

The Fatal Glove eBook

The Fatal Glove

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THE FATAL GLOVE

by

CLARA AUGUSTA

Author of "The Rugg Documents," "Patience Pettigrew's Perplexities," etc.

1892

PART I.

Arch Trevlyn had had a good day. Business had been brisk. The rain had fallen steadily since daybreak, and the street-crossings in New York were ankle deep in mud. The little street-sweeper's arms ached fearfully, but his pocket was full of pennies, interspersed with an occasional half-dime.

The clouds were breaking in the west, and a gleam of sunshine gilded the tall tower of St. John's. Arch shouldered his broom, and whistled a merry tune as he took his way homeward. His bright dark eyes sparkled as he thought how the sight of his earnings would cheer his feeble mother. She could have tea now, with real milk and some sugar in it, and an orange, too. Only yesterday she was wishing she had an orange.

Arch's way led past a horticultural store, and his eye wandered longingly over the display of flowers in the window. He must have just one wee white rose, because, only

the Sabbath before, while he sat at his mother's feet, she had wept in telling him about the sweet roses that used to grow under the window of the little country cottage where her happy youth had been spent.

The white rose would be like bringing back to her ever so little a bit of the happy past. It could not cost much, and Arch felt wealthy as a prince. He stepped into the store and asked the price of a white rose. The clerk answered him roughly:

"Get out of the store, you young rascal! You want to steal something!"

"I am not a thief, sir," said the boy, proudly, his sallow cheeks crimsoning hotly. "I want a rose for my mother. I guess I can pay for it!"

"It's half a dollar, if you want it," said the man, sneeringly. "Show your money, or take yourself off this minute!"

Archie's countenance fell. He had not half a dollar in all. He turned sadly away, his head drooping, his lip quivering. Oh, how very hard it was to be poor, he thought, looking enviously at the costly carriage, with a pair of splendid grays, standing before the door.

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“Stop, little boy!” said a sweet voice from somewhere among the roses and heliotropes. “Is your mother sick?”

Arch removed his cap—some inborn spirit of courtesy prompting him to be reverent toward the glorious vision which burst upon him. For a moment he thought he saw an angel, and almost expected that she would unfold her silvery wings, and vanish in a golden cloud from his sight. But after the first glimpse he saw that she was a little girl about his own age—eight or nine years, perhaps—with yellow curls, deep hazel eyes, a mouth like a rosebud, and a blue silk frock. She repeated the question:

“Is your mother sick, little boy?”

“No, she is not sick, for she always sits up, and sews. But she is not strong, and her cheeks never have any color in them, like yours.”

“And does she love flowers?”

“Yes, she loves them dearly. She kisses them always, when she has any. And that’s not often.”

“Does she? That’s nice. Just like I do!” said the little girl, in a pleased voice. “Mr. Burns”—to the gruff clerk—“here is a dollar. Give me some real nice roses, and two or three sweet pinks. The lady shall have some flowers. Tell her I sent them.”

“Who shall I say sent them?”

“Margie Harrison. Will she know me, think?”

“I guess not. But it’s all the same. I shall tell her you are one of the angels, any way. She knows about them, for she’s told me ever so much about them.”

The little girl laughed, and gave him the flowers.

“Don’t soil them with your grimy hands,” she said, a little saucily; “and when you get home—let’s see, what’s your name?”

“Archer Trevlyn.”

“Why, what a nice name! Just like names in a storybook. I know some elegant people by the name of Trevlyn. But they live in a big house, and have flowers enough of their own. So they can’t be your folks, can they?”

“No, they’re not my folks,” replied the boy, with a touch of bitterness in his voice.

“Well, Archer when you get home, you wash your face, do! It’s so dirty!”

The boy flushed hotly. If one of his companions had said that to him, he would have knocked him down instantly. But he forgave everything this little girl said, because she was so beautiful and so kind.

“I am a street-sweeper, miss.”

“Oh, that accounts for it, then. It’s very muddy to-day, and you must be tired. Hark! there’s Florine calling me. Good-by, Archer.”

She vanished, and a moment later the boy saw her disappear within the glittering carriage, which, loaded down with fragrant blossoms, was driven slowly away. He stood a little while looking after it, then, pulling his cap down over his eyes, and grasping the stems of her flowers tightly in his little purple hand, he started for home.

Home! It could hardly be called so, and yet it was home to Archer. His mother was there—the dear mother who was all the world to him. It was in a poor part of the city—an old, tumble-down wooden house, swarming with tenants, teeming with misery, filth, and crime.

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Up a crazy flight of steps, and turning to the right, Arch saw that the door of his mother's room was half-way open, and the storm had beaten in on the floor. It was all damp and dismal, and such an indescribable air of desolation over anything! Archer's heart beat a little slower as he went in. His mother sat in an arm-chair by the window, an uncovered box in her lap, and a miniature locket clasped in her hand.

"Oh, mother! mother dearest!" cried Arch, holding up the flowers, "only see what I have got! An angel gave them to me! A very angel, with hair like the sunshine, and a blue frock, all real silk! And I have got my pocket full of pennies, and you shall have an orange, mother, and ever so many nice things besides. See, mother dear!"

He displayed a handful of coin, but she did not notice him. He looked at her through the gloom of the twilight, and a feeling of terrible awe stole over him. He crept to her side, and touched her cheek with his finger. It was cold as ice. A mortal pallor overspread his face; the pennies and the flowers rolled unheeded to the floor.

"Dead! dead! My mother is dead!" he cried.

He did not display any of the passionate grief which is natural to childhood—there were no tears in his feverish eyes. He took her cold hand in his own, and stood there all night long, smoothing back the beautiful hair, and talking to her as one would talk to a sick child.

It was thus that Mat Miller found him the next morning. Mat was a little older than himself—a street-sweeper also. She and Arch had always been good friends; they sympathized with each other when bad luck was on them, and they cheered lustily when fortune smiled.

"Hurrah, Arch!" cried Mat, as she burst into the room; "it rains again, and we shall get a harvest! Good gracious, Arch! is—your—mother—dead?"

"Hush!" said the boy, putting down the cold hand; "I have been trying to warm her all night, but it is no use. Only just feel how like ice my hands are. I wish I was as cold all over, and then they would let me stay with my mother."

"Oh, Arch!" cried the girl, sinking down beside him on the desolate hearth, "it's a hard world to live in! I wonder, if, when folks be dead, they have to sweep crossings, and be kicked and cuffed round by old grandmas when they don't get no pennies? If they don't then I wish I was dead, too, Arch!"

"I suppose it's wicked, Mat. *She* used to say so. She told me never to get tired of waiting for God's own time—her very words, Mat. Well, now her time has come, and I am all alone—all alone! Oh, mother—mother!" He threw himself down before the dead woman, and his form shook with emotion, but not a tear came to his eyes. Only that

hard, stony look of hopeless despair. Mat crept up to him and took his head in her lap, smoothing softly the matted chestnut hair.

“Don’t take on so, Arch! don’t!” she cried the tears running down over her sunburnt face. “I’ll be a mother to ye, Arch! I will indeed! I know I’m a little brat, but I love you, Arch, and some time, when we get bigger, I’ll marry you, Arch, and we’ll live in the country, where there’s birds and flowers, and it’s just like the Park all round. Don’t feel so—don’t!”

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Arch pressed the dirty little hands that fluttered about him—for, next to his mother, he loved Mat.

“I will go out now and call somebody,” she said; “there Mrs. Hill and Peggy Sullivan, if she ain’t drunk. Either of them will come!” And a few moments later the room was filled with the rude neighbors.

They did not think it necessary to call a coroner. She had been ailing for a long time. Heart complaint, the physician said—and she had probably died in one of those spasms to which she was subject. So they robed her for the grave, and when all was done, Arch stole in and laid the pinks and roses on her breast.

“Oh, mother! mother!” he said, bending over her, in agony, “she sent them to you, and you shall have them! I thought they would make you so happy! Well, maybe they will now! Who can tell?”

The funeral was a very poor one. A kind city missionary prayed over the remains, and the hearse was followed to Potter’s Field only by Mat and Arch—ragged and tattered, but sincere mourners.

When they came back Mat took Arch’s hand and led him into the wretched den she called home.

“You shall stay here, Arch, with Grandma Rugg and me. She said you might if you’d be a good boy, and not plague the cat. Grandma’s a rough one, but she ain’t kicked me since I tore her cap off. I’m too big to be kicked now. Sit down, Arch; you know you can’t stay at home now.”

Yes, to be sure he could not stay there any longer. No one knew that any better than Arch. The landlord had warned him out that very morning. A half-quarter’s rent was still due, and the meagre furniture would barely suffice to satisfy his claim. Hitherto, Mrs. Trevlyn had managed to pay her expenses, but, now that she was gone, Arch knew that it was more than folly to think of renting a room. But he could not suppress a cry of pain when they came to take away the things; and when they laid their rude hands on the chair in which his mother died, poor Arch could endure no more, but fled out into the street, and wandered about till hunger and weariness forced him back to the old haunt.

He accepted the hospitality of Grandma Rugg, and made his home with her and Mat. The influences which surrounded him were not calculated to develop good principles, and Arch grew rude and boisterous, like the other street boys. He heard the vilest language—oaths were the rule rather than the exception in Grigg Court, as the place was called—and gambling, and drunkenness, and licentiousness abounded. Still, it was singular how much evil Arch shunned.

But there was growing within him a principle of bitter hatred, which one day might embitter his whole existence. Perhaps he had cause for it; he thought he had, and cherished it with jealous care, lest it should be annihilated as the years went on.

From his mother's private papers he had learned much of her history that he had before been ignorant of. She had never spoken to him very freely of the past. She knew how proud and high his temper was, and acted with wisdom in burying the story of her wrongs in her own breast.

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His father, Hubert Trevlyn, had come of a proud family. There was no bluer blood in the land than that which ran in the veins of the Trevlyns. Not very far back they had an earl for their ancestor, and, better than that, the whole long lineage had never been tarnished by a breath of dishonor.

Hubert was the sole child of his father, and in him were centred many bright and precious hopes. His father was a kind parent, though a stern one, who would never brook a shade of disobedience in this boy upon whom his fondest hopes and aspirations were fixed.

When Hubert was about twenty-four he went into the country for his health, which was never very robust, and while there he met Helen Crayton. It was a case of love at first sight, but none the less pure and steadfast account. Helen was an orphan—a poor seamstress, but beautiful and intelligent beyond any woman he had ever met. They loved, and they would not be cheated out of their happiness by any worldly opposition. Hubert wrote to his father, informing him of his love for Helen, and asking his consent to their union. Such a letter as he received in return! It bade him give up the girl at once and return home. If he ever spoke to her again he was disowned forever! He might consider himself houseless and homeless.

Hubert had some of the proud Trevlyn blood in his composition, and this letter roused it thoroughly. A week afterward he was the husband of Helen Crayton. He took his young wife to the city, and, having something of a talent for painting, he opened a studio, hoping to receive sufficient patronage from his friends to support his family in comfort.

But he had not rightfully calculated the extent of his father's hatred. He made himself the evil genius of his disobedient son; and, in consequence, nothing Hubert touched prospered. Mr. Trevlyn destroyed the confidence of his friends in him; he circulated scandalous reports of his wife; he made the public to look with suspicious eyes upon the unfortunate pair, and took the honestly earned bread out of their very mouths. From bad to worse it went on, until, broken in health and spirits, Hubert made an appeal to his father. It was a cold, wet night, and he begged for a little food for his wife and child. They were literally starving! Begged of his own father, and was refused with curses. Not only refused, but kicked like a dog from the door of his childhood's home! There was a fearful storm that night, and Hubert did not come back. All night his young wife sat waiting for him, hushing the feeble cries of the weary infant upon her breast. With the dawn, she muffled herself and child in a shawl, and went forth to seek him. Half way from her wretched home to the palatial mansion of Mr. Trevlyn she found her husband, stone dead, and shrouded in the snow—the tender, pitiful snow, that covered him and his wretchedness from sight.

After that, people who knew Mr. Trevlyn said that he grew more fretful and disagreeable. His hair was bleached white as the snow, his hands shook, and his erect

frame was bowed and bent like that of a very aged man. His wife, Hubert's mother, pined away to a mere shadow, and before the lapse of a year she was a hopeless idiot.

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Helen Trevlyn took up the burden of her life, refusing to despair because of her child. It was a hard struggle for her, and she lived on, until, as we have seen, when Archer was nine years of age, she died.

When all this was known to Archer Trevlyn he was almost beside himself with passion. If he had possessed the power, he would have wiped the whole Trevlyn race out of existence. He shut himself up in his desolate garret with the tell-tale letters and papers which had belonged to his mother, and there, all alone, he took a fearful oath of vengeance. The wrongs of his parents should yet be visited on the head of the man who had been so cruelly unpitying. He did not know what form his revenge might take, but, so sure as he lived, it should fall some time!

* * * * *

Five years passed. Archer was fourteen years of age. He had left the street-sweeping business some time before, at the command of Grandma Rugg, and entered a third-class restaurant as an under-waiter. It was not the best school in the world for good morals. The people who frequented the Garden Rooms, as they were called, were mostly of a low class, and all the interests and associations surrounding Arch were bad. But perhaps he was not one to be influenced very largely by his surroundings. So the Garden Rooms, if they did not make him better, did not make him worse.

In all these years he had kept the memory of Margie Harrison fresh and green, though he had not seen her since the day his mother died. The remembrance of her beauty and purity kept him oftentimes from sin; and when he felt tempted to give utterance to oaths, her soft eyes seemed to come between him and temptation.

One day he was going across the street to make change for a customer, when a stylish carriage came dashing along. The horses shied at some object, and the pole of the carriage struck Arch and knocked him down. The driver drew in the horses with an imprecation.

Arch picked himself up, and stood recovering his scattered senses, leaning against a lamp-post.

"Served ye right!" said the coachman roughly. "You'd no business to be running befront of folkses carriages."

"Stop!" said a clear voice inside the coach. "What has occurred, Peter?"

"Only a ragged boy knocked down; but he's up again all right. Shall I drive on? You will be late to the concert."

"I shall survive it, if I am," said the voice. "Get down and open the door. I must see if the child is hurt."

"It's no child, miss; it is a boy older than yourself," said the man, surlily obeying the command.

Margie Harrison descended to the pavement. From the sweet voice, Arch had almost expected to see *her*. A flush of grateful admiration lit up his face. She beamed upon him like a star from the depths of the clouds.

"Are you hurt?" she asked, kindly. "It was very careless of Peter to let the carriage strike you. Allow us to take you home."

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"Thank you," he said. "I am close to where I work, and I am not hurt. It is only a trifling bruise."

Something familiar about him seemed to strike her; she looked at him with a strangely puzzled face, but he gave her no light.

"Is there nothing we can do for you?" she asked, at length.

A great presumption almost took his breath away. He gave it voice on the moment, afraid if he waited he should lack the courage.

"If you will give me the cluster of bluebells in your belt—"

She looked surprised, hesitated a moment, then laid them in his hand. He bowed, and was lost in the crowd.

That night when he got home he found Mat worse. She had been failing for a long time. She was a large girl now, with great preternaturally bright eyes, and a spot of crimson in each hollow cheek.

It was more than three months since she had been able to do anything, and Grandma Rugg was very harsh and severe with her in consequence. There were black and blue places on her shoulders now where she had been beaten, but Arch did not know it. Mat never spoke to him about her sufferings, because it distressed him so, and made him very angry with the old woman.

He went in and sat down on the straw beside Mat; and almost before he knew it he was telling her about Margie Harrison. He always brought all his joys and sorrows to Mat now, just as he used to carry them to his mother.

The girl listened intently, the spots on her face growing deeper and wider. She looked at the bluebells wistfully, but would not touch them. Arch offered her a spray. She shook her head sadly.

"No," she said, "they are not for me. Keep them, Arch. Some time, I think, you will be rich and happy, and have all the flowers and beautiful things you wish."

"If I ever am, Mat, you shall be my queen, and dress in gold and silver!" answered the boy, warmly; "and never do any more heavy work to make your hands hard."

"You are very good, Arch," she said. "I thank you, but I shall not be there, you know. I think I am going away—going where I shall see my mother, and your mother, too. Arch, and where all the world will be full of flowers! Then I shall think of you, Arch, and wish I could send you some."

“Mat, dear Mat! don’t talk so strangely!” said the boy, clasping her hot hands in his.
“You must not think of going away! What *should* I do without you?”

She smiled, and touched her lips to his hand, which had stolen under her head, and lay so near her cheek.

“You would forget me, Arch. I mean after a time, and I should want you to. But I love you better than anything else in all the world! And it is better that I should die. A great deal better! Last night I dreamed it was. Your mother came and told me so. Do you know how jealous I have been of that Margie Harrison? I have watched you closely. I have seen you kiss a dead rose

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that I knew she gave you. And I longed to see her so much, that I have waited around the splendid house where she lives, and seen her time and again come out to ride, with the beautiful dresses, and the white feather in her hat, and the wild roses on her cheeks. And my heart ached with such a hot, bitter pain! But it's all over now, Arch: I am not jealous now. I love her and you—both of you together. If I do go away, I want you to think kindly of me, and—and—good-night, Arch—dear Arch. I am so tired.”

He gathered her head to his bosom, and kissed her lips.

Poor little Mat! In the morning, when Arch came down, she had indeed gone away—drifted out with the tide and with the silent night.

After Mat's death the home at Grandma Rugg's became insupportable to Arch. He could not remain there. The old woman was crosser than ever, and, though he gave her every penny of his earnings, she was not satisfied.

So Arch took lodgings in another part of the city, quite as poor a place, but there no one had the right to grumble at him. Still, because she was some relation to Mat, he gave Grandma Rugg full half of his money, but he never remained inside her doors longer than necessity demanded.

In his new lodgings he became acquainted with a middle-aged man who represented himself as a retired army officer. His name was John Sharp—a sleek, keen-eyed, smooth-tongued individual, who never boasted or blustered, but who gave people the idea that at some time he had been a person of consequence. This man attached himself particularly to Arch Trevlyn. With insidious cunning he wormed himself into the boy's confidence, and gained, to a certain degree, his friendship. Arch did not trust him entirely, though. There was something about him from which he shrank—the touch of his white, jewelled hand made his flesh creep, like the touch of a serpent.

But Mr. Sharp had an object to gain, and set himself resolutely to work to carry his point. He made himself necessary to Arch. He bought him books, and taught him in the evenings, when neither was engaged otherwise. He had been well educated, and in Arch he had an apt scholar. Every spare moment of the boy's life was absorbed in his books.

By-and-bye Sharp learned the whole history of the wrongs, inflicted on Arch's parents by old Mr. Trevlyn. He snapped at the story as a dog snaps at a bone. But he was, cautious and patient, and it was a long time before he showed himself to Arch in his true character. And then, when he did, the revelation had been made so much by degrees, that the boy was hardly shocked to find that his friend was a house-breaker and a highway robber.

Long before he had formed a plan to rob the house of Mr. Trevlyn. It was a field that promised well. Mr. Trevlyn, with the idiosyncrasy of age, had invested most of his fortune in diamonds, and these he kept in a chamber in his house. His chief delight consisted in gloating over these precious stones. Night after night he would sit handling his diamonds, chuckling over his wealth, and threatening imaginary plunderers with destruction.

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So, his servants said, and Sharp repeated the story to Arch with sundry variations and alterations suited to the case. He had a persuasive tongue, and it is little wonder that the boy, hating his grandfather as he did, and resolved as he was upon revenging his father's wrongs, should fall into the snare. He wanted Mr. Trevlyn to suffer—he did not care how. If the loss of his diamonds would be to him a severer blow than any other, then let it fall.

Sharp used many specious arguments to induce Arch to become his accomplice in robbing the Trevlyn mansion, but the only one which had any weight was that he could thus revenge his father's wrongs.

"Only assist me, and secure your revenge," said the wily schemer, "and I will share the spoils with you. There will be enough to enrich us both for life!"

Arch drew himself up proudly, a fiery red on his cheek, a dangerous gleam in his dark eye.

"I am no thief, sir! I'd scorn to take a cent from that old man to use for my benefit! I would not touch his diamonds if they lay here at my feet! But if I can make him suffer anything like as my poor father suffered through him, then I am ready to turn robber—yes, pickpocket, if you will!" he added, savagely.

Sharp appointed the night. His plans were craftily laid. Mr. Trevlyn, he had ascertained, would be absent on Thursday night; he had taken a little journey into the country for his health, and only the servants and his ward would sleep in the house.

Thursday night was dark and rainy. At midnight Sharp and Arch stood before the house they were about to plunder. No thought of shame or sin entered Archer Trevlyn's heart; he did not seem to think he was about to disgrace himself for life; he thought only of Mr. Trevlyn's dismay when he should return, to find the bulk of his riches swept away from him at one blow.

"He took all my father had," he said, under his breath; "he would have sullied the fair fame of my mother; and if I could take from him everything but life, I would do it."

Sharp, with a dexterous skill, removed the fastenings of a shutter, and then the window yielded readily to his touch. He stepped inside; Arch followed. All was quiet, save the heavy ticking of the old clock on the hall stairs. Up the thickly carpeted stairway, along the corridor they passed, and Sharp stopped before a closed door.

"We must pass through one room before reaching that where the safe is which contains the treasure," he said, in a whisper. "It is possible that there may be some one sleeping in that room. If so, leave them to me, that is all."

He opened the door with one of a bunch of keys which he carried, and noiselessly entered. The gas was turned down low, but a mellow radiance filled the place. A bed stood in one corner, and Sharp advanced toward it. The noise he had made, slight though it was, aroused the occupant, and, as she started up in affright, Arch met the soft, pleading eyes of Margie Harrison. She spoke to him, not to Sharp.

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"Do not let him kill me!"

Sharp laid a rough hand on her shoulder, and put a knife at her throat.

Simultaneously, Arch sprang upon him like a tiger.

"Release that girl!" he hissed. "Dare to touch her with but the tips of your fingers, and by Heaven I will murder you!"

Sharp sprang back with an oath, and at the same moment a pistol-shot rang through the house, and Sharp, bathed in blood, fell to the floor. Old Mr. Trevlyn, travel-stained and wet, strode into the room.

"I've killed him!" he said, in a cracked voice of intense satisfaction. "He didn't catch old Trevlyn napping. I knew well enough they'd be after my diamonds, and I gave up the journey. Margie, child, are the jewels safe?"

She had fallen back on the pillows, pale as death, her white night-dress spattered with the blood of the dead robber.

Arch lifted a tiny glove from the carpet, thrust it into his bosom, and, before old Trevlyn could raise a hand to stop him, he had got clear of the premises.

Such a relief as he felt when the cool, fresh air struck his face. He had been saved from overt criminality. God had not permitted him to thus debase himself. Now that his excitement was gone, he saw the heinousness of the sin he had been about to commit in all its deformity.

Let old Trevlyn go! Let him gloat over his diamonds while yet he had opportunity. He would not despoil him of his treasures, but he could not give up his scheme of vengeance. It should be brought about some other way.

A large reward was offered by Mr. Trevlyn for the apprehension of Sharp's accomplice, but, as no description of his person could be given by any one except Margie, who could not or would not be explicit on that point, he was not secured.

Trevlyn recognized and appreciated her noble generosity in suffering him to go free, for in the one look she had given him on that disgraceful occasion, he had felt that she recognized him. But she pitied him enough to let him go free.

Well, he would show her that her confidence was not misplaced. He would deserve her forbearance. He was resolved upon a new life.

He left the saloon, and after many rebuffs succeeded in getting employment as errand-boy in a large importing house. The salary was a mere pittance, but it kept him in

clothes and coarse food, until one day, about a year after his apprenticeship there, he chanced to save the life of Mr. Belgrade, the senior partner. A gas-pipe in the private office of the firm exploded, and the place took fire, and Mr. Belgrade, smothered and helpless, would have perished in the flames, had not Arch, with a bravery few would have expected in a bashful, retiring boy, plunged through the smoke and flame, and borne him to a place of safety.

Mr. Belgrade was a man with a conscience, and, grateful for his life, he rewarded his preserver by a clerkship of importance. The duties of this office he discharged faithfully for three years, when the death of the head clerk left a vacancy, and when Arch was nineteen he received the situation.

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Through these three years he had been a close student. Far into the night he pored over his books, and, too proud to go to school, he hired a teacher and was taught privately. At twenty he was quite as well educated as nine-tenths of the young men now turned out by our fashionable colleges.

Rumors of Margie Harrison's triumphs reached him constantly, for Margie was a belle and a beauty now. Her parents were dead, and she had been left to the guardianship of Mr. Trevlyn, at whose house she made her home, and where she reigned a very queen. Old Trevlyn's heart at last found something beside his diamonds to worship, and Margie had it all her own way.

