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Title: Selina: Her Hopeful Efforts and Her Livelier Failures

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Illustrator: H. D. Williams

Release date: July 15, 2014 [EBook #46292]

Language: English

Credits: Produced by Giovanni Fini, David Garcia and the Online Distributed Proofreading Team at <http://www.pgdp.net> (This file was produced from images generously made available by The Kentuckiana Digital Library)

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HER LIVELIER FAILURES \*\*\*

## SELINA



"She'd heard I was fond of reading."

[\[Page 20.\]](#)

# *Selina*

*HER HOPEFUL EFFORTS AND  
HER LIVELIER FAILURES*

*By*  
**GEORGE MADDEN MARTIN**  
*Author of EMMY LOU*

*Illustrated by*  
**H.D. WILLIAMS**  
D APPLETON AND COMPANY

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TO  
E. A. M.  
FLORENCE, ITALY

*You have long urged me to an attempted portrayal of the American girl of the '80's. I take it that you from your viewpoint coming from long absence from your own country, look upon her and her moment as in some sense significant.*

*As I read this girl and the conditions surrounding her, born late, Victorian, she came into being when those sincere and fine tenets upon which the Victorian era founded itself, were become the letter of the original vital idea, and the moment itself sentimental, trite and prudish. Outcome and victim of the inefficiencies of an hour so flabby and platitudinous, this young girl of these Victorian '80's apparently not only repudiated her condition made up of absurdities, futilities and inadequacies, but in her maturity has lapsed over into the post-Victorian era as pioneer, she and her companions of that day, who blazed the way for the army of women now following. Following where, you ask? Ah, now, that is another question, and one I am not at all qualified or prepared to answer.*

*In the fact that she did repudiate her day and her condition lies the significance which you see, as I take it. That I have read her at the moment of my depicting, piteous rather than pertinent, helpless more than heroic, and groping rather than grasping, I hope will not disappoint you. So she appears to me; her gravest need, the lack of which renders her piteous and helpless, being a sense of proportion; a lack answerable to the false standards around her, or to her sex, or both, who among her sex shall say?*

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*And that this epic of her days is chronicle of but the small and the petty happening, you will forgive, because this same day made up of the small and seemingly petty, is one of the things, she will tell you now, against which she revolted.*

*Nor am I defending her, nor claiming that she needs defense. As I see her and have tried to set her down. I offer her to you.*

G. M. M.

August, 1914.

Anchorage, Kentucky.

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# SELINA

## CHAPTER ONE

"There must be something wrong, Lavinia, with our way of managing," said Auntie.

"If you think you can do it better than I, Ann Eliza—" came from Mamma, with dignity.

Selina, scant seventeen in years and sweet and loving and anxious, felt that she could not bear it. To sit in consultation thus, with her mother and her aunt because the family purse was at one of its stages of being exhausted, was desperate business enough, but to look from the face of her little mother to the countenance of her auntie under these circumstances was anguish. Negative character has been turned to positive by less, inertia forced into action, the defenceless made defender. And while the endeavors, about to be related, of this young person to add to the income of her family by her own efforts, may call to mind one Baron Munchausen lifting himself by his boot-straps, let it be borne in mind that the boot-straps may be the inconsequential thing, and that where the emphasis is to be laid is upon the good faith put into the lifting.



**"She referred to the cook, faithful and efficient colored plodder."**

"It seemed wise to reduce the grocery bill as far as we could," her mother was saying deprecatingly, "but in doing so, I should have considered that I was leaving myself nothing to pay Aunt Viney." She referred to the cook, faithful and efficient colored plodder.

"Last month it was the iceman who was kept waiting because we paid everything to the butcher," said Selina. "Why is it," a little desperately, "there's never money enough to go around?"

Her mother disliked such a display of feeling. "If you mean that in criticism of your father—" she began.

Auntie interrupted. "The Wistar men have seldom been money-makers. My father in his time was the exception. I'm sure Robert has tried."

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Selina feeling she could not bear what she saw in these faces of her elders, looked about the room where she was sitting with them. In her time, which was twenty-five years ago, in an inland American city in a semi-southern state, bedrooms were sitting-rooms during the day.

What she saw was a ponderously ornate bedstead, ponderous walnut wardrobe, washstand, bureau, fading wall-paper of a pronounced pattern, framed family photographs, and carpet resolutely tacked the four ways of the floor. She did not know the day would come when she would learn that this room with its wool lambrequin above the open grate, its wool table-cover, its wool footstools, was mid-Victorian. Still less did this loving and anxious Selina know that these two dear ladies with whom she sat, were mid-Victorian with their room, and she of the next generation, a victim to their mild inefficiencies and their gentle sentimentalities. In looking about the room, she as by instinct of the hunted, was seeking a clue to escape from her anguish of spirit.

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"It isn't as though your father were not giving me the same amount of money for the house as usual," her mother was saying. Mrs. Wistar always spoke a trifle precisely. "It is more that having dropped so behind with the bills, and knowing that he is worried so to give me as much as he does, I don't like to tell him so."

"The worry'd be no more now than when he does have to know," from Auntie.

"I suppose not," allowed Mrs. Wistar dubiously.

Selina sighed, and her gaze not finding the relief it sought within the room, went to the window and looked out between its discreet draperies. Thus far indeed Selina had gazed on all of life through discreet draperies. And if as she sat there in the cushioned chair with her eyes so sweetly anxious, she was incontinently young to look upon even for scant seventeen, in any real knowledge of life and of what life had a right to demand from her, she was pitifully younger. This story undertakes to be the tenderly smiling narrative of Selina's inefficiencies, the epic of her small aspirings and her, it is to be hoped, engaging failures.

If she, untrained, unarmed and unaware, is typical in any sense of the thousands of American girls of her period, shall it be assumed there are none like her to-day, piously guarded and yet piteously and absurdly unready for life's demands?

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And if the conditions which surrounded her, and the inefficiencies which marked her, were in any degree usual in her day, may we not the better understand her generation's dissatisfaction with these conditions, as shown in those gropings toward something illy defined no doubt but deeply desired, which now appear to have been the first general expression of woman's discontent in this country?

Selina's gaze had wandered to the window to find but doubtful comfort there. For in her mind's eye she saw the relative position her squat, two-storied brick house with its square of grass and its iron fence set in stone coping, bore to the other houses on the block in size, appearance and importance. There were some few smaller and shabbier. She gave neighborly greeting to the dwellers within these homes when she met them, but without any knowledge as to why, and through no volition of her own that she was aware of, her life did not touch theirs.

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**"Impeccable yard plots, whitened flaggings and steps."**

Of the other houses along the block, some were three-storied, others two-storied but double in width, the further characteristics of these eminently prosperous dwellings being impeccable yard plots, whitened flaggings and steps, burnished doorsills, burnished doorbells, doorplates. The dwellers within these altogether creditable establishments, Selina did know; their lives and hers did touch; they too were variations in a common inefficiency; they too were products of the same conditions as herself. Amanthus in the one house, enchanting and engaging, or so Selina saw her; Juliette in another, eager and diminutive, cheeks carmine, fiery with the faith of the ardent follower; Maud in a third, luscious, capable, inquiet, overflowing with protest, alert with innovation; Adele in a fourth, stickler and debater, full of a conscience for the pro and con: these four were Selina's own, these and their households, the friends, she would have told you, of her youth.

She had gone through measles and through mumps with them; through day school and dancing school with them; through the baby age, the overly conscientious age, the giggling age, the conscious age, the arriving age, when at birthdays and school-closings, she, Selina, and Amanthus, and Maud, and Juliette and Adele, exchanged clothbound and gilt-topped volumes, "Lucille," "Aurora Leigh," Tennyson.

But the gaze of Selina right now was out the window of her mother's bedroom, and in her mind's eye she was seeing, not these adored friends of her youth, but the macadamized street she lived upon, with its brick sidewalks and its occasional old sycamore tree, and the homes of herself and these friends along it. And her home was the squat and shabby one, her yard the untended one, and she, Selina Auboussier Wistar, the genteelly poor one of these friends of her youth.

Then her attention came back to matters within the room.

"I try to save Mr. Wistar everything of worry I can," her mother was saying defensively. "I've been setting a chair over that hole in the dining-room hearth rug for months."

"I'm never sure it isn't better to be frank," held Auntie.

Selina's concern returned to her own affairs. Selina Auboussier Wistar! Why Auboussier? Because her father was Robert Auboussier Wistar. Why the Auboussier in either case was to be dwelt upon so insistingly and in full, was never very dazzlingly clear, except that Mamma decreed it. The name had brought her father nothing other in his day than a silver mug, so far as Selina knew, and it had not even brought her that. But it did roll off the tongue as though it had claims. In the very nicest sort of way perhaps this was the

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explanation.

The affairs of her elders in the room again intruded.

"I paid the bills for all those extras we had not counted on when Selina graduated in June," Mamma was saying, and defensively again, "and said nothing about them. It seemed best at the time. And once I got behind in this way on the other bills I haven't seemed able to catch up."

"I needn't have had the carriage and the flowers and the rest of it if I'd known," claimed Selina passionately. "And I'm sure Auntie is right. Everybody in a family ought to know everything."

"I cannot allow such a tone from you, Selina," returned her mother decidedly. "And of whom is it you speak in this disparaging manner? Surely not of your mother? And I will not think you mean your father?"

Her father? Tradition, which meant Selina's own little mother again, told how Mr. Robert Auboussier Wistar at the beginning of things, which was before Selina at all could remember, had made a bold dash and start in life, proprietor of his own inherited iron foundry. It lent solidity and importance to the past, and support to the present. A structural iron railroad and foot-bridge across a turbulent creek at the city's edge, marks the crest of this gentleman's industrial prosperity. It is an ugly bridge where it might have achieved beauty, Selina is forced to admit this now, but then when the family walks on Sunday afternoons and on holidays led to it with something of the spirit which carries the faithful to Mecca, she obediently thrilled with pride as regularly as her mother pointed out the structure to her.

The glittering career of Papa and the foundry had been brief, and Selina had it from her mother and her auntie that this is a sad world for the honorable and trusting man in business.



**"Each lady was sitting by her standing work-basket of cane."**

Mr. Robert Wistar, dear and very real gentleman as he was, and as his Selina saw and knew him, for many years now had had a floor space in a building in an off business street, and bought and sold machinery, new and old, on the varying and uncertain basis of commission. But at home in the squat and ugly brick house owned in part by him and in part by Auntie, who was his older sister, his household of womenkind upheld his prestige and dominance as their male and their protector.

His household of women! Selina's eyes went from the little person of her mother, ardent striver to keep up a fairly prosperous front, to the heavy person of her auntie, darling soul, who did not seem quite to grasp why a front must be kept up, but assured that it must, submitted. Big, lovable, personable auntie, could the pity of it

be that she was always submitting? Each lady was sitting by her standing work-basket of cane, with work however abandoned into her respective dear lap.

Mamma, little person, meant by Heaven to be pretty if she had not in the stead to be so perturbed, just here seemed disposed and almost unreasonably, to harbor feeling against Aunt Viney for wanting what was coming to her. There had been similar feeling on her part toward the iceman, and, preceding him, toward the butcher.

"If it were anybody but Viney herself, coming upstairs to me right in my own room and asking for her money, I would feel I could not overlook it," she was saying. "She should have known that as soon as it was convenient for her to have it, I would give it to her."

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"It is the second time the collector of dues on her funeral insurance has come around," reminded Auntie, "and I dare say he made her feel she had to ask for it."

"There's more to it than her merely coming upstairs to me about it," said Mamma. "Two dollars and a half to three dollars is all anyone thought of paying a servant in my day." Her tone would imply that her day and her authority were decades past and other people in this matter of Aunt Viney, altogether and unworthily responsible. "Four dollars to a servant is out of all reason."

And so indeed four dollars at that day and in that place would have been but for the agreement fixing the wages of this old person at this sum!

Selina's cheeks flamed red. "Aunt Viney is getting four dollars instead of three, Mamma," she reminded her mother, "because you dismissed the washwoman who was getting two dollars, and persuaded Aunt Viney to undertake it for the extra one." Cooking, washing, ironing, dining-room, front door, coal, kindling, fires and something of the rest of it, were the part of Aunt Viney!

Honesty drove Selina to defend her—tentatively and timidly, since not for worlds in her day would a daughter venture to hurt a parent's tender feelings. "Four dollars isn't so terribly much more than a pittance, is it, Mamma? For a week's work? That is," hastily and apologetically, "if one were the receiver of it?"

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Time was to be, and that time soon, when Selina would know more about the place of four dollars in the scale of recompense.

Auntie at this point moved heavily and uneasily. One always felt that nature meant Auntie for something more definite. Her ponderous energy was inexhaustible. To see her expend it on irrelevant and inconsequential things, was to gather that after some fashion of reasoning all her own, she drew comfort from such activities even to convincing herself such efforts were contributory to the general relief.

"I'm sure I wish there were more brasses I could do," sighed the precious and comely soul.

And while Selina here felt again that anguish which seemed more than she could bear, still she blessed the brasses in question, fire-irons, coal-bucket, and fender which adorned their parlor.

And she blessed Cousin Anna Tomlinson who had given the brasses to the Wistar household. Japanned coal vases with panel decorations in subjects such as cat-tails, and mantel tiles with swallow flights across them had recently come in, and Cousin Anna was of those who will have the latest or nothing. Selina did not know what the energy of Auntie would do on the occasions of these recurrent money crises, if she could not put it into the polishing of the brasses.

"I am sure I'm always wishing there were more of them," she was reiterating now.

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And then it was that Selina drew breath, a long and quivering breath. There had come to be but one thing for her to do and she was about to give it voice.

Never before had she taken the initiative in her life. The exact length for the lowering of her dress skirt for graduation, the chosen fashion for the tying of her white sash on that day, the manner of the arranging of her hair, her flowers, her fan, each detail was for these two dear but hitherto decreeing ladies to debate and decide upon.

When their Selina went forth upon her little pleasures and affairs, one saw her off from the front-door step, the other waved a farewell from the window above. When she returned one removed

her hat and passed a readjusting hand over her shining fair hair, the other lifted and put away her cloak.

The initiative was to be Selina's now.

"I told you, Mamma and Auntie dear, of meeting Mrs. William Williams down street yesterday? And of her stopping me?"

She had. She brought all incidents to her absences home, and the two relived them with her. They saw Mrs. William Williams now in this recall, large, impressive, with her benevolently dealt-around interests and inquiries, as from a being of credentialed and superior parts to a world of lesser creatures. Though why this arrogance was permitted, the world of lesser beings could hardly say, but since authority even when self-arrogated, and authority's running mate, material prosperity, are ever potent, the world of Mrs. Wistar and Auntie submitted. Mr. William Williams, a successful dealer in leather and raw hides, had married Mrs. Williams late in both their lives, and one William Williams Jr. was the result.

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Selina was continuing. "And I told you how she said she does not approve of the new methods called kindergarten that are beginning to be used in the schools, and wants William Williams Jr. taught at home, and did I know of any young person among my friends fitted to do it?"

"William Jr.'s head is too big," said Auntie, decidedly, "it rolls around on his neck. I've noticed him on the bench at Sunday-school."

Selina passed over the interruption. "I told her yesterday that I did not know of anyone. To-day I do. I am going to offer to teach him myself!" But her throat was dry, and her hands were cold as she said it.

Selina knew no women wage-earners except her teachers at the public school, who stood apart unique personalities in a world entered into and left behind at intervals, and a scattering of women clerks in the stores of her Southern city. Yes, on the contrary, she did know one, Miss Emma McRanney, a regular attendant at the same church as the Wistars, stolid, settled, and middle-aged, a setter of type at the State Institute for the Blind. Mamma and Auntie made a point of going out their ways on Sundays to stop her and shake hands with her kindly.

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But she was the exception. In the world of Selina, in the world of her mother and her aunt, in that of the friends of her youth and their mothers and sisters and aunts, the accolading stamp of position, of gentility, of femininity, lay in the monetary dependence of womankind on its men.

Nor had life, as Selina came up through it, the private school of her baby days, the public schooling of later days, the friends of her youth, nor Mother, nor Auntie, nor those gilt-topped volumes, nor dancing school, nor Sunday-school, nor her tinkling music lessons, nor traditions, nor precedent, nor standards, nor prides, nor preoccupations, nor day dreams, prepared Selina for this step. And so her throat was dry and her hands were cold as she forced herself to say it.

"I am going to offer to teach him myself."

And then it was that the unexpected happened. The fight on the part of Mamma and Auntie had been a long one and a gruelling one, as long almost as Selina's life, and they by nature were clinging creatures. With the very note of her young utterance, as at the Gideon shout of the newer generation, their walls fell.

This mother of Selina, behold, all at once a little, tearful, dependent, child-like person. "Oh, Selina, daughter, *do* you think you *could*? The terror of having people come to the door with bills one can't pay!"

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This handsome, solid, impressive auntie, a bewildered, rudderless, drifting soul. "I might be able to do little things at home to save you here, Selina. There is the canary's cage. Let me take care of that."

Thus the walls fell about Selina and revealed to her the inward weakness of that stronghold of dominance and authority she, up to now, had deemed well-nigh impregnable.

One instinct with the two, however, held true to its function.

"We will not mention the matter to your father, Selina," from her mother, "unless it seems best. He very likely would worry."

"Robert would worry," from Auntie, decidedly. "It might seem as if it were in criticism of him if we went to him about it beforehand."

No protests! No objections! They were relieved! They were willing! Selina stood up, her voice to her ears coming from vast distances away.

"Four dollars is certainly little more than a pittance for Aunt Viney, I am sure you must see, Mamma." There was pronouncement and finality in the tone as if for the first time she sat in judgment on her parent. "As I've made up my mind to see Mrs. Williams, I'll put on my hat and go now."

But it was all of an hour before she came from her own room ready to go.

"Has she been crying?" Auntie asked Mrs. Wistar anxiously, as Selina went downstairs. "I thought her face showed traces."

"Selina has not the control I would like to see her have," said little Mrs. Wistar concisely. "In my day we were not encouraged to indulge ourselves in tears."

"In what then?" from Auntie as with one suddenly disposed to be captious.

"In self-repression and the meeting of our duties," said Mrs. Wistar. "Ann Eliza," severely, "sometimes I almost think you aid and abet Selina in her expressions of discontent."

Auntie looked non-committal. "Do you, Lavinia?"

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## CHAPTER TWO

On Selina's return in the late afternoon, she came up to her mother's room, her step light and springy now, to tell the two about her visit. She had made up her mind that if she had to do this thing, she would do it with as good grace as possible. They on the contrary had had time to grasp the idea of Selina as a teacher in its several significances.

"Don't think I'd let you do a thing I did not think was proper and right, Selina," her mother hurried to say in greeting. "There's nothing derogatory, I'm sure, in accepting remuneration. I made a set of chemises for your Cousin Anna last year, you remember, and was glad to have her pay me."

"Look at *me*," said Auntie, "and don't you make chemises or anything else, unless it's an understood thing that somebody *is* going to pay you."

A wave of protective feeling rushed over Selina, new to her but warming and whelming, and she had forgiven them.

"I think, Mamma, that Mrs. Williams meant me when she spoke yesterday. She said she was glad to see I was sensible about it. Evidently there are people thinking I ought to go to work. She did."

This was not so rosy as Selina meant it to be for the attentive two; she must do better.

"I'm sure, too, Mamma, she meant to be complimentary. She said a whole lot about my being a booky girl, that she'd heard I was fond of reading, and some more of that sort of thing. And about how she laid a great deal of stress herself on cultivation, and how she wanted William Jr. to achieve a taste that way, too. And she said that habits and associations in the person of a teacher—I remember her words—mean so much."

"I hope she values 'em accordingly," said Auntie indignantly. "I don't like any such tone from her to you. She was a McIntosh, we mustn't forget that. I never thought much of the stock."

"I'm sure all that Selina has told us is most gratifying," Mrs. Wistar hastened to claim. "It only emphasizes the fact that teaching is a calling of accomplishments and refinements. I remember the teacher that I myself recall best." When Mrs. Wistar lost herself in reminiscence, she was more than apt to lose her point also. "His name was Aristides Welkin, and we called him Mr. Arry. He took snuff and recited Dryden and Milton to the class in parsing most beautifully. He was English and sometimes I think now, looking back upon it, drank. My parents paid well for the privilege of having my sister Juanita and myself under him. It was a school of selection and fashion, in the basement under the First Church."





**"His name was Aristides Welkin, and we called him Mr. Arry."**

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Selina kept to her narrative. "She said that of course I was a beginner. That she realized it would hardly pay me to come way out to her house for just William, and she thinks she can get three other pupils in the neighborhood who will come into the class. I'm to go on with him while she tries."

"If you're valuable as all that sounds," insisted Auntie, holding to her point tenaciously, "she certainly ought to pay you well."

Selina paused to steady her voice. So far in her world, and in the world of Mamma and Auntie, money matters were mentioned only when they had to be, and then with embarrassment and reluctance. Hot to her finger-tips and wincing to the fiber, she had had to discuss dollars and cents with Mrs. Williams. Or rather, this lady with her air of large condescension and kindly patronage had discussed it for her. Since Mamma and Auntie had brought her up to feel this shrinking from these things, how could they be so eager now about this part of the interview?

"Mrs. Williams said she had inquired at the private schools and the kindergartens, found the charge for a pupil, and would of course fix the price at that." The blood surged slowly over Selina's face.

"Yes?" from Mamma a little impatiently.

Auntie however had noted the surging signals of distress. "I said that boy William's head was too large," she declared anticipatorily to anything of any nature which might follow.

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Selina, who abhorred doing an uncouth thing, gulped. It was the painful coincidence of the thing. The identical sum fixed by Mrs. Williams and custom for training youth to a knowledge of the rudiments, culture, good habits and worthy associations, had been in the mouths of Mamma, Auntie and herself, all too recently. On hearing it from Mrs. Williams, Selina had winced, and now shrunk from mentioning it herself until she had to.

"I start in to-morrow. Mrs. Williams said why procrastinate things. No, I won't take off my hat, thank you, Auntie."

She was winking fast, her eyes swimming behind something suspiciously like tears. She was swallowing, too, at thought of her own especial little world, her world including Amanthus and Maudie, Juliette and Adele, and their prosperous and easy surroundings. And having reached this point, she sobbed. For what would be the effect of the announcement of her teaching on her world? And what, too, would Culpepper Buxton say? The stepson of Cousin Maria Buxton, down here from up in his part of the state studying law, and her, yes, her very good friend? What would be the attitude of Culpepper to her move?

She found voice. Moreover, she smiled bravely at Auntie. "No, don't take my cloak, please. I'm going out to find the girls and tell them and have it over with. The price, you say, Mamma?" Unexpectedly she sobbed again. The coincidence was mortifying. "Four dollars."

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"I quite begin to follow your meaning, Ann Eliza, when you say Mrs. Williams was a McIntosh," said Mamma with dignity. "You are right; her old grandfather, Manuel McIntosh, used to sit outside his doorstep on the sidewalk in his shirt-sleeves."

"I've always had a big respect for cooking, myself," said Auntie with unexpected relevancy. "I've never thought we put enough emphasis on it as a calling. Feeding the body is a worthy thing. It comes first."

"Who said anything about cooking, Ann Eliza?" from Mamma sharply. "How you wander from the point! If you're going out before dark, Selina, you'd better go."

The two dear ladies at their respective windows, beside their respective work-baskets, watching for Selina to go out, saw her run right into her four friends at the gate. The inference was they were coming by on some of their common affairs. There was the weekly dancing club, the last volume from the circulating library always passed around, the new pattern-book, what-not, constantly bringing them together.

The group opened to Selina as she came through the gate, each individual of it talking as it did so, and closed about her in its midst. Selina was popular with her friends.

Maud Addison was the dashing one with the red-brown hair and the splendidly red and white skin. Maud's father was a solidly

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prosperous wholesale merchant and a Presbyterian elder, as Auntie was wont to say, as if the two things were bracketed, and Mrs. Addison, her mother, capable and authoritative, was a noted housekeeper. There were four children younger than Maud.

"I must say," commented Mrs. Wistar from her window to her sister-in-law at hers, "Maud's rushing the season for October. And Indian summer hardly begun. That's the new sealskin jacket her father and mother promised her at graduation in June. I'd like it better if it did not fit in like a basque."

"If only Selina might have suitable clothes," grieved Auntie, "she would wear clothes well with her nice carriage and her pretty skin, and her color that comes and goes. She would justify pretty things. She gets her features from you, Lavinia, and her hair and her skin from Robert."

"Thank you, Ann Eliza. I must allow I was considered pretty in my day."

The dark and vivid little creature of the group, the little flitting, flashing creature at this moment embracing Selina, was Juliette Caldwell. Juliette's mother was pretty and young to have two daughters younger than Juliette and a son in arms. Her father, young, too, was given to bantering, banging on the piano and making money.

"That crimson at the throat of Juliette's coat, and the crimson feather in her hat, become her," went on Mrs. Wistar.

Auntie agreed. "And Adele Carter is pretty after her own fashion, after all, Selina always insists she is."

"If you like that colorless skin and those big reflective dark eyes," said Mrs. Wistar.

"Adele's mother and her grandmother peck at her too much," claimed Auntie.

"They're worldly as a lot, the whole family. In their efforts to make Adele into what she'll never successfully be, a fashionable daughter, they're only making her awkward. See how she shows she's got elbows."

But of the group of young people down there at the gate Amanthus Harrison was the lovely one. With her cascading, scintillant, positively effulgent hair, amazing skin, laughing eyes, laughing cheeks, laughing lips, she was a radiant creature.

"Amanthus laughs like my flowers in the backyard blow," said Auntie, "she hasn't an idea why she laughs."

"She doesn't need to have," said Mrs. Wistar promptly and astutely. "You ask any man and he'd tell you that an idea would spoil her."

"She's popular," reflected Auntie.

"That's what I'm saying," impatiently. "And her mother is pretty and popular before her."

"And enjoys it," from Auntie. "I've often wondered she hasn't married again. I wish Selina wouldn't think it so much the proper thing to be bookish, Lavinia," a little anxiously, "and to strew magazines around the house so. It isn't as if she actually reads them."

"Selina is quite as popular as she needs to be," said her mother quickly. "She doesn't lack for masculine friends."

"You don't have to take that tone to me, Lavinia," said Auntie sharply. "Nobody has to defend Selina from me."

Here the four friends of Selina down there at the gate embraced her with a sudden rush and ardor.

"She has told them," said Mamma.

"Yes," from Auntie.

And then both were silent, reading alike in the impetuosity of this ardor on the part of these young persons, commiseration, and more, amaze; amaze that she, Selina, their Selina Auboussier Wistar, pretty Selina Wistar, was to go out to be a teacher, the teacher of William Williams Jr.!

A moment later as the group departed silently and as if stunned, and as Selina turned to re-enter her gate, the two ladies at their windows saw Culpepper Buxton appear.

"To be sure, it is Tuesday," from Mrs. Wistar, "and we did tell him we should look for him regularly at dinner on Tuesday evenings. I'm sure I hope there's enough to eat. Viney is still resentful over having to give in to Selina's fad, and have dinner instead of supper at any

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such hour as six, because the Carters do."

"They got it from England, I daresay," from Auntie. "Mr. Carter went over there last year, you know."

"They got it from Chicago," said Mrs. Wistar tartly. "They visit soap-and-lard friends over there. I hope the roast, warmed over, is big enough to go around. I quite overlooked the fact Culpepper'd be here," vexedly.

"We promised Maria, his mother, you and I both did, Lavinia, when she was down, that we'd look after Culpepper. It isn't every stepmother that would see her dead husband's son through as Maria is doing."

"Maria has means," said Mrs. Wistar. "We'd most of us do wonderful things if we had means. There, look down at them. From Selina's manner and Culpepper's, I believe she has told him, too."

"He's fine looking," from Auntie admiringly. "He's a third as tall again as she is, and Selina is tall enough for a girl herself. He's built on the lines of his country doctor father. He's listening to her in that same close way his father had, too, as though he heard through his gaze. I must say Culpepper is a great favorite of mine. But he's looking at her, rather shocked and pityingly, Lavinia. Is it a very terrible thing we're letting her do?"

Now the dialogue down there at the gate, where this Culpepper towered above the slight young person of Selina, was this:

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From him: "Expecting me to dinner? This thing mustn't come to be a nuisance."

"Yes. Why, of course. Auntie would never get over it if you didn't come. It's a serious matter to her, this compact with Cousin Maria. Culpepper?"

"Yes?"

His eyes were a bold blue, his lashes and heavy brows and his hair black. He looked even blatantly ready for the fight with life.

"How—or when did it come to you that you'd have to go to work? Did it just dawn on you sometime? Or did somebody, Cousin Maria for instance, tell you?"

"I haven't gone yet; don't give me undue credit." Culpepper gave that almost insolently contented laugh of his. "I'm making ready. I didn't do so badly at college and now I'm making law school. There wasn't any coming to know about it. I just knew. Every boy knows. He's getting ready from the start."

"I went to-day and asked for a position to teach and got it. I start to-morrow!"

"The devil you—Selina, it slipped out, forgive it. So that's why you wanted to know? I see. Felt you had to?"

She nodded. If a lump requiring to be swallowed was perceptible, she was more willing for Culpepper to suspect than most people. She knew him better, and, too, he was the sort, for all his matter-of-factness, that understands. Or she thought so then.

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**"He held back the gate, too, for her to pass through."**

He gave a slow ejaculation as they went in together, a sort of prolonged h'm-m between his teeth. He held back the gate, too, for her to pass through, with that manner of his, highly indifferent to the act, the manner of one who opens gates for people not because it is the accepted thing to do, but because it pleases him, in this case or that case, to do it.

"Cousin Robert, now, Selina, what does he say to it?"

She was quick in her father's defence. "He doesn't know, Culpepper. Mamma thought it best not to mention it to him just yet."

He shook his head with dire warning. "When you or some other nice feminine lady marries me, Selina, don't think I'm going to submit to any such female managing." He glanced at her a bit oddly as he spoke. Culpepper was extremely fond of Selina. He had known her since she was a child, and came up to his stepmother's farm for visits in the summers with her aunt. He teased her and indulged her both by manner and by act. He was not the sort to bother with people at all if he was not fond of them.

Auntie had come down to meet them and here opened the front door. She adored Culpepper.

"Well, ole Miss?" He kissed her, the only person anyone ever had seen Culpepper kiss, not excepting his stepmother to whom he owed everything. "Safe through another seven days in the wicked city! For another week I've kept my hands from picking and stealing, and my tongue from lying and slandering. Gimme a clean slate."

"You're mightily sure of yourself, being young," retorted Auntie. "I'll write Maria you're behaving. Selina, your mother says come right upstairs and get yourself ready for supper."

"Dinner, Auntie," from Selina quickly and reproachfully. Selina was scant seventeen.

"Dinner," Auntie corrected herself obediently.

"Dinner," mocked Culpepper with an alarmed air, "how're we plain folk ever going to live up to her, I put it to you, ole miss, If she goes on insisting on these things?"

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## CHAPTER THREE

When Selina came down to breakfast the next morning Papa was gone but Mamma and Auntie were lingering over their coffee and waffles, waiting for her.

She explained her tardiness. "I'm late because I didn't know just what to put on to teach in. I got out my cloth dress, but that seemed reckless when it's my best, so I put on the old plaid and this linen collar and cuffs."

"Which are tasty and yet severe," said Mamma approvingly, "and somehow in keeping."

The implication proved unfortunate. Selina's profile as it flashed about on Mamma flushed. Such a young, young profile. Such a young Selina in the plaid dress and the linen collar and the cuffs. Such a child quivering with abhorrence of the act of going to work, and wincing with shame because of the abhorrence. In her pitiful state she was inclined to take umbrage at anything. And what did her mother mean?

"Linen collar and cuffs are in keeping with what, Mamma?" she asked in reply, even sharply.

Mamma hastened to conciliate and again was unfortunate. "In keeping with the very worthy calling you are entering on. The pettifogic calling as we spoke of it under Mr. Aristides Welkin. He had a proper respect for his occupation as a teacher and saw to it that his pupils had."

"If he meant pedagogic, Mamma, he probably said so. And can't you understand if there's one thing *I wouldn't* want it to be, it's a calling? Mamma, *please* don't let's discuss the teaching any more. Yes, I've had all I want to eat. I *did* eat my egg, and I don't *want* any waffles."

"Selina, come here and kiss Auntie before you go," from that dear person. "I learned my a-b, abs, and my parlez-vous's, before the day of Mr. Welkin. In my time we all went to old Madame Noël de Jourde de Vaux, wife of a guillotined French nobleman, as I've often told you. In a little four-roomed cottage it was, not far from the market-house. I tasted my first olive there and sipped orange-flower water and sugar. She was a tiny old personage with twinkling eyes and manners that had served her well at court. She called it her A B C school for the babies."

Darling Auntie! Selina threw grateful, passionate arms around her and kissed her. One could see Madame de Vaux and her babies in the cottage near the market-house through a glamour, but one hated Mr. Aristides Welkin in his calling. Why? Selina couldn't have said. Then in a rush of self-reproach, she swept about and kissed Mamma.

"It's a quarter past eight and I said I'd be there at nine. I'll have to hurry."

She walked the ten blocks out to the opener neighborhood of the Williams'. The early morning of the Indian summer day was tinged with blue mistiness and underfoot was the pleasant rustle and crackle of leaves along the pavement. On the way she stopped in a drugstore that dealt in school supplies. She had told Mrs. Williams to have a primer and first reader for William and she must have one of each herself. As the man brought them she recognized them as the same she had used in *her* day, the primer with a salmon-pink cover in paper, the first reader in a blue cover in pasteboards.

She took them in their package and left. In her day? That meant at the little private school where she went at first and where she learned to read. What did happen in her day at that school? She had to teach William, and it might help her to remember?

She had held to Auntie's hand who took her to school that first day, she remembered that, and cried bitterly because she was frightened. And then? What had happened then?

Why Amanthus had happened then, the most lovely little girl Selina seemed ever to have seen, with bronze shoes on with tassels. And because of Amanthus and the shoes, and more particularly perhaps, the tassels, she had let go of Auntie's hand and consented to stay.

And then Maudie had happened, a taller little girl with plaits that

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were almost red. And after her a little, little girl with black curls in tiers, whose name turned out to be Juliette, and next a little girl with straight hair and big eyes named Adele. And following these, some little boys occurred named Bliss and Brent and Sam and Tommy.

And on this first day did lessons begin? Just as lessons were to begin this morning with William? If only she could recall!

Miss Dellie Black taught that school, and as Mamma intimated about the stiff collar and the cuffs, her alpaca apron and the gloves upon her hands with their fingers neatly cut off across the knuckles, seemed to be in keeping with her calling. She had a ruler and rapped with it, and a pointer with which she pointed to a primer chart and a blackboard.

But what had she taught? And how had she taught it? Selina shut her mental eyes as it were, as she went along, and concentrated all her forces at recalling.

Absurd! This picture that came to her of that first day! Auntie had gone, and the class came out and stood in a row before Miss Dellie because she said stand so. And *she* stood before the chart with the pointer and with a tap of the wood on the page beneath a black mark, said, "*This is A.*"

Everybody was polite about it, but even so Miss Dellie tapped again and harder as though they had disputed it, and said again and louder, "*This is A.*"

Everybody accepted it again, but Miss Dellie seemed to want proof of this.

"Now say it after me, everybody, '*This is A.*'"

Everybody said it after Miss Dellie.

"Now say it again without me," from Miss Dellie.

And after they had said it again without her, the little, little girl with the black curls, the little girl whose name proved to be Juliette, looked up into Miss Dellie's face, her own little face and her eyes full of wondering interest.

"Why's it A?" she asked the lady.

"What? What's that?" from Miss Dellie Black sharply. "Don't you know I'm talking, little girl? And you must listen!"

Half a dozen volunteers explained what she had said, Maudie with the red plaits, Tommy, Sam and others.

"She says *why's* it A?"

"She's a naughty little girl not to know her place in school," said Miss Dellie? Black firmly, "and if she can't be quiet she can go to her seat and stay there."

Absurd again! So Selina told herself as before. Much good a recall like this could do her this morning! She'd try again.

But this time it wasn't a picture of school that came to her at all. But of herself at home going to Papa full of pride in her achievements *at school*, and carrying with her to his knee, her primer open at a picture.

"What's this?" Papa had said, full of flattering concern. "A big, big ox gazing down on a frog on a lily-pad? What? No? It isn't any ox? Miss Lizzie gave it to you for your lesson to-morrow, and she said so? Though it may be a frog? If it isn't an ox, then what is it, Selina?"

She had told him clear and sure, that funny little fair-haired girl. "'Tain't an ox. Miss Dellie told us what it was when she held up the picture. It's a fable!"

Absurd again! And ridiculous! How was any of all this going to help her, the grown Selina, to teach William?

The Williams' house stood in a long, narrow corner lot. Its windows were tall and narrow; its front door was narrow and high. A white maid, whose manner as she surveyed you, at once seemed to disqualify you, opened the door. Selina remembered her from the other day.

It was a very proper house within, very exact, very shining, very precise. One's heart opened a little way for William doomed to live his infant days amid it.

Yet it almost would seem Selina had misjudged Mrs. Williams. She appeared now at the head of the stairs as Selina came in, Amazonian, handsome, impressive, and called down to her quite as anybody might. She was so pleasantly excited she forgot to be

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condescending and reassuring.

"Come right up, Selina. I'm sure you're going to feel I've done my best for you. I couldn't feel I quite *could* let you come way out here for just *William*."

She actually radiated enthusiasm as Selina reached the head of the stairs. "I made up my mind some of the mothers in this neighborhood had to be made to take advantage of this opportunity I was offering them. Come with me to the sewing-room. I've turned that over to you for the present. I've put the lap-board across chairs for two to sit at, and the checker-board on a chair for another. William has his own desk. I've got you four pupils."

Selina followed Mrs. Williams through the hall toward the sewing-room.

"Rupy Dodd and Willy Dodd are midway of the seven Dodd children. Their mother will be over to see you as soon as she can. It was a mercy on my part to insist she enter these two. Henry Revis is our doctor's son. It'll take him off the street, as I pointed out to his father. His mother also will be over to see you."

They went into the sewing-room, Mrs. Williams ahead, making the introductions.

"Rupy and Willy and Henry and William, this is Miss Wistar, Miss Selina Wistar, the young lady, the very lovely and kind young lady I think we may say, who is coming every day to teach you. Rupy!"

And at this one of the two little boys seated at the lap-board, partially desisted from his absorption with some crimson rose-hips and looked up. The lap-board was strewn with stems and husks and some of the rose-hip contents.

"Rupy," sharply, "are you quite sure they're *good* to eat?"

"Aw, who's eatin' 'em?" said Rupy the sturdy, red-haired and freckled, spewing out rose-hip fuzz along with disgust at woman's blindness and interference in what she didn't understand. "I took 'em away f'om Willy to bust 'em an' see what's in 'em. Mummer sent 'em over to the teacher."

"I'll bust some myse'f soon as he'll lemme," from Willy anxiously, not quite so sturdy and with hair not quite so red and paler freckles.

"Rupy's the oldest," from Mrs. Williams as if it were apology and accounted for the whole business. "Willy's his twin. William, you and Henry come and speak to Miss Wistar."

Mrs. Williams had withdrawn. Selma's coat and hat were on the sofa in the corner and she had taken the chair provided for her beside a small table. Her color came and went, her hair shone with pale luster, her manner was pretty and the collar and cuffs were becoming.

At desk, checker-board and lap-board her pupils sat before her and gazed at her.

William was at the desk. He was very clean, very shining and very gloomy. His head *was* too large. It looked tired as from the carrying of an overweight of suspicion. Patiently he eyed her and the whole business about to be with distrust. In a curious way it warmed Selina's heart, causing her to feel banded with William as against some outside cunning force. It was as if she found a friend and ally here in William.

Rupy Dodd and Willy Dodd sat at the lap-board. As said before, they had red hair and freckles wherever freckles supposedly might be. Rupy having abandoned the rose-hips by request, looked alert and Willy, his twin, looked at Rupy.

Henry at the checker-board was small and lean with a keen blue eye and a keener air. Asked by Selina to tell her again what his name was he gave it with briskness and every off-hand due, as Hennery. A minute before she had heard this Henry sum her up to Rupy.

"Aw, she ain't a teacher, she's a girl."

And she had heard the contumely of Rupy's reply: "With molasses-candy plaits round her head."

Selina in the chair before her class held a slate in her hand. She had borrowed it from William and with a bit of chalk supplied her by Mrs. Williams from the machine drawer, had made a certain symbol upon it. This slate with the symbol in chalk upon it she now held up

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to the class.

"This, William and Rupy and Willy and Henry," she said a little tremulously, even while trying to make it sound firm, "*this is A.*"

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William looked tired with distrust of the whole doubtless tricky business. He'd been fooled into this thing called life for a starter, his manner seemed to say, and he'd be wary and watchful about the rest. Let it be A, it was her business since she was claiming it was A, not his.

Henry spoke disparagingly. "Pshaw, I know the whole durned business from A to Izzard. It don't need any teacher to tell *me* what's A."

Willy was peevish. But then, as everybody's manner of bearing with him said, including his brother, what was he but a twin? "What's Izzard?" from Willy, peevishly. "I know A. My Mummer, she taught us A. What you meanin' by Izzard, Henry?"

But Rupy the flame-headed, spewing some more just-discovered rose-hip fuzz out his mouth through a gap made by two missing incisors, here spread himself across the lap-board and asked a question. Asked it as one asked a question he long has wanted to know. Asked it in faith with a demanding eye, as one who means to bite into more fruits in life than mere rose-hips and reveal their hearts, or know the reason.

"*Why's it A?*"

And the girl-teacher, this Selina, looked back at him. Why was it A, indeed? Rupy of this decade was asking as Juliette of the last decade had done. And *Juliette* had had no answer.

William spoke up out of what one gathered was the gloom of his own experience, addressing himself to Rupy. "She'll tell you it's because God says so. Eve'ybody tells you that."

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Rupy flung himself back off the lap-board against his chair with the air of one who had her. "Why's it A?" he repeated.

Henry, small, lean, knowing, never had remitted his shrewd gaze fixed appraisingly upon her. Suddenly now he relaxed and his manner changed from challenging to protective, from aggressive to benignant. "Aw, gwan an' say it out. Don't you be afraid. You say what you want say about why it's A."

For Henry had read her and discovered her. *She didn't know why it was A!*

And Selina drawing enlightenment from Henry upon the wise path to tread, said what she wanted to say, just as he bade her do.

"I don't know why it's A. The first day I ever went to school we asked why it was A, but nobody told us."

"An' you don't know yet?" from William with the triumph of the certain if gloomy prognosticator.

Rupy seemed to feel that he had started all this and was responsible. His air, too, like Henry's, had changed from the demanding and the challenging to the protective. She was a girl, and she didn't know! What further proof needed that she was here to be taken care of?

"Well, anyhow this one's A. Go on. The next one's B. We all know 'em."

Willy came to as though the burden of the proof suddenly was put upon him.

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"B bit it, C cut it, D dealt it—"

"Aw, Willy," from Rupy disgustedly, "you go on like a girl when she thinks she knows it."

William emerged into an outraged being. "Don't go on like a girl. You gimme back them rose-hips. They was mine to give the teacher."

"Well," grumbled Rupy as with one willing to take part of it back, "if, 'tain't like a girl, it's like a twin, then."

They knew their letters, they knew their numbers, up to ten at least, they all had primers and had them with them, and proved to her they knew cat, and rat, and mat, and hen, and pen and men, on the page.

Selina didn't believe, however, that any of them could read. As well make a start somewhere and find out. She turned to a page well on in the primer, a page she had met before in her day. She held it up to them. It showed a benevolent bovine gazing downward



at a frog on a lily-pad.

"Everybody turn to this page. It's a fable and we'll start there."

They were on to her at once with contumely and derision, Rupy the freckled, Henry the lean, William the tired because as now of the very inadequateness of most creatures.

"Fable?" from Rupy. "What for's it any fable? What's a fable?" pityingly.

"Aw, 'tain't no fable, can't you see it ain't?" from Henry in disgust.

From William with gloomy patience. "It's an ox. And the thing it's talking to is a frog."

Willy bobbed up. He was nothing but a twin, poor soul! But even so, *he'd* show her! "O-x, ox, f-r-o-g, frog, p-r-i-m, prim, e-r, er, primer."

"Aw, Willy," from Rupy in tones of even greater disgust. "Whut's the matter with you? This here's *her* school. Let her talk. It ain't your'n."

For she was a girl! And discovered to be pretty! And twice proven under test not to know! She was here to be taken care of and protected! What further proofs of this were needed?

Mrs. Williams came out to the hall as Selina was leaving at noon. "I hope you feel you got along fairly well? That your first morning gave you encouragement?"

Selina hesitated. Her linen collar was a bit awry and the crown of flaxen plaits about her head had sagged. "It's—it's different from what I thought. I don't think I knew what little boys were like. It's—it's interesting, and I dare say I'll like it. Little girls, as I remember us, tried to think the way we were told to think. It's as if little boys feel that's a reason for thinking the other way."

"I dare say," from Mrs. Williams absently. She wasn't following what Selina had to say. But then Selina wasn't at all certain she was following herself.

"I feel you're quite justified in coming to us now," Mrs. Williams was saying. "It's a great relief to me that I succeeded in convincing two mothers at least of how greatly it was to their advantage to send their children over. You understand, of course, Selina, that Rupert and Willy and Henry mean four dollars for you, the same as my William?"

It was what Selina had been anxious to know but had not quite liked to ask.

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## CHAPTER FOUR

When Selina returned from her first morning's teaching, she had much to tell. She almost felt she was growing sordid and mercenary herself. "When I got to Mrs. Williams', Mamma, I found three other pupils waiting for me."

"It's an ugly brick front, that house of the Williams', so tall and spare," said her mother, not just grasping what was significant in the information.

"Three more pupils it means, Mamma and Auntie, making *four* in all."

"I'm sure I'm glad she proved as good as her word," said Auntie. "I suppose because she needed the others to make up the class for her own child, she made those mothers feel it was entirely her interest in their children's welfare bringing it about. People always go down before that sort of zeal for their benefit. That's Amelia McIntosh, exactly!"

Selina tried again. She herself was tremendously excited. If when she arrived at the Williams' and found those four wide-eyed little boys awaiting her, her heart misgave her as to what she was going to do with them, she had no intention of telling it at home, and if damage seemed likely to be done at her novice hands to the innocent William and his equally innocent companions, she was not thinking of that part of it at all! What she was trying to make plain was of a different nature.

"Don't you realize what it means, Mamma? Four pupils at four dollars a pupil! Think of that, Auntie!"

They saw the point at last and dropping their sewing in their laps, sat up animated and excited.

"Four pupils at four dollars a pupil?" said Auntie. "That's how much for a week's teaching, Lavinia?" Auntie always succumbed before figures.

"Four and four's eight, and eight's sixteen," said Mamma, dazzled, "and multiply this sixteen by four again for a month's total—four t'm's six is twenty-four, four t'm's one is four and two to carry, is—! Selina, you must have a round-necked, real party dress now!" happily.

"And two to carry is what, Lavinia?" from Auntie anxiously. "Sixty-four dollars?" in answer to her sister-in-law's triumphant reply. "I can't believe it! Selina, you must have a hat with a soft feather, too!"

Selina was dazzled, too, but endeavoring to hold herself steady. Fifteen dollars was the most she had had for her own at any one time in her life. She had held on to it hoardingly, letting a dozen things go by that she really wanted, to lose her head in the end and spend it for a thing she didn't want at all as it proved. She was going to keep her head and her dignity this time over this sudden wealth opening to her.

"I shall pay Aunt Viney from now on; that's to be my part," she said with finality. "Remember that, please, Mamma, in making your calculations."

"But nothing more," from Auntie.

"Not one thing more, other than for yourself," from Mamma, "and I shall mention the matter to your father, now," happily, "there's nothing in it for him to feel worried over now."

Her father spoke to Selina that evening, stopping her on her way up the stairs as he came down.

"Your mother has told me about this teaching, since I got home," he said. "Stop a moment, Selina."

He lifted her face by a hand placed softly beneath her chin as they stood there on the steps. The refined, rather delicate face with the close brown beard she perforce thus looked up into, was sensitive as her own.

The eyes seemed to be regarding her as from a new viewpoint. His own little daughter, this young person with the all too heavy flaxen plaits and the dress-skirt down to her instep!

"Your mother assures me you chose to do this teaching yourself, Selina? Am I to decry it, or applaud it?"

She was horribly embarrassed, not being accustomed to discuss her affairs in this way with him, communications of an intimate

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nature between them always being through her mother. The thing was to end the interview as quickly as possible and get away from the disturbing proximity.

"It's settled, Papa, so don't decry it," she spoke stiffly and even while doing so was ashamed of it.

He was regarding her a little wistfully. "Your mother tells me, Selina, that you will need a winter dress?" Was he groping, perhaps sorrowfully, trying to find some point through which to reach her? "See to it that it comes from me, will you, and that it is a nice one?"

Again she was ashamed, this time of the relief with which she fled from his kiss and the touch of his hand on her shoulder.

Apparently there is everything in an undertaking being a success, even when it is teaching for your living, and you a woman. Selina told Juliette, what her four pupils were to bring her, and she told the others, they who had been so plainly shocked and full of distress for her, and they came hurrying over, filled with excitement and admiration now.

It was the afternoon following Selina's second day of teaching. She was in her own room which overlooked the backyard and Auntie's beds of salvias and dahlias still braving the first light frosts. Now Selina felt that her room didn't lack distinction. She would have preferred a set of cottage furniture like Maud's, of course, white with decalcomania decorations on it in flowers and landscapes, instead of the despised mahogany set that had belonged to the grandmother she was named for. Selina belonged to her own day and hour.

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"Cottage furniture is adorable and mahogany relegated to attics and junk shops," she once had said discontentedly to her mother.

Still, with her books and her pictures, a panel in oils done by Cousin Anna, of cat-tails, and the companion to it in pond-lilies, and a Japanese parasol over her mantelpiece, her room did not lack for distinction.

She was looking over the first-reader books she had ordered for her pupils, and wondering what she was to do with them, when there was a tap at her door and Amanthus came in. Lashing the laughter of her cheeks and eyes, and Amanthus did not often stop being enchanted for side matters, this loveliest of creatures came hurrying to her and kissed her.

"I've been wanting to tell you, Selina, that Tommy and Bliss and the other boys think you're wonderful and a dear about teaching." Tommy Bacon and Bliss were the quite especial two with Amanthus just now, there never being less than two in her case. "But I came in now because Juliette has told me! Think of you earning all that!"

