their regard was introspective, if speculative at all. Yet her reply followed with a full consciousness of the situation.

"I am unable to explain my malady," she said. "It consists in little more than what you see at this moment. If *you* cannot account for my present condition, it must continue a mystery to me."

He leaned forward and took her hands in his. They were icy cold, although they responded to his touch with an indescribable, nervous vibration.

"I have no trouble of the heart," she murmured, divining his suspicion; "I suffer this lowering of vitality only when in my present condition."

He released her hands and sat back in his chair, regarding her fixedly.

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After a brief pause, he remarked,

"I must ask you to explain what you mean by your 'present condition.'"

"I mean, Dr. Morton, that, since you assure me that there is no presence in this room other than our own, I must possess some species of clairvoyance which my present condition induces. I assure you that there *is a third presence here*, that completely overshadows you! The consciousness of this fact freezes my very marrow and chills my being with the chill of death. It is by no means the first time that I have experienced these baleful sensations, or I should not have come to you for advice and counsel. Heaven knows I have no wish to be cognizant of these occult matters; but I am completely powerless to struggle against them. Ah, me!" she sighed wearily, "had I lived in the days of witchcraft, I suppose I should have been burned at the stake, despite my innocence."

Her voice sank to a whisper, and with its cadence her eye-lids drooped and closed; her breathing became stertorous, while her teeth ground each other with an appalling suggestion of physical agony, of which her body gave no evidence, being quiescent.

Startled though he was, Morton's first suspicion was that he was being made the victim of some clever imposture. This fancy, however, soon gave place to a belief that he was witnessing some sort of refined hysteria. Were the latter supposition the case, he felt himself equal to the emergency.

He leaned forward and placed his hands firmly upon the shoulders of the inanimate woman. "Enough of this, Mrs. Revaleon!" he exclaimed in a firm voice; "if I am to assist you, you must assist me! I command you to open your eyes!"

Not so much as a nerve vibrated in the corpse-like figure.

Aroused to a determination to thoroughly investigate the phenomenon, Morton quickly ignited a candle, and, holding it in one hand, he passed it close to the woman's eyes, the heavy lids of which he alternately raised with the fingers of his disengaged hand.

The eyes returned a dull, sightless glare to the test.

As a last resort to arouse consciousness or discover imposture, he produced a delicate lancet,

and, raising the lace about the woman's wrist, he lightly scarified the cold, white flesh. Blood sluggishly tinged the slight abrasion, but, to his amazement, the immobility of his subject failed to relax one jot; yet the experiment was not entirely without result, since at the same moment a voice, muffled and far away in sound, broke the expectant silence:

"Loyd! Loyd!"

The twilight had deepened to actual gloom, which the flickering of the weird candle-light but served to accentuate. It seemed impossible to establish evidence to prove that it was the lips of Margaret Revaleon that had framed the thrilling utterance; indeed, the eerie tone could be likened to nothing human.

Spellbound the young doctor stood, doubting the evidence of his senses, yet listening—listening, until it came again, with positive enunciation and import,

"Loyd!"

"In Heaven's name, who calls?" he exclaimed.

"Paula, your wife."

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CHAPTER II.

"We see but dimly through the mists and
vapors;
Amid these earthly damps,
What seem to us but sad, funereal tapers
May be heaven's distant lamps."

Though Loyd Morton had proved himself to be an ideal lover, he was at heart an eminently practical man. It is true he had not yet quite outlived that heyday of impressions that occurs somewhere in the first two score years of all lives. His eager mind grasped, with avidity, the various tenets of his day, and strove to fathom them; if he failed in any instance, he chose that happy mean between scepticism and positive unbelief, and waited for more light. He felt that he had been born into an epoch of rare progress, and that it behooved him to reject nothing worthy of intelligent consideration. There can be no doubt that the abundant sentiment in his nature lent itself to the higher phases of intellectual inquiry; yet, in justice, he could not be called a visionary person—at least, prior to this particular April evening. It was but natural that, in the wide circle of his professional and social acquaintanceship he should have fallen in with more than one disciple of the advanced theory of modern spiritualism. To converse with all such, he lent a courteous, even interested, ear. He found himself not infrequently listening in amazement to certain thrilling experiences related by the initiated, and, as a result, he promised himself the satisfaction of investigating the matter for himself some day; but into his busy existence that day had not as yet found its way. Consequently, he had formed no opinion whatever as regarded the so-called communion between the living and the dead. As has been said, his interest in the question had been excited—more, possibly, than comported with the distinction of his professional position; but it is doubtful if he would have rejected the investigation simply on this account.

Here, however, was an instance fairly thrust upon him, which startled, amazed, and mystified him. That the woman, Margaret Revaleon, was in a state of complete coma, he had satisfied himself beyond peradventure. Accomplished physicians are not apt to be deceived regarding the results of infallible tests; and yet here was a subject, absolutely unconscious, speaking not only intelligently, but with a degree of appositeness that, considering the circumstances, was appalling.

Thoroughly alive to the situation, not to say excited, yet sufficiently master of himself to keep well within the pale of scepticism, Morton resumed his seat, which he had quitted in some agitation when informed that he was face to face with the invisibility of his wife, and disposed himself to probe the mystery.

Mrs. Revaleon had ceased to breathe stertorously; a complacent, almost smiling expression had taken possession of her features, and she had leaned forward in her chair, with outstretched hands, though her eyes remained closed.

"Give me your hands, Loyd," she said in the same murmurous tone, that retained not a vestige of her normal voice, "will you not welcome me back?"

Morton relinquished his hands into the keeping of that cold clasp, in silence.

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"O Loyd, my husband," the voice resumed, "can you not believe that it is I, Paula, your wife?"

"What would be the consequence of my saying that I cannot believe?" he responded with constraint.

"It would make it all the more difficult for me to convince you that I am indeed with you."

"Then I will say that I believe."

"I am clairvoyant. You cannot mislead a spirit capable of reading your mind as though it were an

open book. Ah, what can I do to conquer your incredulity? What can I say to convince you that I am as truly with you at *this* moment as I was at any moment while in the flesh? It is your sacred love for me that has attracted my spirit to this fortuitous reunion. Oh, do not doubt me!—rather assist me, if ever you loved me, Lolo!"

He started then, and his dark eyes shone like twin stars. "How came *you* by that name?" he demanded unsteadily—"a name never uttered in the presence of any living being, save myself?"

"How came I by that endearing epithet!" the voice answered. "Did not my absorbing fondness for you suggest it? Was it not the coinage of my affectionate fancy? I beseech you, separate this medium, through whom I speak, from my personality. Understand that this woman is practically dead, while it is I, Paula Morton, who actuate her brain, her voice, her very being."

"My God!" exclaimed Morton, "this is beyond my comprehension!"

"Let perfect faith control you while this brief communion lasts; then take refuge in scepticism—if you can. You are so unhappy, so wretched, without me, that I should think you would be glad to meet me more than half way."

"I cannot see you, if it is you."

"Another question of faith! But it matters not; you will believe in time. So you miss me?"

"My life is a void without my wife," he replied.

"What divine love! Loyd, you and I constitute an affinity. I know *now* how rare are earthly affinities; that is, unions of souls that are destined to endure through all eternity. Every soul born into existence is allotted an affinity, which sooner or later it will meet, in accordance with divine ordinance. These unions of kindred souls, attuned, as they are, to surpassing harmony, are rare upon earth, though they may occur, as in our case; but, generally, years—even ages—may transpire ere these ineffable coalitions are consummated. *Our* souls are affined; we have no need to search. We are simply undergoing a temporary separation. You are coming to me; I am waiting for you. I rejoice in the thought, and the knowledge gives me strength to control this medium, who brings me into such intimate communion with you."

At this juncture in the extraordinary interview, a bell rang violently, and a moment later a light rap sounded upon the door, a preconcerted signal between the doctor and his servant, announcing the fact that another visitor demanded admittance.

It is not surprising that Morton was too deeply absorbed to notice the threatening intrusion.

"If—if I thought," he said, his hesitation marking the intensity of his emotion, "if I suspected that I was being made the dupe of some plausible imposture, the butt of some sort of nameless sorcery, I—"

"Loyd, Loyd," wailed the voice, "you wrong me, wrong me grievously! Your incredulity dooms me to such unhappiness as I have never known."

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"You imply that you have known some degree of unhappiness! You were never unhappy upon earth; are you so now—wherever you may be?"

"Oh, no! I am supremely happy."

"Supremely happy," he echoed, jealously; "supremely happy, though separated from me! and yet you term your love for me divine!"

"It is divine, divine as all things heavenly are. For the perfecting of such love as mine the evidence of the senses is not requisite; indeed, it would prove antagonistic. Your earthly eyes are blind; but from my vision have fallen away the scales, which fact renders my spiritual sight clairvoyant. I can see you at all times, and can be with you with the celerity of the birth of thought. Where then, in what resides the separation for me?"

"For *you*!" he cried, passionately; "ay, but for *me*! I am blind; these mortal scales are upon my eyes, I am not clairvoyant. The wings of thought refuse to raise me above this present slough of despond into which I have fallen; they flutter with me back among the memories of the dead past, but that is all! I am still living in the flesh, and heaven knows that this bitter separation is a reality to me!"

Thereupon ensued a momentary silence, which was ere long ruptured by the low, gentle voice.

"Loyd," it whispered, "you bind me to earth; your love fetters my spirit!"

"If your love were unchanged," he murmured, disconsolately, "there would be no bondage in such magnetism!"

"My love, having been spiritualized, is far more absorbing than ever it was."

"Then why should you complain that the attraction of my love binds you to earth? If it is the spirit of my wife that addresses me at this moment, as you pretend, if your love for me is greater and purer than it was upon earth—which, as God is my judge, I can scarcely credit—why should you not be happier in this sphere, where I am, than in the realm of heaven?"

"Simply because it is not heaven here."

"But *I* am here!"

"For a time only, for a little space; and there is no reckoning of time in eternity. Soon you will be with me—forever."

"Paula! Would I were with you now!"

"Hush! That wish is impious."

"Ah, but think! I have the means at my command to send my soul into eternity, within the twinkling of an eye!"

"Into eternity, but not to me. Oh, my husband, there is no sin accounted so heinous as the taking of a God-given life. You must live on until your appointed hour, then come into the courts of heaven with hands unstained, with soul unsullied."

Raised to a pinnacle of exaltation which, in his normal condition, he would have deemed unattainable to one of his stanch rationality, Morton exclaimed:

"I *cannot* live without you! After what I have just heard, which renders my dreary existence tenfold more dreary, I will not hold myself responsible for what I may do. Oh, Paula, my wife, my wife! if you would not have me commit a crime against myself which may separate us for all eternity, come back to me!"

"I will come back to you," responded the voice.

"Oh, I do not mean enveloped in this ghostly invisibility!" he cried.

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"No, Loyd, I will return to you in the flesh."

Supreme as had been the moment of his supplication, he had retained sufficient reason not to expect a concession; consequently he felt that he was taking leave of his wits as he gasped,

"You will return to me—*in the flesh!*"

"In the flesh. Before the dawn of another day you shall take a living body in your arms and know that it is animated by my soul."

His clasp tightened upon the hands he held.

"Am I mad? Do I hear aright?" he faltered, his utterance thick with wonder; "in God's name, *how* will you effect such reincarnation?"

There was a momentary pause; and then the voice replied with some note of omen in its firmness:

"Mark the test I am about to give to you! You will be called to attend a dying woman—you *are* called; already is the messenger here; a woman's soul is trembling upon the threshold of eternity. If you are alone with her when that soul takes wing, my spirit will instantly take its place, and your skill will do the rest, accomplish the resurrection of that body and secure our further communion. But there may be consequences over which *I* shall have no control; those consequences *you* will have to confront. Are you willing to accept the chances?"

"Willing! All I ask is the opportunity to meet them!"

"Very well. You have conjured me back to earth. With you rests the responsibility!"

The voice expired in a sigh, and the hitherto quiescent figure of Margaret Revaleon shuddered, while her hands trembled convulsively. Thereupon followed the stertorous breathing again, and the painful gnashing of the teeth. An instant later her great hazel eyes flashed open, and rested with a sightless stare upon the flickering candle.

"Oh, where am I?" she moaned languidly, her voice having retaken its normal tone; then came a flash of intelligence like the nascent tremor of dawn; at last full consciousness of her surroundings.

"Oh, is it you, Doctor Morton?" she faltered, smiling faintly; "really I had forgotten you. Where have I been? What do you think of my case? Is it hopeless? By your grave look I infer it must be."

At this moment the signal at the door was repeated more peremptorily.

Morton gathered his energies with an effort.

"Excuse me for a moment, Mrs. Revaleon," he stammered, with difficulty commanding himself, "I will return to you presently."

With a nervous step, quite at variance with his wonted calm demeanor, he hastened into the ante-chamber, closing the door behind him.

The gas burned brightly, and its flare dazzled his sight accustomed to the twilight that reigned within the study; but he was well able to recognize the young gentleman who hastened forward at his approach.

"Oh, Loyd!" exclaimed the visitor, with an accent of mingled agony and reproach, "what an eternity you have kept me waiting! In heaven's name, come to us at once! Romaine is dying!"

"Romaine—dying!" echoed Morton.

"We fear so; God grant that we may be mistaken! But will you come at once?"

"At once of course, Hubert."

"Then follow me; the carriage is waiting."

The young man had reached the door even as he spoke.

Morton paused in the midst of the brilliantly lighted room, every vestige of color fled even from his lips.

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"Merciful Powers!" he murmured, "am I waking from some hallowed dream or from some infernal nightmare? No, no! this is the test *she* bid me mark! It is no fantasy! it is reality!"

Even in his haste he was mindful of his waiting client, and flung open the door of his study. A sharp draught of air from the open casement extinguished the candle that burned within, leaving in its stead the lance of a pale young moon.

Bathed in the aqueous light stood Margaret Revaleon, regarding him with wistful eyes.

"Well, doctor," she began, "you have returned to pass sentence upon me?"

"By no means, Mrs. Revaleon," he answered, hastily; "I have only to say that your case is a singular one. While I have no reason to believe that any real danger will ever result from the 'condition' of which you complain, I am forced to admit that I know of no treatment for you at this time. I beg you to excuse me now, as I am called to attend a critical case. My servant will wait upon you."

And with these hasty words, Morton took his departure.

CHAPTER III.

"Now help, ye charming spells and periapts!"

Sir Francis Bacon maintained that every man is a debtor to his profession, and that in seeking to receive countenance and profit therefrom, he should of duty endeavor, by way of amends, to be a help and ornament thereunto. Undoubtedly every genuine professor realizes this obligation; while if he be of a truly appreciative nature, he will not lose sight of a concomitant duty towards those whose favor has lent encouragement to the practice of his art or profession, especially at the period of its incipience.

Such a debt of gratitude did young Doctor Loyd Morton owe the Effingham family.

Sidney Effingham had been a magnate in his day; a man who had freely given his distinguished influence towards the refinement of our, in some respects, too rapid Republican growth, and he had gone down to the tomb of his ancestors, leaving behind him worthy exemplars in the persons of his widow, his son and daughter. There had been an elder son, Malcolm by name, whose unwavering friendship for Morton in boyhood and early manhood had opened an avenue to the penniless student and orphan into the bosom of the Effingham family; but Malcolm Effingham had died of the Roman fever in Italy, and it had been Morton's melancholy duty, as the young gentleman's travelling-companion and guest, to close his friend's eyes in death and return to America with his body.

The untimely demise of his elder son had proved a grievous stroke to Sidney Effingham; yet he bore up bravely, in a measure transferring his thwarted interest to Malcolm's friend and class-mate. Thus it came about that Loyd Morton owed the perfecting of his education to Mr. Effingham, who insisted that the young man should return to Europe at his expense and complete his studies. Moreover, such was his almost morbid affection for all that pertained to his dead son, Sidney Effingham bequeathed a comfortable living to Morton, thus acknowledging him, as it were, an adopted son.

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The death of this beneficent gentleman occurred during Morton's courtship in Germany, precipitating his marriage and immediate return to his native land. Though the widow welcomed young Mrs. Morton with maternal fervor, to Morton she frankly expressed her regret that he had placed himself beyond the possibility of assuming Malcolm's vacant place in her household.

"But my interest in you remains unabated," she assured the young physician, "and it shall be my pleasure to do all that lies in my power to insure you success in your chosen profession. Otherwise, leaving my personal affection for you out of the account, I should fail in my duty as the wife and mother of those who held your welfare and success so closely at heart."

And Serena Effingham had acted in accordance with her noble convictions and promise. Thanks to her unflagging interest in his behalf, Morton seemed to spring with winged feet into the coveted haven of fashionable patronage. There is no gainsaying the fact that he maintained his position by consummate ability, and equally there is no disputing the fact that he was fortunate in the possession of such eminently influential backing.

As has been stated, such were his engagements that but few hours of the day or night could he call his own, even during the period of his bereavement. His success had been phenomenal, two

brief years having assured his standing among the leading physicians of his day.

This great burden of obligation weighed upon the young doctor's mind, as he sat beside Malcolm Effingham's brother while the carriage-wheels dashed through the murky streets of the town and out over the sodden road that led to Belvoir,—weighed upon his mind to the partial obliteration of his recent weird experience with Margaret Revaleon.

Romaine Effingham—dying!

Oh, it seemed incredible! How was it possible to couple that brilliant spirit with the grim austerity of Death?

"And yet," he thought, with a sickening pang at his heart, "should she die now, in her nineteenth year, she will have enjoyed as many days as were vouchsafed my poor Paula."

Paula! Merciful heaven, how came it about that he should feel at that moment as though he were summoned to Paula's bedside and not Romaine's?

With a start that was half-guilty, half-superstitious, he laid his hand upon the arm of the mutely eloquent figure at his side.

"Hubert!" he exclaimed in the tone of one who would fain drown the voice of conscience, "Hubert, my dear boy, why do you not speak? Are you so anxious?"

"Anxious!" replied young Effingham, "I am almost distracted. What will become of us should anything happen to Romaine! O Loyd, what was I to mother compared with father and Malcolm? what am I to her compared with Romaine?"

"You are unjust to yourself, Hubert, you——"

"Hush, hush! Such words from you, who know us so well, sound like lame condolence! I cannot bear it while there is a glimmer of hope. By and by, should there be no help for it, I may be glad to listen to you; but not now—oh, not now!"

"Hubert," Morton remarked after a momentary pause, "you must be calm. In the few minutes that remain to us I must learn from you something concerning Romaine's condition."

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"God knows I am willing to help you all I can."

"What has happened to her? How is she affected?"

"We were sitting at dinner, Romaine being in her usual health and spirits. Indeed, I do not remember when she has been so gay. I suppose her high spirits were caused by the receipt of a letter to-day from Colley, stating that he should sail from Havre by the following steamer, and might outstrip his letter."

At mention of that name, which was simply the nickname of Colston Drummond, the affianced lover of Romaine Effingham, Loyd Morton shuddered involuntarily.

"Well, well," he urged, "what then?"

"Well, in the midst of a burst of laughter—you know her laugh, so like a peal of bells—Romaine suddenly turned ashy pale, and, with a gasp, sank back in her chair. My God, I shall never forget my sensation at that moment! She looked as father looked when he died."

"What did you do?"

"Do! We did everything that should be done in such an emergency. Mother was as firm as a rock; but I saw the look of despair in her eyes as she turned to me, saying, 'Go for Loyd, with all speed; go yourself, and bring him back!'—I have secured you; I have done all that I can. The rest remains with you."

"With *me!*" gasped Morton. "Do you mean to say that you have not called in some other physician at such a crisis?"

"We have perfect confidence in you, Loyd."

"Good heavens! This is too great a responsibility! I am not—not—" He was going to add, "I am not equal to such an emergency. You must send at once for some other doctor," when he paused abruptly, turning ghastly pale as the words recurred to him, unbidden as the mournful rustling of the leaves of memory,

"A woman's soul is trembling upon the threshold of eternity. If you are alone with her when that soul takes wing, my spirit will instantly take its place, and your skill will do the rest. Accomplish the resurrection of that body, and secure our further communion."

Consultation with another physician might be the means of saving Romaine Effingham's life! After all, what mattered it if he were destined to resurrect her body, though henceforth it was to become the domicile of a soul for the recovery of which he would have sacrificed twenty thousand Romaines?

Consequently he bit his lips in silence. And at that moment the massive gateway of Belvoir gave back a sepulchral echo of the grinding carriage-wheels, while lights glimmered wanly beyond the fog-trailed lawn.

An exceedingly charming girl was Romaine Effingham. She possessed that unconscious grace which resides in the joy of youth and ease of heart. She was beautiful, accomplished, brilliant, and when, upon the eve of his departure for Europe, her engagement to Colston Drummond was announced, the fashionable world joined its plaudits and congratulations to its acknowledgments for the favor of having been permitted to witness at least one genuine example of the eternal fitness of things.