She came into the store of Belgrade and Co. one day, and asked to look at some laces. Trevlyn was the only clerk disengaged, and with a very changeable face he came forward to attend to her. He felt that she would recognize him at once—that she would remember where she had seen him the last time—a house-breaker! She held his reputation in her keeping.

His hand trembled as he took down the laces—she glanced at his face. A start of surprise—a conscious, painful blush swept over her face. He dropped the box, and the rich laces fell over her feet.

“Pardon me,” he said hurriedly, and, stooping to pick them up, the little glove he had stolen on that night, and which he wore always in his bosom, fell out, and dropped among the laces.

She picked it up with a little cry.

“The very glove that I lost four years ago! And you are—” she stopped suddenly.

He paled to the lips, but, lifting his head proudly, said: “Go on. Finish the sentence. I can bear it.”

“No, I will not go on. Let the memory die, I knew you then, but you were so young, and had to bear so much among temptations! And the other was a villain. No, I am silent. You are safe.”

He stooped, and, lifting the border of her shawl, kissed it reverently.

“If I live,” he said solemnly, “you will be glad you have been so merciful. Some time I shall hear you say so.”

She did not purchase any laces. She went out forgetful of her errand, and Arch was so awkward for the remainder of the day, and committed so many blunders, that his fellow-clerks laughed at him unrebuked, and Mr. Belgrade seriously wondered if Trevlyn had not been taking too much champagne.

* * * * *

Margie Harrison and her guardian sat at breakfast. Mr. Trevlyn showed his years very plainly. He was nearly seventy-five—he looked eighty.

Margie looked very lovely this morning and it was of this the old man was thinking as he glanced at her across the table. She had more than fulfilled the promise of her childhood. The golden hair was chestnut now, and pushed behind her ears in heavy rippling masses of light and shadow. Her eyes had taken a deeper tone—they were like wells whose depth you could not guess at. Her features were delicately irregular, the forehead low, broad and white; her chin was dimpled as an infant's, and her mouth still ripe and red, as a damask rosebud. She wore a pink muslin wrapper, tied with white ribbons, and in her hair drooped a cluster of apple-blossoms.

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"Margie dear," said Mr. Trevlyn, pausing in his work of buttering a muffin, "I want you to look your prettiest to-night. I am going to bring home a friend of mine—one who was also your father's friend—Mr. Linmere. He arrived from Europe to-day."

Margie's cheek lost a trifle of its peachy bloom. She toyed with her spoon, but did not reply to his remark.

"Did you understand me, child? Mr. Linmere has returned."

"Yes sir."

"And is coming here to-night. Remember to take extra pains with yourself, Margie, for he has seen all the European beauties, and I do not want my little American flower to be cast in the shade. Will you remember it?"

"Certainly, if you wish it, Mr. Trevlyn."

"Margie!"

"Yes!"

"You are aware that Mr. Linmere is your affianced husband, are you not?"

"I have been told so."

"And yet in the face of that fact—well, of all things, girls do beat me! Thank heaven, I have none of my own!" he added testily.

"Girls are better let alone, sir. It is very hard to feel one's self bound to fulfil a contract of this kind."

"Hard! Well, now, I should think it easy. Mr. Linmere is all that any reasonable woman could wish. Not too old, nor yet too young; about forty-five, which is just the age for a man to marry; good-looking, intelligent and wealthy—what more could you ask?"

"You forgot that I do not love him—that he does not love me."

"Love! tush! Don't let me hear anything about that. I loath the name. Margie, love ruined my only son! For love he disobeyed me and I disowned him, I have not spoken his name for years! Your father approved of Mr. Linmere, and while you were yet a child you were betrothed. And when your father died, what did you promise him on his deathbed?"

Margie grew white as the ribbons at her throat.

"I promised him that I would *try* and fulfil his requirements."

"That you would *try*! Yes. And that was equal to giving an unqualified assent. You know the conditions of the will, I believe?"

"I do. If I marry without your consent under the age of twenty-one, I forfeit my patrimony. And I am nineteen now. And I shall not marry without your consent."

"Margie, you must marry Mr. Linmere. Do not hope to do differently. It is your duty. He has lived single all these years waiting for you. He will be kind to you, and you will be happy. Prepare to receive him with becoming respect."

Mr. Trevlyn considered his duty performed, and went out for his customary walk.

At dinner Mr. Linmere arrived. Margie met him with cold composure. He scanned her fair face and almost faultless form, with the eye of a connoisseur, and congratulated himself on the fortune which was to give him, such a bride without the perplexity of a wooing. She was beautiful and attractive, and he had feared she might be ugly, which would have been a dampener on his satisfaction. True, her wealth would have counter-balanced any degree of personal deformity; but Mr. Paul Linmere admired beauty, and liked to have pretty things around him.

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To tell the truth, he was sadly in need of money. It was fortunate that his old friend, Mr. Harrison, Margie's dead father, had taken it into his head to plight his daughter's troth to him while she was yet a child. Mr. Harrison had been an eccentric man; and from the fact that in many points of religious belief he and Mr. Paul Linmere agreed, (for both were miserable skeptics,) he valued him above all other men, and thought his daughter's happiness would be secured by the union he had planned.

Linmere had been abroad several years, and had led a very reckless, dissipated life. Luxurious by nature, lacking in moral rectitude, and having wealth at his command, he indulged himself unrestrained; and when at last he left the gay French capital and returned to America, his whole fortune, with exception of a few thousands, was dissipated. So he needed a rich wife sorely, and was not disposed to defer his happiness.

He met Margie with *empressement*, and bowed his tall head to kiss the white hand she extended to him. She drew it away coldly—something about the man made her shrink from him.

"I am so happy to meet you again. Margie, and after ten years of separation! I have thought so much and so often of you."

"Thank you, Mr. Linmere."

"Will you not call me Paul?" he asked, in a subdued voice, letting his dangerous eyes, full of light and softness, rest on her.

An expression of haughty surprise swept her face. She drew back a pace.

"I am not accustomed to address gentlemen—mere acquaintances—by their Christian names, sir."

"But in this case, Margie? Surely the relations existing between us will admit of such a familiarity," he said, seating himself, while she remained standing coldly near.

"There are no relations existing between us at present, Mr. Linmere," she answered, haughtily; "and if, in obedience to the wishes of the dead, we should ever become connected in name, I beg leave to assure you in the beginning that you will always be Mr. Linmere to me."

A flush of anger mounted to his cheek; he set his teeth, but outwardly he was calm and subdued. Anger, just at present, was impolitic.

"I hope to win your love, Margie; I trust I shall," he answered, sadly enough to have aroused almost any woman's pity; but some subtle instinct told Margie he was false to the core.

But all through the evening he was affable and complaisant and forbearing. She made no attempt to conceal her dislike of him. Concealments were not familiar to Margie's nature. She was frank and open as the day.

Mr. Linmere's fascinations were many and varied. He had a great deal of adaptation, and made himself agreeable to every one. He had traveled extensively, was a close observer, and had a retentive memory. Mr. Trevlyn was charmed with him. So was Alexandrine Lee, a friend of Margie's, a rival belle, who accidentally (?) dropped in to spend the evening.

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Mr. Linmere played and sang with exquisite taste and skill—he was a complete master of the art, and, in spite of herself, Margie listened to him with a delight that was almost fascination, but which subsided the moment the melody ceased.

He judged her by the majority of women he had met, and finding her indifferent, he sought to rouse her jealousy by flirting with Miss Lee, who was by no means adverse to his attentions. But Margie hailed the transfer with a relief which was so evident, that Mr. Linmere, piqued and irritated, took up his hat to leave, in the midst of one of Miss Lee's most brilliant descriptions of what she had seen in Italy, from whence she had just returned. He went over to the sofa where Margie was sitting.

"I hope to please you better next time," he said, lifting her hand. "Good-night, Margie dear." And before she was aware, he touched his lips to her forehead. She tore her hand away from him, and a flush of anger sprang to her cheek. He surveyed her with admiration. He liked a little spirit in a woman, especially as he intended to be able to subdue it when it pleased him. Her anger made her a thousand times more beautiful. He stood looking at her a moment, then turned and withdrew.

Margie struck her forehead with her hand, as if she would wipe out the touch he had left there.

Alexandrine came and put her arm around Margie's waist.

"I almost envy you, Margie," she said, in that singularly purring voice of hers. "Ah, Linmere is magnificent! Such eyes, and hair, and such a voice! Well, Margie, you are a fortunate girl."

And Miss Lee sighed, and shook out the heavy folds of her violet silk, with the air of one who has been injured, but is determined to show a proper spirit of resignation.

Mr. Paul Linmere hurried along through an unfrequented street to his suite of rooms at the St. Nicholas. He was very angry with everybody; he felt like an ill-treated individual. He had expected Margie to fall at his feet at once. A man of his attractions to be snubbed as he had been, by a mere chit of a girl, too!

"I will find means to tame her, when once she is mine," he muttered. "By heaven! but it will be rare sport to break that fiery spirit! It will make me young again!"

Something white and shadowy bound his path. A spectral hand was laid on his arm, chilling like ice, even through his clothing. The ghastly face of a woman—a face framed in jet black hair, and lit up by great black eyes bright as stars, gleamed through the mirk of the night.

The man gazed into the weird face, and shook like a leaf in the blast. His arm sank nerveless to his side, palsied by that frozen touch; his voice was so unnatural that he started at the sound.

“My God! Arabel Vere! Do the dead come back?”

The great unnaturally brilliant eyes seemed to burn into his brain. The cold hand tightened on his arm. A breath like wind freighted with snow crossed his face.

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“Speak for heaven’s sake!” he cried. “Am I dreaming?”

“Remember the banks of the Seine!” said a singularly sweet voice, which sounded to Mr. Paul Linmere as if it came from leagues and leagues away. “When you sit by the side of the living love, remember the dead! Think of the dark rolling river, and of what its waters covered!”

He started from the strange presence, and caught at a post for support. His self-possession was gone; he trembled like the most abject coward. Only for a moment—and then, when he looked again, the apparition had vanished.

“Good God!” he cried, putting his hand to his forehead. “Do the dead indeed come back! I saw them take her from the river—O heaven! I saw her when she sank beneath the terrible waters! Is there a hereafter, and does a man sell his soul to damnation who commits what the world calls murder?”

He stopped under a lamp and drew out his pocket-book, taking therefrom a soiled scrap of paper.

“Yes, I have it here. ‘Found drowned, the body of a woman. Her linen was marked with the name of Arabel Vere. Another unfortunate—’ No, I will not read the rest. I have read it too often, now, for my peace of mind. Yes, she is dead. There is no doubt. I have been dreaming to-night. Old Trevlyn’s wine was too strong for me. Arabel Vere, indeed! Pshaw! Paul Linmere, are you an idiot?”

Not daring to cast a look behind him, he hurried home, and up to his spacious parlor on the second floor.

Linmere turned up the gas into a flare, and, throwing off his coat, flung himself into an arm-chair, and wiped the perspiration from his forehead. He looked about the room with half-frightened, searching eyes. He dreaded solitude, and he feared company, yet felt the necessity of speaking to something. His eyes lighted on the greyhound dozing on the hearth-rug.

“Leo, Leo,” he called, “come here, sir!”

The dog opened his eyes, but gave no responsive wag of his tail. You saw at once that though Leo was Mr. Paul Linmere’s property, and lived with him, he did not have any attachment for him.

“Come here, sir!” said Linmere, authoritatively.

Still the animal did not stir. Linmere was nervous enough to be excited to anger by the variest trifle, and the dog’s disobedience aroused his rage.

“Curse the brute!” he cried; and putting his foot against him, he sent him spinning across the room. Leo did not growl, or cry out, but his eyes gleamed like coals, and he showed his white teeth with savage but impotent hatred. It was easy to see that if he had been a bulldog instead of a greyhound, he would have torn Mr. Paul Linmere limb from limb.

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Linmere went back to his chair, and sat down with a sullen face; but he could not rest there. He rose, and going into an inner room, brought out an ebony box, which he opened, and from which he took a miniature in a golden case. He hesitated a moment before touching the spring, and when he did so the unclosing revealed the face of a young girl—a fair young girl in her early youth—not more than eighteen summers could have scattered their roses over her, when that beautiful impression was taken. A ripe southern face, with masses of jet-black hair, and dark brilliant eyes. There was a dewy crimson on her lips, and her cheeks were red as damask roses. A bright, happy face, upon which no blight had fallen.

“She was beautiful—beautiful as an houri!” said Mr. Paul Linmere, speaking slowly, half unconsciously, it seemed, his thoughts aloud. “And when I first knew her she was sweet and innocent. I made her sin. I led her into the temptation she was too weak to resist. Women are soft and silly when they are in love, and because of that, men have to bear all the blame. She was willing to trust me—she ought to have been more cautious. Who blames me, if I tired of her? A man does not always want a moping complaining woman hanging about him; and she had a deuced unpleasant way of forcing herself upon me when it was particularly disagreeable to have her do so. Well—but there is no use in retrospection. She was drowned—she and her unborn child, and the dead can never come back—no, never!”

He sprang up and rang the bell sharply. Directly his valet, Pietro, a sleepy-looking and swarthy Italian, appeared.

“Bring me a glass of brandy, Pietro; and look you, sir, you may sleep to-night on the lounge in my room. I am not feeling quite well, and may have need of you before morning.”

The man looked surprised, but made no comment. He brought the stimulant, his master drank it off, and then threw himself, dressed as he was, on the bed.

Upper Tendom was ringing with the approaching nuptials of Miss Harrison and Mr. Linmere. The bride was so beautiful and wealthy, and so insensible to her good fortune in securing the most eligible man in her set. Half the ladies in the city were in love with Mr. Linmere. He was so *distingue*, carried himself so loftily, and yet was so gallantly condescending, and so inimitably fascinating. He knew Europe like a book, sang like a professor, and knew just how to hand a lady her fan, adjust her shawl, and take her from a carriage. Accomplishments which make men popular, always.

Early in July Mr. Trevlyn and Margie, accompanied by a gay party, went down to Cape May. Mr. Trevlyn had long ago forsworn everything of the kind; but since Margie Harrison had come to reside with him he had given up his hermit habits, and been quite like other nice gouty old gentleman.

The party went down on Thursday—Mr. Paul Linmere followed on Saturday. Margie, had hoped he would not come; in his absence she could have enjoyed the sojourn, but his presence destroyed for her all the charms of sea and sky. She grew frightened, sometimes, when she thought how intensely she hated him. And in October she was to become his wife.

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Some way, Margie felt strangely at ease on the subject. She knew that the arrangements were all made, that her wedding *trousseau* was being gotten up by a fashionable *modiste*, that Delmonico had received orders for the feast, and that the oranges were budded, which, when burst into flowers, were to adorn her forehead on her bridal day. She despised Linmere with her whole soul, she dreaded him inexpressibly, yet she scarcely gave her approaching marriage with him a single thought. She wondered that she did not; when she thought of it all, she was shocked to find herself so impassive.

Her party had been a week at Cape May, when Archer Trevlyn came down, with the wife of his employer, Mr. Belgrade. The lady was in delicate health, and had been advised to try sea air and surf-bathing. Mr. Belgrade's business would not allow of his absence at just that time, and he had shown his confidence in his head clerk by selecting him as his wife's escort.

Introduced into society by so well established an aristocrat as Mrs. Belgrade, Arch might at once have taken a prominent place among the fashionables; for his singularly handsome face and highbred manners made him an acquisition to any company. But he never forgot that he had been a street-sweeper, and he would not submit to be patronized by the very people who had once, perhaps, grudged him the pennies they had thrown to him as they would have thrown bread to a starving dog. So he avoided society, and attended only on Mrs. Belgrade. But from Alexandrine Lee he could not escape. She fastened upon him at once. She had a habit of singling out gentlemen, and giving them the distinction of her attentions, and no one thought of noticing it now. Arch was ill at ease beneath the infliction, but he was a thorough gentleman, and could not repulse her rudely.

A few days after the arrival of Mrs. Belgrade, Arch took her down to the beach to bathe. The beach was alive with the gorgeous grotesque figures of the bathers. The air was bracing, the surf splendid.

Mr. Trevlyn's carriage drove down soon after Mrs. Belgrade had finished her morning's "dip;" and Margie and Mr. Linmere, accompanied by Alexandrine Lee, alighted. They were in bathing costume, and Miss Lee, espying Arch, fastened upon him without ceremony.

"Oh, Mr. Trevlyn," she said, animatedly, "I am glad to have come across you. I was just telling Mr. Linmere that two ladies were hardly safe with only one gentleman in such a surf as there is this morning. I shall have to depend on you to take care of me. Shall I?"

Of course, Arch could not refuse, and apologizing to Mrs. Belgrade, who good-naturedly urged him forward, he took charge of Miss Lee.

Linmere offered Margie his hand to lead her in, but she declined. He kept close beside her, and when they stood waist deep in the water, and a huge breaker was approaching, he put his arm around her shoulders. With an impatient gesture she tore herself away. He made an effort to retain her, and in the struggle Margie lost her footing, and the receding wave bore her out to sea.

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Linnere grew pale as death. He knew if Margie was drowned, he was a ruined man. His pictures and statuary would have to go under the hammer—his creditors were only kept from striking by his prospect of getting a rich wife to pay his debts. He cast an imploring eye on the swimmers around him, but he was too great a coward to risk his life among the swirling breakers.

Only one man struck boldly out to the rescue. Arch Trevlyn threw off the clinging hand of Miss Lee, and with a strong arm pressed his way through the white-capped billows. He came near to Margie, and saw the chestnut gleam of her hair on the bright treacherous water, and in an instant it was swept under a long line of snowy foam. She rose again at a little distance, and her eyes met his pleadingly. Her lips syllabled the words, “save me!”

He heard them, above all the deafening roar of the waters. They nerved him on to fresh exertions. Another stroke, and he caught her arm, drew her to him, held her closely to his breast, and touched her wet hair with his lips. Then he controlled himself, and spoke coolly:

“Take my hand, Miss Harrison, and I think I can tow you safely to the shore. Do not be afraid.”

“I am not afraid,” she said, quietly.

How his heart leaped at the sound of her voice! How happy he was that she was not afraid—that she trusted her life to him! Of how little value he would have reckoned his own existence, if he had purchased hers by its loss!

A hundred pairs of hands were outstretched to receive Margie, when Arch brought her to the shore. Her dear devoted friends crowded around her, and in their joy at her escape, Arch retreated for his lodgings. But Miss Lee had been watching him, and seized his arm the moment he was clear of the crowd.

“Oh, Mr. Trevlyn, it is just like a novel!” she exclaimed, enthusiastically. “Only you cannot marry the heroine, for she is engaged to Mr. Linnere; and she perfectly dotes on him.”

She flitted away, and Trevlyn went up to his chamber.

That evening there was a “hop” at the hotel, but Arch did not go down. He knew if he did the inevitable Miss Lee would anchor herself on his arm for the evening; and his politeness was not equal to the task of entertaining her.

The strains of music reached him, softened and made sweet by the distance. He stole down on the piazza, and sat under the shadows of a flowering vine, looking at the sky,

with its myriads of glittering stars. There was a light step at his side, and glancing up, he saw Margie Harrison.

She was in evening dress, her white arms and shoulders bare, and glistening with snowy pearls. Her soft unbound hair fell over her neck in a flood of light, and a subtle perfume, like the breath of blooming water-lilies, floated around her.

“I want to make you my captive for a little while, Mr. Trevlyn,” she said, gayly. “Will you wear the chains?”

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"Like a garland of roses," he responded. "Yes, to the world's end, Miss Harrison!"

The unconscious fervor of his voice brought a crimson flush to her face. She dropped her eyes, and toyed with the bracelet on her arm.

"I did not know *you* dealt in compliments, Mr. Trevlyn," she said, a little reproachfully. "I thought you were always sincere."

"And so I am, Miss Harrison."

"I take you at your word then," she said, recovering her playful air. "You will not blame me, if I lead you into difficulty?"

"Certainly not. I give myself into your keeping."

She put her hand within his arm, and led him up the stairs, to a private parlor on the second floor. Under the jet of light sat old Mr. Trevlyn. Archer's heart throbbed fiercely, and his lips grew set and motionless, as he stood there before the man he hated—the man against whom he had made a vow of undying vengeance. Margie was looking at her guardian, and did not observe the startling change which had come over Arch. She spoke softly, addressing the old man.

"Dear guardian, this is the man who this morning so gallantly rescued me from a watery grave. I want you to help me thank him."

Mr. Trevlyn arose, came forward, and extended his hand. Arch stood erect, his arms folded on his breast. He did not move, nor offer to take the proffered hand. Mr. Trevlyn gave a start of surprise, and seizing a lamp from the table, held it up to the face of the young man. Arch did not flinch; he bore the insulting scrutiny with stony calmness.

The old man dashed down the lamp, and put his hand to his forehead. His face was livid with passion, his voice choked so as to be scarcely audible.

"Margie, Margie Harrison!" he exclaimed, "what is this person's name?"

"Archer Trevlyn, sir," answered the girl, amazed at the strange behavior of the two men.

"Just as I thought! Hubert's son!"

"Yes," said Arch, speaking with painful calmness, "I am Hubert's son; the son of the man your wicked cruelty murdered."

Mr. Trevlyn seized his cane and rushed upon his grandson; but Margie sprang forward and threw her arm across the breast of Arch.

“Strike him, if you dare!” she said, “but you shall strike a woman!”

Mr. Trevlyn looked at her, and the weapon dropped to the floor.

“Margaret Harrison,” he said, sternly, “leave this room. This is no place for you. Obey me!”

“I am subject to no man’s authority,” she said, boldly; “and I will not leave the room. You shall not insult a gentleman to whom I owe my life, and who is here as my invited guest!”

“I shall defend myself! There is murder in that fellow’s eye, if I ever saw it in that of any human being!”

“I am answerable for his conduct,” she said with proud dignity. “He will do nothing of which a lady needs stand in fear. I brought him here, ignorant of the relationship existing between you and him, and unconscious of the truth that I should be called upon to defend him from the causeless rage of his own grandfather.”

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Again the cane was uplifted, but Margie laid her hand resolutely upon it.

“Give it to me. Will you—you, who pride yourself upon your high and delicate sense of honor—will you be such an abject coward as to strike a defenceless man?”

He yielded her the weapon, and she threw it from the window.

“You may take away my defence, Margaret,” said the old man, resolutely, “but you shall not prevent me from cursing him! A curse be upon him—”

“Hold, sir? Remember that your head is white with the snows of time? It will not be long before you go to the God who sees you every moment, who will judge you for every sin you commit.”

“You may preach that stuff to the dogs! There is no God! I defy him and you! Archer Trevlyn, my curse be upon you and yours, now and forever! Child of a disobedient son! child of a mother who was a harlot!”

Arch sprang upon him with a savage cry. His hand was on his throat—God knows what crime he would have done, fired by the insult offered to the memory of his mother, had not Margie caught his hands, and drawn them away.

“Oh, Archer, Archer Trevlyn!” she cried, imploringly, “grant me this one favor—the very first I ever asked of you! For my sake, come away. He is an old man. Leave him to God, and his own conscience. You are young and strong; you would not disgrace your manhood by laying violent hands on the weakness of old age!”

“Did you hear what he called my mother, the purest woman the world ever saw? No man shall repeat that foul slander in my presence, and live!”

“He will not repeat it. Forgive him. He is fretful, and he thinks the world has gone hard with him. He has sinned, and those who sin suffer always. It has been a long and terrible feud between him and yours. I brought you here—let me take you away.”

Her soft hands were on his—her beautiful tear-wet eyes lifted to his face. He could not withstand that look. He would have given up the plans of a lifetime, if she had asked him with those imploring eyes.

“I yield to you, Miss Harrison—only to you,” he replied. “If John Trevlyn lives, he owes his life to you. He judged rightly—there was murder in my soul, and he saw it in my eyes. Years ago, after they laid my poor heart-broken mother out of my sight, I swore a terrible vow of vengeance on the old man whose cruelty had hurried her into the grave. But for you, I should have kept the vow this moment. But I will obey you. Take me wherever you will.”

She led him down the stairs, across the lawn, and out on the lonely beach, where the quiet moon and the passionless stars dropped down their crystal rain. The sweet south wind blew up cool from the sea, and afar off the tinkle of a sheep-bell stirred the silence of the night. The lamp in the distant lighthouse gleamed like a spark of fire, and at their feet broke the tireless billows, white as the snow-drifts of December.

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There was something inexpressibly soothing in the serenity of the night. Arch felt its influence. The hot color died out of his cheek, his pulse beat slower, he lifted his eyes to the purple arch of the summer sky.

"All God's universe is at rest," said Margie, her voice breaking upon his ear like a strain of music. "Oh, Arthur Trevlyn, be at peace with all mankind!"

"I am—with all but *him*."

