

What Necessity Knows eBook

What Necessity Knows

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WHAT NECESSITY KNOWS

by

L. DOUGALL

Author of "Beggars All," etc

New York
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15 East Sixteenth Street
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1893

*To my brother
John Redpath Dougall
this book is inscribed
with reverence and affection*

Preface.

One episode of this story may need a word of explanation. It is reported that while the “Millerite” or Adventist excitement of 1843 was agitating certain parts of North America, in one place at least a little band of white-robed people ascended a hill in sure expectation of the Second Advent, and patiently returned to be the laughing stock of their neighbours. This tradition, as I heard it in my childhood, was repeated as if it embodied nothing but eccentricity and absurdity, yet it naturally struck a child’s mind with peculiar feelings of awe and pathos. Such an event appeared picturesque matter for a story. It was not easy to deal with; for in setting it, as was necessary, in close relation to the gain-getting, marrying and giving in marriage, of the people among whom it might occur, it was difficult to avoid either giving it a poetic emphasis which it would not appear to have in reality or degrading it by that superficial truth often called realism, which belittles men. Any unworthiness in the working out of the incident is due, not so much to lack of dignity in the subject, or to lack of material, as to the limitations of the writer’s capacity.

Lest any of my countrymen should feel that this story is wanting in sympathy with them, I may point out that it does not happen to deal with Canadians proper, but with immigrants, most of whom are slow to identify themselves with their adopted Country; hence their point of view is here necessarily set forth.

I would take this opportunity to express my obligation to my fellow-worker, Miss M.S. Earp, for her constant and sympathetic criticism and help in composition.

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L.D.

Edinburgh, June, 1893.

BOOK I.

"Necessity knows no Law."

WHAT NECESSITY KNOWS

CHAPTER I.

Introduction.

"It is not often that what we call the 'great sorrows of life' cause us the greatest sorrow. Death, acute disease, sudden and great losses—these are sometimes easily borne compared with those intricate difficulties which, without name and without appearance, work themselves into the web of our daily life, and, if not rightly met, corrode and tarnish all its brightness."

So spoke Robert Trenholme, Principal of the New College and Rector of the English church at Chellaston, in the Province of Quebec. He sat in his comfortable library. The light of a centre lamp glowed with shaded ray on books in their shelves, but shone strongly on the faces near it. As Trenholme spoke his words had all the charm lent by modulated voice and manner, and a face that, though strong, could light itself easily with a winning smile. He was a tall, rather muscular man; his face had that look of battle that indicates the nervous temperament. He was talking to a member of his congregation who had called to ask advice and sympathy concerning some carking domestic care. The advice had already been given, and the clergyman proceeded to give the sympathy in the form above.

His listener was a sickly-looking man, who held by the hand a little boy of five or six years. The child, pale and sober, regarded with incessant interest the prosperous and energetic man who was talking to its father.

"Yes, yes," replied the troubled visitor, "yes, there's some help for the big troubles, but none for the small—you're right there."

"No," said the other, "I did not say there was no help. It is just those complex difficulties for which we feel the help of our fellow-men is inadequate that ought to teach us to find out how adequate is the help of the Divine Man, our Saviour, to all our needs."

“Yes, yes,” said the poor man again, “yes, I suppose what you say is true.”

But he evidently did not suppose so. He sidled to the door, cap in hand. The clergyman said no more. He was one of those sensitive men who often know instinctively whether or not their words find response in the heart of the hearer, and to whom it is always a pain to say anything, even the most trivial, which awakes no feeling common to both.

Trenholme himself showed the visitors out of his house with a genial, kindly manner, and when the departing footsteps had ceased to crunch the garden path he still stood on his verandah, looking after the retreating figures and feeling somewhat depressed—not as we might suppose St. Paul would have felt depressed, had he, in like manner, taken the Name for which he lived upon his lips in vain—and to render that name futile by reason of our spiritual insignificance is surely the worst form of profanity—but he felt depressed in the way that a gentleman might who, having various interests at heart, had failed in a slight attempt to promote one of them.

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It was the evening of one of the balmy days of a late Indian summer. The stars of the Canadian sky had faded and become invisible in the light of a moon that hung low and glorious, giving light to the dry, sweet-scented haze of autumn air. Trenholme looked out on a neat garden plot, and beyond, in the same enclosure, upon lawns of ragged, dry-looking grass, in the centre of which stood an ugly brick house, built apparently for some public purpose. This was the immediate outlook. Around, the land was undulating; trees were abundant, and were more apparent in the moonlight than the flat field spaces between them. The graceful lines of leafless elms at the side of the main road were clearly seen. About half a mile away the lights of a large village were visible, but bits of walls and gable ends of white houses stood out brighter in the moonlight than, the yellow lights within the windows. Where the houses stretched themselves up on a low hill, a little white church showed clear against the broken shadow of low-growing pines.

As Trenholme was surveying the place dreamily in the wonderful light, that light fell also, upon him and his habitation. He was apparently intellectual, and had in him something of the idealist. For the rest, he was a good-sized, good-looking man, between thirty and forty years of age, and even by the moonlight one might see, from the form of his clothes, that he was dressed with fastidious care. The walls and verandah, of his house, which were of wood, glistened almost as brightly with white paint as the knocker and doorplate did with brass lacquer.

After a few minutes Trenholme's housekeeper, a wiry, sad-eyed woman, came to see why the door was left open. When she saw the master of the house she retired in abrupt, angular fashion, but the suggestion of her errand recalled him from his brief relaxation.

In his study he again sat down before the table where he had been talking to his visitors. From the leaves of his blotting-paper he took a letter which he had apparently been interrupted in writing. He took it out in a quick, business-like way, and dipped his pen in the ink as though, to finish rapidly; but then he sat still until the pen dried, and no further word had been added. Again he dipped his pen, and again let it dry. If the first sentence of the letter had taken as long to compose as the second, it was no wonder that a caller had caused an interruption.

The letter, as it lay before him, had about a third of its page written in a neat, forcible hand. The arms of his young college were printed at the top. He had written:—

My dear brother,—I am very much concerned not to have heard from you for so long. I have written to your old address in Montreal, but received no answer.

Here came the stop. At last he put pen to paper and went on:—

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Even though we have disagreed as to what occupation is best for you to follow, and also as to the degree of reserve that is desirable as to what our father did, you must surely know that there is nothing I desire more than your highest welfare.

After looking at this sentence for a little while he struck his pen through the word “highest,” and then, offended with the appearance of the obliteration, he copied this much of the letter on a fresh sheet and again stopped.

When he continued, it was on the old sheet. He made a rough copy of the letter—writing, crossing out, and rewriting. It seemed that the task to which he had set himself was almost harder than could appear possible, for, as he became more absorbed in it, there was evidence of discomfort in his attitude, and although the room was not warm, the moisture on his forehead became visible in the strong light of the lamp above him. At length, after preliminary pauses had been followed by a lengthened period of vigorous writing, the letter was copied, and the writer sealed it with an air of obvious relief.

That done, he wrote another letter, the composition of which, although it engaged his care, was apparently so much pleasanter, that perhaps the doing of it was chosen on the same principle as one hears a farce after a tragedy, in order to sleep the more easily.

This second letter was to a lady. When it was written, Trenholme pulled an album from a private drawer, and looked long and with interested attention at the face of the lady to whom he had written. It was the face of a young, handsome girl, who bore herself proudly. The fashion of the dress would have suggested to a calculating mind that the portrait had been taken some years before; but what man who imagines himself a lover, in regarding the face of the absent dear one in the well-known picture, adds in thought the marks of time? If he had been impartial he would have asked the portrait if the face from which it was taken had grown more proud and cold as the years went by, or more sad and gentle—for, surely, in this work-a-day world of ours, fate would not be likely to have gifts in store that would wholly satisfy those eager, ambitious eyes; but, being a man no wiser than many other men, he looked at the rather faded photograph with considerable pleasure, and asked no questions.

It grew late as he contemplated the lady's picture, and, moreover, he was not one, under any excuse, to spend much time in idleness. He put away his album, and then, having personally locked up his house and said good-night to his housekeeper, he went upstairs.

Yet, in spite of all that Trenholme's pleasure in the letter and the possession of the photograph might betoken, the missive, addressed to a lady named Miss Rexford, was not a love-letter. It ran thus:—

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I cannot even feign anger against “Dame Fortune,” that, by so unexpected a turn of her wheel, she should be even now bringing you to the remote village where for some time I have been forced to make my home, and where it is very probable I shall remain for some years longer. I do, of course, unfeignedly regret the financial misfortune which, as I understand, has made it necessary for Captain Rexford to bring you all out to this young country; yet to me the pleasure of expecting such neighbours must far exceed any other feeling with which I regard your advent. I am exceedingly glad if I have been able to be of service to Captain Rexford in making his business arrangements here, and hope all will prove satisfactory. I have only to add that, although you must be prepared for much that you will find different from English life, much that is rough and ungainly and uncomfortable, you may feel confident that, with a little patience, the worst roughness of colonial life will soon be overcome, and that you will find compensation a thousand times over in the glorious climate and cheerful prospects of this new land. As I have never had the pleasure of meeting Captain and Mrs. Rexford, I trust you will excuse me for addressing this note of welcome to you, whom I trust I may still look upon as a friend. I have not forgotten the winter when I received encouragement and counsel from you, who had so many to admire and occupy you that, looking back now, I feel it strange that you should have found time to bestow in mere kindness.

Here there followed courteous salutations to the lady’s father and mother, brothers and sisters. The letter was signed in friendly style and addressed to an hotel in Halifax, where apparently it was to await the arrival of the fair stranger from some other shore.

It is probable that, in the interfacings of human lives, events are happening every moment which, although bearing according to present knowledge no possible relation to our own lives, are yet to have an influence on our future and make havoc with our expectations. The train is laid, the fuse is lit, long before we know it.

That night, as Robert Trenholme sealed his letters, an event took place that was to test by a strange influence the lives of these three people—Robert Trenholme, the lady of whom he thought so pleasantly, and the young brother to whom he had written so laboriously. And the event was that an old settler, who dwelt in a remote part of the country, went out of his cabin in the delusive moonlight, slipped on a steep place, and fell, thereby receiving an inward hurt that was to bring him death.

CHAPTER II.

The Indian summer, that lingers in the Canadian forest after the fall of the leaves, had passed away. The earth lay frozen, ready to bear the snow. The rivers, with edge of thin ice upon their quiet places, rolled, gathering into the surface of their waters the cold that would so soon create their crystal prison.

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The bright sun of a late November day was shining upon a small lake that lay in the lonely region to the west of the Gaspé Peninsula near the Matapédiac Valley. There was one farm clearing on a slope of the wild hills that encircled the lake. The place was very lonely. An eagle that rose from the fir-clad ridge above the clearing might from its eminence, have seen other human habitations, but such sight was denied to the dwellers in the rude log-house on the clearing. The eagle wheeled in the air and flew southward. A girl standing near the log-house watched it with discontented eyes.

The blue water of the lake, with ceaseless lapping, cast up glinting reflections of the cold sunlight. Down the hillside a stream ran to join the lake, and it was on the more sheltered slope by this stream, where grey-limbed maple trees grew, that the cabin stood. Above and around, the steeper slopes bore only fir trees, whose cone-shaped or spiky forms, sometimes burnt and charred, sometimes dead and grey, but for the most part green and glossy, from shore and slope and ridge pointed always to the blue zenith.

The log-house, with its rougher sheds, was hard by the stream's ravine. About the other sides of it stretched a few acres of tilled land. Round this land the maple wood closed, and under its grey trees there was a tawny brown carpet of fallen leaves from which the brighter autumn colours had already faded. Up the hillside in the fir wood there were gaps where the trees had been felled for lumber, and about a quarter of a mile from the house a rudely built lumber slide descended to the lake.

It was about an hour before sundown when the eagle had risen and fled, and the sunset light found the girl who had watched it still standing in the same place. All that time a man had been talking to her; but she herself had not been talking, she had given him little reply. The two were not close to the house; large, square-built piles of logs, sawn and split for winter fuel, separated them from it. The man leaned against the wood now; the girl stood upright, leaning on nothing.

Her face, which was healthy, was at the same time pale. Her hair was very red, and she had much of it. She was a large, strong young woman. She looked larger and stronger than the man with whom she was conversing. He was a thin, haggard fellow, not at first noticeable in the landscape, for his clothes and beard were faded and worn into colours of earth and wood, so that Nature seemed to have dealt with him as she deals with her most defenceless creatures, causing them to grow so like their surroundings that even their enemies do not easily observe them. This man, however, was not lacking in a certain wiry physical strength, nor in power of thought or of will. And these latter powers, if the girl possessed them, were as yet only latent in her, for she had the heavy and undeveloped appearance of backward youth.

The man was speaking earnestly. At last he said:—

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"Come now, Sissy, be a good lassie and say that ye're content to stay. Ye've always been a good lassie and done what I told ye before."

His accent was Scotch, but not the broad Scotch of an entirely uneducated man. There was sobriety written in the traits of his face, and more—a certain quality of intellectual virtue of the higher stamp. He was not young, but he was not yet old.

"I haven't," said the girl sullenly.

He sighed at her perverseness. "That's not the way I remember it. I'm sure, from the time ye were quite a wee one, ye have always tried to please me.—We all come short sometimes; the thing is, what we are trying to do."

He spoke as if her antagonism to what he had been saying, to what he was yet saying, had had a painful effect upon him which he was endeavouring to hide.

The girl looked over his head at the smoke that was proceeding from the log-house chimney. She saw it curl and wreath itself against the cold blue east. It was white wood smoke, and as she watched it began to turn yellow in the light from the sunset. She did not turn to see whence the yellow ray came.

"Now that father's dead, I won't stay here, Mr. Bates." She said "I won't" just as a sullen, naughty girl would speak. "'Twas hateful enough to stay while he lived, but now you and Miss Bates are nothing to me."

"Nothing to ye, Sissy?" The words seemed to come out of him in pained surprise.

"I know you've brought me up, and taught me, and been far kinder to me than father ever was; but I'm not to stay here all my life because of *that*."

"Bairn, I have just been telling ye there is nothing else ye can do just now. I have no ready money. Your father had nothing to leave ye but his share of this place; and, so far, we've just got along year by year, and that's all. I'll work it as well as I can, and, if ye like, ye're welcome to live free and lay by your share year by year till ye have something to take with ye and are old enough to go away. But if ye go off now ye'll have to live as a servant, and ye couldn't thole that, and I couldn't for ye. Ye have no one to protect ye now but me. I've no friends to send ye to. What do ye know of the world? It's unkind—ay, and it's wicked too."

"How's it so wicked? You're not wicked, nor father, nor me, nor the men—how's people outside so much wicked?"

Bates's mouth—it was a rather broad, powerful mouth—began to grow hard at her continued contention, perhaps also at the thought of the evils of which he dreamed. "It's a very *evil* world," he said, just as he would have said that two and two made four to a

child who had dared to question that fact. “Ye’re too young to understand it now: ye must take my word for it.”

She made no sort of answer; she gave no sign of yielding; but, because she had made no answer, he, self-willed and opinionated man that he was, felt assured that she had no answer to give, and went on to talk as if that one point were settled.

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"Ye can be happy here if ye will only think so. If we seem hard on ye in the house about the meals and that, I'll try to be better tempered. Ye haven't read all the books we have yet, but I'll get more the first chance if ye like. Come, Sissy, think how lonesome I'd be without ye!"

He moved his shoulders nervously while he spoke, as if the effort to coax was a greater strain than the effort to teach or command. His manner might have been that of a father who wheedled a child to do right, or a lover who sued on his own behalf; the better love, for that matter, is much the same in all relations of life.

This last plea evidently moved her just a little. "I'm sorry, Mr. Bates," she said.

"What are ye sorry for, Sissy?"

"That I'm to leave you."

"But ye're not going. Can't ye get that out of your head? How will ye go?"

"In the boat, when they take father."

At that the first flash of anger came from him. "Ye won't go, if I have to hold ye by main force. I can't go to bury your father. I have to stay here and earn bread and butter for you and me, or we'll come short of it. If ye think I'm going to let ye go with a man I know little about—"

His voice broke off in indignation, and as for the girl, whether from sudden anger at being thus spoken to, or from the conviction of disappointment which had been slowly forcing itself upon her, she began to cry. His anger vanished, leaving an evident discomfort behind. He stood before her with a weary look of effort on his face, as if he were casting all things in heaven and earth about in his mind to find which of them would be most likely to afford her comfort, or at least, to put an end to tears which, perhaps for a reason unknown to himself, gave him excessive annoyance.

"Come, Sissy"—feebly—"give over."

But the girl went on crying, not loudly or passionately, but with no sign of discontinuance, as she stood there, large and miserable, before him. He settled his shoulders obstinately against the wood pile, thinking to wait till she should speak or make some further sign. Nothing but strength of will kept him in his place, for he would gladly have fled from her. He had now less guidance than before to what was passing in her mind, for her face was more hidden from his sight as the light of the sinking sun focussed more exclusively in the fields of western sky behind her.

Then the sun went down behind the rugged hills of the lake's other shore; and, as it sank below their sharp outlines, their sides, which had been clear and green, became



dim and purple; the blue went out of the waters of the lake, they became the hue of steel touched with iridescence of gold; and above the hills, vapour that had before been almost invisible in the sky, now hung in upright layers of purple mist, blossoming into primrose yellow on the lower edges. A few moments more and grey bloom, such as one sees on purple fruit, was on these vast hangings of cloud that grouped themselves more largely, and gold flames burned on their fringes. Behind them there were great empty reaches of lambent blue, and on the sharp edge of the shadowed hills there was a line of fire.

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It produced in Bates unthinking irritation that Nature should quietly go on outspreading her evening magnificence in face of his discomfort. In ordinal light or darkness one accepts the annoyances of life as coming all in the day's work; but Nature has her sublime moments in which, if the sensitive mind may not yield itself to her delight, it is forced into extreme antagonism, either to her or to that which withholds from joining in her ecstasy. Bates was a man sensitive to many forces, the response to which within him was not openly acknowledged to himself. He was familiar with the magnificence of sunsets in this region, but his mind was not dulled to the marvel of the coloured glory in which the daylight so often culminated.

He looked off at the western sky, at first chiefly conscious of the unhappy girl who stood in front of him and irritated by that intervening shape; but, as his vision wandered along the vast reaches of illimitable clouds and the glorious gulfs of sky, his mind yielded itself the rather to the beauty and light. More dusky grew the purple of the upper mists whose upright layers, like league-long wings of softest feather held edge downward to the earth, ever changed in form without apparent movement. More sparkling glowed the gold upon their edges. The sky beneath the cloud was now like emerald. The soft darkness of purple slate was on the hills. The lake took on a darker shade, and daylight began to fade from the upper blue.

It was only perhaps a moment—one of those moments for which time has no measurement—that the soul of this man had gone out of him, as it were, into the vastness of the sunset; and when he recalled it his situation took on for him a somewhat different aspect. He experienced something of that temporary relief from personal responsibility that moments of religious sentiment often give to minds that are unaccustomed to religion. He had been free for the time to disport himself in something infinitely larger and wider than his little world, and he took up his duty at the point at which he had left it with something of this sense of freedom lingering with him.

He was a good man—that is, a man whose face would have made it clear to any true observer that he habitually did the right in contradistinction to the wrong. He was, moreover, religious, and would not have been likely to fall into any delusion of mere sentiment in the region of religious emotion. But that which deludes a man commonly comes through a safe channel. As a matter of fact, the excitement which the delight of the eye had produced in him was a perfectly wholesome feeling, but the largeness of heart it gave him at that moment was unfortunate.

The girl stood just as before, ungainly and without power of expression because undeveloped, but excitation of thought made what she might become apparent to him in that which she was. He became more generous towards her, more loving.

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“Don’t greet, that’s a good lassie,” he said soothingly. “There’s truth in what ye have said—that it’s dull for ye here because ye have nothing to look ahead to. Well, I’ll tell ye what I didn’t mean to tell ye while ye are so young—when ye’re older, if ye’re a good lassie and go on learning your lessons as ye have been doing, I will ask ye to marry me, and then (we hope of course to get more beforehand wi’ money as years go) ye will have more interest and—”

“Marry!” interrupted the girl, not strongly, but speaking in faint wonder, as if echoing a word she did not quite understand.

“Yes,” he went on with great kindliness, “I talked it over with your father before he went, and he was pleased. I told him that, in a year or two, if he liked it, I would marry ye—it’s only if ye *like*, of course; and ye’d better not think about it now, for ye’re too young.”

“Marry me!” This time the exclamation came from her with a force that was appalling to him. The coarse handkerchief which she had been holding to her eyes was withdrawn, and with lips and eyes open she exclaimed again: “Marry me! *You!*”

It was remarkable how this man, who so far was using, and through long years had always used, only the tone of mentor, now suddenly began to try to justify himself with almost childlike timidity.

“Your father and I didn’t know of any one else hereabouts that would suit, and of course we knew ye would naturally be disappointed if ye didn’t marry.” He went on muttering various things about the convenience of such an arrangement.

She listened to nothing more than his first sentence, and began to move away from him slowly a few steps backwards; then, perceiving that she had come to the brink of the level ground, she turned and suddenly stretched out her arm with almost frantic longing toward the cold, grey lake and the dark hills behind, where the fires of the west still struggled with the encroaching November night.

As she turned there was light enough for him to see how bright the burning colour of her hair was—bright as the burning copper glow on the lower feathers of those great shadowy wings of cloud—the wings of night that were enfolding the dying day. Some idea, gathered indefinitely from both the fierceness of her gesture and his transient observation of the colour of her hair, suggested to him that he had trodden on the sacred ground of a passionate heart.

Poor man! He would have been only too glad just then to have effaced his foot-prints if he had had the least idea how to do it. The small shawl she wore fell from her unnoticed as she went quickly into the house. He picked it up, and folded it awkwardly, but with meditative care. It was a square of orange-coloured merino, such as pedlars who deal with the squaws always carry, an ordinary thing for a settler’s child to

possess. As he held it, Bates felt compunction that it was not something finer and to his idea prettier, for he did not like the colour. He decided that he would purchase something better for her as soon as possible. He followed her into the house.

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CHAPTER III.

Night, black and cold, settled over the house that had that day for the first time been visited by death. Besides the dead man, there were now three people to sleep in it: an old woman, whose failing brain had little of intelligence left, except such as showed itself in the everyday habits of a long and orderly life; the young girl, whose mind slow by nature in reaching maturity and retarded by the monotony of her life, had not yet gained the power of realising its own deeper thoughts, still less of explaining them to another; and this man, Bates, who, being by natural constitution peculiarly susceptible to the strain of the sight of illness and death which he had just undergone, was not in the best condition to resist the morbid influences of unhappy companionship.

The girl shed tears as she moved about sullenly. She would not speak to Bates, and he did not in the least understand that, sullen as she was, her speechlessness did not result from that, but from inability to reduce to any form the chaotic emotions within her, or to find any expression which might represent her distress. He could not realise that the childish mind that had power to converse for trivial things had, as yet, no word for the not-trivial; that the blind womanly emotion on which he had trodden had as yet no counterpart in womanly thought, which might have formed excuses for his conduct, or at least have comprehended its simplicity. He only felt uneasily that her former cause of contention with him, her determination, sudden as her father's death, to leave the only home she possessed, was now enforced by her antagonism to the suggestion he had made of a future marriage, and he felt increasing annoyance that it should be so. Naturally enough, a deep undercurrent of vexation was settling in his mind towards her for feeling that antagonism, but he was vexed also with himself for having suggested the fresh source of contest just now to complicate the issue between them as to whether she should remain where she was, at any rate for the present. Remain she must; he was clear upon that point. The form of his religious theories, long held in comparative isolation from mankind, convinced him, whether truly or not, that humanity was a very bad thing; she should not leave his protection, and he was considerate enough to desire that, when the time came for launching the boat which was to take her father's body to burial, he should not need to detain her by force.

The girl set an ill-cooked supper before Bates and the hired man, and would not herself eat. As Bates sat at his supper he felt drearily that his position was hard; and, being a man whose training disposed him to vaguely look for the cause of trial in sin, wondered what he had done that it had thus befallen him. His memory reverted to the time when, on an emigrant ship, he had made friends with the man Cameron who that day had died, and they had agreed to choose their place and cast in their lot together. It had been part of the agreement that the aunt who accompanied Bates should do the woman's work of the new home until she was too old, and that Cameron's child should do it when she was old enough.

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The girl was a little fat thing then, wearing a red hood. Bates, uneasy in his mind both as to his offer of marriage and her resentment, asked himself if he was to blame that he had begun by being kind to her then, that he had played with her upon the ship's deck, that on their land journey he had often carried her in his arms, or that, in the years of the hard isolated life which since then they had all lived, he had taught and trained the girl with far more care than her father had bestowed on her. Or was he to blame that he had so often been strict and severe with her? Or was he unjust in feeling now that he had a righteous claim to respect and consideration from her to an almost greater extent than the dead father whose hard, silent life had showed forth little of the proper attributes of fatherhood? Or did the sin for which he was now being punished lie in the fact that, in spite of her constant wilfulness and frequent stupidity, he still felt such affection for his pupil as made him unwilling, as he phrased it, to seek a wife elsewhere and thus thrust her from her place in the household. Bates had a certain latent contempt for women; wives he thought were easily found and not altogether desirable; and with that inconsistency common to men, he looked upon his proposal to the girl now as the result of a much more unselfish impulse than he had done an hour ago, before she exclaimed at it so scornfully. He did not know how to answer himself. In all honesty he could not accuse himself of not having done his duty by the girl or of any desire to shirk it in the future; and that being the case, he grew every minute more inclined to believe that the fact that his duty was now being made so disagreeable to him was owing, not to any fault of his, but to the naughtiness of her disposition.

The hired man slept in an outer shed. When he had gone, and Bates went up to his own bed in the loft of the log-house, the last sound that he heard was the girl sobbing where she lay beside the old woman in the room below. The sound was not cheering.

The next day was sunless and colder. Twice that morning Sissy Cameron stopped Bates at his work to urge her determination to leave the place, and twice he again set his reasons for refusal before her with what patience he could command. He told her, what she knew without telling, that the winter was close upon them, that the winter's work at the lumber was necessary for their livelihood, that it was not in his power to find her an escort for a journey at this season or to seek another home for her. Then, when she came to him again a third time, his anger broke out, and he treated her with neither patience nor good sense.

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It was in the afternoon, and a chill north breeze ruffled the leaden surface of the lake and seemed to curdle the water with its breath; patches of soft ice already mottled it. The sky was white, and leafless maple and evergreen seemed almost alike colourless in the dull, cold air. Bates had turned from his work to stand for a few moments on the hard trodden level in front of the house and survey the weather. He had reason to survey it with anxiety. He was anxious to send the dead man's body to the nearest graveyard for decent burial, and the messenger and cart sent on this errand were to bring back another man to work with him at felling the timber that was to be sold next spring. The only way between his house and other houses lay across the lake and through a gap in the hills, a way that was passable now, and passable in calm days when winter had fully come, but impassable at the time of forming ice and of falling and drifting snow. He hoped that the snow and ice would hold off until his plan could be carried out, but he held his face to the keen cold breeze and looked at the mottled surface of the lake with irritable anxiety. It was not his way to confide his anxiety to any one; he was bearing it alone when the girl, who had been sauntering aimlessly about, came to him.

"If I don't go with the boat to-morrow," she said, "I'll walk across as soon as the ice'll bear."

With that he turned upon her. "And if I was a worse man than I am I'd let ye. It would be a comfort to me to be rid of ye. Where would ye go, or what would ye do? Ye ought to be only too thankful to have a comfortable home where ye're kept from harm. It's a cruel and bad world, I tell ye; it's going to destruction as fast as it can, and ye'd go with it."

The girl shook with passion. "I'd do nothing of the sort," she choked.

All the anger and dignity of her being were aroused, but it did not follow that she had any power to give them adequate utterance. She turned from him, and, as she stood, the attitude of her whole figure spoke such incredulity, scorn, and anger, that the flow of hot-tempered arguments with which he was still ready to seek to persuade her reason, died on his lips. He lost all self-control in increasing ill-temper.

"Ye may prance and ye may dance"—he jerked the phrase between his teeth, using words wholly inapplicable to her attitude because he could not analyse its offensiveness sufficiently to find words that applied to it. "Yes, prance and dance as much as ye like, but ye'll not go in the boat to-morrow if ye'd six fathers to bury instead of one, and ye'll not set foot out of this clearing, where I can look after ye. I said to the dead I'd take care of ye, and I'll do it—ungrateful lass though ye are."

He hurled the last words at her as he turned and went into a shed at the side of the house in which he had before been working.

The girl stood quite still as long as he was within sight. She seemed conscious of his presence though she was not looking towards him, for as soon as he had stepped within the low opening of the shed, she moved away, walking in a wavering track across the tilled land, walking as if movement was the end of her purpose, not as if she had destination.

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The frozen furrows of the ploughed land crumbled beneath her heavy tread. The north wind grew stronger. When she reached the edge of the maple wood and looked up with swollen, tear-blurred eyes, she saw the grey branches moved by the wind, and the red squirrels leaped from branch to branch and tree to tree as if blown by the same air. She wandered up one side of the clearing and down the other, sometimes wading knee-deep in loud rustling maple leaves gathered in dry hollows within the wood, sometimes stumbling over frozen furrows as she crossed corners of the ploughed land, walking all the time in helpless, hopeless anger.

When, however, she came back behind the house to that part of the clearing bounded by the narrow and not very deep ravine which running water had cut into the side of the hill, she seemed to gather some reviving sensations from the variety which the bed of the brook presented to her view. Here, on some dozen feet of steeply sloping rock and earth, which on either side formed the trough of the brook, vegetable life was evidently more delicate and luxuriant than elsewhere, in the season when it had sway. Even now, when the reign of the frost held all such life in abeyance, this grave of the dead summer lacked neither fretted tomb nor wreathing garland; for above, the bittersweet hung out heavy festoons of coral berries over the pall of its faded leaves, and beneath, on frond of fern and stalk of aster, and on rough surface of lichen-covered rock, the frost had turned the spray of water to white crystals, and the stream, with imprisoned far-off murmur, made its little leaps within fairy palaces of icicles, and spread itself in pools whose leafy contents gave colours of mottled marble to the ice that had grown upon them. It was on the nearer bank of this stream, where, a little below, it curved closer to the house, that her father, falling with a frost-loosened rock, had received his fatal injury. Out of the pure idleness of despondency it occurred to the girl that, from the point at which she had now arrived, she might obtain a new view of the small landslip which had caused the calamity.

She cast her arms round a lithe young birch whose silver trunk bent from the top of the bank, and thus bridging the tangle of shrub and vine she hung over the short precipice to examine the spot with sad curiosity.

She herself could hardly have told what thoughts passed through her mind as, childlike, she thus lapsed from hard anger into temporary amusement. But greater activity of mind did come with the cessation of movement and the examination of objects which stimulated such fancy as she possessed. She looked at the beauty in the ravine beneath her, and at the rude destruction that falling earth and rock had wrought in it a few yards further down. She began to wonder whether, if the roots of the tree on which she was at full length stretched should give way in the same manner, and such a fall prove fatal to her also, Mr. Bates

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would be sorry. It gave her a sensation of pleasure to know that such a mishap would annoy and distress him very much; and, at the very moment of this sensation, she drew back and tested the firmness of the ground about its roots before resigning herself unreservedly to the tree again. When she had resumed her former position with a feeling of perfect safety, she continued for a few minutes to dilate in fancy upon the suffering that would be caused by the death her whim had suggested. She was not a cruel girl, not on the whole ill-natured, yet such is human nature that this idea was actually the first that had given her satisfaction for many hours. How sorry Mr. Bates would be, when he found her dead, that he had dared to speak so angrily to her! It was, in a way, luxurious to contemplate the pathos of such an artistic death for herself, and its fine effect, by way of revenge, upon the guardian who had made himself intolerable to her.

From her post of observation she now saw, what had not before been observed by any one, that where rock and earth had fallen treacherously under her father's tread, another portion of the bank was loosened ready to fall. Where this loosening—the work no doubt of the frost—had taken place, there was but a narrow passage between the ravine and the house, and she was startled to be the first to discover what was so essential for all in the house to know. For many days the myriad leaves of the forest had lain everywhere in the dry atmosphere peculiar to a Canadian autumn, till it seemed now that all weight and moisture had left them. They were curled and puckered into half balloons, ready for the wind to toss and drift into every available gap. So strewn was this passage with such dry leaves, which even now the wind was drifting upon it more thickly, that the danger might easily have remained unseen. Then, as fancy is fickle, her mind darted from the pleasurable idea of her own death to consider how it would be if she did not make known her discovery and allowed her enemy to walk into the snare. This idea was not quite as attractive as the former, for it is sweeter to think of oneself as innocently dead and mourned, than as guilty and performing the office of mourner for another; and it was of herself only, whether as pictured in Bates's sufferings or as left liberated by his death, that the girl was thinking. Still it afforded relaxation to imagine what she might do if she were thus left mistress of the situation; and she devised a scheme of action for these circumstances that, in its clever adaptation to what would be required, would have greatly amazed the man who looked upon her as an unthinking child.

The difference between a strong and a weak mind is not that the strong mind does not indulge itself in wild fancies, but that it never gives to such fancy the power of capricious sway over the centres of purpose. This young woman was strong in mind as in body. No flickering intention of actually performing that which she had imagined had place within her. She played with the idea of death as she might have played with a toy, while resting herself from the angry question into which her whole being had for two days

concentrated itself, as to how she could thwart the will of the man who had assumed authority over her, and gain the freedom that she felt was necessary to life itself.

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She had not lain many minutes upon the out-growing birch before she had again forgotten her gust of revengeful fancy, and yielded herself to her former serious mood with a reaction of greater earnestness. The winter beauty of the brook, the grey, silent trees above, and the waste of dry curled leaves all round—these faded from her observation because the eye of her mind was again turned inwards to confront the circumstances of her difficulty.

As she leaned thus in childlike attitude and womanly size, her arms twined round the tree and her cheek resting on its smooth surface, that clumsiness which in all young animals seems inseparable from the period when recent physical growth is not yet entirely permeated by the character-life which gives it individual expression, was not apparent and any intelligent eye seeing her would have seen large beauty in her figure, which, like a Venus in the years when art was young, had no cramped proportions. Her rough, grey dress hung heavily about her; the moccasins that encased her feet were half hidden in the loose pile of dry leaves which had drifted high against the root of the tree. There was, however, no visible eye there to observe her youthful comeliness or her youthful distress. If some angel was near, regarding her, she did not know it, and if she had, she would not have been much interested; there was nothing in her mood to respond to angelic pity or appreciation. As it was, the strong tree was impotent to return her embrace; its cold bark had no response for the caress of her cheek; the north wind that howled, the trees that swayed, the dead leaves that rustling fled, and the stream that murmured under its ice, gave but drear companionship. Had she yielded her mind to their influence, the desires of her heart might have been numbed to a transient despair more nearly akin to a virtuous resignation to circumstance than the revolt that was now rampant within her. She did not yield; she was not now observing them; they only effected upon her inattentive senses an impression of misery which fed the strength of revolt.

A minute or two more and the recumbent position had become unendurable as too passive to correspond with the inward energy. She clambered back, and, standing upon level ground, turned, facing the width of the bare clearing and the rough buildings on it, and looked toward the downward slope and the wild lake, whose cold breath of water was agitated by the wind. The sky was full of cloud.

She stood up with folded arms, strength and energy in the stillness of her attitude. She heard the sound of carpenter's tools coming from the shed into which Bates had retired. No other hint of humanity was in the world to which she listened, which she surveyed. As she folded her arms she folded her bright coloured old shawl about her, and seemed to gather within its folds all warmth of colour, all warmth of feeling, that was in that wild, desolate place.

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A flake of snow fell on the shawl; she did not notice it. Another rested upon her cheek; then she started. She did not move much, but her face lifted itself slightly; her tear-swollen eyes were wide open; her lips were parted, as if her breath could hardly pass to and fro quickly enough to keep pace with agitated thought. The snow had begun to come. She knew well that it would go on falling, not to-day perhaps, nor to-morrow, but as certainly as time would bring the following days, so certainly the snow would fall, covering the frozen surface of the earth and water with foot above foot of powdery whiteness. Far as she now was from the gay, active throng of fellow-creatures which she conceived as existing in the outer world, and with whom she longed to be, the snow would make that distance not only great, but impassable to her, unaided.

It was true that she had threatened Bates with flight by foot across the frozen lake; but she knew in truth that such departure was as dependent on the submission of his will to hers as was her going in the more natural way by boat the next day, for the track of her snow-shoes and the slowness of her journey upon them would always keep her within his power.

The girl contemplated the falling flakes and her own immediate future at the same moment. The one notion clear to her mind was, that she must get away from that place before the cold had time to enchain the lake, or these flakes to turn the earth into a frozen sea. Her one hope was in the boat that would be launched to carry her dead father. She must go. *She must go!*

Youth would not be strong if it did not seek for happiness with all its strength, if it did not spurn pain with violence. All the notions that went to make up this girl's idea of pain were gathered from her present life of monotony and loneliness. All the notions that went to make up her idea of happiness were culled from what she had heard and dreamed of life beyond her wilderness. Added to this there was the fact that the man who had presumed to stand between her and the accomplishment of the first strong volition of her life had become intolerable to her—whether more by his severity or by his kindness she could not tell. She folded her shawl-draped arms more strongly across her breast, and hugged to herself all the dreams and desires, hopes and dislikes, that had grown within her as she had grown in mind and stature in that isolated place.

How could she accomplish her will?

The flakes fell upon the copper gloss of her uncombed hair, on face and hands that reddened to the cold, and gathered in the folds of the shawl. She stood as still as a waxen figure, if waxen figure could ever be true to the power of will which her pose betrayed. When the ground was white with small dry flakes she moved again. Her reverie, for lack of material, seemed to have come to nothing fresh. She determined to prefer her request again to Bates.

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She walked round the house and came to the shed door. In this shed large kettles and other vessels for potash-making were set up, but in front of these Bates and his man were at work making a rude pinewood coffin. The servant was the elder of the two. He had a giant-like, sinewy frame and a grotesquely small head; his cheeks were round and red like apples, and his long whiskers evidently received some attention from his vanity; it seemed an odd freak for vanity to take, for all the rest of him was rough and dirty. He wriggled when the girl darkened the doorway, but did not look straight at her.

"There's more of the bank going to slip where father fell—it's loose," she said.

They both heard. The servant answered her, commenting on the information. These were the only words that were said for some time. The girl stood and pressed herself against the side of the door. Bates did not look at her. At last she addressed him again. Her voice was low and gentle, perhaps from fear, perhaps from desire to persuade, perhaps merely from repression of feeling.

"Mr. Bates," she said, "you'll let me go in the boat with that?"—she made a gesture toward the unfinished coffin.

His anger had cooled since he had last seen her, not lessening but hardening, as molten metal loses malleability as it cools. Much had been needed to fan his rage to flame, but now the will fused by it had taken the mould of a hard decision that nothing but the blowing of another fire would melt.

"Ye'll not go unless you go *in* a coffin instead of along-side of it."

The coarse humour of his refusal was analogous to the laugh of a chidden child; it expressed not amusement, but an attempt to conceal nervous discomposure. The other man laughed; his mind was low enough to be amused.

"It's no place for me here," she urged, "and I ought by rights to go to the burying of my father."

"There's no place for ye neither where he'll be buried; and as to ye being at the funeral, it's only because I'm a long sight better than other men about the country that I don't shovel him in where he fell. I'm getting out the boat, and sending Saul here and the ox-cart two days' journey, to have him put decently in a churchyard. I don't b'lieve, if I'd died, you and your father would have done as much by me."

As he lauded his own righteousness his voice was less hard for the moment, and, like a child, she caught some hope.

"Yes, it's good of you, and in the end you'll be good and let me go too, Mr. Bates."

“Oh yes.” There was no assent in his voice. “And I’ll go too, to see that ye’re not murdered when Saul gets drunk at the first house; and we’ll take my aunt too, as we can’t leave her behind; and we’ll take the cow that has to be milked, and the pigs and hens that have to be fed; and when we get there, we’ll settle down without any house to live in, and feed on air.”

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His sarcasm came from him like the sweat of anger; he did not seem to take any voluntary interest in the play of his words. His manner was cool, but it was noticeable that he had stopped his work and was merely cutting a piece of wood with his jack-knife. As she looked at him steadily he whittled the more savagely.

The other man laughed again, and wriggled as he laughed.

"No," she replied, "you can't come, I know; but I can take care of myself."

"It's a thieving, drunken lot of fellows Saul will fall in with. Ye may prefer their society to mine, but I'll not risk it."

"I can go to the minister."

"And his wife would make a kitchen-girl of ye, and ye'd run off from her in a week. If ye'd not stay here, where ye have it all your own way, it's not long that ye'd put up wi' my lady's fault-finding; and ministers and their wives isn't much better than other folks—I've told ye before what I think of that sort of truck."