Juliette, who had come with Amanthus and had lingered to speak with Mrs. Wistar and Auntie in the front room, came flashing in here.

"Isn't Amanthus' new dress enchanting, Selina? Who but Mrs. Harrison would have thought of fawn color and rose? I heard ribbon bows as trimming were coming in, and I must say I like them. We've been discussing you, Selina. Maudie says you didn't want to teach, and that every step we take toward the thing we don't want to do, as you did, strengthens our characters. She is choosing something for me to take up, that I won't care for, because she says I'm volatile and changeable. Think of you really earning all that, Selina!" The crimson staining Juliette's cheeks was glorious!

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"I'm not sure Maudie is such a safe one for you to follow, Judy," considered Selina, the fair-skinned. "You're not as volatile, if I know what volatile is, as she is."

Amanthus turned away from the bureau where she had been fluffing her sunny yellow hair, and came and sat down before the open coal fire with the two. "Mamma says Maudie is laughable if she wasn't so masterful, taking you all after strange gods. I asked her what strange gods meant, and she laughed and told me I'd never need to find out."

"You won't, Amanthus," said little Judy omnisciently, with a nod of her small dark head, "the rest of us, I kind of feel," with big solemnity, "will go far." Then she took a lighter tone. "It's Maudie who's always proposing something to the rest of us, but when you come to think about it, we always fall in. There she is now, calling to your mother, Selina, as she comes up the stairs. She said she'd be over."

Handsome Maud, bringing energy and unrest with her, burst

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forth with her plaint before even she had found a seat, Selina vacating one of the three chairs for her, and taking a place on the bed.

"It's giving me such concern, what I ought to be making of myself, Selina, now you've set the way, I didn't sleep last night for considering it. I said so to Papa, and he said 'stuff' which wasn't polite. And anyway, I know I'm right; everyone should center on some talent, only I can't decide on which. Think of the proved value of yours!"

And here Adele came in. She had gone by for one and the other, and then followed them here. If Juliette was flashing, and Amanthus enchanting, and Maudie with her red-brown hair and red and white skin, undeniably handsome, Adele, seemingly, should have been lovely. Her eyes were dark, and her cheeks softly oval. But somehow she lacked what Maud called the vital fire. Or was it confidence she lacked? She herself explained it by saying she never was allowed by her family to respect the things she had the slightest bent for doing.

As Adele came in now, her dark eyes looked their worry. She took the place indicated beside Selina on the bed. "You're working for what you'll get, Selina, giving something for something? It's just come to me, thinking it over. It must be a self-respecting feeling it gives. It makes me begin to wonder if I've really any right to my allowance from Papa."

"While Selina's busy with her teaching, maybe it would be a good thing for the rest of us to get together and keep up our German," burst forth Maud. "Oh, I know, Adele, you mean a different thing, something highly moral and uncomfortable, but meanwhile let's be doing *something*. It's inaction that's galling."

"You said the other day," from little Juliette, indignantly, "we'd get a chart and find out something about the stars and astronomy. I went and bought me a book!"

Amanthus, flower-like and lovely creature, looked from one to the other of them as they talked. The wonder on her face and the bother in her violet eyes made her sweet and irresistible.

"You're so queer," protestingly, "you Maudie and Adele, and yes, Juliette, too. You do get so worked up. I don't see what it is you're always thinking you're about. Selina needed the money. I don't see what more there is to it than that. It's certainly fine she is going to make all she is by teaching. And, Selina, I mustn't forget, Mamma told me to give you her love and consummations, no, I guess I mean congratulations." Amanthus was given to these lapses in her English. "Are the rest of you going to stay longer? I've got to go."

When Culpepper came around a night later and heard the astounding news of Selma's good fortune, he pretended to a loss of his usually sober head.

"Come go to the theater with me to-night, Selina, to celebrate? That is if your mother agrees? No, certainly I can't afford it. I see the question in your accusing eyes, but you needn't rub it in that I'm a plodding dependent and you're the opulent earner."

At the close of her first week at teaching William the gloomy and Rupy and Willy and Henry, Selina did not bring home her expected sixteen dollars. "It probably is customary to pay monthly. I didn't like to ask," she told Mamma and Auntie. "Settle with Aunt Viney for me until I get it, Mamma; she pays the rent for her room by the week, I know, and I'll give it to you in a lump sum at the end of the month."

And when that time came, she did, a pale, incredulous, crushed Selina, and fell weeping against Mamma's neck with a hand outstretched to be cherished by Auntie.

"She said four dollars a pupil. I supposed she meant a week the same as we pay Aunt Viney. I thought that was little enough. She is amazed I could have dreamed of such a thing. She says I ought to have known, that my common-sense should have told me, that I could have investigated for myself. She meant four dollars a month for a pupil. Education comes cheaper than cooks. The money from all four of them— here it is." Selina stretched forth the other hand passionately. "It will not quite pay Aunt Viney."

"She was a McIntosh, as your Aunt says. I never did think it was much of an alliance for a Williams," from Mamma scathingly.

"I said from the start that boy William's head was too large" from Auntie as one justified.

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## CHAPTER FIVE

That evening at the dinner table, Mamma looked around the castor and spoke briskly to Papa, tall and slight gentleman that he was, with temples hollowing a bit.

"We made a foolish miscalculation in the amount Selina is to receive for her teaching. We women are poor arithmeticians. With her lack of experience it is gratifying that she will be commanding the customary price as it is."

By this Selina understood that her father was to be spared as much of her disappointment as possible. She really owed this gentleman something on account in this teaching business, if she were given to considering money received from him after any such fashion. He had smilingly, at her mother's request, advanced the amount needed for books and other material for her teaching, and a second sum for carfare to the Williams' in bad weather. But these transactions were not on the mind of Selina at all. Just as the economic end rather than Aunt Viney was the thing considered by Mamma in the readjustment of the family wash, so Papa, as a source of supply was taken for granted by Selina. It would not have occurred to her, nor yet to Mamma or Auntie, or to any of the mothers and aunts and daughters whom they knew, that the sum of her earnings was offset by the amount advanced for her equipping. On the other hand Selina was loving, and quite understood that it should be the feelings of her father she must spare.



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**"Mamma looked around the castor and spoke briskly."**

"The experience will mean everything," she claimed briskly and promptly to her mother's cue, "I ought to be glad to teach for nothing, I daresay, to get it."

Auntie looked alarmed at any such view of the matter. "I knew of an apprentice in my young days, our gardener's son, bound out for the experience in a rope-walk, who carried thirty-seven boils at one time from the mildewed cornmeal they fed him. I don't approve of anyone working for anybody for nothing. We're sure to undervalue what we don't pay the price for. It's a poor plan."

"How you wander," from Mamma.

"Not from my point," from Auntie stoutly. "I've made it."

After dinner Juliette and Maud who lived next door to each other, and Amanthus and Adele who lived at the opposite ends of the block, came in in a body. It was a way the group had of getting together at one house when there was nothing else especial on hand. They trooped gaily in, dropping their wraps in the hall and coming into the parlor. No more were they and Selina seated about the open grate fire and Auntie's burnished brasses, and prepared to talk volubly, than Culpepper walked in. He found a chair and joined the group.

"Judy and I," Maud was saying to Selina who was pale though

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nobody noticed this, "saw you starting out this morning to your teaching. We think if you'd coil your plaits round your head, instead of looping them, you'd look older."

"If four infant pupils bring in one swollen fortune," speculated Culpepper blandly, "how many fortunes, through how many infant pupils, is one Selina, now she's started, likely to amass?"

It was as well! The mistaken matter of such banter indeed was uppermost in Selina's thoughts. The minds of these five friends had to be disabused of their rosy misinformation about her earnings, and the sooner the better. Selina, who in general had a gay little way in talking to these friends, endeavored to take that way now.

"I've some interesting data about the market value of education with some other things," she said briskly. "I'm thinking I'd get rich sooner, Culpepper, if I abandoned pupils and decided to cook. I'll have to ask you to divide by four"—did Selina choke a little here?—"that Fortunatus salary I thought I was getting for teaching William and the others."

"Selina! Divide by four? What do you mean? Oh, I do wish," plaintively, "you all would ever say what it is you mean, plain out," from Amanthus.

"Selina!" from Adele, "Oh, I'm sorry!"

"Let me help you choose a better vocation if that's the case," indignantly from Maud. "Don't waste yourself on it."

"How did you make such a mistake, Selina? Or was it your mistake?" from Juliette.

"Mrs. Williams said I ought to have known what she meant, I should have investigated—" Selina thus was taking up the tale of it once more when she stopped.

"Yes?" from Culpepper. "We're waiting?"

But with a brisk air of not hearing him, Selina changed the subject. Her father whom she had forgotten was sitting in the back parlor with her mother and her aunt, had lowered his paper and was listening, too. By all the precedents and traditions of her upbringing, it was hers to change the subject.

Her audience all were acquainted with the personnel of her little class of boys by now, for when Selina was interested in a thing she talked about it. They were familiar, too, with Auntie's grievance about the cranial peculiarity of William. The thing now was to turn the matter off with what Maudie would call sprightly nonchalance.

"William's head certainly is growing smaller, you must know," said Selina with gayety. "Isn't it some sort of reflection on me? As his teacher? I would have thought it would be the other way."

Culpepper from across the circle was looking at her with those boldly blue eyes of his, beneath half-raised lids. Papa's paper was lowered to his knee in the next room. Something was wrong, this brave gayety was assumed and they showed that they knew it was.

"Bluffed," said Culpepper still with that keen and appraising gaze upon her, "she's going to quit."

Papa's paper floated unnoticed from his knee to the floor. Was he listening for what was to come?

"I'm not," said Selina indignantly, stung by these attitudes as of watchers noting her on trial, "I've just begun."

"Still, it seems to me, Mrs. Williams was right," from little Judy here in the front room. "You ought to have investigated; you should have known for yourself. Somehow girls and women never seem to know for themselves. I wonder why?"

Mrs. Wistar's voice murmuring defensively came in from the next room. "I hardly follow you, Mr. Wistar! I'm sure it was harder on me than on Selina to have her so disappointed. No girl was ever more shielded than she has been from all possible disappointments, and such things, up to now, nor spared where it was possible to spare her!"

The murmuring voice in reply came from Auntie. "My father's mother with her eight children followed her husband, she by wagon, he on horseback, over the old wilderness road to settle here where this town is now. She learned to use a gun and an axe as well as she used a spinning wheel, because she had to. She bore him seven more children after they were here. Nobody spared women or children then. Maybe it's been our mistake to spare her too much, Lavinia."

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There are Olympians in each group of us, and Mrs. Gwinne Tuttle not only was of the Olympians in Selina's community, but was held by some to be *the* Olympian. Such is the magic of pre-eminence the name Tuttle sounded chaste and euphonious to the ear.

Selina's aunt and this lady who had gone to school together and were old friends, met down street. If the weakness of Mrs. Tuttle, who was an august but kindly soul, lay in a palpable enjoyment in the overdressing of her large person, her virtues lay in a well-intentioned heart. Though the details of the meeting between these two ladies were not all given to Selina, what happened at the underwear counter of the drygoods store where they met, was this:

"Selina is teaching, Emmeline, teaching in a private way," Auntie told Mrs. Tuttle. "It does not pay, but it is an opening wedge," an explanation she made everybody.

"You mean to say, Ann Eliza Wistar, that Robert's child is old enough for that! Her name, Selina, is for your mother, I remember. And a mighty capable and resolute woman she is named for. That stock in our mothers one generation removed from pioneer blood and bone, was fine stock, Ann Eliza. How is Lavinia taking the child's doing it?"

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"Well, she feels it's a pity, and so do I, and so, I think, does Robert. Selina is pretty, Emmeline."

"H'm, I see. I remember now she is. I used to see her once a year at least at the dancing school balls. You send her to me, Ann Eliza, whenever an invitation comes to her from me this winter. No, better, now I come to think about it, you tell her I want her at my house to-morrow night. I'm having a musicale. I'll look out for her. Somewhere before nine o'clock."

Selina reached home that day in excellent spirits anyway. She had been teaching her class of four for two months now, and William had been embarrassingly slow starting at reading in his first reader. He seemed to feel he had enough of reading when he finished his primer. This morning Mrs. Williams had come to her in the sewing-room, with reassuring news.

"We find William has begun to read at last, Selina. Day before yesterday he couldn't, and last night he seized his book, when we urged him, and deliberately read his father a page about a baby robin, without a mistake. We think it's wonderful how it's come about all at once."

Selina thought so, too, but was none the less relieved for that. Not that she was not conscientious, for with the best will in the world she was applying the printed page to her four pupils and her pupils to the page, the moment of flux unfortunately being unpredictable but exceedingly reassuring when it came. Evidently there is more in the phrase "born teacher" than she had been aware of, and she grew a bit heady with the relief of this news.

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And here when she reached home was the invitation from Mrs. Tuttle awaiting her! Honors were crowding her! She and Mamma and Auntie talked it over eagerly at the lunch table.

"There's no ease like that from going about to the best places," said Mamma. "I can't be too glad this has come just when it has. It defines Selina's position. I don't suppose," musingly, "Amelia Williams ever was asked to the Tuttle home in her life. The McIntoshes never were anybody. Not that I'd have you mention to her, Selina, that you're going to this musicale."

"Emmeline's even more given to dress now than when she was a girl," said Auntie. "She had trimming in steel and jet all over the bosom of her dress this morning, and big as she is, it looked too much."

Just here, as Aunt Viney brought in the plum preserves for dessert, Culpepper walked in with a note from his mother, inclosed in his weekly letter from home.

"It says 'Ann Eliza' on the outside, ole miss, so I'll have to reckon it's for you."

Auntie took her note, then broke forth with the more immediate news happily: "Selina's going to a grown-up party at one of my old friend's to-morrow night."

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Culpepper was bantering but practical. He got his pleasure out of these dear ladies, too. "Tomorrow night? How's she going to get



there?"

True! They all three had forgotten! "To be sure, Selina!" said her mother, "it is your father's whist night."

"I can't see why she wants to go. I never see much in these things myself," from Culpepper, "but if you do, Selina, I'll come around and take you, wherever it is, and get you later and bring you home."

After he was gone Mamma and Auntie sang his praises. "It was both nice and thoughtful in him to remember about your father and his neighborhood whist club," said Mamma.

"I hope he's not inconveniencing himself to do it," from Auntie.

It would seem that all those honors right now crowding Selina were gone to her head. Resenting quite so much solicitude for Culpepper under the circumstances, she all but tossed that head.

"He wouldn't put himself out, let me assure you Mamma, and you, Auntie, too, if he didn't want to."

During the afternoon Cousin Anna Tomlinson, who lived a block away, came around, having heard the news through Aunt Viney, who had stopped to chat with the servants on her way to the grocery.

"I always meant to give Selina gold beads," she said as she came in, as if the enormity of the present crisis exonerated her from doing so now. "What has she to wear, Lavinia? Why certainly she can't go in her graduating dress. She's worn it on every occasion since she's had it. It's been dabby for some time."

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Cousin Anna was rich, the money belonging to her and not to Cousin Willoughby Tomlinson, her husband. Her house impeccably swept and garnished, year after year, was brought up to date though nobody ever went there, Cousin Willoughby entertaining his friends at that newly established thing, the club. And Cousin Anna, who had finery in quantity though she never went anywhere, was fussily dressy, but in last year's clothes. Just as she could not bear to use her house, so time had to take the edge of value off her clothes before she wore them. She had a straight and unswerving backbone; her coiffure as she styled it, was elaborate; and she settled her watch chain and her rings constantly.

"And she is every bit as old as I am," Mamma never failed to say.

Cousin Willoughby Tomlinson's mother had been a Wistar, and it was commonly told among the older set, that he had tried for Emmeline Knight, she that was now Mrs. Gwinne Tuttle, before he came round to Cousin Anna.

This person gazed from Mamma to Auntie. "Certainly Selina can't be allowed to go to a Tuttle entertainment dabby," she said sharply. "You've never had a real dressmaker dress in your life, have you, Selina? Emmeline Tuttle is a little too inclined to look on her invitations as distributed favors. You're going to this musicale in a Vincent dress of mine, if you can wear it, and judging by the eye, I think you can. I'll go right home and send it round."

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Madame Vincent was the last cry in the community among what Mamma and Cousin Anna and Auntie called mantua-makers.

Oh, why should the spirit of mortal be proud? Juliette Caldwell, little vivid, affectionate body, and Adele Carter, impersonation of consideration for others, coming over as Cousin Anna left, Selina snubbed them.

They were such slaving and believing followers of Maud! And she, Selina herself? Well, she was a follower, too, but with reservations. Maud recently had made sweeping assertions, saying that the group of them as social entities were sadly limited, and she followed up the charge by proposing they each commit a passage of poetry to heart each day, saying she had read, and this really was at base of the whole matter, that it would strengthen the mind, add to the vocabulary, and furnish food for quotation and ready repartee. At the time they all had agreed but Amanthus, who said she did not feel any need for vocabulary or repartee, and in truth as they could see, she did not need them in the least as assets in her business of life.

Juliette and Adele were come over now about this matter. They were full of enthusiasm.

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"We were to begin with our committed passages to-day, you remember," explained Juliette.

"We both have ours," added Adele.

"I'm really pleased with my way of selecting," from Juliette. "I

opened our volume of Scott and took the lines my eyes fell on:"

"Stern was her look and wild her air,  
Back from her shoulders streamed her hair."

"I chose mine from a little volume of selections called 'Pearls of Wisdom,'" said Adele:

"Man's love is of man's life a thing apart,  
'Tis woman's whole existence."

Selina was at both impatient and intolerant. "I was fearfully angry at Culpepper one day when he said that girls play at being educated and boys are educated. Sometimes I think Maud is responsible for our seeming to play at it. Don't you see, Judy dear, if there's anything really in this idea of Maud's you must choose your quotation? You want lines that are apt and quotable if you're going to do it at all? These of yours are relevant to nothing."

"You can't say that of mine," from Adele, pacific enough in general, but disposed to resent this manner toward Juliette, and from Selina of all persons, usually so full of concern and appreciation.

This undreamed of Selina answered promptly. "I certainly can't applaud your choice. Our sex should be the last to admit such an epigram exists."

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Cousin Anna did not send the dress around until the next morning, a note to Mrs. Wistar which accompanied it, explaining the delay:

"Emmeline Tuttle is a little too pleased with being Emmeline Tuttle. I am sending a dress this moment home from Vincent for Selina to wear."

On reaching home from the morning's teaching, Selina came hurrying up to her mother's room to see it. Unboxed and laid on the bed, it was an impressive affair, and the color rushed to her cheeks, and her hands sought each other rapturously. Satin puffs in a high-light green obtruded through slashes in a myrtle-green satin waist and sleeves. From the throat arose something akin to a Medici collar, and the skirt flowed away in plenitude. A beaded headdress for the hair of a seemingly fish-net nature completed the whole.

There was no question Mrs. Wistar and Auntie were dubious. They looked their worry.

"Is it Mary, Queen of Scots, in a steel engraving, it makes me think of," from Auntie in an anxiously low voice to Mamma, "or is it Amy Robsart in our pictorial volume of Scott's heroines?"

"Madame Vincent is always so ahead and so extreme in her styles," fretted Mamma, "and yet," still more fretted, "Anna may be depended on never to forgive us if she isn't allowed to wear it."

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**"Before the mirror trying on the dress from Cousin Anna."**

They looked at Selina with her eager color and prettily disordered hair and shining eyes, already slipped out of her everyday dress of sober plaids, dear loving child, and before the mirror, trying on the dress from Cousin Anna.

"Mull and lace and a sash is the proper thing for her at her age, I don't care if her dress is dabby. And it's a poor rule to be beholden to anybody," held Auntie.

"We can't get her dress washed and ironed now," from Mrs. Wistar, "and she took her sash down town to be cleaned and has not gotten it home. We'll have to give in this time and let her wear this dress of Anna's."

"Come feel the satin of it, Mamma," exulted Selina, "put your cheek against its sheen, Auntie. Or can one feel a sheen?" she laughed happily. "Maud says let the love of dress get in your blood and it will poison your life at its spring, and you even might come to marry for what a man could give you! She meant it for Juliette who cried because her mother wouldn't let her have high heels to make her taller. But I'm not sure I see Maud's logic. When we marry, we take from the man anyhow, don't we? Why shouldn't one care then, in the ratio of what one takes? Don't look so shocked, Auntie, I'm only thinking it out."

"Sometimes, Selina," said Auntie, dismayed, "you talk like you weren't the girl we brought you up to be! The dress fits well enough, that's all I can say for it."

"It looks a little like a fancy costume," admitted Selina doubtfully, "but anyhow it's wonderful and I love it. I think, Auntie dear," reassuringly, "it isn't that Maud and the rest of us are undependable. It's that we want something, and we don't know what we want. When we're with people who're grandly mental, we think it's that, or religious, it's that, or when it's someone who's a social personage, then it seems as if it's that. Does it sound weak-minded Auntie, veering so?"

This evening of the musicale Culpepper came for Selina on the moment, which he did not always do, and he and she in her gorgeousness, went off gayly together, Mamma and Auntie seeing them to the door.

"She's really a child at heart, Lavinia," worried Auntie, after they were gone, "a child, I sometimes fear, that has had so little experience in life that it's pitiful. And yet this afternoon she spoke shockingly. I wouldn't have her too helpless and inexperienced, but neither would I have her lose her illusions. There's mighty little left

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a woman when she parts with these."

"If I only felt more comfortable in my mind about that dress," from Mrs. Wistar. "Sometimes I could wish I were a person of more courage and finality; I didn't want to let her wear it."

"No, I wouldn't want her to feel we had failed her about it," agreed Auntie. "I wouldn't want her ever to feel we'd failed her anywhere, but sometimes I'm afraid she's going to."

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## CHAPTER SEVEN

The night was mild. When Culpepper and Selina reached the car-line on a nearby street, the car with its two jogging little mules was in sight. "There comes the car, and here comes the moon," said Culpepper. "Shall we ride or walk?"

They walked.

Now Selina and her girl friends knew a sufficient number of boys, always had known a plentiful number in fact, Tommy and Bliss and Brent and the rest, as she termed them. Culpepper, however, was not of these: he was older, he was from away and he was studying law; many reasons in fact combined to make it gratifying to have it Culpepper.

He with three other law students had rooms including a common sitting-room over a confectionery, where ordinarily young men away from home in the city would have been in boarding houses. From information dropped by Culpepper, they smoked pipes and played chess and read books by writers known as Darwin and Spencer and Buckle. That they were bold and buccaneeringly adventurous figures thus may be seen.

Added to all this, Culpepper did not care for girls, Selina being the only one he went with, and further, he had been so used to a big family connection and an overflowing house and habitual hubbub, Cousin Maria Buxton, his stepmother, being related to everybody in her part of the state, that his avowed dislike to gatherings and affairs was genuine.

"You men don't like to do a thing, and you say so and don't do it," wondered Selina; "Papa gave up night church long ago, and Mamma who loves to go, had to accommodate herself to it."

Culpepper defended his sex. "We're honest. You're not, women as a class, I mean. My stepmother is, but then she's independent."

"Independent?"

"Has her own means and manages her own affairs. It makes the rest of you propitiatory," bluntly.

"Propitiatory? What does?"

"Taking money as it's doled to you, or doing without."

They had reached the Tuttle house now in its broad yard. Carriages were arriving, delivering their occupants at the curb and driving away. Culpepper steered Selina in at the gate, up the flagging, and with her mounted the steps.

"I'm glad it's you and not me," was his cheering remark.

Selina herself was not feeling so glad about it all at once. Why had she not wondered earlier if any persons she knew would be here?

As the door opened to admit guests just ahead of them and the light fell on the lady entering and on her evening wrap bordered with swansdown, that elegance of the hour, Selina became conscious of Mamma's knitted throw on her head and Auntie's striped scarf about her shoulders.

"You—you'll be for me on time?" she reminded Culpepper, "Mamma thought half-past eleven at the latest?"

"Can you fancy I won't?" he returned, handing her in at the door, which was a nice way of putting it and a good deal from him.

Evidently it is one thing to be within the gay world and another to be of this world, and Selina in her striped scarf made her way hurriedly up the stairs. And a dressing-room filled with ladies, who know each other and who do not know you, presents parallels with Polar regions for chill and solitudes. Glances fell on her but they passed her over, or traveled elsewhere or beyond.

Moods have a protean way of changing from roseate hues to grayness. Even the sustaining glory of Cousin Anna's dress seemed threatened, for as the maid removed the striped scarf, it appeared according to the cheval glass, that the radiance of spirit which earlier had appropriated the gown to its wearer, had flickered and expired, leaving the one Cousin Anna's, and the other, Selina Wistar, frightened and ill at ease and unforgivably young.

She moved with the company out into the hall and down the stairs. The walls were white and gold, paneled, and the stair covering was crimson; there were niches on the landing and again down the further flight of the stairs, from which looked busts of, so

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far as Selina knew, male Tutttles in white marble. It was august and costly and subduing, and though she had yet to live to be told it, Victorian and lamentable.

The parlors as seen through the arched entrances as she came reluctantly down the steps, were spacious, with crimson carpets of a piece with that in the halls, pier glasses, crimson curtains and gilt cornices, marble mantels outvying the niched busts for whiteness, prism chandeliers and gilt chairs in rows for the approaching musicale.

Mrs. Tuttle was stationed in the first parlor and by custom or arrangement or understanding everything fell away from her as it were, or so it seemed to Selina as she made her way in, the guests as they were presented retreating into the background of the far parlor.

A young man of such distinguished and easy appearance as to suggest new standards for judgment of Tommy and Bliss and Brent and the rest, handed the guests on to the person of the hostess. He proved to be Mr. Tuttle Jones, a nephew of the lady's deceased husband. Selina having in time thus reached Mrs. Tuttle, raised her eyes.

In the full enjoyment of her large person's sartorial splendor stood this lady, satin puffs in a high-light salmon, obtruding through slashes in a crimson satin waist and sleeves, from the open throat of which arose something akin to a Medici collar, the skirt flowing away in plenitude and a beaded headdress of a seemingly fish-net texture, completing the whole.

And in the pier glass just behind Mrs. Tuttle, and repeated again and again and yet and yet again from a confronting pier glass at the far end of the adjoining parlor, appeared a half dozen, a dozen, a hundred, was it a thousand reflected Selinas in myrtle and high-light greens, puffs, slashes, and netted headdress, vanishing into perspective? And multitudes upon multitudes grouped about the back parlor, or so it seemed to Selina, looking on.

So, it was the person of that young niece of Ann Eliza Wistar's that Mrs. Tuttle was gazing on? This lady never was known not to speak her mind.

"If Vincent made that dress for you, Selina, she's a fool."

The mirrors repeated the accusation, but they repeated the salmon and crimson person of Mrs. Tuttle, too. She was not one to spare herself at all.

"And when I allowed her to make its original, or its replica as the case may be, for me, I was another."

Selina found speech small and arriving from far. "Cousin Anna Tomlinson sent the dress around so that I could come."



**"Mr. Tuttle Jones ... sat with her through a pianoforte number."**

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"Well, as for Anna Pope, by the grace of God, Tomlinson, there's never been any doubt in anybody's mind, she's a fool. As for Vincent, it's sheer perfidy! Go over there, in the next room, this one is cleared for the piano and the performers. Find a chair, get a place, I'll send someone to you, but for the land's sake, go and don't come back near me."

Selina hurriedly sought a gilded chair in an unobtrusive position, which as the evening went on proved to be an island solitude in an immediate waste of vacant chairs. She had not even a program to bury herself in. True, Mr. Tuttle Jones, the nephew, came and sat with her through a pianoforte number, but at its close he left, to come again in time with a second polite but perfunctory young man who also in time departed.

Then it happened. Selina never will forget it, never. A vocal number had reached that point where it reiteratingly bade 'Good-bye to hope, good-bye, good-bye,' and she was bitterly agreeing, when a gloved hand reached out and touched an empty gilt chair a few places beyond, while the young lady owner of the hand and of the brown eyes above it, smiled and in quiet gesture invited her to take it. What the kindly eyes had been seeing, though Selina could not know this, was a young guest awkwardly alone and betraying it in a color coming and going painfully and a chin piteously inclined to quiver.

Selina went, seventeen is not so very far along the way, and the sob so long threatening in the throat within the Vincent setting, arose undisguisedly.

The owner of the smiling eyes, whose own shoulders emerged from a charming and correct gown, by sharing her program afforded a momentary sheltering for recovery.

At the close of the song came an intermission, during which servants came about with ices.

Selina's companion chatted. "I should say we both were a little strange here. I am 'Hontas Boswell, Pocahontas Boswell, from Eadston. My aunt and I are down spending a few days at the hotel, and her old friend, Mrs. Tuttle, was good enough to ask us here to-night. Shall you and I agree to stay together?"

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## CHAPTER EIGHT

Selina and Miss Pocahontas had supper together at a little table in a bay window with Mr. Tuttle Jones as a somewhat peripatetic third, since his duties as aid to his aunt kept him constantly leaving them.

In the beautiful time Selina now found herself having with this new friend, she told her about Mamma and Papa and Auntie, and even some of the rest of it, about the friends of her youth, for instance, and William Jr., whom she taught, and about Culpepper who brought her. For after all, at seventeen, is not one's little world one's world, that is to be talked about? And were not the warm brown eyes of Miss Boswell amazingly tender and encouraging as she smiled back upon this ardent young face?

Mr. Jones with a murmuring sigh of further apology came and sank into his place once more with them at the bay-window table. He was a quick and alert young man, with a nice smile and when he had time, a nice manner. Was he perhaps dapper? His small moustache was immaculate, and his tie and boutonnière irreproachable.

It would seem he was taking note of Selina as a possible entity for the first time. "My aunt asked me to apologize to you about something I don't seem to understand. She says she can't come herself—"

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"—without making herself ridiculous," said this hitherto seemingly harmless young Miss Wistar with unlocked for and apparently astute bitterness. Miss Boswell looked surprised. Mr. Jones looked at Selina. He looked again. He might look away, as indeed he did, to concern himself with the final course for their table, but Selina was an entity now.

At half-past eleven she came downstairs amid the departing guests, Mamma's throw upon her head, Auntie's scarf about her shoulders, still in the comforting care of Miss Pocahontas Boswell and her aunt, Miss Boswell. Miss Pocahontas was all kindness to the end. "And may we not take you home? Our carriage is double?" she asked as they reached the hall.

"Culpepper is to come for me," Selina explained. "He would not know what to do."

"My niece tells me it is Maria Buxton's stepson, from up our way, you speak of," said Miss Boswell, the aunt; "I remember him as a very blunt, outspoken little son of a blunt father and outspoken stepmother. If he is to come for you we had surely better leave you for him."

But come for her is what Culpepper failed to do. The various groups departed, the crowd in the hallway thinned, a silver-chimed clock somewhere struck the quarter, and the street-cars would stop at twelve. The servants in the hall gathering up this and that, looked at Selina interrogatively, then departed, too.

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It was here that Mrs. Tuttle came out into the hall and found her. This lady seemed engrossed in the closing of the house by the servants now, and to have forgotten the matter of Cousin Anna's dress and Vincent's perfidy.

"Culpepper who? Maria Buxton's boy?" This in answer to Selina's explanation. "Ann Eliza didn't tell me he was living here? Is he personable? A hostess always needs young men. Wait, Reuben," this to the gray-haired negro man in livery moving around in the background, "you know I always want to satisfy myself the window fastenings *are* secure," Then to Selina, "You say he said he *would* be here? What on earth are we going to do about it, say *dear* child?"

The lights were out now but for one or two, and everyone had disappeared but Mrs. Tuttle and Selina and Reuben. Seeing a reflected figure in a pier glass opposite her, and recognizing that disheveled and distraught figure to be her own, certain words heard from Juliette that afternoon, and which Selina had held to be inapt and wanting in relevancy, beat themselves to measure on her brain:

"Wild was her look and stern her air,  
Back from her shoulders streamed her hair"

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**"Selina hurried out and joined him."**

And when at length, incredible, unpardonable, unforgivable length, Culpepper did come and Selina hurried out and joined him, what had he to say?

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"Of course you can't, I won't ask you to forgive me, Selina. There was a boxing match on, but I would not go to that. Then I remembered an expert chess game at—er—a place, a Hungarian player against home talent, but I knew I would get drawn into the moves and—well. So I went back to the rooms and the boys were all there, and we got to jawing about this new thing by a man named George, called Single Tax, and I got into the talk and forgot."

Selina stopped by Adele's house on her way to her teaching the next morning. She was anxiously sweet and sorry, the natural Selina now.

"I was short about those quotations yesterday, Adele," she acknowledged, "and I want to say to you, and I mean to say to Judy, that I've every reason since I saw you both and was so rude, to think they are, well, the one apt and the other true. Men it seems have so many interests, they forget to come for us when they promise!" And she told Adele all about it.

"But I made that Mr. Jones acknowledge me," she commented. "I don't believe I could have stood all the rest if I couldn't feel I did that. I'm beginning to believe that we only grow through a sort of self-assertion, Adele. And I owe it to my self-respect, too, to say I think Auntie's old friend, Mrs. Tuttle, was very rude."

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She came home from her morning's work perturbed, and joined Mamma and Auntie at the lunch table, a worried frown puckering her brow.

"It's the last straw. This time yesterday I was so elated on every count. What's that saying of Papa's whist club when they're counting up the score? Honors are easy, isn't it? Mrs. Williams and I were so relieved when she found William could read. To-day she tells me she believes he did it deliberately to stop their talk. He took a page about a baby robin that he's heard the others read so often he knows it by heart."

"Girls play at being educated and boys are educated," Culpepper had said. Selina was to ask herself again if this was so.

She and her mother went at once to call on Miss Boswell and Miss Pocahontas Boswell at their hotel. And so glowing was the further description given by Selina to her four friends of the charms of Miss Boswell the younger, that she had to go again to take them. Following this the five were invited by Miss Pocahontas to spend an afternoon with her, and she had what Maud called a little collation for them in her hotel sitting-room.

Mamma and Auntie had the offer of Cousin Anna Tomlinson's carriage and coachman for this same afternoon, and in order that the young people might be free, they took Miss Boswell the elder for a drive to the cemetery, they being of a mind, and the community with them, that no more seemly spot for innocent recreation and enjoyment might be.

The afternoon and its collation were so delightful, and Miss 'Hontas in a semi-formal afternoon gown was so winning, the guests went home in a state of uplift, with the exception of Amanthus who seemed non-committal. But, as Maud said, charming people are so often resentful of other people being charming.

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Selina spoke at home about this attitude from Amanthus. "She seemed ungenerous over our admiration for Miss Pocahontas, Mamma. Right in the middle of the afternoon she wanted to come home. Lovely as she is, she's hard to stand when she acts this way."

"I've never encouraged you to find fault with your friends, Selina," reproved her mother. "No doubt Amanthus had her grounds."

"I haven't a doubt she had," from Auntie. "I've watched Amanthus before. If a thing's true, Lavinia, why shouldn't Selina say it? She'll get along the better for recognizing it. Refusing to admit a fact doesn't make it less so."

"I've always found Amanthus sweetly feminine," said Mamma concisely.

"And there isn't a man won't agree with you," from Auntie. "She's exactly to the pattern of what they look for in women. I found that out before ever Amanthus was born."

"Ann Eliza, I'm astonished at your tone!"

"The tone goes with the rankle that's been in me a good many years, Lavinia."

Selina and her group met with Maud this same evening to talk the afternoon over as was their habit after an occasion. The Addison's were prosperous and their parlors boasted velvet carpets, mirrors over the mantels, lace curtains stiff with pattern and the seemly rest of what handsome parlors at that day should boast.

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Again Amanthus took exception to the enthusiasm over Miss Boswell. Perhaps there was something in the name of the lady that was suggestive of the especial line of attack. "I don't see anything so good-looking about her," she declared. "She's too dark; she looks like an Indian squab."

Amanthus was given to occasional lapses in her words, and while as a rule the others were tolerant with her, this as concerning Miss Boswell was too much.

"Meaning squaw, we are to presume?" said Maud—generous-spirited, whole-souled Maud, scornful of such assets as mere red-brown hair and splendid skin, the emphasis with her being laid on loftier attainments!

"I can't keep you from presuming," returned Amanthus with dignity, *her* daffodil yellow head held high, "I said squab."

"But it doesn't mean anything used so," pointed out conscientious Adele.

"Not a thing," corroborated little Juliette.

"You can't prove that it doesn't to me," returned Amanthus, which after all was true. It also was characteristic of Amanthus. It was best to change the subject. Perhaps it was unfortunate that it returned to Miss Boswell.

"It seems to Mamma and to me," said Selina, "that I ought to do something in the way of entertaining for Miss Pocahontas. It's more of an occasion to have it in the evening, of course, but it can't be

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dancing in our little house, nor music, because we can't depend on our piano any longer."

"You wouldn't want the ordinary thing for her anyway," said Maud promptly and decidedly. "Selina," one saw the sweep as it were of Maudie's unbridled fancy as it mounted, one braced oneself against the oncoming rush of her enthusiasm, "I have the idea!" Did she have it, or was she merely pursuing it unaware of what it would be until she overtook it? "Unless you actually want it, let me ask Mamma if I may give it myself? I should love to. What I say," she had it now, and brought it forth with the pride of ownership, "is a conversazione!"

"But I do want it," Selina hastened to declare, "though," dubiously, "I hadn't thought of attempting anything like that."

Amanthus spoke here and almost crossly. "Mamma says the accustomed thing is nearly always the proper thing. She told me to remember that. I can't see why you're always hunting the unusual thing? I don't know what a conversazione is."

"A conversazione," said Maud loftily, "is a meeting for conversation, preferably on belle-lettres or kindred topics. It's not unlike the French salons."

"I'll speak to Mamma," from Selina still more dubiously, "and if she agrees I'll go and see Miss Pocahontas. If I do decide on it, will you meet with me and help me plan it?"

"Meet here," said Maud, "and in the mean season I'll look up the subject further."

When Selina went home with her proposal, Mrs. Wistar was more concerned with the obligation than the nature of the entertaining. "Have what you please, Selina, so it's reasonably simple in its cost and we can afford it. I'm glad to have you do it for Miss Boswell."

Auntie demurred. "I like the idea of a party, too," she said, "but why not just a party? What does Selina, or what do the others know about a— what is it you're proposing to have, Selina? A conversazione? It sounds to me like borrowed finery in another guise such as we let her wear to the musicale. Let's don't do it again, Lavinia. I don't fancy mental furbelows that are not her own any more than dressmaker furbelows. Let Selina give a plain party."

"Why should you want to discourage the child, Ann Eliza? If she and the others want to have a conversational evening. I can see no reasonable grounds for objection."

Accordingly the group met with Maud the next evening and Selina reported. "Mamma approves, but Miss Pocahontas looked a little startled when I said conversazione. Or maybe I imagined she did, for immediately she smiled charmingly and said, 'How very lovely!' Maudie, do you really think we'd better undertake it?"

Having originated an idea, Maud never was known to relinquish it. "Just as you please," largely, "as I said before if you don't want it, let me give it."

Selina surrendered. "You got our literary club at school into that debate with the boys from the high school," she reminded Maud uneasily however, "and what we thought at the time was applause from them, we found out afterward was laughter."

They all moved uneasily at the recollection, all but Amanthus and she had not been in it.

"It was the subject Maud insisted on, we can see that now," said Juliette bitterly, "'Resolved that the works of Alexander Pope are atheistical in their tendency.' We ought to have known they were laughing at us when they accepted it."

"If we're here to help you, Selina," said Maud loftily, "we'd better get about it. There's more than enough of our sex for the evening as it is. I've been reading up and there's very little said about women as guests at either salons or conversaciones. The important thing seems to have been the men."

Amanthus showed more interest at this, but she seemed determined to be trying. "I won't come if you have Tommy Bacon."

Juliette was responsible for this. At the Friday evening dancing club she had burst forth to a group of them, impetuously, "What do you suppose Tommy Bacon here has just said to me? That Maud and Selina and Adele and I are the only girls he knows whose hand he can't hold when he wants to."

In the pause which had followed Amanthus had grown very red. They could not blame her now. Though Tommy measured suddenly against the requirements of a conversazione did seem very young,

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still his absence would leave them short.

Maud was rising to the demands of the moment again so visibly that her companions as visibly looked uneasy. But her suggestion this time was practical. On the previous Saturday afternoon she and Selina and Adele, out for a walk in the Indian summer briskness had met Culpepper Buxton and his three roommates out for a tramp also. The two groups had joined forces and gone sauntering out the sycamore bordered road that led up-climbing and down-rolling to the old monastery in its secluded and wooded grounds where Louis Phillipe in his exile for a time had stayed. It not only proved a pleasant occasion, the background of the French king lending color and romance to the setting, but it added three masculine acquaintances to the lists of the ladies—Mr. Cannon, easy and talkative, Mr. Welling, provocative and in spectacles, Mr. Tate, tall and studious. Older than their own set, decidedly these three young men were acquisitions.

"You must ask these friends of Culpepper, Selina," proposed Maud. "And do you believe if we coax Culpepper, he'll get Algernon Charles Biggs to come? At a conversazione, after it is understood by Miss Boswell who he is, he will seem to be a card?"

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**"The two groups had ... gone sauntering out the sycamore bordered road."**

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Algy Biggs was a near if collateral kinsman of a very real and great poet on the other side of the English-speaking world, a thing he never was allowed to forget, and which in company rendered him next to mute. Yet he was amazingly big and athletic and good-looking, great in the local militia, in the summer regattas on the river, as a stroke oar on the barge picnic parties, carrying the baskets and luggage, building the fires, fetching water.

"A regular Herculeum, or whoever it was performed labors and cleaned stables," Amanthus had said of him.

"He won't come if he knows what we want him for," affirmed Selina, decidedly. "I'll try."

Adele here pointed out the flaw in the arrangements, it being her gift from Heaven always to do that.

"But the ones you're naming are nearer our ages. There ought to be somebody more suitable for Miss Boswell."

"Your Cousin Marcus, Selina." said Maud.

Selina felt ashamed of the haste with which she said no for surely it is an unworthy thing to be overly sensitive about your kin, and nobody is any better off as to family than the total average in desirability of its members. Still there was no use running the family in on Miss Boswell if she did not have to.

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Aunt Juanita, married to Uncle Bruce, was Mamma's sister, and Cousin Marcus was their son. Aunt Juanita wrote letters to the newspapers on every sort of subject that engrossed her from Schopenhauer to Susan B. Anthony, and made impassioned addresses to women wherever she ran into them, at parties, picnics, church societies, anywhere, like as not having forgotten to take down one curl-paper in dressing her iron-gray hair. The subjects for the addresses varied.

A forerunner, a feminine John Baptist to her day and place and sex, as Selina was one day to come to see her, then Aunt Juanita Bruce, tall, angular, unmended and ungroomed, stood alone in her community, unique in type but none the less absorbed and none the more abashed for that.

As for Uncle Bruce, Mamma called him in as he came by of mornings, with his big bushy-haired head and untidy beard and his mummified and scholarly little trotting body, and brushed him off and tidied him up and retied his old black string cravat, and started him on again. Whereat if he had a book, it being his way to proceed along the streets with his nose and his spectacled eyes within the covers of some abstruse volume, he was as like as not to proceed indefinitely at his little dog-trot speed in whatsoever line started on, the levee and the river, it was said, on more than one occasion bringing him up. Uncle Bruce was a lawyer and Selina was told that he was an authority, but there was small comfort to her young and innocent soul in that in the face of his more salient characteristics.

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Cousin Marcus, their son, did editorial paragraphs on the newspapers and was clever, but then you never knew what he might be besides, being all of Aunt Juanita and Uncle Bruce and himself together. If he was asked to come at eight he would stroll round at ten, and if one wanted to close the house at twelve, Marcus would produce his cigarettes—he was the only person in town to use them and was looked on askant therefore—and monologue with brilliancy till one. He was a law unto himself and over-rode your laws. Now Selina yearned secretly and passionately, and she feared almost unworthily, to be considered correct and proper, and this, moreover, was an occasion for that charmingly correct person, Miss Pocahontas Boswell. Auntie remembered now, too, just who the Boswells were. She was sure that as a girl she had spent a night at their even then old brick home at Eadston in its setting of quaint garden. Selina was uneasy as it was, over this conversazione business of Maud's, and if the truth be told, always winced at her relatives, the Bruces.

"No," she said, and firmly for once in the face of Maud, "I don't think I want Marcus."

"Then who—?" began Maud, and stopped. The same thought had occurred at this point, was recurring to each of them, to four of them that is, Amanthus not knowing the person in question this time.

A new assistant rector at Selina's church had achieved a notable popularity, and of late these friends of hers, with the exception of Amanthus, had been accompanying her to services whenever they could be spared from their own. Perhaps they all blushed a bit now under detection.

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"Why not the Reverend Mr. Thomas Wingham if he'll come?" avowed Maud stoutly despite the general abashment. "It's entirely for Miss Boswell we're considering him?"

As yet Selina was the only one who had met the gentlemen, he having called upon her household in the performance of his parochial duties. Driven thus into a corner by Maud, there was no reason why he should not be invited. "I'll ask Mamma," she conceded.

This person approved, and accordingly the invitation to him went the next day in Mamma's lady-like and running hand, upon her visiting card. It was hard to reconcile her being Aunt Juanita's sister, though to be sure they did have different mothers.

To Meet  
Miss Pocahontas Boswell

Conversation  
Please Reply

Friday Evening

The Reverend Mr. Wingham, young and good-looking gentleman that he was, promptly replying that it would be his pleasure to meet Miss Boswell on Friday evening, the affair assumed aspects entirely

new, and in a different sense, significant.

Mamma planned the details. The back parlor, so-called, in the Wistar home, really was the dining-room.

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"On the evening of your little affair, Selina," she explained, "thanks to the screen which we'll set about the table beforehand, your aunt and I, at the agreed-upon moment, will slip in with coffee, chocolate, sandwiches, and plates of cake. There'll remain only the removing of the screen by your father, to disclose us in our places, I behind the chocolate pitcher, your aunt behind the coffee urn, and the adjournment of your guests to the back parlor. I'm always thankful when an occasion like this comes up, that the Wistar coffee urn isn't plate but silver."

After preparations for the affair thus were well under way, Juliette, dependable if she was such a little creature, rounded up Maud and Selina at the Wistars one afternoon. "It's conversazione, of course, but what're we going to talk about?"

True! One saw Maud rising to the new demands of the situation. "If we'd only thought about it sooner," she mourned. "On our walk with Culpepper and his friends the other day, Mr. Welling that I was with, the square one with spectacles, told me they were deep in a book round at their rooms that they were having daily rows over, Adam Smith's 'Wealth of Nations.' My uncle has it on his shelves. We might have gotten up on that and showed them."

Amanthus happened in here and they explained the trouble.

"Why not talk in pairs and not trouble about a subject?" she asked hopefully. "Wouldn't it be a conversazione just the same?"

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They ignored this whereas they might have said patently tolerant things to her. Amanthus was Amanthus and they must accept her as she was, which meant be magnanimous with her rather than lofty or pitying.

"I'll go round to the school to-morrow," said Maud, "and ask permission to look over the old minutes of our Sappho Literary Club. By looking up our program, I'll happen on some subject of general interest that we're all up on. As soon as you're home from your teaching, Selina, come over and we'll decide."

"Don't count me in on this conversazione," said Amanthus, "I'll come but I won't talk."

True, as she had said once before, lovely creature that she was, sunny-haired, violet of eyes, coral-lipped, she had no need for conversation, no, nor yet wit, nor repartee, in her business of life.

It almost would seem that Auntie agreed with Amanthus. "Selina's quite pretty enough, Lavinia, to do without this foolishness," she insisted. "It isn't on account of any brains she's got, or any she'll come to have, for example, that Culpepper comes round here. Selina's pretty and sweet and she looks up to him. So far as he and any other men she's likely to meet go, what on earth more do they want in her? I'm an old maid but I know."

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## CHAPTER TEN

It was the evening of the conversazione. Selina, dear child, as Auntie called her, pretty and flushed and frankly excited, wore the discredited graduation dress, furbished up once more by Mamma, and yet once more pressed by Aunt Viney.

"Never, never again do we let her wear garments not her own," said Mamma as Selina went down to welcome those first arrivals, the friends of her youth.

"Thanks be, Lavinia, for that," said Auntie. "Maybe you'll come around to my view of the mental furbelows next."

When Selina reached her friends below, she found Amanthus in yellow. With a pretty mother who dressed well herself Amanthus always had charming clothes. The corn-colored knotted sash and ribbons worn by her to-night were the color of her abundant hair, and her fan of yellow feathers seemed planned to open against her red lower lip while her face dimpled and sparkled above it.

It was handsome Maud's self one saw, animated and sure and leading. You hardly thought about, if you noted at all, her val-edged flounces and her string of beads, though you did rejoice in her clear white and red skin and her red-brown hair. Auntie said, you felt the courage and vigor of Maud's Presbyterian forebears in her straightforwardness if she did belie them in her impulsiveness. [102]

Pretty Juliette's cheeks subdued her cherry ribbons, little gypsy thing, and Adele's throat rose soft and white from her round-necked blue cashmere. As for Miss Pocahontas Boswell who arrived here—but how put into words that simplicity which is not simplicity at all, about her amber draperies? Or how make plain the appreciation and interest in her smiling eyes?

Mrs. William Williams, hearing of the occasion, had sent Selina a box of hot-house flowers, half a dozen kinds at least laid on a bedding of wet smilax, the endeavor in those days being for variety and assemblage of colors. Combined with the smilax the whole made a mixed bowlful for the table between the lace curtains of the two windows and, so Selina felt, lent a riotous air of preparation and festivity to the parlors.

And now the remainder of the guests came, or seemed to come, at once. Papa out in the hall, was shaking hands and exchanging little sallies and seeing to the disposition of coats and hats, after which, having sent, seen and brought the arrivals to the last one in, he went back to his paper in the next room.

It was restoring to a hostess' anxious spirits now the actual moment was come, to enumerate these arrivals in greeting them and in presenting them to Miss Boswell. What can be more to the credit of a hostess than an excess of the other sex? [103]

Here were Bliss and Brent and Sam of their own set. But can it be that familiarity in the long run does breed—well, an uncompromising eye? For Bliss and Brent and Sam looked—it was the dismaying truth—they looked young! They acted young, too, falling back the one against the other at the parlor door, and reddening as they took the hand of the guest as if they did not know what to do with it! And pretty Bliss, rather spoiled on that account if the truth be told, with his ruddy hair and his rosy checks, to have put on a pink neck-tie!