"And with *him*, also. The heart which bears malice cannot be a happy heart. There has been a great wrong done—I have heard the sad story—but it is divine to forgive. The man who can pardon the enemy who has wrought him evil, rises to a height where nothing of these earthly temptations can harm him more. He stands on a level with the angels of God. If you have been injured, let it pass. If your parents were hurried out of the world by his cruelty, think how much sooner they tasted the bliss of heaven! Every wrong will in due time be avenged. Justice will be done, for the Infinite One has promised it. Leave it in His hands. Archer, before I leave you, promise to forgive Mr. Trevlyn."

"I cannot! I cannot!" he cried, hoarsely. "Oh, Margie, Miss Harrison, ask of me anything but that, even to the sacrifice of my life, and I will willingly oblige you, but not that! not that!"

"*That* is all I ask. It is for your good and my peace of mind that I demand it. You have no right to make me unhappy, as your persistence in this dreadful course will do. Promise me, Archer Trevlyn!"

She put her hand on his shoulder; he turned his head and pressed his lips upon it. She did not draw it away, but stood, melting his hard heart with her wonderfully sweet gaze. He yielded all at once—she knew she had conquered. He sank down on one knee before her, and bowed his face upon his hands. She stooped over him, her hair swept his shoulders, the brown mingling with the deeper chestnut of his curling locks.

"You will promise me, Mr. Trevlyn?"

He looked up suddenly.

"What will you give me, if I promise?"

"Ask for it."

He lifted a curl of shining hair.

"Yes," she said. "Promise me what I ask, and I will give it to you."

He took his pocket-knife and severed the tress.

“I promise you. I break my vow; I seek no revenge. I forgive John Trevlyn, and may God forgive him also. He is safe from me. I submit to have my parents sleep on unavenged. I leave him and his sins to the God whom he denies; and all because you have asked it of me.”

Slowly and silently they went up to the house. At the door he said no good-night—he only held her hand a moment, closely, and then turned away.

PART II.

Paul Linmere’s wedding-day drew near. Between him and Margie there was no semblance of affection. Her coldness never varied, and after a few fruitless attempts to excite in her some manifestation of interest, he took his cue from her, and was as coldly indifferent as herself.

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A few days before the tenth of October, which was the day appointed for the bridal, Dick Turner, one of Paul's friends, gave a supper at the Bachelors' Club. A supper in honor of Paul, or to testify the sorrow of the Club at the loss of one of its members. It was a very hilarious occasion, and the toasting and wine-drinking extended far into the small hours.

In a somewhat elevated frame of mind, Mr. Paul Linmere left the rooms of the Club at about three o'clock in the morning, to return home. His way lay along the most deserted part of the city—a place where there were few dwellings, and the buildings were mostly stores and warehouses.

Suddenly a touch on his arm stopped him. The same cold, deathly touch he had felt once before. He had drank just enough to feel remarkably brave, and turning, he encountered the strangely gleaming eyes that had frozen his blood that night in early summer. All his bravado left him. He felt weak and helpless as a child.

"What is it? what do you want?" he asked brokenly.

"Justice!" said the mysterious presence.

"Justice? For whom?"

"Arabel Vere."

"Arabel Vere! Curse her!" he cried, savagely.

The figure lifted a spectral white hand.

"Paul Linmere—beware! The vengeance of the dead reaches sometimes unto the living! There is not water enough in the Seine to drown a woman's hatred! Death itself cannot annihilate it! Beware!"

He struck savagely at the uplifted hand, but his arm met no resistance. He beat only against the impalpable air. His spectral visitor had flown, and left nothing behind her to tell of her presence.

With unsteady steps Mr. Paul Linmere hurried home, entered his room, and double-locked the door behind him.

* * * * *

Mr. Trevlyn had decided that the marriage of his ward should take place at Harrison Park, the old country seat of the Harrisons, on the Hudson. Here Margie's parents had lived always in the summer; here they had died within a week of each other, and here in the cypress grove by the river, they were buried. There would be no more fitting place

for the marriage of their daughter to be solemnized. Margie neither opposed nor approved the plan. She did not oppose anything. She was passive, almost apathetic.

The admiring dressmakers and milliners came and went, fitting, and measuring, and trying on their tasteful creations, but without eliciting any signs of interest or pleasure from Margie Harrison. She gave no orders, found no fault; expressed no admiration nor its opposite. It was all the same to her.

The bridal dress came home a few days before the appointed day. It was a superb affair, and Margie looked like a queen in it. It was of white satin, with a point lace overskirt, looped up at intervals with tiny bouquets of orange blossoms. The corsage was cut low, leaving the beautiful shoulders bare, the open sleeves displaying the perfectly rounded arms in all their perfection. The veil was point lace, and must have cost a little fortune. Mr. Trevlyn had determined that everything should be on a magnificent scale, and had given the whole arrangement of the affair to Mrs. Colonel Weldon, the most fashionable woman in her set.

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Mr. Trevlyn had the diamonds which were the wonder of the city, richly set, and Margie was to wear them on her bridal night, as a special mark of the old man's favor. For, next to the diamonds, the sordid man loved Margie Harrison.

Linmere's gift to his bride was very simple, but in exquisite taste, Mrs. Weldon decided. A set of turquoise, with his initial and hers interwoven. Only when they were received, did Margie come out of her cold composure. She snapped together the lid of the casket containing them with something very like angry impatience, and gave the box to her maid.

"Take them away, Florine, instantly, and put them where I shall never see them again!"

The woman looked surprised, but she was a discreet piece, and strongly attached to her mistress, and she put the ornaments away without comment.

The tenth of October arrived. A wet, lowering day, with alternate snatches of rain and sunshine, settling down toward sunset into a steady, uncomfortable drizzle. A dismal enough wedding-day.

The ceremony was to take place at nine o'clock in the evening, and the invited guests were numerous. Harrison Park would accommodate them all royally.

Mr. Linmere was expected out from the city in the six o'clock train, and as the stopping place was not more than five minutes' walk from the Park, he had left orders that no carriage need be sent. He would walk up. He thought he should need the stimulus of the fresh air to carry him through the fiery ordeal, he said, laughingly.

The long day wore slowly away. The preparations were complete. Mrs. Weldon in her violet moire-antique and family diamonds, went through the stately parlors once more to assure herself that everything was *au fait*.

At five o'clock the task of dressing the bride began. The bridesmaids were in ecstasies over the finery, and they took almost as much pains in dressing Margie as they would in dressing themselves for a like occasion.

Margie's cheeks were as white as the robes they put upon her. One of the girls suggested rouge, but Alexandrine demurred.

"A bride should always be pale," she said. "It looks so interesting, and gives everyone the idea that she realizes the responsibility she is taking upon herself—doesn't that veil fall sweetly?"

And then followed a shower of feminine expressions of admiration from the four charming bridesmaids.

“Is everything ready?” asked Margie, wearily, when at last they paused in their efforts.

“Yes, everything is as perfect as one could desire,” said Alexandrine. “How do you feel, Margie, dear?”

“Very well, thank you.”

“You are so self-possessed! Now, I should be all of a tremble! Dear me! I wonder people *can* be so cold on the eve of such a great change! But then we are so different. Will you not take a glass of wine, Margie?”

“Thank you, no. I do not take wine, you know.”

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"I know, but on this occasion. Hush! that was the whistle of the train. Mr. Linmere will be here in a few minutes! Shall I bring him up to see you? It is not etiquette for the groom to see the bride on the day of their marriage, until they meet at the altar; but you look so charming, dear! I would like him to admire you. He has such exquisite taste."

Margie's uplifted eyes had a half-frightened look, which Alexandrine did not understand.

"No, no!" she said, hurriedly; "do not bring him here! We will follow etiquette for this time, if you please, Miss Lee."

"O well, just as you please, my dear."

"And now, my friends, be kind enough to leave me alone," said Margie. "I want the last hours of my free life to myself. I will ring when I desire your attendance."

Margie's manner forbade any objection on the part of the attendants, and they somewhat reluctantly withdrew. She turned the key upon them, and went to the window. The rain had ceased falling, but the air was damp and dense.

Her room was on the first floor, and the windows, furnished with balconies, opened to the floor. She stood looking out into the night for a moment, then gathering up her flowing drapery, and covering herself with a heavy cloak, stepped from the window. The damp earth struck a chill to her delicately-shod feet, but she did not notice it. The mist and fog dampened her hair, unheeded. She went swiftly down the shaded path, the dead leaves of the linden trees rustling mournfully as she swept through them. Past the garden and its deserted summer-house, and the grapery, where the purple fruit was lavishing its sweets on the air, and climbing a stile, she stood beside a group of shading cypress trees. Just before her was a square enclosure, fenced by a hedge of arbor vitae, from the midst of which, towering white and spectral up into the silent night, rose a marble shaft, surmounted by the figure of an angel, with drooping head and folded wings.

Margie passed within the inclosure, and stood beside the graves of her parents. She stood a moment silent, motionless; then, forgetful of her bridal garment, she flung herself down on the turf.

"Oh, my father! my father!" she cried, "why did you doom me to such a fate? Why did you ask me to give that fatal promise? Oh, look down from heaven and pity your child!"

The wind sighed mournfully in the cypresses, the belated crickets and katydids droned in the hedge, but no sweet voice of sympathy soothed Margie's strained ear. For, wrought up as she was, she almost listened to hear some response from the lips which death had made mute forever.

The village clock struck half-past eight, warning Margie that it was almost time for the ceremony to take place. She started up, drew her cloak around her, and turned to leave the place. As she did so, she felt a touch on her hand—the hand she laid for a moment on the gate—as she stood giving a last sad look at the mound of earth she was leaving, a touch light and soft as a breath, but which thrilled her through every nerve.

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She turned her head quickly, but saw nothing. Something the sound of receding footsteps met her ear, nothing more, but she was convinced there had been a human presence near her. Where? Her heart beat strangely; her blood, a moment before so chilled and stagnant, leaped through her veins like fire. From whence arose the change?

She reached her chamber without meeting any one, and unlocking the door, rang for her attendants. The house was in a strange confusion. Groups were gathered in the corridors, whispering together, and some unexplained trouble seemed to have fallen upon the whole place.

After a little while, Alexandrine came in, pale and haggard. Margie saw her white dress was damp, and her hair uncurled, as if by the weather.

"Where have you been, Alexandrine?" she asked; "and what is the matter?"

The girl turned from white to crimson.

"I have been in my room," she replied.

"But your clothes are damp, and your hair uncurled—"

"The air is wet, and this great house is as moist as an ice-shed," returned the girl, hurriedly. "It is no wonder if my hair is uncurled. Margie, the—the—Mr. Linmere has not arrived."

"Not arrived! It must be nine o'clock."

As she spoke, the sonorous strokes of the clock proclaiming the hour, vibrated through the house.

"We have been distracted about him for more than two hours! he should surely have been here by half-past six! Mr. Trevlyn has sent messengers to the depot, to make inquiries, and the officekeeper thinks Mr. Linmere arrived in the six o'clock train, but is not quite positive. Mr. Weldon went, himself, to meet the seven-thirty train, thinking perhaps he might have got detained, and would come on in the succeeding train, but he did not arrive. And there are no more trains to-night! Oh, Margie, isn't it dreadful?"

Alexandrine's manner was strangely flurried and ill at ease, and the hand she laid on Margie's was cold as ice. Margie scrutinized her curiously, wondering the while at her own heartless apathy.

Something had occurred to stir the composure of this usually cool, and self-possessed woman fearfully. But what it was Margie could not guess.

Mr. Trevlyn burst into the room, pale and exhausted.

"It is no use!" he said, throwing himself into a chair, "no use to try to disguise the truth! There will be no wedding to-night, Margie! The bridegroom has failed to come! The scoundrel! If I were ten years younger, I would call him out for this insult!"

Margie laid her hand on his arm, a strange, new feeling of vague relief pervading her. It was as if some great weight, under which her slender strength had wearied and sank, were rolled off from her.

"Compose yourself, dear guardian, he may have been unavoidably detained. Some business—"

"Business on his wedding-day! No, Margie! there is something wrong somewhere. He is either playing us false—confound him!—or he has met with some accident! By George! who knows but he has been waylaid and murdered! The road from here to the depot, though short, is a lonely one, with woods on either side! And Mr. Linmere carries always about his person enough valuables to tempt a desperate character."

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"I beg you not to suppose such a dreadful thing!" exclaimed Margie, shuddering; "he will come in the morning, and—"

"But Hays was positive that he saw him leave the six o'clock train. He described him accurately, even to the saying that he had a bouquet of white camelias in his hand. Margie, what flowers was he to bring?"

She shook her head.

"Mrs. Weldon knows. I do not."

Alexandrine spoke.

"White camelias. I heard Mrs. Weldon ask him to fetch them."

Mr. Trevlyn started up.

"I will have out the whole household, at once, and search, the whole estate! For I feel as if some terrible crime may have been done upon our very threshold. Margie, dear, take heart, he may be alive and well!"

He went out to alarm the already excited guests, and in half an hour the place was alive with lanterns, carried by those who sought for the missing bridegroom.

Pale and silent, the women gathered themselves together in the chamber of the bride, and waited. Margie sat among them in her white robes, mute and motionless as a statue.

"It must be terrible to fall by the hand of an assassin!" said Mrs. Weldon, with a shudder. "Good heavens! what a dreadful thing it would be if Mr. Linmere has been murdered!"

"An assassin! My God!" cried Margie, a terrible thought stealing across her mind. Who had touched her in the cypress grove? What hand had woke in her a thrill that changed her from ice to fire! What if it were the hand of her betrothed husband's murderer?

Alexandrine started forward at Margie's exclamation. Her cheek was white as marble, her breath came quick and struggling.

"Margie! Margie Harrison!" she cried, "what do you mean?"

"Nothing," answered Margie, recovering herself, and relapsing into her usual self-composure.

They searched all that night, and found nothing. Absolutely nothing. With the early train, both Mr. Trevlyn and Mr. Weldon went to the city. They hurried to Mr. Linmere's room, only to have their worst fears confirmed. Pietro informed them that his master had left there on the six o'clock train; he had seen him to the depot, and into the car, receiving some orders from him relative to his rooms, after he had taken his seat.

There could be no longer any doubt but that there had been foul play somewhere. The proper authorities were notified, and the search began afresh. Harrison Park and its environs were thoroughly ransacked; the river was searched, the pond at the foot of the garden drained, but nothing was discovered. There was no clue by which the fate of the missing man could be guessed at, ever so vaguely.

Every person about the place was examined and cross-examined, but no one knew anything, and the night shut down, and left the matter in mystery. Pietro, at length, suggested Leo, Mr. Linmere's gray-hound.

"Him no love his master," said the Italian, "but him scent keen. It will do no hurt to try him."

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Accordingly, the next morning, Pietro brought the dog up to the Park. The animal was sullen, and would accept of attentions from no one save Margie, to whom he seemed to take at first sight. And after she had spoken to him kindly, and patted his head, he refused all persuasions and commands to leave her.

Mr. Darby, the detective, whose services had been engaged in the affair, exerted all his powers of entreaty on the dog, but the animal clung to Margie, and would not even look in the direction of the almost frantic detective.

"It's no use, Miss Harrison," said Darby, "the cur wont stir an inch. You will have to come with him! Sorry to ask ye, but this thing must be seen into."

"Very well, I will accompany you," said Margie, rising, and throwing on a shawl, she went out with them, followed by Mrs. Weldon, Alexandrine, and two or three other ladies.

Leo kept close to Margie, trotting along beside her, uttering every now and then a low whine indicative of anticipation and pleasure.

Darby produced a handkerchief which had belonged to Mr. Paul Linmere, and which he had found in his rooms, lying on his dressing-table. He showed this to the dog; Leo snuffed at it, and gave a sharp grunt of displeasure.

"We want you to find him, Leo, good dog," said the Italian, stroking the silky ears of the dog; "find your master."

Leo understood, but he looked around in evident perplexity.

"Take him to the depot!" said Mr. Trevlyn, "he may find the trail there."

They went to the station; the dog sniffed hurriedly at the platform, and in a moment more dashed off into the highway leading to Harrison Park.

"Him got him!" cried Pietro; "him find my master!"

The whole company joined in following the dog. He went straight ahead, his nose to the ground, his fleet limbs bearing him along with a rapidity that the anxious followers found it hard to emulate.

At a brook which crossed the road he stopped, seemed a little confused, crossed it finally on stepping stones, paused a moment by the side of a bare nut tree, leaped the fence, and dashed off through a grass field. Keeping steadily on, he made for the grounds of the Park, passed the drained pond, and the frost-ruined garden, and pausing before the inclosure where slept the Harrison dead, he lifted his head and gave utterance to a howl so wild, so savagely unearthly, that it chilled the blood in the veins of

those who heard. An instant he paused, and then dashing through the hedge, was lost to view.

“He is found! My master is found!” said Pietro, solemnly, removing his cap, and wiping a tear from his eye. For the man was attached to Mr. Paul Linmere, in his rough way, and the tear was one of genuine sorrow.

His companions looked at each other. Alexandrine grasped the arm of Margie, and leaned heavily upon her.

“Let us go to the house—” she faltered, “I cannot bear it.”

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"I will know the worst," said Margie, hoarsely, and they went on together.

It was so singular, but no one had thought to look within the graveyard enclosure; perhaps if they had thought of it, they judged it impossible that a murderer should select such a locality for the commission of his crime.

Mr. Darby opened the gate, entered the yard, and stopped. So did the others. All saw at once that the search was ended. Across the path leading to the graves of Mr. and Mrs. Harrison, lay Paul Linnere. He was white and ghastly; his forehead bare, and his sightless eyes wide open, looking up to the sun of noon-day. His right hand lay on his breast, his left still tightly grasped the turf upon which it had fixed its hold in the cruel death-agony. His garments were stiff with his own blood, and the dirk knife, still buried to the hilt in his heart, told the story of his death.

Leo crouched a little way off, his eyes jubilant, his tail beating the ground, evincing the greatest satisfaction. All present knew that the dog rejoiced at the death of his master.

Alexandrine took a step toward the dead man, her back to the horror-stricken group by the gate. She stopped suddenly, and lifted something from the ground.

Darby, alert and watchful, was by her side in a moment.

"What have you there?" he demanded.

"My glove which I dropped," she answered, quietly, holding up the dainty bit of embroidered kid.

The detective turned away satisfied; but Margie saw the girl's hand shake, and her lips grow pale as marble, the moment Darby's keen eye was removed from her face.

The discovery of the remains was followed by a long and tedious investigation. There was an inquest, and a rigid examination of every person who could by any possibility be imagined capable of throwing any light on the murder, and after all was over, the mystery was just as dark as it was at first.

Nothing was found to furnish the slightest clue to the assassin, except a white cambric handkerchief just inside the graveyard, marked with the single initial "A" in one corner. This handkerchief might have belonged to the murderer, and it might have belonged to Mr. Linnere,—that could not be determined. The article was given into the keeping of Mr. Darby; and after three days lying in state at Harrison Park, the body of Mr. Linnere was taken to Albany, where his relatives were buried, and laid away for its last sleep.

Mr. Trevlyn offered a large reward for the apprehension of the murderer, or for information which would lead to his apprehension; and the town authorities offered an equal sum. Mr. Darby was retained to work upon the case, and there it rested.

Margie uttered no word in the matter. She was stunned by the suddenness of the blow, and she could not help being painfully conscious that she felt relieved by the death of this unfortunate man. God had taken her case into his hands in a manner too solemnly fearful for her to question.

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Three months after the death of Paul Linmere, Margie met Archer Trevlyn at the house of Alexandrine Lee. He was quite a constant visitor there, Mrs. Lee told her, with a little conscious pride, for young Trevlyn was being spoken of in business circles as a rising young man. He was to be admitted to partnership in the firm of Belgrade and Co., in the spring. And this once effected, his fortune was made.

There was a little whist party at Mrs. Lee's that evening, and Margie was persuaded to remain. After a while the company asked for music. Whist, the books of engravings, and the *bijoux* of the centre-table were exhausted, and small talk flagged. Margie was reluctantly prevailed upon to play.

She was not a wonderful performer, but she had a fine ear, and played with finish and accuracy. But she sang divinely. To oblige her friends, she sang a few new things and then pausing, was about to rise from the instrument, when Mr. Trevlyn came to her side.

"Will you play something for me?" he asked, stooping over her. His dark, passionate eyes brought the blood to her face—made her restless and nervous in spite of herself.

"What would you like?" she managed to ask.

"This!" He selected an old German ballad, long ago a favorite in the highest musical circles, but now cast aside for something newer and more brilliant. A simple, touching little song of love and sorrow.

She was about to decline singing it, but something told her to beware of false modesty, and she sang it through.

"I thank you!" he said, earnestly, when she had finished. "It has done me good. My mother used to sing that song, and I have never wanted to hear it from any other lips—*until now.*"

Alexandrine glided along, as radiant as a humming-bird, her cheeks flushed, her black eyes sparkling, her voice sweet as a siren's.

"Sentimentalizing, I declare!" she exclaimed, gayly; "and singing that dreadful song, too! Ugh! it gives me the cold shudders to listen to it! How can you sing it, Margie, dear?"

"Miss Harrison sang it at my request, Miss Lee," said Trevlyn, gravely, "it is an old favorite of mine. Shall I not listen to you now?"

Alexandrine took the seat Margie had vacated, and glanced up at the two faces so near her.



"Why, Margie!" she said, "a moment ago I thought you were a rose, and now you are a lily! What is the matter?"

"Nothing, thank you," returned Margie, coldly. "I am weary, and will go home soon, I think."

Trevlyn looked at her with tender anxiety, evidently forgetful that he had requested Miss Lee to play.

"You are wearied," he said. "Shall I call your carriage?"

"If you please, yes. Miss Lee I am sure will excuse me."

"I shall be obliged to, I suppose."

Trevlyn put Margie's shawl around her, and led her to the carriage. After he had assisted her in, he touched lightly the hand he had just released, and said "Good-night," his very accent a blessing.

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In February Mr. Trevlyn received a severe shock. His aged wife had been an inmate of an insane asylum almost ever since the death of her son Hubert; and Mr. Trevlyn, though he had loved her with his whole soul, had never seen her face in all those weary years.

Suddenly, without any premonitory symptoms, her reason returned to her, and save that she was unmindful of the time that had elapsed during her insanity, she was the same Caroline Trevlyn of old.

They told her cautiously of her husband's old age, for the unfortunate woman could not realize that nearly twenty years had passed since the loss of her mind. The first desire she expressed was to see "John," and Mr. Trevlyn was sent for.

He came, and went into the presence of the wife from whom he had been so long divided, alone. No one knew what passed between them. The interview was a lengthy one, and Mr. Trevlyn came forth from it, animated by a new-born hope. The wife of his youth was to be restored to him!

He made arrangements to take her home, but alas! they were never destined to be carried into effect. The secret fears of the physician were realized even sooner than he had expected. The approach of dissolution had dissolved the clouds so long hanging over the mind of Caroline Trevlyn. She lived only two days after the coming of her husband, and died in his arms, happy in the belief that she was going to her son.

Mr. Trevlyn returned home, a changed being. All his asperity of temper was gone; he was as gentle as a child. Whole days he would sit in the chair where his wife used to sit in the happy days of her young wifehood, speaking to no one, smiling sometimes to himself, as though he heard some inner whisperings which pleased him.

One day he roused himself seemingly, and sent for Mr. Speedwell, his attorney, and Dr. Drake, his family physician. With these gentlemen he was closeted the entire forenoon; and from that time forward, his hold on the world and its things seemed to relax.

One morning, when Margie went to take his gruel up to him—a duty she always performed herself—she found him sitting in his arm-chair, wide awake, but incapable of speech or motion.

The physician, hastily summoned, confirmed her worst fears. Mr. Trevlyn had been smitten with paralysis. He was in no immediate danger, perhaps; he might live for years, but was liable to drop away at any moment. It was simply a question of time.

Toward the close of the second day after his attack, the power of speech returned to Mr. Trevlyn.

"Margie!" he said, feebly, "Margie, come here." She flew to his side.

"I want you to send for Archer Trevlyn," he said with great difficulty.

She made a gesture of surprise.

"You think I am not quite right in my mind, Margie, that I should make that request. But I was never more sane than at this moment. My mind was never clearer, my mental sight never more correct. I want to see my grandson."

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Margie despatched a servant with a brief note to Archer, informing him of his grandfather's desire, and then sat down to wait his coming.

It was a wild, stormy night in March; the boisterous wind beat against the old mansion, and like a suffering human thing, shrieked down the wide, old-fashioned chimneys.

In a lull of the storm there was a tap at the chamber door. Margie opened it, and stood face to face with Archer Trevlyn.

"Come in," she whispered, "he is asleep."

"No, I am not asleep," said the sick man; "has my grandson come?"