There was a glitter in her eyes that would have startled him, but he did not see it. He was looking only at the wood he was cutting, but he never observed that he was cutting it. After a minute he uttered his conclusion.

"Ye'll stay wi' me."

"*Stay with you,*" she cried, her breath catching at her words—"for how long?"

"I don't know." Complete indifference was in his tone. "Till ye're old, I suppose; for I'm not likely to find a better place for ye."

All the force of her nature was in the words she cast at him.

"*I'll not stay.*"

"No?" he sneered in heavy, even irony. "Will ye cry on the neighbours to fetch ye away?"

She did not need to turn her head to see the wild loneliness of hill and lake. It was present to her mind as she leaned on the rough wooden lintel, looking into the shed.

"Or," continued he, "will ye go a-visiting. There's the Indians camping other side o' the mountain here"—he jerked his head backward to denote the direction—"and one that came down to the tree-cutting two weeks ago said there were a couple of wolves on the other hill. I dare say either Indians or wolves would be quite glad of the *pleasure* o' your company."



She raised herself up and seemed suddenly to fill the doorway, so that both men looked up because much of their light was withdrawn.

"You'd not have dared to speak to me like this while father was alive."

As a matter of fact the accusation was not true. The father's presence or absence would have made no difference to Bates had he been wrought up to the same pitch of anger; but neither he nor the girl was in a condition to know this. He only replied:

"That's the reason I waited till he was dead."

"If he hadn't been hurt so sudden he wouldn't have left me *here*."

"But he *was* hurt sudden, and he *did* leave ye here."

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She made as if to answer, but did not. Both men were looking at her now. The snow was white on her hair. Her tears had so long been dry that the swollen look was passing from her face. It had been until now at best a heavy face, but feeling that is strong enough works like a master's swift chisel to make the features the vehicle of the soul. Both men were relieved when she suddenly took her eyes from them and her shadow from their work and went away.

Saul stretched his head and looked after her. There was no pity in his little apple face and beady eyes, only a sort of cunning curiosity, and the rest was dulness and weakness.

Bates did not look after her. He shut his knife and fell to joining the coffin.

CHAPTER IV.

The girl lifted the latch of the house-door, and went in. She was in the living-room. The old woman sat in a chair that was built of wood against the log wall. She was looking discontentedly before her at an iron stove, which had grown nearly cold for lack of attention. Some chairs, a table, a bed, and a ladder which led to the room above, made the chief part of the furniture. A large mongrel dog, which looked as if he had some blood of the grey southern sheep dog in him rose from before the stove and greeted the in-comer silently.

The dog had blue eyes, and he held up his face wistfully, as if he knew something was the matter. The old woman complained of cold. It was plain that she did not remember anything concerning death or tears.

There was one other door in the side of the room which led to the only inner chamber. The girl went into this chamber, and the heed she gave to the dog's sympathy was to hold the door and let him follow her. Then she bolted it. There were two narrow beds built against the wall; in one of these the corpse of a grey-haired man was lying. The dog had seen death before, and he evidently understood what it was. He did not move quickly or sniff about; he laid his head on the edge of the winding-sheet and moaned a little.

The girl did not moan. She knelt down some way from the bed, with a desire to pray. She did not pray; she whispered her anger, her unhappiness, her desires, to the air of the cold, still room, repeating the same phrases again and again with clenched hands and the convulsive gestures of half-controlled passion.

The reason she did not pray was that she believed that she could only pray when she was "good," and after falling on her knees she became aware that goodness, as she understood it, was not in her just then, nor did she even desire it. The giving vent to her

misery in half-audible whispers followed involuntarily on her intention to pray. She knew not why she thus poured out her heart; she hardly realised what she said or wished to say; yet, because some expression of her helpless need was necessary, and because, through fear and a rugged sense of her own evil, she sedulously averted her mind from the thought of God, her action had, more than anything else, the semblance of an invocation to the dead man to arise and save her, and take vengeance on her enemy.

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Daylight was in the room. The girl had knelt at first upright; then, as her passion seemed to avail nothing, but only to weary her, she sank back, sitting on her feet, buried her locked hands deeply in her lap, and with head bowed over them, continued to stab the air with short, almost inaudible, complaints. The dead man lay still. The dog, after standing long in subdued silence, came and with his tongue softly lapped some of the snow-water from her hair.

After that, she got up and went with him back into the kitchen, and lit the fire, and cooked food, and the day waned.

There is never in Nature that purpose to thwart which man in his peevishness is apt to attribute to her. Just because he desired so much that the winter should hold off a few days longer, Bates, on seeing the snow falling from the white opaque sky, took for granted that the downfall would continue and the ice upon the lake increase. Instead of that, the snow stopped falling at twilight without apparent cause, and night set in more mildly.

Darkness fell upon the place, as darkness can only fall upon solitudes, with a lonesome dreariness that seemed to touch and press. Night is not always dark, but with this night came darkness. There was no star nor glimmer of light; the pine-clad hills ceased to have form; the water in the lake was lost to all sense but that of hearing; and upon nearer objects the thinly sprinkled snow bestowed no distinctness of outline, but only a weird show of whitish shapes. The water gave forth fitful sobs. At intervals there were sounds round the house, as of stealthy feet, or of quick pattering feet, or of trailing garments—this was the wind busy among the drifting leaves.

The two men, who had finished the coffin by the light of a lantern, carried it into the house and set it up against the wall while they ate their evening meal. Then they took it to a table in the next room to put the dead man in it. The girl and the dog went with them. They had cushioned the box with coarse sacking filled with fragrant pine tassels, but the girl took a thickly quilted cloth from her own bed and lined it more carefully. They did not hinder her.

“We’ve made it a bit too big,” said Saul; “that’ll stop the shaking.”

The corpse, according to American custom, was dressed in its clothes—a suit of light grey homespun, such as is to be bought everywhere from French-Canadian weavers. When they had lifted the body and put it in the box, they stopped involuntarily to look, before the girl laid a handkerchief upon the face. There lay a stalwart, grey-haired man—dead. Perhaps he had sinned deeply in his life; perhaps he had lived as nobly as his place and knowledge would permit—they could not tell. Probably they each estimated what they knew of his life from a different standpoint. The face was as ashen as the grey hair about it, as the grey clothes the body wore. They stood and looked at it—those three, who were bound to each other by no tie except such as the accident of time

and place had wrought. The dog, who understood what death was, exhibited no excitement, no curiosity; his tail drooped; he moaned quietly against the coffin.

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Bates made an impatient exclamation and kicked him. The kick was a subdued one. The wind-swept solitude without and the insistent presence of death within had its effect upon them all. Saul looked uneasily over his shoulder at the shadows which the guttering candle cast on the wall. Bates handled the coffin-lid with that shrinking from noise which is peculiar to such occasions.

"Ye'd better go in the other room," said he to Sissy. "It's unfortunate we haven't a screw left—we'll have to nail it."

Sissy did not go. They had made holes in the wood for the nails as well as they could, but they had to be hammered in. It was very disagreeable—the sound and the jar. With each stroke of Saul's hammer it seemed to the two workmen that the dead man jumped.

"There, man," cried Bates angrily; "that'll do."

Only four nails had been put in their places—one in each side. With irritation that amounted to anger against Saul, Bates took the hammer from him and shoved it on to a high shelf.

"Ye can get screws at the village, ye know," he said, still indignantly, as if some fault had appertained to Saul.

Then, endeavouring to calm an ill-temper which he felt to be wholly unreasonable, he crossed his arms and sat down on a chair by the wall. His sitting in that room at all perhaps betokened something of the same sensation which in Saul produced those glances before and behind, indicating that he did not like to turn his back upon any object of awe. In Bates this motive, if it existed, was probably unconscious or short-lived; but while he still sat there Saul spoke, with a short, silly laugh which was by way of preface.

"Don't you think, now, Mr. Bates, it 'ud be better to have a prayer, or a hymn, or something of that sort? We'd go to bed easier."

To look at the man it would not have been easy to attribute any just notion of the claims of religion to him. He looked as if all his motions, except those of physical strength, were vapid and paltry. Still, this was what he said, and Bates replied stiffly:

"I've no objections."

Then, as if assuming proper position for the ceremony that was to ease his mind, the big lumberman sat down. The girl also sat down.

Bates, wiry, intelligent Scot that he was, sat, his arms crossed and his broad jaw firmly set, regarding them both with contempt in his mind. What did they either of them know about the religion they seemed at this juncture to feel after as vaguely as animals feel

after something they want and have not? But as for him, he understood religion; he was quite capable of being priest of his household, and he felt that its weak demand for a form of worship at this time was legitimate. In a minute, therefore, he got up, and fetching a large Bible from the living-room he sat down again and turned over its leaves with great precision and reverence.

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He read one of the more trenchant of the Psalms, a long psalm that had much in it about enemies and slaughter. It had a very strong meaning for him, for he put himself in the place of the writer. The enemies mentioned were, in the first place, sins—by which he denoted the more open forms of evil; and, in the second place, wicked men who might interfere with him; and under the head of wicked men he classed all whom he knew to be wicked, and most other men, whom he supposed to be so. He was not a self-righteous man—at least, not more self-righteous than most men, for he read with as great fervour the adjurations against sins into which he might fall as against those which seemed to him pointed more especially at other sinners who might persecute him for his innocence. He was only a suspicious man made narrower by isolation, and the highest idea he had of what God required of him was a life of innocence. There was better in him than this—much of impulse and action that was positively good; but he did not conceive that it was of the workings of good that seemed so natural that God took account.

Upon Saul also the psalm had adequate effect, for it sounded to him pious, and that was all he desired.

The girl, however, could not listen to a word of it. She fidgeted, not with movement of hands or feet, but with the restlessness of mind and eyes. She gazed at the boards of the ceiling, at the boards of the floor, at the log walls on which each shadow had a scalloped edge because of the form of tree-trunks laid one above another. At length her eyes rested on the lid of the coffin, and, with nervous strain, she made them follow the grain of the wood up and down, up and down. There was an irregular knothole in the lid, and on this her eyes fixed themselves, and the focus of her sight seemed to eddy round and round its darkened edge till, with an effort, she turned from it.

The boards used for making the coffin had been by no means perfect. They were merely the best that could be chosen from among the bits of sawn lumber at hand. There was a tiny hole in one side, at the foot, and this larger one in the lid above the dead man's breast, where knots had fallen out with rough handling, leaving oval apertures. The temptation Sissy felt to let her eyes labour painfully over every marking in the wood and round these two holes—playing a sort of sad mechanical game therewith—and her efforts to resist the impulse, made up the only memory she had of the time the reading occupied.

There was a printed prayer upon a piece of paper kept inside the lid of the Bible, and when Bates had read the psalm, he read this also. He knelt while he did so, and the others did the same. Then that was finished.

"I'll move your bed into the kitchen, Sissy," said Bates.

He had made the same offer the night before, and she had accepted it then, but now she replied that she would sooner sleep in that room than near the stove. He was in no

mood to contest such a point with her. Saul went out to his shed. Bates shut the house door, and went up the ladder to his loft. Both were soon in the sound slumber that is the lot of men who do much outdoor labour.

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The girl helped the old woman to bed in the kitchen. Then she went back and sat in the chamber of death.

Outside, the wind hustled the fallen leaves.

CHAPTER V.

At dawn Bates came down the ladder again, and went out quietly. The new day was fair, and calm; none of his fears were fulfilled. The dead man might start upon his journey, and Bates knew that the start must be an early one.

He and Saul, taking long-handled oars and poles, went down to the water's edge, where a big, flat-bottomed boat was lying drawn up on the shore to avoid the autumn storms. The stones of the beach looked black: here and there were bits of bright green moss upon them: both stones and moss had a coating of thin ice that glistened in the morning light.

It was by dint of great exertion that they got the clumsy vessel into the water and fastened her to a small wooden landing. They used more strength than time in their work. There was none of that care and skill required in the handling of the scow that a well-built craft would have needed. When she was afloat and tied, they went up the hill again, and harnessed a yoke of oxen to a rough wooden cart. Neither did this take them long. Bates worked with a nervousness that almost amounted to trembling. He had in his mind the dispute with the girl which he felt sure awaited him.

In this fear also he was destined to be disappointed. When he went to the inner room the coffin lay as he had left it, ready for its journey, and on the girl's bed in the corner the thick quilts were heaped as though the sleeper, had tossed restlessly. But now there was no restlessness; he only saw her night-cap beyond the quilts; it seemed that, having perhaps turned her face to the wall to weep, she had at last fallen into exhausted and dreamless slumber.

Bates and Saul carried out the coffin eagerly, quietly. Even to the callous and shallow mind of Saul it was a relief to escape a contest with an angry woman. They set the coffin on the cart, and steadied it with a barrel of potash and sacks of buckwheat, which went to make up the load. By a winding way, where the slope was easiest, they drove the oxen between the trees, using the goad more and their voices as little as might be, till they were a distance from the house. Some trees had been felled, and cut off close to the ground, so that a cart might pass through the wood; this was the only sign of an artificial road. The fine powdered snow of the night before had blown away.

When they reached the beach again, the eastern sky, which had been grey, was all dappled with cold pink, and the grey water reflected it somewhat. There was clearer

light on the dark green of the pine-covered hills, and the fine ice coating on stone and weed at the waterside had sharper glints of brilliancy.

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Bates observed the change in light and colour; Saul did not; neither was disposed to dally for a moment. They were obliged to give forth their voices now in hoarse ejaculations, to make the patient beasts understand that they were to step off the rough log landing-place into the boat. The boat was almost rectangular in shape, but slightly narrower at the ends than in the middle, and deeper in the middle than at the ends; it was of rough wood, unpainted. The men disposed the oxen in the middle of the boat; the cart they unloaded, and distributed its contents as they best might. With long stout poles they then pushed off from the shore. Men and oxen were reflected in the quiet water.

They were not bound on a long or perilous voyage. The boat was merely to act as a ferry round a precipitous cliff where the shore was impassable, and across the head of the gushing river that formed the lake's outlet, for the only road through the hills lay along the further shore of this stream.

The men kept the boat in shallow water, poling and rowing by turns. There was a thin coating of ice, like white silk, forming on the water. As they went, Bates often looked anxiously where the log house stood on the slope above him, fearing to see the girl come running frantic to the water's edge, but he did not see her. The door of the house remained shut, and no smoke rose from its chimney. They had left the childish old woman sitting on the edge of her bed; Bates knew that she would be in need of fire and food, yet he could not wish that the girl should wake yet. "Let her sleep," he muttered to himself. "It will do her good." Yet it was not for her good he wished her to sleep, but for his own peace.

The pink faded from the sky, but the sun did not shine forth brightly. It remained wan and cold, like a moon behind grey vapours.

"I'll not get back in a week, or on wheels," said Saul. He spoke more cheerfully than was pleasing to his employer.

"If it snows ye'll have to hire a sleigh and get back the first minute you can." The reply was stern.

The elder and bigger man made no further comment. However much he might desire to be kept in the gay world by the weather, the stronger will and intellect, for the hour at least, dominated his intention.

They rowed their boat past the head of the river. In an hour they had reached that part of the shore from which the inland road might be gained. They again loaded the cart. It, like the boat, was of the roughest description; its two wheels were broad and heavy; a long pole was mortised into their axle. The coffin and the potash barrel filled the cart's breadth; the sacks of buckwheat steadied the barrel before and behind. The meek red

oxen were once more fastened to it on either side of the long pole. The men parted without farewells.

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Saul turned his back on the water. The large, cold morning rang to his voice—"Gee. Yo-hoi-ist. Yo-hoi-eest. Gee." The oxen, answering to his voice and his goad, laboured onward over the sandy strip that bound the beach, up the hill among the maple trees that grew thickly in the vale of the small river. Bates watched till he saw the cattle, the cart, and Saul's stalwart form only indistinctly through the numerous grey tree-stems that broke the view in something the way that ripples in water break a reflection. When the monotonous shouting of Saul's voice—"Gee, gee, there. Haw, wo, haw. Yo-hoi-eest," was somewhat mellowed by the widening space, Bates stepped into the boat, and, pushing off, laboured alone to propel her back across the lake.

It took him longer to get back now that he was single-handed. The current of the lake towards its outlet tended to push the great clumsy scow against the shore. He worked his craft with one oar near the stern, but very often he was obliged to drop it and push out from shore with his pole. It was arduous, but all sense of the cold, bleak weather was lost, and the interest and excitement of the task were refreshing. To many men, as to many dogs, there is an inexplicable and unreasoning pleasure in dealing with water that no operation upon land can yield. Bates was one of these; he would hardly have chosen his present lot if it had not been so; but, like many a dry character of his stamp, he did not give his more agreeable sensations the name of pleasure, and therefore could afford to look upon pleasure as an element unnecessary to a sober life. Mid pushings and splashings, from the management of his scow, from air and sky, hill and water, he was in reality, deriving as great pleasure as any millionaire might from the sailing of a choice yacht; but he was aware only that, as he neared the end of his double journey, he felt in better trim in mind and body to face his lugubrious and rebellious ward.

When, however, he had toiled round the black rock cliff which hid the clearing from the river's head, and was again in full sight of his own house, all remembrance of the girl and his dread of meeting her passed from him in his excessive surprise at seeing several men near his dwelling. His dog was barking and leaping in great excitement. He heard the voices of other dogs. It took but the first glance to show him that the men were not Indians. Full of excited astonishment he pushed his boat to the shore.

His dog, having darted with noisy scatter of dry leaves down the hill to meet him, stood on the shore expectant with mouth open, excitement in his eyes and tail, saying as clearly as aught can be said without words—"This is a very agreeable event in our lives. Visitors have come." The moment Bates put his foot on land the dog bounded barking up the hill, then turned again to Bates, then again bounded off toward the visitors. Even a watchdog may be glad to see strangers if the pleasure is only rare enough.

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Bates mounted the slope as a man may mount stairs—two steps at a time. Had he seen the strangers, as the saying is, dropping from the clouds, he could hardly have been more surprised than he was to see civilised people had reached his place otherwise than by the lake, for the rugged hills afforded nothing but a much longer and more arduous way to any settlement within reach. When he got up, however, he saw that these men carried with them implements of camp-life and also surveying instruments, by which he judged, and rightly, that his guests were ranging the lonely hills upon some tour of official survey.

That the travellers *were* his guests neither he nor they had the slightest doubt. They had set down their traps close to his door, and, in the calm confidence that it would soon be hospitably opened by rightful hands, they had made no attempt to open it for themselves. There were eight men in the party, two of whom, apparently its more important members, sauntered to meet Bates, with pipes in their mouths. These told him what district they were surveying, by what track they had just come over the hill, where they had camped the past night, where they wanted to get to by nightfall. They remarked on the situation of his house and the extent of his land. They said to him, in fact, more than was immediately necessary, but not more than was pleasant for him to hear or for them to tell. It is a very taciturn man who, meeting a stranger in a wilderness, does not treat him with more or less of friendly loquacity.

Under the right circumstances Bates was a genial man. He liked the look of these men; he liked the tone of their talk; and had he liked them much less, the rarity of the occasion and the fact that he was their host would have expanded his spirits. He asked astute questions about the region they had traversed, and, as they talked, he motioned them towards the house. He had it distinctly in his mind that he was glad they had come across his place, and that he would give them a hot breakfast; but he did not say so in words—just as they had not troubled to begin their conversation with him by formal greetings.

The house door was still shut; there was still no smoke from the chimney, although it was now full three hours since Bates had left the place. Saying that he would see if the women were up, he went alone into the house. The living-room was deserted, and, passing through the inner door, which was open, he saw his aunt, who, according to custom was neatly dressed, sitting on the foot of Sissy's empty bed. The old woman was evidently cold, and frightened at the unusual sounds outside; greatly fretted, she held the girl's night-cap in her hand, and the moment he appeared demanded of him where Sissy was, for she must have her breakfast. The girl he did not see.

The dog had followed him. He looked up and wagged his tail; he made no sign of feeling concern that the girl was not there. Bates could have cursed his dumbness; he would fain have asked where she had gone. The dog probably knew, but as for Bates, he not only did not know, but no conjecture rose in his mind as to her probable whereabouts.

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He took his aunt to her big chair, piled the stove from the well-stored wood-box, and lit it. Then, shutting the door of the room where the disordered bed lay and throwing the house-door open, he bid the visitors enter. He went out himself to search the surroundings of the house, but Sissy was not to be found.

The dog did not follow Bates on this search. He sat down before the stove in an upright position, breathed with his mouth open, and bestowed on the visitors such cheerful and animated looks that they talked to and patted him. Their own dogs had been shut into the empty ox-shed for the sake of peace, and the house-dog was very much master of the situation.

Of the party, the two surveyors—one older and one younger—were men of refinement and education. British they were, or of such Canadian birth and training as makes a good imitation. Five of the others were evidently of humbler position—axe-men and carriers. The eighth man, who completed the party, was a young American, a singularly handsome young fellow—tall and lithe. He did not stay in the room with the others, but lounged outside by himself, leaning against the front of the house in the white cold sunlight.

In the meantime Bates, having searched the sheds and inspected with careful eyes the naked woods above the clearing, came back disconsolately by the edge of the ravine, peering into it suspiciously to see if the girl could, by some wild freak, be hiding there. When he came to the narrow strip of ground between the wall of the house and the broken bank he found himself walking knee-deep in the leaves that the last night's gale had drifted there, and because the edge of the ravine was thus entirely concealed, he, remembering Sissy's warning, kicked about the leaves cautiously to find the crack of which she had spoken, and discovered that the loose portion had already fallen. It suddenly occurred to him to wonder if the girl could possibly have fallen with it. Instantly he sprang down the ravine, feeling among the drifted leaves on all sides, but nothing except rock and earth was to be found under their light heaps. It took only a few minutes to assure him of the needlessness of his fear. The low window of the room in which Sissy had slept looked out immediately upon this drift of leaves, and, as Bates passed it, he glanced through the uncurtained glass, as if the fact that it was really empty was so hard for him to believe that it needed this additional evidence. Then the stacks of fire-wood in front of the house were all that remained to be searched, and Bates walked round, looking into the narrow aisles between them, looking at the same time down the hill, as if it might be possible that she had been on the shore and he had missed her.

"What are you looking for?" asked the young American. The question was not put rudely. There was a serenity about the youth's expectation of an answer which, proving that he had no thought of over-stepping good manners, made it, at the same time, very difficult to withhold an answer.

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Bates turned annoyed. He had supposed everybody was within.

"What have you lost?" repeated the youth.

"Oh—" said Bates, prolonging the sound indefinitely. He was not deceitful or quick at invention, and it seemed to him a manifest absurdity to reply—"a girl." He approached the house, words hesitating on his lips.

"My late partner's daughter," he observed, keeping wide of the mark, "usually does the cooking."

"Married?" asked the young man rapidly.

"She?—No," said Bates, taken by surprise.

"*Young* lady?" asked the other, with more interest. Bates was not accustomed to consider his ward under his head.

"She is just a young girl about seventeen," he replied stiffly.

"Oh, halibaloo!" cried the youth joyously. "Why, stranger, I haven't set eyes on a young lady these two months. I'd give a five dollar-bill this minute, if I had it, to set eyes on her right here and now." He took his pipe from his lips and clapped his hand upon his side with animation as he spoke.

Bates regarded him with dull disfavour. He would himself have given more than the sum mentioned to have compassed the same end, but for different reasons, and his own reasons were so grave that the youth's frivolity seemed to him doubly frivolous.

"I hope," he said coldly, "that she will come in soon." His eyes wandered involuntarily up the hill as he spoke.

"Gone out walking, has she?" The youth's eyes followed in the same direction. "Which way has she gone?"

"I don't know exactly which path she may have taken." Bates's words grew more formal the harder he felt himself pressed.

"Path!" burst out the young man—"Macadamised road, don't you mean? There's about as much of one as the other on this here hill."

"I meant," said Bates, "that I didn't know where she was."

His trouble escaped somewhat with his voice as he said this with irritation.

The youth looked at him curiously, and with some incipient sympathy. After a minute's reflection he asked, touching his forehead:

"She ain't weak here, is she—like the *old* lady?"

"Nothing of the sort," exclaimed Bates, indignantly. The bare idea cost him a pang. Until this moment he had been angry with the girl; he was still angry, but a slight modification took place. He felt with her against all possible imputations.

"All right in the headpiece, is she?" reiterated the other more lightly.

"Very intelligent," replied Bates. "I have taught her myself. She is remarkably intelligent." The young man's sensitive spirits, which had suffered slight depression from contact with Bates's perturbation, now recovered entirely.

"Oh, Glorianna!" he cried in irrepressible anticipation. "Let this very intelligent young lady come on! Why"—in an explanatory way—"if I saw as much as a female dress hanging on a clothes-line out to dry, I'm in that state of mind I'd adore it properly."

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If Bates had been sure that the girl would return safely he would perhaps have been as well pleased that she should not return in time to meet the proposed adoration; as it was, he was far too ill at ease concerning her not to desire her advent as ardently as did the naive youth. The first feeling made his manner severe; the second constrained him to say he supposed she would shortly appear.

His mind was a good deal confounded, but if he supposed anything it was that, having wakened to find herself left behind by the boat, she had walked away from the house in an access of anger and disappointment, and he expected her to return soon, because he did not think she had courage or resolution to go very far alone. Underneath this was the uneasy fear that her courage and resolution might take her farther into danger than was at all desirable, but he stifled the fear.

When he went in he told the company, in a few matter-of-fact words of his partner's death, and the object of the excursion from which they had seen him return. He also mentioned that his aunt's companion, the dead man's child, had, it appeared, gone off into the woods that morning—this was by way of apology that she was not there to cook for them, but he took occasion to ask if they had seen her on the hill. As they had come down the least difficult way and had not met her, he concluded that she had not endeavoured to go far afield, and tried to dismiss his anxiety and enjoy his guests in his own way.

Hospitality, even in its simplest form, is more often a matter of amiable pride than of sincere unselfishness, but it is not a form of pride with which people are apt to quarrel. Bates, when he found himself conversing with scientific men of gentle manners, was resolved to show himself above the ordinary farmer of that locality. He went to the barrel where the summer's eggs had been packed in soft sand, and took out one apiece for the assembled company. He packed the oven with large potatoes. He put on an excellent supply of tea to boil. The travellers, who, in fact, had had their ordinary breakfast some hours before, made but feeble remonstrances against these preparations, remonstrances which only caused Bates to make more ample provision. He brought out a large paper bag labelled, "patent self-raising pancake meal," and a small piece of fat pork. Here he was obliged to stop and confess himself in need of culinary skill; he looked at the men, not doubting that he could obtain it from them.

"The Philadelphian can do it better," said one. This was corroborated by the others. "Call Harkness," they cried, and at the same time they called Harkness themselves.

The young American opened the door and came in in a very leisurely, not to say languid, manner. He took in the situation at a glance without asking a question. "But," said he, "are we not to wait for the intelligent young lady? Female intelligence can make the finer pancake."

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The surveyors manifested some curiosity. "What do you know about a young lady?" they asked.

"The young lady of the house," replied Harkness. "Hasn't *he*"—referring to Bates—"told you all about her? The domestic divinity who has just happened to get mislaid this morning. I saw him looking over the wood pile to see if she had fallen behind it, but she hadn't."

"It is only a few days since her father died," said the senior of the party gravely.

"And so," went on the young man, "she has very properly given these few days to inconsolable grief. But now our visit is just timed to comfort and enliven her, *why* is she not here to be comforted and enlivened?"

No-one answered, and, as the speaker was slowly making his way toward the frying-pan, no one seemed really apprehensive that he would keep them waiting. The youth had an oval, almost childish face; his skin was dark, clear, and softly coloured as any girl's; his hair fell in black, loose curls over his forehead. He was tall, slender without being thin, very supple; but his languid attitudes fell short of grace, and were only tolerable because they were comic. When he reached out his hand for the handle of the frying-pan he held the attention of the whole company by virtue of his office, and his mind, to Bates's annoyance, was still running on the girl.

"Is she fond of going out walking alone?" he asked.

"How could she be fond of walking when there's no place to walk?" Bates spoke roughly. "Besides, she has too much work to do."

"Ever lost her before?"

"No," said Bates. It would have been perfectly unbearable to his pride that these strangers should guess his real uneasiness or its cause, so he talked as if the fact of the girl's long absence was not in any way remarkable.

Having mixed a batter the American sliced pork fat into the hot pan and was instantly obscured from view by the smoke thereof. In a minute his face appeared above it like the face of a genius.

"You will observe, gentlemen," he cried without bashfulness, "that I now perform the eminently interesting operation of dropping cakes—one, two, three. May the intelligent young lady return to eat them!"

No one laughed, but his companions smiled patiently at his antics—a patience born of sitting in a very hot, steamy room after weeks in the open air.

“You are a cook,” remarked Bates.

The youth bent his long body towards him at a sudden angle. “Born a cook—dentist by profession—by choice a vagabond.”

“Dentist?” said Bates curiously.

“At your service, sir.”

“He is really a dentist,” said one of the surveyors with sleepy amusement. “He carries his forceps round in his vest pocket.”

“I lost them when I scrambled head first down this gentleman’s macadamised road this morning, but if you want a tooth out I can use the tongs.”

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"My teeth are all sound," said Bates.

"Thank the Lord for that!" the young man answered with an emphatic piety which, for all that appeared, might have been perfectly sincere.

"And the young lady?" he asked after a minute.

"What?"

"The young lady's teeth—the teeth of the intelligent young lady—the intelligent teeth of the young lady—are they sound?"

"Yes."

He sighed deeply. "And to think," he mourned, "that he should have casually lost her *just* this morning!"

He spoke exactly as if the girl were a penknife or a marble that had rolled from Bates's pocket, and the latter, irritated by an inward fear, grew to hate the jester.

When the meal, which consisted of fried eggs, pancakes, and potatoes, was eaten, the surveyors spent an hour or two about the clearing, examining the nature of the soil and rock. They had something to say to Bates concerning the value of his land which interested him exceedingly. Considering how rare it was for him to see any one, and how fitted he was to appreciate intercourse with men who were manifestly in a higher rank of life than he, it would not have been surprising if he had forgotten Sissy for a time, even if they had had nothing to relate of personal interest to himself. As it was, even in the excitement of hearing what was of importance concerning his own property, he did not wholly forget her; but while his visitors remained his anxiety was in abeyance.

When they were packing their instruments to depart, the young American, who had not been with them during the morning, came and took Bates aside in a friendly way.

"See here," he said, "were you gassing about that young lady? There ain't no young lady now, is there?"

"I told you"—with some superiority of manner—"she is not a young lady; she is a working girl, an emigrant's——"

"Oh, Glorianna!" he broke out, "girl or lady, what does it matter to me? Do you mean to say you've really lost her?"

The question was appalling to Bates. All the morning he had not dared to face such a possibility and now to have the question hurled at him with such imperative force by

another was like a terrible blow. But when a blow is thus dealt from the outside, a man like Bates rallies all the opposition of his nature to repel it.

“Not at all”—his manner was as stiff as ever—“she is lurking somewhere near.”

“Look here—I’ve been up the hill that way, and that way, and that way”—he indicated the directions with his hand—“and I’ve been down round the shore as far as I could get, and I’ve had our two dogs with me, who’d either of them have mentioned it if there’d been a stranger anywheres near; and she ain’t here. An’ if she’s climbed *over* the hill, *she’s* a spunky one—somewhat spunkier than *I* should think natural.” He looked at Bates very suspiciously as he spoke.

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“Well?”

“Well, my belief is that there ain’t no young lady, and that you’re gassing me.”

“Very well,” said Bates, and he turned away. It was offensive to him to be accused of telling lies—he was not a man to give any other name than “lie” to the trick attributed to him, or to perceive any humour in the idea of it—but it was a thousand times more offensive that this youth should have presumed to search for Sissy and to tell him that the search had been vain.

Horrible as the information just given was, he did not more than half believe it, and something just said gave him a definite idea of hope—the strange dogs had not found Sissy, but the house-dog, if encouraged to seek, would certainly find her. He had felt a sort of grudge against the animal all day, because he must know which way she had gone and could not tell. Now he resolved as soon as the strangers were gone to set the dog to seek her. Upon this he stayed his mind.

The surveyors hoped to get a few days’ more work done before the winter put an end to their march; they determined when thus stopped to turn down the river valley and take the train for Quebec. The way they now wished to take lay, not in the direction in which the ox-cart had gone, but over the hills directly across the lake. The scow belonging to this clearing, on which they had counted, was called into requisition.

The day was still calm; Bates had no objection to take them across. At any other time he would have had some one to leave in charge of the place, but especially as he would be in sight of the house all the time, he made no difficulty of leaving as it was. He could produce four oars, such as they were, and the way across was traversed rapidly.

“And there ain’t really a female belonging to the place, except the old lady,” said the dentist, addressing the assembled party upon the scow. “It was all a tale, and—my eye;—he took me in completely.”

Probably he did not give entire credence to his own words, and wished to provoke the others to question Bates further; but they were not now in the same idle mood that had enthralled them when, in the morning, they had listened to him indulgently. Their loins were girded; they were intent upon what they were doing and what they were going to do. No one but Bates paid heed to him.

Bates heard him clearly enough, but, so stubbornly had he set himself to rebuff this young man, and so closely was he wrapped in that pride of reserve that makes a merit of obstinate self-reliance, that it never even occurred to him to answer or to accept this last offer of a fellow-man’s interest in the search he was just about to undertake.

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He had some hope that, if Sissy were skulking round, she would find it easier to go back to the house when he was absent, and that he should find her as usual on his return; but, as he wrought at his oar in returning across the leaden water, looking up occasionally to make the log house his aim, and staring for the most part at the lone hills, under the pine woods of which his late companions had disappeared, his heart gradually grew more heavy; all the more because the cheerfulness of their society had buoyed up his spirit in their presence, did it now suffer depression. The awful presentiment began to haunt him that he would not find the girl that night, that he had in grim reality “lost her.” If this were the case, what a fool, what a madman, he had been to let go the only aid within his reach! He stopped his rowing for a minute, and almost thought of turning to call the surveying party back again. But no, Sissy might be—in all probability was—already in the house; in that case what folly to have brought them back, delaying their work and incurring their anger! So he reasoned, and went on towards home; but, in truth, it was not their delay or displeasure that deterred him so much as his own pride, which loathed the thought of laying bare his cause for fear and distress.

CHAPTER VI.

The day was duller now. The sun, in passing into the western sky, had entered under thicker veils of white. The film of ice on the bay, which had melted in the pale sunbeams of noon, would soon form again. The air was growing bitterly cold.

When Bates had moored his boat, he went up the hill heavily. The dog, which had been shut in the house to guard it, leaped out when he opened the door. Sissy was not there.

Bates went in and found one of her frocks, and, bringing it out, tried to put the animal on the scent of her track. He stooped, and held the garment under the dog’s nose. The dog sniffed it, laid his nose contentedly on Bates’s arm, looked up in his face, and wagged his tail with most annoying cheerfulness.

“Where is she?” jerked Bates. “Where is she? Seek her, good dog.”

The dog, all alert, bounded off a little way and returned again with an inconsequent lightness in tail and eye. One of his ears had been torn in a battle with the strange dogs, but he was more elated by the conflict than depressed by the wound. When he came back, he seemed to Bates almost to smile as if he said: “It pleases me that you should pay me so much attention, but as for the girl, I know her to be satisfactorily disposed of.” Bates did not swear at the animal; he was a Scotchman, and he would have considered it a sin to swear: he did not strike the dog either, which he would not have considered a sin at all. He was actually afraid to offend the only living creature who could befriend and help him in his search. Very patiently he bent the dog’s nose to the frock and to the ground, begging and commanding him to seek. At length the dog

trotted off by a circuitous route up the clearing, and Bates followed. He hoped the dog was really seeking, but feared he was merely following some fancy that by thus running he would be rid of his master's solicitude.

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Bates felt it an odd thing that he should be wandering about with a girl's frock in his hands. It was old, but he did not remember that he had ever touched it before or noticed its material or pattern. He looked at it fondly now, as he held it ready to renew the dog's memory if his purpose should falter.

The dog went on steadily enough until he got to the edge of the woods, where his footsteps made a great noise on the brittle leaves. He kicked about in them as if he liked the noise they made, but offered to go no farther. Bates looked at them and knew that the dog was not likely to keep the scent among them if the girl had gone that way. He stood erect, looking up the drear expanse of the hill, and the desperate nature of his situation came upon him. He had been slow—slow to take it in, repelling it with all the obstinacy of an obstinate mind. Now he saw clearly that the girl had fled, and he was powerless to pursue at the distance she might now have reached, the more so as he could not tell which way she had taken. He would have left his live stock, but the helpless old woman, whose life depended on his care, he dared not leave. He stood and considered, his mind working rapidly under a stress of emotion such as perhaps it had never known before—certainly not since the first strong impulses of his youth had died within his cautious heart.

Then he remembered that Sissy had walked about the previous day, and perhaps the dog was only on the scent of yesterday's meanderings. He took the animal along the top of the open space, urging him to find another track, and at last the dog ran down again by the side of the stream. Bates followed to the vicinity of the house, no wiser than he had been at first.

The dog stopped under the end window of the house where old Cameron fell, and scratched among the leaves on the fresh fallen earth. Bates was reminded of the associations of the fatal spot. He thought of his old friend's deathbed, of the trust that had there been confided to him. Had he been unfaithful to that trust? With the impatience of sharp pain, he called the dog again to the door of the house, and again from that starting-point tried to make him seek the missing one. He did this, not because he had much hope in the dog now, but because he had no other hope.

This time the dog stood by, sobered by his master's soberness, but looking with teasing expectancy, ready to do whatever was required if he might only know what that was. To Bates, who was only anxious to act at the dumb thing's direction, this expectancy was galling. He tore off a part of the dress and fastened it to the dog's collar. He commanded him to carry it to her in such excited tones that the old woman heard, and fumbled her way out of the door to see what was going on. And Bates stood between the dumb animal and the aged wreck of womanhood, and felt horribly alone.

Clearly the sagacious creature not only did not know where to find the girl, but knew that she was gone where he could not find her, for he made no effort to carry his burden a step. Bates took it from him at last, and the dog, whose feelings had apparently been

much perturbed, went down to the water's edge, and, standing looking over the lake, barked there till darkness fell.

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The night came, but the girl did not come. Bates made a great torch of pine boughs and resin, and this he lit and hoisted on a pole fixed in the ground, so that if she was seeking to return to her home in the darkness she might be guided by it. He hoped also that, by some chance, the surveying party might see it and know that it was a signal of distress; but he looked for their camp-fire on the opposite hills, and, not seeing it, felt only too sure that they had gone out of sight of his. He fed and watched his torch all night. Snow began to fall; as he looked up it seemed that the flame made a globe of light in the thick atmosphere, around which closed a low vault of visible darkness. From out of this darkness the flakes were falling thickly. When the day broke he was still alone.

CHAPTER VII.

When Saul and the oxen were once fairly started, they plodded on steadily. The track lay some way from the river and above it, through the gap in the hills. Little of the hills did Saul see for he was moving under trees all the way, and when, before noon, he descended into the plain on the other side, he was still for a short time under a canopy of interlacing boughs. There was no road; the trees were notched to show the track. In such forests there is little obstruction of brushwood, and over knoll and hollow, between the trunks, the oxen laboured on. Saul sat on the front ledge of the cart to balance it the better. The coffin, wedged in with the potash barrel, lay pretty still as long as they kept on the soft soil of the forest, but when, about one o'clock, the team emerged upon a corduroy road, made of logs lying side by side across the path, the jolting often jerked the barrel out of place, and then Saul would go to the back of the cart and jerk it and the coffin into position again.

The forest was behind them now. This log road was constructed across a large tract which sometime since had been cleared by a forest fire, but was now covered again by thick brush standing eight or ten feet high. One could see little on either side the road except the brown and grey twigs of the saplings that grew by the million, packed close together. The way had been cut among them, yet they were forcing their sharp shoots up again between the seams of the corduroy, and where, here and there, a log had rotted they came up thickly. The ground was low, and would have been wet about the bushes had it not been frozen. Above, the sky was white. Saul could see nothing but his straight road before and behind, the impenetrable thicket and the white sky. It was a lonely thing thus to journey.

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While he had been under the forest, with an occasional squirrel or chipmunk to arrest his gaze, and with all things as familiar to sight as the environments of the house in which he was accustomed to live, Saul had felt the vigour of the morning, and eaten his cold fat bacon, sitting on the cart, without discontent. But now it was afternoon—which, we all know, brings a somewhat more depressing air—and the budless thickets stood so close, so still, Saul became conscious that his load was a corpse. He had hoped, in a dull way, to fall in with a companion on this made road; the chances were against it, and the chances prevailed. Saul ate more bread and bacon. He had to walk now, and often to give the cart a push, so that the way was laborious; but, curiously enough, it was not the labour he objected to, but the sound of his own voice. All the way the silent thicket was listening to his “Gee-e, gee; haw then”;—“yo-hoi-eest”; yet, as he and his oxen progressed further into the quiet afternoon, he gradually grew more and more timid at the shouts he must raise. It seemed to him that the dead man was listening, or that unknown shapes or essences might be disturbed by his voice and rush out from the thicket upon him. Such fears he had—wordless fears, such as men never repeat and soon forget. Rough, dull, hardy woodman as he was, he felt now as a child feels in the dark, afraid of he knew not what.