Not to have known Romaine Effingham personally, may be accounted a positive deprivation; while, to have been ignorant of the existence of "Colley" Drummond, that estimable corypheus of patrician youth, was equivalent to confessing one's self quite unknown; and that without a shade of irony, since Colston Drummond was, in the best sense, a man of that world which has reason to consider itself well-born. So much having been admitted, one may feel inclined to sympathize with the legion who loved Romaine and admired her lover. [585]

It was a grievous sight indeed, to see the fair young girl low lying in her dainty chamber, with the pallid sign of death on lip and cheek. Equally pitiful was it to mark the mute anguish of that noble mother, whose life had been one era of devotion to her children. They had been her very idols—her treasures beyond price. She had passed whole days and nights in attendance upon them during their slight juvenile ailments—days and nights which to fashionable women of her ilk are precious epochs of social dissipation. To have gone into society leaving one of her children ill at home, it mattered not how trifling the indisposition, would have been as utter an impossibility to Serena Effingham as for her to have regarded with an indifferent eye the present deathlike syncope of her beautiful daughter. As she had been faithful in the minutiae of maternal duty, so was she proportionally constant in greater exigencies. With eyes haggard with suspense, she watched the wan face upon the pillow, while her heart-beats told her how the laggard moments dragged themselves away—away from the happy past, on towards the menacing future.

A sepulchral silence had settled upon the house, portentous in its profundity; consequently the slightest sound seemed almost painfully magnified. Naturally, then, the roll of the carriage-wheels upon the flagging before the principal entrance sounded an alarm to the anxious watcher's heart.

"They have come at last!" she breathed. "God grant that they come not in vain!"

With the prayer trembling upon her lips, she met Loyd Morton at the head of the staircase. She noted the deadly pallor upon the young doctor's face and the unusual dilation of his eyes; but she thought they argued his keen anxiety, as, in a certain sense, they did. She gave him her hand, with a firm clasp, and dimly noted that his were as cold as ice. She drew him to her and kissed him, heedless of the fact that he failed to return the salute.

"You must save her, Loyd," she murmured. "Our hope is built upon your skill. If ever you loved us, have pity upon us now!"

He made no reply to the solemn injunction; perhaps words failed him at that supreme moment, perhaps he felt silence to be the wiser course. She relinquished her hold upon him, and he crossed the hall. At the door of the dimly lighted chamber he paused and turned abruptly. The rustle of her dress betrayed the fact that she was close in his wake.

"Permit me to make an examination," he faltered, with evident constraint; "I—I will then report." The strained circumstances seemed to invest his words with a defiant ring—at least, her woman's instinct suggested the fancy; but she respected his request and joined her son, where he stood, at the head of the staircase, leaning upon his arm for support. From where they stood, mother and son could see Morton bending above the inanimate form, could watch him as he lowered his head close to the pillow, holding it in that position for what seemed a very eternity.

Was he listening for some token of fluttering vitality? Was he applying some remedy?

Once Serena Effingham started, as a single word, possibly a name, reached her listening ear from the dim chamber. *Was* it a name she heard? If so, *whose* name? For an instant she was half inclined to fancy that her tense anxiety had produced some passing delusion. Yet, had she been put upon her oath, she would have been forced to confess that the name which had reached her was that of one dead—the name of *Paula!* [586]

The fancy appeared preposterous; she had no intention of betraying such a piece of sensationalism to her son, while Hubert Effingham had no opportunity of inquiring into the cause of her sudden emotion, since at the moment Morton quitted the bedside and came quickly forth to join them.

"Her swoon is yielding," he said, in answer to the eloquent appeal of their eyes.

"Thank God!"

"Yes, she had passed beyond the portals of death, but she has returned." He spoke according to his present conviction, not as the scientist he prided himself upon being. "She will shortly be conscious," he added, cutting short their eager queries; "her mind will be in an acutely sensitive condition, and, absolute quiet throughout the house is indispensable. I will watch till midnight when, if her condition is favorable, I will relinquish my place to you." He glanced at Serena Effingham. "I would advise you to secure what rest you can during the intervening hours."

He turned to re-enter the chamber, when the lady laid a detaining hand upon his arm.

"Loyd," she whispered, "tell me one thing. What do you consider the cause of this awful trance?"

"Her heart," he answered.

"Then she may die as her father died?"

"It does not follow. She may never have a recurrence of the trouble. What I fear is—"

"What do you fear?"

The sensitive lines of his face seemed to petrify as with a desperate resolution he replied:

"I fear her mind may be affected by this attack."

"Her *mind!* Oh, Loyd, tell me anything but that!"

"Would you prefer her death?" he demanded, almost harshly.

"Oh, no, no, no!"

"Then let us hope for the best; or at least make the best of the inevitable. You may take comfort in the fact that I promise you Romaine's life."

He turned abruptly as he spoke, and entering the chamber, silently but securely closed the door.

Then it was that the mother's fortitude gave way, and turning to her son, she flung herself upon his breast and burst into tears.

"Oh, Hubert," she sobbed, "what dreadful spell is upon us? After all these years—though I have known Loyd from his infancy, have loved him almost as one of my own children, to-night he seems a stranger to me! What does it mean? what does it all portend?"

He strove to soothe her with loving words, and almost bearing her precious weight in his arms, he led her away to her own apartments.

And then, in expressive silence, the night wore on to its mid-watch. The pale crescent of the moon dropped behind the hills, while here and there a lonesome star peered forth in the rifts of the scudding wrack.

At last, and just upon the stroke of midnight, the vigil was disturbed by the sound of wheels, of footsteps, of voices, and by the muffled unclosing and closing of doors. Loyd Morton started from his chair at the bedside of the sleeping girl. He was pallid to the lips, and with difficulty commanded the desperate condition of his nerves. Contrary to his commands, the door of the chamber had been opened to admit the stalwart figure of a man. The pair had not met in many a year, but in the dim radiance of the shaded lamp, their recognition was instantaneous. [587]

For an instant Morton quailed. The intruder who had braved his authority, to which even the anxiety of a mother deferred, was Colston Drummond!

The confrontation bristled with omen.

CHAPTER IV.

"I do not know what witchcraft's in him."

Had he been put upon the rack Loyd Morton would still have been unable to give any coherent account of his vigil at the bedside of Romaine Effingham. Four hours had elapsed from the moment that he closed the chamber-door until, upon the stroke of midnight, it opened to admit Colston Drummond. Reflection failed to assist him to any satisfactory explanation regarding the flight of the time. He was morally certain that he had not lost an instant in slumber, the tension upon his mind would be almost proof positive that he could not have lapsed into unconsciousness; and yet the span seemed a complete void as he looked back upon it.

Romaine still lived; indeed her hold upon vitality had visibly strengthened since Morton's advent, yet, so far as his cognizance of the phenomenon went, Nature unassisted had taken the resurrection into her own hands. Resurrection was Morton's estimate of the miracle, since every token of immediate dissolution was present in the appearance of his patient when first he bent over her. The eyes were glazed, the flesh clammy, and the pulsations imperceptible. The extremities were cold with that peculiar chill which is so eloquent to the practised touch. Death's conquest was imminent, perhaps assured, and he had done nothing to avert the dread consummation—nothing save to murmur the name of one which embodied, for him, the quintessence of existence here and hereafter.

"Paula!" he had murmured, half tentatively, half mechanically.

It must have been the result of sorcery if simply at the utterance of that name Death furled his pale flag and left the field to his erstwhile routed opponent. Yet such was the case, as the physician's keen senses promptly detected. The young man experienced a thrill second to none that as yet he had encountered in his professional career, as upon his finger-tips came the delicate flutter of the pulse, while to his eager sight followed a gentle upheaval of the breast that sent a quivering sigh to his listening ear.

It was a supreme moment to Loyd Morton.

Naturally his first impulse was to apply some restorative and thus assist resuscitation. There was brandy at hand, a small quantity of which he inserted, drop by drop, between the parted lips. The effect produced seemed magical; the respiration became steady, a delicate glow crept into the wan cheeks, while a genial warmth attended by that most encouraging of symptoms, a dew-like moisture, relaxed the cold rigidity of the hands that returned the faintest possible pressure as they rested in the young doctor's clasp. Every token of convalescence by degrees made itself manifest and progressed until the soft gray eyes unclosed, instinct with crescent intelligence.

The watcher bent eagerly so that his countenance should fill the field of her vision, so that her awakening consciousness should grasp his personality to the exclusion of all other objects. Apparently the unpremeditated act met with flattering success, in that Romaine Effingham's first utterance framed his name.

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"Loyd!"

It was simply an articulate breath, but it was a conscious utterance capable of interpretation, and Morton was satisfied; nay, he was enraptured.

"Paula!" he exclaimed, in his exaltation, "Paula, you have come back to me!"

"I have—come back," was the tremulous reply.

"And we shall never, never again be parted," he urged with passionate intensity.

The dilated eyes watched him as if spell-bound.

"You understand that you are no longer Romaine, but Paula, my own dear, true love," he continued, giving each word its due import; "Romaine has gone to her rest, but you have returned to make my life once more worth the living! Oh, my dear one, tell me that you realize the situation, that you comprehend my words! Let me hear you say that you are Paula, my wife."

"Paula, your wife," came the obedient echo.

Had he been in his normal condition of self-control, Morton's exuberant satisfaction might have been tempered by a consciousness of the fact that he was forcing his own volition upon a cataleptic subject; the strained circumstances under which he labored, however, spared him this somewhat matter-of-fact view of the case. Indeed, he had closed all avenues of approach to unwelcome spectres of the scientific order, for the time being at least. Moreover, he had permitted himself to lose sight of an attribute which upon more than one occasion had been imputed to him. It had been whispered among his hyper-sensitive patients that the young physician possessed that most mysterious, yet positive, of gifts, mesmeric power, animal magnetism,—what you will. Be that as it may, Loyd Morton undoubtedly exerted a strong attraction for those in whom he was personally interested. Babblers had informed him of his endowment much, be it said, to his annoyance; but the fact remained that he held his fellow man in thrall, whether he would or not.

Either of the above considerations would have tinctured his overflowing cup with bitterness; but as he had already drained that cup of joy, it remained for digestion to prove whether the adverse mixture had crept in in some ingustable form.

A few more words of passionate admonition he addressed to his patient ere the eye-lids drooped and the breathing became measured as in that profound slumber which succeeds exhaustion.

And thereupon began that extraordinary vigil, during which Morton was conscious of naught save the assured resurrection and possible—he dared not think probable—reincarnation.

She had placed her hand in his ere she fell asleep, and he sat close beside her scarcely venturing to relinquish it into the keeping of its fellow where it rested upon her breast. By the light of the shaded lamp he studied the calm beauty of the girl's features, the restful slumber lending a heightening touch to their exquisite outline.

Always a being set above and apart from his anxious existence, he had seen even less than formerly of Romaine since his marriage, and in that time she had matured into the perfection of womanhood. He had loved her, as he had loved the other members of her family, with a love born of gratitude. There had been no sentiment in this love beyond that of grateful appreciation; he had loved Romaine exactly in the vein that he had loved her brothers; had he been called upon, he would have laid down his life for any of them with indiscriminating loyalty. Having been his intimate friend, Malcolm might have stood first in a test of self-sacrifice, but there had never been the slightest shade of difference in his sense of allegiance to either Hubert or Romaine. In a word, he had never loved Romaine otherwise than as a friend; within the niche before which his soul bowed down in all-absorbing idolatry he had set up the image of the woman who had been his wife, and as it was a case of soul-worship with him, the niche remained occupied to the eternal exclusion of rival effigies.

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He recalled with a flutter of timid pride how officious friends, ambitious of his welfare, had ventured to couple his name with that of Romaine.

"You were her brother's 'Fidus Achates,'" they urged; "you have received not only marks of affection from every member of her family, but positive encouragement in every form. Take Malcolm's vacant place and be a son and brother and husband all in one."

To this friendly folly he smiled in answer, saying, "You admit that I assumed the rôle of Achates to perfection, do you?"

"Certainly!" was the reply.

"Then let me rest upon my laurels. I am wise in my own generation. I know the limit of my histrionic ability and have no wish to attempt an impersonation of Phaethon."

Hence his friends inferred that he was disinclined to court Romaine Effingham through modesty or diffidence, little dreaming that he refused to enter the lists through lack of inclination. Even upon this night as he sat at her bed-side, keeping vigil while she slept, satisfied that she was convalescent, he was simply grateful that heaven in its mercy had spared her to her mother and brother, and—

A cold perspiration akin to the dews of death, pearly upon his brow, grown suddenly pallid, as a problem of dire import flitted like a grewsome spectre into the field of his speculation.

"If," suggested the phantom, with appalling reason, "she is spared to her mother and brother, is she not spared as well to her affianced lover? Will he not shortly claim her as his own? And if, as you have been persuaded to believe, her soul is at rest while the soul of one you have loved and lost is renescent, incarnate in her body, how will you bear this second separation, this alienation in life, which promises to be infinitely more trying than that of death?"

He sat as one spell-bound, listening in horror to the silent voice.

He relaxed his hold upon the girl's hand and it fell limply at her side. His eyes grew haggard with the speechless agony of uncertainty, while his pallid lips strove to utter the cry of his anguished soul, "My God, why did I not foresee this emergency? Thou art my judge that I would not cause her one instant's misery, would not cast my shadow in the path of her perfect happiness for my life, and yet"—"And yet," resumed the voice of the phantom—alas, with no intonation of mockery—"and yet you must secure her body in order to claim communion with the soul that now animates it. Look upon her, strive to realize that this is Paula your wife and no longer the daughter of your benefactors."

"Oh, grant me some proof!" he moaned; "Paula! Paula, speak to me! In heaven's name, give me the satisfaction of *knowing* that you are with me once again, or this uncertainty will drive me mad!" He had dropped upon his knees at the bedside and had almost roughly resumed possession of her hand, passionately pressing it to his lips. "Paula," he cried, "assure me that you are here, grant me some token that you recognize me, Loyd, your husband, and help me to shape my course of action, for now is the appointed time; one precious moment lost and we may be estranged, hopelessly parted. I am groping in darkness like unto the shadow of death. If ever I needed thy guiding hand, I need it now, in this supreme, this awful moment. Oh, hear me, Paula! I conjure you, speak to me!"

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As if in answer to his desperate exhortation, she stirred in her sleep, and he felt the soft flutter of her hand as it lay crushed between his.

"No, no!" he panted, "you *must* speak, or I shall not be satisfied that it is indeed *you!* Call me Loyd, husband—anything you will, so that I recognize your presence?"

He arose and bent low above her, almost crying aloud in exultation as her lips parted to exhale his name, simply his name.

"Loyd!"

Then the profound slumber resumed its sway.

He raised the quiescent figure in his arms and imprinted a passionate kiss upon the low brow.

"Did you not promise me," he whispered, "that before the dawn of another day I should take a living body in my arms and know that it is animated by your soul? Your prophecy has come true and I thank God for it!"

Very gently he lowered the delicate form among the pillows and with a reverent touch placed the hand that he had caressed, within the clasp of its fellow; then he turned and began to pace the shadowy chamber in a state of uncontrollable excitement.

"She warned me," he murmured, "that consequences would arise over which she should have no control; warned me that *I* should have to confront them. I assured her that I was not only ready, but eager to accept the chances. What was my conviction at that moment compared with the overwhelming conviction that commands me *now*? Then she was intangible, invisible even,—a spirit; now she is in the flesh and has addressed me with lips of flesh! Be the consequences what they may, this body which has served her soul with the means of reincarnation shall belong to me, as wholly and entirely as her soul, which is mine to all eternity!"

"You do not love that body," whispered the spectral Mentor; "beautiful as in itself it is, it possesses no attraction for you."

"By degrees I shall learn to cherish it," was the undaunted reply; "shortly I shall love it as being *her* abode."

Argument was out of the question in his existing condition of mental exultation; not that he had

quite lost his grip upon himself, since some semblance of common-sense had borne ecstatic fancy company in her flight to the lofty pinnacle upon which she now poised, as his next more material thought gives evidence. He had reached the fire-place in his nervous perambulation and had paused upon the hearth, mechanically setting his gaze upon the smouldering embers.

"I would to heaven," he muttered, "that Paula's spirit had returned to me in any other guise than this! I shudder before the complication that looms upon the near horizon, and yet in what am I to be blamed for what of necessity must transpire in the immediate future? How can I be expected, in the very nature of things, to be able to explain to Drummond the reason that he should cease to cherish his love and relinquish all to me? Would he not consider me hopelessly insane were I to lay before him the reason for my determined action, expose a scheme which even in my eyes seems unparalleled in the history of man? No, no! I am convinced that so occult a compact must remain an inviolable secret between the Infinite and me. I feel myself to be but a mere factor in some great covenant, an instrument, a simple means tending towards an end of which I am in ignorance."

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The smouldering embers fell together upon the hearth, emitting one expiring lance of flame, illumining his pallid features grown tense and rigid with resolution.

"I may be forced to dissimulation, even to deceit," he concluded, turning away from the dazzling gleam, "in order to effect my purpose. Already, as it were unconsciously, have I prepared Mrs. Effingham for possible catastrophes. I have told her that her daughter will recover, but in the same breath I warned her that I feared for her mental condition. Why I so warned her, heaven only knows. So far as I know at present that utterance was a lie, a base, ignoble fabrication; but it came unbidden to my lips, and who shall say that it came not at the instigation of some mysterious power beyond and above me? Who shall deny that, since I have ceased to be the man I was, some species of clairvoyant skill has descended upon me as the natural concomitant of the atmosphere of unreality that henceforth I shall breathe?"

He turned quickly and crept to the bedside, a desperate expression kindling in his haggard eyes as they rested upon the sleeping girl.

"Whether the issue proves me to be clairvoyant or brands me with falsehood, I must establish mental aberration in my patient, or lose my prize," he muttered; "I have burned my bridges and there is no retreating now!"

Scarcely had the incoherent words escaped his lips ere a clock tolled midnight and simultaneously the sound of wheels upon the terrace disturbed the peaceful course of night.

Thereupon followed the confusion of the muffled unclosing and closing of doors, excited voices and hurrying footsteps.

The sleeper stirred and moaned. Morton drew himself up into an attitude of unconscious defence, vaguely preparing himself for menace or attack, and in the next instant the door was thrust open to admit Colston Drummond.

No need to glance twice at the handsome face in order to guess the ungovernable anxiety and disarray that possessed the young lover.

"Is she alive?" he gasped, advancing into the middle of the chamber.

For answer, Morton imperiously waved him back in silence.

"No, no!" he cried, "give me some satisfaction! Tell me at least that I have not arrived too late! In God's name, why do you not speak?"

Barring his impetuous passage to the bedside, even laying detaining hands upon Drummond's shoulders, Morton was about to reply, when a low cry disturbed the ominous pause.

Snatched from her profound slumber and unobserved, Romaine Effingham had struggled up to a sitting posture and straightway fallen back with the cry which had startled the silence.

"Oh, why will you torture me?" she moaned piteously, flinging her arms across her face as if in desperate effort to shut out the sight of some uncanny apparition; "take him—take him away and let me—rest! In mercy, let me rest!"

"Romaine! Great heaven! what does this mean?"

"Silence!" commanded Morton, releasing his hold and retreating a step, while a gleam of triumph flickered for one brief moment in his sunken eyes; "Mr. Drummond, if you have any respect for the life of Miss Effingham, you will instantly leave this room!"

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"Her life?" echoed Drummond in suspense, "it appears to me rather as if her *reason* were in jeopardy!"

"You are right," came the firm response, "her reason is gone—she is *mad*!"

CHAPTER V.

"She is abused, stolen from me, and corrupted by spells and medicines bought of mountebanks."

"A day in April never came so sweet to show how costly summer was at hand," may be quoted as applicable to the rare dawn that succeeded that night of mystic import at Belvoir. The whole world seemed instinct with the smile of jocund spring. The dreary night had wept itself away, leaving its tears to jewel each new-born blade of grass. High up upon the spacious lawn crocuses fluttered their imperial raiment while snowdrops nodded and shook their bells as the bland wind swept by. The brook, swollen to a ruffled sea that inundated the low-land meadows, swirled through the willow-copse plumed to its crest with golden down in token of its glad revival. The trees stretched forth their yearning arms green with enamel of new buds; and over all the sun, rejoicing in release, shot his bright lances into nook and dell where lurked the mists of yesterday.

Yet, despite the allurements of the outer world, the inmates of Belvoir House remained invisible, and the stately white columns were left to mount guard over their sharply defined shadows along the sunny piazza.

Within the mansion much of the silence and gloom of the preceding night prevailed. Breakfast had been prepared as usual, but the appointed hour had passed unheeded, a significant fact in a household of such rigid regulation. By and by, however, a rustle upon the staircase announced the appearance of Mrs. Effingham.

Meeting a servant upon the way, the lady inquired where she should find Mr. Drummond; the man replied that he was closeted in the library with his young master, Hubert.

Thither she went directly, entering suddenly, and surprising the young gentlemen in the depths of earnest conversation.