"He is here," said Margie. "I will leave him with you, dear guardian. Let him ring for me when you want me."

"Remain here, Margaret. I want you to be a witness to what passes between us. I have no secrets from you, dear child, none whatever. Archer, come hither."

Trevlyn advanced, his face pale, his eyes moist with tears. For, having forgiven his grandparent, he had been growing to feel for the desolate old man a sort of filial tenderness, and strong in his fresh young manhood, it seemed terrible to him to see John Trevlyn lying there in his helplessness and feebleness, waiting for death.

"Come hither, Archer," said the tremulous voice, "and put your hand on mine. I cannot lift a finger to you, but I want to feel once more the touch of kindred flesh and blood. I have annoyed you and yours sadly my poor boy, but death sweeps away all enmities, and all shadows. I see so clearly now. O, if I had only seen before!"

Arch knelt by the side of his bed, holding the old man's withered hands in his. Margie stood a little apart, regarding the pair with moist eyes.

"Call me grandfather once, my son; I have never heard the name from the lips of my kindred."

"Grandfather! O grandfather!" cried the young man, "now that you will let me call you so, you must not die! You must live for me!"

"The decree has gone forth. There is from it no appeal. I am to die. I have felt the certainty a long time. O, for one year of existence, to right the wrongs I have done! But they could not be righted. Alas! if I had centuries of time at my command, I could not bring back to life the dear son my cruelty hurried out of the world, or his poor wife, whose fair name I could, in my revenge for her love of my son, have taken from her! O Hubert! Hubert! O my darling! dearer to me than my heart's blood—but so foully wronged!"

His frame shook with emotion, but no tears came to his eyes. His remorse was too deep and bitter for the surface sorrow of tears to relieve.

“Put it out of your mind, grandfather,” said Arch, pressing his hand. “Do not think of it, to let it trouble you more. They are all, I trust, in heaven. Let them rest.”

“And you will tell me this, Archer? You, who hated me so! You, who swore a solemn oath to be revenged on me! Well, I do not blame you. I only wonder that your forbearance was so long-suffering. Once you would have rejoiced to see me suffer as I do now.”

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"I should, I say it to my shame. God forgive me for my wickedness! But for *her*"—looking at Margie—"I might have kept the sinful vow I made. She saved me."

"Come here, Margie, and kiss me," said the old man, tenderly. "My dear children! my precious children, both of you! I bless you both—both of you together, do you hear? Once I cursed you, Archer—now I bless you! If there is a God, and I do at last believe there is, he will forgive me that curse; for I have begged it of Him on my bended knees."

"He is merciful, dear guardian," said Margie, gently. "He never refuses the earnest petition of the suffering soul."

"Archer, your grandmother died a little while ago. My cruelty to your father made her, for twenty long years, a maniac. But before her death, all delusion was swept away, and she bade me love and forgive our grandson—that she might tell your father and mother, when she met them in heaven, that at last all was well here below. I promised her, and since then my soul has been in peace. But I have longed to go to her—longed inexpressibly. She had been all around me, but so impalpable that when I put out my hands to touch her, they grasped only the air. The hands of mortality may not reach after the hands which have put on immortality."

He lay quiet a moment, and then went on, brokenly.

"Archer, I wronged your parents bitterly, but I have repented it in dust and ashes. Repented it long ago, only I was too proud and stubborn to acknowledge it. Forgive me again, Archer, and kiss me before I die."

"I do forgive you, grandfather; I do forgive you with my whole heart." He stooped, and left a kiss on the withered forehead.

"Margie," said the feeble voice, "pray for me, that peace may come."

She looked at Archer, hesitated a moment, then knelt by the bedside. He stood silent, and then, urged by some uncontrollable impulse, he knelt by her side.

The girlish voice, broken, but sweet as music, went up to Heaven in a petition so fervent, so simple, that God heard and answered. The peace she asked for the dying man came.

Her pleading ceased. Mr. Trevlyn lay quiet, his countenance serene and hopeful. His lips moved, they bent over him, and caught the name of "Caroline."

Trevlyn's hand sought Margie's and she did not repulse him. They stood together silently, looking at the white face on the pillows.

"He is dead!" Archie said, softly: "God rest him!"

* * * * *

After the funeral of John Trevlyn, his last will and testament was read. It created a great deal of surprise when it was known that all the vast possessions of the old man were bequeathed to his grandson—his sole relative—whom he had despised and denied almost to the day of his death. In fact, not a half-dozen persons in the city were aware of the fact that there existed any tie of relationship between John Trevlyn, the miser, and Archer Trevlyn, the head clerk of Belgrade and Company.

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Arch's good fortune did not change him a particle. He gave less time to business, it is true, but he spent it in hard study. His early education had been defective, and he was doing his best to remedy the lack.

Early in the autumn following the death of his grandfather, he went to Europe, and after the lapse of a year, returned again to New York. The second day after his arrival, he went out to Harrison Park. Margie had passed the summer there, with an old friend of her mother for company, he was told, and would not come back to the city before December.

It was a cold, stormy night in September, when he knocked at the door of Miss Harrison's residence; but a cheery light shone from the window, and streamed out of the door which the servant held open.

He inquired for Miss Harrison, and was shown at once into her presence. She sat in a low chair, her dress of sombre black relieved by a white ribbon at the throat, and by the chestnut light of the shining hair that swept in unbound luxuriance over her shoulders. She rose to meet her guest, scarcely recognizing Archer Trevlyn in the bronzed, bearded man before her.

"Miss Harrison," he said, gently, "it is a cold night; will you not give a warm welcome to an old friend?"

She knew his voice instantly. A bright color leaped to her cheek, an embarrassment which made her a thousand times dearer and more charming to Arch Trevlyn, possessed her. But she held out her hands, and said a few shy words of welcome.

Arch sat down beside her, and the conversation drifted into recollections of their own individual history. They spoke to each other with the freedom of very old friends, forgetful of the fact that this was almost the very first conversation they had ever had together.

After a while, Arch said:

"Miss Harrison, do you remember when you first saw me?"

She looked at him a moment, and hesitated before she answered.

"I may be mistaken, Mr. Trevlyn. If so, excuse me; but I think I saw you first, years and years ago, in a flower store."

"You are correct; and on that occasion your generous kindness made me very happy. I thought it would make my mother happy, also. I ran all the way home, lest the roses might wilt before she saw them."

He stopped and gazed into the fire.

“Was she pleased with them?”

“She was dead. We put them in her coffin. They were buried with her.”

Margie laid her hand lightly on his.

“I am so sorry for you! I, too, have buried my mother.”

After a little silence, Arch went on.

“The next time you saw me was when you gave me these.” He took out his pocket-book, and displayed to her, folded in white paper, a cluster of faded bluebells. “Do you remember them?”

“I think I do. You were knocked down by the pole of the carriage?”

“Yes. And the next time? Do you remember the next time?”

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"I do."

"I thought so. I want to thank you, now, for your generous forbearance. I want to tell you how your keeping my secret made a different being of me. If you had betrayed me to justice, I might have been now an inmate of a prison cell. Margie Harrison, your silence saved me! Do me the justice to credit my assertion, when I tell you that I did not enter my grandfather's house because I cared for the plunder I should obtain. I had taken a vow to be revenged on him for his cruelty to my parents, and Sharp, the man who was with me, represented to me, that there was no surer way of accomplishing my purpose than by taking away the treasures that he prized. For that only I became a house-breaker. I deserved punishment. I do not seek to palliate my guilt, but I thank you again for saving me!"

"I could not do otherwise than remain silent. When I would have spoken your name, something kept me from doing it. I think I remembered always the pitiful face of the little street-sweeper, and I could not bear to bring him any more suffering."

"Since those days, Miss Harrison, I have met you frequently—always by accident—but to-night it is no accident. I came here on purpose. For what, do you think?"

"I do not know—how should I?"

"I have come here to tell you what I longed to tell you years ago! what was no less true then than it is now; what was true of me when I was a street-sweeper, what has been true of me ever since, and what will be true of me through time and eternity!"

He had drawn very near to her—his arm stole round her waist, and he sat looking down into her face with his soul in his eyes.

"Margie, I love you! I have loved you since the first moment I saw you. There has never been a shade of wavering; I have been true to you through all. My first love will be my last. Your influence has kept me from the lower depths of sin; the thought of you has been my salvation from ruin. Margie, my darling! I love you! I love you!"

"And yet you kept silence all these years! Oh, Archer!"

"I could not do differently. You were as far above me as the evening star is above the earth it shines upon! It would have been base presumption in the poor saloon-waiter, or the dry-goods clerk, to have aspired to the hand of one like you. And although I loved you so, I should never have spoken, had not fate raised me to the position of a fortune equal to your own, and given me the means of offering you a home worthy of you. But I am waiting for my answer. Give it to me, Margie."

Her shy eyes met his, and he read his answer in their clear depths. But he was too exacting to be satisfied thus.

“Do you love me, Margie? I want to hear the words from your lips. Speak, darling. They are for my ear alone, and you need not blush to utter them.”

“I do love you, Archer. I believe I have loved you ever since the first.”

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"And you will be mine? All my own!"

She gave him her hands. He drew the head, with its soft, bright hair, to his breast, and kissed the sweet lips again and again, almost failing to realize the blessed reality of his happiness.

It was late that night before Archer Trevlyn left his betrothed bride, and took his way to the village hotel. But he was too happy, too full of sweet content, to heed the lapse of time. At last the longing of his life was satisfied. He had heard her say that she loved him.

And Margie sat and listened to the sound of his retreating footsteps, and then went up to her chamber to pass the night, wakeful, too content to be willing to lose the time in sleep, and so the dawn of morning found her with open eyes.

* * * * *

The ensuing winter was a very gay one. Margaret Harrison returned to New York under the chaperonage of her friend, Mrs. Weldon, and mingled more freely in society than she had done since the season she "came out." She took pleasure in it now, for Archer Trevlyn was welcomed everywhere. He was a favored guest in the most aristocratic homes, and people peculiarly exclusive were happy to receive him into their most select gatherings.

His engagement with Margie was made public, and the young people were overwhelmed with the usual compliments of politely expressed hopes and fashionable congratulations.

The gentleman said Miss Harrison had always been beautiful, but this season she was more than that. Happiness is a rare beautifier. It painted Margie's cheeks and lips with purest rose color, and gave a light to her eyes and a softness to her sweet voice.

Of course she did not mingle in society, even though her engagement was well known, without being surrounded by admirers. They fairly took her away from Arch, sometimes; but he tried to be patient. Before the apple-trees in the green country valleys were rosy with blossoms, she was to be all his own. He could afford to be generous.

Among the train of her admirers was a young Cuban gentleman, Louis Castrani, a man of fascinating presence and great personal beauty. He had been unfortunate in his first love. She had died a few days before they were to have been married—died by the hand of violence, and Castrani had shot the rival who murdered her. Public opinion had favored the avenger, and he had not suffered for the act, but ever since he had been a prey to melancholy. He told Margie his history, and it aroused her pity; but when he asked her love, she refused him gently, telling him that her heart was another's. He had

suffered deeply from the disappointment, but he did not give up her society, as most men would have done. He still hovered around her, content if she gave him a smile or a kind word, seeming to find his best happiness in anticipating her every wish before it was uttered.

Toward the end of March Alexandrine Lee came to pass a few days with Margie. Some singular change had been at work on the girl. She had lost her wonted gayety of spirits, and was for the most part subdued, almost sad. Her beautiful eyes seldom lighted with a smile, and her sweet voice was rarely heard.

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She came, from a day spent out, one evening, into Margie's dressing-room. Miss Harrison was preparing for the opera. There was a new prima donna, and Archer was anxious for her to hear the wonder. Margie had never looked lovelier. Her pink silk dress, with the corsage falling away from the shoulders, and the sleeves leaving the round arms bare, was peculiarly becoming, and the pearl necklace and bracelets—Archer's gift—were no whiter or purer than the throat and wrists they encircled.

Alexandrine stood a moment in the door, looking at the lovely picture presented by her young hostess. A pang, vague and unacknowledged, wrung her heart, and showed itself on her countenance. But she came forward with expressions of admiration.

"You are perfect, Margie—absolutely perfect! Poor gentlemen! how I pity them to-night! How their wretched hearts will ache!"

Margie laughed.

"Nonsense, Alex, don't be absurd! Go and dress yourself. I am going to the opera, and you must accompany us."

"Us—who may that plural pronoun embody?"

"Myself—and Mr. Trevlyn."

"Ah! thank you. Mr. Trevlyn may not care for an addition to his nice little arrangement for a *tete-a-tete*."

"Don't be vexed, Alexandrine. We thought you would pass the evening at your friend's, and Archer only came in to tell me a few hours ago."

"Of course I am not vexed, dear," and the girl kissed Margie's glowing cheek. "Lovers will be lovers the world over. Silly things, always, and never interesting company for other people. How long before Mr. Trevlyn is coming for you?"

Margie consulted her watch.

"At eight. It is now seven. In an hour."

"In an hour! An hour's time! Long enough to change the destiny of empires!"

"How strangely you talk, Alexandrine! What spirit possesses you?" asked Margie, filled, in spite of herself, with a curious premonition of evil.

Alexandrine sat down by the side of her friend, and looked searchingly into her face, her great black eyes holding Margie with a sort of serpent-like fascination.

“Margaret, you love this Archer Trevlyn very dearly do you not?”

Margie blushed crimson, but she answered, proudly:

“Why need I be ashamed to confess it? I do. I love him with my whole soul!”

“And you do not think there is in you any possibility of a change?”

“A change! What do you mean? Explain yourself.”

“You do not think the time will ever come when you will cease to love Mr. Arthur Trevlyn?”

“It will never come!” Margie replied, indignantly, “never, while I have my reason!”

“Do you believe in love’s immortality?”

“I believe that all true love is changeless as eternity! I am not a child, Alexandrine, to be blown about by every passing breeze.”

“No, you are a woman now, with a woman’s capability of suffering. You ought, also, to be possessed of woman’s resolution of a woman’s strength to endure sorrow and affliction.”

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"I have never had any great affliction, Alexandrine. The death of Mr. Linmere was horrible to me, but it was not as if I had loved him; and though I loved Mr. Trevlyn, my guardian, he died so peacefully, that I cannot wish him back. And my dear parents—I was so young then, and they were so willing to go! No, I do not think I have ever had any great sorrow, such as blast people's whole lifetimes."

"But you think you will always continue to love Archer Trevlyn?"

"How strangely you harp on that string! What do you mean? There is something behind all this; I see it in your face. You frighten me!"

"Margie, all people are blind sometimes, but more especially women, when they love. Would it be a mercy to open the eyes of one who, in happy ignorance, was walking over a precipice which the flowers hid from her view?"

Margie shuddered, and the beautiful color fled from her cheek.

"I do not comprehend you. Why do you keep me in suspense?"

"Because I dread to break the charm. You will hate me for it always, Margie. We never love those who tell us disagreeable truths, even though it be for our good."

"I do not know what you would tell me, Alexandrine, but I do not think I shall hate you for it."

"Not if I tell you evil of Archer Trevlyn?"

"I will not listen to it!" she cried, indignantly.

"I expected as much. Well, Margie, you shall not. I will hold my peace; but if ever, in the years to come, the terrible secret should be revealed to you—the secret which would then destroy your happiness for all time—remember that I would have saved you, and you refused to listen."

She drew her shawl around her shoulders, and rose to go.

Margie caught her arm.

"What is it? You *shall* tell me! Suspense is worse than certainty."

"And if I tell you, you will keep silent? Silent as the grave itself?"

"Yes, if you wish it."

"Will you swear it?"

"I cannot; but I will keep it just as sacredly."

"I want not only your promise, but your oath. You would never break an oath. And this which I am about to tell you, if known to the world, involves Archer Trevlyn's life! and you refuse to take an oath."

"His life! Yes, I will swear. I would do anything to make his life safer."

"Very well. You understand me fully? You are never to reveal anything I may tell you to-night, unless I give you leave. You swear it?"

"I swear it."

"Listen, then. You remember the night Mr. Linmere was murdered?"

Margie grew pale as death, and clasped her hands convulsively.

"Yes, I remember it."

"You desired us, after we had finished dressing you, to leave you alone. We did so, and you locked the door behind us, stepped from the window, and went to the grave of your parents."

"I did."

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"You remained there some little time, and when you turned away, you stopped to look back, and in doing so you laid your hand—this one,—” she touched Margie’s slender left hand, on which shone Archer Trevlyn’s betrothal ring—“on the gate post. Do you remember it?”

"Yes, I remember it."

"And while it rested there—while your eyes were turned away, that hand was touched—by something soft, and warm, and sentient—too warm, too passionate, to be the kiss of a disembodied soul. Living human lips, that scorched into your flesh, and thrilled you as nothing else ever had the power to thrill you!"

Margie trembled convulsively, her color came and went, and she clasped and unclasped her hands with nervous agitation.

"Am I not speaking the truth?"

"Yes, yes—go on. I am listening."

"Was there, in all the world, at that time, more than one person whose kiss had the power to thrill you as that kiss thrilled you? Answer me, Margie Harrison!"

"I will not! You have no right to ask me!" she replied, passionately.

"It is useless to attempt disguise, Margie. I can read your very thoughts. At the moment you felt that touch, you knew instinctively who was near you. You felt and acknowledged the presence of one who had no right to be kissing the hand of another man's promised wife. And yet the forbidden sin of that person was sweet to you. You stooped and pressed your lips where his had been! Whose?"

"I do not know—indeed I do not! Why do you torture me so, Alexandrine?"

"My poor child, I will say no more. Good-night, Margie. I trust you will have a pleasant evening with Mr. Trevlyn."

Margie caught the flowing skirt of Miss Lee's dress.

"You shall tell me all! I must know. I have heard too much to be kept in ignorance of the remainder."

"So be it. You shall hear all. You know that Archer Trevlyn was in the graveyard, or near it, that night, though you might not see him. Yet you were sure of his presence—"

"I was not! I tell you, I was not!" she cried, fiercely. "I saw no one; not a person!"

"Then, if you were not sure of his presence, you loved some other; else why did you put your lips where those of a stranger had been? In that case, you were doubly false!"

Margie's cheeks were crimson with shame. She covered her face with her hands, and was silent.

"How many can you love at once, Margie Harrison?"

"Alexandrine, you are cruel!—cruel! Is it not enough for you to tell me the truth, without torturing me thus?"

A flash of conscious triumph crossed the cold face of Miss Lee, and then she was calm as before.

"No, I am not cruel—only truthful. You cannot deny that you knew Archer Trevlyn was near you. You will not deny it. Margie, I know what love is—I know something of its keen, subtle instincts. I should recognize the vicinity of the man I loved, though all around me were black as midnight."

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"Well, what then?" asked Margie, defiantly.

"Wait and see. I followed you out that night, with no definite purpose in my mind. Perhaps it was curiosity to see what a romantic woman, about to be married to a man she does not love, would do, I stood outside the hedge of arbor vitae while you were inside. I saw the tall, shadowy figure which bent its head upon your hand, and I saw you put your mouth where his had been. When you went away I did not go. Something kept me behind. A moment afterward, I heard voices inside the hedge—just one exclamation from each person—I could swear to that! and then—O heaven!"

"What then!"

"A blow! a dull, terrible thud, a smothered groan, a fall—and I stood there powerless to move—stricken dumb and motionless! And while I stood transfixed, some person rushed past me, breathless, panting, reckless of everything save escape! Margie, it was so dark that I could not be positive, but I am morally certain that the person I saw was Archer Trevlyn!"

"My God!" Margie cowered down to the floor, and hid her face in the folds of Alexandrine's dress.

"Hear me through," Miss Lee went on relentlessly, her face growing colder and harder with every word. "Hear me through and then decide for yourself. Let no opinion of mine bias your judgment. I stood there a moment longer, and then, when suspended volition came back to me, I fled from the place. Margie, words cannot express to you my distress, my bitter, burning anguish! It was like to madness. But sooner than have divulged my suspicions, I would have killed myself! For I loved Archer Trevlyn with a depth and fervor which your cool nature has no conception of. I love him still, though I feel convinced, from the bottom of my soul, that he is a murderer!"

Her cheeks grew brilliant as red roses, her eyes sparkled like stars. Margie looked into the bewilderingly beautiful face with suspended breath. The woman's passionate presence scorched her; she could not be herself, with those eyes of fire blazing down into hers.

Alexandrine resumed, "I am wasting time. Let me hurry on to the end, or your lover will be here before I finish."

"My lover!" cried Margie, in a dazed sort of way, "*my lover?* O yes I remember, Archer Trevlyn was coming. Is it nearly time for him?"

Alexandrine took the shrinking, cowering girl by the shoulders, and lifted her into a seat.

"Rouse yourself, Margie. I have not done. I want you to hear it all."

“Yes, I am hearing.”

It was pitiful to see how helpless and weak the poor child had become. All sense of joy and sorrow seemed to have died out of her.

“I feared so much that when the body of the murdered man should be discovered, there would be some clue which would point to the guilty party! Such a night as I passed, while they searched for the body! I thought I should go mad!” She hid her face in her hands, and her figure shook like a leaf in the autumn wind.

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"When the dog took us to the graveyard, I thought I would be the first inside—I would see if there was anything left on the ground to point to the real murderer. You remember that I picked up something, do you not?"

"I do. Your glove, was it not?"

"Yes. It was my glove! I defy the whole world to take it from me! I would die before such a proof should be brought against the man I love!" she cried wildly. "See here!"

She drew from her bosom a kid glove, stained and stiff with blood.

"Margie, have you ever seen it before? Look here. It has been mended; sewed with blue silk! Do you remember anything about it?"

"Yes; I saw you mend it at Cape May," she answered, the words forced from her, apparently, without her volition.

"You are right. He had torn it while rowing me out, one morning. I saw the rent and offered to repair it. He makes his gloves wear well, doesn't he?"

"O don't! don't! how can you! Alexandrine, wake me, for mercy's sake! This is some horrible dream."

"I would to heaven it were! It would be happier for us all. But if you feel any doubt about the identity of the glove, look here." She turned back the wrist, and there on the inside, written in the bold characters which were a peculiarity of Arch Trevlyn's handwriting, was the name in full—*Archer Trevlyn*.

Margie shrank back and covered her eyes, as if to shut out the terrible proof. Alexandrine returned the glove to her bosom, and then continued:

"The handkerchief found near Mr. Linmere was marked with the single letter A. Whose name begins with that letter?"

"Stop, I implore you! I shall lose my reason! I am blinded—I cannot see! O, if I could only die and leave it all!"

"You will not die. I bore it, and still live; and it is so much harder for me, because I have to bear it all alone. You have your religion to help you, Margie. Surely that will bear you up! I have heard all you pious people prate enough of its service in time of trouble to remember that consolation."

"Don't, Alexandria! It is sinful to scorn God's holy religion. Yes, you are right; it will help me. God himself will help me, if I ask him. He knows how much I stand in need of it."

"I am glad you are so likely to be supported," returned the girl, half-earnestly, half-contemptuously. "Are you satisfied in regard to Mr. Archer Trevlyn?"

"I will not credit it!" cried Margie, passionately. "He did not do that deed! He could not! So good, and noble, and pitiful of all suffering humanity! And besides, what motive could he have?"

"The motive was all-powerful. Has not Mr. Trevlyn, by his own confession, loved you from his youth up?"

"Yes."

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"And Paul Linmere was about to become your husband. Could there be a more potent reason for Archer Trevlyn to desire Mr. Linmere's death? He was an obstacle which could be removed in no other way than by death, because you had promised your father to marry him, and you could not falsify your word. All men are weak and liable to sin; is Trevlyn any exception? Margie, I have told you frankly what I know. You can credit it or not. I leave it with you; decide as you think best. It is eight o'clock. I will go now, for it is time for your lover to come for you."

"O, I cannot meet him—not to-night! I must have time to think—time to collect my thoughts! My head whirls so, and everything is so dark! Stay, Alexandrine, and excuse me to him. Say I have a headache—anything to quiet him. I cannot see him now! I should go mad! Let me have a night to think of it!"

Alexandrine put her hand on the soft hair of the bowed head.

"My poor Margie! it is hard for you. Hark! there is the bell. He has come. Will you not go down?"

"No, no, no! Do what you judge best, and leave me to myself and my God."

Alexandrine went out, and Margie, locking the door after her, flung herself down on the carpet and buried her face in the pillows of the sofa.

Miss Lee swept down the staircase, her dark, bright face resplendent, her bearing haughty as that of an empress. Arch was in the parlor. He looked up eagerly as the door opened, but his countenance fell when he saw that it was only Miss Lee. She greeted him cordially.

"Good evening, Mr. Trevlyn. I am deputized to receive you, and my good intentions must be accepted in place of more fervid demonstrations."