Culpepper and his friends arriving just here, made a gratifying and convincing show: Mr. Cannon, alert and good-looking, enlivened by a white vest; Mr. Tate, tall and decorous; Mr. Welling, square-set and in spectacles. These with Culpepper were a force in themselves.

Bringing up the close came first the Reverend Mr. Wingham. Was it his high vest or his high calling that gave the distinctive quality to his good looks? And lastly came Algernon Charles Biggs, Culpepper evidently on the lookout for him.

Algy was fearfully gloomy. As the company sat down he took his chair with a furtive unwillingness, Culpepper seating himself near him almost as if by intention.

With this exception, Selina felt, everything was quite *comme il faut*, as Maude loved to say of an occasion, and even impressive and needless to say, gratifying. Everybody sat around, the open grate the center, so to speak, the firelight flickering on Auntie's especially burnished fender and coal-bucket and fire-irons. [104]

By the connivance of the four, Selina, Juliette, Maud and Adele,

Mr. Wingham was seated next Miss Boswell. He had shown brisk pleasure on being presented to tall and dashing Maud and seemed willing to linger and parry sallies with her; he had warmed, everybody warmed to Juliette; while within the minute he was taking issue on some general proposition with Adele. But these introductory passages over, they passed him on to his place for the evening.

Bliss, pretty, pouty boy, on whom Amanthus had been smiling since she dismissed Tommy, was sulky because she, from some perversity, was off to herself in an unilluminated spot as it were, between the bookcase and the door. Yet she illumined it; she was a lovely creature.

"Like sunshine in a shady spot," Selina and Adele who were near together heard Miss Boswell say to Mr. Wingham, and his attention thus directed to Amanthus, he heartily agreed.

Then Selina charmingly flushed beneath the crown of her fair hair, could she but have known it, and prettily anxious, became aware that Maud had coughed, was coughing again. It was the signal agreed upon. There came a rushing as of the seas in her ears, a sinking in the pit of her person. Had they allowed Maud to coerce them into something ill-advised again? Was Auntie right? Were they about to make themselves preposterous and ridiculous? And what had Culpepper said—Culpepper there across the circle next to Algy? That girls played at having a knowledge that men had? Was he laughing at them now with that same look of lenient enjoyment in his bold blue eyes that he usually gave to Auntie? Tears almost of anger were in her eyes.

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Not at all! She had had these hideous moments preceding the actual plunge before, precursors always to the later joys of triumph. As, for example, when she used to lead in the debate at The Sappho, and at call for her secretarial report at the junior missionary society, and again at the moment of her figuring at her graduation. Surely she knew them for what they were now!

Maud had given definite instructions beforehand. "Let your start seem casual, Selina, the mere off-throw from passing reflections."

And, recalling this and drawing a restoring breath of confidence, Selina spoke to the circle of her guests, endeavoring to convey ease along with the proposition which was to furnish subject and substance for the conversazione, in a voice which would not be quite steady.

"But is there not a denial of the truth that the moral is necessarily part with the beautiful, in such phrases as 'art for art's sake,' 'beauty for the sake of beauty'? So Selina."

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Maud, as per arrangement and program, came sweepingly to the retort direct, which she had taken from a volume belonging to The Sappho's library, called "Prepared Debates." As she had pointed out, there's nothing like getting the requisite impetus at the start!

"The moral changes with the times, the place and the peoples. Art is as fixed as the gulf between itself and the ethical obligation is wide."

Juliette, with cheeks afire, rushed gallantly in, also as prearranged by Maud, she being scheduled to be off-hand, playful and staccato. She was to fling the proposition on at this point to one of the guests, having been instructed which one:

"If eyes were made for seeing,  
Then beauty is its own excuse for being,"

said she gayly and insouciantly. "Isn't it so, er—Mr. Wingham?"

That very good-looking and well-set-up young clergyman across the circle next to Miss Boswell, started ever so slightly at this call upon him by name. He had been looking at Amanthus, lovely creature, who needed neither vocabulary nor repartee either, in her business of life!

"It is," he agreed a little hastily; then gathering himself smilingly together he said heartily, "It is eminently and conclusively its own excuse and justification."

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This coming from Mr. Wingham was a bit dismaying, as from the nature of his cloth and calling, he had been counted on to take the moral issue up at this point. It brought matters to an unprepared-for pause.

"The Puritan—" hurriedly began conscientious Adele, but with a glance at Maud, stopped. The Puritan, as taken from "Prepared



Debates," was to follow in logical sequence after the support and exposition of the moral by Mr. Wingham. Adele swallowed, and withdrew.

Whereupon support for the moral came from the other side of the circle, from Culpepper nobly and by no sort of prearrangement either. One could wish he would show more conviction and less jocularly about it, however. The progenitors of this evening's business were of no mind by now to be played with. Two of the friends of Culpepper, also, Mr. Welling and Mr. Cannon, would bear looking after. Their markedly polite attention almost would seem to cover ecstasy and enjoyment.

"In the ideals of that great old people, the Greeks," queried Culpepper jocularly, "somehow I seem to recall that the symmetry of the human body was the expression of the symmetry of the inner soul?"

Mr. Welling, he of the square person, resettled his spectacles. "As for example, Aesop? Or shall we say Socrates?"

Mr. Cannon of the white vest burred, then coughed to cover his defection. [108]

"The Puritan—" here ventured in Adele again, with an eye as to its being proper business on Maud, who frowned darkly, whereupon Adele, flushed but obedient again withdrew.

Tall Mr. Tate, the third of the friends of Culpepper, had looked across each time at Adele's remark twice ventured and twice withdrawn. With the exceptions of these glances in her direction, he like Mr. Wingham, had been looking at Amanthus. Even so, something of what Maud called scholastic earnestness sat upon Mr. Tate, and he was disposed, too, to treat the evening with gratifying sincerity. There was that in the subject twice introduced and twice withdrawn by the young lady in blue as he afterward designated Adele, which evidently appealed to him to the momentary eclipsing of Amanthus' charms.

"The Puritan—" he took the suggestion up the least bit sententiously and with courteous acknowledgment toward the source of its origin, "that great timely force for moral power which is moral beauty, was—"

Mr. Cannon indisputably naughty by this time, pulled down his white vest and wickedly concluded the sentence—"was at once known from other men by his gait, his garb, his lank hair, the sour solemnity of his face, the up-turned whites to his eyes'—how does the rest of the paragraph go, Welling?" Which was not in the least what Mr. Tate nor yet Adele had in mind to say. [109]

But even so, was not this the mounting joy of wit? Of give and take? Of stimulation? This the hitherto imagined delight of social intercourse?

So Selina. But a hostess must keep a hostess' wit and head! Everyone must be won and led to speak! But wait, Miss Boswell, and smiling as with one lending herself prettily to the moment, is talking:

"In speaking of beauty perhaps we're thinking a bit too much of the quality in an object which in regarding it excites pleasing emotions? Surely we're to believe that the terms of beauty apply to qualities that arouse admiration and approval. I for one shall insist on there being intellectual and moral beauty—and beauty of goodness and utility. But if I understand just right, Mr. Biggs here is far better qualified to define beauty than the rest of us. And with a great poet's authority behind him, too!"

Big, handsome, gloomy Algy nearly fell over with his chair which at the moment he was uneasily balancing on one leg as some perception of what he was in dawned on him.

"I—Oh say now, any of 'em will tell you I've never read a word of him in my life. Never could find the hitch—er—don't you know, between the words and the sense. Quit it, will you, Culpepper, kicking me?"

"A thing of beauty is a joy forever!" gayly chanted dependable little Juliette who true to the program was to throw herself and her munitions into breaches as needed. [110]

"Handsome is as handsome does," suddenly observed Bliss, very young and passing bitter, with an obviousness patent to those who understood the evening's coolness between him and Amanthus, "Beauty is only skin deep." Could it be that Bliss had noted the glances of two of the company, Mr. Wingham and Mr. Tate, fixed

upon Amanthus even now?

"And yet," it was the first spontaneous contribution to the evening from the Reverend Mr. Wingham, his gaze returning from that retired corner where it had been drawn again and again, "the eternal youth of the beautiful!" Certainly Amanthus did not need vocabulary or repartee in the least!

Adele with new courage, and this time at a signal from Maud, began again: "The Puritan through his great exponent——"

The doorbell rang. Kind conventions! *Comme il faut!* Had Selina really been congratulating herself in these gratifying terms?

It was Cousin Marcus Bruce; she recognized his voice as Papa let him in.

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## CHAPTER ELEVEN

At least the guests were continuing to talk, though in the interruption from the doorbell and the answering of it by Papa, Adele evidently had lost out. For as the divided attention of Selina came back to the circle about her, Miss Boswell for whom all these endeavors and proprieties had been evoked, was doing her best to defend the utilitarian beauty of woolen gloves and ear-muffs, propounded upon her original proposition by spectacled Mr. Welling, backed by Mr. Cannon of the white vest.

The while Selina heard Papa urging Marcus to give up his umbrella and to take off his cape which she knew to be a waterproof cloth voluminous affair to which he was much addicted. It gave one a sense of storm and stress of weather and downpour without, whereas in reality it was a dry and mild starlit night. It was merely of a piece with Marcus.

And here he came strolling in, casual as always. Marcus was tall, lithe and thin. One lock of black hair fell anywhere, according to the moment, over onto his long, thin-flanked face, to be brushed aside continually by his long fingers, out of his deliberately roaming and observing blue eyes, the remaining black locks throwing themselves anyhow backward onto his old velvet coat collar. You never knew what a Bruce might do, but you could be sure he would do something extraordinary. Papa's overtures in the hall had only partly prevailed, for Marcus coming strolling in, had retained his strapped and buckled Arctic overshoes.

"Well, Selina? How are you little people?" This to Maud and Juliette, Amanthus and Adele whom he had seen grow up along with Selina. The meanwhile, Cousin Marcus was cheerfully and as a matter of course shaking hands with—of all persons—Miss Boswell! "Everybody don't get up, everybody don't change places, I went around to the hotel to find you," this to Miss Boswell, "and your aunt telling me you were here, I trusted Selina for grace and followed."

Marcus on terms of evident and easy friendliness with Miss Pocahontas? Marcus, whom Selina had repudiated!

But in the meanwhile everybody had gotten up, and everybody was changing places. In the readjustment Marcus was found to be in possession of the chair next to Miss Boswell. His keen eyes patently taking in much, roved delightedly, seeing among other things as it proved, the well-set-up and good-looking Mr. Wingham hasten to carry a chair for himself to that bit of obscurity lighted by the sunny hair, the dimples, and the violet eyes of Amanthus. Saw him arrive with his chair just in time to circumvent Mr. Tate who was doing likewise. Saw Maud look incensed as Mr. Wingham contentedly sat himself down in this haven where he would be, saw Selina and Juliette look indignant, Adele incredulous. Else why should those keen eyes of Marcus thus roving, grow delighted as with a comprehending sense of the situation? But they roamed on, their owner accompanying their survey with comment:

"So, it's a conversazione, Selina, Cousin Robert tells me? In the name of eloquence, Algernon Charles Biggs, how did you get in it?"

The worm turned. Big Algy reddened angrily. "Culpepper here got me in. He swore it was a candy-pulling!"

Mr. Cannon snorted; Mr. Welling it was who this time coughed, and tall Mr. Tate, who failing a place by Amanthus had come back and taken his seat in the circle, looked sincerely annoyed.

"Apropos of Mr. Algernon," said Miss Boswell, still well-meaning, seeing that Algy had been pointed to her as a card by her young hostesses. She paused. Did the desperate look at her here by the goaded Algy enlighten her as to something being wrong. "No, not Mr. Algernon at all." She went on a little hurriedly. "Mr. Bruce," she turned about to Marcus next to her. "Mr. Bruce here and I are old friends," evidently she meant to be certain of her ground this time, "thanks to his winters for his newspaper in our little city during the legislatures. We've quarreled over such questions as these too often for me not to know where he stands. So, self-avowed seeker after the pleasing even to expedience, what are we to accept as the definition of beauty?"

"Exactly," said Marcus cheerfully. "I would call it one thing, you or Miss Maud or Algy here, another," he paused, to give Algy full time to start and be quieted down by Culpepper, "while Mr. Welling and Mr. Cannon stand ready to confute the lot of us. Still, we'll try it

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around, Mr. Wingham," those eyes of Marcus had been roving as he spoke, "give us an idea of what you hold it to be?"

"It—" said Mr. Wingham suddenly and a little tartly as he bandied the impersonal and unenlightening pronoun thus thrust upon him, sparring for time. He had been contentedly talking to Amanthus and as was evident, had lost the trend of the discussion he had been asked here to partake in. "It—er—I should claim, is, admitting of course, the term to be indefinite—" the poor gentleman was floundering.

"It's so conceded to be," from Marcus encouragingly.

But everybody rushed to say something here to spare the guest, Maud and Juliette as to beauty being beauty, Miss Pocahontas as to ethics and utility being beauty, Bliss, put to it by Mr. Welling and Mr. Cannon, as to beauty being vanity, and Adele with final arrival as to "the Puritans' greatest exponent, Milton, being proof and utterance of the beauty and poetry at the moral heart of Puritanism!" Which indeed she owed to Maud and the "Prepared Debates." And in this general chorus, Mr. Wingham and his impersonal pronoun was lost sight of, or at any rate, sound of.

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At half-past ten when the removal of the screen by Papa disclosed Mamma with her precious bits of Honiton lace on her head and at her throat, behind the chocolate pitcher, and Auntie in her black silk and long gold chain behind the coffee urn, Mr. Wingham was found to be lost again as well as Amanthus and this time in a more literal sense.

Selina had seen it when it happened, and so had Maud, Juliette and Adele. One fancied Mr. Tate was aware of it, and so it now proved, was Marcus.

"Wingham," his best and mellowest voice called as the company arose to adjourn to the back parlor, "that cosy corner of sofa and lamp under the stairs is very well for tête-à-tête, but how about bread and butter?"

Nor did Amanthus and Mr. Wingham look too well pleased as they came in.

As Marcus who was on his good behavior, carried cups and passed sandwiches, he leaned presently and spoke to Miss Boswell, just as Selina arrived with cake:

"Your coupé has come, Pocahontas, may I go out and send it away and you walk back to the hotel with me?" This from Marcus whom Selina had deemed unworthy the occasion!

It happened, however, that Marcus took Amanthus to her home at the corner first. Mr. Wingham went promptly after supper with somewhat the air of one who has been unfairly treated. Bliss who still was in the sulks went speedily too. Mr. Tate even while he struggled against the coercion, was borne off bodily by Mr. Welling and Mr. Cannon whose delight seemed to be in circumventing him. The two of them in leaving made what Auntie would have called their devoirs, both for themselves and him, though he struggled to make his own.

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"Minerva over Venus ever, Miss Selina," from Mr. Cannon of the white vest. "It's for that we're carrying Tate off. After his recovery from this temporary dereliction, he'll be grateful to us."

"Ear-muffs and woolen gloves for the soul's sake, every time, Miss Selina," from Mr. Welling of the spectacles, "and as a rule you would have had Tate heart and soul with you. He's been adamant to dimples before, so it must have been the hair or the eyes. We're hurrying him off for his safe-keeping."

Culpepper and Algy already were gone, taking Maud and Adele to their doors across the street. Juliette here by Selina's side in the hall seeing the last of their guests off, was to spend the night with her.

Marcus happening out from the parlor along with Amanthus at this moment, and discovering, so to speak, an empty hall, took in the situation. If he had noted a little chill in manner toward Amanthus since supper on the part of her four friends—and what was there ever that Marcus did not note?—he recalled that chill now and evidently coupled it with her uncavaliered situation. It is so men unfairly judge of all women.

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He went and found her cloak on the rack and brought it. Humming as he did so, he broke forth lightly into words:

"Morality thou deadly bane,"

He put the soft and hooded wrap about her nicely, for him even carefully and prettily,

"Thy tens of thousands hast thou slain."

He picked up his slouch hat and donned his disreputable old cape,

"Vain is his hope whose stay and trust is  
In moral mercy, truth and justice!"

Having rooted out his umbrella and tucked Amanthus, pretty thing, onto his arm, Marcus here paused within the doorway and said backward over his shoulder mellowly to Selina and Juliette.

"Kindly explain for me to Miss Boswell that it will take me just three minutes to go and return. She's talking in the parlor with your mother and your aunt, Selina. Amanthus," still more mellowly, "shall I make an utterance for you as you are leaving? Your single contribution to the evening's parley? That, so far as I have been present to observe, you have been a silently eloquent and irrefutable argument for the affirmative? Don't ask Amanthus what irrefutable means, my cousin Selina, nor brisk Juliette? That were unworthy of you, and unkind!"

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**"Rooted out his umbrella and tucked Amanthus, pretty thing,  
onto his arm."**

Juliette turned indignantly upon Selina as Marcus and Amanthus left. "It's we who're left in the ungenerous attitudes!" hotly. "How did we get there?"

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Later, after Marcus in his old hat and shabby cape had returned, and again had departed, with Miss Boswell in his keeping, Selina cast herself upon her mother and burst into tears.

"Are we as impossible, as ridiculous and absurd, as we are to judge we are from what they all imply?" she sobbed hotly.

"More so, even, no doubt," from Juliette bitterly.

A caressing arm and hand came around Selina's shoulder as she wept on her little mother's bosom, the hand of her father.

"But even so, delightful," said that gentleman comfortingly, "far more delightful, if an onlooker may testify, than you'll ever quite know."

"We sent the borrowed dress home to Anna," said Auntie. "Let's pack the mental furbelows up and send them over to Maud."

"We'll borrow them again," came from Selina in muffled tones of bitterness. "We never learn."

"Or lend her ours, let's be quite honest," from little Juliette.

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## CHAPTER TWELVE

From the evening of the conversazione, Marcus aroused to a livelier sense of his pretty cousin Selina, and she gained a new conception of him. How had she failed to realize that it was not so much that he was singular as significant? She said as much to her mother and Auntie.

"He's Juanita's son," said Mamma guardedly. "If she is my sister, I have to allow that she's at times both eccentric and trying."

"He's Juanita's son but his own keeper," avowed Auntie. "If he's ever thought in his life for anybody but himself, I've yet to hear of it."

But Selina felt that she as well as they were mistaken. Within the next few weeks Marcus took her to the theater several times, and Oh, the wonder not only of seeing Booth's *Hamlet* and Modjeska's *Rosalind* through the medium of his kindness and his comment and elucidation, but of seeing how many persons in the audience strove to catch her cousin's eye and invite his recognition! He did editorial paragraphs which were clever for the leading daily paper, of course, but there was more to it than that! Apparently if one can successfully back up some chosen eccentricity, as of an old hat and shabby cape and the rest of it, by exactly the adequate manner, he attains to being a personage! And Selina for the better part of her seventeen years, had been thinking Marcus merely had bad manners!

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"You must do a bit of reading of a little different nature, pretty cousin mine," he told her about this same time. "Aunt Lavinia and good Miss Ann Eliza keep you a child."

And accordingly he brought her books of a flattering nature, among them "The Story of Creation," differing from the narrative in the Pentateuch in a way which would have startled Mamma and Auntie unspeakably. But which she and Maud, adventurous soul that this person always was, set themselves to read faithfully.

And lastly, about February, Marcus came round with a letter from Miss Boswell who with her aunt was spending the remainder of the winter in the South. Evidently the intimacy between Marcus and Miss Pocahontas was close.

He read Selina one especial bit, which, or so it seemed to her who had seen nothing at all of the world, opened a wide-spreading and dismaying vista!

More and more [thus went the letter] I am convinced we ought to do some of our wandering early. Our sense of true values ought to come to us young. These glorious Florida nights of tropical softness and moonlight only gain through their recall of other scenes as lovely met in my wanderings when I was young with my invalid father and my mother in search of the health he was not to find. I don't suppose we ever really deplore the gain through experience, whatever the cost at the time. My love to the little sequestered way-side bloom, Selina. How sweet she was in her sheltered innocence and how touching. Do not forget how we discussed the chances for her, you and I, for a bit more of the world through you, her big cousin?

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So? That was it? Miss Boswell with her tender eyes of comprehension was behind this kindness from Marcus? Still one must be thankful even for dictated favors once they are accepted.

Marcus read her bits again from a second letter full of the soft glamour of tropical scene and beauty. After he had gone, Selina hunted her old school geography and sought the map. A pale yellow lady-finger a little over-run in the baking, Florida was on the page, but in the mind of Selina as she sat there in the shabby parlor with the book outspread on her lap, Florida the ever-blooming and the tropical, was Ponce de Leon in gleaming apparel with banner and sword stepping ashore upon sands flowing golden beneath the fancied fountain of his search, Ponce de Leon the ever glorious and understandable to youth, symbol of quest, of faith in the fabled, of adventuring forth!

Maud walked in here on Selina in the parlor in the dusk, the open book still on her lap, the fire died to red embers, Auntie's brasses in the faint glow the one note of brightness amid the gloom. Selina's smile was a bit wan as she looked up and fluttered the pages of the unwieldy folio. "Thirty-seven maps herein of the world and its blue and pink and yellow grand divisions and kingdoms and countries,

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Maudie! Marcus has just been here and he's left me wincing over what he calls my limitations. I've been to Cincinnati, once, for two days, to the exposition and the musical festival with you and Judy and your mother. And I've been to Chicago for a week with Auntie and Cousin Anna to visit some Wistar kin who live in a dreary house right on the street, one of a row. Though Cousin Anna says it's a very good house and being in a real city is expected to sit on the street in a row, that I merely don't know any better. And that's the extent of my traveling!"

"Limitations is a very good word," decided Maudie promptly. "I'm deploring our deficiencies right along! I've a new word myself. Mr. Welling and I are reading German together. I gave up waiting for the rest of you to keep your appointments and asked him. That's what I came over to tell you. We started last night."

These friends of Culpepper were their friends now. As Maud put it, since they discovered they were outgrowing Brent and Sam and the rest, these newer acquisitions were a godsend!

Mr. Welling, by Christian name Henry, square-set by mind as by body though a wag, had seemed to gravitate to mercurial Maud.

"Apparently to correct what he chooses to call my sweeping mis-assertions," was Maud's way of explaining it.

Mr. Cannon, Preston by name, and perpetual joker, gravitated to Adele for whom he had to diagram each joke, and assure her he didn't mean it, while Mr. Tate, that scholastic young man, with earnest admiration sought Amanthus who told him wonderingly she'd always supposed Pompey was a buried city till he told her he was a general.

Something of the personal histories of these young men were known now to the young ladies. The father of Mr. Welling was a judge in his end of the state. Mr. Cannon's people lived in one of the mountain counties and were what is called land-poor, and Mr. Tate had been raised by a grandmother.

"And shows it," Maud said when she heard this. Mr. Tate had money left him by his grandfather too, in a quiet respectable sense, and when his grandmother died he would have a very considerable more.

"And his name's Lemuel," again from Maud at the time they were learning these facts, "and it's perfectly patent after you know him, why the others continually bait him."

But right now Maud had come over to talk to Selina about her German and Mr. Welling.

"What's your new word, Maud?" Selina asked.

"*Wanderlust*. We came on it last night. It's apropos of what you were saying about the thirty-seven maps in the atlas."

"I see."

In April the Boswells returned from the South and Miss Pocahontas wrote asking Selina up to Eadston to visit her.

"It will mean a new spring dress," demurred Mamma, "and the price of the ticket besides."

"But it will mean three days for her with Marcia and Pocahontas Boswell," said Auntie. "She can go up from Friday to Monday and not miss her teaching either. I must say, Lavinia, they're the kind of people I want to have her visit."

"I suppose you're right. We'll have to manage the rest of it. Selina get your pen and thank Miss Pocahontas for her invitation, and say you accept with pleasure."

Miss Pocahontas herself was at the Eadston station on the following Friday afternoon to meet Selina. The carriage and horses and colored coachman in livery waiting for them outside were all old and handsome and well preserved. The town as they drove through it was old, too, but not so well preserved.

"As though our forefathers planned and builded for us better than we deserve," Miss Pocahontas said in speaking of this. She seemed to regret it and to make a point of it.

A covered wooden bridge across the river dividing the town seemed older than anything else. Indeed Miss Pocahontas herself and Selina, as the carriage rolled echoingly across this bridge, full of laughter and pretty exchange of confidences, alone seemed young of all the staid and sleepy place. For the square, brick house they came to presently, on a street of big, square houses, its yard running down to this same river, was old too, and its box hedges

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and its purple beeches were old with it.



**"A covered wooden bridge across the river ... seemed older than anything else."**

And within the house the big rooms, both above and below stairs, were filled with old furniture, and mahogany at that, not sent to the junk-shop or the attic either, but cared for and revered and openly treasured. And as for other old things there were old portraits and old brasses and old andirons, and soft-footed, pleasant-voiced old colored servants, two at least among them in spectacles and with white hair.

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There were old candle-sticks, old silver and old damask on the supper table later. The pale-gray dress of Miss Boswell the elder, who was tall and pleasing, trailed with a soft rustle, and the amber-toned dress of the younger Miss Boswell was cut low.

Selina's mother had strained a point and along with the new spring street dress, had made her a soft chaille, white sprinkled over with pink rosebuds. Selina here at the Boswell table with it on, could not be too thankful!

When the meal was about half over, Miss Marcia Boswell laughed softly:

"I saw your Cousin Maria Buxton last week, Selina. She was down here in Eadston for the day to pay her taxes and took her dinner with us. She reminded me that your aunt as a girl, once was here overnight with her to a dance. She also made me admit what I've supposed all these years was hidden in my maiden breast. Which is, that when she and I and your Aunt Ann Eliza Wistar were sixteen—Ann Eliza spent a good deal of her time up here with Maria in those days—we all three were in love with the desperation of love at sixteen, with John Buxton, the father of your Culpepper. He married at twenty according to his own bent and not ours. Maria of course got him later after they were both free again. Maria usually holds to her point pretty well, as I suggested to her when she twitted me the other day. And even with two daughters of her own by her first husband, if she has a downright weakness, and she admits it herself, it's for her stepson by John Buxton, your Culpepper."

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"Why," said Selina, quickly, "if Auntie's really foolish about any one person in the world, it's Culpepper."

"Better and better," laughed Miss Marcia Boswell, altogether a delightful personage. "I'll be ready when next they come twitting me."

The next day Miss Pocahontas and Selina in a pretty phaeton, drove about the town with its old state buildings, and out the road along the cliffs overlooking the river.

"Tell me about the teaching," Miss 'Hontas asked. "How does it go? Are you satisfied that it's the right thing?"

Selina flushed, hesitated and opened her heart. "It's the only thing I can do as far as I can see, if it paid better. My little boys seem to be getting along pretty well. But it don't pay at all, especially when I have to ride in bad weather. I can't talk much about it at home, Mamma and Auntie don't understand, and take it



out in disliking the mothers of my little boys. And I don't seem to know how to find anything better for next year."

She hesitated, her gaze up the canyon of the rushing river winding between its cliffs of limestone softened with April verdure. She had seen little of any scenery before! "You're so practical and so definite, Miss 'Hontas, you and Miss Boswell, too. Auntie thinks it's terrible to make personal remarks, and I beg your pardon, but I envy it so."

"I'm not practical, I'm afraid, my dear, as you'll find. Look at the town there below us, Selina, nestling in its hollow? I'm a bit overenthusiastic instead. But perhaps what you see in Aunt Marcia and myself is the result of depending on ourselves for a good many years. My father died alone with me in Rome when I was fifteen, and my mother had died shortly before. Aunt Marcia and I have our own means and look after them."

The next day, on Sunday afternoon, Miss Pocahontas had callers: Mr. Mason, a bluff young man who let it be understood his interests were horses and in a milder degree the new stables he was building on his stock-farm, and Mr. Huger who talked in a prosperous way of the tobacco market and the present dullness in business. One could not associate either of them in mind with Miss 'Hontas.

After these callers were gone, Miss 'Hontas went upstairs to her sitting-room to write a note to a Miss Diana Talbot. Why she mentioned this name, Selina did not quite see, but later on she was to understand.

She went up to this sitting-room, too, at Miss Pocahontas' suggestion, and finding a seat on the broad white window-sill, not far from the desk, looked out on the gravel paths and the box edgings and the beds of jonquils and tulips in the garden sloping down to the river.

Presently Miss Pocahontas laid down her pen and rather tenderly studied the slim figure in the rosebud chaille on the window-seat.

"And what now?" she asked with the smile in her eyes she seemed to keep there for Selina, as this person turned.

"Mr. Huger was speaking of Marcus, Miss 'Hontas, after he heard he was my cousin. He said what jolly good company men found him. I wouldn't have thought Marcus was such a good mixer? Miss 'Hontas, do you suppose another thing is true? From something Marcus said to me, I fancy he writes verse."

Miss Pocahontas laughed outright: "And you have not grasped yet, or will not, my little friend, that your cousin is a really and easily clever person—even to cultivating Mr. Huger, who is prominent and might be useful? Since you say he intimated it, why, yes, he writes verse, writes bits of it even to me. The Austin Dobson its prophet sort of thing my share is, light but clever and graceful, the ballade, the triolet, the rondeau. I even have tried my hand at it under his tutelage and encouragement myself," laughing.

Selina fingered a fold of her rosebud chaille and colored: "I don't believe I know Austin Dobson and I'm sure I don't know about the ballade, and the rest of what you mentioned."

When she heard more about these ballades and the rest and even was shown some attempts at them by Miss 'Hontas, smiling at herself as she did so, she was charmed. She had caught a new viewpoint, too! By play at these clever things of life, play which one puts a value on as play, life is made prettier! She and Maud and incidentally the others had gone at everything exaggeratedly and too in earnest! By taking self too seriously, you lay yourself open to ridicule! Ardent and dear Selina, she was sure she had it right now!

And so pleased was she, that when on her return home the next day the group gathered at her house in the evening to welcome her, she complained to them about the commonplaceness of the average intercourse and disclosed to them the more pleasing and different diversions of persons like Miss Pocahontas and Marcus.

The response, however, was not all that she could have hoped for.

"Since when this furore about Marcus?" inquired Culpepper, but then he always had refused ordinary grace to him, holding that he was a poseur.

"It was I always defending Marcus to you, up to now, Selina," said Maud with a show of truth.

"She complains of the commonplaceness of intercourse when you are here, Algy," said Mr. Cannon, "and when Tate, old man, is just

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through telling Miss Amanthus that no man can say wherein lies the significance of the fifth leg of the Assyrian bull."

"This poet person named Austin, and his masterpieces called Dobsons, make a note of 'em, Culpepper," directed Mr. Welling. "Some of us must try and qualify."

As the days went on, however, Marcus was not above being pleased by this new attitude from Selina. He met her downtown wearing her new spring hat, and the mail the next morning brought her a communication from him, penciled, off-hand as it were, on the back of an envelope, saying:

A broad-brimmed hat upon her head  
To shade her cheeks' sweet roses,  
A crown were fit, but she wore instead  
A broad-brimmed hat upon her head.  
I'll see her thus until I'm dead  
And darkness on me closes,  
A broad-brimmed hat upon her head,  
To shade her cheeks' sweet roses.

Selina discovering more and more that Marcus was sought for, and according to his fancy, went everywhere, felt even gratefully what these lines meant coming from him.

Again, on the day later in May when her little class was to close for the summer, she wore her new white piqué that she felt became her, to mark the occasion. When the hour came for saying good-bye to William Jr. and his three companions, they accompanied her to the Williams' front gate, then because it was to be a protracted farewell until fall, went with her to the corner.

As she was taking leave of them here with final conscientious admonitions in her capacity of their teacher, Tommy Bacon's younger brother, Tod, came along and stopped to ask her something about the barge picnic up the river, on for Friday. It was here that Marcus, out in that neighborhood in the quest of a book he had loaned, so he explained, came upon the group, Selina looking very well indeed in that new piqué which became her, being kissed in succession by four little boys, and Tod waiting until this be done, to walk along home with her.

That same afternoon's mail brought her another communication from Marcus, carelessly penciled in blue this time, which said:

The young she loves,  
The innocent doves,  
And her heart is quite tender, I ween,  
And little boys  
Are ceaseless joys  
Up from six all the way to sixteen.  
  
How she preaches,  
As she teaches  
With a glow in every feature,  
And they,  
Lack-a-day,  
Fall in love with their teacher!

There was no denying that it was pleasing, and Selina determined, if it was not lapsing too much into that overearnestness again, that she would put this and the preceding one from Marcus away with certain other treasures. There are kinds in straws to show the way the wind blew, that some day surely will be pleasing to bring forth and show, not alone to one's children but grandchildren. Maud did even more in this sort of prudential provisioning; she saved *all* illuminating and perhaps valuable data, lists of her reading, theater programs, dancing-cards with personal tributes in masculine writing upon them, so that if in time need should come for biographical matter concerning her, it would be there. And she frankly declared, too, that she had every enthusiastic and honorable intention that such material should be needed. But then one had learned not to pattern on Maud too closely!

At the close of Marcus' gratifying stanzas he had added a further line:

Had no idea until recently you were taking this thing of teaching and earning your way in earnest. Come down to my place at 3:30 to-day and see me.

By place, Marcus meant his office at the newspaper building. It

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was three o'clock when the postman left the note. When Mamma heard about it she demurred at first, saying it was no place for a young girl to be going, but when Selina pointed out that she had only to go up a stairway opening on the street to a door at its head, she gave way.

"Put on your spring suit and that jabot I made you to show at the throat of your jacket when you went up to Eadston," she directed, "and wear your best gloves and your good hat. No, the piqué won't do, Selina; a business office calls for wool street clothes."

"And let us hope he'll be there when you get there," said Auntie. "It's mighty little dependence I ever put on Marcus."

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## CHAPTER THIRTEEN

Marcus was there when Selina arrived, actually and for once in the place at the time he said he would be. A bare floor, a shabby desk, three wooden-bottom chairs, and a framed cartoon of Marcus himself hanging on the wall, was the whole of it.

He arose as Selina came in and an elderly lady seated in the second of the three chairs looked at her with expectant interest.

"This is my Cousin Selina, Miss Diana Talbot."

Selina saw a plump, comely and cheerful person in comfortably sensible dress, mantle and bonnet. It may be interpolated that what Miss Diana Talbot saw was an ardent-faced, pretty girl in a plaid skirt and plain jacket, a hat with roses, and a manner bright with interest and interrogation.

The ladies shook hands.

"Miss Talbot has plans afoot to open a school in the autumn," said Marcus, "and Miss Pocahontas Boswell has done you the compliment to propose that she consider you as a teacher. Miss Talbot also on the recommendation of the elder Miss Boswell and her niece, has come from her part of the state to have me advise with her about her advertisements and her prospectus."



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**"Marcus was there when Selina arrived."**

Miss Diana Talbot took up the narrative cheerily: "Miss Boswell and Pocahontas and I were at the same small hotel in Florida this winter. Pocahontas goes down with her aunt every year. I am returning South later in the summer to open a winter school for girls whose health requires they winter in the South, and whose parents are anxious their schooling be continued. I will say the idea was suggested to me by an acquaintance of the winter staying at the hotel with his family, a Mr. Ealing from our part of the state. His two daughters are the nucleus of my school, in fact my first enrollments. Pocahontas has suggested I let her look after my French and music this first year as she has to be South anyway. And she tells me that she has satisfied herself that you can coach beginners in Latin and algebra, hear classes in the lower branches and be of use to me in a secretarial way. I should say I have taken the hotel where we were staying, for my school. The proprietor died and it seemed opportune."

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After further conversation and an appointment for a second meeting with Selina, Miss Talbot left. Resuming his seat before his desk with his long person outstretched in relaxation, Marcus smiled with lazy satisfaction over at Selina, flushed prettily with excitement.

She was glad to have this word with him: "If it turned out by chance that I could go, would it cost much to get me there, Marcus?"

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To—to Florida?" Her voice almost broke on the magic of the word.

"Ticket, sleeper, meals, trunk, something in your pocket to start you on—a hundred or more dollars at least. I tell you though, Selina," Marcus actually roused himself and sat up emphatically, "you must make it. The longer I look at it, the more I can see it is just what you need. I haven't an idea but Pocahontas sees this in it for you, too, in proposing it. A little contact with the larger world, a little assertion and standing on your own two feet will do everything for you. Aunt Lavinia and good Miss Ann Eliza, as I've said before, keep you a baby, whereas naïveté can come to be downright irritating, and so can lack of sophistication. Break away, Selina, and find yourself now."

There was that in this unfamiliar view of herself through Marcus' estimate which hurt, and she went away silent.

Precedent and training had done all they might to make intercourse between Selina and her father strained and unnatural. She could remember when she was a bit of a thing, how on taking a pricked finger to him for attention, she had been snatched away as from an act of impiety, by womenkind, Mamma or Auntie, for womankind to attend it, and somehow the episode seemed typical.

To open confidence with your father was as desperate a violation of custom as to be immodest, and she had not forgotten the embarrassment of going to him for money for her teaching venture of the winter, even after her mother had opened the way. It came to her now that such a relation between a daughter and father was a bit shocking.

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**"She went to her father."**

That night after her mother and her aunt were gone together to Wednesday evening service, she went to her father who was reading his paper as usual in the back parlor, and spoke quickly before her courage could fail her.

"You—you have been giving me five dollars a month for my carfare and change since I began teaching, Papa. And through Mamma you are paying for my clothes. Isn't it a losing business for you? I've only been giving Mamma the sixteen dollars I make a month, for Aunt Viney, and that's over with for the summer now."

"Instead of keeping the sixteen dollars for your carfare and incidentals and such?" smiled Papa, perhaps a little embarrassed, too, at the trend of the conversation. "Won't you sit down, Selina?"

"But it seems so much more to Mamma and Auntie to have it come from me this way."

"I bow to the processes in feminine logic more intricate than I can follow," agreed Papa. "And what then, Selina?"

For a moment she almost abandoned the affair, then rallied: "Would you be willing to advance more, Oh, a great deal more, all of —" Selina nerved herself desperately, cold to her pretty finger-tips

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with the effort of it, "—yes, a hundred dollars, if you thought good could come to me of it?"

"Willing always, Selina; able is another thing. It is not easy for a father to confess to his daughter that as a business proposition he is a failure."

"Papa!"

"Yes, Selina."

The very necessity to get away from the horribly painful embarrassment of this drove her on. "I have a chance to go away and teach, I can be a help then by earning something worth while. Marcus thinks it wise, Marcus says I ought to go, that I need to develop in self-reliance and——"

"Marcus be—" began Papa and stopped.

The story came forth at this with a rush of detail. "And, Papa, to be a whole, whole winter with Miss 'Hontas, under the same roof, doing the same things! I love her so, Papa, I love her!"

There were further questionings from him and answers from Selina and something in his sensitive face as he watched her while she talked, drove her to seek justification.

"There is so much in the world, isn't there, Papa? And I haven't seen anything of it yet? Not anything!"

By the time that Miss Diana Talbot was ready to return home several days later, it was settled that Selina should go South in October and teach for the winter in her school.

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## CHAPTER FOURTEEN

Mamma cried right along through the summer about it, and as the time began to approach, Auntie stopped eating and grew pale. Culpepper had gone home in June without knowing anything about the plan just then afoot, and here at this point, late in August, an invitation came down from Cousin Maria Buxton for Auntie and Selina to visit her.

"There's too much to do and to plan getting Selina ready," decided Mamma, "and there'd be the extra expense of it to consider. I don't see how it can be arranged, do you, Ann Eliza?"

"I'll write and say so," said Auntie.

"And I think, Selina," from her mother, "it would be only polite for you to slip a note in your aunt's letter thanking your Cousin Maria for asking you."



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**"Selina ... sat down to write her note."**

Selina got her pen and paper and sat down to write her note, then paused and fell to dreaming. She saw Cousin Maria's farm, three thousand acres she believed it was, orderly, productive and prosperous. In her mind's eye it lay in zones, as it were, the outer boundary being the old stone wall along the encircling limestone pike; the tilled fields came next, of hemp, tobacco, corn and what not; the middle zone between these tilled fields and the houseyard was the wide-spreading, park-like woodland pastures; and heart of it all, reached through the big stone-pillared iron gate, was the house in its houseyard, with the garden behind. She loved this house of her Cousin Maria's, set in lilac and syringa shrubberies, a one-storied white brick, wide and ample and flanked by wings, with big gallery porches front and back, and beneath a high basement containing kitchen, laundry, storerooms and the farm offices. In recall Selina saw Cousin Maria now, too, comely like Auntie, surveying her capably and appraisingly as she welcomed her, had she and Auntie gone. And she saw Culpepper, too, as it were at Cousin Maria's side as they welcomed her, regarding her quizzically.

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Cousin Maria and the farm and Culpepper, seemed to stand visualized thus in her mind, symbol for some suddenly defined thing. Was it the best of the old things? The worth while of the established things?

Then she thought swiftly of the vista opening to her of the unknown, with Miss Pocahontas and her outstretched hand awaiting, and her heart leaped!

She began her letter and after thanking her Cousin Maria for the invitation, went on to state her plans.

I want you to know, Cousin Maria, and Culpepper as well, that I'm

going away about the end of September to Florida to teach, with Miss Diana Talbot who says she knows you, and with Miss Pocahontas Boswell. It's not only to try to help myself and so make it easier for them here at home, but because I want to go so badly I can't pretend this feature of it doesn't come first. I say this because Culpepper would see through me and say it for me if I didn't. Papa knows this part of it and sympathizes, and I'm a little afraid Mamma and Auntie suspect it and don't, as Mamma, for one, cries so about it most of the time, it makes it hard, but I can't feel it possible for me to be unselfish enough now to give it up.

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Culpepper came down a week before it was necessary for his return to the law school, to see about this thing of Selina going away as he put it to Auntie bluntly. He walked in one evening big and sunburned and bold and blatant with health and stored energy and conviction.

It was the first week in September and hot and he found the household, Mamma, Auntie and Selina sitting out on the stone steps in the starlight, Papa inside reading his paper, the aroma of his cigar floating out.

"What does it all mean?" Culpepper without preamble demanded of the older ladies—"this thing Selina wrote about of going away to teach? Keep still, Selina, we know your side of it."

"And mine, I hope, Culpepper," came out through the open doorway from Papa reading under the gas-jet in the hall. "Kindly accept the fact that I am aiding and abetting her. She came to her father this time first."

Mamma, coming in on this tearfully, was most emphatic: "I blame Marcus, blame him entirely. He's Juanita's own child for stirring up trouble or trying to, for other people. He defended himself to my face by saying I had kept Selina so overyoung for her years she's almost ridiculous, and that he's trying to help her to find what I've deprived her of, her right to be a reasoning and thinking human creature." Mamma produced her pocket handkerchief.

"Juanita herself came around with him," said Auntie aggrievedly. "She'd better have stayed at home and mended her clothes. Her skirt was without a braid and frayed, and two buttons were gone from the front of her waist. Instead she told us that if we of the older generation didn't face the demands of the present younger one, it simply means they'll cut us out of their working plans and repudiate us. Don't ask me what she meant. You've heard Juanita. And she said the time was at hand and was ripe and she was warning us. What time she didn't specify. That she hadn't been prophesying to her sex all these years not to know the signs now they were here. She talked like an altogether determined and fanatical person, and with no more sense to it than just what I say, but then Juanita's talk is always more or less that way."

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"Marcus, of course! I might have guessed he was in it," said Culpepper with small patience. But then these two never had struck it off anyway, neither ever willing to concede a thing to the other, Maud always said. "It's a fool proposition, I beg your pardon, Cousin Robert, since you say you're in it, but I'm with Cousin Lavinia and ole Miss here, every time. If Selina's got to teach, she'd better teach for less here at home where we all can look after her."

He spoke to Selina presently, suggesting they take a walk about the block. He began to question her almost as soon as they were started, the dry sycamore leaves on the pavement crackling under their feet. This Selina by his side was scant eighteen now.

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"It's true then, what you wrote in your letter? That it's you who want to go? You're thinner than you were and you're pale. Stop here under the gas post and let me look at you. What's it all about?"

He seemed almost to be making an issue of her wanting to go. She colored in the dark with a feeling of vague uneasiness that she was about to disappoint and hurt him by what she must say. And yet when she once was started, she amazed herself by the actual passion with which she spoke.

"It's like rosy beckoning fingers, Culpepper, and sweet odors I've longed for, and food and drink I'm desperate for. It's not Florida or Kalamazoo or Keokuk nor any other definite spot, Culpepper. I've thought about it and I know. It's the unknown. It must sound to you that I'm talking wildly and foolishly, but I won't allow it's either of those and I won't allow I'm to blame."

He dropped her arm from his at this, and walked back to her gate beside her with no further word.



"Good night," then he said. And yet he had asked her for her point of view upon it! She had always thought Culpepper fair!

Later in September Cousin Maria Buxton came down for a week's visit and shopping, and brought Selina a dress to add to her outfit for the warm climate. Cousin Maria was solid and handsome, as said before; her hair, still black, was parted and banded down to her ears about her strong and healthily florid face and her black eyes surveyed the world capably. The morning after her arrival she came into Mamma's room from her own room adjoining, which really was Auntie's, with the garment in question just taken from her trunk, hanging over her arm.

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"It's a dress made last spring for one of Alice's girls. She's never had it on. They have so many they outgrow them before they get around to them."

Alice was one of Cousin Maria's two daughters by her first husband. She had married a prominent stock-farmer in her part of the state and was rich. The other had married a tobacco farmer and was rich likewise.

"Lavinia," pleaded Auntie, remindingly.

"I had said Selina never should wear finery again not her own," explained Mamma.

"Well, isn't it her own?" returned Cousin Maria emphatically, "and haven't you and Ann Eliza been playing mothers to my Culpepper? Come now, Lavinia, I shall be downright put out. Ann Eliza, you may as well give in."

As for Selina herself, standing by, the good ladies, as was their custom, never for a moment thought of allowing her a voice in the discussion at all!

It was a dear dress that she, used to being obedient, here was bidden to try on, just as Cousin Anna Tomlinson happening by, came upstairs. There was not much to it, though in that perhaps lay its appeal. Scant and slip-like, with a show of her pretty throat, and a show, too, of her slim nice ankles, it consisted of hand needlework on a texture of limp mull.

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"Like our India muslins when we were young," Auntie was obliged to allow to Cousin Maria with satisfaction.

"Made by the sisters here in the convent on Madeleine Street," said Cousin Maria.

"I always meant to give Selina gold beads," said Cousin Anna.

"Why don't you give 'em then?" from Cousin Maria. "Selina, you look dear. With ankle-strap slippers and your finger in your mouth the way you had to be spanked out of, you'd seem about seven again. That's right, look pleased."

It was Mrs. Gwinne Tuttle, however, of all unpremeditated persons!—who gave Selina beads. She came trundling in just here to pay a visit to Auntie and her lifelong friend, Cousin Maria, leaving her carriage at the curb. Hearing voices upstairs, she came mounting up.

"As if Ann Eliza and Maria and I hadn't slept three in a bed in order to stay together, many a Friday night in our young days," she reminded Mamma. "I'd better add, we all were thinner then. Selina, that dress is something more like what it should be than the ones Anna here and Madame Vincent put on you and me. So you are going South, they tell me, with Pocahontas and my old friend, Marcia Boswell? I wish Pocahontas would make up her mind whom she's going to marry and do it. Huger with all his tobacco money, wants her, I hear, Maria, and young Mason, the jockey club's biggest man, is after her. Marcus Bruce is on her string, too, they tell me. She's too charming a person to grow restless and faddish, imagining she wants occupation and not a husband! That dress, Selina, with its round neck, needs beads."

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There came a murmur from Cousin Anna.

"Well, who's keeping you from giving gold ones, Anna?" inquired Mrs. Tuttle. "I'm going to send Selina some beads on my own account. I owe her on a score she and I know about. I was tried that night of the musicale, Selina; two of my best soloists had failed me, and I can't seem to stand a person being apologetic and deprecatory anyhow. Why didn't you rise to it and tell me what you thought of me? My beads, Anna, are going to be coral, the coral of Selina's cheeks right now. The ingenue style of the dress and of Selina, call for coral."

"When a girl is young," said Cousin Maria, "I say have her look

young."

"She does, Maria," returned Mrs. Tuttle. "Selina looks altogether young. She's pretty, too, and it's not going to hurt her to know it. It'll do her good instead, and give her spirit. I'm going down street and choose my corals now."

After Mrs. Tuttle and Cousin Anna both were gone, Cousin Maria broke forth: "I hope Diana Talbot isn't going to make a fiasco of her legacy with this school venture."

"We haven't heard anything about a legacy," said Mamma. "We liked Miss Diana very much when she called twice. She seemed very cheerful and certain about the school, and has offered Selina thirty-five dollars a month and her board and washing. She herself and the Episcopal minister at the place, so she said, are to teach the advanced classes."

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"Diana is as cheerfully volatile and heady as the rest of the Talbots," claimed Cousin Maria. "They are in the county next to ours and I've known 'em always. Old Tom Talbot, the grandfather, built the first brandy distillery in the state in order to distill brandy from beets. Why, with corn everywhere and fortunes, too, to be made in sour-mash whisky, only a Talbot could say. He failed, of course, and later set out vineyards for claret on land that held fortunes in Burley tobacco. He had traveled and read too much to be practical, old Tom Talbot had."

"Why, of course," chimed in Auntie, "I remember the stories of *him*. He thought once he'd succeeded in making silk thread for weaving from milk-weed."

"It's in the blood," said Cousin Maria. "Bulkley Talbot, Tom's son, and Diana's father, had his craze planting yucca to make rope fiber with all his wife's inherited acres crying to God and nature for hemp. Diana's been kept down until now by her brothers who both married level-headed women who have kept them steady in harness themselves. In turn they've frowned down Diana until this last year when she came into a legacy of some several thousand dollars from an aunt. Immediately she disbanded the little school she had taught for half her life in her home town, and last fall went South. She said our winters were beginning to give her rheumatism and she was going down to sit on the equator or some of its tributaries and think things over. They tell me she has leased this hotel for two years, and I know she has had her school furniture shipped. I don't mean to discourage you, Selina. Diana is one of my old friends. In one sense you'll be as safe with her as with your mother here, or with Ann Eliza or myself. And I must say, too, I agree with Emmeline Tuttle that it looks freakish in Pocahontas to drag her aunt down there this early in the season that she may go to teaching when she doesn't have to. Young women didn't indulge in restlessness in my day."

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## CHAPTER FIFTEEN

It seemed as though everyone wanted to do something for Selina as the time drew near. Marcus stopped by one morning about a week before she was to go. He had added a carelessly floating tie to his make-up of cape and old hat, and his manner was even more easily negligent.

"Tell Uncle Robert not to do anything about a ticket for you, Selina. The matter's as good as settled and I stopped to tell you I have a pass for you."