The way was very weary. He trudged on beside the cart. Something went wrong with one of his boots, and he stopped the oxen in order to take it off. The animals, thus checked, stood absolutely still, hanging down their heads in an attitude of rest. The man went behind the cart and sat on its edge. He leaned on the end of the coffin as he examined the boot. When that was put right he could not deny himself the luxury of a few minutes’ rest. The oxen, with hanging heads, looked as if they had gone to sleep. The man hung his head also, and might have been dozing from his appearance. He was not asleep, however. What mental machinery he had began to work more freely, and he actually did something that might be called thinking on the one subject that had lain as a dormant matter of curiosity in his head all day—namely, how the girl would act when she woke to find the cart was actually gone and she left behind. He had seen old Cameron die, and heard Bates promise to do his best for his daughter; he remembered her tears and pleading on the preceding day; the situation came to him now, as perceptions come to dull minds, with force that had gathered with the lapse of time. He had not the refinement and acuteness of mind necessary to make him understand the disinterested element in Bates’s tyranny, and while he sympathised cunningly with the selfishness of which, in his mind, he accused Bates, it seemed to him that the promise to the dead was broken, and he thought upon such calamities as might befall in token of the dead man’s revenge.

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How awfully silent it was! There was no breath in the chill, still air; there was no sound of life in all the dark, close brushwood; the oxen slept; and Saul, appalled by the silence that had come with his silence, appalled to realise more vividly than ever that he, and he alone, had been the instigator of voice in all that region, was cowed into thinking that, if the dead could rise from the grave for purposes of revenge, how much more easily could he rise now from so crude a coffin as he himself had helped to construct for him!

It was in this absolute silence that he heard a sound. He heard the dead man turn in his coffin! He heard, and did not doubt his hearing; it was not a thing that he could easily be deceived about as he sat with his elbow on the coffin. He sat there not one instant longer; the next moment he was twenty feet away, standing half-hidden in the edge of the brushwood, staring at the cart and the coffin, ready to plunge into the icy swamp and hide farther among the young trees if occasion required. Occasion did not require. The oxen dozed on; the cart, the barrel, and the coffin stood just as he had left them.

Perhaps for five minutes the frightened man was still. Gradually his muscles relaxed, and he ceased to stand with limbs and features all drawn in horror away from the coffin. He next pulled back his foot from the icy marsh; but even then, having regained his equilibrium on the road, he had not decided what to do, and it took him some time longer to turn over the situation in his mind. He had heard the dead man move; he was terribly frightened; still, it might have been a mistake, and, any way, the most disagreeable course, clearly, was to remain there till nightfall. He had run backward in his first alarm; so, to get to the nearest habitation, it would be necessary to pass the cart on the road, even if he left it there. Had any further manifestation of vitality appeared on the part of the corpse he would have felt justified in running back into the forest, but this was an extreme measure. He did not wish to go near the cart, but to turn his back upon it seemed almost as fearsome. He stood facing it, as a man faces a fierce dog, knowing that if he turns and runs the dog will pursue. He supposed that as long as he stared at the coffin and saw nothing he could be sure that the deceased remained inside, but that if he gave the ghost opportunity to get out on the sly it might afterwards come at him from any point of the compass. He was an ignorant man, with a vulgar mind; he had some reverence for a corpse, but none whatever for a ghost. His mind had undergone a change concerning the dead the moment he had heard him move, and he looked upon his charge now as equally despicable and gruesome.

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After some further delay he discovered that the course least disagreeable would be to drive the oxen with his voice and walk as far behind the cart as he now was, keeping the pine box with four nails on its lid well in view. Accordingly, making a great effort to encourage himself to break the silence, he raised his shout in the accustomed command to the oxen, and after it had been repeated once or twice, they strained at the cart and set themselves to the road again. They did not go as fast as when the goad was within reach of their flanks; or rather; they went more slowly than then, for “fast” was not a word that could have been applied to their progress before. Yet they went on the whole steadily, and the “Gee” and “Haw” of the gruff voice behind guided them straight as surely as bit and rein.

At length it could be seen in the distance that the road turned; and round this turning another human figure came in sight. Perhaps in all his life Saul never experienced greater pleasure in meeting another man than he did now, yet his exterior remained gruff and unperturbed. The only notice that he appeared to take of his fellow-man was to adjust his pace so that, as the other came nearer the cart in front, Saul caught up with it in the rear. At last they met close behind it, and then, as nature prompted, they both stopped.

The last comer upon the desolate scene was a large, hulking boy. He had been plodding heavily with a sack upon his back. As he stopped, he set this upon the ground and wiped his brow.

The boy was French; but Saul, as a native of the province, talked French about as well as he did English—that is to say, very badly. He could not have written a word of either. —The conversation went on in the *patois* of the district.

“What is in the box?” asked the boy, observing that the carter’s eyes rested uneasily upon it.

“Old Cameron died at our place the day before yesterday,” answered Saul, not with desire to evade, but because it did not seem necessary to answer more directly.

“What of?” The boy looked at the box with more interest now.

“He died of a fall”—briefly.

The questioner looked at the pinewood box now with considerable solicitude. “Did his feet swell?” he asked. As Saul did not immediately assent, he added—“When the old M. Didier died, his feet swelled.”

“What do you think of the coffin?” Saul said this eyeing it as if he were critically considering it as a piece of workmanship.

“M. Didier made a much better one for his little child,” replied the boy.

“If he did, neither Mr. Bates nor me is handy at this sort of work. We haven’t been used to it. It’s a rough thing. Touch it. You will see it’s badly made.”

He gained his object. The boy fingered the coffin, and although he did not praise the handiwork, it seemed to Saul that some horrid spell was broken when human hands had again touched the box and no evil had resulted.

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"Why didn't you bury him at home?" asked the boy. "He was English."

"Mr. Bates has strict ideas, though he is English. He wanted it done proper, in a graveyard, by a minister. He has wrote to the minister at St. Hennon's and sent money for the burying—Mr. Bates, he is always particular."

"You are not going to St. Hennon's?" said the boy incredulously. "I'll stay to-night at Turrif's, and go on in the morning. It's four days' walk for me and the cattle to go and come, but I shall take back a man to cut the trees."

"Why not send him by the new railroad?"

"It does not stop at Turrif's."

"Yes; they stop at the cross-roads now, not more than three miles from Turrif's, There's a new station, and an Englishman set to keep it. I've just brought this sack of flour from there. M. Didier had it come by the cars."

"When do they pass to St. Hennon's?" asked Saul meditatively,—“But anyway, the Englishman wouldn't like to take in a coffin."

"They pass some time in the night; and he must take it in if you write on it where it's going. It's not his business to say what the cars will take, if you pay."

"Well," said Saul. "Good-day. Yo-hoist! Yo, yo, ho-hoist!"

It did not seem to him necessary to state whether he was, or was not, going to take the advice offered. The straining and creaking of the cart, his shouts to the oxen, would have obliterated any further query the boy might have made. He had fairly moved off when the boy also took up his burden and trudged on the other way.

CHAPTER VIII.

When the blueberry bushes are dry, all the life in them, sucked into their roots against another summer, the tops turn a rich, brownish red; at this time, also, wild bramble thickets have many a crimson stalk that gives colour to their mass, and the twigs that rise above the white trunks of birch trees are not grey, but brown.

Round the new railway station at the cross-roads near Turrif's Settlement, the low-lying land, for miles and miles, was covered with, blueberry bushes; bramble thickets were here and there; and where the land rose a little, in irregular places, young birch woods stood. If the snow had sprinkled here, as it had upon the hills the night before, there was no sign of it now. The warm colour of the land seemed to glow against the dulness of the afternoon, not with the sparkle and brightness which colour has in sunshine, but

with the glow of a sleeping ember among its ashes. Round the west there was metallic blue colouring upon the cloud vault. This colouring was not like a light upon the cloud, it was like a shadow upon it; yet it was not grey, but blue. Where the long straight road from Turrijs and the long straight road from the hills crossed each other, and were crossed by the unprotected railway track with its endless rows of tree-trunks serving as telegraph poles, the new station stood.

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It was merely a small barn, newly built of pinewood, divided into two rooms—one serving as a store-room for goods, the other as waiting-room, ticket office, and living-room of the station-master. The station-master, who was, in fact, master, clerk, and porter in one, was as new to his surroundings as the little fresh-smelling pinewood house. He was a young Englishman, and at the first glance it could be seen he had not long been living in his present place. He had, indeed, not yet given up shaving himself, and his clothes, although rough, warm, and suited to his occupation, still suggested, not homespun, but an outfit bought of a tailor.

It was about four o'clock on that November afternoon when the new official of the new station looked out at the dark red land and the bright-tinted cloud. It was intensely cold. The ruts of the roads, which were not made of logs here, were frozen stiff. The young man stood a minute at his door with his hands in his pockets, sniffed the frost, and turned in with an air of distaste. A letter that had been brought him by the morning train lay on his table, addressed to "Alec Trenholme, Esq." It had seen vicissitudes, and been to several addresses in different cities, before it had been finally readdressed to this new station. Perhaps its owner had not found the path to fortune which he sought in the New World as easily accessible as he had expected. Whether he had now found it or not, he set himself to that which he had found in manly fashion.

Coming in from the cold without, and shutting himself in, as he supposed, for the evening, he wisely determined to alleviate the peculiar feeling of cold and desolation which the weather was fitted to induce by having an early tea. He set his pan upon a somewhat rusty stove and put generous slices of ham therein to fry. He made tea, and then set forth his store of bread, his plates and cup, upon the table, with some apparent effort to make the meal look attractive. The frying ham soon smelt delicious, and while it was growing brown, Alec Trenholme read his letter for the fifth time that day. It was not a letter that he liked, but, since the morning train, only two human beings had passed by the station, and the young station-master would have read and re-read a more disagreeable epistle than the one which had fallen to his lot. It was dated from a place called Chellaston, and was from his brother. It was couched in terms of affection, and contained a long, closely reasoned argument, with the tenor of which it would seem the reader did not agree, for he smiled at it scornfully!

He had not re-read his letter and dished his ham before sounds on the road assured him an ox-cart was approaching, and, with an eagerness to see who it might be which cannot be comprehended by those who have not lived in isolation, he went out to see Saul and his cattle coming at an even pace down the road from the hills. The cart ran more easily now that the road was of the better sort, and the spirits of both man and beasts were so raised by the sight of a house that they all seemed in better form for work than when in the middle of their journey.

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Alec Trenholme waited till the cart drew up between his door and the railway track, and regarded the giant stature of the lumberman, his small, round head, red cheeks, and luxuriant whiskers, with that intense but unreflecting interest which the lonely bestow upon unexpected company. He looked also, with an eye to his own business, at the contents of the cart, and gave the man a civil “good evening.”

As he spoke, his voice and accent fell upon the air of this wilderness as a rarely pleasant thing to hear. Saul hastily dressed his whiskers with his horny left-hand before he answered, but even then, he omitted to return the greeting.

“I want to know,” he said, sidling up, “how much it would cost to send that by the cars to St. Hennon’s.” He nudged his elbow towards the coffin as he spoke.

“That box?” asked the station-master. “How much does it weigh?”

“We might weigh it if I’d some notion first about how much I’d need to pay.”

“What’s in it?”

Saul smoothed his whiskers again. “Well,” he said—then, after a slight pause—“it’s a dead man.”

“Oh!” said Trenholme. Some habit of politeness, unnecessary here, kept his exclamation from expressing the interest he instantly felt. In a country where there are few men to die, even death assumes the form of an almost agreeable change as a matter of lively concern. Then, after a pause which both men felt to be suitable, “I suppose there is a special rate for—that sort of thing, you know. I really haven’t been here very long. I will look it up. I suppose you have a certificate of death, haven’t you?”

Again Saul dressed his whiskers. His attention to them was his recognition of the fact that Trenholme impressed him as a superior.

“I don’t know about a certificate. You’ve heard of the Bates and Cameron clearin’, I s’pose; it’s old Cameron that’s dead”—again he nudged his elbow coffinward—“and Mr. Bates he wrote a letter to the minister at St. Hennon’s.”

He took the letter from his pocket as he spoke, and Trenholme perceived that it was addressed in a legible hand and sealed.

“I fancy it’s all right,” said he doubtfully. He really had not any idea what the railway might require before he took the thing in charge.

Saul did not make answer. He was not quite sure it was all right, but the sort of wrongness he feared was not to be confided to the man into whose care he desired to shove the objectionable burden.

“What did he die of?” asked the young man.

“He fell down, and he seemed for some days as if he’d get over it; then he was took sudden. We put his feet into a hot pot of water and made him drink lye.”

“Lye?”

“Ash water—but we gave it him weak.”

“Oh.”

“But—he died.”

“Well, that was sad. Does he leave a wife and family?”

“No,” said Saul briefly. “But how much must I pay to have the cars take it the rest of the way?”

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Trenholme stepped into his room and lit his lamp that he might better examine his list of rates. Saul came inside to warm himself at the stove. The lamp in that little room was the one spot of yellow light in the whole world that lay in sight, yet outside it was not yet dark, only dull and bitterly cold.

Trenholme stood near the lamp, reading fine print upon a large card. The railway was only just opened and its tariff incomplete as yet. He found no particular provision made for the carriage of coffins. It took him some minutes to consider under what class of freight to reckon this, but he decided not to weigh it. Saul looked at the room, the ham and tea, and at Trenholme, with quiet curiosity in his beady eyes. Outside, the oxen hung their heads and dozed again.

“You see,” said Saul, “I’ll get there myself with the potash to-morrow night; then I can arrange with the minister.”

He had so much difficulty in producing the requisite number of coins for the carriage that it was evident the potash could not be sent by train too; but Trenholme was familiar now with the mode of life that could give time of man and beast so easily, and find such difficulty in producing a little money of far less value. He did remark that, as the cart was to complete the journey, the coffin might as well travel the second day as it had done the first; but, Saul showed reluctance to hear this expostulation, and certainly it was not the station-master’s business to insist. The whole discussion did not take long. Saul was evidently in a haste not usual to such as he, and Trenholme felt a natural desire to sit down to his tea, the cooking of which filled the place with grateful perfume. Saul’s haste showed itself more in nervous demeanour than in capacity to get through the interview quickly. Even when the money was paid, he loitered awkwardly. Trenholme went into his store-room, and threw open its double doors to the outside air.

“Help me in with it, will you?”

It was the pleasant authority of his tone that roused the other to alacrity. They shouldered the coffin between them. The store-room was fairly large and contained little. Trenholme placed the coffin reverently by itself in an empty corner. He brought a pot of black paint and a brush, and printed on it the necessary address. Then he thought a moment, and added in another place the inscription—“Box containing coffin—to be handled with care.”

It is to be remarked how dependent we are for the simplest actions on the teaching we have had. Never having received the smallest instruction as to how to deal with such a charge, it cost him effort of thought and some courage to put on this inscription. Saul watched, divided between curious interest and his desire to be away.

“You’ve got another coffin inside this case, of course?” said the station-master, struck with a sudden doubt.

To him, polished wood and silver plating seemed such a natural accessory of death that he had, without thought, always associated the one idea with the other.

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"No, that's all there is. We made it too large by mistake, but we put a bed quilt in for stuffing."

"But, my man, it isn't very well put together; the lid isn't tight."

"No—neither it is." Saul had already sidled to the door.

Trenholme felt it with his thumb and fingers.

"It's perfectly loose," he cried. "It's only got a few nails in the lid. You ought to have put in screws, you know."

"Yes, but we hadn't got any; we had used the last screws we had for the hinge of a door. I'm going to buy some to put in at St. Hennon's. Good-day."

As they spoke, Saul had been going to his cart, and Trenholme following, with authoritative displeasure in his mien.

"It's exceedingly careless—upon my word. Come back and nail it up firmer," cried he.

But Saul drove off.

The young station-master went back to the store-room. He looked at the box for a moment, with annoyance still in his mind. The air that he had would have sat well upon a man with servants under him, but was somewhat futile in the keeper of a desolate railway-station. He had not been able to command the man, and he certainly could not command the coffin to nail itself more firmly together. After all, his tea waited. Somewhat sullenly he barred the double door on the inside, and went back to his own room and his evening meal.

The room was filled with the steam of the boiling tea as he poured it out, and the smoke of the ham gravy. With the strength of youth and health he thrust aside the annoyance of his official position from his present mind, and set himself to his supper with considerable satisfaction.

He had not, however, eaten a single morsel before he heard a sound in the next room which caused him to sit erect and almost rigid, forgetting his food. He had been so pre-occupied a minute before with the carelessness of those who constructed the coffin that he had left the inner door between the two rooms ajar. It was through this that the sound came, and it seemed to his quickened sense to proceed from the corner in which the pinewood box reposed, but he hastily went over all the contents of the room to think if any of them could be falling or shifting among themselves. The sound still continued; it seemed as if something was being gently worked to and fro, as in a soft socket. His imagination was not very quick to represent impossible dangers, nor had he in him more cowardice than dwells in most brave men. He did not allow himself to conclude that he

heard the coffin-lid being opened from the inside. He took his lamp and went to see what was wrong.

The sound ceased as he moved. When the light of the lamp was in the next room all was perfectly silent. For almost half a minute he stood still, shading his eyes from the lamp, while, with every disagreeable sensation crowding upon him, he observed distinctly that, although the nails were still holding it loosely in place, the lid of the coffin was raised half an inch, more than that indeed, at the top.

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"Now, look here, you know—this won't do," said Trenholme, in loud authoritative tones; so transported was he by the disagreeableness of his situation that, for the moment, he supposed himself speaking to the man with whom he had just spoken. Then, realising that that man, although gone, was yet probably within call, he set down the lamp hastily and ran out.

It seemed to him remarkable that Saul and the oxen could have gone so far along the road, although of course they were still plainly in sight. He shouted, but received no answer. He raised his voice and shouted again and again, with force and authority. He ran, as he shouted, about twenty paces. In return he only heard Saul's own commands to his oxen. Whether the man was making so much noise himself that he could not hear, or whether he heard and would not attend, Trenholme could not tell, but he felt at the moment too angry to run after him farther. It was not his place to wait upon this carter and run his errands! Upon this impulse he turned again.

However, as he walked back, the chill frost striking his bare head, he felt more diffidence and perplexity about his next action than was at all usual to him. He knew that he had no inclination to investigate the contents of the box. All the curiosity stirred within him still failed to create the least desire to pry further; but, on the other hand, he could not think it right to leave the matter as it was. A strong feeling of duty commanding him to open the coffin and see that all was right, and a stout aversion to performing this duty, were the main elements of his consciousness during the minutes in which he retraced his steps to the house.

He had set down the lamp on a package just within the baggage-room door, so that his own room, by which he entered, was pretty dark, save for the fire showing through the damper of the stove. Trenholme stopped in it just one moment to listen; then, unwilling to encourage hesitation in himself, went through the next door. His hand was outstretched to take the lamp, his purpose was clearly defined—to go to the far corner and examine the coffin-lid. Hand and thought arrested, he stopped on the threshold, for the lid was thrown off the coffin, and beside it stood a figure.

The lamp, which did not throw very much light across the comparatively large empty room, was so placed that what light there was came directly in Trenholme's eyes. Afterwards he remembered this, and wondered whether all that he thought he saw had, in fact, been clearly seen; but at the moment he thought nothing of the inadequacy of light or of the glare in his eyes; he only knew that there, in the far corner beside the empty coffin, stood a white figure—very tall to his vision, very lank, with white drapery that clothed it round the head like a cowl and spread upon the floor around its feet. But all that was not what arrested his attention and chilled his strong courage, it was the eyes of the figure, which

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were clearly to be seen—large, frightened, fierce eyes, that met his own with a courage and terror in them which seemed to quell his own courage and impart terror to him. Above them he saw the form of a pallid brow clearly moulded. He did not remember the rest of the face—perhaps the white clothes wrapped it around. While the eyes struck him with awe, he had a curious idea that the thing had been interrupted in arranging its own winding sheet, and was waiting until he retired again to finish its toilet. This was merely a grotesque side-current of thought. He was held and awed by the surprise of the face, for those eyes seemed to him to belong to no earthly part of the old man who, he had been told, lay there dead. Drawn by death or exhaustion as the face around them looked, the eyes themselves appeared unearthly in their large brightness.

He never knew whether his next action was urged more by fear, or by the strong sense of justice that had first prompted him to call back the carter as the proper person to deal with the contents of the coffin. Whatever the motive, it acted quickly. He drew back; closed the door; locked it on the side of his own room; and set out again to bring back the man. This time he should hear and should return. Trenholme did not spare his voice, and the wide lonely land resounded to his shout. And this time he was not too proud to run, but went at full speed and shouted too.

Saul undoubtedly saw and heard him, for he faced about and looked. Perhaps something in the very way in which Trenholme ran suggested why he ran. Instead of responding to the command to return, he himself began to run away and madly to goad his oxen. There are those who suppose oxen yoked to a cart cannot run, but on occasion they can plunge into a wild heavy gallop that man is powerless to curb. The great strength latent in these animals was apparent now, for, after their long day's draught, they seemed to become imbued with their driver's panic, and changed from walking to dashing madly down the road. It was a long straight incline of three miles from the station to the settlement called Turrifs. Saul, unable to keep up with the cattle, flung himself upon the cart, and, with great rattling, was borne swiftly away from his pursuer. Young Trenholme stopped when he had run a mile. So far he had gone, determined that, if the man would not stop for his commands, he should be collared and dragged back by main force to face the thing which he had brought, but by degrees even the angry young man perceived the futility of chasing mad cattle. He drew up panting, and, turning, walked back once more. He did not walk slowly; he was in no frame to loiter and his run had brought such a flush of heat upon him that it would have been madness to linger in the bitter cold. At the same time, while his legs moved rapidly, his mind certainly hesitated—in fact, it almost halted, unable to foresee in the least what its next opinion or decision would be. He

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was not a man to pause in order to make up his mind. He had a strong feeling of responsibility towards his little station and its inexplicable tenant, therefore he hurried back against his will. His only consolation in this backward walk was the key of the door he had locked, which in haste he had taken out and still held in his hand. Without attempting to decide whether the thing he had seen was of common clay or of some lighter substance, he still did not lend his mind with sufficient readiness to ghostly theory to imagine that his unwelcome guest could pass through locked doors.

Nor did the ghost, if ghost it was, pass through unopened doors. The flaw in Trenholme's comfortable theory was that he had forgotten that the large double door, which opened from the baggage room to the railway track, was barred on the inside. When he got back to his place he found this door ajar, and neither in his own room, nor in the baggage room, nor in the coffin, was there sign of human presence, living or dead.

All the world about lay in the clear white twilight. The blueberry flats, the bramble-holts, were red. The clouded sky was white, except for that metallic blue tinge in the west, through which, in some thin places, a pale glow of yellower light was now visible, the last rays of the day that had set. It was this world on which the young Englishman looked as, amazed and somewhat affrighted, he walked round the building, searching on all sides for the creature that could hardly yet, had it run away in such a level land, be wholly out of sight.

He went indoors again to make sure that nothing was there, and this time he made a discovery—his tea was gone from his cup. He gave a shudder of disgust, and, leaving his food untouched, put on coat and cap, and went out shutting his door behind him. His spirits sank. It seemed to him that, had it been midnight instead of this blank, even daylight, had his unearthly-looking visitant acted in more unearthly fashion, the circumstances would have had less weird force to impress his mind.

We can, after all, only form conjectures regarding inexplicable incidents from the successive impressions that have been made upon us. This man was not at all given to love of romance or superstition, yet the easy explanation that some man, for purpose of trick or crime, had hidden in the box, did not seem to him to fit the circumstances. He could not make himself believe that the eyes he had seen belonged to a living man; on the other hand, he found it impossible to conceive of a tea-drinking ghost.

About a quarter of a mile away there was a long grove of birch trees, the projecting spur of a second growth of forest that covered the distant rising ground. Towards this Trenholme strode, for it was the only covert near in which a human being could travel unseen. It was more by the impulse of energy, however, than by reasonable hope that

he came there, for by the time he had reached the edge of the trees, it was beginning to grow dark, even in the open plain.

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No one who has not seen birch trees in their undisturbed native haunts can know how purely white, unmarred by stain or tear, their trunks can be. Trenholme looked in among them. They grew thickly. White—white—it seemed in the gathering gloom that each was whiter than the other; and Trenholme, remembering that his only knowledge of the figure he sought was that it was wrapped in white, recognised the uselessness, the absurdity even, of hoping to find it here, of all places.

Then he went back to the road and started for Turrifs Settlement.

CHAPTER IX.

The settlement called “Turrifs” was not a village; it was only a locality, in which there were a good many houses within the radius of a few square miles.

When Alec Trenholme started off the third time to reproach the recreant driver of the ox-cart, he had no intention of again dealing with him directly. He bent his steps to the largest house in the neighbourhood, the house of the family called Turrifs; whose present head, being the second of his generation on the same farm, held a position of loosely acknowledged pre-eminence. Turrif was a Frenchman, who had had one Scotch forefather through whom his name had come. This, indeed, was the case with many of his neighbours.

Trenholme had had various negotiations with this Turrif and his neighbours, but he had only once been to the house he was now seeking and in the darkness, which had fallen completely during his three-mile walk, he was a little puzzled to find it quickly. Its wooden and weather-greyed walls glimmered but faintly in the night; it was only by following the line of log fences through the flat treeless fields that he found himself at last full in the feeble rays of the candle-light that peeped from its largest window. Trenholme knocked.

Turrif himself opened the door. He was a man of middle age, thick-set but thin, with that curious grey shade on a healthy skin that so often pertains to Frenchmen. For a moment his shrewd but mild countenance peered into the darkness; then, holding wide the door and making welcome motion with his hand, he bade Trenholme enter.

Trenholme could not speak French, but he knew that Turrif could understand enough English to comprehend his errand if he told it slowly and distinctly. Slowly and distinctly, therefore, he recounted all that had befallen him since Saul arrived at the station; but such telling of such a story could not be without some embarrassment, caused by the growing perception, on the part of both men, of its extraordinary nature.

“Eh—h!” said the Frenchman during the telling. It was a prolonged syllable, denoting meditative astonishment, and it brought another listener, for the wife came and stood by



her husband, who interpreted the story to her, and shortly a girl of thirteen also drew near and stood listening to her father's interpretation. Trenholme began to wonder whether the elder listeners were placing any confidence in his word; but the doubt was probably in his mind only, for an honest man does not estimate the subtle force of his own honesty.

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Turris and his wife listened to all that was said, and looked at each other, and looked at him, and asked him a good many questions. They were neither of them hasty, but, as the woman's manner was the more vivacious, so her questions, when translated, showed a somewhat quicker wit. When all was said, like wise people, they pronounced no sentence, either upon Trenholme's actions or upon those of the creature that had inhabited the coffin; but they remarked that if the carter had committed no evil he would not have run away. They said that they had some knowledge of this man, whom they called "Monsieur Saul," and that he was a fellow of little worth. They agreed that Turris should go with Trenholme, as requested, to bring the man to book.

On crossing the threshold of the house Trenholme had come at once into a large, long room, which composed the whole lower flat of the dwelling, as appeared from the windows on both sides and from the fact that the staircase went up from one end of it. It was a comfortable, well-warmed room, containing evidences of all the various industries of the family, from the harness that hung on the wall and the basket of carded wool by the spinning-wheel, to the bucket of cow's mash that stood warming by the stove at the foot of the baby's cradle. At the far end a large table, that held the candle, had a meal spread upon it, and also some open dog's-eared primers, at which small children were spelling audibly.

When the conference, which had taken place near the door, was over, the wife went back to her children and her lighted table, and Trenholme made as if to open the door, supposing that Turris would walk away with him.

"Eh—*non*," said the older man, with a kindly smile. "*Pas encore*," and taking Trenholme by the arm, he pushed him gently towards the table. "I weel get out my 'orse," said he, in slow, broken English. "You have had enough walking to-day, and I have had enough work. *A present*"—with a gesture toward the table.

He made Trenholme sit down at the table. There was a very large pan of thick sour milk on it, and a loaf of grey bread. Bits of this bread were set round the edge of the table, near the children, who munched at them.

Turris gave Trenholme a bit of bread, cutting into the loaf as men only do in whose lives bread is not scarce. With a large spoon he took a quantity of the thick rich cream from the top of the milk and put a saucer of it before the visitor. Trenholme ate it with his bread, and found it not as sour as he expected, and on the whole very good. Turris, eating bread as he went, carried the harness out of the house.

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As there was no one left for him to talk to, Trenholme grew more observant. He remarked the sweetness and sense in the face of the house-mother as she bestowed their suppers upon the children. She was still comparatively young, but there was no beauty of youth about her, only the appearance of strength that is produced by toil and endurance before these two have worn the strength away. But, in spite of this look of strength, the face was not hard—no, nor sad; and there was a certain latent poetry, too, about the gesture and look with which she gave food to the little ones, as if the giving and receiving were a free thing, and not the mere necessity of life. Her manner of giving them supper was to push the large pan of curded milk close to the edge of the table, where the little ones were clustered, and let them, four of them at once, lap out of the side of it with their little spoons. At the same time she pushed the creasy yellow cover of cream to the farther side, with a watchful glance at Trenholme's saucer, evidently meaning that it was kept for him. She and the elder boy and girl waited to sup till the little ones had finished.

Trenholme endeavoured to say that he should not want any more cream, but she did not understand his words. He would have felt more concerned at the partiality shown him if the youngsters had looked more in need of cream; but they were, in truth, so round-faced and chubby, and so evidently more pleased to stare at him with their big, black eyes than grieved to lose the richest part of their milk, that he felt distress would have been thrown away. All four little ones wore round knitted caps, and their little heads, at uneven heights, their serious eyes rolling upon him, and their greedy little mouths supping in the milk the while, formed such an odd picture round the white disk of the milk-pan that Trenholme could not help laughing. The greedy little feeders, without dropping their spoons, looked to their mother to see whether they ought to be frightened or not at such conduct on the stranger's part, but seeing her smile, they concluded that they were safe.

Upon Trenholme's making further overtures of friendship, one or two of them began to smile: the smile was infectious, it spread to all four, and they began to laugh, and laughed in baby fashion quite immoderately. Their mother considered this a sign that they had had enough, and took their spoons from them. As they scattered from the table Trenholme perceived that, though their heads were covered, their feet were not. Their whole costume consisted of a short blue cotton nightgown and the little knitted cap.

When Turrif came in to say that the horse was ready, Trenholme made an effort to present his thanks in saying good-bye to the mistress of the house, but she did not seem to expect or take much notice of these manners. As he went out of the door he looked back to see her bending over the baby in the cradle, and he noticed for the first time that above the cradle there was a little shrine fastened to the wall. It was decked with a crucifix and paper flowers; above was a coloured picture of the Virgin.

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Trenholme, whose nerves were perhaps more susceptible than usual by reason of the creature set at large by the opening of the coffin, wondered that Turrif should leave his wife and children alone so willingly, without any effort to bar the house and without objection on their part. He knew there was no other house within half a mile, and the darkness that lay on the flat land appeared to give room for a thousand dangers.

He expressed this surprise to Turrif, who replied placidly that the good saints took care of women and children—a reply which probably did not go to prove the man's piety so much as the habitual peace of the neighbourhood.

The vehicle to which Turrif had harnessed his pony was a small hay cart—that is to say, a cart consisting of a platform on two wheels, and a slight paling along each side intended to give some support to its contents. It was much more lightly made than Saul's ox-cart. The wheels went over the frozen ruts at a good pace, and the inmates were badly jolted. Trenholme would rather have walked, but he had already observed that the Canadian rustic never walked if he could possibly avoid it, and he supposed there must be some reason for this in the nature of the country. The jolting made talking disagreeable; indeed, when he attempted conversation he found his words reminded him forcibly of times when, in the nursery of his childhood, he had noticed the cries of baby companions gradually grow less by reason of the rapid vibrations of the nurse's knee. He kept silence therefore, and wondered whether Turrif or the pony was guiding, so carelessly did they go forth into the darkness, turning corners and avoiding ghostly fences with slovenly ease.

It soon appeared that Turrif knew no more than Trenholme where to find Saul; his only method of seeking was to inquire at each house. It was not, however, necessary to go into each house; the cart was only brought sufficiently near upon the road for a lusty shout to reach the family inside. The first house Trenholme hardly saw in the darkness; at one or two others he had a good view of the interior through an open door or window. From each door men and boys, sometimes women and children, sallied forth eagerly into the cold night to see what was wanted, and to each inquiry the phlegmatic Turrif repeated Trenholme's tale. Trenholme would have given a good deal to be able fully to understand what was said. There was much conversation. From each house one or two men joined them, and in one case, from a squalid-looking doorway, a loud-speaking and wilful girl came out and insisted on getting into the cart. She talked to the men and shrieked loudly when any object, such as a barn or a tree, loomed dimly at the side of the road. Two of the men brought a lantern and walked behind. When they came to the house whose roof was found to cover Saul, a party of eight entered to hear and pronounce upon his explanation. Certainly, if Trenholme had had the management of the business, he would not have proceeded in this fashion, but he had no choice.

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The carter had been drinking whisky—not much as yet, but enough to give him a greater command of words than he ordinarily possessed. When he saw Trenholme among the band who were inquiring for him, he manifested distinct signs of terror, but not at his visitors; his ghastly glances were at door and window, and he drew nearer to the company for protection. It was plainly what they had to tell, not what they had to demand, that excited him to trembling; the assembled neighbourhood seemed to strike him in the light of a safeguard. When, however, he found the incomers were inclined to accuse him of trick or knavery, he spoke out bravely enough.

Old Cameron had died—they knew old Cameron?

Yes, the men assented to this knowledge.

And after he had been dead two days and one night, Mr. Bates—they knew Mr. Bates?—

Assent again.

—Had put him in the coffin with his own hands and nailed down the lid. He was quite dead—perfectly dead.

On hearing this the bold girl who had come with them shrieked again, and two of the younger men took her aside, and, holding her head over a bucket in the corner poured water on it, a process which silenced her.

“And,” said Turrif, quietly speaking in French, “what then?”

“What then?” said Saul; “Then to-day I brought him in the cart.”

“And buried him on the road, because he was heavy and useless, and let some friend of yours play with the box?” continued Turrif, with an insinuating smile.

Saul swore loudly that this was not the case, at which the men shrugged their shoulders and looked at Trenholme.

To him the scene and the circumstances were very curious. The house into which they had come was much smaller than Turrif’s. The room was a dismal one, with no sign of woman or child about it. Its atmosphere was thick with the smoke of tobacco and the fumes of hot whisky, in which Saul and his host had been indulging. A soft, homemade candle, guttering on the table, shed a yellow smoky light upon the faces of the bearded men who stood around it. Saul, perhaps from an awkward feeling of trembling in his long legs, had resumed his seat, his little eyes more beady, his little round cheeks more ruddy, than ever, his whiskers now entirely disregarded in the importance of his self-vindication.

Too proud for asseveration, Trenholme had not much more to say. He stated briefly that he could not be responsible for the contents of a box when the contents had run away, nor for any harm that the runaway might do to the neighbourhood, adding that the man who had consigned the box to his care must now come and take it away.

He spoke with a fine edge of authority in his voice, as a man speaks who feels himself superior to his circumstances and companions. He did not look at the men as he spoke, for he was not yet sure whether they gave him the credence for which he would not sue, and he did not care to see if they derided him.

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"I sink," said Turriff, speaking slowly in English now,— "I sink we cannot make that mee-racle be done."

"What miracle?" asked Trenholme.

Those of the men who understood any English laughed.

"Se miracle to make dis genteel-man, M. Saul, fetch se box."

Trenholme then saw that Saul's shudderings had come, upon him again at the mere suggestion.

"What am I to do, then?" he asked.

At this the men had a good deal of talk, and Turrif interpreted the decision.

"We sink it is for M. Bates to say what shall be done wit se box. We sink we take se liberte to say to sis man—'Stay here till some one go to-morrow and fetch M. Bates.'"

This struck Trenholme as just, and any objection he felt to spending the night under the same roof with the mysterious coffin did not seem worth remark.

As for Saul, he professed himself satisfied with the arrangement. He was only too glad to have some one brought who would share his responsibility and attest, in part at least, his tale.

"Well," said Trenholme, "I'll go then."

He felt for the key of the station in his pocket, and would have thanked the men and bid them "good evening," had they not, rather clamorously, deprecated his intention. Living, as they did, far from all organised justice, there was in them a rough sense of responsibility for each other which is not found in townsmen.

Trenholme shortly made out that they had decided that two of them should help him to guard the station that night, and were only disputing as to who should be allotted for the purpose.

"It isn't at all necessary," said Trenholme.

"We sink," said Turrif, with his deliberate smile, "it will be best; for if you have not been wandering in your mind, some one else's body has been wandering."

Trenholme went back to his station in the not unpleasant company of two sturdy farmers, one young and vivacious, the other old and slow. They found the place just as

he had left it. The coffin was empty, save for the sweet-scented cushion of roughly covered pine tassels on which the body of the gaunt old Cameron had been laid to rest.

The three men sat by the stove in the other room. The smoke from their pipes dimmed the light of the lamp. The quiet sounds of their talk and movements never entirely took from them the consciousness of the large dark silence that lay without. No footfall broke it. When they heard the distant rush of the night train, they all three went out to see its great yellow eye come nearer and nearer.

Trenholme had one or two packages to put in the van. He and his companions exchanged greetings with the men of the train.

Just as he was handing in his last package, a gentlemanly voice accosted him.

“Station-master!” said a grey-haired, military-looking traveller, “Station-master! Is there any way of getting milk here?”

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A lady stood behind the gentleman. They were both on the platform at the front of a passenger car.

"It's for a child, you know," explained the gentleman.

Trenholme remembered his untouched tea, and confessed to the possession of a little milk.

"Oh, hasten, hasten!" cried the lady, "for the guard says the train will move on in a moment."

As Trenholme knew that the little French conductor thus grandly quoted did not know when the train would start, and as in his experience the train, whatever else it did, never hastened, he did not move with the sudden agility that was desired. Before he turned he heard a loud-whispered aside from the lady: "Tell him we'll pay him double—treble, for it; I have heard they are avaricious."

When Trenholme had started the train he jumped upon it with the milk. He found himself in a long car. The double seats on either side were filled with sleepy people. There was a passage down the middle, and the lamps above shone dimly through dirty glasses. Trenholme could not immediately see any one like the man who had spoken to him outside, but he did spy out a baby, and, jug in hand, he went and stood a moment near it.

The lady who held the baby sat upright, with her head leaning against the side of the car. She was dozing, and the baby was also asleep. It was a rosy, healthy child, about a year old. The lady's handsome face suggested she was about seven-and-twenty. Among all the shawl-wrapped heaps of restless humanity around them, this pair looked very lovely together. The dusty lamplight fell upon them. They seemed to Trenholme like a beautiful picture of mother and child, such as one sometimes comes upon among the evil surroundings of old frames and hideous prints.

Said Trenholme aloud: "I don't know who asked me for the milk."

The lady stirred and looked at him indifferently. She seemed very beautiful. Men see with different eyes in these matters, but in Trenholme's eyes this lady was faultless, and her face and air touched some answering mood of reverence in his heart. It rarely happens, however, that we can linger gazing at the faces which possess for us the most beauty. The train was getting up speed, and Trenholme, just then catching sight of the couple who had asked for the milk, had no choice but to pass down the car and pour it into the jar they held.

The gentleman put his hand in his pocket. "Oh no," said Trenholme, and went out. But the more lively lady reopened the door behind him, and threw a coin on the ground as he was descending.

By the sound it had made Trenholme found it, and saw by the light of the passing car that it was an English shilling. When the train was gone he stood a minute where it had carried him, some hundred feet from the station, and watched it going on into the darkness.

Afterwards, when his companions had composed themselves to sleep, and he lay sleepless, listening to all that could be heard in the silent night, curiously enough it was not upon the exciting circumstances of the early evening that he mused chiefly, but upon the people he had seen in the night train.

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A seemingly little thing has sometimes the power to change those currents that set one way and another within a man, making him satisfied or dissatisfied with this or that. By chance, as it seems, a song is sung, a touch is given, a sight revealed, and man, like a harp hung to the winds, is played upon, and the music is not that which he devises. So it was that Trenholme's encounter in the dusty car with the beautiful woman who had looked upon him so indifferently had struck a chord which was like a plaintive sigh for some better purpose in life than he was beating out of this rough existence. It was not a desire for greater pleasure that her beauty had aroused in him, but a desire for nobler action—such was the power of her face.

The night passed on; no footfall broke the silence. The passing train was the only episode of his vigil.

In the morning when Trenholme looked out, the land was covered deep in snow.

CHAPTER X.