"I am happy to see you, Miss Lee. Where is Margie?"

"She is in her room, somewhat indisposed. She begged me to ask you to excuse her, as she is unable to come down, and of course cannot have pleasure of going with you to the opera."

"Sick? Margie sick!" he exclaimed, anxiously. "What can be the matter? She was well enough three hours ago."

"O, do not be uneasy. It is nothing serious. A headache, I think. She will be well after a night's rest. Cannot I prevail on you to sit down?"

"I think not, to-night, thank you. I will call to-morrow. Give Margie my best love, and tell her how sorry I am that she is ill."



Alexandrine promised, and Mr. Trevlyn bowed himself out. She put her hand to her forehead, which seemed almost bursting with the strange weight there.

“Guilty or not guilty,” she muttered, “what does it matter to me? I love him, and that is enough?”

PART III.

The long night passed away, as all nights, however long and dark they may be, will pass away.

Margie had not slept. She had paced her chamber until long after midnight, utterly disregarding Alexandrine, who had knocked repeatedly at her door, and at last, overcome by weariness, she had sunk down in a chair by the open window, and sat there, gazing blankly out into the night, with its purple heavens, and its glory of sparkling stars.

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Nothing could have tempted Margie to have credited such a story of her lover, had it not been for the overwhelming evidence of her own senses. Ever since the night of Paul Linmere's assassination, she had at times been tortured with agonizing doubts. From the first she had been morally sure whose lips had touched her hand that night in the graveyard; she knew that no other presence than that of Archer Trevlyn had the power to influence her as she had been influenced. She knew that he had been there, though she had not seen him; and for what purpose had he been there? It was a question she had asked herself a thousand times!

There could be no doubt any longer. She was forced to that conclusion at last; her heart sinking like lead in her bosom as she came to acknowledge it. In a moment of terrible temptation, Arch Trevlyn had stained his hands with blood! And for her sake!

There was a violent warfare in her heart. Her love for Archer Trevlyn had not sprung up in a day; its growth had been slow, and it had taken deep root. Oh, how hard it was to give up the blissful dream! She thought of his early life—how it had been full of temptation—how his noble nature had been warped and perverted by the evil influences that had surrounded him, and for a while the temptation was strong upon her soul to forgive him everything—to ignore all the past, and take him into her life as though the fearful story she had just listened to had been untold. Marry a murderer!

"Oh, God!" she cried in horror, as the whole extent of the truth burst upon her: "Oh, my God, pity and aid me!"

She sank down on her knees, and though her lips uttered no sound, her heart prayed as only hearts can pray when wrung with mortal suffering. She saw her duty clearly. Archer Trevlyn must be given up; from that there could be no appeal. Henceforth he must be to her as though he had never been. She must put him entirely out of her life—out of her thoughts—out of her sleeping and waking dreams.

But she could give him no explanation of her change of mind. She had passed her word—nay, she had sworn never to reveal aught that Miss Lee had told her, and a promise was binding. But he would not need any explanation. His own guilty conscience would tell him why he was renounced.

She took off the rose-colored dress in which she had arrayed herself to meet him, and folded it away in a drawer of her wardrobe, together with every other adornment she had worn that night. They would always be to her painful reminders of that terrible season of anguish and despair. When all were in, she shut them away from her sight, turned the key upon them, and flung it far out of the window.

Then she opened her writing desk, and took out all the little notes he had ever written to her, read them all over, and holding them one by one to the blaze of the lamp, watched them with a sort of stony calmness until they shrivelled and fell in ashes, black as her

hopes, to the floor. Then his gifts; a few simple things. These she did not look at; she put them hastily into a box, sealed them up, and wrote his address on the cover.

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The last task was the hardest. She must write him a note, telling him that all was over between them. The gray light of a clouded morning found her making the effort. But for a long time her pen refused to move; her hand seemed powerless. She felt weak and helpless as a very infant. But it was done at last, and she read it over, wondering that she was alive to read it:

“MR. ARCHER TREVLYN, SIR:—Yesterday afternoon, when I last saw you, I did not think that before twenty-four hours had elapsed I should be under the necessity of inditing to you this letter. Henceforth, you and I must be as strangers. Not all the wealth and influence of the universe could tempt me to become your wife, now that my eyes are opened. I renounce you utterly and entirely, and no word or argument of yours can change me. Therefore, do not attempt to see me, for with my own consent I will never look upon your face again. I deem no explanation necessary; your own conscience will tell you why I have been forced to make this decision. I return to you with this note everything that can serve to remind me of you, and ask you to do me the favor to burn all that you may have in your possession which once was mine. Farewell, now and forever.

“MARGARET HARRISON.”

There remained still something more to be done. Margie knew that Archer Trevlyn would seek her out, and demand an explanation from her own lips, and this must never be. She could not see him now; she was not certain that she could ever see him again. She dared not risk the influence his personal presence might have upon her. She must leave New York. But where should she go? She had scarcely asked the question before thought answered her.

Far away in the northern part of New Hampshire, resided old Nellie Day, the woman who had nursed her, and whom she had not seen for twelve years. Nellie was a very quiet, discreet person, and had been very warmly attached to the Harrison family. She had married late in life a worthy farmer, and giving up her situation in New York, had gone with him to the little-out-of-the-way village of Lightfield. Margie had kept up a sort of desultory correspondence with her, and in every letter that the old lady wrote she had urged Margie to visit her in her country home. It had never been convenient to do so, but now the place was suggested to her at once, and to Lightfield she decided to go.

She consulted her watch. It was five o'clock; the train for the North, the first express, left at half-past six. There would be time. She would leave all her business affairs in the hands of Mr. Farley, her legal adviser and general manager; and as to the house, the maiden aunt who resided with her could keep up the establishment until her return, if she ever did return.

She packed a few of her plainest dresses and some other indispensables, in a trunk, arrayed herself in a dark traveling suit, and rang for Florine. The girl looked at her in silent amazement. Margie steadied her voice, and spoke carelessly enough.

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“Florine, I have been obliged to leave home very suddenly. My preparations are all complete. I thought I would not wake you as I had so little to do. Tell Peter to have the carriage at the door at six precisely, and bring up Leo’s breakfast, and a cup of hot coffee for me.”

At six o’clock—having written a note to Mr. Farley, and one to her aunt, giving no explanations, but merely saying she had been called away—she put on her bonnet, entered the carriage and was driven to the depot. And before nine-tenths of New York had thought of leaving their beds, she was being whirled rapidly northward, her only companion Leo, who, watchful and alert, lay curled up on the seat beside her.

* * * * *

Archer Trevlyn had not slept that night. Some sense of impending evil, some demon of uneasiness oppressed him strangely. He tossed about until daybreak, then he rose, dressed himself, and went out. Everything was still on the streets except the clatter of the milk carts, and the early drays and huckster wagons. The air was damp and dense, and struck a deadly chill to the very marrow of this unseasonable wanderer. He walked a few squares, and then returned to his hotel, more oppressed than when he went out.

Did ever time move so slowly before? Would the morning never pass? He wrote some urgent letters, read the damp morning paper, without the slightest notion of contents, and went down to his breakfast, to come away again leaving it untasted. Eight o’clock! The earliest possible hour at which it would be proper to call on Miss Harrison was eleven. Three mortal hours first! How should he ever endure it? She might be very ill. She might even be dying? Archer, with the foolish inconsistency of love, magnified every evil until he was nearly beside himself with dread, lest she might be worse than Miss Lee had represented.

Nine o’clock struck; he was walking the floor in a state of nervous excitement which would have forced him ere long to have broken all rules of etiquette and taken his way to Harrison House, had not fate saved him the necessity.

A waiter entered, and brought in a letter and a package. He snatched them both, and saw they were directed in Margie’s handwriting. For a moment his heart stood still with a deadly fear. Great drops of perspiration covered his forehead, and he dropped letter and package to the floor. Why was she writing to him when she must expect to see him in a few hours? And that package! what did it contain?

He picked it up, and tore off the wrappings. The betrothal ring rolled out and fell with a hollow sound on the floor. The ring he had put upon her finger—the ring he had seen her kiss more than once! He looked over the contents of the box hurriedly; every little thing he had ever given her was there, even to a bunch of faded violets!

But the letter? He had almost forgotten it, in pondering over the dread significance of the return of his presents. He took it up, and broke the seal with slow deliberation. It would not tell him any news, but it might contain an explanation. His face grew pale as ashes as he read, and he put his hand to his heart, as though he had received a blow there. Twice he read it through, and at the last reading he seemed to realize its dread portent.

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"She gives me up! Margie renounces me! Strangers we must be henceforth! What does it all mean? Am I indeed awake, or is this only a painful dream?"

He read a few lines of the missive a third time. Something of the old dominant spirit of Archer Trevlyn came back to him.

"There is some misunderstanding. Margie has been told some dire falsehood!" he exclaimed, starting up. "I will know everything. She shall explain fully."

He seized his hat and hurried to her residence. The family were at breakfast, the servant said, who opened the door. He asked to see Miss Harrison.

"Miss Harrison left this morning, sir, in the early express," said the man, eying Trevlyn with curious interest.

"Went in the early train! Can you tell me where she has gone?"

"I cannot. Perhaps her aunt, Miss Farnsworth, or Miss Lee can do so."

"Very well;" he made a desperate effort to seem calm, for the servant's observant eye warned him that he was not acting himself. "Will you please ask Miss Lee to favor me with a few minutes of her time?"

Miss Lee came into the parlor where Archer waited, a little afterward. Archer, himself, was not more changed than she. Her countenance was pale even to ghastliness, with the exception of a bright red spot on either cheek, and her eyes shone with such an unnatural light, that even Archer, absorbed as he was in his own troubles, noticed it. She welcomed him quietly, in a somewhat constrained voice, and relapsed into silence. Archer plunged at once upon what he came to ascertain.

"The servant tells me that Miss Harrison left New York this morning. I am very anxious to communicate with her. Can you tell me wither she has gone?"

"I cannot. She left before any of the family were up, and though she left notes for both her aunt and her business agent, Mr. Farley, she did not in either of them mention her destination."

"And she did not speak to you about it?"

"She did not. I spent a part of last evening with her, just before you came, but she said nothing to me of her intention. She was not quite well, and desired me to ask you to excuse her from going to the opera."

"And you did not see her this morning?"

“No. I have not seen her since I left her room to come down to you last night. When I returned from my interview with you, I tapped at her door—in fact, I tapped at it several times during the evening, for I feared she might be worse—but I got no reply, and supposed she had retired. No one saw her this morning, except Florine, her maid, and Peter, the coachman, who drove her to the depot.”

“And she went entirely alone?”

“She did from the house. Peter took her in the carriage.”

“*From the House!* But after that?” he asked, eagerly.

“Mr. Trevlyn,” she said, coldly, “excuse me.”

“I must know!” he cried; passionately grasping her arm; “tell me, did she set out upon this mysterious journey alone?”

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"I must decline to answer you."

"But I will not accept any denial! Miss Lee, you know what Margie was to me. There has arisen a fearful misunderstanding between us. I must have it explained. Why will you trifle with me? You must tell me what you know."

"I do not wish to arouse suspicions, Mr. Trevlyn, which may have no foundation to rest on. Only for your peace of mind do I withhold any information I may possess on the subject."

"It is a cruel kindness. Tell me everything at once, I beg of you!"

"Then, if it distresses you, do not blame me; Peter saw Mr. Louis Castrani at the depot, and is confident he went in the same train, in the same car, with Miss Harrison."

"Castrani! Great Heaven!" he staggered into a chair. "Is it possible? Margie, my Margie, that I thought so good and pure and truthful, false to me! It cannot, cannot be! I will not believe it!"

"I do not ask you to," said Alexandrine, proudly. "I insinuated nothing. I only replied to your question."

"Pardon me, Miss Lee. I am not quite myself this morning. I will go now. I thank you for what you have told me, and trust it will all be explained."

"I trust so," answered Miss Lee, turning to leave the room.

"Stay a moment! To what depot did Peter drive her?"

"The Northern, I think he said."

"Again I thank you, and good-morning."

He hurried away, got into the first coach he came across, and was driven to the Northern depot.

He was somewhat acquainted with the ticket agent, and assuming as nonchalant an air as was possible in his present disturbed state, he strolled into the office. After a little indifferent conversation, he said.

"By the way, Harris, do you know Mr. Castrani, the young Cuban, who has turned the heads of so many of our fair belles? Some one was telling me that he left town this morning."

“Castrani! Yes, I think I do. He did leave for the North this morning, in the early express. I marked his baggage for him. He had been hurried so in his preparations, he said, that he had no time for it.”

“Indeed? It’s a bore to be hurried. Where was he checked to?”

“Well, really, the name of the place has escaped me. Some little town in New Hampshire or Maine, I think. We do so much of this business that my memory is treacherous about such things.”

“Were you speaking of Castrani?” asked Tom Clifford, a friend of Archer’s removing his cigar from his mouth. “Deuced fine fellow! Wish I had some of his spare shillings. Though he’s generous as a prince. Met him this morning just as he was coming down the steps of the Astor. Had to get up early to see after that confounded store of mine. Walker’s too lazy to open it mornings.”

“You met Mr. Castrani?” said Archer, referring to the point.

“Yes. He told me he was going away. Woman somewhere mixed up in the case. Said he expected to find one somewhere—well, hanged if I can tell where. There’s always a woman at the bottom of everything.”

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"He did not mention who this one was?"

"Not he. But I must be going. It's nearly lunch time. Good morning."

Trevlyn stopped a few moments with Mr. Harris, and then went back to his rooms. He was satisfied. Hard as it was for him to believe it, he had no other alternative. Margie was false, and she had gone away from him under the protection of Castrani. He could have forgiven her anything but that. If she had ceased to love him, and transferred her affections, he could still have wished her all happiness, if she had only been frank with him. But to profess love for him all the while she was planning to elope with another man, was too much! His heart hardened toward her.

If there had been, in reality, as he had at first supposed, any misunderstanding between him and her, and she had gone alone, he would have followed her to the ends of the earth, and have had everything made clear. But as it was now, he would not pursue her an inch. Let her go! False and perfidious! Why should her flight ever trouble him?

But though he tried to believe her worthy of all scorn and contempt, his heart was still very tender of her. He kissed the sweet face of the picture he had worn so long in his bosom, before he locked it away from his sight, and dropped some tears, that were no dishonor to his manhood, over the half dozen elegant little trifles she had given him, before he committed them to the flames.

There was a nine days' wonder over Miss Harrison's sudden exodus. But her aunt was a discreet woman, and it was generally understood that Margie had taken advantage of the pause in the fashionable season to visit some distant relatives, and if ever any one coupled her flight and the departure of Castrani together, it was not made the subject of remark. Alexandrine kept what she knew to herself, and of course Archer Trevlyn did not proclaim his own desertion.

For a week, nearly, he managed to keep about, and at the end of that time he called at Mrs. Lee's. He wanted to question Alexandrine a little further. The idea possessed him that in some way she might be cognizant of Margie's destination. And though he had given the girl up, he longed desperately to know if she were happy. He had felt strangely giddy all day, and the heat of Mrs. Lee's parlors operated unfavorably upon him. He was sitting on a sofa conversing with that lady and her daughter, when suddenly he put his hand to his forehead, and sank back, pale and speechless.

In the wildest alarm, they called a physician, who put him to bed, and enjoined the severest quiet. Mr. Trevlyn, he said, had received a severe shock to his nervous system, and there was imminent danger of congestive fever of the brain.

His fears were verified. Archer did not rally, and on the second day he was delirious. Then the womanly nature of Alexandrine Lee came out and asserted itself. She

banished all attendants from the sick room, and took sole charge herself of the sufferer. Not even her mother would she allow to take her place. When tempted by intense weariness to resign her post, she would take *that stained glove* from her bosom, and the sight of it would banish all thought of admitting a stranger.

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"No," she said to herself, "people in delirium speak of their most cherished secrets and he shall not criminate himself. If he did that terrible deed, only I of all the world can bring a shadow of suspicion against him, and the secret shall never be revealed to any other."

So she sat the long days and longer nights away, by the side of this man she loved so hopelessly, bathing his fevered brow, holding his parched hand, and lingering fondly over the flushed, unconscious face.

He sank lower and lower day by day—so very low that the physician said he could do no more. He must leave the case. There was nothing for it but to wait with patience the workings of nature.

At last, the day came when the ravings of delirium subsided and a deadly stupor intervened. It was the crisis of the disease. The sundown would decide, Dr. Grayson said; he would be better, or death would ensue.

Alexandrine heard his opinion in stony silence. She sat by the bed's-head now, calm and silent; her powers of self-control were infinite. Her mother came in to watch for the change, as did several of Archer's friends, heretofore excluded. She was not afraid for them to come; there was no danger of Mr. Trevlyn criminating himself now. He had not spoken or moved for twelve hours.

The time passed slowly. The sun crept down the west. The ticking of the watch on the stand was all that broke the silence of the room. The last sun ray departed—the west flamed with gold and crimson, and the amber light flushed with the hue of health the white face on the pillow. Alexandrine thought she saw a change other than that the sunset light brought, and bent over him.

His eyes unclosed—he looked away from her to the vase of early spring flowers on the centre-table. His lips moved—she caught the whispered word with a fierce pang at the heart:

"Margie!"

The physician stepped forward, and sought the fluttering pulse. His face told his decision before his lips did.

"The crisis is passed. He will live."

Yes, he would live. The suspense was over. Alexandrine's labors were shared now, and Archer did not know how devotedly he had been tended—how he owed his very existence to her.

He mended slowly, but by the middle of May he was able to go out. Of course he was very grateful to the Lees, and their house was almost the only one he visited. Alexandrine was fitful and moody. Sometimes she received him with the greatest warmth, and then she would be cold and distant. She puzzled Archer strangely. He wanted to be friends with her. He felt that he owed her an immense debt of gratitude, and he desired to treat her as he would a dear sister.

Perhaps it was because time hung so heavily on his hands that Trevlyn went so frequently to Mrs. Lee's. Certainly he did not go to visit Alexandrine. We all know how the habit of visiting certain places grows upon us, without any particular cause, until we feel the necessity of going through with the regular routine every day. He was to blame for following up this acquaintance so closely, but he did it without any wrong intention. He never thought it possible that any one should dream of his being in love with Alexandrine.

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But the world talked. They said it was a very pretty romance; Mr. Trevlyn had been deserted by his lady-love, had fallen ill on account of it, and been nursed by one whom of course he would marry. Indeed, they thought him in duty bound to do so. In what other way could he manifest his gratitude?

Vague whispers of this reached Trevlyn's ear, but he gave them at first little heed. He should never marry, he said; it was sinful to wed without love. But as he saw Alexandrine's pale face and strangely distraught manner day by day, he came to feel as if he had in some way wronged her though how he did not exactly understand.

One day he entered the sitting-room of Mrs. Lee with the freedom of a privileged visitor, without rapping, and found Alexandrine in tears. He would have retreated, but she had already seen him, and he felt that it would be better to remain. He spoke to her kindly.

"I trust nothing has occurred to distress you?"

She looked at him almost defiantly.

"Leave me!" she said, impetuously; "you, of all others, have no right to question me!"

"Pardon me" he exclaimed, alarmed by her strange emotion, "and why not I question you?"

"Because you have caused me misery enough already—"

She stopped suddenly, and rising, was about to leave the room. He took her hand, and closed the door she had opened, leading her to a seat.

"My dear Miss Lee, I do not comprehend you. Explain. If I have ever injured you in any way, it has been the very thing farthest removed from my intentions. Will you not give me a chance to defend myself?"

She blushed painfully; her embarrassment disturbed him, for he was generous to all, and he really felt very kindly toward her.

"I cannot explain," she said, in a subdued voice. "I am sorry you came just now. But these slanders anger me, as well as wound my feelings."

"What slanders, Miss Lee?"

Her color grew deeper. Animated by some sudden resolve, she lifted her head proudly.

"I will tell you. Remember that you sought the information. Your coming here has been made the subject of remark, and I have been accused of having schemed to draw you here. You know if it be true."

His face flushed slowly. He recalled the silly stories that had some time before reached his ears. And because of them she had suffered! This woman whose unremitting care had saved his life! How thoughtless and cruel he had been! He was a man of honor; if any woman's reputation had been injured through his means, there was but one course for him to pursue. He must make reparation. And how? For a moment his head whirled, but glancing at the pale, distressed face before him, he made his decision.

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"Alexandrine," he said, quietly, "you know just what my course has been. You know my lowly origin—you know how life has cheated me of happiness. You know how dear Margie Harrison was to me, and how I lost her. I loved her with my whole soul—she will be the one love of my life time. I shall never love another woman as I loved her. But if my name, and the position I can give my wife, will be pleasant to you, then I ask you to accept them, as some slight recompense for what I have made you suffer. If you can be satisfied with the sincere respect and friendship I feel for you, then I offer myself to you. You deserve my heart, but I have none to give to any one. I have buried it so deep that it will never know a resurrection."

She shuddered and grew pale. To one of her passionate nature—loving him as she did—it was but a sorry wooing. His love she could never have. But if she married him, she should be always near him; sometimes he would hold her hands in his, and call her, as he did now, Alexandrine. Her apparent struggle with herself pained him. Perhaps he guessed something of its cause. He put his arm around her waist.

"My child," he said, kindly, "do you love me? Do you indeed care for me? Cold and indifferent as I have been? Tell me truly, Alexandrine?"

She did tell him truly; something within urged her to let him see her heart as it was. For a moment she put aside all her pride.

"I do love you," she said, "God only knows how dearly!"

He looked at her with gentle, pitying eyes, but he did not touch the red lips so near his own. He could not be a hypocrite.

"I will be good to you, Alexandrine. God helping me, you shall never have cause for complaint. I will make your life as happy as I can. I will give you all that my life's shipwreck spared me. Will that content you? Will you be my wife?"

Still she did not reply.

"Are you afraid to risk it?" he asked, almost sadly.

"No, I am not afraid! I will risk everything!" she answered.

Meantime, what of Margie Harrison? Through the dull, stormy day she had been whirled along like the wind. The train was an express, and made few stoppages. Margie took little note of anything which occurred. She sat in her hard seat like one in a trance, and paid no heed to the lapse of time, until the piteous whining of Leo warned her that night was near, and the poor dog was hungry. At the first stopping-place she purchased some bread and meat for him, but nothing for herself. She could not have swallowed a mouthful.

Still the untiring train dashed onward. Boston was reached at last. She got out, stood confused and bewildered, gazing around her. It was night, and the place was strange to her. The cries of the porters and hackmen—the bustle and dire confusion, struck a chill to her heart. The crowd hurried hither and thither, each one intent on his own business, and the lamps gave out a dismal light, dimmed as they were by the hanging clouds of mist and fog. Alone in a great city! For the first time in her life she felt the significance of the words she had so often heard. She had never traveled a half dozen miles before, by herself, and she felt almost as helpless as a little child.

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“Carriage, ma’am?” said a hackman, touching her arm.

“Yes,” she said, mechanically, and put her hand in her pocket for her *porte-monnaie*, with a vague idea that she must pay him before she started.

She uttered a low cry of dismay! Her pocket-book was missing! She searched more thoroughly, but it was not to be found. Her pocket had been picked. She turned a piteous face to the hackman.

“My money is lost, sir!” she said, “but if you will take me to a place of shelter, I will remunerate you some way.”

“Sorry to be obliged to refuse, ma’am,” said the man, civilly enough, “but I’m a poor man, with a family, and can’t afford to keep my horses for nothing.”

“What is it, driver?” queried a rough voice; but in a moment a crowd had gathered around poor, shrinking Margie, and growling, indignant Leo.

“The woman’s lost her purse—”

“Oh, ho! the old story—eh? Beauty in distress. Should think they’d git tired of playing that game!” said the coarse voice, which belonged to a loungeur and hanger-on at the depot.

“Looks rather suspicious, ma’am, for ye to be traveling on the train alone,” began the hackman; but he was interrupted by the loungeur.

“That’s the way they all travel. Wall, thank the Lord, I hain’t so gallant as to git taken in by every decent face I see!”

“Thank Heaven, I am not so lost to all sense of decency as to insult a lady!” said a clear, stern voice; and a tall, distinguished-looking man swept through the crowd, and reached Margie’s side.

“Indeed, I am not mistaken!” he said, looking at her with amazement. “Miss Harrison!”

She saw, as he lifted his hat, the frank, handsome face of Louis Castrani. All her troubles were over—this man was a pillar of strength to her weakness. She caught his arm eagerly, and Leo barked with joy, recognizing a friend.

“I am so glad to see you, Mr. Castrani!”

His countenance lighted instantly. He pressed the hand on his arm.

“Thank you, my friend. What service can I render you? Where do you wish to go? Let me act for you.”