This was news so astounding that Mamma on hearing it, lost her head. "Then we will get that piece of white opera cloth, Ann Eliza, and make her the evening cape she needs so badly. There'll be money enough for it now."

Selina had not forgotten a certain extravagance she longed for. "And those ankle-strap slippers, Mamma, may I have them?"

Maud brought her a letter portfolio, Juliette a little crêpe scarf, Adele a case for photographs and Amanthus the dearest bangle for her bracelet, if she'd owned a bracelet. Amanthus didn't always remember things. The four came in a body with their gifts and stood about amid the litter of preparation and packing, with embarrassment, almost with wistfulness.

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At last Maud broke forth. Judy and Adele flushed as she spoke and Amanthus looked disturbed, but they evidently all stood with her in what she said. "We've been talking about you, Selina. It's as if we still need you and you no longer need us. And watching you, we can see you're different in other ways. You've been giving in, just as you've always given in more than any of us, letting your mother get you the clothes she wants you to have rather than what you want, and pack your trunk when we know how you want to pack it yourself. You're just the same in this way *seemingly*, but in reality you're not the same at all. You know now that you want your own way about the clothes, and you know you want to pack your trunk. You've been slower coming to it than any of the rest of us, except Amanthus, who hasn't any idea what I'm talking about now, and probably never will have. Her mother or her husband or somebody'll always pack her trunks and she'll thank them beautifully and sweetly and mean it. But you *know* now you want to do it all for yourself, and it makes you different. And we've had to decide you don't need *us*, because you've made all your plans and arrived at your decisions without us?"

Selina looked from one to the other of them. Was it so? Did she not need them as in the past? She did not know herself. Certainly it was true that she passionately did want to pack her own trunk! How did they guess? What could she say to them? She embraced them all in turn, and kissed them tenderly.

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Mr. Tate came round a full day too soon in his dates with roses for her to take on the journey, and Mr. Cannon brought her all the latest magazines. Mr. Welling came with a volume of what he explained were Dobsons by that fellow Austin. Mr. Welling was a wag.

"I'm sorry none of us have been able to qualify, Miss Selina, and this has to be the best I can do for you. There are *rondeaux* in it, I can vouch for that for I've looked to see, and I'm suspicious there are dittoes. But unfortunately there are not *batteaux* which would mean more in a place like Florida. But then, of course, you'll have Miss Tippecanoe," by which name he invariably spoke of Miss Pocahontas.

A dearth in news, or indeed in communication of any sort from Miss Diana, began to prove worrying as the day before leaving arrived, and a telegram was sent to Miss Pocahontas for reassurance.

By night her reply came:

Have wired Miss Talbot, and had answer. Expected on original date.

Miss Boswell and Miss 'Hontas were to leave Eadston in the late afternoon. Selina was to start in the early evening and meet them at one o'clock that night at the junction where she would board their train.

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This very day, Selina's trunk locked and her satchel ready, Aunt Juanita stopped by with a message. It was a mercy she remembered

to deliver it.

"Marcus finds he is not going to get that pass; he asked me yesterday to let you know. He put off his application until too late, but he says he can arrange for a lower rate, and to tell Robert it will be about half. And he does hope, Selina, you are going to be self-reliant and not make too many demands on Pocahontas, who is a sacrifice to her aunt and her aunt's asthma now."

Selina sat up straight and indignant. She really liked that. And from Marcus who had insisted on her going!

Her mother began to worry as soon as Aunt Juanita left. "I'm sorry now I took any of that money from you your father gave you this morning for yourself, and paid the bill for your cape while I was down street, Selina, but your father has been so bothered to get as much together, we won't mention it to him. It isn't as if you wouldn't shortly be earning money for yourself."

Cousin Anna came by here. "Willoughby wanted me to give you some money for a present outright, Selina. But I said no—that fifty dollars is a good deal for you to feel free to spend. I am putting that much in your hands, however. I have it here with me now, for you to hold in case of any emergency. Giving it to you with such an understanding we'll know you have funds if need arises."

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Everybody went to the train in the evening, Mamma, Auntie, Papa, the girls, Culpepper, Mr. Cannon, Mr. Welling, Bliss, Algy even, and Tommy Bacon. Papa had seen Marcus late in the afternoon who said he would meet them at the station with the ticket as he was having a little trouble getting it fixed up and that he wanted to see Selina off anyhow.

Five minutes before train time, with Selina's trunk waiting to be checked and everybody agitated since it was known that Marcus was to bring the ticket, there came, not this person at all, but a messenger boy with an envelope, calling Wistar as he came through the gate, a privilege which everybody enjoyed comfortably and at will in those days.

Well, it was here at any rate, the ticket, and Papa, his face dark with suppressed rage, jerked out, not a ticket at all, but a scribbled line from Marcus which Selina caught as her father flung it from him, and read at a hurried glance while he in a quick undertone asked for her purse to supplement his.

Cheaper rates out of the question. They tell me the regular tickets are on sale at the station.

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"She ... stood looking at them grouped below."

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While her father was gone to see about ticket and baggage, everybody else boarded the train with Selina, only to be hustled off almost immediately by the porter. Her kisses to Mamma and Auntie even were curtailed. She hurried with them as far as the rear platform of her coach, and stood looking at them grouped below, a somewhat bereft young figure had she but known it, up there alone, pale and startled now the actual moment of going was come. And she looked pretty, too, in her new skirt and jacket of blue, with her traveling veil, also new, flung back; quite too pretty and visibly inexperienced to be starting off alone.

"That change at the junction by herself in the middle of the night, I don't like it," insisted Mrs. Wistar down on the platform.

Auntie, when deeply moved, became cross. "What's the use bringing that up now?" she demanded tartly. "You've known about it all along."

"The train's off and where's the ticket?" cried Maud.

"Oh, where?" from Juliette and Adele.

Selina's father running down the platform here and swinging up the step to her with ticket and trunk check in his hand as the train began to move, met Culpepper swinging up by the steps from the other side. There was a look of determination on the older man's face. It was evident that at this last moment he didn't like the idea of that change for her at the junction either.

"You needn't," said Culpepper tersely, taking the ticket and check from him. "My mind has been made up all the time, I am."

"On the contrary, I——"

"Cousin Robert!"

The eyes of the two met. "Exactly," said the younger, "now will you let me go? Reassure ole Miss and her mother. She has to sign that ticket somewhere, doesn't she?"

And Culpepper helped his Cousin Robert swing off the now briskly moving train, and he and Selina saw him go back along the platform and join the others.

At 1:45 Culpepper put Selina, ticket, satchel, umbrella, candy-box, roses, magazine and lunch basket, into the actual hands of Miss Pocahontas Boswell, up and at the steps of the sleeper to receive her.

"She's the only thing in the way of a Selina, such as it is, we've got, you know," he remarked cheerfully.

"I know, and I'll see she is returned to you such as I take her, except my own part in her which I propose holding," said Miss Pocahontas smiling, too. "When do you get a train back?"

"Four in the morning," from Culpepper genially.

"He brought me here to the junction to you," Selina told Miss Pocahontas in the dressing-room a bit later as that dear person assisted her to get ready for her berth, "and took every sort of care of me. But he was blunt. He wouldn't even talk."

"Why not?" from Miss 'Hontas, plaiting Selina's heavy flaxen hair.

"He didn't want me to want to come so much," said Selina, neither very lucidly nor elegantly, she felt.

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## CHAPTER SIXTEEN

Thirty-six hours later, Miss Diana Talbot in a comfortably sensible white dress, with a triangle of lace cap on her portly head, stood at the top of the porch-steps of her leased hotel of white clap-boards, the same set in a flanking of moss-draped live oaks with a nice blue lake behind.

From the station omnibus at the foot of these steps, with their eyes taking in this pleasing picture of establishment, descended Miss Marcia Boswell, tall and quietly distinguished, Miss Pocahontas, charming and smiling, and Selina in the jaunty new skirt and jacket of blue and the back-flung veil, flushed and altogether lovely, her young eyes dewy with something of joy and more of big and eager wonder.

Miss Diana's countenance as they came up the steps to her, however, was by no means so comfortable in its aspect as her comely person. It looked absorbed and anxious, nor did she mince matters nor hesitate in confiding them. Such was not her way.

"My dears," she announced, "it is ghastly. Not an application, not an entry but those two original Ealings. Everything in readiness for an ideal winter school for delicate girls, but the pupils. I thought best to break it to you at once!"

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Following an early supper, Miss Diana, the Boswells and Selina gathered on the wide gallery along the south side of the charming old clap-board hotel. The immediate point to decide was, what was to be done? Selina swallowed hard, and then regained herself. She was a little lady, Mamma and Auntie's care had made her that, to give them their dues, and her private troubles now were her private troubles and must be regarded by her as such. She was the favored young friend of the Boswells, and Miss Talbot's guest, but not their first nor their chief consideration even under the circumstances, nor must she expect to be. Miss Pocahontas as though divining something of the nature of Selina's thoughts, leaned across from her chair at this point and took the pretty hand. It threatened to unnerve again, but once more Selina regained herself, and this time to steady herself further, looked about her from her place on the broad and lovely gallery.

Close at hand the giant live-oaks that overtopped the roof above, trailed their ghost-beard mosses palely, the fruit on an ancient orange tree crowding the gallery rail, gleamed russet-golden and the water of the shimmering and irregularly wandering blue lake, a hitherto undreamed-of turquoise, quivered silver under the rising moon, and rippled rose beneath the flush from sunset lingering high in the sky. Beyond the lake's farther, darkly verdued shore, a feathered palm tree stood a cheek the evening star, and a huge, stork-like bird, its long legs dangling, its white body rose-tinged with the sunset flush like the lake, rose heavily from somewhere and flapped across the scene! And again, this afternoon on a brisk walk into town to the post-office, Miss Pocahontas with Selina at her side, had bowed smilingly to half a dozen delightful looking acquaintances in high traps and buckboards, the men in pith helmets, the women with veils twisted about straw sailors! It was Florida!

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Florida, the pale-yellow lady-finger on the geography page! The breeze which kissed Selina's pretty cheek was from the Atlantic to the east, that Atlantic which she was to see at Miss 'Hontas' first opportunity. The Gulf of Mexico which she was to see at Christmas, was to the west. And, she, Selina, with Papa and Mamma and Auntie far away and maybe thinking of her, was on the narrow strip of map between. The quiver that ran through her at the realization that it was she, Selina Wistar, who was here, closed her soft hands convulsively. And the quiver at sudden recall of what she was about to hear of her prospects for remaining here, opened and closed them again more convulsively.

Miss Diana, as has been said, had gathered them out here on the gallery to give them her whole dismaying confidence. "I've got the lease and little more," she now was stating, "I've spent my money getting ready. What am I to do with the Ealings when they get here to-morrow night? And what am I to do about this dear child, Selina? I couldn't say the school wasn't going to materialize until it didn't."

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Was Miss Talbot but an elderly, sanguine, impractical child herself?

Miss Boswell, the elder, on her part was a gently sensible lady. "Propose to Mr. Ealing that he let Selina tutor his daughters; and they, she, Pocahontas and myself, and anyone else you can get, board with you until you can dispose of the lease."

It cheered them all. Selina breathed in fresh courage at the respite. "Make yourself look as dear as you can when they arrive tomorrow, Selina, so Papa Ealing will not be able to withstand you," said Miss Pocahontas, "and we'll have our winter together here in Florida after all."

When the time came Selina did her best, then from the upstairs gallery where she had been told to wait, saw the Ealings arrive. The father, a prosperous stock-breeder and horseman, so she had been told, led the way from the 'bus, big and florid in person, the daughters following as it were in his shadow. The resolute tones of Miss Diana who awaited them at the head of the steps, breaking the news with her characteristic promptness, came up to Selina.

"And I should feel even more responsible about hoping to the last moment and thus unwittingly allowing you to start before I wired you," she ended, "if I could not offer a substitute plan with Miss Wistar of my proposed faculty for a tutor!"

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The Ealings coming upstairs with Miss Talbot a few minutes later, by an entire miscalculation on Miss Wistar's part, met this person coming down. Miss Diana at once presented her.

"Miss Wistar, Mr. Ealing and the Misses Ealing, the member of my faculty about whom I was speaking."

The Misses Ealing crowding upon their father's heels, as everybody paused on the landing, were large and heavy girls with pallid skins and peevish countenances. Miss Wistar on the contrary, in Cousin Maria's limp mull, with ankle-strap slippers below and corals above, looked dear—appallingly, ruthlessly dear!

"Good God!" said the florid Mr. Ealing, more startled than offensive, poor man, he was having considerable to bother him just at the moment, too. "Mine are fillies, but this one's a sucking colt."

Selina in her own room later, her vaunted self-control altogether gone now, wept piteously against the shoulder of Miss Pocahontas.

"You are to stay and visit Aunt Marcia and me, since the stupid Ealings will not have you," Miss Pocahontas comforted her confidently. "Oh, yes you are. It's all decided. And didn't I get you down here? Listen a bit before you shake your head so vigorously. Why should you not, Selina, for all your nice independence, my dear, when I tell you I shall probably marry your Cousin Marcus some day?"

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"She shall stay so long as I have a boarder to keep the roof over me," said Miss Diana coming in on the heels of this. "I hold myself justly responsible for this child."

Selina shook her head again, lifting it from the dear shoulder of Miss Pocahontas to do so. Truly she *was* a little lady, Mamma and Auntie again must have their dues. "I came to earn my way. I'm sure they would say so at home. I've just written."

That night Miss 'Hontas came in to Selina, already in bed, slim, pretty, flaxen-crowned child that she was, in one of her new nighties, fruit of Auntie's skill, tucks hand-run, ruffles about the soft, young throat, rolled and whipped and lace-edged, and sat beside her, and smoothed her hand and talked to her about many things. About character and sweetness and bravery and courage and even some other things, which she said she found in her little friend to love and admire, and—about Marcus!

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**"Miss 'Hontas came in ... and talked to her about many things."**

"You are hard on him right now, Selina, and won't admit you are glad I am going to marry him. And as I don't propose to have you feel so, and as you and I are always going to mean a great deal to each other, I want to show him to you as I see him and always have seen him. It won't hurt you now to begin to see life a little more as it is, my own little girl. We women—I mean you by this, too—have to accept our measure for the part in life we are allowed to fill, through what our fathers are if we remain at home, or through what our husbands are, or come to be, if we marry. Fix that in your consciousness right now. I doubt if this is fair, or if it is going to content us as a sex much longer, witness my indictment of it for one. But it's the best that is done for us at present. Our grandfathers and their fathers were merchants and lawyers and farmers; one of mine sold rope, the other raised tobacco. But if we believe tradition here in the South, and the homes they left us seem to prove it, they were something of scholars and thinkers and travelers as well, citizens more or less of the world and public servants, too. And here's my point I've been getting to, Selina. Patience a bit longer, my dear! The men of my class that I have happened to know best in my home town and my state, are merchants and lawyers and stock-raisers, too, like their forefathers, but nothing more. Am I insufferable? I've kept it buried in my bosom so far. I know it's the necessities of the South since the war have made it so, but still I'd come to be murderous, or drive my unfortunate yoke-mate to be so, if I were to find myself inevitably confined within the round and horizon of any one of these men I have in mind. I'm quite horrid, and your mother would never lend you to me again if she heard me. But can't you gather now, something of why Marcus always has appealed to me, and will? Kiss me, Selina, and consider well whether you won't stay and be my guest as I do so want you. No? You are sure that at home they wouldn't agree to it?"

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Some two weeks later, on a cold, drizzling morning, Papa and Culpepper received their Selina from the steps of a sleeper.

"She's the only Selina we've got, such as she is, and we're glad to get her back," said Culpepper cheerfully.

"Mamma sent this old last year's heavy cloak, my precious," said Papa. "You're to be sure to put it on."

"Papa," said Selina, "let me tell you and I'll feel easier. It's what's worried me most. I had to use Cousin Anna's money to get here."

When Selina and her father reached home, Mamma was standing out on the unsheltered doorstep of the small squat house awaiting them, despite the drizzling rain. Selina had forgotten quite how tiny and worried-looking her mother was, and how shabby the house! In the background of the open doorway, close beyond Mamma, was Auntie, darling, comely Auntie.

"We've got her back," cried Mamma exultantly. "I never approved



of her going, not for one moment, in the least!"

"She's tried her wings; I see it in her face," said Auntie presciently and sadly. "Lavinia, mark me, she's going to find the old nest too small!"

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## CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

When Selina, after the manner of her Ponce de Leon, returned fruitless from her quest, not of the golden fountain of youth, but of the golden fleece of independence, the cotillion long planned by Mrs. Harrison for Amanthus was just over, but the reception by the Carters to introduce Adele to their friends was yet to be. Maud had accused Selina of being absorbed by her own affairs and her own altered point of view. As chance or purpose, as the case may be, was to have it, Selina was to become absorbed for a time in the respective points of view of her four friends.

"I have accepted the Carter invitations for your aunt and your father and myself," said her mother the morning after Selina's return, as pleased as could be about it. "Your aunt's black velvet is always distinguished and elegant; no one would imagine it was bought for your father's and my wedding. At that time I said—you remember that I did, Ann Eliza—'why do you get velvet and black at that? You're still a handsome girl.' And your reply was, Ann Eliza—do you remember it?—'I'll live up to it, never fear, Lavinia, I won't be a girl forever!'"

Mamma went on happily: "I've looked over my mauve grenadine, and by cutting the tails off the basque and buying new gloves, it will do. And speaking of buying reminds me, you must have underwear with some wool in it, coming up this way from almost the tropics."

"And maybe a little wool in her stockings, Lavinia, don't you think?" added Auntie anxiously, "though we're having wonderfully mild and protracted autumn weather for the first day of November, to be sure."

"Now that I think about it," amended Mrs. Wistar, "we can't put heavy underwear on her until after this Carter affair. You will recall my regrets for you at once, of course, Selina. I'm glad we made you that one unqualified evening dress."

"And cape," from Auntie.

By a seemingly tacit consent everyone was very nice about Selina's humiliating return.

"I don't want you to think about that fifty dollars now," said Cousin Anna, "and I don't want you to ask Robert to return it for you. Pay it when you can."

The girls came over promptly and in a bunch. They were tactful and considerate. Only Maud made any direct allusion to her friend's unhappy failure. "We all have our regrettable moments," she said largely, embracing Selina and kissing her tenderly, as Juliette and Amanthus and Adele in turn released her, "our humiliating moments, I may say, in regard to myself. The other day I told the most distinguished man, come to preach at our church and staying with us, that I always know everything written by him for *The Christian Herald*, by its academic touch, and then went and looked up academic in the dictionary." Generous Maud! It was her way of comforting!

"Mamma sends her love," said Amanthus, "so much love!"

"We can't be sorry we've got you back, and we hope you won't require it of us," said Judy, dear little Judy. But she looked listless and she said it without her usual animation. Did the others look at her a little anxiously, a little solicitously, perhaps, or did Selina imagine it?

"I'm such a disappointment to Mamma and Grandmamma, Selina," said Adele, "thus far in what they're pleased to call my social start. I'm the square peg in the round hole, as I see it myself. If it isn't my physical elbows that stick out, it's my mental elbows, and they get on the nerves of my family even worse. I need you at home, and badly, to be sorry for me."

Several days after this Adele came over alone. "Come go back with me for dinner, Selina," she begged. "I haven't really seen you yet, and I've so missed having you to talk to. As I told you the other day, I'm such a disappointment to Mamma and Grandmamma. Why can't they let me alone? Why can't I be myself in my own way? Neither of my brothers was any older than I am now, when they were allowed to choose and follow their ways, Roswell to Tech, and Jim out West with our uncle in business."

As Selina, consenting, went to change her dress, she was thinking that even with no interference, it wasn't the simple matter

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to be one's self that Adele seemed to imply. For her own part she seemed to be the victim of interchangeable selves right now that arranged the matter of possession between them, with no respect at all for her wishes, the result being a sort of see-saw in her personality, up or down, buoyant or depressed, confident or deprecatory, according to the self in predominance at the moment.

The buoyant self right now since her return home, seemed born of a knowledge she felt almost guilty about admitting; she was prettier. She was the last person who ought to recognize it Mamma and Auntie would tell her if they suspected her of doing so, and she therefore would keep any show that she was conscious of it hidden. But the fact was there. She saw it in the eyes of her mother and aunt themselves; in the puzzled gazes of Maud and Juliette and Amanthus; in an unwilling admission from the eyes of Culpepper, who was bluntly opposed always to anybody or anything flattering her; in quick comprehension and acknowledgment in the glances of Adele.

Was Marcus right? Had her brief glimpse into life, her short temporary dependence upon herself, done it? [175]

The knowledge of it, whatever the explanation, gave her new confidence and sudden brave carriage. Her color deepened and despite her cruel disappointment, which yet stung sharply, her eyes laughed and her step was tripping and light. The second day that she was home, she met a former acquaintance down street, Mr. Tuttle Jones, that paragon of correctness, and he stopped at her bow, a thing he never had done before, and with his eyes upon her face, shook hands and passed some of the gratifying nothings of pleasant interchange with her.

And here last night, the fourth since her return, he came to call. Papa opened the door to him, and in consequence his card had to go hastily into his pocket; but after all if you're poor, and she, Selina, and Papa and Mamma and Auntie were incontestably poor, the thing is to be frankly what you are and undisturbed about it! She was glad that she had arrived at this point. It made for self-respect!

And she could feel that on this occasion she had been pleasingly and successfully undisturbed. It was Sunday evening and nine o'clock when Mr. Jones came. She heard afterward from Amanthus and Adele, that as to day and hour, this was quite the thing of the moment to do, the *en règle* thing, as Maudie put it. Algy Biggs was already there, calling, too, and apparently wanting to talk about Juliette; and why Juliette? But not being so given to the thing of the moment, he had come earlier. [176]

"Papa is an admirable Crichton when it comes to opening doors," Selina said as she shook hands with Mr. Jones, and as she could feel, with complete success; "but I am an admirable Miss Crichton when it comes to other matters." And she took him and Algy, to whom the matter just had been proposed, on out to the pantry which was shabby but big and orderly, trust Auntie for that. And here from cold turkey and other choice bits left from Sunday dinner, they concocted a feast with hilarity and satisfaction.

But there was a second and disparaging self which alternated with this more confident and successful one. At the mere call to mind of certain people, Adele's mother and grandmother, for example, or of occasions connected with such people, the Carter reception about to be, as an instance, or of attitudes characteristic of such people, the Carter stress laid upon prominence and prosperity as a further example, at such recall Selina's second self came into its deplorable own, and the self of happier, buoyant mood went down.

And presto! assurance was gone, and she was Selina Wistar, unenviable person, limited and obscure, living in the small shabby house of the block, with a father always harrassed and poor; Selina Wistar unworthily ashamed of first one thing and another, as, at this particular moment, not so much Auntie's antiquated velvet as of her veneration for it, nor Mamma's grenadine with the tails cut off, as at her respect for it; and thus ashamed, the more ashamed that she was ashamed, she on whose account Papa and Mamma right now were the poorer, she who was in debt to Cousin Anna! [177]

And in this fashion as she finished the changing of her older plaid dress for her newer cashmere and went into her mother's room to rejoin Adele, she found herself at the lowest bump of the see-saw of her personality upon the ground of self-abasement.

"The dress looks very well, Selina," said her mother. "I was

always sorry we didn't see you in it before you went. It's a nice shade of blue, not too deep and not too washed out, and a good piece of cashmere. It was a bargain though I must say I'm always doubtful of bargains myself. The lace goes with it nicely. I was afraid it was too much of a bargain, too."

"I'm glad we left the waist a little open at the throat," said Auntie. "Lavinia, I do believe it's a trifle too long in the skirt. Still we did very well with it; it hasn't that impressed, homemade look I deplore, one bit."

A moment later and Selina and Adele were crossing the street through the dusk, with a wave of their hands back to Mamma and Auntie at their windows.

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## CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

The Carter house was a broad, double brick in a terraced, well-kept yard. Herndon, the negro man, opened the door to Adele's ring. Within, the house was sedate with inherited Carter furniture, Carter portraits, the emphasis being laid on the Carter side and not the Grosvenor; one could not but notice, handsomely cased books and, so it seemed, every nature of paper and periodical.

"Though really," Maudie always said, "unless Mr. Carter chances to stay home long enough from the club, or from boards of directors, or the toast master's chair at banquets, no one but Adele ever reads them."

It was an ordeal to go through a meal at the Carters. A meal at Maud's home was substantial and well served, with Mrs. Addison, her capable, dominant mother at one end of the table and her pillar-of-the-church father at the other end, her younger brothers and sisters and herself along the sides, and most always, some divine or layman of church note, strange in the city. A meal at Juliette's house, was abundant and the family manners natural. Her mother was so pretty one overlooked poor management and poor servants, and Mr. Caldwell, her father, made up for his rather tiresome teasing by lavish tips and royal boxes of candy as recompense to hurt feelings.

At Amanthus' home only women prevailed, and a meal there was like Mrs. Harrison and Amanthus themselves, easy and pretty and charming.

But here at the Carters as now, the occasion was an ordeal. Being six o'clock dinner, and copied from the Grosvenor soap-and-lard Chicago kin, it truly was dinner, in a sense Mamma and Aunt Viney had no comprehension of, soup to finish.

Adele and Selina came downstairs together at the summons, Adele in an overmodish dress in coral pink, in which Amanthus would have looked enchanting, and in which she looked unhappy, and after Selina had been greeted, took their places with the family about the table.

Mrs. Carter who was blonde, and whose hair was elaborately dressed, was in blue like Selina; Mrs. Grosvenor, her mother, whose hair was gray and even more elaborately dressed, was in black net with a deal of cascading lace and many rings; and Mr. Carter, a person of parts, with moustaches and an imperial, was in a hurry as always, and too disposed to hasten the meal to its close, to be sociable. Again as Maudie said, his reputation for wit and conversation and charm must have been gained away from home.

"Adele tells me you have reconsidered your regrets, Selina, and will be with us at our reception," said Mrs. Carter just a shade languidly. "I'm sure we're very glad."

"Selina was in Florida, Mamma, when her mother declined for her," put in Adele quickly. "Naturally she will come. Selina's popular; she may teach me how to be."

"If you wouldn't decry yourself in this way, Adele," began her mother.

"I tell her so all the time," said Mrs. Grosvenor.

"But you both, Mamma and Grandmamma, have decried me for so many years yourselves, trying to improve me, I can't see myself otherwise," pleaded Adele.

"For your own good, as you allow," from Mrs. Carter.

"A girl has to be formed," from her grandmother.

"I was a perfect failure at my first big party thus far, Selina," said Adele, laughing a little desperately, "and with Mamma and Grandmamma there to see. I—"

"Can't we let this fish go and have the roast, Adelia?" from Mr. Carter to his wife.

"If Adele would not talk so laboredly to men," said Mrs. Grosvenor, to no one in particular that Selina could discover. "Her mother and I overheard her speaking to young Tuttle Jones at this same dancing party. And on my word for it, Adele, I heard you ask that poor man, I put your actual speech to mind that I might confront you with it—if he thought Christianity was a revolt of Hebraism against Hellenism? These were your very words! I told them to your mother and asked her to help me to remember them. It's perfectly understandable why Mr. Jones has declined your affair.

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Men hate such things."

"I had to talk about something," said Adele wretchedly. "I'd been reading about it in Papa's *Quarterly*."

"Adele would go to the public schools with the rest of you," Mrs. Carter addressed this to Selina, "and her father permitted it because she cried every time mother and I took it up. Now the little cliques and sets among the young people of my friends are made up when she goes among them, and she feels out of it."

"I don't see what there is to it that you and Grandmamma should want me to feel in it," avowed Adele.

"Roswell," this from Mrs. Carter to her husband, ignoring the remark from her daughter, "I had a note yesterday that I forgot to mention, from charming old Mrs. Jinnie Hines Cumming. She says in the most gracious way that nothing could prevent her coming to see your daughter and Mamma's granddaughter, launched upon her career, and that she has a graceless great-nephew living now in town who never comes to see her, but whom she asks to bring with her."

Now it was conceded among Olympians that the social scepter was wielded by Mrs. Gwinne Tuttle, aunt of Tuttle Jones, only because Mrs. Jinnie Cumming grown old chose to pass it on. [182]

"Mamma loves lions," said Adele and laughed a little nervously.

"Ergo, my dear young friend Selina," said Mr. Carter, suddenly attentive and kindly and polite, as getting up to go from his untouched dessert and hastily swallowed coffee, he came round to shake hands, "bring a lion or two and find yourself persona grata. And in the mean season, in the face of this discouragement from the cliques and sets, don't go back on our Adele."

Nor did he nor Selina dream how literally and triumphantly in this matter of lions she was to obey him! She was to rout disparagement at least for once!

But in the immediate mean season she was hot and sore and indignant. When she found herself alone with Adele again after dinner, she burst forth: "Adele, why do you force your mother to ask us to your affairs? She doesn't want us."

"Selina, Oh Selina, if you and Maud and Juliette go back on me! What else have I got? Everything pleasant that I've known has come through you or them. One of the really pleasant things, such as I mean, happened the other night just before you got home. Mr. Cannon called for the first time. He is so irrepressible and ridiculous and clever, too, and jokes and quizzes so, I forget to be self-conscious. Mamma wanted to know who he was and if I could vouch for him, but there's always something. I answered pretty crossly, I expect. At any rate she won't let me ask him for the reception. I feel terribly about it." [183]

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## CHAPTER NINETEEN

Selina's relatives, the Bruces, figured largely in what now followed, by not figuring therein at all. One always could count on a Bruce to do something unexpected.

It began with the absence of Marcus. Selina had not seen him since her return and had a feeling that perhaps she did not care to. She considered that she had grounds for still being indignant with him. The unworthy and the inconsiderate flourish undeservedly, however, as she reflected somewhat sorely. During the political campaign of a year ago, Marcus in a temporary associated-press capacity, had accompanied a presidential nominee and his party on their special car on an unprecedented tour through the South. This nominee was now the president of the United States, and about the time Selina was packing her trunk to come home from the South, Marcus was offered the post of consul to a group of islands in the bluest of semi-tropical seas. As Selina came up from Florida, Marcus had passed her somewhere on the way.

"He's gone to ask Pocahontas whether he wants the appointment or not," Aunt Juanita, stopping by to say howdy to Selina, explained to her and Mamma confidentially, "Of course you have grasped before this, Selina, that Pocahontas is going to marry Marcus."

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Selina nodded. She had not brought herself to feel great enthusiasm on the subject even though she had been given the point of view of Miss 'Hontas to help her to it. And she did wish Aunt Juanita would take time to fix her clothes! Tall and ungroomed, the feather on her bonnet hung dejected by a thread, and three buttons were off her rusty shoe! Still as in the case of Marcus with his questionable manners, you never can tell. And Uncle Bruce, if possible, was the strangest, certainly the most unkempt of the three, and see too what had come to pass about him?

At about the same time the consulship was offered to Marcus, the home papers copied an interview from the Washington journals in which the name of Bruce figured gratifyingly. The personage of the interview was an English parliamentarian and historian, the Honorable Verily Blanke.

According to the Washington papers, this gentleman was reported as saying:

Perhaps I look forward as much as to any individual acquaintance I hope to make in your country, to my meeting with your Mr. Aurelius Bruce, whom I regard as one of the greatest living authorities on the interpretative history of the American constitution. In the course of my correspondence with this gentleman, at the time I was occupied with those chapters in my history of popular government dealing with your constitution, I promised myself if ever I should be in the United States of America, the pleasure and personal gratification of a meeting with this distinguished and profound jurist. From the nature and the variety of the authorities he has been able to point me to, affording me the desired passages from his own shelves, when these authorities were not to be met with readily by me elsewhere, I should rank his personal library devoted to American law and jurisprudence, as one of the notable ones of the country.

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As Selina said when she read this in the daily paper, truly you cannot foretell!

Aunt Juanita on the same occasion of her visit to see Selina, had something to say about this tribute to Uncle Bruce, too.

"Marcus made his father write at once, or in the end, I believe, compromised with his father by writing for him, asking this Mr. Verily Blanke and his secretary, who the papers say is a grandson of some big personage or other in England, here to be our guests. There has been no answer to Marcus' letter, so I don't suppose there's a chance now they will come."

As if the Bruces were not figuring enough in the public eye, the very day after this talk, a signed communication from Aunt Juanita appeared in the local papers. She was measurably concerned in the honors come to her husband and her son, but her interest was in her own affairs.

TO THE EDITOR,

Sir: "The number of members of a body or corporation competent to transact business by law or constitution," is a "quorum," Webster, vide Quorum. Under our law a majority of the members of our City Council

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constitutes a quorum, and a majority of the members present is necessary for the carrying of a motion. Under this procedure, six members out of a total membership of twenty were able to kill the very necessary street watering-cart ordinance at the last meeting of our City Council.

By what equity shall the will of a minority thus imposed on that of a majority, be defended? I call the attention of women, and of women's organizations, to wit, The Women's Rights Association of America, now in session in Rochester, N. Y., to the dangers attendant on embodying such fallacies in popular government in its constitution.

JUANITA LIVINGSTON BRUCE.

The noon of this same day Aunt Juanita came by again. There was an air of preparation about her tall person this time. Her veil trailed crookedly and her glove tips needed mending, but she carried a satchel and umbrella. "On second thoughts, Lavinia, I am going on the afternoon train to Rochester. I can't sit still with this question of what proportion of a representative body shall constitute a working majority, threatening the future of my sex. What I want to know is, will you let Aurelius come here for his meals while I am gone? He can sleep, in fact it is safer that he should sleep, at the house. Hester will go round in the mornings and see to the anthracite in the hall stove, and whatever else there is to be done." Hester was the Bruce's servant, and like Aunt Viney had her home elsewhere.

This same afternoon, Mrs. Gwinne Tuttle came rolling around to the Wistar home in her carriage and found Auntie and Selina in.

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**"Her veil trailed crookedly."**

"See here, Selina," she said so straightway one inferred it was what she came for, "Tuttle has been around here three times in ten days, I'm hearing. My dear child, look at me! So this is what your fool's errand trip south with the Boswells did for you? Not a fool's errand, I see, after all. Why she's come to real beauty, Ann Eliza! With all that Wistar flaxen hair, and her fair skin, that's right, blush away child, and her fine, clear profile, she's like a cameo. No, it won't hurt her to know it, Ann Eliza. What she needs now is exactly what a little conceit will give her. Now that I've seen you, my dear, I must say I admire Tuttle's discrimination. There's more to him than I've been giving him credit for. I began to be afraid for him about the time when he saw to it that his mosquito bar was tied back with ribbons to match his bureau cover, but that's past. He's mighty grand, I don't dispute it, Selina, and a great beau. But he hasn't got a picayune but what that vault door he keeps at the bank pays him, and that's little enough, unless his father, and I, his aunt by marriage, being fools, give it to him."

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## CHAPTER TWENTY

The one and only triumph of Selina's brief day drew nearer. And that she should achieve it through a source hitherto so undervalued!

The worst about having Uncle Bruce coming for his meals was that two-thirds of the time he forgot to come, and one-half of the remaining times when he did come, he came trotting in after one had given up expecting him. Mamma always waited a reasonable time, however, insisting they owed this much to Uncle Bruce. Thus dinner was held back on the evening of the reception at the Carters. Though they did not expect to go over before say nine o'clock, certainly no sooner, Auntie and Mamma dressed before dinner.

"I've reached a place in life when I don't like to be hurried," explained Auntie.

"There's something elegant about dressing for dinner at any time," claimed Mamma, "and if there weren't so many little things to see to in the dining-room and pantry to help Viney along, I'd do it every day. I must say this grenadine of mine has held its own. There's nothing like a good stout cotton bag for hanging clothes away in, and camphor. I'll touch myself up a bit again, one's hair does get so disarranged, before going over to the Carters later."

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Dinner was put on the table a quarter of an hour late, and they were sitting down, Mamma, Papa, Auntie and Selina, without Uncle Bruce, when the doorbell rang. Aunt Viney having answered it, summoned Papa.

As it proved, it was old Uncle Taliaferro Bucklin at the door, a brother-in-law of Aunt Viney, and owner and driver of a hack and two white horses whereby he made a living, meeting trains for passengers at the several railroad stations. His voice at the open door explaining to Papa, came in through the parlor to the dining-room.

"Done took 'em to the Bruce resi-*dence*, a' th'ain't arry pusson thar. Went aroun' to the kitchen doah at las' myself——"

"And you found nobody there, exactly," in Papa's quick and impatient voice. "Get along with it, Bucklin."

Uncle Taliaferro pursued his own line in narrative undisturbed. "Got thar trunks an' contraptions on top er the kerridge, wouldn't heah to comin' long without 'em. Said they was expected on this train by Mr. 'Relius Bruce, so I brought 'em aroun' heah."

To get to the point, as Papa discovered on going out to the shabby old hack, the fares of Uncle Taliaferro Bucklin proved to be the Honorable Verily Blanke, parliamentarian and historian, his secretary, the grandson of the personage and their man-servant, the only truly intimidating and disturbingly superior one of the three as it turned out.

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**"Owner and driver of a hack ... whereby he made a living,  
meeting trains."**

Even so. And to get to a further point, the letter written from Washington to Uncle Bruce by the secretary, accepting the invitations sent by Marcus and announcing the date of their arrival, was discovered in the pocket of the disturbed Uncle Bruce next day, unopened and unrecalled.

Papa rose to the occasion as he did at those times when he abruptly became the decisive head of his house. One marveled and wondered about it afterward that he should not be this head always! He brought the guests in, explaining to them something of the eccentricities of their host, Uncle Bruce, presented them to Mamma, and accompanied by her, took them upstairs to make themselves a little more comfortable after their journey, for dinner.

Leaving them thus employed, he came down, got in the hack with Uncle Taliaferro and the luggage above, and the man-servant within, and drove around to the alley where according to Aunt Viney, Hester, the servant of the Bruce household, lived. Found her, put her up on the box by Uncle Taliaferro, took her to the house, and leaving her and the man-servant there to make the guests' rooms ready, as well as leaving the luggage of the guests, arrived at home again in time to meet the descending gentlemen and take them in to the re-served dinner.

This from Papa! There were reserves and capabilities then in him, too, unused and unsuspected, as in Auntie! Who or what had failed to draw them out?

The delay had given Auntie and Selina opportunity to open some ginger preserves, and search out some cake that was not too stale, from the cake-box. It gave Selina time to speak her scandalized mind, too. She was horrified!

"And they'll sleep there! In that house!" she managed to say to Mamma. She meant the Bruce house, big, three-storied, of stucco, with iron verandas upstairs and down, well enough outside, though needing painting. But inside——!

"Certainly, we've nothing to do with that," said Mamma sensibly. "It would have been no more in order if Juanita had been here and they had been expected, you know that. They and your Uncle Bruce will eat here. We'll do our part.

"Warn them about the books on the stairs and the landing, Lavinia," reminded Auntie.

She referred to Marcus' new Encyclopedia. When the twenty-five volumes of it came home, there did not seem any place for them in the house already overflowing with books, and Aunt Juanita piled them along the stairs until a place for their disposal could be discussed, and nobody ever had moved them.

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Once more Aunt Viney in her best apron now, and a fresh and snowy headkerchief, brought dinner in and put it on the table.

The Honorable Verily Blanke, across the table from Selina, was a delightful, elderly personage with grizzled hair, and a well-kept grizzled beard, whose head as if by its splendid weight, was sunk forward between great shoulders. His eyes were blue and keen and kindly, and he kept looking across with a wonderful gleam and smile in them as if he found something there worth the looking at, in Selina, whose cheeks with the wonderful exigency of it all, were their finest coral, and whose pretty concern, nicely held in, was in itself a tribute. Perhaps his eyes wandered in kindly fashion to Auntie, too, comely and restful in her black velvet gown.

The Honorable Cyril Doe, the grandson of the personage, was very much less satisfactory. His chin was on a line with the dome center of his head, his body seemed to lack co-ordination and to be about to drop an arm or a leg or two from sheer disinterestedness in holding to them any longer, and on being addressed he started and ejaculated in British. The older gentleman on the contrary, spoke quietly in English of his pleasure in meeting American life and customs.

"Will not you and Mr. Doe go with us this evening across to our neighbors, Mr. and Mrs. Roswell Carter, who are entertaining for their young daughter?" asked Mrs. Wistar.

"For myself, I shall have pleasure in going with you," said Mr. Blanke. "How is it with you, Cyril? We will both go. We are desirous to see just as much of the South and its life as we may be permitted to."

So after dinner Papa took the gentlemen up to the Bruce house to dress, and Selina hastened upstairs to her own room to get herself ready that she might go across to the Carters ahead of the others, and make the proper explanations.

Her new little evening dress of white net was very nice. Auntie had a real genius for making clothes! She viewed herself and her slim bare neck and her smooth young arms in the mirror of her big old bureau, with approval. Her first real evening gown! She took the evening cape of white cloth from her wardrobe and slipped it about her with some complacency. Persons, just as a matter touching on self-respect, she reflected as she viewed the effect of this, have no right to be without those garments reasonably suited to the occasion. It was gratifying, too, to note how readily she adapted herself to them when she became their owner. It seemed to argue an intention in the stamp of her by nature, for these fitnesses and niceties! So pretty Selina!

She did not get to the Carters ahead of the others, after all. As she came downstairs in her pleasing array, white fan and white gloves added to the festive rest, Aunt Viney, already delayed in her home-going past all timeliness, was opening the door to Mr. Tuttle Jones in cape overcoat and top-hat, and to Uncle Bruce in Mr. Jones' firm grasp! It was to be an evening of superlatives!

Hearing the voices Mamma came hurrying down with her scarf and wrap on, and Auntie with her Paisley shawl about her velvet dress, followed a minute later.

Mr. Jones, his small moustaches exquisitely exact, his collar and shirt front protected by his deftly adjusted muffler, the pearl-gray glove on the hand staying and steadying his companion, immaculate, had steered Uncle Bruce in and was setting him down in a hall chair.

Then he turned to Mamma and Auntie from a last regard of Uncle Bruce after getting him deposited. One saw now that there were tiny beads as of stress upon the forehead of young Mr. Jones, though his manner to Mamma was perfect.

"It is owing to the particular shade of blue in the legal papers Mr. Bruce here had in his hand at something to five o'clock that I'm spared being his unintentional murderer."

He mopped his brow with an immaculate handkerchief, the while giving the ladies time to disburden themselves of their ejaculations, then continued his explanation.

"While dressing to start out for the evening, dressing before dinner I'm gratefully able to add, this peculiar quality in blue, the exact thing I've been trying to visualize for my mother's projected scheme in her new Dutch dining-room—foolscap blue shall we call it?—kept recurring to me. As I reached for my scarf-pin, the

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collusion between the recall and the original came to me with a crash. Mr. Bruce here, our lawyer for the bank, has his private box with us as a sort of special privilege. I'd let him go into the vault to this box after hours, reading a bulk of blue papers as he went, and though I couldn't recall seeing him come out, I'd locked that vault door myself at five o'clock and gone home. I've had him in a drug store for an hour since I got him out. If we'd had a modern vault with one of these new time locks, his end would be on my soul."

Uncle Bruce came into the talk here. The bow to his cravat was at the back of his neck and his beard and hair stood rumpled wildly.

"It was highly important I should finish reading those papers before locking them up. I found myself with only a few matches in my pocket and some loose papers to convert into spills to break the stygian darkness he left me in," he spoke testily.

"Aurelius," said Mamma, slowly and with the careful emphasis one uses to some harmless but trying irresponsible whose attention must be held, "that very delightful Englishman and his secretary are here that Marcus sent the invitation to. Robert is up at your house with them now. It's very necessary we should find out from you what you want to do with them."

Uncle Bruce, little mummified, scholarly person, from his position of temporary collapse on the hall chair, glared at her. He grasped his beard below his chin with an exasperated hand, and his wild rumple of hair seemed almost to lift and stiffen with his irritation.

"Do with 'em? Do with 'em?" said Uncle Bruce with testy finality. "Tell 'em from me to go to the devil."

"Mr. Bruce," said Mamma with dignity, "you forget yourself!"

"Not a bit of it," from Auntie shortly, who had small use for any of the Bruce family.

"Well then," said Uncle Bruce flinging his little person up from the chair and making a snatch at his hat on the hat-tree by him, "if you like it any better, tell 'em from me, I've gone there."

## CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

It was a gratifying entry that finally was made at the Carters, Uncle Bruce ultimately being pacified and left at home in the care of the English servant, and Mr. Jones, after meeting the guests and hearing the program for the evening, glancing across at Selina in her white net dress and evening cape, and asking to go along.

Papa and Mamma were justly proud of their guests, pre-eminently the older one. And Mr. Roswell Carter was equally and as sincerely gratified to find them his guests. He asked Papa to arrange with Uncle Bruce that he be privileged to have a dinner followed by a smoker at the club that the men of the community be given the opportunity to meet the gentlemen. And Mrs. Gwinne Tuttle coming sailing up in all her splendor to Papa and Mamma and the distinguished strangers, asked to be permitted to arrange for a dinner party on the next evening.

But while these staid elders were doing the honors thus to the guests from the old world over in the more sedate library, Selina was feeling the thrill and the importance of her entrance into the embowered parlors with Mr. Tuttle Jones.

Adele in an even overly-modish dress which sat uneasily upon her, dear Adele with her conscientious face and her serious eyes, stood between her mother and her grandmother, a seeming shrine of palms and floral decorations for background.

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Selina deep in her heart was proud of the casual manner with which she came up and presented Mr. Jones. There was no question of his welcome being assured. Mrs. Grosvenor, elaborate as to hair and impressive gown, smiled graciously upon this sought-after young man, and anticipating her daughter, spoke first: "It is very lovely in you to challenge our leniency as you put it, Mr. Jones, and come over with Selina. She is like a second daughter in our house, I may say, she and Adele, my granddaughter, being inseparable. Adele, have you spoken to Mr. Jones?"

Mrs. Carter, also elaborate as to gown and hair, was equally affable: "Charming old Mrs. Jinnie Cumming has given us the pleasure of having her with us this evening. It is inevitable she is going to demand you come and speak to her? Shall I anticipate and take you to her? My duties to arriving guests seem to be about over. Mrs. Cumming claims to have waived formality, too, and has brought a drolly delightful nephew with her, a recent comer in the city."

And Mrs. Carter laid a hand on the arm of Mr. Jones and carried him off, Mrs. Grosvenor turned to bespeak a possible next guest if there be one, and Adele sometimes surprisingly dry-spoken for a girl of eighteen, laid her hand on Selina's gloved arm.

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"Unfortunately that's just like Mamma, overlooking the fact he was your escort because she wanted him then herself. And who do you suppose the droll nephew is that Mrs. Jinnie Cumming brought with her? The humor of it's helped me bear up under this ridiculous dress. I must look like an irresponsible in its spangles, don't I, Selina, for I feel like one?"

"It's really a wonderful dress, Adele. Who's the droll nephew?"

"Our Mr. Cannon that Mamma wouldn't let me ask here to the reception to-night. I was perfectly hateful and threw it up to her a bit ago."

Did Adele here look away and her cheek grow pink with rare color? Was she pleased that it should be Mr. Cannon?

With a change of tone she spoke again. "Juliette wouldn't come at the last moment. Selina, she's unhappy, and I think we ought to tell you so. It happened while you were gone." Again with a change of tone: "Did you ever see anything so lovely as Amanthus and so entrancing?"

"Our Mr. Doe thinks so," said Selina. "Witness, please."

Across the hall in the open doorway of the library stood Mr. Cyril Doe, the secretary, endeavoring to fit a glass into his eye with all the awkwardness of one about to lose an arm or a leg or two from sheer inability to hold on to them.

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**"Endeavoring to fit a glass into his eye."**

"Did you ever before see a monocle except on the stage, Selina? In 'Lord Dundreary' and that sort of thing? I never have," from Adele. "And the truly wonderful grimaces he's making getting it to stay! It's sort of horribly fascinating to see if he's going to succeed. There, it's done, and what's it in place to gaze on?"

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And following the undoubted line of Mr. Doe's vision, as indicated by Selina, Adele came to Amanthus near the embowered newell post, a dozen feet away from the library doorway.

Amanthus! Dimpling for three callow youths surrounding her. Amanthus of the laughing eyes, the laughing cheeks, the laughing lips, Amanthus of the sunny hair and violet gaze, who laughed, as now, as the flowers blow, nor knew why more than they! Amanthus, supple and young and enchanting, in floating clouds of gauzy yellow, a wreath of buds upon her daffodil hair, and slender slippers of daffodil gold upon her buoyant feet! Maud stood near her talking to some other callow youth, handsome enough in her white tarlatan dress with glossy green leaves and their berries in her red-brown hair, and young and vital, too, but not for Mr. Cyril Doe. It was upon that vision known to earth as Amanthus this monocled, British, chinless person was gazing.

"And Mr. Jones, after declining our party, came with you, Selina," from Adele. "We'll be regarding you as another Amanthus."

Selina arched her pretty throat, then remembered to be modest. It was hard not to be complacent about it just a bit, the more so that Mr. Jones having shaken loose from Mrs. Carter, here was seen making his way through the crowded parlors back to her. But at least if she was not so really modest as she could wish about it, she could dissemble.

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"Adele, look out in the hall again," thus she sought to put the matter aside. "Mr. Doe has found Mrs. Gwinne Tuttle, and she is taking him to Amanthus."

The next day Maud spoke accusingly to Selina. One rarely deceived Maud. "Don't be self-deceiving about it. Don't be too scathing of Mrs. Carter and Mrs. Grosvenor. Look into your own heart first, if you please, Selina. You were the more elated over taking Mr. Jones than over any of the rest of it, yourself, and you

needn't tell me, for one, you weren't! The big frog in the home pool means more to the little frogs than the big fish from strange waters. I suppose I'd have been, too."

The evening of this same day Selina told Culpepper of Maud's accusation. Papa and Mamma, Uncle Bruce and the guests were gone to Mrs. Tuttle's dinner party, and Culpepper on request had come round to spend the evening with her and Auntie. It was a comfort thus to have him in the family, making it possible to ask such things of him, and to talk to him about quite personal matters. He and she were in the parlor before the flickering fire and the burnished brasses, and Auntie in the next room was playing her evening game of Napoleon solitaire on the dining-table.