"You have seen Romaine?" they inquired simultaneously.

"Yes, I have just left her."

"How is she?"

"Apparently safe."

Thereupon a strained silence ensued, during which Drummond led Mrs. Effingham to a divan and seated himself beside her, while Hubert watched the pair with an intentness that reflected the motive of his interrupted conversation with his future brother-in-law.

Colston Drummond was the first to break the silence.

"How do you find Romaine?" he asked.

The lines of anxious care deepened upon the lady's face as she replied.

"I have said that I consider her perfectly safe."

"*Mentally* as well as physically?"

"How can I tell? As yet I have seen no signs of derangement in her."

"Ah!" exclaimed Drummond, eagerly, "then you refuse to credit *his* announcement that she is mad!"

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"If you mean Loyd, I believe that he has spoken in accordance with his convictions."

"He *may* be mistaken," was the terse reply.

Serena Effingham glanced in a startled way from one to the other of the young men, and it was Hubert who came to her relief.

"Colley has been urging the necessity of calling in another physician," he explained. "But I tell him, mother, that we have reason to have implicit faith in Loyd's ability; besides, it would seem like insult to send for any one now that she is out of danger."

Drummond passed his hand over his curling hair with a gesture eloquent of impatient doubt.

"Of course, I will not interfere if you are satisfied," he said. "But I beg you to answer me one question, for I feel that I shall never sleep, nor rest in peace until it is answered."

"What is it, my dear boy?" inquired Mrs. Effingham.

"You will grant me that Romaine is my affianced wife?" he demanded.

"No one disputes that point."

"And she loves me with her whole heart and soul? No, you need not answer that question! Here upon my heart lies her last letter, written within the month. I want no better evidence that she is mine, as truly as woman was ever man's."

"Well? What more do you ask?"

"What more?" he cried excitedly. "I ask why she screamed at sight of me last night, crying piteously, 'Why will you torture me? Take him away and let me rest!' Can you explain such words upon *her* lips, and at sight of *me*?"

"She was not herself, Colston. Her attitude towards you is proof that her mind is indeed

deranged."

He shook his head dejectedly.

"You have just told me that as yet you have seen no signs of derangement in her," he said. "Tell me, if you can, why she should seem insane to me, yet sane to you?"

At this juncture Serena Effingham turned to Drummond and flung her arms about his neck.

"My darling boy," she murmured, gently; "for you are that, and ever will be to me. You are worn out with fatigue and excitement. The shock of finding Romaine so ill, after your long and hopeful journey, has completely unhinged you. But I sympathize with you. Remember, that my love for her is akin to yours, and remember, too, that God is good; and I believe that, if we pray unceasingly, He in His mercy will give her back to us, sane and whole again."

He stooped and kissed her up-turned forehead, as he replied,

"God bless you, dear mother. I would that my faith were such as yours!"

Then, releasing himself from the lady's embrace, he rose, adding,

"I am going to breakfast with my mother at Drummond Lodge. Meanwhile, *watch Romaine!* I shall return later in the day and shall depend upon an interview with her."

"Which I may almost promise shall be granted you."

The voice that uttered these unexpected words was low of pitch yet startlingly sonorous; indeed, so unprepared were the trio for the sudden intrusion, that they were quite thrown off their guard, and turned about in some disarray.

Doctor Loyd Morton proved to be the intruder. He stood upon the threshold of the apartment, parting the drapery with one outstretched hand, while the extreme pallor of his countenance, the firmness of his glance, as well as his pronounced dignity of mien, failed not to impress his beholders. [594]

Divining that the situation threatened to become strained, Mrs. Effingham remarked quickly,

"We have been waiting for you to breakfast with us, Loyd." Then turning to Drummond, she added, "We shall look for you at dinner, Colston. Always bear in mind that you are at home at Belvoir."

Drummond bowed in silence, and with one glance at Morton, who had advanced a step, still holding the drapery, he passed into the hall, accompanied by Hubert.

The moment the drapery fell into place again, Serena Effingham advanced impulsively and kissed Morton with the maternal fervor which had ever been her wont with him.

"What a debt we owe you, Loyd, dear," she murmured beneath her breath, while her eyes lingered upon the swaying folds that hid Drummond from her view.

"Address your thanks to God," he replied, steadily, holding her in his arms.

"You have saved her life!"

"Say rather that He has spared her."

"She would have died had you not come to us."

The firmness of his glance never wavered for an instant as he answered,

"That is true; but we must bear in mind that I am but an instrument in the hands of the Almighty."

And his words were uttered with as sincere a conviction as had ever possessed him. However deeply he may have been impressed by the questionable part he was enacting, he was satisfied that Romaine Effingham would have been laid beside her father and brother in the tomb but for his influence, at the moment of the crisis. Through his interposition, he told himself, her body had been saved; with the fate that had befallen her soul he was not concerned. In a series of gyrations, never-ending in their recurrence, the words seemed to dance through his brain, "A body is theirs, a soul is mine; a soul is mine, a body is theirs," and so on, and on, and on, with incessant swirl and swing until, dazed and confused, he was forced to seek the palliative of fresh air under pretence of making a hasty round of visits upon his patients.

Meanwhile, above stairs in her dainty chamber, Romaine had been clothed in a robe of delicate texture, snowy as the billowy rifts of swan's-down that strayed about the neck and down the front, and had been placed in the azure depths of silken cushions upon a lounge that stood where the flood of genial sunshine streamed in. Beside her a huge cluster of mingled Freesia and golden jonquils spent their rich fragrance upon the air, conjuring, as it were, a hint of the exuberant spring-tide within the house. A very festival of warmth and light seemed to hold the chamber beneath its inspiring spell, calling forth ethereal tones in the blues of the rugs and hangings, and investing the silver upon the toilet-table with a quite magical glitter.

A little maid, meek-eyed as any dove, went here and there with noiseless step, putting the finishing touches to the final arrangement of the room. Now and again she would cast a dutiful

glance towards the couch whereon lay her fair young mistress, with eye-lids drooping until the dark lashes rested upon her pale cheeks, her slender fingers interlaced upon her breast.

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There were sparrows chirping somewhere about the casements, while from the distance the hum of pastoral life came drowsily to the ear.

The little maid fluttered her plumed brush about a Dresden cavalier, ruthlessly smothering a kiss that he had been vainly endeavoring for years to blow from the tips of his effeminate fingers to a mincing shepherdess, beyond the clock upon the mantle. In due time she relieved the love-lorn knight and fell upon his inamorata, favoring her with the same unceremonious treatment. The clock chimed twelve to the accompaniment of a brief waltz, presumably executed upon the lute of the china goat-herd that surmounted the time-piece, and at the same moment Romaine Effingham stirred. In an instant the faithful watcher was beside the couch.

"Miss Romaine!" she breathed, "it is I, Joan. Can I do anything for Miss Romaine?"

One of the slender hands was raised and rested lightly upon the little maid's head.

"Yes," was the low reply. "You may find him and send him to me."

"Who, Miss Romaine? Mr. Hubert?"

"No."

"Mr. Drummond?"

"No, no," emphatically, but not impatiently.

"Ah! I know—Doctor Morton?"

"Oh, yes!" with a sigh. "Loyd; go and find him."

"Yes, Miss Romaine."

But instead of Loyd Morton it was Serena Effingham who had hastened promptly to her daughter's side.

"Here I am, dear," she said, stooping to caress the fair low brow. "I have been besieged by callers to inquire for you, but from this moment I will deny myself to everyone until you are quite strong and well again."

"But I sent for Loyd," persisted the girl, in the same calm tone.

"Loyd has gone to visit his patients, my darling; but you may depend upon it he will not be gone long."

"I hope not. O, how devoted he is! Why, it is to him that I owe my life, for he has brought me back to life; and yet—and yet how strange it seems that I cannot recollect where I have been in all this time!"

"Dearest child, do not distress yourself," urged the mother anxiously; "you will recall everything in time and all will be well."

"Ah, but it is not distress to me! It was like a dream of heaven when I heard his voice calling me to come out of the shadow into the radiance that his dear face shed about me! Oh, there can be no death where he is, and no sorrow while he is by!"

She smiled as one smiles in sleep, and let her eye-lids droop until the lashes cast their shadow.

Each of the strange words deepened the pallor upon Serena Effingham's face, a sign of anxious care, perhaps not wholly due to her consciousness of the fact that her daughter was actually under the spell of a gentle hallucination; as a matter of fact it pained her that that hallucination had taken a course somewhat at variance with Drummond's interests.

As she had determined, from that moment she devoted herself to Romaine. The greater part of the time the girl slept soundly; during the intervals of wakefulness she seemed happy and at perfect peace within herself. Occasionally she would break her complacent silence by inquiries for Morton; otherwise she appeared inclined to enter into no sort of converse.

Such nourishment as was offered her she accepted with relish, remarking once, with a fleeting smile, "I have seen enough of death for one lifetime; and I want to live, since I have so much to live for."

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Plainly her volition materially assisted her convalescence, which was rapid—visible almost from hour to hour. And thus the uneventful afternoon waned to early evening. The goat-herd rehearsed his brief waltz over and over again, and the sun went westward, withdrawing his rays from the silken hangings and the silver upon the toilet-table.

Lacking in incident as the day had proved at Belvoir, to Loyd Morton it had been an epoch of emotions such as he had never dreamed of realizing.

Upon leaving Belvoir, he had gone directly to his house in town, into which he admitted himself with a latch-key. The object of his haste was to place himself before a portrait of his wife which hung in a room held sacred to her memory. Here, amid a thousand mementos of the happy past,

it was his custom to sit during his leisure hours, brooding upon the wreck that had overtaken him.

To-day, however, he entered the mortuary apartment with buoyant step, wafting a smiling kiss up at the fair-haired Gretchen that gazed upon him from her frame above the mantel-piece. He flung wide the windows and blinds, even sweeping back the draperies, that the April sun might beam in and rob the place of shadow.

Then he placed himself before the portrait, and thus addressed it, giving vent to his pent-up exaltation,

"I no longer beseech you to speak to me with those beloved lips," he cried, "nor to smile upon me with those eyes that heaven has tinted with its own blue! And yet I must adore your image, which, after all, is lost to me. But what care I, since your immortal soul actuates other lips to breathe your love for me, and kindles other eyes with that same deathless love when silence falls between us? O, Paula, my idol! tell me why I should be so infinitely blessed, when other men languish in their bereavement? Thou knowest *now* that I am as other men are—as full of frailty and sin as any; then, why am I favored with the lot of angels? O my God, it cannot be that I have died and *this* is heaven!—this being with you and yet not seeing you, this exquisite aggravation which is mingled agony and bliss! By some strange decree, you are with me again, yet I cannot see, I cannot touch, you. Am I perhaps in purgatory? Or, worse, what if I should wake to find myself in a Fool's Paradise! Heaven forbid; for that would drive me mad, and then my unbalanced spirit would wander gibbering through all eternity, and know you not! Oh, no, no, no! It is the magic of our great love that has united us in this communion, which ameliorates the misery of our transient separation, and I thank God for it! Another day, and mayhap I shall be with you indeed—in the spirit, in heaven! But, oh, my love, my life, my all in all, my divinity, never desert me! In mercy and in love remain with me until the hour of my release; then lead me back with thee!"

Thus more or less coherently he rambled on before the gazing portrait, in wild salutation and petition, until the sudden opening of the door hurled him from the heights of exaltation to earth.

Upon the threshold stood his man, amazed and at the same time abashed.

"You will excuse me, sir," he began brokenly; "but I had no idea you were in the house. I heard voices up here, and I thought thieves had got in, or—or that the place was haunted!"

"I suppose I have the right to come and go and speak in my own house as I choose?" retorted Morton testily, conscious of his inexplicable demeanor, and impotently furious accordingly. [597]

"Close the blinds and windows, and shut the room up. Have there been any calls?"

"No end of them, sir—and letters."

Glad to make his escape from a predicament that bordered too closely upon the ridiculous to be comfortable, Morton hastily descended to his office. In the ante-chamber, in which he had received Hubert Effingham on the preceding evening, he found ample affirmation of his man's statement that he had been sought during his absence. The slate was covered with names and requests, while upon a table lay a salver heaped with letters. These he mechanically examined until, at the very bottom of the heap, he came upon a missive which promptly arrested his attention. It was addressed in pencil and unsealed. A moment later and he had possessed himself of the startling information contained within.

He rang the bell in haste and excitedly anticipated the advent of his man by throwing open the door into the hall.

"When was this note left?" he demanded.

"Last evening, sir."

"At what hour?"

"Just before you left the house, sir, with Mr. Effingham."

"*Before* I left the house!" exclaimed Morton; "in heaven's name, why did you not bring it to me? It is a case of life and death! It should have been attended to without the loss of a moment. As I could not attend to it myself, I should have sent Chalmers in my place."

The poor man looked panic-stricken.

"You will excuse me, sir," he faltered, "but I knocked twice on the study-door while the messenger waited, but I got no response. I thought you couldn't come, so sent the messenger away."

"But why did you not give me the note before I went away with Mr. Effingham?"

"Well, the truth is, sir," stammered the man, "I had no idea you were going to leave during office-hours, so I just slipped down to finish a cup o' tea, and when I came up you were off and away."

"Fool! Do you know that your negligence may have cost Miss Casson her life?"

"Casson!" gasped the man, turning pale to the lips and staggering against the wall for support, "the Lord save us, sir; she's dead!"

"Dead!" echoed Morton, in horror.

"Dead, sir! They sent round word early this morning to say that she died at midnight sharp."

Morton staggered into his study, slamming the door in the man's face. He threw himself into the deep reclining-chair which Margaret Revaleon had occupied, and pressed his head between his hands in a desperate endeavor to collect his wits.

Hark! was it a repeating voice, or some mad phantasy, the coinage of his excited brain, that reproduced those thrilling words:

"You will be called to attend a dying woman,—you *are* called, already is the messenger here. A woman's soul is trembling upon the threshold of eternity. If you are alone with her when that soul takes wing, my spirit will instantly take its place—and your skill will do the rest. Accomplish the resurrection of that body and secure our further communion."

Two women were approaching the threshold of death and *two* messengers were waiting to summon him while those portentous words were being uttered! To *which* of the two should he have gone? *Which* one was intended, destined for the promised reincarnation?

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CHAPTER VI.

"A sense sublime
Of something far more deeply interfused,
Whose dwelling is the light of setting
suns,
And the round ocean, and the living air,
And the blue sky, and in the mind of men
A motion and a spirit, that impels
All thinking things, all objects of all
thought,
And rolls through all things."

Morton roused from his passing stupor to find himself in a highly hysterical condition. He was inclined to laugh; in fact he did laugh in a mirthless way, with sobbing accent that closely resembled the act of weeping. He strove to assure himself that he had been the dupe of his own over-taxed nerves; that his present condition was wholly due to the excessive tension of his mental powers and want of sleep. He even went so far as to smilingly pledge his presumptive happiness in a copious dose of valerian. Thus armed with a species of Dutch courage, he threw himself upon a lounge and sought composure. If his wife's spirit, he reasoned, were omnipresent in all conditions and under all circumstances that pertained to him, as had been represented, and if that spirit were anxious to be reincarnate, as he had been given to understand that it was, why in the name of all that was rational, should it desert him, simply because he hastened to attend one dying woman instead of another? What possible difference could it make which corporeal attire it assumed? was it not reasonable to assume that a spirit, presumably clairvoyant, would pursue its affinity as the magnet seeks the pole, and appropriate any earthly guise, since the power was granted it? Was not Romaine Effingham's body as well fitted for its reinstatement in the flesh as another's?

True, the late Miss Casson had possessed a certain fascination for him, which had been commented upon before he went abroad to meet his fate, and naturally enough his wife had divined the *ci-devant* but now defunct spell when she took her place in his circle, and, woman-like, had rallied him upon it.

"If I had come to you bare-footed," she often remarked jocosely, "I should not be constantly haunted by the consciousness that the fair Isabel is impatiently awaiting my shoes."

To which quip he invariably replied with a laugh, "Such a suspicion would never occur to you, my dear, if the shoes did not pinch."

And upon this occasion he conjectured, with a drowsy smile, that Isabel Casson's body would have failed to offer his wife's spirit the inducements to reincarnation that Romaine's might, under the circumstances, the beautiful Miss Effingham having been ever far removed from any such lovers' banter. And so, thanks to the drug and his own reasoning power, he lapsed involuntarily into sleep, the result of excessive fatigue. When at last he awoke, he sprang to his feet, startled at his own temerity. His hysteria had vanished, leaving him depressed and apathetic. With a thrill he noticed that the sun, obscured by the windy clouds of the early spring evening, had crept round to the back of the house and was glimmering fitfully in at his study windows. The day had waned, and heaven only knew how many precious hours he had lost.

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He paused a moment, his blood halting in his veins as he strove to surmise what might have transpired at Belvoir during his absence. Fortunately for him, he had not overheard Drummond's half-implied doubts of the morning, but in guilty consciousness of his attitude towards Romaine's affianced lover, he instinctively felt the young gentleman to be, in all righteousness, his deadly antagonist.

Ten minutes later he had ordered his carriage and was being borne swiftly over the road that led to Belvoir, the invigorating breath of the April evening blowing in upon him and soothing his

perturbation, despite himself. Consequently, as he passed through the gateway of Belvoir, that gave back that description of echo peculiar to aristocratic portals and cemeteries, he drew a long breath, feeling himself to be himself again. Even the apparition of a well-known, stalwart figure crossing the lawn from the direction of Drummond Lodge, failed to materially disturb his equilibrium, since he had already alighted before the figure had reached the garden stair leading up to the terrace.

He let himself in at the unbarred door, as he had been wont to do in the old time when he had been more an inmate of, than visitor at, the house, and, finding no one to delay or question him in the shadowy hall, he mounted the stairs, and laid his hand upon the door of his patient's chamber.

He entered noiselessly, even pausing and holding his breath in amazement at the vision that met his gaze.

Left alone for the moment, Romaine had arisen from her couch and had gone to one of the windows that afforded an enchanting prospect of the eastern hills, cloaked in the emerald film of bourgeoning spring, vivified by the effulgence of the setting sun. She stood with the silken drapery thrust back in her upraised hand, thus admitting the evening glow that lent a touch ethereal to her lovely face and flowing attire.

It seemed like the irony of Fate that Morton should have discovered her thus, instead of Drummond; but, even with his normal faculty of observation, Morton paused, spell-bound. He neither spoke, nor made the slightest movement that might disturb her intent reverie. He simply put the passionate yearning of his heart into one brief and mute appeal.

"Oh, my darling, my Paula, my wife! Come to me of your own accord. Come to me and let me feel the clasp of your dear arms about my neck!"

Whether she experienced the strong mesmeric power of that dumb appeal, or whether her woman's instinct only warned her of his silent presence, is a question for the determination of graduates in the science of psychology. Certain it is that she turned with a visible thrill, and came to him, the loose drapery of her sleeves falling back and exposing the exquisite symmetry of her outstretched arms. She laid those arms about his neck, glancing up into his face with a smile, and kissed him upon the lips.

"How I have longed for you!" she murmured; "and what an eternity since you left me!"

"Paula—Paula, my own sweet love!" he ventured breathlessly.

He stared hungrily into her upturned face, half-fearfully, half-confidently noting the effect of his words; but the calm smile remained unchanged, fixed upon her features as might have been the smile of peaceful death, save that it wore the tint of life. He caught her in his arms, passionately folding her to his breast, kissing her hair, her brow, and lips.

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In the next moment his quick ear detected the sound of foot-falls upon the neighboring staircase.

"He is coming!" he whispered in involuntary alarm. "I promised him that he should see you; but, oh, my love, remember that it is I, not he, who claim you now—claim your every thought, your love wholly and entirely!"

"I shall not forget that which is a part of my own being," she answered gently. "With you by my side, I should not fear to face Satan himself!"

He bore her in his arms to the lounge and tenderly placed her upon it.

"I am your physician, as well as lover," he murmured; "and it is in my power to prevent your being tortured by a lengthy interview."

She smiled up at him reassuringly.

"Have no fear for me," she said. "But—but do not leave me."

And, upon the instant, Colston Drummond entered the chamber.

Morton stood at the head of the couch, his body half-turned away, his face studiously averted; yet, in spite of his attitude, he was conscious that Romaine's lover had thrown himself upon his knees beside her couch, and had possessed himself of one of her hands, which he pressed passionately to his lips.

"Romaine, Romaine," he faltered in evident suspense, "why do you turn away your head? Why do you hide your face from me? Do you not know me? It is I, Colston; I have come home to claim you for my wife, as we agreed. Have you forgotten? In mercy, try to think, try to recall the happy past! Oh, look at me, Romaine!"

A brief silence succeeded the eager appeal, only to be broken by a sharp gasp from Drummond.

"Great God!" he exclaimed in an accent of horror, "can it be that she does not know me? Dr. Morton, what does this mean?"