“Oh, thank you—if you only will! I was going further, but the train I wished to take has been gone some hours, and I must stay here to-night. And on my way, somewhere, my money has been stolen.”

“Give yourself no more uneasiness. I am only too happy to be of any use to you.”

The crowd dispersed, and Castrani called a carriage, and put Margie and Leo inside.

“Have you any choice of hotels?”

“None. I am entirely unacquainted here. You know best.”

“To the —— House,” he said to the driver; and thither they were taken.

A warm room and a tempting supper were provided, but Margie could not eat. She only swallowed a little toast, and drank a cup of tea. Castrani came to her parlor just after she had finished, but he did not sit down. He had too much delicacy to intrude himself upon her when accident had thrown them together.

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"I was called here on very urgent business," he said, "and shall be obliged to attend to it to-night, but I shall return soon, and will see you in the morning. Meanwhile, feel perfectly at home. I have engaged a chamber-maid to attend to you, and do not be afraid to make your wants known. Good-night, now, and pleasant dreams."

She was so weary, that she slept some, with Leo hugged tightly to her breast; for she felt a sense of security in having this faithful friend near her. Breakfast was served in her room, and by-and-by Castrani came up. He spoke to her cheerfully, though he could not fail to notice that some terrible blow had fallen upon her since last he had seen her, gay and brilliant, at a party in New York. But he forbore to question her. Margie appreciated his delicacy, and something impelled her to confide to him what she had not entrusted to the discretion of any other person. She owed him this confidence, for his disinterested kindness.

"Mr. Castrani," she said, quietly enough, outwardly, "circumstances, of which I cannot speak, have made it necessary for me to leave New York. I do not desire that the place of my destination shall be known to any one. But to show you how much I appreciate your kindness, and how entirely I trust you, I will inform you that I am going to Lightfield, in New Hampshire, to stop an indefinite length of time with my old nurse, Mrs. Day."

Castrani was visibly affected by this proof of her confidence.

"From me, no one shall ever know the place of your refuge," he said, earnestly. "Your train leaves at ten. It is now nine. If you would only permit me to see you safely to the end of your journey!"

She flushed. He read a quiet reproach in her eye.

"Pardon me. I know it may seem like officiousness, but I would try and not be disagreeable to you. I would not even speak to you, if you desired it should be so. But I could travel in the same car with you, and be there to protect you, if you should need me."

"I thank you greatly. But I had rather you went no further. I shall meet with no difficulty, I think. I shall reach Nurse Day's by sunset."

"As you will. I will not press the matter. Your pleasure shall be mine."

A little later, he assisted her from the carriage that had taken her to the depot. Her baggage was checked—he handed her the check, and her ticket, and then pressed into her hand a roll of bank-notes. She put them back quietly, but he declined taking them.

"I do not give it to you—I lend it to you. You shall repay it at your convenience."

"On these conditions, I thank you, also."

She put out her hand. He took it, resisted the inclination to press his lips to it, and held it lightly in his.

“If you will give me permission—to call upon you—should I be in Lightfield during your stay there—I shall be more than happy!”

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She was about to refuse, but the mute pleading of his eyes deterred her. He had been kind to her, and it could do her no harm. Probably, he would never come to Lightfield, so she gave him the permission he asked for.

The day passed without incident, and nightfall found Margie within ten miles of her destination. She was driven along a rough country road, to a square farm-house—looming up white through the dark—and a moment later she was lying, pale and exhausted, in the arms of Nurse Day.

“My blessed child!” cried the old lady; “my precious little Margie! My old eyes will almost grow young again, after having been cheered by the sight of ye!” And she kissed Margie again and again, while Leo expressed his delight in true canine style—by barking vociferously, and leaping over the chairs and tables.

Nurse Day was pleasantly situated. Her husband was a grave, staid man who was very kind to Margie, always. The farm was a rambling affair—extending over, and embracing in its ample limits, hill and dale, meadow and woodland, and a portion, of a bright, swift river, on whose bold banks it was Margie’s delight to sit through the purple sunsets, and watch the play of light and shade on the bare, rocky cliff opposite.

Nature proved a true friend to the sore heart of the girl. The breezes, so fresh, and sweet, and clear, soothed Margie inexpressibly. The sunshine was a message of healing; the songs of the birds carried her back to her happy childhood. Wandering through the leafy aisles of the forest, she seemed brought nearer to God and his mercy. Only once had Nurse Day questioned her of the past, and then Margie had said:

“I have done with the past forever, Nurse Day. I wish it never recalled to me. I have met with a great sorrow—one of which I cannot speak. I came here to forget it. Never ask me anything about it. I would confide it to you, if I could, but my word is given to another to keep silent. I acted for what I thought best. Heaven knows if I erred, I did not err willingly.”

“Give it all into God’s hands,” said Nurse Day, reverently. “He knows just what is best for us.”

The days went on slowly, but they brought something of peace to Margie Harrison. The violence of her distress passed away, and now there was only a dull pain at her heart—a pain that must always have its abode there.

She held no communication with any person in New York, save her aunt, and her business agent, Mr. Farley, and her letters to them were posted in a distant town, in a neighboring State, where Nurse Day had friends—and so Margie’s place of refuge was still a secret.

It was August now, and the weather at its hottest. Margie spent a large portion of her time out of doors, with only Leo for a companion. She sat, one lovely afternoon, on the bank of the river, dividing her time between the charming panorama of sunshine and shadow before her, and a book of poems in her lap, when there was a step at her side. She looked up, and saw the face of Louis Castrani.

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"Miss Harrison, you will, I trust, excuse me for seeking you here. But my wish to see you was so strong, that, on my way to the White Mountains, I left my party, and turned aside here, to gratify the desire. You know you gave me permission?"

"I did; but I hardly thought you would take advantage of it."

"Perhaps I ought not to have done so. Indeed, I tried hard not to. Are you very angry?"

"No, I am not angry at all. I am glad to see you." She held out her hand. "So is Leo, too—only see him caper."

The dog was leaping upon Mr. Castrani, with the liveliest demonstrations of joy. He patted the silky head.

"It is something to be welcomed by a brute, Miss Harrison; their instincts are seldom at fault, I believe. Have you been well, Miss Harrison?"

"Very well, thank you. And you? But I need not ask. Your looks answer for you. When did you leave New York?"

"I have been in New York only a fortnight since I last saw you. Business has kept me elsewhere. I came from New York three days ago. What a beautiful spot you have hidden yourself in!"

"I am pleased to hear you say so. Isn't it lovely? But you must tell me about home. How are all my friends?"

"They are well. How mellowy the sunshine falls on the rough crags opposite, and what a picture for a painter to transfer to canvas!"

"Yes, I have wished I were an artist, over and over a gain. But I have no talent in that direction. My friends are all well, you say? What of Miss Lee? Did you see her?"

"Yes. She is well. What are you reading?" lifting the book from the ground where it had fallen.

Margie turned suddenly upon him, and regarded him searchingly.

"Why do you evade answering my questions, Mr. Castrani? It is natural that I should want to hear something of the home from which I have been so long away, is it not? Why do you refuse to satisfy my reasonable curiosity on that subject?"

Castrani's handsome face clouded—he looked at her with tender pity in his eyes.

"Miss Harrison, why will you press me further? Your friends are all well."

"I know. But there is something behind that. Tell it to me at once."

"I cannot—indeed, I cannot! You must hear it from some other lips. I would rather die, than cause you one single pang of sorrow!"

"You are very kind, Mr. Castrani—you mean generously—but I want to know." Some subtle instinct seemed to tell her what she was to hear—for she added, "Is it of Miss Lee?"

"I told you Miss Lee was well."

"Mr. Castrani. I have given you more of my confidence than I have ever bestowed on any other person, because I respect you above all men, and because I have perfect confidence in your honor. Has this matter, of which you hesitate to tell me, anything to do with—with Mr. Archer Trevlyn?"

Her voice sank to a whisper, before the sentence was finished, for she had never spoken his name since that fearful night on which his guilt had been revealed to her.

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"I will reply to your question by asking another; and, if it seems impertinent, remember that it is not so intended, and that I do not ask it from any vulgar feeling of curiosity."

"You can ask nothing impertinent, Mr. Castrani," she replied, earnestly.

"Thank you. I do not intend to. Are you betrothed to Archer Trevlyn?"

She grew very pale, but her eyes met his fearlessly.

"I was once. But it is all over, now," with a dreary sigh, that was like the breath of the autumn wind through the dead leaves.

"Before you left New York—was it over before that?"

"Yes, before I left New York. It was why I left there. I cannot tell you how it was—I can never tell any human being. But a terrible necessity arose which forced us apart."

"Did he—did Arch Trevlyn desert you, Miss Harrison?" asked Castrani, his brow contracting, his dark eyes glowing with indignation.

"No; it was my hand that severed the engagement. Do not blame him for that. It was impossible that it should be fulfilled."

"You, Miss Harrison? You broke the engagement?" he asked, eagerly.

Perhaps she read something in the beautiful hope that sprung up in his heart from the glad light in his eyes, and she crushed it at once.

"Yes, I. But not because I had ceased to love him. No, no. He was—is—and will be always, the one love of my lifetime. I shall never love another. Now, I have trusted in you—be frank and free with me."

"Well—since you ask it, Mr. Trevlyn and Miss Lee are to be married in September."

"To Miss Lee—married to Miss Lee? Great Heaven! And she is aware of his—What am I saying? What did I say? O, Mr. Castrani, excuse me—I am so—surprised—" She groped blindly for something to cling to, fell forward, and he received her senseless form in his arms.

He held her silently, a moment, his face wearing a look of unutterable love and sadness; then he put her down on the grass, and brought water in a large leaf from the stream. He bathed her forehead, tenderly as a mother might, murmuring over her words of gentleness and affection.

"My poor Margie! my poor little darling!"

He pressed the little icy hands in his, but he did not kiss the lips he would have given half his life to have felt upon his. He was too honorable to take advantage of her helplessness. She revived after a while, and met his eyes, as he knelt beside her.

“Are you better?” he asked, gently.

“Yes, it is over now. I am sorry to have troubled you. I must depend on you to go to the house with me. Nurse Day will be glad to welcome you. And I must ask you not to alarm her by alluding to my sudden illness. I am quite well now.”

He gave her his arm, and they went up to the house together followed by Leo.

* * * * *

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Archer Trevlyn and Alexandrine Lee were married in September. It was a very quiet wedding, the bridegroom preferring that there should be no parade or show on the occasion. Alexandrine and her mother both desired that it should take place in the fashionable church, where they worshipped, but they yielded to the wishes of Mr. Trevlyn. He deserved some deference, Mrs. Lee declared, for having behaved so handsomely. His presents to his bride were superb. A set of diamonds, that were a little fortune in themselves, and a settlement of three thousand a year—pin-money. The brown-stone house was furnished, and there was no more elegant establishment in the city.

Trevlyn House, the fine old residence of the late John Trevlyn, was closed. Only the old butler and his wife remained in a back-wing, to air the rooms occasionally, and keep the moths out of the upholstery. For some reasons, unexplained even to himself, Archer never took his wife there. Perhaps the quiet room too forcibly reminded him of the woman he had loved and lost.

Alexandrine's ambition was satisfied. At last, she was the wife of the man whose love and admiration she had coveted since her first acquaintance with him. From her heart she believed him guilty of the murder of Paul Linmere; but in spite of it, she had married him. She loved him intensely enough to pardon even that heinous crime.

Her husband's admiration Alexandrine possessed, but she soon came to realize that he had told her the truth, when he said his heart was buried too deep to know a resurrection. He was kind to her—very gentle, and kind, and generous—for it was not in Archer Trevlyn's nature to be unkind to anything—and he felt that he owed her all respect and attention, in return for her love. Her every wish was gratified. Horses, carriages, servants, dress, jewelry—everything that money could purchase—waited her command, but not what she craved more than all—*his love*.

He never kissed her, never took her hands in his, or held her to him when he said good-by, as he frequently did, for several days' absence on matters of business. He never called her Alexandrine—it was always Mrs. Trevlyn; and through the long winter evenings, when they were not at some ball or party, and sat by their splendid fireside, he never put his head in her lap, and let her soft fingers caress his hair, as she had seen other husbands do.

In September, Louis Castrani again appeared in New York society. His appearance revived the old story of his devotion to Margaret Harrison, and people began to wonder why she staid away from home so long.

As soon as he heard of Castrani's arrival, Archer Trevlyn sought him out. He felt that he had a right to know if his suspicions touching Margie were correct.

Castrani received him coldly but courteously. Trevlyn was not to be repelled, but went to the point at once.

“Mr. Castrani,” he said, “I believe I have to deal with a man of honor, and I trust that you will do me the favor of answering the questions I may ask, frankly.”

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"I shall be happy to answer any inquiries which Mr. Trevlyn may propound, provided they are not impertinent," replied Castrani, haughtily.

Trevlyn hesitated. He dreaded to have his suspicions confirmed, and he feared that if this man spoke the truth, such would be the case.

"I am listening, Mr. Trevlyn," remarked Castrani.

"Excuse me. In order to make you understand my position, I must beg you to indulge me in a little retrospection. You are, doubtless, aware that at one time I was engaged to Miss Margaret Harrison?"

"Such was the rumor, sir."

"It was correct. I loved her deeply, fondly, with my whole soul—just as I love her still—in spite of all."

"Mr. Trevlyn," said Castrani, with cold reproof in his voice, "you have a wife."

"I am aware of it, but that does not change my feelings. I have tried to kill all regard for Margaret Harrison, but it is impossible. I can control it, but I cannot make it die. My wife knows it all—I told her freely—and knowing it, she was willing to bear my name. For some reason, unknown to me, unexplained by Margaret, she cast me off. I had seen her only the day before the fatal note reached me—had held her in my arms, and felt her kiss upon my lips." He stopped, controlling his emotion, and went on resolutely.

"The next day I received a letter, from her—a brief, cold, almost scornful letter. She renounced me utterly—she would never meet me again, but as a stranger. She need make no explanation, she said; my own conscience would tell me why she could no longer be anything to me. As if I had committed some crime. I should have sought her, from one end of the earth to the other, and won from her an explanation of her rejection, had it not been for the force of circumstances, which revealed to me that she left for the North, in the early express—with you—or equivalent to that. She entered the train at the same time, and you were both in the same car. That fact, coupled with your well-known devotion to her, and her renunciation of me, satisfied me that she had fled from me, to the arms of—another lover!"

"Villain!" cried Castrani, starting from his chair his face scarlet with indignation. "If it were not a disgrace to use violence upon a guest, I would thrash you soundly! You loved Margaret Harrison, and yet believed that damnable falsehood of her! Out upon such love! She is, and was, as pure as the angels! Yes, you say truly, I was devoted to her. I would have given my life—yea, my soul's salvation, for her love! But she never cared for me. I never enticed her to do evil—I would not, if I could, and I could not, if I would! Who repeated this vile slander? Show him to me, and by Heaven, his blood shall wipe out the stain!"

All Trevlyn's pride and passion left him. His face lost its rigid tenseness, his eyes grew moist. He forgave Castrani's insults, because he told him Margaret was pure. He put out his hands, and grasped those of his companion.

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"O, sir," he said, "I thank you—I thank you! You have made me as happy as it is now possible for me to become. It is like going back to heaven, after a long absence, to know that she was pure—that I was not deceived in her. O Margie! Margie! my wronged Margie! God forgive me for indulging such a thought of you!"

Castrani's hard face softened a little, as he witnessed the utter abandonment of the proud man before him.

"You may well ask God to forgive you," he said. "You deserve the depths of perdition for harboring in your heart a thought against the purity of that woman. Archer Trevlyn, had she loved me as she did you, I would have cut off my right hand before I would have entertained a suspicion of sin in her! It is true, she went North on the same train as I did, but I did not know it until the journey was ended. Previous to that time, I had not seen her for more than a fortnight, and I did not know that she was near me, until in Boston my attention was attracted by a crowd of 'roughs,' gathered around a lady and a greyhound. The lady had lost her *porte-monnaie*, and the crowd made some insulting remarks which I took the liberty of resenting, and when I saw the lady's face, to my amazement I recognized Margaret Harrison!"

"And you protected her? You gave her money and took her to a place of safety?" said Trevlyn, anxiously.

"Of course. As I should have done by any other lady—but more especially for her. I took her to a hotel, and on the morrow saw her start on her journey. I would have gone on with her, but she declined my escort."

"O, I thank you—I thank you, so much! I shall be your friend always, for that. You will tell me where she is?"

"No. I cannot."

"Cannot. Does that imply that you will not?"

"It does."

"Then you know her present place of sojourn?"

"I do. But she does not desire the knowledge to become general. I have pledged my word to her not to reveal it. Neither is it best for you to know."

"You are right. It is not. I might be unable to hinder myself from seeking her. And that could do no good. I know that she is innocent. That shall suffice me. Only tell me she is well, and agreeably situated."

"She is both. More, I think she is at peace. She is with those who love her."

“I thank you for bearing with me. I shall be happier for knowing she was not false to me. Whatever might have caused her to break the engagement, it was not because she loved another. Good-by, Mr. Castrani.”

He wrung the hand of the Cuban warmly, and departed.

* * * * *

It was an afternoon in May. Everything without was smiling and at rest, but Mrs. Trevlyn was cross and out of humor. Perhaps any lady will say that she had sufficient reason. Everything had gone wrong. The cook was sick, and the dinner a failure; her dressmaker had disappointed her in not finishing her dress for the great ball at Mrs. Fitz Noodle's, that evening; and Annie, her maid, was down with one of her nervous headaches, and she would be obliged to send for a hair-dresser.

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Louis Castrani was a guest in the house, by Archer's invitation—for the two gentlemen had become friends, warmly and deeply attached to each other, and Mrs. Trevlyn could not help fretting over the unfortunate condition of her *cuisine*.

She was looking very cross, as she sat in the back parlor, adjoining the tasteful little morning-room, where she spent most of her time, and where the gentlemen were in the habit of taking their books and newspapers when they desired it quiet. If she had known that Mr. Castrani was at that moment lying on the lounge in the morning-room, the door of which was slightly ajar, she might have dismissed that unbecoming frown, and put her troubles aside. Mr. Trevlyn entered, just as she had for the twentieth time that day arrived at the conclusion that she was the most sorely afflicted woman in the world, and his first words did not tend to give her any consolation.

"I am very sorry, Mrs. Trevlyn, that I am to be deprived of the privilege of attending the ball to-night. It is particularly annoying."

"What do you mean, Mr. Trevlyn?"

"I am obliged to go to Philadelphia on important business, and must leave in this evening's train. I did not know of the necessity until a few hours ago."

Mrs. Trevlyn was just in the state to be wrought upon by trifles.

"Always business," she exclaimed, pettishly. "I am sick of the word."

"Business before pleasure, Mrs. Trevlyn. But, really this is an important affair. It is connected with the house of Renshaw and Selwyn, which went under last week. The firm were under large obligations to—"

"Don't talk business to me, Mr. Trevlyn. I do not understand such things—neither do I desire to. I only hope it *is* business you are going for!"

Mr. Trevlyn looked at her in some surprise.

"You only hope it *is* business?" he said, inquiringly. "I do not comprehend."

"I might have said that I hoped it was not a woman who called you from your wife!"

The moment the words were spoken she repented their utterance, but the mischief was already done.

"Mrs. Trevlyn, I shall request you to unsay the insinuation conveyed in your words. They are unworthy of you and a shame to me."

"And I shall decline to unsay them. I dare affirm they are true enough."

“What do you mean, madam? I am, I trust, a man of honor. You are my wife, and I am true to you. I have never loved but one woman, and she is dead to me.”

The allusion to the old love was extremely unfortunate just at this time, for Mrs. Trevlyn was just sore enough to be deeply wounded by it, and angry enough to throw back taunt for taunt.

“A man of honor!” she ejaculated, scornfully. “Honor, forsooth! Archer Trevlyn, do you call yourself that?”

“I do; and I defy any man living to prove the contrary!” answered Archer, proudly.

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“You defy any *man*! Do you, also, defy any woman? Tell me, if you can, whose glove this is?” And she pulled from her bosom the blood-stained glove, and held it up before him.

He looked at it, flushed crimson, and trembled perceptibly. She laughed scornfully.

“Archer Trevlyn, your guilt is known to me! It has been known to me ever since the fatal night on which Paul Linnere met his death. I was there that night, by the lonely graveyard. I saw you kiss *her* hand! I heard the dreadful blow, listened to the smothered groan, and saw through the gloom the guilty murderer as he fled from the scene of crime! When the victim was discovered, I went first, because I feared he might have left behind him something that might fix his identity—and so he had. This glove I found lying upon the ground, by the side of the wretched victim—marked with the name of the murderer-stained with the blood of the murdered! I hid it away; I would have died sooner than it should have been torn from me, because I was foolish enough to love this man, whose hand was red with murder! Archer Trevlyn, you took the life of Paul Linnere, and thus removed the last obstacle that stood between you and Margaret Harrison!”

Trevlyn’s face had grown white as death while she had been speaking, but it was more like the white heat of passion, than like the pallor of detected guilt. His rigid lips were stern and pale; his dark eyes fairly shot lightnings. He looked at his wife, as though he would read her very soul.

“Alexandrine!” he said, hoarsely, “you believed this of me? You deemed me guilty of the crime of murder, and yet you married me?”

“Yes, I married you. I was not so conscientious as your saintly Margaret. She would not marry a man who had shed blood—even though he had done it for love of her!”

Trevlyn caught her arm fiercely.

“Madam, do you mean to say that this shameful story ever came to the ears of Margie Harrison?”

“Yes, she knew it. I told it to her myself! Kill me, if you like,” she added, seeing his fearful face; “it will not be your first crime!”

He forced himself to be calm.

“When did you make this revelation to Margaret?”

“The night before she left New York—the night she was to have gone to the opera with you. I deemed it my duty. I did not do it to separate you, though I am willing to confess

that I desired you to be separated. I knew that Margaret would sooner die than marry you, if the knowledge of your crime was possessed by her.”

“And she—Margaret—believed me guilty?”

“Why should she not? Any jury of twelve impartial men would have committed you on the evidence I could have brought. You were in love with Miss Harrison. She was under a solemn obligation to marry Mr. Linmere—yet she loved you. Nothing save his death could release her. You were, then, at night in a lonely graveyard, where none of your kin were slumbering. There, at that hour, the murder was done, and after its commission, you stole forth silently, guiltily. By the side of the murdered man, was found your glove, stained with his blood; and a little way from his dead body, a handkerchief, bearing the single initial ‘A.’ Whose name commences with that letter? Could anything be clearer or more conclusive?”

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"And you believe me guilty?"

"I do."

He took a step toward her. She never forgot the dreadful look upon his face.

"I scorn to make any explanation. I might, perhaps, clear myself of this foul accusation, but I will make no effort to do so. But not another day will I live beneath the same roof with the woman who believed me guilty of murder, and yet sunk herself so low as to become my wife!"

"As you please," she said, defiantly. "I should be quite as happy were it so."

He bowed coldly, courteously—went out, and closed the door behind him. The sound struck to the heart of his wife like a knell. She staggered back, and fell upon a chair.

Had she been mad? She had wounded and angered him, beyond all hope of pardon—him, whom in spite of everything, she held more precious than the whole world! She had lost his respect—lost forever all chance of winning his love. And she *had* eagerly cherished the sweet hope that some time he might forget the old dream, and turn to the new reality. But it was past!

She went up to her chamber, and locking the door, threw herself, dressed as she was, on the bed. How long must this continue? How long would he remain away? His business would not, probably, keep him more than a few days, and then, surely, he would return. And she would throw herself at his feet, acknowledge her fault, and plead—yes, beg for his forgiveness. Anything, only to have peace between them once more!

She could not write to him, for he had not left his address. The next morning, she went down to the store, but they knew nothing of his destination, or his probable time of absence. So all she could do was to return home and wait.

A week passed—ten days—and still he did not return, and no tidings of him had reached his agonized wife.

PART IV.

Louis Castrani received, one day, an urgent summons to Boston. It was the very day following that on which he had been an unwilling listener to the difficulty between Mr. and Mrs. Trevlyn. He knew from whom the summons came. Once before he had been suddenly called in like manner.

A wretched woman she was now—but once the belle and beauty of the fair Cuban town where Castrani's childhood and youth had been spent. She had been a beautiful

orphan, adopted by his parents, and brought up almost as his sister. Perhaps, in those days, when they played together under the soft Southern skies, he knew no difference.

Now she was dying. So said the message. Dying, and burdened with a secret which she could confess to no ears save his. Before, when he had gone to her, she had rallied after his arrival, and had declined making confession. She should never speak of it, she said, until her death was sure. But when she felt dissolution drawing nigh, she should send for him again. And the summons had come. He obeyed it in haste, and one night just before sunset, he stood by her bedside.