"Maud didn't quite say I was an incipient snob, Culpepper," Selina commented after telling him the story of the whole evening, the rescue of Uncle Bruce by Mr. Jones included. "She didn't actually say I was as despicable as that, but she implied it." Selina flushed and grew even a little more thoughtful. "And the truth of it is, Culpepper, I had to admit to Maud her accusation in a sense is true. I was elated over taking Mr. Jones. But Mrs. Carter and Mrs. Grosvenor could not have been made to acknowledge on any less worldly grounds the something I had come to recognize as necessary to my Wistar self-respect, and especially if I were to continue going with Adele. I've been thinking it over and I'm right about this. But there's worse! I flaunted my new evening cape and was complacent over it. I even felt myself pitying Mamma and feeling cross toward her about her old scarf. Whereas if I come down to facts, Cousin Anna's money which I still owe her, went to replace that used to buy the cape and some other things. It isn't the actual cape I'm meaning, though, nor the literal episode of taking Mr. Jones to the Carter's, Culpepper? Of course you know that? What I'm worrying over is what Maud calls 'the principle back of the thing.' I'm not one bit pleased with what I see in myself that way. Do we go on forever climbing three feet out of the well by day, and falling back two feet by night? Will I ever get anywhere?"

The iliad of her little woes, piteously assailing those walls of half-knowledge shutting her out from her mede of common-sense and common understanding! The odyssey of her little wanderings following half-truths, misled by platitudes, failing ever of the haven of truth where she would be! Alas for you, Mamma and Auntie, who with all your yearnings over her, have so pitifully equipped your one ewe lamb for life!

Culpepper the while Selina talked, thus guileless of her guilelessness, thus innocent of her innocence, had been gazing at her across the space of the hearth between them, his eyes upon her, but following thoughts of his own. He came to himself with a start.

Now that she, this pretty girl here before the fire with him in this intimate aloofness, was growing up, tall and fair, that crown of pale, shining hair distinguishing her, it came upon him at times such as now, with a clutch, a catching of his breath, to have her still so ingenuously sweet, still so honest, still so utterly and so endearingly confiding. It disarmed him. It broke down his control. It got into that blatant blood of his and for moments made him see red and feel afraid for himself. He wanted to seize her hands there in her lap, and kiss their helpless palms! No, he wanted to seize *her* and kiss *her*, kiss her until she awoke to the facts of life and—understood. And this achieved, lay down the mandate to her that he was here, and all the while had been here, for the man-made and Heaven-sanctioned purpose of taking material and every other sort of care of her, the woman. His stepmother knew it, his Cousin Robert knew it, ole Miss, he'd take his oath, more than half suspected it.

True, he had nothing whatever of his own, only a princely allowance from that big-souled person, his stepmother. But God Almighty, what of that? He'd have all that he needed having in his own good time. He was the stripe and make that batters any old thing out of the way of the going if it be mistaken enough to get there—the sort, in fact, that succeeds. The baffling thing here was of a different nature, being Selina herself. You can't crush a bud into its bloom by the mere force of your longing; you can't kiss a child that knows no passion, with passion!

Culpepper, twenty-three himself, but no less sophisticated than he would be when he was thirty-three, pulled himself together, big, good-looking young giant that he was, the effect of whose bodily presence here was always to further dwarf the shabby little parlor.

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The soft flip of Auntie's cards being dealt out on the table came from the next room. It was like a restoring touch from her calm personality.

"One thing is cleared up for me by last night's happenings," declared Culpepper cheerfully.

"What?" from Selina. She had been thinking how comfy and nice it was, this long chatty evening with him, and the firelight, and the always restful sense of Auntie's proximity.

"Why, Tuttle, or Tuts, as we of his class at college called him, was in training for a color-sense those four years, matching suits to socks, and socks to neckties. But for that nicety for color so faithfully attained, where would little Mr. Bruce be right now?"

Auntie's voice came in from the next room. "Mr. Jones is a gentleman, and has proved it, Culpepper. I won't have you decrying him."

"All right, ole Miss; what you say goes. What we at college kicked about was that he was such a lady."

"Culpepper, not another word," from Auntie.

"Just to ask how much longer the high and mighties, these Britishers, are with us," pleaded Culpepper, "so I'll know when it's safe for me to show up around here in the old way?"

"One more day only," Selina reassured him, "Mr. Carter's giving them a dinner and smoker at the club to-morrow evening. Mrs. Harrison has arranged for them to stop for a day at Selimcroft, her Uncle's stock-farm up your way, as they go. She discovered that they want to see some of our typical horses and stables and training tracks and such, you'll know just what, better than I do. Mrs. Harrison and Amanthus are going up for the day with them. Amanthus is so impressed by Mr. Doe, the secretary, she's overcome. It hasn't often happened to Amanthus. He told her for some reason or other, that everything that's good form in England just now wears bangs. And she asked him, you know how Amanthus does ask such things, if he meant horses?"

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## CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO

Selina put on hat and jacket the day after Uncle Bruce's guests left, and went over to see Juliette. The Caldwell house was of brick with gables, a bay, a small Gothic porch, pointed windows and clambering, leafless vines. Juliette's father, as said before, was a rising business man, and his own and his pretty wife's people were well to do. There was considerable extravagance and laxity and also waste in the household, and the children up to a certain point, from Juliette, the oldest, down through her two younger sisters and the son just toddling, did pretty much as they pleased.

But of late everyone was worried about Juliette. She was dauncie, as the darkies say, in other words, listless and indifferent and pale. In all the years past this same gay little Juliette had stood with her friends as embodiment of life and vividness and enthusiasm.

Mrs. Caldwell opened the side door to Selina's tap. She had a gingham apron with a bib over her rather elaborate crimson cashmere wrapper. Dark like Juliette, and like her also in being aquiline and vivid, and still a bit frivolous in her tastes, now she looked disheveled and cross and tired. They were an outspoken as well as a bit haphazard household, these prosperous Caldwells.

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"No cook since Monday, Selina, and neither nurse for the baby or house-boy to-day. When one of them gets mad, the others always take it up and follow. What we're coming to I'm sure I can't say. The older servants such as my mother's been used to dealing with, are dying off, and the younger ones don't know how to do a thing and won't let you show them."

It was a familiar plaint, and Selina was so accustomed to it, it slid nowadays from the consciousness as housekeepers voiced it, like a too-oft repeated platitude. Cousin Anna had such trouble continually; Mrs. Williams, while Selina taught there, never seemed to have her full quota of servants at any one time and never ceased to say so, and the Addison and even the Carters were complainers, too. Selina took Mrs. Caldwell's grievance as a matter of course.

"I've been coming over for a good long visit with Judy ever since I got home," she replied, "but if you're busy, you'll need her, and won't want me, Mrs. Caldwell?"

"Juliette? I'm glad you've come hunting her. I'm sure I don't know what we're going to do with her, Selina. She's never been stubborn or ugly in her life before. It's been going on now for sometime, this undercurrent of resentment to her father, and I don't mind speaking out with you, Selina, we look on you quite as one of ourselves, it's come to a break, an open rupture between them. Her father can't see it anyway but that she's been underhand in her defiance, and she won't allow that she cares in the least what he thinks. Of course, I don't know how much she may have told you. Go on up to her room. The little girls are at school, and I'm thankful the baby's asleep. Juliette and I've just finished in the kitchen and she's upstairs starting to straighten the bedrooms."

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Selina went through the halls to the front stairway. She didn't fancy the Caldwells' house. Everything was over-elaborate and nothing very well cared for and there seemed a regrettable mixture. She couldn't bear the bisque cupid, for instance, which hung from the costly gilt chandelier. And she and Adele and Maud deplored the portrait of Juliette at three which hung over the mantelpiece. Cunning Judy as she really had been, here forever seated on a rose-bank, her curls in tiers, her cheeks carmine, and a sash of blue bound round her tummy so precisely that her embroidered skirts flew out beneath as though released. And Selina disliked the showy pattern in the velvet carpet on the halls and up the stairs. But she did love Juliette.

She went up the steps. She knew something of the trouble between Juliette and her father, and could guess what had brought about the present rupture. About the time she went South, Juliette had dared be audacious in a way that caused her friends to hold breath, terrified at thought of what the storm would be when discovery by her father came.

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Having reached the hallway above, Selina tapped on a door which was ajar at the head of the stairs, the door to Juliette's own room. At the sound, Juliette, in an apron like the one upon her mother, turned, and seeing Selina in the doorway, sat down suddenly on an ottoman at hand and resting her black-tressed little

head against the edge of the bureau she was dusting, went into passionate weeping. It was as if the sight of her friend loosed the pent-up flood of her unhappiness.

Quickly enough words equally as passionate made their way through the wild sobbing. "It's the stupidity of Papa's position, his utter lack of reason, that's so maddening, Selina. 'I'll see a daughter of mine going to college!' is the whole of it. And his unfairness, too, stops any attempted answering on my part after he's had his say, with 'That'll do now. I don't care to hear any more on the subject.' And what's his argument, I'd like to know, Selina? He hasn't any. Simply none. Just the senseless, stubborn stand he's got from somewhere. 'I'll see a daughter of mine going to college. Get busy and help your mother with the younger children and the house, and don't let's hear any further nonsense on the subject.'"

Selina sat down aghast. Yielding by disposition herself, and product of a lifelong submission to a loving if sometimes paralyzing authority against which she had lifted a tentative protest only once or twice, she gazed at Juliette dismayed. At pretty Judy, facing her from the ottoman, she herself now on a nearby chair, their young knees almost a-touch, a miniature, flashing, apparently altogether volatile creature, suggestive of the ruby-throated hummingbirds that darted about Auntie's flowers and vines in the backyard in summer!

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This little Juliette had been raised under a certain amount of authority, too, but the authority of a young and complacent father who overindulged his family so long as his own mood was genial, but who when his temper was ruffled, as Maud put it, like the heathen raged. Still a parent and father is parent and father. The foundation tenet to all known ethics in the family relation as Selina was familiar with them, that of unquestioning obedience to the man of the household, was being repudiated, and this by seemingly crushable little Juliette.

"I've talked college ever since our junior year at the high school," she here reminded Selina.

She had. Juliette had a northern cousin in Ohio whose letters to her began to be dated from an institution that same year. There were several college-graduate women in their own community, too, figures upon whom Juliette and the rest of them had gazed, awed. And about whom they mutually confessed to find, a certain carriage and a definite assurance, a look and manner more common to busy men, of those having business to attend to and the will and the ability to do it.

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But who had dreamed that seeds so chance as these could have sown themselves in little Juliette's breast to become the dominant possession of that wee abode?

Little? Wee? Volatile? Crushable?

It was as if Juliette there on her ottoman vigorously using her pocket handkerchief to stay the still welling tears, thus read these oft-repeated and disqualifying diminutives applied to her in Selina's mind.

"All of you, in the family and out of it, always infuriate me by fixing the measure of my ability by the size of my body!" The crimson of her fury rushed to her cheeks afresh. "When I read my graduating essay as an honor girl, nobody gave me any credit for having got the honor, whereas everybody clapped and said how cute and that sort of thing."

It was so. It had seemed a joke, little Juliette with her crimson cheeks and her unfurled essay. "Judy, poor Judy," murmured Selina, aghast the more at these revelations from this friend she had thought she knew.

"You went to teaching," Juliette was continuing, "and that made me think on my part. Then you went South, getting about your business in life as you saw it, and at that I up and told Papa what I wanted. He treated it as a huge joke on my part, chucked me under the chin, I always have loathed his doing that at any time, and said for perpetrating it he'd give me a box at the minstrels and I could ask my friends. He actually did say that, Selina. And when I persisted that it wasn't a joke, that I'd made up my mind I wanted to go to college, and sooner or later was going, he was incredulous at first, and then flew into a rage and told me I was a little fool and there'd been enough of this nonsense, and if I said any more I could go to my room and stay there until I could be sensible. When I took it up the next time and insisted he owed it to me to show me why he

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felt as he did about a girl going to college, he said he'd show me the only argument he purposed advancing, and took me by my shoulder and marched me up here to my room, and going out slammed the door. I wrote him a note then and sent it to him at the store by mail, saying if he'd show me truly and convincingly, why, I'd give in. He didn't answer, but told Mamma to tell me if there was any more of it, he'd stop the allowance I'd asked for my last birthday."

"And all this by yourself, Judy?" from Selina, deplorably. "And I not here near you to help you, nor to comfort you!"

"I've never touched my allowance since," hotly, "and I don't mean to. That's why I didn't come to Adele's. I didn't have the dress to wear and I wouldn't ask for it. I haven't said another word to him on the subject of college since and I'm not going to. I just went around to Professor Maynard's boys' school and asked him if he'd take me and get me ready for college, and he said he would. I had some money saved up; you see, both my grandfathers always give us children money at Christmas and birthdays. This was while you were gone, Selina. Mamma and baby were away, staying for a couple of weeks at Grandma's on account of the whooping-cough next door to us, and it made it easier for me to manage."

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"Judy! And you had the courage! You little—well you *are* a little thing, and I *have* to say it. Algy told me something about it, told me that you were being coached but didn't want anything said about it."

"Algy helped me plan it. His father quarreled with him because he *wouldn't* go to college. It's the same sort of principle. He was sent to Professor Maynard's to be made ready and wouldn't stay. That's how I came to go there. Algy told me about him."

Algy! The butt of their fond joking and laughter! Truly, as Selina had said to herself along other lines, you never can tell! "And what happened next, Judy?"

"When Mamma came back from Grandma's, she began questioning, and I had to tell her. And of course Papa found out then. And because he's a stubbornly limited person, Oh, I'm going to say it, I've thought it long before this especial trouble between us—he thinks, for instance, that horrible bisque cupid in our parlor is the cutest thing in the house—Selina, my life and my wants are to be lopped off to his. I'm not going to stand it. I'm going to college somehow, you hear me now, Selina. I daresay it's his own stubbornness cropping out in me, but that doesn't deter me either. I've a right to my own life, and I'm going if planning can get me there."

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But at least she disliked the bisque cupid! There was comfort in knowing that!

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## CHAPTER TWENTY-THREE

With Juliette avowedly rebellious, and Adele confessedly the square peg in the round hole, Selina when she said good-bye at the Caldwell's, went in the Addison house next door to get some comfort from Maud.

It was the middle of the morning, and Mrs. Addison, a big wholesome-looking, capable personage, was overseeing the hanging of fresh lace curtains in the parlors. She sent Selina on up to Maud's room, after, like Mrs. Caldwell, a plain-spoken word.

"Now that Maud's through with the novelty of refitting her room, though I saw nothing wrong with it before, she's gone back into complaining discontent again. What's the matter with you all, Selina?"

"I'm wondering myself, Mrs. Addison," said Selina truthfully.

She went on up. Maud was clearing the litter from a big deal table that certainly did not add anything to the looks of her room with its new blue carpet and blue paper and ruffled curtains and its still a-wee-bit-envied cottage furniture. Maud was going in for china painting right now and kept her equipment on the deal table. She exhibited the pitcher of a tea-set of three pieces.

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**"Maud was going in for china painting."**

"There's nothing to it, Selina; painting pink butterflies on a blue background doesn't satisfy one bit. In my heart, and you know it and I know it, too, I don't care a rap for decorated china tea-sets."

It was Maud's third essay into the arts since leaving school eighteen months ago. She had tried with two successive teachers to manufacture a voice which was not there, and also had taken a course in Kensington embroidery. A cover of blue felt cloth, done in drab cat-tails was on her reading-table now.

"I've just been over with Juliette," Selina explained.

"At least she knows what she does want, and that's a good deal," from Maud.

"She hates the bisque cupid as much as we do," Selina hastened to relate, "and hasn't said so. It's taken this last to make her disloyal."

"Maybe she hates herself at three on the rose-bank, too," surmised Maud. "Tell Adele and it'll cheer her. Algy's so hot over the treatment of Juliette at home, he goes around every single day to see her."

"And we didn't half take up his row that time when he wouldn't go to college. I'd almost forgotten till Juliette reminded me. Have

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you ever thought what a real dear Algy's always been? We haven't half estimated him? When persons do and do for you, you come to take it for granted? Think how we've always called on Algy?"

"I suppose," said Maud to this reflectively, as she stood at the washstand rinsing her hands of their paint stains, "we're all fools to some other intelligence. Algy's seemed slower than the rest of us. And now I want to read you a note from Mr. Welling showing where *he puts me*. As I just said, meaning myself as well as Algy, we're all fools to some other intelligence. Of course, Mr. Welling is older and has had college and has been about, but still it's trying. And I've been so altogether complacent, imagining he was getting value received in his visits round here, reading German with me, and all. Maybe he has been getting it in a sense I hadn't reckoned on," bitterly. "He asked me the other night, Selina, in that jocular way of his that one ought always to distrust, if I had read the editorial in the morning paper on our new democratic president's first message. I hadn't. I didn't know there was a message, and I knew I wasn't a bit bright as to just what a president's message is supposed to be. I had to formulate some sort of position though, and so as I went along, I said no, I never read the papers much, that Mamma glanced over the deaths and headlines and reported them while Papa ate his breakfast, and then Papa went off with the paper in his pocket. And I added that we were on the other side anyhow, that the Addisons had been Unionists, and were with the republican interests ever since."

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"I know," said Selina hastily, this being the one thing about Maud and her family always hard to get around, and therefore a matter to refrain from dwelling on as far as possible.



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**"Mr. Welling looked at me in that ... quizzing way of his."**

Maud was continuing: "Mr. Welling looked at me in that prolonged, considering, quizzing way of his, his spectacles somehow always seeming to intensify the effect, you know what I mean, and with his lips pursed as if he were having a jolly good time for some unseen reason. He generally is when he looks that way, and at somebody else's expense, too. I hurried to add that of course I supposed I ought to show more interest in questions of the day and that perhaps I would if the papers were ever at hand around the house."

"I never read them much myself," agreed Selina, "except when something comes up that I hear Papa and Culpepper talking to each other about. Then I try to remember to look it up."

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"Well, listen now to what followed. We're only highly diverting and amusing to 'em, Selina. This morning I received notices by mail of subscriptions in my name to two papers, one local and one not, and a note from Mr. Welling. Listen to it, Selina, and then you'll know what they think of us. He's laughing at me from the very start to the finish."

"My dear Miss Maud:

"I am going to hope that you will read the editorials in these two papers every day. It is unnecessary to say I have no sinister object in view such as putting that in your way which might influence you adversely to the political faith you say you have elected to move in. It is rather because I consider that newspapers typify the most virile and

living English of our day, as well as embody the history of our own times, and for these reasons as well as for their perforce certain amount of incisive logic, are a means of disciplining and cultivating the mind. Such articles as appear in a reputable paper's editorial columns, not now and then, but in every issue of every first rate daily, will gradually effect an undisciplined reader, and cause her to form by absorption—"

Maud lowered the sheet of close-written paper and looked over at Selina. An indignant color glowed in her face. "You notice he restricts himself to the one pronoun, Selina, 'and cause her to form by absorption—— "'

"I did notice," agreed Selina unwillingly.

"Wait till you hear the whole of it," Maud lifted the pages and resumed:

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—"will gradually effect an undisciplined reader, and cause her to form by absorption, habits of logical contemplation and discussion which eventually will enable her to discern the salient points and the related elements of a question, than which there is no greater conscious pleasure. And when she arrives at that stage of development, to say what she means instead of gradually finding out (?)—"

Again Maud lowered the page.

"There's a question mark in parenthesis after the 'finding out,' I ought to tell you, Selina. He was afraid the implication might escape me. Well, if he's amused, I suppose we ought to be willing to supply it to him."

She resumed:

"—to say what she means instead of gradually finding out (?) what she means from what she says. I take it that intelligent thinking requires as much mental discipline as military action requires physical discipline. I trust you will not consider it a *noblesse oblige* to read the tariff articles too, though their disciplining effect would also be excellent. But if it requires any grinding, I beg of you to be certain you are acquitted of any obligation in this direction, resting upon the claim of so virulent a disciple to free trade as myself, suggesting it."

Maud flung the several pages down, and faced Selina. "There! Certainly you can see that he's laughing at me! What else can you make of it? And that's what they really think of us, Selina, and our attainments we rather flattered ourselves over."

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"It—er—shows trouble he's taken, too," from Selina weakly and as she felt as she said it, without conviction.

"It shows an abysmal depth of pity, not to say hilarity with the pity," gloomily.

"Maud," from Selina with reluctance and hesitation, "what's free trade that he says he's such a virulent disciple of? Has it to do with the—er—tariff?"

"That's the trouble," bitterly. "I don't know."

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## CHAPTER TWENTY-FOUR

Amanthus stopped by one afternoon a week later, to see Selina. If Adele was entirely occupied in going to luncheons, dinners and cotillions, where she did not shine, so that Selina saw little of her, Amanthus was equally occupied in going to these same affairs, where she did shine, and Selina saw less of her.

She was returning from a luncheon now, lovely child, and a fawn-colored hat set off her hair and face, and a fawn-colored wrap enveloped her. She had come by with a message.

"But first I ought to say, Mr. Verily Blanke and Mr. Doe sent back polite messages. I haven't seen you since the day Mamma and I spent with them at my uncle's stock-farm. They're going out as far as California while they're in this country, stopping everywhere, and up into Canada. They don't go back to England before next summer. If Mamma and I go east to her cousin's summer place, we'll see them again at Bar Harbor. And, Selina, Mr. Doe says everybody in London, to the plainest and the ugliest, even the princesses royal, have bangs. He wasn't talking about horses as I thought at first, but about people. Mamma says bangs are copied from a doubtful person, an actress, and she's not sure she wants to see me have them. And that brings me to what I came for. And first, may I go out to the mirror in the hat-tree and fix my hat on better? It feels crooked and I'm going from here to pay a party call."

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She went out to the glass and talked back from this point as she resettled her hat. "Mamma is trying this new thing, of serving tea in the afternoon, as perhaps you know, Selina. She thought my coming-out winter was a good time to begin it. It was while you were away we started it, and she wants you and Maud and Juliette and Adele to come for a cup to-morrow."

Selina very ardently adored Mrs. Harrison and an invitation from her was a privilege.

"There's sure to be some men drop by, too, now it's getting to be understood about it," explained Amanthus coming back into the parlor, "your Mr. Tate, for one," as though this person in kind were a creature entirely peculiar to Selina's world and unclassified in hers, "ever since we asked him to our dance in fact. Lately Mr. Welling and Mr. Cannon and Culpepper have been coming, too, as if they do it to plague him. He told them real testily, the last time, he wished they would not follow him around."

"That's why they do it," said Selina, even while she was adapting herself to this new and surprising viewpoint of Culpepper and his group, habitués at Mrs. Harrison's!

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Amanthus rather unexpectedly resented this imputation on Mr. Tate. She replied almost sharply, "I like Mr. Tate myself, though I suppose he comes more to see Mamma. He talks to me about the Caesars and the Atlantic cable and Garfield. You think I don't know how the rest of you, Maud and every one of you, change the subject when I come and talk down to me, but I do."

True enough, every word of this indictment! And true also that Mr. Tate did talk to Amanthus and Amanthus was pleased that he should.

"Shall I tell Mamma you'll come, Selina?"

"Oh, always, Amanthus, you know I'd never decline a chance to be where your mother is."

The next afternoon, Selina went downstairs in best dress, coat, hat and gloves, to join Adele come by for her and waiting on the doorstep outside in velvet coat, velvet hat and furs against a background of early dusk and spitting snow. As they neared the Harrison house at the other end of the block, a brick dwelling with a slate mansard, sitting high in its trim corner yard, they saw Maud and Juliette on the steps. Maud in hunter's green, and Juliette still wan of cheek, but as if a bit defiantly, tricked out in brave scarlet. Hurrying they joined the two as Hetty, the maid, opened the door.

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**"They found Mrs. Harrison ... before the open fire."**

Ushered in they found Mrs. Harrison in the second of the two parlors in a big and comfortable chair before the open fire. They loved her fair hair drawn in water waves about her brow and temples; they loved her flowing apricot-toned cashmere with its fichu and hand ruffles and its touches of blue; they loved her fine and frankly beautiful face.

They long had known her story, too, from their elders. A rich girl, raised by her uncle, owner of the Selimcroft stock-farm, she had married a man considerably her senior, a person of charm and much social note, who bringing her here to this community, had wasted her property in shocking fashion in his own behalf, and practiced economy almost to scandal upon her. Since his death when Amanthus was a bit of thing, she had managed the wreck of her affairs herself, prudently and thriftily, bringing herself and her child to where they were.

Mrs. Harrison laid her book on the table by her as the group came in. She, without being aware of it, was advocate and sponsor for much of their present reading, a recently heard of English writer, one Hardy, being the latest met with at her hands, she claiming for him a new departure in heroines. "A Pair of Blue Eyes," was the volume she was laying down now, as their quick eyes saw. By the end of the week, some one of them would have secured it from the circulating library, and the four would have read it, too. In what way were these heroines of this Hardy new in departure? Just what did Mrs. Harrison mean? Was Hardy defending them in their types because they were what the world had made them? These were the questions the four asked each other after reading each volume.

"Well, my dears! Let Hetty have your wraps and come and join me. Amanthus is the victim of her own pertinacity. I gave in at last this morning and agreed she might go down to Miss Lucy at the hair-store and have her hair shingled into a bang. With every one of you now snipping surreptitiously at her hair more and more each day—yes, you well may blush, Maud, you bear the proofs upon you—we opposing elders may as well give in and let you have your bangs. The deed being done, Amanthus had to rush downtown again this afternoon with Mary, the upstairs maid, carrying band-boxes, every hat she owns proving too big in the crown from this cropped arrangement. She'll be in presently. I'm glad to have you to myself this bit."

They came flocking back after depositing their coats, and found seats about the fire as near to her as might be. They loved her hands which were white and shapely and well cared for. They loved her generous comprehendings and her unfailing appreciations. They knew, for example, that she already would have noted and with pleasure in the noting, that Adele's new ruche was becoming, that

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Maud was wearing her first man-tailored suit, that Juliette's scarlet box-coat just removed, was fetching, that Selina in her cashmere that was open a bit at the throat, had lowered her abundant hair to a Langtry knot at the nape of her pretty neck, if her mother wouldn't let her have a Langtry bang over her forehead.

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"Amanthus told Selina we talk down to her, Mrs. Harrison," burst forth little Juliette. "Though I can't see why, with her dozen to our one of every sort of thing, she should care. We felt we'd have to tell you."

"That I might absolve you?" smiled Mrs. Harrison. "Amanthus is a dear goose, a very dear but palpable goose."

Did this lovely lady with the sweet and even pityingly tender eyes pause here, as with one deliberating, and in resuming, speak as to a seen end? Or was she by chance a Medea sowing dragon's teeth for these of her own sex from which should spring the discontents of the future?

"Amanthus is a dear goose," slowly, "but has it occurred to you alert young people, that so long as things are as they are for us women, so long as our only avenue to place and establishment continues to be through marriage, Amanthus is the enviable one among us, the one forever safe and contentedly sweet and insured within the confines of her own docility and femininity, the one that will never rebel, the one that will never ask why? And that as things are as they are, we perhaps should be the more rejoiced to have Amanthus as she is."

*"So long as things are as they are?" "So long as our only avenue to place and establishment continues to be through marriage?"*

This group of four young people looked at Mrs. Harrison startled, and as though not sure they quite were getting her meaning.

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The outer door was heard to open and close, and Amanthus quite literally blew in, snow-sprinkled and wind-tossed, Amanthus who brought into dim rooms the golden effulgence of youth and radiance and beauty, Amanthus, the forever safe and contentedly sweet and insured.

She tossed off her big, softly plumed beaver hat, and behold, she was shingled to her yellow crown! But also, she was in despair.

"Mamma—girls, I'm so glad to see you—I was reading the fashion-paper I bought on the way, while I waited at the milliner's. It's too discouraging. It says Queen Victoria has tabooed bangs. What sort do you suppose tabooed bangs are? The latest thing I suppose! And here, just to-day, I've had mine shingled into Langtry ones!"

"And yet," said Mrs. Harrison laughing, even if tenderly, and drawing Amanthus down to her and kissing her, the while she gave a look all whimsical to the others across the yellow-head, "and yet, in the name of every one of us, why would we have her one whit different?"

What did Mrs. Harrison mean? Why was she thus including them and not Amanthus in these implications and indictments? The four looked at each other, non-plussed and wondering, and for some reason just the least bit disturbed.

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## CHAPTER TWENTY-FIVE

Here Mr. Tate was shown in by Hetty. He was exceedingly tall and his cheek-bones were prominent, and so was his earnestness. His skirted coat seemed ponderous and so did he.

Maud, for one, never had cared for Mr. Tate, possibly because he seemed so little aware of her. She was in a gloomy frame of mind anyway, not having cheered up since, so she put it, she'd seen herself as Mr. Welling and his sex saw her. She said afterwards, that this afternoon at the Harrisons only confirmed the point of view. Mr. Tate in his frock coat and his earnestness seemed to provide an outlet for her immediate ill-humor.

"When a person's dressed with all that excess of correctness, he only looks ridiculous," she told Selina, by whom she was sitting.

Amanthus apparently did not think so. She smiled for Mr. Tate and that marvel of a dimple showed and she gave him her soft hand. Mrs. Harrison smiled for him, too, and offered a hand and told him that she and Amanthus had enjoyed his matinée tickets hugely.

"He's never offered us matinée tickets," sotto voce from Maud at Selina's elbow. "That earnestness of his keeps its eye on exactly what it wants and doesn't waste itself elsewhere. He's recognizing we're here now and he's coming to tell us so. That's something to be grateful for."

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He shook hands with Adele and called her Miss Adelina. She and her identity always seemed vague to him. He shook hands with Selina and asked her about her mother and her aunt; he shook hands with Juliette. He came to Maud. Her attitude to him at times savored of belligerency. She wasn't fond of persons who ignored her, but as she explained afterward, she hardly had flattered herself he'd noticed this manner.

"Miss Maud," Mr. Tate having said this in recognition of her as he put out his hand, paused, then said the name over again as if struck for the first time with the sound and significance of it. "Miss *Maud*?" consideringly and reflectively. "There's something then in names? Juliette now," with a beneficent wave of the hand in the direction of that pretty, dark, little person, "diminutive of Julia; Amanda, Amanthus, and the further derivatives," he turned and bowed gallantly in the direction of this young lady, "worthy to be loved—Matilda, Matilde, Maud—mighty battle maid."

Perhaps it was fortunate that Hetty came in here, this time ushering Mr. Welling, Mr. Cannon and Culpepper. They seemed to bring in with them the bracing of the outside cold and something of its vigor as to a man they rallied about their hostess, their spirits effervescent.

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"We had your note," from Mr. Cannon, the good-looking and the debonaire, cheerfully.

"We've primed ourselves with the law on the subject of cook-ladies and their husbands and their wages," from Culpepper genially.

"We were pricking Tate, old man, into coming this afternoon anyway, before we heard from you, to give us an excuse for following him," from Mr. Welling.

"Tate's been right testy because you asked us instead of him for that advice. He prefers to think the whole lien on things around here is his," from Mr. Cannon.

They came about the room now shaking hands generally.

"You here, Selina? That's good," from Culpepper.

"And you won't forgive me, Miss Maud?" from Mr. Welling to this energetically handsome young lady in her cloth suit of hunter's green. "Won't believe me that my motives, far from trying to win you over to my democracy, were unmixed and pure? Wouldn't see me when I called the other evening! Haven't answered my pleading note! I appeal to you, Mrs. Harrison. I've a question in ethics, moral, social and otherwise that Miss Amanthus once told me about. Or perhaps I'd better put it direct to Miss Maud. *Will a lady say she's out when she's in?* I'm coming around again to satisfy myself as to this, to-morrow night."

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And meanwhile did Mr. Cannon—perish the thought!—approximate a wink at Adele as he approached her? At Adele who when she used to sportively skip rope did it with such painful conscientiousness one's heart ached to watch her? At Adele who

constitutionally would be so embarrassed with a wink thus placed on her hands, one could not figure out the consequences? Certainly this Mr. Preston Cannon the naughty did something with an eyelid quite confidentially as he reached her. And who pray had told him of his recent double identity in connection with the Carter reception?

"The vagabond interloper is discovered in the cherished nephew," he was saying jocularly to Adele whose face was scarlet.

But even so, despite this effervescence of good spirits bestowed around, the younger ladies could not deceive themselves. The gentlemen were glad to find them here, of course, but incidentally, their own coming and their own ardor being for Mrs. Harrison!

For the third time Hetty appeared, now bringing in the tea and its accompaniments, which she put down on a table before Mrs. Harrison.

Whereupon the gentlemen rallied to their hostess again, rallied with a zest and heartiness that spelled homage. Culpepper at the table by her elbow, with the silver tongs suspended above the silver sugar bowl, waited her word to distribute the cubes to saucers. Culpepper—the blunt and self-avowed scorners of the lady's man!

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Mr. Welling went about carrying cups. According to Maud's undertones to Selina, his facetious speeches as he distributed these merely sounded excessive.

"And silly," she added a moment later to the first indictment.

It was his speech calling attention to the gracious occupation of the hostess at the tea-table, that provoked this last comment.

"Juno, to human needs sweetly descent, pours tea," Mr. Welling diagramed it, as he handed Maud a cup of the brew.

"He mails mental pabulum to me, and bestows compliments elsewhere," she remarked scathingly as he moved on.

Amanthus, artless sight, her shingled yellow bang altogether fetching, followed in the wake of Mr. Welling, with cakes in a silver basket. He called back gallantly over his shoulder diagraming her, too.

"Hebe to the children of earth," he explained.

It was nauseating, that is if one agreed with Maud.

Mr. Tate followed after the cups and the cakes with lemon and with cream. It was a risk to let him. He earnestly and even decorously stumbled over a rug and slopped the cream, and as earnestly and decorously looked annoyed and recovered himself. He also made rejoinder to Mr. Welling.

"Juno and Hebe, if you will, Henry," he was the only known soul apparently who addressed this gentleman by his Christian name, "except that in both cases, our Juno and our Hebe are first and last and always, radiantly and commendably, woman!"

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**"He ... stumbled over a rug and slopped the cream."**

Selina who earlier in the afternoon felt she was looking her best in her cashmere with its open throat and the knot of her hair at the nape of her neck, but was less fondly hopeful about it now, took her tea from Mr. Welling, her cake from Amanthus, her cream from Mr. Tate, but something of her state of mind from Maud.

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She did not care for tea. If the truth be told, while she was a little sensitive about the childish look of the thing, a goblet of milk still stood at her plate three times a day, Mamma discouraging even a tentative cup of coffee at breakfast. But it was not her lack of ardor for the tea now in her hand which was dampening her spirits, but the realization that she and her companions were but incidents to a foreground adequately filled for these young gentlemen.

A foreground not even shared by Amanthus, but filled altogether by Mrs. Harrison, beautiful, smiling, and serene, too big, too adequate, too honest and too real to put forward one charm, one attribute deliberately to invite such recognition.

Too big, too honest and too real? Selina caught at the words as they passed through her mind. Could the secret lie in these? Auntie had deplored the borrowed furbelows with deep distress. Were she and her group paying the penalty of trying to be what they were not?

These young gentlemen whose good opinions the group yearned to possess, bantered them instead with jocularly, and gave sincerity and admiration to Mrs. Harrison. If Selina could judge, it was the same nature of homage men offered to Miss Pocahontas Boswell, that most natural and unassuming of persons.

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Had Selina laid bare the secret? For was not Mrs. Harrison nobly and simply herself? Each charm and each loveliness taking its toll rightfully her own? And her interests and her occupations and her reading, her assumptions and her opinions, were not these too gently and quietly her own?

She had faced about from the tea-table now, her own cup in hand and was speaking. How lovely her fair hair was, how pleasing the apricot tones of her dress! And Mamma and Auntie said there was no degradation a husband might descend to that her money was not taken to pay for, no price a humiliated young wife could be taxed, her personal fortune did not stand voucher for! Why should a woman permit it? Why not consider her own to be her own, in such a case? Selina, looking at Mrs. Harrison, wondered.

She herself was speaking. "And now about old colored Aunt Hosanna in my kitchen. She has a lazy, ne'er-do-well husband, girls, though I've probably mentioned it before to you, who as regularly as

the week-end rolls around, appears and collects her week's wages for her. I have asked to be assured by these young lawyers-to-be, that he has every right to do it, before I give in to him any longer."

"He has every right," from Mr. Welling, square-set now like his spectacles, and earnest and definite. "The common law, covering the law of husband and wife, has been modified in some of the states, but here in our own, is practically unchanged."

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"Culpepper," from Mrs. Harrison still playing with her tea-cup, to this black-haired, blue-eyed young gentleman in a chair to her left, "you promised to look up the case of that little dressmaker for me. Don't think I hunt these things. By some force of attraction seemingly, they seek me."

Culpepper took advantage of the opportunity to put his cup down. Its undiminished contents would indicate that he didn't care for tea as a beverage either. He, too, was business-like and definite.

"I took the address you gave me," he said, "and went around to see her carpenter husband. She's temporarily left him since you saw her. He admits the house was bought and paid for by her out of her earnings before he knew her. And he admits he mistreats her every time he's drunk. But the house and its contents he proposes to keep if she leaves him."

"She lost three sewing-machines once before," said Mrs. Harrison, "and a piano she'd bought by installments that was the joy and pride of her life. They were seized a week after she married him three years ago to settle debts he had contracted before he knew her."

Mr. Cannon came into the conversation. Nor was he in the least the jolly, bandying person the younger ladies were familiar with.

"Which is proof of where he on his part puts us, too," murmured Maud.

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"You women, Mrs. Harrison, so seldom take the protection offered you in the ante-nuptial or marriage settlement provisions. We've just been remarking on it among ourselves, the rich women seldom, the working-woman never."

Mrs. Harrison played with the spoon in her saucer, as if considering before answering. She had been holding her cup now for some time.

"Put it down," said Mr. Welling from his stand near the fender, persuasively; "you haven't tasted it."

"No more have you yours," retorted his hostess, "nor Selina, nor Maud, nor Culpepper nor Juliette—I don't like tea myself, and I don't believe one of the rest of you do."

There was relaxation at this, and general confession, and a setting down of cups.

"Tea as a function is more popular than tea as a beverage," from Mr. Welling, gallantly.

Mrs. Harrison reached for her tating which lay near her book. "You say, Mr. Cannon, you wonder women so seldom take advantage of the marriage settlement provisions?" Her eyes glancing from one to the other of the young girls grouped about her fireside and then returning to Mr. Cannon seemed to say, "Here are cases in possible point to be. Consider them."

What she said, however, was, "How many young girls, even in the class you know, are likely to have heard of an ante-nuptial provision? Or as things go in our American life, would conceive any need of protection in her own case? American women usually marry for affection, which implies faith. Though the real truth is, we're not apt to think about marriage in any sense such as this at all, having been trained neither to the knowledge nor the thinking. I take it, Mr. Cannon," smiling, "that you will make it your business to instruct the young lady of your choice in these points beforehand?"

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Mr. Cannon laughed, but he got red, too.

Was Mrs. Harrison too honest thus to be sowing insubordination in the camps of the possible future and not acknowledge it? She put her tating down.

"I am not attacking the institution of marriage in the least, Maudie and Juliette, Selina, Adele and my Amanthus. I am not attacking it at all; I am repudiating woman's helplessness within the institution. Adele knows more of what I am talking about, I see it in her eyes. Adele is a browser among books."

"Mills on 'The Subjection of Woman,'" murmured Mr. Cannon still

red. "This my defence. I lent it to her."

Hetty appeared again, this time ushering Bliss and Mr. Tuttle Jones.

"Oh," from Amanthus, "if you knew how glad I am to see you both. They've been talking and talking, and are still talking, and I haven't been able to make out one thing of what they think they're talking about."

Bliss ruddy-haired and pretty boy, hurried to her side, his face alight at the welcome. Bliss was twenty-one now, and his father had given him a wee interest in a box factory, and he was up and gone from home by half-past six in the mornings, and was tremendously proud and in earnest and interested, and very much in love with Amanthus. [246]

Mr. Jones, his neat person and neat features and small moustache immaculate, finished his greetings without a shade of hurry, then made his way to Selina. Maud had wandered away now, and he took the place she had vacated. Whereupon the color began to rise in Selina's cheek, warm and permeating, and rich. For the eyes of Mr. Jones were sweeping over her face, her brow, her hair, even to the pale burnished knot at the nape of her neck, and sweeping back again over the whole. There were other masculine eyes that might have been doing the same that had declined their prerogative.

"I knew the style was yours when I asked you to try it" murmured Tuttle.

The color flamed higher.

"Mamma and I had cards to-day from your sister, Mrs. Sampson, for her next afternoon. It was nice of her to think of us," from Selina.

Selina and her mother did not know Mrs. Sampson.

"Promise me to accept and go," from Tuttle, earnestly. "A real promise I want. Exactly. Now I have it. I want you to know my people better, and my people to know you." [247]

What could the color do at a speech such as this, but wave almost painfully, higher and even higher?

"Oh, I must tell you, by the way, your aunt, Mrs. Bruce came in the bank to-day to see me. She fancies she owes me some sort of thanks about her husband, which, of course, she doesn't at all. That off her mind, she asked me if I could give her any reasonable idea of how many women in town had a vault box, or if I could tell her how to find out how many have bank-books. What do you suppose?"

Selina had a nice voice, clear and sweet and when she was happy and merry, full of cadences. It rang silvery in its notes now. "I don't suppose. Nobody does when it's Aunt Juanita. Mamma says she's been hunting information of various kinds about women for fifteen years."

It was such a wonderfully pleasing thing to hear that silvery laugh, Tuttle Jones set about awakening it again.

\* \* \* \* \*

About the time cloaks were being sought, Culpepper came strolling to hunt Selina.

"I'll walk back with you," he said easily.

We're all pitiable and ignoble, which is to say, human creatures. If Selina had admitted the slightest feeling of chagrin earlier in the evening, that feeling found satisfaction now. Moreover, she was looking that very best of hers again, which means she was sparkling and coloring and laughing, a thing calculated to increase one's satisfaction. She gave Culpepper a share of this sparkle and this color as she replied: [248]

"Mr. Jones is going to take me home, thank you, Culpepper. He says it's quite dark and snowing fast."

## CHAPTER TWENTY-SIX

There were escorts for everybody and Selina and Mr. Jones started out alone. He guided her down the Harrisons' snow-laden front steps.

"Give me your hand. There's enough snow to be treacherous. Put your foot here, and here, and here."

Was there snow enough in truth on the steps to be treacherous? Selina concluded that perhaps there was but that his solicitude about it was excessive.

He led her down the even snowier flagging to the gate. "This drift has piled up since I went in half an hour ago. I don't know that I'd have brought you out in it if I'd realized."

Outside the gate he took her hand and placed it on his arm. "Right about," encouragingly. "Only the length of the block and you're there."

Then the out-streaming path of light from the Harrisons' doorway was left behind, and the dusk and the silently descending snow shut them in disquietingly and together.

Or was it, rather than the storm and dusk, the care of her by Tuttle which brought this disquieting sense of nearness and intimacy?

"This way—the snow's deeper near the fence. And yet don't stumble over the broken pavements."

And because of this increasing sense of disquiet, she began to talk hurriedly with the gay volubility of embarrassment. "You were wondering about Aunt Juanita and her questions about women? Mrs. Harrison says so many bothering things about women herself. I never feel certain I know just what she means."

Tuttle dropped her arm—they had gone possibly twenty steps—placed himself on the other side of her, lifted that hand and put it on his arm.

"The wind's veered more to this side. I can protect you better here. I rather suspect Mrs. Bruce is a shrewd enough woman, and we know Mrs. Harrison is a charming one. But what do we care after all, you and I, about their meanings?"

Was there just emphasis enough about that "you and I" to render it disquieting, too? Selina clung to her point and talked more volubly.

"Miss Pocahontas Boswell, that I met at your aunt's musicale, says things of the same sort as Mrs. Harrison, things that evidently Aunt Juanita means, too, things that won't let you alone afterward for wondering if they're true, and that hurt your self-respect to think they are true."

"Give me the end of that scarf," Tuttle referred to the little affair of crêpe about her throat, a present not so long ago from Juliette, and which in the swirl of wind and snow was proving refractory. He caught the end, and halting her there in the snow and dusk again, they had gone perhaps thirty feet farther now, found its mate, and retied them. There was something like a woman in the skilful way he did it, and yet as he put her hand back on his arm for the third time, there was that which was not in the least like any woman, in the overlength of time he took in placing that hand where he wanted it. And there was that not in the least suggestive of any woman either, in the tiny pressure of reassurance he put upon those fingers as he left them.

And just what was it these manifestations from Tuttle meant?

Even in Selina's day a prude was a prude and no girl wanted to be one. On the one side, Mrs. Harrison and Miss 'Hontas Boswell and Aunt Juanita, possibly, too, would have said bluntly, "Look at the facts and try to find out what he means."

On the other hand, Mamma and Auntie, by their profound reticence, conveyed the idea, that once let a young man's attentions to a girl be so marked as to be a fact, and every instinct of maidenliness must erect itself in her mind, making blind alleys of all inquiry, wonder or surmise on her part, as to what such attentions mean.

And the facts in this case of Tuttle and Selina, were what? That a really prominent young man in the local little world of fashion, was devoting himself with pertinence and even pertinacity, to a pretty

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girl unknown in his world, an even *quite* pretty girl who unless she married, must find some way to earn a living and take care of herself.

The point might be held to be, were these attentions from Tuttle a passing thing, or sincere?

There was a good deal to make it reasonable that they were but passing. Tuttle was the son of Mr. Samuel Jones, wealthy and eminent citizen. True, some claimed that he was an eminent citizen last because he was a wealthy pork-packer first, but that may be permitted to pass. Tuttle was the son of this Mr. Samuel Jones by a second marriage. His mother in her public contributions to charity signed herself Alicia Tuttle Jones, which is all that needs be said on that score. And Tuttle, twenty-four years of age, neat, dapper, with sense enough of his own, was a beau, a great beau according to his aunt, a beau of such undoubted repute in his world, he even was dubbed the Oswald of it by those outside it and unkind to it, Preston Cannon and Culpepper, for example.

He also had the reputation according to his aunt once more, of being rather shrewdly unsusceptible. Or in other words, the words of Mr. Tate this time, used in defending him from the jocular side-thrusts of Preston and Culpepper, "he had a proper sense of his own value."

So much for Tuttle.

And the assets of this Selina, without a dollar of her own, or of her family's, shabbily established and obscure? Her assets, beyond the lure of nature through her youth and fairness were what? A sound young body. A nature plastic as yet to any mold through place and standing that might be hers. A nature appealingly innocent and unspoiled.

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And these points on either side ascertained, what did these attentions from Tuttle to this pretty Selina mean? His manner of singling her out? Of separating her from whatever group of the moment she was in, and isolating her to himself? Or as now, of touching her fingers if ever so lightly, with a meaning in the touch that seemed to have a language of its own?

Selina being the outcome of Mamma's and Auntie's raising, might not ask herself these things. That tiny wedge of doubt first inserted by Miss 'Hontas Boswell, and again of late driven further by Mrs. Harrison, as to the soundness of the older ideas and traditions and customs, was a mere prick as yet, for the admission of some wonderment and some perturbation. She still was the product of her day and time and up-bringing and being this product, must close the doors of maidenliness and modesty as she knew them upon any such avenues to comprehension and honest understanding.

And so she chattered to Tuttle down the length of the snowy block, chattered volubly and prettily, fate having granted her this, that she did most things prettily, chattered gayly and volubly and withal a bit shyly, as cover to her greater embarrassment.

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**"He below, lifting his hat."**

And so down the length of the snowy block also, he guided her, and in at her own gate, and to her door. And his solicitude, with its silent language, was all but actually caressing.

It was even that. He brought her to her door. A pause here, a space, and his hand left her arm where it had guided her up the steps and dropped, the breath of a touch only, the shadow of a hold—and yet, the blood leaped to it, and the heart stopped—as this Tuttle's hand sought and found hers at her side.

"And you changed the wearing of your hair, your pale, lovely hair that would be a poet's joy, as that little Juliette said of it to me, because I asked you?"

The touch of his hand on hers was gone, she was on the snow-wet step, he below, lifting his hat—correct Tuttle!—even in the swirling snow, bidding her hurry in and change her damp garments, saying good night, gone.

And she? Giving herself one moment to stand there, one pulsing, palpitating, trembling moment before she opened the door and went in to shabby, dreary, ordinary things, might not ask herself what this come upon her was? Nor what it meant? Nor what it portended? This warm, stealing, permeating, this vitalizing glow, this rush as of rosiness through her body?

Might not ask herself this, but being Selina Wistar, fruit of Mamma's and Auntie's rearing, must close the doors of a so-called nicety upon life and truth and nature, and deny to herself by all she was bred to hold modest and seemly, that it was so. For was she not product of her day and time and up-bringing?

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## CHAPTER TWENTY-SEVEN

It seemed to Selina that at times she failed to get the satisfaction from her mother she could have desired.

"Mamma," she said to this little person the morning after the Harrison tea-party, "I can't be comfortable while I owe that fifty dollars to Cousin Anna Tomlinson."

"I'm glad to hear that," from Auntie in her own room through the open door.

Mrs. Wistar, however, spoke from her place at the window almost peevishly.

"Why must you bring up uncomfortable subjects, Selina? And here it is eleven o'clock in the morning and the house just straightened and I this moment sitting down to my church paper!"

"But Mamma, I've kept hoping you'd say something about it. You haven't and I felt I'd have to ask you."

"I try to spare people, myself," severely. "And just as long as I did not speak you might know it was because there was nothing to say. I must say I think Anna is niggardly to want it back. But one can't help one's blood and she's a Pope. 'Hungry as a Pope nigger,' the saying used to be in slave times, or was it a Groghan nigger? Yes, I believe it was a Groghan."

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**"You haven't spoken to Papa about it?"**

"You haven't spoken to Papa about it? Then I'm going to, Mamma," Selina spoke with irritation. Her moods were uncertain these days.

She opened the door to her father that evening. It was a raw and shivery day. She helped him off with his coat and followed him back to the stove in the hall where he stood warming his hands at the glowing mica. By some unfortunate chance his glance wandered about, resting on the shabby papering and paint, the old sofa, the carpet worn to a monotone almost guiltless of pattern.

"Pretty hopeless, Selina? Everything past even patching up this time?"

"Papa, why did you take this evening to say it? When I'm here to worry you more? It's hateful to come to you only for one sort of thing. I'm looking about, I'm telling everybody I want almost any sort of teaching, but in the meantime I'm worrying about that money I owe Cousin Anna."

Her father smiled. He was a comfort in his looks, tall, slight and refined. "I returned the loan to Anna the day after you came home."

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"Papa!" She forgot her relief in her greater feeling of indignation. The debt was paid and he had not told her! Had not mentioned it to her mother! She resented it, and only the timidity of a life-time where he was concerned kept her from saying so.