He had regained his feet and stepped so close to Morton that his breath fanned his cheek. Morton turned swiftly, and their glances met. Some vague instinct seemed to warn each of them that in a way they were rivals, and for an instant they appeared to be measuring each other's

strength, as for some mortal combat—Drummond suffused, as to his handsome face, with suppressed excitement, Morton sternly calm and pallid.

"Pray do not forget, Mr. Drummond," the latter said steadily, "that Miss Effingham is an invalid. As her physician, I insist upon her being undisturbed."

The words, far from recalling Drummond to his senses, seemed to increase his agitation.

"And do not forget, sir," he retorted, "that my attitude towards Miss Effingham entitles me to some satisfaction, some explanation."

Morton simply bowed his head, covertly watching the young gentleman as he crossed the chamber. With his hand upon the door, Drummond paused and turned, whether for the desperate comfort of one more glance, or ultimate word of defiance is doubtful, since at that moment Romaine half rose upon her couch and clasped one of Morton's hands in both her own. The significant act so maddened its beholder that the last vestige of his self-control vanished. Returning swiftly upon his steps, he snatched a letter from his breast and held it quivering before the eyes of the shrinking girl.

"Romaine Effingham," he cried, "look at this letter! Look at it and let the sight of it restore you to your wits, if you have lost them! Do you recognize it? Do you remember how you wrote these lines to me within a month, these lines instinct with your great love, with your intense longing for me to return to you? I am willing to stake my life that more impassioned words were never sent to absent lover. There stands your signature! Do you deny it?"

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She covered her face with her hands and moaned.

"You remember, then?" he added triumphantly. "Your mind is *not* deranged, but *bewitched!*"

She only moaned, trembling like a broken twig vibrating in the wind.

Then Morton spoke with the same stony calm of voice and feature:

"You have had your say, sir," he said. "I have permitted you to speak out of pity, but I am answerable to Mrs. Effingham for the welfare of her daughter, which is being jeopardized by such a tirade as this which you have seen fit to indulge in. I therefore request you—as her physician, I request you to respect Miss Effingham's condition, and leave the room."

Drummond raised his head and dealt Loyd Morton a glance which smote him to the heart.

"I go," he answered. "I leave her in peace; but as God is judge of us both, I fail to understand why you, who have enjoyed one all-absorbing love, and ought to be faithful to it, can have the heart to force yourself between my only love and me!"

And, with these significant words, he left the chamber.

Loyd Morton shivered as the door closed heavily upon his departing form, and he crept to the window, raised the drapery, and stood staring blindly out upon the darkening landscape.

For the first time since the beginning of his weird experience, the voice of conscience asserted itself, weakening his resolution to the extent of making a partial coward of him.

"God help me!" he mentally ejaculated; "would to heaven that I had foreseen this disastrous complication before I entered into a covenant with death! Far be it from me to interfere with the love and hope of any man. But what can I do now, if, as I believe, it is Paula's soul that has returned to comfort me in my loneliness? How can I give her up to any other man to love and cherish? Were I to betray her thus, outrage her confidence in me, and doom her to a spiritual hell on earth, how could I face her when at last we meet in the life to come? Heaven have mercy upon me and save me! rescue me from this awful doubt that the soul I love is *not* with me, is not incarnate here; that I am the victim of some Satanic wile that grants me the power to exert an infernal magnetism to the estrangement of fond and loyal hearts! O my God, rather let me die here and now, before I have consummated irreparable wrong!"

The desperate thought ended in a sharp gasp that voiced the surprise and almost superstitious awe which seized upon him as he felt a slender arm coil itself softly about his neck with soothing contact of cool flesh against his feverish cheek.

The gloom had deepened to darkness within the chamber, but in the deep embrasure of the window there lurked a faint after-glow of day, that ultimate flickering of our northern twilight that seems fraught alike with hinted promise and with lingering farewell. There is a witchery about the "sober livery" of that brief hour that lends itself to the imaginative soul and lays a magic spell upon the triteness of existence.

He knew that she had come to him, but for a moment he trembled in uncertainty.

"You are in doubt about me, Loyd?" she faltered, with a perspicacity that was the more startling by reason of her hesitation. "You think it best to relinquish all claim to me?"

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"What think you yourself?" he asked in an agony of suspense.

"I am in doubt when you are."

"But when I am firm?"

"Then I feel that death itself cannot part us."

He wound his arms about her, and in return felt her hold upon him tighten with clinging trust; and thus for one supreme moment they stood.

"When you love, I love," she murmured; "when you waver, I waver. I am the slave of a magnetism of which you are the master."

"Hush, hush!" he gasped, assailed even with her arms about him, by the grewsome conviction which but a minute before had impelled him to call upon heaven to end his ill-starred career; "no, no! this is not magnetism! Banish the thought, dear love, and henceforth believe that it is by a special dispensation of Providence that we are once more united, never again to part!"

She nestled closer to him and laid her sweet head upon his breast in eloquent reliance.

"I believe, since you believe," she murmured.

A moment later there sounded a cautious knocking upon the door.

Morton loosened his embrace and crossed the chamber to answer the summons.

"Mr. Drummond begs Doctor Morton to join him immediately in the library upon a matter of importance," announced the servant.

Morton bowed his head in silence.

CHAPTER VII.

"Love, lend me wings to make my purpose
swift,
As thou hast lent me wit to plot this
drift!"

The portentous interview in the library was held within closed doors, and at its conclusion the two gentlemen left the house by one of the casement windows of the room that gave upon the terrace. Through the gathered dusk they passed side by side, their blurred shadows tracking them in the faint radiance of the young moon. Side by side they crossed the lawn, bearing down towards the belt of woodland beyond which lay Drummond Lodge—two apparitions, voiceless and black. At last the blackness of the woods embraced them and they vanished.

Not until the dense umbrage of the budding trees was reached was a word exchanged between the ill-assorted pair. It was there, upon the fragrant hem of the grove, that Morton paused, removed his hat and mopped his brow, though the evening was damp and chill.

"I see no occasion for me to go farther," he remarked, a note of nervous irritation in his tone.

"I did not intend to bring you so far," replied Drummond; "but I wished to think of your proposition; to think before I gave an answer to your—your unnatural demand."

His companion listened to the words, his pallid face agleam in the wan twilight.

"Well," he muttered, "you have arrived at some conclusion?"

"I admit that I am curious to know the limit of your powers," was the reply, bitter with irony.

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"I boast no special powers. I will simply try to do that which I have proposed."

Drummond broke off a spray of dogwood blossom and tossed it away unheeded.

"You understand," he said sternly, "understand thoroughly, that I insist upon complete satisfaction in the matter."

"I understand."

"That I must have the proof and testimony which I have named."

"I understand."

"You speak confidently."

"I speak as I feel—as I have reason to speak."

"As you *think* you have reason to speak," echoed Drummond, an ominous gloom shadowing his fierce eyes. "Well, sir, do your best—accomplish what you can—then come to me at any hour of the night. You may suit your own convenience. Between this hour and daybreak you will find a light burning which will guide you straight to me. You will find me alone and waiting—but, mark you! if you come to me with any trickery, any fabrication, any counterfeit proof, I shall detect you in your infamy, and shall be merciless; so beware! Likewise should you attempt to evade me in the humiliation of failure, I warn you that I shall be equally relentless."

Morton replied in a tense tone which betrayed the struggle for composure that he was undergoing.

"I do not fear you," he said, "your approbation or displeasure is alike a matter of indifference to

me. In any case, though I admit but *one* to be possible, I shall come to you before daybreak."

Drummond drew up his stalwart figure to its full height and folded his arms.

"Under the circumstances, then," he observed with a sneer, "I should be unreasonable were I to encroach upon another instant of your precious time."

Perhaps his mockery was unheeded. Be that as it may, Morton had turned abruptly while he was speaking, and had begun rapidly to retrace his steps to the mansion beyond the lawn.

Upon the fringe of the wood, Colston Drummond stood watching the receding figure until, its lineaments mingling with the pervading gloom, it was lost to sight.

"Charlatan! fool!" he muttered. "I have given you the rope; go hang yourself!"

He turned upon his heel and pressed into the path that led across the copse, through which twinkled the lights of Drummond Lodge.

Suddenly he paused with clenched hands, and only the budding leaves and fronds were auditors of the groan that came, wrung from his inmost soul.

"My God! *if* she should fail me!"

Meanwhile dinner had been announced at Belvoir. Plenty of candles had been lighted to dispel the gloom. The butler stood at his post before the side-board, but as yet the four chairs placed about the table lacked occupants. The man glanced at the clock upon the mantel-piece and heaved a decorous sigh, doubtless in memory of the well-ordered days of his late master. At last, and just as the hands of the clock marked the half-hour after seven, Hubert Effingham appeared and requested the "faithful Adam" to serve the repast.

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"Doctor Morton will dine with us," he said, and turned to meet his mother and Morton as they entered.

Mother and son had indulged in no little surmise as to the sudden disappearance of their two guests, and had delayed dinner until the last moment on their account. Morton's return, unattended, did not serve to elucidate matters, since he did not appear to be in a communicative frame of mind.

The pair had met him upon the terrace, where they had been strolling to and fro in the pale moonlight, talking in lowered tones and awaiting some development in the mystery. They had descried his dark figure as he crossed the lawn, coming from the direction of "Drummond Copse," as the belt of woodland separating the estates was familiarly called, and, with no slight sense of curiosity, awaited his arrival at the head of the steps. Their meeting might have seemed strained, but for Hubert Effingham's remark, which relieved the situation.

"If the dinner is spoiled, my dear Loyd," he said cheerily, "pray do not blame the cook; when guests stray away at the dinner-hour, who is responsible for the consequences? And, by the way, where is Colston? Have we to wait until his constitutional is over?"

"Mr. Drummond will not dine with us this evening," replied Morton, with an indifference, the assumption of which was painfully apparent. "And pardon me; I was in hopes that you would begin, and permit me to catch up with you, as—as I have so frequently done."

"The idea of obliging Loyd to apologize for his actions," interposed Mrs. Effingham, laughing, "when his privileges here are the privileges of his own house! Be off with you, you Hector, and tell Anton he may serve dinner."

Thereupon she linked her arm within that of the young doctor, and glanced up into his face with an affection beyond question.

"Why should I mention your privileges in my home, my dearest boy and almost son?" she asked. "Do I need to remind you of my darling Malcolm's love for you, or of the paternal fondness of that dear one who so soon followed my boy to the grave?"

She noted the nervous tremor of Morton's pallid lips, and hastened to remove the painful impression she had produced.

"Of course not!" she added; "more than ever, now, I account you a son. You have saved Romaine, and it is the debt of a mother's gratitude that I have to repay—if such requital be within human power. Oh, Loyd dear, you are again alone in the world! Come to me and fill the vacant place!"

"Of son?" he demanded in a tone, the hoarseness of which concealed its almost fierce eagerness.

"Of nothing less than son, you know it."

His dark eyes lighted with an inward fire that he was powerless to mask.

"God bless you!—mother," he answered, chokingly; "perhaps the hour is not far distant when I may ask requital for the life I have given you back, and put you to the test."

They had entered the lighted hall and she glanced with a slightly wondering start into his face, though the replied in the same fulness of soul,

"Bring me to the test."

Their entrance into the dining-room and the presence of Hubert put an end to the conversation, and dinner began, a single course of which gave ample proof that the atmosphere had cleared. Romaine was out of danger, indeed convalescent, and the awful suspense of the last twenty-four hours was at an end. Mother and son presided in the very best of spirits, and Morton must have been morose indeed had he been able to withstand the contagion of their buoyant mood. Under the influence of their constantly reiterated gratitude for the feat which they ascribed to his skill, of the genial atmosphere, combined with the excellent fare and wines, he warmed while some hint of hope and peace crept back into his tortured heart. Only once did the clutch of inexorable destiny seem laid upon him, causing his blood to halt in its channels, as Hubert exuberantly exclaimed,

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"I see but one way, Loyd, and only one, in which you can be repaid for saving Romaine!"

"Relieve my mind by informing me, Hubert," remarked Mrs. Effingham with a smile; "I confess that I have cudgelled my brains in vain."

"By giving him what he has saved—by giving him Romaine!"

"And how about Colston?" laughed the lady in high good humor.

"I did not take him into the account," responded the young man; "at all events he should not object, under the circumstances."

"Which proves that you have never been in love, my boy."

They glanced at Morton, and were slightly chilled at the sternness of his face and the intensity with which he answered,

"Were it her will, I would gladly be Romaine's servant in love as I have been her servant in life and death."

It was as if a frigid wind had crossed the genial atmosphere, chilling their hearts as the mere passage of a current closes the sensitive blossoms of the deep sea. But the constraint was transient; they were used to Morton's moods, and ever were accustomed to make light of them; and in the kindness of their hearts they readily imagined a score of excuses for this particular one. The actual relief to the situation, however, presented itself in the sudden and unexpected apparition of Romaine herself upon the threshold of the dining-room. She stood between the parted draperies, the soft folds of her robe falling about her in the radiance of the candles.

Romaine's welcome back to her accustomed place at table was full of that exuberant congratulation natural to the situation. There was a general uprising to receive and lead her to the vacant chair, which had been set in place for Colston Drummond. Although Mrs. Effingham and Hubert simultaneously saluted the girl's wan cheeks, Romaine had eyes only for Morton as he bent before her to kiss the hand she involuntarily outstretched to him. Those eyes, so dark and limpid, seemed fairly to embrace the young doctor with their eloquent scrutiny. A conscious flush suffused his face, while an eager, hungry light flashed into his eyes, hitherto so dull and apathetic.

Romaine sank into the vacant chair and glanced about her with a happy sigh.

"How good it seems to be well again!" she exclaimed. "I feel as though I had been away from you all an age. Pray, how long is it since I sat here?"

"Just twenty-four hours, sister mine," replied Hubert.

"One day, only one brief day," she remarked, as it were, introspectively, "and yet in that short space of time I have lived through an eternity—such an eternity!"

Her voice fell almost to a whisper, and her eyes became fixed upon space with an indescribably dreamy inspection in their depths.

Although the dinner was practically at an end, Hubert seated himself beside her, watching her with an affectionate interest not unmixed with sadness. Mrs. Effingham and Morton, however, remained standing side by side at the head of the table, and it was of the latter that the lady inquired in a swift undertone,

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"Is it not a risk for her to have left her room so soon?"

"I think not," replied Morton, without removing his eyes from Romaine, upon whom they had rested intently since her appearance; "but I do not approve of her remaining here. See for yourself! The associations of the spot seem to be exerting some spell upon her already. Romaine," he said suddenly, perhaps in answer to the mother's anxious glance, "if I am to be your physician until you are out of all danger, you must obey me. You were imprudent to leave your room without my permission."

She raised her eyes quickly, smiling in happy submission, as she inquired,

"Must I go back again? Command! I am your dutiful patient."

"We will go into the conservatory, if you wish," Morton answered. "It is warmer there and less exposed to draughts; you shall inspect your favorite flowers, and then, I think, we shall have you retire for the night and rest."

She rose with the ready acquiescence of a docile child, and going to him, placed her arm within his.

"Come!" she said. "Of all things, I would like to show you my plants; I think you have not seen them for a long, long time." And with an animated smile, that somehow seemed pathetic, she led Morton away through the glass doors that opened from the dining-room into the spacious conservatory lying fragrant and dim in the rays of the crescent moon.

Hubert had risen as Romaine left the room, and stood with his hand resting upon the back of his chair, lost in troubled thought that mirrored itself upon his expressive face; at last, with sudden resolution, he conquered his painful indecision, and coming to Mrs. Effingham's side, touched her arm.

"Mother," he remarked, "Loyd is correct."

"Loyd is always correct," replied the lady in a startled way, that belied the confidence that her words implied.

"Yes, but he is correct upon one point which you and I, in our great love for Romaine, have been trying to evade during the whole of this endless day."

"What do you mean, Hubert?"

"I mean that Romaine's mind *is* affected."

"Merciful heaven!" cried the mother, the ready tears glittering in her anxious eyes, "how you utter my thoughts! My dear boy, what shall we do if such be the case?"

"I believe it to be but a temporary aberration, and Loyd thinks so, too," replied the young man, soothingly.

"But how can we tell? O Hubert, what suspense for us!"

"Yes; but we must bear it bravely, mother, hoping and praying for the best. All that we can do is to mind Loyd's commands, in regard to Romaine, to the letter. It must be our duty to see that nothing troubles or thwarts her."

"Of course!"

"Ah, that may mean more than you think."

"How so?"

"It may mean that we shall be forced to forbid Colston the house, or at least the privilege of seeing Romaine until she recovers."

"Colston!" exclaimed Mrs. Effingham, in pained amazement; "forbid Colston Drummond to enter our house!"

"Yes. An unfortunate scene has been enacted this afternoon in Romaine's room between Colston and Loyd—of course in Romaine's presence. Then, later, there has been something mysterious going on between the two men, of what import I do not know." [607]

"What can it be?"

"I say I do not know; but perhaps Loyd will confide in me. In the mean time I have perfect confidence that he is conscientiously doing his best for Romaine's welfare. You can see for yourself, that her consideration even for us, her mother and brother, is second to her sudden attachment for Loyd."

The significance of the words failed not duly to impress Mrs. Effingham. Her slight color faded, leaving her face ashy to the very lips.

"Can you mean," she said, with evident effort, "that some mysterious mental distemper has interested her in Loyd to the prejudice of Colston?"

"That is my suspicion."

"You think that her love has turned to Loyd?"

"Can you doubt it?"

"What would be the consequences of her return to reason?"

"Mother dear," replied Hubert Effingham, manfully, "we had better not torment ourselves with considerations for the future; we have our hands full with the present."

Meanwhile Romaine and Morton had wandered out of ear-shot of this significant conversation, into the depths of the conservatory. They had paused beneath a luxuriant *Japageria*, and the girl had raised caressing hands, drawing downward a cluster of its frosty bells to her lips.

The startling likeness in tint between the wan face and the ghostly blossoms, as they gleamed side by side in the moonlight, so painfully suggested the sculptured pallor of death, that Morton caught her hands in his and drew her quickly into his embrace, as he would snatch her from the brink of the grave. She resigned herself to his clasp, almost rough in its passion, without a

tremor, while she glanced with a wondering smile up into his face.

"I associate those cold, scentless flowers with a certain funeral," he said with a shudder that caused her to nestle involuntarily closer to him; "I saw them near you once, and God knows I would never see them so placed again!"

"Yes, I have worn them in my hair," she said, "and they were thought beautiful with my white lace gown."

"They were laid upon your breast when I saw them last," he muttered, "and they were cut from this very vine."

"Indeed? I do not recollect."

"No, and I would not have you recollect that time, since we are united again."

"United again!" she echoed dreamily. "O Loyd, teach me to understand how we have ever been separated!"

"Rather let me teach you how fondly I love you," he whispered; "let me convince you that every heart-throb of ours distances the past—the dead past and its shadows. Let your very soul be witness to my avowal when I tell you that I love you! Paula, I love you!"

"Paula!"

She spoke the name after him in no surprise, with no intonation of perplexity. It left her lips lingeringly, as though its sound was pleasing to her ear.

"Yes, Paula," he answered eagerly; "you are Paula, Paula to me, but Romaine to the rest of the world."

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"How strange," she faltered with that dreamy smile, as if fascinated.

"But you comprehend," he insisted—"you appreciate the distinction?"

"Oh, yes."

"Answer to every name in Christendom, if you will, save Paula; you are Paula alone for *me*!"

His impassioned emphasis seemed to charm her. Her rapt gaze enveloped his head as she lay in his arms, and there was a smile of ineffable serenity upon her lips.

"How you love that name!" she murmured.

"*You* taught me to love it."

"I must have, since you say so."

"You are Paula."

"Yes, I am Paula," she replied as one echoes a dictation; then, with a half-regretful sigh, "What would I not give to be able to recall the past!"

"You will recall everything in due time," he said soothingly; "I will help you."

"After all," she said after a pause, "what is the past, compared with the present? It seems like an earth-life which I have left behind; the present is heaven."

"Paula, my own true darling!" he parted in ecstasy, "you recognize me; you love me!"

"I love you, Loyd."

He bent his head to kiss the calmly smiling lips, when she raised her hand to stroke, with fond caress, his hair.

A flash like miniature lightning dazed his sight as her hand passed upward; it was simply the gleam of a diamond upon her finger; but through its white sheen peered the face of Colston Drummond, distorted with a grimace of mocking warning, and he reeled from his seventh heaven to earth, felled by that tiny shaft.

He loosened his hold upon her, and caught her hand, riveting his burning eyes upon the gem, that returned the glare with flashes of ruby fire.

"You must not wear this ring!" he exclaimed; "I cannot bear to see it upon your dear hand."

Her startled glance left his face and rested upon the exquisite jewel.

"You do not like the ring?" she inquired in a puzzled way.

"It is not a question of my like or dislike," he replied with increasing eagerness, almost with impatience. "*I* did not place it upon your finger; it does not belong to you, Paula."

"Oh, then take it away!" she cried, hastily twisting off the circlet; "I hate it now, although I thought it so beautiful."

