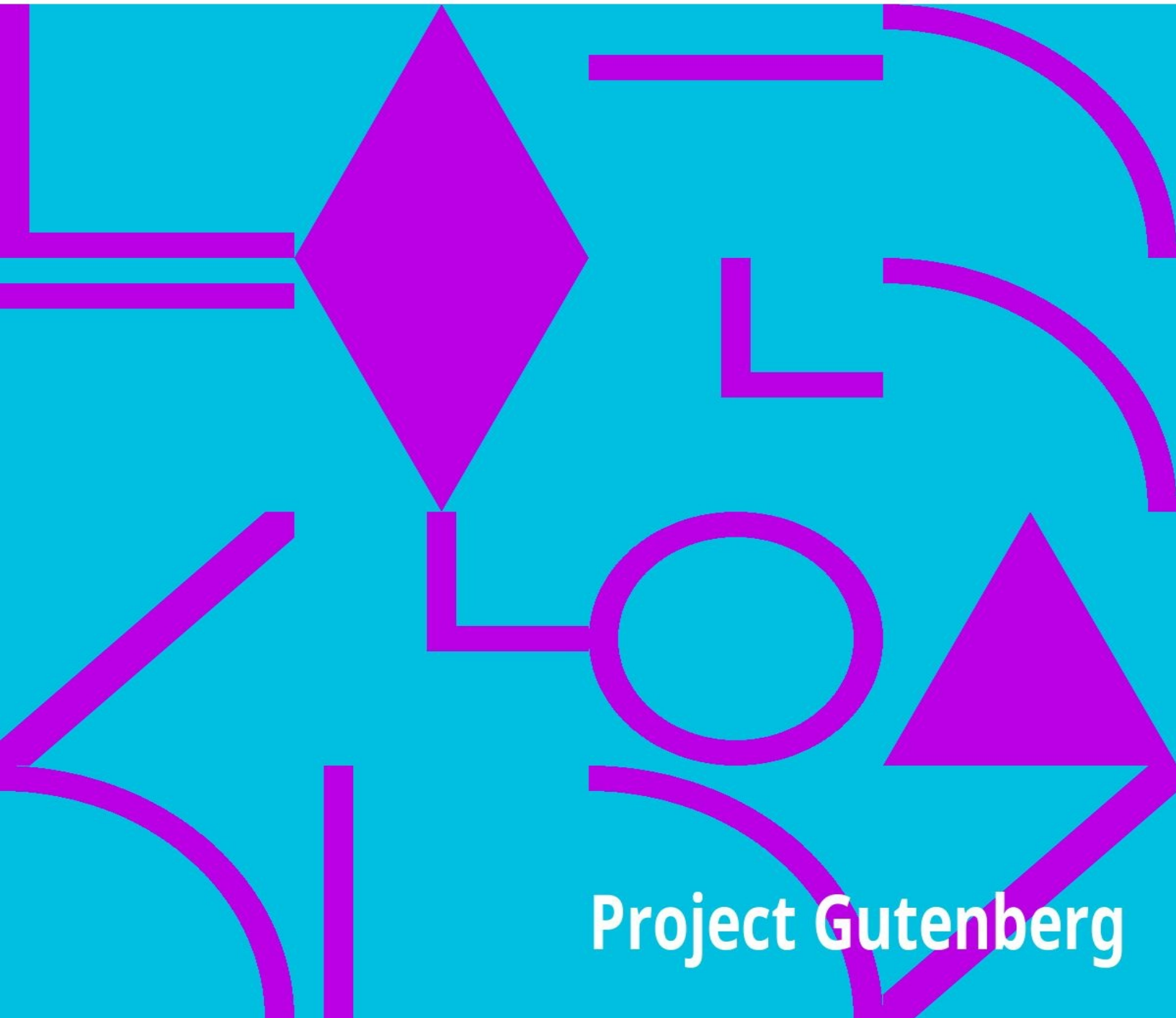
Ladies-In-Waiting

Kate Douglas Smith Wiggin



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LADIES-IN-WAITING

By

KATE DOUGLAS WIGGIN

WITH FRONTISPIECE BY

CHRISTINE TUCKE CURTISS

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FOREWORD

It may be urged that all proper heroines go through a period of uncertainty before giving their hands and hearts in marriage. Occasionally, however, there are longer seasons of indecision, incident to pride, high temper, or misunderstanding on the lady's side, or to poverty, undue timidity, or lack of high pressure on the part of the gentleman. I have christened the heroines of this volume "Ladies-in-Waiting," and that no mental picture may be formed of Queen and Court and Maids of Honor I have asked the artist to portray for the frontispiece a marriageable maiden seated pensively upon a hillside. Her attitude is plainly one of suspended animation while the new moon above her shoulders suggests to the reader that she will not wait in vain.

KATE DOUGLAS WIGGIN

August 11, 1919

Contents

LADIES-IN-WAITING

MISS THOMASINA TUCKER

I

“Good-bye, Miss Tucker!”

“Good luck, Miss Tommy!”

“Bye, bye, Tomsie!”

“Don’t stay away too long!”

These sentiments were being called from the Hoboken dock to the deck of an ocean steamer, while a young lady, buried in bouquets and bonbons, leaned over the rail, sparkling, inciting, compelling, responding.

“Take care of yourself, Tommy!”

“I don’t see but that I must! Nobody else to do it!” she responded saucily.

“You wouldn’t let ’em if they tried!” This from a rosy-cheeked youngster who was as close to the water’s edge as safety permitted. “Say, did you guess what my floral offering was to be when you trimmed your hat? I *am* flattered!”

“Sorry! The hat was trimmed weeks ago, and I’m wearing your bouquet because it matches.”

“Thanks, awfully,” replied the crestfallen youth. “Plans for reduction of head-size constantly on file in Miss Tucker’s office.”

“Just Carl’s luck to hit on a match.”

“Don’t see any particular luck in being accessory to a hat trimming,” grumbled Carl.

“Write now and then, Miss Tommy, won’t you?” said a fellow with eyeglasses and an air of fashion.

“Won’t promise! I’ll wait till I’m rich enough to cable!”

“Shilling a word’s expensive, but you can send ’em to me collect. My word is ‘Hopeful,’”—at which the little party laughed.

“Register another, and make it ‘Uncertain,’” called the girl roguishly, seeing that no one was paying any attention to her friends and their nonsense.

“London first, is it?” asked the rosy youth. “Decided on your hotel?”

“Hotel? It’s going to be my share of a modest Bloomsbury lodging,” she answered. “Got to sing my way from a third-floor-back in a side street to a gorgeous suite at the Ritz!”

“We’ll watch you!” cried three in chorus.

“But we’d rather hear you, darling,” said a nice, tailor-made girl, whose puffy eyelids looked as if she had been crying.

“Blessed lamb! I hope I’ll be better worth hearing! Oh, do go home, all of you; especially you, Jessie! My courage is oozing out at the heels of my shoes. Disappear! I’ve been farewelling actively for an hour and casually for a week. If they don’t take off the gangplank in a minute or two I shan’t have pluck enough to stick to the ship.”

“You can’t expect us to brace you up, Tommy,” said the rosy youth. “We’re losing too much by it. Come along back! What’s the matter with America?”

“Don’t talk to her that way, Carl,”—and the tailor-made girl looked at him reproachfully. “You know she’s got nobody and nothing to come back to. She’s given up her room. She’s quarreled with her beastly uncle at last; all her belongings are in the hold of the steamer, and she’s made up her mind.”

“All ashore that’s going ashore!” The clarion tones of the steward rang through the air for the third time, and the loud beating of the ship’s gong showed that the last moment had come. The gangplank was removed and the great liner pushed off and slowly wended her way down-river, some of the more faithful ones in the crowd waving handkerchiefs until she was a blur in the distance.

“Well, there’s no truer way of showing loyalty than by going to Hoboken to see a friend off,” said the eyeglassed chap as he walked beside Jessie Macleod to the ferry. “I wouldn’t do it for anybody but Tommy.”

“Nor I!” exclaimed the rosy youth. “Good old Tommy! I wonder whether she’ll sing and have a career, or fall in love over there?”

“She might do both, I should think; at least it has been done, though not, perhaps, with conspicuous success,” was Carl’s reply.

“Whatever she does, we’ve lost her,” sighed the girl; “and our little set will be so dull without Tommy!”

Fergus Appleton had leaned over the deck rail for a few moments before the ship

started on her voyage; leaned there idly and indifferently, as he did most things, smoking his cigarette with an air of complete detachment from the world. He was going to no one, and leaving no one behind. He had money enough to live on, but life had always been something of a bore to him and he could not have endured it without regular occupation. His occasional essays on subjects connected with architecture, his critical articles in similar fields, his travels in search of wider information, the book on which he was working at the moment, —these kept him busy and gave him a sense of being tolerably useful in his generation. The particular group of juveniles shouting more or less intimate remarks to a girl passenger on board the steamer attracted his attention for a moment.

“They are very young,” he thought, “or they would realize that they are all revealing themselves with considerable frankness, although nobody seems to be listening but me!”

He would not have listened, as a matter of fact, had it not been for the voice of the girl they called Tommy. It was not loud, but it had the quality of a golden bell, and Fergus was susceptible to a beautiful voice. One other thing—the slightest possible thing—enlisted his notice. She wore a great bunch of mignonette stuck in the waistband of her green cloth dress, and her small hat had a flat wreath of the same flower. Mignonette was, perhaps, the only growing thing of which Fergus Appleton ever took note, and its perfume was the only one that particularly appealed to his rather dull sense of smell; the reason being that in the old garden of the house in which he was born there was always a huge straggling patch of mignonette. His mother used to sit there on summer mornings and read to him, and when he lay on his back in the sunshine he used to watch the butterflies and humming-birds and trees, and sniff the fragrance that filled the air. When his mother died, he wandered into the garden, sought the familiar corner, and flung himself on the bed of mignonette to cry his heart out—the lonely heart of an eight-year-old boy. That was five and twenty years ago, but he never passed a florist’s open door in summer-time without remembering that despairing hour and the fragrance of the flowers, bruised with his weight and moist with his tears.

The girl vanished the moment the steamer was out of sight of the dock, and Fergus did not give her another thought for a day or two. He had liked her green cloth dress and the hat that framed her young, laughing, plucky face. He had thought her name suited her, and wondered what dignified appellation had been edited, cut, and metamorphosed to make “Tommy,” deciding after a look at the

passenger list that it was Thomasina, and that the girl must be Miss Thomasina Tucker, an alliterative combination which did not appeal to his literary taste.

The voyage was a rough one, and he saw her only now and then, always alone, and generally standing on the end of the ship, her green cape blowing in a gale of wind and showing a scarlet lining, her mignonette hat exchanged for a soft green thing with an upstanding scarlet quill. She was the only companionable person on board, but he did not know her and sat nowhere near her at table, an assemblage of facts that seemed to settle the matter, considering the sort of man he was and the sort of girl she was.

“She’s too pretty and too young to be gallivanting about ‘on her own,’” he said to himself one morning, when Tommy stood on the upper deck looking out to sea and, as far as he could judge, singing, though there was such a gale blowing that he could not hear her voice. “But all the girls are the same nowadays,”—and he puffed his pipe disconsolately; “all the same; brisk, self-supporting, good fellows. If I ever met a nice, unsuccessful-but-not-depressed sort of girl, soft but not silly, mild but not tame, flexible but not docile, spirited but not domineering, I think I should capitulate; but they’re all dead. The type has changed, and I haven’t changed with it.”

Fergus Appleton did not make acquaintances easily; no man does who has had a lonely, neglected boyhood, his only companion a father who seldom remembered his existence, and, when he did, apparently regretted it. He had known girls, but he was a shy, silent, ugly boy, and appealed as little to them as they to him. He did not live through the twenties without discovering that a fine crop of sentiment was growing in his heart; he also discovered that he didn’t know in the least what to do with it. George Meredith, speaking of Romance, says: “The young who avoid that region escape the title of Fool at the cost of a Celestial crown.” Fergus Appleton wouldn’t have minded being called a fool if only he could have contrived to deserve the title, and the glimmer of the crown celestial had been in his imagination more than once until he turned thirty and decided it was not for his head. Guileless school-girls did not appeal to him, and elderly sirens certainly had no power to charm; he was even widow-proof, so he became a thoroughfare for sisterly affection. Girls suffocated him with friendliness, which was not the stuff of which his dreams were made.

However, he had nothing to complain of, for he got as good as he gave, and it occurred to him that he could not expect to start a disastrous conflagration in any maiden bosom so long as he had no brimstone, nor any substitute for it, on his

own premises.

“Anyway,” he reflected (though perhaps not oftener than once a year), “if I haven’t a tie in the world, I have complete freedom to do as I like!” And if the said freedom palled upon him occasionally, nobody was the wiser, for Fergus Appleton did not wear his heart on his sleeve.

As for Tommy, there had been several Thomas Tuckers in genealogical line, and the father of Thomasina was already Thomas Tucker the third. Mr. and Mrs. Tucker, the parents of the first Thomas, must have been somewhat lacking in humor, and somewhat ignorant of the classics, for although they could not, perhaps, help being Tuckers, they needn’t have saddled their offspring with a Christian name which would suggest Mother Goose to every properly educated person. However, the first Thomas grew into a great man, healthy, wealthy, and wise, and his descendants could hardly do less than keep his name alive. Thomas the third was disappointed, not to say mortified, when his only child, born in his old age, turned out to be a girl, but he bravely did the best he could and named her Thomasina. Mrs. Tucker did not like the name, but she died before the baby was three days old. The baby hated it herself when she reached years of discretion, and when she found that she possessed a voice and had a possible career before her, she saw plainly that something more mellifluous must be substituted if programmes should ever be in question. Meantime she was Tommy to her friends, and the gay little name suited her to a T. The gay little rhyme suited her, too, for like the Tommy Tucker in Mother Goose, she had to “sing for her supper”; for her breakfast, and her dinner, and her tea also, for that matter, if any were to be eaten.

Her only relation, a disagreeable bachelor uncle, had given her a home during her orphaned girlhood, and her first idea on growing up was to get out of it. This she did promptly when she secured a place in a Brooklyn choir. The salary was modest, but it provided a room and at least one meal a day, not, of course, a Roman banquet, but something to satisfy a youthful appetite. It seemed to the intrepid possessor of a charming voice, an equally charming face, and a positive gift for playing accompaniments, that the other two meals, and a few clothes and sundries, might be forthcoming. As a matter of fact, they were, although the uncle said that Tommy would starve, and he almost hoped that she would, just to break the back of her obstinate independence.

II

Tommy had none too much to eat, and, according to her own æsthetic ambitions,

nothing at all to wear; but she was busy all day long and absurdly happy. Her income was uncertain, but that was amusing and thrilling rather than pitiful or tragic. She had two or three “steadies” among singers, who gave her engagements as accompanist at small drawing-room recitals or charitable entertainments. There was a stout prima donna whose arias for dramatic soprano kept her practicing until midnight, and a rich young lady amateur who needed a very friendly and careful accompaniment because she sang flat and always lost her breath before the end of a long phrase. The manner in which Tommy concealed these defects was thoroughly ingenious and sympathetic. When Miss Guggenheim paused for breath, Tommy filled the gap with instrumental arabesques; when she was about to flat, Tommy gave her the note suggestively. If she was too dreadfully below pitch, and had breath enough to hang on to the note so long that the audience (always composed of invited guests) writhed obviously, Tommy would sometimes drop a sheet of music on the floor and create a diversion, always apologizing profusely for her clumsiness. The third patron was a young baritone, who liked Miss Tucker’s appearance on the platform and had her whenever he didn’t sing Schubert’s “Erl König,” which Tommy couldn’t play. This was her most profitable engagement, but it continued alas! for only three months, for the baritone wanted to marry her, and she didn’t like him because he was bald and his neck was too fat. Also, she was afraid she would have to learn to play the “Erl König” properly.

All this time Tommy was longing to sing in public herself, and trying to save money enough to take more lessons by way of preparation.

When she lost the baritone, who was really peevish at being rejected after suiting his programmes to her capacities for a whole season, Tommy conceived a new idea. She influenced Jessie Macleod, who had a fine contralto, and two other girls with well-trained voices, to form a quartette.

“We can’t get anything to do separately; perhaps we can make a pittance together,” she said. “We’ll do good simple things; our voices blend well, and if we practice enough there’s no reason why we shouldn’t sing beautifully.”

“Singing beautifully is one thing and getting engagements is another,” sighed Jessie Macleod.

“As if I didn’t know that! We can’t hope to be superior to other quartettes, so we must be different—unusual, unique—I can’t think just how at the moment, but I will before we make our début.”

And she did, for Tommy was nothing if not fertile in ideas.

Every hour that the girls could spare in the month of October was given to rehearsal, till the four fresh young voices were like one. They had decided to give nothing but English songs, to sing entirely from memory, and to make a specialty of good words well spoken. All the selections but one or two were to be without accompaniment, and in these Tommy would sit at the piano surrounded by the other three in a little group.

Miss Guggenheim was to give them their first appearance, invite fifty or sixty people, and serve tea. She kindly offered to sing some solos herself, but Tommy, shuddering inwardly, said she thought it was better that the quartette should test its own strength unaided.

Miss Guggenheim couldn't sing, but she could dress, and she had an inspiration a week before the concert.

"What are you going to wear, girls?" she asked.

"Anything we have, is the general idea," said Tommy. "Mine is black."

"Mine's blue"—"White"—"Pink!" came from the other three.

"But must you wear those particular dresses? Can't you each compromise a little so as to look better together?"

"So hard to compromise when each of us has one dress hanging on one nail; one neck and sleeves filled up for afternoons and ripped out for evenings!"

"I should get four simple dresses just alike," said Miss Guggenheim, who had a dozen.

"What if they should hang in our closets unworn and unpaid for?" asked Jessie Macleod.

"We're sure to get at least one engagement some time or other. Nothing ventured, nothing have. We ought to earn enough to pay for the dresses, if we do nothing more,"—and Tommy's vote settled it.

Miss Guggenheim knew people, if she did sing flat, and her drawing-room was full on the occasion of the début. Carl Bothwick, a friend of Tommy's, was in a publishing office, and nobly presented programmes for the occasion. The quartette had not thought of naming itself, but Carl had grouped the songs under the heading, "The Singing Girls," and luckily they liked the idea.

At four o'clock the hum of conversation ceased at the sound of singing voices in the distance. A sort of processional effect had been Tommy's suggestion, and the

quartette formed in the dressing-room and sang its way to the audience.

> “Hark, hark, the lark at Heaven’s gate sings,
> And Phœbus ’gins to rise.”

The voices rang high and clear, coming nearer and nearer. All the words could be heard and understood. The hall portières divided, and the girls entered, all in soft gray crêpe, gardenias at the belt, little brimmed hats of black velvet with a single gardenia on the side, the flowers being the offering of the dramatic soprano, who loved Tommy. They were young, they were pretty, they sang delightfully in tune, and with quite bewitching effect. Several ladies fell in love with them at first sight, and hoped that they would sing for nothing a few times, “just to get themselves known.” They had done nothing else for two years, so that Tommy said they must be acquainted with the entire State of New York, though nothing ever came of it. It was a joyous surprise, then, when an old gentleman in the company (who was seen to wipe tears away when the girls sang “Darby and Joan”) engaged them to sing at his golden wedding the next night. That was the beginning of a season of modest prosperity. Tommy’s baritone had married his new accompanist (he seemed determined to have a piano-playing wife), and wishing to show Miss Tucker that his heart was not broken by her rejection, he gave a handsome party and engaged the quartette, paying for their services in real coin of the realm. Other appearances followed in and out of town, and Tommy paid for her gray dress, spent a goodly sum for an attack of tonsillitis, the result of overwork, and still saved two hundred dollars. The season was over. She was fagged, but not disheartened. Who is at twenty-two? But it was late April, and drawing-room entertainments were no more. The two hundred dollars when augmented by the church salary would barely take her through till October.

“It is very annoying,” thought Tommy, “when you have to eat, drink, sleep, and dress twelve months in the year, that the income by which you do these things should cease abruptly for four months. Still, furriers can’t sell furs in hot weather, and summer boarders can’t board in winter, so I suppose other people have to make enough money in eight months to spend in twelve.”

> “‘Hark, hark, the lark at Heaven’s gate sings,
> And Phœbus ’gins to rise!’”

she caroled, splashing about in her morning tub as she finished making these reflections, the tub being an excellent place for trills and scales.

Proceeding from tub to her sitting-room to make things ready for toilet and breakfast, her mind ran on her little problems.

“I want to learn more, see more, hear more,” she thought. “I have one of those nasty, unserviceable, betwixt-and-between talents: voice not high enough for ‘Robert, toi que j’aime,’ nor low enough for ‘Ständchen’; not flexible enough for ‘Caro Nome,’ nor big enough for ‘Ocean, Thou Mighty Monster’; poor French accent, worse German; awfully good English, but that doesn’t count. Can sing old ballads, folk-songs, and nice, forgotten things that make dear old gentlemen and ladies cry—but not pay. If I were billed at all, it ought to be

“First Appearance in Public
of
Behind-the-Times Tommy”

This appellation so tickled her fancy that she nearly upset the coffee-pot, and she continued to laugh at her own wit until a fat letter was pushed under her door from the hall outside. She picked it up. It had an English postmark.

“Helena Markham!” she cried, joyously.

Dear Tommy: [the letter read]

> Don’t you want to come over to London for the season? You never make any money at home from June to October, and if by chance you have a penny in the bank (I don’t know why I say “if” when none of us ever had such a thing!) I think I can put enough in your way to pay part of your expenses. I am really beginning to get on!—three engagements in the provincial towns all arranged. My accompanist plays lots better than you do, but I don’t sing half so well with him as I used to with you. You somehow infuse the spirit into me that I lack. I incline to be lumpy and heavy. They may not notice it in the provinces, for I dare say they are lumpy and heavy there, too. However, though I shall have to have somebody well known over here for concerts of any great pretensions, I could work you into smaller ones, and coach with you, too, since I must have somebody. And you are so good-looking, Tommy dear, and have such a winning profile! I am plainer than ever, but no plainer than Madame Titiens, so the papers say. I never saw or heard her, of course, but the critics say I have the same large, “massive” style of voice and person. My present accompanist would take first prize for ugliness in any competition; he is more like a syndicate of plainness than one single exemplification of it! I must have a noble nature to think more of my audiences than of myself, but I should like to give them something to please their eyes—I flatter myself I can take care of their ears!

Oh, do come, Tommy! Say you will!

HELENA.

Tommy pirouetted about the room like an intoxicated bird, waving the letter, and trilling and running joyful chromatic scales, for the most part badly done.

“Will I go to London?” she warbled in a sort of improvised recitative. “Will I take two or two and a half lessons of Georg Henschel? Will I grace platforms in the English provinces? Will I take my two hundred dollars out of the bank and risk it royally? Perhaps the bystanders will glance in at my windows and observe me giving the landlady notice, and packing my trunk, both of which delightful tasks I shall be engaged in before the hour strikes.”

III

Fergus Appleton thought he saw “the singing girl” of his voyage from New York one May day in Wells, where he went to study the cathedral. He noticed a hansom with a pink-clad figure in the opening, looking like a rosebud of a new and odd sort on wheels. At least, it looked like a rosebud at the moment the doors rolled back like the leaves of a calyx, and the flower issued, triumphant and beautiful. She was greeted by a tall, stout young lady, who climbed into the hansom, and the two settled themselves quickly and drove off.

Appleton’s hansom followed on its own course, which chanced to be in the same direction, and he saw the slim and the stout disappear up a hilly street, at the top of which was a famous old house. He walked that way in the afternoon, having nothing better to do, but could observe no dwelling at which the two ladies might be staying. There was a pretty cottage with a long, graveled pathway leading to it, and a little sign on the locked gate reading: “Spring Cleaning. Please do not knock or ring.” Farther along was a more pretentious house, so attractive that he was sorry he had never noticed it before, for the sign “Apartments to Let” was in one of the front windows. He heard a piano in the rear somewhere, but on reaching the front door another sign confronted him: “The parlor maid is slightly deaf. If doorbell is not answered at once, please step inside and ring the dinner bell on the hall table.”

This somehow required more courage than Appleton possessed, though he determined to look at the rooms on his next visit, so he stole down the path and went about his business, wondering why in the world he had done such a besotted thing as to take a walk among the furnished lodgings of the cathedral town of Wells.

The summer waxed. He had nearly finished his book, and feeling the need of some peaceful retreat where he could do the last chapters and work up his sketches, he took the advice of an English friend and went down to Devonshire, intending to go from place to place until he found a hotel and surroundings to his mind.

The very first one pleased his exacting taste, and he felt that the Bexley Sands Inn would be the very spot in which to write; comfortable within, a trifle too large, perhaps, and at week-ends too full of people, but clean, well-kept, and sunny.

It was a Friday evening, and the number of guests who arrived on the last train from Torquay was rather disturbing. The dining-room service was not interfered with, but Appleton made up his mind to smoke his pipe in his own sitting-room and go down to the lounge later to read the papers, when the crowd might have dispersed. At nine o'clock, accordingly, he descended, and was preparing to settle himself with the last "Spectator" when the young lady in the office observed: "There's a very good concert going on in the drawing-room, sir, if you enjoy music. No admittance, you know; just a plate at the door as you leave—quite optional."

Appleton bowed his thanks, filled his pipe, and taking up his newspaper with a sensation of comfortable idleness, was beginning an article on the situation in the Balkans, when a voice floated out from the distant drawing-room, down the long corridor, through the writing-room into the lounge. It was not a little voice nor a big voice, it seemed to have no extraordinarily high notes and no low ones, it did not arrest attention by the agility of its use; but it was as fresh and young as a bird's and sweeter than honey in the comb. It began by caroling "My Love's an Arbutus," went on to "The Little Red Lark" and "The Low-Backed Car," so that Appleton, his head thrown back in the easy-chair, the smoke wreaths from his pipe circling in the air, the Balkans forgotten, decided that the singer was Irish.

"A pretty voice, sir," remarked the goddess of the hotel office. "I'm sorry so many of our guests are playing bowls this evening, and there's a bridge party of three tables in our first-floor private sitting-room, or the young lady would have had an audience. She seems a nice little thing, quite a stranger, with no experience."

If the singer had even a small group of hearers, they were apparently delighted with "The Low-Backed Car," for with only a second's pause she gave "The Minstrel Boy." A certain individual quality of tone and spirit managed to bridge

the distance between the drawing-room and lounge; or perhaps it was the piano accompaniment, so beautifully played that one could almost imagine it a harp; or was it that the words were so familiar to Appleton that every syllable was understood, so that the passion and fire of the old song suffered no loss?

"The minstrel fell, but the foeman's chain
Could not bring that proud soul under!
The harp he loved ne'er spoke again,
For he tore its chords asunder."

"It's a pity her programme is so old-fashioned," said the young lady of the office, passing his chair to give an order to the page. "It's true only the elderly people went in, but our week-enders are very up-to-date in everything. There's a lot of Londoners here, and those from Torquay are frightfully musical. If they don't get Debewssy, it seems they think nothing of the programme."

"Well, I confess that Debussy seems a trifle alien to this time and place," said Appleton, "and these old ballads suit my taste much better. I think I'll take a nearer view."

He shoved his pipe into its case and strolled down the corridor, pausing behind the heavy velvet portières that shut off the drawing-room. There was no buzz of conversation going on, because there was not a sufficient number of persons to buzz. A very quiet, stodgy audience it was, with no friendly grouping; just a few old gentlemen here and a few old ladies there, sometimes with their prematurely aged and chastened paid companions by their sides. There were some girls of fifteen or sixteen, too, scattered about, a few of them accompanied by prim governesses.

Appleton heard the entrance of some one from the anteroom beyond the grand piano, then a few chords, struck by hands that loved the ivory keys and evoked a reciprocal tenderness every time they touched them; then:

"Near Woodstock Town in Oxfordshire
As I walked forth to take the air,
To view the fields and meadows round,
Methought I heard a mournful sound."

So the chronicle ran on until the crisis came:

"The lady round the meadow ran,
And gathered flowers as they sprang.
Of every sort she there did pull

Until she got her apron full.”

The history of the distracted lady’s unhappy passion persevered:

“The green ground served her as a bed,
The flowers a pillow for her head.
She laid her down and nothing spoke.
Alas! for love her heart was broke.”

Appleton was at first too enchanted with the mischievous yet sympathetic rendition of this tragedy to do anything but listen. The voice, the speech, were so full of color and personality he forgot for the moment that there would be a face behind them; but there was an irresistible something in the line, “Until she got her apron full,” that forced him to peep behind the curtain just in time to catch the singer’s smile.

As this is not a story of plot, suspense, or mystery, there is no earthly use in denying that the lady in question was Miss Thomasina Tucker, nor any sense in affirming that her appearance in Fergus Appleton’s hotel was in the nature of a dramatic coincidence, since Americans crossing the Atlantic on the same steamer are continually meeting in the British Isles and on the Continent.

Appleton was pleased to see the girl again because he had always liked her face, and he was delighted to find that her voice not only harmonized with it, but increased its charm a hundredfold. Miss Tommy had several rather uncommon qualities in her equipment. One was that when she sang a high note she did it without exposing any of the avenues which led to her singing apparatus. She achieved her effects without pain to herself or to the observer, just flinging them off as gayly and irresponsibly as a bird on a bough, without showing any *modus operandi*. She had tenderness also, and fire, and a sense of humor which, while she never essayed a “comic” song, served her in good stead in certain old ballads with an irresistibly quaint twist in them. She made it perfectly clear that she was sorry for the poor lady who was running around the meadow preparing her flowery bier, but the conviction crept over you that she was secretly amused at the same time. Appleton heard the smile in her voice before he pulled aside the curtain and saw its counterpart on her face; heard and responded, for when Tommy tossed a smile at you, you caught it gratefully and tossed it back in the hope of getting a second and a third.

Another arrow in Tommy’s modest quiver was the establishment of an instantaneous intimacy between herself and her audience. The singing of her songs was precisely like the narration of so many stories, told so simply and

directly that the most hardened critic would have his sting removed without being aware of it. He would know that Tommy hadn't a remarkable voice, but he would forget to mention it because space was limited. Sometimes he would say that she was an interpreter rather than a singer, and Tommy, for her part, was glad to be called anything, and grateful when she wasn't brutally arraigned for the microscopic size of her talent.

It was Tommy's captivating friendliness and the quality of her smile that "did" for the shyest and stiffest of men, for by the time she had finished her programme the thunderbolt, the classic, the eternal thunderbolt, had fallen, and Fergus Appleton was in love. Tommy began her unconscious depredations with "Near Woodstock Town" and "Phillida Flouts Me," added fuel to the flames with "My Heart's in the Highlands" and "Charlie Is My Darling," and reduced his heart to ashes with "Allan Water" and "Has Sorrow Thy Young Days Shaded?" The smile began it, but it was tears that worked the final miracle, though moisture very rarely has this effect on fires of any sort.