When the night train left Turfids Station it thundered on into the darkness slowly enough, but, what with bumping over its rough rails and rattling its big cars, it seemed anxious to deceive its passengers into the idea that it was going at great speed. A good number of its cars were long vans for the carriage of freight; behind these came two for the carriage of passengers. These were both labelled "First Class." One was devoted to a few men, who were smoking; the other was the one from which Trenholme had descended. Its seats, upholstered in red velvet, were dusty from the smoke and dirt of the way; its atmosphere, heated by a stove at one end, was dry and oppressive. It would have been impossible, looking at the motley company lounging in the lamplight, to have told their relations one to another; but it was evident that an uncertain number of young people, placed near the lady who held the baby, were of the same party; they slept in twos and threes, leaning on one another's shoulders and covered by the same wraps. It was to seats left vacant near this group that the man and his wife who had procured the milk returned. The man, who was past middle life, betook himself to his seat wearily, and pulled his cap over his eyes without speaking. His wife deposited the mug of milk in a basket, speaking in low but brisk tones to the lady who held the baby.

"There, Sophia; I've had to pay a shilling for a cupful, but I've got some milk."

"I should have thought you would have been surer to get good milk at a larger station, mamma." She did not turn as she spoke, perhaps for fear of waking the sleeping baby.

The other, who was the infant's mother, was rapidly tying a shawl round her head and shoulders. She was a little stout woman, who in middle age had retained her brightness of eye and complexion. Her features were regular, and her little nose had enough

suggestion of the eagle's beak in its form to preserve her countenance from insignificance.

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“Oh, my dear,” she returned, “as to the milk—the young man looked quite clean, I assure you; and then such a large country as the cows have to roam in!”

Having delivered herself of this energetic whisper, she subsided below the level of the seat back, leaving Sophia to sit and wonder in a drowsy muse whether the mother supposed that the value of a cow’s milk would be increased if, like Io, she could prance across a continent.

Sophia Rexford sat upright, with the large baby in her arms and a bigger child leaning on her shoulder. Both children were more or less restless; but their sister was not restless, she sat quite still. The attitude of her tall figure had the composure and strength in it which do not belong to first youth. Hers was a fine face; it might even be called beautiful; but no one now would call it pretty—the skin was too colourless, the expression too earnest.

Her eyes took on the look that tells of inward, rather than outward, vision. Her thoughts were such as she would not have told to any one, but not because of evil in them.

This was the lady to whom Robert Trenholme, the master of the college at Chellaston, had written his letter; and she was thinking of that letter now, and of him, pondering much that, by some phantasy of dreams, she should have been suddenly reminded of him by the voice of the man who had passed through the car with the milk.

Her mind flitted lightly to the past; to a season she had once spent in a fashionable part of London, and to her acquaintance with the young curate, who was receiving some patronage from the family with whom she was visiting. She had been a beauty then; every one danced to the tune she piped, and this curate—a mere fledgeling—had danced also. That was nothing. No, it was nothing that he had, for a time, followed lovesick in her train—she never doubted that he had had that sickness, although he had not spoken of it—all that had been notable in the acquaintance was that she, who at that time had played with the higher aims and impulses of life, had thought, in her youthful arrogance, that she discerned in this man something higher and finer than she saw in other men. She had been pleased to make something of a friend of him, condescending to advise and encourage him, pronouncing upon his desire to seek a wider field in a new country, and calling it good. Later, when he was gone, and life for her had grown more quiet for lack of circumstances to feed excitement, she had wondered sometimes if this man had recovered as perfectly from that love-sickness as others had done. That was all—absolutely all. Her life had lately come again into indirect relations with him through circumstances over which neither he nor she had had any control; and now, when she was about to see him, he had taken upon him to write and pick up the thread of personal friendship again and remind her of the past.

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In what mood had he written this reminder? Sophia Rexford would surely not have been a woman of the world if she had not asked herself this question. Did he think that on seeing her again he would care for her as before? Did he imagine that intervening years, which had brought misfortune to her family, would bring her more within his grasp? Or was his intention in writing still less pleasing to her than this? Had he written, speaking so guardedly of past friendship, with the desire to ward off any hope she might cherish that he had remained unmarried for her sake? Sophia's lips did not curl in scorn over this last suggestion, because she was holding her little court of inquiry in a mental region quite apart from her emotions.

This woman's character was, however, revealed in this, that she passed easily from her queries as to what the man in question did, or would be likely to, think of her. A matter of real, possibly of paramount, interest to her was to wonder whether his life had really expanded into the flower of which she had thought the bud gave promise. She tried to look back and estimate the truth of her youthful instinct, which had told her he was a man above other men. And if that had been so, was he less or more now than he had been then? Had he been a benefit to the new country to which he had come? Had the move from the Old World to this—the decision in which she had rashly aided with youthful advice—been a good or a bad thing for him and for the people to whom he had come?

From this she fell a-thinking upon her own life as, in the light of Trenholme's letter, the contrast of her present womanly self with the bright, audacious girl of that past time was set strongly before her. It is probably as rare for any one really to wish to be the self of any former time—to wish to be younger—as it is really to wish to be any one else. Sophia certainly did not dream of wishing to be younger. We are seldom just to ourselves—either past or present: Sophia had a fine scorn for what she remembered herself to have been; she had greater respect for her present self, because there was less of outward show, and more of reality.

It might have been a quarter of an hour, it might have been more, since the train had last started, but now it stopped rather suddenly. Sophia's father murmured sleepily against the proximity of the stations. He was reclining in the seat just behind her.

Sophia looked out of her window. She saw no light. By-and-by some men came up the side of the track with lanterns. She saw by the light they held that they were officials of the train, and that the bank on which they walked looked perfectly wild and untrodden. She turned her head toward her father.

"We are not at any station," she remarked.

"Ay!" He got up with cumbrous haste, as a horse might rise. He, too, looked out of the window, then round at his women and children, and clad himself in an immense coat.

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"I'll just go out," he whispered, "and see how things are. If there's anything wrong I'll let you know."

He intended his whisper to be something akin to silence; he intended to exercise the utmost consideration for those around him; but his long remark was of the piercing quality that often appertains to whispers, and, as he turned his back, two of the children woke, and a young girl in the seat in front of Sophia sat up, her grey eyes dilated with alarm.

"Sophia," she said, with a low sob, "oh, Sophia, is there something *wrong*?"

"Be quiet!" said Sophia, tartly.

The snoring mother now shut her mouth with a snap. In a twinkling she was up and lively.

"Has your father got on his overcoat, Sophia? Is there danger?" She darted from one side of the carriage to another, rubbing the moisture off each window with a bit of her shawl and speaking with rapidity.

Then she ran out of the car. Two of the children followed her. The others, reassured by Sophia's stillness, huddled together at the windows, shivering in the draught of cold air that came from the open door.

After some minutes Sophia's father came in again, leading his wife and children with an old-world gallantry that was apparent even in these unsatisfactory circumstances. He had a slow impressive way of speaking that made even his unimportant words appear important. In the present case, as soon as he began to speak most of the people in the car came near to hear.

Some obstruction, he said, had fallen across the line. It was not much; the men would soon remove it. An Indian woman, who lived near, had heroically lit a fire, and thus stopped the train in time. There was no other train due upon the road for many hours. There was no danger. There *might* have been a bad accident, but they had been providentially preserved.

His utterance greatly impressed the bystanders, for he was an important-looking gentleman; but long before he had finished speaking, the bright-eyed little mother had set her children into their various seats again, pulled their jackets close in front, rolled up their feet, patted their caps down on their heads, and, in fact, by a series of pokes and pulls, composed her family to sleep, or, at least, started them as far on the way to sleep as a family can be sent by such a method.

Quiet settled on the car again. Soon the train went on. Sophia Rexford, looking out, could dimly discern the black outline of wood and river. At length the window grew

thicker and opaque. There was no sound of rain or hail, and yet something from without muffled the glass. Sophia slept again.

When the dawn of day at length stole upon them she found that snow had been upon the glass and had melted. Snow lay thick on the ledges of the windows outside. Yet in that part of the country in which they now were there was none on the ground. They seemed to have run a race with a snowstorm in the night, and to have gained it for the nonce. But the sight struck her sadly. The winter, which she dreaded, was evidently on their track.

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It was in the first grey hour of dawn that the train steamed into the station, which was the junction for Quebec, and passengers bound for the English settlements south of that city were obliged to change.

For a few minutes before the train stopped the Rexford family had been booted and spurred, so to speak, ready for the transfer. Each young person was warmly buttoned up and tied into a warlike-looking muffler. Each had several packages in charge. A youth came in from the smoking-car and attached himself to them. When the train had come to a standstill the little French conductor was energetic in helping them to descend.

The family was very large, and, moreover, it was lively; its members were as hard to count as chickens of a brood. Sophia, holding the youngest child and the tickets, endeavoured to explain their number to the conductor.

"There are three children that go free," she said. "Then two little boys at half fare—that makes one ticket. Myself and three young ladies—make five tickets; my brother and father and mother—eight."

The sharp Frenchman looked dubious. "Three children free; two at half fare," he repeated. He was trying to see them all as he spoke.

Sophia repeated her count with terse severity.

"There was not another young lady?"

"Certainly not."

And Sophia was not a woman to be trifled with, so he punched the tickets and went back into his car.

Wooden platforms, a station hotel built of wood, innumerable lines of black rails on which freight trains stood idle, the whole place shut in by a high wooden fence—this was the prospect which met the eyes of the English travellers, and seen in the first struggling light of morning, in the bitter cold of a black frost, it was not a cheerful one. The Rexford family, however, were not considering the prospect; they were intent only on finding the warm passenger-car of the train that was to take them the rest of their journey, and which they had been assured would be waiting here to receive them.

This train, however, was not immediately to be seen, and, in the meantime, the broad platform, which was dusted over with dry frost crystals, was the scene of varied activities.

From the baggage-car of the train they had left, a great number of boxes and bags, labelled "Rexford," were being thrown down in a violent manner, which greatly distressed some of the girls and their father.

"Not that way. That is not the way. Don't you know that is not the way boxes should be handled?" shouted Captain Rexford sternly, and then, seeing that no one paid the slightest attention to his words, he was fain to turn away from the cause of his agitation. He took a brisk turn down the empty end of the platform, and stood there as a man might who felt that the many irritations of life were growing too much for his self-control.

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The little boys found occupation because they observed that the white condensed vapour which came from their mouths with each breath bore great resemblance to the white steam a slowly moving engine was hissing forth. They therefore strutted in imitation of the great machine, emitting large puffs from their little warm mouths, and making the sound which a groom makes when he plies the curry-comb. The big brother was assisting in the unloading of a large carriage from an open van in the rear of the train, and Mrs. Rexford, neat, quick-moving, and excitable, after watching this operation for a few minutes and issuing several orders as to how it was to be done, moved off in lively search of the next train. She ran about, a few steps in each direction, looking at the various railway lines, and then accosted a tall, thin man who was standing still, doing nothing.

"Is the train for the Eastern Townships here? We were told it would be here waiting to receive us at daybreak. Is it here? Is it ready?"

Seeing from the man's face, as she had already seen from the empty tracks, that no such train was in readiness, she ran at one of the puffing and strutting children whose muffler was loose, and tied it up again. Then, struck by another thought, she returned to the impassive man whom she had before addressed.

"This is really the *actual* dawn, I suppose?" she asked, with an air of importance. "I have read that in some countries there is what is called a 'false dawn' that comes before the real one, you know."

Compelled now to speak, the man, who was a New Englander, took a small stick from between his teeth and said: "As far as I know, marm, this morning is genuine."

"Oh really"—with abatement of interest in her tone—"I thought perhaps there might be that sort of thing in Canada, you know—we certainly read of Northern Lights. Very strange that our train isn't here!"

The Yankee took the trouble to reply again, hardly moving a muscle of his face. "Keep a good heart, marm; it may come along yet, a-ridin' on these same Northern Lights."

"Riding on—? I beg your pardon—on what, did you say?" she asked eagerly.

At this the grey-eyed girl who had been frightened in the night plucked her by the sleeve and pulled her away. "Don't you see he's making fun of you, mamma?"

Besides the grey-eyed girl, who wore short frocks, there were two other girls in the first bloom of young-womanhood. One of these, having overheard the conversation, ran and told the other.

"Just because we happened to read of such a thing in that book of Asiatic travel! Isn't it absurd? And there's papa fuming at the other end of the station."

Both girls giggled.

“I know *quite* well that people will think us all crazy,” urged the first speaker. Then they laughed again, not unhappily.

“There’s not a doubt of it,” gasped the other.

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These two girls were very much alike, but one wore a red cloak and the other a blue one. In spite of the fact that they were somewhat bloused and a little grimy, and their pretty little noses were now nipped red by the icy morning, they looked attractive as they stood, pressing their handkerchiefs to their mouths and bending with laughter. The extent of their mirth was proportioned to their youth and excitement, not to the circumstances which called it forth.

The train they had left now moved off. Most of the other passengers who had alighted with them had taken themselves away in various directions, as travellers are apt to do, without any one else noticing exactly what had become of them.

Sophia, with the child in her arms, made her way to a mean waiting-room, and thither the children followed her. The mother, having at last ascertained the train would be ready in the course of time, soon came in also, and the father and brother, hearing it would not be ready for at least a quarter of an hour, went away to see the town.

There was a stove burning hotly in the small waiting-room. The only other furniture was a bench all round the wall. The family, that had entered somewhat tumultuously, almost filled it. There was only one other traveller there, a big girl with a shawl over her head and a bundle under her arm. When Sophia had come into the room alone with the baby, she had asked the girl one or two questions, and been answered civilly enough; but when the rest of the family followed, the girl relapsed into silence, and, after regarding them for a little while, she edged her way out of the room.

Mrs. Rexford, who in the excitement of change and bustle was always subject to being struck with ideas which would not have occurred to her mind at other times, suddenly remembered now that they were dependent upon the resources of the new country for domestic service, and that she had heard that no chance of securing a good servant must be lost, as they were very rare. Stating her thought hastily to Sophia, and darting to the narrow door without waiting for a reply, she stretched out her head with an ebullition of registry-office questions.

“My good girl!” she cried, “my good girl!”

The girl came back nearer the door and stood still.

“Do you happen to know of a girl about your age who can do kitchen work?”

“I don’t know any one here. I’m travelling.”

“But perhaps you would do for me yourself”—this half aside—“Can you make a fire, keep pots clean, and scour floors?”

“Yes.” She did not express any interest in her assent.



“Where are you going? Would you not like to come with me and enter my service? I happen to be in need of just such a girl as you.”

No answer.

“She doesn’t understand, mamma,” whispered the grey-eyed girl in a short frock, who, having wedged herself beside her mother in the narrow doorway, was the only one who could see or hear the colloquy. “Speak slower to the poor thing.”

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"Looks very stupid," commented Mrs. Rexford, hastily pulling in her head and speaking within the room. "But still, one must not lose a chance." Then with head again outside, she continued, "Do you understand me, my good girl? What is your name?"

"Eliza White."

"That is a very good name"—encouragingly. "Where do you live?"

"I used to live a good bit over there, in the French country." She pointed with her arm in a certain direction, but as the points of the compass had no existence for Mrs. Rexford's newly immigrated intelligence, and as all parts of Canada, near and remote, seemed very much in the same place in her nebulous vision of geography, the little information the girl had given was of no interest to her and she took little note of it.

"Did you come from Quebec just now?"

"Yes," replied the girl, after a moment's pause.

Then, in answer to further questions, she told a succinct tale. She said that her father had a farm; that he had died the week before; that she had no relatives in the place; that, having seen her father buried, she thought it best to come to an English-speaking locality, and wait there until she had time to write to her father's brother in Scotland.

"Sad, sad story! Lonely fate! Brave girl!" said Mrs. Rexford, shaking her head for a minute inside the waiting-room and rapidly repeating the tale.

"Yes, if it's true," said Sophia. But Mrs. Rexford did not hear, as she had already turned her head out of the door again, and was commending Eliza White for the course she had taken.

The grey-eyed Winifred, however, still turned inside to combat reproachfully Sophia's suspicions. "You would not doubt her word, Sophia, if you saw how cold and tired she looked."

Mrs. Rexford seemed to argue concerning the stranger's truthfulness in very much the same way, for she was saying:—

"And now, Eliza, will you be my servant? If you will come with me to Chellaston I will pay your fare, and I will take care of you until you hear from your uncle."

"I do not want to be a servant." The reply was stolidly given.

"What! do you wish to be idle?"

"I will work in your house, if you like; but I can pay my own fare in the cars, and I won't be a servant."

There was so much sullen determination in her manner that Mrs. Rexford did not attempt to argue the point.

"Take her, mamma," whispered Winifred. "How ill she seems! And she must be awfully lonely in this great country all alone."

Mrs. Rexford, having turned into the room, was rapidly commenting to Sophia. "Says she will come, but won't be called a servant, and can pay her own fare. Very peculiar—but we read, you know, in that New England book, that that was just the independent way they felt about it. They can only induce *slaves* to be servants *there*, I believe." She gave this cursory view

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of the condition of affairs in the neighbouring States in an abstracted voice, and summed up her remarks by speaking out her decision in a more lively tone. "Well, we must have some one to help with the work. This girl looks strong, and her spirit in the matter signifies less." Then, turning to the girl without the door: "I think you will suit me, Eliza. You can stay with us, at any rate, till you hear from your uncle. You look strong and clean, and I'm *sure* you'll do your best to please me"—this with warning emphasis. "Come in now to the warmth beside us. We can make room in here."

The place was so small and the family so large that the last assurance was not wholly unnecessary. Mrs. Rexford brought Eliza in and set her near the stove. The girls and children gathered round her somewhat curiously, but she sat erect without seeming to notice them much, an expression of impassive, almost hardened, trouble on her pale face. She was a very tall, strong girl, and when she dropped the shawl back a little from her head they saw that she had red hair.

CHAPTER XI.

The village of Chellaston was, in itself, insignificant. Its chief income was derived from summer visitors; its largest building was an hotel, greatly frequented in summer; and its best houses were owned by townspeople, who used them only at that season. That which gave Chellaston a position and name above other places of the same size in the country was an institution called "The New College," in which boys up to the age of eighteen were given a higher education than could be obtained at ordinary schools. The college was a square brick building, not handsome, but commodious; and in the same enclosure with it were the head-master's house, and a boarding-house in which the assistant-masters lived with the pupils. With that love of grand terms which a new country is apt to evince, the head-master was called "The Principal," and his assistants "Professors." The New College was understood to have the future of a university, but its present function was merely that of a public school.

Chellaston was prettily situated by a well-wooded hill and a fair flowing river. The college, with some fields that were cultivated for its use, was a little apart from most of the houses, placed, both as to physical and social position, between the commonplace village and the farms of the undulating land around it; for, by a curious drift of circumstances, the farms of this district were chiefly worked by English gentlemen, whose families, in lieu of all other worldly advantage, held the more stoutly by their family traditions. In doing so they were but treasuring their only heirloom. And they did not expect to gain from the near future any new source of pride; for it is not those who, as convention terms it, are the best born who most easily gather again the moss of prosperity when that which has been about them for generations has once been

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removed. They were, indeed, a set of people who exhibited more sweetness of nature than thrift. Elegance, even of the simplest sort, was almost unknown in their homes, and fashion was a word that had only its remotest echoes there; yet they prided themselves upon adhering strictly to rules of behaviour which in their mother-country had already fallen into the grave of outgrown ideas. Their little society was, indeed, a curious thing, in which the mincing propriety of the Old World had wed itself right loyally to the stern necessity of the New. How stern such necessity might be, the Rexford family, who came rolling into this state of things in their own family carriage, had yet to learn.

It was to the Principalship of the New College that Robert Trenholme, by virtue of scholastic honours from Oxford, had attained. Although a young man for the post, it was admitted by all that he filled it admirably. The school had increased considerably in the three years of his management. And if Trenholme adapted himself to the place, the place was also adapted to him, for by it he held an assured standing in the country; he could, as the saying is, mix with the best; and he valued his position. Why should he not value it? He had won it honourably, and he cherished it merely as the greatest of his earthly goods, which he believed he held in due subordination to more heavenly benefits. Those lives are no doubt the most peaceful in which self-interest and duty coalesce, and Trenholme's life at this period was like a fine cord, composed of these two strands twisted together with exquisite equality. His devotion to duty was such as is frequently seen when a man of sanguine, energetic temperament throws the force of his being into battle for the right. He had added to his school duties voluntary service in the small English church of Chellaston, partly because the congregation found it hard to support a clergyman; partly because he preferred keeping his schoolboys under the influence of his own sermons, which were certainly superior to those of such clergymen as were likely to come there; and partly, if not chiefly, because the activity of his nature made such serving a delight to him. The small church, like the school, had been greatly improved since it had come under his hand, and the disinterestedness of his unpaid ministrations was greatly lauded. He was a very busy, and a successful, man, much esteemed by all who knew him. The New College was expected to become a university; Robert Trenholme hoped for this and expected to remain at its head, but this hope of his was by the way; he did not think of it often, for he loved work for its own sake. Even the value he set on his present success was not often, more actively in his mind than the value he set on the fresh air he breathed. It was very occasionally that the pride of him came to the surface, and then chiefly when animated by the memory of the time when he had been at a disadvantage in worldly things. Such memories came to him when he prepared to go to the railway station to meet the Rexfords. He concealed it perfectly, but it gave him certain swellings of heart to think that Miss Rexford would now gradually see all to which he had attained.

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When Captain Rexford had decided upon buying a farm at Chellaston, he had had some correspondence with Principal Trenholme on the subject, having been put into communication with him by the widow of the relative at whose house Sophia and Trenholme had first met. This was the whole extent of the acquaintance. Of Sophia's step-mother and her numerous children Robert Trenholme knew nothing, save that a second family existed. Nor did Captain Rexford imagine that his eldest daughter had any distinct remembrance of a man whom she had so casually known. Fathers are apt to assume that they know the precise extent of their daughters' acquaintanceships, for the same reason that most people assume that what they never heard of does not exist. Yet when Trenholme actually repaired to the station at the hour at which Captain Rexford had announced his arrival, it was a fact that many of his leisure thoughts for a month back had been pointing forward, like so many guide-posts, to the meeting that was there to take place, and it was also true that the Rexford family—older and younger—were prepared to hail him as a friend, simply because their knowledge of him, though slight, was so much greater than of any other being in the place to which they were come—and everything in this world goes by comparison.

Now the main feature of the arrival of the Rexford family in Chellaston was that they brought their own carriage with them. It was an old, heavy carriage, for it had come into Captain Rexford's possession in the first place by inheritance, and it was now a great many years since he had possessed horses to draw it. From its long and ignominious retreat in an outhouse it had lately emerged to be varnished and furbished anew, in order to make the handsomer appearance in the new country. It had been one of the considerations which had reconciled Mrs. Rexford to emigration, that on a farm this carriage could be used with little extra expense.

Principal Trenholme had come to the station, which was a little way from the village, in a smart gig of his own. According to Captain Rexford's instructions, he had sent to the station a pair of horses, to be harnessed to the aforesaid carriage, which had been carefully brought on the same train with its owners. He had also sent of his own accord a comfortable waggon behind the horses, and he straightway urged that the family should repair in this at once to their new home, and leave the carriage to be set upon its wheels at leisure. As he gave this advice he eyed the wheelless coach with a curiosity and disfavour which was almost apparent through his studious politeness.

His arguments, however, and Captain Rexford's, who agreed with him, were of no avail. Mrs. Rexford, partly from sentiment, partly from a certain pathetic vanity, had set her heart on driving to the new home in the old carriage. Captain Rexford's eldest son had helped to get the vehicle off the train, and was now working steadily with one of the station hands to get it upon its wheels. It was assuredly such a carriage as that bit of Canadian road had never seen before. The station loiterers, sometimes helping in its arrangement, sometimes merely looking on, gazed at it with unwavering attention. Robert Trenholme gazed at it also, and at last felt obliged to give some more distinct warning of difficulties he foresaw.

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"We have native horses," he said, with a good-humoured smile that leaped out of his eyes before it parted his lips; "we have horses, and we have ponies, and I am afraid that a pair of the one would be as serviceable in the long run as a pair of the other in drawing it on these roads. Are you getting out carriage-horses from England, Captain Rexford?"

The gentleman addressed continued to set the cushions in their places, but in a minute he went back into the station, where by a stove he found his wife and Sophia warming themselves, the smallest children, and a pot of carriage oil.

"You know, my dears, I never felt quite clear in my own mind that it was wise of us to bring the carriage." He held his hands to the warmth as he spoke. "Mr. Trenholme, I find, seems to think it heavy for these roads."

His wife heard him quite cheerfully. "In weather like this nothing could be more desirable," said she, "than to have one's own comfortably cushioned carriage; and besides, I have always told you we owe it to our children to show the people here that, whatever misfortunes we have had, we *have* been people of consequence." She added after a moment in conclusion: "Harold has brought the best grease for the wheels."

She had her way therefore, and in course of time the ladies, and as many of the children as could be crowded into the carriage, thus commenced the last stage of their journey. The others were driven on by Trenholme. As for the little boys, "a good run behind," their mother said, was just what they needed to warm them up.

They began running behind, but soon ran in front, which rather confused Mrs. Rexford's ideas of order, but still the carriage lumbered on.

CHAPTER XII.

Captain Rexford had no fortune with his second wife; and their children numbered seven daughters and three sons. It was natural that the expenses of so large a family should have proved too much for a slender income in an English town where a certain style of living had been deemed a necessity. When, further, a mercantile disaster had swept away the larger part of this income, the anxious parents had felt that there was nothing left for their children but a choice between degrading dependence on the bounty of others and emigration. From the new start in life which the latter course would give they had large hopes. Accordingly, they gathered together all that they had, and, with a loan from a richer relative, purchased a house and farm in a locality where they were told their children would not wholly lack educational opportunities or society. This move of theirs was heroic, but whether wise or unwise remained to be proved by the result of indefinite years. The extent of their wealth was now this new property, an income

which, in proportion to their needs, was a mere pittance, and the debt to the richer relative.

The men who came to call on their new neighbour, and congratulate him on his choice of a farm, did not know how small was the income nor how big the debt, yet even they shook their heads dubiously as they thought of their own difficulties, and remarked to each other that such a large family was certainly a great responsibility.

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"I wonder," said one to another, "if Rexford had an idea in coming here that he would marry his daughters easily. It's a natural thing, you know, when one hears of the flower of British youth leaving England for the Colonies, to imagine that, in a place like this, girls would be at a premium. I did. When we came out I said to my wife that when our little girls grew up they might pick and choose for themselves from among a dozen suitors, but—well, this isn't just the locality for that, is it?"

Both men laughed a little. They knew that, however difficult it might be to find the true explanation of the fact, the fact remained that there were no young men in Chellaston, that boys who grew up there went as inevitably elsewhere to make their fortunes as they would have done from an English country town.

Among the ladies who came to see Mrs. Rexford and count her children, the feeling concerning her was more nearly allied to kindly commiseration than she would at all have liked had she known it. They said that Captain Rexford might succeed if his wife and daughters—Each would complete the conditional clause in her own way, but it was clear to the minds of all that the success of the Rexford farm would depend to a great extent upon the economy and good management practised in the house.

Now the Rexfords, man, woman, and child, had come with brave hearts, intending to work and to economise; yet they found what was actually required of them different from all that their fancy had pictured; and their courage, not being obliged to face those dangers to which they had adjusted it, and being forced to face much to which it was not adjusted, suffered shock, and took a little time to rally into moderate animation.

At the end of their weary journey they had found themselves in a large wooden house, not new by any means, or smart in any of its appointments; and, as convenience is very much a matter of custom, it appeared to them inconvenient—a house in which room was set against room without vestige of lobby or passage-way, and in which there were almost as many doors to the outside as there were windows. They had bought it and its furniture as a mere adjunct to a farm which they had chosen with more care, and when they inspected it for the first time their hearts sank somewhat within them. Captain Rexford, with impressive sadness, remarked to his wife that there was a greater lack of varnish and upholstery and of traces of the turning lathe than he could have supposed possible in—"furniture." But his wife had bustled away before he had quite finished his speech. Whatever she might feel, she at least expressed no discouragement. Torture does not draw from a brave woman expressions of dismay.

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That which gave both Mrs. Rexford and Sophia much perplexity in the first day or two of the new life was that the girl Eliza seemed to them to prove wholly incompetent. She moved in a dazed and weary fashion which was quite inconsistent with the intelligence and capacity occasionally displayed in her remarks; and had they in the first three days been able to hear of another servant, Mrs. Rexford would have abruptly cancelled her agreement with Eliza. At the end of that time, however, when there came a day on which Mrs. Rexford and Sophia were both too exhausted by unpacking and housework to take their ordinary share of responsibility, Eliza suddenly seemed to awake and shake herself into thought and action. She cleared the house of the litter of packing-cases, set their contents in order, and showed her knowledge of the mysteries of the kitchen in a manner which fed the family and sent them to bed more comfortably than since their arrival. From that day Eliza became more cheerful; and she not only did her own work, but often aided others in theirs, and set the household right in all its various efforts towards becoming a model Canadian home. If the ladies had not had quite so much to learn, or if the three little children had not been quite so helpless, Eliza's work would have appeared more effective. As it was, the days passed on, and no tragedy occurred.

It was a great relief to Captain and Mrs. Rexford in those days to turn to Principal Trenholme for society and advice. He was their nearest neighbour, and had easy opportunity for being as friendly and kind as he evidently desired to be. Captain Rexford pronounced him a fine fellow and a perfect gentleman. Captain Rexford had great natural courtesy of disposition.

"I suppose, Principal Trenholme," said he blandly, as he entertained his visitor one day in the one family sitting-room, "I suppose that you are related to the Trenholmes of ——?"

Trenholme was playing with one of the little ones who stood between his knees. He did not instantly answer—indeed, Captain Rexford's manner was so deliberate that it left room for pauses. Sophia, in cloak and fur bonnet, was standing by the window, ready to take the children for their airing. Trenholme found time to look up from his tiny playmate and steal a glance at her handsome profile as she gazed, with thoughtful, abstracted air, out upon the snow. "Not a very near connection, Captain Rexford," was his reply; and it was given with that frank smile which always leaped first to his eyes before it showed itself about his mouth.

It would have been impossible for a much closer observer than Captain Rexford to have told on which word of this small sentence the emphasis had been given, or whether the smile meant that Principal Trenholme could have proved his relationship had he chosen, or that he laughed at the notion of there being any relationship at all. Captain Rexford accordingly interpreted it just as suited his inclination, and mentioned to another neighbour in the course of a week that his friend, the Principal of the College, was a

distant relative, by a younger branch probably, of the Trenholmes of—, *etc. etc.*, an item of news of which the whole town took account sooner or later.

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To Mrs. Rexford Trenholme was chiefly useful as a person of whom she could ask questions, and she wildly asked his advice on every possible subject. On account of Captain Rexford's friendly approval, and his value to Mrs. Rexford as a sort of guide to useful knowledge on the subject of Canada in general and Chellaston in particular, Robert Trenholme soon became intimate, in easy Canadian fashion, with the newcomers; that is, with the heads of the household, with the romping children and the pretty babies. The young girls were not sufficiently forward in social arts to speak much to a visitor, and with Sophia he did not feel at all on a sure footing.

After this little conversation with Captain Rexford about his relatives, and when Sophia had received the other children from the hands of Eliza and repaired with them to the house door, Trenholme also took leave, and rose to accompany her as far as the gate.

Sophia shivered a little when she stepped out upon the narrow wooden gallery in front of the door.

The Rexford house was not situated in the midst of the farm, but between the main road that ran out of the village and the river that here lay for some distance parallel with the road. On the next lot of land stood an empty house in the centre of a large deserted garden; and on the other side of the road, about a quarter of a mile off, stood the college buildings, which were plainly to be seen over flat fields and low log fences. Beyond the college grounds were woods and pastures, and beyond again rose Chellaston Mountain. This view was what Sophia and Trenholme looked upon as they stood on the verandah; and all that they saw—field, road, roof, tree, and hill—was covered with sparkling snow. It was a week since the snow came, and Sophia still shivered a little whenever she looked at it.

"I am sorry to see you do not look upon this scene as if it rejoiced your heart," he said. "When you know it better, you will, I hope, love it as I do. It is a glorious climate, Miss Rexford; it is a glorious country. The depressions and fears that grow up with one's life in the Old World fall away from one in this wonderful air, with the stimulus of a new world and a strong young nation all around. This snow is not cold; it is warm. In this garden of yours it is just now acting as a blanket for the germs of flowers that could not live through an English winter, but will live here, and next summer will astonish you with their richness. Nor is it cold for *you*; it is dry as dust; you can walk over it in moccasins, and not be damp: and it has covered away all the decay of autumn, conserving for you in the air such pure oxygen that it will be like new life in your veins, causing you to laugh at the frost."

"I have not your enthusiasm," she replied. Together they led the unsteady feet of the little ones down the crisp snow path which Harold's industrious shovel had made.

Trenholme spoke briefly of the work he was trying to do in his school. A clergyman has social licence to be serious which is not accorded to other men. Wherefore he spoke as

a clergyman might speak to a friend, saying, in general terms, how steep is the ascent when, among mundane affairs, human beings try to tread only where the angels of the higher life may lead.

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Sophia assented, feeling a little sharp because it seemed to her that he was taking up the thread of his acquaintance with her just where it had formerly parted when she had thrown before him the gauntlet of such high resolves and heavenly aims as young girls can easily talk about when they know as yet nothing of their fulfilment. Whether or not Sophia knew more of their fulfilment since then, she had, at least, learned a more humble reverence for the very thought of such struggles, and she was quite ready to believe that the man to whom she had once called to come onward had by this time far outstripped her in the race. She was *ready* for this belief; but she had not accepted it, because, as yet confused and excited by all that was new, she had formed no conclusion whatever with regard to Trenholme. It had puzzled her somewhat from the outset to find him such a model of elegance in the matter of clothes and manners. She had, somehow, fancied that he would have a long beard and wear an old coat. Instead of that, his usual manner of accosting her reminded her more of those fashion plates in which one sees tailors' blocks taking off their hats to one another. She did not think this was to his disadvantage; she did not, as yet, think distinctly on the matter at all. She certainly had no time to deliberate during this particular conversation, for her companion, having only a few minutes to utilise, was in a talkative humour. Having spoken of his own work, and made the more general observations on the difficulties of what is commonly called the "narrow road," in a quiet, honest way, he said something more personal.

"I have always felt, Miss Rexford, that it would be a pleasure to me to see you again, because of the strength and courage which you managed to infuse into my youthful aspirations; but now that I have seen you, will you permit me to say that you have been quite unknowingly a help to me again? A week ago I was half-disheartened of my life because of the apparent sordidness of its daily duties, and now that I have seen you giving your life to perform small and unassuming services for others, my own duties have appeared more sacred. I can't tell you how much I admire your unselfish devotion to these children. Don't think me rude because I say it. I often think we are shabby to one another because, in the strife, we do not frankly say when we are helped by seeing the brave fight that some one else is making."

They had stopped by the gate, for he was going one way and she and the little ones another. Two strong young firs, with snow upon their shelving branches, formed gateposts. The long broad road was white as their footpath had been.

Sophia answered: "There is no virtue in what I do, for, had I the choice, I certainly should not be their nursemaid."

"Do you know," he said, "I think when we see life in its reality, instead of in its seeming, we shall find that the greatest deeds have been done just because their doers believe that they could not do otherwise."

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"I don't see that. If circumstances shut us up to doing certain things, there is no virtue in doing them. There may be a little virtue in not repining at our fate, but not much."

He did not answer for a minute, but broke the curl of a little snowdrift gently with his stick. Because he did not answer or say good-bye, Sophia tarried for a moment and then looked up at him.

"Miss Rexford," he replied, "the voice of circumstances says to us just what we interpret it to say. It is in the *needs must* of a high nature that true nobility lies."

CHAPTER XIII.

It is upon the anniversary of feasts that a family, if despondent at all, feels most despondent. So it fell out that at Christmas-time the homesickness which hitherto had found its antidote in novelty and surprise now attacked the Rexford household. The girls wept a good deal. Sophia chid them for it sharply. Captain Rexford carried a solemn face. The little boys were in worse pickles of mischief than was ordinary. Even Mrs. Rexford was caught once or twice, in odd corners, hastily wiping away furtive tears.

This general despondency seemed to reach a climax one afternoon some days before the end of the year. Without, the wind was blowing and snow was descending; inside, the housework dragged monotonously. The only lively people in the house were the little children. They were playing quite riotously in an upper room, under the care of the Canadian girl, Eliza; but their shouts only elicited sighs from Mrs. Rexford's elder daughters, who were helping her to wash the dinner dishes in the kitchen.

These two elder daughters had, since childhood, always been dressed, so far as convenient, the one in blue, the other in red, and were nicknamed accordingly. Their mother thought it gave them individuality which they otherwise lacked. The red frock and the blue were anything but gay just now, for they were splashed and dusty, and the pretty faces above them showed a decided disposition to pout and frown, even to shed tears.

The kitchen was a long, low room. The unpainted wood of floor, walls, and ceiling was darkened somewhat by time. Two square, four-paned windows were as yet uncurtained, except that Nature, with the kindness of a fairy helper, had supplied the lack of deft fingers and veiled the glass with such devices of the frost as resembled miniature landscapes of distant alp and nearer minaret. The large, square cooking-stove smoked a little. Between the stove and the other door stood the table, which held the dishes at which worked the neat, quick mother and her rather untidy and idle daughters.

“Really, Blue and Red!” The words were jerked out to conceal a sigh which had risen involuntarily. “This is disgraceful.”

Her sharp brown eyes fell on the pile of dishes she had washed, which the two girls, who were both drying them, failed to diminish as fast as she increased it.

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"Our cloths are wet," said Blue, looking round the ceiling vaguely, as if a dry dish-towel might be lying somewhere on a rafter.

"I declare—" the mother began, tapping her foot. But what she was going to declare was never known, for just then a knock at the outer door diverted their attention.

However commonplace may be the moment after a door is opened, the moment before the opening is apt to be full of interest, for one can never know but that some cause of delightful excitement is on the other side.

It was Blue who opened the door. She did not at first open it very wide, for she had learned by experience how much icy air could rush in, and the other two, watching from behind, saw her answering some salutation with dubious politeness. Then, after a moment, they saw her open it more widely, and with a shy but hospitable inclination of the pretty head—"Will you walk in?" said Blue.

The young man who immediately entered had a very smart appearance to eyes which had grown accustomed to the working garb of father and brother. He was, moreover, handsome to a degree that is not ordinary. The curly hair from which he had lifted his fur cap was black and glossy as a blackbird's plumage, and the moustache, which did not cover the full red lips, matched the hair, save that it seemed of finer and softer material. His brown eyes had the glow of health and good spirits in them.

"Dear me!" Mrs. Rexford gave this involuntary exclamation of surprise; then she turned inquiringly to the visitor. It was not in her nature to regard him with an unfriendly eye; and as for Blue and Red, a spot of warm colour had come into each of their sorrowful cheeks. They were too well bred to look at each other or stare at the stranger, but there was a flutter of pleased interest about the muscles of their rosy lips that needed no expressive glances to interpret it.

To be sure, the next few minutes' talk rather rubbed the bloom off their pleasure, as one rubs beauty off a plum by handling; but the plum is still sweet; and the pleasure was still there, being composed purely of the excitement of meeting a young human creature apparently so akin to themselves, but different with that mysterious difference which nature sets between masculine and feminine attributes of mind and heart.

The young man was an American. Any one experienced in American life would have observed that the youth was a wanderer, his tricks of speech and behaviour savouring, not of one locality, but of many. His accent and manner showed it. He was very mannerly. He stated, without loss of time, that, hearing that they had lately come to the country and had some rooms in their house which they did not use, he had taken the liberty of calling to see if they could let him a couple of rooms. He was anxious, he said, to set up as a dentist, and had failed, so far, to find a suitable place.

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The disappointment which Blue and Red experienced in finding that the handsome youth was a dentist by profession was made up for by the ecstasy of amusement it caused them to think of his desiring to set up his business in their house. They would almost have forgiven Fate if she had withdrawn her latest novelty as suddenly as she had sent him, because his departure would have enabled them to give vent to the mirth the suppression of which was, at that moment a pain almost as great as their girlish natures could bear.

Oh, no, Mrs. Rexford said, they had no rooms to let in the house.

The stranger muttered something under his breath, which to an acute ear might have sounded like "Oh, Jemima!" but he looked so very disconsolate they could not help being sorry for him as he immediately replied, soberly enough, "I *am* sorry. I can't think of any place else to go, ma'am. I'm *real* tired, for I've been walking this long time in the loose snow. Will you permit me to sit and rest for a time on the doorstep right outside here till I can think what I better do next?"

Blue fingered the back of a chair nervously.

"Take a chair by the stove and rest yourself," said Mrs. Rexford. She had a dignity about her in dealing with a visitor that was not often apparent in other circumstances. She added, "We have too lately been strangers ourselves to wish to turn any one weary from our door." Then, in whispered aside, "Dry your dishes, girls."