Perhaps it was the utter absence of regret in her tone that brought that triumphant glitter to his eyes, as he accepted the ring and slipped it upon the little finger of his left hand.

"It shall return whence it came," he said unsteadily. "It shall trouble you no more; but in its stead you shall wear this ring, these pearls. Paula, do you not recognize them?"

As he spoke, he produced a plain gold hoop, set with three perfect pearls, and held it before her eyes.

"Pearls!" she murmured sadly; "pearls are ill-fated; they mean tears."

He cast his arm about her waist and drew her to him, still holding the ring within range of her vision.

"All portents, all auguries, all superstitions fail in our case!" he cried exultantly. "We are exempt [609] from all baleful influences now! These pearls may *once* have signified tears, but now there are no more tears whence they came; they are petrified, and symbolize our happy reunion. In this supreme moment of our love, try to recollect—Paula, do you not recognize these pearls?"

A spasm of actual pain crossed the beautiful face, the result of intense mental exertion.

"O Loyd, I cannot recollect!" she faltered piteously; "and yet—. Did you not promise to help me to recall the past?"

"Yes, my darling!" he exclaimed, his passion exceeding all bounds; "and I will fulfil that promise when we have wearied of the blessed present! A new promise I will make you here and now, and that is never again to torture you with unavailing considerations; only tell me once again that you love me with all your renewed strength, with all your purified soul!"

She raised her arms and wound them about his neck.

"Loyd, I love you," she answered steadily; "I love you—love you as the angels in heaven love!"

"Of whom you are one!"

He kissed her upon the lips—a long, rapturous kiss, thrilling with the welcome of his yearning heart; with such rapture only could he have kissed the one who had been his bride, returned to him from the imminence of some awful danger or from the shadow of the grave.

As such, and in all good faith, he kissed the woman lying in his arms, in all reason believing her his loved and lost one sent back to him from the vague realms of eternity.

Suddenly he raised his head and looked into her face with something akin to fright, actuated doubtless by the shadow of a last doubt upon his certitude; as a fleeting remnant of cloud-rack after a night of storm will sometimes fleck the serenity of a perfect dawn.

Would there be a blush upon her cheek after that impassioned salute? And, if there were, would not it portend an agitation born of maiden modesty? His suspicious heart assured him that no such tell-tale hue dyes the brow in holy wedlock. And he could have cried aloud in his exceeding joy to find the sweet face as untinged as the ghostly flower-bells that hung above it.

He placed the ring of pearls upon her finger whence the flashing diamond had been removed, and kissed it into place; and she, with fond humility, received the kiss from the jewelled pledge, and returned it to his lips.

Then they passed, with their arms entwined about each other, through the dimly lighted rooms and up the stairs to the chamber, where he surrendered her into the care of her waiting-maid.

"You will not leave the house to-night?" she murmured, as their hands unclasped at the threshold.

"Not to-night," he answered softly, "nor ever, till you go with me!"

For the instant he forgot his obligation to Colston Drummond that night; but, when her chamber-door had closed and the diamond upon his hand flashed a defiant ray at the lamp upon the newel-post, he bethought himself of his inevitable engagement. However, he did not blench.

"I am master of the ring!" he murmured in triumph. "One more effort, and I go to Drummond Lodge within the hour, prepared to remove the last impediment from my path!"

At that moment he descried the figure of Mrs. Effingham crossing the hall below in the direction [610] of the library. With rapid steps he descended the stairs and followed her. He was in search of her, since from her hand must come the final weapon destined to silence his rival.

CHAPTER VIII.

"No, no, although
The air of Paradise did fan the house,
And angels offic'd all: I will be gone—
... Come, night; end, day!
For with the dark, poor thief, I'll steal
away."

Whether or not he entertained decided views regarding the power of his personal magnetism over Romaine, it is certain that Morton felt no perturbation, no uncertainty of touch, in his management of her. Loth, as we have seen him, to admitting that he possessed any so-called

mesmerism, he was convinced that he held the key to her volition, and that he need have no further anxiety on that score. Come what might, no matter what contingency might arise, he was persuaded that she would second his wishes, would obey him in any event. Why should it not be so if, as he strove to believe—nay, as he was obliged to believe or perish—she were actuated by the spirit of his wife? Doubtless he would have been stronger in his belief if that belief had not resorted to the make-shift of interrogation. He was vaguely conscious of the weakness, of the masked doubt, that a question implies—especially when it is a question of faith; and yet his very inability to answer such question satisfactorily lent him a species of Dutch courage that materially assisted him to tread his dubious way. As the belated way-farer whistles in the night or affrightedly calls upon his common-sense to assign suspicious sounds to the harmlessness of natural causes, so he groped his way, fondly believing the darkness light, satisfied if an unanswered query dispelled a doubt.

If, then, he experienced no uneasiness as regarded his management of Romaine, he was forced to admit great apprehension as to the successful control of Mrs. Effingham at the decisive moment. Granting his power of magnetism over the daughter, he had reason seriously to doubt the virtue of his occult gifts if applied to the mother.

Something of this moral hesitancy must have mirrored itself upon his countenance as he thrust aside the drapery that concealed the library door and found himself in the presence of the lady.

Serena Effingham had seated herself at the writing-table, arranged paper, and taken pen in hand; but, as the sound of Morton's footsteps reached her, she hastily dropped the pen and removed a tiny rose colored shade from the candle, the better to scan the intruder's face.

"I disturb you," he said shortly, in a tone that promptly secured her curious attention.

"No," she answered; "as you see, I am not engaged, I have not begun to write. What is it, Loyd? You have something of importance to say to me?"

She half rose as she spoke, but he motioned her back to her seat.

"Yes, something of importance to say," he replied; "a request to ask, which you can grant nowhere so well as here, since you must write."

"Write—what? To whom?"

"To Mr. Drummond."

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"To Colston! He may be here during the evening; I do not doubt he will be."

"Colston Drummond will not call this evening."

Hubert's insinuations, together with the mysterious behavior of the two men earlier in the evening, recurred to her mind with unpleasant vividness; yet she hesitated to divulge alike her son's and her own involuntary espionage upon their guests. Consequently she had recourse to temporization for present safety.

"Colston would be remiss in his duty if he failed to inquire for Romaine before he slept," she remarked nervously. "Whatever may be his faults—and he has as few as any man I know—indifference is not one of them; at least, indifference as regards those he loves."

It was like her valiantly to defend the absent, and she spoke from her heart.

Morton watched her with his soul in his eyes, though he turned a shade more pallid, while the lines about his lips grew more tense as each word of hers broke the silence.

"Why should you defend him?" he asked almost harshly.

"Why?" she faltered, at a loss for words.

"Such defence as yours implies some suspicion."

"Why so?"

"Because it was wholly unprovoked."

"Loyd," the lady exclaimed, "you dislike Colston!"

"Why should I?"

"Do you not?"

"No! He is almost a stranger to me; I am not called upon either to like or dislike him. I do not belong to his sphere in life; he has simply crossed mine as a thousand and one persons meet me professionally and part, never to meet again."

"But you are likely to meet him frequently in the future."

"I think not. I confess that I am not so completely indifferent to his welfare as to hope he might some day have need of my services, which would be the only opportunity we could have of meeting."

Mrs. Effingham bit her lip to conceal some rising emotion, and toyed absently with the pen.

"Let us dismiss him from our thoughts for the present," she said with a sigh, "and attend to your request."

"I would willingly comply," Morton remarked, "but unfortunately we cannot dismiss Mr. Drummond, since he is intimately connected with my request."

She turned a swift, startled glance upon the speaker.

"Yes," he continued, coming close to the table and leaning above it; "I wish you to write to Mr. Drummond, forbidding him to come here—for the present; at least, forbid him to intrude upon Romaine until she is stronger and better able to bear his importunity."

"Loyd! what can you mean?"

"Exactly what I say. Either Mr. Drummond vacates the field to me, or I vacate the field to Mr. Drummond and such other physician as you may choose to call in. I cannot, and will not, suffer my efforts to be balked by his interference. You have placed Romaine in my charge to cure, and I will do my utmost to secure the desired end so long as I am undisturbed; any physician demands so much. If you consider me unreasonable, I beg you to say so frankly. No candid opinion, honestly uttered, ever gave offence or caused a breach in friendship. At all events, it shall not in my case."

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The heroism of his words was belied by his tone, the expression of his face, his very attitude.

If Colston Drummond's rights at Belvoir were maintained in spite of Morton's semi-truthful plea, the day would be lost to him, and he knew it. If Drummond held his ground, he must retreat. He felt the solid earth beneath him changing to a shifting quick-sand, from which only a miracle could save him. If Drummond were restored to Romaine, he must leave her, and, in leaving her, leave that chimerical love to which he had become enslaved, abandon his spirit-wife—and go mad, for aught he knew to the contrary.

The suspense of that supreme moment aged him appreciably, while the reaction that succeeded well-nigh deprived him of self-control.

He could have cried aloud in the exuberance of his joy, could have flung himself upon the earth, or indulged in any other fantastic mode of relief when at last Mrs. Effingham tremulously replied,

"Come what may, you shall remain in command here. O Loyd, do not desert us in this the eleventh hour of our anxiety! In heaven's name, stand by us until your good work is accomplished! You have dragged Romaine back from the threshold of death; sustain her until the threatening portals are closed and she is safe!"

She rose as she spoke, with outstretched arms, and he hastened to her to receive her embrace.

She clung to him hysterically for a moment, then sank into her chair and with an effort caught up the pen in her trembling fingers.

"Dictate—I will write," she faltered sobbingly.

It was Morton's very good fortune that Mrs. Effingham never so much as dreamed of suspecting his perfect disinterestedness in her daughter's cause. In intrusting Romaine's life to his care, she placed in his keeping that which she considered infinitely more precious than the salvation of her own immortal soul, since she unhesitatingly considered her welfare here and hereafter as second to that of her children, such was the perfection of her maternal self-denial. From long association with her, Morton was well aware of this fact; consequently it was from prudential motives that he stepped behind her chair to conceal the guilty triumph that distorted his countenance. Had she seen his face at that moment, the depth of his deceit would have been instantly apparent to her, and this he was wise enough to know. Her woman's instinct would have warned her that he did not love Romaine for herself, that he was actuated in his devotion by some ulterior motive in which Romaine held no share. At least, he knew such to be the case, knew that his success in the future depended upon his keeping that knowledge an inviolate secret. He was well aware that the treason against Colston Drummond was vividly depicted upon his face, and that in perfect concealment of it resided his only hope of further communion with the spirit of his wife, that reincarnation in which he now as devoutly believed, as he believed in his own existence.

Be it said in his favor that he was not wholly selfish in his conduct, notwithstanding the insatiable yearning of his soul for the affinity from which he had been separated, since he felt himself to be responsible for having summoned that spirit back to earth, for having conjured it from the realms of bliss through the spell of his great love, even overcoming its reluctance to return by his importunity; but, having succeeded in his invocation, having secured the reincarnation, how could he abandon the imprisoned spirit? What right had he to leave it to pine among strangers?

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What was the spirit of his wife to Drummond, or Drummond to the spirit of his wife? They had never met upon earth, and now, wrapped in a veil of invisibility, how could that spirit hope for the sympathy and love upon which it had fed, and for the renewal of which it had returned to earth?

Could he in duty, in honor, in love, desert the habitation which that blessed spirit had chosen, and leave it enslaved to a doom beside which total annihilation would seem paradise?

A thousand times, no! As the bonds of wedlock had made him responsible for the welfare of his wife, even so had this covenant with death rendered him accountable for the peace of her spirit.

Such was his self-acquittal for the high-handed deceit which he was practising upon his best of friends.

A portion at least of this defence sped involuntarily through his mind as he stood behind Mrs. Effingham's chair; and, thanks to it, he was able to regain some measure of composure, so that, when she faintly repeated the request that he should dictate the letter to Drummond, he replied with a reasonable degree of command,

"Write as your heart dictates."

"My heart fails me," she answered piteously. "I can find no words in which to forbid the man, who was to have been my son-in-law within the month, to enter my house."

It seemed to Morton then as if the threatening quick-sands were creeping about his feet again. If he failed to secure this dismissal, all would be lost.

He might go to Drummond with the ring, feeling himself well armed, but a vulnerable point would still be exposed as long as Drummond could freely seek Mrs. Effingham and demand an explanation. Perfect success to his scheme was in view, and he must secure it at all hazards!

He stepped from his concealment and boldly faced the lady, a horn of the bull in either hand.

"Believe me, Mrs. Effingham," he said sternly, "this is no child's-play; we have arrived at a decisive moment, which is not to be gainsaid. Permit me to present the question from another point of view. Suppose that I had failed in my management of Romaine's case; that you saw her steadily growing worse under my treatment instead of better; that you were satisfied that I was mistaken and surely courting death for her; would you not dismiss me ere it was too late, and summon one whose skill could save your child? Answer me that!"

"O Loyd!" she cried, "how can you ask me? How can you find it in your heart to torture me so?"

"And how can you place impediments in the way of my saving Romaine? I am simply amazed that you will run any risk where Romaine is concerned. As I said before, I now repeat—either Mr. Drummond assumes direction here, or I do; it is for you to choose between us."

"I beseech you, do not be unreasonable, Loyd; you are the physician. Have I not given you every proof of my confidence? Pursue your way undisturbed."

"That is out of the question," he answered steadily, "out of the question, while Mr. Drummond is permitted to come here. His influence upon Romaine in her present sensitive condition is disastrous. If he comes here, he will insist upon seeing her; and, if she sees him, I will not answer for the consequences. I grant you that the gentleman is not to blame for the baleful influence he exerts—indeed, I entirely exonerate him; but the fact remains that, for some mysterious reason, Romaine is reduced almost to frenzy at the very sight of him. Had you been in her chamber this afternoon when he forced an entrance there and defied my authority, you would have been satisfied that your daughter's life is a matter of a few hours' duration if she is left to his mercy!"

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It was a bold stroke, and it struck home.

Hubert's hint of the "unfortunate scene" that had been enacted in Romaine's presence that afternoon recurred to Mrs. Effingham's mind most opportunely for Morton. Without further parley, she drew a sheet of paper to her, caught up the pen, and wrote in breathless haste the following entreaty:

"MY DEAR COLSTON: I beg you to appreciate the depth of my solicitude for Romaine, when I tell you that I am more than willing to assume all the blame for the pain I am forced to inflict upon you. You already know something of the critical condition of my darling child; and yet I venture to say that it is far more critical than you suspect. Complete rest and total freedom from every description of excitement are indispensable to her recovery. I shall keep her strictly removed from all social intrusion, even of the most intimate kind; and I must beg you, for the present, not to attempt to see her. Indeed, I will so far hazard the endurance of your friendship and love for me as to beseech you not even to come to the house until she is out of all danger. You may deem me a fanatic in my maternal anxiety—perhaps I am; but nevertheless I ask you to respect a mother's wishes and second a mother's prayers. I take this, possibly unwarrantable, step entirely upon my own responsibility, persuaded that your dear, noble heart will sympathize with and understand me. Hubert shall bring you daily tidings of our dear one; and, in the hope that this moral quarantine may be of brief duration, believe me,

"Ever your fondly attached friend,

SERENA EFFINGHAM."

The manner in which she reached her signature suggested the broken gait of an exhausted animal that has been lashed almost beyond endurance, yet accomplishes the behest of its master with its ultimate gasp. The pen fell from her nerveless hand, and she sank back in her chair with a quivering sigh.

"Read what I have written," she gasped. "It may be utterly unintelligible."

For answer, Morton folded the sheet and placed it in an envelope.

"Address this, if you please," he said.

She obeyed his request, limply forcing herself to make the effort; and, as the pen once more fell from her fingers, she glanced up at him with a haggard piteousness in her eyes.

"Will you not read what I have written?" she asked again.

"I see no reason why I should," he answered. "I have no wish to intrude. You are simply doing your duty towards your daughter; such a proceeding is not open to criticism."

"I only hope and pray that Colston will regard my attitude in the same magnanimous light," she sighed, taking a little heart at his words.

"He will if he is truly a lover and a gentleman," was the daring reply.

Mrs. Effingham rose and, crossing the room, opened one of the casements to admit a breath of the cool night air; and at that moment a clock somewhere about the house chimed ten. [615]

"It is so late," she remarked sadly, "that there is little danger of poor Colston's intruding upon us to-night. We may as well defer sending the note until to-morrow."

She was looking absently forth upon the engloomed landscape, to where, beyond the crest of the low-lying hills, the blood-red segment of the moon was sinking to rest; consequently she failed to note the inward fire that flashed up in Morton's haggard eyes as he hastened to reply,

"I will take a short walk before I sleep, as is my custom, and leave the note at Drummond Lodge."

She turned with an apprehensive start towards the writing-table, as if to claim the note, perhaps with a view to its destruction; but it had disappeared.

Divining her intention, Morton touched his breast. "It is here," he said, "you may trust me to deliver it safely. Romaine has requested me to remain here over night," he added, going towards the door that opened upon the hall, "and I must respect her wish. Doubtless I shall find Hubert up when I return."

He was about to leave the room, when the lady extended her arms and he was obliged to return and receive her embrace.

"Good-night," she murmured; "I shall look in at Romaine and then retire; for I am completely worn out with the events of this day. Good-night, Loyd. Ah, my dear boy! you little know what comfort it is to have you to depend upon. I have trusted you with Romaine's precious life, and you have not failed me; now I intrust to your keeping her future welfare and happiness. Be faithful. God bless you. Good-night!"

Words of strong significance they seemed to Morton, in his exalted mood. Could it be that they implied a suspicion of apostasy on his part?

Like many another constitutionally upright man, laboring in strained circumstances, he felt his "conscience hanging about the neck of his heart;" and, like many another good man, overwhelmed by the force of circumstances, he left himself no time to listen to that conscience. He grasped his hat and hurried out into the night. As he passed one of the uncurtained windows of the drawing-room, whence a belt of light fell out upon the terrace from the shaded lamps within, he paused and half involuntarily drew Mrs. Effingham's letter to Drummond from his pocket. He had not sealed it, and, as he drew the folded sheet from its envelope, he experienced a twinge of shame-faced regret that he had not read it in the lady's presence, as she had besought him to do. The desire—nay, the imperative necessity—had been with him at the time to satisfy himself to what extent her words had coincided with his requirements; but somehow he could not have brought himself to read the missive with her confiding eyes resting upon him.

Now, however, with an assurance born of the encompassing darkness, his eyes flew over the lines, gathering a gleam of hungry satisfaction in their depths as they read.

"Indeed, I will so far hazard the endurance of your friendship and love for me as to beseech you not even to come to the house until she is out of all danger," he read, almost audibly. "Good! good! Nothing could be better! We are safe from his intrusion, at least for the precious present! Ah," he concluded, with savage, mirthless humor, "I am greatly mistaken in his high-mettle if she has not made him his quietus with a bare bodkin!"

He returned the letter to his pocket and hurried away to the steps that led down to the lawn, casting one backward, furtive glance at the lighted windows. [616]

Fair-haired Achilles, armed cap-a-pie, could not have led his troops against Troy with more perfect faith in his invulnerability, in more profound assurance of his powers to vanquish, than did Morton hasten through the dew-drenched woodland that separated Belvoir from Drummond Lodge. He gave no heed to the clinging briars, no thought to the roots and stubble that vainly essayed to bar his passage. It is even doubtful if he kept to the slightly defined path; there was a single light aglow beyond the trees, towards which he bore with feverish haste. He had lost all sense of physical discomfort or opposition; it was as if, discarnate, his spirit winged impetuous flight towards the goal of its desires.

As he approached the dim mansion lying low amidst dense shrubbery, he descried a small star set low and somewhat in advance of the signal light, like some strange winged glow-worm poised

in air. Soon his eager eyes were able to detach from the enviroing gloom the outlines of a tall man, standing with folded arms, a lighted cigar between his lips. Some instinct peculiar to his excited condition informed Morton that the solitary figure was that of Colston Drummond—long before recognition was possible.

"So he, too, has suffered an anxious moment!" he thought, an overpowering throb of triumph almost suffocating him.

A minute later the two men stood confronting each other.

The moon had set, and in the darkness a brisk, chill wind was busy among the tree-tops. Near by an owl hooted dismally, and receiving answer from the distance, hooted again in eerie ululation.

"Well?" queried Drummond, with difficulty disguising a thrill of surprise.

"I have kept my appointment," answered Morton, "earlier than I thought; earlier, probably, than you expected me."

"Well?"

"I am the bearer of a message—a note from Mrs. Effingham."

"Follow me."

Drummond threw away his cigar and led the way across the sodden grass to the open casement window, within which burned the light. It was a charming room, decorated with trophies of the chase. From floor to ceiling the walls were draped with fish-seines festooned upon antlers. Groups of arms from every quarter of the globe, glistened upon the various panels, while ancient and modern panoplies scintillated in every nook and corner. Beside a table shrouded in dull gray velvet, and littered with books, papers, and smoking-materials, Drummond paused and turned to face the shadow that followed him.