Tommy was tired and a bit disheartened; Appleton, the only responsive person in the audience, was seated in a far corner of the room, completely hidden behind a lady of formidable width and thickness, so the singer could not be expected to feel the tidal waves of appreciation he was sending toward her, although they ran so high at one moment that he could have risen to his feet and begged her to elope with him. The rest of her hearers sat heavily, stodgily in their seats without moving a muscle, mental, emotional, or physical. They had no private sitting-rooms, and they might as well be where they were as anywhere else; that was the idea they conveyed in every feature of their expressionless faces. An old gentleman in the front row left the room during the last song on the programme, and Appleton was beset by, and resisted, a vulgar temptation to put out his foot and trip him up in the doorway. When Tommy sang:

"Has hope, like the bird in the story,
That flitted from tree to tree
With the talisman's glitt'ring glory,
Has hope been that bird to thee?
On branch after branch alighting,
The gem did she still display,
And when nearest and most inviting,
Then waft the fair gem away."

"Yes, yes, a thousand times yes," answered Fergus Appleton's heart, for the first time in his life conscious of loneliness, lack of purpose, lack of anchorage, lack

of responsibilities, lack of everything he had never wanted before, but wanted desperately all at once, and quite independent of logic.

He slipped out of the door and let the scattered units in the audience assemble, pass him, and drift down the corridor toward the office and lounge. To his astonishment and anger they dropped shillings on the plate, and the young people sixpences and, great Heavens! even pennies; one half-crown, the tacit apology of the old gentleman who had left early, was the only respectable offering. Appleton took out a sovereign, and then was afraid to put it in the collection for fear of exciting the singer's curiosity, so he rummaged his pockets for half-crowns and two-shilling pieces. Finding only two or three, he changed his mind and put back the gold-piece just in time to avoid the eye of the page, who came to take the offering back to Miss Tucker. Appleton twisted his mustache nervously, and walked slowly toward the anteroom with no definite idea in mind, save perhaps that she might issue from her retreat and recognize him as she passed. (As a matter of fact she had never once noticed him on the steamer, but the poor wretch was unconscious of that misfortune!) The page came out, putting something in his pocket, and left the door half open behind him. Appleton wheeled swiftly, feeling like a spy, but not until he had seen Miss Thomasina Tucker take a large copper coin from the plate, fling it across the room, bury the plate of silver upside down in a sofa cushion, and precipitate herself upon it with a little quivering wail of shame, or disappointment, or rage, he could hardly determine which.

Appleton followed the unfeeling, unmusical, penurious old ladies and gentlemen back into the lounge, glaring at them as belligerently and offensively as a gentleman could and maintain his self-respect. Then he went into the waiting-room and embarked upon a positive orgy of letter-writing. Looking up from the last of his pile a half-hour later, he observed the young lady who was unconsciously preventing a proper flow of epistolary inspiration on his part, seated at a desk in the opposite corner. A pen was in her right hand, and in her left she held a tiny embroidered handkerchief, rather creased. Sometimes she bit the corner of it, sometimes she leaned her cheek upon it, sometimes she tapped the blotting-pad with the pen-handle, very much as if she had no particular interest in what she was doing, or else she was very doubtful about the wisdom of it.

Presently she took some pennies from a small purse, and rising, took her letters with her with the evident intention of posting them. Appleton rose too, lifting his pile of correspondence, and followed close at her heels. She went to the office,

laid down threepence, with her letters, turned, saw Fergus Appleton with the physical eye, but looked directly through him as if he were a man of glass and poor quality of glass at that, and sauntered upstairs as if she were greatly bored with life.

However, the top letter of her three was addressed very plainly to the “Bishop of Bath and Wells,” and Fergus Appleton had known the bishop, and the bishop’s wife, for several years. Accordingly, the post-bag that night held two letters addressed to the Bishop’s Palace, and there was every prospect of an immediate answer to one of them.

IV

As for the country roundabout the Bexley Sands Inn, it is one of the loveliest in Devonshire. It does not waste a moment, but, realizing the brevity of week-end visits and the anxiety of tourists to see the greatest amount of scenery in the shortest space, it begins its duty at the very door of the inn and goes straight on from one stretch of loveliness to another.

If you have been there, you remember that if you turn to the right and go over the stone bridge that crosses the sleepy river, you are in the very heart of beauty. You pick your way daintily along the edge of the road, for it is carpeted so thickly with sea-pinks and yellow and crimson crow's-foot that you scarcely know where to step. Sea-poppies there are, too, groves of them, growing in the sandy stretches that lie close to and border the wide, shingly beach. In summer the long, low, narrow stone bridge crosses no water, but just here is an acre or two of tall green rushes. You walk down the bank a few steps and sit under the shadow of a wall. The green garden of rushes stretches in front of you, with a still, shallow pool between you and it, a pool floating with blossoming water-weeds. On the edge of the rushes grow tall yellow irises in great profusion; the cuckoo's note sounds in the distance; the sun, the warmth, the intoxication of color, make you drowsy, and you lean back among the green things, close your eyes, and then begin listening to the wonderful music of the rushes. A million million reeds stirred by the breeze bend to and fro, making a faint silken sound like that of a summer wave lapping the shore, but far more ethereal.

Thomasina Tucker went down the road, laden with books, soon after breakfast Monday morning. Appleton waited until after the post came in, and having received much-desired letters and observed with joy the week-enders setting forth, hither and thither on their return journeys, followed what he supposed to be Miss Tucker's route; at least, it was her route on Saturday and Sunday, and he could not suppose her to harbor caprice or any other feminine weakness.

Yes, there she was, in the very loveliest nook, the stone wall at her back, and in front nice sandy levels for books and papers and writing-pad.

"Miss Tucker, may I invade your solitude for a moment? Our mutual friend, the Bishop of Bath and Wells, has written asking me to look you up as a fellow countryman and see if I can be of any service to you so far away from home."

Tommy looked up, observed a good-looking American holding a letter in one hand and lifting a hat with the other, and bade him welcome.

“How kind of the bishop! But he is always doing kind things; his wife, too. I have seen much of them since I came to England.”

“My name is Appleton, Fergus Appleton, at your service.”

“Won’t you take a stone, or make yourself a hollow in the sand?” asked Tommy hospitably. “I came out here to read and study, and get rid of the week-enders. Isn’t Bexley Sands a lovely spot, and do you ever get tired of the bacon and the kippered herring, and the fruit tarts with Devonshire cream?”

“I can’t bear to begin an acquaintance with a lady by differing on such vital points, but I do get tired of these Bexley delicacies.”

“Perhaps you have been here too long—or have you just come this morning?”

Appleton swallowed his disappointment and hurt vanity, and remarked: “No, I came on Friday.” (He laid some emphasis on Friday.)

“The evening train is so incorrigibly slow! I only reached the hotel at ten o’clock when I arrived on Thursday night.” Miss Tucker shot a rapid glance at the young man as she made this remark.

“I came by the morning express and arrived here at three on Friday,” said Appleton.

Miss Tucker, with a slight display of perhaps legitimate temper, turned suddenly upon him. “There! I have been trying for two minutes to find out when you came, and now I know you were at my beastly concert on Friday evening!”

“I certainly was, and very grateful I am, too.”

“I suppose all through my life people will be turning up who were in that room!” said Miss Tucker ungraciously. “I must tell somebody what I feel about that concert! I should prefer some one who wasn’t a stranger, but you are a great deal better than nobody. Do you mind?”

Appleton laughed like a boy, and flung his hat a little distance into a patch of sea-pinks.

“Not a bit. Use me, or abuse me, as you like, so long as you don’t send me away, for this was my favorite spot before you chose it for yours.”

“I live in New York, and I came abroad early in the summer,” began Tommy.

“I know that already!” interrupted Appleton.

“Oh, I suppose the bishop told you.”

“No, I came with you; that is, I was your fellow passenger.”

“Did you? Why, I never saw you on the boat.”

“My charms are not so dazzling that I expect them to be noted and remembered,” laughed Appleton.

“It is true I was very tired, and excited, and full of anxieties,” said Tommy meekly.

“Don’t apologize! If you tried for an hour, you couldn’t guess just why I noticed and remembered *you*!”

“I conclude then it was not for *my* dazzling charms,” Tommy answered saucily.

“It was because you wore the only flower I ever notice, one that is associated with my earliest childhood. I never knew a woman to wear a bunch of mignonette before.”

“Some one sent it to me, I remember, and it had some hideous scarlet pinks in the middle. I put the pinks in my room and pinned on the mignonette because it matched my dress. I am very fond of green.”

“My mother loved mignonette. We always had beds of it in our garden and pots of it growing in the house in winter. I can smell it whenever I close my eyes.”

Tommy glanced at him. She felt something in his voice that she liked, something that attracted her and wakened an instantaneous response.

“But go on,” he said. “I only know as yet that you sailed from New York in the early summer, as I did.”

“Well, I went to London to join a great friend, a singer, Helena Markham. Have you heard of her?”

“No; is she an American?”

“Yes, a Western girl, from Montana, with oh! such a magnificent voice and such a big talent!” (The outward sweep of Tommy’s hands took in the universe.) “We’ve had some heavenly weeks together. I play accompaniments, and—”

“I know you do!”

“I forgot for the moment how much too much you know! I went with her to Birmingham, and Manchester, and Leeds, and Liverpool. I wasn’t really grand enough for her, but the audiences didn’t notice me, Helena was so superb. In between I took some lessons of Henschel. He told me I hadn’t much voice, but

very nice brains. I am always called ‘intelligent,’ and no one can imagine how I hate the word!”

“It is offensive, but not so bad as some others. I, for example, have been called a ‘conscientious writer’!”

“Oh, are you a writer?”

“Of a sort, yes. But, as you were saying—”

“As I was saying, everything was going so beautifully until ten days ago, when Helena’s people cabled her to come home. Her mother is seriously ill and cannot live more than a few months. She went at once, but I couldn’t go with her—not very well, in midsummer—and so here I am, all alone, high and dry.”

She leaned her chin in the cup of her hand and, looking absent-mindedly at the shimmering rushes, fell into a spell of silence that took no account of Appleton.

To tell the truth, he didn’t mind looking at her unobserved for a moment or two. He had almost complete control of his senses, and he didn’t believe she could be as pretty as he thought she was. There was no reason to think that she was better to look at than an out-and-out beauty. Her nose wasn’t Greek. It was just a trifle faulty, but it was piquant and full of mischief. There was nothing to be said against her mouth or her eyelashes, which were beyond criticism, and he particularly liked the way her dark-brown hair grew round her temples and her ears—but the quality in her face that appealed most to Appleton was a soft and touching youthfulness.

Suddenly she remembered herself, and began again:

“Miss Markham and I had twice gone to large seaside hotels with great success, but, of course, she had a manager and a reputation. I thought I would try the same thing alone in some very quiet retreat, and see if it would do. Oh! wasn’t it funny!” (Here she broke into a perfectly childlike fit of laughter.) “It was such a well-behaved, solemn little audience, that never gave me an inkling of its liking or its loathing.”

“Oh, yes, it did!” remonstrated Appleton. “They loved your Scotch songs.”

“Silently!” cried Tommy. “I had dozens and dozens of other things upstairs to sing to them, but I thought I was suiting my programme to the place and the people. I looked at them during luncheon and made my selections.”

“You are flattering the week-enders.”

“I believe you are musical,” she ventured, looking up at him as she played with a tuft of sea-pinks.

“I am passionately fond of singing, so I seldom go to concerts,” he answered, somewhat enigmatically. “Your programme was an enchanting one to me.”

“It was good of its kind, if the audience would have helped me,”—and Tommy’s lip trembled a little; “but perhaps I could have borne that, if it hadn’t been for the —plate.”

“Not a pleasant custom, and a new one to me,” said Appleton.

“And to me!” (Here she made a little grimace of disgust.) “I knew beforehand I had to face the plate—but the contents! Where did you sit?”

“I was forced to stay a trifle in the background, I entered so late. It was your ‘Minstrel Boy’ that dragged me out of my armchair in the lounge.”

“Then perhaps you saw the plate? I know by your face that you did! You saw the sixpences, which I shall never forget, and the pennies, which I will never forgive! I thirst for the blood of those who put in pennies!”

“They would all have been sitting in boiling oil since Friday if I had had my way,” responded Appleton.

Tommy laughed delightedly. “I know now who put in the sovereign! I knew every face in that audience—that wasn’t difficult in so small a one—and I tried and tried to fix the sovereign on any one of them, and couldn’t. At last I determined that it was the old gentleman who went out in the middle of ‘Allan Water,’ feeling that he would rather pay anything than stay any longer. Confess! it *was* you!”

Appleton felt very sheepish as he met Tommy’s dancing eyes and heightened color.

“I couldn’t bear to let you see those pennies,” he stammered, “but I couldn’t get them out before the page came to take the plate.”

“Perhaps you were ‘pound foolish,’ and the others were ‘penny wise,’ but it was awfully nice of you. If I can pay my bill here without spending that sovereign, I believe I’ll keep it for a lucky piece. I shall be very rich by Saturday night, anyway.”

“A legacy due?”

“Goodness, no! I haven’t a relation in the world except one, who disapproves of

me; not so much as I disapprove of him, however. No, Albert Spalding and Donald Tovey have engaged me for a concert in Torquay."

"I have some business in Torquay which will keep me there for a few days on my way back to Wells," said Appleton nonchalantly. (The bishop's letter had been a pure and undefiled source of information on all points.)

"Why, how funny! I hope you'll be there on Saturday. There'll be no plate! Tickets two and six to seven and six, but you shall be my guest, my sovereign guest. I am going to Wells myself to stay till—till I make up my mind about a few things."

"America next?" inquired Appleton, keeping his voice as colorless as possible.

"I don't know. Helena made me resign my church position in Brooklyn, and for the moment my 'career' is undecided."

She laughed, but her eyes denied the mirth that her lips affirmed, and Appleton had such a sudden, illogical desire to meddle with her career, to help or hinder it, to have a hand in it at any rate, that he could hardly hold his tongue.

"The Torquay concert will be charming, I hope. You know what Spalding's violin-playing is, and Donald Tovey is a young genius at piano-playing and composing. He is going to accompany me in some of his own songs, and he wants me to sing a group of American ones—Macdowell, Chadwick, Nevin, Mrs. Beach, and Margaret Lang."

"I hope you'll accompany yourself in some of your own ballads!"

"No, the occasion is too grand; unless they should happen to like me very much. Then I could play for myself, and sing 'Allan Water,' or 'Believe Me,' or 'Early One Morning,' or 'Barbara Allen.'"

(Appleton wondered if a claque of sizable, trustworthy boys could be secured in Torquay, and under his intelligent and inspired leadership carry Miss Thomasina Tucker like a cork on the wave of success.)

"Wouldn't it be lunch-time?" asked Miss Tucker, after a slight pause.

"It is always time for something when I'm particularly enjoying myself," grumbled Appleton, looking at his watch. "It's not quite one o'clock. Must we go in?"

"Oh, yes; we've ten minutes' walk,"—and Tommy scrambled up and began to brush sand from her skirts.

“Couldn’t I sit at your table—under the chaperonage of the Bishop of Bath and Wells?” And Appleton got on his feet and collected Tommy’s books.

The girl’s laugh was full-hearted this time. “Certainly not,” she said. “What does Bexley Sands know of the bishop and his interest in us? But if you can find the drawing-room utterly deserted at any time, I’ll sing for you.”

“How about a tea-basket and a walk to Gray Rocks at four o’clock?” asked Appleton as they strolled toward the hotel.

“Charming! And I love singing out of doors without accompaniment. I’m determined to earn that sovereign in course of time! Are you from New England?”

“Yes; and you?”

“Oh, I’m from New York. I was born in a row of brown-stone fronts, in a numbered street, twenty-five or thirty houses to a block, all exactly alike. I wonder how I’ve outlived my start. And you?”

“In the country, bless it,—in the eastern part of Massachusetts. We had a garden and my mother and I lived in it during all the months of my life that matter. That’s where the mignonette grew.”

“‘And He planted a garden eastward in Eden,’” quoted Tommy, half to herself.

“It’s the only Eden I ever knew! Do you like it over here, Miss Tucker, or are you homesick now that your friend is in America?”

“Oh, I’m never homesick; for the reason that I have never had any home since I was ten years old, when I was left an orphan. I haven’t any deep roots in New York; it’s like the ocean, too big to love. I respect and admire the ocean, but I love a little river. You know the made-over aphorism: ‘The home is where the hat is’? For ‘hat’ read ‘trunk,’ and you have my case, precisely.”

“That’s because you are absurdly, riotously young! It won’t suit you forever.”

“Does anything suit one forever?” asked Tommy frivolously, not cynically, but making Appleton a trifle uncomfortable nevertheless. “Anything except singing, I mean? Perhaps you feel the same way about writing? You haven’t told me anything about your work, and I’ve confided my past history, present prospects, and future aspirations to you!”

“There’s not so much to say. It is good work, and it is growing better. I studied architecture at the Beaux-Arts. I do art-criticism, and I write about buildings

chiefly. That would seem rather dull to a warbler like you."

"Not a bit. Doesn't somebody say that architecture is frozen music?"

"I don't get as immediate response to my work as you do to yours."

"No, but you never had sixpences and pennies put into your plate! Now give me my books, please. I'll go in at the upper gate alone, and run upstairs to my room. You enter by the lower one and go through the lounge, where the guests chiefly congregate waiting for the opening of the dining-room. Au revoir!"

When Tommy opened her bedroom door she elevated her pretty, impertinent little nose and sniffed the air. It was laden with a delicate perfume that came from a huge bunch of mignonette on the table. It was long-stemmed, fresh, and moist, loosely bound together, and every one of its tiny brown blossoms was sending out fragrance into the room. It did not need Fergus Appleton's card to identify the giver, but there it was.

"What a nice, kind, understanding person he is! And how cheerful it makes life to have somebody from your own country taking an interest in you, and liking your singing, and hating those beastly pennies!" And Tommy, quickly merging artist in woman, slipped on a coatee of dull-green crêpe over her old black taffeta, and taking down her hat with the garland of mignonette from the shelf in her closet, tucked some of the green sprays in her belt, and went down to luncheon. She didn't know where Fergus Appleton's table was, but she would make her seat face his. Then she could smile thanks at him over the mulligatawny soup, or the filet of sole, or the boiled mutton, or the apple tart. Even the Bishop of Bath and Wells couldn't object to that!

V

Their friendship grew perceptibly during the next two days, though constantly under the espionage of the permanent guests of the Bexley Sands Inn, but on Wednesday night Miss Tucker left for Torquay, according to schedule. Fergus Appleton remained behind, partly to make up arrears in his literary work, and partly as a sop to decency and common sense. He did not deem it either proper or dignified to escort the young lady on her journey (particularly as he had not been asked to do so), so he pined in solitary confinement at Bexley until Saturday morning, when he followed her to the scene of her labors.

After due reflection he gave up the idea of the claque, and rested Tommy's case on the knees of the gods, where it transpired that it was much safer, for Torquay liked Tommy, and the concert went off with enormous éclat. From the moment

that Miss Thomasina Tucker appeared on the platform the audience looked pleased. She wore a quaint dress of white flounced chiffon, with a girdle of green, and a broad white hat with her old mignonette garland made into two little nosegays perched on either side of the transparent brim. She could not wear the mignonette that Appleton had sent to her dressing-room, because she would have been obscured by the size of the offering, but she carried as much of it as her strength permitted, and laid the fragrant bouquet on the piano as she passed it. (A poem had come with it, but Tommy did not dare read it until the ordeal was over, for no one had ever written her a poem before. It had three long verses, and was signed “F.A.”—that was all she had time to note.)

A long-haired gentleman sitting beside Appleton remarked to his neighbor: “The girl looks like a flower; it’s a pity she has such a heathenish name! Why didn’t they call her Hope, or Flora, or Egeria, or Cecilia?”

When the audience found that Miss Tucker’s singing did not belie her charming appearance, they cast discretion to the winds and loved her. Appleton himself marveled at the beauty of her performance as it budded and bloomed under the inspiration of her fellow artists and the favor of the audience, and the more he admired the more depressed he became.

“She may be on the threshold of a modest ‘career,’ of a sort, after all,” he thought, “and she will never give it up for me. Would she be willing to combine me with the career, and how would it work? I shouldn’t be churl enough to mind her singing now and then, but it seems to me I couldn’t stand ‘tours.’ Besides, hers is such a childlike, winsome, fragrant little gift it ought not to be exploited like a great, booming talent!”

The audience went wild over Donald Tovey’s songs. He played, and Tommy sang them from memory, and it seemed as if they had been written then and there, struck off at white heat; as if the composer happened to be at the piano, and the singer chanced with his help to be interpreting those particular verses for that particular moment.

His setting of “Jock o’Hazeldean” proved irresistible:

“They sought her baith by bower an ha’;
The ladie was not seen.”

And then with a swirl and a torrent of sound, a clangor of sword and a clatter of hoofs:

“She’s o’er the Border and awa’

Wi’ Jock o’ Hazeldean.”

Appleton didn’t see any valid reason why Tovey should kiss Tommy’s hand in responding to the third recall, but supposed it must be a composer’s privilege, and wished that he were one.

Then the crowd made its way into the brilliant Torquay sunshine, and Appleton lingered in the streets until the time came for the tea-party arranged for the artists at the hotel.

It was a gay little gathering, assisted by a charming lady of the town, who always knew the celebrated people who flock there in all seasons. Spalding and Tovey were the lions, but Miss Thomasina Tucker did not lack for compliments. Her cheeks glowed and her eyes sparkled under the white tulle brim of her hat. Her neck looked deliciously white and young, rising from its transparent chiffons, and her bunch of mignonette gave a note of delicate distinction. The long-haired gentleman was present, and turned out to be a local poet. He told Miss Tucker that she ought never to wear or to carry another flower. “Not, at all events, till you pass thirty!” he said. “You belong together—you, your songs, and the mignonette!”—at which she flung a shy upward glance at Appleton, saying: “It is this American friend who has really established the connection, though I have always worn green and white and always loved the flower.”

“You sent me some verses, Mr. Appleton,” she said, as the poet moved away. “I have them safe” (and she touched her bodice), “but I haven’t had a quiet moment to read them.”

“Just a little tribute,” Appleton answered carelessly. “Are you leaving? If so, I’ll get your flowers into a cab and drive you on.”

“No. I am going, quite unexpectedly, to Exeter to-night. Let us sit down in this corner a moment and I’ll tell you. Mr. Tovey has asked me to substitute for a singer who is ill. The performance is on Monday and I chance to know the cantata. I shall not be paid, but it will be a fine audience and it may lead to something; after all, it’s not out of my way in going to Wells.”

“Aren’t you overtired to travel any more to-night?”

“No, I am treading air! I have no sense of being in the body at all. Mrs. Cholmondeley, that dark-haired lady you were talking with a moment ago, lives in Exeter and will take me to her house. And how nice that I don’t have to say good-bye, for you still mean to go to Wells?”

“Oh, yes! I haven’t nearly finished with the cathedral—I shall be there before

you. Can I look up lodgings or do anything for you?”

“Oh, no, thank you. I shall go to the old place where Miss Markham and I lived before. The bishop and Mrs. Kennion sent us there because there is a piano, and the old ladies, being deaf, don’t mind musical lodgers. Didn’t the concert go off beautifully! Such artists, those two men; so easy to do one’s best in such company.”

“It was a triumph! Doesn’t it completely efface the memory of the plate and the pennies?”

“Yes,” Tommy answered. “I bear no ill-will to any living creature. The only flaw is my horrid name. Can’t you think of another for me? I’ve just had an anonymous note. Hear it!” (taking it from her glove):

> DEAR MADAM:
>
> The name of Thomasina Tucker is one of those bizarre Americanisms that pain us so frequently in England. I fancy you must have assumed it for public use, and if so, I beg you will change it now, before you become too famous. The grotesque name of Thomasina Tucker belittles your exquisite art.
>
> Very truly yours,
> A WELL WISHER.

“What do you think of that?”

Appleton laughed heartily and scanned the note. “It is from some doddering old woman,” he said. “The name given you by your sponsors in baptism to be condemned as a ‘bizarre Americanism’!”

“I cannot think why the loyalty of my dear mother and father to Tucker, and to Thomas, should have made them saddle me with such a handicap! They might have known I was going to sing, for I bawled incessantly from birth to the age of twelve months. I shall have to change my name, and you must help me to choose. Au revoir!”—and she darted away with a handshake and a friendly backward glance from the door.

“Can I think of another name for her?” apostrophized Appleton to himself. “Can feminine unconsciousness and cruelty go farther than that? Another name for her shrieks from the very housetops, and I agree with ‘Well Wisher’ that she ought to take it before she becomes too famous; before it would be necessary, for instance, to describe her as Madame Tucker-Appleton!”

VI

These are the verses:

To Miss Tommy Tucker

(with a bunch of mignonette)

A garden and a yellow wedge
    Of sunshine slipping through,
And there, beside a bit of hedge,
    Forget-me-nots so blue,
Bright four-o’clocks and spicy pinks,
    And sweet, old-fashioned roses,
With daffodils and crocuses,
    And other fragrant posies,
And in a corner, ’neath the shade
By flowering apple branches made,
        Grew mignonette.

I do not know, I cannot say,
    Why, when I hear you sing,
Those by-gone days come back to me,
    And in their long train bring
To mind that dear old garden, with
    Its hovering honey-bees,
And liquid-throated songsters on
    The blossom-laden trees;
Nor why a fragrance, fresh and rare,
Should on a sudden fill the air,
        Of mignonette!

Your mem’ry seems a garden fair
    Of old-time flowers of song.
There Annie Laurie lives and loves,
    And Mary Morison,
And Black-eyed Susan, Alice Grey,
    Phillida, with her frown—
And Barbara Allen, false and fair,

From famous Scarlet Town.
What marvel such a garland rare
Should breathe sweet odors on the air,
Like mignonette?

F. A.

VII

There was never such a summer of enchanting weather as that particular summer in Wells. The whole population of Somersetshire, save those who had crops requiring rain, were in a heaven of delight from morning till night. Miss Tommy Tucker was very busy with some girl pupils, and as accompanist for oratorio practice; but there were blissful hours when she “studied” the cathedral with Fergus Appleton, watching him sketch the stately Central Tower, or the Lady Chapel, or the Chain Gate. There were afternoon walks to Tor Hill, winding up almost daily with tea at the palace, for the bishop and his wife were miracles of hospitality to the two Americans.

Fergus Appleton had declared the state of his mind and heart to Mrs. Kennion a few days after his arrival, though after his confidence had been received she said that it was quite unnecessary, as she had guessed the entire situation the moment she saw them together.

“If you do, it is more than Miss Tucker does,” said Appleton, “for I can’t flatter myself that she suspects in the least what I am about.”

“You haven’t said anything yet?”

“My dear Mrs. Kennion, I’ve known her less than a fortnight! It’s bad enough for a man to fall in love in that absurd length of time, but I wouldn’t ask a girl to marry me on two weeks’ acquaintance. It would simply be courting refusal.”

“I am glad you feel that way about it, for we have grown greatly attached to Miss Tucker,” said the bishop’s wife. “She is so simple and unaffected, so lovable, and such good company! So alone in the world, yet so courageous and independent. I hope it will come out all right for your dear mother’s son,” she added affectionately, with a squeeze of her kind hand. “Miss Tucker is dining here to-morrow, and you must come, too, for she has offered to sing for our friends.”

Everybody agreed that Mrs. Kennion’s party for the young American singer was a delightful and memorable occasion. She gave them song after song,

accompanying herself on the Erard grand piano, at which she always made such a pretty picture. It drifted into a request programme, and Tommy, whose memory was inexhaustible, seemed always to have the wished-for song at the tip of her tongue, were it English, Scotch, Irish, or Welsh. There was general laughter and surprise when Madame Eriksson, a Norwegian lady who was among the guests, asked her for a certain song of Halfdan Kjerulf's.

"I only know it in its English translation," Tommy said, "and I haven't sung it for a year, but I think I remember it. Forgive me if I halt in the words:

"'I hardly know, my darling,
What mostly took my heart,
Unless perhaps your singing
Has done the greater part.
I've thrilled to many voices,
The passionate, the strong,
But I forgot the singer,
And I forgot the song.
But there's one song, my darling,
That I can ne'er forget.
I listened and I trembled,
And felt my cheek was wet;
It seemed my heart within me
Gave answer clear and low
When first I heard you sing, dear,
Then first I loved you so!'"

Tommy had sung the song hundreds of times in earlier years, and she had not the slightest self-consciousness when she began it; but just as she reached the last four lines her eyes met Fergus Appleton's. He was seated in a far corner of the room, leaning eagerly forward, with one arm on the back of a chair in front of him. She was singing the words to the company, but if ever a man was uttering and confirming them it was Fergus Appleton at that moment. The blindest woman could see, the deafest could hear, the avowal.

Tommy caught her breath quickly, looked away, braced her memory, and finished, to the keen delight of old Madame Eriksson, who rose and kissed her on both cheeks.

Tommy was glad that her part of the evening was over, and to cover her confusion offered to sing something of her own composing, the Mother Goose

rhyme of “Little Tommy Tucker Sings for His Supper,” arranged as an operatic recitative and aria. The humor of this performance penetrated even to the remotest fastnesses of the staid cathedral circle, and the palace party ended in something that positively resembled merriment, a consummation not always to be reached in gatherings exclusively clerical in character.

The bishop’s coachman always drove Miss Tucker home, and Appleton always walked to his lodgings, which were in the opposite direction, so nothing could be done that night, but he determined that another sun should not go down before he put his fate to the touch.

How could he foresee what the morning post would bring and deposit, like an unwelcome bomb, upon his breakfast tray?

His London publishers wanted to see him at once, not only on a multitude of details concerning his forthcoming book, but on a subject, as they hoped, of great interest and importance to him.

Thinking it a matter of a day or so, Appleton scribbled notes to Mrs. Kennion and Miss Tucker, with whom he was to go on an excursion, and departed forthwith to London.

Everything happened in London. The American publishers wanted a different title for the book and four more chapters to lengthen it to a size selling (at a profit) for two dollars and a half. The English publishers thought he had dealt rather slightingly with a certain very interesting period, and he remembered, guiltily, that he had been at Bexley Sands when he wrote the chapters in question. It would take three days’ labor to fill up these gaps, he calculated, and how fortunate that Miss Thomasina Tucker was safely entrenched in the heart of an ecclesiastical stronghold for the next month or two; a town where he had not, so far as he knew, a single formidable rival. He wrote her regarding his unexpected engagements, adding with legitimate pride that one of England’s foremost critics had offered to write a preface for his book; then he settled to his desk and slaved at his task until it was accomplished, when he departed with a beating heart for the town and county that held Miss Thomasina Tucker in their keeping.

Alighting at the familiar railway station, he took a hansom, intending to drop his portmanteau at his lodgings and go on to the palace for news, but as he was driving by the deanery on the north side of Cathedral Green, he encountered Mrs. Kennion in her victoria. She signaled him with her hand and spoke to her coachman, who drew up his horses. Alighting from his hansom, he strode

forward to take her welcoming hand, his face radiating the pleasure of a home-coming traveler.

“If you’ll let the cabman take your luggage, I’d like to drive you home myself. I have something to tell you,” said Mrs. Kennion, making room for him by her side.

“Nothing has happened, I hope?” he asked anxiously.

“Miss Tucker is leaving for America to-morrow morning.”

“Going away?” Appleton’s tone was one of positive dismay.

“Yes. It is all very sudden and unexpected.”

“Sailing to-morrow?” exclaimed Appleton, taking out his watch. “From where? How can I get there?”

“Not sailing to-morrow—leaving Wells to-morrow on an early train and sailing Saturday from Southampton.”

“Oh, the world is not lost entirely, then!”—and Appleton leaned back and wiped his forehead. “What has happened? I ought never to have gone to London.”