He was continuing gazing at the glowing mica rather than at her. "I don't mean the money is not still owing, only that it's always better, or seems so to me, to owe on a business footing and not a personal one. Especially I've never had a fancy for owing one's relations," dryly.

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"Papa?" The tone was different now. He was taking her into his counsels where she ought to be. Indignation had given place to understanding of the situation and sympathy.

"Selina?"

"I'm wondering why I haven't come to you about every sort of thing? It's very satisfactory when I do come."

"Thank you, Selina."

"I'm wondering, seriously wondering, why I haven't come all this time?"

"I'm to regard this as an arraignment?" smiling.

"Arraignment, Papa?"

"Of my American fatherhood? That I've allowed my womenkind to usurp my prerogatives? That it's being borne in on you and me, that somehow we've been kept out of our rights in each other?"

Selina hesitated. Then, "Papa, may I ask you something else?"

"It's because you haven't, we're both complaining."

"It's this," her color came and went a little rapidly, but she stood to her colors; "since you did settle this matter with Cousin Anna, don't you think it was only fair to have told Mamma and me?"

"Is indictment added to arraignment, Selina? Culpable as a husband as well as a father?"

"Papa, I didn't say so." She threw herself on him, this fair-haired daughter, and went to crying with her face and tears on his poor innocent shirt-front, and her arm around his neck. It was sweet to have her there, and so new and rare a thing for him to see anything but the veriest surface of her nature, that he was willing to take the toll of her tears from her to receive the rest.

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Selina was a creature of many moods these days. She said she wanted work and when it came she acted as badly as possible about it.

This same evening as she and her three elders were finishing dinner, the doorbell rang. Miss Emma McRanney who went to the same church as the Wistars and who set type at the State Institute for the Blind, followed Aunt Viney into the front parlor. Auntie and Papa who were through their meal, went in at once to speak to her, and Mamma, waiting only to finish her bit of pudding, followed.

Selina poured more cream on her own bit of pudding, and dallied. In her present mood, though what that mood was she hardly could have said herself, other than it savored of a captious disposition to be short with everybody and everything, she felt the one thing she couldn't stand was Miss McRanney. It wasn't that she disliked this person herself so much as she disliked the thing that characterized her.

"It's her air of having accepted," Selina told her pudding crossly, with a vicious stab with her spoon into it, "of having accepted and stayed decently cheerful at that!"

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Accepted! Given in and taken your allotment, however meager, and settled down to it! It's a thing youth cannot conceive of, cannot forgive. For Selina's part, passionately communing with her pudding, she never would accept. Nothing ever, ever, should make her consent to feel poor or to give in to shabbiness. She might be and was amid both these conditions, but nothing but her own will and submission could make her of them. It was feeling this way about them, loathing them, repudiating them, refusing to admit them, that made them possible.

Her elders as they went in the parlor had shaken hands with the visitor, a thick-set person with large features, whose dress, cloak, and hat, Mamma would have described as "plain but perfectly decent and genteel."

Time was when Selina thought this kindly and cordial attitude of her family toward Miss McRanney came from pity of her because

she worked. She knew now that it was because they considered her a fine woman. But, for Selina's part, and again she stabbed the wee remaining morsel of her pudding—if fine character consists in cheerful acceptance of a sordid lot, then she had no patience with it herself. The thing is to repudiate any such lot.

Miss McRanney had a paralytic brother, a black sheep whose by-gone peccadilloes had left the two of them poorer even than they might have been. She lived with this brother in rooms over a drugstore, setting type from nine to five and taking care of him and doing light housekeeping between times. It was a shabby and unrelieved picture. Selina hated it. She hated another thing, too—though this one she would not admit—she hated the thought of herself as a wage-earner when she thought of Miss Emma McRanney as one!

The visitor was speaking in the parlor in a good-humored voice.

"I'm glad of this chance to say howdy," she was saying, "but what I'm here for is to see Selina. No indeed, Mr. Wistar, I don't want you to go, you or Mrs. Wistar, either, and Miss Ann Eliza mustn't go in any event, as I've got my missionary dues in my pocket; I want to pay her. It's only that what I've come to say has to be said to Selina."

But Papa and Mamma retreated, the latter calling to Selina for fear she had not followed the conversation. The last vestige of her pudding being gone, this person arose and went into the next room and shook hands with the guest, after which the three of them, Auntie, Miss McRanney and she herself, took chairs.

"I want to know, Selina, if you'll coach me for an examination. A teacher out at the Institute where I am, is going to quit. I can't do that myself, so the next best thing is to get his place if I can, as it pays better than my own. I understand the finger-reading, both the Roman and the Braille, working in the type I found myself interested, but the position calls for a grade-school teacher's certificate which I have to pass an examination to get."

"Emma!" said Auntie. "And you have the courage? You must have been well along when you went to work and taught yourself how to set type? And to get yourself ready again——"

"That's right, Miss Ann Eliza, I'm forty last month. But what's forty when you come to think about it? It's ten, fifteen years younger than it used to be. My grandmother died when she was forty-eight, and I always think of her as an old person in a frilly cap."

"I'm forty-eight myself. You're quite right about it, for I certainly haven't any disposition yet toward caps. Emma," almost wistfully, "if I had your advantage of those eight years I'd ask you to show me how to fit myself for something. Many's the time I've asked myself if I wasn't capable of something beyond rolling and whipping cambric bands and polishing brasses. I've looked at you more than once in church, and envied you."

Auntie! Darling Auntie! Confessing to Miss Emma McRanney that she envied her! It filled Selina with a greater fury of dislike and distaste for this person. She did want work, and had said so, but she didn't want to teach Miss Emma McRanney!

This lady was speaking again. "After I'm home in the evening, I get supper for my brother and myself. Try it a while, Miss Ann Eliza, before you quite envy me. So I'll have to ask you to give me an hour in the evenings, Selina, say three times a week."

If anything could make the proposition more distasteful it was this.

"I taught in our orphan asylum after I graduated, until I got my present place, Selina, so I'm not on altogether new ground, though no certificate was required there. It's not quite such a crime against your fellow-man to be blind, so I've discovered, as to be an orphan. Anything, even Emma McRanney with no certificate, was good enough for orphans, whereas I have to be guaranteed in this case. You're unfortunate if you're blind, but the state does look after you, but to be an orphan, leaves you convicted of your own guilt, and not a leg to stand on. If you're ever compelled to choose between these things, Selina, don't be foolish enough to be an orphan. They pay teachers so little to instruct them, even I had to leave. I ought to tell you these examinations I want to take come late in March. That'll give us six weeks. I'm promised the place if I can get the certificate, and I've got some former questions from the examining board thinking we could find out from these where I stand and what there is to do."

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Selina roused herself. She didn't want to teach Miss McRaney! "I've had so little experience, Miss Emma, I ought to tell you I'm not at all sure I'm competent."

"Neither was I," said Miss Emma good-humoredly if unexpectedly. "I graduated through our high school, myself, the second class put through after it was established. And looking back in the light of what I've found out since, I'll say there don't seem to be anything in the way of real, actual, everyday sense that a body ought to have, that I didn't succeed in failing to have—I and most of my class."

"Why, Emma," from Auntie, "and you had the leading honor, what is it that it's called, the valedictory?"

"That's the surest and most damning evidence against me, Miss Ann Eliza; it takes years to live it down," continued Miss Emma. "I thought about you in church Sunday, Selina, wondering if you'd do, and then went and asked Mrs. Williams about you, knowing you'd taught there. She said you did fairly well with your little class, and toward the end of the year seemed to be doing better, but as you told her you were going South to coach in Latin and Algebra, she judged these were your specialties. Well, they're mine, too, where I'm likeliest to fall down, and that decided me."

Do our assumptions, then, like our sins, live on to confront us? "But there was no coaching to do when I got there," hurriedly explained Selina. "I never had a pupil!"

"Well, that don't prevent its being your specialty even so. I'm the one to risk it. And I'll have to say what convinced me there's something to you, is that you stood Mrs. Williams and her condescension all those months you were in her house and didn't murder her. I have to swallow a good deal of such patronage anyhow, because I'm poor, or because I work, or both, and I'm guiltless of violence only because I can't hope to commit assault and battery on people's persons and not pay the penalty. But it never would do to tempt me too far with that woman. But to get back to the point, are you going to undertake me?"

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Try as Selina would, she didn't seem to know how to get out of it. She endeavored to throw some cordiality into her manner. "We'll begin whenever you say, Miss Emma. Have you those questions with you, you spoke about? We might go over them and see what there is to do."

Auntie got up to leave them. "Thank you for remembering your missionary dues, Emma. You're an amazing person to me. If I was forty instead of forty-eight," longingly, "I'd certainly follow your example."

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## CHAPTER TWENTY-EIGHT

About half-past eight Culpepper Buxton arrived at the Wistar house. He was good-humored and unruffled. Selina had turned him down the evening before for the first time in history. The pretty and lovable little minx! She was waking then! Juliette, who was clever with her dark eyes and her flashing smiles, or Amanthus herself, could not have done it any better.

As he came up, Selina was at the door saying good night to a stout, rather pleasant-voiced person.

He waited until this guest had gone, then went in with Selina.

"Who's your friend?" inquired Culpepper.

Selina diagramed the lady and her business briefly, so briefly that Culpepper might have taken it as cue to drop a dangerous subject. "She has to take an examination and wants me to coach her for it."

But Culpepper, in his unruffled good humor, failed to know his cue. "That's good. Just the sort of thing you've been wanting. No?"

For Selina, having started to push chairs and footstools back into place, here ceased abruptly and swung about on him furiously. "It's not good. I loathe everything she stands for. I hate shabbiness. I hate poverty, I don't like to be near either of them, they always seem to be reaching out fingers to drag me down to them. You're altogether and entirely wrong. I don't want to teach Miss McRanney."

Hoity-toity! As Culpepper's stepmother used to say to his early and childish bursts of temper. She *was* a little minx all at once! He didn't know that he'd put up with it.

"You'd better not teach her then, you won't do it halfway right," from Culpepper coolly.

"You're very priggish," from Selina, in return, and hot as he was cool. "You speak, I suppose, from the heights of masculine superiority?"

"I'll run on up to ole Miss' door, if I may," from Culpepper. "I've a message for her in my home letter to-day from my mother, and I want to get back to the rooms. We've a crowd on for to-night by nine."

She heard him run up the stairs, tap at her aunt's door, and at the answer, enter. Whereupon she herself sped up the steps, too, and past that door and in at her own, which she closed softly, if passionately. When he came down again, to call a cool good-bye as he went out, he should not find her waiting there!



**"Selina ... fell on her knees."**

Within her room this child, Selina, young and crude, her tragedies pitiful in their tininess but tragedies to her none the less who did not know them for tiny, fell on her knees beside her big and tolerated poster-bed, and sobbed into her marseilles spread, and

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passionately arraigned that which she called God. First, because Culpepper had hurt her feelings and next, though she would not have admitted either, because she did not want to teach Miss Emma McRanney. For while Selina said her formulas in prayer, night and morning, dutifully and on her knees, it was only in moments of hurt and passionate outcry against the hurt that she really approached her God. Though she, dear child, did not know this.

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Self-examined, even here now upon her knees, she would have decided and honestly so far as she was concerned in the opinion, that she was a religious person. She had been brought up so to be. On her little book-rack on her table, stood her Bible, her Thomas à Kempis, "The Lives of the Saints" (in miniature, a rather daring acquisition which pleased her, savoring of Rome as it did), "The History of the Church and Its Liturgy," and a few other volumes. She even felt that she was rather better informed in religious matters than her friends, and in some ways, more catholic in her interests. She talked predestination and free-will with Maud; St. Francis of Assisi, St. Paul and conversion with Juliette, who longed for a light from Heaven; conscience and duty with Adele, and even life after death; and she and Maud found themselves in conversation on virgin birth with a converted Armenian lady missionary staying at Maud's house, though with a startled consciousness, in the light of the lady's contribution to the subject, that they evidently did not know either what they or she were talking about.

Selina, honest child, looked on matters such as these as being religious. It did not dawn on her that it was only when the world went amiss for her that she prayed. Only at times, such as now, after the door was pushed to and the bolt passionately shot, and she fell on her knees to that Something brooding somehow and somewhere above its created creatures, only when she held out her arms to it and cried to it through sobs, and even though that cry be but appeal against her own discomfiture, that she prayed, that she ever had prayed, ever had sought a God through need.

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"I want admiration for what I am, I want applause for what I do, I want my part to be favored and enviable according to my choosing of what is favored and enviable," may be said to be the unformulated gist of this unwitting child's poor little human prayer.

As indeed, for the pitiful part of that, it is the prayer of millions of us, every day. But prayer for all its paucity, prayer for all that.

And meanwhile in Auntie's room, a room of ponderous mahogany akin to Selina's, with a great deal of red and an equally cheerful predominance of green in carpet, curtains and lambrequin, she and Culpepper were having a real heart-to-heart confidence.

"I didn't suppose she'd tiff with me. What's got in her all at once, ole Miss?"

Ole Miss patted the hand that was holding hers. They were mighty fond of each other, these two, to use their own vernacular about it. But she didn't reply. Yet there was that in her manner which implied she could have done so if she would.

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"What's the use us two beating about the bush with each other, ole sport?" from Culpepper, who meant she should. "You know just as well as my mother, or Cousin Robert, and I've made a clean breast to 'em both, what's the state I'm in as to Selina. The trouble's the other way round. When she was about ten or eleven, up there at home in the summers, I used to catch and kiss her to tease her. I don't believe she'd read a bit more in it if I caught her and did it now."

Ole Miss spoke. "There never can be but one first for a girl, Culpepper. There never was but the one, first and last, for me. I'd like you to know that it was your father. The truth with Selina is, she's wakin'. She's cross because she's coming to be conscious. It's a trying time and we're human, and we've all got tempers. I think it will break my old worthless heart if it's Emmeline's Tuttle Jones, and not John Buxton's Culpepper who's responsible for it."

A pause. Then a breath long and deep and gloriously big and gloriously confident from Culpepper.

"And that's it! You've put heart in me altogether, ole sport! You've pointed me the road and shown me the gait. Gimme one before I go, like a real lady!"

Ole Miss roused to her own defence. "Stop right now, Culpepper. No, I don't want to be mauled and teased, stop smacking that kiss

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into my ear—well, put it on my cheek if that's what you meant to do. No, I won't discuss the subject further either now or any other time. I haven't another word to say concerning it, and if that's what you're waiting for, you may as well go long."

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## CHAPTER TWENTY-NINE

Miss McRanney proved worth while enough, and rather good fun if Selina would have allowed this. She arrived on the appointed evening with a satchel of schoolbooks and an avowed poor opinion of examinations as tests of teachers. She followed Selina to the dining-room where they were to work, and where Auntie was lingering to say howdy, and as she emptied the satchel of the textbooks, emptied her mind of this opinion.

"Drat such a test, it's all wrong. What life asks teachers to put into their pupils, or get out of them, as you prefer it, is character. To take a wild flight into the fanciful, and I'm not strong there, one might call it the universal language recognized everywhere and anywhere, whether in a Choctaw or a Charlemagne. Right now I couldn't pass the examination that gave me that valedictory at eighteen, no, Miss Ann Eliza, and don't look so distressed about it, not if Mazeppa's ride in duplicate for me was the consequence of failing. Whereas any character I've got of my own to help a child to his, I've found since then."

"Any character *you've* got, Emma?" from Auntie indignantly. "And starting out again at forty?" The wild daring of this act, as she saw it, seemed to fascinate Auntie.

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"Well," said Miss Emma, "he must needs go whom the devil doth drive, my devil having been necessity. I've never had a man to rest back on, or I probably would have done so. However we're keeping Selina waiting. The digressions of middle age are mighty tiresome, aren't they, Selina? Well, don't forget they are when you get there. Since I've got to pass this examination I suppose we'd better get to work, especially in your specialties, algebra and Latin, that are my pitfalls."

The next lesson came on a Monday evening and Miss Emma had been at church the day before. "There's many a thing to amuse a body, Selina," she said good-humoredly as she took off her wraps. "I earn my way and occupy my small place in the army of producers. The rest of the women in that congregation of ours live sweetly and unconcernedly upon the general store that other people produce. And yet, if their unfailing and admirably ordered patronage of me could overwhelm, I'd long ago have been washed away in the flood."

Auntie's voice expostulating, came in from the next room where she was reading the paper laid down by Papa. "Why Emma——"

"Here, keep out of this, Miss Aunt Eliza. I'm talking to the next generation. I want to point out a few things to it that may make the way easier for its journeying. Selina, if you're going to teach, come on along with me and take this examination and get your certificate. You've got something to show then, something to go on so long as the public demands certificates."

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Selina had been thinking about this herself, and wishing she'd done it sooner. If the suggestion had come from anyone but Miss Emma she'd have taken it. As it was——

"What pitiful fools we are!" from Miss Emma at the next lesson. "Far from respecting my job when I first started out teaching, and getting everything out of it there was in it for me and everybody else, I lost my first years at it being ashamed of it. Nowadays I set type well, the job seeks me, and I don't mind saying so. I'll have to feel this same capacity in myself for the new job if I get it. It's a good thing to feel, capacity in yourself for your work, and respect for yourself in it."

The doorbell rang. Of course! The wonder to Selina had been that it hadn't rung before on these lesson evenings. The fear that it would ring had been one among many reasons she was so averse to the undertaking. Papa, however, had his instructions in this event to close the folding doors and leave them to their work in the dining-room undisturbed. But Papa now forgot the folding doors. He opened the front door and after a moment's delay in the hall for the removal of hat and coat, ushered the caller in.

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It was Mr. Tuttle Jones. Again, of course! Who could Selina less have wanted it to be?

And here at the dining-table, all too visible to the front room, sat Miss Emma McRanney, plain, shabby and busy. Her textbooks, open over the table, were shabby as herself, and unlovely. Her hands showed manual work. Selina was ashamed of Miss McRanney,

ashamed of teaching Miss McRanney, ashamed of being found thus teaching her by Tuttle Jones. Alas for you, Mamma, once again! You with your strained anxiety, your every effort bent toward that front in life which must be kept up! Your one ewe lamb would have been the happier for the truer values held by Auntie!

Mr. Jones came smilingly back through the parlor to the dining-room, his hand outstretched to—not Selina at all, but Miss McRanney! Indeed, and indeed, you never can tell!

"Well, Tuttle, and how's your mother?" from this lady. "Tuttle's mother and I are old friends from grade and high school days, Selina. Admirable and democratic meeting-ground for the classes with the masses," dryly. "How'd you say your mother is, Tuttle?"

"Quite well. Miss Emma, and grumbling only yesterday that you'd not been around for a month to put her in a better humor with the world. What's wrong with my telling her you'll come for dinner Sunday?" He was shaking hands with Selina now. "But I'm in the way here?"

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Selina was overswept with a passion of loathing for herself, and a need for abasement and self-punishment.

"Miss Emma came to me to get some coaching and's finding I'm a very poor teacher. Oh, but she is, and she's too considerate and kind to say so. For fifteen minutes now she's been showing me how to do a page in algebra I, the teacher, couldn't show *her*."

"Sit down, Tuttle," from Miss Emma, cheerfully, "and see what's wrong. I'll be jiggered if I've got it either. Figures used to be your strong suit when you were a boy."

Selina meant for herself to go the whole way now. Being ashamed, she was very much ashamed. "I've been following every clue and chance for teaching I could hear of since I came home in November," she told Tuttle, "and nobody wanted me. I never quite understood until Miss Emma pointed out that I wasn't qualified as a teacher. I'm going to try for a certificate along with her in March."

Miss Emma nodded approval. "Now she's talking, Tuttle. Get busy and applaud her. This child's been going through that circle of purgatory Dante forgot to set down, finding herself a woman that's got to make her way, and taking her cue from the rest of the woman world, ashamed of the fact."

Selina dropped her head right down on the page of the open textbook before her on the table. The sob was coming and she could not stop it. Bye and bye when the pretty head with its masses of flaxen hair lifted, they all laughed together. For Miss Emma McRanney was chafing one of Selina's hands and Tuttle Jones the other one.

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Culpepper's visits these days were to Auntie. He got in the way of running in and up to her room for a brief while in the evenings, and out again.

"She won't have a thing to do with me, ole Miss, and there's nothing for it but for me to take my medicine! 'Oh, yes, she's quite well, thank you!' when I do stop and speak to her 'and very busy.' She's not only getting Miss McRanney ready as far as she knows how, but trying to get herself ready for these examinations in March. That's about what she says to me, coolly and loftily, and goes on about her own affairs."

"I don't like it at all," from Auntie, stoutly, "And here's Emmeline's Tuttle around every lesson night looking like a model out of a store window, helping them with their algebra, both Emma and Selina." Auntie was innocent of guile. "It's his specialty, too, it seems," she added lamentingly.

"Why don't he stay where he's put?" grumbled Culpepper. "He's a dude, a dandy dude, you can tell it by his fashion, can't you, ole Miss? What's he got to do with our nice, humble, worthy ways, and with our Selina and her problems? I ask you that!"

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There came a morning late in March when Miss Emma McRanney at nine-thirty, in her 'plain but perfectly genteel' best wool dress, stood waiting at the drugstore over which she lived, instead of being at the Institute mounted on a stool, and wearing a blue calico apron with sleeves, setting type.

Nor had she waited above two minutes when a rather breathless

young person came hurrying in. A moderately tall, slim, pretty girl, with a good deal of flaxen hair, in obviously her soberest wool dress, and quietest head-gear.

"On time, am I, Miss Emma? After lying awake half the night saying over lists of dates and rules and the rest of it, I overslept this morning and Mamma wouldn't wake me."

"Plenty of time, Selina. At least *you* don't have to worry about your particular specialties, algebra and Latin——"

"Now, Miss Emma, you said you wouldn't——"

"Whereas between you and me, Selina, I'm weakest if anything in the one that's Tuttle's specialty too——"

They boarded the street car, the stout, plain lady in her best wool dress, and the slim, pretty girl in her plainest dress. When they alighted before a tall, broad, ugly brick building that bore above its central doorway the words, "Board of Education," a clock in a neighboring steeple said five minutes of ten.

"And the examinations are at ten. We're just in good time, Selina," said Miss Emma McRanney.



**"They boarded the street car."**

One week from that day Selina Wistar arriving at her own gate at dusk from one direction, she had walked home from the office of the Board of Education in truth, to avoid getting there any sooner than she had to, met Miss Emma McRanney arriving from the other direction.

If one did not fear conveying the impression that Selina was fast lapsing into an eighteenth century heroine so far as weeping goes, it could be mentioned there was that about her face, despite the dusk, which showed she had been crying. Just a preparatory cry, perhaps, of a scalding tear or two, that could be permitted as she hurried along in the dusk, and would not be noticed—an abeyant tear as it were, pending the unrestrained flow that would come when seclusion and her own room were reached.

"Well, Selina," from Miss Emma, cheerfully, "it's all over for me. I've just been by the school office to get my report. I'm a type-setter who knows her job and is doomed to stick at it. What—*what?* Don't tell me you've gone and failed, too?"

"Oh, Miss Emma——"

"Now, Selina, don't tell me a further thing, don't tell me you fell down in your own specialties——"

"Miss Emma——"

"Well, well, now that's exactly what I was afraid I'd do and that I did, but I'd said from the start they were *my* weaknesses."

Selina was crying bitterly.

"My child," from Miss Emma, "it isn't worth it. You've gained enough in other things to make up for the lost certificate. And as for me, I've something that will comfort you, that I've known for two

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days. It made my middle-aged blood so hot I didn't know if I'd take the place if I could get it. It's almost as despicable a thing to be a woman, as I discovered it was to be an orphan, Selina, and very seldom more remunerative to the individual. At the last meeting of the board out at the Institute, they agreed, to a man, in giving this place to a woman, that it wasn't worth as much, and reduced the salary to exactly what I'm getting now. They did the same thing when they gave me my present job as type-setter. No, I won't come in, thank you. I've got to get on home. One thing I'm as adamant about. I can't feel those blind babies would have missed that Latin and algebra in me, and I've been hungry to teach 'em ever since I've been there. Good night! I'm coming around some evening soon, with Tuttle. We've a date, so it's not good-bye."

Whereupon Selina fled into the house and up to her room, and although, this time, it was an absolutely *fresh* marseilles spread, put on clean *that* morning, flung herself upon it and cried and cried and cried bitterly.

Mamma came in, worried and indignant. "Why did Emma McRanney expect you to know more than she did and instruct *her*? It was a good deal for her to ask anyway. And I'm sure you've just said you failed, too. Why should all your worry be for her?"

Auntie came in. "I'm sure Emma knows you did your best, Selina. And think what you've gained? A real friend in a real woman like Emma?"

That night alone in her room, Selina took her pen and her paper. The note she wrote was to Culpepper whom she had ignored for six long weeks, and it said:

DEAR CULPEPPER:

I want to tell you that I've been hateful and I am sorry. I did try, however, with my pupil after the first, and try my best. Evidently my best is an inadequate thing, and unflattering to me, for she has failed. And, deciding to try for a certificate, myself, I have failed, too.

SELINA.

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## CHAPTER THIRTY

The next day, about noon, Culpepper Buxton rang the Wistar doorbell. Aunt Viney opened the door, still adjusting the apron she had tied on as she came.

"No, not Miss Ann Eliza this time, Aunt Viney. Is Miss Selina here?"

Viney, cautious soul, true to her race in this, never was known to commit herself or her white household.

"I'll go up an' see, Mr. Culpepper."

"Tell her it's only for a moment, I've run 'round between classes."

Plump brown Viney, not without panting, mounted the stairs and went on back to Selina's room. "Yes'm, I knew you's here, an' I knew you's goin' to see him. But 'tain't my way, an' you know 'tain't, to keep my white folks too ready on tap. Get up f'om that sew-in'-machine, an' turn roun' an' lemme untie thet ap'on you got on. Think you's sewin' foh yo'se'f, don't you? Think it's a petticoat you's goin' to learn to make, don' you? An' firs' time you lay it down an' go off an' leave it, yo' aunt or yo' ma'll take it up foh you an' finish it."

"Aunt Viney, you do understand, don't you? And you're the only one here that does! Tell 'em I *want* to do it, I want to make mistakes, and I want to rip 'em out and do it over again. Tell 'em so for me, won't you, Aunt Viney?"

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"Go on down to thet thar youn' man. He ca'ies his haid high, but 'tain't no proof we don't ca'y our'n higher. He'n Miss Maria, his ma, ain't got it all; we're folks our own se'f."

But for all this by way of support while she smoothed her hair, Selina went downstairs slowly and constrainedly, conscious in the sense she had been conscious when coming home through the snowstorm with Tuttle Jones.

She had known Culpepper *would* come from the moment she dropped her note to him in the letterbox at the corner last night. And now that he had come she was afraid to go down and meet him. Afraid of what? She couldn't have said; instinct didn't take her that far; it only sent her down the steps hesitatingly and constrainedly.

Culpepper the undemonstrative, the coolly unflattering in his attitude always, swung about at the sound of her footsteps and met her at the parlor door.

She held out a hand, a soft and pretty hand, its mate going up at the same time to push back some imaginary troublesome lock, a characteristic gesture with her when she was embarrassed.

But Culpepper having taken the soft hand proffered, put it over into his left one, and—

("Oh, Culpepper, no, I'm not ten now!")

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—with the frowning and horrific air of a fearsome captor, undoubtedly an ogre captor intent and not to be deterred, went creepingly after its mate and cunningly caught it and brought it down and put it, with even more diablerie of horrific cunning alongside the other upon his big left palm, and—

("Culpepper, don't—don't do it, it frightens me still!")

—like as when the compassionless keeper of the ogre dungeon into which the victim is thrust, lowers the overhead stone that fits into its place—lowered his big right hand upon these two soft ones—

And why not? So he used to catch her and tease her when she was ten, playing the thing through in realistic pantomime until she, throwing herself on him, clung to him perforce! But she was not that little girl! Nor did she feel as a little girl feels any longer! She tried to take her hands away.

As well try any other feat in strength which is impossible. And now Culpepper bending his head a little was trying to make her look up, those bold eyes in teasing wait to catch her gaze when she did.

Not for worlds could Selina have looked up. Her heart beat wildly, and the blood pulsed in her throat and pounded at her ears. And as Culpepper holding the hands captive, went on bending to surprise her gaze, her lashes swept lower and yet lower upon her cheeks.

As a picture of shy maidenliness, Mamma and Auntie, the thing as you fancy it in perfection, behold your handiwork!

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As a piteous young creature, ignorantly innocent, or innocently

ignorant, as you prefer to put it, Mamma and Auntie, the choice in terms is yours, a piteous young creature suddenly overswept with conscious sex that nor you nor any creature has seen fit to explain to her, behold your handiwork! Groping by her young self, filled with terror and horror of self, of life, even of the God who made her as she was, you have left your child to battle as she may with things hideous to her distorted imaginings, rather than know them as attributes natural, decent, and sanctioned of God!

Culpepper bent yet lower to find her eyes through the down sweep of those lashes. The warmth from his young, gloriously alive face, so close to hers, the lift and fall of his breathing, reached her consciousness.

"I had your note, Selina. I wonder, writing me that, if you knew how sweet you were being to me?"

And here she got her hands away because in truth his heart was touched by her piteous terror, and he let her go. She found a chair and pointed one to him.

"You didn't come round any more," she said hurriedly.

He looked across at her oddly, those blue eyes of his within their accentuating black lashes, even humorously baffled in their expression. Seeing that this speech from her was honest and not arch, it was disarming to a lover by its very nature. And yet allowing that it was the child in her that was honest, was he not to gather that the maid in her was disturbed?

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And again allowing that it was the child in her that spoke, was it not the maiden in her whose fingers even now were plaiting her dress nervously into folds, her eyes upon these fingers and her color coming and going? Peradventure, Mamma and Auntie, she does you proud, this proper and becoming picture of fluttered and timid maidenhood. You, Mamma, who have been girl, maiden, wife and mother, and have no woman's word for your woman-child! You, Auntie, who discussed the situation frankly enough with Culpepper, the man, but as with a flaming sword of vigilance, have stood guard lest even a breath of the truth reach the ignorance of Selina, the woman.

Culpepper watching her as she sat there, lovely and drooping and fair-haired, with her clear young profile partly averted, spoke, and watched anew to note the effect upon her of what he said.

"I concluded I'd keep away, Selina. I wasn't in the least satisfied with what you were giving me. I'm an outspoken brute. If there's no show that my share's going to be any more, I'll go on keeping away."

She shrank as though something had struck her. And in truth something had. Comprehension of what he meant, so far as knowledge went with her, the lightning flash of it stunned while it revealed.

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Yet even as the poor child reeled pale with the shock, she rallied to her womanhood as she had had womanhood impressed on her. Courageously rallied! And bravely dissembled! A thing well-nigh synonymous with womanhood as taught to her!

Which is to say the child restored herself with a long, deep breath, laughed with a disarming little throw back to the head, swept her hands across the plaits she had so busily gathered there in the breadths of her dress, as though she swept away with these all but an everyday interpretation of Culpepper's word, and spoke frankly, frankness being a most excellent dissembling weapon.

"It's good to have you back, Culpepper." Her voice, traitorous at first, gained in composure. As said before it was a nice voice, and under conditions, full of cadences. When she was ten, Culpepper used to kiss her in her pretty neck to tickle her, because he liked these cadences when she laughed.

Meanwhile with the aid of that dissembling weapon, frankness, she was going on. "Don't stay away ever again. And, Oh, there's so much to ask you, and so much to tell you about!"

He looked across at her and her pretty dissembling and laughed. "You little goose! You haven't known me all this while to think you can put me off if I'm really ready?"

Her gaze at this was hurried, beseeching, pleading. It seemed to beg for time, respite, mercy!

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He laughed again, and she hurried on. "As I said, there's so, so much to talk about——"

"As for instance——?"

One saw her hurriedly and desperately searching her mind.

"Why, er—of course—Judy!"

The tone even implied reproach that he could have thought it anything but Judy.

"All right, my lady," his name for her of old. "I accept the cue. Judy it's to be, is it? You're sparring for time, I'm to understand? The idea's planted now alongside any foolishness which Tuttle may have been putting there and I'm to let you get used to it awhile? And what's the trouble with Judy, now? Still sore with her father, or something fresh?"

"We're not supposed to know what she's doing," with a rush of evident relief at his docility, "but we do. She's being coached for her college examinations by some college chap Algy found and arranged with. It's mostly done through Algy, too, with an occasional meeting at the circulating library to outline more work. She'll have to go to Cincinnati for the examinations when they come, in June, which her father won't let her do, so we can't see how any of it's going to help her?"

"Go on," from Culpepper. "Talk along, amuse yourself. But one of these days when my time comes, my lady——"

Selina's breath came piteously in its flutterings. And for all her rallyings to that womanhood, her heart had never ceased its cruel clamberings, and her blood its beatings in her ears and its pulsings in her throat. And on all that vast sea of terror fast returning on her again, terror not of him, that was secondary, but of that within her innocent self she could no longer deny as being there, on all this rising sea of fear and terror, she could see but the one absurd little spar of inconsequence to cling to still—Judy.

"We feel so sort of dishonorable toward her father and mother, Maud and Adele and I do, Culpepper. But we're not supposed to know she's doing this. And of all people, little Judy!"

"Certainly, by all means, little Judy."

She rose with a pretty dignity which seemed to say she didn't like this tone from him.

He rose with her. She had to look up to him when they stood thus, which gives the man the advantage.

"It's lunch time, Culpepper, though we'll be glad to have you stay?"

No doubt he had really meant to be merciful and bide his time when he said he would. Instead, as she finished her little speech with its implied reproof, he laughed and with a mighty sweep of his arms, gathered this suddenly white-cheeked Selina up and kissed her, kissed her roughly, kissed her gloriously, kissed her exultingly. And set her down.

She stayed white-cheeked and looked at him. She spoke so quietly it was a bit discomfiting. "That was outrageous of you. And cruel. I'll listen to you if ever I make up my mind now I want to listen and not before. Right now I hate you! Yes, I'm sure that's it, hate you! Not so much because you're Culpepper—"and here it became evident she was going to cry, one hates to have to tell it on her so soon again—"but because of something in you that made you think you could!" And the storm of tears now upon her, she turned and fled upstairs.

Late that afternoon when Selina went into her mother's room, she found Auntie talking about her paragon and favorite Culpepper. "He's his father right over again, Lavinia. Women like to be coerced and decided for. And anything that once belonged to Culpepper, he'd be fierce to the death caring for."

"I don't agree with you about what women like, Auntie," from Selina, to this startled lady who didn't know she was around. "Why should a person like to be coerced because she's a woman? And why should she want to be decided for, for the same reason?"

Auntie looked not only startled but alarmed. "Why, Selina!"

Selina took a calmer tone. "Maybe we're beginning to feel differently about these things, Auntie," curiously, as if wondering about it herself. "Maybe women are different from what you and the ones you knew were?"

"Lavinia," from Auntie, "do you hear your child?"

Selina overswept by the fury of swift and sudden rage, stamped her foot and—terrible as it is to have to set it down again—burst into tears.

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"But I'm not a child! That's the trouble! If anybody'd only understand and—help me!"

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## CHAPTER THIRTY-ONE

One afternoon toward the end of April, Mamma came to Selina's door. Her manner was both pleased and excited.

"Mrs. Gwinne Tuttle is here in her carriage. Tuttle's sister, Mrs. Sampson, is with her. They've stopped by to take you driving."

Selina flushed. "I don't know that I want to go, Mamma."

Mrs. Wistar looked tried. "When I've already been down to speak to them and tell them you would? Get up quickly, Selina, and slip off that dress and let me take your hair down, and put it up again. Nobody can make it look so well and stay in place as I can. There's plenty of time if you'll come on. Mrs. Tuttle said they would go up to the Harrison's and leave cards and be back for you."

Mamma worked swiftly, a hairpin or two for immediate use held between her lips and preventing conversation, while the clear-cut face of Selina before the mirror of the mahogany bureau looked absently at the face of Selina within the mirror.

There was something about Tuttle's solicitude and zeal for her which she did not understand. This arrival now of Mrs. Tuttle and Mrs. Sampson was but more of the same vaguely disturbing sort of thing.

"Mamma, it's too much, it's forever Tuttle's family. Do you realize I'm about being run by his family?"

Mamma got rid of the hairpins. "And why shouldn't you be? They see that he admires you, and I must say it's very generous and sweet of them——"

"Generous, Mamma?"

"Well, the word was ill-advised. I'll get out your coat and hat now your hair's done, while you slip on your dress."

"That's all, Mamma, please. I'll finish dressing quicker by myself if you'll let me."

Selina wanted to think, and she sighed with relief as the door closed behind her mother. Was she, in truth, being absorbed, by Tuttle and his people? She ran over the past weeks in her mind. Culpepper Buxton had apologized and she accepted the truce, but did she have time ever to see him? When did she see Maud and Juliette and Adele nowadays?

And just how came it about? Quite casually late one afternoon in March, Tuttle and his mother had dropped in. Selina had not met this lady before. Report had it that if Tuttle's father took him calmly, he on the contrary led his mother by her fine, straight Tuttle nose. In the course of the brief call it developed that Mrs. Jones had charge of a booth at the forthcoming Easter kirmess, and wanted to know if Selina would make one of the half dozen young people to assist her? Also in leaving, she held Selina's hand a moment overlong in her beautifully gloved one. She was tall, fair and good looking-herself. "You're very winning and lovely, my dear," she said, "and I quite can see why my Tuttle thinks so."

Following this a bevy of Tuttle's girl cousins came to call, and next Selina was asked to a box party given by Mrs. Gwinne Tuttle during the week of the spring opera. It meant a new dress and all but precipitated a breach between Mamma and Auntie.

Auntie hotly resented the invitation for some reason known to herself, whereas Mamma was determined that Selina should accept it.

"Certainly it means a new dress," she agreed promptly, when Auntie intimated that it did, "and I'm going straight down street now and get it. Write your note of acceptance to Mrs. Tuttle, Selina, and I'll mail it on my way."

She came back with an organdie! And French organdies such as this one she triumphantly unfolded, came by way of New Orleans and cost accordingly.

"While the ground of it's white," said Mamma, "and there's the faintest blush in the blossoms, the general effect is of the pale apple-green of the leaves. With Selina's pale hair, she ought to look more than well in the green."

Auntie set her lips.

"I didn't get a pattern-book this time; it seemed more a case for a real fashion-paper. I got sash ribbon and I got lace, and if you think best, we'll have a seamstress in for a day?"

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"As you please," said Auntie grimly, "I prefer to have no say in the matter."

Whereupon Selina had run and thrown her arms around Auntie and cried, but then as Mamma said fretfully, Selina cried and Ann Eliza snapped at everything of late and there wasn't much reward trying to do things for either of them.

The dress was a triumph and even Mrs. Tuttle resplendent in her box at the opera said so, while Tuttle whispered—well, no matter what Tuttle whispered—the point being that not even the success of the dress quite removed the sting of hurt feelings behind it.

And here three days later were Mrs. Tuttle and Mrs. Sallie Jones Sampson arrived to take her driving! True, report had it again that Tuttle led his aunt in her turn, by her grumbling weakness for himself—

Mamma put her head in at the door. "Ready, Selina? They're here!"

The open carriage at the gate, Selina went out to it. Its upholsterings and its coachman were in plum color. Mrs. Tuttle was in strawberry, the newest shade of the day, with a parasol to match, and Mrs. Sampson a stout, lively and good-humored matron, was in raspberry, the next newest shade. The effect of the whole, equipage and ladies, was, well—resplendent. Selina, with a new rose on her last spring's hat, and new buttons and a new satin collar on her last year's coat, got in amid the elegance of it. As to where they were going there was no issue. The carriage world drove out the avenue every bright afternoon and met all the rest of the carriage world. The plum-colored carriage and pair whirled about and started for the avenue.

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Mrs. Tuttle was talking. "Sally here was just saying, Selina, she didn't know how lovely your shade of hair was, till she saw you in that pale green the other night. And you'll go on gaining in your looks, I tell her. The Wistar women are all handsome to the end. Look at Ann Eliza at forty-eight!"

They had been discussing her, Selina! They were taking account of her stock in value it would seem!

The carriage turning into the avenue took its place, one of the procession moving in one direction meeting a procession returning in the other. Mrs. Tuttle bowed from time to time, and Mrs. Sampson bowed and at times waved a hand in friendlier gesture.

"There wasn't a lovelier and more personable matron in town in my young days, either, Selina, than your grandmother," said Mrs. Tuttle, "the mother of Ann Eliza and Robert, your father I mean. I've just been telling Sally here. Your grandfather was prospering, his foundry was the largest in this part of the state, and Mrs. Wistar as the head of the establishment was both efficient and popular."

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They had been discussing her further. Her grandmother Wistar, her grandfather, the prospering foundry, the establishment, were to be considered assets!

And here in Mrs. Tuttle's pompous, plum-colored barouche, Selina told herself hotly that she understood now what it all meant. It meant that Tuttle in his own mind had accepted her, but not her world and her friends! She saw it suddenly. Instead, she, Selina, was being led to his world, and introduced to his friends! It was she that Tuttle wanted, because she pleased him, but not her setting. It was she he would translate as it were, to his world and his affiliations and familiars. And with such tacit understanding apparently, his coerced family were discussing her as they accepted her?

Her face burned, her heart raced, her slim fingers gripped at the plum-colored cushions. Would the mincing, parking drive never be done, and they and their carriage and pair out of this senseless procession, and she, Selina, at home?

At home and these polite conversational returns to Mrs. Tuttle and Mrs. Sampson over with, and in her own room and the key turned and alone! She wanted to look at the facts. She wanted to put facts together and apply herself to what they said and try and get at the truth.

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Put facts together and so get at the truth. That is the way to reach truth. Then why hadn't she found it those many, many times before when she wanted it so? Was it that she failed to know or to admit facts? Had been discouraged, even taught to shut her mind and her eyes to facts?

"Tuttle's taken his father's house, room by room now," Mrs. Tuttle was saying to Mrs. Sampson, "and made it over into an absolutely reproachless interior. And you'll have to allow, Sally, that your father's only idea when he built it was to spend money. It's a passion with the boy, a sort of mania to bring things up to convention and correctness. The more amenable his wife, the greater happiness Tuttle will get making her into the perfect thing he'd have her."

At home at length, and safe within her room, Selina cried bitterly, her hat and jacket thrown on the bed, and she dropped into a chair with her pretty head upon the table that also was desk and book-shelf.

So much for Tuttle? She could see it no other way now she came to look at it! And what then? Was it so bad a thing she was finding him guilty of? The repudiation of that world and its people and its things, that she belonged to? The keeping himself, with the exception of the Harrisons, skilfully unidentified with her group or their affairs?

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And say this was the truth? Was it humiliation at base which Tuttle was offering her in place, part and identity in life through his own? Or was it laudation? In that he could conceive nothing better to offer than his best own?

And by way of contrast with Tuttle, what of Culpepper's attitude to her? Certainly he had not sinned along these lines? Culpepper made friends of her friends, made one with her family, easily and serenely, tolerantly and indulgently in fact, just as he took the confidences she gave him about her efforts at self-support, and her failures, just as he played escort and took her to doors and came after her, every way, indeed, but seriously.

"Play away," his amused manner seemed to say, "amuse yourself with these things, even improve your character through the effort put into them. When the time comes, the proper time, it's the man who'll sweep these out of the way, and have done with their assumptions, and take care of you."

Was this the truth, too? If she was to read Tuttle the one way, was this the way she was to read and understand Culpepper?

Quickly and passionately she got up and went and laved her face at the washstand, and as quickly and passionately went to the window of her room, through which the while she had heard voices. Auntie down there in the yard was moving about in company with old colored Uncle Taliaferro Bucklin. It was April, buds and blooms were on lilac bush and peach tree, and Auntie and Uncle Taliaferro were looking over the ground-plan of flower beds and borders preparatory to their yearly activities.

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"Those seedling hollyhocks we put out last spring, Taliaferro, make a good show. They'll bloom this year," from Auntie. "So'll these Canterbury bells I brought down from the Buxton's garden, bloom for the first time. I want to put in quite a good deal this spring with a thought to next fall, dahlias and astors and cosmos and salvia in plenty. I don't know anything that comes at a time you're more grateful to 'em, than the late-blooming things in the fall."

"Look at these he'ah lockspuhs, Miss Ann 'Liza," from Uncle Taliaferro direfully. "Same thing as las' yeah. Worm right at the root of ev'ey pesky las' one. Never did have no faith in that wood-ashes you's so sure about, myse'f."

Flowers take patience and faith, and tendance and waiting. Would she, Selina, looking down on the little backyard and these two patient workers in it, ever come to a place like Auntie, where she could care for them enough to center time and hope and affection in them?

Never! Never! She threw her arms out in refutation of any such surrender in herself!

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**"Flowers take patience and faith, and tendance and waiting."**

Which brought to her mind that she promised Mamma and Auntie answers to certain pleas from both of them before another week-end. And at this her hands clenched in further refutation, this time of their claims. For wherever and however she arrived now, it was going to be through truth and for herself! Undoubtedly she would have to hurt Mamma and hurt Auntie, which last was even harder, but at least she would be honest in doing it.

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Passionately she put on her hat and jacket again and left her room and hurried down the stairs and out of the house. The show and feel of late April were everywhere, in the green of the lawns, in the buds of the shrubberies, in the unfolding blooms of the magnolia trees, in the soft languor of the dusk already falling.

Three blocks away Selina turned in at the brick rectory next the church she had gone to all her life.

The side-door with a step beneath a little penthouse roof led direct into the rectory study. She tapped at this door and entering, hurried across the room to the elderly little clerical figure in the chair beside the cluttered table. Dropping on the footstool beside this chair, she put her hands, both, into the parchment brown ones outstretched to greet her.

The study, with its book-lined walls, its cluttered table, its cluttered open desk, its smoldering grate fire, reeked with tobacco. The scholarly little person in clerical garb in the leather chair seemed mellowed to meerschaum tints with it, from the ivory tones of his close, small beard, to the parchment brown of those shapely old hands grasping hers, while their owner looked in kindly fashion down into her face lifted to his.

The volume he had laid down at her entrance, was of a Hebrew character. Report had it that he was equally at home in at least three other tongues as erudite. He had baptized Selina, a wee baby in flowing robes, and fourteen years later had prepared her for her confirmation. From the pulpit he had talked to her nearly every Sunday of her life since babyhood. His wife was fond of her; he was fond of her. In their ways he and this pretty girl were very good friends. And yet in reality he knew nothing whatever about her.

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"Selina, my child? And what then, my dear?"

"A great deal, Dr. Ronald. Mamma feels that I ought to be in all sorts of things connected with the church now, the Rector's Aid, and the Altar Guild, and such things. And that I ought to take a Sunday-school class. She's said so much about it, she's stopped now, and only *looks* her hurt and disappointment, that I don't do it." She paused. The fine old brown hand went on patting hers. Its owner's eyes went on studying her face not unshrewdly.

"And Auntie comes to industrial school every Saturday morning, and every Saturday morning looks disappointed when I decline her invitation to come with her."

"And why decline it, my dear? That at least is a little thing to do, to please her?"

Selina burst forth. "I'm through with doing things because it pleases somebody. I've done it all—church, confirmation, communion—because they told me to. I've never had a conviction in my life. Tell them for me, please, Dr. Ronald—that's what I've come to you for—tell them that I've a right to find the ways for myself. Tell them, that because I haven't found any of them for myself, it's all perfunctory, and all cut and dried. That I hate the coming, that I hate it when I'm here, hunting God in my Sunday clothes in congregations, and I hate God, too, if he's what they all seem to make him."

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She sobbed, and her head slipped onto his knee, face down as she sobbed. The wrinkled brown hand merely moved itself to the masses of her hair and went on patting.

"My dear, my dear," the old rector said, "I'm surprised, I'm truly distressed. You are young, overyoung and impatient and heady. And you imagine these things you feel to-day are final. As for your mother, Selina, and your good aunt, salt of the earth they are, never overlook that fact, salt of the earth. While on the other hand, these things you are confessing to are traits common to all youth rather than peculiar to you. How many dare I estimate in my forty years' pastorate in this church, have come to me in this room as you to-day, each with youth's cry against the claim of things upon him?"

The touch of his hand upon her head was gentle.

"Patience, Selina, patience. Do not think we've not been, all of us, where you are to-day. And don't forget that it is as inevitable you also will be where we are!"

She lifted her head, staring at him in a kind of horror. She even remembered to be sorry for that long procession of youth coming to him through forty years, her heart seeming to be monotoning in a sort of bitter chanting for them, "Bread and he gave them a stone. Bread and he gave them a stone."

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"Never," she declared to him passionately, getting up and feeling about for her hat that had tumbled somewhere. "Never! Please, Dr. Ronald, I'd rather go now. And as to my coming to the place that you say I some day will, never, never!"

He looked at her as she pinned on her hat, but made no motion to stay her. And the while though he said not one word, it was to her as though he shouted it forth, "So they all said, that procession of youth passing through this room through forty years."

It infuriated her so to know he was thinking it, she hurried away with barely a civil word at leaving. Like the rest of them in this also, he could have told her.

Her way back took her past the home of Algy Biggs. He was getting home from work just as she got there. The Biggs house, broad and comely, stood in half a square of irreproachable lawn, rolled and clipped, trimmed and impeccable. At the curb the carriage was just arrived with Algy's mother and his sisters in it.

When Algy had been told to go to college or get out and find a job for himself and depend on it, he found one at the locomotive shops, working on the inside of boilers. That was two years ago; he was still in the shops, getting thirty-five dollars a week now, for he said so.

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And at this particular moment when Selina met him he probably was just out of his overalls, for the grime and smudge of the shops were still upon him. Tall and blond chap that he was, his blue eyes gleamed unspeakably funny out of his blackened face.

Selina bowed to his mother and sisters. But she—yes—she did—kissed her finger tips to Algy. She understood *this!* She gloried in his act! She exulted in Algy!

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## CHAPTER THIRTY-TWO

The last day of April Selina went to Eadston with her Aunt Juanita and her Uncle Bruce, to the wedding of Pocahontas and Marcus. In deference to the occasion the two came by for her on their way to the station in Uncle Taliaferro's hack, drawn by the two bony white horses.

"I'd like to be going," said Mamma, kissing Selina at the doorstep, "but to send a present and let you go—is all that could be thought of."

"Auntie," from Selina to this person in the doorway, "tell Culpepper I'll see Cousin Maria at the wedding, and give her the latest news about him."

She joined the two in their hack and from the start Uncle Bruce seemed outdone.

"I ought to be in Washington this very day. The case of the State against the Federal Banking Tax argued there this morning—" He kept up a furious little clicking with his tongue.