No word was exchanged, while in breathless silence he accepted and read to its close the letter which Morton had brought. Without comment he laid it upon the table, then bent his keen, stern glance upon the messenger.

"This letter is but a part of our compact," he said, each distinctly uttered word cutting the silence like a knife.

"I agreed to bring you this letter from Mrs. Effingham," Morton answered, defiantly, "and your engagement-ring from"—

"Well? You have brought it?"

"I have."

Drummond recoiled a step, casting out his hand behind him and grasping the table for support.

"Great God!" burst from his tensely drawn lips; "I—I"—

"You recognize the ring?"

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Morton had slipped the circlet from his finger and held it before Drummond's eyes, twinkling in the lamp-light.

"This is some jugglery!" gasped the wretched man; "some infernal witchcraft! I—I refuse to"—

"This is your ring!"

A pause of awful import ensued, broken only by the weird hubbuboo of the owls.

"Mr. Drummond," Morton continued at length, his voice fairly startling the silence, "I have fulfilled my part of the compact. I have brought you undeniable proof that for the present, at all events, your attentions to Miss Effingham are"—

"Silence!" gasped Drummond, between his ghastly lips.

"Are distasteful to her," proceeded Morton, steadily, but with no note of triumph in his tone. "Your part of the compact involves your relinquishing all claim upon Belvoir, even as a visitor. I have accomplished my part; as a gentleman you"—

"Silence!" thundered Drummond, his whole being vibrant with an overmastering fury. "Out of my sight! or by the living God I will not be responsible for what I may do! Never fear that I shall not abide by my part of the compact! But as there is justice in heaven, I will never rest until I have probed this damnable mystery to the heart! Now, go! before the sight of you reduces me to a ravening beast! Go, before I tear your heart out, and by drawing your blood, deprive you of the power of sorcery! Out of my sight!"

Morton's return to Belvoir was effected at the height of his speed. His interview with Drummond had unmanned him; while the conscience that hung about the neck of his heart seemed to be strangling his life out in its deadly clutch. The owls, winging breast to breast, pursued him, and even the very wind caught up their vague denunciation and hurled it about his ears. Only the twinkling lights of Belvoir recalled him from the verge of madness, from the black Gehenna of his accusing soul.

CHAPTER IX.

"Have I caught thee, my heavenly jewel? Why, now let me die, for I have liv'd long enough: this is the period of my ambition."

Romaine Effingham's convalescence was as rapid as the advent of summer that year. As the brief April days glided into May, she grew strong and well again; sound physically, at all events. Her mental condition remained a matter of conjecture to those who watched her with anxious hearts. Apparently she was perfectly herself, save for her infatuation for Morton which, after all, was scarcely a flattering view of the case to take. Naturally there was no reason why she should not fall in love with the young physician, setting Drummond's undeniable claims aside; but that Drummond should be set aside, for no apparent cause, in favor of Morton, argued a distemper which perhaps might most easily be placed to the account of mental aberration. It was evident that something must be seriously wrong with her that she should wholly and completely ignore the existence of her affianced lover. She never mentioned him, while if, in the common course of conversation his name chanced to be uttered, which was not often the case for obvious reasons, she maintained as unaffected an indifference as if the name of some stranger, in whom by no chance could she be interested, had been called in question. [618]

As a matter of course Mrs. Effingham indulged in a purely sentimental view of the singular situation. If she were not betrayed into saying so, in so many words, she was convinced that as Romaine's health strengthened, her mind would resume its sovereignty, her former predilections and affections would duly re-assert themselves, and as a consequence, her dormant love for Drummond would awake and claim its idol, which had simply suffered temporary eclipse, not obliteration. The good lady felt persuaded that Romaine's love for her betrothed was dormant, not defunct.

On the other hand, man-like, Hubert Effingham was of opinion—and, true son of his father, he had the courage of his opinions—that either his sister's mind was hopelessly deranged, her unwarrantable neglect of Drummond giving ample proof of the incipience of the baleful distemper, or else she was making herself a glaring example of that frailty which is imputed to woman. Standing between the horns of a dilemma which he had evolved from his independent consideration of the question, he was satisfied that he had rather accept the former position, painful as it must be to him, than force himself to believe Romaine guilty of an inconstancy as reprehensible as it was unjustifiable. Setting aside his strong fraternal regard for Morton, Hubert esteemed Drummond one of God's noblemen, as out of doubt he was. Had Morton been the favored one primarily, Hubert would have been content; but such was his sense of justice he could not passively stand by and see Morton, deeply as he loved and respected him, usurp the rights and place of one whom he had no reason to regard with a lighter love and respect.

Such being the case, he felt himself called upon to probe the mystery and right the wrong, if wrong there were, while his mother remained in optimistic apathy. He kept his counsel and patiently awaited his opportunity.

One perfect spring morning, perhaps a week removed from that dark and perplexing day that had befallen Belvoir, Hubert met Romaine as she emerged from the house accompanied by a splendid mastiff in leash, evidently prepared for a tour of the gardens and the surrounding park. Loyd Morton had gone into the city for the purpose of making further arrangements with his friend Chalmers to attend to his practice indefinitely. For reasons best known to himself, he considered his presence indispensable at Belvoir, and no incentive had been offered him to think otherwise.

The present was the first occasion upon which brother and sister had met, since Romaine's illness, free of the surveillance of Morton. It was surely an opportunity not to be neglected.

"You are going for a walk?" inquired Hubert, engagingly.

"Yes, for our first walk, as in the good old times! Eh, Molossus?" Romaine replied, with a gay smile that embodied much of the vernal buoyancy of the morning, stooping as she spoke to stroke the tawny velvet of the dog's head.

"May I bear you company?"

She hesitated an instant, with that fascinating archness which was hers to employ with telling effect.

"Well," she remarked, "I have no objection to your company if Molossus has not; but you see we have so long been deprived of each other's companionship that—well, we are just a trifle averse to intruders. You see it seems an age since we were free and alone together."

As if to second her words the great animal pressed closely into the folds of her gown, looking up into her face the while with eloquent affection.

"The old traitor!" laughed Hubert; "what would he have done but for my devotion while you were ill? For the time being he transferred all his love to me." [619]

"Ah, but, my dear boy, I always told you that Molossus is simply human; he feels like all of us, that first love is always the best; we return to it as if by instinct."

"Do we?" inquired Hubert sharply, scarcely able to conceal the thoughts that were uppermost in

his mind; "do *you* find it to be true?"

"Why should I not?" she answered, with the most innocent of smiles; then, bending to the dog, she added, "Come, Molossus, we will permit this young unbeliever to trespass upon our privacy, just this once, if only to convince him how enduring a first love is."

So, side by side, the three companions passed down the steps and strolled away through the broad garden-paths, whence the crocuses and snow-drops had retired to give place to hyacinths and tulips, standing in serried lines, like small armies gorgeous in fresh uniforms. There was a general bourgeoning of rose-trees in the sun, while the perfume of shy violets was borne far and wide upon the pregnant air. It was a day of days, a halcyon day, instinct with proud summer's boast, when birds have cause to sing.

They walked along in congenial silence, the mastiff sniffing at the trim box-edging of the path, or ever and anon making abortive lunges at some new-fledged butterfly that, disturbed at their approach, winged its devious flight sunward.

Presently, after much cautious preparation, Hubert broke the charmed silence by remarking, "I have been at Drummond Lodge several times since you were ill, Romaine."

"Yes?" she replied, half unconsciously, "you found them well there?"

"Mrs. Drummond is as well as any hopeless invalid can be. Colley has gone away."

He set his eyes keenly upon her face as he spoke. Romaine was looking straight before her calmly, fancy-free.

"Gone away?" she echoed; "where?"

"No one at the Lodge seems to know."

"Not even his mother?"

"No."

She started forward suddenly, stooping to pick a tiny sprig of forget-me-not that gemmed the border.

"The very first of the season!" she exclaimed in childish delight; "you dear little blossoms! how dared you venture here before there is even a rose-bud to bear you company? Here, Hubert," she cried, "you shall wear them!"

She was about to attach the spray to the lapel of his coat, when she surprised a look of keen disappointment, almost of chagrin upon his face.

"You do not like them!" she murmured, turning sad in a moment, as an April day is obscured.

He took her hands in his gently, but there was a note of firmness in his voice, as he said,

"It is not to the flowers that I object, but to the way in which you slight their meaning."

"What can you mean?" she asked in a puzzled, nearly pained way.

"You are forgetful, Romaine."

"Of what?"

"Of your duty."

She turned pale and started back so suddenly that the mastiff, startled likewise, uttered a deep-mouthed growl.

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"Of what do you accuse me?" she cried piteously. "O Hubert, my brother! what have I done?"

"What are you leaving undone?" he persisted rashly. "Ask your heart, and let it answer me—your best friend—answer me honestly."

She made a movement as though she were groping in the darkness, which young Effingham was too eager and excited to notice.

"I—I do not understand," she faltered.

"What month is this, Romaine? Is it not the month of May?"

"I think it is."

"Then what event, what happy event, was to have happened in this month, *shall* happen if God wills?"

"My marriage," she sighed.

"Yes, yes," he cried earnestly; "your marriage, dear—your marriage with whom?"

She twisted the blue-starred sprig between her white fingers until it wilted.

"You say you are my best friend, Hubert?" she murmured.

"You should know it, dear."

"Then I will confide in you. If—if my marriage is to take place this month—"

"Yes, yes, this month! Whom are you to marry?"

"Loyd."

The name escaped her blanched lips almost inaudibly; but his eager ear caught it, and he recoiled from her with a gasp, as though she had stung him.

She wavered for an instant, then flung out her hands blindly, as if grasping for support.

"Oh, take me into the house!" she moaned; "I am ill again."

He sprang to her side just in time to feel her delicate weight in his arms; but she did not quite lose consciousness, possibly because, in swift contrition, he whispered,

"Of course you shall marry Loyd, darling, if you will." While under his breath he added, "God forgive me, never again will I hazard her precious life, come what may! But, in Heaven's name, what does it all mean? I am satisfied that her mind is *not* deranged!"

Upon his return to Belvoir, Doctor Morton was surprised and alarmed to find his patient restless from sudden fever. And thereupon he registered a solemn oath never again to leave her, it mattered not how fared his clientage.

The excitement caused by Romaine's ill turn fortunately proved a false alarm. There could be no gainsaying the magic of Morton's presence. The moment she saw him, every trace of the mysterious agitation left her, the feverish symptoms vanished as suddenly as they had appeared, and, after a few gentle words of welcome, which induced his promise that he would remain within call, she lapsed into profound, healthful slumber, from which she awoke sufficiently refreshed to appear at dinner in her usual gay spirits.

Poor Hubert found himself more hopelessly mystified than ever regarding his sister's incomprehensible condition. If he could have had speech with Colston Drummond, even for the briefest space, there can be no doubt that the discarded lover's view of the situation would have gone a long way towards clearing Hubert's vision. Though much too intelligent a man of the world to sympathize in the slightest degree with the fanciful "isms" of his day, Drummond was constrained to accredit Morton with some sort of magnetic influence which had served to effect the subversion of Romaine's reason, so far as he personally was concerned. His view of her case was correct, his diagnosis accurate so far as it went. Upon the recovery of his manliness and power of cool reasoning, he was inclined to scout the fancy that any serious consequences would result from Romaine's infatuation. He argued that such caprices must be transitory, and persuaded himself, that, without his interference, affairs must right themselves, and ultimately right themselves in his favor.

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However, he smarted under the lash of Mrs. Effingham's dismissal; her action wounded him far more than did the compulsory return of his betrothal-ring. He acutely judged that Romaine, being under the supremacy of Morton, was not responsible for what she might do, whereas it must be otherwise with her mother. He felt convinced that were he to go to Mrs. Effingham and masterfully demand an explanation of her attitude towards him, he could easily win her back to his side. But she had dismissed him from her house—the fact burned and rankled inwardly. He was touched in his most vulnerable point—his high-strung pride; and consequently he found himself unable to confront the passive days of exile within sight of Belvoir. It was a foolish, ill-advised step, his going away just at this important juncture; and he came to a realizing sense of his mistake ere he had placed a hundred miles between himself and the object of his heart's desire. Pride is short-lived; and, when pride dies, obstinacy ceases to seem a virtue. The truth came home to Drummond ere he had gone far from home, and with results which we shall presently see.

Hubert Effingham never favored Morton with Romaine's confidences of that unlucky moment in the garden. Much as he cared for Morton, he would have bitten his tongue off before he would have betrayed his sister—before he would have placed one pebble of impediment in the path of Drummond's cause. But, though he steered a middle course with studious fealty—though he struggled hard to be impartial in his estimate of both men—insensibly his sympathy fluttered away to the absent suitor.

Meanwhile no barrier was raised against the intimate intercourse of Romaine and her medical adviser. While she was with him, she was in abundant health and spirits; when separated, she pined; consequently, he was permitted to be her constant companion. Unmolested, they walked and drove together in the lengthening days of crescent summer. Upon such blissful occasions he invariably addressed her by the name of Paula, and she readily, happily answered to the name. Though he studied her with lynx-like intensity, he never discovered the slightest tremor of surprise that he should not address her as others did. So far he was satisfied, and in so far he fancied himself to be justified in laying the flattering unction to his soul that he was indeed in communion with the reincarnated spirit of his wife. The point which baffled him, before the non-committal front of which he shrank chilled and discouraged, was the total oblivion of all past events which that spirit evinced.

Yet he was not wholly discouraged, since he never permitted his cult of the veiled idol to

overshadow his system of persistent investigation. For the hundredth time, he would endeavor to recall to her mind some sweet episode of his by-gone courtship, or briefly happy wedded life, and for the hundredth time she would reply, with that gentle smile,

"How I wish I could remember a time that must have been so joyous! Ah, my dear Loyd, I fear this poor head of mine is like the Chaldean idols—more clay than gold!"

Certainly her defective recollection of the leading events in the life of Romaine Effingham, previous to her acute illness, lent color to the supposition that Paula Morton might be equally deficient in this regard, in that both personalities were forced to act through the same disabled brain; that is, granting the doubt as to which spirit might be in residence at the time. [622]

Naturally, the reasoning was not logical—not conclusive to a man of Morton's intelligence; and yet with it he was fain to be content.

Of one thing he was satisfied; Paula, reincarnated, could not have loved him more fondly than the beautiful being who had voluntarily abandoned every tie to bind herself to him. Sometimes he wondered, with the chill of death at his heart, how it was all to end; and she, seeming to divine the desperate query, as often as it presented itself, when he was with her, would exclaim,

"What matters it whether I recall the past or not, so long as we are happy in the present, so long as you have my love for the future and for all eternity?"

Paula might have said that in just such words; and the glamor of his fool's paradise encompassed him again. Thus the inexplicable situation, in the natural course of events, grew to a climax.

One afternoon they had been riding for miles through the park-like woodland of the neighborhood, their horses keeping leisurely pace through aisles white with the bloom of dogwood. For a while Morton had entertained his companion with reminiscences of that happy by-gone time which was a reality to him, a pleasing effort of the imagination to her. Her responsiveness was an encouragement to him; and he began at the beginning, closing with the untimely end.

There were tears—tears of genuine sympathy and sorrow—in her limpid eyes as he ceased speaking. So graphic had been his description of that last scene in the cemetery—that end-all to his hope and joy—that she seemed to see the lonely figure beside the open grave, to hear his sobs mingling with the sough of the rainy wind, and to feel the unutterable desolation of that grievous hour.

"Loyd," she said, after a brief pause, her tone suggestive of unshed tears, "you must take me to her grave some day."

"Whose grave?" he demanded sharply, her sympathy for the first time striking a discordant note in his soul.

"Her grave," she answered, wonderingly, "your wife's."

He slid from his saddle, allowing his horse to turn to the lush grass, and came to her side. He took her hand in both of his and looked up into her face with an intensity that startled her.

"That grave was *your* grave, Paula," he said. "Can you not understand?"

"It is hard to realize," she faltered.

"And you are *my wife*!"

She turned pale so suddenly that he would have been alarmed, had not the fugitive dye instantly returned deeper than before upon cheek and brow.

"Your wife!"

"My wife in the sight of God! Oh, have no doubt of it; for your indecision would drive me mad! Paula was my wife, and you are Paula!"

"Yes, but Paula in another form."

"Exactly! But still my wife!"

"Not in the sight of man."

"Then the sooner we are made one again, the better!" he went on impetuously. "See, you wear your own betrothal-ring. Can you, will you submit to the absurdity of a second marriage ceremony, for the sake of the blind world's opinion?" [623]

"I can and will," she answered.

"Then let there be no delay!"

He reached up, and, bending low, she kissed him upon the lips; and she did it so frankly, trustingly, that henceforth he banished every doubt, every vestige of uncertainty to that vague realm whither much of his outraged common-sense had fled.

Late that night a wailing cry startled the quiet of the house—a cry low, but sufficient in carrying-power to rouse Mrs. Effingham from the depths of her first sleep. Hurrying, breathless with

apprehension, through the dressing-room which separated her chamber from Romaine's, speechless was her amazement and alarm to find the girl standing before her mirror, the candelabra ablaze on either side, robed from head to foot in white, the splendid masses of her hair sweeping about her shoulders. Upon her exquisite neck and arms scintillated rivulets of diamonds, heir-looms of the Effingham family, which descended to each daughter of the house upon her eighteenth birthday; while in her hand, held at arm's length, glittered an object which had the sheen of blent gold and jewels—a tiny object that fitted softly into the snowy palm. Upon this object were her eyes riveted, with a sort of wild dismay in their inspection. She seemed entranced, and for a minute the watcher dared give no sign of her intrusion.

CHAPTER X.

"Wilt thou pluck my fair son from mine
age,
And rob me of a happy mother's name?"

The events which led up to the somewhat dramatic climax in Romaine's chamber at midnight would scarcely seem to warrant so pronounced a crisis. An agreeable evening had been passed in the music-room, Morton and Hubert smoking, Mrs. Effingham busied with some bit of fancy-work, while Romaine played the piano or sang, as her mood suggested. She was an ardent musician, possessed of a fine mezzo-soprano voice, which had been trained in the best schools. Her fancy was for the fantasticism of the more modern composers; and upon this occasion, being in the vein, she sang, with remarkable effect, the weird night-song of the slave in Goldmark's "Queen of Sheba," the dreamy Berceuse from "Lakme" and two or three of Meyer Helmund's idyllic creations. The vibrant tenderness and surpassing melody of her voice filled her hearers with wonder. Never had she sung with such depth of feeling; and they marvelled at it, regarding the performance as a revelation. Naturally, as the evening wore on, a reaction set in, a pallid exhaustion took the place of the heightened color of cheek and lip, and finally Romaine rose from the piano unnerved and hysterical. The party promptly broke up, and Mrs. Effingham led the way to her daughter's chamber.

By eleven o'clock the good lady had left Romaine, apparently calm and at peace with herself, in the hands of her maid, and had retired for the night.

The gown of India silk had been exchanged for a garment of soft white wool, the peculiar flowing pattern of which suggested the graceful robes of Watteau and Greuze, and in it the young mistress of Belvoir reclined at ease upon her couch. So lost was she in reverie, that she took no heed of the maid, who, her preparations for the night completed, glided to the back of the couch and stood waiting. The Dresden clock's faint tick became audible, and presently the chime rang out. The oppressive silence broken, the maid spoke:

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"Will Miss Romaine have her hair brushed now?"

Romaine turned with a start, casting one exquisitely moulded arm up to the back of the couch, so that she faced the speaker.

"I must have been asleep or in a trance!" she exclaimed in a dazed way. "No, no, Eunice; I will braid my hair to-night. Go to bed. It is late. See, it is half-past eleven."

"But, miss, I—"

"Yes, I know you would work over me until you dropped from sheer fatigue," the young lady went on, with a smile; "but I shall not permit it—not to-night. I prefer to be left alone. Good-night."

Reluctantly the maid vanished, closing the door behind her.

The instant she disappeared, Romaine rose and stood in the faint glow of the single candle, her white robe lying in ample folds about her.

"At last I am alone!" She listened intently for some sound in the silent house. "Alone—with my thoughts of *him*! How he loves me; but," with a fluttering sigh, "how he loved that *other one*—that Paula! Am I she? He says I am; and who should know as well as he? Oh, it is all so strange, so mysterious, that—that I cannot tell. His great love assures me that I must have lived before. When I am with him, I am as sure as he; but, when he is not with me, I seem to doubt, to be groping somewhere, as it were blindfold, among familiar scenes. O Loyd, sustain me, be my guide, or I shall fall by the wayside, fainting, helpless!"

She crossed her chamber and stood before her mirror, gazing intently at her reflection. Presently she withdrew the golden pin from her hair and let its rich masses fall about her shoulders like a bronze-gold veil.