“She had a cable yesterday from her Brooklyn church, offering her a better position in the choir, but saying that they could hold it only ten days. By post on the same day she received a letter from a New York friend—”

“Was it a Carl Bothwick?”

“No; a Miss Macleod, who said that a much better position was in the market in a church where Miss Tucker had influential friends. She was sure that if Miss Tucker returned immediately to sing for the committee she could secure a thousand-dollar salary. We could do nothing but advise her to make the effort, you see.”

“Did she seem determined to go?”

“No; she appeared a little undecided and timid. However, she said frankly that, though she had earned enough in England to pay her steamer passage to America, and a month’s expenses afterward, she could not be certain of continuing to do so much through a London winter. ‘If I only had a little more time to think it out,’ she kept saying, ‘but I haven’t, so I must go!’”

“Where is she now?”

“At her lodgings. The bishop is detained in Bath and I am dining with friends in

his stead. I thought you might go and take her to dinner at the Swan, so that she shouldn't be alone, and then bring her to the palace afterward—if—if all is well."

"If I have any luck two churches will be lamenting her loss to-morrow morning," said Fergus gloomily; "but she wouldn't have consented to go if she cared anything about me!"

"Nonsense, my dear boy! You were away. No self-respecting girl would wire you to come back. She was helpless even if she did care. Here we are! Shall I send a hansom back in half an hour?"

"Twenty-five minutes will do it," Appleton answered briskly. "You are an angel, dear lady!"

"Keep your blarney! I hope you'll need it all for somebody else to-night! Good fortune, dear boy!"

VIII

Appleton flung the contents of his portmanteau into his closet, rid himself of the dust of travel, made a quick change, and in less than forty minutes was at the door of Miss Tucker's lodgings.

She had a little sitting-room on the first floor, and his loud rat-a-tat brought her to the door instead of the parlor-maid.

At the unexpected sight of him she turned pale.

"Why—why, I thought it was the luggage-man. Where did you come from?" she stammered.

"From London, an hour ago. I met Mrs. Kennion on my way from the station."

"Oh! Then she told you I am going home?"

"Yes, she told me. How could you go to America without saying good-bye, Miss Tommy?"

She flushed and looked perilously near tears.

"I wrote to you this morning as soon as I had decided," she said. "I don't like to dart off in this way, you can imagine, but it's a question of must."

He did not argue this with her; that was a bridge to be crossed when a better understanding had been reached; so, as if taking the journey as an inexorable fact, he said: "Come out and dine with me somewhere, and let us have a good

talk.”

“I’m afraid I can’t. I’m eating now on a tray in my sitting-room,”—and she waved a table napkin she was holding in her hand. “I am rather tired, and Miss Scattergood gave me some bacon and an egg from the nest.”

“Give the bacon to the cat and put back the egg in the nest,” he said coaxingly. “Mrs. Kennion said: ‘Don’t let her eat her last dinner alone. Take her to the Swan.’”

“Oh, I am only in my traveling-clothes and the Swan is full of strangers to-night.”

“The Green Dragon, then, near the cathedral. You look dressed for Buckingham Palace.”

She hesitated a moment, and then melted at the eagerness of his wish. “Well, then, if you’ll wait five minutes.”

“Of course; I’ll go along to the corner and whistle a hansom from the stand. Don’t hurry!”

The mental processes of Miss Thomasina Tucker had been very confused during the excitement of the last twenty-four hours.

That she loved Fergus Appleton she was well aware since the arrival of the cablegram calling her back to America. Up to that time she had fenced with her love—parried it, pricked it, thrust it off, drawn it back, telling herself that she had plenty of time to meet the issue if it came. That Fergus Appleton loved her she was also fairly well convinced, but that fact did not always mean—everything—she told herself, with a pitiful little attempt at worldly wisdom. Perhaps he preferred his liberty to any woman; perhaps he did not want to settle down; perhaps he was engaged to some one whom he didn’t care for now, but would have to marry; perhaps he hadn’t money enough to share with a wife; perhaps he was a flirt—no, she would not admit that for an instant. Anyway, she was alone in the world, and the guardian of her own dignity. If she could have allowed matters to drift along in the heavenly uncertainty of these last days, there would have been no problem; but when she was forced to wake from her delicious dream and fly from everything that held her close and warm, fly during Fergus Appleton’s absence, without his knowledge or consent—that indeed was heart-breaking. And still her pride showed her but the one course. She was alone in the world and without means save those earned by her own exertions. A living income was offered her in America and she must take it or leave it on the instant.

She could not telegraph Fergus Appleton in London and acquaint him with her plans, as if they depended on him for solution; she could only write him a warm and friendly good-bye. If he loved her as much as a man ought who loved at all, he had time to follow her to Southampton before her ship sailed. If business kept him from such a hurried journey, he could ask her to marry him in a sixpenny wire, reply paid. If he neither came nor wired, but sent a box of mignonette to the steamer with his card and “Bon voyage” written on it, she would bury something unspeakably dear and precious that had only just been born—bury it, and plant mignonette over it. And she could always sing! Thank Heaven for the gift of song!

This was Tommy’s mood when she was packing her belongings, after hearing the bishop say that Appleton could not return till noon next day. It had changed a trifle by the time that Fergus had gone to the corner to whistle for a hansom. Her gray frieze jacket and skirt were right enough when she hastily slipped on a better blouse with a deep embroidered collar, pinned with Helena Markham’s parting gift of an emerald clover-leaf. Her gray straw hat had a becoming band of flat green leaves, and she had a tinge of color. (Nothing better for roses in the cheeks than hurrying to be ready for the right man.) Anyway, such beauty as Tommy had was always there, and when she came to the door she smote Appleton’s eyes as if she were “the first beam from the springing east.”

Once in the hansom, they talked gayly. They dared not stop, indeed, for when they kept on whipping the stream they forgot the depth of the waters underneath.

Meantime the Green Dragon, competitor of the Swan, had great need of their lavish and interesting patronage.

The Swiss head waiter, who was new to Wells, was a man of waxed mustaches and sleepless ambitions. The other hotels had most of the tourists, but he intended to retrieve the fortunes of his employer, and bring prosperity back to the side streets. He adored his vocation, and would have shed his heart’s blood on the altar of any dining-room of which he had charge.

There were nine tables placed about the large room, though not more than three had been occupied in his tenure of office; but all were beautifully set with flowers and bright silver and napkins in complicated foldings. Pasteboard cards with large black numbers from one to eight stood erect on eight of the tables, and on the ninth an imposing placard bore the sign:

in letters two inches high, giving the idea that a hungry crowd was waiting to surge in and take the seats.

The second man, trained within an inch of his life, had been already kindled by the enthusiasm of his superior, and shared his vigils.

This very evening there had been hopes deferred and sickened hearts over the indifference of the public to a menu fit for a king. Were there not consommé royale, filet of sole, maître d'hôtel, poulet en casserole, pommes de terres sautés, haricots verts, and a wonderful Camembert? A savory could be inserted in an instant, and a sweet arranged in the twinkling of an eye.

"A carriage, Walter! Prepare!"

Both flew silently to the window.

"Two ladies; ah, they are not alighting! They wish to know if there is evening service in the cathedral."

"A gentleman, Walter! In a four-wheeler!"

"No, he dines not. He has come to request his umbrella of the porter."

"A hansom, Walter!"

"Ah, they alight. She is of an elegance unmistakable. They are young married ones, and will dine well. Hasten, Walter, and order both sweet and savory!"

Fergus and Tommy looked about the cozy room with pleasure as they entered, receiving the salute of Gustave and the English bow of Walter as tributes to their deep, unspoken hopes.

"Where will you sit, Miss Tucker?" asked Appleton, and as he spoke his quick eye observed the "Engaged" placard, and with lightning dexterity he steered his guest toward that table. (There *was* an opening, if you like!) Not quick enough for Tommy, though, for she had seen it and dropped into a seat several feet away, declaring its position was perfect. Gustave put menus before his distinguished clients with a flourish, and indicated the wine card as conspicuously as was consistent with good form. Then he paused and made mental notes of the situation.

"Ah, very good, very good," murmured Appleton. "You might move the flowers, please; they rather hide—the view; and bring the soup, please."

"Very young married ones!" thought Gustave, summoning his slave and retiring

to a point where he could watch the wine card. Walter brought the consommé, and then busied himself at the other tables. They would never be occupied, but it was just as well to pretend, so he set hideous colored wine-glasses, red, green, and amber, at the various places, and polished them ostentatiously with a clean napkin in the hope that the gentleman would experience a desire for liquid refreshment.

“This is very jolly, and very unexpected,” said Appleton.

“It is, indeed.”

“I hope you don’t miss the nest-egg.”

“You mustn’t call it a nest-egg! That’s a stale thing, or a china one that they leave in, I don’t know why—for an example, or a pattern, or a suggestion,” said Tommy, laughing. “An egg from the nest is Miss Scattergood’s phrase, and it means a new-laid one.”

“Oh, I see!—well, do you regret it?”

“Certainly not, with this sumptuous repast just beginning!”

“You always give me an appetite,” exclaimed Appleton.

“It’s a humble function, but not one to be despised,” Tommy answered mischievously, fencing, fencing every minute, with her heart beating against her ribs like a sledge-hammer.

Walter brought the fish and solicitously freed the wine card that had somehow crept under a cover of knives and forks.

“I beg ten thousand pardons. What will you drink, Miss Tucker? We must have a drop of something to cheer us at a farewell dinner. Here is a vintage champagne, a good honest wine that will hearten us up and leave no headache in its train.”

“I couldn’t to-night, Mr. Appleton; I really couldn’t.”

“Then I refuse to be exhilarated alone,” said Fergus gallantly; “and you always have the effect of champagne on me anyway. I decline to say good-bye. I can’t even believe it is ‘au revoir’ between us. We had such delightful days ahead, and so many plans.”

“Yes; it isn’t nice to make up your mind so suddenly that it turns everything topsy-turvy,” sighed Tommy—“I won’t have any meat, thank you.”

Walter looked distinctly grieved. “I can recommend the pulley-ong-cazzerole, miss, and there’s potatoes sortey with it.”

Tommy’s appetite kindled at the sound of his accent, and she relented. “Yes, I’ll have a small portion, please, after all.”

“When friends are together the world seems very small, and when they are separated it becomes a space too vast for human comprehension—I think I’ve heard that before, but it’s true,” said Appleton.

“Yes,” Tommy answered, for lack of anything better to say.

“It seems as if we had known each other for years.”

“And it is less than three weeks,” was Tommy’s contribution to the lagging conversation.

“The bishop offered me a letter of introduction to you when he wrote me at the Bexley Sands Inn, you remember, but he added in a postscript that in case of accident he was not to be held responsible. Rather cryptic, I thought—at the time.”

“A little Commonburg, sir?” asked Walter. “It is a very fine ripe one, and we have some fresh water-cress.”

“‘Commonburg,’ Miss Tucker? No? Then bring the coffee, please.”

A desperate silence fell between them, they who had talked unendingly for days and evenings!

When Walter brought the tray with the coffee-pot and the two little cups, Appleton suddenly pushed his chair back, saying: “Let us take our coffee over by the window, shall we, and perhaps I may have a cigarette later? Don’t light the gas, waiter—we want to see the hills and the afterglow.”

There was no avoiding it; Appleton and the waiter conveyed Tommy helplessly over to a table commanding the view and the sunset, and it was the one on which the huge “Engaged” placard reared itself persuasively and suggestively.

“We shall need nothing more, waiter; you may go; I think this will cover the bill,”—and scorning the chair opposite Tommy, Appleton seated himself beside her.

“You have turned your back to the afterglow,” she said, as she reached forward to move “Engaged” to a position a trifle less obvious.

“I don’t care tuppence about the afterglow,” and Appleton covered her hand with his own. “Make it come true, dear, dear Tommy! Make it come true!”

“What?” she asked, between a smile and a tear.

“The placard, dear, the placard! If you should travel the world over, you couldn’t find a man who loves you as I do.”

“What would be the use in my traveling about to find another man when I am so satisfied with this one?” whispered Tommy. “Oh, remember! they may come back at any moment!”

“I will, I will, if only I may have the comfort of holding your hand after all my miserable doubts! I never knew what companionship meant before I met you! I never really cared about life until now.”

“I have always cared about it, but never like this,” confessed Tommy. “You see, I have always been alone, ever since I grew up.”

“And I! How wonderful of Fate to bring us together! And will you let me cable to the churches that you cannot come home just yet?”

“You think I’d better not go—so soon?”

“Without me? Never! You shall go anywhere you like, any time you like, so long as you take me with you. We’ll settle all those things to-morrow—the blessedest day that ever dawned, that’s what to-morrow will be! Couldn’t you marry me to-morrow, Tommy?”

“Certainly not! At any rate—not in the morning!” said Tommy mischievously, withdrawing her hand and moving out of the danger zone.

“And you must remember that your talent is your own, to use as you like!” Appleton continued after a well-filled pause. “Your voice is a unique and precious gift. I’ll try not to be selfish with it, or jealous of it, though if it had half the effect on other men that it has upon me, the floor would be strewn with broken hearts every time you sing!”—and he hummed under his breath:

“I hardly know, my darling,
What mostly took my heart,
Unless perhaps your singing
Has done the greater part.”

“Oh, you dear absurdity!” said Tommy, twinkling and sparkling enchantingly. —“I wish the waiter wouldn’t come in every time I want to say something especially private!”

“‘Confound his politics, frustrate his knavish tricks,’ but we shall soon be out of his reach, spinning along to the palace.”

“Are we going there? Oh! I shall be afraid to tell the bishop and Mrs. Kennion!”

“You needn’t be. I told Mrs. Kennion this afternoon that I loved you to distraction. If the bishop is back from Bath, she’ll have passed on the information by now.”

“I was just going to say, when the waiter came so near, that it isn’t the public I love, it’s the singing! Just to sing and sing, that’s what I long to do!”

“And what you shall do, so help me! You know you wanted me to find a new name for you? Wasn’t I clever to think of Appleton?”

“Very! And you’re kindly freeing me of half of my ‘bizarre Americanism,’ as my Torquay correspondent called it. How shall we deal with Thomasina?”

“We’ll call her Tommy. A darling, kissable little name, Tommy!—No, I’m not going to do anything!”

“You don’t think it’s cowardly of me to marry you?”

“Cowardly?”

“Yes, when I haven’t actually proved that I can earn my living; at least, I haven’t done it long enough, or well enough, yet.”

“I think it’s brave of you to marry me.”

“Brave?”

“To turn your back on a possible career.”

“It’s not the ‘careering’ that I love; though it will seem very strange when Tommy Tucker doesn’t have to sing for her supper!—Shall we go? The waiter is coming in again. I believe he thinks we are going to run off with the spoons!”

“So we are! At least, when we go, the spoons will go! I know it’s a poor joke, but I am too happy to be brilliant. Call the head waiter, please,”—this to Walter, who despaired of ever getting rid of his guests, and was agreeably disappointed that a gentleman who had not ordered wine should ask for Gustave.

Appleton took the “Engaged” placard off the table and used it nonchalantly as a fan in crossing the room. Then as he drew near the men he slipped two gold pieces into Tommy’s hand.

“May I carry away this placard, waiter?” he asked, as if it were quite a sane request. “I’ve taken a fancy to it as a souvenir of a most delightful and memorable dinner.”

“Assuredly, assuredly!” murmured Gustave. He knew that there was romance in the air, although he did not perceive the exact point of Appleton’s request.

“The young lady will reward you for your courtesy. No; I’ll help with her jacket, thank you.”

Tommy, overcome with laughter and confusion and blushes, pressed the gold pieces into the hands of the astonished waiters, who bowed almost to the floor.

“You are always giving me sovereigns, dear Fergus,” she whispered with a laugh and something like a sob, as they drove along in the delicious nearness provided by the hansom.

“Never mind,” said Fergus. “You will be giving me one when you marry me!”

THE TURNING-POINT

Not far from the village of Bonny Eagle, on the west bank of the Saco, stood two little low-roofed farmhouses; the only two that had survived among others of the same kind that once dotted the green brink of the river.

Long years before, in 1795 or thereabouts, there had been a cluster of log houses on this very spot, known then as the Dalton Right Settlement, and these in turn had been succeeded at a later date by the more comfortable frame-roof farmhouses of the period.

In the old days, before the sound of the axe for the first time disturbed the stillness of the forest, the otter swam in the shadowy coves near the shore and the beaver built his huts near by. The red deer came down to dip his antlers and cool his flanks in the still shallows. The speckled grouse sat on her nest in the low pine boughs, while her mate perched on the mossy logs by the riverside unmolested.

The Sokokis built their bark wigwams here and there on the bank, paddling their birch canoes over the river's smooth surface, or threading the foamy torrents farther down its course.

Here was the wonderful spring that fed, and still feeds, Aunt Judy's Brook, the most turbulent little stream in the county. Many a moccasin track has been made in the soft earth around the never-failing fountain, and many the wooden bucket lowered into its crystal depths by the Dalton Righters when in their turn they possessed the land.

The day of the Indian was over now, and the day of the farmer who succeeded him was over, too. The crash of the loom and the whir of the spinning-wheel were heard no longer, but Amanda Dalton, spinster,—descendant of the original Tristram Dalton, to whom the claim belonged,—sat on alone in her house, and not far away sat Caleb Kimball, sole living heir of the original Caleb, himself a Dalton Righter, and contemporary of Tristram Dalton.

Neither of these personages took any interest in pedigree or genealogy. They

knew that their ancestors had lived and died on the same acres now possessed by them, but the acres had dwindled sadly, and the ancestors had seemingly left little for which to be grateful. Indeed, in Caleb's case they had been a distinct disadvantage, since the local sense of humor, proverbially strong in York County, had always preserved a set of Kimball stories among its most cherished possessions. Some of them might have been forgotten in the century and a half that had elapsed, if the Caleb of our story had not been the inheritor of certain family traits famous in their day and generation.

Caleb the first had been the "cuss" of his fellow farmers, because in coming from Scarboro to join the Dalton Righters he had brought whiteweed with the bundle of hay for his cattle when he was clearing the land. The soil of this particular region must have been especially greedy for, and adapted to, this obnoxious grass-killer, for it flourished as in no other part of the county; flourishes yet, indeed—though, if one can forget that its presence means poor feed for cattle where might be a crop of juicy hay, the blossoming fields of the old Dalton Settlement look, in early June, the loveliest, most ethereal, in New England. There, a million million feathery daisies sway and dance in the breeze, lifting their snowy wheels to the blue June sky. There they grow and thrive, the slender green stalks tossing their pearly disks among sister groves of buttercups till the eye is fairly dazzled with the symphony of white and gold. The back-aching farmers of the original Dalton Settlement had indeed tried to root out the lovely pests, but little did our Caleb care! If he had ever trod his ancestral acres either for pleasure or profit he might in time have "stomped out" the whiteweed, so the neighbors said, for he had the family foot, the size of an anvil; but he much preferred a sedentary life, and the whiteweed went on seeding itself from year to year.

Caleb was tall, loose-jointed, and black as a thunder-cloud—the swarthy skin, like the big foot, having been bequeathed to him by the original Caleb, whose long-legged, shaggy-haired sons had been known as "Caleb's colts." Tall and black, all of them, the "colts," so black that the village wits said the Kimball children must have eaten smut and soot and drunk cinder tea during the years their parents were clearing the land. Tall and black also were all the Kimball daughters, so tall it was their boast to be able to look out over the tops of the window curtains; and proud enough of their height to cry with rage when any rival Amazon came into the neighborhood.

Whatever else they were or were not, however, the Kimballs had always been industrious and frugal. It had remained for the last scion of the old stock to

furnish a byword for slackness. In a village where stories of outlandish, ungodly, or supernatural laziness were sacredly preserved from year to year, Caleb Kimball's indolence easily took the palm. His hay commonly went to seed in the field. His cow yielded her morning's milk about noon, and her evening "mess" was taken from her (when she was lucky) by the light of a lantern. He was a bachelor of forty-five, dwelt alone, had no visitors and made his living, such as it was, off the farm, with the help of a rack-o'-bones horse. He had fifty acres of timber-land, and when his easy-going methods of farming found him without money he simply sold a few trees.

The house and barn were gradually falling into ruins; the farm implements stood in the yard all winter, and the sleigh all summer. The gate flapped on its hinges, the fences were broken down, and the stone walls were full of gaps. His pipe, and a snarling rough-haired dog, were his only companions. Hour after hour he sat on the side steps looking across the sloping meadows that separated his place from Amanda Dalton's; hour after hour he puffed his pipe and gazed on the distant hills and the sparkling river; gazed and gazed—whether he saw anything or thought anything, remembered anything, or even dreamed anything, nobody could guess, not even Amanda Dalton, who was good at guessing, having very few other mental recreations to keep her mother-wit alive.

Caleb Kimball, as seen on his doorstep from Amanda Dalton's sink window, was but a speck, to be sure, but he was her nearest neighbor; if a person whose threshold you never cross, and who never crosses yours, can be called a neighbor. There were seldom or never meetings or greetings between the two, yet each unconsciously was very much alive to the existence of the other. In days or evenings of solitude one can make neighbors of very curious things.

The smoke of Amanda's morning fire cried "Shame" to Caleb's when it issued languidly from his kitchen chimney an hour later. Amanda's smoke was like herself, and betokened the brisk fire she would be likely to build; Caleb's showed wet wood, poor draught, a fallen brick in the chimney.

Later on in the morning Caleb's dog would sometimes saunter down the road and have a brief conversation with Amanda's cat. They were neither friends nor enemies, but merely enlivened a deadly, dull existence with a few casual remarks on current topics.

Once Caleb had possessed a flock of hens, but in the course of a few years they had dwindled to one lonely rooster, who stalked gloomily through the wilderness of misplaced objects in the Kimball yard, and wondered why he had been born.

Amanda pitied him, and flung him a surreptitious handful of corn from her apron pocket when she met him walking dejectedly in the road halfway between the two houses. So encouraged he extended his rambles, and one afternoon Amanda, looking out of her window, saw him stop at her gate and hold a tête-à-tête with one of her Plymouth Rock hens. The interview was brief but effective. In a twinkling he had told her of his miserable life and his abject need of sympathy.

“There are times,” he said, “when, I give you my word, I would rather be stewed for dinner than lead my present existence! It is weak for me to trouble you with my difficulties, but you have always understood me from the first.”

“Say no more,” she replied. “I am a woman and pity is akin to love. The fowls of Amanda Dalton’s flock do not need me as you do. Eleven eggs a day are laid here regularly, and I will go where my egg will be a daily source of pleasure and profit.”

“The coop is draughty and the corn scarce,” confessed the rooster, doing his best to be noble.

“I am of the sex created especially to supply companionship,” returned the hen, “therefore I will accompany you, regardless of personal inconvenience.”

Amanda saw the departure of the eloping couple and pursued them not.

“Land sakes!” she exclaimed, “if any male thing hereabouts has sprawl enough to go courtin’ I’m willin’ to encourage ’em. She’ll miss her clean house and good food, I guess, but I ain’t sure. She’s ‘women-folks’ after all, and I shouldn’t wonder a mite but she’d take real comfort in makin’ things pleasanter up there for that pindlin’, God-forsaken old rooster! She’ll have her hands full, but there, I know what ’tis to get along with empty ones!”

There were not many such romances or comedies as these to enliven Amanda’s mornings. Then afternoon would slip into twilight, darkness would creep over the landscape, and Amanda’s light—clear, steady, bright, serene—would gleam from its place on the sink shelf through the kitchen window, over the meadow, “up to Kimball’s.” It was such a light as would stream from a well-trimmed lamp with a crystal clean chimney, but it met with small response from its neighbor’s light during many months of the year. In late autumn and winter there would be a fugitive candle gleam upstairs in the Kimball house, and on stormy evenings a dull, smoky light in the living-room.

From the illumination in the Dalton sink window, Caleb thought Amanda sat in the kitchen evenings, but she didn’t. She said she kept the second light there

because she could afford it, and because the cat liked it. The cat enjoyed the black haircloth sofa in the sitting-room, afternoons, but she greatly preferred the kitchen for evening use; it made a change, and the high-backed cushioned rocker was then vacant. Amanda had nobody to consider but the cat, so she naturally deferred to her in every possible way. It was bad for the cat's character, but at least it kept Amanda from committing suicide, so what would you? Here was a woman of insistent, unflagging, unending activity. Amanda Dalton had energy enough to attend to a husband and six children—cook, wash, iron, churn, sew, nurse—and she lived alone with a cat. The village was a mile, and her nearest female neighbor, the Widow Thatcher, a half-mile away. She had buried her only sister in Lewiston years before, and she had not a relation in the world. All her irrepressible zeal went into the conduct of her house and plot of ground. Day after day, week after week, year after year, the established routine was carried through. First the washing of the breakfast dishes and the putting to rights of the kitchen, which was radiantly clean before she began upon it. Next her bedroom; the stirring-up of the cornhusk mattress, the shaking of the bed of live geese feathers, the replacing of cotton sheets, homespun blankets, and blue-and-white counterpane. Next came the sitting-room with its tall, red, flag-bottomed chairs, its two-leaved table, its light stand that held the Bible and work-basket and lamp. The chest of drawers and tall clock were piously dusted, and the frames of the Family Register, "Napoleon Crossing the Alps," and "Maidens Welcoming Washington in the Streets of Alexandria," were carefully wiped off. Once a week the parlor was cleaned, the tarlatan was lifted from the two plaster Samuels on the mantelpiece, their kneeling forms were cleaned with a damp cloth, the tarlatan replaced, and the parlor closed again reverently. There was kindling to chop, wood to bring in, the modest cooking, washing, ironing, and sewing to do, the flower-beds to weed, and the little vegetable garden to keep in order.

But Amanda had a quick foot, a neat hand, a light touch, and a peculiar faculty of "turning off" work so that it simply would not last through the day. Why did she never think of going to the nearest city and linking her powers with those of some one who would put them to larger uses? Simply because no one ever did that sort of thing in Bonny Eagle in those days. Girls crowded out of home by poverty sought employment here and there, but that a woman of forty, with a good home and ten acres of land—to say nothing of coupon bonds that yielded a hundred dollars a year in cash—that such a one should seek a larger field in a strange place, would have been thought flying in the face of Providence, as well as custom.

Outside Bonny Eagle, in the roar and din and clamor of cities, were all sorts of

wrongs that needed righting, wounds that cried out to be healed. There were motherless children, there were helpless sufferers moaning for the sight of a green field, but the superfluous females of Amanda Dalton's day had not awakened to any sense of responsibility with regard to their unknown brothers and sisters.

Amanda was a large-hearted woman. She would have shared her soda biscuit, her bean soup, her dandelion greens, her hogshead cheese, her boiled dinner, her custard pie, with any hungry mortal, but no one in Bonny Eagle needed bite nor sup. Therefore she feather-stitched her dish-towels, piled her kindling in a "wheel pattern" in the shed, named her hens and made friends of them, put fourteen tucks in her unbleached cotton petticoats, and fried a pancake every Saturday for her cat.

"It's either that or blow your brains out, if you've got a busy mind!" she said grimly to Susan Benson, her best friend, who was passing a Saturday afternoon with her. It was chilly and they liked the cheerful warmth of the Saturday fire that was baking the beans and steaming the brown bread.

Susan unrolled her patchwork and, giving a flip to the cat with her thimble finger, settled herself comfortably in the kitchen rocker.

The cat leaped down and stalked into the next room with an air of offended majesty, as much as to say: "Of all the manners I ever saw, that woman has the worst! She contrives to pass by three empty chairs and choose the one I chance to be occupying!"

"You wouldn't be so lonesome if you could see a bit of life from your house, Mandy," said Mrs. Benson. "William an' I were sayin' last night you'd ought to move into the village winters, though nothin' could be handsomer than the view from your sink window this minute. Daisies, daisies everywhere! How do you manage to keep 'em out o' your place, Mandy, when they're so thick on Caleb Kimball's?"

"I just root an' root, an' keep on rootin'," Amanda responded cheerfully, "though I don't take a mite o' pride out of it, for the better my place looks the worse his does, by comparison."

"It is a sight!" said Mrs. Benson, standing for a moment by the sink and looking up to Kimball's.

"I went up there one night after dark, when I knew Caleb 'd gone to Hixam, an' I patched up some o' the holes in his stone wall, thinkin' his whiteweed seeds

wouldn’t blow through quite so thick!”—and Amanda joined Mrs. Benson at the window. “I’d ’a’ done a day’s work on his side o’ the wall as lief as not, only I knew folks would talk if they saw me.”

“Land, no, they wouldn’t, Mandy. Everybody knows you wouldn’t take him if he was the last man on earth; an’ as for Caleb, I guess he wouldn’t marry any woman above ground, not if she was a seraphim. I used to think he’d spunk up some time or other, when he got over his mother’s death; but it’s too late now, I’m afraid.”

“Caleb set great store by his mother; that’s one good thing about him,” said Amanda.

“He did for certain,” agreed Mrs. Benson. “If that girl he was engaged to hadn’t ’a’ spoken disrespectful to her in his hearin’ there’d ’a’ been a wife an’ children up there now an’ the place would ’a’ looked diff’rent.”

“Not so very diff’rent! He didn’t lose much in Eliza Johnson. I guess he knows that by now!” remarked Amanda serenely; “though I s’pose ’t was quarrelin’ with her that set him runnin’ down hill, all the same.”

“I never thought he cared anything about Eliza. She was determined to have him, an’ he was too lazy to say no, but you see in the end she only got her labor for her pains. The Kimball boys never had any luck with their love affairs. When Caleb an’ his mother was left alone, she was terrible anxious for him to marry. She was allers findin’ girls for him, but part of ’em wouldn’t look at him, and he wouldn’t make up to any of ’em.”

“I was livin’ in Lewiston those years,” said Amanda.

“I remember you was. Well, when old Mrs. Kimball broke her arm, Charles, the youngest son, that was a stage-driver, determined he’d get somebody for Caleb, for his own wife wouldn’t lift her finger to help ’bout the house. He saw a girl up to Steep Falls that he kind o’ liked the looks of, an’ he offered her a ride down to his mother’s to spend the day, thinkin’ if the family liked her she might do for Caleb. However, her eyes was weak an’ she didn’t know how to milk, so they thought she’d better go home by train. That would ’a’ been fair enough for both parties, but when Charles drove her to the station he charged her fifteen cents an’ it made an awful sight o’ talk. She had a hot temper, an’ she kind o’ resented it!”

“I dare say ’t wa’n’t so,” commented Amanda; “but everybody’s dead that could deny it, except Caleb, and he wouldn’t take the trouble.”

“It’s one of the days when he’s real drove, ain’t it?” asked Susan sarcastically, as

she looked across the field to the wood-pile where a gray-shirted figure sat motionless. “If ever a man needed a wife to patch the seat of his pants, it’s Caleb Kimball! I guess it’s the only part of his clothes he ever wears out. He wa’n’t like that before his mother died; the wheels seemed to stop in him then an’ there. He was queer an’ strange an’ shy, but I never used to think he’d develop into a reg’lar hermit. She’d turn in her grave, Mis’ Kimball would, to see him look as he does. I don’t s’pose he gets any proper nourishment. The smartest man in the world won’t take the trouble to make pie for himself, yet he’ll eat it ’s long ’s he can stan’ up! Caleb’s mother was a great pie-baker. I can see her now, shovelin’ ’em in an’ out o’ the oven Saturdays, with her three great black lanky boys standin’ roun’ waitin’ for ’em to cool off.—‘Only *one*, mother?’ Caleb used to say, kind o’ wheedlin’ly, while she laughed up at him leanin’ against the door-frame.—‘What’s one blueb’ry pie amongst me?’”