The dignity of bearing with which she spoke to him altered as she threw her head backward to give this last command.

"I thank you from my heart, madam." The young man bowed—that is, he made an angle of himself for a moment. He moved the chair to which she had motioned him, but did not sit down. "It is impossible for me to sit," said he, fervently, "while a lady stands."

The quaintness and novelty in his accent made them unable to test his manners by any known standard. For all they knew, the most cultured inhabitant of Boston, New York, or Washington might have behaved precisely in this way.

"Sit down, mamma," whispered Blue and Red, with praiseworthy consideration for their mother's fatigue; "we'll finish the dishes."

The girls perceived what, perhaps, the stranger had already perceived, that if their mother consented to sit there was a chance of a more equal conversation. And Mrs. Rexford sat down. Her mind had been unconsciously relieved from the exercise of great dignity by the fact that the stranger did not appear to notice her daughters, apparently assuming that they were only children.



"It is *real* kind of you, ma'am, to be so kind to me. I don't think *any* lady has seemed so kind to me since I saw my own mother last."

He looked pensively at the stove.

"Your mother lives in the United States, I suppose." He shook his head sadly. "In heaven now."

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"Ah!" said Mrs. Rexford; and then in a minute, "I am glad to see that you feel her loss, I am sure." Here she got half off her chair to poke the damper of the stove. "There is no loss so great as the loss of a mother."

"No, and I *always* feel her loss most when I am tired and hungry; because, when I was a little chap, you know, it was always when I was tired and hungry that I went home and found her just sitting there, quite natural, waiting for me."

Blue and Red looked at the cupboard. They could not conceive how their mother could refrain from an offer of tea. But, as it was, she gave the young man a sharp glance and questioned him further. Where had he come from? When had he arrived?

He had come, he said, from the next station on the railway. He had been looking there, and in many other places, for an opening for his work, and for various reasons he had now decided that Chellaston was a more eligible place than any. He had come in the early morning, and had called on the doctor and on Principal Trenholme of the College. They had both agreed that there was an opening for a young dentist who would do his work well, charge low prices, and be content to live cheaply till the Tillage grew richer. "It's just what I want," he said. "I don't seem to care much about making money if I can live honestly among kind-hearted folks."

"But surely," cried Mrs. Rexford, "neither Dr. Nash nor Principal Trenholme suggested to you that Captain Rexford could give you rooms for—" She was going to say "pulling out teeth," but she omitted that.

The young man looked at her, evidently thinking of something else. "Would you consider it a liberty, ma'am, if I—" He stopped diffidently, for, seeing by his manner that he meditated immediate action of some sort, she looked at him so fiercely that her glance interrupted him for a moment, "if I were to stop the stove smoking?" He completed the sentence with great humility, evidently puzzled to know how he had excited her look of offence.

She gave another excited poke at the damper herself, and, having got her hand blacked, wiped it on her coarse grey apron. The diamond keeper above the wedding-ring looked oddly out of place, but not more so than the small, shapely hand that wore it. Seeing that she had done the stove no good, she sat back in her chair with her hands crossed upon her now dirty apron.

"You can do nothing with it. Before we came to Canada no one told us that the kitchen stoves invariably smoked. Had they done so I should have chosen another country. However, as I say to my children, we must make the best of it now. There's no use crying; there's no use lamenting. It only harasses their father."

The last words were said with a sharp glance of reproof at Blue and Red. This mother never forgot the bringing up of her children in any one's presence, but she readily forgot the presence of others in her remarks to her children.

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"But you aren't making the best of it," said the visitor. With that he got up, carefully lifted an iron piece in the back of the stove, turned a key thus disclosed in the pipe, and so materially altered the mood of the fire that in a few moments it stopped smoking and crackled nicely.

"Did you ever, mamma!" cried the girls. A juggler's feat could not have entertained them more.

"If for a time, first off, you had someone in the house who had lived in this country, you'd get on first class," said the youth.

"But you know, my dears," Mrs. Rexford spoke to her daughters, forgetting the young man for a moment as before, "if I had not supposed that Eliza understood the stove I should have inquired of Principal Trenholme before now."

"May I enquire where you got your help?" asked the American. "If she was from this locality she certainly ought to have comprehended the stove."

"She is a native of the country."

"As I say," he went on, with some emphasis, "if she comes from hereabouts, or further west, she ought to have understood this sort of a stove; but, on the other hand, if she comes from the French district, where they use only the common box stove, she would not understand this kind."

He seemed to be absorbed entirely in the stove, and in the benefit to them of having a "help," as he called her, who understood it.

"I think she comes from the lumbering country somewhere near the St. Lawrence," said Mrs. Rexford, examining the key in the stove-pipe. She could not have said a moment before where Eliza had come from, but this phrase seemed to sum up neatly any remarks the girl had let fall about her father's home.

"*That* accounts for it! Will you be kind enough to let me see her? I could explain the mechanism of this stove to her in a few words; then you, ma'am, need have no further trouble."

She said she should be sorry to trouble him. If the key were all, she could explain it.

"Pardon me"—he bowed again—"it is *not* all. There are several inner dampers at the back here, which it is most important to keep free from soot. If I might only explain it to the help, she'd know once for all. I'd be real glad to do you that kindness."

Mrs. Rexford had various things to say. Her speeches were usually complex, composed of a great variety of short sentences. She asked her daughters if they

thought Eliza would object to coming down. She said that Eliza was invaluable, but she did not always like to do as she was asked. She thought the girl had a high temper. She had no wish to rouse her temper; she had never seen anything of it; she didn't wish to. Perhaps Eliza would like to come down. Then she asked her daughters again if they thought Eliza would come pleasantly. Her remarks showed the track of her will as it veered round from refusal to assent, as bubbles in muddy water show the track of a diving insect. Finally, because the young man had a strong will, and was quite decided as to what he thought best, the girls were sent to fetch Eliza.

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Blue and Red ran out of the kitchen. When they got into the next room they clasped one another and shook with silent laughter. As the door between the rooms did not shut tightly, they adjured one another, by dances and gestures, not to laugh loud. Blue danced round the table on her toes as a means of stifling her laughter. Then they both ran to the foot of the attic stair and gripped each other's arms very tight by way of explaining that the situation was desperate, and that one or other must control her voice sufficiently to call Eliza.

The dining-room they were in was built and furnished in the same style as the kitchen, save that here the wood was painted slate-colour and a clean rag carpet covered the floor. The upper staircase, very steep and dark, opened off it at the further end. All the light from a square, small-paned window fell sideways upon the faces of the girls as they stretched their heads towards the shadowed covert of the stairs.

And they could not, *could* not, speak, although they made gestures of despair at each other and mauled each other's poor little arms sadly in the endeavour to prove how hard they were trying to be sober.

If any one wants to know precisely what they were laughing at, the only way would be to become for a time one of two girls to whom all the world is a matter of mutual mirth except when it is a matter of mutual tears.

Although it seemed very long to them, it was, after all, only a minute before Blue called in trembling tones, "Eliza!"

"Eliza!" called Red.

"Eliza! Eliza!" they both called, and though there was that in their voices which made it perfectly apparent to the young man in the next room, that they were laughing, so grand was their composure compared with what it had been before, that they thought they had succeeded admirably.

But when a heavy foot was heard overhead and an answering voice, and it was necessary to explain to Eliza wherefore she was called, an audible laugh did escape, and then Blue and Red scampered upstairs and made the communication there.

It spoke much for the strength and calibre of character of the girl who had so lately come into this family that a few minutes later, when the three girls entered the kitchen, it was Eliza who walked first, with a bearing equal to that of the other two and a dignity far greater.

The young man, who had been fidgeting with the stove, looked up gravely to see them enter, as if anxious to give his lesson; but had any one looked closely it would have been seen that his acute gaze covered the foremost figure with an intensity of

observation that was hardly called for if he took no other interest in her than as a transient pupil in the matter of stove dampers.

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Perhaps any one might have looked with interest at her. She was evidently young, but there was that in her face that put years, or at least experience of years, between her and the pretty young things that followed her. She was largely made, and, carrying a dimpled child of two years upon her shoulder, she walked erect, as Southern women walk with their burdens on their heads. It detracted little that her gown was of the coarsest, and that her abundant red hair was tossed by the child's restless hands. Eliza, as she entered the kitchen, was, if not a beautiful girl, a girl on the eve of splendid womanhood; and the young man, perceiving this almost faltered in his gaze, perhaps also in the purpose he was pursuing. The words of the lesson he had ready seemed to be forgotten, although his outward composure did not fail him.

Eliza came near, the child upon her shoulder, looked at him and waited.

"Eliza will hear what you have to say," said Mrs. Rexford.

"Oh," said he, and then, whatever had been the cause of his momentary pause, he turned it off with the plea that he had not supposed this to be "the—young lady who—wished to learn about the stove."

She received what he had to say without much appreciation, remarking that, with the exception of the one key, she had known it before.

As for him, he took up his cap to go. "Good-day, ma'am," he said; "I'm obliged for your hospitality. Ladies, I beg leave now to retire." He made his bow elaborately, first to Mrs. Rexford, then in the direction of the girls.

"My card, ma'am," he said, presenting Mrs. Rexford with the thing he mentioned.

Then he went out.

On the card was printed, "Cyril P. Harkness, M.D.S."

It was growing so dark that Mrs. Rexford had to go to the window to read it. As she did so, the young man's shadow passed below the frosted pane as he made his way between snow-heaps to the main road.

CHAPTER XIV.

Next day Eliza went out with two of the little children. It was in the early afternoon, and the sun shone brightly. Eliza had an errand down the street, but every one knows that one does not progress very fast on an errand with a toddler of two years at one's side. Eliza sauntered, giving soothing answers to the little one's treble remarks, and only occasionally exerting herself to keep the liveliness of her older charge in check. Eliza liked the children and the sunshine and the road. Her saunter was not an undignified

one, nor did she neglect her duty in any particular; but all the while there was an undercurrent of greater activity in her mind, and the under-thoughts were occupied wholly and entirely with herself and her own interests.

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After walking in the open road for a little while she came under the great elm trees that held their leafless limbs in wide arch over the village street. Here a footpath was shovelled in the snow, on either side of the sleigh road. The sun was throwing down the graceful lines of elm twigs on path and snowdrift. The snow lawns in front of the village houses were pure and bright; little children played in them with tiny sledge and snow spade, often under the watchful eye of a mother who sat sewing behind the window pane. Now and then sleighs passed on the central road with a cheerful jingle of bells.

When Eliza, with the children, came to the centre of the village, it became necessary to cross the street. She was bound for the largest shop, that stood under part of the great hotel, and just here, opposite the hotel, quite a number of sleighs were passing. Eliza picked up the little one in her arms, and, taking the other child by the hand, essayed to cross. But one reckons without one's host in counting surely on the actions of children. Sturdy five-year-old baulked like a little horse, and would not come. Eliza coaxed in vain. A long line of draught-horses, dragging blue box-sleighs, came slowly up the road, each jingling a heavy belt of bells. Five-year-old was frightened and would not come. Eliza, without irritation, but at the same time without hesitation, took it by the waist under her left arm and started again. She got half across before the child seemed thoroughly to realise what was occurring, and then, with head and arms in front and little gaitered legs behind, it began to struggle so violently that the young woman, strong and composed as she was, was brought for a minute to a standstill.

Two men were watching her from the smoking-room of the hotel; the one an elderly man, the owner of the house, had his attention arrested by the calm force of character Eliza was displaying; the other, the young American dentist, saw in the incident an excuse for interference, and he rushed out now to the rescue, and gallantly carried the little naughty one safely to the right side of the road.

Eliza, recognising him, saw that he was looking at her with the pleasant air of an old acquaintance—one, in fact, who knew her so well that any formal greeting was unnecessary—not that she knew anything about greetings, or what might or might not be expected, but she had an indistinct sense that he was surprisingly friendly.

“How’s the stove going?” then he asked. He escorted her into the shop, and superintended her little purchases in a good-natured, elder-brother fashion. That done, he carried the elder child across the road again, and Eliza went upon her way back down the long narrow pavement, with the children at her side.

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She had shown nothing to the young man but composed appreciation of his conduct. She was, however, conscious that he would not have been so kind to any girl he happened to meet. "He admires me," thought Eliza to herself. For all that, she was not satisfied with the encounter. She felt that she had not played her part well; she had been too—had been too—she did not know what. She thought if she had held her head higher and shown herself less thankful—yes, there had been something amiss in her behaviour that ought to be corrected. She could not define what she had done, or ought to have done. How could she? An encounter of this sort was as new to her as Mrs. Rexford's sewing machine, which she had not yet been allowed to touch. Yet had she been shut up alone with the machine, as she was now shut up to revise her own conduct within herself, she would, by sheer force of determined intelligence, have mastered its intricacy to a large degree without asking aid. And so with this strong idea that she must learn how to act differently to this young man; dim, indeed, as was her idea of what was lacking, or what was to be gained, she strove with it in no fear of failure.

She raised her head as she walked, and recast the interview just past in another form more suited to her vague ideal, and again in another. She had a sense of power within her, that sense which powerful natures have, without in the least knowing in what direction the power may go forth, or when they will be as powerless—as Samson shaven. She only felt the power and its accompanying impulses; she supposed that in all ways, at all times, it was hers to use.

In a day or two Cyril Harkness met Eliza in the street again, and took occasion to speak to her. This time she was much less obliging in her manner. She threw a trifle of indifference into her air, looking in front of her instead of at him, and made as if she wished to proceed. Had this interview terminated as easily as the other, she would have been able to look back upon it with complete satisfaction, as having been carried on, on her part, according to her best knowledge of befitting dignity; but, unfortunately for her, the young American was of an outspoken disposition, and utterly untrammelled by those instincts of conventionality which Eliza had, not by training, but by inheritance from her law-abiding and custom-loving Scotch ancestry.

"Say," said he, "are you mad at anything?"

He gained at least this much, that she instantly stared at him.

"If you aren't angry with me, why should you act crusty?" he urged. "You aren't half as pleasant as t'other day."

Eliza had not prepared herself for this free speaking, and her mind was one that moved slowly.

"I must take the children home," she said. "I'm not angry. I wasn't pleasant that I know of."

"You ought to be pleasant, any way; for I'm your best friend."

Eliza was not witty, and she really could not think of an answer to this astonishing assertion. Again she looked at him in simple surprise.

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"Well, yes, I am; although you don't know it. There isn't man round Turribs who has the least idea in the world where you are, for your friends left you asleep when they came out with the old gentleman; when I twigged how you got off I never told a word. Your father had been seen" (here he winked) "near Dalhousie, wandering round! But they won't find you unless I tell them, and I won't."

"Won't find me unless you tell them," repeated Eliza slowly, the utmost astonishment in her tone. "Who?"

So vague and great was the wonder in her voice that he brought his eyes to interrogate hers in sudden surprise. He saw only simple and strong interest on the face of a simple and strong country girl. He had expected a different response and a different expression.

He put his tongue in the side of his cheek with the air of an uncontrolled boy who has played a trump-card in vain. "Say," said he, "didn't you, though?"

"Didn't I?" said Eliza, and after a minute she said, "What?"

The young man looked at her and smiled. His smile suggested a cunning recognition that she was deceiving him by pretended dulness.

At this Eliza looked excessively offended, and, with her head aloft, began to push on the little sleigh with the baby in it.

"Beg your pardon, ma'am," he said with sudden humility, but with a certain lingering in his voice as if he could not relinquish his former idea as suddenly as he wished to appear to do. "I see I've made a mistake."

Eliza hesitated in her onward movement. "But what was it you were going to tell about me?" She spoke as if she had merely then remembered how the conversation began.

His recantation was now complete. "Nothing; oh, nothing. T'was just my fun, miss."

She surveyed him with earnest disapprobation.

"You're not a very sensible young man, I'm afraid."

She said this severely, and then, with great dignity, she went home.

The young man lingered for a minute or two by the snow piles in front of the hotel where they had been standing. Then he went into the hotel with the uncertain step that betokens an undecided mind. When he got to the window he looked out at her retreating figure—a white street with this grey-clad healthy-looking girl walking down it,

and the little red box-sleigh with the baby in it which she pushed before her. He was quite alone, and he gave vent to an emphatic half-whisper to himself.

“If she did it, she’s a magnificent deep one—a magnificent deep one.” There was profound admiration in his voice.

That evening it was Mrs. Rexford who happened to wipe the tea-things while Eliza washed them.

“That young Mr. Harkness, the dentist—” began Eliza.

“Yes,” said Mrs. Rexford, alert.

“Twice when I’ve been to the shop he’s tried to make himself pleasant to me and the children. I don’t suppose he means any harm, but he’s not a sensible young man, I think.”

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"You're a very sensible girl, Eliza," said Mrs. Rexford, with quick vigour and without any sense of contrast.

"It doesn't matter to me," went on Eliza, "for I don't answer him more than I can help; but if he was to talk to the other girls when they go out, I suppose they'd know not to notice him too much."

Mrs. Rexford was one of those people who get accustomed to circumstances in the time that it takes others to begin to wonder at them. She often took for granted now that Eliza would consider her daughters as, entirely on a level with herself, but less sensible. It might not be wholly agreeable; neither, to Mrs. Rexford's mind, was it agreeable to have the earth covered with snow for four months of the year; but she had ceased wondering at that phenomenon a minute after she had first read of it in a book of travels, and all the ever-fresh marvel of its glossy brightness had, failed to bring fresh comment to her lips, or to make her mind more familiar with the idea. In the same way, she had accepted Eliza's position and character as a complex fact which, like the winter, had advantages and disadvantages. Mrs. Rexford put up with the latter, was thankful for the former, and wasted no more thoughts on the matter.

Eliza's last remark, however, was a subject for consideration, and with Mrs. Rexford consideration was speech.

"Dear me!" she said. "Well!" Then she took a few paces backward, dish-cloth and dish still in hand, till she brought herself opposite the next room door. The long kitchen was rather dark, as the plates were being washed by the light of one candle, but in the next room Captain Rexford and his family were gathered round a table upon which stood lamps giving plenty of light.

The mother addressed the family in general. "The dentist," said she, "talks to Eliza when she goes to the shop. Blue and Red! if he should speak to you, you must show the same sense Eliza did, and take not the slightest notice."

Sophia had asked what the dentist said to Eliza, and Mrs. Rexford had reproved the girls for laughing, while the head of the family prepared himself to answer in his kindly, leisurely, and important way.

"To 'take not the slightest notice' is, perhaps, requiring more of such young heads than might be possible. It would be difficult even for me to take no notice whatever of a young man who accosted me in a place like this. Severity, mild displeasure, or a determination not to speak, might be shown."

"If necessary," said Sophia; "but—"

"If *necessary*," the father corrected himself, emphasizing his words with a gentle tap of his fingers on the table. "I only mean if necessary, of course."

"People have such easy-going ways here," said Sophia. "Don't you think, mamma, a little ordinary discretion on the girls' part would be enough? Blue and Red have too much sense, I suppose, to treat him as an equal; but they can be polite."

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Eliza, overhearing this, decided that she would never treat the young American as an equal, although she had no idea why she should not.

Let it not be supposed that Mrs. Rexford had idled over the dish she was wiping. The conversation was, in fact, carried on between the family in the bright sitting-room and an intermittent appearance of Mrs. Rexford at the door of the shady kitchen. Twice she had disappeared towards Eliza's table to get a fresh plate and come again, rubbing it.

"Ah, girls," she now cried, "Sophia is always giving you credit for more sense than I'm afraid you possess. No giggling, now, if this young fellow should happen to say 'good morning.' Just 'good morning' in return, and pass on—nothing more."

The father's leisurely speech again broke in and hushed the little babble.

"Certainly, my dear daughters, under such circumstances as your mother suggests; to look down modestly, and answer the young man's salutation with a little primness, and not to hesitate in your walk—that, I should think, is perhaps the course of conduct your mother means to indicate."

"It strikes me," said Harold, the eldest son, "a good deal depends on what he *did* say to Eliza. Eliza!"

This last was a shout, and the girl responded to it, so that there were now two figures at the door, Mrs. Rexford drying the dish, and Eliza standing quite quietly and at ease.

"Yes, my son," responded Captain Rexford, "it *does* depend a good deal on what he *did* say to Eliza. Now, Eliza" (this was the beginning of a judicial inquiry), "I understand from Mrs. Rexford that——"

"I've heard all that you have said," said Eliza. "I've been just here."

"Ah! Then without any preface" (he gave a wave of his hand, as if putting aside the preface), "I might just ask you, Eliza, what this young—Harkness, I believe his name is—what——"

"He's just too chatty, that's all that's the matter with him," said Eliza. "He took off his hat and talked, and he'd have been talking yet if I hadn't come away. There was no sense in what he said, good or bad."

The children were at last allowed to go on with their lessons.

When the dish-washing was finished and Mrs. Rexford came into the sitting-room, Sophia took the lamp by the light of which she had been doing the family darning into the kitchen, and she and Harold established themselves there. Harold, a quiet fellow about nineteen, was more like his half-sister than any other member of the family, and



there was no need that either should explain to the other why they were glad to leave the nervous briskness of the more occupied room. It was their habit to spend their evenings here, and Sophia arranged that Eliza should bring her own sewing and work at it under her direction. Harold very often read aloud to them. It was astonishing how quickly, not imperceptibly, but determinedly, the Canadian girl took on the habits and manners of the lady beside her; not thereby producing a poor imitation, for Eliza was not imitative, but by careful study reproducing in herself much of Sophia's refinement.

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CHAPTER XV.

That evening Blue and Red were sent to bed rather in disgrace, because they had professed themselves too sleepy to finish sewing a seam their mother had given them to do.

Very sleepy, very glad to fold up their work, they made their way, through the cold empty room which was intended to be the drawing-room when it was furnished, to one of the several bedrooms that opened off it. There was only one object in the empty room which they passed through, and that was the big family carriage, for which no possible use could be found during the long winter, and for the storing of which no outside place was considered good enough. It stood wheelless in a corner, with a large grey cloth over it, and the girls passing it with their one flickering candle looked at it a little askance. They had the feeling that something might be within or behind it which would bounce out at them.

Once, however, within their small whitewashed bedroom, they felt quite safe. Their spirits rose a little when they shut the door, for now there was no exacting third person to expect anything but what they chose to give. Theirs was that complete happiness of two persons when it has been long proved that neither ever does anything which the other does not like, and neither ever wants from the other what is not naturally given.

They were still sleepy when they unbuttoned each other's frocks, but when they had come to the next stage of shaking out their curly hair they began to make remarks which tended to dispel their drowsiness.

Said Blue, "Is it very dreadful to be a dentist?"

Said Red, "Yes; horrid. You have to put your fingers in people's mouths, you know."

"But doctors have to *cut off legs*, and doctors are quite——"

There is another advantage in perfect union of twin souls, and that is, that it is never necessary to finish a remark the end of which does not immediately find expression on the tip of the tongue, for the other always knows what is going to be said.

"Yes, I know doctors are," replied Red; "still, you know, Principal Trenholme said Mr. Harkness is not a well-bred American."

"His first name is Cyril. I saw it on the card," replied Blue, quitting the question of social position.

"It's a *lovely* name," said Red, earnestly.

“And I’ll tell you,” said Blue, turning round with sudden earnestness and emphasis, “I think he’s the *handsomest* young man I ever saw.”

The rather odd plan Mrs. Rexford had hit on for lessening the likeness between these two, clothing each habitually in a distinctive colour, had not been carried into her choice of material for their dressing-gowns. These garments were white; and, as a stern mood of utility had guided their mother’s shears, they were short and almost shapeless. The curly hair which was being brushed over them had stopped its growth, as curly hair often does, at the shoulders. In the small whitewashed room the two girls looked as much like choristers in surplices as anything might look, and their sweet oval faces had that perfect freshness of youth which is strangely akin to the look of holiness, in spite of the absolute frivolity of conduct which so often characterises young companionship.

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When Blue made her earnest little assertion, she also made an earnest little dab at the air with her brush to emphasise it; and Red, letting her brush linger on her curly mop, replied with equal emphasis and the same earnest, open eyes, "Oh, so do I."

This decided, there was quiet for a minute, only the soft sound of brushing. Then Red began that pretty little twittering which bore to their laughter when in full force the same relation that the first faint chit, chit, chit of a bird bears to its full song.

"Weren't papa and mamma funny when they talked about what we should do if he spoke to us?"

She did not finish her sentence before merriment made it difficult for her to pronounce the words; and as for Blue, she was obliged to throw herself on the side of the bed.

Then again Blue sat up.

"You're to look down as you pass him, Red—like this, look!"

"*That* isn't right." Red said this with a little shriek of delight. "You're smiling all over your face—that won't do."

"Because I *can't* keep my face straight. Oh, Red, what *shall* we do? I know that if we *ever* see him after this we shall simply *die*."

"Oh, yes"—with tone of full conviction—"I know we shall."

"But we *shall* meet him."

They became almost serious for some moments at the thought of the inevitableness of the meeting and the hopelessness of conducting themselves with any propriety.

"And what will he think?" continued Blue, in sympathetic distress; "he will certainly think we are laughing at *him*, for he will never imagine how much we have been amused."

Red, however, began to brush her hair again. "Blue," said she, "did you ever try to see how you looked in the glass when your eyes were cast down? You can't, you know."

Blue immediately tried, and admitted the difficulty.

"I wish I could," said Red, "for then I should know how I should look when he had spoken to me and I was passing him."

"Well, do it, and I'll tell you."

"Then you stand there, and I'll come along past and look down just when I meet you."

Red made the experiment rather seriously, but Blue cried out:

“Oh, you looked at me out of the corner of your eye, just as you were looking down—that’ll never do.”

“I didn’t mean to. Now look! I’m doing it again.” The one white-gowned figure stood with its back to the bed while the other through its little acting down the middle of the room.

“That’s better”—critically.

“Well,” pursued Red, with interest, “how does it look?”

“Rather nice. I shouldn’t wonder if he fell in love with you.”

This was a sudden and extraordinary audacity of thought.

“Oh, Blue!”—in shocked tones—“How could you think of such a thing!” She reproached her sister as herself. It was actually the first time such a theme had been broached even in their private converse.

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"Well," said Blue, stoutly, "he might, you know. Such things happen."

"I don't think it's quite nice to think of it," said Red, meditatively.

"It isn't nice," said Blue, agreeing perfectly, but unwilling to recant; "still, it may be our duty to think of it. Sophia said once that a woman was always more or less responsible if a man fell in love with her."

"Did Sophia say that?" Weighty worlds of responsibility seemed to be settling on little Red's shoulders.

"Yes; she was talking to mamma about something. So, as it's quite possible he might fall in love with us, we *ought* to consider the matter."

"You don't think he's falling in love with Eliza, do you?"

"Oh no!"—promptly—"but then Eliza isn't like us."

Red looked at her pretty face in the glass as she continued to smooth out the brown curls. She thought of Eliza's tall figure, immobile white face, and crown of red hair.

"No," she said, meditatively; "but, Blue"—this quite seriously—"I hope he won't fall in love with us."

"Oh, so do I; for it would make him feel so miserable. But I think, Red, when you looked down you did not look *prim* enough—you know papa said 'prim.' Now, you stand, and I'll do it."

So Blue now passed down the little narrow room, but when she came to the critical spot, the supposed meeting ground, her desire to laugh conflicting with the effort to pull a long face, caused such a wry contortion of her plump visage that seriousness deserted them once more, and they bubbled over in mirth that would have been boisterous had it not been prudently muffled in the pillows.

After that they said their prayers. But when they had taken off the clumsy dressing-gowns and got into the feather-bed under the big patchwork quilt, like two little white rabbits nestling into one another, they reverted once more to their father's instructions for meeting the dentist, and giggled themselves to sleep.

Another pair of talkers, also with some common attributes of character, but with less knowledge of each other, were astir after these sisters had fallen asleep.

Most of the rooms in the house were on the ground-floor, but there were two attic bedrooms opening off a very large room in the roof which the former occupant had used as a granary. One of these Sophia occupied with a child; the other had been given to



Eliza. That night, when Sophia was composing herself to sleep, she heard Eliza weeping. So smothered were the sounds of sorrow that she could hardly hear them. She lifted her head, listened, then, putting a long fur cloak about her, went into the next room.

No sooner was her hand on the latch of Eliza's door than all sound ceased. She stood for a minute in the large, dark granary. The draught in it was almost great enough to be called a breeze, and it whispered in the eaves which the sloping rafters made round the edges of the floor as a wind might sigh in some rocky cave. Sophia opened the door and went in.

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“What is the matter, Eliza?”

Even in the almost darkness she could see that the girl's movement Was an involuntary feigning of surprise.

“Nothing.”

“I used to hear you crying when we first came, Eliza, and now you have begun it again. Tell me what troubles you. Why do you pretend that nothing is the matter?”

The cold glimmer of the light of night reflected on snow came in at the diamond-shaped window, and the little white bed was just shadowed forth to Sophia's sight. The girl in it might have been asleep, she remained so quiet.

“Are you thinking about your father?”

“I don't know.”

“Do you dislike being here?”

“No; but—”

“But what? What is troubling you, Eliza? You're not a girl to cry for nothing. Since you came to us I have seen that you are a straightforward, good girl; and you have plenty of sense, too. Come, tell me how it is you cry like this?”

Eliza sat up. “You won't tell them downstairs?” she said slowly.

“You may trust me not to repeat anything that is not necessary.”

Eliza moved nervously, and her movements suggested hopelessness of trouble and difficulty of speech. Sophia pitied her.

“I don't know,” she said restlessly, stretching out aimless hands into the darkness, “I don't know why I cry, Miss Sophia. It isn't for one thing more than another; everything is the reason—everything, everything.”

“You mean, for one thing, that your father has gone, and you are homesick?”

“You said you wouldn't *tell*?”

“Yes.”

“Well, I'm not sorry about *that*, because—well, I suppose I liked father as well as he liked me, but as long as he lived I'd have had to stay on the clearin', and I hated that.

I'm glad to be here; but, oh! I want so much—I want so much—oh, Miss Sophia, don't you know?"

In some mysterious way Sophia felt that she did know, although she could not in any way formulate her confused feeling of kinship with this young girl, so far removed from her in outward experience. It seemed to her that she had at some time known such trouble as this, which was composed of wanting "so much—so much," and hands that were stretched, not towards any living thing, but vaguely to all possible possession outside the longing self.

"I want to be something," said Eliza, "rich or—I don't know—I would like to drive about in a fine way like some ladies do, or wear grander clothes than any one. Yes, I would like to keep a shop, or do something to make me very rich, and make everybody wish they were like me."

Sophia smiled to herself, but the darkness was about them. Then Sophia sighed. Crude as were the notions that went to make up the ignorant idea of what was desirable, the desire for it was without measure. There was a silence, and when Eliza spoke again Sophia did not doubt but that she told her whole mind.

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It is a curious thing, this, that when a human being of average experience is confided in, the natural impulse is to assume that confidence is complete, and the adviser feels as competent to pronounce upon the case from the statement given as if minds were as limpid as crystal, and words as fit to represent them as a mirror is to show the objects it reflects. Yet if the listener would but look within, he would know that in any complicated question of life there would be much that he would not, more than he could not, tell of himself, unless long years of closest companionship had revealed the one heart to the other in ways that are beyond the power of words. And that is so even if the whole heart is set to be honest above all—and how many hearts are so set?

“You see,” said Eliza, “if people knew I had lived on a very poor clearin’ and done the work, they’d despise me perhaps.”

“It is no disgrace to any one to have worked hard, and it certainly cannot be a disadvantage in this country.”

“It was rough.”

“You are not very rough, Eliza. It strikes me that you have been pretty carefully trained and taught.”

“Yes, I was that”—with satisfaction. “But don’t you think, if I got on, grand people would always look down at me if they knew I’d lived so common? And besides, I’m sometimes afraid the man that went shares at the land with father will want to find me.”

“But you said you told him you were coming away.”

“I told him, plain and honest; but I had a long way to walk till I got to the train, and I just went off. But he won’t find it so easy to fill my place, and get some one to do the housework! He’d have kept me, if he could; and if he heard where I was he might come and try to get me back by saying father said I was to obey him till I was twenty-one.”

“If your father said—that—”

“No,” cried the girl, vehemently, “he never did.”

“You will hear from your uncle in Scotland?” said Sophia.

“I don’t believe he’ll write to me. I don’t believe he lives any more where I sent the letter. It’s years and years since father heard from him. I said I’d write because I thought it would look more respectable to Mrs. Rexford to have an uncle. And I did write; but he won’t answer.”

This was certainly frank.

“Was that honest, Eliza?”

“No, Miss Sophia; but I felt so miserable. It’s hard to walk off with your bundle, and be all alone and afraid of a man coming after you, and being so angry. He was dreadful angry when I told him I’d come. If you’d only *promise* not tell where I came from to anybody, so that it can’t get round to him that I’m here, and so that people won’t know how I lived before—”

“Well, we certainly have no reason to tell anybody. If it will make you content, I can assure you none of us will talk about your affairs. Was that all the trouble?”

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“No—not all.”

“Well, what else?” Sophia laughed a little, and laid her cool hand on the girl’s hot one.

“I can’t be anything grand ever, and begin by being a servant, Miss Sophia. I say I’m not a servant, and I try not to act like one; but Mrs. Rexford, she’s tried hard to make me one. You wouldn’t like to be a servant, Miss Sophia?”

“You are very childish and foolish,” said Sophia. “If I had not been just as foolish about other things when I was your age I would laugh at you now. But I know it’s no use to tell you that the things you want will not make you happy, and that the things you don’t want would, because I know you will not believe it. I will do my best to help you to get what you want, so far as it is not wrong, if you will promise to tell me all your difficulties.”

“Will you help me? Why are you so kind?”

“Because—” said Sophia. Then she said no more.

Eliza showed herself cheered.

“You’re the only one I care to talk to, Miss Sophia. The others haven’t as much sense as you, have they?”

As these words were quietly put forth in the darkness, without a notion of impropriety, Sophia was struck with the fact that they coincided with her own estimate of the state of the case.

“Eliza, what are you talking of—not of my father and mother surely?”

“Why, yes. I think they’re good and kind, but I don’t think they’ve a deal of sense—do you?”

“My father is a wiser man than you can understand, Eliza; and—” Sophia broke off, she was fain to retreat; it was cold for one thing.

“Miss Sophia,” said Eliza, as she was getting to the door, “there’s one thing—you know that young man they were talking about to-night?”

“What of him?”

“Well, if he were to ask about me, you’d not tell him anything, would you? I’ve never told anybody but you about father, or any particulars. The others don’t know anything, and you won’t tell, will you?”



"I've told you I won't take upon myself to speak of your affairs. What has that young man to do with it?"—with some severity.

"It's only that he's a traveller, and I feel so silly about every traveller, for fear they'd want me to go back to the clearin'."

Sophia took the few necessary steps in the cold dark granary and reached her own room.

CHAPTER XVI.

Sophia was sitting with Mrs. Rexford on the sofa that stood with its back to the dining-room window. The frame of the sofa was not turned, but fashioned with saw and knife and plane; not glued, but nailed together. Yet it did not lack for comfort; it was built oblong, large, and low; it was cushioned with sacking filled with loose hay plentifully mixed with Indian grass that gave forth a sweet perfume, and the whole was covered with a large neat pinafore of such light washing stuff as women wear about their work on summer days. Sophia and her step-mother were darning stockings. The homesickness of the household was rapidly subsiding, and to-day these two were not uncomfortable or unhappy. The rest of the family, some to work, some to play, and some to run errands, had been dismissed into the large outside.

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The big house was tranquil. The afternoon sun, which had got round to the kitchen window, blazed in there through a fringe of icicles that hung from the low eaves of the kitchen roof, and sent a long strip of bright prismatic rays across the floor and through the door on to the rag carpet under the dining-room table. Ever and anon, as the ladies sewed, the sound of sleigh-bells came to them, distant, then nearer, then near, with the trotting of horses' feet as they passed the house, then again more distant. The dining-room window faced the road, but one could not see through it without standing upright.

"Mamma," said Sophia, "it is quite clear we can never make an ordinary servant out of Eliza; but if we try to be companionable to her we may help her to learn what she needs to learn, and make her more willing to stay with us."

It was Mrs. Rexford's way never to approach a subject gradually in speech. If her mind went through the process ordinarily manifested in introductory remarks it slipped through it swiftly and silently, and her speech darted into the heart of the subject, or skipped about and hit it on all sides at once.

"Ah, but I told her again and again, Sophia, to say 'miss' to the girls. She either didn't hear, or she forgot, or she wouldn't understand. I think you're the only one she'll say 'miss' to. But we couldn't do without her. Mrs. Nash was telling me the other day that her girl had left in the middle of the washing, and the one they had before that for a year—a little French Romanist—stole all their handkerchiefs, and did not give them back till she made confession to her priest at Easter. It was very *awkward*, Sophia, to be without handkerchiefs all winter." The crescendo emphasis which Mrs. Rexford had put into her remarks found its fortissimo here. Then she added more mildly, "Though I got no character with Eliza I am convinced she will never pilfer."

Mrs. Rexford was putting her needle out and in with almost electric speed. Her mind was never quiet, but there was a healthy cheerfulness in her little quick movements that removed them from the region of weak nervousness. Yet Sophia knit her brow, and it was with an effort that she continued amicably:

"Certainly we should be more uncomfortable without her just now than she would be without us; but if she left us there's no saying where her ambition might lead her."

Mrs. Rexford bethought her that she must look at some apples that were baking in the kitchen oven, which she did, and was back in time to make a remark in exchange without causing any noticeable break in the conversation. She always gave remarks in exchange, seldom in reply.

"Scotchmen are faithful to their kinsfolk usually, aren't they, Sophia?"

“You think that the uncle she wrote to will answer. He may be dead, or may have moved away; the chances are ten to one that he will not get the letter. I think the girl is in our hands. We have come into a responsibility that we can’t make light of.”

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"Good gracious, Sophia! it's only the hen with one chicken that's afraid to take another under her wing."

"I know you want to do your best for her—that's why I'm talking."

"Oh, /—it's you that takes half the burden of them all."

"Well, we want to do our best—"

"And you, my dear, could go back whenever you liked. *You* have not burned the bridges and boats behind you. There's *one* would be glad to see you back in the old country, and that lover of yours is a good man, Sophia."

A sudden flush swept over the young woman's face, as if the allusion offended her; but she took no other notice of what was said, and continued: "I don't suggest any radical alteration in our ways; I only thought that, if you had it in your mind to make a companion of her, the pains you take in teaching her might take a rather different form, and perhaps have a better result."

"I think our own girls grow more giddy every day," said Mrs. Rexford, exactly as if it were an answer. "If Blue and Red were separated they would both be more sensible."

The mother's mind had now wandered from thought of the alien she had taken, not because she had not given attention to the words of the daughter she thought so wise, but because, having considered them as long as she was accustomed to consider anything, she had decided to act upon them, and so could dismiss the subject with a good conscience.

The conversation ceased thus, as many conversations do, without apparent conclusion; for Sophia, vexed by her step-mother's flighty manner of speech, hid her mood in silence. Anything like discussion between these two always irritated Sophia, and then, conscious that she had in this fallen below her ideal, she chafed again at her own irritation. The evil from which she now suffered was of the stuff of which much of the pain of life is made—a flimsy stuff that vanishes before the investigation of reason more surely than the stuff of our evanescent joys. There was nothing that could be called incompatibility of temper between these two; no one saw more clearly than Sophia the generosity and courage of Mrs. Rexford's heart; no one else sympathised so deeply with her motherly cares, for no one else understood them half so well; and yet it might have been easier for Sophia Rexford to have lived in external peace with a covetous woman, able to appreciate and keep in steady view the relative importance of her ideas.

Meantime Mrs. Rexford went on talking. She was generally unconscious of the other's intellectual disdain. Pretty soon they heard bells and horses' feet that slackened at the gate. Sophia stood up to look.

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There was a comfortable sleigh, albeit somewhat battered and dingy, turning in at the gate. A good-looking girl was driving it; a thin, pale lady sat at her side. Both were much enveloped in faded furs. Over the seats of the sleigh and over their knees were spread abundant robes of buffalo hide. The horse that drew the vehicle was an old farm-horse, and the hand that guided the reins appeared more skilful at driving than was necessary. The old reins and whip were held in a most stylish manner, and the fair driver made an innocent pretence of guiding her steed up the road to the back-yard with care. The animal the while, having once been shown the gate, trotted quietly, with head down, up the middle of the sleigh track, and stopped humbly where the track stopped, precisely as it would have done had there been no hand upon the rein.

Sophia, standing in the middle of the sitting-room, watched the visitors through the windows of that room and of the kitchen, with unwonted animation in her handsome face. The girl, who was now evidently coming with her mother to call upon them, had been named to her more than once by discriminating people as the most likely person in the neighbourhood to prove a friend and companion to herself, and Sophia, in her present situation, could not be at all indifferent to such a prospect. She had already observed them in church, wondering not a little at that scrupulous attention to ceremony which had made them ignore the existence of the newcomers till their acquaintance should have been made in due form.