"His wife!" she murmured, smiling wanly at her image; "his wife *again* after some lapse of time! How long a time? Ah, does he detect some change in me which he is too loyal to notice? With time, come change and decay. How can I tell how changed I may be—in *his* sight?" She shuddered, and peered more keenly at the mirror. "If I *am* changed," she concluded, with a pretty assumption of desperate resolution, "it is my duty to repair the ravages of time. I will be dressed like any queen at her bridal. I will wear all my jewels, and let their lustre conceal defects from even his generous eyes. He loves me; but I must struggle to *hold* that love. My jewels! Where are my jewels? How shall I look in them?"

With feverish haste she opened the compartments of the toilet-table until her eager hands fell upon a casket of dull red leather, faded and bruised. Within, however, the velvet cushions were as fresh and white as though newly lined; there was no more hint that four generations had gazed upon their sheeny lustre than there was hint of age in the priceless gems that nestled, glittering like captured stars, amid their depths.

Romaine uttered a sigh of delight, and, with eager, trembling hands, hung the chained brilliants upon her neck and arms. Then she lighted the candelabra beside the mirror, and stood back, speechless before her own surpassing beauty.

"Would he could see me *now!*" she exclaimed naïvely, entranced, then bent forward to insert still other jewels in her ears.

At that moment an object set in gold and rimmed with diamonds caught her eye. She had not noticed it before, but now it riveted the inspection of her very soul.

She snatched it from the case with a low, wailing cry, akin to the smothered utterance of one laboring in nightmare, and held it at arm's length, breathless, speechless. [625]

Simply a medallion set in gems, the medallion of a man's face—*the face of Colston Drummond!*

And it was at this moment, supreme enough to thrill poor Romaine's reviving intellect, that Mrs. Effingham hastily entered the chamber.

The lateness of the hour, coupled with her daughter's incongruous toilet, startled the good lady into the passing fancy that some unexpected crisis had arrived—that Romaine had indeed taken leave of her senses. She uttered some stifled exclamation and stood spell-bound. As quick as thought the girl dropped the miniature into its case and turned to confront the intruder.

"Mother!" she exclaimed, her voice trembling with repressed emotion, "thank heaven, you have come! Otherwise I should have been forced to wake you, for I cannot sleep, I cannot wait another hour, another minute. I *must* speak now, this instant!"

She came to her mother and laid her jewelled arms about her neck, her very attitude eloquent of the yearning of her soul.

It was with the utmost effort that Mrs. Effingham commanded herself sufficiently to conceal the dire apprehension that assailed her.

"And so you shall speak, my darling," she answered soothingly, as one would humor a perverted fancy; "unburden your whole heart to me."

"Mother, I was to have been married this month."

"Yes, my dear child."

"How many days are we from the date proposed?"

The anxious pallor of the lady's face overspread her lips and she hesitated.

"What does it matter, dear?" she faltered.

"What does it matter!" echoed Romaine steadily; "it matters much—to me. Events have become confused in my mind since my illness; so you must tell me how soon I was to have been married. You *must* tell me, for I wish to know."

"The twentieth of May was the day appointed," was the reluctant reply.

"And it is now?"

"The fifth."

"More than a fortnight to wait! And delays are dangerous. Mother, I have seen my wedding-dress in the east room. Is everything prepared?"

"Everything, Romaine."

"Then why delay, and so court danger? Let my marriage take place at once, the sooner the better."

"Romaine!"

"Loyd has spoken to-day; he would second my petition were he here."

"Loyd!"

She recoiled out of the girl's embrace as she spoke, and stood staring at her in blank amazement.

"Loyd!" she added faintly; "it is *Loyd* you wish to marry?"

"Whom else?" answered Romaine, smiling calmly; "you would not doubt it, mother dear, if you knew *all*. Oh, I am not demented, as perhaps you think. I am myself again, thanks to the magnetism of his great love. Mother, if I thought that he were never to have the right in the sight of God and man to call me wife, I should pray for death—ay, court it as the sweetest boon. Thwart me in my love, and you kill me; grant my prayer, and you not only give me life, but heaven upon

It cannot be said that Mrs. Effingham was wholly unprepared for the turn affairs had taken. Setting aside Hubert's expressed suspicions, her woman's instinct had vaguely warned her how this inexplicable course of love had raised Morton upon its bosom, leaving Drummond high and dry, stranded upon the stale and unprofitable shore of Neglect. And yet, out of sheer loyalty to Drummond and his interests, she had refused to listen to that mysterious voice, stiller and smaller than the voice of conscience. She had waited to be convinced by some ulterior medium which, after all, she knew could but accord with her own unacknowledged convictions.

From her son next day she received but cold comfort, though it was gently offered, according to his wont.

"I told you so," he remarked. "For Colley's sake, I have done what I could, only to be met by dismal failure. I will never venture to risk so much again. We must accept the inevitable, dear mother, and make the best of a situation which, if inexplicable, is far from desperate. I can only say, God grant that Romaine's determined action may not prove to be some insane caprice!"

"Amen to that!" came the faltering reply.

The lady's first interview with Morton after the revelation was managed in more diplomatic fashion.

She met the young physician in the garden before breakfast on the following morning. She kissed him in silence, and held his hands while the unbidden tears welled within her haggard eyes.

"Romaine has spoken!" he exclaimed, interpreting the mute eloquence of her attitude.

She bowed her head in assent.

"And you—you have given your consent?" he asked tremulously.

"Did you not warn me that it might be fatal to thwart Romaine in any way?"

"That is not answering my question," he said with sudden sternness; "do you give your consent to our marriage?"

"Romaine's peace of mind is paramount to all other considerations," she answered; "her will is my law."

"But you are reluctant to give her to me."

"I know no reluctance where her wishes are concerned. I have closed my eyes to every other consideration save her happiness, Loyd; and with all my heart I give her to you—for her sake."

And with, such modicum of consolation he was obliged to be content.

Considering the eminent social position of the persons concerned, it is small wonder that the report of Romaine's change of heart swept society like a whirlwind. The indignation that was expressed on the score of the young lady's so-called frailty was not occasioned by the fact that the fashionable world loved Morton less, but that it loved Drummond more. Had the latter gentleman stood by his guns, he would have been the hero of the hour and received a greater meed of sympathy than is usually vouchsafed the banished lover; but, as he had played the renegade when he should have formally opposed his rival, society shrugged its shoulders, and saw to it that Morton's prowess did not want praise and esteem. Thus ever does the myopic world deceive itself.

It was decided that the ceremony should be accomplished upon the twelfth day of the month, that it should be conducted with the strictest privacy, and that no invitations should be issued. Of course there would be "after-cards," and in due course there would be receptions upon the return of the pair from a sojourn in Europe. Such were the hasty arrangements, to which all concerned agreed.

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The change from doubt to certainty operated most favorably upon Morton—the galling irritability of the past few weeks vanished; the natural buoyancy of his early youth returned; he seemed to find a zest in living, which was a surprise and delight to no one more than to himself.

Romaine, on the other hand, though to all appearance happy and content, endured nameless torture when left to herself—her nights were hideous epochs of harassing suspense and misgiving; the unattended hours of her days were rendered unbearable by some invisible incubus which, she was neither able to explain nor banish. Ever and anon she would seem to herself to be upon the verge of some explanation, some solution of the enigma with which she wasted herself in unavailing battle; but no sooner did she find herself approaching this most desirable consummation, than she fell into the toils of Morton's irresistible influence, and was content to find herself the victim of his soothing wiles. In a word, her meditations upon the subject simply resolved themselves into this formula: When I am with him, I love him beyond question; when I am *not* with him, my love is crossed by doubt.

As if by instinct Morton divined the threatening condition of her mind, and consequently left no stone unturned to hasten the preparations for his marriage. Circumstances forced him, in great measure, to relax his sedulous care and espionage. To all appearance he found his patient as hale, mentally and physically, as she had ever been; and, though he was by no means free of

apprehension on her account, he did not scruple to absent himself as often as he found it necessary for him to make some adjustment of his affairs in view of an indefinite sojourn abroad. Then, too, he experienced the liveliest satisfaction in setting his somewhat neglected house in town in order, and in beautifying its every detail for the reception of his bride. The wilful, methodical nature of the man manifested itself in just such *minutiæ* as the hanging of a drapery here, or the placing of an ornament there, that he might satisfy himself as to the exact appearance of the place when she should come home to it—it mattered not when. He trusted no one; he placed no confidence in judgment other than his own. It was a labor of love; and, like a labor of love, it had long since become a work of faith, as was meet—especially under the circumstances.

Several hours of each day Morton passed in the city, and perhaps nothing afforded such ample proof of his confidence in the establishment of affairs as the composure and assurance with which he returned each time to Belvoir. The truth was, he had made assurance double sure, and taken a bond of Fate—or so he was constrained to regard his successful course.

It was during one of these occasions of non-attendance, a day or two after the rumor of the engagement had spread its facile wing, that an imposing family-carriage, decorated as to its panels with the ensign armorial of the Drummonds, turned in at the gates of Belvoir, and entered upon the gradual ascent of the avenue with the cumbrous roll of stately equipages in general, and of the Drummond equipage in particular. Upon the hammer-cloth were seated an ancient coachman and footman, most punctilious of mien and attire; while within the coach, bolstered into an upright position among the cushions, sat a lady well into the decline of life and health, a spare, stern creature, with the face of an aged queen. It was a face from which the effulgence of halcyon days had died out, but despite the rigidity of its lines it was still a countenance replete with an inborn dignity. Letitia Drummond had been a beauty in her day, and it was some consolation to her in her decline, to find something of her famed advantages revived in her only and beloved son.

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This son was her idol, in her eyes a very paragon; her worship of him was the one vital interest of her invalid existence. Secluded from the world by reason of her malady, she drew vitality from her communion with him as the frail, unearthly orchid subsists upon the air which its hale neighbors reject.

It had been years since the widow Drummond had entered her carriage, and she had by no means dared exposure to the dampness of this May morning for a trifle. As the horses leisurely took their way along the avenue the lady glanced forth upon the luxurious verdure of lawn and budding trees, with a critical scrutiny not unmingled with malevolence.

Presently the glimpse of a girlish figure gathering lilacs in a by-path, riveted her attention. Quickly she touched a bell, and in the next instant the coach had stopped and the footman was at the open door.

"I see Miss Effingham," she remarked; "give me my cane and help me out. There! Now drive on a short distance, remain there ten minutes, then return for me here. You understand."

The command was given in a grudging tone, as if each word, each breath of the balmy air cost her a pang.

From her lilac-bower Romaine had watched the proceeding in wonder; but as the carriage departed, leaving the withered figure, wrapped in its finery of a by-gone date, standing alone in the sunshine, she came forward, her hands filled with snowy blossoms.

They met beside a rustic garden-seat, beneath hawthorns full of rosy bloom and the carolling of birds.

As Romaine paused, irresolute, the lady spoke:

"You recognize me?"

"You are Mrs. Drummond."

"I *am* Mrs. Drummond, Colston's mother."

She had drawn her weapon, and seemed figuratively to be examining the keenness of point and edge.

Romaine shuddered.

"Where is he?" demanded the lady.

"Where is—who?"

"Who!—who but my son? Whose absence in all this wide world should I give an instant's thought to but my son's? For whom else should I dare misery and perhaps death to inquire for but my son! Answer me! where is he?"

Poor Romaine had grown as pallid as the flowers that trembled and dropped one by one from her nerveless hands.

"Answer me!" repeated Mrs. Drummond; "I am his mother, and I will not be satisfied with any white-lipped silence. What have you done with my son? Where is he?"

"I—I do not know."

Most hearts would have been touched by the pitiful innocence of those words and look.

"You do not know. I will believe you so far; but why has he left his home—and me?"

"How can I tell?" faltered the girl.

"I can imagine you experience some difficulty," was the harsh reply, "but I mean to remove all obstacles from your path so that you *can* tell, and also give me a coherent account. He had entrusted his happiness to your keeping; he had divided his love for me with you. What account have you to give of your stewardship?" [629]

The helpless attitude of the girl coupled with her wild-eyed silence, seemed to infuriate the lady.

"No wonder you do not dare to raise your voice to answer me," she cried shrilly; "faithless, false-hearted girl! You have wrecked his life! And when the news of your ill-assorted marriage reaches him, it will kill him, and I shall not survive his death! Jezebel!" she hissed, griping Romaine's arm in her gloved claw, "do you comprehend that two lives, two God-given lives will be upon your soul when you have consummated this unholy deed? I would die for my son. I would even be branded with crime for the sake of his peace and happiness! I *love* him! And what has your vaunted love amounted to? Answer me, or I will smite that mutely-mocking mouth of yours! Have you not told him a thousand times, have you not assured him by word, by deed, by action that you loved him? Answer me!"

"Yes," came the gasping reply.

"Then why have you played him false?"

"Oh, I do not know, I—I cannot tell!"

She cast the delicate arm from her as though the contact were contamination.

"I hope to heaven you *are* insane, as it is whispered," she gasped, weak from excess of anger and feebleness; "madness would be your only salvation in *my* eyes. But I have my doubts, I have my doubts. I shall raise heaven and earth to find my son, I shall go in search of him myself if messengers fail, and when he is found I shall send him to you, and I only pray that the sight of him may strike you dead at his feet if he comes too late!"

The grinding of the returning carriage-wheels upon the gravel of the avenue interrupted her further utterance, and in silence she hobbled back to the footman, who obsequiously replaced her upon her cushions.

Left alone amidst the whispering leaves, the sunshine and the birds, Romaine slowly struggled back to semi-consciousness. She pressed her hands upon her throbbing temples, while dry sobs rent her from head to foot.

"O what have I done?" she sobbed, "and what am I doing?"

Like one stricken with sudden blindness she felt her way from tree to tree, leaning against their trunks every now and then for support. In this pitiful way she reached the terrace-steps, stumbled and fell prostrate in the garish light, like a stricken flower discarded by the reapers.

CHAPTER XI.

"The Devil tempts thee here
In likeness of a new untrimmed bride."

"Such a mad marriage never was before."

If Serena Effingham derived any comfort from the contemplation of Romaine's precipitate union with Morton, that comfort resided in the fact that having secured the constant attendance and companionship of the young physician, the girl would enjoy immunity from the mysterious crises that were likely to assail her whenever he was not at hand. There was no gainsaying the point that Romaine was perfectly herself while under Morton's influence. No one could deny the potency of the spell he exerted; consequently Mrs. Effingham was forced to accept the lesser of the evils, if so strong a term may be applied to her gentle estimate of the situation. [630]

It was the good lady herself who discovered her daughter lying insensible at the foot of the terrace steps; and as Romaine, upon the recovery of her consciousness, guarded the secret of her stormy interview with Mrs. Drummond even from her mother, who was in ignorance of the unwonted visit, Mrs. Effingham remained in an agony of suspense and anxiety until Morton returned from town. At sight of him the girl flung herself into his arms and clung to him hysterically, to the perplexity of all concerned.

When questioned regarding the cause of her illness, she returned answers of adroit incoherency, simply maintaining that her existence was a burden to her when separated from Morton; that she was wholly wretched and unable to command herself when left to herself. Naturally such extraordinary assertions lent color to the suspicion that her mind was affected; yet, when in the presence of her heart's desire, she appeared perfectly sane and as soundly reasonable as ever she had been. Her condition seemed a hopeless mystery to all save Morton who was persuaded

beyond peradventure, that he detected the almost jealous reliance of his departed wife through the mask of her reincarnation.

From that time forth he no longer absented himself from Belvoir, and the expectant hours crowded themselves into days that all too rapidly took their departure.

The eve of Romaine's wedding-day proved to be one of those rare epochs of spring that are instinct with the genial presage of summer, one of those intense days which May has in her gift, when one involuntarily seeks the shady side of city streets, or wanders into the shadows of the woods to escape the garish splendor of the open fields. Such weather is always premature and ominous of impending inclemency; but it is none the less exquisite while it lasts.

All day long the lovers had luxuriated in the balmy air, and the setting sun surprised them bending their reluctant steps homeward through Drummond copse. One by one the swift hours had registered their happiness, their constantly reiterated oaths of fealty and their expressions of confidence in the future. They had uttered nothing worthy of being chronicled, for they had talked simply as lovers talk, with an intent significant only to themselves. They had laid their plans for the future as the poets fancy the short-sighted birds scheme at their nest building. Morton had proposed that, the ceremony over, they should drive to his town-house and there, amidst its renovated glories, forget the world until such time as they cared to claim its diversions again. There was method in the plan since he entertained some vague fancy that his reclaimed wife would be more at her ease, more at home among scenes which had witnessed the happiest hours of her past. And Romaine's joyous acquiescence increased his fancy until it became positive conviction. He even went so far as to surmise that the soul of Paula would evince a keen delight and interest in the new beauties of the old abode.

So the sun had set and the full moon had reared her colossal lamp to light them home. Suddenly, as they emerged from the copse and found themselves upon the rustic path that ran between Belvoir and Drummond Lodge, Romaine laid her hand upon her lover's arm with a sharp gasp.

"I have left my book up yonder upon the rocks where we sat!" she exclaimed; "oh, Loyd, how careless of me! and *you* gave it me!"

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Morton laughed light-heartedly.

"We will send one of the men for it in the morning," he said; "there will be no pilfering lovers in that place to-night, I warrant you."

"But it will be ruined by the dews," she insisted; "we may forget to send for it to-morrow; besides, I do not wish to leave it there. I will go back and get it."

"You!" he cried, with a laugh; "if you *must* have the worthless thing, I will go for it."

"We will go together, Loyd."

"No," he objected, in the gently authoritative tone which had become habitual with him, "you are completely tired out and the climb would prove the one straw too many. But how can I leave you here?"

"What is there to fear? We are within gun-shot of home."

Morton hesitated an instant; then he said with some reluctance,

"Would you mind walking on alone? I will make haste, take a short cut through the copse and meet you upon the lawn."

"Very well! I will walk slowly."

For some reason, which it would be vain to attempt to account for, he stooped and kissed her where she stood in a mellow ray of the risen moon.

"Why are you so particular about that little book?" he asked tremulously.

"I have already told you, dear," she answered.

"Because *I* gave it you?"

"Yes; for that reason it is precious, invaluable in my eyes."

"My darling! God bless you for those sweet words! To hear them from your dear lips again I would go to the ends of the earth!"

It was simply lovers' parley, but for some reason each felt its vague significance which in some way seemed portentous. He kissed her again, and left her alone in the woodland path.

At one period of her life, that happy time when a trip to Drummond Lodge had been numbered among the chief joys of her innocent life, Romaine had been familiar with every wild flower that bloomed, with every bird that sang in the copse; but since her mysterious illness all that had passed and the place seemed strange to her. Small wonder then that, in the exaltation of parting with Loyd Morton and in the dubious moon-beams, she turned, not towards Belvoir, but in the direction of Drummond Lodge. The night was one of ideal loveliness and as she leisurely threaded her way between the shadows cast by the great tree-boles, she softly sang to herself and smiled as her quick ear caught the twitter of the nesting birds. Suddenly the sharp snap of a

twig punctuated the chant and its invisible chorus, causing the girl to pause abruptly and peer before her into the semi-gloom.

Could it be that love had lent her lover the fleetness of Fortunio's lackey, so that he had accomplished his quest and returned to surprise her ere she had reached the verge of the wood? Impossible! And yet the figure of a man loomed before her in the narrow, moon-lit path! Her heart fluttered, then sank like a dead thing in her bosom, while the words of glad welcome expired upon her blanched lips.

For she had recognized the man, and, by some swift divination of association, knew that he had a right to be where he stood—within his own domain.

The effect of the unexpected encounter was scarcely less patent in the case of Colston Drummond. He uttered some inaudible exclamation of surprise, halted, then advanced a step, staring at the apparition in awed silence. [632]

"Romaine!" he murmured at last, as if fearful of breaking the spell and dissolving the vision by the mere sound of his voice; "Romaine, can it be you—here—at this hour? In heaven's name, where are you going?"

"Home," she faltered, her very utterance paralyzed by amazement and vague fear.

"Home!" he echoed more distinctly, emboldened by the vital voice of the phantom; "you are going in the wrong direction. You are but a few steps from the Lodge. My poor girl, why are you here and alone?"

He spoke with the infinite tenderness which was part and parcel of his manly nature; and, though he came close to her side, even taking her hand in his, she did not cringe. Somehow she felt soothed and calmed by his presence, notwithstanding that she trembled as the environing leaves trembled in the rising breeze, and did not speak for lack of self-command.

"Do not shiver so," he said gently; "it is neither cold here, nor have you any cause for alarm—with me. You have only lost your way. Come, I will see you safely home."

Then she roused from her passing stupor.

"Oh no, no, no!" she cried piteously; "I must go alone. I—he is waiting for me. He must not see you—with me. Only show me the way."

"He!" Drummond asked calmly; "you mean Doctor Morton?"

She bowed in silence, while an unfathomable expression flitted across his face, to be lost in a pitiful smile.

"Well," he said, still holding the hand that she weakly strove to wrest from him, "*he* can wait for a few short minutes."