“He must ’a’ had some fun in him once,” smiled Amanda.

“They say women-folks ain’t got no sense o’ humor,” remarked Mrs. Benson, with a twitch of her thread. “I notice the men that live *without* ’em don’t seem to have any! We may not amount to much, but we’re somethin’ to laugh *at*.”

“Why don’t you bake him a pie now an’ then, an’ send it up, Susan?” asked Amanda.

“Well, there, I don’t feel I hardly know him well enough, though William does. I dare say he wouldn’t like it, an’ he’d never think to return the plate, so far away. —Besides, there never *is* an extry pie in a house where there’s a man an’ three boys; which reminds me I’ve got to go home an’ make one for breakfast, with nothin’ to make it out of.”

“I could lend you a handful o’ dried plums.”

“Thank you; I’ll take ’em an’ much obliged. I declare it seems to me, now the rhubarb’s ’bout gone, as if the apples on the trees never would fill out enough to drop off. There does come a time in the early summer, after you’re sick of mince, ’n’ squash, ’n’ punkin, ’n’ cranberry, ’n’ rhubarb, ’n’ custard, ’n’ ’t ain’t time for currant, or green apple, or strawb’ry, or raspb’ry, or blackb’ry—there does come a time when it seems as if Providence might ’a’ had a little more ingenuity in plannin’ pie-fillin’!—You might bake a pie for Caleb now an’ then yourself, Mandy; you’re so near.”

“Mrs. Thatcher lives half a mile away,” replied Amanda; “but I couldn’t carry Caleb Kimball a pie without her knowin’ it an’ makin’ remarks. I’d bake one an’ willin’ if William ’d take it to him; but there, ’t would only make him want

another. He’s made his bed an’ he’s got to lie on it.”

“He *lays* on his bed sure enough, an’ most o’ the time probably—but do you believe he ever makes it?”

Amanda shuddered. “I don’t know, Susan; it’s one o’ the things that haunts me; whether he makes it or whether he don’t.”

“Do you ever see any wash hung out?” Mrs. Benson’s needle stopped in midair while she waited for Amanda’s answer.

“Ye-es; now an’ then.”

“What kind?”

“Sheets; once a gray blanket; underclothes; but naturally I don’t look when they’re hung out. He generally puts ’em on the grass, anyway.”

“Well, it’s a sin for a man to live so in a Christian country, an’ the kindest thing to say about him is that he’s crazy. Some o’ the men folks over to the store declare he is crazy; but William declares he ain’t. He says he’s asleep. William kind o’ likes him. Does he ever pass the time o’ day with you?”

“Hardly ever. I meet him once or twice a year, maybe, in the road. He bows when I go past on an errand an’ holds on to his dog when he tries to run out an’ bite me.”

“That’s real kind o’ gentlemanly,” observed Susan.

“I never thought of it that way,” said Amanda absently; “but perhaps it is. All I can say is, Caleb Kimball’s a regular thorn in my flesh. I can’t do anything for him, an’ I can’t forget him, right under foot as he is—his land joinin’ mine. Mornin’, noon, an’ night for years I’ve wanted to get into that man’s house an’ make it decent for him; wanted to milk the cow the right time o’ day; feed the horse; weed the garden; scrub the floor; wash the windows; black the stove.”

“How you do go on, Mandy!” exclaimed Mrs. Benson. “What diff’rence does it make to you how dirty he is, so long’s you’re clean?”

“It does make a diff’rence, an’ it always will. I hate to see the daisies growin’ so thick, knowin’ how he needs hay. I want to root ’em out same’s I did mine, after I’d been away three years in Lewiston. I hate to take my pot o’ beans out o’ the oven Saturday nights an’ know he ain’t had gumption enough to get himself a Christian meal. Livin’ alone ’s I do, Susan, things ‘bulk up’ in my mind bigger’n they’d ought to.”

“They do so,” agreed Susan; “an’ you mustn’t let ’em. You must come over to our house oftener. You know William loves to have you, an’ so do the boys. The Bible may insinuate we are our brother’s keeper, but we can’t none of us help it if he won’t *be* kept!—There, I must be gettin’ home. I’ve had considerable many reminders the last half-hour that it’s about time! It’s none o’ my business, Mandy, but you do spoil that cat, an’ the time’s not far off when he won’t be a mite o’ comfort to you. Of course, I’m too intimate here to take offense, but if the minister should happen to set in this chair when he calls, an’ see that cat promenade round an’ round the rockers an’ then rustle off into the settin’-room as mad as Cuffy, he’d certainly take notice an’ think he wa’n’t a welcome visitor.”

“Like mistress, like cat!” sighed Amanda. “Tristram an’ I get awful set in our ways.”

“Kind o’ queer, Mandy, namin’ a cat for your grandfather,” Mrs. Benson observed anxiously as she opened the door. “William an’ me don’t want you to get queer.”

“I ain’t got anything better ’n a cat to name for grandfather,” said poor Amanda, in a tone that set her friend Susan thinking as she walked homeward.

The summer wore along and there came a certain Tuesday different from all the other Tuesdays in that year, or in all the forty years that had gone before—a Tuesday when the Kimball side door was not opened in the morning. No smoke issued from the chimney all day. The rooster and his kidnapped hen flew up from the steps and pecked at the door panels vigorously. Seven o’clock in the evening came, then eight, and no light to be seen anywhere. The dog howled; the horse neighed; the cow lowed ominously in the closed barn. At nine o’clock Amanda took a lantern and sped across the field, found a pail in the shed, slipped into the barn, milked the cow, gave the beasts hay and water, and leaving the pail of milk on the steps, went quietly home again, anxious lest she had done too much, anxious also lest she had not done enough.

Next morning she stationed herself at her kitchen window and took account of her signs. The milk-pail was overturned on the steps, the rooster and hen perching on the rim, but there was no smoke coming from the chimney. She thought quickly as she did everything else. She waited long enough to make a cup of coffee, then she slipped out of her door and up to Kimball’s. Her apron was full of kindling, and on her arm she carried a basket with a package of herbs, a tiny bottle of brandy, one of cologne, some arrowroot and matches, a cake of

hard soap and a clean towel, bones for the dog and corn for the hen.

Caleb's door was unlocked. The dog came out of the shed evincing no desire to bark or bite. The kitchen was empty, and—she thanked the Lord silently, as she gave a hasty glance about—not as dreadful as she had anticipated. Untidy beyond words, bare, dreary, cheerless, but not repulsively dirty. She stole softly through the lower part of the house, and then with a beating heart went up the uncarpeted stairs. At the head was an open door that showed her all she expected and feared to find. The sun streamed in at the dusty, uncurtained window over the motionless body of Caleb Kimball, who lay in a strange, deep sleep, unconscious, on the bed. His hair was raven black against the pillow and the lashes on his cheeks looked more 'n a yard long, Amanda told Susan Benson. (She afterward confessed that this was a slight exaggeration due to extreme excitement.) She spoke his name three times, but he did not stir. She must get the doctor and send for William Benson, that was clear; but first she must try her hand at improving the immediate situation.

Stealing downstairs she tied on her apron and lighted a fire in the kitchen stove, with the view of making things respectable before gossipy neighbors came in. Her sister used to say that the minute Amanda tied on her apron things began to move and take a turn for the better, and it was so now. She poured a few drops of cologne into a basin of water, and putting the towel over her arm went upstairs to Caleb's bedside.

"I've done him wrong," she thought remorsefully as she noted his decent night-clothing and bedding. "He ain't lost his self-respect in all these years, and every soul in Bonny Eagle thought he was living like an animal!"

She bathed his face and throat and hands, then moistened and smoothed his hair without provoking a movement or a sound. He seemed in a profound stupor, but there was no stertorous breathing. Straightening the bedclothes and giving a hasty wipe to the tops of the pine bureau and table, she opened the window and closed the blinds. At this moment she spied one of the Thatcher boys going along the road, and ran down to the gate to ask him to send William Benson and the doctor as soon as possible.

"Tell them Miss Dalton says please to come quick; Caleb Kimball's very sick," she said.

"Don't you need mother, too?" asked the boy. "She's wanted to git into his house for years, and she'd do most anything for the chance."

"No, thank you," said Amanda pitilessly. "I can do everything for the present,

and Mr. Benson will probably want his wife, if anybody."

"All right," said the boy as he started off on a dog-trot. News was rare in Bonny Eagle, and Caleb Kimball was a distinguished and interesting figure in village gossip.

Amanda Dalton had never had to hurry in her life. That was one of her crosses, for there probably never was a woman who could do more in less time. It was an hour and a half before William Benson came, and in those ninety minutes she had swept the kitchen and poured a pail or two of hot soap-suds over the floor, that may have felt a mop, but certainly had not known a scrubbing-brush for years. She tore down the fly-specked, tattered, buff shades, and washed the three windows; blackened the stove; fed the dog and horse; milked the cow; strained the milk and carried it down cellar; making three trips upstairs in the meantime to find no change in the patient. His lids stayed down as though they were weighted with lead, his long arms lay motionless on the counterpane.

Amanda's blood coursed through her veins like lightning. Here was work to her hand; blessed, healing work for days, perhaps weeks to come. In these first moments of emotional excitement I fear she hoped it would be a long case of helpless invalidism, during which it would be her Christian duty to clean the lower part of the house and perhaps make some impression on the shed; but this tempting thought was quickly banished as she reflected that Caleb Kimball was a bachelor, and the Widow Thatcher the person marked out by a just but unsympathetic Providence for sick-nurse and housekeeper.

"She shan't come!" thought Amanda passionately. "I'll make the doctor ask me to take charge. William Benson shall stay here nights an' Susan will run in now an' then daytimes, or I'll get little Abby Thatcher to do the rough work an' keep me company; then her mother won't make talk."

"I don't know exactly what's the matter with the man," confessed the doctor, when he came. "There's a mark and a swelling on the back of his head as if he might have fallen somewhere. He hasn't got any pulse and he's all skin and bone. He's starved out, I guess, and his machinery has just stopped. He wants nursing and feeding and all the things a woman can do for him. The Lord never intended men-folks to live alone!"

"If they ain't got wit enough to find that out for themselves it ain't likely any woman'll take the trouble to tell 'em!" exclaimed Amanda with some spirit.

"Don't get stuffy, Amanda! Just be a good Christian and take hold here for a few days till we see whether we've got to have a nurse from Portland. Man's

extremity is God’s opportunity; maybe Caleb’ll come to his senses before he gets over this sickness.”

“I wonder if he ever had any senses?” said Amanda.

“Plenty,” the doctor answered as he prepared the medicines; “but he hasn’t used them for twenty years.—I’ll come back in an hour and fetch Bill Benson with me. Then I’ll stay till I can bring Caleb back to consciousness. We shall have to get him downstairs as soon as he can be moved; it will be much easier to take care of him there.”

The details of Caleb Kimball’s illness would be such as fill a nurse’s bedside record book. The mainspring of life had been snapped and the machinery refused to move for a long time. When he recovered consciousness his solemn black eyes followed Amanda Dalton’s movements as if fascinated, but he spoke no word save a faltering phrase or two at night to William Benson.

Meantime much had been happening below-stairs, where Amanda Dalton reigned supreme, with Susan Benson and Abby Thatcher taking turns in housework or nursing. William Benson was a painter by trade, and Amanda’s ingenious idea was to persuade him to paint and paper the Kimball kitchen before Caleb was moved downstairs.

This struck William as a most extraordinary and unnecessary performance.

“Israel in Egypt!” he exclaimed. “What’s the matter with you women? I never heard o’ such goin’s-on in my life! I might lay abed a thousand years an’ nobody’d paint my premises. Let Caleb git his strength back an’ then use a little elbow grease on his own house—you can’t teach an old dog new tricks, Susan!”

“’Pends on how old the dog is, an’ what kind o’ tricks you want to teach him,” Susan replied. “It’d be a queer dog that wouldn’t take to a clean kennel, or three good meals a day ’stead o’ starvation vittles. Amanda says it may be a kind of a turnin’-point in Caleb’s life, an’ she thinks we’d ought to encourage him a little.”

“Ain’t I encouragin’ him by sleepin’ on his settin’-room lounge every night an’ givin’ him medicine every two hours by the alarm clock? I’ve got my own day’s work to do; when would I paint his kitchen, I’d like to know?”

“We thought probably you’d like to do it nights,” suggested his wife timidly.

“Saul in Tarsus! Don’t that beat the devil?” ejaculated William. “Caleb Kimball ain’t done a good day’s work for years, an’ I’m to set up nights paintin’ his kitchen!” Nevertheless the magnificent impertinence of the idea so paralyzed his

will that he ended by putting on twelve single rolls of fawn-colored paper and painting the woodwork yellow to harmonize, working from eight to twelve several nights and swearing freely at his own foolishness.

By this time Amanda had made the downstairs chamber all tidy and comfortable for the patient. She had contributed a window shade and dimity curtains; Susan a braided rug and a chair cushion. The chamber (the one in which Caleb's mother had died) opened from the kitchen and commanded an enticing view of the fresh yellow walls and shining cook-stove. On the day before Caleb's removal Amanda sat on the foot of the bed and looked through the doorway with silent joy, going to and fro to move a bright tin dipper into plainer view or retire a drying dish-cloth to greater privacy.

Even Abby Thatcher was by this time a trifle exhilarated. She did not understand the situation very well, being of a sternly practical nature herself, but she caught the enthusiasm of the two women and scrubbed the kitchen floor faithfully every morning in order to remove the stains of years of neglect.

"You wouldn't think your old hen 'd be such a fool, Miss Dalton," she said; "but I kind o' surmised the reason she's been missin', an' I found her to-day in a corner o' the haymow sittin' on five eggs. Now, wouldn't you s'pose at her age she'd know better than to try an' raise chickens in October?"

"I'm afraid they'll die if it should be a cold fall, with nobody to look after 'em; but maybe I can take 'em home to my shed an' lend Mr. Kimball another hen." (Amanda's tone was motherly.) "I never like to break up a hen's nest, somehow; it seems as if they must have feelin's like other folks."

"I'd take her off quicker'n scat, an' keep takin' her off, till she got some sense," said Abby, with the Chinese cruelty of sixteen.

"Well, you let her be till Mr. Kimball gets well enough to ask; an' I think, Abby, you might clean up the dooryard just a little mite this mornin'," suggested Amanda. "If you could straighten up the fence an' find a couple of old hinges to hang the gate with, it would kind o' put new heart into Mr. Kimball when he's sittin' up an' lookin' out the window."

"Why didn't he put heart into hisself by hangin' his *own* gate, before he took sick?" grumbled Abby, reducing Amanda to momentary silence by her pitiless logic.

"Why didn't he, indeed?" echoed her heart gloomily, receiving nothing in the way of answer from her limited experience of men.

Caleb had spoken more frequently the last few days. When by the combined exertions of the Bensons and the doctor he had been brought down into his mother's old room, Amanda closed the kitchen door, thinking one experience at a time was enough for a man in his weak and exhausted condition. William Benson couldn't see any sense in this precaution, but he never did see much sense in what women-folks did. He wanted to show Caleb the new paint and paper immediately, and remark casually that he had done all the work while he was "night-nursin'."

The next morning Amanda had seized a good opportunity to open the door between the two rooms, straightway retiring to the side entry to await developments. In a few moments she heard Caleb moving, and going in found him half sitting up in bed, leaning on his elbow.

"What's the matter with the kitchen?" he asked feebly, staring with wide-open eyes at the unaccustomed prospect.

"Only fresh paint an' paper; that's William's work."

"O God, I ain't worth it! I ain't worth it!" he groaned as he hid his face in the pillow.

"Have you been here all the time?" he asked Amanda when she brought him his gruel later in the day.

"Yes, off an' on, when I could get away from my own work."

"Who found me?"

"I did. I knew by the looks somethin' was wrong up here."

"Somethin' wrong, sure enough, an' always was!" Amanda heard him mutter as he turned his face to the wall.

The next day he opened his eyes suddenly as she was passing through the room.

"Did you make that pie William Benson brought me last month?"

"What made you think I did?"

"Oh, I don't know; it looked, an' it tasted like one o' yours," he said, closing his eyes again. "If you know a woman, you can tell her pie, somehow!"

When had Caleb Kimball ever tasted any of her cooking? A mysterious remark, but everything he said sounded a trifle lightheaded.

His questions came back to her when she was waiting for William Benson at

twilight that same day.

Caleb had been sleeping quietly for an hour or more. Amanda was standing at the stove stirring his arrowroot gruel. The kitchen was still.

A smothered "*miaow*" and the scratching of claws on wood arrested her attention, and she went hurriedly to the door.

"Tristram Dalton; what *are* you up here for, away from your own home?" she exclaimed.

Tristram vouchsafed no explanation of his appearance, but his demeanor spoke louder than words to Amanda's guilty conscience, as he walked in.

"No shelter for me but the shed these days!" he seemed to say. "Instead of well-served meals, a cup of milk set here or there!"

He made the circuit of the kitchen discontentedly and finding nothing to his taste went into the adjoining room, and after walking over the full length of Caleb's prostrate form curled himself up in a hollow at the foot of the bed.

"I've neglected him!" thought Amanda; "but his turn'll come again soon enough," and she bent her eyes on the gruel.

The blue bowl sat in the pan of hot water on the stove, and she stirred and stirred, slowly, regularly, continuously, in order that the arrowroot should be of a velvety smoothness.

The days were drawing in, and the October sun was setting very yellow, sending a flood of light over her head and shoulders. She wore her afternoon dress of alpaca, with a worked muslin collar and cuffs and a white apron tied round her trim waist. She was one of your wholesome shining women and her bright brown hair glistened like satin.

Caleb's black eyes looked yearningly at her as she stood there all unconscious, doing one of her innumerable neighborly kindnesses for him.

She made a picture of sweet, strong, steady womanliness, although she did not know it. Caleb knew something extraordinary was going on inside of him, but under what impulse he was too puzzled and inexperienced to say.

"Amanda."

Amanda turned sharply at the sound of his voice as she was lifting the steaming arrowroot out of the water.

"Whose cat is this?"

“Mine.—Come off that bed, Tristram!”

“Don’t disturb him; I like to have him there.—Where’s Abby Thatcher?”

“She’s gone home on an errand; she’ll be back in fifteen minutes now.”

“Where’s William?”

“It’s only five o’clock. He don’t come till six. What can I get for you? Have you had a good sleep?”

She set the gruel on the back of the stove and went in to his bedside.

“I don’t sleep much; I just lie an’ think ... Amanda, ... now, they’re all away, ... if I get over this spell, ... an’ take a year to straighten up an’ get hold o’ things like other folks, ... do you think ... you’d risk ... marryin’ me?”

There was a moment’s dead silence; then Amanda said, turning pale: “Are you in your right mind, Caleb Kimball?”

“I am, but I don’t wonder at your askin’,” said the man humbly. “I’ve kind o’ fancied you for years; but you’ve always been way down there across the fields, out o’ reach!”

“I’m too amazed to think it out,” faltered Amanda.

“Don’t you think it out, for God’s sake, or you’ll never do it!” He caught at her hand as if it had been a life-line—her kind, smooth hand, the helpful hand with the bit of white cambric bound round a finger burned in his service.

“It was the kitchen that put the courage into me,” he went on feverishly. “I laid here an’ thought: ‘If she can make a house look so different in a week, what could she do with a man?’”

“I ain’t afraid but I could,” stammered Amanda; “if the man would help—not hinder.”

“Just try me, Amanda. I wouldn’t need a year—honest, I wouldn’t—I could show you in three months!”

Caleb’s strength was waning now. His head dropped forward and Amanda caught it on her breast. She put one arm round his shoulders to keep him from falling back, while her other hand supported his head. His cheek was wet and as she felt the tears on her palm, mutely calling to her strength, all the woman in her gathered itself together and rushed to meet the man’s need.

“If only ... you could take me ... now ... right off,” he faltered; “before anything

happens ... to prevent? I'd be good to you ... till the day I die!"

"I ain't afraid to risk it, Caleb," said Amanda. "I'll take you now when you need me the most. We'll just put our two forlorn houses together an' see if we can make 'em into a home!"

Caleb gave one choking sob of content and gratitude. His hand relaxed its clasp of Amanda's; his head dropped and he fainted.

William Benson came in just then.

"What's the matter?" he cried, coming quickly toward the bed. "Has he had a spell? He was so much better last night I expected to see him settin' up!"

"He'll come to in a minute," said Amanda. "Give me the palm-leaf fan. We're goin' to be married in a day or so, an' he got kind of excited talkin' it over."

"Moses in the bulrushes!" ejaculated William Benson, sitting down heavily in the nearest chair.

William Benson was not a sentimental or imaginative person, and he confessed he couldn't make head nor tail out o' the affair; said it was the queerest an' beatin'est weddin' that ever took place in Bonny Eagle; didn't know when they fixed it up, nor how, nor why, if you come to that. Amanda Dalton had never had a beau, but she was the likeliest woman in the village, spite o' that, an' Caleb Kimball was the onlikeliest man. Amanda was the smartest woman, an' Caleb the laziest man. He kind o' thought Amanda 'd married Caleb so 't she could clean house for him; but it seemed an awful high price to pay for a job. He guessed she couldn't bear to have his everlastin' whiteweed seedin' itself into her hayfield, an' the only way she could stop it was to marry him an' weed it out. He thought, too, that Caleb had kind o' got int' the habit o' watchin' Mandy flyin' about down to her place. There's nothin' so fascinatin' as to set still an' see other folks work. The critter was so busy, an' so diff'rent from him, mebbe it kind o' tantalized him.

The Widow Thatcher was convinced that Mandy must have gone for Caleb hammer 'n' tongs when he was too weak to hold out against her. No woman in her sober senses would paper a man's kitchen for him unless she intended to get some use out of it herself. "We don't know what the disciples would 'a' done," she said, "nor the apostles, nor the saints, nor the archangels; we only know what women-folks would 'a' done, and there ain't one above ground that would 'a' cleaned Caleb Kimball's house without she expected to live in it."

Susan Benson had a vague instinct with regard to the real facts of the case, but

even she mustered up courage to ask Amanda once how the wonderful matter came about.

Amanda looked at Mrs. Benson with some embarrassment, for she was not good at confidences.

“Susan, you an’ I’ve been brought up together, gone to school together, experienced religion an’ joined the church together, an’ I stood up with you an’ William when you was married, so ’t I’d speak out freer to you than I would to most.”

“I hope so, I’m sure.”

“Though I wouldn’t want you to repeat anything, Susan.”

“’Tain’t likely I would, Mandy.”

“Well, I’d no sooner got Caleb into a clean bed an’ a clean room an’ begun to feed him good food than I begun to like him. There’s things in human hearts that I ain’t wise enough to explain, Susan, an’ I ain’t goin’ to try. Caleb Kimball seemed to me like a man that was drownin’, all because there wa’n’t anybody near to put a hand under his chin an’ keep his head out o’ water. I didn’t suspicion he’d let me do it! I thought he’d just lie there an’ drown, but it didn’t turn out that way.”

“Well, it does kind o’ seem as if you’d gone through the woods o’ life to pick up a crooked stick at last,” sighed Susan; “though I will say, now I’ve been under Caleb Kimball’s roof, he’s an awful sight nicer man close to than he is fur off. So, take it all in all, life an’ men-folks bein’ so uncertain, an’ old age a-creepin’ on first thing you know, perhaps it’s for the best; an’ I do hope you’ll make out to be happy, Mandy.”

There was a quiver of real feeling in Susan Benson’s voice, though she made no movement to touch her friend’s hand.

“I’m goin’ to be happy!” said Amanda cheerfully. “I always did like plenty to do, an’ now I’ve got it for the rest o’ my life!”

“I only hope you can stan’ his ways, Amandy,” and Susan’s voice was still doubtful. “That’s all I’m afraid of; that you’re so diff’rent you can’t never stan’ his ways.”

“He won’t have so many ways when we’ve been married a spell,” said Amanda.

HULDAH THE PROPHETESS

"And they went unto Huldah the
Prophetess and communed with her"

Huldah Rumford leaned from her bedroom window as she finished plaiting her hair.

The crowing of the white Brahma rooster had interrupted her toilet and she craned her neck impatiently until she discovered that he had come from the hen-yard in the rear and established himself on the doorsteps, from which dominating position he was announcing his message.

"That means company coming, and I hope it's true," she said to herself, as she looked absent-mindedly in the old-fashioned looking glass, with its picture of Washington crossing the Delaware.

Her thoughts were evidently wandering, for she took her petticoat from a hook in the closet and pulling it over her head found, when she searched for the buttons in the waistband, that she had it on wrong-side out.

"I don't care!" she exclaimed, giving the unoffending garment an angry twitch, "but it does seem as if I was possessed! I can't keep my mind on my clothes long enough to get them on straight! I turned my petticoat yesterday, in spite of knowing it brings bad luck, but to-day I just won't take the chance."

The pink calico morning dress went on without adventure. Then she carefully emptied the water from the wash-bowl into the jar, wiped it neatly and hung the towel to dry; straightened the photograph of her deceased father in its black-walnut frame; shook the feather bed and tightened a sagging cord under the cornhusk mattress; took the candlestick from the light-stand by her bedside and tripped down the attic stairs two at a time.

Huldah was seventeen, which is a good thing; she was bewitchingly pretty, which is a better thing; and she was in love, which is probably the best thing of all, making due allowance, of course, for the occasions in which it is the worst possible thing that can happen to anybody.

Mrs. Rumford was in the kitchen frying doughnuts for breakfast. She was a comfortable figure as she stood over the brimming “spider” with her three-pronged fork poised in the air. She turned the yellow rings in the hissing fat until they were nut-brown, then dropped them for a moment into a bowl of powdered sugar, from which they issued the most delicious conspirators against the human stomach that can be found in the catalogue of New England cookery.

The table was neatly laid near the screen door that opened from the kitchen into the apple-orchard. A pan of buttermilk biscuits was sitting on the back of the stove, and half a custard pie, left from the previous night’s supper, held the position of honor in front of Mrs. Rumford’s seat. If the pie had been cereal, the doughnuts omelette, and the saleratus biscuits leavened bread, the plot and the course of this tale might have been different; but that is neither here nor there.

“Did you hear the Brahma rooster crowing on the doorstep, mother?” asked Huldah.

“No; but I ain’t surprised, for I can’t seem to keep my dish-cloth in my hand this morning; if I’ve dropped it once I’ve dropped it a dozen times: there’s company coming, sure.”

“That rooster was crowin’ on the fence last time I seen him, and he’s up there ag’in now,” said little Jimmy Rumford, with the most offensive skepticism.

“What if he is?” asked his sister sharply. “That means fair weather, and don’t interfere with the sign of company coming; it makes it all the more certain.”

“I bet he ain’t crowin’ about Pitt Packard,” retorted Jimmy, with a large joy illuminating his sunburnt face. “Pitt ain’t comin’ home from Moderation this week; he’s gone to work on the covered bridge up there.”

Huldah’s face fell.

“I’d ought to have known better than to turn my white skirt yesterday,” she sighed. “I never knew it to fail bringing bad luck. I vow I’ll never do it again.”

“That’s one o’ the signs I haven’t got so much confidence in,” said Mrs. Rumford, skimming the cream from a pan of milk into the churn and putting the skimmed milk on the table. “It don’t come true with me more ’n three times out o’ five, but there’s others that never fails. You jest hold on, Huldy; the dish-cloth and the rooster knows as much ’bout what’s goin’ to happen as your white petticoat does.”

“Jest about as much,” interpolated Jimmy, with his utterance somewhat choked

by hot doughnut.

Huldah sat down at the table and made a pretense of eating something, but her heart was heavy within her.

“What are you churning for on Friday, mother?” she asked.

“Why, I told you I am looking for strangers. It ain’t Pitt Packard only that I expect. Yesterday mornin’ I swept a black mark on the floor; in the afternoon I found two o’ the settin’-room chairs standin’ back to back, and my right hand kep’ itchin’ all day, so’t I knew I was goin’ to shake hands with somebody.”

“You told me ’t was the left hand,” said Jimmy.

“I never told you no such thing, Jimmy Rumford. Eat your breakfast, and don’t contradict your mother, or I’ll send you to bed quick ’s you finish eatin’. Don’t you tell me what I said nor what I didn’t say, for I won’t have it. Do you hear me?”

“You did!” responded Jimmy obstinately, preparing to dodge under the table in case of sudden necessity. “You said your left hand itched, and it meant money comin’, and you hoped Rube Hobson was goin’ to pay you for the turkey he bought a year ago last Thanksgivin’-time, so there!”

“So I did,” said the widow reflectively. “Come to think of it, so I did; it must ’a’ been a Wednesday my right hand kep’ itchin’ so.”

“And comp’ny didn’t come a Wednesday neither,” persevered Jimmy.

“Jimmy Rumford, if you don’t behave yourself and speak when you’re spoken to, and not before, you’ll git a trouncin’ that you’ll remember consid’able of a spell afterwards.”

“I’m ready for it!” replied the youngster, darting into the shed and peeping back into the kitchen with a malignant smile. “I dreamt o’ Baldwin apples last night.

‘Dream fruit out o’ season,
That’s anger without reason.’

I knew when I got up you’d get mad with me the first thing this morning, and I’m all prepared—when you ketch me!”

Both women gave a sigh of relief when the boy’s flying figure disappeared around the corner of the barn. He was morally certain to be in mischief wherever he was, but if he was out of sight there was one point gained at least.

“Why do you care so dreadfully whether Pitt comes or not?” asked Mrs. Rumford, now that quiet was restored, “If he don’t come to-day, then he’ll come a Sunday; and if he don’t come this Sunday, then he’ll come the next one, so what’s the odds? You and him didn’t have a fallin’ out last time he was home, did you?”

“Yes, if you must know it, we did.”

“Haven’t you got any common sense, Huldy? Sakes alive! I thought when I married Daniel Rumford, if I could stand his temper it was nobody’s business but my own. I didn’t foresee that he had so much he could keep plenty for his own use, and then have a lot left to hand down to his children, so ’t I should have to live in the house with it to the day of my death! Seems to me if I was a girl and lived in a village where men-folks is as scarce as they be here, I’d be turrible careful to keep holt of a beau after I’d got him. What in the name o’ goodness did you quarrel about?”

Huldah got up from the table and carried her plate and cup to the sink. She looked out of the window to conceal her embarrassment, and busied herself with preparations for the dish-washing, so that she could talk with greater freedom.

“We’ve had words before this, plenty of times, but they didn’t amount to anything. Pitt’s good, and he’s handsome, and he’s smart; but he’s awful dictatorial and fault-finding, and I just ain’t goin’ to eat too much humble-pie before I’m married, for fear I won’t have anything else to eat afterwards, and it ain’t very fattening for a steady diet. And if there ever was a hateful old woman in the world it’s his stepmother. I’ve heard of her saying mean things about our family every once in a while, but I wouldn’t tell you for fear you’d flare up and say Pitt couldn’t come to see me. She’s tried to set him against me ever since we began to keep company together. She’s never quite managed to do it, but she’s succeeded well enough to keep me in continual trouble.”