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Once, she had been beautiful, with such beauty as a pure complexion, black eyes, raven hair and perfect features confer; but now she was a wreck. The pure, transparent complexion was pale as marble—the brilliant eyes sunken—the magnificent hair bleached white as the wintry snow.

She welcomed him brokenly, her eyes lighting up with the pleasure of seeing him—and then the light faded away, leaving her even more ghastly than before.

“They tell me I am dying,” she said, hoarsely. “Do you think so?”

He smoothed back the hair on the forehead—damp already with the dews of death. His look assured her better than the words he could not bring himself to speak.

“My poor Arabel!”

“Arabel! Who calls me Arabel?” she asked, dreamily. “I have not heard that name since *he* spoke it! What a sweet voice he had! O, so sweet!—but falser than Satan! O Louis, Louis! if we could go back to the old days among the orange groves, before I sinned—when we were innocent little children!”

“It is all over now, Arabel. You were tempted; but God is good to forgive, if repentance is sincere.”

“O, I *have* repented! I have, indeed! And I have prayed as well as I knew how. But my crimes are so fearful! You are sure that Christ is very merciful?”

“Very merciful, Arabel.”

“More merciful, more gentle and loving than our best friends, Louis?”

“He forgave those who crucified Him.”

“O, if I could only trust Him—if I only could!”

She clasped her hands, and her pale lips moved in prayer, though there was no audible word.

“Let me hold your hand, Louis. It gives me strength. And you were always a friend so true and steadfast. How happy we were in those dear old days—you, and Inez, and I! Ah, Inez—Inez! She died in her sweet innocence, loving and beloved—died by violence; but she never lived to suffer from the falsity of those she loved! Well, she is in paradise—God rest her!”

The dark eyes of Castrani grew moist. There arose before him a picture of the fair young girl he had loved—the gentle-eyed Inez—the confiding young thing he was to

have married, had not the hand of a cruel jealousy cut short her brief existence. Arabel saw his emotion, and pressed his hand in hers, so cold and icy.

“You have suffered also, Louis, but not as I have suffered—O, no! O, the days before *he* came—*he*, the destroyer! What a handsome face he had, and how he flattered me! Flattered my foolish pride, until, deserting home and friends, I fled with him across the seas! To Paris—beautiful, frivolous, crime-imbued Paris. I am so faint and tired, Louis! Give me a drink, from the wineglass.”

He put it to her lips; she swallowed greedily, and resumed:

“I have written out my history fully. Why, I hardly know, for there are none but you, Louis, who will feel an interest in the poor outcast. But something has impelled me to write it, and when I am dead, you will find it there in that desk, sealed and directed to yourself. Maybe you will never open it, for if my strength does not desert me, I shall tell you all that you will care to know, with my own lips. I want to watch your face, as I go on, and see if you condemn me. You are sure God is more merciful than man?”

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"In His word it is written, Arabel."

She kissed an ivory cross lying on her bosom, and proceeded with evident difficulty.

"Well, I fled with Paul Linmere. For a time I was very happy. He was kind to me, and I loved him so! We lived in a little vine-wreathed cottage, on the banks of the Seine, and I had my tiny flower-garden, my books, my birds, my faithful dog Leo—and Paul! Every pleasant night he used to take me out on the river in the little boat which bore my name on its side. O, those nights of perfect peace! The stars shone so softly, and the moon beamed with a mellow light peculiar to Southern moons. Those seasons of delight are a sweet dream in my memory. They seemed stolen from paradise—they were so perfect. I lived in a sort of blissful waking trance, that left me nothing to desire, nothing to ask for. Fool that I was! I thought it was to last always. A little more cordial, Louis; it will keep the spark of life alive, perhaps, until I have finished."

"Do not exert yourself, Arabel," he said, pityingly; "I do not wish you to."

"I shall die easier. Let me go on. After a while, Paul wearied of me. Perhaps I was too lavish of my caresses and words of love; it might tire him to be loved so intensely. But such was my nature. He grew cold and distant; at times positively ill-natured. Once he struck me; but I forgave him the blow, because he had taken too much wine. At length, it became known to me that I was about to become a mother, and I besought him to give me a right to his name. I could bear the shame for myself, but my child must not be born to curse the author of its being. He laughed me to scorn, and called me by a foul name that I cannot repeat. But I bore it all, for the sake of my unborn child, and on my knees I begged and prayed of him to legalize our union by right of marriage. After the first, he made me no reply, but subsided into a sullen silence, which I could not make him break. That night he asked me to go out boating with him. I prepared myself with alacrity, for I thought he was getting pleased with me, and perhaps would comply with my request. Are you weary of my story, Louis?"

"No, no. Go on. I am listening to you, Arabel."

"It was a lovely night. The stars gleamed like drops of molten gold, and the moon looked down, pure, and serene, and holy. Paul was unusually silent, and I was quiet, waiting for him to speak. Suddenly, when we reached the middle of the river, he dropped the oars, and we drifted with the current. He sprang up, his motion nearly capsizing the frail boat, and taking a step toward me, fastened a rough hand upon my shoulders. 'Arabel,' he said, hoarsely, 'your power over me is among the things of the past. Once, I thought I loved you, but it was merely a passion which soon burned itself out. After that, I grew to hate you; but, because I had taken you away from home and friends, I tried to treat you civilly. Your caresses disgusted

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me. I would gladly have cast you off long ago, if I had had but the shadow of a pretext. I am to be married to a beautiful woman in America, before many months shall elapse—a woman with a name and a fortune which will help me pay those cursed debts that are dragging me down like a millstone. For you I have no further use. You complain that our unborn child will be disgraced, unless I go through the mockery of marriage with you. There is no disgrace in the grave—and I consign you to its dreamless sleep!’ The next moment the boat was capsized, and I was floating in the water. I cried aloud his name, beseeching him to save me, and got only his mocking laugh in return, as he struck out for the shore. I could not swim, and I felt myself sinking down—down to unfathomable depths. I felt cold as ice; there was a deafening roar in my ears, and I knew no more.”

“My poor Arabel, I could curse the villain who did this cowardly thing, but he is dead, and in the hands of God.”

“When I woke to consciousness, I was lying in a rude cottage, and two persons, unknown to me—a man and a woman—were bending over me, applying hot flannels to my numbed limbs, and restoratives to my lips. Before morning my child was born; but it never opened its eyes on this world. Death took it away. I had some articles of jewelry on my person, of some considerable value, and with these I bribed the persons who had taken me from the river to cause Mr. Linmere to believe that I had died. They were rough people, but they were kind-hearted, and I owe them a large debt of gratitude for their thoughtful care of me. But for it, I should have died in reality. As soon as I was able to bear the journey, I left France. Linmere had already closed the cottage and gone away—none knew whither; but I was satisfied he had departed for the United States. I left France with no feeling of regret, save for Leo, my faithful hound. I have shed many bitter tears, when pondering over the probable fate of my poor dog.”

“Be easy on that subject, Arabel. I saw the hound but a few weeks ago. He is the property of a lady who loves him—the woman Paul Linmere was to have married, if he had lived.”

“I am glad. You may laugh at me, Louis, but the uncertain fate of Leo has given me great unhappiness. But to continue—I engaged myself as nursemaid with an English family, who had been traveling on the continent, and were about returning home. I remained with them until I had accumulated sufficient funds to defray my expenses across the Atlantic, and then I set out on my journey. I came to New York, for that had been Mr. Linmere’s home before we went to France. I soon got upon the track of him, and learned that he was about to be married to a Miss Margaret Harrison, a young lady of great beauty, and with a large fortune. I wanted to see her; for you must know that I had registered a fearful vow of vengeance on Mr. Paul Linmere, and I desired to judge

for myself if it would fall heavily on the woman he was going to marry. For even violently as I had loved him I now hated him.

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"I saw Miss Harrison. I accosted her in the street, one day, as any common beggar would have done, telling her a pitiful story of my poverty. She smiled on me, spoke a few words of comfort, and laid a piece of gold in my hand. Her sweet face charmed me. I set myself to find out if she cared for the man she was to marry. It had all been arranged by her father, years before, I understood, and I felt that her heart was not interested.

"After learning that, nothing could have saved Paul Linmere. His fate was decided. Twice I waylaid him in the streets, and showed him my pale face, which was not unlike the face of the dead. And as he believed that I was drowned, the sight of me filled him with the most abject terror. How I enjoyed the poor wretch's cowardly horror!

"The night that he was to be married, I lay in wait for him at the place where the brook crossed the highway. I had learned that he was to walk up alone from the depot, to the house of his expectant bride, and there I resolved to avenge my wrongs. I stepped before him as he came, laid my cold hand on his arm, and bade him follow me. He obeyed, in the most abject submission. He seemed to have no will of his own, but yielded himself entirely to me. He shook like one with the ague, and his footsteps faltered so that at times I had to drag him along. I took him to the lonely graveyard, where sleep the Harrison dead, and—" She covered her face with her hands and lapsed into silence.

"Well, Arabel, and then?" asked Castrani, fearfully absorbed in the strange narrative, feeling, as he listened, that the fate of Archer Trevlyn hung on the next words the wretched woman might speak.

"I dropped the hood from my face and confronted him. I had no pity. My heart was like stone. I remembered all my wrongs; I said to myself this was the man who had made my life a shipwreck, and had sent my soul to perdition. He stood still, frozen to the spot, gazing into my face with eyes that gleamed through the gloom like lurid fire. 'I am Arabel Vere, whom you thought you murdered!' I hissed in his ear. 'The river could not hold my secret! And thus I avenge myself for all my wrongs!'

"I struck one blow; he fell to the ground with a gurgling groan. I knew that I had killed him, and I felt no remorse at the thought. It seemed a very pleasant thing to contemplate. I stooped over him, to assure myself that he was dead, and touched his forehead. It was growing cold. It struck me through and through with a chill of unutterable horror. I fled, like one mad, from the place. I entered a train of cars, which were just going down to the city, and in the morning I left New York and came here. I fell sick. The terrible excitement had been too much for me, and for weeks I lay in a stupor which was the twin-sister of death. But a strong constitution triumphed, and I came slowly back to health. I had some money on my person at the time I was taken ill, and happening to fall into the hands of a kind-hearted Irish woman, at whose door I had asked for a glass of water, I was nursed with the care that saved my life.

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"But I have never seen a moment of happiness since. Remorse has preyed on me like a worm, and once before this I have been brought face to face with death. Now I am going where I sent him! God be merciful!"

"Amen!" responded Louis, fervently.

It was very still in the room. Castrani sat by the bedside, waiting for her to speak. She was silent so long he thought she slept, and stooped over to ascertain. Yes, she did sleep. In this world she would never waken more!

* * * * *

Castrani remained in Boston, and saw the remains of the unfortunate Arabel Vere consigned to decent burial, and, that duty accomplished, he took the first train for Lightfield. He had in his possession a document which would clear Archer Trevlyn from the foul crime of which he stood convicted in the mind of Margaret Harrison, and, aside from his desire to see justice rendered the man whom he had grown to consider a very dear friend, Castrani felt that it would make Margaret happier to know that the one she had loved and trusted so entirely once, was innocent of the crime imputed to him.

It was sunset when he reached the dwelling of Nurse Day. Margaret was sitting on the veranda, with Leo by her side. The hound ran down to the gate, to give the visitor a joyful greeting, and Margaret descended the steps and held out her hand. She was very kind, almost cordial, for she respected Castrani with her whole heart, and she was pleased to see him.

"I am very glad to see you, Mr. Castrani," she remarked, leading him into the sitting-room; "and so, also, will be Nurse Day, when she returns. She has gone to a prayer-meeting, now. And I am especially pleased to see you just at this time, because I am thinking of returning to New York, and I hope to persuade you to give me your escort, if it will not be asking too much."

"To New York? Indeed that is delightful intelligence for the five hundred dear friends who have deplored your absence so long! I had feared sometimes, that you intended to remain here always."

"I almost wish I could—life has been so peaceful here. But I must go back sooner or later, as well now as at any time. I think I am strong enough to bear it," she added, sadly.

"Miss Harrison, I want to tell you a story."

She drew back from the hand he laid on hers, and her air became cold and repelling. He divined her fears, and smiled a melancholy smile.

“No, not that. Do not fear. I shall never again trouble you with the story of my unfortunate passion. I must go through life without the blessing that would have made this world a paradise. It is not that of which I speak, and you need have no apprehension for the future. God helping me, I will never say to you a single word that a brother might not say to a dearly-beloved sister.”

She put her hand into his.

“I wish I could love you, Louis Castrani,” she said, solemnly. “You deserve my heart’s best affections; but for me love is over! I have had my day, and it is set. But you shall be my brother my dear, kind brother, Louis! Oh, it is sweet to know that in this false world there is one heart loyal and true!”

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"Margaret, there is more than one true heart in the world, as you will acknowledge, when I have told you my little story. You know, now, why you discarded Archer Trevlyn. You thought him guilty of the murder of Paul Linmere!"

A ghastly pallor overspread her face; she caught her breath in gasps, and clutched frantically the arm of Castrani.

"Hush!" she said. "Do not say those dreadful words aloud; the very walls have ears sometimes! Remember their utterance puts the life of a fellow mortal in peril!"

"Have no fear; I am going to right the wrong."

"Leave this punishment to God. It would kill me to see him brought before a hissing crowd to be tried for his life. Oh, Mr. Castrani, I implore you—"

"Calm yourself, my child. I shall never knowingly injure Mr. Trevlyn. He deserves no punishment for a sin he never committed. He is guiltless of *that deed* as you are yourself!"

"Guiltless—Archer guiltless!" she cried, her face wearing the pitiful, strained look of agonized suspense. "I do not quite comprehend. Say it again—oh, say it again!"

"Margaret, Archer Trevlyn never lifted a hand against Paul Linmere—never! He is innocent before God and the angels!"

She dropped her head upon her hands, and burst into tears—the first she had shed since that terrible night when that blasted revelation had, as she thought, sealed up the fountain of tears forever. Castrani did not seek to sooth her; he judged rightly that she would be better for this abandonment to a woman's legitimate source of relief. She lifted her wet face at last—but what a change was there! The transparent paleness had given place to the sweet wild rose color which had once made Margie so very lovely, and the sad eyes were brilliant as stars, through the mist of tears.

"I believe it—yes, I believe it?" she said, softly,—reverently. "I thank God for giving me the assurance. You tell me so. You would not, unless it were true!"

"No, Margaret; I would not," replied Castrani, strongly affected. "Heaven forbid that I should raise hopes which I cannot verify. When you are calm enough to understand, I will explain it fully."

"I am calm now. Go on."

"I must trouble you with a little, only a little, of my own private history, in order that you may understand what follows. I am, as you know, a Cuban by birth, but my father, only, was Spanish. My mother was a native of Boston, who married my father for love, and



went with him to his Southern home. I was an only child, and when I was about twelve years of age, my parents adopted a girl, some four years my junior. She was the orphan child of poor parents, and was possessed of wonderful beauty and intelligence. Together we grew up and no brother and sister loved each other more fully than we. It was only a brotherly and sisterly love—for I was engaged, at sixteen, to Inez de Nuncio, a lovely young Spanish

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girl, who was cruelly taken away from me by the hand of violence, as you know. Arabel grew to girlhood, lovely as a houri. Lovely, however, is not the right word; she was royally magnificent. I have seen many elegant women, but never one who for stately grace and beauty would compare with her. She had many suitors, but she favored none, until he came—Paul Linmere, the fiend and destroyer! Ill health had driven him to Cuba, to try the effect of our southern air, and soon after his arrival, he became acquainted with Arabel. He was very handsome and fascinating, and much sought after by the fair ladies of my native town. Arabel was vain, and his devoted attentions flattered her, while his handsome face and fascinating address won her love. She was a passionate child of the South, uncalculating as a babe where her affections were concerned; and before my parents had begun to ascertain any danger from Linmere's society, she had left everything, and fled with him.

"My mother was plunged in grief, for she had loved Arabel like an own child; and the uncertainty of her fate, I think, hastened my mother's death. My father left no means untried to discover the whereabouts of the erring girl—but in vain. For years her fate was shrouded in mystery. My parents died. Inez was taken from me, and weary and heartsick, I came to New York, hoping to find some distraction in new scenes, and among a new people.

"The day before you left New York, I received a message from Arabel Vere. She was in Boston ill unto death. She wanted to see me once more; and she had a sin upon her conscience, which she must confess before she died; and she must confess it to no person but myself. In obedience to this summons, I hurried to Boston, and the same train that carried me, carried you, also.

"I found Arabel but a mere wreck of her former self. Her countenance told me how fearfully she had suffered. She was very ill, in a wretched room, with no attendants or medical aid. I had her immediately removed to lodgings suitable for her, and provided a nurse and a physician. From that time she began to mend, and in a couple of days the physician pronounced her out of immediate danger. When she knew her life was to be prolonged, she refused to make the confession she had summoned me to hear. So long as there was any prospect of her recovery, she said, she must keep the matter a secret. But she could not die and leave it untold. Therefore she promised that whenever she should feel death approaching she should send again for me, and relieve her soul by the confession of her sin. A few days ago came her second summons.

"Previous to this only a little while, I had been inadvertently a listener to an altercation between Archer Trevlyn and his wife, during which Mrs. Trevlyn, in a fit of rage, denounced her husband as the murderer of Paul Linmere. She produced proofs, which I confess struck me as strangely, satisfactory, and affirmed her belief in his guilt. She

also told him that because the knowledge of his crime had come to you, you had discarded him, and left New York, to be rid of him forever!

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“So knowing this, when I listened to the dying confession of Arabel Vere, I knew that this confession would clear Archer Trevlyn from all shadow of suspicion. Arabel died, and I buried her. Previous to her death—perhaps, to guard against accident, perhaps, guided by the hand of a mysterious Providence to clear the fair fame of an injured man—she wrote out at length the history of her life. She gave it to me. I have it here. It will explain to you all that you will desire to know.”

He gave her the manuscript, wrung her hand, and left her.

* * * * *

Far into the night, Margie sat reading the closely-written sheets, penned by the hand now pulseless in death. All was made clear; Archer Trevlyn was fully exculpated. He was innocent of the crime which she had been influenced to believe he had committed. She fell on her knees, and thanked God for that. Though lost to her, it was a consolation ineffable to know that he had not taken the life of a fellow-mortal.

Her resolution was taken before morning. She had deeply wronged Archer Trevlyn, and she must go to him with a full confession, confess her fault, and plead for his forgiveness.

Castrani, who came in the morning, approved her decision; and Nurse Day, who was told the whole story, and listened with moist eyes, agreed with them both. So it happened that on the ensuing morning Margie bade farewell to the quiet home which had sheltered her through her bitterest sorrow, and accompanied by Castrani, set forth for New York.

She went to her own home first. Her aunt was in the country, but the servants gave her a warm welcome, and after resting for an hour, she took her way to the residence of Archer Trevlyn, but a few squares distant.

A strange silence seemed to hang over the palatial mansion. The blinds were closed—there was no sign of life about the premises. A thrill of unexplained dread ran through her frame as she touched the silver-handled bell. The servant who answered her summons seemed to partake of the strange, solemn quiet pervading everything.

“Is Mr. Trevlyn in?” she asked, trembling in spite of herself.

“I believe Mr. Trevlyn has left the country, madam.”

“Left the country? When did he go?”

“Some days ago.”



Margie leaned against the carved marble vase which flanked the massive doorway, unconsciously crushing the crimson petals of the trumpet-flower which grew therein. What should she do? She could write to him. His wife would know his address. She caught at the idea.

“Mrs. Trevlyn—take me to her! She was an old friend of mine.”

The man looked at her curiously, hesitated a moment, and motioning her to enter, indicated the closed door of the parlor.

“You can go in, I presume, as you are a friend of the family.”

A feeling of solemnity, which was almost awe, stole over Margie as she turned the handle of the door, and stepped inside the parlor. It was shrouded in the gloom of almost utter darkness. The heavy silken curtains fell drooping with their costliness to the velvet carpet, and a faint, sickening odor of withering water lilies pervaded the close atmosphere. Water lilies!—they were Alexandrine’s favorite flowers.

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Margie stopped by the door until her eyes became accustomed to the gloom, and then she saw that the centre of the room was occupied by a table, on which lay some rigid object—strangely long, and still, and angular—covered with a drapery of black velvet, looped up by dying water lilies.

Still controlled by that feeling of strange awe, Margie stole along to the table and lifted the massive cover. She saw beneath it the pale, dead face of Alexandrine Trevlyn. She dropped the pall, uttered a cry of horror, and sank upon a chair. The door unclosed noiselessly, and Mrs. Lee, the mother of the dead woman, came in.

“Oh, Margie! Margie!” she cried, “pity me! My heart is broken! My darling! My only child is taken from me!”

It was long before she grew composed enough to give any explanation of the tragedy—for tragedy Margie felt sure it was.

The story can be told in a few brief words. Alexandrine and her husband had had some difficulty. Mrs. Lee could not tell in relation to what, but she knew that Alexandrine blamed herself for the part she had taken. Mr. Trevlyn left her in anger, to go to Philadelphia on business. He was expected to be absent about four days. Meanwhile, his wife suffered agonies of remorse, and counted the hours until his return should give her the privilege of throwing herself at his feet and begging his forgiveness.

But he did not return. A week, ten days passed, and still no tidings. Alexandrine was almost frantic. On the eleventh day came a telegraph despatch, brief and cruel, as those heartless things invariably are, informing her that Mr. Trevlyn had closed his business in Philadelphia, and was on the eve of leaving the country for an indefinite period. His destination was not mentioned, and his unhappy wife, feeling that if he left Philadelphia without her seeing him, all trace of him would be lost, hurried to the depot and set out for that city.

There had been an accident about half way between New York and Philadelphia, and Alexandrine Trevlyn had been brought back to her splendid home—a corpse! That was all.

Archer Trevlyn had left behind him no clue by which he might be reached or communicated with, and his wife, unforgiven, must be consigned to the tomb, without a single tear upon her face from the eyes of him she had loved so fondly.

They buried her at Greenwood, and the grass and flowers bloomed over her grave. She passed out of memory, and was forgotten, like a perished leaf, or a beautiful sunset fading out with the night.

* * * * *

The summer days fled on, and brought the autumn mellowness and splendor. Margie, outwardly calm and quiet, lived at Harrison Park with her staid maiden aunt.

A year passed away thus monotonously, then another, and no tidings ever came of Archer Trevlyn. Margie thought of him now as we think of one long dead, with tender regret, and love almost reverent. He was dead to her, she said, but it was no sin to cherish his memory.

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In the third year Margie's aunt married. It was quite a little romance. An old lover, discarded years before in a fit of girlish obstinacy, came back, after weary wanderings in search of happiness, and seeking out the love of other days, wooed and won her over again.

There was a quiet wedding, and then the happy pair decided on a trip to Europe. And, of course, Margie must accompany them. At first she demurred; she took so little pleasure in anything, she feared her presence might mar their happiness, and she dreaded to leave the place where she had passed so many delightful hours with him. But her aunt and Doctor Elbert refused to give her up, and so, one beautiful September morning, they sailed for Liverpool in the good ship Colossus.

For many days the voyage was prosperous, but in mid-ocean they fell upon stormy weather, and the ship was tossed about at the winds and waters. It was a terrible storm, and great apprehensions were entertained that the vessel might founder, but she would doubtless have weathered the blast in safety, if she had not sprung a leak.

The fearful intelligence was announced just at the closing in of a dark dismal night, and every heart sank, and every face was shrouded in gloom. Only for a moment! The men sprang to the pumps and worked with a will—as men will work for their lives—but their efforts were vain. The water increased in the hold, and it soon became evident that the Colossus would hardly keep afloat until morning.

But Providence was pleased to snatch those human lives from the destruction which seemed inevitable, and just when they were most helpless, most despairing, the lights of a strange ship were seen. They succeeded in making their desperate condition known, and by day-dawn all were safe on board the steamer; for the stranger proved to be a steamer on her way from Liverpool to New York.

The decks were crowded; Doctor Elbert was looking after his wife, and Margie, clinging to a rope, stood frightened and alone. Some one came to her, said a few words which the tempest made inaudible, and carried her below. The light of the cabin lamps fell full on his face. She uttered a cry, for in that moment she recognized Archer Trevlyn.

"Margie Harrison!" he cried, his fingers closing tightly over hers. "Margie! Mine! Mine at last! The ocean has given you up to me!"

"O Archer! where have you been? It has been so weary! And I have wanted to see you so much—that I might tell you how I had wronged you—that I might ask you to forgive me. Will you pardon me for believing that you could ever be guilty of that man's death? If you knew—if you knew how artfully it was represented to me—what overwhelming proofs were presented, you would not wonder—"

“I do know all, Margie; Alexandrine told me. My poor wife! God rest her. She believed me guilty, and yet her fatal love for me overlooked the crime. She deceived me in many things, but she is dead, and I will not be unforgiving. She poisoned my mind with suspicions of you and Louis Castrani, and I was fool enough to credit her insinuations. Margie, I want you to pardon me.”