"Aurelius," from Aunt Juanita, "Marcus told you to have your hair cut and your beard trimmed. You haven't done it."

"Let him have his own hair cut! What's he got to do with mine? Have I ever in any way sought to impose my personal ideas and conclusions on him? Have I ever told him to get *his* hair cut?" Uncle Bruce glared.

"Well, it's all one to me," from Aunt Juanita indifferently. "I had it on my mind and now it's off and that's an end to it so far as I'm concerned."

There was to be worse from Uncle Bruce. The spring freshets were upon the land, and creeks and rivers were up. The wedding at Eadston was to be at six o'clock at the Boswell home. The train bearing the Bruces and Selina was late, held up by a wash-out, one hour, two hours, three hours! When they did reach Eadston and hurried out the station to the carriage waiting for them, there was one hour to spare. And of this ten minutes at least were consumed driving through the sleepy town and across the covered bridge beneath which the swollen river swept sullenly.

And another five minutes must have been consumed disembarking at the Boswell carriage block, their luggage being with them. Uncle Bruce had his umbrella somewhere, too, he insisted, and that found, a tin spectacle-case, much prized, was missing! You couldn't hurry Uncle Bruce! As well give in and turn about on the sidewalk while he plunged around in the recesses of the carriage hunting his property, and enjoy the dignified and fine old house in its wedding consciousness, its purple beeches in tender young leaf, its early magnolias in bloom. And to the side, beyond the borders of the box, and the gravel paths, one caught a gleam of the garden, and beyond it, as one knew, came the terraces overhanging the surging river now at its flood tide.

And at last they could go in, Uncle Bruce being ready! The servants awaiting them at the door, remembered Selina, a soft-voiced elderly one in spectacles taking charge of her and a second one of Aunt Juanita and Uncle Bruce.

And on the way upstairs, with scarce half an hour to the good now, the door of Pocahontas' room opened, and she calling a greeting to the older guests, stopped Selina, and kissed her through the half inch of space.

Selina found that she had her old room, familiar from the visit of a year ago, while Aunt Juanita and Uncle Bruce were in the room next to her. Lights, warm water, English tub, met with first at her former visit, towels, her dress-box thus quickly unstrapped, everything was ready and at hand!

She dressed swiftly. The green organdie was a joy and she wanted time at that stage of the toilet to get into it properly.

If Uncle Bruce had seemed like an irascible old lion peeved, earlier in the day, right now he was worse. In the next room just here he roared.

"Selina!" It was Aunt Juanita calling irascibly herself.

Selina struggling into her green dress, hurried in. Aunt Juanita was on a low chair changing her shoes with her bonnet still on. The effect, considering she'd taken off her dress, was startling. Uncle Bruce in his underwear, which ran around in stripes, sat on the bed

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and glared from out of the jungle of his hair and beard.

"You'll have to see if Marcus is anywhere in the house, Selina," from Aunt Juanita. "I can't do a thing with your Uncle Bruce."

"You've been a model and praiseworthy wife, Juanita, and I respect you for it," from Uncle Bruce. "You've never tried to do things with me. Damn my son's impertinence, does *he* think *he* can begin to do it now after all these years? I go to my telescope to get out my clothes and I take out a suit I do not recognize. And you tell me he's put it there in place of my own. That I'm to wear it. I'll be damned, he can be damned, we'll all be damned before I do. Have I ever interfered with him? Haven't I watched him going about in long hair and a waterproof cape he looked a durned fool in, and held my tongue? I've done my part by this wedding, too. I sent the lady my grandmother's pearls because you and he told me to, and wrote her a letter in addition. And I took him down to my vault box and gave him a bunch of securities, and when I found it was the wrong bunch, double in value, told him to keep it anyhow. I go to this wedding in the clothes I came in, since my others are missing, or I stay here as I am."

Selina had been desperately hooking her dress.

"Go find Marcus if he's here," said Aunt Juanita, who having buttoned her boots, now bethought her to untie and remove her bonnet.

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Selina went and found Miss Boswell, serene and distinguished in her wedding array of silvery gray satin, and with her aid and that of the servants, Marcus was found, having arrived from the hotel with his bevy of newspaper friends, and betaken himself to the room given over to him.

When Selina returned with him, Uncle Bruce still in his striped underwear, had moved a big armchair under the gas and gotten out some documents from somewhere, and lit an evil-looking and smelling cigar, and dismissed the matter. Aunt Juanita had combed her hair and now was washing her face!

"Wear what you please, sir," said Marcus promptly. "Your dress clothes were sleek with age and misuse, but it was damned impertinent of me to interfere. I beg your pardon, sir, it was none of my business."

"The principle we as a family have always gone on," said Uncle Bruce. And getting up, he began to draw on the pepper and salt trousers he'd come to Eadston in. "You've got on a tie with flowing ends with evening dress, yourself, Marcus!" suddenly he paused to say. Uncle Bruce saw more than one thought for! "You've put it on to be in keeping with your bid for eccentricity. I only remark on it to let you know I hold my tongue as a matter of principle about other people's affairs, and not because I don't see 'em."

"Selina," said Aunt Juanita, "I've never had on this dress before, that the dressmaker saw fit to make me. Can you suggest what's wrong with it?"

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"You've put it on with the buttons behind, when they ought to be before, Aunt Juanita. If you'll take it off I'll help you."

It was a gracious house for a wedding, the rooms so ample and the halls so generous. There were guests not only from Eadston but from the neighboring towns and counties, including Cousin Maria and her two daughters. And like Pocahontas herself, coming down the stairs in cloudy, trailing white on the arm of Marcus, everything was punctiliously correct and yet seemingly simple. After the ceremony Selina found herself at the bride's table between red-faced Mr. Mason, the rich young horseman she had met last spring, and Mr. Spragg from her own town, a colleague of Marcus', the city editor in fact of his paper. Beyond the bridal table, with its charming decorations, stretched small tables over the house and out on the porches.

"The bride is a wonderful woman," said Mr. Mason doughtily to Mr. Spragg on the other side of Selina. "What's she getting?"

They seemed to overlook the fact that she, Selina, the cousin of the groom, sat between them.

Mr. Spragg replied: "Exactly whatever he's planned to make of himself. He's gifted and smart as the next, and allows nothing to stand between him and his end. A brilliant editorial paragrapher, thus far, whom we're losing."

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After supper Pocahontas within the cloud of her back-flung veil,

found a moment to draw Selina within the shelter of an embowered window.

"Oh, my dear, my dear! And we were cheated of our promised long talk by that delay of your train! You've the sweetest eyes, Selina, I must tell you, looking at me, as now, all intent, impelling the truth from me whether I want to give it or no. But I do, and only that wash-out prevented much conversation. So listen to me sweetly and intently now. It means for me, Selina, all the difference of a life and intelligence satisfied, not hungry, that I waited and found myself, found what I was and what I wanted before I married. Selina, dearest little friend, I want you to have a compensating life, an experience rich and full in contact and opportunity. I tried to play Providence and arrange to some of these ends for you and see what I did in getting you down there to a school that was no school? Does Providence always resent the limited human interference? I wonder? Must the working out all be through the person's own will and character? Kiss me, Selina, while we're hidden away here. There will be no comfort in the general good-bye coming presently."

"I still resent Marcus, I feel I ought to be honest and say so," from Selina hurriedly.

"As if you had to tell me that," laughing. "As beauty is its own excuse for being, for example, Amanthus," laughing again, "you feel that temperament is its own excuse for using the rest of us—well—selfishly?"

"Miss Pocahontas!"

"I thought we dropped the 'Miss' by agreement some while back? And if I choose to be a handmaiden to temperament? If I happen to believe in the claims of temperament, and want my share in its later rewards and glories? Marcus and I understand each other, my dear; not for nothing have we thrashed out every step of the way. And now kiss me again. Our train leaves at midnight for the East, and from there we sail at once for our semi-tropical islands in their bluest of seas."

They were gone, and the guests were departed. Aunt Juanita in her wedding-gown of appalling magenta brocade and passanterie, and Uncle Bruce in his pepper-and-salt everyday suit, were gone off to their room. There were left Cousin Maria Buxton, who was spending the night and who had on her famous dress of Brussels lace that had done service for ten years and so she claimed, was good to do it for ten more, Selina of the pale, pale hair and paler green dress, Miss Boswell in her silvery gray, and the servants in the background putting out lights and gathering up napery and glass and silver from the scattered tables.

Cousin Maria who had insisted they all sit down for a breathing space and a pow-wow over the evening, was full of gratulation over all points of the affair but the groom. Here she stoutly proclaimed herself pessimistic.

"Juanita's gone and so we can talk. Marcus has followed his own bent ever since the hour she brought him into the world and returned to her own engrossments. He personifies unthwarted, undeterred individuality. The sort of thing they tell me young people are all beginning to clamor for these days. I don't know myself; my own minded *me* while they were under *my* roof, right or wrong; it was *my* way. But to get back to Marcus. Pocahontas is as adaptable as a person often is, but even so——"

Miss Marcia Boswell, very pleasing in her charming gown, looked undisturbed. "In the first place Pocahontas is probably the only person in the world Marcus relies on to put him right. He's a wonderful idea of her good taste and her judgment. As for Pocahontas, she's gone about the world all her life. She was left by herself at school in Switzerland the first time when she was eight years old. She generally has a perfectly intelligent idea of what a situation demands of her. And also of what she on her side demands of it. I wish most young married people understood what they want as well as these two seem to. Pocahontas and Marcus both see a future man of letters in Marcus. They are entirely one in what they're planning on this basis in life."

When Selina went up to her room, she sat and thought about it all. "Unthwarted and undeterred individuality!" This it was then in Marcus which she had called selfishness! Was it selfishness, nevertheless, under another name? Or was it the courage of a

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pronounced character? And *were* young people these days beginning to clamor for it? And was it better or worse for them who secured it?

Selina sat and thought. She wanted, Oh, she wanted to find—truth.

Selina and her aunt and uncle went home the next day. She watched the flying scene from the car window: the swirling, turbulent creek whose rocky bed the track followed; the towering walls of limestone cliffs mounting from the foaming, brawling water, their ledges white with dogwood and rosy with red-bud and green like Selina's own pretty dress, with the pale verdure of April.

Selina was nearing nineteen now. She watched this flying glory of freshet and cliffs and April flowering, but her thoughts were with Pocahontas whom she loved, and Marcus whom despite all she so resented. If anyone had told her that day would come when the personal equation as the factor, would have faded, and to recall this trip to Eadston for the wedding would be to see tumbling waters, wild gray cliffs and tender tints of April, she would have refuted it with young scorn.

She turned from the car window and spoke to her aunt. This person's bonnet was over one ear, and her breastpin was unfastened and dangling, but she looked at peace since the thing requiring all this recent sacrifice of a trip to Eadston of her was over.

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**"She watched the flying scene from the car window."**

"Miss Boswell says Pocahontas stands ready to complement—that's the word she used to you when she was talking about it this morning—whatever Marcus chooses in life. She, not he, it seems. I suppose the justification is that he considers he's got the talent to be exploited and not she."

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Aunt Juanita responded but absently. She'd done her part by her son's wedding now, and was through with it, and it distracted her to have her mind drawn any longer from her own affairs.

"Marcus has to go the way he feels driven, naturally. We all have to if we're going to amount to any force at all. Selina," abruptly, "I seem to recall in the prospectus of that school you went South to teach in, and which Lavinia gave me to read, that you went down there to do something or other secretarial?"

Selina changed countenance. It's hard to live down a false position, apparently, but she wasn't going to have these assumptions hanging over her any longer. "I know now that I didn't realize what it was I was undertaking and agreed to it because I wanted so much to go. Why, Aunt Juanita?"

"Mrs. Higginson and I are going to need some help. We're willing to give a hundred dollars each to the advancing of the cause of women, for printing, postage and some clerical assistance. That word secretarial made me think about you. We'll probably need you and one or two more as well, for a morning or so every week, directing envelopes and putting stamps on. I plan to turn my library into working quarters."

"Will I do, Aunt Juanita?" anxiously. "I'd like to try. And I might ask Maud and Juliette. What will we have to do?"

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"Get together lists of the women we want to reach and their addresses." Aunt Juanita was perfectly definite. "Direct and stamp circular reports of what women through organization are doing elsewhere, mark articles in the daily newspapers we'll have printed there and mail these like the circulars. There's so much that might be done it's hard to decide on just what *not* to do. Aurelius," this to Uncle Bruce deep in his newspaper on the seat in front of them, "I want a list of the women in town who pay taxes on property in their own name." Then to Selina, "We'll find more intelligence among these coming from tending to their own affairs. We'll need it, too. There'll likely prove to be too few of them to raise the general level of intelligence of the rest, woman of the helpless, indeterminate kind I mean, your mother for example, and Miss Ann Eliza, who don't know the first thing about their affairs and are content not to know."

Their train pulled into the shed about eight in the evening. Selina was in the care of her aunt and uncle, but nevertheless had a feeling that some more especial escort of her own, say Culpepper, with whom she was good friends again, or if not he, Tuttle Jones, would be there waiting for her.

What she had not thought about was what happened. Tuttle and Culpepper both were there, Tuttle at the gate talking to the gate-keeper, Culpepper a moment late, as usual, hurrying up through the crowd. Oddly enough he merely shook hands around, inquired if there was anything in the way of baggage to look after, said good-bye curtly and left them.

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Afterward Aunt Juanita spoke about it. "Now Selina, do be sensible, if, being Lavinia's child, you can. Shutting your eyes to the obvious is only patterning after the ostrich. It was perfectly patent those two absurd young men there at the station were taking each other's measure."

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## CHAPTER THIRTY-THREE

The morning after Selina's return from Eadston she spoke to her mother about her Aunt Juanita's proposal that she do some clerical work. "It'll be for only a few weeks, but if she thinks I can do it, Mamma, I'd like to try."

"Juanita has a wonderful head for just that sort of thing," said Mrs. Wistar, impeccable little lady, sitting by her window stitching on a petticoat for Selina, "hunting up lists and sorting people and poking figures and facts at them when she's sorted them. I suppose she knows what it's about. I must say I never have grasped it myself. And I do wish she'd mend her clothes. The only concession she's ever made to being a woman is curl-papers. I asked her once how it happened and she said no doubt Hecuba, wife of Priam, had some weakness. I asked her who Hecuba, wife of Priam, was, and she said she'd expected I'd ask just that. Still I'd like you to know your aunt better by being thrown with her. Juanita's a most excellent and high-minded person."

"She doesn't think as much of the rest of her sex," said Selina to this stoutly. Wasn't Mamma defending Aunt Juanita who had criticized *her*? "She says *you* don't know the first thing about your affairs. What does she mean? What affairs?"

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"I should consider it an insult to your father if I thought I had to know. I had five thousand dollars when I married, the same as she had. It's this she means. She's always asking me where it is. I've never sought to know." Mamma spoke virtuously, even proudly.

In the surprise of this knowledge of her mother's affluence, Selina lost her head. "Five thousand dollars, Mamma! What became of it?"

"The tone of your question sounds like your aunt Juanita," severely, "I've never asked."

Selina found herself suddenly turned stubborn. "Why didn't Papa tell you? Why should you have to ask?"

Auntie came into the conversation. They had forgotten her sitting over at the second window also stitching on a petticoat, also for Selina. It was the one Selina had started for herself. It was the first of May, and did they not, these two dear ladies, always endeavor to make Selina two around of everything in underclothes and thus replenish her stock, every April and May? Darling Auntie, who had acknowledged the meager satisfaction of a life given up to stitching underclothes and polishing brasses!

She was speaking. "Robert has always insisted on explaining and going over business matters with me. I inherited the same as he did under our father's will, you see, Selina. From the start he has regularly brought me slips of paper written over with figures and those worrying ditto marks. I listen while he goes over them, but when he goes I drop 'em in the fire. I know it's right if Robert says so."

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Selina turned stubborn again. She felt unaccountably irritated. "Well, I don't just see the merit in that, myself, Auntie. Somehow it doesn't seem quite fair to Papa."

"Selina!" from her mother scandalized. "Do you realize what you are saying? And *who* you're talking to?"

Aunt Juanita being seen about the matter again, thought that Selina might do, and further agreed that she ask Maud and Juliette if they wanted to come and help her.

From this interview with Aunt Juanita, Selina went straight across the street to the Addisons' to see Maud and find out.

She found her in her own room with an array of books, including a dictionary, much paper, and a purple smudge from her ink bottle, on her nose. Energetic, restless, and dissatisfied Maud!

"I've turned on china painting; it was pretence with me from the start, Selina. Do you realize you haven't been over here for—well—almost weeks? I'm working at my German again. If Marcus and Miss Pocahontas did German verse into English, and even got some of the cleverest of it printed in the back of a magazine, why shouldn't I try what I can do? I'm working at some of the easier verses of Heine. Sit down and tell me about your trip to Eadston."

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Selina told her about the wedding and then explained her

mission. "I don't grasp in the least what Aunt Juanita's about, Maud. She never explains. But she and Mrs. Higginson want to pay us to help 'em advance what she calls the cause of woman."

"It's a phrase going the rounds," from Maudie. "I've run on it a good many times lately. Selina, I'm not a snob, and neither are you, but I must say I'd like to know and to work with Mrs. Higginson. And it's not because she's our richest woman, in the finest home, and it's not because she and Mr. Higginson give about everything that's given in the way of gifts to the city. I think probably it's because that sort of person *must* be fine to know, and interesting."

"You'll come then?"

"I will if Mamma says I may. Let's go right now and ask her."

Mrs. Addison was downstairs lending a directing oversight in her dining-room and ample pantries. The elderly downstairs man of many years' service in the household had died this past winter, and she, capable and impatient person, was going through the trials of a succession of young and inefficient substitutes. Or so she defined them. "They don't know one thing about their duties, Selina, and they won't let anybody tell them. Listen to me and hold on to Viney till she's actually tottering."

The same old story it was, differing only in that Mrs. Addison was more fortunate than most in having her troubles deferred this long.

Having finished her own recital, she heard what Maud had to say, somewhat testily.

"I'll consider the money as part of my mission offering, Mamma, if you don't like the idea of my taking it," this person pleaded. "It will give me something to do and be such sport being with Selina, and with Mrs. Bruce and Mrs. Higginson."

"Do it then," from Mrs. Addison impatiently. "To have you moping around the house the way you've been, tearful and complaining, is as much of a trial as these worthless houseboys. I've got my hands full enough with them. Thank heavens your sisters are still at school and occupied! Go on if it will satisfy you and content you."

The two flew right over to see and ask Juliette. They found her also in her own room. She slipped some textbooks in her desk before she turned round to greet and to listen to them. She proved bitterly heroic. "I'd be most glad to make the money. I happen to need every cent I can get, and under the circumstances, considering what I want it for, I can't take it from Papa. But I haven't time. I'm busy every moment I can get to myself."

She didn't say what she was busy with, but the others divined. It was the first of May. She was studying for those problematical college examinations in June.

It was well past noon when Selina and Maud left her and started downstairs to go home. The Caldwells had dinner at one, and at the front door the two met Mr. Caldwell coming in.

Maud, with her chestnut hair and red and white skin and lively carriage, was handsome, and Selina, slim and fair, was pleasing. Mr. Caldwell liked pretty women. He was brisk and off-hand.

"Glad you've been over to see Juliette, both of you. Coax her out with you, get her into the things you're doing, like she used to be, girls. Get this college bee out of her bonnet and you'll do us a favor over here. Advanced learning! College for women! Dr. Mary Walker trousers next! She must have been crazy when she took this idea up. See here, both of you, take these three two-dollar bills. Get Juliette and all of you go to the *matinée* this afternoon—my treat. Blow in the change on carfare and candy. It'll mean a lot to get her out with you again."

In their embarrassment, their faces crimson, the bills were actually thrust in Maud's hand and left there, and Mr. Caldwell gone into the house and clattering up the stairs, before they could collect themselves sufficiently to refuse it. It meant going back into the house now and finding Mrs. Caldwell.

She was in the kitchen, a would-be pleasant room, with wide windows and a door opening on a porch. But right now it was unswept, the ashes hadn't been taken out the stove which they overflowed, the sink was full of unwashed, unscraped dishes.

Pretty Mrs. Caldwell, flushed and disheveled, taking up dinner from the hot stove, set down a dish to pin up her trailing negligée, and to take the money Maud handed her.

"Juliette wouldn't have gone on it anyway, even if we'd felt we wanted to take it," Maud was explaining.

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"Juliette's behaving abominably," from Mrs. Caldwell. "Yes, of course, girls, the last cook's gone, too. Impertinent! Demanding to know her duties to the dot, and wanting me to specify her exact time off. Saucy! At least, Maud, it's some comfort to know that your mother with her reputation has come into her trouble, too. And, Selina, I hear that someone offered more wages to your Cousin Anna Tomlinson's cook, and she's left. After being with her ten years! Ingratitude! I don't see what we're coming to."

That afternoon, Selina and Maud, while they were about it, went over to see Adele. She had on an elaborate tea-gown in peach-blow silk and lace that sat on her dejectedly.

When she heard about the offer from Mrs. Bruce, she sighed, and her soft cheeks flushed and longing came into her dark eyes. The awkwardness left her and she forgot the fripperies of the tea-gown that so embarrassed her.

"If only I might make the third! I'm *so* desperate for *something* to do, I envy the servants."

"I envy the men digging gas-pipe trenches along the street," burst forth vigorous Maud. "Do you know they're really considering letting girls come to the athletic club certain afternoons this summer and learn to play tennis? Mamma thinks it's too violent and unladylike, but I'm going to do it anyhow if they decide to let us." [332]

"I'm desperate sometimes," from Adele, sighing. "I'll tell you what I did the other day. I was waiting for Mamma to be ready for a reception. Oh, but I'm a dreary weight on her hands when she gets me to them. I was in the library and I took a piece of paper and a pencil and wrote down all the words that seem most full of thrill and lure to me when I say 'em over. Then I wrote at the top of the paper, 'Thesaurus for the Ennuied.' Papa came in just then, home a bit early for him, and for some reason came over to me where I was sitting at the library table and took the slip from me. He read it through and took me by the chin and looked down at me as if he were studying me. Then he said right oddly, "That bad, Adele?"

"What were the words you'd written down?" from Maud.

"Just what I was going to ask you?" from Selina.

"I don't remember exactly, there were so many of them. Any of them will do. Words that I somehow seem to revel in—*hew, build, make, do, fashion, kindle, evolve!* I don't know," wistfully and a little embarrassed, too "that I can make you understand?" Then with a change of manner, "Have you seen Amanthus lately, either of you?" [333]

"No," from Selina.

"No," from Maud.

From Adele suddenly, "Mr. Tate's grandmother's dead. The wife of the grandfather who left him the money."

"Who told you?"

"Amanthus. He'll come into a great deal of money now, he told Mrs. Harrison so, Amanthus says."

## CHAPTER THIRTY-FOUR

Monday morning and ten o'clock found Selina and Maud, both more than a little shy, and also a good deal excited, presenting themselves at the door of the Bruce library where Mrs. Bruce and Mrs. Higginson awaited them. The room itself was familiar to them both, with its faded solid red carpet, its book-shelving from floor to ceiling behind doors of oak and glass, its framed prints of Washington, Jefferson, Clay and Robert E. Lee, its incredible litter of papers and pamphlets, its overflow of books stacked into corners and upon chairs.

But to-day it was visibly made ready for the occasion. The big central table was swept clean by the simple expedient of piling its accumulation on the floor beneath, Marcus' old desk in a corner stood cleared and open, and a kitchen table of deal, piled with stationery and printed circulars, was placed near a window.

Mrs. Bruce herself, tall, unmended and ungroomed, and entirely unconcerned as to that, was taking envelopes by the pack out of boxes.

Mrs. Harriet Polksbury Higginson, otherwise Mrs. Amos Higginson, was seated at the table. Her iron-gray hair was drawn in rippling bands either side her personable, big-featured face, her silk dress was sensible, her big-faced watch with its short chain and bunch of charms, laid on the table by her, was for utility, though the stones in the rings on her strong, goodly hands, were wonderful.

To Selina and Maud, as said before, not the least exciting part in the undertaking, was the thought of working under Mrs. Higginson.

"Not that we are snobs," Maud had diaphraged yet again, "nor because she's our richest woman in the biggest house. But because being the richest woman in the biggest house, she's famous for being outspoken and independent of the snobs and all the rest of it, and therefore worth while."

Aunt Juanita, looking up, saw the two girls standing in the doorway a bit diffidently, both in summer wash-dresses, Maud's gingham pink, Selina's percale blue. As the two dimly realized even then, Aunt Juanita saw femininity in the mass only, as a cause, an issue. Its youth and its diffidence and its pink and blue habiliments were lost on her, and its hesitation to come on in and get to business, only irritated her.

"Well, Maud, well, Selina, come in, come in," testily. "Everything's here in readiness," as they entered, "and the first thing's to get our list of chosen names in shape with their addresses. Selina, since you're to work with me, take the desk for the time being. Maud, sit at the table across from—Mrs. Higginson, do you know my niece, Selina Wistar, and my young friend, Maud Addison?"

They took, their places hastily, Aunt Juanita palpably having no thought of confusing amenities with purpose.

"Selina," from Aunt Juanita brusquely, "here are three lists, a combined church list, Mrs. Higginson's dinner and party lists, and the names of women taxpayers in town that Aurelius secured for me. We're checking these over and want you to make a revised list from them, alphabetically arranged. And here's a city directory, Maud. As Selina hands the lists to you, fill out their addresses." Aunt Juanita, though she abjured amenities, was a credit to her sex in being definite about what she considered her business.

Mrs. Higginson, checking names on her lists with a gold lead-pencil, looked up, at the abrupt method of introduction and smiled good-humoredly, at the assistant in pink, and then the assistant in blue. For her woman in the mass still included individuals, and amenities belonged to the life she knew.

"Every woman's name on the list you're to make, Miss Selina," she explained, "is a target at which we two are proposing to fire our convictions. It's a glorious thing at any time of one's life to have convictions, let me tell you, if you haven't discovered it." Was she laughing at them? "Mrs. Bruce and I are the two liveliest women in this town, and always will be, because our convictions, whatever they be, ride us."

Having finished unboxing the envelopes Aunt Juanita was going around distributing ink. She paused at this point in Mrs. Higginson's remarks, tweaked her nose with the side of the ink bottle in her

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hand, since that hand was occupied with the bottle, and addressed herself to this lady.

"Organize! *Organize!* If we can just get that word and its significances over to the women in this town! If we can make 'em understand that woman's hope everywhere lies in this one word! If we can show 'em that it's the instrument of the whole era upon us, for class, labor, capital, too, Aurelius points out, as well as the one instrument for them! Organize and discover our strength as women and so on to our rights. That's the phrase. That's the slogan."

The clerical force in pink showed a bright spot on either cheek! The open heart and the open mind were ever hers! Her handsome, hazel-brown eyes beneath her red-brown hair were dilating with the beginnings of zeal, of fire!

The clerical force with the heavy masses of pale flaxen hair, the clerical force, that is to say, in blue brought some names on a bit of paper over to the visibly impressed force in pink. "Organize for what, Maud? Who'll organize? And where?"

"Hush," said Maud, "I don't know. But I feel right from the start I'm with 'em! So you're, Selina." And so were others all over this fair land to be with them; others as great in faith and zeal as Maudie, though no better equipped in comprehension as to what it was about! But it was glorious none the less to be there!

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Mrs. Higginson was replying to Aunt Juanita. Her voice was good-humored but ripe and decided. She was a person accustomed to being heard. "Now, Juanita Bruce, you haven't any grounds whatever for assuming I'm with you in any position. You know exactly where I stand in this movement among women all over this land. You know the stand I've taken in it as well as you know your own. And you know *why* I want to organize our own women in this town. *I* say this movement, this quiver, so to put it, running from side to side of this continent, has some underlying cause. *I* say it's woman's dissatisfaction with herself. *I* say she's roused and looked at herself and the sight's not pleasing to her. You put the cause outside of woman. *I* say to my sex, 'Organize and find out what's the trouble with yourself.' That's *my* slogan to my sex, and that's *my* present mission."

Aunt Juanita banged down the ink bottle still in her hand. Two hairpins leaped from her hair with the impact, and the switch of gray hair that all too palpably eked out her own scant store, promptly surged forward and threatened her left eye. But the uplift of the moment raised everybody's mind above such as that! The clerical force were so enthralled they couldn't keep to work if salvation depended on it. And on the other hand apparently salvation of some kind depended on their listening and finding out about this thing? *Was* there a movement among their sex, a movement wide as the continent? Where had they been during it? Why had they not heard of it? How had it manifested itself? Had it spoken?

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So these young and ardent two! Nor knew that they in their gropings, their dissatisfactions, their restlessness, their eager scannings of horizons, their questionings, their discontents with inaction, they and Juliette in her revolt, they and Adele in her repinings, were part and proof with it and of it!

Aunt Juanita retwisting her hair with that impatience called out in the human breast by the depravity of inanimate objects such as hair switches, was flinging back words at Mrs. Higginson.

"Don't expect me to believe in any such stand as that, Harriet Higginson? There isn't but one issue to this thing. In a word, women have discovered they haven't their inalienable rights, and they want 'em."

"I'm *so* certain in my stand, Juanita Bruce, that I've come into this local thing with you to work for the issue as I believe it to be. I've given not a little thought and investigation and observation to the matter, for a good many years, and so have you. But I tell you, Juanita, your suffrage bee shall be proved a mere side issue in the final adjustment, whenever this does come, sooner or later. You and your adherents are diverting us from the main issue. We may lose it through you for years. For just to the extent that you do divert us you're putting the final outcome back."

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Aunt Juanita snorted and started to reply. Mrs. Higginson, using the gold eye-glasses in her hand, waved her to unwilling silence.

"No, let me finish, Juanita, and then take your say. This is mine. I claim, and I'll go on claiming—I went up to your meeting in

Rochester and stood for it from the platform. I'm going over to Chicago week after next and put it to 'em again from their platform. I claim that our rights, as you call 'em, will come to us as our capabilities push ahead of us, exactly as the flood follows the channel. I see it so plain, it's come to be an obsession with me. Let me illustrate. Take this town we live in, you and I. We're not the big mould of women now our mothers and our grandmothers were. Reasonable and intelligent administration of our homes and our servants and our income is the exception, and who shall say this town's not typical? For my part, my slogan is, and I'm here to cry it from your housetop, 'Organize and find out what's the matter.' Ability engendered among us, Juanita, and the rest of what you want will follow," Mrs. Higginson flipped the air again with her eye-glasses, "as the night the day."

The clerical force drew breath. It was a thrilling and momentous morning! They wouldn't have missed it!

"As the day the night is rather what my kind is demanding," from Aunt Juanita grimly. "We're benighted enough in all conscience now. Harriet Higginson, hear me. Not one woman in a hundred in this town, no, not one in five hundred or a thousand, owns a bank-book. I've investigated," grimly. "And if *this* is so in this town, why not the same thing elsewhere?"

The clerical force in blue felt this to be a sidelight. It brought in Tuttle Jones. Had he in the end secured the information for Aunt Juanita? How far away from this present battlefield seemed Tuttle and his world?

Mrs. Higginson was replying. "H'm, now that's valuable data, Juanita, I owe you some gratitude for giving me that. Putting that with some conclusions I've arrived at myself, sheds light on my problem. The whole cause of our present economic unfitness as I see it in woman, may lie in this fact you give me—no bank account of her own. It's worth looking into. It's only fair a woman should handle and apportion the money through which she is expected to administer the home. And what I've discovered for myself is this. Not one woman in your thousand in this town knows the price of flour, or sugar, or bacon or any other staple she uses every day in her household, except as quoted to her at her nearest grocery. No, nor can tell you her running expenses of this year as compared with any other year under her management. Nor but is so harassed by the servant problem as it's grown to be, that her peace and comfort and almost her self-respect is undermined. And our mothers bequeathed us a wonderful article in servants here in the South, too, in the house-servants of slave-time. Organize and find out what's the matter, I say. If the fault's not in *us*, then find out where it is, even unto bank-books," laughing. "And at all events, Juanita," pacifically and smiling again, "we're agreed on one point, the essential point right now. Organize 'em. Put it to 'em, pro and con, you and I, and let 'em choose. But first, organize 'em."

It *was* a thrilling and momentous morning as may be seen! The clerical force in pink and the clerical force in blue, entirely unable to hold its mind to the task in hand, felt that they were in touch at last with issues, real issues, throbbing, vital and essential issues!

And who shall say they were not? Though these issues, a quarter of a century old since then, are still open! And still open perhaps, and again who may say not, because as Mrs. Higginson claimed, the movement mistook the main issue?

Undoubtedly it *was* a thrilling and momentous morning. Youth is eager, youth is full of the ardor of impatient faith, youth is impressionable. It longs to be fired! It yearns for a cause! 'Rights' is a stirring word! 'Organize' is a new one! Had the clerical force found its cause at last? It wondered.

On the way home at noon, Maud spoke to Selina. They were confused over a few matters. "Mrs. Bruce is all for rights, Selina, as if it were a personal thing. I don't suppose there can be a person alive, do you, who comes nearer doing as she pleases."

"Just as nobody could be more capable than Mrs. Higginson with all that money and children and grandchildren, and the retinue of servants she's famous for running. Or maybe it's because they've each got what they stand for, that they want it for other women?"

"Rights," from Maud, ruminating. "It's a thrilling word, Selina. And 'organize' is a new one."

"Slogan," corrected Selina, "that's what they called it."

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That evening Culpepper and Mr. Welling and Preston Cannon were at the Wistars calling. By chance Maud and Juliette were over, too.

Maud and Selina were eloquent about their new word.

"Organize how and for what?" queried Mr. Cannon. "No, I'm not caviling, truly I'm not, I want to know?"

So in a way did they, but they were not going to confess it.

"For—uh—consolidation," from Maud grandly.

"For—well—some general benefit," from Selina hesitatingly.

"It's in the air," from Maud authoritatively. She'd heard Mrs. Bruce say it was.

Little Judy, quiet as a rule of late, spoke here so suddenly and so unexpectedly, they all started. There seemed no haziness about it to Juliette. They hardly knew her these days.

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**"Culpepper ... leaned over the back of her chair and spoke softly to her."**

"It's an impelling," she said passionately. "We're all feeling it. Woman, I mean. It's driving us. We don't know where it's taking us. But it's mandatory. I wouldn't say it's not instinct."

"What is?" asked Mr. Cannon breaking the silence which this astounding outbreak from Juliette left behind it momentarily.

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The young ladies, two of them at any rate, were indignant at his levity. Figuratively they turned their backs on Mr. Cannon and refused to answer him, and went on talking about the morning and its revelations and purposes to the others.

Culpepper came across to Selina presently and leaned over the back of her chair and spoke softly to her. His breath touched her cheek and her pretty ear. Her heart leaped, treacherous, traitorous heart! And the blood beat in her throat!

"Honey, when you going to let me come and talk to you? School's over next week and I'll have to go home. I can't go on finding excuses for hanging around."

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## CHAPTER THIRTY-FIVE

Selina and Maud found themselves more and more thrilled with their work under Mrs. Bruce and Mrs. Higginson.

"It's the virus of content for one thing," said Maud grandly, "we are occupied, and then, too, of course, it's a cause."

There were varying happenings which went with the cause. The business as the days went on, so overcrowded the library, that Aunt Juanita and Selina and the especial medium they worked in, newspaper articles to be compiled, and proofs of circulars from the printers to be corrected, overflowed into the dining-room and onto the dining-table. Mrs. Higginson and Maud in the library folded and directed and stamped all this data in its final form.

Everyone was in earnest and the work engrossing. "You'll stay here to lunch," Aunt Juanita would direct. "There's no time to be wasted going off to hunt food." And the impatience in her voice for any quest so unreasonable and unnecessary as one for food, kept anybody from going.

Nor did conveniences when they were not conveniences carry any weight with her. "No, certainly you can't have the dining-table," she told Hester on an occasion when they all did stay for lunch, and that person, cloth in hand, presented herself to set this piece of furniture for the meal. It was quite as if Hester had asked for something as irregular and preposterous as somebody's nose or ear. "Don't you see Miss Selina and I are using it? That it is piled with our papers? Put the food in dishes and set it around. Why ask me where?" exasperatedly. "Anywhere. We'll help ourselves when we get ready."

And they did, from side-board, window-seat, and mantelpiece, without comment and with equanimity. And be it remarked it was excellent food. And excellently cooked. Trust a Bruce for that! They surprised you by such unexpected characteristics as knowing good food and having it!

Another day Aunt Juanita departed betimes for the printer, leaving the others at their tasks.

"What? What's that, Maud?" from Mrs. Higginson presently, looking about her as she stood up, tying on her bonnet, "Mrs. Bruce told you to get those circulars to the post-office when you finish them? Why there's five hundred of them! That's Juanita Bruce! Go home and get your lunches, both of you, and I'll send the carriage around here for you. It can take you to the office with the circulars, and wherever you'd like to go afterwards. Girls always have a round of calls to pay. Use it for the afternoon."

And the Higginson carriage meant a pair as well and coachman and footman and liveries!

"The greenhouses are going to waste," said this lady another day, "waiting for weather to get the flowers out into the beds. Come back in the carriage to lunch with me, both of you, and let the gardener cut you what you want." And the Higginson house meant pictures brought from abroad, and wonderful rugs, and articles of what Maud once inadvertently called virtue! The clerical force were thrilled and enraptured with their secretarial occupation!

And it would seem, too, that the time was ripe for the cause which Aunt Juanita and Mrs. Higginson were furthering. Selina for proof of this had only to take the cases of her mother and Auntie.

Mail from the outer and impersonal world, coming to either of these two, was so infrequent as to be negligible, their correspondence being altogether personal and intimate. When such mail began to come to both, circulars, and clippings and marked newspapers, despite the fact that their own Selina, or if not she, then Maud, was known to have directed them, they were impressed and fluttered, and put their sewing aside, needles in work, thimbles on sills, read it through with absorption and remark and comment.

"The Ladies' Library Club of Kalamazoo' is the oldest organization of the kind in the West," Mrs. Wistar would read aloud. "Four book clubs recently were formed in the State of Pennsylvania.' I'm sure such affairs must be altogether beneficial in communities. We think too little no doubt of the things of the mind. Cultivation along such lines as would be proper in a book club would be stimulating for us all here in our community. Now take Anna, for instance," she referred to Cousin Anna Tomlinson on whom she

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turned thus testily every now and then, "no matter where she is, or what the occasion, she *never* wants to talk about anything now but the dishonesty or the appetites of her servants. It's come to be wearing."

"The Cosmos Club of West Newburyport, Mass.," read Auntie whose vocabulary was circumscribed and confined to the familiar, darling soul, and who conceived of cosmos only as pink and white and magenta, grown on bushes and brought in in the fall and put about in vases, "Now I'd like to see something like a cosmos club started here among ourselves. I've always said it was an excellent plan to exchange seeds and cuttings and ideas with other flower lovers."

Juliette Caldwell's pretty mother considered that she'd had a musical training in her day. Hadn't she studied a whole *year* as a girl at the Conservatory of Music up in Cincinnati? She stopped Selina on the sidewalk to speak about a marked article in a paper sent to her. "It's really wonderful about that B-Sharp Club away out there in a little town in Dakota. I'm so tired when I'm through with the servants, or the no-servants, and the children and the house, I'd be grateful to any incentive which would send me to my piano again."

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Cousin Anna Tomlinson came by the Wistars with a circular report of various kinds of Woman's organizations. "The Ladies' Tourist Clubs? Are they parties for travel, Selina? I do get so tired when I go on a trip with your Cousin Willoughby, who won't let me do a thing or see a thing my way."

Selina one day chanced to report these things to her Aunt Juanita and Mrs. Higginson.

"I've known it for some while," assented her aunt. "I've not waited and worked, and worked and waited twelve years for this moment, not to recognize it when it comes. The time is ripe." Aunt Juanita spoke solemnly and as if genuinely moved. "I knew that when Mrs. Higginson and I started upon this local agitation and movement."

"I've studied the situation nearly five years myself," from Mrs. Higginson. "Juanita is right, the time *is* ripe, and the moment *is* here!"

It was the crucial moment! Both ladies admitted it! Acknowledged they had foreseen it and made ready for it! And then turned their backs upon it!

Mrs. Bruce met her clerical force of two as they arrived at her door the next morning. It was near the end of May.

"Important as I deem the cause here at home," she told Selina and Maud, "and I hold nothing higher than the arousing of the individual woman, Mrs. Higginson and I are called to Chicago. There's a chance that the demand by women for representation on the commission of the projected world's fair in Chicago is to be turned down. Mrs. Higginson hopes to be appointed one of these women representatives if the demand is granted to use the opportunity to spread her ideas about women among women. I am interested on principle. We go to-day."

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Here Mrs. Higginson arrived in her carriage to pick up Mrs. Bruce and her satchel. She got out and came in for a brief conference.

"We had hoped to call on the women here in our own town and induce them to meet and organize this week. We may have to be in Chicago ten days, which will bring it well into June. By that time the various commencements and such are all on, and after them the summer exodus will have begun and the moment will be past. It's most unfortunate."

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## CHAPTER THIRTY-SIX

When Selina and Maud became converts to the cause of Mrs. Bruce and Mrs. Higginson, they carried Adele and Juliette with them. They also offered of their enthusiasm and their enlightenment to Amanthus but she only looked at them wonderingly.

The day after the two sponsors for the cause, Mrs. Higginson and Mrs. Bruce, deserted it, the four were gathered at the Wistars' in Selina's room, discussing the affair, when Amanthus walked in.

"You *ought* to be interested in what we're talking about, Amanthus," said Maud severely, "though you're not. It's a question involving every phase and—er—" Maud had lost the vocabulary of the article she was quoting, "every side of woman" she finished a little lamely. "You ought to be an espouser either for or against such a cause, or you ought to know at least, whether you consider it a cause."

Amanthus heard Maudie out. How pretty she was in her attention that didn't do more than just attend. Then she laughed protestingly. The little wonder on her face, the bother in her eyes, made her sweet and irresistible. Made you want to protect and defend her! Want to shield her from the bothering Mauds of life with their perpetual attacks and innuendoes!

"You're so queer, Maudie," smiling affectionately; "you and Judy and Adele, and, yes, Selina, too. You all do get so worked up. Last time it was about the reverting, or was it the reversion of the Scriptures? And whether you approve of it? I don't see what it is you all are always thinking you're about." She paused a perceptible time. Then she blushed, dazzlingly, radiantly. While they wasted themselves in all these puzzling fashions, *she* had been about the real business of life. "Mr. Tate has asked Mamma if I may marry him."

A mere puff from the May breeze ruffling the fruit tree outside the window of Selina's room could have felled her audience over. Their faces paled even to their red young lips. The first, she, their Amanthus, for *it* to come to! *It*, the incredible, the barely formulated in thought, the well-nigh unuttered in phrase! They stared at her, and at each other about the room! It was a space before volition began to come back to them! And with the return of it, they remembered! Bliss' father had just put him into business, Bliss was working like a man, pretty Bliss, thinking it was for Amanthus!

Amanthus the meanwhile was continuing to drop further startling information. "Mr. Tate is going to Germany. He wants to study. He says if Mamma will consent to let me be married at once, and all of us go over together, it will be better. We can live in any sort of way or fashion Mamma and I choose, he says. There's a great deal of money."

Somebody gasped. It turned out to be Maud. Amanthus, sweet and unruffled and definite, was going on.

"Mamma says, however, he's to go away. Quite away. And let her have the summer to take me about. We're going to Mamma's two cousins who married East, one at Narragansett, and one at Bar Harbor, and think it over. But I know now. Mamma needn't bother."

Juliette more than ever these days was Spartan and accusing. She spared not herself nor anyone. Her aquiline little face blazed and her dark eyes flashed. "How do you reconcile it with yourself about Bliss?"

Amanthus colored. "I don't have to. I told him it was a boy and girl affair all the time. It never would have been Bliss anyhow. There have been several this winter I haven't talked about."

That night Culpepper and Mr. Welling and Mr. Cannon came around again to Selina's. As if drawn back by a common need of fellowship, Maud and Juliette and Adele were there.

"Wonderful old Tate!" said Mr. Welling. "He's just broken it to us."

The four were silent. Maud was by Selina on the sofa, and Juliette who was sitting by Adele, had her hand. They avoided Mr. Welling's eyes, and the eyes of each other. As Amanthus herself had said, they took things hard. Probe beneath this affair of hers with anybody, they could not. Nor could they bring themselves to mention Mr. Tate. It was as if silently and desperately they sought support in each other only, and clung together.

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Perhaps the others understood. "Fool Bliss," said Culpepper, "but then he always has been."

They could not discuss that either.

"How's the cause?" from Mr. Cannon suddenly.

He having indulged in levity concerning it, was in disgrace in that respect. The ladies eyed him doubtfully, and questioningly.

"But I mean it. No cavil. Who do you think called me up at the law class to-day? Got the first private telephone line in town, just put in, lively old girl! Aunt Jinnie Hines Cumming, *ætat.* eighty-three! She was vigorously and impatiently saying, 'Hurrah,' 'hurrah,' instead of 'Hello,' when I got to the receiver, having forgotten the cabalistic word, but that's small detail. She promptly went on to tell me over the telephone that she's always considered women such fools—her words, not mine, ladies—she'd like to see 'em started toward some sort of mitigation of their condition before she died—that she'd been getting all sorts of data through the mail of late about women—that of course, she knew it came from Juanita Bruce and Harriet Higginson. But nevertheless it had given her an idea, and would I come round there?"

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From Maud, "Of all people, even more than Mrs. Higginson, the right one!"

From Juliette, "Do you suppose she *really* means to do it?"

From Selina, "Does she know how unfortunately Aunt Juanita and Mrs. Higginson were called away? We've got the lists of names and all the data. Oh, go on and tell us, did you go?"

From Adele, "If anybody can put it through, Mrs. Cumming can!"

Mr. Cannon rubbed his hands and eyed his audience delightfully. "My Aunt Jinnie Cumming, *ætat.* eighty-three, sent for me in my legal status, to tell her how to go about it! She proposes to organize!"

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## CHAPTER THIRTY-SEVEN

It was a momentous assemblage, that gathering of ladies who responded to the call of their erstwhile social leader, Mrs. Jinnie Hines Cumming. This octogenarian person, about to go away for the summer with her two maids and her six trunks when the idea struck her, delayed her going but declined to have the covers taken off the furniture in her drawing-room.

"Never put yourself out for women," was her explanation of this to Preston Cannon, her nephew. "If they think you overvalue them, they undervalue you, and the other way round for the reverse of the proposition."

Consequently the meeting came to order in due time in Mrs. Cumming's less formal library, which she declared was easier to unswathe and put in order.

Thanks to the beneficent offices of Preston Cannon, right hand for all the ladies concerned in planning the affair, Miss Selina Wistar, Miss Maud Addison and Miss Adele Carter were present, established in the dining-room opening off the library in the combined callings of ushers, pages and tellers. It wasn't strictly parliamentary that they should be there, and years afterwards they turned on him and told him so, but then they were only thrilled and excited and grateful to him for arranging it with Mrs. Cumming.

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On the afternoon in question the three wearing immaculate white dresses, and seated at a small table just inside the door leading from the dining-room into the library, with trays of papers and pencils in readiness, watched the ladies surge in, in pairs, trios and groups, and find chairs.

Adele leaned across to speak to Maud and Selina. She had on a white sailor hat with scarlet cherries on it, fruit being the rage in millinery this season, a jaunty type which didn't at all suit her. "How would it do to take some notes of the meeting for Mrs. Bruce and Mrs. Higginson? They'll want to know everything." Conscientious Adele!

Maud looked stunning in her new white hat with crystallized grapes on it. "Better than that," she whispered in reply, "Selina and I are going to telegraph 'em when the meeting's over. We have their address."

Selina had been considerably worried over Mamma's extravagance for her this spring, but since she could not combat it, looked rather nice herself in a soft-brimmed leghorn with a wreath of strawberries, both blossoms and fruit, upon it. She leaned across the table in her turn. "We're going to the telegraph office before we go home. Come with us. Thanks to Maud the message is written out in telling style."

"I felt it was a significant moment," said Maud, "a moment we may be proud to feel we witnessed. And I felt the message ought to be epigrammatic in a way and worthy of it. Read it, Selina."

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Selina produced it from her pocket-book and read it softly, the library filling rapidly with ladies by now:

Organization effected. Mrs. Cumming responsible. Congratulations.  
Our rights and our realms our platform.

It was a representative gathering, this, in the library of old Mrs. Cumming. Summer silks, summer grenadines, buntings, and this latest thing, French satines, abounded. While fashion this season decreed trains which swept pavements and floors impassively, the marked characteristic of the hour was bustles. And if bonnets predominated over hats, the bonnets made up for any over-sedateness in form by their wealth in that rage of the moment mentioned, fruit in every shape known to millinery if not to pomology.

Mrs. Gwinne Tuttle was there, Mrs. Alicia Tuttle Jones was there, and also Mrs. Jones' three married stepdaughters. Mrs. William Williams was there, and Mrs. Carter, mother of Adele, and Mrs. Grosvenor, her grandmother, Mrs. Harrison, very lovely and very charming and smiling, Mrs. Addison, Mrs. Caldwell, Selina's little mother, Mrs. Wistar, and Auntie and Cousin Anna Tomlinson. And besides these, serried ranks of others even the more impressive because the less well known.

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"Mrs. Cumming ordered a hundred chairs from the undertaker's,

though she wouldn't have this known, every confectioner in town chancing to have his engaged for this afternoon or this evening, I know that," whispered Selina to Maud and Adele, "for Mr. Cannon said so, and there are just ten vacant."

Here Mrs. Jinnie Cumming rose from her chair in the front row of the audience, tottery but equal to it, game old girl, as Preston Cannon said of her. And deliberately reading the instructions furnished her by her nephew through her lorgnette after she had risen, found what she wanted, asked somebody near by to pound a chair back, and call the meeting to order.

Having gotten it to order, and its attention fixed on herself, she told the ninety ladies gathered in her library that they knew as well as she did what they were there for, or ought to know if they had read the card she'd sent 'em. And thereupon asked Mrs. Alicia Tuttle Jones to take the chair.

Mrs. Jones in grenadine, trained and bustled, and red blackberries, had prepared herself for this, so it was understood afterwards, having been told beforehand. She swung matters deftly along from this point, being a capable person and a Tuttle. When Mrs. Gwinne Tuttle in turn should pass the social scepter to the next in line, there was very little doubt as to who hoped to be qualified to receive it.