“What’s she got to say?” inquired Mrs. Rumford hotly. “She never had a silk dress in the world, till Eben Packard married her, and everybody knows her father was a horse-doctor and mine was a reg’lar one!”

“She didn’t say anything about fathers, but she did tell Almira Berry that no member of the church in good standing could believe in signs as you did and have hope of salvation. She said I was a chip off the old block, and had been raised like a heathen. It seems when I was over there on Sunday I refused to stand up and have my height measured against the wall, and I told ’em if you measured heights on Sunday you’d like as not die before the year was out. I

didn’t know then she had such a prejudice against signs, but since that time I’ve dragged ’em in every chance I got, just to spite her.”

“More fool you!” said her mother, beginning to move the dasher of the churn up and down with a steady motion. “You might have waited until she was your mother-in-law before you began to spite her. The first thing you know you won’t get any mother-in-law.”

“That’s the only thing that would console me for losing Pitt!” exclaimed Huldah. “If I can’t marry him I don’t have to live with her, that’s one comfort! The last thing she did was to tell Aunt Hitty Tarbox she’d as lief have Pitt bring one of the original Salem witches into the house as one of the Daniel Rumford tribe.”

“The land sakes!” ejaculated the widow, giving a desperate and impassioned plunge to the churn-dasher. “Now I know why I dreamt of snakes and muddy water the night before she come here to the Ladies’ Aid Club. Well, she’s seventy, and she can’t live forever; she can’t take Eben Packard’s money into the next world with her, either, and I guess if she could ’t would melt as soon as it got there.”

Huldah persevered with her confession, dropping an occasional tear in the dishwater.

“Last time Pitt came here he said he should have three or four days’ vacation the 12th of August, and he thought we’d better get married then, if ’t was agreeable to me. I was kind of shy, and the almanac was hanging alongside of the table, so I took it up and looked to see what day of the week the 12th fell on. ‘Oh, Pitt,’ I said, ‘we can’t be married on Friday; it’s dreadful unlucky.’ He began to scold then, and said I didn’t care anything about him if I wouldn’t marry him when it was most convenient; and I said I would if ’t was any day but Friday; and he said that was all moonshine, and nobody but foolish old women believed in such nonsense; and I said there wasn’t a girl in town that would marry him on a Friday; and he said there was; and I asked him to come right out and tell who he meant; and he said he didn’t mean anybody in particular; and I said he did; and he said, well, Jennie Perkins would, on Friday or Sunday or wash-day or any other day; and I said if I was a man I vow I wouldn’t take a girl that was so anxious as all that; and he said he’d rather take one that was a little too anxious than one that wasn’t anxious enough; and so we had it, back and forth, till I got so mad I couldn’t see the almanac. Then, just to show him I had more good reasons than one, I said, ‘Besides, if we should be married on a Friday we’d have to go away on a Saturday, and ten to one ’t would rain on our wedding-trip.’

“‘Why would it rain Saturday more than any other day?’ said he; and then I mistrusted I was getting into fresh trouble, but I was too mad to back out, and said I, ‘They say it rains more Saturdays in the year than any other day’; and he got red in the face and said, ‘Where’d you get that silly notion?’ Then I said it wasn’t any silly notion, it was Gospel truth, and anybody that took notice of anything knew it was so; and he said he never heard of it in his life; and I said there was considerable many things that he’d never heard of that he’d be all the better for knowing; and he said he was like Josh Billings, he’d rather know a few things well than know so many things that wa’n’t so.”

“You might have told him how we compared notes about rainy days at the Aid Club,” said her mother. “You remember Hannah Sophia Palmer hadn’t noticed it, but the minute you mentioned it she remembered how, when she was a child, she was always worryin’ for fear she couldn’t wear her new hat a Sunday, and it must have been because it was threatening weather a Saturday, and she was afraid it would keep up for Sunday. And the widow Buzzell said she always picked up her apples for pie-baking on Friday, it was so apt to be dull or wet on a Saturday.”

“I told him all of that,” continued Huldah, “and how old Mrs. Bascom said they had a literary society over to Edgewood that used to meet twice a month on Saturday afternoons, and it rained or snowed so often they had to change their meetings to a Wednesday.

“Then the first thing I knew Pitt stood up so straight he looked more than ten feet tall, and says he, ‘If you don’t marry me a Friday, Huldah Rumford, you don’t marry me at all. You’re nothing but a mass of superstition, and if you’re so scared for fear it will rain on your wedding-bonnet a Saturday, you can stay home under cover the rest of your life, for all I care. I’ll wash the top buggy, put the umbrella under the seat, and take Jennie Perkins; she won’t be afraid of a wetting so long as she gets it in good company.’

“‘You’re right,’ I said, ‘she won’t, especially if the company’s a man, for she’ll be so dumfounded at getting one of ’em to sit beside her she won’t notice if it rains pitchforks, and so far as I’m concerned she’s welcome to my leavings.’ Then he went out and slammed the kitchen door after him, but not so quick that I didn’t get a good slam on the sitting-room door first.”

“He’ll come back,” churned Mrs. Rumford philosophically. “Jennie Perkins has got a pug nose, and a good-sized mole on one side of it. A mole on the nose is a sure sign of bad luck in love-affairs, particularly if it’s well to one side. He’ll

come back.”

But, as a matter of fact, the days went by, the maple-trees turned red, and Pitt Packard did not come back to the Rumford farm. His comings and his goings were all known to Huldah. She knew that he took Jennie Perkins to the Sunday-School picnic, and escorted her home from evening meetings. She knew that old Mrs. Packard had given her a garnet pin, a glass handkerchief-box, and a wreath of hair flowers made from the intertwined tresses of the Packards and the Doolittles. If these symptoms could by any possibility be misinterpreted, there were various other details of an alarmingly corroborative character, culminating in the marriage of Pitt to Jennie on a certain Friday evening at eight o’clock. He not only married her on a Friday, but he drove her to Portland on a Saturday morning; and the Fates, who are never above taking a little extra trouble when they are dealing out misery, decreed that it should be one of the freshest, brightest, most golden mornings of the early autumn.

Pitt thought Portland preferable to Biddeford or Saco as a place to pass the brief honeymoon, if for no other reason than because the road thither lay past the Rumford house. But the Rumfords’ blinds were tightly closed on the eventful Saturday, and an unnecessarily large placard hung ostentatiously on the front gate, announcing to passers-by that the family had gone to Old Orchard Beach, and would be home at sundown. This was a bitter blow to the bridegroom, for he had put down the back of the buggy with the intention of kissing the bride within full view of the Rumford windows. When he found it was of no use, he abandoned the idea, as the operation never afforded him any especial pleasure. He asked Mrs. Pitt if she preferred to go to the beach for her trip, but she decidedly favored the gayeties of a metropolis.

The excitement of passing the Rumford house having faded, Jennie’s nose became so oppressive to Pitt that he finally changed places with her, explaining that he generally drove on the left side. He was more tranquil then, for her left profile was more pleasing, though for the life of him he could not help remembering Huldah’s sweet outlines, the dimple in her chin, her kissable mouth, her delicate ear. Why, oh, why, had she inherited her father’s temper and her mother’s gift of prophecy, to say nothing of her grandfather’s obstinacy and her grandmother’s nimble tongue! All at once it dawned upon him that he might have jilted Huldah without marrying Jennie. It would, it is true, have been only a half revenge; but his appetite for revenge was so dulled by satisfaction he thought he could have been perfectly comfortable with half the quantity, even if Huldah were not quite so uncomfortable as he wished her to be. He dismissed

these base and disloyal sentiments, however, as bravely as he could, and kissed Jennie twice, in a little stretch of wood road that fell in opportunely with his mood of silent penitence.

About two o'clock clouds began to gather in the sky, and there was a muttering of thunder. Pitt endured all the signs of a shower with such fortitude as he could command, and did not put up the buggy-top or unstrap the boot until the rain came down in good earnest.

"Who'd have suspicioned this kind of weather?" he growled as he got the last strap into place and shook the water from his new straw hat.

"I was afraid of it, but I didn't like to speak out," said Jennie primly; "they say it gen'ally does rain Saturdays."

Meanwhile Huldah lay in the spare room at the back of the house and sobbed quietly. Mrs. Rumford and the skeptical Jimmy had gone to Old Orchard, and Huldah had slipped out of the front door, tacked the obtrusive placard on the gate-post, and closed all the blinds in honor of the buried hopes that lay like a dead weight at the bottom of her heart.

She was a silly little thing, a vain little thing, and a spitfire to boot, but that did not prevent her suffering an appreciable amount, all that her nature would allow; and if it was not as much as a larger nature would have suffered, neither had she much philosophy or strength to bear it. The burden is fitted to the back as often as the back to the burden.

She frequently declared to herself afterwards that she should have had "a fit of sickness" if it had not been for the thunderstorm that came up on that never-to-be-forgotten Saturday afternoon. She had waked that morning with a dull pain in her heart—a dull pain that had grown keener when she looked from her attic window and saw the sun shining clear in the sky. Not a cloud sullied the surface of that fair blue canopy on this day of the faithless Pitt's wedding-journey. A sweet wind blew the tail feathers of the golden cock on the squire's barn till he stared the west directly in the eye. What a day to drive to Portland! She would have worn tan-colored low shoes and brown openwork stockings (what ugly feet Jennie Perkins had!), a buff challie dress with little brown autumn leaves on it, a belt and sash of brown watered ribbon (Jennie had a waist like a flour-barrel!), and a sailor hat with a bunch of yellow roses on one side—or would two brown quills, standing up coquettishly, have been more attractive? Then she would have taken a brown cloth shoulder-cape, trimmed with rows upon rows of cream-

colored lace, and a brown parasol with an acorn of polished wood on the handle. Oh, what was the use of living when she could wear none of this bridal apparel, but must put on her old pink calico and go down to meet Jimmy's brotherly sneers? Was there ever such a cruelly sunshiny morning? A spot of flickering light danced and quivered on her blue wallpaper until she could bear it no longer, and pinned a towel over it. She sat down by the open window and leaned dejectedly on the sill, the prettiest picture of spiteful, unnecessary misery that the eye of mortal man ever rested upon, with her bright hair tumbling over her unbleached nightgown, and her little bare feet curled about the chair-rounds like those of a disconsolate child. Nobody could have approved of, or even sympathized with, so trivial a creature, but plenty of people would have been so sorry for her that they would have taken sensible, conscientious, unattractive Jennie Perkins out of Pitt Packard's buggy and substituted the heedless little Huldah, just for the pleasure of seeing her smile and blush. There was, however, no guardian imp to look after her ruined fortunes, and she went downstairs as usual to help about the breakfast, wondering to herself if there were any tragedies in life too terrible to be coexistent with three meals a day and the dishes washed after each one of them.

An infant hope stirred in her heart when she saw a red sparkle here and there on the sooty bottom of the tea-kettle, and it grew a little when her mother remarked that the dishwater boiled away so fast and the cows lay down so much that she believed it would rain the next day. When, that same afternoon, the welcome shower came with scarce ten minutes' warning, Huldah could hardly believe her eyes and ears. She jumped from her couch of anguish and remorse like an excited kitten, darted out of the house unmindful of the lightning, drove the Jersey calf under cover, chased the chickens into the coop, bolstered up the tomatoes so that the wind and rain would not blow the fruit from the heavily laden plants, opened the blinds and closed the windows.

"It comes from the east," she cried, dancing up and down in a glow of childish glee—"it comes from the east, and it's blowing in on Jennie's side of the buggy!" She did not know that Pitt had changed places with his bride, and that his broad shoulder was shielding her from the "angry airt."

Then she flew into the kitchen and pinned up her blown hair in front of the cracked looking-glass, thinking with sympathetic tenderness how pretty she looked, with her crown of chestnut tendrils tightened by the dampness, her round young cheeks crimsoned by the wind, and her still tearful eyes brightened by unchristian joy. She remembered with naughty satisfaction how rain invariably

straightened Jennie Perkins's frizzes, and was glad, *glad* that it did. Her angry passions were so beautifying that the radiant vision in the glass almost dazzled her. It made her very sorry for Pitt too. She hated to think that his ill-temper and stubborn pride and obstinacy had lost him such a lovely creature as herself, and had forced him to waste his charms on so unappreciative and plain a person as Jennie Perkins. She remembered that Pitt had asked her to marry him coming home from the fair in a rainstorm. If he meant anything he said on that occasion, he must be suffering pangs of regret to-day. Oh, how good, how sweet, how kind of it to rain and support her in what she had prophesied of Saturday weather!

All at once a healing thought popped into her head. "I shall not live many years," she reflected—"not after losing Pitt, and having his mother crow over me, and that hateful Jennie Perkins, having the family hair wreath hanging over her sofa, and my wedding ring on her hand; but so long as I live I will keep account of rainy Saturdays, and find a way to send the record to Pitt every New Year's Day just to prove that I was right. Then I shall die young, and perhaps he will plant something on my grave, and water it with his tears; and perhaps he will put up a marble gravestone over me, unbeknownst to Jennie, and have an appropriate verse of Scripture carved on it, something like:

SHE OPENETH HER MOUTH WITH WISDOM;
AND IN HER TONGUE IS THE LAW OF KINDNESS

I can see it as plain as if it was written. I hope they will make it come out even on the edges, and that he will think to have a white marble dove perched on the top, unless it costs too much."

The years went on. Huldah surprised everybody by going away from home to get an education. She would have preferred marriage at that stage of her development, but to her mind there was no one worth marrying in Pleasant River save Pitt Packard, and, failing him, study would fill up the time as well as anything else.

The education forced a good many helpful ideas into pretty Huldah's somewhat empty pate, though it by no means cured her of all her superstitions. She continued to keep a record of Saturday weather, and it proved as interesting and harmless a hobby as the collecting of china or postage-stamps.

In course of time Pitt Packard moved to Goshen, Indiana, where he made a comfortable fortune by the invention of an estimable pump, after which he was known by his full name of W. Pitt Fessenden Packard. In course of time the

impish and incredulous Jimmy Rumford became James, and espoused the daughter of a wealthy Boston merchant. His social advancement was no surprise to Huldah and her mother, for, from the moment he had left home, they had never dreamed of him save in conjunction with horned cattle, which is well known to signify unexampled prosperity.

In course of time, too, old Mrs. Rumford was gathered to her fathers after a long illness, in which Huldah nursed her dutifully and well. Her death was not entirely unexpected, for Hannah Sophia Palmer observed spots like iron rust on her fingers, a dog howled every night under Almira Berry's window, and Huldah broke the kitchen looking-glass. No invalid could hope for recovery under these sinister circumstances, and Mrs. Rumford would have been the last woman in the world to fly in the face of such unmistakable signs of death. It is even rumored that when she heard the crash of glass in the kitchen she murmured piously, "Now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace," and expired within the hour.

Nineteen summers and winters had passed since Pitt Packard drove "her that was Jennie Perkins" to Portland on her wedding-trip. He had been a good and loyal husband; she had been a good and faithful wife; and never once in the nineteen years had they so much as touched the hem of the garment of happiness.

Huldah the Prophetess lived on in the old house alone. Time would have gone slowly and drearily enough had it not been for her ruling passion. If the first part of the week were fair, she was hopeful that there was greater chance of rain or snow by Saturday; if it were rainy, she hoped there would be a long storm. She kept an elaborate table showing the weather on every day of the year. Fair Saturdays were printed in red ink, foul Saturdays in jet-black. The last days of December were generally spent in preparing a succinct statement from these daily entries. Then in the month of January a neat document, presenting facts and figures, but no word of personal comment or communication, was addressed at first to Mr. W. P. Packard, and of late years to W. Pitt Fessenden Packard, and sent to Goshen, Indiana.

Mr. Packard was a good and loyal husband, as I have said, but there was certainly no disloyalty in the annual perusal of statistical weather tables. That these tables, though made out by one of the weaker sex, were accurate and authentic, he had reason to believe, because he kept a rigid account of the weather himself, and compared Huldah's yearly record with his own. The weather in Pleasant River did not, it is true, agree absolutely with the weather in

Goshen, but the similarity between Maine and Indiana Saturdays was remarkable. The first five years of Pitt's married life Huldah had the advantage, and the perusal of her tables afforded Pitt little satisfaction, since it proved that her superstitions had some apparent basis of reason. The next five years his turn came, and the fair Saturdays predominated. He was not any happier, however, on the whole, because, although he had the pleasure of being right himself, he lost the pleasure of believing Huldah right. So time went on until Mrs. Pitt died, and was buried under the handsomest granite monument that could be purchased by the sale of pumps. Not only were the funeral arrangements carried out with the liveliest consideration for the departed, but Mr. Packard abstained from all gay society and conducted himself with the greatest propriety. Nevertheless, when his partner and only confidential friend extolled Jennie's virtues as wife, housekeeper, companion, and church member, he remarked absently: "She was all that, Jim, but somehow I never liked her."

For two years after his bereavement Huldah omitted sending her weather statistics to Mr. Packard, thinking, with some truth, that it might seem too marked an attention from an attractive Maine spinster to a "likely" Indiana widower.

Matters were in this state when Mr. Packard alighted at the Edgewood station one bright day in August. He declined the offer of a drive, and soon found himself on the well-remembered road to Pleasant River. He had not trodden that dusty thoroughfare for many a year, and every tree and shrub and rock had a message for him, though he was a plain, matter-of-fact maker of pumps. There was no old home to revisit, for his stepmother had died long ago, and Jennie had conscientiously removed the family wreath from the glass case and woven some of the departed lady's hair into the funereal garland. He walked with the brisk step of a man who knew what he wanted, but there was a kind of breathless suspense in his manner which showed that he was uncertain of getting it. He passed the Whippoorwill Mill, the bubbling spring, the old moss-covered watering-trough, and then cut across the widow Buzzell's field straight to the Rumford farm. He kept rehearsing the subject-matter of a certain speech he intended to make. He knew it by heart, having repeated it once a day for several months, but nobody realized better than he that he would forget every word of it the moment he saw Huldah—at least, if the Huldah of to-day were anything like the Huldah of the olden time.

The house came in sight. It used to be painted white; it was drab now, and there was a bay-window in the sitting-room. There was a new pump in the old place,

and, happy omen, he discovered it was one of his own manufacture. He made his way by sheer force of habit past the kitchen windows to the side door. That was where they had quarreled mostly. He had a kind of sentiment about that side door. He paused a moment to hide his traveling-bag under the grapevine that shaded the porch, and as he raised his hand to grasp the knocker the blood rushed to his face and his heart leaped into his throat. Huldah stood near the window winding the old clock. In her right hand was a “Farmer’s Almanac.” How well he knew the yellow cover! and how like to the Huldah of seventeen was the Huldah of thirty-six! It was incredible that the pangs of disappointed love could make so little inroad on a woman’s charms. Rosy cheeks, plump figure, clear eyes, with a little more snap in them than was necessary for connubial comfort, but not a whit too much for beauty; brown hair curling round her ears and temples—what an ornament to a certain house he knew in Goshen, Indiana!

She closed the wooden door of the clock, and, turning, took a generous bite from the side of a mellow August sweeting that lay on the table. At this rather inauspicious moment her eye caught Pitt’s. The sight of her old lover drove all prudence and reserve from her mind, and she came to the door with such an intoxicating smile and such welcoming hands that he would have kissed her then and there, even if he had not come to Pleasant River for that especial purpose. Of course he forgot the speech, but his gestures were convincing, and he mumbled a sufficient number of extracts from it to convince Huldah that he was in a proper frame of mind—this phrase meaning to a woman the one in which she can do anything she likes with a man.

They were too old, doubtless, to cry and laugh in each other’s arms, and ask forgiveness for past follies, and regret the wasted years, and be thankful for present hope and life and love; but that is what they did, old as they were.

“I wouldn’t have any business to ask you to marry such a dictatorial fool as I used to be, Huldah,” said Pitt; “but I’ve got over considerable of my foolishness, and do say you will. Say, too, you won’t make me wait any longer, but marry me Sunday or Monday. This is Thursday, and I must be back in Goshen next week at this time. Will you, Huldah?”

Huldah blushed, but shook her head. She looked lovely when she blushed, and she hadn’t lost the trick of it even at thirty-six.

“I know it’s soon; but never mind getting ready. If you won’t say Monday, make it Tuesday—do.”

She shook her head again.

“Wednesday, then. *Do* say Wednesday, Huldy dear.”

The same smile of gentle negation.

He dropped her hand disconsolately.

“Then I’ll have to come back at Christmas-time, I s’pose. It’s just my busy season now, or I would stay right here on this doorstep till you was ready, for it seems to me as if I’d been waiting for you ever since I was born, and couldn’t get you too soon.”

“Do you really want me to marry you so much, Pitt?”

“Never wanted anything so bad in my life.”

“Didn’t you wonder I wasn’t more surprised to see you to-day?”

“Nothing surprises me in women-folks.”

“Well, it was because I’ve dreamed of a funeral three nights running. Do you know what that’s a sign of?”

Pitt never winked an eyelash; he had learned his lesson. With a sigh of relief that his respected stepmother was out of hearing, he responded easily, “I s’pose it’s a sign somebody’s dead or going to die.”

“No, it isn’t: dreams go by contraries. It’s a sign there’s going to be a wedding.”

“I’m glad to know that much, but I wish while you was about it you’d have dreamt a little more, and found out when the wedding was going to be.”

“I did; and if you weren’t the stupidest man alive you could guess.”

“I know I’m slow-witted,” said Pitt meekly, for he was in a mood to endure anything, “but I’ve asked you to have me on every day there is except the one I’m afraid to name.”

“You know I’ve had plenty of offers.”

“Unless all the men-folks are blind, you must have had a thousand, Huldah.”

Huldah was distinctly pleased. As a matter of fact she had had only five; but five offers in the State of Maine implies a superhuman power of attraction not to be measured by the casual reader.

“Are you sorry you called me a mass of superstition?”

“I wish I’d been horsewhipped where I stood.”

“Very well, then. The first time you wouldn’t marry me at all unless you could have me Friday, and of course I wouldn’t take you Friday under those circumstances. Now you say you’re glad and willing to marry me any day in the week, and so I’ll choose Friday of my own accord. I’ll marry you to-morrow, Pitt: and”—here she darted a roguishly sibylline glance at the clouds—“I have a water-proof; have you an umbrella for Saturday?”

Pitt took her at her word, you may be sure, and married her the next day, but I wish you could have seen it rain on Saturday! There never was such a storm in Pleasant River. The road to the Edgewood station was a raging flood; but though the bride and groom were drenched to the skin they didn’t take cold—they were too happy. Love within is a beautiful counter-irritant.

Huldah didn’t mind waiting a little matter of nineteen years, so long as her maiden flag sank in a sea of triumph at the end; and it is but simple justice to an erring but attractive woman to remark that she never said “I told you so!” to her husband.

TWO ON A TOUR

LOG-BOOK OF
CHARLOTTE AMALIA CLIFFORD

S.S. Diana, January 21, 1918
On the way to the Virgin Islands

I engrossed the above heading in my journal shortly after we left the dock in New York, but from what has occurred in the past few days I think my occasional entries in the log-book are likely to be records of Dorothea Valentine's love-affairs as they occur to her day by day, and as unluckily they are poured into my ear for lack of a better or more convenient vessel.

We are dear friends, Dolly and I. Her name is Dorothea, but apparently she will have to grow up to it, for at present everybody calls her Dolly, Dora, Dot, or Dodo, according to his or her sex, color, or previous condition of servitude. Dolly is twenty and I am thirty; indeed, her mother is only forty, so that I am rather her contemporary than Dolly's, but friendship is more a matter of sympathy than relative age, and Mrs. Valentine and I are by no means twin souls. As a matter of fact, that lady would never have noticed me, the private secretary of Clive Winthrop, a government official in Washington, had it not been that, through him and his sister, I had access to a more interesting group in society than had Mrs. Valentine, a widow of large means but a stranger in the Capital. Clive Winthrop is a person of distinction and influence, and Miss Ellen Winthrop, an old friend of my mother's, is one of the most charming hostesses in Washington, while I am in reality nothing but a paid scribe; the glad, willing, ardent, but silent assistant of a man who is serving the Administration with all his heart; but neither he nor his sister will have it so considered. I almost think that Miss Ellen Winthrop, still vivacious and vigorous at seventy, is ready to give up to me her place as head of the household if I consent to say the word; but I am not sure enough yet to say it; and because of that uncertainty I cannot trust myself in the daily company of the two persons most deeply concerned in my decision.

A sea voyage is the best thing in the world to blow away doubts or difficulties; it

also clears the air so that one can see one's course, whether it be toward the north of duty or the south of desire.

My work for a long time has been to report interviews, take stenographic records, and write hundreds of letters for Mr. Winthrop during the somewhat protracted discussion that preceded the acquisition of the Virgin Islands by the United States. It is odd that these tasks should have fallen to me, who added below Clive Winthrop's signature to many communications the typed initials C. A. C., for I have a special interest in these new possessions of ours, a very close and sentimental one, since I was born on St. Thomas, one of the Virgin Islands, and christened Charlotte Amalia after the little red-roofed town on the shore of the perfect harbor. My birth in St. Thomas was entirely unpremeditated, and I was taken away as soon as my mother was able to travel; nevertheless, I have always longed during the twelve years of my loneliness, without father or mother, to see the place where they were so happy in each other and so blissful in the prospect of my appearance.

I, then, have a right to this particular holiday and this opportunity to decide my future. Miss Dorothea Valentine, on the contrary, is a wholly unexpected, I will not say an unwelcome, companion, although when I wish to be thinking of my own problems she generally desires to discuss hers, which are trivial, though interesting and unique.

Everything about the girl piques interest; her beauty, her charm, her childlike gayety and inconsequence, which are but the upper current of a deeper sea of sincerity and common sense. Somebody says: "Ladies vary in looks; they're like military flags for a funeral or a celebration—one day furled, next day streaming. Men are ships; figureheads, about the same in a storm or a calm, and not too handsome, thanks to the ocean." The last phrases are peculiarly true of Clive Winthrop, who is sometimes called the ugliest man in Washington, yet who commands attention in any room that he enters because of his fine physique, his noble head, and his distinction of bearing and speech. Rugged he is, "thanks to the ocean," but he looks as if he could swim against the strongest current. On the other hand, it cannot be said that Dolly Valentine varies. She is lovely at breakfast, lovelier at luncheon, and loveliest at dinner when the dazzling whiteness of her neck and shoulders is revealed. Only a tolerably generous woman would suffer herself to be in the almost daily companionship of such a charmer, and that I am in that dangerous juxtaposition is her fault, not mine.

"You must take me with you on your sea voyage, Charlotte," she said. "I must get away from Washington and from mother. No, don't raise your eye-brows and

begin to scold before you know what I mean! I am not going to criticize my maternal parent, but I am so under her thumb at the moment that I am a flabby mass of indecision. I have no more mind than a jellyfish, yet I have to decide a matter of vital importance within a month. How can I make up a non-existent mind? Answer me that. Your life is so fixed and serene and settled; so full of absorbing work; you are so flattered and appreciated that you are like a big ship anchored in a safe harbor, and you can't think what it's like to be a silly little yacht bobbing about on the open sea!" (Such is the uncomprehending viewpoint of twenty toward thirty; the calm assumption that ladies of that mature age can have no love-affairs of their own to perplex them!)

"There is no need of your being a silly little yacht, Dolly!" I answered. "If you want to make a real voyage you have the power to choose your craft."

"Mother always chooses for me," she said with a pout. "She doesn't gag me and put me in irons and lead me up the gangplank by brute force, but she dominates me. I start out each morning like a nice, fat, pink balloon and by evening, though I haven't felt any violent pin-pricks, I am nothing but a little shrunken heap of shriveled rubber. You know it, Charlotte! You have seen me bouncing at breakfast and seen me flat at dinner!"

It was impossible not to laugh at her. "Don't be ridiculous!" I expostulated. "There is nothing between you and happiness but a little cloud so diaphanous that a breath of common sense would blow it away. Now read your magazine and let me write in my log-book. It is intended to be an informal report to my chief, of the islands we are to visit. We shall be at St. Thomas to-morrow morning and in the four days we have been journeying from New York the only topic of conversation in which you have shown the slightest enthusiasm is whether you should or should not marry Marmaduke Hogg!"

"Don't call him all of it, Charlotte," and she shuddered. "Mother is always doing it and I can't bear it!" whereupon she flounced about on her deck-chair and hid her face in her steamer-rug.

It was a foolish little love-story, that of Dorothea Valentine. Her mother was a mass of polite and unnecessary conventions; a pretty sort of person with a clear profile like that of a cold, old little bird. Her small, sharp nose resembled a beak; her eyes were like two black beads; and her conversation was a lengthy series of twitterings. Charlotte Clifford used to tell Miss Winthrop that if Mrs. Valentine had been a canary, people would have forever been putting a towel over her cage to secure silence. She was always idle, save for a bewildering succession of

reconstruction periods, apparently forestalling ruins that no one else could have prophesied. She dieted and reduced her hips; had violet rays applied to her scalp; had her wrinkles ironed out by some mysterious process. If you caught her before ten in the morning you would find her with crescent-shaped bits of court-plaster beside her eyes, in front of her ears, and between her brows. She was beautifully clothed, shod, gloved, massaged, manicured, and marcelled. She lived on the best sides of the streets and at the proper hotels. She answered notes, returned calls, and gave wedding presents punctiliously. She never used the telephone for invitations, nor had anything but contempt for abbreviations, carefully writing out Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, and Minneapolis, Minnesota, when she addressed her sisters in those cities. A mass of the most glaring virtues was Mrs. Reginald Valentine, impeccable and unassailable, with views on all subjects as rigid as the laws of the Medes and Persians. She had ordered her husband's life during their ten years of marriage, he being a gentle and artistic soul, and she had more or less directed his exercise, amusements, diet, as well as his political and religious opinions. She nursed him faithfully in his last illness, but when he timidly begged to be cremated instead of buried, she reminded him that it was a radical, ultra-modern idea; that the Valentine lot and monument were very beautiful; that there never had been any cremations in the family connection; and that she hoped he would not break a long-established custom and leave behind him a positively irreligious request. Various stories of Mr. Valentine's docility had crept into circulation, and it is said that on this occasion he turned his head meekly to the wall and sighed: "Very well, Emma! Do just as you think best; it's your funeral!"

Just how Dorothea blossomed on this stalk it is difficult to say. A bright-eyed, sunshiny, willful baby, she had grown into an unaffected, attractive, breezy young woman, outwardly obedient, inwardly mutinous. She was generally calm in her mother's presence, never criticizing her openly, and her merry heart kept her from being really unhappy in a relationship that many girls would have found intolerable. Beaux she had a-plenty and lovers not a few. As cream or honey to flies, so was Dorothea Valentine to mankind in general; but she took them on gayly and cast them off lightly, little harm being done on either side by the brief experience.

Of course the suits of some of the suitors had been hard-pressed by Mrs. Valentine. "You will go through the woods to find a crooked stick at last, Dorothea," she would say. "You don't know a desirable *parti* when you see one. You must have an extraordinary opinion of your own charms to think that you have only to pick and choose. Those charms will fade, rather prematurely, I fear,

and when your looked-for ideal comes along it may be that he will not regard you as flawless."

"I don't expect him to, mother! I only expect him to find my own flaws interesting."