"Mamma," said she, "this is Mrs. Bennett and her daughter."

"Something to do with an admiral, haven't they?" cried Mrs. Rexford.

It proved to be an unnecessary exertion of memory on Mrs. Rexford's part to recollect what she had heard of the relatives of her visitors, for not long after Mrs. Bennett had introduced herself and her daughter she brought her uncle, the admiral, into the conversation with considerable skill.

She was a delicate, narrow-minded woman, with no open vulgarity about her, but simply ignorant of the fact that bragging of one's distinguished relatives had fallen into disuse. Her daughter, was like her in manner, with the likeness imposed by having such a mother, but much more largely made in mind and body, pleasant-looking, healthy, high-browed. Sophia liked her appearance.

Mrs. Rexford, her mind ever upon some practical exigency, now remembered that she had also heard that the Bennetts managed their dairy excellently, and, having a large craving for help on all such subjects, she began to bewail her own ignorance, asking many and various questions; but, although she did not perceive it, it soon became apparent to her more observant daughter that the visitors, having come out to make a call of ceremony, preferred to talk on subjects more remote from their daily drudgery, on subjects which they apparently considered more elegant and becoming. Unable to check the flow of her mother's talk, Sophia could only draw her chair cosily near to Miss

Bennett and strike into a separate conversation, hoping for, and expecting, mental refreshment.

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"I suppose there are no good lending libraries in any of the towns near here," she began. "How do you get new books or magazines?"

Miss Bennett had a bright, cordial manner. She explained that she thought there was a circulating library in every town. When she was visiting in Quebec her friends had got a novel for her at two cents a day. And then she said Principal Trenholme bought a good many books, and he had once told her mother that he would lend them any they chose, but they had never had time to go and look over them. "It has," she added, "been such an advantage to Chellaston to have a gentleman so clever as he at the college."

"Has it?" said Sophia, willing to hear more. "Is he very clever?"

"Oh," cried the other, "from Oxford, you know;" and she said it in much the tone she might have said "from heaven."

"Is it long," asked Sophia, "since you have been in England?"

Miss Bennett said she had never been "home," but she longed, above all things, to go.

She had, it seemed, been born in Canada, and her parents had no possessions in the mother-country, and yet she always called it "home." This was evidently a tradition.

Sophia, who had come from England a little tired of the conditions there, and eager for a change, felt the pathetic sameness of the discontent wrought by surfeit and by famine.

"Yet," said she, "it is a relief to the mind to feel that one lives in a country where no worthy person is starving, and where every one has a good chance in life if he will but avail himself of it. It seems to make me breathe more freely to know that in all this great country there is none of that necessary poverty that we have in big English towns."

Little answer was made to this, and Sophia went on to talk of what interested her in English politics; but found that of the politics, as well as of the social condition, of the country she adored, Miss Bennett was largely ignorant. Her interest in such matters appeared to sum itself up in a serene belief that Disraeli, then prominent, was the one prop of the English Constitution, and as adequate to his position as Atlas beneath the world. Now, Sophia cherished many a Radical opinion of her own, and she would have enjoyed discussion; but it would have been as difficult to aim a remark at the present front of her new acquaintance as it would be for a marksman to show his skill with a cloud of vapour as a target. Sophia tried Canadian politics, owning her ignorance and expressing her desire to understand what she had read in the newspapers since her arrival; but Miss Bennett was not sure that there was anything that "could exactly be called politics" in Canada, except that there was a Liberal party who "wanted to ruin the country by free trade."

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Sophia ceased to take the initiative. She still endeavoured to respect the understanding of a girl of whom she had heard that when her father's fortunes were at a low ebb she had retrieved them by good management and personal industry—a girl, too, who through years of toil had preserved sprightliness and perfect gentility. What though this gentility was somewhat cramped by that undue importance given to trifles which is often the result of a remote life; it was still a very lovely thing, a jewel shining all the more purely for its iron setting of honest labour. Sophia fought with the scorn that was thrusting itself into her heart as she listened when Miss Bennett now talked in a charming way about the public characters and incidents which interested her.

"I wish for your sake, Miss Rexford," she said, "that some of the Royal family would come out again. The only time that there is any real advantage in being in a colony is when some of them come out; for here, you know, they take notice of every one."

"One would still be on the general level then," said Sophia, smiling.

"Well, I don't know. It makes one feel distinguished, you know, in spite of that. Now, when the Prince was out, he stopped here for a night, and we had a ball. It was simply delightful! He danced with us all—I mean with all who could claim to be ladies, and indeed with some who could not; but how could *he* discriminate? There was a man called Blake, who kept a butcher's shop here then—you may have noticed we haven't such a thing as a butcher's shop in the village now, Miss Rexford?"

"Indeed I have. It seems so odd."

"Blake had a handsome daughter; and when we had a ball for the Prince, didn't he buy her a fine dress, and take her to it! She really looked very handsome."

"I hope the Prince danced with her," laughed Sophia. Her good spirits were rising, in spite of herself, under the influence of the liveliness with which Miss Bennett's mind had darted, birdlike, into its own element.

"Yes, he did. Wasn't it good-natured of him! I believe his aide-de-camp told him who she was; but he was so gracious; he said she should not go away mortified. I never spoke to her myself; but I've no doubt she was unable to open her mouth without betraying her origin; but perhaps on that occasion she had the grace to keep silent, and she danced fairly well."

"Was her head turned by the honour?" asked Sophia, led by the other's tone to expect a sequel to the tale.

"Poor girl! The end was sadder than that. She caught a violent cold, from wearing a dress cut low when she wasn't accustomed to it, and she died in a week. When we heard of it I was glad that he *had* danced with her; but some were cruel enough to say



that it served Blake right for his presumption. He was so broken-hearted he left the place. The dress she wore that night was a green silk, and he had her buried in it; and some one told the Prince, and he sent some flowers. Wasn't it sweet of him! They were buried with her too. It was quite romantic."

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"More romantic to have such a swan-like death than to live on as a butcher's daughter," said Sophia, and sarcasm was only a small ingredient in the speech.

"We were quite grieved about it," said Miss Bennett, sincerely.

Sophia also felt sorry, but it was not her way to say so. She was more interested in remarking upon the singular method of getting butcher's meat then in vogue at Chellaston. A Frenchman, a butcher in a small way, drove from door to door with his stock, cutting and weighing his joints in an open box-sleigh. To see the frozen meat thus manipulated in the midst of the snow had struck Sophia as one of the most novel features of their present way of life. Miss Bennett, however, could hardly be expected to feel its picturesqueness. Her parents did not fancy this vendor's meat, and at present they usually killed their own. Her father, she said, had grown quite dexterous in the art.

"Really!" cried Sophia. This was an item of real interest, for it suggested to her for the first time the idea that a gentleman could slaughter an ox. She was not shocked; it was simply a new idea, which she would have liked to enlarge on; but good-breeding forbade, for Miss Bennett preferred to chat about the visit of the Prince, and she continued to do so in a manner so lively that Sophia found it no dull hearing.

"And, do you know," she cried, "what Bertha Nash did? The Nashes, you know, are of quite a common family, although, as Dr. Nash is everybody's doctor, of course we are all on good terms with them. Well, Bertha asked the Prince how his mother was!" She stopped.

"I suppose he knew whom she was talking about?"

"Oh, that was the worst of it—he couldn't *help knowing*," cried Miss Bennett. "I should have sunk through the floor with mortification if I had done such a thing. I should have expected to be arrested on the spot for high treason. Bertha says, you know, that she was so nervous at the thought of who her partner was that she didn't know what she was saying; but I scarcely think she knew really how to address him. One can never be thankful enough, I'm sure, for having been thoroughly well brought up."

She went on to explain what had been her own sensations when first accosted by this wonderful Prince, upon being led out by him, and so on. It all sounded like a new fairy tale; but afterwards, when she had gone, with cordial wishes, as she took leave, that another prince might come soon and dance with Sophia, the latter felt as if she had been reading a page of an old-fashioned history which took account only of kings and tournaments.

This visit was a distinct disappointment on the whole. Sophia had hoped more from it, and coming after weeks that had been trying, it had power to depress. It was late afternoon now, and the day was the last in the year. Sophia, going upstairs to get rid of

the noise of the children, was arrested by the glow of the sunset, and, weary as she was, stood long by the diamond window that was set in the wooden wall of her room. It was cold. She wrapped a cloak about her. She did not at first look observantly at the glow and beauty outside. Her eyes wandered over the scene, the bright colour upon it rousing just enough interest to keep her standing there: her thoughts were within.

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Sophia Rexford had set herself, like many a saint of olden and modern times, to crush within her all selfishness; and the result had been the result of all such effort when it is staunch and honest—to show that that against which she was warring was no mere mood or bad habit, to be overcome by directing the life on a nobler plan, but a living thing, with a vitality so strong that it seemed as if God Himself must have given it life. She stood now baffled, as she had often been before, by her invincible enemy. Where was the selfless temper of mind that was her ideal? Certainly not within her. She was too candid to suppose for a moment that the impatient scorn she felt for those with whom she had been talking approached in any way to that humility and love that are required of the Christian. She felt overwhelmed by surging waves of evil within. It was at the source the fountain ought to be sweet, and there ambition and desire for pleasure rose still triumphant; and the current of her will, set against them, seemed only to produce, not their abatement, but a whirlpool of discontent, which sucked into itself all natural pleasures, and cast out around its edge those dislikes and disdains which were becoming habitual in her intercourse with others. It was all wrong—she knew it. She leaned her head against the cold pane, and her eyes grew wet with tears.

There is no sorrow on earth so real as this; no other for which such bitter tears have been shed; no other which has so moved the heart of God with sympathy. Yet there came to Sophia just then a strange thought that her tears were unnecessary, that the salvation of the world was something better than this conflict, that the angels were looking upon her discouragement in pained surprise.

She had no understanding with which to take in this thought. As she looked at it, with her soul's eye dim, it passed away; and she, trying in vain to recall the light that it seemed to hold, wondered if it would come again.

Perhaps the tears had given relief to her brain; perhaps some Divine Presence had come near her, giving hope that she could not weigh or measure or call by name; at any rate, as she looked round again with fresh glance, the scene outside seemed fairer than it had yet appeared to her.

A long strip had been swept on the ice of the river by pleasure-loving hands. Down this burnished path young men and maidens were skating, and their way was paved with gold. There was soft tinting of this same light on the undulations of the pearly land beyond; blue shadows were in its woods, and reflected fire on many a window of the houses that clustered near and far. She knew that in each house that was a true Canadian home there was joyous preparations going on for the next day's fete. She wondered what it would be like to be at home in this country, to be one in its sports and festivities. She could not see from her attic window the land on this side of the river, but she heard the shouts of some boys who were spending their holiday at the college. They were at some game or other in a field near. Sophia liked to hear them.

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Just then Mrs. Rexford came upstairs to consult her about something. She joined in the outlook for a few moments, and the sunset made her reflective.

“Well, my love,” said she, “last year at this time we did not know we should be here to-day! Ah, Sophia, it is always a little doleful to see the Old Year go out; but here, where there are no bells in the churches, it will seem less solemn.”

END OF BOOK I.

BOOK II.

*“Necessity, like light’s electric force,
Is in ourselves and all things, and no more
Without us than within us—.”*

CHAPTER I.

The bells have solemn sound that from old belfries ring the passing of the year in the hearing of thousands; but perhaps it is a more solemn thing to watch and tell the birth of a new year by the march of stars that look down out of their purple void upon a land of trackless snow. If ceremony and the united sentiment of many hearts have impressive effect, they yet tend to lighten the burden of individual responsibility, which presses with weight, like the weight of the atmosphere upon a vacuum, when a man tries to grapple with his own soul in solitude.

Alec Trenholme was spending another wakeful night in the living-room of his small railway station. Winter lay around him. For a month the blueberry flats and bramble thickets had been wholly lost under the snow, which stretched far whiter than the pure white of the birch trees in the nearest groves. Now the last night but one of the old year had brought a fresh downfall, unusually heavy; the long, straight railway track, and the sleigh-road which was kept open between the station and Turrif’s Settlement, had been obliterated by it. Alec Trenholme had awoke that morning to observe that his little station of new wood, and the endless line of rough telegraph poles, were the only remaining signs of man’s lordship of earth, as far as his eyes could see. It was upon this sight, when the snow clouds had fled, that he had seen a scarlet sun come up; over the same scene he had watched it roll its golden chariot all day, and, tinging the same unbroken drifts, it had sunk scarlet again in the far southwest. He had not been far from his house, and no one, in train, or sleigh, or on snow-shoes, had happened to come near it.

He would have gone himself to Turrif’s for milk, for the pleasure of exchanging a word with his fellow-men, and for air and exercise, had it not been that he had hourly



expected to see an engine, with its snow-plough, approaching on the rails. Conversation by telegraph would have been a relief to him, but the wires seemed to have succumbed in more than one place to their weight of snow, and there was nothing for this young station-master to do but wait, and believe that communication would be re-established over the road and the wires sooner or later. In the meantime he suffered no personal inconvenience, unless loneliness can be thus named, for he had abundance of food and fuel. He watched the bright day wane and the sun of the old year set, and filled his stove with wood, and ate his supper, and told himself that he was a very fortunate fellow and much better off than a large proportion of men.

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It is not always when we tell ourselves that we are well off that we are happiest: that self-addressed assertion often implies some tacit contradiction.

When darkness came he wondered if he should put on his snow-shoes and run over to Turrif's. Yet for some reason he did not go, in the way that men so often do not do things that they think on the whole would be very good things to do. An hour or two later he knew that the good people there would have gone to bed and that he had no longer the option of going. He did not go to bed himself. He had not had enough exercise that day to make him sleepy; and then, too, he thought he would sit up and see the old year out. He had an indistinct idea that it was rather a virtuous thing to do, rather more pious than sleeping the night through just as if it were any other night. He put his much-handled, oft-read books down before him on the table, and set himself to passing the evening with them. Midnight is actually midnight when the sun goes down before five o'clock and there is no artificial interest for the after hours.

Most men have more religion at heart, latent or developed, than can be seen by others. When they have not, when what shows is as much as what is—God pity them!

Alec Trenholme was not given to self-dissection or to expression of his private sentiments, therefore neither to himself nor to others was the religion of him very visible. Nevertheless, this evening his books, which had become not less but more to him because he had read them often, palled upon his taste. When he was a boy his father had taught him that at New Year's time one ought to consider whether the past had been spent well, and how the future could be spent better. So, as time went on, he pushed his books further and set himself to this consideration. For a while he sat looking at his own doings only by the light, as it were, of two candles—the one, of expediency; the other, of rectitude. Had he been wise? Had he been good?

Not being of a contemplative or egotistical disposition, he soon fidgeted. Thinking he heard a sound outside, which might be wind rising, or might be the distant approach of the iron snow-plough, he got up to look out. The small panes of his window were so obscured by frostwork that he did not attempt to look through the glass, but opened his door. Far or near there was no sign of rising wind or coming engine; only, above, the glowing stars, with now and then a shaft of northern light passing majestically beneath them, and, below, the great white world, dim, but clearly seen as it reflected the light. The constellations attracted his attention. There hung Orion, there the Pleiades, there those mists of starlight which tell us of space and time of which we cannot conceive. Standing, looking upwards, he suddenly believed himself to be in the neighbourhood of God.

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When the keen air upon his bare head had driven him indoors, he sat down again to formulate his good resolutions, he found that his candles of expediency and morality had gone out. The light which was there instead was the Presence of God; but so diffused was this light, so dim, that it was as hard for him now to see distinction between right and wrong as it would have been outside upon the snow to see a shadow cast by rays which had left their stars half a century before. All, all of which he could think seemed wrong, because it was not God; all, all of which he could think seemed right, because it was part of God. The young man's face sank on his arms and lay buried there, while he thought, and thought, and thought, trying to bring a life of which he could think into relation with that which is unthinkable.

Was ever reverie more vain! He raised his head and stared about him. The glaring lamp showed all the details of the room, and made it seem so real, so much more real than mere thoughts, let alone that of which one cannot think. He got up to alter the stove-damper, pushing it shut with a clatter of iron, burning his fingers slightly, and sat down again, feeling it a relief to know, if by the smart, that he had touched something.

The wood within the stove ceased blazing when the damper was shut, and when its crackling was silenced there was a great quiet. The air outside was still; the flame of the lamp could hardly make sound. Trenholme's watch, which lay on the table, ticked and seemed to clamour for his attention. He glanced down at it. It was not very far from midnight.

Just then he heard another sound. It was possibly the same as that which came to him an hour ago, but more continuous. There was no mistaking this time that it was an unusual one. It seemed to him like a human voice in prolonged ejaculatory speech at some distance.

Startled, he again looked out of his door. At first he saw nothing, but what he had seen before—the world of snow, the starry skies. Yet the sound, which stopped and again went on, came to him as if from the direction in which he looked. Looking, listening intently, he was just about to turn in for his coat and snow-shoes in order to go forth and seek the owner of the voice, when he perceived something moving between him and the nearest wood—that very birch wood in which, more than a month before, he had sought for the man Cameron who had disappeared from his own coffin. In an instant the mood of that time flashed back on him as if there had been nothing between.

All the search that had been made for Cameron in the first days of the snow had resulted in nothing but the finding of his coarse winding-sheet in this birch wood. Then and since, confused rumours had come that he was wandering from village to village, but no one had been brave enough to detain him. Trenholme knew that people on the railway line to the south believed firmly that the old man was still alive, or that his ghost walked. Now, as his eyes focussed more intently upon the moving thing, it looked to him like a man.

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Again he heard the sound of a voice, a man's voice certainly. It was raised for the space of a minute in a sort of chant, not loud enough for him to hear any word or to know what language was spoken.

"Hi!" cried Trenholme at the top of his voice. "Hi, there! What do you want?"

There was no doubt that a man out there could have heard, yet, whatever the creature was, it took not the slightest notice of the challenge.

As his eyes grew accustomed to the dim light he saw that the figure was moving on the top of the deep snow near the outskirts of the wood—moving about in an aimless way, stopping occasionally, and starting again, raising the voice sometimes, and again going on in silence. Trenholme could not descry any track left on the snow; all that he could see was a large figure dressed in garments which, in the starlight, did not seem to differ very much in hue from the snow, and he gained the impression that the head was thrown back and the face uplifted to the stars.

He called again, adjuring the man he saw to come at once and say why he was there and what he wanted. No attention was paid to him; he might as well have kept silent.

A minute or two more and he went in, shut and bolted his door, even took the trouble to see that the door of the baggage-room was secured. He took his lamp down from the wall where, by its tin reflector, it hung on a nail, and set it on the table for company. He opened the damper of the stove again, so that the logs within crackled. Then he sat down and began to read the Shakespeare he had pushed from him before. What he had seen and heard seemed to him very curious. No obligation rested upon him, certainly, to go out and seek this weird-looking creature. There was probably nothing supernatural, but—well, while a man is alone it is wisest to shut out all that has even the appearance of the supernatural from his house and from his mind. So Trenholme argued, choosing the satirical fool of the Forest of Arden to keep him company.

"Now am I in Arden; the more fool I; when I was at home, I was in a better place: but travellers must be content."

Trenholme smiled. He had actually so controlled his mind as to become lost in his book.

There was a sound as if of movement on the light snow near by and of hard breathing. Trenholme's senses were all alert again now as he turned his head to listen. When the moving figure had seemed so indifferent to his calls, what reason could it have now for seeking his door—unless, indeed, it were a dead man retracing his steps by some mysterious impulse, such as even the dead might feel? Trenholme's heart beat low with the thought as he heard a heavy body bump clumsily against the baggage-room door and a hand fumble at its latch. There was enough light shining through his window to

have shown any natural man that the small door of his room was the right one by which to enter, yet the fumbling at the other door continued.

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Trenholme went into the dark baggage-room and heard the stir against the door outside. He went near it. Whoever was there went on fumbling to find some way of entrance.

By this time, if Trenholme had suffered any shock of dismay, he had righted himself, as a ship rights itself after shuddering beneath a wave. Clearly it now came within his province to find out what the creature wanted; he went back into his room and opened its outer door.

Extending beyond the wall, the flooring of the house made a little platform outside, and, as the opening of the door illuminated this, a man came quietly across the threshold with clumsy gait. This man was no ghost. What fear of the supernatural had gathered about Trenholme's mind fell off from it instantly in self-scorn. The stranger was tall and strong, dressed in workman's light-coloured clothes, with a big, somewhat soiled bit of white cotton worn round his shoulders as a shawl. He carried in his hand a fur cap such as Canadian farmers wear; his grey head was bare. What was chiefly remarkable was that he passed Trenholme without seeming to see him, and stood in the middle of the room with a look of expectation. His face, which was rugged, with a glow of weather-beaten health upon it, had a brightness, a strength, an eagerness, a sensibility, which were indescribable.

"Well?" asked Trenholme rather feebly; then reluctantly he shut the door, for all the cold of the night was pouring in. Neither of him nor of his words or actions did the old man take the slightest notice.

The description that had been given of old Cameron was fulfilled in the visitor; but what startled Trenholme more than this likeness, which might have been the result of mere chance, was the evidence that this man was not a person of ordinary senses and wits. He seemed like one who had passed through some crisis, which had deprived him of much, and given him perhaps more. It appeared probable, from his gait and air, that he was to some extent blind; but the eagerness of the eyes and the expression of the aged face were enough to suggest at once, even to an unimaginative mind, that he was looking for some vision of which he did not doubt the reality and listening for sounds which he longed to hear. He put out a large hand and felt the table as he made his clumsy way round it. He looked at nothing in the room but the lamp on the table where Trenholme had lately put it. Trenholme doubted, however, if he saw it or anything else. When he got to the other side, having wandered behind the reflector, he stopped, as if perhaps the point of light, dimly seen, had guided him so far but now was lost.

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Trenholme asked him why he had come, what his name was, and several such questions. He raised his voice louder and louder, but he might as well have talked to the inanimate things about him. This one other human being who had entered his desolate scene took, it would seem, no cognisance of him at all. Just as we know that animals in some cases have senses for sights and sounds which make no impression on human eyes and ears, and are impervious to what we see and hear, so it seemed to Trenholme that the man before him had organs of sense dead to the world about him, but alive to something which he alone could perceive. It might have been a fantastic idea produced by the strange circumstances, but it certainly was an idea which leaped into his mind and would not be reasoned away. He did not feel repulsion for the poor wanderer, or fear of him; he felt rather a growing attraction—in part curiosity, in part pity, in part desire for whatever it might be that had brought the look of joyous expectancy into the aged face. This look had faded now to some extent. The old man stood still, as one who had lost his way, not seeking for indications of that which he had lost, but looking right forwards and upwards, steadily, calmly, as if sure that something would appear.

Trenholme laid a strong hand upon his arm. “Cameron!” he shouted, to see if that name would rouse him. The arm that he grasped felt like a rock for strength and stillness. The name which he shouted more than once did not seem to enter the ears of the man who had perhaps owned it in the past. He shook off Trenholme’s hand gently without turning towards him.

“Ay,” he said. (His voice was strong.) Then he shook his head with a patient sigh. “Not here,” he said, “not here.” He spoke as deaf men speak, unconscious of the key of their own voice. Then he turned shuffling round the table again, and seemed to be seeking for the door.

“Look here,” said Trenholme, “don’t go out.” Again he put his hand strongly on his visitor, and again he was quietly brushed aside. The outside seemed so terribly cold and dark and desolate for this poor old man to wander in, that Trenholme was sorry he should go. Yet go he did, opening the door and shutting it behind him.

Trenholme’s greatcoat, cap, and snow-shoes were hanging against the wall. He put them on quickly. When he got out the old man was fumbling for something outside, and Trenholme experienced a distinct feeling of surprise when he saw him slip his feet into an old pair of snow-shoes and go forth on them. The old snow-shoes had only toe-straps and no other strings, and the feat of walking securely upon seemed almost as difficult to the young Englishman as walking on the sea of frozen atoms without them; but still, the fact that the visitor wore them made him seem more companionable.

Trenholme supposed that the traveller was seeking some dwelling-place, and that he would naturally turn either up the road to Turrifs or toward the hills; instead of that, he

made again for the birch wood, walking fast with strong, elastic stride. Trenholme followed him, and they went across acres of billowy snow.

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CHAPTER II.

Why Alec Trenholme followed the old man toward the wood he himself would have found it a little difficult to tell. If this was really Cameron he did not wish that he should escape; but, at the same time, he saw no means of keeping him against his will, unless he went of his own accord to some place where other men could be called to help. Quite apart, however, from the question whether the stranger was Cameron or not, Trenholme felt for him a sort of respect which character alone inspires, and which character written in a man's appearance has often power to inspire without a word or action to interpret it further. It was because of this that curiosity to know where he was going and what for, and a real solicitude as to what would happen to him, were strong enough to lead the young man on.

They who have not walked upon snow by starlight do not know, perhaps, that the chief difficulty of such progress is that there is no shadow; perhaps they do not even know that at all times the difference between an upward and a downward slope is revealed to the eye by light and shade. The snow on which the two men were now walking had been left by the wind with slight undulations of surface, such as are produced in a glassy sea by the swing of a gentle under-swell; and Trenholme, not sensitive as the stranger seemed to be in the points of his snow-shoes, found himself stepping up when he thought himself stepping down, and the reverse. At last he stumbled and fell.

It is not a matter of ease to rise from a bed which yields endlessly to every pressure of arm or knee. Even a sea-bird, that strongest of flyers, finds it hard to rise from any but its own element; and before Trenholme had managed to spring up, as it were, from nothing, the man in front had in some way become aware of his presence for the first time, and of his fall; he turned and lifted him up with a strong hand. When Trenholme was walking again the other retained a firm hold of his arm, looked at him earnestly, and spoke to him. His words expressed a religious idea which was evidently occupying his whole mind.

"The Lord is coming presently to set up His kingdom," he said. "Are you ready to meet Him?"

On Alec Trenholme the effect of these words, more unexpected than any other words could have been, was first and chiefly to convince him that he was dealing with a witless person. Leaving him again, the speaker had hurried on in front, making his way still toward the wood. When Trenholme came up with him the wanderer had evidently found the place where he had been before, for there was the irregular circular track of his former wandering upon the snow. Trenholme counted himself a fool to have been able before to suppose that there was no track because he had not seen it. But he had hardly time for even this momentary glance at so small a matter, for the old man was

standing with face uplifted to the stars, and he was praying aloud that the Divine Son of Man would return to earth and set up His kingdom.

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Sometimes there was more light upon the dark scene, sometimes less, for giant rays of the northern light stalked the sky, passing from it, coming again, giving light faintly.

Trenholme felt an uncontrollable excitement come over him. His mind was carried out of himself, not so much to the poor man who was praying, as to the Divine Man to whom the supplication was addressed; for the voice of prayer spoke directly from the heart of the speaker to One who he evidently felt was his friend. The conviction of this other man that he knew to whom he was speaking caught hold of Alec Trenholme's mind with mastering force; he had no conviction of his own; he was not at all sure, as men count certainty, whether there was, or was not, any ear but his own listening to the other's words; but he did not notice his own belief or unbelief in the matter, any more than he noticed the air between him and the stars. The colourlessness of his own mind took on for the time the colour of the other's.

And the burden of the prayer was this: Our Father, thy kingdom come. Even so, come, Lord Jesus.

The hardihood of the prayer was astonishing; all tender arguments of love were used, all reasonable arguments as of friend with friend and man with man, and its lengthened pathos was such that Trenholme felt his heart torn for pity within him.

"Look here!" he said at last. (He had been listening he knew not how long, but the planets in the sky above had moved westward. He took hold of the old man.) "Look here! He won't come so that you can see Him; but He's here just the same, you know."

The only result was that the old man ceased speaking aloud, and continued as if in silent prayer.

It seemed irreverent to interrupt him. Trenholme stood again irresolute, but he knew that for himself at least it was madness to stand longer without exercise in the keen night.

"Come, Lord Jesus!" cried the old man again in loud anguish. "Come. The world is needing only Thee. We are so wicked, so foolish, so weak—we need Thee. Come!"

Whether or not his companion had the full use of eyes and ears, Trenholme was emboldened by the memory of the help he had received on his fall to believe that he could make himself heard and understood. He shouted as if to one deaf: "The Lord is here. He is with you now, only you can't see Him. You needn't stay here. I don't know who you are, but come into my place and get warmed and fed."

"How do you know He is here?" asked the old man, shaking his head slowly.

"Everybody knows that."

"I can't hear."

"Everybody knows," shouted Trenholme.

"How do you know? What do you know?" asked the other, shaking his head sorrowfully.

Trenholme would have given much to comfort him. He tried to drag him by main force in the direction of the house. The old man yielded himself a few steps, then drew back, asking,

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"Why do you say He is here?"

"Because" (Trenholme called out his words in the same high key) "before He died, and after, He said He would always be with His servants. Don't you believe what He said?"

Again the old man yielded a few paces, evidently listening and hearing with difficulty, perhaps indeed only hearing one or two words that attracted him.

"Did the Lord say it to *you*?" he asked eagerly.

"No."

There was blank disappointment shown instantly. They had come to a standstill again.

"Do you know him?" The strong old face was peering eagerly into his, as if it had not been dark. "Have you heard his voice?"

"I don't know," answered Trenholme, half angrily.

Without another word the old man shook him off, and turned once more to the starry sky above.

"Lord Jesus!" he prayed, "this man has never heard thy voice. They who have heard Thee know thy voice—they know, O Lord, they know." He retraced all the steps he had taken with Trenholme and continued in prayer.

After that, although Trenholme besought and commanded, and tried to draw him both by gentleness and force, he obtained no further notice. It was not that he was repulsed, but that he met with absolute neglect. The old man was rock-like in his physical strength.

Trenholme looked round about, but there was certainly no help to be obtained. On the one side he saw the birch wood indistinctly; the white trunks half vanished from sight against the white ground, but the brush of upper branches hung like the mirage of a forest between heaven and earth. All round was the wild region of snow. From his own small house the lamp which he had left on the table shot out a long bright ray through a chink in the frostwork on the window. It occurred to him that when he had fetched down the lamp it was probably this ray, sudden and unexpected in such a place, that had attracted his strange visitor to his house. Had his poor dazed brain accepted it as some sign of the glorious appearing for which he waited?

Trenholme looked again at his companion. It mattered nothing to him who or what he was; he would have done much to still that pleading voice and pacify him, but since he could not do this, he would go for a little while out of sight and hearing. He was fast growing numb with the fierce cold. He would come back and renew his care, but just

now he would go home. He walked fast, and gained his own door with blood that ran less chill.

He heaped his stove with fresh logs, and set on food to warm, in the hope that the stranger might eventually partake of it, and then, opening the stove door to get the full benefit of the blaze, he sat down for a little while to warm himself. He looked at his watch, as it lay on the table, with that glance of interest which we cast at a familiar thing which has lain in the same place while our minds have undergone commotion and change. Midnight had passed since he went out, and it was now nearly two o'clock.

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Whether it was that the man with whom he had been, possessed that power, which great actors involuntarily possess, of imposing their own moods on others, or whether it was that, coming into such strange companionship after his long loneliness, his sympathies were the more easily awakened, Trenholme was suffering from a misery of pity; and in pity for another there weighed a self-pity which was quite new to him. To have seen the stalwart old man, whose human needs were all so evident to Trenholme's eyes, but to his own so evidently summed up in that one need which was the theme of the prayer he was offering in obstinate agony, was an experience which for the time entirely robbed him of the power of seeing the elements of life in that proportion to which his mind's eye had grown accustomed—that is, seeing the things of religion as a shadowy background for life's important activities.

The blazing logs through the open stove door cast flickering flamelight upon the young man, who was restlessly warming himself, shifting his position constantly, as a man must who tries to warm himself too hastily. A traveller read in ancient lore, coming suddenly on this cabin amid its leagues of snow, and looking in to see its light and warmth and the goodly figure of its occupant, might have been tempted to think that the place had been raised by some magician's wand, and would vanish again when the spell was past. And to Alec Trenholme, just then, the station to which he was so habituated, the body which usually seemed the larger part of himself, might have been no more than a thought or a dream, so intent was he upon another sort of reality. He was regardless of it all, even of the heat that, at the same time, scorched him and made him shiver. He thought of the words that he—he, Alec Trenholme—had lifted up his voice to say, waking the echoes of the snow-muffled silence with proclamation of—He tried not to remember what he had proclaimed, feeling crushed with a new knowledge of his own falseness; and when perforce the thought came upon him of the invisible Actor in the night's drama whose presence, whose action, he had been so strenuously asserting, he was like a man in pain who does not know what remedy to try; and his mood was tense, he sought only relief. He essayed one thought and another to reason away the cloud that was upon him; and then he tried saying his prayers, which of late had fallen somewhat into disuse. It was only by way of a try to see if it would do any good; and he did not give himself much time, for he felt that he must go out again to try to bring in the old man.

Before he had put on his fur cap a second time, however, he heard the whistle of the engine he had been expecting now for nearly twenty-four hours. It came like a sudden trumpet-sound from the outside world to call him back to his ordinary thoughts and deeds. For the first moment he felt impatient at it; the second he was glad, for there would certainly be some one with it who could aid him in using force, if necessary, to bring the old man to spend the remainder of the night within doors.

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Trenholme saw the black and fiery monster come on into his dark and silent white world. It shook a great plume of flaming smoke above its snorting head, and by the light of the blazing jewel in its front he saw that the iron plough it drove before it was casting the snow in misty fountains to right and left.

When the engine stopped, Trenholme found that there was a small car with it, containing about twenty men sent to dig out the drifts where snow sheds had given way. These were chiefly French Canadians of a rather low type. The engine-driver was a Frenchman too; but there was a brisk English-speaking man whose business it was to set the disordered telegraph system to rights. He came into the station-room to test its condition at this point of the route. As there was a stove in their car, only a few of the men straggled in after him. At a larger place the party might have been tempted to tarry, but here they had no thought of stopping an unnecessary moment. Trenholme had no time to lose, and yet he hardly knew how to state his case. He sought the Englishman, who was at the little telegraph table. The engineer and some others lounged near. He began by recalling the incident of the dead man's disappearance. Every one connected with the railway in those parts had heard that story.

"And look here!" said he, "as far as one can judge by description, he has come back again here to-night." All who could understand were listening to him now. "See here!" he urged addressing the brisk telegraph man, "I'm afraid he will freeze to death in the snow. He's quite alive, you know—alive as you are; but I want help to bring him in."

The other was attending to his work as well as to Trenholme. "Why can't he come in?"

"He won't. I think he's gone out of his mind. He'll die if he's left. It's a matter of life or death, I tell you. He's too strong for me to manage alone. Someone must come too."

The brisk man looked at the engineer, and the French engineer looked at him.

"What's he doing out there?"

"He's just out by the wood."

It ended in the two men finding snow-shoes and going with Trenholme across the snow.

They all three peered through the dimness at the space between them and the wood, and they saw nothing. They retraced the snow-shoe tracks and came to the place where the irregular circuit had been made near the end of the wood. There was no one there. They held up a lantern and flashed it right and left, they shouted and wandered, searching into the edge of the wood. The old man was not to be found.

"I dare say," said the telegraph man to Trenholme, "you'd do well to get into a place where you don't live quite so much alone. 'T'aint good for you."

The whole search did not take more than twenty minutes. The railway-men went back at a quick pace. Trenholme went with them, insisting only that they should look at the track of the stranger's snow-shoes, and admit that it was not his own track.

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The French engineer was sufficiently superstitious to lend a half belief to the idea that the place was haunted, and that was his reason for haste. The electrician was only sorry that so much time had been purely wasted; that was his reason. He was a middle-aged man, spare, quick, and impatient, but he looked at Alec Trenholme in the light of the engine lamp, when they came up to it, with some kindly interest.

"I say," he went on again, "don't you go on staying here alone—a good-looking fellow like you. You don't look to me like a chap to have fancies if you weren't mewed up alone."

As Trenholme saw the car carried from him, saw the faces and forms of the men who stood at its door disappear in the darkness, and watched the red light at its back move slowly on, leaving a lengthening road of black rails behind it, he felt more mortified at the thought of the telegraph man's compassion than he cared to own, even to himself.

He went out again, and hunted with a lantern till he found a track leading far into the wood in the opposite direction from his house. This, then, was the way the old man had gone. He followed the track for a mile, but never came within sight or sound of the man who made it.

At last it joined the railway line, and where the snow was rubbed smooth he could not trace it. Probably the old man had taken off his snow-shoes here, and his light moccasins had left no mark that could be seen in the night.

CHAPTER III.

For two nights after that Alec Trenholme kept his lamp lit all night, placing it in his window so that all the light that could struggle through the frosted panes should cast an inviting ray into the night. He did this in the hope that the old man might still be wandering in the neighbourhood; but it was soon ascertained that this was not the case; the stranger had been seen by no one else in Turrif Settlement. Though it was clear, from reports that came, that he was the same who had visited other villages and been accepted as the missing Cameron, nothing more was heard of him, and it seemed that he had gone now off the lines of regular communication—unless, indeed, he had the power of appearing and disappearing at will, which was the popular view of his case. Turrif Station had become notorious. Trenholme received jeers and gibes even by telegraph from neighbouring stations. He had given account to no one of the midnight visit, but inventive curiosity had supplied details of a truly wonderful nature. It was not on this account that he gave up his situation on the line, but because a new impulse had seized him, and he had no particular reason for remaining. He waited till a new caretaker arrived from the headquarters of the railway, and then set forth from the station the following morning on foot.

Turrif had been laid up with some complaint for a week or two, and Alec went to say good-bye to him. The roads had been opened up again. He had his snow-shoes on his back, and some clothes in a small pack.

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Turrif's wife opened the door, and Trenholme disburdened himself and went and sat by the bed. The little children were about, as usual, in blue gowns; he had made friends in the house since his first supper there, so they stood near now, and laughed at him a great deal without being afraid. In the long large wooden room, the mother and eldest girl pursued the housework of the morning tranquilly. Turrif lay upon a bed in one corner. The baby's cradle, a brown box on rockers, was close to the bed, and when the child stirred the father put out his hand and rocked it. The child's head was quite covered with the clothes, so that Trenholme wondered how it could breathe. He sat by the foot of the bed, and Turrif talked to him in his slow English.

"You are wise to go—a young man and genteel-man like you."

"I know you think I was a fool to take the place, but a man might as well earn his bread-and-butter while he is looking round the country."

"You have looked round at this bit of country for two months"—with a shrug of the shoulders. "I should have sought your bright eyes could see all what sere is to see in two days."

"You'll think me a greater fool when you know where I am going."

"I hope" (Turrif spoke with a shade of greater gravity on his placid face)—"I hope sat you are going to some city where sere is money to be made, and where sere is ladies and other genteel-men like you."

"I knew you would think me mad. I'm going to Bates's clearing to cut down his trees."

"Why?" The word came with a certain authority.

"You would almost be justified in writing to the authorities to lock me up in an asylum, wouldn't you? But just consider what an awful condition of loneliness that poor wretch must be in by this time. You think I've been more alone than's good for me; think of him, shut up with an old woman in her dotage. He was awfully cut up about this affair of old Cameron and the girl, and he is losing all his winter's lumbering for want of a man. Now, there's a fix, if you will, where I say a man is to be pitied."

"Yes," said Turrif, gravely, "it is sad; but sat is *hees* trouble."

"Look here: he's not thirty miles away, and you and I know that if he isn't fit to cut his throat by this time it isn't for want of trouble to make him, and you say that that state of things ought to be only his own affair?"

"Eh?"



“Well, I say that you and I, or at least I, have something to do with it. You know very well I might go round here for miles, and offer a hundred pounds, and I couldn’t get a single man to go and work for Bates; they’re all scared. Well, if they’re scared of a ghost, let them stay away; but *I’m* not frightened, and I suppose I could learn to chop down trees as well as any of them. He’s offered good wages; I can take his wages and do his work, and save him from turning into a blethering idiot.”

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Probably, in his heat to argue, he had spoken too quickly for the Frenchman to take in all his words. That his drift was understood and pondered on was evident from the slow answer.

"It would be good for Monsieur Bates, but poor for you."

"I'm not going to turn my back on this country and leave the fellow in that pickle. I should feel as if his blood were on my head."

"Since?"

"How since?"

"Since what day did you have his care on you? Last time you came you did not mean sen to help him." It was true, but so strongly did Trenholme see his point that he had not realised how new was the present aspect of the case to him.

"Well," said he, meaning that this was not a matter of importance.

"But why?" said Turrif again.

"Oh, I don't know." Trenholme looked down at his moccasined feet. "I thought" (he gave a laugh as if he were ashamed) "I'd turn over a new leaf this year, and do something that's more worth doing. I was well enough off here so far as looking out for myself was concerned."

Turrif looked at him with kind and serious disapproval.

"And when will you begin to live se life of a *man*?"

"How do you mean—'a man'?"

"When will you make money and get married?"

"Do you think time is all wasted when one isn't making money and getting married?"

"For a *boy*, no; for a *man*, yes."