"No, no, I must go at once," she wailed; "have mercy upon me; let go my hand."

"Think, Romaine!" he commanded softly; "he will have you for all life, while these few paltry moments with you are all that remain to me. Think of it, Romaine, and be generous."

She looked into his face and read the anguished pleading of his eyes.

"First of all," he continued, "tell me how you came here? May I venture to hope that in the eleventh hour you were coming to speak a word of comfort to my mother?"

"No, I had lost my way."

"You did not know that I returned to-day?" he inquired, hope struggling against hope in his eager tone.

"I had forgotten that you had been away."

"You had forgotten!" he cried sadly. "O Romaine, how you have blotted me from your very existence! I can conceive of your love for me having changed; but why have you so utterly forgotten and neglected me?"

She closed her eyes and replied in sobbing accent, "I—I cannot tell. I seem to have been dreaming, to be dreaming still."

"Would it *were* all a dream! My darling—there—there, do not start, it is the last time that I shall ever call you so—darling, I only pray the good God that you are happy."

She did not answer, and he went on as though he did not notice her silence.

"Only to-day, within the last two hours, have I learned that to-morrow will be your wedding-day. Is—is it so?"

"Yes."

"Can you fancy what that means to me? Oh, heaven is my judge, I do not mean to reproach you. It is too late for that. I did not even think to see you again; it is some inexplicable fate which has brought us together. Believe me, I am resigned to my lot; but, since we have met, since God in His mercy has vouchsafed me this one ray of comfort, permit me to beg you, to beseech you ever [633]

to regard me as your loyal friend. O Romaine, my heart's dearest love, if ever the shadow of sorrow or trouble arises, command me, even unto my last breath, and I will do my utmost to dispel it. I wish you joy, from my soul, I wish you joy; I have forgiven, and I shall try to forget. If you doubt me, try me; test my fidelity to you even unto death. Now, Romaine, have you no word for me? no little grain of comfort to leaven the bitterness of this last farewell upon earth? Be merciful!"

With the steadiness of summer rain the tears had been coursing over the girl's pallid cheeks, and there were tears in her voice as she cried,

"O my God! let me sleep and continue to dream, for, should I awake, I should go mad!"

He took her in his arms and pressed her to his breast for one brief moment, while his kisses mingled with the tears that rained upon her shining hair. "I understand, I understand," he murmured brokenly, gently putting her from him; "God help us both! Yonder is your way. Hark! he is calling you! I need not go with you. Dry your tears and greet him with a smile; perhaps it is better so, for I am not worthy of you. Some day we shall know—Good-by, my darling. Go, go quickly! He must never know that we have met. May God bless and keep you!"

He continued to speak until she had vanished among the clustering shadows, the weird call of the distant voice punctuating his broken utterances. When at last she had really gone, and he found himself actually alone, he fell upon his face in an agony of desolation, stifling his sobs in the depths of the lush grasses.

And it was a crest-fallen, pallid being who came forth from the dimness of the woods to relieve Morton's anxiety.

"In mercy's name, where have you been?" he exclaimed, hastening to her as she emerged into the lambent ways of the moon, and eagerly clasping her hand in his.

"I lost my way," she faltered, with downcast eyes, vainly striving to conceal the tears that glistened upon her lashes.

"But you have been weeping!"

"I became confused and frightened," she explained. She was about to add, "it seemed so lonesome without you;" but the words remained unuttered.

As they walked side by side across the dewy lawn, Morton was not so much impressed by the incoherency of the explanation of her present condition as by the subtle change which had come over her within those few minutes. What could have caused it, he was completely at a loss to surmise; what it might portend, he could not conjecture; but that some mysterious change had taken place in her, he was as certain as though she had said in so many words,

"You should have been far-sighted enough not to have left me alone for an instant until I am irrevocably yours!"

He suffered the torture of a lifetime in those few brief moments; and the torment was all the more poignant that it was too vague to impart, even if he had dared so to do.

Long ere they reached the house, the silence became so oppressive that in sheer despair he was forced to break it.

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"I found the book," he remarked with effort, displaying the dainty volume.

She did not offer to take it from him, as he expected, as he fondly hoped; she simply replied, with eyes intent upon the ground,

"I am sorry to have given you so much trouble."

As if by instinct he felt as if virtue had gone out of him. How, when, or why, he could not determine, but in that hour an occult warning came home to him—a presage that his empire over Romaine Effingham was no longer supreme.

Had he known, had he even suspected, that Romaine would weep herself to sleep that night with Colston Drummond's jewelled miniature upon her bosom, he would have pulled himself together, banished the spell that held him in thrall, and thus averted the catastrophe that the pregnant moments hastened to consummate.

CHAPTER XII.

"But shapes that come not at an earthly
call
Will not depart when mortal voices bid."

The augury of the preceding day's perfection proved correct—Romaine's nuptial morn came up, veiled in murky clouds that promised a period of dismal rain. The very face of nature, of late so bright and jocund, suffered an obscuration that left it gray and drear. By sun-rise the mists crept swiftly up the hill-sides, revealed the verdant landscape for a moment, and then, as their custom is, descended in a persistent, chilling downpour.

Morton and Hubert were the only members of the household to meet at the breakfast-table, which the butler had striven to render resplendent, in honor of the occasion, by masses of ghastly Freesia and Narcissi.

The conversation of the two men during the repast was desultory in the extreme. There were dark rings around Morton's eyes, which betrayed a sleepless night; he was nervous and constrained in manner, while the wan pallor of his face contrasted sharply with the unrelieved blackness of his garments. It was with evident relief that the brothers-elect left the table and separated by tacit consent.

It had been agreed that the ceremony should be solemnized in the conservatory at noon, after which the wedded pair should at once be driven to Morton's house in the city. The preparations were of the simplest description, if the mere removal of the rustic seats from the conservatory could be considered such.

To be sure, as the appointed hour drew nigh, various wines were placed upon the sideboard in the dining-room, where a bridal-cake occupied the centre of the table, upon which lay bride-roses and lilies-of-the-valley in richly fragrant garlands. Servants in holiday attire went hither and thither with muffled step; otherwise the house maintained the most sepulchral silence. No sound of approaching equipage disturbed the rainy day without; even the birds restrained their plaintive twitter beneath the dripping leaves. It was as if some invisible dead lay in state during that ominous lull which precedes the arrival of the mourners.

Left to himself, Morton paced to and fro in the library. He grew calmer, but by degrees more pallid, as the hours wore to noon, until, when the clergyman was ushered into his presence, his stern composure impressed the man of God as most extraordinary. It was only when the slowly chiming clocks proclaimed the appointed hour, that Morton evinced the least animation. He sprang from his chair, while a hectic glow flashed into his face, and motioned the clergyman to follow him. Scarcely had they entered the conservatory when Romaine appeared, leaning heavily upon her brother's arm, and similarly supported upon the other side by her mother. A very bride of death she looked, her splendid attire rather heightening than relieving her pallor. She wore no jewels, as she had once proposed to do; and she had no need for them, since, if ever loveliness needed not the foreign aid of ornament, but was, when unadorned, adorned the most, Romaine Effingham in her bridal hour proved an exemplar.

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They guided her faltering steps forward and gave her into Morton's keeping. He received her with feverish eagerness, and she seemed to thrill beneath his touch as he murmured some word into her ear that summoned the phantom of an answering smile.

Thereupon ensued an ominous pause, broken only by the servants as they grouped themselves at a respectful distance, and by the pitiless patter of the rain upon the glazed roof overhead.

Then the solemn words were pronounced which made the twain one—pronounced to the last Amen, without let or hindrance, and Romaine Morton turned to her husband to receive his kiss. She seemed strong and relieved in spirit as she accepted the tearful embraces of her mother and brother, betraying the while her haste to escape from the thralldom of her nuptial robes, and to be gone to meet the new life upon the threshold of which she stood.

During the progress of her change of costume she seized her opportunity, when unheeded by her mother, to slip a note, addressed to Colston Drummond, into her maid's hand, with the whispered petition that it be delivered as soon as she had left the house. And the loyal little confederate was already upon her way to Drummond Lodge as the carriage containing the wedded pair dashed into the sodden country road that led citywards.

It is needless to state that that day had proved the heaviest of Colston Drummond's existence. It is true that he had brought himself to that pitch of resignation which closely resembles apathy, but he suffered none the less the dull misery that inevitably succeeds acute anguish.

Though he was in ignorance of the hour which should make the idol of his life another's, it was enough that his doom was destined to be sealed at some period of the fatal span between sunrise and sunset. In accordance with his wishes, he had been left in undisturbed solitude during the morning hours, and, as he took no heed of the flight of time, the servant who intruded to announce the messenger from Belvoir found him stretched upon a divan in his sanctum, where he had received Morton that night, long weeks before.

Promptly recognizing the maid, he sprang to his feet, breathlessly demanding the object of her visit.

"I am the bearer of a note from my mistress, sir," the girl replied.

"From Mrs. Effingham?"

"From Mrs. Morton, sir."

He wavered for an instant, but, quickly recovering himself, he groaned,

"Then the marriage has taken place?"

"It has, sir."

"Then what can she want of me?" he muttered inaudibly, as he accepted the missive and broke

He read Romaine's letter to the close with no outward sign of emotion, beyond a trembling of the hands, which he was powerless to repress. Suddenly, however, he raised his eyes, and there was the fire of an invincible resolution in their depths as he demanded,

"Mrs. Morton has left Belvoir?"

"Yes, sir, more than an hour ago."

"Have you an idea where she has gone?"

"To Doctor Morton's house in the city."

"Thank you—stay; you will be faithful to your mistress and—and to me," he added gently, "and you will keep your errand a secret?"

"You may trust me, sir."

"I shall not forget you."

Once more alone, he hastened to a window and dashed aside the draperies, the better to secure the sickly light that filtered in.

"She has set my soul on fire!" he panted. "O Romaine, Romaine, it had been wiser to let me live out my allotted time and die in my enforced resignation!"

Then his eyes fled over the lines which Romaine had penned, and which ran as follows:

"My dream is dispelled. I have awakened to the reality. God help me! Was it His will that I should have met you in the eleventh hour? To what purpose? Why could I not have slept on, even unto the end? I have been roused too late. In one hour I shall be a wife; and, with God's help I will prove myself worthy the name. But—O my friend, why should I have fallen the prey of such an inscrutable fate? You have said that some day we shall know. Your words will comfort me and give me strength to bear my burden without repining. I shall try to sleep and dream again, for such is my only refuge. God be with you."

He crushed the sheet within his palms, while the panoplies about the apartment rang with his exultant cry:

"She loves me! Thank God, it is not too late for righteous interference so long as she remains a wife in name only! There are hours between this and night, and all I ask is minutes in which to accomplish her salvation! Come what may, I will go to her!"

Meanwhile, Morton and his bride had sped over the intervening distance and found themselves safely housed against the storm in his renovated mansion in the city. Blinds and draperies had been raised to admit such light as there was; rare exotics spent their fragrance upon the genial air; and a repast of exceeding daintiness had been spread for their refreshment. Everything had been done which a refined forethought could suggest—in a word, the cage had been exquisitely gilded, and was in all respects worthy of the bird.

Beneath the mystic spell of his presence, Romaine had recovered her composure, and appeared to all intents and purposes her happiest self. Like a pair of joyous children they wandered from room to room, admiring the new splendors; and thus, in due course, they entered the apartment where, enthroned above the mantel and garlanded with pale blush roses, hung the portrait of Paula. Morton led his wife to a point of vantage, and bid her look upward, riveting his eyes upon her face the while with a hungry longing.

Before the blonde loveliness of the Saxon girl, Romaine paled, while a shudder rent her from head to foot. She sighed heavily, and turned to Morton with a piteous gesture.

"My dear Loyd," she murmured sadly, "never again call me Paula."

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He recoiled from her as though each innocent word had stung him to the quick.

"My God!" he cried, "if I thought—" when he checked himself before her look of abject terror, came to her, and took her in his arms. "My darling," he faltered, "if you only knew what agony the mere suspicion of your doubt causes me, you would have pity upon me!"

He spoke with such suppressed passion, with such wild anguish in his haggard eyes, that her alarm faded to helpless amazement.

"I have expressed no doubt," she murmured; "what can you mean?"

"Oh, I do not know," he moaned. "Perhaps I am not quite myself; all the happiness of this day has unnerved me. But—but you bid me never to call you Paula again; what do you mean?"

"Why, simply that I am so inferior to her in loveliness," she answered with a flurried smile.

"Did I ask, did I expect, you to look like her?" he demanded fiercely. "Can you not understand that the flesh is dust, and to dust returns; but the soul is immortal? Paula's body is dust, but her immortal soul lives—lives, not in the realms of bliss to which it fled, released, but—*where* does it live to-day, at this very instant? I want to hear *you* tell me!"

He caught her delicate shoulders between his strong white hands and glared like some ravenous animal into her startled face.

"Answer me!" he commanded.

"O Loyd," she wailed, "how wildly you speak! How can I tell where her soul may be, since I can see no reason why it should not be in heaven!"

"If it *is* in heaven," he cried, thrusting her violently from him, "then am I in hell!"

With a stifled cry, poor Romaine staggered to a chair and sank upon it, overcome by the conviction that she had allied herself to a madman.

And in the ominous pause that ensued, a light rap sounded upon the closed door.

With a muttered ejaculation Morton pulled himself together and went to inquire into the untimely intrusion. Upon opening the door, he found his man upon the threshold, stammering some words of apology, which were summarily cut short.

"What do you want?" Morton demanded sternly.

"There is a lady in the office, sir."

"Where are your wits, that you have forgotten your orders? I am not at home to patients."

"But she has called repeatedly, sir."

"Send her to Doctor Chalmers, my colleague."

"She declares that she will not leave without seeing you. Here is her card."

The sight of that graven name seemed for an instant to petrify the beholder, and several seconds elapsed ere he was able to command himself sufficiently to speak.

Going to his shrinking wife, he raised her hand and pressed it to his lips in a way that was infinitely pathetic.

"I must leave you for a moment, to attend to an urgent case," he whispered; "and while I am gone, I beseech you to pardon a love which transcends all bounds. Some day you will understand all I have suffered. Be lenient with me, for I am an object for pity!"

In the dimness of his office, which had undergone no renovation and no decoration, he found himself confronted by the tall and slender figure of a woman whom he knew full well. The veil had been raised from before the appealing beauty of the face which bore but slight traces of alteration since last he looked upon Margaret Revaleon!

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His greeting was of so cordial a nature as to preclude all attempt on the part of his visitor to apologize for her intrusion.

"I am more than glad to see you, Mrs. Revaleon," he exclaimed, excitedly; "your visit is most opportune. For the past week you have been omnipresent in my thoughts. Who shall say that I am not developing something of your own peculiar clairvoyance?"

"I trust not," she said, regarding the speaker with apparent uneasiness.

But he continued, with precipitate heedlessness,

"And how do you find yourself since last we met?"

"My condition remains unchanged," replied the woman. "Indeed, I am satisfied that I have developed into what is popularly known as a spiritualistic medium. But I am wretched at the thought of being the unwilling possessor of this so-called odylic power; and I have come to you again to beseech you to treat me for a malady which I am convinced you can cure if you will."

Yielding to his adroit guidance, Margaret Revaleon found herself once more seated in the luxurious patient's chair, while the young doctor seated himself before her with his back to the light.

Thus advantageously placed, he replied with a smile,

"Indeed, my dear madam, you overestimate my ability. I do not profess electro-biology. In order to do so, I should be obliged to enter upon an exhaustive course of reading of Reichenbach and his disciples. In point of fact, I have no sympathy with the believers in mesmerism and its concomitant fancies."

"No?" she answered dreamily, that singular absence of inspection dulling her tawny eyes. "Do you know, doctor, that I am impressed to tell you that you are possessed of the mesmeric power to an extraordinary degree?"

He winced consciously, but rejoined soothingly, doing his utmost to increase the stupor which was fast gaining command of his visitor,

"It may be as you say; it is certainly a power second only to your own. What else have you to impart? Anything that you might say, I should regard as oracular."

He thrilled from head to foot with a sense akin to sickening faintness, as he saw her eye-lids slowly droop while she extended her slim, white hands to him.

"Give me your hands," she murmured; "oh, dear, dear, dear! Stand back; do not crowd so! How many there are here!—Ah!"

The final word was simply an exhalation. She slumbered profoundly, breathing stertorously at first, but swiftly relapsing into perfect calm. The trance had begun. The portals of eternity seemed to be widening. The solemnity of the moment was supreme.

Morton's features became rigid as he watched; his haggard eyes started from their sockets and the drops of an icy sweat pearly upon his brow. He had longed for this moment, and yet, now that it was his, he would have given his immortal soul to have been able to play the coward and escape the consequences.

In fact he did withdraw his hands from the slight grasp, but in the next moment he was held spell-bound, for Margaret Revaleon was speaking in that weirdly vaticinal tone.

"Poor Romaine! Where is she?"

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"Who speaks? Who are you?" gasped Morton, once more grasping the outstretched hands.

"Her father. *You* should know me. I am Sidney—Sidney—"

"Sidney Effingham!"

"Yes, and I am called back to earth in spite of myself. There is trouble here among those I dearly love, and I am pained, disturbed in my happiness."

"Your widow and son are well," murmured Morton, profoundly awed by the impressive tone of the presence.

"Yes, yes; but Romaine! my daughter, where is she? She is no longer with her mother."

"Of course she is not!" exclaimed Morton; "is she not with *you* in heaven?"

The violence of the query appeared to disturb the medium; her eyelids fluttered and her breathing became labored, as though the conditions of the trance had been deranged. Presently, however, the transient agitation subsided and a name escaped her lips.

"Loyd!"

"Who speaks?" whispered Morton, vaguely conscious of a change of personality.

"How can you ask? Can you not guess?"

"No!" he cried wildly; "O God! I do not dare to guess, even to think! In heaven's name, do not tell me who you may be! and—and yet I *must* know! I am resolved to dare death itself to be satisfied! Who is it that speaks?"

"Paula, your wife—and I am waiting!"

The listening air seemed to cringe before the maddened shriek that filled the house.

Morton struggled to his feet and for a moment hovered above the quiescent figure beneath him with hands outstretched and hooked like the talons of a bird of prey; then with a groan he sank back into his chair; his arms fell like plummetts at his sides and his head dropped forward upon his breast.

Meanwhile, in the luxurious chamber over which presided the radiant portrait of the dead, garlanded in roses, the unhappy bride paced to and fro, now wringing her delicate hands, and again dashing the terrified tears from her eyes. Each moment but served to increase her helpless alarm; she knew her husband's return to be immediate, at least inevitable, and yet she could not support the thought of his advent. In a word, the last shackle which bound her soul in mystic spell had fallen away, and she was herself again. It had required weeks to right the disordered brain and give it the strength requisite to battle with the mesmeric power of its master; but at last, late as it was, her mind had fully regained its normal functions.

In the midst of her pitiful quandary Romaine was startled by an impetuous step outside the closed door. She recoiled to the furthest corner of the room, and stood bracing her fainting body against the wall.

Contrary to her expectation it was Colston Drummond who flung wide the door and stood before her.

The revulsion of feeling well-nigh overpowered her, yet in some way she was able to demand, in answer to his passionate utterance of her name,

"Why are *you* here?"

"To protect you, Romaine."

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"You forget that I can claim a husband's protection," she retorted valiantly.

"It is from him that I seek to protect you," Drummond exclaimed; "you should not have written to me as you did, should not have laid bare your tortured heart and revealed the secret which I have had every reason to suspect, which my great love for you divined long, long ago, if you did not wish me to fly to your rescue!"

She held up beseeching hands, as though she would ward off that which she would welcome, and cried piteously,

"Too late! It is too late!"

Whatever he might have said remained unuttered, since at the moment that frenzied cry reached their ears, freezing their blood with its baleful import.

"Merciful heaven!" gasped Romaine; "it is Loyd's voice! Something dreadful has occurred! Oh, prove yourself my protector, and come with me! Come, quick, quick!"

In the excitement of the moment, the brooding twilight, and their unfamiliarity with the house they lost much precious time. Indeed they were only guided at last to the grim little office by the sudden opening of a door through which the figure of a woman escaped and passed them in swift flight.

And then they entered in awed silence, to find the bridegroom sitting in the gloaming of his nuptial-day with pendent arms and sunken head, lost—

"In that blessed mood,
In which the burden of the mystery,
In which the heavy and the weary weight
Of all this unintelligible world,
Is lightened!"

THE END.

FOOTNOTES:

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Transcriber's Notes:

"The Cost of Things" (bottom of P. 513): the original appears to be missing content after ["the fallacy of a popular delusion—that"](#) (an apparent printer's error). Unable to locate alternate publication of this article in order to identify and replace missing text. An ellipsis has been added to indicate the incomplete statement.

Obvious typographical errors have been repaired.

Hyphenation inconsistencies present in the original have been retained.

*** END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK BELFORD'S MAGAZINE, VOL II, NO. 10, MARCH 1889 ***

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