"There is no certainty of that, my dear,"—and Mrs. Valentine's tone was touched with cynicism. "I had an intimate friend once, Clara Wyman, a very nice girl she was, who had been in love with my cousin Roger Benson for years. He seemed much attached to her and when time went by and nothing happened, I spoke to him plainly one night and asked him if he didn't intend to propose to her, and if not, what were his reasons. What do you suppose they were?"

Mrs. Valentine's tone implied that a shock was coming.

Dolly sat erect on her mother's Italian day-bed as one prepared.

"I'm sure I have no idea—how could I have?" she asked.

"Roger said that he didn't like her wiping her nose through her veil!!"

Dolly flung herself at length on the couch and buried her face in the cushions, her whole body shaking convulsively with silent mirth.

"You may laugh, Dorothea, but this incident, which I have told many times, shows how fantastic, erratic, despotic, and hypercritical men generally are. You will come to your senses some time and realize that no one is likely to bear with your perversities more patiently than Arthur Wilde or Lee Wadsworth, who have both wasted a winter dangling about you."

Dolly raised her head, patted her hair, and wiped her streaming eyes.

"I realize the dangerous obstacles between me and the altar as I never did before,"—and the girl's voice was full of laughter. "But I should have to lock Arthur Wilde in the basement whenever professors came to dinner. I couldn't marry Arthur's vocabulary, mother,—I couldn't!"

"He is a wonderful son, and a millionaire; he has three houses, four motors, and a steam yacht!"

"Sure, but that don't 'enthuse me,' 'tremenjous' as it sounds! (I am imitating Mr. Wilde's style of conversation.) And as for Lee Wadsworth he is bow-legged!"

"Lee's reputation is straight at any rate, and his income all that could be desired," responded Mrs. Valentine loftily. "I wish I could convince you, Dorothea, that there are no perfect husbands. You are looking for the impossible!

Indeed, I have always found men singularly imperfect, even as friends and companions, and in a more intimate relation they leave still more to be desired. You dismissed Sir Thomas Scott because he was too dictatorial, although you knew he intended to have the family diamonds reset for you."

"He'd have had them reset in Sheffield or Birmingham, but, anyhow, one doesn't marry diamonds, mother."

"One might at least make the effort, Dorothea! I notice that most of the people who disdain diamonds generally possess three garnets, two amethysts, and one Mexican opal."

Dolly laughed. "You know I did emulate the celebrated Mrs. Dombey, mother."

"I know you made a very brief and feeble effort to be sensible, and you might have conquered yourself had it not been for the sudden appearance of this young Hogg on your horizon."

"You shall not call him a young Hogg!" cried Dolly passionately. "It isn't fair; I won't endure it!"

"I thought that was his name," remarked Mrs. Valentine, placidly shifting a wrinkle-plaster from one place to another. "You wouldn't object if I had alluded to young Benham or young Wadsworth. You show by your very excitement how disagreeable his name is to your ears. It isn't a question of argument; Marmaduke Hogg is an outrageous, offensive name; if he had been Charles or James it would have been more decent. The 'Marmaduke' simply calls attention to the 'Hogg.' If any one had asked to introduce a person named Hogg to me I should have declined."

"I've told you a dozen times, mother, that the Wilmots' house-party was at breakfast when I arrived from the night train. There was a perfect Babel and everybody was calling him 'Duke.' He looked like one, and nobody said—the other. I didn't even hear his last name till evening, and then it was too late."

"'Too late!' Really, Dorothea, if you have no sense of propriety you may leave the room!"—and Mrs. Valentine applied the smelling-bottle to her birdlike nose as a sign that her nerves were racked to the limit and she might at any moment succumb.

"All I know is," continued Dorothea obstinately, "that he was the best-looking, the most interesting, the cleverest, the most companionable man in the house-party, or for that matter in the universe. You don't ask the last name of Orlando, or Benedick, or Marcus Aurelius, or Albert of Belgium."

“It wouldn’t be necessary.” (Here Mrs. Valentine was quite imperturbable.) “The Valentines have never been required to associate with theatrical people or foreigners. In some ways I dislike the name of Marmaduke as much as Hogg. It is so bombastic that it seems somehow like an assumed name, or as if the creature had been born on the stage. When coupled with Hogg it loses what little distinction it might have had by itself. One almost wishes it had been Marmalade. Marmalade Hogg suggests a quite nauseating combination of food, but there is a certain appropriateness about it.”

Dorothea’s face was flaming. “You will never allow Duke to explain himself, mother, nor hear me through when I attempt to make things clear to you. You never acknowledge that you know, but you do know, that Duke’s people were English a long way back, and ‘Marmaduke’ is an old family name. The Winthrops will tell you that Duke’s father and mother were named Forrest and that they changed it to Hogg to pacify an old bachelor uncle who wanted to leave Duke six thousand dollars a year. He had no voice in the matter; he was only twelve years old.”

“It was a very short-sighted business proposition, and your Duke must have been very young for his age,”—and Mrs. Valentine took another deep sniff of lavender. “Sixty thousand a year wouldn’t induce me to be named Hogg, and I shall never consent to have one in my family!”

Dorothea burst into tears, a most uncommon occurrence.

“You have dwelt so long on this purely immaterial objection,” she sobbed, “that you have finally inoculated me with something of your own feeling and made me miserable and ashamed. I dare say, too, I have hurt Duke’s pride by trying to give him a reason for your indifferent attitude, yet never having courage for the real, piffling explanation. I am mortified at my despicable weakness and I will overcome it by realizing how unworthy I am to bear Duke’s honorable, unstained name, even if it is Hogg. You might as well give up, mother! If the dearest, best, most delightful man in the world loves me, I shall marry him, name and all.”

“I do not regard it as settled,” replied Mrs. Valentine calmly. “The young man may not think you so desirable when he learns that my refusal to accept him as a son-in-law means that he must take you without any income. Your dear father must have foreseen some such tragedy when he left all his money in my care!”

“Duke will take me without a penny!” cried Dorothea hotly. “I would stake my life on that!”

“Don’t be melodramatic, Dorothea. We shall see in time. It is just possible that the young man may not be greedy, and so belie his name.” This was Mrs. Valentine’s last shaft as Dorothea walked out of the room with her chin in the air.

S.S. Diana, January 26, 1918

St. Thomas, and Charlotte Amalia, the little town for which I was named, looked so lovely when we landed early this morning that I felt a positive thrill of pride.

This halfway house of the sea, this gateway of the Caribbean, as it has been picturesquely called, seemed, as Dolly and I climbed the hills and the stone stairways, to materialize into a birthplace instead of a vague dream. A year ago, with the *Dannebrog*, the scarlet, white-crossed banner of Denmark, floating over the red Danish fortress on the water-front, I might have felt an alien, but the Stars and Stripes made me feel at home and I could only remember that my father and mother met and loved each other in this little Paradise, and that when I was born there they were the two happiest people under the sun. If they could have seen their daughter saluting the American flag so near the very spot in which she first saw the light, they would have been comforted, I am sure, instead of repining that they had both been taken away when she most needed their love and protection.

Such a view from Diana's deck as we crept into the wonderful harbor! A background of towering green hills and a dazzling blue of velvet sky and crystal sea, like that of Algiers, greeted our enchanted gaze! Like some of the coast towns of Italy, Charlotte Amalia is gay with color, and its white, red-roofed villas nestle among their luxuriant gardens and tropical foliage, standing out in a perfect riot of orange and yellow, blue and red.

Never, save in Venice, have I seen such a gorgeous array of color in a landscape.

Five hours we had in St. Thomas while the Diana put off hundreds of barrels of cement; but what with the gayly painted boats and their dark-skinned crews, the naked brown boys diving and swimming for pennies and dimes in the harbor, a walk to Bluebeard's Tower and Blackbeard's Castle, we were well amused. Particularly so was Dorothea, who disappeared from my side for a half-hour while I chatted with the captain, rejoining me in the tiny palm-bordered park near the landing.

She was glowing with happiness.

"What do you think, Charlotte?" she exclaimed. "I have a letter from Duke. Not written after we sailed, of course, for it couldn't have reached me. He bearded mother in her fortress the morning we left Washington. She was out, or said she was, but sent a note saying that I had gone on a journey and would be absent for a month. He went directly to the Winthrops for news and they told him I was with you and that if he wrote at once by special delivery he could reach the ship

before it left New York dock. He sent the letter to the captain and asked him to give it to me at St. Thomas for a surprise. The captain is such a nice man, though a good deal of a tease! Mr. Winthrop was delighted to hear you were not alone. Poor Miss Winthrop has influenza and they both wish they had taken this trip. It seems they are thinking of it just a little."

"The Winthrops coming on this voyage," I exclaimed. "Impossible! They hadn't an idea of it."

"Mightn't he want to interview the governor and look at the island?"

"He hasn't time. I chose this journey instead of another so that I could interview the governor and look at the islands myself."

"Well, I dare say there's nothing in it. Duke didn't speak of it as anything settled, and he may have misunderstood, his mind being on me. May I read you the letter —I mean parts of it?"

"I shouldn't expect to hear all of it," I replied dryly.

"Yet the bits I leave out are the ones that show him as he is," she said, looking off into the grove of palms. "Duke is so conscientious that until we succeed in melting mother—that would be a good title for a story, 'Melting Mother'!—and until she sanctions an engagement he won't let himself go, even on paper. So I get only a lovely sort of 'seepage' that breaks through in spite of him!"

"Skip the seepage," I said unsympathetically, "and give the news."

She re-read the first paragraphs to herself with a good deal of dimpling and with eyes that suffused with feeling now and then, and turning the page began to read aloud:

> Knowing that you were on the high seas far away from me, though safe with your charming Miss Clifford (Duke admires you extravagantly, Charlotte!), I concluded to burn my ships and have a straightforward talk with your mother, although you have repeatedly warned me that this was not the best method of approach and that only patience would win my cause. I sent up my card at the New Willard, and doubtless she would have refused to receive me, but, going from the office to one of the reception rooms to await her, I found her seated there with your Philadelphia aunt and another lady. There had evidently been confidences, so they scented trouble and took to their heels when I had been introduced to them somewhat informally as a friend of Dorothea's, my name not being mentioned.

I asked your mother, when we were left alone, if she had any objection to me other than my uneuphonious and suggestive surname.

She replied guardedly, no, or at least nothing in particular, though she might say without conceit that Dorothea might aspire to anybody, even the highest.

I cordially agreed, saying that if the male sex had any eye for beauty, charm or loveliness of character, Dorothea might marry not only anybody but everybody.

She said she thought persiflage was out of taste when the happiness of a mother's whole life was in question.

I begged pardon, but said it was necessary for me to whistle to keep my courage up, for the happiness of *my* whole life was in question.

She said that was beside the point and her daughter's happiness must also be considered.

I remarked that her daughter, to my infinite surprise and gratitude, assured me that her happiness lay in the same direction as my own.

She vouchsafed the information that Dorothea was a romantic fool.

I denied it.

She dealt what she considered to be a body-blow by affirming that your property would not be in your hands till you were twenty-one.

I replied that I didn't care if it didn't reach you till you were a hundred and twenty-one.

She said, "Don't be silly," and asked me if I had ever thought of changing my name back to Forrest from Hogg.

I inquired in return if she would mind the loss of six thousand dollars a year, supposing that I should take such a step.

She reflected and said that she should, but she would rather lose it than take the name; and that we could rub along on Dorothea's money, she supposed, if that was my idea of a pleasant life.

I hastened to say that I would relinquish the six thousand without a pang, confident that I could make a living anyway; but that it would be disloyal to my good old uncle, whose bounty had given me a college course, two years at Oxford and three at Harvard Law School. It had also

permitted me to give my services to the United States Shipping Board without compensation.

She said she thought it was very selfish in a government to accept a man's whole time and give him no remuneration; that the Secretary of the Treasury had only to say to the banks, "Let there be money," and there was money. There would be plenty for everybody if only the engravers and laborers at the Mint would not strike.

I reminded her that men were remunerated sufficiently in being allowed to serve their country in time of war.

She returned that she thought that point of view foolish and fantastic, but if she found, after a year, that her daughter's peace of mind was threatened, would I then change my name and live on Dorothea's income until I could establish myself in the practice of the law? She said that I must acknowledge that this was a ridiculously generous proposition and one that neither my talents nor my station in life merited.

I replied that the proposition meant to me that I should simply be selling myself and buying her daughter, and that I declined to accept it.

("Oh, Charlotte!" the girl interrupted with a catch in her throat, "don't you think that was splendid and clever, too?")

Your mother said that she wished to take the matter into consideration during your absence [so the letter ran on], and just as we were rising the Philadelphia aunt came in from one door and General X, Senator Y, and Lord Z from another.

They are at the moment three of the most significant figures in the moving picture of Washington society, and all women pursue them. They beamed at me as if they had been commandeered for that special purpose, and Senator Y said jovially: "How are you, Duke? Glad to see you. Are you free to dine with us?"

I hastily turned to your mother, saying: "I was just going to ask you and your sister if you would dine with me."

Lord Z, who was at Balliol with me, you remember, said: "Then perhaps you will allow us to come to your table for coffee, Hogg?" Your mother gazed at him, astounded that his noble tongue could utter the name. Then she actually and gracefully "fell" for the dinner, lured by the bait

of the post-prandial coffee with the distinguished trio, and the Philadelphia aunt kept things going serenely. She is a delightful person and will be a perfect companion for your mother when—you know when—when she needs one—and I no longer do!

("There never was a man who said things like Duke!" interpolated Dolly ecstatically.)

All would have gone swimmingly to the end had not a page suddenly entered the room bawling: "*Mr. Hogg wanted at the telephone: Mr. Hogg? Telephone message for Mr. HOGG!*"

Only capitals can give an idea of the volume of voice. My ear-drum, grown painfully sensitive since I met your mother, echoed and reëchoed with the tone as I threaded my way through the crowded room, followed by every eye, while I imagined people saying: "I wonder if he's called to the stockyard?" (It is queer, but I never felt this way in Oxford, for they still remember Hogg, the Scottish poet, and I hung myself to his revered coat-tails.)

The telephone message was from my secretary, and healed my wounded vanity, for it came from the British Embassy conveying the thanks of the Foreign Office for Mr. Hogg's friendly and helpful action in conducting negotiations for the chartering of ex-enemy ships lying in South American ports.

("You see what he is!" exclaimed Dolly, looking up from the letter with eyes full of unshed tears! "Of course he has five or six superiors in office but I suppose really that Duke's extraordinary talent keeps that whole shipping board going! You mark my words, Charlotte, when Duke gives up his position and goes to Plattsburg there'll be an absolute slump in that office! But just hear what follows; it is so discouraging!")

But when, glowing with the delight that always comes to me when I have any little tribute to lay with my love at your charming number-three feet, when I returned to my table your mother had gone to her room and the Philadelphia aunt remained to explain that she had been taken suddenly ill.

"It will all come right, Mr.—my dear boy!" she said. "My sister has one weakness, an abnormal sensitiveness to public opinion. She thinks constantly what people will say of this, that, or the other trifling thing, and in that way perpetually loses sight of the realities of life. There is a

> great deal of good in her that you have never seen because for the moment she is absolutely obsessed by her objection to your name and her conviction that Dorothea might and should marry a title. My sister married Reginald Valentine more for the effect on her future visiting-card than anything else, but Dorothea's father bequeathed his good looks, his sunny disposition, his charm, and his generous nature to his daughter. You have chosen wisely, my dear Mr.—boy, but not more wisely, to my mind, than Dorothea has!"
>
> So it ended, but I somehow hope that I may have converted your mother from an enemy alien to an armed neutral!

"There is nothing more of—of—general interest," said Dolly tearfully, as she slipped the letter in the envelope. "Aunt Maggie is a trump. Oh, Charlotte! if only you had ever had a love-problem like mine and could advise me! Duke always wondered that you never married."

(Dorothea ought to be cuffed for impertinence, but she is too unconscious and too pretty and lovable for corporal punishment.)

"Perhaps there may still be hope even at thirty!" I said stiffly.

"Oh, I didn't mean that! You might have anybody by lifting your finger! We only wonder you've never lifted it! But you could be happy only with a very learned and prominent man, you are so clever!"

"I'm clever enough to prefer love to learning, if I have to choose, Dolly, my dear."

"I'm so sorry you didn't get a letter, Charlotte," said the girl, snuggling sympathetically to my side on the bench.

This was more than flesh and blood or angel could bear!

I kissed her, and, shaking her off my shoulder vigorously, I said, as I straightened my hat: "As a matter of fact, Miss Valentine, I have had a letter every day since we left New York; a letter delivered before breakfast by the steward. You have had but one, yet you are twenty and I am thirty!"

"*Charlotte!*"

"Don't add to your impudence by being too astonished, darling," I continued. "Come! let's go and pick bananas and pineapples and tamarinds and shaddocks and star-apples and sapodillas!"

“I won’t budge a step till you tell me all about it!”

“Then you’ll grow to this green bench and have to be cut away by your faithful Marmaduke!”

“Is it a secret?”

“It doesn’t exist at all for you. You are not of age, Dolly.”

“I’m old enough to know the things one can learn by heart!” was Dolly’s comment.

When the Diana was leaving St. Thomas at sunset and we were well on our way to St. Croix, Dolly made a half confidence.

“You are not my chaperon, Charlotte, because in my hour of need I simply fastened myself to you like a limpet, or an albatross, or a barnacle, or any other form of nautical vampire that you prefer. Still, I might as well confess that I cabled to Duke, or wirelessed, or did something awfully expensive of that sort at St. Thomas while you were having that interminable talk with the captain, who, by the way, is married and devoted to his wife, they say.”

“That was foolish and extravagant, my child,” I answered. “I don’t know what you said, but I have the most absolute confidence in your indiscretion. I hope you remembered that all messages are censored in war-time?”

“I did, indeed,” she sighed. “I was never so hampered and handicapped in my life, but I think I have outwitted the censors. I wish I were as sure about—mother!”

S.S. Diana, January 26

St. Croix was delightful, with a motor-ride across the island from Frederikstad to Christianstad, where we lunched.

Dolly’s mind is not in a state especially favorable for instruction, but I took a guidebook, and, sitting under a wonderful tamarind tree, read her Alexander Hamilton’s well-known letter describing a West Indian hurricane, written from St. Croix in 1772.

We were with a party of Canadian acquaintances made on shipboard and greatly interested in our first visits to sugar plantations. Vast cane-fields of waving green stretched mile after mile on the right and on the left, making it seem incredible that a Food Commissioner need beg the sweet tooth to deny itself in the midst of such riotous plenty.

There was a dazzling glare from the white buildings of the town and the coral roads, but the moment we reached the outlying country all was verdant and restful. The beautiful hard roads ran like white ribbons over velvet hills and through rich valleys; tall windmills, belonging to the earlier days of sugar-making, rose picturesquely from the magnificent palms and other shade-trees; there were brilliant flowers and blossoming vines breaking through hedges here and there, and acres of pineapples and orange groves. Truly, our Canadian companions might wish us luck in our new possessions!

Later in the day

We have left the Virgin Islands now and at dawn we neared St. Kitts, of the Leeward group, anchoring a half-mile away from the landing and putting passengers ashore in the small boats that ranged themselves near the steamer. There was a very bedlam of chatter, argument, and recrimination among the black boatmen, mounting at times to furious invective in a patois we failed wholly to understand, for though the majority of the natives speak English on all the islands, whether Dutch, French, or British, they use a language of their own vintage on these undress occasions. I could see Dolly's bright head and laughing eyes peeping through her porthole, nodding good-morning to me as I viewed the scene from my own little stateroom opposite hers.

The St. Kitts boatmaster was a superb personage in white linen uniform and cap. He stood at the top of the steps lowered from our steamer to the ocean, and from that serene height of power commanded his clamorous and refractory legions.

It was his voice that called me irresistibly from my berth and kept my ears, as well as my eyes, glued to the porthole of my cabin. It was a deep, rich barytone, as full of color as his own native skies and sea. The white cap set off his dark skin, and a pair of eyes that shot lightnings of authority gleamed from under his vizor. He ought to have been singing the "Pagliacci" prologue at the Metropolitan Opera House, but instead he was calling resonantly (his private megaphone seemed to be located in his own throat): "*Don't crowd, Edward.... Push in, Victoria.... Get away, George.... Come nearer, come nearer, Mary.... Show your number, Albert, or meet me in court to-morrow at eleven!*"

As a matter of fact, these were the names painted on the boats crowding and jamming their way to the most favorable places for securing passengers or freight; but the quality of his voice made it seem as if, in calling Victoria, Edward, George, Mary, and Albert, he were summoning a corporeal bevy of kings and queens to do his instant bidding. The excitement reached its climax

when an aged bishop descended the stairway, which was under some circumstances as perilous as a ladder. The bishop's quaint hat and gown and hood of various colors made him seem like a benign figure in comic opera; and perhaps because of his dignity or his multiplicity of luggage, all the boats ardently desired him as a passenger. Two green boxes, carrying much information painted in white on the sides, gave us all details of his rank, ancestry, and place of residence. These were projected down the stairway and then followed an imposing procession of servitors bearing potted plants, packages done up in linen cloth, baskets of eggs, limes, lemons, grapefruit, a canary in a cage, some white mice, and a Persian cat; the last three, it is needless to say, being in separate crates.

Majestic being, that St. Kitts boatmaster; never more impressive than when he successfully landed a bishop of the isles! Dolly and I recalled the "Admirable Crichton" in Barrie's whimsical play, who, as butler in a titled English family, was wrecked with the entire household on a desert island. It needed only the emergencies of twenty-four hours to establish him as the dominant intellectual force and the practical governor of the sadly inefficient earls, countesses, ladies, and honorables; and before long he assumed the authority properly belonging to him. That the earl's daughter finally fell in love with him seemed not so much dramatic license as a tribute to his obvious superiority. In London the lady would have been criticized as marrying beneath her; on the desert island it actually appeared as if she were doing particularly well for herself; indeed, Dolly confessed that though she would prefer marrying Marmaduke Hogg she would rather be wrecked in the company of the St. Kitts boatmaster.

S.S. Diana, Sunday, January 27

After breakfast, on our way to anchor at Antigua for the night, we saw in the distance the towering cone of Nevis, the "Gorgeous Isle" of Alexander Hamilton's birth and the famous scene of Lord Nelson's marriage. It has fallen from its proud estate of former years into poverty and neglect, but it is still marvelously beautiful to the eye. We sat on deck reading, or at least glancing drowsily over the pages of our books to the sapphire sea and the emerald forests of the island shores with a never-ceasing delight. There were three Roman Catholic priests on board, also four Protestant missionaries, one of them with a wife and a family of charming children—Samuel, Naomi, Esther, Daniel. Piously they were named and never once did they bring contempt on the Holy Scriptures! From below in a far end of the boat we could hear echoes of gospel hymns in some little cabin where a Sunday-morning service was being held.

Dorothea gave a deep sigh.

“It is all so peaceful, Charlotte! One day just like another and all beautiful and tranquil. We haven’t seen anybody hurry since we left New York. Do you remember Rudyard Kipling saying, when he came back there after a long absence, that he was afraid to step slowly lest the man behind him should walk up his back? Nobody ever seems nervous in these islands. The natives can be ragged and hungry without being much concerned. Work never appears to be a delight to them for its own sake, but only as a means to get food. I feel slip—slip—slipping into a heavenly state of coma. Does anything ever stir the tropics except hurricanes and earthquakes, I wonder? How can women fight for suffrage in this climate? How can a man be awakened to great ambitions?”

“Alexander Hamilton was born on Nevis and passed all his boyhood and youthful days on what is now our own St. Croix,” I said.

“Yes, but he wasn’t Washington’s aide-de-camp nor secretary of the treasury in the tropics!”

“True; nevertheless, when he was Nicholas Cruger’s bookkeeper at the age of twelve he wrote to an American friend: ‘I contemn the groveling condition of a clerk to which my fortunes condemn me, and I would willingly risk my life, though not my character, to exalt my station.... My youth excludes me from any hope of immediate preferment, but I mean to prepare the way for futurity.’ You see the yeast was stirring, even in the tropics, Dolly!”

“Well, I feel no yeast stirring in me,” she said languidly. “All the morning I have been trying to recapture a certain ‘Ode to a Cow’ written by a man of action in a country hotel where mother and I were sojourning last summer. I could have echoed it when I first regarded the inhabitants of these islands, and now anybody might say it of me, for I grow more and more cow-like with every passing day. It runs this way:

“‘ODE TO A CUD-CHEWING COW

“‘Why, Cow, art thou so satisfied,
So well content with all things here below,
So meek, so lazy, and so awful slow?
Dost thou not know that men’s affairs are mixed?
That grievously the world needs to be fixed?

That nothing we can do has any worth?
That life is care and trouble and untowardness?
Prit, Cow! This is no time for idleness!
The cud thou chewest is not what it seems.
Get up and moo! Tear round and quit thy dreams!’”

By this time Dorothea was asleep. Her book slid to the floor, I shaded her face with my green umbrella, pulled down her muslin frock over her pretty ankles, and gave myself up to vagrant thoughts of her probable future.

Sunday on shipboard is a good day for reflections and heart-searchings. My own problem, after all, is not so baffling as Dolly’s. She is as loyal as a charming and sensible girl can be to a mother like Mrs. Valentine, whose soul, if the truth were told, is about the size of a mustard-seed. A frivolous, useless, bird-minded woman is Dolly’s mother; a woman pecking at life as a canary pecks at its cuttlefish, simply to sharpen its bill. How the girl can respect her I cannot imagine! I suppose flesh calls to flesh and she loves her without too much analysis, but they seem to have come to the parting of the ways. It is Dolly’s highest self that is in love with Marmaduke Hogg, and I don’t believe she will sacrifice it to a maternal whim and call it filial obedience. Perhaps the absence that makes the heart grow fonder is working like a philter in this journey planned by Mrs. Valentine with a far different purpose.

“Let her go with you, Charlotte,” she begged me with tears in her eyes. “I must get her away from this attractive but undesirable young man! That absurd uncle who didn’t want his name to die out must have been a lunatic or an imbecile. Why shouldn’t such a vulgar name become extinct? And to think that my exquisite Dorothea—whose figure and eyelashes have been remarked by royalty—to think that she should be expected to graft herself on to that family tree of all others! To think that she may take that name herself and, for aught we know, add half a dozen more to the list; all boys, probably, who would marry in course of time and produce others, piling Hoggs on Hoggs, as it were! It is like one of those horrible endless chains that are condemned by the government!”

I gave way to peals of laughter at this impassioned speech, evidently annoying Mrs. Valentine, who expected sympathy. I tried to placate her with reference to the poet of the name which had none but delightful associations in Scotland.

“Then if they choose to defy me and marry each other, let them go and live in Scotland!” she snapped.

“Would you have minded Dolly’s marrying Lord Bacon?” I asked.

This gave her food for thought.

“No,” she said reflectively, “for, of course, he was a lord, which is something.”

“But how about the associations?”

“I can’t explain, but somehow they are not as repulsive to me,” she insisted. “I always think of bacon cooked, not raw, and—the other is alive!”

As for my own difficulty, it is, after all, a conventional one. I cannot bear the idea of marrying my employer; a man known by sight and reputation to everybody in Washington, while I am a relatively unknown person without fortune, kith, or kin. The thought brings to mind sensational headlines in cheap newspapers regarding the wedding of some aged millionaire with his youthful stenographer, and the consequent alarms of his household; or the alliance of some scion of a wealthy house with a trained nurse of obscure lineage and vaulting ambition. I am all alone in the world, and though my father, who died when he was only five and twenty, left me but the barest support, I have gloried in my independence and rejoiced in my modest successes.

My people on both sides were of good stock. Even the Winthrops could climb my family tree and find no bad fruit on it, but the world will say: “What a splendid match for Charlotte Clifford.” ... “I wonder how Ellen Winthrop will take it?” ... “I shouldn’t have thought Clive Winthrop would marry his secretary, somehow, though there’s nothing against her; but he could look higher!”

The world would be quite right. It is a splendid marriage for Charlotte Clifford, and Clive Winthrop could look higher. He is my superior and that is the reason I love him. That he loves me proves that there is something in me that will rise to his level. All the same, I wrote him when I came away that I could never cross the bridge between us (there is a bridge, although he does not see it) until I was no longer his secretary and until I was sure his sister would welcome me into the household that has been so harmonious and delightful to every human being that has ever crossed its threshold. Nobody could equal Ellen Winthrop as a hostess, with her fine, spirited face, lovely even at seventy; her gift of repartee, her stately manner, her simple, trailing dress, always of black or gray, and always reaching the floor, when most of the feminine world looks, in its best clothes, as if mounted on stilts, with a skimpy, semi-detached tail wriggling its silly length behind! I could never scale the heights on which the splendid Ellen perpetually dwells, but I could sit at the foot of them and admire with all my heart, and perhaps that attitude, if fully understood, might win her affection.

S.S. Diana, January 28, 1918

At Antigua we anchored and took a steam launch to see the town, where we visited a very fine sugar-cane factory, watching the whole process from the cane-field to the market.

We did not land at Guadeloupe, the hour not being favorable and the stay being too brief to compensate for the effort involved. But this morning at eight we approached Dominica, the largest of the Leeward group, the loftiest of the Lesser Antilles, and the loveliest—if one could or ought to make comparison—the loveliest of the West Indian Isles. The guidebook calls it "The Caribbean Wonderland," and Dolly and I were not disposed to quarrel with the phrase, after hanging over the deck-rail for an hour before breakfast and marveling at the beauty of the view. Mountains shimmered in the distance like visions seen in dreams, mountains like towering emeralds springing from a sapphire sea! We passed tiny hamlets, half-hidden in lime orchards, and cocoa-groves with yellow patches of cane gleaming here and there against a background of forest. As we drew nearer we could see white torrents dashing tempestuously down through green valleys, for Dominica has a too plenteous water-supply, since in some districts three hundred inches a year is the average rainfall. It rained seven times in the three hours that we passed on shore, but the showers were gentle ones, and we found generous shelter in the wonderful Botanical Garden, where we spent most of our time.

Nature is sometimes a kindly mother; often she wears a tragic mask, and now and then she indulges in melodrama; but I never conceived the possibility of her having a sense of humor until we witnessed her freakish mood in the Dominica garden. There were the usual varieties of magnificent palms and brilliant flowering shrubs; but the joy of joys was the Sausage-Tree, around which we walked in helpless mirth at the incredible veracity of the imitation. It reached a goodly height, and had a splendid girth and circumference of shade; but no factory in Bologna or Frankfort, or any other possible birthplace of the real article, could rival this amazing, this funny, tree in fertility. Its product was just a trifle large, save for the omnivorous lover of sausage; but in other respects it was a faithful copy of the original—unless, indeed, the first sausage-maker borrowed the idea from the tree, instead of the other way about. These vegetable sausages hung in hundreds of strings and festoons and clusters from the topmost to the lowest branches. Because of the way they hung, the way they were strung, their shape and color, and the very manner in which the skin was neatly drawn over each one and fastened, no one possessing a sense of the ridiculous but would sit

down under the tree and laugh at the joke. Oddly enough we could find no pictorial postcard of this phenomenon to bring home for the enlivening of winter evenings, though we bought a capital one of the Cannon-Ball Tree, just as unique in its way but not so absurd.

Dorothea was enchanted with Dominica, and kept exclaiming every few minutes: “Oh, if only Great Britain would sell us this island! I think I’d choose to live in Dominica, because if I had a sausage-tree in my garden I should laugh every day, and the children wouldn’t need any playthings.”