Trenholme rose. "Good-bye, and thank you for all your hospitality," said he. "I'll come back in spring and tell you what I'm going to do next."

He was moving out, when he looked again at the little shrine in the middle of the wall, the picture of the Virgin, and, below, the little altar shelf, with its hideous paper roses. He looked back as it caught his eye, arrested, surprised, by a difference of feeling in him towards it.

Noticing the direction of Trenholme's glance, the Frenchman crossed himself.

It was a day of such glory as is only seen amid Northern snowfields. Alec Trenholme looked up into the sky, and the blue of other skies that he remembered faded beside it, as the blue of violets fades beside the blue of gentian flowers. There was no cloud, no hint of vapour; the sky, as one looked for it, was not there, but it was as if the sight leaped through the sunlit ether, so clear it was, and saw the dark blue gulfs of space that were beyond the reach of the sun's lighting. The earth was not beyond the reach of the sunlight, and in all that wide white land, in mile after mile of fields, of softened hillock and buried hollow, there was not a frozen crystal that did not thrill to its centre with the sunlight and throw it back in a soft glow of myriad rays.

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Trenholme retraced his steps on the road from Turrif's door to a point nearer his old railway-station; then he put on his snow-shoes and set out for the gap in the hills that led to the Bates and Cameron clearing. As he mounted the soft snow that was heaped by the roadside and struck out across the fields, his heart bounded with a sense of power and freedom, such as a man might have who found means to walk upon the ocean. Little need had he of map or guide to mark the turning or crossing of his road; the gap in the hills was clear to his eyes fifteen miles away; the world was white, and he strode across it. When the earth is made up of pearl-dust and sunshine, and the air is pure as the air of heaven, the heart of man loses all sense of effort, and action is as spontaneous as breath itself. Trenholme was half-way to the hills before he felt that he had begun his day's journey.

When he got past the unbroken snow of the farm lands and the blueberry flats, the white surface was broken by the tops of brushwood. He did not take the line of the straight corduroy road; it was more free and exciting to make a meandering track wherever the snow lay sheer over a chain of frozen pools that intersected the thickets. There was no perceptible heat in the rays the sun poured down, but the light was so great that where the delicate skeletons of the young trees were massed together it was a relief to let the eye rest upon them.

That same element of pleasure, relief, was found also in the restful deadness of the wooded sides of the hills when he came near them. Grey there was of deciduous trees in the basin of the river, and dull green of spruce firs that grew up elsewhere. Intense light has the effect of lack of light, taking colour from the landscape. Even the green of the fir trees, as they stood in full light on the hill summits, was faded in comparison with the blue beyond.

This was while he was in the open plain; but when he walked into the forest, passing into the gap in the hills, all was changed. The snow, lightly shadowed by the branches overhead, was more quiet to the sight, and where his path lay near fir trees, the snow, where fell their heavy shade, looked so dead and cold and grey that it recalled thoughts of night-time, or of storm, or of other gloomy things; and this thought of gloom, which the dense shadow brought, had fascination, because it was such a wondrous contrast to the rest of the happy valley, in which the sunbeams, now aslant, were giving a golden tinge to the icy facets of crags, to high-perched circling drifts, to the basin of unbroken snow, to the brown of maple trunks, and to the rich verdure of the very firs which cast the shadow.

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It was after four o'clock in the afternoon when he stopped his steady tramp, arrested by the sight of the first living things he had seen—a flock of birds upon a wild vine that, half snow-covered, hung out the remnant of its frozen berries in a cleft of the hill. The birds did not fly at his approach, and, going nearer and nearer on the silent snow, he at last stopped, taking in greedily the sight of their pretty, fluttering, life. They were rather large birds, large as the missel thrush; they had thick curved beaks and were somewhat heavy in form; but the plumage of the males was like the rose-tint of dawn or evening when it falls lightly upon some grey cloud. They uttered no note, but, busy with their feast, fluttered and hopped with soft sound of wings.

In lieu of gun or net, Trenholme broke a branch from a tree beside him, and climbed nearer to the birds in order to strike one down if possible. To his surprise, as he advanced deftly with the weapon, the little creatures only looked at him with bright-eyed interest, and made no attempt to save themselves. The conviction forced itself upon him with a certain awe that these birds had never seen a man before. His arm dropped beside him; something of that feeling which comes to the explorer when he thinks that he sets his foot where man has never trod came to him now as he leaned against the snow-bank. The birds, it is true, had fluttered beyond his arm's length, but they had no thought of leaving their food. Twice his arm twitched with involuntary impulse to raise the stick and strike the nearest bird, and twice the impulse failed him, till he dropped the stick.

The slight crust which usually forms on snow-banks had broken with the weight of his figure as he leaned against it, and he lay full length against the soft slope, enjoying rest upon so downy a couch, until the birds forgot him, and then he put out his hand and grasped the nearest, hardly more to its own surprise than to his. The bird feigned dead, as frightened birds will, and when he was cheated into thinking it dead, it got away, and it was only by a very quick movement that he caught it again. He put it in a hanging pocket of his coat, and waited till he could catch a companion to fill the opposite pocket.

Thus weighted, he continued his journey. It gave him the cheerful feeling that a boy has when choice marbles are in his pocket. Neither birds nor marbles under such circumstances have absolute use, but then there is always the pleasant time ahead when it will be suitable to take them out and look at them. The man did not finger his birds as a boy might have done his marbles, but he did not forget them, and every now and then he lifted the flaps of the, baggy pockets to refill them with air.

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He was tramping fast now down the trough of the little valley, under trees that, though leafless, were thick enough to shut out the surrounding landscape. The pencils of the evening sunlight, it is true, found their way all over the rounded snow-ground, but the sunset was hidden by the branches about him, and nothing but the snow and the tree trunks was forced upon his eye, except now and then a bit of blue seen through the branches—a blue that had lost much depth of colour with the decline of day, and come nearer earth—a pale cold blue that showed exquisite tenderness of contrast as seen through the dove-coloured grey of maple boughs.

Where the valley dipped under water and the lake in the midst of the hills had its shore, Trenholme came out from under the trees. The sun had set. The plain of the ice and the snowclad hills looked blue with cold—unutterably cold, and dead as lightless snow looks when the eye has grown accustomed to see it animated with light. He could not see where, beneath the snow, the land ended and the ice began; but it mattered little. He walked out on the white plain scanning the south-eastern hill-slope for the house toward which he intended to bend his steps. He was well out on the lake before he saw far enough round the first cliff to come in sight of the log house and its clearing, and no sooner did he see it than he heard his approach, although he was yet so far away, heralded by the barking of a dog. Before he had gone much farther a man came forth with a dog to meet him.

The two men had seen one another before, in the days when the neighbourhood had turned out in the fruitless search for Cameron's daughter and for Cameron himself. At that time a fevered eye and haggard face had been the signs that Bates was taking his misfortune to heart; now Trenholme looked, half expecting to see the same tokens developed by solitude into some demonstration of manner; but this was not the case. His flesh had certainly wasted, and his eye had the excitement of expectation in it as he met his visitor; but the man was the same man still, with the stiff, unexpressive manner which was the expression of his pride.

Bates spoke of the weather, of the news Trenholme brought from Turrif Settlement, of the railway—all briefly, and without warmth of interest; then he asked why Trenholme had come.

"You haven't been able to get any one yet to fell your trees for you?"

Bates replied in the negative.

"They think the place is dangerous," said the other, as if giving information, although he knew perfectly that Bates was aware of this. He had grown a little diffident in stating why he had come.

"Fools they are!" said Bates, ill-temperedly.

Trenholme said that he was willing to do the work Bates had wanted a man for, at the same wages.

“It’s rough work for a gentlemanly young man like you.”

Trenholme’s face twitched with a peculiar smile. “I can handle an axe. I can learn to fell trees.”

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"I mean, the living is rough, and all that; and of course" (this was added with suspicious caution) "it wouldn't be worth my while to pay the same wages to an inexperienced hand."

Trenholme laughed. This reception was slightly different from what he had anticipated. He remarked that he might be taken a week on trial, and to this Bates agreed, not without some further hesitation. Trenholme inquired after the health of the old aunt of whom he had heard.

"In bodily health," said Bates, "she is well. You may perhaps have heard that in mind she has failed somewhat."

The man's reserve was his dignity, and it produced its result, although obvious dignity of appearance and manner was entirely lacking to him.

The toothless, childish old man woman Trenholme encountered when he entered the house struck him as an odd exaggeration of the report he had just received. He did not feel at home when he sat down to eat the food Bates set before him; he perceived that it was chiefly because in a new country hospitality is considered indispensable to an easy conscience that he had received any show of welcome.

Yet the lank brown hand that set his mug beside him shook so that some tea was spilt. Bates was in as dire need of the man he received so unwillingly as ever man was in need of his fellow-man. It is when the fetter of solitude has begun to eat into a man's flesh that he begins to proclaim his indifference to it, and the human mind is never in such need of companionship as when it shuns companions.

The two spent most of the evening endeavouring to restore to liveliness the birds that Trenholme had taken from his pockets, and in discussing them. Bates produced a very old copy of a Halifax newspaper which contained a sonnet to this bird, in which the local poet addressed it as

"The Sunset-tinted grosbeak of the north"

Trenholme marvelled at his resources. Such newspapers as he stored up were kept under the cushion of the old aunt's armchair.

Bates brought out some frozen cranberries for the birds. They made a rough coop and settled them in it outside, in lee of one of the sheds. It is extraordinary how much time and trouble people will expend on such small matters if they just take it into their heads to do it.

CHAPTER IV.

There was no very valuable timber on Bates's land. The romance of the lumber trade had already passed from this part of the country, but the farmers still spent their winters in getting out spruce logs, which were sold at the nearest saw-mills. Bates and Cameron had possessed themselves of a large portion of the hill on which they had settled, with a view to making money by the trees in this way—money that was necessary to the household, frugal as it was, for, so far, all their gains had been spent in necessary improvements. Theirs had been a far-seeing policy that would in the end have brought prosperity, had the years of uninterrupted toil on which they calculated been realised.

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It was not until the next day that Trenholme fully understood how helpless the poor Scotchman really was in his present circumstances. In the early morning there was the live-stock to attend to, which took him the more time because he was not in strong health; and when that was done it seemed that there was much ado in the house before the old woman would sit down peacefully for the day. He apologised to Trenholme for his housework by explaining that she was restless and uneasy all day unless the place was somewhat as she had been accustomed to see it; he drudged to appease her, and when at last he could follow to the bush, whither he had sent Trenholme, it transpired that he dared not leave her more than an hour or two alone, for fear she should do herself a mischief with the fire. In the bush it was obvious how pitifully small was the amount of work accomplished. Many trees had been felled before Cameron's death; but they still had to be lopped and squared, cut into twelve-foot lengths, dragged by an ox to the log-slide, and passed down on to the ice of the lake. Part of the work required two labourers; only a small part of what could be done single-handed had been accomplished; and Trenholme strongly suspected that moonlight nights had been given to this, while the old woman slept.

It is well known that no line can be drawn between labour and play; it is quite as much fun making an ox pull a log down a woodland path as playing at polo, if one will only admit it, especially when novelty acts as playmate. Most healthy men find this fascination hidden in labour, provided it only be undertaken at their own bidding, although few have the grace to find it when necessity compels to the task. Alec Trenholme found the new form of labour to which he had bidden himself toilsome and delightful; like a true son of Adam, he was more conscious of his toil than of his delight—still both were there; there was physical inspiration in the light of the snow, the keen still air, and the sweet smell of the lumber. So he grew more expert, and the days went past, hardly distinguished from one another, so entire was the unconsciousness of the slumber between them.

He had not come without some sensation of romance in his knight-errantry. Bates was the centre, the kernel as it were, of a wild story that was not yet explained. Turrif had disbelieved the details Saul had given of Bates's cruelty to Cameron's daughter, and Trenholme had accepted Turrif's judgment; but in the popular judgment, if Cameron's rising was not a sufficient proof of Bates's guilt, the undoubted disappearance of the daughter was. Whatever had been his fault, rough justice and superstitious fear had imposed on Bates a term of solitary confinement and penal servitude which so far he had accepted without explanation or complaint. He still expressed no satisfaction at Trenholme's arrival that would have been a comment on his own hard case and a confession of his need. Yet, on the whole, Trenholme's interest in him would have been heightened rather than decreased by a nearer view of his monotonous life and his dry reserve, had it not been that the man was to the last degree contentious and difficult to deal with.

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Taking for granted that Trenholme was of gentle extraction, he treated him with the generosity of pride in the matter of rations; but he assumed airs of a testy authority which were in exact proportion to his own feeling of physical and social inferiority. Seen truly, there was a pathos in this, for it was a weak man's way of trying to be manful but his new labourer, could not be expected to see it in that light. Then, too, on all impersonal subjects of conversation which arose, it was the nature of Bates to contradict and argue; whereas Trenholme, who had little capacity for reasonable argument, usually dealt with contradiction as a pot of gunpowder deals with an intruding spark. As regarded the personal subject of his own misfortune—a subject on which Trenholme felt he had a certain right to receive confidence—Bates's demeanour was like an iron mask.

Bates scorned the idea, which Turrif had always held, that Cameron had never really died; he vowed, as before, that the box he had sent in Saul's cart had contained nothing but a dead body; he would hear no description of the old man who, it would seem, had usurped Cameron's name; he repeated stolidly that Saul had put his charge into some shallow grave in the forest, and hoaxed Trenholme, with the help of an accomplice; and he did not scruple to hint that if Trenholme had not been a coward he would have seized the culprit, and so obviated further mystery and after difficulties. There was enough truth in this view of the case to make it very insulting to Trenholme. But Bates did not seem to cherish anger for that part of his trouble that had been caused by this defect; rather he showed an annoying indifference to the whole affair. He had done what he could to bury his late partner decently; he neither expressed nor appeared to experience further emotion concerning his fate.

When a man has set himself to anything, he generally sticks to it, for a time at least; this seemed to be the largest reason that Trenholme had the first four weeks for remaining where he was. At any rate, he did remain; and from these unpromising materials, circumstance, as is often the case, beat, out a rough sort of friendship between the two men. The fact that Bates was a partial wreck, that the man's nerve and strength in him were to some extent gone, bred in Trenholme the gallantry of the strong toward the weak—a gallantry which was kept from rearing into self-conscious virtue by the superiority of Bates's reasoning powers, which always gave him a certain amount of real authority. Slowly they began to be more confidential.

"It's no place for a young man like you to be here," Bates observed with disfavour.

It was Sunday. The two were sitting in front of the house in the sunshine, not because the sun was warm, but because it was bright; dressed, as they were, in many plies of clothes, they did not feel the cold, in flat, irregular shape the white lake lay beneath their hill. On the opposite heights the spruce-trees stood up clear and green, as perfect often in shape as yews that are cut into old-fashioned cones.

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"I was told that about the last place I was in, and the place before too," Trenholme laughed. He did not seem to take his own words much to heart.

"Well, the station certainly wasn't much of a business," assented Bates; "and, if it's not rude to ask, where were ye before?"

"Before that—why, I was just going to follow my own trade in a place where there was a splendid opening for me; but my own brother put a stop to that. He said it was no fit position for a young man like me. My brother's a fine fellow," the young man sneered, but not bitterly.

"He ought to be," said Bates, surveying the sample of the family before him rather with a glance of just criticism than of admiration. "What's your calling, then?"

Alec pulled his mitts out of his pocket and slapped his moccasins with them to strike off the melting snow. "What do you think it is, now?"

Bates eyed him with some interest in the challenge. "I don't know," he said at last. "Why didn't your brother want ye to do it?"

"'Twasn't grand enough. I came out naturally thinking I'd set up near my brother; but, well, I found he'd grown a very fine gentleman—all honour to him for it! He's a good fellow." There was no sneer just now.

Bates sat subjecting all he knew of Alec to a process of consideration. The result was not a guess; it was not in him to hazard anything, even a guess.

"What does your brother do?"

"Clergyman, and he has a school."

"Where?"

"Chellaston, on the Grand Trunk."

"Never heard of it. Is it a growing place?"

"It's thriving along now. It was just right for my business."

"Did the clergyman think your business was wrong?"

The young man laughed as a man laughs who knows the answer to an amusing riddle and sees his neighbour's mental floundering. "He admits that it's an honest and respectable line of life."

“Did ye give in, then?”

“I took a year to think over it. I’m doing that now.”

“Thinking?”

“Yes.”

“I’ve not observed ye spending much time in meditation.”

The young man looked off across the basin of the frozen lake. What is more changeable than the blue of the sky? Today the far firmament looked opaque, an even, light blue, as if it were made of painted china. The blue of Alec Trenholme’s eyes was very much like the sky; sometimes it was deep and dark, sometimes it was a shadowy grey, sometimes it was hard and metallic. A woman having to deal with him would probably have imagined that something of his inward mood was to be read in these changes; but, indeed, they were owing solely to those causes which change the face of the sky—degrees of light and the position of that light. As for Bates, he did not even know that his companion had blue eyes; he only knew in a general way that he was a strong, good-looking fellow, whose figure, even under the bulgy shapes of multiplied garments, managed to give suggestion of that indefinite thing we call style. He himself felt rather thinner, weaker, more rusty in knowledge of the world, more shapeless as to apparel, than he would have done had he sat alone.

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After a minute or two he said, "What's your trade?"

Trenholme, sitting there in the clear light, would have blushed as he answered had his face not been too much weathered to admit of change of colour. He went through that momentary change of feeling that we connect with blushes. He had been perfectly conscious that this question was coming, and perfectly conscious, too, that when he answered it he would fall in Bates's estimation, that his prestige would be gone. He thought he did not mind it, but he did.

"Butcher," he said.

"Ye're not in earnest?" said Bates, with animosity.

"Upon my word."

"Ye don't look like that"—with disappointment.

"Look like what?"—fiercely—"What would you have me look like? My father was as good-looking a man as you'd see in the three kingdoms, and as good a butcher, too. He got rich, had three shops, and he sent us boys to the best school he could find. He'd have set me up in any business I liked; if I chose his it was because—I did choose it."

He was annoyed at Bates's open regret, just as we are constantly more annoyed at fresh evidence of a spirit we know to be in a man than with the demonstration of some unexpected fault, because we realise the trait we have fathomed and see how poor it is.

"How did your brother come to be a minister?"

"He's a *clergyman* of the Church of England"—with loftiness.

"Well, that's more of a thing than a minister; how did he come by it?"

"He was clever, and father was able to send him to Oxford. He was a good deal older than I was. I suppose he took to the Church because he thought it his duty."

"And now that he's out here he wants to sink the shop?"

"Oh, as to that"—coldly—"when he was quite young, in England, he got in with swells. He's tremendously clever. There were men in England that thought no end of him."

"Did he lie low about the shop there?"

"I don't know"—shortly—"I was at school then."

Bates, perceiving that his questions were considered vastly offensive, desisted, but not with that respectfulness of mind that he would have had had Alec's father been a clergyman as well as his brother. Bates's feeling in this matter was what it was by inheritance, exactly as was the shape of his nose or the length of his limbs; it required no exercise of thought on his part to relegate Alec Trenholme to a place of less consequence.

Trenholme assuaged his own ill-temper by going to take out his pink and grey grosbeaks and give them exercise. He was debating in his mind whether they were suffering from confinement or not—a question which the deportment of the birds never enabled him to solve completely—when Bates wandered round beside him again, and betrayed that his mind was still upon the subject of their conversation.

"Ye know," he began, with the deliberate interest of a Scotchman in an argument, "I've been thinking on it, and I'm thinking your brother's in the right of it."

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“You do!” The words had thunderous suggestion of rising wrath.

“Well,” said the other again, “ye’re hard to please; ye were vexed a while since because ye thought I was criticising him for lying low.”

The answer to this consisted in threats thrown out at any man who took upon himself to criticise his brother.

“And now, when I tell ye I’m thinking he’s in the right of it, ye’re vexed again. Now, I’ll tell ye: ye don’t like to think the Rev. Mr. Trenholme’s in the right, for that puts ye in the wrong; but ye don’t like me to think he’s in the wrong, because he’s your brother. Well, it’s natural! but just let us discuss the matter. Now, ye’ll agree with me it’s a man’s duty to rise in the world if he can.”

Upon which he was told, in a paraphrase, to mind his own business.

CHAPTER V.

It was a delightful proof of the blessed elasticity of inconsistency in human lives, a proof also that there was in these two men more of good than of evil, that that same evening, when the lamp was lit, they discussed the problem that had been mooted in the afternoon with a fair amount of good temper. As they sat elbowing the deal table, sheets of old newspapers under their inspection, Trenholme told his story more soberly. He told it roughly, emphasising detail, slighting important matter, as men tell stories who see them too near to get the just proportion; but out of his words Bates had wit to glean the truth. It seemed that his father had been a warmhearted man, with something superior in his mental qualities and acquirements. Having made a moderate fortune, he had liberally educated his sons. There is nothing in which families differ more by nature than in the qualities of heart which bind them together or easily release them from the bonds of kinship. The members of this small family had that in them which held them together in spite of the pulling of circumstance; for although the elder son had come on the stage of manhood ten years before the younger, although he had had talents that advanced him among scholarly men, and had been quickly taken from his first curacy to fill a superior position in a colony, he had never abated an affectionate correspondence with Alec, and had remained the hero of his young brother’s imagination. This younger son, not having the same literary tastes, and having possibly a softer heart, gratified his father by going into business with him; but at that good man’s death he had had sufficient enterprise, sufficient distaste, possibly, for his English position, to sell the business that was left in his hands, and affection drew him, as a loadstone a magnet, to his brother’s neighbourhood. He brought with him securities of the small fortune they were to divide between them, and expected nothing but happiness in the meeting and prosperity in his future career. Unfortunately, a cause of dispute between the two brothers arose instantly on Alec’s arrival: there was an exceptionally good opening in

Chellaston for one of Alec's calling; the brothers took different views concerning that calling; they had quarrelled with all the fire of warm natures, and were parted almost as soon as met.

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"And did ye think it would be pleasing to your brother to have a tradesman of the same name and blood as himself in the same place?" asked Bates with lack of toleration in his tone.

"That's all very fine!"—scornfully. "You know as well as I do that my lord and my gentleman come out to this country to do what farm-hands and cattle-men would hardly be paid to do at home—"

"When they've ruined themselves first, but not till then," Bates put in.

"And besides, old Robert sets up to be a saint. I didn't suppose he'd look upon things in the *vulgar* way." This reflection was cast on Bates as one of a class. "Was I likely to suppose he'd think that to kick one's heels on an office stool was finer than honest labour, or that my particular kind of labour had something more objectionable about it than any other? In old times it was the most honourable office there was. Look at the priests of the Old Testament! Read Homer!"

"I don't know that I'm understanding ye about Homer."

"Why, hear him tell the way the animals were cut up, and the number of them—yards and yards of it."

"But in the Bible the animals were used for sacrifice; that's very different." Bates said this, but felt that a point had been scored against him in the poetry of Homer; the Old Testament was primeval, but Homer, in spite of ancient date, seemed to bring with him the authority of modern culture.

"If they were, the people feasted upon them all the same, and the office of preparing them was the most honourable. I'm not claiming to be a priest (I leave that to my respected brother); I claim my right in a new country, where Adam has to delve again, to be a butcher and a gentleman." All his words were hot and hasty.

"But ye see," said Bates, "in the towns here, things are beginning to regulate themselves much in the shape they take in the old country."

"My brother cares more what people think than I do."

"And a verra good thing too; for with the majority there is wisdom," put in Bates, keen and contentious.

"You think so, do you?"—with sarcasm.

"Ye must remember ye're young yet; your brother has seen more of the world—"

Now Alec Trenholme had had no intention of telling what, to his mind, was the worst of his brother's conduct, but here he slapped the table and burst out angrily:

"And I tell you he believes as I do, but he hasn't pluck to act up to it. He's not even told one of his fine friends what his brother does; he says it's for the sake of his school. He's living a lie for his own pride. He's got himself made master of a college, fine as a fiddle, and he cares more about that than about his brother. With all his prayers and his sermons in church every Sunday, he'd let me go to the dogs rather than live out the truth. He thinks I've gone to the devil now, because I left him in a rage, and I told him I'd go and learn to spend my money, and drink, and swear, and gamble as a *gentleman* should. He thinks I've done it, and he writes and implores me, by all that's holy, to forsake evil courses; but never a word like 'Come back and set up your shop, old fellow, and I'll be your customer.' That's the amount of his religion."

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"It was a hard choice ye put upon him," said Bates, solemnly.

"You think it was? Well!" The young man gave a boisterous laugh.

"For, in the first place, it's not his fault, but your own entirely, if ye go to the bad."

"I've not gone to the bad; but if I had, if I'd gone straight there, it would have been his fault."

"'Twould just have been your own. There's just one man that's responsible for your actions, and that's yourself. If your brother was a compete blackguard, instead of a good man, that's no excuse for you. God never put any man into this world and said, 'Be good if some other man is.'"

"When a man sets up to preach, and then throws away his influence over his own brother for a little finery opposition, it's more than being a blackguard. What does a man mean by standing up to preach if he doesn't mean that he's taking some responsibility for other people?"

"Well, but it wasn't he that threw away his influence over you; it was you. He never said 'Don't be influenced any more by me.' If ye thought he was an angel before then, more fool ye were, for no man is an angel. What business had you to make all the influence of his godly life condeetion on his doing right, or what you thought right, on a certain point of opinion?"

"He's living a lie, I tell you."

"I'm not sure but he's right not to have blazoned it. I'm not sure but I'd have done the same myself."

"Well, as you just remarked, men are not angels. That you would have done it doesn't prove anything."

Next morning Trenholme, whose half-awaked mind had not yet recurred to the night's dispute stepped out of the house into a white morning fog, not uncommon in fierce weather when holes for fishing had been made in the ice of the lake. The air, seemingly as dry as smoke, but keen and sweet, was almost opaque, like an atmosphere of white porcelain, if such might be. The sun, like a scarlet ball, was just appearing; it might have been near, it might have been far; no prospect was seen to mark the distance. Trenholme was walking round by the white snow path, hardly discerning the ox-shed to which he was bound, when he suddenly came upon the dark figure of Bates, who was pitching hay for his Cattle. Bates let down his fork and stood in his path.

"For God's sake, Mr. Trenholme," said he, "let your brother know where you are."

Trenholme started: Bates's figure stood not unlike some gnarled thorn that might have appeared to take human shape in the mist.

"For God's sake, man, write! If ye only knew what it was to feel the weight of another soul on ye, and one that ye had a caring for! Ye're easy angered yourself; ye might as easy anger another, almost without knowing it; and if he or she was to go ye didn't know where, or perhaps die, be sure ye would blame yourself without heeding their blame."

Bates's voice was trembling. The solemnity of his mien and the feminine pronoun he had let slip revealed to Trenholme the direction his thoughts had taken.

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He went on, holding out an arm, as though by the gesture swearing to his own transgression: "I counted myself a good man, and I'll not say now but I did more for"—some name died upon his lips—"than one man in a hundred would have done; but in my folly I angered her, and when I'd have given my life ten times over—"

This, then, was the sorrow that dogged his life. Trenholme knew, without more ado, that Bates loved the lost girl, that it was her loss that outweighed all other misfortune. He felt a great compassion: he said impatiently:

"There's no use trying to interfere between brothers. You can't see the thing as I see it. Let's leave it."

"Ay, leave it," cried the other, voice and limb shaking, "and life is short, and the time to die is every time, and if some accident is to sweep us away to-night, who's to tell him that your death, and your soul too, isn't on his head?"

"Bother my soul!" said Alec; and yet there was a certain courtesy expressed in the gentler tone in which he spoke, and what he thought was, "How much he must have loved her!"

When the fog had vanished, leaving daylight absolute, this scene of the morning seemed like a dream, and in the evening, as much from curiosity to see if he could revive its essence again as from a friendly desire to relieve the overcharged heart of his comrade, he said:

"Tell me about her, Bates. What was she like?"

Bates responded to the question like a man whose heart is beating against the walls of his silence as a bird beats upon its cage. He spoke a few words, hardly noticing that he was telling his memories; then the mask of his self-bound habit was resumed; then again the dignity of his sorrow found some expression; and still again he would retire into dumbness, setting the questioner aside slightly; and when he had forgotten that he had drawn back within himself some further revealing would come from him. It was little that he said in all, but language that has been fused in the furnace of so strong a sorrow and silence has little of the dross of common speech—the unmeaning, misleading, unnecessary elements: his veritable memory and thought and feeling were painted by his meagre tale.

Was that tale true? John Bates would have thought it a great sin to deceive himself or another, and yet, such was the power of his love, blown to white heat by the breath of regret and purified, that when he spoke of the incidents of Sissy's childhood, of the cleverness she displayed when he taught her, of her growth until the day in which he had offended her by speaking of marriage, when he told of her tears, and prayers, and anger, and of his own despotism, the picture of it all that arose in Trenholme's

imagination was exceedingly different from what would have been there had he seen the reality. He would not have liked Cameron's daughter had he seen her, but, seeing her through the medium of a heart that loved her, all the reverence that is due to womanly sweetness stirred in him. Cupid may be blind, but to the eyes of chastened love is given the vision of God.

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When it appeared that Bates had said all that he was going to say, Alec Trenholme sat pondering the problem of this girl's disappearance with more mental energy than he had before given to it. Knowing the place now, he knew that what Bates and Saul had averred was true—that there were but two ways by which any one could leave it while water was unfrozen, one by the boat, and the other by striking at random across the hill to the back of the farm—a route that could only lead either to one of several isolated farms, or, by a forty-mile tramp round by the nearest river bridge, to the railway. At no farmhouse had she been seen, and the journey by the bridge was too long to have been accomplished before the snow storm must have impeded her. It was in attempting this journey, Bates was convinced, that she had perished. There was, of course, another possibility that had been mooted at Turrifs Settlement; but the testimony of Bates and Saul, agreeing in the main points, had entirely silenced it. Trenholme, thinking of this now, longed to question more nearly, yet hardly dared.

“Do you think she could have gone mad? People sometimes do go stark mad suddenly. Because, if so, and if you could be mistaken in thinking you saw her in the house when you went—”

The Scotchman was looking keenly at him with sharp eyes and haggard face. “I understand ye,” he said, with a sigh of resignation, “the noise o’ the thing has been such that there’s no evil men haven’t thought of me, or madness of her. Ye think the living creature ye saw rise from the coffin was, maybe, the dead man’s daughter?”

“I think it was much too big for a woman.”

“Oh, as to that, she was a good height.” Perhaps, with involuntary thought of what might have been, he drew himself up to his full stature as he said, “A grand height for a woman; but as to this idea of yours, I’ll not say ye’re insulting her by it, though! that’s true too; but I’ve had the same notion; and now I’ll tell ye something. She was not mad; she took clothes; she left everything in order. Was that the act of a maniac? and if she wasn’t mad, clean out of her wits, would she have done such a thing as ye’re thinking of?”

“No”—thoughtfully—“I should think not.”

“And, furthermore; if she had wished to do it, where is it she could have laid him? D’ye think I haven’t looked the ground over? There’s no place where she could have buried him, and to take him to the lake was beyond her strength.” There was nothing of the everyday irascibility about his voice; the patience of a great grief was upon him, as he argued away the gross suspicion.

“That settles it.” Trenholme said this willingly enough.

“Yes, it settles it; for if there was a place where the earth was loose I dug with my own hands down to the very rock, and neither man nor woman lay under it.”

Trenholme was affected; he again renounced his suspicion.

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"And now I've told ye that," said Bates, "I'll tell ye something else, for it's right ye should know that when the spring comes it'll not be in my power to help ye with the logs—not if we should lose the flood and have to let 'em lie till next year—for when the snow passes, I must be on the hills seeking her." (He had put a brown, bony hand to shade his eyes, and from out its shade he looked.) "There were many to help me seek her alive; I'll take none wi' me when I go to give her burial."

The other saddened; The weary length and uncertainty of such a search, and its dismal purpose, came to him.

"You've no assurance that she hasn't drowned herself in the lake here," he cried, remonstrating.

"But I have that; and as ye'll be naturally concerned at me leaving the logs, I'll tell ye what it is, if ye'll give me your word as an honest man that ye'll not repeat it at any time or place whatsoever."

He looked so like a man seeking courage to confess some secret sin that Trenholme drew back.

"I'll not *tell*, but—"

Bates took no heed. "My aunt," he began, "had money laid by; she had ten English sovereigns she liked to keep by her—women often do. There was no one but me and Sissy knew where it was; and she took them with her. By that I know she was making for the railway, and—" His voice grew unsteady as he brought his hand down; there was a look of far-off vision in his eyes, as though he saw the thing of which he spoke. "Ay, she's lying now somewhere on the hills, where she would be beaten down by the snow before she reached a road."

Trenholme was thinking of the sadness of it all, forgetting to wonder even why he had been told not to repeat this last, when he found Bates was regarding his silence with angry suspicion.

"It wasn't stealing," he said irritably; "she knew she might have them if she wanted." It was as though he were giving a shuffling excuse for some fault of his own and felt its weakness.

The young man, taken by surprise, said mechanically, "Would Miss Bates have given them to her?" He had fallen into the habit of referring to the childish old woman with, all due form, for he saw Bates liked it.

"Hoots! What are you saying, man? Would ye have had the lassie leave the burden on my mind that she'd gone out of her father's house penniless? 'Twas the one kindness she did me to take the gold."

CHAPTER VI.

One evening Alec Trenholme sat down to write to his brother. Bates had urged him to write, and, after a due interval, of his own accord he wrote. The urging and the writing had a certain relation of cause and effect, but the writer did not think so. Also, the letter he wrote was very different from the document of penitence and recantation that Bates had advised, and now supposed him to be writing.

He gave a brief account of what he had done before he accepted the post of station-master at Turrifs Station, and then,

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"I liked it well enough," he wrote, "until one night a queer thing happened. As evening came on, a man drove up bringing a coffin to be sent by train to the next village for burial. When I was left alone with the thing, the man inside got up—he really did, I saw him. I shut him in and ran to fetch the carter, but couldn't catch him. When I came back, the man had got out and ran into the wood. They had lined the box with a white bed-quilt, and we found that some miles away in the bush the next day, but we never found the man; and the queer thing is that there were two men and a girl who seem to have been quite certain he was dead. One of them, a very intelligent fellow that I am staying with now, thinks the carter must have played some trick on the way; but I hardly believe that myself, from the way the carter acted. I think he spoke the truth; he said he had been alone on the road all day, and had been scared out of his wits by hearing the man turn in the coffin. He seemed well frightened, too. Of course, if this is true, the man could not really have been dead; but I'm not trying to give an explanation; I'm just telling you what occurred. Well, things went on quietly enough for another month, and on the last night of the old year the place was snowed up—tracks, roads, everything—and at midnight an old man came about who answered to the description I had of the dead man, clothes and all, for it seems they were burying him in his clothes. He was rather deaf, and blind I think, though I'm not sure, and he seemed to be wandering in his mind somehow; but he was a fine, powerful fellow—reminded me a little of father—and the pathetic thing about it was that he had got the idea into his head—"

Here Alec stopped, and, holding the pen idly in his hand, sat lost in thought. So wistful did he look, so wrapt, that Bates, glancing furtively at him, thought the letter had raised associations of his home and childhood, and took himself off to bed, hoping that the letter would be more brotherly if the writer was left alone. But when Alec put pen to paper again he only wrote:—

"Well, I don't know that it matters what he had got into his head; it hadn't anything to do with whether he was Cameron (the name of the man supposed dead) or not. I could not get a word out of him as to who he was or where he came from. I did all I could to get him to come in and have food and get warmed; but though I went after him and stood with him a long while, I didn't succeed. He was as strong as a giant. It was awfully solemn to see an old man like that wandering bareheaded in the snow at night, so far from any human being. I was forced to leave him, for the engine came clearing the track. I got some men to come after him with me, but he was gone, and we never saw him again. I stayed on there ten days, trying to hear something of him, and after that I came here to try my hand at lumbering. The owner of this place here was terribly cut up

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about the affair. It was he who started the coffin I told you of, and he's been left quite alone because this tale frightened men from coming to work for him in the winter as usual. I have a very comfortable berth here. I think there must have been something curious—a streak of some kind—in the dead man's family; his only daughter went off from here in a rage a few days after his death, and as the snow came at once, she is supposed to have perished in the drifts on the hills. Our logs have to be floated down the small river here at the spring flood, and this man, Bates, is determined to look for the lost girl at the same time. I'll stay and see him through the spring. Very likely I shall look in on you in summer."

Alec Trenholme went to bed not a little sleepy, but satisfied that he had given a clear account of the greater part of what had befallen him.

The next day he tramped as far as the railway to post the letter.

When Principal Trenholme received this letter he was standing in his library, holding an interview with some of his elder pupils. He had a pleasant manner with boys; his rule was to make friends with them as much as possible; and if he was not the darling of their hearts, he was as dear to them as a pedagogue ever is to a class under his authority. When he saw Alec's letter, his heart within him leaped with hope and quailed with fear. It is only a few times during his life that a man regards a letter in this way, and usually after long suspense on a subject which looms large in his estimate of things. When he could disengage himself, he tore it open, and the first question with which he scanned it concerned Alec only—was he in trouble? had he carried out his threat of evil-doing? or was it well with him?

Robert Trenholme was not now merely of the stuff of which men of the world are made. Could we but know it, a man's mind probably bears to his religion no very different relation from what his body bears; his creed, opinions, and sentiments are more nearly allied to what St. Paul calls "the flesh" than they are to the hidden life of the man, with which God deals. To the inner spring of Robert Trenholme's life God had access, so that his creed, and the law of temperance in him, had, not perfection, but vitality; and the same vitality, now permitted, now refused, by unseen inlets flowed into all he did and was, and his estimate of things was changed. He, in subtle selfishness, did much, almost all he could, to check and interrupt the incoming life, although indeed he prayed, and often supposed his most ardent desire was, to obtain it. Such is the average man of faith; such was Robert Trenholme—a better thing, truly, than a mere man, but not outwardly or inwardly so consistent.

The great fear he had when he opened this letter was that he had caused his brother to stumble; the great hope, that, because of his prayers, Heaven would grant it should not be so; but when, on the first hasty glance over the pages, he discovered that Alec was well, and was apparently amusing himself in a harmless way, that fear and hope

instantly glided into the background; he hardly knew that they had both been strong, so faded did they look in the light of the commonplace certainty.

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The next question that pressed assumed an air of paramount importance. He had asked Alec to enter some honourable mercantile profession. He had pressed this in the first interview, when the hot-tempered young man had left him in a rage. He had argued the point in subsequent letters; he had even offered his own share of their inheritance as additional capital. He felt that he deserved an answer to this offer, and believed that his happiness depended upon Alec's acceding to the proposed change of his life-plan. His mind full of this secondary subject, he perused the sheets of the letter with singular impatience and distaste. Any man might, in the most favourable circumstances, have been excused for experiencing impatience at having so wild a tale foisted in brief confusion upon his credulity; in the mood of his present circumstance the elder Trenholme refolded the letter, using within himself the strongest language in his vocabulary.

Robert Trenholme was not a happy man just now. Since he had last seen Alec a change had come to him which made this matter of the other's calling of warmer interest than it had been. Then his early love for Sophia Rexford had been a memory and a far, half-formed hope; now it had been roused again to be a true, steady flame, an ever-present influence. His one desire now was to win her affection. He would not be afraid then to tell her all that there was to tell of himself, and let her love decide. He did not feel that he should wrong her in this. At present he had everything to give, she everything to receive, except the possession of gentle blood, which would apparently be her only dowry. The girl he could not once have dared to address was now working servantless in her father's kitchen; he knew that it was no light drudgery; and he could offer her a comparatively luxurious home, and a name that had attracted to itself no small honour. He had a nice appreciation for what is called position, and the belief that their mutual positions had changed was very sweet to him. All his mind expanded in this thought, as the nerves of the opium-eater to the influence of his drug; it soothed him when he was weary; it consoled him when he was vexed; it had come to him as an unexpected, unsought good, like a blessing direct from heaven.

This was as things now were; but if his brother adhered to his purpose of establishing himself in his business in the same country, that would make a difference—a difference that it was hard, perhaps, for a thoughtful man to put into words, but which was still harder to wipe away by any sophistry of words. Robert Trenholme may have been wise, or he may have been foolish, but he estimated this difference as great. Should Alec persist in this thing, it would, in the first place, endanger the success of his school, or alter his relation to that school; in the second, it would make him more unworthy in the eyes of all Sophia's well-born relatives. While he remained in suspense,

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therefore, he was too honourable to seek to entangle her affections by the small arts that are used for such purposes; for if the worst came, he felt that he would be too proud to ask her to be his wife, or, if love should overcome pride, and he should still sue for what he loved better than life, he must do so before he sought her heart—not after; he must lay his cause before the tribunal of Sophia's wit before she had let go her heart—a thing that he, being what he was, had not courage to do.