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"I do, freely. Castrani is a noble soul. I love him as I would a brother."

"Continue to do so, Margie. He deserves it, I think. The night I left home, Alexandrine revealed to me the cause of your sudden rejection of me. We quarrelled terribly. I remember it with bitter remorse. We parted in anger, Margie, and she died without my forgiveness and blessing. It was very hard, but perhaps, at the last, she did not suffer. I will believe so."

"If she sinned, it was through love of you, Archer, and that should make you very forgiving toward her."

"I have forgiven her long ago. I know the proofs were strong against me. I am not sure but that they were sufficient to have convicted me of murder in a court of law. You were conscious of my presence that night in the graveyard, Margie?"

"Yes. I thought it was you. I knew no other man's presence had the power to thrill and impress me as yours did."

"I meant to impress you, Margaret. I brought all the strength of my will to bear on that object. I said to myself, she shall know that I am near her, and yet my visible presence shall not be revealed to her. And now, can you guess why I was there?"

"Hardly."

"Love ought to tell you."

"It might tell me wrong."

"No, Margie. Never! You know that I have loved you from the moment I saw you first, and though for a long, long time I never dared to think you would ever be to me anything more than a bright, beautiful vision, to be worshipped afar off, yet it agonized me to think of giving you up to another. For after that it would be a sin to love you. When I heard you were to marry that man, I cannot tell you how I suffered. I set myself to ascertain if you cared for him. And I was satisfied beyond a doubt that you did not."

"You were correct. I did not."

"He was a villain of the deepest dye, Margie. I do not know as Arabel Vere sinned in ridding the earth of him. When I think that but for her crime you would now have been his wife, I am not sure that she was not the instrument of a justly incensed Providence to work out the decrees of the destiny."

"O, Archer! It was dreadful for him to die as he did. But what a life of misery it saved me from! I will not think of it. I leave it all."

“It is best to do so. But to explain my presence at Harrison Park that night. I went there hoping to catch a glimpse of you. I wanted to see you once more before you were lost to me forever. I did not desire to speak to you; I did not desire to disturb you in any way; but I wanted to see you before that man had a legal claim on you. I watched your windows closely. I had found out which was your window from one of the servants, and I watched its light which burned through the dusky twilight like the evening star. I wonder if you had a thought for me, that night, Margie—your wedding night?”

“I did think of you—” she blushed, and hid her face on his shoulder—“I did think of you. I longed inexpressibly to fly to your side and be forever at rest!”

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"My darling!" he kissed her fondly, and went on: "I saw you leave your room by the window and come down the garden path. I had felt that you would come. I was not surprised that you did. I had expected it. I followed you silently, saw you kneel by the grave of your parents, heard you call out upon your father for pity. O, how I loved and pitied you, Margie—but my tongue was tied—I had no right to speak—but I did kiss your hand. Did you know it Margie?"

"Yes."

"You recognized me, then? I meant you should. After that I hurried away. I was afraid to trust myself near you longer, lest I might be tempted to what I might repent. I fled away from the place and knew nothing of the fearful deed done there until the papers announced it the next day."

"And I suspected you of the crime! O, Archer! Archer! how could I ever have been so blind? How can you ever forgive me?"

"I want forgiveness, Margie. I doubted you. I thought you were false to me, and had fled with Castrani. That unfortunate glove confirmed you, I suppose. I dropped it in my haste to escape without your observation, and afterward I expected to hear of it in connection with the finding of Linmere's body. I never knew what became of it until my wife displayed it, that day when she taunted me with my crime. Poor Alexandrine! She had the misfortune to love me, and after your renunciation and your departure from New York—in those days when I deemed you false as fair—I offered her my hand. I thought perhaps she might be happier as my wife, and I felt that I owed her something for her devoted love. I tried to do my duty by her, but a man never can do that by his wife, unless he loves her."

"You acted for what you thought was best, Archer."

"I did. Heaven knows I did. She died in coming to me to ask my forgiveness for the taunting words she had spoken at our last parting. I was cruel. I went away from her in pride and anger, and left behind me no means by which she could communicate with me. I deserved to suffer, and I have."

"And I also, Archer."

"My poor Margie! Do you know, dear, that it was the knowledge that you wanted me which was sending me home again? A month ago I saw Louis Castrani in Paris. He told me everything. He was delicate enough about it, darling; you need not blush for fear he might have told me you were grieving for me; but he made me understand that my future might not be so dark as I had begun to regard it. He read to me the dying confession of Arabel Vere, and made clear many things regarding which I had previously been in the dark. Is all peace between us, Margie?"

“All is peace, Archer. And God is very good.”

“He is. I thank Him for it. And now I want to ask one thing more. I am not quite satisfied.”

“Well?”

“Perhaps you will think it ill-timed—now that we are surrounded by strangers, and our very lives perhaps in peril—but I cannot wait. I have spent precious moments enough in waiting. It has been very long, Margie, since I heard you say you loved me, and I want to hear the words again.”

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She looked up at him shyly.

“Archer, how do I know but you have changed?”

“You know I have not. I have loved but one woman—I shall love no other through time and eternity. And now, at last, after all the distress and the sorrow we have passed through, will you give me your promise to meet whatever else fortune and fate may have in store for us, by my side?”

She put her face up to his, and he kissed her lips.

“Yours always, Archer. I have never had one thought for any other.”

So a second time were Archer Trevlyn and Margie Harrison betrothed.

On the ensuing day the storm abated, and the steamer made a swift passage to New York.

Doctor and Mrs. Elbert were a little disappointed at the sudden termination of their bridal tour, but consoled themselves with the thought that they could try it over again in the spring.

Trevlyn remained in the city to adjust some business affairs which had suffered from his long absence, and Margie and her friends went up to her own home. He was to follow them hither on the ensuing day.

And so it happened that once more Margie sat in her old familiar chamber dressing for the coming of Archer Trevlyn. What should she put on? She remembered the rose-colored dress she had laid away that dreadful night so long ago. But now the rose-colored dreams had come back, why not wear the rose-colored dress? She went to the wardrobe where she had locked it away. Some of the servants had found the key out in the grass where she had flung it that night, and fitted it to the lock. She lifted the dress, and the beautiful pearl ornaments, and held them up to the light. The dress was fresh and unfaded, but it was full four years behind the style! Well, what did that matter? She had a fancy for wearing it. She wanted to take up her life just where she had left it when she put off that dress.

To the unbounded horror of Florine, she arrayed herself in the old-fashioned dress, and waited for her lover. And she had not long to wait. She heard his well-remembered step in the hall, and a moment after she was folded in his arms.

* * * * *

At Christmas there was a bridal at Harrison Park. The day was clear and cloudless—the air almost as balmy as the air of spring. Such a Christmas had not been known for years.

The sun shone brightly, and soft winds sighed through the leafless trees. And Margie was married, and not a cloud came between her and the sun.

Peace and content dwelt with Archer Trevlyn and his wife in their beautiful home. Having suffered, they knew better how to be grateful for, and to appreciate the blessings at last bestowed upon them.

At their happy fireside there comes to sit, sometimes, of an evening, a quiet, grave-faced man. A man whom Archer Trevlyn and his wife love as a dear brother, prize above all other earthly friends. And beside Louis Castrani, Leo sits, serene and contemplative, enjoying a green old age in peace and plenty. Castrani will never marry, but sometime in the hereafter, I think he will have his recompense.

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CONSTITUTIONALLY BASHFUL.

I suppose there is no doubt but I was born with bashful tendencies, and “What is bred in the bone, stays long in the flesh,” to use the words of some wise individual, who, like many another great genius, shunned notoriety, and had for his *nom de plume*, Anonymous.

My mother tells me that, when an infant, I had the ridiculous habit of turning over on my face in the cradle, when there was company; and if the visitors happened to be ladies, I turned red in the cheeks, and purple about the eyes, to such an alarming degree as could not fail of exciting wonder and awe in the heart of the most indifferent beholder!

I remember that, when a child of four or five years, I used to take refuge behind the great eight-day clock whenever my mother had callers; and once I came near being frozen to death in the refrigerator, where I had ensconced myself on the appearance of a couple of lady visitors.

Throughout my boyhood it was the same, only decidedly more so. My *debut* at school was like an entrance into the ancient halls of torture.

The austere schoolmaster, with his dread insignia of birchen rod, steel-bowed spectacles, and swallow-tailed coat, was bad enough; the grinning, mischief-loving, and at times, belligerent, boys were worse. But the girls! Heavens! I feared them more than any suspected criminal of old did the Terrible Council of Ten! All on earth they seemed to find to do was to giggle at me! Of course, I was the object of their sport; for they peeped at me over the tops of their books, from behind their pocket-handkerchiefs, through the interstices of their curls—and made me hopelessly wretched by dubbing me “Apron-string.”

The third day of my attendance at school was stormy, and my home being at some distance, I was obliged to remain, with most of the others, through the noon intermission. The little girls got to playing at pawns. I retreated to a corner near the door, and stood a silent and not unterrified spectator.

By-and-by, a cherry-lipped little girl had to pay a forfeit, and one of her schoolmates pronounced the sentence, in a loud voice:

“Kiss Apron-string Sunderland!”

That meant me. There was a wild scream of laughter, in which all joined, and I took ingloriously to flight, with little Cherry-lips close at my heels. I strained every nerve and sinew—it was a matter of life and death to me—and I have no doubt but I should have won the race in fine style, if I had not, unfortunately, in my blind haste, run against Miss Patty Hanson, the primest and worst tempered spinster in Hallswell.



My *momentum* was such that I knocked Miss Patty from *terra firma*, very much as the successful ball knocks down the nine-pins; and the *debris* of the wreck—consisting of a fractured umbrella, a torn calico gown, and a fearfully dislocated bonnet—Miss Hanson rose up—a Nemesis! And such a thrashing as I received, at her hand, would have made the blackest villain out of purgatory confess his sins without prevarication!

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I had heard my mother say that no one died till their time had come, and I felt satisfied that my time *had* come. I vainly endeavored to repeat,

“Now I lay me down to sleep!”

as both fitting and appropriate to the occasion; but Miss Patty thumped the words out of me, to the tune of the Umbrella Quickstep, in staccato.

Little Cherry-lips came nobly to the rescue.

“For shame! Miss Hanson,” she cried, “to beat a little boy at such a rate! It won’t mend your umbrella, nor straighten your calash! And the perspiration is washing the paint all out of your cheeks!”

My enemy left me to fly at my defender, whose name was Florence Hay. But Florence was a little too agile for the old lady, whom she speedily distanced, while I made good my escape into the sheltering foliage of an apple-tree, where, securely perched on a strong limb, I remained until school was out, and the girls had all gone home.

After a time, at my urgent entreaties, my parents removed me from the village-school, and placed me at an institute for boys. I had thought, previously to the change, that I should be perfectly happy when it was effected; but I had, somehow, miscalculated. I missed the bewitching faces of the girls I had fled from, and, for the first time in my life, I realized that the world would be a terrible humdrum sort of a place if there were nothing but men here.

To confess the plain truth, I had discovered that, in spite of my bashfulness, I loved every single girl I had ever seen—not even excepting good black Bess in my mother’s kitchen, who concocted such admirable turnovers and seedcakes. But at that time, sooner than have acknowledged such a weakness, I would have been broiled alive.

As I grew toward manhood, my bashfulness got no better. It was confirmed; it had become a chronic disease, as irremediable as the rheumatism, and a thousand times more distressing.

I was frequently invited to quiltings, apple parings, huskings, *etc.*; but I never dared to go, lest I should be expected to have something to say to some of the feminine portion of the company.

If my mother sent me on any errand to a house where there were girls, I used to stand a half hour on the door step, waiting for courage to rap; and if one of the aforesaid girls happened to answer the summons, it was with the greatest difficulty that I could restrain myself from taking refuge in flight. And after I had got in, and made known my business, I knew no more what was told me in return than we know why the comet of last summer had a curved train.

At church, I habitually sat with averted face, and cut my finger nails; in fact I had performed that operation for those digital ornaments so often that there was very little left of them to practice upon. I most devoutly wished that it had been so that folks could have been created with knitting-work, or something of the kind, in their hands—it would have been so nice when one didn't know what to do with his upper extremities.

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As for my feet, though not remarkably large, they were constantly in the way. I have often seen the time when I would have given all the world, had it been mine to give, if I could have taken them off, and consigned them to the obscurity of my pocket.

One eventful day, my mother took it into her head to have a quilting. Early in the afternoon I retired to the garret, as the most isolated spot I could think of, and ensconced myself in bed. All the girls in the neighborhood were invited, and I would sooner have faced a flaming line of armed batteries.

Such a gay, joyous time as they had of it, judging from the sounds of merriment that occasionally floated up to my retreat! I longed to be a witness of the frolic I knew they were enjoying, but I could not summon resolution enough to venture from my concealment; and so I wound the sheets round my head to shut out the gay peals of laughter, and tried to think myself highly satisfied with my achievement. I was comfortable and safe, so far as I knew; but the hours were long ones, and I prayed Time to jog on his team a little faster, if convenient.

By-and-by, the merriment grew louder; there was a pattering of eager feet on the garret stairs, considerable loud whispering in the passage, and an infinite amount of giggling. Good heavens! What were they going to do? I clutched the bed clothes with frantic hands and drew them around my head, to the utter neglect of the rest of my body, probably believing, like the ostrich, that so long as I saw nobody, nobody would see me.

Directly the door was thrown open, and, evidently, there was a consultation on the threshold.

"Go in, Flory!" said the gay voice of Kate Merrick, the pride and tease of the village. "Go in, I say! What on earth are you afraid of? Boy Sunderland won't eat you, if he is a bear!"

"But what will he think?" asked Florence Hay, softly. "He is so bashful! Goodness! Kate, how can I?"

"Nonsense! You must pay the forfeit, or your thimble remains in my possession! I won't be coaxed over, this time!" returned Kate, decisively.

There was a slight scuffle, and then the eager hands of the coterie began to pull away my fortifications. I resisted with the strength of desperation, but I was no match for a dozen frolicsome girls. They unswathed me, and while four of them held my two arms, Florence Hay kissed me. Mahomet! Such a thrill as went through my heart! I devoutly wished that she would repeat the experiment; but, instead of doing so, she scampered from the room, followed by her boisterous companions. Completely overcome, I crept under the bed, where I remained until nightfall sent our merry visitors to their several homes.

Well, the years passed on, and brought my eighteenth birthday. I had lost nothing of my besetting difficulty. My mother was thoroughly mortified by my conduct, and did not hesitate to lecture me soundly on my folly; and my aunt Alice emphatically declared I was the most consummate fool that she had ever seen! I knew it was true; but—so perverse is man—I did not feel at all obliged to her for uttering it.

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One day it rained a little; in fact, it often does so. Florence Hay was returning home from the village just as the shower came up, and, partly out of regard for my mother, with whom she was a great favorite, partly from the fear of ruining her new spring bonnet, she stepped into our house.

My mother was delighted to see her, and made her quite at home directly. It was no new thing for the little maiden to visit my mother; but on such occasions I had always, hitherto, taken flight to the fields or the hay-mow. Now, however, it was raining hard, and I was holding silk for my mother to mind; and a retreat was impossible.

Though in exquisite torture, every moment, lest the pretty visitor should address some question to me, and oblige me to speak, yet I enjoyed being where I could look into her bewitching face immensely. She had such blue eyes! and such cherry lips! And those lips had kissed me! I blushed red-hot to think of it, and my good mother anxiously commented on my high color, saying she was afraid I was going to have the erysipelas. Erysipelas, indeed!

It rained all the afternoon. Florence stayed to tea, and, by the time the meal was over, I had broken two plates, knocked down a saucer, upset the cream pitcher, and nearly cut the end of my thumb off with my knife. Also, the rain had ceased, and it was dark.

Florence declared she could not stop another moment. Her friends would be alarmed about her; she must go at once. My mother urged her to remain all night. But she could not think of it; and, while she was arranging her wraps, my mother beckoned me into the entry.

"Roy," she said, decisively, "Florence should not go home alone!"

"I can't help it!" said I, doggedly. "I guess nothing will devour her on the journey."

"My son!" she exclaimed, with just severity, "I cannot permit you to speak in that way of one whom I so highly respect! It is ungentlemanly! Your father is absent, the servant is busy, and Florence has a full half-mile to walk. You will attend her home!"

My limbs trembled under me. I should have darted from the back door, and left my mother's favorite to shift for herself; but my austere relative had kept a firm hold of my arm, and, without further parley, drew me back to the parlor.

"If you must go, dear," she said to Florence, "I will not urge you. Roy will walk home with you."

Florence opened wide her blue eyes in evident astonishment; and, as for me, the whole creation was in a whirl! The room went round and round like a top—I was obliged to grasp the back of a chair to keep from falling—I was penetrated with speechless dismay.

“Roy! Florence is waiting!” said my unrelenting mother.

There was no appeal. To use a vulgar, but expressive phrase, I was “in for it;” and, nerved by a sort of desperate courage, which sometimes comes to the aid of the weak in great extremities, I flung open the door, blundered down the steps, and out into the street. Florence followed leisurely behind, shut the gate after her, and fastened the latch. How I envied her her provoking coolness!

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We went on; she one side of the road—I the other, and about three yards in advance of her. By-and-bye, when we had proceeded in utter silence for a quarter of a mile, my companion said, demurely:

“Roy, you can get over the fence, and go in the field; and I will keep the road.”

The little jade was quizzing me. I could not endure her ridicule, so forthwith I made a sort of flying leap to her side of the street, spattering the mud in every direction as I alighted beside her. I had just begun to think how much better the footing was on that sidewalk than the one I had just left, when I heard somebody whistling, and, looking up, I saw Will Richardson, a mutual acquaintance, approaching. The cold perspiration started to my brow—how could I endure to be seen going home with a girl? I could not! No, never! The idea was out of the question! I flew to the wall, sprang over, and threw myself down behind a pile of stones.

I heard Will and Florence laughing together in a vastly amused way—and then she took his arm, and off they went! I shook my clenched hand after them; at that moment, I think I could have cudgelled Will without compunction.

The ridiculous story of my adventure got wind; no doubt Will spread it, and I was the laughing stock of the village. My mother gave me a sound berating, and my staid, punctilious father administered the severest rebuke of all—he said I was a disgrace to my ancestors.

I managed to live through it, though, and a few months later entered college. I will not linger on the days spent with my Alma Mater; the history of the scrapes which my mischief-loving fellow students got me into during those four years, would fill three volumes of octavo.

At the end of the prescribed time, I graduated with the highest honors, for I had always been a most determined bookworm; and, with my diploma in my pocket, I returned home.

My friends were rejoiced to see me, they said; aunt Alice informed me that I had improved wonderfully in manners, as well as looks; she thought me decidedly handsome, she said, which remark, I privately concluded, was the most sensible of any I had ever heard her make.

The day following my arrival at home, my mother spoke of Florence. I had been longing to ask about her, but dared not hazard the question. My mother thought that I ought to call on the Hay family, we had always been intimate, she said, and it would be no more than courteous for me to surprise them with my presence.

I told her the truth. I should be extremely happy to do so, but I lacked the courage.

“Mother,” said I, frankly, “you know my cardinal failing. Be merciful unto me. I should only make a fool of myself.”

“I will make an errand for you,” she replied, quickly; “Mrs. Hay is troubled with a cough, and she wanted some of my tomato preserves for it. You shall carry them over.”

Ah! it takes a woman to manage things; depend on that.

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I caught eagerly at the suggestion, for the imaged face of Florence Hay had obtruded between my eyes and endless Greek roots a great many times during the past four years. I was glad of an excuse to see once more the face itself.

Armed with my letter of introduction, a glass jar of tomatoes, and arrayed in my best suit, I rang the bell at the door of Mr. Hay. A servant girl admitted me, and showed me directly into the room where Florence was sitting.

How very beautiful she had grown during my absence! I had never seen so fair a vision! She rose at my entrance, and, bowing with inimitable grace, extended her hand.

“Am I correct in believing that I have the pleasure of addressing Mr. Sunderland?” she said, with gentle politeness.

I bowed—the jar slipped from my grasp and fell to the floor; I made a hasty movement to take the hand she had offered me, and in so doing put my foot on the jar; it was crushed to atoms, and the seeds and syrup flew in every direction! The obstacle beneath my feet made me stagger; I grasped the folds of a window-curtain in the hope of saving myself, but my equilibrium was too far gone—down came the curtain—over I went, head first, against a flower-stand, on which were a nondescript array of flowerpots, a canary bird in a cage, and a big Maltese cat in a basket.

The force of my fall upset the stand, and, with all its favorites, it turned over on the carpet! Plants, cat, bird, cage, and Roy Sunderland, all lay in one mass of ruin together at the feet of the astonished Miss Hay. The cat was the first to recover her presence of mind, and with a “midnight cry” which would have appalled the stoutest heart, she sprang into my face, tearing up the skin with a violence worthy the admiration of all persons who believe in the wisdom of “getting at the root of a matter” at once.

I scrambled up—gave the animal a blow that sent her to the other side of the room—and hatless, and bloody, made for the door. With frantic haste I seized the handle—it did not yield; the door was fastened by a spring lock, and I was a prisoner!

Imagine my dismay! Florence stood looking at me, and there was a smile on her face that she, with great difficulty restrained from breaking into a decided ha! ha! Just then I would have sold myself to any reliable man for a six-pence, and thirty days credit.

Mortified and crestfallen, I was strongly inclined to follow the example of the heroines in sensation novels, and burst into tears; but crying, it is said, makes the nose red, and, remembering this, I forbore.

I suppose Florence pitied me; she must have seen from the woe begone expression of my face that I was in the last stages of human endurance, for she came quietly to my side and laid her hand on my arm.

“Come in, Roy,” she said, kindly—almost tenderly, I thought—and drew me into a small boudoir opposite the sitting-room. Things in the latter apartment were too nearly wrecked to make it pleasant for occupation, I suppose.

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"There," she said, seating me on a sofa by her side, and speaking in a consoling tone one would use to a child who had burnt his apron, or broke the sugar-bowl, "don't think anything more of it." She was wiping the blood from pussy's autograph on my face with her handkerchief—"Accidents will happen, you know!"

She was so close to me—her sweet face so very near mine—and the temptation was so great that I trust I may be excused, especially as I am a bashful man, and not in the habit of committing such indiscretions.

I threw my arms around her and paid back, with interest, the kiss I had kept so long. A burning blush overspread her face.

"Oh, Roy! how could you?" she exclaimed, reproachfully.

I had gone too far to retreat; the words which for years had filled my heart struggled up to my lips and clamored for utterance.

"Florence!" I cried, passionately, "I love you! and I want you to be entirely mine! Take me, and cure me of the bashful folly which has been the bane of my life!"

She did not reply. I was in a tumult of fear and hope, but a sort of desperate courage kept me firm.

"One word, Florence, only one word! Am I to be consigned to Hades, or Paradise? Do not keep me in suspense!"

She nestled closer to my side; her soft cheek rested against mine; her breath swept my lips. She spoke but one word in accents of deepest tenderness, and that word was my name—

"Roy!"

"Florence! my darling!"

I trust that everybody will forgive me, and feel charitably toward me, when I declare on my honor that I was happier, at that moment, than I had ever been in my life before!

"Popping the question" is acknowledged by all to be a serious piece of business; and if ordinary men find it a serious business, how much more terrible must it be to a bashful individual like myself?

A silence fell between Florence and me; perhaps I was holding her so close to my heart that the effort of speaking was difficult, I should not wonder. By-and-by she lifted up her face, and said, quietly:

"Did you mean for me to marry you, Roy?"

“Marry me? Yes, dearest, and that, too, before many days have elapsed! I have been a fool so long that now I cannot afford to wait!”

“Yes; but if I promise myself to you, how can I be sure that, on the way to the altar, you will not jump over the fence, and leave me to fate and Will Richardson?”

“Confound Will Richardson! Florence, forgive me! I was little less than a brute! Is there peace between us?”

“Both peace and love,” she whispered, softly; and my heart was at rest.

My mother was overjoyed by the turn affairs had taken. Everything had happened just as she had wished; and, to this day, the good lady idolizes tomatoes, insisting upon it that it was through the agency of those preserves that Florence and I came to an understanding. It might have been—I cannot tell—great events sometimes originate in small causes.

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Florence—dear little wife!—for five years she has sustained to me that relation; and if she has not cured me of my bashfulness, she has at least broken me of its extreme folly.

To other men afflicted as I was with constitutional shyness, I can conscientiously recommend my course. Don't be afraid; the ladies admire courage, and "None but the brave deserve the fair."