S.S. Diana, February 1, 1918

We have had a glimpse of France through a day at Martinique. The principal feature of our visit was a wild motor-drive up an eighteen-hundred-foot mountain. It was a steady climb from glory to glory, with tropical forests on every side. Our method of progress was not quite serene, for there was not a sufficient number of cars to satisfy the demand.

After a long wait Dolly and I took a small mongrel sort of motor that had been refused by all the Diana’s passengers. The Creole driver, handsome, debonair, persuasive, and fluent, though unintelligible, assured us that he had ascended and descended the mountain hundreds of times, a fact only too obvious to one who examined his means of transportation. None of the tires matched, and two of them looked like wounded soldiers just home from the front, displaying patches of adhesive plaster and bandages of cotton and woolen rags of every color, with an occasional inset of an alien material into the rubber. One could catch a glimpse of a tin tomato-can neatly introduced in the place of some vital bit of machinery; a Waterbury alarm-clock figured in an unexpected position, apparently adding its power to the engine; and there were stout ropes, here and there, which I never observed before in the rigging of any motor.

I hesitated to enter, for the future, though not absolutely certain, looked full of hope and promise; but Dolly was firm and reckless. I am ten years her senior, but still young to be called a “’fraid cat” with impunity; so I finally mounted the vehicle. The driver gave a gay, insouciant tap to a front tire, as much as to say: “Courage, mon enfant! C’est la dernière fois!”—then flung himself into his seat, and, blowing a horn, started his base-hospital up the mountain at a breakneck pace. The motor’s own horn was out of commission, but there was a substitute by the driver’s side. It was easy for him to blow it because he had no particular use for either of his hands, his steering being left largely to chance. Repeated expostulations in boarding-school French only elicited a reply that sounded like:

“Soyez tranquilles, mesdames. You speak American? Bien! Leezy est parfaitement docile!”

This conveyed no idea to me, although his broad grin convinced me that in his own opinion it was a subtle witticism. At length, however, it burst upon Dolly, who went off into irrepressible gales of laughter.

“You have lived so continuously in a rarefied Winthrop atmosphere, Charlotte, that you haven’t any modern vocabulary. He is telling you the pet name of his car, to give you confidence. Nobody ever dies in a tin ‘Lizzie.’ Not only is the machine indestructible, but the people that ride in it. Isn’t the driver a witty, reckless darling?”

He was, indeed; and, incredible as it may seem, Lizzie ascended and descended the mountain in safety—though only because a kind Providence watched over us. Then, when we had paid the reckless, danger-proof darling twice the sum he should have demanded, we sat on a bench in the Savanna, where we could be quietly grateful that we were alive and watch the coming and going of the Fort-de-France townspeople, so unmistakably French, with the bright costumes of the women, the pose of their turbans or hats, their sparkle and chatter and vivacious gestures.

Here in the Savanna travelers always gather to look at the marble statue of the Empress Josephine, which is called the greatest work of art in the West Indies. That is not fatuous praise, perhaps, but the figure needed the hand of no master sculptor to hold the eye and captivate the imagination. It is mounted on a huge pedestal and is of heroic size, the white glitter of its marble enhanced by its truly magnificent setting, a circle of towering royal palms. There she stands, the lovely Creole woman of Martinique, forever looking at “Trois Islets,” as if she were remembering her birth in an overseer’s shack and her girlhood passed in a sugar-mill. Straightway the crowds of native men and women chaffering in the market-place, the mothers holding up their crowing babies to the statue, the nursemaids and groups of playing children, all vanished, and we re-lived in spirit poor Josephine’s past, thrilling anew at the remembrance of her romance, her triumph, and her bitter sorrow—the Creole girl who crossed the sea to become Empress of France and share a throne with Napoleon, but who sailed back to her island home a brokenhearted woman.

Good-bye, Martinique, land of Josephine; and land of St. Pierre, the scene of one of the greatest tragedies of modern times, when the fury of Mont Pelée engulfed the growth of centuries and buried forty thousand human creatures in its scalding

lava. St. Lucia, of the Windward group, to-morrow, and then Barbados, from whence the Diana goes on to Demerara and returns a week or so later, so that we are able to rejoin her, taking up our former comfortable cabins and our much-liked captain.

S.S. Diana
Between Barbados and New York
February 11

Here we are again on our homeward trip, making fewer landings and briefer stops, principally to take on passengers and thousands of barrels of limes.

Barbados, with its charming hotel at Hastings, was an unalloyed delight; and Dorothea, who had determined to live in each of the islands as it came along, would finally have transferred her allegiance for good and all had it not seemed more loyal for an American to choose one of our own possessions and "grow up with the country." We found ourselves in the midst of pleasant, even distinguished, society—British officials, ex-governors, and judge-advocates of the various islands, English and Canadian soldiers on sick-leave, and officers commanding the U-boat chasers in near-by waters. Dorothea danced nightly and held court daily on the broad piazzas, reminding me of Rudyard Kipling's fascinating heroine in an Indian army post, who, whenever she appeared, caused the horizon to become black with majors. Her head and heart remained true to the absent Marmaduke—I am not so sure about her dancing feet!

Now that that experience is over, with the many others, we are at sea and quiet again, with one tranquil day just like the other.

"What a honeymoon journey it would make, Charlotte!" said Dolly one moonlight evening on deck. "It is so difficult to grow in knowledge of people in New York or Washington. One doesn't even know one's self."

"All journeys must be good for honeymooners, don't you think?"

"Yes, in a way; but some places are created for lovers and newlyweds, who are, after all, only explorers, Charlotte, forever discovering new lands and annexing new territories."

"Yes; and sometimes falling into the hands of savages and cannibals, I suppose."

"Yes; that must be terrible—the awakening to find that one has been mistaken in a man!" sighed Dolly.

"I dare say we ought to worry lest men be mistaken in us; it might happen, you

know.”

“Your mind is so logical, Charlotte! However, this voyage wouldn’t have to be idealized to meet the needs of honeymooners. In a Vermont village where I sometimes stay I remember a girl who had to be married on Sunday because she could not give up her position as telegraph-operator till Saturday night. That was dull enough in all conscience, but she was married in her high-school graduating dress, and went to her grandmother’s house, ten miles away, for her wedding-journey. I think it required considerable inward felicity to exalt that situation!”

I sat upright in my steamer chair. “Dorothea,” I said sharply, “you have been manufacturing conversation for the last five minutes—just killing time for fear that I should ask you questions. Is there anything on your mind? You have been absentminded and nervous for days.”

“Your imagination is working overtime, Charlotte,” she answered. “We are nearing home, that is all; and life presses closer.”

I could not gainsay her, for every mile of ocean crossed makes my heart beat faster. I seem to be living just now in a sort of pause between my different lives. There is the heaven of my childhood in the vague background; then the building of my “career,” if so modest a thing can be called by so shining a name; then the steady, half-conscious growth of a love that illumines my labors, yet makes them difficult and perplexing; and now there is a sense of suspended activity, of waiting, with a glimmering air-castle rising like an iridescent bubble out of the hazy future. Sometimes there are two welcoming faces at a window and sometimes the indistinct figure of a woman stretching out a forbidding hand, my chief’s sister, who may not want a third person in the family!

S.S. Diana, February 13, 1918

Dolly went on the bridge this afternoon and stayed a half-hour with the captain, giving no reason save that she liked to talk with him, which seemed plausible, but did not satisfy me. At bedtime I discovered her unpacking and laying out in her upper berth a dazzling toilet for our landing at St. Thomas to-morrow. She blushed when I looked in upon her.

“Do dress ‘up to me,’ Charlotte,” she coaxed. “I don’t want to be conspicuous. Wear your gray georgette and the broad hat with the roses.”

“Why this sudden display of vanity and good clothes?”

“Hasn’t your letter of introduction to Governor Oliver brought us an invitation to

luncheon at Government House?”

“Yes; but I don’t suppose it is a banquet.”

“Charlotte, I must confide in you.”

“I should think it was about time.”

“What do you mean?”

“I have known for days that you were concealing something.”

“I didn’t want to be secretive, but I thought it was only fair to you to keep my own counsel. Now you can report to mother that you knew nothing, and that therefore you couldn’t interfere.”

“But what have you done? You can’t be secretly married—with your chosen man in Washington and you on the vasty deep.”

“No; but I’m next door to it.”

“What do you mean by ‘next door’? Have you a groom and a minister waiting on the New York dock?”

“No; mother will be there, but I fear she won’t bring a minister. I’m so glad you imagined something far, far worse than I ever intended. It shows that you are more audacious than I—though nobody would believe it.”

“I don’t like your tone; but go on.”

“I’ve been communicating rather frequently with Duke.”

“So I fancied, from your changing money at every stop and doing continual sums on paper.”

“It has made me a pauper—this telegraphing in war-time. The messages go by Jamaica or Porto Rico or Trinidad or Bermuda and lots of other islands, and I think some of the messages must be personally conducted straight to New York by powerful swimmers, judging by the cost.”

“Go on. Don’t temporize.”

“I needn’t repeat all of them, and in fact I haven’t copies. Duke, after he had my first telegram from St. Thomas, wired back to St. Croix, ‘*You are willing to take my name. Why, after all, shouldn’t I refuse your sacrifice and make one of my own by taking yours?*’ Wasn’t that noble?”

“It would have softened the heart of a suffragette or a feminist. What did you

reply?”

“I said: ‘*Never in the world!*’”

“‘Never’ would have been enough. You wasted three words at a dollar or so apiece.”

“I wanted to be strong. I said: ‘*Never in the world! I am not going to have you criticized and nagged and made unhappy, as if your name were a crime!*’ Then he wired: ‘*But it would remove objections, and cost only six thousand a year.*’ I had to wait two whole days and nights before I could cable: ‘*Objector will surely meet me in New York. She will probably forgive if we are both firm. My mind is made up. I would rather be a you-know-what than remain a Valentine.*’”

“That was strong enough.”

“I meant it to be. He has been scurrilously treated, and somebody must stand by him. Now, to-morrow, February 14th, is his birthday. I remember it because we met on St. Valentine’s day, and it wasn’t many hours afterward that I guessed how he felt about me.”

“Dorothea! Do you mean to tell me that a man spoke to you of his feelings within twenty-four hours of the time you met?”

“No, I do not.”

“You certainly intimated as much. If it wasn’t many hours after you met on the 14th it must have been on the 15th.”

“No, you are wrong, Charlotte. It was the evening of the same day. We met in the early morning.”

“It sounds like a children’s party with an exchange of those snapping-mottoes.”

“Duke is nearly twenty-eight, you know, Charlotte; so it is simply nonsense to jeer at him. You ought to be able to imagine what sort of things would be said between two persons mutually attracted to each other—when you remember that he was born on February 14th and my name is Valentine. The coincidence simply put ideas into our heads; but I won’t go on if you don’t sympathize.”

“I don’t actually disapprove, not at heart. Now, what has his birthday got to do with to-morrow and St. Thomas?”

“Why, I cabled him as soon as we arrived at Barbados: ‘*What would you like for a birthday present from the West Indies?*’ I knew that he would remember we met on St. Valentine’s day and an answer could reach me at St. Thomas.”

“Couldn’t you buy him a souvenir without inquiring at great expense what he’d prefer?”

“Ye-es; but I thought it was a nice, affectionate question.”

“Well?”

“Well, he cabled one word, Charlotte.”

“I guessed that the moment you quoted your message. When you asked: ‘*What shall I bring you from the West Indies?*’ Duke promptly answered, ‘*Yourself.*’”

“Charlotte, you are positively uncanny! How did you manage to hit upon it?”

“It doesn’t take as much intellect as you fancy. You are as transparent as a plate of glass. Well, when he said ‘*Yourself,*’ how did you answer him?”

“It’s the only thing I don’t like to tell you, but I must. I reflected a full half-hour at Barbados. It was one of those heavenly moonlight nights not suitable for reflection. Then I wrote a message and sent it to the office by one of the colored waiters so that the hotel people shouldn’t read it. It said” (and here she turned her face away from me): “‘*Deliveries from the West Indies are uncertain and expensive; come and get me.*’—Do you think that was forward?”

I laughed irresistibly and a long time. “It certainly was not backward, but it was delicious,” I said at length, wiping the tears from my eyes. “However, he seems as impetuous and tempestuous as you, so perhaps it doesn’t matter.”

“You see, Charlotte, I knew that probably he couldn’t meet this boat to save his life, so I was willing to say, ‘*Come and get me,*’ just for fun. I hadn’t the slightest clue as to when he would receive my message or the sailing dates of steamers from New York, everything is so changed in war-times. I know only that the time is slipping away, and Duke may leave the Shipping Board at any moment for the training-camp. I intend to have one brief, straightforward talk with mother, and declare my purpose. We are going to get your Mr. Winthrop to intercede for us, too. I shall be of age in March, and I don’t intend to let a mere name stand between me and happiness.”

“I think you are right, and that your mother will finally agree with you; but I still don’t see the need of an unusual toilet for to-morrow.”

“It’s for the Governor,” said Dolly, “and one never knows what may happen.”

“If a bromidic remark may also be cryptic, Dorothea, you have achieved the combination. Now I must ask you a direct question, for, although I am not your

keeper, but your friend, I am not disposed to let you do anything reckless. Why did you put that idea into Duke's head—the idea of meeting you in St. Thomas?"

"I wanted to talk things over before seeing mother. I knew I could trust him. He has some elderly cousins and a sister-in-law; surely, between them, he could find somebody to bring along with him; and I have you, safest and wisest of Charlottes! Duke is one of the legal advisers of the Shipping Board. Why shouldn't he have business in these islands? Besides, it is a practical impossibility that he should be able to reach St. Thomas on a given date."

"Then why did you suggest it?"

"I think, Charlotte, it must have been empty-mindedness."

"I regard it as a pure lack of self-control."

"I've practiced self-control for one whole, endless year."

"You have practiced filial obedience, I grant that. But what good do you expect to achieve if Duke does surmount the insurmountable and meet you to-morrow?"

"What good?" Dolly almost shrieked the question. "What good, do you ask? You callous, cold-hearted Charlotte! Why, four heavenly days spent in his society, to be sure—with you and his chaperon having a lovely time together somewhere not too near."

"And you haven't any sneaking idea of marrying him in St. Thomas? Because I won't allow it."

"No such luck! He wouldn't let me, unless mother's attitude has been miraculously changed."

"Well, I can only say that you have made me very nervous and uncomfortable, Dolly," and I prepared to leave her cabin and cross the narrow space that divided it from mine.

"Darling Charlotte!" Here she drew me back. "If you are nervous and uncomfortable, it seems that you think there's a bare chance that Duke will be in St. Thomas."

"I know nothing about the possibilities," I replied. "He might persuade the Shipping Board that he could be of use in this vicinity, and, of course, he would have advantages not possessed by ordinary tourists."

"If you had had any experience with shipping boards, Charlotte, you would know that they can only be moved by chloroform or dynamite. Besides, Duke

would never do anything underhanded; he is too patriotic; though, of course, he is inventive."

"Of course! And inventiveness is only one of his gifts, while his virtues are those of Sir Galahad, King Arthur, Marcus Aurelius, Abraham Lincoln, and a few others."

"Charlotte, I don't want to seem harsh, but I hope some time you will get a faint inkling of what love really is. Your heart reminds me of the Rock of Gibraltar!"

"One doesn't wear the Rock of Gibraltar on one's sleeve, at all events," I remarked.

"Do you mean that if you ever did have a love-affair you wouldn't confide in me, when I adore you so, Charlotte?"

"I mean something of the sort, my child." At which she made a feint of beating me with her little silver hair-brush, but ended in kissing my cheek and whispering: "Good-night! You are a darling, even if you have no sentiment."

Morning came. We anchored outside St. Croix at five o'clock; went through medical inspection at six, and if there was anything the matter with Dolly's heart or mine the physician did not offer any comment. Then about ten we approached St. Thomas for the second time.

If the Virgin Islands looked beautiful when we first saw them, they had grown in beauty during our brief absence, and my birthplace, in the shining distance, was a very dream of loveliness. We saw its outline rising above a rim of azure sea, with the mountains of Porto Rico standing out to the westward. The great palm groves on the shore led the eye upward to the green hills and the clouds topping the higher peaks. Gayly painted boats began to come near the Diana, and naked diving boys, slender shapes of brown mahogany, plunged into the sea to catch our pennies. Then we saw the red roofs of Charlotte Amalia, the little park near the landing, and the pink, toy-like fortress with the Stars and Stripes floating over it.

Dorothea and I stood near the deck-rail, her hand in mine. In her white dress, her broad hat wreathed with corn-flowers, and a scarlet sunshade, she looked a youthful Columbia, so radiant and bewitching that for the first time I secretly hoped Marmaduke Hogg might triumph over the obstacles in the way and come to meet his ladylove, although I saw many embarrassing and awkward situations arising from such a meeting. I could not be jealous of so bright and joyous a creature, and anyway my own happiness was only a few days distant, if I chose

to put out my arms and take it.

There seemed to be a crowd on the dock, which was made most unattractive by a colossal mountain of coal that concealed everything behind it. The Diana made a slow approach, but we finally passed the coal-heap and came within thirty feet of the shore. I could feel Dolly's heart beat through her pulse that lay under my hand. Then suddenly her quick eyes searched the outer edge of the crowd and found the shape they were looking for.

"I think I see him! I think I am going to faint, for I didn't really expect him! Yes; I know it is he, though he is wearing summer clothes that I never saw before. Look, Charlotte! Away back near that grove of cocoanut-trees! He's with other people—I knew he would find somebody! Give me the glasses. There's an elderly man in a Panama hat, and two ladies, and—why, Charlotte, take the glasses yourself. It can't be, but it looks like your Winthrop!"

My hand trembled so that I could hardly hold the glass. I could scarcely believe Dolly's eyes or my own; but the Diana crept nearer, and it was true! Inch by inch the picture grew clearer, and then a pathetic surprise met my gaze.

I could see Clive plainly now, and felt that he was searching the line of passengers on the Diana's deck to find me. My heart gave a furious leap to think that a man like my chief would look for only one woman's face in that crowd, and regard it, with all its blemishes, as a precious thing.

Duke had separated himself from the little group and was swinging his hat to Dorothea; but I could not explain why the two men were not standing nearer together and what was the meaning of the wheeled chair, with the nurse's head rising above the back. The identity of the person in the chair was hidden by a tiny black frilled parasol with a handle bent in the middle so that it could be used for a shield. Did I know that little old-fashioned sunshade? I did! It was the property of some one whose belongings had a certain air of difference from those of other people. She lifted it at last, as we came close to the dock, and I met Ellen Winthrop's affectionate, welcoming glance. Her eyes swam in unshed tears, and mine were so wet I could see only dimly that her beautiful hair was a shade whiter, her face paler and thinner, that she had aged mysteriously in a month, and the hand that was holding the parasol trembled like a leaf. She had been very ill; there was no doubt of that. She had been ordered a voyage, and I felt that she had chosen this one because she knew Clive's wish. That meant she was willing to welcome me into the heart of the family; perhaps even that she wished to help me fit myself to take her own unique place in her brother's life.

Oh, what joy to feel that I could not only take freely all that my chief wanted to give me, but that I could be of real service to her!

Down the precipitous landing-steps we went, Dolly, as usual, well in the front. Clive and Duke were at the foot awaiting us, and, as we felt a sense of safety in the midst of strangers, Dolly flung herself at once into Duke's arms, while all the male watchers on deck or dock gazed at him with envy. Finding myself unobserved in this spectacular tableau, I could give Clive my own greeting as my heart dictated, while I told him that his sister's presence answered my last doubt.

When Dolly withdrew from the embrace of her adoring swain—rosy, joyous, unabashed—she adjusted her hat from its perilous position on one side of her head, and gazed upon Clive and me with unflattering astonishment mixed with awe.

"You, too, perfidious Charlotte! You needn't deny it; I saw you both—just finishing!"

"Not at all, Miss Valentine," laughed Clive, putting out his hand to shake hers. "We were, in fact, only just beginning."

"And to think I never suspected, when I might have known that you are the only man in the world learned enough and good enough for Charlotte."

"You were too absorbed in your own affairs to think about mine, missy," I said. "Now, will you be modest and grateful for the rest of your life, since you see that my Mr. Winthrop has brought your young man to St. Thomas in a discreet manner that you never could have achieved by yourself? Take me to your sister, Clive; I want her to know without a moment's delay how I appreciate her coming with you."

"She has been terribly ill, Charlotte. For ten days after you left it was almost hopeless, but at length she rallied, and since the doctor insisted on a change of climate her whole heart was bent on coming here. She has long suspected our feeling for each other, and you will be such a joy to her as well as to me, my dear."

"It makes me so happy, so happy!" I faltered, my eyes swimming with tears. "I was so unwilling to take all and give so little—now it will be more!"

"Don't go off by yourselves," said Dolly. "Be dignified and indifferent, like us. Take Mr. Winthrop's arm and I'll take Duke's." (Here she suited the action to the word.) "There's the Governor, expecting us to luncheon and not knowing us by

sight. He won't suspect what has happened; but after saluting him and asking him to put some more plates on the table, we'll all walk up to Miss Winthrop's chair, and you and I will say: 'Good-morning, dear lady. Let us introduce to you "our new possessions," our spoils of travel, our souvenirs of a sea-voyage.' Then Duke and Mr. Winthrop will make a profound obeisance, and all will be over."

And so it turned out! Everybody laughed and chatted; Dorothea kissed Ellen Winthrop's hand prettily, coquetted with Clive, and began to lay siege to the nurse's heart, while she riveted the chains by which she held Marmaduke Hogg in bondage. She was in high spirits, but she was distinctly nervous, and whenever she introduced her fiancé to one of her fellow voyagers she showed a heightened color as she slid quickly over his surname.

Presently Clive withdrew a little distance to talk with the Governor's secretary, and Dorothea caught the captain on his way from the ship and entangled him in a merry conversation with Miss Winthrop. This gave Marmaduke an opportunity to take me aside. I suspected that he wanted to confide in me that Mrs. Valentine had made one last determined refusal to receive him as a son-in-law, and that after the next few days of sea-voyaging we should meet an irate parent at the landing in New York and that there would be metaphorical "wigs on the green."

I confess in that moment, as I envisaged the recalcitrant Dolly locked in her room and fed upon bread and water, that I wished Mr. Marmaduke Hogg had remained in Washington, which is the scene of so many battles that one more or less would not be obvious on the horizon. On the contrary, his first words were a surprise.

"Miss Clifford," he said, "no one knows what Dolly and I owe to you!"

"But what have I done?" I inquired laughingly.

"Oh, a thousand things! Taken my part gently and kindly with Mrs. Valentine; and above all, allowed Dolly to come on this journey with you, when she was so utterly confused by her mother's objections to our marriage that she did not know which way to turn.—It's rather a big job for a girl to decide whether she'll break her mother's heart, or her lover's!"

"Mrs. Valentine has no heart, save in the physiological sense," I interrupted.

"Well, I have cut the Gordian knot," continued Marmaduke. "I don't want Dolly to know just at first, but I have set plans in motion for changing my name back to Forrest!"

"But you lose six thousand dollars a year!" I exclaimed.

“It doesn’t matter. I am offered a New York partnership when the war is over and it won’t be very long before I make it up.”

“And what about your dear old uncle?”

“That hurts me, I confess. But I think if departed spirits know nothing of our doings, it doesn’t matter, and if they know everything, uncle must have kept an eye on Mrs. Valentine and will understand.”

“I never thought of leaving the whole matter to ‘uncle,’” I observed.

“I’m not shifting the responsibility; I’m simply counting on him. I always counted on him and he always trusted me. If I could get him on a spiritual long-distance telephone, he would see that I cannot part an only daughter from her only mother.”

“Yes, I’ve often thought only children were a mistake; they bulk too heavily in the foreground. Where there are six, each one cannot take up so much room.”

“Exactly. You see we’ve got to go to her mother’s to dinner every other Sunday when our cook’s out. I’ve learned that much about matrimony in advance.”

“Perhaps you won’t be invited!”

“Well, that would be even worse. Besides, she has given up her apartment and leased a charming house.”

“Does she think that you and Dolly are to live with her?”

“If she does she is mistaken, but to do her justice I don’t believe that’s her idea at all. However, she is all settled and awaiting Dorothea. The house is going to be a surprise.”

“Dolly will like it; the apartment didn’t suit her taste.”

“A pompous butler is installed. I discovered all this when I went to call, and conscientiously told her I was going to St. Thomas with the Winthrops. He is elderly, of course, as all the middle-aged and young butlers are in khaki; and wonderful to relate, there is also an aged but well-preserved footman. He dwells on the lower floor, and communicates with the butler on the floor above, where the drawing- and dining-rooms are, by means of a speaking-tube. The moment the footman approached me with his ‘What name, sir?’ and bawled ‘MR. HOGG!’ through the tube, the butler repeating it resonantly to the boudoir where Mrs. Valentine was sitting; at that moment I knew why she had taken the house. It was for the speaking-tubes! I have never before seen a small house in Washington

with these annunciators. The butler and footman were engaged for the same purpose, that of bawling ‘MR. HOGG’ whenever I called upon Dolly. After my interview with Mrs. Valentine, which was placid, for she thanked me coldly for telling her of my proposed journey and said she should go herself, but imagined that the steamers were small and uncomfortable, and the food villainous; however, we would talk the whole matter over in New York and come to some decision; she then went to the speaking-tube and called, ‘Brown! Ask Jenkins to show Mr. Hogg out, please!’

“I left the lady and went at once to Clive Winthrop for advice and began the process of amputating my surname. Perhaps I shall not call at the X Street house till the wedding is over, and when the footman asks: ‘What name, sir?’ I shall say: ‘My bachelor name, as you may remember, was Hogg, but I am now married and it is Forrest!’”

PHILIPPA’S NERVOUS PROSTRATION

A STUDY IN NOBLENESS

Stanwood Sanitarium,
Mapleton, Pennsylvania,
*June,*19—

FIRST WEEK

Monday

The door has just closed behind one of the most eminent physicians in the State, and I am no longer Philippa Armstrong, but a case of neurasthenia, an inmate of Room Number 17, which has a yellow placard over its entrance; a placard announcing that no callers are allowed within, save with the special permission of Dr. Levi Stanwood. At present the placard is the only thing I enjoy about the institution; that, at least, promises peace; at all events, such peace as can be found outside of one’s own soul.

I am counseled to have complete rest, cheerful surroundings, abstinence from newspapers and letters, sound sleep, careful and nourishing diet, freedom from anxiety, gentle tonics, with electrical and other treatments underlined upon a printed list.

The head physician (who is a genius in the way of diagnosis, seeing through the human system as if it were plate glass) has made a careful study of my symptoms and written my Cousin Sarah that all I need is six or eight weeks of his care to be quite myself again.

How little they understand us women, after all—poor, blind, unsuspicious doctors! My heart-beats, my color, my temperature, my pulse, my blood pressure, even my tongue, all these have told no tales to the scientific eye, and as it was literally impossible for Dr. Stanwood to discern my malady, it was equally beyond him to suggest a remedy. As a matter of fact, all I need to make and keep me well is large and constant doses of Richard Morton, Esq., of Baltimore; but who would confess that to a doctor?

Cousin Sarah does not suspect the state of things, the gentleman himself is, I trust, quite ignorant, and the doctor will waste upon me all the wealth of curative agencies at his command without effecting the least change in my condition.

Richard Morton is an orphan; so am I. He is young, strong, good-looking, clever, and poor. I am the first, second, and fifth; as to one's own beauty and cleverness it is difficult to speak impartially.

I have thought for nearly six months, and indeed I am still inclined to think, that Richard Morton loves me, and I was equally certain, until a few weeks ago, that he was only awaiting a suitable opportunity to declare his love and ask me to marry him. I had made up my mind, whenever he should put the important question, to answer him frankly and joyously in the affirmative; not because he is the handsomest or most brilliant or most desirable person in the world, but because for sheer lovableness and husbandliness he is unsurpassed and unsurpassable.

In March Cousin Sarah made a visit to Germantown and met there a Mrs. Taunton, Richard Morton's widowed aunt. When the intimacy had progressed sufficiently Mrs. Taunton told Cousin Sarah one day that she hoped her nephew would eventually marry a certain Amy Darling, a near neighbor of hers; that Miss Darling's father and Richard's had been friends from boyhood; and that they had always planned a marriage between the two young people, each an only child.

Of course, Mr. Darling, who died only this winter, did not indulge in any such melodramatic or bookish nonsense as setting down commands or desires in his will, nor were any of his bequests dependent upon them. He did talk with his daughter, however, during his last illness, and he did leave Richard Morton a letter expressing his regard and confidence, and saying that as his daughter was entirely without relatives he should have felt much happier had he seen her married before his death. If he had stopped there all would have been well, but he went on. He knew, he said, that Amy was one of the sweetest and most attractive girls in the world, and if a mutual affection should grow out of her acquaintance with Richard he would be glad to know that the fortune he had made by his own energy might be a basis for the future prosperity and business success of his old friend's son.

Cousin Sarah came home from Germantown quite excited by this romance and discussed it with me daily, in exasperating unconsciousness that I could feel the least distaste for the subject.

“It seems almost providential, Philippa,” she said, over her knitting.

“Providential for which of them?” I asked, stabbing my sheet of music paper with the pen, while I tried in vain to think how many eighth notes would fill a measure.

“For both; though I was really thinking of Mr. Morton. His business is one that peculiarly requires capital; then again he has many interests in Philadelphia, and there is that beautiful place in Germantown with house, stable, horses, and gardens all ready for him.”

“And the girl, too; don’t forget her,” I responded. “Though some men don’t care for these ready-to-wear wives; they prefer to look about and to choose.”

“He would have to look a long distance before he found any one to compare with Miss Darling, either in beauty or suitableness,” said Cousin Sarah, thereby injecting the first drop of poison in my blood and starting me on the downward path toward nervous prostration.

“Miss Darling is a man’s woman,” she continued, unconsciously giving me another push; “the type with which neither you nor I have anything in common, but which we know to be irresistible.”

Now Cousin Sarah is fifty-five, thin, angular, erect, uncompromising. I love and respect her, but do not care to be lumped with her in affairs of the heart, at least not for thirty years to come; and although I think it is disgusting to be labeled a “man’s woman” it is insufferable to be told that one is *not*!

“I can see Amy Darling in my mind’s eye,” I ventured; “blonde, dimply, fluffy as to head, willowy as to figure so as to cling the better, blue eyes swimming in unshed tears, and a manner so exquisitely feminine that she makes all the other women in her vicinity appear independent and mannish. But not all men care for pets, Cousin Sarah—some of them prefer companions.”

“A pet *is* a companion,” remarked Cousin Sarah casually as she left the room, giving me thereby an entirely new and most unpleasant thought.

I have known Richard Morton for many months, and although I have met him very often at other places, he has been a constant visitor at our house. If he has had any resemblance to a possible suitor why hasn’t Cousin Sarah discovered it? Is *she* deaf and blind, or have my ears and eyes played me false? Am I so undesirable that it would never cross her mind that a man might fall in love with me? Hardly, for she is well aware that several men have expressed their willingness to annex my poverty-stricken charms.