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With a few graceful phrases explaining the reasons for their presence here this afternoon, Mrs. Jones appointed a secretary, and this done came to the point.

"Since we are here, because we are really interested, ladies, will someone tell us a little of what women are doing elsewhere?"

Mrs. William Williams, Mrs. Carter and Mrs. Wistar all got up. Mrs. Wistar explained afterwards that however disinclined she might have felt to do so, there was no choice left her, being Juanita's sister.

Mrs. Williams whose bodily proportions were by far the larger of the three, and wearing a summer silk of green, a bustle, and a bonnet with gooseberries, was recognized by the chair, and the other two ladies sat down. Whereupon Mrs. Williams with a sudden change of countenance, looked about her as if for help, colored violently and sat down herself. It was as startling as it was uncharacteristic, and the first exhibition of club-fright witnessed by any of the company. It added verve to the occasion.

Mrs. Carter now arose, in bunting, bustle and pink raspberries, smiling and propitiatory. Not for worlds, so said her manner, would she have it thought that she was covering Mrs. Williams' confusion.

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**"More uplift, more culture is the cry of the moment."]**

"It would seem, ladies, that women everywhere are awaking to a

need of more uplift in their lives, are realizing that their lives on the whole are starved. In proof of this, book-clubs, magazine clubs, culture clubs are forming all over this land of ours. More uplift, more culture is the cry of the moment among our sex." One recalled the nature of periodical at the Carter house that no one read but Adele! "And who of us but rejoices that women are awake to this need in themselves?"

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Mrs. Wistar arose, all of five feet four, but none the less impressive and none the less herself for that.

"She was a Livingston, too, like Mrs. Bruce," somebody whispered to somebody.

"In our leisure," Mrs. Wistar deplored, "and I hope it is not disloyal to say it, women are too inclined to talk recipes and seamstresses and servants to the exclusion of more elevating and uplifting topics." Was she getting back at Cousin Anna? "From the information on the subject we all have been receiving recently, it would seem woman is lifting the plane of her life to things more worth while. As one eloquent article written by a woman herself, ably puts it, 'Woman has for too long allowed herself to become subdued to the thing she works in.' In other words, as the writer goes on to explain, domesticity."

At a signal from the chair that her time was up, Mrs. Wistar sat down, and in compliance with a previous understanding between Mrs. Jones, Mrs. Cumming and Mrs. Gwinne Tuttle, Mrs. Tuttle arose, resplendent, as becomes a leader, in purple silk and train, nature having provided the bustle, and purple and green grapes combined with a modest crop of seckel pears upon her bonnet. She arose and moved that the body of women present organize themselves into a club for purposes to be set forth following organization.

Seconded by Mrs. Sally Jones Sampson, and also by Mrs. Gwinne Tuttle herself, in a loud voice, she being on ground new to her, it was put to the vote without remark, Mrs. Jones failing to recall she ought to ask for any; and unanimously adopted.

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"And the name of this club, ladies?" from Mrs. Jones in the chair.

"Perhaps the name will better follow after we determine the club's purposes?" from Mrs. Harrison on her feet for the moment, lovely and smiling in grenadine, bustle, and bonnet garniture of small oranges.

"Music," called pretty Mrs. Caldwell in a checked silk, bustle and huckleberries.

"Literature," from Mrs. Carter, she of the pink raspberries.

"Art," from Mrs. Williams, recovered, with a reviving nod of her gooseberries.

"Or," from little Mrs. Wistar impressively arising—surely this lady had belonged to the ranks of the retiring and deprecating only because the way had never opened to her to be elsewhere! "Or may we not include *all* of these suggestions, and say music, art *and* literature?"

A newcomer, late in arriving, stood up, in a wool street dress, plain but perfectly decent and genteel, though lacking a bustle. It was Miss Emma McRanney, in a plain straw hat, poor, working creature, large of feature, thick-set and good-humored.

"Ladies, it may be well here to remind ourselves of the two persons who've done most toward this end of organization and common fellowship among us. And who most regrettably to themselves and to us, I hope I may say, are not with us to-day. I speak, of course, of Mrs. Aurelius Bruce and Mrs. Amos Higginson, who have given of themselves and their time and their money to bring about the present occasion. And I would like to recall that each of these ladies has a conviction which she feels should be at base of any such organization of women as we are effecting now. Convictions which, I'm sure you'll all agree with me, we owe it to them to consider."

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A murmur went around the ninety ladies, and Mrs. Jones bowed graciously from the chair in recognition of the general agreement to this.

Miss Emma McRanney went on. "One of these ladies, Mrs. Bruce, believes and has believed for years that the great factor in the future of woman is suffrage. Mrs. Higginson's conviction is as strong that woman will come into her larger sphere and wider field of usefulness through a better understanding of her own present



business of domesticity. I am merely the mouthpiece of Mrs. Bruce and Mrs. Higginson, ladies, with whose views I chance to be familiar. They, hearing of the meeting through Mrs. Cumming, who telegraphed them in Chicago to such effect, have replied asking that their views be presented to you this afternoon, and at the request of Mrs. Cumming I am here to do it. Mrs. Bruce believes that the platform of this or any other organization of women for woman's own betterment must be suffrage. Mrs. Higginson maintains that such a club at start should be a forum and clearing-house for the broadening and enlightenment of women as home administrators."

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But murmurs were many: currants were nodding in emphatic refutation to cherries, blackberries to quinces, apples to gooseberries. Milliners might dictate their common absurdities in head-gear; mantua-makers in dress styles, but not Mrs. Bruce or Mrs. Higginson, hopeless dressers both, their business to these ladies! Denunciations grew audible. Remarks, while unofficial and made from lady to lady, nevertheless, were to one end.

"Suffrage, with all apologies to Mrs. Bruce," said some apricots to some Concord grapes next to 'em, "simply stands with and for freaks. Who'd want to look like Mrs. Bruce?"

"And domesticity is exactly what we're running away from," returned the grapes, outraged. "We want to turn our backs for a while on the servant problem and its vexations."

As a unit the ninety were against Miss Emma McRanney! One only was to rise to her support, and that one Mrs. Jinnie Hines Cumming!

Miss McRanney was still speaking. "If woman in any numbers is to become a self-supporting and economic factor, and it looks as if she were going to have to, it's only fair she ask for her part in making the laws she'll work under. And if woman is to be a self-supporting factor as well as a homemaker, it's only wisdom on her part to get about fitting herself to do both things."

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Mrs. Cumming having struggled up out of her chair by means of her cane, was on her old feet now. "If woman's going to be an economic factor, she's a long ways to travel before she'll be one. If she hopes to see herself arrive she'd better set about starting."

Cousin Anna Tomlinson, of all persons, in grenadine, bustle and plums, was on her feet and being recognized by the chair. When one saw her fumbling for her pince-nez, as she called her eye-glasses, and having found the same, peer about until the angle desired was obtained between them and a slip of paper in her hand, it grew clear that she was recognized for reasons, someone, pushing her to her feet as a mouthpiece, having put the paper there.

Mrs. Sally Jones Sampson and her clique in truth had put it there, scribbling it hastily on a bit of paper secured from those young girl pages, Mrs. Sampson's clique including Mrs. Williams, Mrs. Carter, Mrs. Grosvenor, and, yes, Mrs. Wistar, a very bright spot on either cheek, torn from the cause of her sister Juanita by the compelling magic of that call to culture.

"It is moved," read Cousin Anna Tomlinson stumblingly, and continuing to shift her glasses to keep the angle "that the purpose of this organization of women be for the furthering of its members in the arts, including music and literature, and indirectly the community in which it lives——"

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This being seconded by loud acclaim, it was promptly put to the vote and adopted with applause, before it was realized Mrs. Tomlinson was still on her feet and still by the aid of her pince-nez endeavoring to complete her motion.

"—and further that the name of this organization be The Woman's Culture Club of Blankington."

Mrs. Wistar, an even brighter spot on either cheek, was on her feet at this. Truly a star too long eclipsed, she spun madly in this sky of sudden opportunity. Auntie next her, dear soul, sought to restrain her. "At least *act* as if you remembered Juanita," she begged in a cautious whisper, "if only for the looks of the thing, Lavinia."

But Mrs. Wistar shook Ann Eliza's hand off her arm. She had scented culture and it had fired her brain. She even would hold them to culture's finer distinctions. "I rise to deplore Mrs. Tomlinson's use of the word woman. And would suggest that in its place she substitute the customary and more pleasing word, lady."

Mrs. Jinnie Cumming at that last reseating of her old self had shown fatigue. But at this she emerged again, reached out a veined

and withered hand for a grip on the wrist of her nearest neighbor and pulled herself to her feet. Shrewd and dry she gazed around. Her old eyes ran appraisingly over the faces of that assemblage. With here and there a sophisticated one, as in the cases of Mrs. Harrison and Mrs. Carter, for the most these ninety women's faces were naïve, credulous, pleased, the faces of children grown to maturity, eager, excited.

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Mrs. Jinnie Cumming took her time in surveying them. Ninety women, most of whom she considered fools, if one believed her statements, couldn't hurry *her*! She even communed with herself. "Our mothers and our grandmothers were women with women's capacities. Nobody shielded them as these weakling creatures have been shielded. The world and its brutal facts met 'em square, and sophisticated 'em. I go back eighty years myself and I remember 'em."

Whereupon she spoke. "I rise for two things, ladies. The first is to put myself on record with Miss McRanney, Mrs. Bruce and Mrs. Higginson and to say that by the platform you've just adopted you've set the impulse among you back into dilettantism by—who shall say how many years? And next to say that I take issue with the last speaker who would have the word *lady* substituted for that of *woman* in the name of this organization. It is my feeling the day of the lady, so denominated, is passing, and the hour of woman is come."

"Great old girl," said Preston Cannon when he heard about it afterwards. But that was later.

Right now the meeting adjourned, after the appointment of committees to draw up working plans. And as Mrs. Jinnie Cumming tottered out with the assistance of her maid, the ninety ladies followed in pairs, in trios, and groups; in grenadines, silks, buntings and bustles; in apricots, apples, peaches and plums; whereupon the young girl page and usher, Selina Wistar, slim and fair and aghast, beneath a wreath of strawberries and their blossoms, looked at her companion pages and ushers, Maud Allison beneath white grapes crystallized, and Adele Carter in her jaunty hat with cherries that didn't suit her.

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"And we have to break it to Aunt Juanita and Mrs. Higginson!" said Selina. Tears were in her eyes. Tears of outrage and indignation! She seemed to have glimpsed something for her sex that loomed big and pertinent! And here was an end to it!

"Where's the telegram?" asked Maud tersely.

Selina produced and unfolded it and the three of them read it over:

Organization effected. Mrs. Cumming responsible. Congratulations.  
Our rights and our realms our platform.

"We can't send that," said Maud. "Give it to me."

She seized a pencil from the table and edited the message sternly.

Organization effected. Mrs. Cumming not responsible. Apologies.  
Our rights and our realms rejected.

At which light seemed to break upon Maud! And she saw things through a revealing sense of proportion. Glimpsed humor and truth which go to make proportion at last!

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"They'll be as funny in their war-paint, hunting culture, as we've been carrying around the wisdom that was to die with us!"

And all the while during this afternoon a note lay in Selina's pocket-book, along with that telegram, a note written on French gray paper, embossed and monogrammed The postman had handed it to her at her gate and she had read it on the way here. The contents came back to her as later, after sending the telegram she walked home in company with Maud and Adele.

My dear Selina, I am going as usual to my cottage at the Virginia springs about the middle of June. Bereft of companionship by the marriage of the last daughter in our family, it occurs to me to wonder if you will come and be my guest for July? Tuttle's vacation will lend him to us for part of that time. I need hardly say that he adds his entreaties to mine.

Affectionately and sincerely yours,

ALICIA TUTTLE JONES.

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## CHAPTER THIRTY-EIGHT

Selina, reaching home a bit before dinner, read and re-read her note from Mrs. Jones. The springs in Virginia! She felt she knew all that this meant, and knew, too, what it would mean to be the young guest of Mrs. Samuel Jones at her cottage at these springs!

After dinner, for some reason she couldn't define, she took the note, not to her mother, but her father. He was alone downstairs with his paper. He looked worn and tired, even a bit broken and haggard. Standing by his chair while he read the letter, she slipped an arm about his shoulders, though again she could not have explained why. His free hand went up, sought her hand there on his shoulder and closed on it.

He sat quite still after he had finished the reading, his eyes on the sheet of paper lowered to his knee. For a full minute he did not speak. Then:

"Tuttle has made no secret of what he means, Selina. Let's be very honest about it. Are you ready then to accept this invitation at his mother's hands?"

"Papa!" piteously.

"Unless your own mind is quite made up, I don't think you can accept it. How about it? Do you know what you want?"

"Papa!" this time beseechingly.



**"For a full minute he did not speak."**

"Think it over, little daughter, and then come back and tell me what you decide."

"I have thought it over, Papa."

"The world and the flesh and a very decent and reputable young fellow, Selina?"

"Papa, please don't!"

"Come around here to me, where I can look at you, Selina." And when she had come, and he had drawn her down on the arm of the chair, he took her face in his hand and studied it, the eyes above all. Then he stood up, drew her to him and kissed her.

"We'll decide you won't go, little daughter. Let us say it's a case where we'll give the doubt the benefit for a while yet."

"Must I tell Mamma about the note, and about my answer to it, Papa?"

"Certainly. Why do you ask?"

"She's going to be put out. It's almost a pity she has to know. And, Papa, I'm worried about the money she's spending on clothes for me this summer! She's done it because she's pleased to have me

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going with Tuttle."

Selina stood before the mirror in her room, dressing for a barge party up the river. It was the first one of the season and the program was always the same. The crowd met in couples at some agreed on starting-point near the street-car line. On this occasion Cousin Anna's front porch was to be that spot by permission. From here they went down in the car to the river, descended the steep levee to the boathouse, and getting started a moment or so before sunset, if they had luck, rowed up the river a dozen miles to a certain favored spot, ate supper and floating down after the moon was up, reached the boathouse in time for an hour's dancing before going home.

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With care, Selina told herself as she stood there at her mirror, one can wear a best white dress on such an affair and not get it *too* dabby. She'd compromise by wearing a ribbon belt and not a sash. Culpepper didn't dance, didn't care for foolishness, was the way he put it, but was going. So were Preston Cannon and Mr. Welling. The rooms over the confectionery were given up, and the three were leaving for their homes in the state to-morrow. Mr. Tate had already gone, sailing from New York for Germany this very day.

Tuttle Jones was not of the party, which consisted of Selina's world, a world that Tuttle didn't trouble with.

He had been very nice over her declining his mother's invitation.

"I was afraid perhaps you wouldn't see your way to it," he said. "I'll only be there with my mother two weeks anyhow. We can put in a very decent time here together, at home."

Selina, her dressing completed, caught up her jacket from the bed and went into her mother's room. Culpepper was downstairs waiting for her. "Mamma, will I do? It's the end of the old things, you know, a real breaking up, and I want to look nice."

"I thought you were saving that dress to go with Tuttle to call on his cousins to-morrow night," from Mamma. "The older one would have done perfectly well. Yes, you took very nice."

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"You look more than nice," from Auntie emphatically. "You're looking your best, Selina. If you need the dress for to-morrow night, I'll press it for you."

Cousin Anna's porch was gay with the assembled bevy of them. Mr. Welling was with Maud, Mr. Cannon with Adele, and Bliss—yes, poor foolish Bliss, for the last time and at his own behest—was with Amanthus. Then there were Tommy and Tod Bacon and their visiting girl cousins and Brent Wild and Sam Rand for extras. Cousin Anna came out on the porch and shook hands around and laughed at their nonsense and pressed ice-water upon them. Nobody wanted any but still that was a good deal from Cousin Anna in the way of hospitality.

Amanthus spoke of her plans to Selina and Maud while they were waiting for Juliette and Algy to come. She was sweet and definite.

"Mamma and I are going on to Narragansett and then Bar Harbor, the day after to-morrow. I had a note from your Mr. Cyril Doe, Selina, the other day, I haven't seen you to tell you, written from Ottawa, and he *will* be in Bar Harbor like he said. Later in the summer Mamma and I go to England and Mr. Tate will meet us there, and we'll be married in London."

"What'll you call him?" from Maud, which was altogether nasty of her. "You can't bring yourself to say Lemuel, can you?"

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"Lemuel is a very good name," from Amanthus with dignity, "and besides his middle name is Worthington and we'll probably call him that."

Algy and Juliette came hurrying up just as the rest of them, tired of waiting, were boarding the street car.

Juliette across the car aisle, now they could see her, looked pale. She had on her last winter's scarlet coat over a last summer's old white dress and looked dabby, poor, little, dark-eyed gypsy. But when a girl *won't* take the money her father offers her to buy any new summer clothes—

She had studied too hard, they all knew that. And for nothing. The examinations were but two days off now, in Cincinnati. There had been a final scene and row at her house recently, when she demanded again of her father that she be allowed to go, and again was refused with an almost brutal outburst of temper.

"And he said I'm under age," Juliette told Selina and Maud the day after this, "and if I ran off and started as I intimated I'd do, he could bring me back."

Juliette with Algy at her side was with the crowd as they left the car, and with baskets, wraps, and what not, went down the steep, rock-paved levee, to the river at its foot, rolling broad and serene, the evening ferryboats just starting on their pilgrimages, and a steamboat here and there laid up at its wharf, the red of the sun at the horizon line, turning their white paint to rosiness.

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And Juliette and Algy went aboard the boathouse with them, everybody again was sure of that. Though the men couldn't recall that Algy was at his locker when they were at their own, getting into boating togs, and the girls spending their time out on the guards looking at the sunset on the water could not remember Juliette being with them.

One thing was sure. After the two barges were well started under the long strokes of the rowers, and as far on their way as the upper bridge, it was discovered that neither boat contained Juliette or Algy.

A halt following this discovery and a bringing of the barges alongside each other brought a bit of testimony from Tod Bacon.

"I saw them in one of the sculls before we got the barges out of the boathouse. I reckon they've plans of their own."

There was a good deal of grumbling over the absence of Algy when they landed for supper on the high, woody bank that overswept the river up and down in a mighty stretch of view. Algy always built the fire, and went to the nearest farmhouse for water, and fetched and carried generally.

The girls were unpacking the baskets and Maud had produced a tablecloth.

"Here, give me the bucket and I'll get the water," grumbled Culpepper, "but the rest of you fellows busy yourselves with the fire."

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It was wonderful always, floating back those twelve miles downstream by moonlight. And such moonlight as there was to-night! One wondered what Amanthus found to say to Bliss. Culpepper with his orange and black blazer over his boating togs was lolling back in the stern of their barge beside Selina, and she said as much to him.

He answered good-humoredly, "It isn't Amanthus' business in life to say, as she's often told you. She won't try to say."

Tod Bacon, that nice boy, and Sam Rand, had their mandolins. Their clever picking of the strings ting-ling-a-linged over the broad waters.

"Honey, I'm going home to-morrow," said Culpepper, laying hold of a bit of Selina's jacket as it lay unused on her lap and openly fondling it while his eyes sought her face in the moonlight. "You haven't let me talk to you yet? What are you going to do about it?"

And here Culpepper's hand, his big, firm hand leaving the cloak he had used for a blind, found her hand.

Culpepper took what he wanted of life and people! She had said so before! And resented it!

She regained her hand. He didn't seem to hold it against her and went back to his fondling of the jacket. "What you going to do about it, honey?"

"Tell you good-bye and a nice summer," said Selina briskly, moving her jacket. "I don't want to hear you talk, as you call it, Culpepper."

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"Well, I'll be back," from this young gentleman, still without resentment. "My mother has entered me in the best law firm in your town; isn't she the first-class fellow? And I come down to start in August."

Patently Juliette and Algy did have their own plans and as patently didn't care to discuss them. They were at the boat-club waiting when the others arrived, and it was plain they neither of them cared to talk. Juliette's white dress under the scarlet coat looked dabbier, and she was altogether pale.

She danced a little with the rest of them at the start, Tod Bacon,

blessed boy, at the piano, but after that sat by herself, tired, she said. But when Algy, after prowling in the lunch baskets, brought her a sandwich and a bottle with shrub in it, she obediently ate the one, and when he had found a glass and got ice from the janitor, drank the other.

Algy, big, splendid dear, looked pale himself, and with his straight features so unwontedly grown-up and stern, even looked gaunt.

Mr. Welling, romping rather than waltzing by with one of the Bacon cousins, called to Algy.

"*Oh, swiftly glides the bonnie scull!*" Or did it, Algy?"

"Aw, I don't know what you mean," said Algy crossly. "Lemme alone, can't you, Welling?"

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The next morning they learned what the temporary disappearance of Juliette and Algy the night before meant. The Wistars were at breakfast when Maud came flying over and into the dining-room. In her blue gingham dress, her red-brown hair was glorious, but her eyes were big and her cheeks white.

At sight of her, Selina in a fresh gingham herself, divined something amiss and rose to meet her. Maud in her blue dress, threw herself upon Selina in her pink one, and burst into tears. "Juliette went across the river last night when we missed her, and was married to Algy!"

Selina clutched at Maud and they stayed each other. The exclamations of Mamma and Auntie, and the question or two from Papa, reached them, as it were, from far away.

Then Maud recovered herself. She had a tale to unfold and must be at the business! "I was at my window dressing, up a bit earlier than usual to work on my German verses, at my bay window, Selina, that looks out on the Caldwells. And I saw Algy arrive and come round the side way, and whistle real softly under Juliette's window. And after a minute Juliette came out the side-door with her hat and jacket and her gloves on, carrying her satchel. And I called to 'em and hurried down and met 'em at the gate and they told me they were married last night. Algy had come round to take her and put her on the train for Cincinnati. He entered her by telegraph last night for the examinations as Juliette Caldwell Biggs. She isn't of age, you see, Mr. Wistar, and her father told her he'd stop her if she tried to go."

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**"And whistled real softly under Juliette's window."**

"Judy!" from Selina, weeping anew. "That little, tiny, pretty, breakable Judy!"

"I've known little tiny, pretty people myself," from Papa with humor. "It doesn't always preclude determination."

"Determination," retorted Mamma. "I don't know what you mean, Mr. Wistar. I call it self-will in Juliette that's outrageous."

"Mamma!" from Selina.

"I haven't finished," from Maudie, wiping her eyes and looking up. "After she's taken her examination, she's going to her college cousin up in Ohio, to wait and see if she passes. But she'll pass, we all know Juliette. And from there she'll enter college next fall. Juliette's written letters to send back to her grandfathers to see if either of them will help her through her college course with money. And if they won't she'll let Algy lend her enough to get her through."

"Algy!" from Mamma, scandalized, "doesn't she realize he's her husband?"

"Algy put her through *college*?" from Auntie bewildered. "Doesn't she understand she's *married*?"

Maud looked startled. She seemed to be seeing it in this light for the first time herself. "I—I don't believe she does. I don't believe it's occurred to Juliette that way at all. But," brightening, "Algy won't expect her to. He's sure to understand. He's always been that way; hasn't he, Selina?"

Selina nodded in corroboration.

"Accommodating, you know," further elucidated Maud, "and—er—perfectly willing to be—well—an expedient."

"Expedient!" from Mamma, "And you're speaking of the girl's husband?"

"Glorious," from Papa. "We've often thought it about ourselves, we husbands, but it takes the younger generation to admit it."

"I don't like this levity," from Auntie, "my head's all in a whirl and I don't understand," piteously. "Marriage is a solemn thing and carries heavy obligations. Hasn't she thought at all of what a very great deal she's taking for granted in this young man? In Algy?"



Darling Auntie!

"Selina," from her father, "take your auntie's cup out to Viney and get her some fresh coffee. I do believe she's honestly pale. Woman's being driven willy-nilly, to and fro, up and down, finding herself these days, don't you realize that, big Sis? What's a mere Algy or two in the final issue?"

"Marriage is a solemn thing and carries obligations," insisted Auntie still piteously. Then she rose for her to vast heights. "For a woman to marry for any end but the one, is like using the chalice of the holy sacrament as a basket to carry her own wares to market."

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## CHAPTER THIRTY-NINE

Mamma, who so rarely betrayed herself by an open admission of her real state of mind, sat by the window crying softly. Auntie, at her window, moved heavily as through the act to expend some of her ponderous energy.

"I've always felt there *must* be something wrong with our way of managing, Lavinia? Do you suppose it would have worked better if we'd ever had a *plan* to fit our expenses to, or made Robert agree as to just *what* we might have to go on?"

"If you think you could have done it better than I have, Ann Eliza—" from Mamma, a bright spot on either cheek as she raised her head and faced her sister-in-law. Little lady, only forty-two now, and meant by heaven to be pretty if instead she had not to be so anxiously perturbed!

"How bad *is* it, Lavinia?" from Auntie.

A light footstep sounded along the hall and Selina paused in her mother's doorway. It was September and, after the long summer, pleasures and activities were starting up. She had been to the theater with Tuttle last night, and this morning was allowed to have her sleep out. Here at half-past nine she was just coming up from her breakfast!

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This Selina standing there in the doorway, looking from her mother to her aunt, was nineteen now and past, but beneath something of gravity now in the face under the very lovely hair, she still was sweet and loving and anxious.

"How bad *is* it, Lavinia?" Auntie was saying.

Mamma looking across to the door saw her child. "Come in, Selina. You've heard as much, and you may as well hear the rest. There's no money for Viney. Last month's bills all lapsed over because Robert told me I'd have to wait. And now they've come in with this month's bills. The iceman's been here three times."

Here Mamma's hands dropped into her lap with a gesture that carried dismay to the others. It was the gesture of one who abjures any further responsibility, of one who steps aside. No defence was left in her, no air of anxious justification. She would state the whole, her manner seemed to say, without reserve and without mincing, and let somebody else face the issue.

The face of this older Selina, standing there in the doorway, had gathered something of decision, too, and something of the inner steady flame that comes with this gain in character.

"How has Papa explained it, Mamma? What did he say when he told you that you would have to wait?"

"He didn't explain and I didn't like to ask. It's been clear he was worried all along through the summer."

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"Mamma, I think you should have asked. Or I think Papa should have told you, so you wouldn't have to ask."

Mamma made no defence, showed no disposition to reprove, or yet to resent. She searched around for her pocket-handkerchief again, found it, and resumed her crying.

"You said something about it to Robert at the breakfast table this morning, Lavinia?" reminded Auntie.

Mamma conceded this from behind the handkerchief at her eyes.

"You said, 'Robert, you didn't get in from the office till one o'clock last night, and you didn't come up to bed till past three? What *is* the matter? And this thing of no money again for the bills? What *does* it all mean?'"

Mamma lifted her head again. Her spirit had returned. "And he said," she spoke indignantly, "'For God's sake, Lavinia, when I'm trying to spare you as long as I can, don't come at me now with questions.' I didn't ask him to spare me!" with spirit. "I'm tired of pretending his way of keeping me in the dark's right. I've been pretending so when I didn't feel so for twenty years. I'm going to say it out now. And I didn't ask him to spare me. I asked him to tell me."

"Mamma, little Mamma!" from Selina, hurrying across the room to her side.

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"Of course I wasn't competent at first, and proved I couldn't be trusted with money and the rest of it. I never had been trusted with anything. My mother bought my clothes and my father took the bills from her and paid them. But it doesn't go to prove I couldn't have

been made trustworthy if Robert had been patient and showed me a little and trusted me till I could."

"Lavinia," from Auntie piteously, "I've misjudged you. You wouldn't criticize Robert and you wouldn't allow anyone else to criticize him before you?"

Mamma had resumed her soft crying and Selina was on her knees by her, trying to comfort her.

"Have you any idea what *is* the matter, Mamma? The matter with Papa's affairs, I mean?"

"He's been worried all summer, and you've seen for yourself how haggard he's come to be. There was some talk of his losing his two best agencies last spring. The rest of the business doesn't amount to much, and I'm afraid it must be that he's lost them."

"Mamma, don't you think we've a right to know? I'll go down to him at his office now, if you're willing I may, and ask him? I'll dress and go down to him, if you'll let me?"

"I'm through," said her mother, "I feel that I've failed. The heart's gone out of me. Do what you please."

Matters this time were past the point where Selina felt at all that she wanted to cry. She went quietly back to her room and set about putting things in order with rather more faithfulness than usual, the while thinking and planning her morning so that she might go to her father as she said.

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It was past ten o'clock. By the time she dressed and started it would be near or quite eleven. At one o'clock, Tuttle Jones, his mother, Mrs. Sampson, his sister, and a bevy of young people were coming by for her in a tally-ho driven by Tuttle. Their destination was the jockey-club, where they would have lunch before the races, the fall trots opening to-day.

Selina had never been to a clubhouse, and for knowledge of races had seen a derby once in company with her father and Culpepper. But she would have given all chances to come of ever seeing the one or the other, if she'd known how to get out of going to-day. Her soul was sick and also her spirit. Papa, haggard and broken! And Mamma turned on him with reproach, after giving up the fight!

And yet this coaching-party was result of the discovery by Tuttle that she, Selina, never had been to so routine a thing as the race-course clubhouse, or to so perfunctory a piece of business as the trotting races. His manner concerning these sins of omission in her bringing-up was perfect, but he filled up the blanks in her all too meager experience as rapidly as possible after discovery.

Mrs. Gwinne Tuttle had given her nephew's point of view on the social obligation to Selina one day when she had her out driving.

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"Tuttle will endeavor to meet his God with a perfect manner and calmly. He'd feel he'd failed 'em both to show gaucherie or surprise. And Tuttle's devout."

About eleven o'clock Selina showed herself at her mother's door again. She had on a summer silk in biscuit tones, one of Mamma's several extravagances for her that had worried her this summer and her leghorn hat with its wreath. And she was carrying Mamma's further extravagance for her, a silk dust-coat. Tuttle had a smart trap and a fast roadster, and throughout the summer had come around about an hour before sundown to take her for a spin out the avenue, or through town and out the country road following the banks of the river. Mamma said this made a coat for her imperative.

Also, as she stood here in the door, she held in her hand a parasol, biscuit-colored too, with a rose lining. Mamma had noticed that everybody in traps or stanhopes, every lady that is, starting forth with the sun still an hour high, had a parasol. As Selina got these things together to-day, she could only hope they were paid for.

"Mamma, I'm starting down to see Papa now. I dressed so as to be ready for the races when they come by for me. It's off my mind and easier for me than to have to hurry when I get back. Mamma, I won't kiss you, nor you either, Auntie. It won't do for me to break down and cry."

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She went downstairs and out into the September midday glare. She would walk the two squares to the street-car line and there for the sake of time take a car. Otherwise even carfare might be an extravagance now.

And then as she went along the hot street, Selina with a rush of

despair and bitterness began to take stock.

As an economic factor—she was indebted to Miss Emma McRaney for the phrase—where was she, Selina Wistar, after two years of effort?

"Exactly where I started," she told herself still more bitterly, "listening to Mamma say there's no money to pay Aunt Viney."

True, in June just past, she had taken the examinations over again, and this time obtained her teacher's certificate. And to what end? To learn that in lieu of any normal training for teachers in the public schools, she must supply as an assistant without pay for a year to achieve such training.

She had answered some advertisements in Mamma's church paper, for private teaching in Southern families. The result had been to learn that French, drawing, music, and in one instance, needlework, were part of the requirements, for which board and one hundred dollars for the ten months was the largest of the offered remunerations. And this last week she had applied for a chance vacancy in a private school here at home. The polite refusal of her application lay at home now on her table. One line of the reply from the lady principal of the school stayed with her, "Experience in my estimation is the most essential qualification for teaching." It was the thing, Selina told herself, she was begging to be allowed to get!

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Here she reached the car-line and at the approach of the jogging car and its little mules got aboard, and, finding herself alone, resumed her communings. More, she got out a small bundle of letters from the pocket of her silk coat, letters she had taken over two nights ago to read to Maud who was just home from six weeks' travel with some cousins.

It had been a long summer for Selina, unbroken except for Tuttle Jones, and since August, by the return of Culpepper. Amanthus had written to her once from Bar Harbor, she had the letter here now, apparently to say Mr. Cyril Doe was there visiting the embassy which had removed itself to that place for the summer. For having said this, Amanthus said nothing else. It was plain that Mr. Doe continued to impress her, and few things in this life so far had. She and her mother since then had left for London. Mr. Tate had written very happily to Culpepper, saying he and Amanthus would be married on his arrival in London.

And Maud had been doing her first real traveling. As said, she was just home and, according to her mother, her first sight of the snow-topped mountains, plains and a few of the cities of her continent had not subdued her discontent.

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She had come across to see Selina only yesterday and to talk about her dissatisfaction. "What does Culpepper hear from Mr. Welling, Selina? Has he decided to settle in his part of the state and practice law under his father? I haven't heard from him. I didn't expect to. I told him I didn't believe I cared to correspond. And I didn't care to. If ever he and I take up our friendship again, his glee is going to be with me, and not at me. Selina, what is it I want? Is it the moon, do you suppose? Or only a path under the moon that goes to somewhere?"

Selina here in the jogging street-car, remembering Maud's question, almost cried for her, its appeal was so great!

Then the old Maud, in all the old vigor and energy, had spoken up again. "I'm going to New York and spend the winter as one of those chaperoned parlor-boarders at some school, if Papa will let me. I'll take up something, if it's only horseback riding," bitterly. "There's a fad for riding-schools right now. I really think maybe I'll look into elocution. Though some way that doesn't sound distingué, does it? Perhaps it had better be designing for carpets or wall-paper, I read about women doing these."

So Maud, splendid, loyal, honest, restless Maud!

Selina looked out the car-window and got her bearings. She had time in plenty yet and could resume her communings. Adele had been away since July at Cape May and to the mountains with her mother and grandmother. She would be home about the first of October. Her several letters to Selina had been listless and devoid of much hope.

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"I don't quite see what I'm coming back to," she said in the last one here on Selina's lap "and can only hope Mamma and Grandmamma do see. Débutantes of the first and second rank when they lapse over to a second winter, I've noticed, form into euchre

clubs that play in the daytime with each other, and take classes in the Saturday morning sewing-schools. What becomes of lapsed-over débutantes of the third or even as bad as the fourth rank, apparently I'm being taken back home to find out. I didn't tell you before I left that Mr. Cannon has been engaged all this time to a cousin up at his own home. He told me about it when he came to say good-bye. I thought I'd like you to know, and now we'll drop it."

Selina took up the last of the letters. It was from Juliette and she wrote cheerfully in her crisp, spirited backhand.

Both Granddad and Grandfather came around in their stands, after they found I'd actually done the thing, and agreed to put me through the four years of college. And Algy went to see them it seems and up and told them he purposed doing this himself! That, as he understands it, and unless he was laboring under a mistake, he was the person whose name I'd undertaken to bear. And he's been sending me money right along while I'm here with my cousin making up my two conditions. But it's the money both Granddad and Grandfather have put in the bank for me I'm using and shall use. And so I can't understand all this talk from everybody at home of the shocking great deal I've taken from Algy in marrying him in this way. He and I, at any rate, understood it when we talked it over. My cousin asked me the other day what I meant to do about it when I got through college? Did I look on myself as Algy's wife, or did I not? I hadn't thought about this, and it's been worrying me considerably. Do you suppose he thinks that's the way of it? Do you know, Mamma never once spoke to me about the possibilities of my being anybody's wife in my life?

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Selina, glancing up, put her letters hastily together and thrust them in her pocket and rang the bell. She had reached the corner where she left the car, half a block from her father's office.

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## CHAPTER FORTY

The street where Selina left the car was cool and dank between shabby brick stores and shabbier warehouses. It smelled of sugar and molasses and leather. The floor-space occupied by her father for fifteen years was in one of these buildings on the second floor.

Coming to it she went up the worn stairs by which this second floor was reached from the street, and, opening the glass-sashed door at the head of the staircase, came in on the long floor-space occupied with boilers, pumps, portable mills, what not, most of them second-hand. She went back through the long aisle between these to the office in the rear, which was shut off by a glass partition and overlooked an alley where, as she remembered it, drays drawn by mules forever stood being loaded or unloaded with heavy freight.

The door in this partition was open and through it she could see the interior of the office—two tall, shabby, sloping-topped desks, two tall stools one before either desk, two chairs, a stove and a strip of cocoa matting. That was the whole of it! That and her father and his general factotum, old Jerry, who was clerk, office boy, janitor, and, with some help from the outside for the lifting of machinery, porter. The whole of it, this, where her father for fifteen years had spent the larger part of his waking hours! And for the rest paid the bills Mamma made for the family, and played whist with a congenial group of his own sex once a fortnight! Husbands and fathers then did not always get a great deal out of it themselves!

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Selina had slowed her steps as she came to the open door. Within the office old Jerry was bringing out ledgers, she had a general idea you called 'em ledgers, or daybooks, she'd heard somewhere of daybooks too. And as he placed these on one of the sloping desks and shuffled out of the way, she saw her father leaning against the other desk and talking to, why, so it was, he was talking with Cousin Willoughby Tomlinson!

They had not seen her yet, and something made her stop where she was outside the doorway.

Perhaps it was the little hand wave of her father, which was quietly eloquent. "Thank you for coming to me, Willoughby. A little counseling with somebody of one's own family at a time like this is a relief."

Somebody of his own family! She liked that! This dear, mistaken Papa! He was talking on. "Yes, it's the end of things here for me, I'm afraid. I've lost my only worth-while agencies. I daresay they're right about it. I'm foggy and they want a hustler to represent 'em for a change. The question is—and I want your counsel about it, Jerry's getting out the books for us—can I make it a wind-up in any possible way, or is it going to have to be an assignment?"

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Selina turned and hurried back through the long aisle between the oily machines. Her heart beat cruelly, but the rest of her, thoughts, feelings, body itself, was numb. She went down the worn stairway and came out into the dankness of the street.

They had not seen her, her father and Cousin Willoughby. She was glad of that. What would have been the use? It would have disturbed them in their talk and upset her father, and she knew now what she'd come to ask without his having to tell her.

It was early. She still had part of the time she had allowed for her talk with him. Certainly carfare *was* to be considered. She'd walk home, walk and think.

Think? Think of what? She knew! Think how if she had been a poor man's *son* where she was a poor man's *daughter*, that son would have been prepared and shaped by every condition and circumstance to take care of himself. A son long ago would have been at work.

Just what then *is* expected of poor men's daughters by the world they live in and are to exist by? *What?*

The answer came to her with staggering suddenness and illuminating clarity as she never had grasped it before. A truth is a truism and slips through the consciousness glibly until one discovers it for oneself. Another illuminating discovery! Then it is mighty and will prevail!

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*Daughters are expected to solve their economic problems through marriage!* Daughters have but the one business in life, which is to find husbands! Marriage as a solution for all her

problems is a daughter's profession!

And if she fail? If she find no economic salvation for herself through a husband?

Rage, fury, shame, swept through Selina. The symbol of such failure stood piteously before her, Auntie! Auntie with a pittance doled out to her barely sufficient for her church dues and her few garments! Auntie stitching on fine muslin hands with no remuneration from any source for the perfection of those stitches, Auntie with all that magnificent endowment of perfect health and untiring energy that wasted itself so piteously in polishing brasses. Fury swept through Selina again, fury and resentment so hot they scorched and seared her. Say, for instance, that had Auntie been the man, and Papa the woman of the two of them?

Selina hurried along, one block, two blocks, three blocks, not that time pressed but that misery and indignation drove.

Then as she looked up and saw where she was, at the turn of a block where it touched on the courthouse neighborhood and the region of lawyers and their offices, she knew by prescience what was going to happen. Knew it with such certainty that her heart quickened and her breath caught even as a step came hurrying behind her, a cheerful voice as the steps drew nearer, spoke her name, and Culpepper, catching up with her, joined her.

"Our offices are in the second story back yonder. I saw you out the window as you went by."

He took off his straw hat and wiped his forehead with one of those amazingly big and wonderful linen handkerchiefs Cousin Maria gloried in keeping him supplied with. In his vigor, his strength, his confidence, he was overwhelming. He towered above Selina. To surrender to masterfulness like his? To lose oneself through such dominance? Could she? And be at peace forever in the certainty of his care, and the knowledge the fight was his, not hers? It all were easy then if one could.

Culpepper's blue eyes bold through those black lashes, but softened by solicitude right now, scanned her face, then looked relieved.

"You know then?"

She nodded, pretty creature that she was, the wealth of her shining hair showing beneath her wreathed hat. "And *you* know?"

"I was round with Cousin Robert at the office last night, going over the books and the chances with him."

Here he waved a car. It was a belt line and went the long way round, but in its own good time would get them to their home neighborhood.

He led her out to the track, put her on the car, and followed. "How'd you know?" he asked as he sat down by her. "Cousin Robert told me he wouldn't mention it to any of you at the house till matters were decided."

"He ought to have told it at home from the start," she cried, and explained how she knew and they talked it and the situation at home over in their sorry details. Then she burst forth again, the more passionately that being here on the street-car, it must be restrainedly.

"Look at me, Culpepper? What am I? What am I fit for? What am I able to do as anything should be done? I've been given no way at all to earn my living. I've never been allowed to order a meal, or go to market to fit me even that way. I've never drawn a check, and I've never paid a bill. I'm past nineteen and at as pitiful a beginning as I was at sixteen."

She swallowed, looking ahead, her eyes fixed absently on the only other passenger in the car at the moment. Her profile thus was to Culpepper and he loved it. Fair and clear-cut and fine, he had loved it in her when she was a child.

She was seeing not the other passenger at all at whom she gazed so bitterly, poor man, but a grievance because of which she was passionately rebellious.

"You were made ready from the start, Culpepper; everybody concerned saw to it *you* were prepared. I'm hard about it. I'm resentful. I accuse—who or what is it I *do* accuse?" piteously. "Mamma? Papa? Conditions? The system? If there is any system for bringing up girls, and it isn't *all* just haphazard! And Culpepper, at home they're all so helpless! Mamma and Auntie! And Papa's so sensitive and is going to grow pitiful under this second failure and

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the having to take, as I suppose he will, some little clerkship, somebody'll be charitable enough to give him. It's up to me. And I want it to be up to me. You must see that the whole measure of what I'll ever be depends on my seeing right now that it *is* up to me. And, Oh, what way is there for me to meet it?"

He laid a hand on her arm and nodded abruptly toward the window. She followed his indicating nod and looked out. The car had turned into a residence street, and they were passing the house where Tuttle Jones made his home with his exceedingly well-to-do parents. Pompous and broad, and of comely stone was this home in its wide yard, its flower vases overflowing with bloom and color. But it was to something more pertinent than the Jones' house Culpepper with his nod referred.

Tuttle himself and his tally-ho were just wheeling in at the curb, and the groom at the back was leaping down. And if the whole, horses, tandem, coach, Tuttle himself in his belted dust-coat, groom breeched and booted, were more than a bit spectacular, one could rest easy in the knowledge that it was because in this case it was eminently the correct thing to be spectacular. Tuttle was arrived here at home, Selina judged, to get his mother, preparatory to gathering up the remainder of his party, herself among these.

"Tuttle will be by for me by the time we reach home, Culpepper. He's horrified that I haven't had my share in social experience as included in races."

The car jogged past, and as it came to the corner, the point nearest their own neighborhood, Culpepper rang the bell.

As they reached the pavement he spoke. His eyes were narrowed and he did not look at her. For the first time in their lives he was approaching a subject to her with entire seriousness.

"I reckon we'll have to allow it was coincidence offered me Tuttle and his circus wagon just now. What I meant was, honey, that the world and the system, as you call it, would point to Tuttle and tell you you've done everything and even more, expected of you. Catch my meaning?"

Did she? Her cheeks blazed. He was only corroborating what within the half-hour she had said for herself.

Culpepper was going on, still avoiding all look at her. "And I want to say further, honey, that Tuttle's a great chap, Tut's all right. I gave in when he showed what was in him by appreciating *you*." His eyes swept around to her here with mock challenge. "How's that my lady, for magnanimity toward a flaunting rival?"

She didn't pretend not to understand him. She was rising to honesty these days through a force within her which itself craved truth. Color, however, had surged to her face with a violence which the rose lining to the open parasol on her shoulder could not be held responsible for—a growing violence, which finally overcame her, and she stumbled.

His hand quick and sure, righted her little gesture.

She made a disclaiming with her head.

"The world and the system may be mistaken," she said hotly. And as she said it she now looked straight ahead, though her face was spirited.

He checked their steps. Their own corner was in sight, a block straight ahead.

"So?" from this Culpepper, watching her. "So, honey? All the better then. It clears the decks. It seemed decenter somehow to include his claims. And now for mine. Everybody knows where I stand. What I want. You know. My mother for godspeed, when I came away in August, said, 'Go on down and take your job and marry Selina.' Will you do it, honey?"

Her color was gone with the violence with which it came, leaving her white. A tremor went over her.

Watching her as closely still, he went on. "What a fool time and fool place to ask it, where I can't pick you up and tell you a few things. Can't comfort you, honey, the way we used to comfort your hurt fingers and feelings when you'd bring 'em to us when you were around five! Remember how I used to cure 'em, Selina?" coaxingly. "And ole Miss'll belong to us? She's a little more mine even than she's yours? What say now, honey, don't let's go teasing each other this way any longer?"

Up the home street ahead of them Tuttle, his tally-ho a-blossom now with gay parasols, was wheeling round the far intersection and

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about to come toward them. A moment or so more, and as they themselves would arrive at Selina's squat house, he would be wheeling in at the curb before it.

"As you say, Culpepper, it's a foolish time to try to talk. But I must try, and quickly, before we get there, please."

Her color was all gone so that even her pretty lips, a bit compressed to hide their trembling, were white. So white his hand went out to touch hers, hanging at her side, for reassurance.

But hers clenched so that he could not grasp it. Blessed child! And yet so obviously now, woman, too, through the child.

"Let me talk, please, Culpepper. Thank you for wanting me and for telling me. Though I don't believe you've ever realized that I've resented the way you've taken me for granted, you and Cousin Maria, and Auntie, and, yes, even Papa. But that's not what I want to speak about. It's this. There's no power in heaven or earth right now could make me marry either you or Tuttle! If he asks me to-day, and I won't hold him off any longer, I'll say so to him. When I come to marrying, I see it perfectly clearly and of a sudden to-day, it's going to be beyond any imagining or shade of possibility that's it's because it's a solution for me! I'm finding myself a little bit these days. I'm going to prove what I've found now. When I come to marry, it's going to be because I choose to give up independence to do it. How I'll get the independence I'm sure I don't know now, but I will get it," piteously. Then, "Culpepper, Oh, Culpepper," beseechingly as she turned toward him, a cry as from one bereft and needing help, "*don't* you see? *Can't* you see? Put yourself where I am, and understand *for* me!"

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They were crossing the home corner now. Tuttle and his glittering show were wheeling in at the curb before the ugly little house. The neighborhood surreptitiously was at its windows. The breeched and booted groom had leaped down.

It was this Tuttle up on the box who wouldn't shame his God by meeting him with anything less than entire correctness. Selina would try not to fail this kindly Tuttle now.

"Coming," she called with pretty gayety to the company aloft as she came in speaking distance, with a lift and a flirt of her parasol before surrendering it to Culpepper for lowering.

Then to Culpepper imploringly. "Speak to Mamma and Auntie for me and reassure them about Papa, won't you, Culpepper? I'll have no chance."

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The coach was stationary at the curb, and so by now were Selina and Culpepper. He was big and splendid; she was slim and fair. Greetings were pelting down on them, and Tuttle with an eye on his horseflesh had risen on the box.

"No," from Selina to Tuttle aloft, "don't get down. Or *can* Jehu on the box get down? Culpepper'll put me up. Mrs. Jones, Mrs. Sampson, Miss Lyle, Mr. Haven, you all up there know Mr. Buxton? I've never mounted a coach before, and I'm horribly afraid I'll perpetrate what a friend of my youth, when she sprained her ankle, called a *faux pas*. Do give me your hand, Culpepper, and put me up?"

Blessed child!

And did her hand, as he took it, close on his for the instant, beseechingly as it were? Those soft fingers of hers cling to his? Hold to his as though loath to leave them?

He must have thought they did, for after he had put her up on the box to the place directed by Tuttle beside himself, pretty creature that she was, still tremulous but bravely gay with it to wring your heartstrings, this Culpepper made pretence of need for more care of her, and swinging up on the step to arrange her skirt from chance contact with any brake or such matter, whispered softly up in the vernacular he kept for her and ole Miss.

"Honey!"

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**"Everybody waved and Culpepper was left standing there."**

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And the while a chorus was chanting from the back seats, "Listen to us, Selina! Listen, Selina! *Have* you heard about Amanthus? Turn around and listen to us! *Have* you heard about Amanthus?"

And here Mrs. Jones, leaning forward, addressed herself to Culpepper down again on the curb. "Mr. Buxton I seem to remember that Mr. Tate is a friend of yours? Have *you* heard about Amanthus?"

The chorus resumed itself, arising from Mrs. Sampson, Miss Lyle, and Mr. Haven behind Mrs. Jones.

"Go on."

"Don't keep 'em waiting."

"Tell 'em about Amanthus."

"Amanthus," said Mrs. Jones, "was married at St. George's in London, yesterday, to Mr. Cyril Doe. A cable from Mrs. Harrison to her bank, which is Tuttle's bank, came to-day."

Amanthus had lived up to *her* business in life!

The whip touched the leader, the coach wheeled, everybody waved, and Culpepper was left standing there.

Auntie called to him from the door. She had seen him from the window and come down. He went in to her there on the doorstep and put his arm around her and kissed her.

"Ole Miss, what do you suppose, I've just been given to cherish most of everything in the world?"

"Are you in earnest, Culpepper, or teasing? I never know. I'm a bit unstrung, and so's Lavinia, over this trouble, whatever it is, hanging over Robert. What is it that's been given to you to cherish?"

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She spoke with concern.

"Don't you worry, ole Miss, it's mine for cherishing, not yours. You're no worry. *You* belong to another generation in daughters of Shiloh that did your dancing in your vineyard according to custom, and have nothing to reproach *your* past with. The daughters of Shiloh to-day are declining to dance, ma'am, and are plucking the grapes in the vineyard instead. I need your coddling and your comforting. A daughter of Shiloh, among the dancers and the grapes, has handed me for my cherishing fruit of her gathering called a point of view."

"Whatever do you mean, Culpepper? I never know when you're in earnest, or not?"

"She thinks *she* is, ole Miss, that fair young daughter of Shiloh. I don't know just what to think, myself!"

"Are you speaking of Selina, Culpepper?"

"Who else? Ole Miss, I love her so and I want her. Where'd she pick up this whim?"

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- Obvious print and punctuation errors fixed.
- A Table of Contents was not in the original work; one has been produced and added by Transcriber.

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