As I look back upon the weeks that followed the interview with Cousin Sarah I see that Richard was never the same after he received Mr. Darling's letter. I felt a nameless difference. It was not only that I saw him less frequently, but that he gave me less of himself when I did see him. I, too, was on guard and never succeeded in being quite natural. I am not so foolish as to give up to another girl a man who loves me, simply because she is rich. The thought that worries me night and day is this: if at the moment he only feels for me friendship, ought I to let it grow into love when there is another woman who could give him with herself everything he needs to assure his career? With Philippa Armstrong for a wife he will have to work unceasingly, and unless fortune is particularly kind he may not achieve a large success for many years. If he marries Amy Darling (soft, silly, spineless little name!) he has house, lands, and money, all the influence of her father's former business associates, and has, besides, carried out his own father's wishes.

This is considerable; quite enough to make a man reflect and vacillate, unless he is so deeply in love already that no temptation is strong enough to assail him.

Richard Morton, I know, likes to dance with me, sing with me, golf with me, talk with me, consult with me about his affairs, write letters to me; and more than that, he doesn't like to have other men usurp these privileges; but I am not prepared to say that he would pine away if circumstances removed me altogether from his path. At any rate, these perplexities have been too much for my peace of mind, and when Richard Morton announced that he had business which would keep him in Philadelphia for a month I began to feel physically ill and unable to bear Cousin Sarah's sympathy, her curiosity, even at last her proximity. When the doctor advised my coming here to this quiet, restful place I eagerly embraced the opportunity simply because I could be alone, and because I need not meet Richard until he had enjoyed a full month of Amy Darling's society, either succumbing to its fascination or resisting it, as the case might be.

Would it be nobler of me to give him up before he is really mine, knowing that in this way I am advancing his worldly interests? This is the question that I hope solitude will help me to answer, but its complications and side-issues are so many that I feel dazed by their number and their difficulty. I went to sleep last night echoing the old negro's prayer: "Thou knowest what's about right, Lord. Now do it!"

Tuesday

8 A.M.—Nurse gives me an alcohol bath.

8.30—She takes my pulse and temperature and enters them in the Bedside Record Book, afterwards reading me my diet-list. It seems I do not belong to the favored class, which, to be cured, is stuffed with pleasant things to eat; my symptoms demand a simple, unexciting bill of fare.

9 o'clock—Breakfast.

Fruit in season.

(This is its only name, but everybody knows it
by sight.)

Poweretta Grits with Cream.
Graham Muffins.
Wheatoata Process Coffee.

10.30—Hot fomentations.

11.15—Drop of blood extracted from ear and subjected to examination.

11.30—Glass of Certified Milk.

12—Visit from physician.

1—Dinner.

Barley Broth.
Lamb Chop—Hominy or Rice.
Bread-and-butter Pudding
Custard Sauce.

2 to 3—Silent hour.

3.30—Static electricity.

4.15—Weight taken.

4.30—Cold pack.

5—Cup of Predigested Maltese Milk.

5.30—Visit from head nurse.

6.30—Supper.

Cornetta Mush.
Poached Egg on Whole-Wheat Toast.
Sterilized Stewed Apples—Zephyrettes.

Cup of Somnolina.
(A beverage from which everything pleasant and
harmful has been extracted by a beneficent process.)

7.30—Miss Blossom, the nurse, insists on reading to me. It is not a good performance but it doesn't matter. I know that Dick and Amy Darling are just starting for the theater.

8.30—Tepid sponge bath.

9—Massage.

9.30—Glass of peptonized water.

9.45—Temperature and pulse taken.

10—Lights out.

Never in all my twenty-five years of life have I passed a busier or more exhausting day.

Wednesday

Precisely like Tuesday save for some new experiences in diet. There was a mild process-drink called Cocoatina; Teaette also made its appearance. There were dolls' mattresses of shredded excelsior moistened with milk; nut salad, and Grahamata mush. I could never have supposed so many new cereals could be invented.

There is mush in the evening, mush in the morning,
Mush when it's looked for and mush without warning.

It is rather like the immortal "Charge of the Light Brigade":

Oats to the right of them,
Corn to the left of them,
Wheat to the north of them,
Grits to the south of them,
Into the Valley of Mush rode the two hundred.

Thursday

I was allowed to sit on my balcony for an hour this morning. This would have been a pleasant change had I not heartily disliked at first sight my next-door neighbor who was sitting on the adjoining balcony. At noon she sent me a bunch

of pansies and her card: Mrs. Grosvenor Chittenden-Ffollette.

Among fifty or sixty attendants there are always a few who gossip in spite of repeated warnings from the authorities. Sometimes it is a young nurse, sometimes a masseuse, a manicure or a shampooer, but there are always those who retail the news, mostly innocent news, of an institution like this. Cold-packing, or rubbing, or spraying, or electrifying, or brushing, or polishing—all these operations open the flood-gates of speech and no damming process is effectual. Miss Phœbe Blossom is the herald who proclaims tidings of various kinds in my room, and there is also a neophyte in the electricity department who is always full of information and quite unable to retain it. It would be almost more than human to ask them to be silent when they are the only links with the world outside. A system reduced to nothingness by a supper of Wheatoata Coffee, Cracker-dust Croquettes, Cosmos with milk, and a choice of Cerealina, Nuttetta, Proteinetta, or Glucosa is in no fit state to resist gossip.

It seems that Mrs. Chittenden-Ffollette is more than a mere woman—she is a remarkable "case," and has proved a worldwide advertisement for this sanitarium. Dr. Stanwood has almost effected a cure; her disease has had to be named and her symptoms have been written up in all the medical journals. I don't know what sort of person she was before she became a case, but she is now a greater tyrant than Caligula or Catherine of Russia. As to her disease, she has those things that she ought not to have, and she has not those things that she ought to have, and there is no health in her; or at least there was not until she came here a year ago. Now she is strong enough to perambulate in the corridor a little while each morning or be wheeled along the board-walk in the afternoon, and when she hears that some of the other patients are suffering, she sneers at their modest, uninteresting ailments and glances in at their doors with half-disguised contempt. You know the expression of the prize dog who is borne from the show hung with medals and ribbons—how he gazes on the little mongrel curs that gather with the crowd in the streets?

Her name, Chittenden-Ffollette, is of as vital importance as her medical-journal malady. When the third floor is in dire confusion; when Mrs. Parks has hysterics and Miss Simmons is crying for her mother, and Mrs. Bell's hot-water bottle has burst in the bed, and Miss Phipps has discovered that the undergraduate has bandaged the wrong ankle, Miss Blossom sometimes becomes flustered and hurried and calls her patient Mrs. Follett, whereupon she says, "*Chittenden*-Ffoll*ette, if* you please!"

If by any chance she sees the Chittenden-Ffollette without the hyphen in the

Nurses' Bedside Record Book or scribbled on the morning paper she doesn't need any stimulant the rest of the day. The omission of the hyphen sends up her pulse and temperature to the required point for several hours, though there is always a reaction afterward. I've told Dr. Levi that I should name one of her complaints hyphenitis. The occasional operation performed on the hyphen by Miss Blossom, or the young lady at the stationery counter, might be called hyphenotomy. Everybody detests Mrs. Chittenden-Ffollette, but as the banner patient of the sanitarium she must be treated with respectful consideration. All America's most skillful physicians have struggled with her organism. They have tried to get her symptoms into line, so to speak, so as to deduce some theory from the grand array of phenomena, but the symptoms courteously decline to point in any one direction. When the doctors get seven eighths of them in satisfactory relation there are always two or three that stay out and sulk, refusing to collaborate in any sort of harmony. They act precisely like an obstinate jury, in that they calmly refuse to agree, and then Mrs. Chittenden-Ffollette appeals to a higher court where flaws in the testimony are always found, judgment is reversed, and a new trial ordered. The greatest surgeons in Europe have left the bedsides of crowned heads to ponder over her inscrutable mysteries, and have returned to their sovereigns crushed and humbled. All this attention would have upset a stronger character than hers, and now that she is in a fair way to recover, her pride will have its inevitable fall. Though much more agreeable and docile than when she entered, she is in uniformly low spirits. The truth is, she liked being an unsolved mystery and she is a good deal nettled at being found at last both soluble and curable—obliged to live, like an ex-president, on the glories of the past.

Friday

Buckle, in his "History of Civilization," claims that men and women are divided into three classes. The first and lowest talks of persons, the second of things, and the third and highest, of ideas. I should divide the human race into four, instead of three classes, and name as the lowest those persons who discuss their symptoms. The patients here are counseled not to do it, so the vice is reduced to a minimum, being practiced, say, not more than three out of the fourteen waking hours.

Swinging in a hammock in a shady nook this afternoon the conversation that floated to me under my distant tree was somewhat after this fashion.

Mrs. A. "Once I had neurasthenia. For three months I couldn't be moved in bed,

and for nine weeks I couldn’t turn my head on the pillow.”

Mrs. B. } “Mercy!”
Mrs. C. } “Oh, Mrs. A.!”
Mrs. D. } “Good gracious!”

Mrs. E. “Cerebro-spinal meningitis is worse than neurasthenia. I had it four years ago, and the doctor said he’d never seen a woman live that was as ill as I was. One night my temperature was 167.”

Mrs. C. } “Goodness!”
Mrs. B. } “That’s pretty high!”
Mrs. A. } “Are you sure?”

Mrs. E. “Yes, I’m perfectly sure, or at least I think I am; I am seldom wrong on figures.”

Mrs. A. “I asked, because I’ve noticed here that the thermometers register only 110, and I wondered how they measured the temperature when it rose above that point.”

Mrs. E. (huffily). “Probably they have extra long thermometers for extreme cases.”

Mrs. F. “I am glad that in this sanitarium they take the temperature by tucking the barometer-thing under the arm. My doctor at home always puts it under the tongue, and it is a perfect nuisance. He never gets it well placed but that I think of something I want to say. Then, of course, I have to keep still for three minutes, which seem three hundred, and by that time I have either forgotten it or changed my mind, so there I am!”

Mrs. G. “Just after my youngest child was three years old—”

Mrs. F. (interrupting). “I was going to say, when Mrs. E. spoke about the barometer, that after I was engaged to Mr. F. I had a dreadful attack of brain fever. I was ill in bed three months and they couldn’t touch a brush to my hair for nine days.”

Mrs. D. } “Horrors!”
Mrs. E. } “Dreadful!”
Mrs. C. } “Heavens!”

Mrs. G. (bravely). “Just after my youngest child was three—”

Mrs. X. “A man patient was brought on to our floor this morning.”

Mrs. S. “*Our* floor? I wish they *would* have separate corridors for male patients.”

Mrs. X. “This gentleman is an old friend of Dr. Levi’s. His wife has been here four weeks, and now he’s been taken ill, so they’ve put him next her on the first floor.”

Mrs. S. “I don’t care, I hate to have him near us.”

Mrs. B. “Why? He’s perfectly harmless; he is too ill to move.”

Mrs. C. “I’m sure I wish he could! Anything to relieve this hideous dullness. What’s the matter with him, I wonder!”

Mrs. D. “I’ll ask Miss Oaks when I have my hot fomentations this afternoon; she knows everything and she’s as generous as a prince with her knowledge.”

Mrs. G. (patiently). “Just after my youngest child was—”

A nurse passes through the grove, bearing a sterilized tray with peptonized preparations on it.

Mrs. Y. (calling her). “Nurse! what’s the matter with the new man-patient on our floor?”

Nurse (discreetly). “I don’t know, Mrs. Y.”

Mrs. X. (as the nurse vanishes). “She does, but she’s a stiff thing! Anyway, I heard the attendants whispering about him in the corridor before breakfast. Something—I think it’s an organ—is floating about in him.”

All. “*Floating?* What kind of an organ? Horrors!”

Mrs. X. “I couldn’t understand exactly. You know people always roar if they have nothing particular to say, but if it is interesting they whisper. I distinctly heard the word ‘*floating*.’ I don’t know whether it’s one of his regular organs, or something he swallowed accidentally.”

Mrs. C. (plaintively). “Doctors are never satisfied. If anything floats they want to get it stationary, and if it’s stationary they want to cut it loose.”

Mrs. G. “*Just after my youngest child—*”

Mrs. B. “They say Mrs. H. is going to leave to-morrow; she doesn’t like the food or the service.”

Mrs. E. “Goodness, she has all the service there is on our floor! Nobody else gets a chance! She spends her whole silent hour pushing the electric button.”

Mrs. D. “Yes, Miss Oaks declares she ‘lays’ on it. She says that the head nurse told Mrs. H. she must ring less frequently, or the bell would be removed. Miss Oaks says the patients that pay the smallest rates always ring the bells most. It isn’t fair that a thirty-dollar patient should annoy a whole row of eighty-dollar ones and prevent their bells from being answered.”

Mrs. X. “There’s nothing made out of Mrs. H. at thirty dollars a week. She was as contented as possible last night, but this morning she wanted her bed in the other corner, awnings put on the windows, and the bureau changed for a chiffonier. Come, we must all go in for treatment—it wants five minutes of four.”

Mrs. G., in despair, as she sees the occupants of the hammocks dispersing, almost shrieks: “JUST AFTER MY YOUNGEST—”

But the ladies, for some reason or other, do not care to hear anything about Mrs. G.’s youngest, and she is obliged to seek another audience.

Saturday

The doctor found me “over-treated” this morning and advised a day of quiet, with a couple of hours on the roof-garden or under the trees.

I have heard at various times sighs of weariness or discontent or pain issuing from the room opposite mine, and this afternoon when Miss Blossom had gone into Number 19 to sit with the haughty Mrs. Chittenden-Ffollette I stole across the corridor and glanced in at the half-open door of Number 18.

The quaintest girl raised herself from a mound of sofa-pillows and exclaimed: “Why, you beautiful thing! Are you Number 17? I didn’t know you looked like that!”

“It’s very kind of you,” I answered, blushing at this outspoken greeting; “but I am not beautiful in the least; it is because you do not expect much from a person who has just crept out of bed. I don’t look any better when I am dressed for a party.”

“You don’t need to,” she said. “Now get on my bed and cuddle under the afghan and we’ll talk till Miss Blossom comes back. Won’t she beat you for being out of your room? Why are you here? You haven’t the least resemblance to a rest cure! What is the matter with you?”

“Backache, sideache, shoulderache, headache, sensation of handcuffs on wrists, balls and chains on ankles, lack of appetite, and insomnia.”

“Is that all? Haven’t you any disease?”

“I believe not,” I answered humbly, “but the effect is the same as if I had. Why are you here?” I asked in return, as I looked admiringly at her shining brown hair, plump, rosy cheeks, and dancing eyes.

“I came here, so to speak, in response to an ideal; not my ideal—I never have any—but Laura Simonds’s. She is my dearest friend and one of the noblest girls you ever knew. She said the separation from the world would do us both good, and so it might if she could have stayed to keep me company. Now she has the world and I have the separation.”

“She isn’t here, then?”

“No, worse luck! She is always working and planning for the good of others, but she is constantly meeting with ingratitude and misunderstanding. She had just brought me here when she was telegraphed for to turn about and go home. You see she had sent two ailing slum children to be taken care of at her house, and it proved to be scarlet fever, and, of course, her stepmother took it the first thing—she’s a hateful person and takes everything she can get—and then the cook followed suit. Now they blame Laura and she has to find trained nurses and settle everything before she comes back to me.”

“Then you’re not an invalid? I thought you were in pain and couldn’t reach the bell. That’s the reason I looked in.”

“Oh, dear, no, I was only yawning! I came for what Laura calls the healing influence of solitude, but Laura thought as the place was so expensive, and treatment was included, we’d better take Turkish baths, massage, and electricity, they’re so good for the complexion. I have a little table to myself in the convalescents’ dining-room and haven’t made any acquaintances. I can’t stand their sweetbread complexions and their double chins. The patients are all so fat they might sing Isaac Watts’ hymn in unison: ‘Much of my time has run to waist.’”

“It is not an inspiring assemblage,” I agreed, “though I haven’t seen them all together, as you have.”

“And they think of nothing but themselves, which is exactly what I want to think about—myself, I mean. There’s one charming girl on this floor. Something’s the matter with her solar plexus and they won’t allow her to talk, so we have had some nice conversations in the silent hour. They’ve told me now I mustn’t call again; it seems that I was too exciting. Tell me something about yourself, Vashti

—I am sure that's your name, or Semiramis or Zenobia or Judith, and if it isn't one or another of those I don't want to hear what it is, for you wouldn't look like it."

Just here a page brought in a letter which she glanced through with an "Excuse me, please."

"Oh, dear! Now Laura can't come to-morrow! She is certainly the most unfortunate being in the universe. She became very much interested in a deaf man that she met in her settlement work, and so as to give the poor thing employment she appointed him Superintendent of the Working Boys' Club. Now the working boys refuse to play with him and the directors have had a meeting asking Laura to remove him at once. I do think they might have endured him one season when I gave him a twenty-dollar ear-trumpet, but some people are utterly unreasonable; and here I am, in need of advice every moment, and Laura kept in the city!"

"Haven't you any family?"

"Not a soul; have you?"

"No one but a cousin."

"I believe nobody nice and interesting has a family nowadays. Laura has no one but an uncongenial stepmother, and that is the reason we are so intimate. I am so giddy and frivolous, and Laura is so noble and self-sacrificing that I try to form myself on her now and then, when I'm not too busy."

"You live with her, do you?"

"Oh, no! I don't live anywhere in particular. Of course I have a house and a lady housekeeper, but she doesn't count. I've been staying mostly with a Mrs. Beckett, an old friend of my mother's. She is the dearest and loveliest woman in the world and I can't bear to be away from her."

"Why can't she join forces with you if you are so alone in the world?"

"Because there's a son."

"Is he too young, or too old, to join forces?"

"No, he's just right, and he'd be only too glad to join forces, or anything else that had me in it, but he mustn't, and that's the reason Laura made me come here!" And with this she punched the sofa-pillows rebelliously, looking more like an enraged Angora kitten than anything else.

“It’s your hour for cold spray,” said Jimmy, the page-boy, peeping in at the crack of the door.

“I’ll come!” she responded unwillingly. “Now do steal in again,” she whispered, turning to me, “for I must talk to somebody, and if Laura could see you I know she would think you safer than anybody here.”

That afternoon, as I swung in my hammock in the grove below the sanitarium, I looked up at its three stories of height and its rows upon rows of windows, and wondered how many cases of neurasthenia under its roof were traceable to a conflict between love and conscience. “I begin to have an interest in that chatterbox neighbor of mine,” I thought drowsily, “and that, after vowing not to make an acquaintance in this place. Love will be a side dish, not the roast, in her bill of fare, if I am any judge of character, and why does her Laura attempt to stem the natural tide of events? It is almost wicked of the Fates to give such a featherhead any problems to solve; she ought to have her what’s-his-name, Beckett, if she wants him, particularly if he wants her. As for the noble Laura, I long to make her acquaintance. I can almost hear the uncongenial stepmother, the feverish cook, and the infuriated directors, clamoring for a providence to remove her from their field of vision, and substitute some thoroughly practical and ignoble person in her stead.”

Sunday

I was very happy all the morning; so happy that I forgot my tonics, massage, and sedative tablets; but the doctor called at noon and spoke of the wonderful way in which my system responded to his remedies, so I said nothing.

Cousin Sarah forwarded me a letter from Richard Morton, who is superintending some surveying near a small town in Pennsylvania. He knows that I am not well and away from home on a visit to the country, but, of course, he is not aware of my exact whereabouts. It was just one of his gay, friendly letters, with an undertone of something warmer in it. Among other things he said:

> How weak a thing is man! Now that you are so far away and I am exiled in a village where there is but one post a day I suffer pangs of hunger for a word from you. So far the one daily mail would have been all too ample for your desires, since you have not written a word as yet; but there is always the hope! I have been speculating to-night upon the frightful risks and dangers surrounding the man who is waiting for a letter. It seems to me the very best postal service is inadequate to take

> care of a letter from you to me! Think of the uncertainties and perils to which it is exposed in .pm +1 transit! You give it to a maid to drop in a pillar post-box, but she may forget and leave it in her pocket, or she may lose it. Or say she drops it in; it must be removed from the box by an ordinary human being who has no conception of the issues involved in the rigid performance of this particular duty. The letter is then taken to the branch office of your section, then to the general post, and then to the railway, where new dangers menace its precious existence. The train may be robbed; and if a single letter is stolen it will be yours to me. No man alive could resist a letter of yours after he had once read one.

Is there not a note of tenderness here, a note that has crept in only during the last few months? But what if there is? It occurred to me after dinner that the question of his feeling for me is not the only, nor even the principal one to be considered. The point under advisement is, shall I allow him to love me when there is something better in store for him?

Miss Blossom had scarcely left my room this evening when I heard a pattering step and a hurried tap on my door. On my saying “Come,” my opposite neighbor slipped in and turned the key in the lock. It was an unconventional and amusing performance, but I didn’t mind. Somehow one couldn’t mind anything with such a spoiled baby.

“Good-evening, Zuleika!” she said. “No, you needn’t smile and raise your finger at me as if you were dying to tell me your name is Abigail! Miss Blossom has gone for the night, hasn’t she? I thought so. You know it’s the nurses’ ball this evening, and there’s only one attendant on duty in each corridor from now to half-past nine. May I have this big chair by the window? I am so bored with this place that it excites me even to think how stupid it is. I almost wish I had a symptom or two, just by way of sensation. Did you have Somnolina for supper? I did, and some time I shall make a scene in the dining-room when I watch the hundred and fifty dyspeptics simultaneously lifting cups of Teaette or Somnolina to their parched lips.”

“You ought to be ashamed,” I chided, “when you know almost every one who is here needs to be put upon a diet. You wouldn’t expect champagne, terrapin, and canvasback ducks?”

“I know it; don’t scold, it makes you look like Cassandra. Isn’t the moonlight enchanting, and if this weren’t a health resort wouldn’t it be a heaven upon earth?”

The broad, unscreened windows were wide open and vines of woodbine or honeysuckle framed them on every side. A lake shone like a silver mirror in the distant landscape and the elms and maples and chestnuts swayed in the summer breeze. Little groups chatted on the broad piazzas, and here and there on a rustic bench in the moonlight sat a man and a woman—two minds with but a single thought, and that thought his or her own solar plexus.

It was an hour for confidences, and I remember that my troubled heart cried out for a strong, tried friendship on which to draw for counsel and sympathy. What wonder, then, that the Angora kitten, deprived of her Laura, emptied her silky little head of some of its worries, divining that I was older and graver and perhaps would find her lost ball and give it to her to play with again.

“There’s no telling when Laura will be here!” she exclaimed despairingly. “When there is any duty within a thousand miles she stays to perform it. Mrs. Beckett has poisoned herself with mercury and Laura thinks she ought to go and nurse her for a day or two—as if Mrs. Beckett hadn’t six maids and twenty thousand a year to spend in nurses! Laura can’t bear Tom, his incurable levity gets on her nerves, and why she wants to martyr herself by staying in the house with him when I’d be only too glad to go, passes my comprehension!”

(I can’t explain it, but at this juncture I seemed to have visions of Laura flirting with the Beckett during the Kitten’s absence.)

“Sometimes,” she continued, rippling along as if natural speech had been denied her for hours, “sometimes I wish I hadn’t selected such a superior being for a bosom friend, and then again I despise myself for harboring such a mean feeling. I’m forever trying to climb, and Laura is continually trying to drag me to her level, but I suppose I don’t belong there, and that’s the reason I keep slipping off and sliding down. At this minute, if she’d let me be the groveling little earthworm I am by nature, I could marry Tom Beckett and be as happy as the day is long.”

“What is the matter?” I asked sympathetically, though rather ashamed to drop a plummet into so shallow a brook. “If you love his mother so dearly, and love him too, and are sure of his affection, why don’t you marry him? Isn’t he suitable?”

“Oh, yes; he’s almost too suitable; that’s one of the lions in the way. His family is good, he is as handsome as Apollo, and he has a much larger income than mine, but you see there’s another man.”

“Another man! You didn’t mention him yesterday.”

“Didn’t I? How funny! But after all it was our very first interview, and even silly I have my reserves.”

“Do you love them both equally?” I asked, trying to keep the note of sarcasm out of my voice.

“Certainly not. I care nothing about anybody but Tom Beckett, but Laura says that such a marriage will simply mean a life of self-indulgent luxury, idleness, and pleasure. She says marriage is something loftier and nobler than pleasing one’s self; that it ought to mean growth and development both to the man and the woman. She says that I should have no influence on Tom, and that I need somebody strong and serious to steady me. She says Tom and I would only frisk through life and leave the world no better or wiser than we found it. She even says” (and here she turned her face to the honeysuckles)—“I don’t like to repeat it, but Laura is so advanced she makes my embarrassment seem simply idiotic—she even says that the children of such a union would be incurably light-minded and trivial; and oh, Zuleika, if one isn’t a bit advanced in any way, doesn’t it seem hard to keep from marrying somebody you love just for the good of a few frivolous children you’ve never seen in your life?”

It was neither the place, the hour, nor the subject for laughter, but I forgot my neurasthenia and gave way to a burst of wholehearted mirth! Every second of time seemed to increase the unconscious humor of her point of view, and only fear of the nurse on duty in the corridor enabled me to control myself at all.

“Have I been funny?” she asked delightedly, as she drew her head in the window. “I never can see my own jokes, but I’m glad to have amused you, only I did hope for a little sympathy. Everybody can’t be Zenobias and Vashtis and Lauras, superior to common weaknesses!”

“I do, I do sympathize,” I said, wiping the tears of merriment from my eyes, “and I agree with you much more than with Laura. Now the ‘other man’ is, I suppose, all that is grave and reverend—a complete contrast to the too trivial Thomas?”

“Yes, and he’s as good as good can be; trustworthy, talented, honorable, everything; you know the kind? I never get on with them.”

“Does he love you?”

“Laura thinks he does, but I’ve no reason to suppose so. We’ve always been friends, while Tom Beckett and I squabble and make up twice a week; but anyway, even if he doesn’t adore me in Tom’s silly way, Laura says I ought not

to mind. She says it would be noble of me to help him to a splendid and prosperous career, and thinks I ought to remember how much my father wanted him for a son-in-law—you see he is awfully poor."

At this coupling of fathers and poverty a sudden light blazed in upon my consciousness and I sat bolt upright among the sofa-pillows. How could I have guessed that the love-affairs of this rosy-cheeked dumpling, the casual acquaintance of a rest-cure, could have any connection with my own? If she hadn't been the sort of person who confides at first sight we should have learned each other's names at the beginning and been on guard. The truth is, I had thought of no one but Tom Beckett in her confessions; the personality of "the other man" had stolen into the chronicle so late in the day that I had taken no interest in him.

"Are you Amy Darling?" I asked her plump.

"Yes, but how mean of you to pump Blossom! I wanted to go on thinking of you as Zuleika and have you call me something imaginary and romantic."

"I am Philippa Armstrong. Did you ever hear the name?"

"No, but it's all right; it looks like you, and it's nearly as pretty as Zenobia. Now if Tom Beckett had only chosen you and I could have obliged Laura by falling in love with—"

"Don't mention the other man's name!" I cried hastily; "it just comes to me that I may have met him."

"Met Dick Morton?"

It was true then! Here was the girl whom Richard ought, for his worldly good, to marry, and she was not a woman at all, only an Angora kitten, and moreover a kitten in love with Tom Beckett!

"Yes, I have met him, but I only this moment suspected it!"

"Have you known him long?"

"Less than a year."

"That settles it!" she cried, leaping to her feet excitedly. "If Dick Morton has known you for a year he won't want me and I can marry Tom! Goody, goody, goody!"

"Stuff and nonsense!" I said quickly. "Richard Morton is only a very dear friend."

“Stuff and nonsense yourself! No man with an eye in his head could be a dear friend to you! And Dick Morton is the hero sort who doesn’t care for Dottie Dimples, but worships Vashtis and Zuleika-Zenobias. Have you any money?”

“Not a penny!”

“Oh, dear! I might have known you wouldn’t have, with that hair and those eyes. Never mind! I’m certain that Dick would rather have a pauper goddess than a rich little earthworm.”

“You mustn’t talk any more about the matter,” I said with as much dignity as I could muster in the midst of her laughter-provoking nonsense, which made the most sacred subjects seem a natural matter of discussion. “I know through Mrs. Taunton all about the circumstances—your father’s wishes and his letter to Richard. If you can possibly love him you must accept him, advance his fortunes, and do your duty by your father. I am determined to be as noble as Laura Simonds in this matter and I refuse to be a stumbling-block!”

The girl fell limply into the lounging-chair.

“Oh,” she said despondently, “if *you* are going to be noble, too, there’s no use discussing the matter. What an example we shall be for the heathen nations! You will be noble and give up Dick Morton; I shall be noble and marry him; and be noble at the same time in giving up Tom; Tom will be noble in suffering me to marry anybody but himself; Dick will be noble in obliging my father and marrying me instead of you; Laura is always noble! We could use up a whole order of nobility among us! And it is all so silly! Do you suppose my dear father would want four of us to be unhappy, his own daughter among them? It’s really only Laura who matters, and if you had any ingenuity you could pacify her and persuade her that it is my duty for once to follow my ignoble inclinations. I am afraid of her, but *you* needn’t be! You could blaze and flash and tower, if you only would, and save us all!”

“You seem to forget,” I urged, “that Mr. Morton has never asked me to marry him.”

“That’s nothing; he has probably been thinking how he could get me nicely disposed of, or how he could earn a roof under which he could ask you to step in wet weather. He’s been too stupid and moody and dull this last winter for any use, and now I understand him. Has he ever seen you like this with your Rebecca-at-the-well hair down?”

“Certainly not!”

“I thought so; or he’d have forgotten the necessary roof!—Come in!—Goodness! it’s your room and I locked the door! Do excuse me; I’ll open it. A telegram for you.—Wait outside for an answer, Jimmy.”

I tore open the envelope, confidently expecting that Cousin Sarah had been struck with paralysis; instead of which I read:

Archville, Pennsylvania,
June 16

> Have this moment secured a large and important contract assuring two years' lucrative work. May I come to see you immediately? Name earliest day.
>
> R. M.

I handed the message to the Kitten, who read it and exclaimed: "I knew he was only waiting for the roof! You see he doesn't worry about *my* prospects—selfish pig! Answer it and say Thursday—you can get well by Thursday, can't you?—for I want to send for Tom on the same day. There's a polo game at home on Saturday, and Tom has a new motor car. Tell Dick the best hotel in the town is the Brooks House. I must wire to Laura, too. I shall say, let me see: I shall say: '*You shouldn't have left me. I couldn't be noble alone.*' That's just ten words. She'll understand fast enough, and it will pave the way for you when you explain the situation to her. We'll leave the sanitarium Friday and get your Cousin Sarah to chaperon us on the journey home. Here, I've written my messages, now do yours—hurry! There!—Jimmy, you're too old to play with matches, aren't you?"

"Yes, marm."

"Very well, then, you can be trusted with these two telegrams. Don't hold them near the fire; there's a match in each of them."

SECOND WEEK

As a patient Dr. Levi says I am almost as great a credit to the institution as Mrs. Chittenden-Ffollette herself.

Monday.—I slept all day, waking only for meals.

Tuesday.—The handcuffs slipped off my wrists and the balls and chains off my ankles.

Wednesday.—My headache, sideache, backache, and shoulderache disappeared. Breakfasted with the doctor on coffee, hot biscuits, beefsteak, and griddle cakes with sausage.

Thursday.—Richard Morton came.

Friday.—Dismissed as completely cured.

“The dimensions of this mercy are above my thoughts,” as Cromwell wrote after the Worcester fight.

THE END

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