He was not “living a lie” (as his brother had said) any more than every man does who allows his mind to dwell on the truth of what pleases him more than on disagreeable truth. The fact that he was, by a distant tie of consanguinity, related to a gentleman of some county position in England was just as true, and to Trenholme's mind more largely true, than the fact of his father's occupation. Yet he had never made this a boast; he had never voluntarily stated the pleasant truth to any one to whom he had not also told the unpleasant; and where he had kept silence concerning the latter, he had done so by the advice of good men, and with excuse concerning his professional influence. Yet, some way, he was not sufficiently satisfied with all this to have courage to bring it before Miss Rexford, nor yet was he prepared (and here was his worldly disadvantage) to sacrifice his conscience to success. He would not ask his brother to change, except in so far as he could urge that brother's duty and advantage; he would not say to him, “Do this for my sake”; nor yet would he say, “Go, then, to the other side of the world”; nor yet, “You shall be no longer my brother.”

Robert Trenholme was bearing a haunted life. The ghost was fantastic one, truly—that of a butcher's shop; but it was a very real haunting.

CHAPTER VII.

The Rexford family was without a servant. Eliza, the girl they had brought with them from Quebec, had gone to a situation at the Chellaston hotel. The proprietor and manager of that large building, having become lame with rheumatism, had been sorely in need of a lieutenant, or housekeeper, and had chosen one with that shrewdness which had ever been his business capital. His choice had fallen on Eliza and she had accepted the place.

When Robert Trenholme heard of this arrangement he was concerned, knowing how difficult servants were to procure. He took occasion to speak to Miss Rexford on the subject, expressing sympathy with her and strong censure of Eliza.

“Indeed I am not sure but that she has done right,” said Sophia.

“You surprise me very much. I thought you made somewhat of a companion of her.”

“I do; and that is why, after hearing what she has to say about it, I think she has done right. She has abilities, and this is the only opening in sight in which she can exercise them.”

“I should think”—sternly—“that these abilities were better unexercised.”

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“That is probably because you haven’t the least idea what it is to have energies and faculties for which you have no scope”—this archly.

“But I should think the risk of learning pert manners—”

“That is the way men always argue about women. I tell you there is no such risk for an energetic, clever girl as to place her where the rust of unexercised faculties will eat into her soul. It is just because so many girls have to undergo this risk, and cannot do it safely, that the world is so full of women that are captious or morbid or silly. Boys treated in the same way would turn out as badly.”

“But there is scope for all the highest faculties of a woman’s nature in such a household as yours,” cried he.

“Since you say so”—politely—“I am bound to believe it.”

“No, but really—do you mean to say you don’t think so?”

“You have just expressed yourself so positively that I am curious to know how you came by your knowledge, first, as to Eliza’s faculties, and secondly, as to the scope for them in our house.”

“It is unkind of you to laugh at me when I am only a humble enquirer after truth.”

“Having expressed yourself thus modestly—”

“Nay, but I only said what I would have said about any girl in any such family.”

“And you only said it with that simplicity of certainty which every man would have felt on the same subject.”

“I cry a truce; I plead for mercy. Let us have out the traits of Eliza’s character separately, and examine the scope in detail.”

“To begin with, she has wonderful foresight; her power to plan the work of the house so as to get it done as easily as possible often surprises me. Now, of what use is this faculty in the kingdom of my step-mother, who always acts on the last impulse, and upsets every one’s plans without even observing them? She has great executive ability, too; but what use is it when, as soon as she gets interested in the accomplishment of something, my mother cries, ‘Come, Eliza, all work and no play makes Jack a dull boy; go and romp with the children!’ Then, too, she has plenty of resource; but of what use is that, when the thing she sees to be best in an emergency is seldom the thing that is done? The hotel-keeper is more observing than you; he has noticed that Eliza is no ordinary manager, and offered her high wages.”



“You know, of course, what you are talking about,” said Trenholme, feelingly, for he had no doubt that her sympathy with Eliza had arisen out of the pains of her own experience; “but in your house there is surely boundless room for humble, loving service; and how much better this girl would be if she could set aside her cleverness to perform such service.” He did not add, “as you have done,” but there was that in his voice which implied it. He went on: “I do not yet allow that you have disproved my statement, for I said that where she was she had scope for her *highest* faculties.”

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"I suppose it is admitted that the highest faculty of man is worship," remarked Sophia, suggesting that he was not speaking to the point; "but that is no reason why a boy with a head for figures should be made a farmer, or that a young woman with special ability should remain a maid-of-all-work."

"And what of the affections—love for children, and for other women better than herself? A girl who has such privileges as this girl had with you has a far better chance of doing well than in a public hotel, even if that were a safe place for her."

Possibly Sophia thought her companion showed too great sensibility concerning Eliza's privileges, for she did not take notice of any but the last part of his sentence.

"It is a safe place for her; for she is able to take care of herself anywhere, if she chooses; and if she doesn't choose, no place is safe. Besides, you know, the place is a boarding-house really, rather than an hotel."

"I am not so surprised at the view *you* take of it, for you will do more than any one else to supply her place."

This, Trenholme's feeling prophecy, was quite true. Sophia did do more of Eliza's work than any one. She spared her younger sisters because she wanted them to be happy.

In spite of this, however, Sophia was not so much in need of some one's sympathy as were those younger girls, who had less work to do. A large element in happiness is the satisfaction of one's craving for romance. Now, there are three eras of romance in human life. The first is childhood, when, even if the mind is not filled with fictitious fairy tales which clothe nature, life is itself a fairy tale, a journey through an unexplored region, an enterprise full of effort and wonder, big with hope, an endless expectation, to which trivial realisations seem large. It was in this era that the younger Rexford children, up to Winifred, still lived; they built snow-men, half-expecting, when they finished them in the gloaming, that the thing of their creation would turn and pursue them; they learned to guide toboggans with a trailing toe, and half dreamed that their steeds were alive when they felt them bound and strain, so perfectly did they respond to the rider's will. Sophia, again, had reached the third epoch of romance, when, at a certain age, people make the discovery of the wondrous loveliness in the face of the Lady Duty, and, putting a hand in hers, go onward, thinking nothing hard because of her beauty. But it is admitted by all that there is often a stage between these two, when all the romance of life is summed up in the hackneyed word "love." The pretty girls who were nicknamed Blue and Red had outgrown childhood, and they saw no particular charm in work; they were very dull, and scarce knew why, except that they half envied Eliza, who had gone to the hotel, and who, it was well known, had a suitor in the person of Mr. Cyril Harkness, the Philadelphian dentist.

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Harkness had set up his consulting room in the hotel, but, for economy's sake, he lodged himself in the old Harmon house that was just beyond Captain Rexford's, on the same road. By this arrangement he passed the latter house twice a day, but he never took any notice of Blue and Red. They did not wish that he should—oh no, they were above that—but they felt sure that Eliza was very silly to dislike him as she did, and—well, between themselves, they found an infinite variety of things to say concerning him, sayings emphasised by sweet little chuckles of laughter, and not unfrequently wandering sighs. Sophia, at their age, had had many suitors, this was the family tradition, and lo, upon their own barren horizon there was only one pretty young man, and he only to be looked at, as it were, through the bars of a fence.

One day, when the blue merino frock was flitting about near the red one, the wearers of both being engaged in shaking up a feather bed, Red suddenly stopped her occupation in some excitement.

"Oh, Blue!" She paused a moment as if she were experiencing some interesting sensation; "oh, Blue, I think I've got toothache."

"No!" cried Blue, incredulously, but with hope.

Again over Red's face came the absorbed expression of introspection, and she carefully indented the outside of her pretty cheek several times with her forefinger.

"Yes, I'm sure I feel it. But no; there, it's gone again!"

"It's just the very way things have," said Blue, lamenting. "For two months we've quite wished we had toothache, and there was Tommy the other night just roaring with it."

"I shouldn't like a *roaring* toothache," said Red, reflectively.

"Oh, but the worse it was," cried Blue, encouragingly, "the more necessary it would be —" She stopped and shook her head with a very roguish and significant glance at her sister.

"Mamma only put a bag of hot salt to Tommy's," said Red, prognosticating evil.

"But if it were me," cried Blue, with assurance, "I'd not be cured by bags of hot salt. I would insist upon consulting a dentist."

They both laughed a laugh of joyful plotting.

"It was only the other day," said Red, twisting her little English voice into the American accent, "that he told Harold he was right down clever at tinkering a tooth in the most pain_less_ manner."



“Oh, Red, dear Red,” begged Blue, “do feel it again, for my sake; it would be so joyfully funny if mamma would take us to him.”

“I’d a little bit rather *you*, had the ache, Blue.”

“I’d have it this *instant* if I could, but”—reproachfully—“it was you that felt the twinge.”

“Well, I don’t mind,” said Red, heroically, “as long as my cheek doesn’t swell; I won’t go with a swelled face.”

“What would it matter? He knows that your face is alike on both sides *usually*.”

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“Still, I shouldn’t like it,” replied Red, with a touch of obstinacy.

Eliza, however, was of a very different mind about this same young man. She had not taken her new situation with any desire to see more of him; rather she hoped that by seeing him oftener she should more quickly put an end to his addresses.

The “Grand Hotel” of Chellaston was, as Miss Rexford had said, a boarding-house. It had few transient visitors. The only manufacturer of the village, and his wife, lived in it all the year round; so did one of the shopkeepers. Several other quiet people lived there all winter; in summer the prices were raised, and it was filled to overflowing by more fashionable visitors from the two cities that were within a short journey. This “hotel” was an enormous wooden house, built in the simplest fashion, a wide corridor running from front to rear on each storey, on which the room doors opened. Rooms and corridors were large, lofty, and well-lighted by large windows. The dining-room, billiard-room, office, and bar-room, on the ground-floor, together with the stairs and corridors, were uncarpeted, painted all over a light slate grey. With the exception of healthy geraniums in most of the windows, there was little ornament in these ground-floor rooms; but all was new, clean, and airy. The upper rooms were more heavily furnished, but were most of them shut up in winter. All the year round the landlord took in the daily papers; and for that reason his bar-room, large and always tolerably quiet, was the best public reading-room the village boasted.

The keeper of this establishment was a rather elderly man, and of late he had been so crippled by rheumatism that he could walk little and only on crutches. He was not a dainty man; his coat was generally dusty, his grey beard had always a grimy appearance of tobacco about it. He spent the greater part of his day now sitting in a high pivot chair, his crutches leaning against it.

“You see, miss,” he said to Eliza, “I’ll tell you what the crying need for you is in this house at present; it’s to step round spry and see that the girls do their work. It’s this way; when I was spry, if I wasn’t in the room, the young people knew that, like as not, I was just round the corner; they knew I *might* be there any minute; at present they know they’ll hear my sticks before I see them. It makes all the difference. What I want of you is to be feet for me, and eyes for me, and specially in the dining-room. Mrs. Bantry—that dressy lady you saw in the corridor—Mrs. Bantry told me that this morning they brought her buckwheat cakes, and *ten minutes after*, the syrup to eat ’em with. How hot do you suppose they were?”

He finished his speech with the fine sarcasm of this question. He looked at Eliza keenly. “You’re young,” he remarked warningly, “but I believe you’re powerful.”

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And Eliza showed that she was powerful by doing the thing that he desired of her, in spite of the opposition from the servants which she at first experienced. She had a share of hand work to do also, which was not light, but she had high wages, a comfortable room in the top storey, and the women who were boarding in the house made friends with her. She would have thought herself very well off had it not been for her dislike of Harkness, for which one reason certainly was the show he made of being in love with her.

Harkness had his office on the first floor, and he took dinner at the hotel. For about a week after Eliza's advent the young dentist and the young housekeeper measured each other with watchful eyes, a measurement for which the fact that they crossed each other's path several times a day gave ample opportunity. Because the woman had the steadier eyes and the man was the more open-tempered, Eliza gained more insight into Harkness's character than he did into hers. While he, to use his own phrase, "couldn't reckon her up the least mite in the world," she perceived that under his variable and sensitive nature there was a strong grip of purpose upon all that was for his own interest in a material way; but having discovered this vein of calculating selfishness, mixed with much of the purely idle and something that was really warmhearted, she became only the more suspicious of his intentions towards herself, and summoned the whole strength of her nature to oppose him.

She said to him one day, "I'm surprised to hear that you go about telling other gentlemen that you like me. I wonder that you're not ashamed."

As she had hitherto been silent, he was surprised at this attack, and at first he took it as an invitation to come to terms.

"I've a right-down, hearty admiration for you, Miss White. I express it whenever I get the chance; I'm not ashamed of my admiration."

"But I am," said Eliza, indignantly. "It's very unkind of you."

Harkness looked at her, failing to unravel her meaning.

"There ain't anything a young lady likes better than to have an admirer. She mayn't always like *him*, but she always likes him to be admiring of her."

However true this philosophy of the inner secrets of the heart might be, Eliza did not admit it for a moment. She denounced his behaviour, but it was clear, as the saying is, that she was speaking over the head of her audience. The youth evidently received it as a new idea that, when he had spoken only in her praise, she could seriously object.

"Why now," he burst forth, "if any young lady took to admiring me, thinking a heap of me and talking about me to her friends, d'ye think I'd be cut up? I'd be pleased to that



extent I'd go about on the broad grin. I mightn't want to marry just yet; and when I did, I mightn't *possibly* take up with her; but I can tell you, as soon as I was disposed to marry, I'd have a soft side towards her; I'd certainly think it right to give her the first chance in considering who I'd have. And that's all I ask of you, Miss White. You won't have anything to do with me (why, I can't think), but I just give it put that I'm an admirer, and I hang on, hoping that you'll think better of it."

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He was good-natured about it, perfectly open apparently, and at the same time evidently so confident that his was the sensible view of the matter that Eliza could only repeat her prohibition less hopefully.

A little later she found that he had quelled a revolt against her authority that was simmering in the minds of the table-maids. She went at once to the door that was decorated with the dentist's sign.

It was opened by Harkness in the bowing manner with which he was wont to open to patients. When he saw Eliza's expression he straightened himself.

"I want to know what you've been saying to those girls downstairs about me."

"Well now," said he, a little flustered, "nothing that you'd dislike to hear."

"Do you think," she went on with calm severity, "that I can't manage my affairs without your help?"

"By no means." His emphasis implied that he readily perceived which answer would give least offence. "Same time, if I can make your path more flowery—fail to see objections to such a course."

"I don't want you to trouble yourself."

"It wasn't the least mite of trouble," he assured her. "Why, those girls downstairs, whenever I roll my eyes, they just fly to do the thing I want."

"Do you think that is nice?" asked Eliza.

"Lovely—so convenient!"

"I do not like it."

"It don't follow that whenever they roll their eyes, I do what they want. Jemima! no. They might roll them, and roll them, and roll them, right round to the back of their heads; 'twouldn't have an atom of effect on me."

He waited to see some result from this avowal, but Eliza was looking at him as coldly as ever.

"In that respect," he added, "there ain't no one that interferes with your prerogative."

Eliza looked as if he had spoken in a foreign tongue. "I do not understand," she said, and in this she told a lie, but she told it so successfully that he really did not know whether she had understood, or whether it behooved him to speak more plainly.



Before he could make up his mind, she had taken her departure. When she was gone he stood looking darkly, wishing he knew how to hasten the day when she should change her aspect to him.

CHAPTER VIII.

When Harkness found that he was always defied by Eliza he grew gloomy, and was quiet for a time. One day, however, he recovered his former cheerfulness. He seemed, indeed, to be in high spirits. When he saw his time, he sought talk with Eliza. He did not now affect to be lively, but rather wore a manner of marked solemnity.

“Can you read the French language?” he asked.

“No,” she answered.

“That’s unfortunate, for I’m not a good hand at it myself; but I’ve found a bit of news in a French paper here that is real interesting and important.”

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He unfurled a crushed copy of a Quebec journal a few days old. "It says," he began translating, that "there's a man called Cameron, who's been nicknamed Lazarus Cameron, because he seemed to be dead and came to life again."

He looked hard at the paper, as if needing a few moments to formulate further translation.

"Do go on," said Eliza, with manifest impatience.

"Why now, you're *real* interested, Miss White."

"Anybody would want to know what you're at."

"Well, but, considering it's any one so composed as you, Miss White, it's real pleasant to see you so keen."

"I'm keen for my work. I haven't time, like you, to stand here all day."

All this time he had been looking at the paper. "What I've read so far, you see, is what I've told you before as having happened to my knowledge at a place called Turrif Station."

"Is that all?"

"No," and he went on translating. "Whether this man was dead or not, he is now alive, but partially deaf and blind; and whether he has ever seen anything of the next world or not, he has now no interest in this one, but spends his whole time praying or preaching, living on crusts, and walking great distances in solitary places. He has lately appeared in the suburbs of this city' (that is Quebec) 'and seems to be a street-preacher of no ordinary power.'"

Harkness stopped with an air of importance.

"Is that all?" asked Eliza.

He gave her another paper, in English, to read. This contained a longer and more sensational account of the same tale, and with this difference, that instead of giving the simple and sentimental view of the French writer, the English journalist jeered greatly, and also stated that the nickname Lazarus had been given in derision, and that the man, who was either mad or an imposter, had been hooted, pelted, and even beaten in the streets.

"Is that all?" she asked.

"Unless you can tell me any more." He did not say this lightly.

"Is that all?" she asked again, as if his words had been unmeaning.

"Well now, I think that's enough. 'Tisn't every day this poor earth of ours is favoured by hearing sermons from one as has been t'other side of dying. I think it would be more worth while to hear him than to go to church, I do."

"Do you mean to say," she asked, with some asperity, "that you really believe it?"

"I tell you I saw the first part of it myself, and unless you can give me a good reason for not believing the second, I'm inclined to swallow it down whole, Miss Cameron—I beg your pardon, White, I mean. One gets real confused in names, occasionally."

"Well," said Eliza, composedly, preparing to leave him, "I can't say I understand it, Mr. Harkness, but I must say it sounds too hard for me to believe."

He looked after her with intense curiosity in his eyes, and in the next few days returned to the subject in her presence again and again, repeating to her all the comments that were made on the story in the bar-room, but he could not rouse her from an appearance of cheerful unconcern.

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Another item appeared in the papers; the old man called Cameron had been brought before the magistrates at Quebec for some street disturbance of which he appeared to have been the innocent cause.

Upon this Cyril Harkness took a whim into his head, which he made known to all his friends in the place, and then to Eliza—a most extraordinary whim, for it was nothing less than to go down to Quebec, and take the street preacher under his own protection.

“I feel as if I had a sort of responsibility,” said he, “for I was at the very beginning of this whole affair, and saw the house where he had lived, and I got real well acquainted with his partner, who no doubt had ill-treated him. I saw the place where a daughter of his perished too, and now he’s got so near up here as this, I can’t bear to think of that old man being ill-treated and having no one to look after him. I’m going right down to Quebec by the Saturday-night train, an’ I’ll be back Monday morning if I can persuade the old gentleman to come right here where I can look after him. I reckon there’s room in the Harmon house for both him and me, an’ I reckon, if he’s got anything particularly powerful to say in the way of religion, it won’t do this little town any harm to hear it.”

He had said all this to Eliza.

“Don’t!” she cried in great surprise, but with determined opposition. “I shall never think you have any sense again if you do such a foolish and wicked thing.”

“Why now, Miss White, as to losing your good opinion, I didn’t know as I’d been fortunate enough to get it yet; and as to its being wicked, I don’t see how you make *that* out.”

“It’s meddling with what you have nothing to do with.”

“Well now, what will you give me not to go?” He said these words, as he said most of his words, in a languid, lingering way, but he turned and faced her with an abrupt glance.

He and she were standing at the head of the first staircase in the unfurnished corridor. It was the middle of the afternoon; no one chanced to be passing. He, light-moving, pretty fellow as he was, leaned on the wall and glanced at her sharply. She stood erect, massive, not only in her form, but in the strength of will that she opposed to his, and a red flush slowly mantled her pale, immobile face.

“I don’t know what you want of me,” she said. “Money’s the thing you love, and I haven’t any money; but whether I had or not, I would give you *nothing*.” She turned at the last word.

Then Harkness, taking the chiding and jeers of all his companions good-naturedly, and giving them precisely the same excuses that he had given to Eliza, started for Quebec.

What was more remarkable, he actually brought back the old preacher with him—brought him, or rather led him, to the Harmon house, for the old man was seemingly quite passive. This was an accomplished fact when Eliza and Harkness met again.

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CHAPTER IX.

The day after his coming, and the next, for some reason the old stranger called Cameron remained in the brick house to which Harkness had brought him. The young man, impatient for novelty, if for nothing else, began to wonder if he had sunk into some stupor of mind from which he would not emerge. He had heard of him as a preacher, and as the conceptions of ordinary minds are made up only of the ideas directly presented to them, he had a vague notion that this old man continually preached. As it was, he went to his work at the hotel on the third morning, and still left his strange guest in the old house, walking about in an empty room, munching some bread with his keen white teeth, his bright eyes half shut under their bushy brows.

Harkness came to the hotel disconcerted, and, meeting Eliza near the dining-room, took off his hat in sullen silence. Several men in the room called after him as he passed. "How's your dancing bear, Harkness?" "How's the ghost you're befriending?" "How's your coffin-gentleman?" There was a laugh that rang loudly in the large, half-empty room.

After Harkness had despatched two morning visitors, however, and was looking out of his window, as was usual in his idle intervals, he noticed several errand-boys gazing up the road, and in a minute an advancing group came within his view, old Cameron walking down the middle of the street hitting the ground nervously with his staff, and behind him children of various sizes following rather timidly. Every now and then the old man emitted some sound—a shout, a word of some sort, not easily understood. It was this that had attracted the following of children, and was very quickly attracting the attention of every one in the street. One or two men, and a woman with a shawl over her head, were coming down the sidewalks the same way and at about the same pace as the central group, and Harkness more than suspected that they had diverged from the proper course of their morning errands out of curiosity. He took more interest in the scene than seemed consistent with his slight connection with the principal actor. He made an excited movement toward his door, and his hand actually trembled as he opened it. Eliza was usually about the passages at this time of day. He called her name.

She put her head over the upper bannister.

"Come down and see Lazarus Cameron!"

"I'll come in a minute."

He saw through the railing of the bannisters the movement of some linen she was folding.

“He’ll be past in a minute.” Harkness’s voice betrayed his excitement more than he desired.

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Eliza dropped the linen and came downstairs rather quickly. Harkness returned to his window; she came up beside him. The inner window was open, only one pane was between them and the outer air. In yards all round cocks were crowing, as, on a mild day in the Canadian March, cocks will crow continually. Light snow of the last downfall lay on the opposite roofs, and made the hills just seen behind them very white. The whole winter's piles of snow lay in the ridges between the footpaths and the road. Had it not been that some few of the buildings were of brick, and that on one or two of the wooden ones the white paint was worn off, the wide street would have been a picture painted only in different tones of white. But the clothes of the people were of dark colour, and the one vehicle in sight was a blue box-sleigh, drawn by a shaggy pony.

Eliza was conscious of the picture only as one is conscious of surroundings upon which the eye does not focus. Her sight fastened on the old man, now almost opposite the hotel. He was of a broad, powerful frame that had certainly once possessed great strength. Even now he was strong; he stooped a little, but he held his head erect, and the well-formed, prominent features of his weather-beaten face showed forth a tremendous force of some sort; even at that distance the brightness of his eyes was visible under bushy brows, grey as his hair. His clothes were of the most ordinary sort, old and faded. His cap was of the commonest fur; he grasped it now in his hand, going bareheaded. Tapping the ground with his staff, he walked with nervous haste, looking upward the while, as blind men often look.

Harkness did not look much out of the window; he was inspecting Eliza's face: and when she turned to him he gave her a glance that, had she been a weaker woman, would have been translated into many words—question and invective; but her silence dominated him. It was a look also that, had he been a stronger man, he would have kept to himself, for it served no purpose but to betray that there was some undercurrent of antagonism to her in his mind.

"You're very queer to-day, Mr. Harkness," she remarked, and with that she withdrew.

But when the door closed she was not really gone to the young man. He saw her as clearly with his mind as a moment before he had seen her with his eyes, and he pondered now the expression on her face when she looked out of the window. It told him, however, absolutely nothing of the secret he was trying to wring from her.

There was no square in Chellaston, no part of the long street much wider than any other or more convenient as a public lounging place. Here, in front of the hotel, was perhaps the most open spot, and Harkness hoped the old man would make a stand here and preach; but he turned aside and went down a small side street, so Harkness, who had no desire to identify himself too publicly with his strange *protege*, was forced to leave to the curiosity of others the observation of his movements.

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The curiosity of people in the street also seemed to abate. The more respectable class of people are too proud to show interest in the same way that gaping children show it, and most people in this village belonged to the more respectable class. Those who had come to doors or windows on the street retired from them just as Harkness had done; those out in the street went on their ways, with the exception of two men of the more demonstrative sort, who went and looked down the alley after the stranger, and called out jestingly to some one in it.

Then the old man stopped, and, with his face still upturned, as if blind to everything but pure light, took up his position on one side of the narrow street. He had only gone some forty paces down it. A policeman, coming up in front of the hotel, looked on, listening to the jesters. Then he and they drew a little nearer, the children who had followed stood round, one man appeared at the other end of the alley. On either side the houses were high and the windows few, but high up in the hotel there was a small window that lighted a linen press, and at that small window, with the door of the closet locked on the inside, Eliza stood unseen, and looked and listened.

The voice of the preacher was loud, unnatural also in its rising and falling, the voice of a deaf man who could not hear his own tones. His words were not what any one expected. This was the sermon he preached:

"In a little while He that shall come will not tarry. Many shall say to Him in that day, 'Lord, Lord,' and He shall say, 'Depart from me; I never knew you.'"

His voice, which had become very vehement, suddenly sank, and he was silent.

"Upon my word, that's queer," said one of the men who stood near the policeman.

"He's staring mad," said the other man in plain clothes. "He should be in the asylum."

This second man went away, but the first speaker and the policeman drew still nearer, and the congregation did not diminish, for the man who left was replaced by the poor woman with the checked shawl over her head who had first followed the preacher up the street, and who now appeared standing listening at a house corner. She was well known in the village as the wife of a drunkard.

The old man began speaking again in softer voice, but there was the same odd variety of tones which had exciting effect.

"Why do you defraud your brother? Why do you judge your brother? Why do you set at nought your brother? Inasmuch as you do it unto the least of these, you do it to Him."

His voice died away again. His strong face had become illumined, and he brought down his gaze toward the listeners.

“If any man shall do His will he shall know of the doctrine. He will know—yes, know—for there is no other knowledge as sure as this.”

Then, in such a colloquial way that it almost seemed as if the listeners themselves had asked the question, he said: “What shall we do that we may work the works of God?”



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And he smiled upon them, and held out his hands as if in blessing, and lifted up his face again to heaven, and cried, "This is the work of God, that ye believe on Him Whom He hath sent."

As if under some spell, the few to whom he had spoken stood still, till the preacher slowly shifted himself and began to walk away by the road he had come.

Some of the children went after him as before. The poor woman disappeared behind the house she had been standing against. The policeman and his companion began to talk, looking the while at the object of their discussion.

Eliza, in the closet, leaned her head against the pile of linen on an upper shelf, and was quite still for some time.

CHAPTER X.

Principal Trenholme had been gone from Chellaston a day or two on business. When he returned one evening, he got into his smart little sleigh which was in waiting at the railway station, and was driving himself home, when his attention was arrested and his way blocked by a crowd in front of the hotel. He did not force a way for his horse, but drew up, listening and looking. It was a curious picture. The wide street of snow and the houses were dusky with night, except where light chanced to glow in doorways and windows. The collection of people was motley. Above, all the sky seemed brought into insistent notice as a roof or covering, partly because pale pink streamers of flickering northern light were passing over it, partly because the leader of the crowd, an old man, by looking upwards, drew the gaze of all to follow whither his had gone.

Trenholme heard his loud voice calling: "Behold He shall come again, and every eye shall look on Him Whom they have pierced. Blessed are those servants whom their Lord when He cometh shall find watching."

The scene was foreign to life in Chellaston. Trenholme, who had no mind to stand on the skirts of the crowd, thrust his reins into the hand of his rustic groom, and went up the broad steps of the hotel, knowing that he would there have his inquiries most quickly answered.

In the bar-room about thirty men were crowded about the windows, looking at the preacher, not listening, for the double glass, shut out the preacher's voice. They were interested, debating loudly among themselves, and when they saw who was coming up the steps, they said to each other and the landlord, "Put it to the Principal." There were men of all sorts in this group, most of them very respectable; but when Trenholme stood inside the door, his soft hat shading his shaven face, his fur-lined driving coat lying back from the finer cloth it covered, he was a very different sort of man from any of them. He

did not know that it was merely by the influence of this difference (of which perhaps he was less conscious than any of them) that they were provoked to question him. Hutchins, the landlord, sat at the back of the room on his high office chair.

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"Good evening, Principal," said he. "Glad to see you in the place again, sir. Have you heard of a place called Turrif Road Station? 'Tain't on our map."

Trenholme gave the questioner a severe glance of inquiry. The scene outside, and his proposed inquiry concerning it, passed from his mind, for he had no means of divining that this question referred to it. The place named was known to him only by his brother's letter. The men, he saw, were in a rough humour, and because of the skeleton in his closet he jumped to the thought that something had transpired concerning his brother, something that caused them to jeer. He did not stop to think what it might be. His moral nature stiffened itself to stand for truth and his brother at all costs.

"I know the place," he said.

His words had a stern impressiveness which startled his hearers. They were only playing idly with the pros and cons of a newspaper tale; but this man, it would seem, treated the matter very seriously.

Hutchins had no desire to annoy, but he did not know how to desist from further question, and, supposing that the story of Cameron was known, he said in a more ingratiating way:

"Well, but, sir, you don't want us to believe the crazy tale of the station hand there, that he saw the dead walk?"

Again there was that in Trenholme's manner which astonished his hearers. Had they had the slightest notion they were offending him, they would have known it was an air of offence, but, not suspecting that, they could only judge that he thought the subject a solemn one.

"I would have you believe his word, certainly. He is a man of honour."

A facetious man here took his pipe out of his mouth and winked to his companions. "You've had private information to that effect, I suppose, Principal."

Very haughtily Trenholme assented.

He had not been in the room more than a few moments when all this had passed. He was handed a newspaper, which gave still another account of the remote incident which was now at last ticklings the ears of the public, and he was told that the man Cameron was supposed to be the preacher who was now without. He heard what part Harkness had played, and he saw that his brother's name was not mentioned in the public print, was apparently not known. He took a little pains to be genial (a thing he was certainly not in the habit of doing in that room), in order to dissipate any impression his offended manner might have given, and went home.

It is not often a man estimates at all correctly the effect of his own words and looks; he would need to be a trained actor to do this, and, happily, most men are not their own looking-glasses. Trenholme thought he had behaved in a surly and stiff manner, and, had the subject been less unpleasant, he would rather have explained at once where and who his brother was. This was his remembrance of his call at the hotel, but the company there saw it differently.

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No sooner had he gone than the facetious man launched his saw-like voice again upon the company. "He had private information on the subject, *he had*."

"There's one sure thing," said a stout, consequential man; "he believes the whole thing, the Principal does."

A commercial traveller who was acquainted with the place put in his remark. "There isn't a man in town that I wouldn't have expected to see gulled sooner."

To which a thin, religious man, who, before Trenholme entered, had leaned to the opinion that there were more things in the world than they could understand, now retorted that it was more likely that the last speaker was gulled himself. Principal Trenholme, he asserted, wasn't a man to put his faith in anything without proofs.

Chellaston was not a very gossiping place. For the most part the people had too much to do, and were too intent upon their own business, to take much trouble to retail what they chanced to hear; but there are some things which, as the facetious man observed, the dead in their graves would gossip about if they could; and one of these themes, according to him, was that Principal Trenholme believed there had been something supernatural about the previous life of the old preacher. The story went about, impressing more particularly the female portion of the community, but certainly not without influence upon the males also. Portly men, who a week before would have thought themselves compromised by giving a serious thought to the narrative, now stood still in the street to get the chance of hearing the preacher, and felt that in doing so they were wrapped in all the respectability of the cloth of Trenholme's coats, and standing firm on the letters of his Oxford degree and upon all the learning of the New College.

They did not believe the story themselves. No, there was a screw loose somewhere; but Principal Trenholme had some definite knowledge of the matter. The old man had been in a trance, a very long trance, to say the least of it, and had got up a changed creature. Principal Trenholme was not prepared to scout the idea that he had been nearer to death than falls to the lot of most living men.

It will be seen that the common sense of the speakers shaped crude rumour to suit themselves. Had they left it crude, it would have died. It is upon the nice sense of the probable and possible in talkative men that mad rumour feeds.

As for Trenholme, he became more or less aware of the report that had gone out about his private knowledge of old Cameron, but it was less rather than more. The scholastic life of the college was quite apart from the life of the village, and in the village those who talked most about Cameron were the least likely to talk to Trenholme on any subject. His friends were not those who were concerned with the rumour; but even when he was taxed with it, the whole truth that he knew was no apparent contradiction. He wrote to

Alec, making further inquiries, but Alec had retreated again many miles from the post. To be silent and ignore the matter seemed to be his only course.

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Thus it happened that, because Harkness housed him in the hope of working upon Eliza, and because Trenholme happened to have had a brother at Turri's Station, the strange old preacher found a longer resting place and a more attentive hearing in the village of Chellaston than he would have been likely to find elsewhere.

CHAPTER XI.

There was in Chellaston a very small and poor congregation of the sect called Adventists. The sect was founded by one Miller, a native of New York State, a great preacher and godly man, who, from study of prophecy, became convinced that the Second Coming of the Lord would take place in the year 1843. He obtained a large following; and when the time passed and his expectation was not fulfilled, this body, instead of melting away, became gradually greater, and developed into a numerous and rather influential sect. In the year of Miller's prediction, 1843, there had been among his followers great excitement, awe and expectation; and the set time passed, and the prediction had no apparent fulfilment, but lay to every one's sight, like a feeble writing upon the sands of fantasy, soon effaced by the ever flowing tide of natural law and orderly progression. Now, that this was the case and that yet this body of believers did not diminish but increased, did not become demoralised but grew in moral strength, did not lose faith but continued to cherish a more ardent hope and daily expectation of the Divine appearing, is no doubt due to the working of some law which we do not understand, and which it would therefore be unscientific to pronounce upon.

The congregation of Adventists in Chellaston, however, was not noticeable for size or influence. Some in the neighbourhood did not even know that this congregation existed, until it put forth its hand and took to itself the old preacher who was called Lazarus Cameron. They understood his language as others did not; they believed that he had come with a message for them; they often led him into their meeting-place and into their houses; and he, perhaps merely falling into the mechanical habit of going where he had been led, appeared in his own fashion to consort with them.

There, was something weird about the old preacher, although he was healthy, vigorous, and kindly, clean-looking in body and soul; but the aspect of any one is in the eye of the beholder. This man, whose mind was blank except upon one theme, whose senses seemed lost except at rare times, when awakened perhaps by an effort of his will, or perhaps by an unbidden wave of psychical sympathy with some one to whom he was drawn by unseen union, awoke a certain feeling of sensational interest in most people when they approached him. The public were in the main divided into two classes in their estimate of him—those who felt the force of his religion, and argued therefrom that his opinions were to be respected; and those who believed that his mind was insane, and argued

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therefrom that his religion was either a fancy or a farce. At first there was a great deal of talk about whether he should be put in a madhouse or not; some called Harkness a philanthropist, and others called him a meddling fellow. Soon, very soon, there was less talk: that which is everybody's business is nobody's business. Harkness continued to befriend him in the matter of food and lodging; the old man grew to be at home in the Harmon house and its neglected surroundings. When the will to do so seized him, he went into the village and lifted up his voice, and preached the exactions of the love of the Son of God, proclaiming that He would come again, and that quickly.

The winter days had grown very long; the sun had passed the vernal equinox, and yet it looked upon unbroken snowfields. Then, about the middle of April, the snow passed quickly away in blazing sunshine, in a thousand rivulets, in a flooded river. The roads were heavy with mud, but the earth was left green, the bud of spring having been nurtured beneath the kindly shelter of the snow.

CHAPTER XII.

Now came the most lovely moment of the year. All the trees were putting forth new leaves, leaves so young, so tiny as yet, that one could see the fowls of the air when they lodged in the branches—no small privilege, for now the orange oriole, and the bluebird, and the primrose-coloured finch, were here, there, and everywhere; and more rarely the scarlet tanager. A few days before and they had not come; a few days more and larger leaves would hide them perfectly. Just at this time, too, along the roadsides, big hawthorn shrubs and wild plum were in blossom, and in the sheltered fields the mossy sod was pied with white and purple violets, whose flowerets so outstripped their half-grown leaves that blue and milky ways were seen in woodland glades.

With the sense of freedom that comes with the thus sudden advent of the young summer, Winifred Rexford strayed out of the house one morning. She did not mean to go, and when she went through the front gate she only meant to go as far as the first wild plum-tree, to see if the white bloom was turning purple yet, as Principal Trenholme had told her it would. When she got to the first plum-tree she went on to the second. Winifred wore a grey cotton dress; it was short, not yet to her ankles, and her broad hat shaded her from the sun. When she reached the second group of plum-trees she saw a scarlet tanager sitting on a telegraph pole—for along the margin of the road, standing among uncut grass and flowers and trees, tall barkless stumps were set, holding the wires on high. Perhaps they were ugly things, but a tree whose surface is uncut is turned on Nature's lathe; at any rate, to the child the poles were merely a part of the Canadian road, and the scarlet tanager showed its plumage to advantage as it sat on the bare wood. There was no turning back then; even Sophia would have neglected her

morning task to see a tanager! She crept up under it, and the bird, like a streak of red flame, shot forth from the pole, to a group of young pine trees further on.

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So Winifred strayed up the road about a quarter of a mile, till she came to the gate of the Harmon garden. The old house, always half concealed, was quickly being entirely hidden by the massive Curtains the young leaves were so busily weaving. The tanager turned in here, as what bird would not when it spied a tract of ground where Nature was riotously decking a bower with the products of all the roots and seeds of a deserted garden! There was many a gap in the weather-beaten fence where the child might have followed, but she dare not, for she was in great awe of the place, because the preacher who was said to have died and come to life again lived there. She only stood and looked through the fence, and the tanager—having flitted near the house—soared and settled among the feathery boughs of a proud acacia tree; she had to look across half an acre of bushes to see him, and then he was so high and so far that it seemed (as when looking at the stars) she did not see him, but only the ray of scarlet light that travelled from him through an atmosphere of leaflets. It was very trying, for any one knows that it is *something* to be able to say that you have come to close quarters with a scarlet tanager.

Winifred, stooping and looking through the fence, soon heard the college bell jangle; she knew that it was nine o'clock, and boys and masters were being ingathered for morning work. The college buildings in their bare enclosure stood on the other side of the road. Winifred would have been too shy to pass the playground while the boys were out, but now that every soul connected with the place would be indoors, she thought she might go round the sides of the Harmon garden and see the red bird much nearer from a place she thought of.

This place was nothing but a humble, disused, and untidy burying-ground, that occupied the next lot in the narrow strip of land that here for a mile divided road and river. Winifred ran over the road between the Harmon garden and the college fence, and, climbing the log fence, stood among the quiet gravestones that chronicled the past generations of Chellaston. Here grass and wild flowers grew apace, and close by ran the rippling river reflecting the violet sky above. A cemetery, every one knows, is a place where any one may walk or sit as long as he likes, but Winifred was surprised to find Principal Trenholme's housekeeper there before her; and moreover, this staid, sad woman was in the very place Winifred was going to, for she was looking through the fence that enclosed the Harmon garden.

"Good morning, Mrs. Martha," said Winifred politely, concealing her surprise.

"I've been milking," said the sad woman, glancing slightly at a pail of foaming milk that she had set for greater security between two grave-heaps.

Winifred came and took her place beside the housekeeper, and they both looked through the paling of the Harmon property.

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The tanager was still on the acacia, from this nearer point looking like a great scarlet blossom of some cactus, so intense was the colour; but Winifred was distracted from her interest in the bird by seeing the old house more plainly than she had ever seen it before. It stood, a large substantial dwelling, built not without the variety of outline which custom has given to modern villas, but with all its doors and windows on this side fastened by wooden shutters, that, with one or two exceptions, were nailed up with crossbeams and overgrown with cobwebs. Winifred surveyed it with an interested glance.

"Did you come to see him?" whispered the housekeeper.

Winifred's eye reverted to the tanager of which, on the whole, her mind was more full. "Yes"—she whispered the word for fear of startling it.

"I should think yer ma would want you in of a morning, or Miss Sophia would be learning you yer lessons. When I was your age—But"—sadly—"it stands to reason yer ma, having so many, and the servant gone, and the cows comin' in so fast these days one after t'other, that they can't learn you much of anything reg'lar."

Winifred acquiesced politely. She was quite conscious of the shortcomings in the system of home education as it was being applied to her in those days; no critic so keen in these matters as the pupil of fourteen!

"Well now, it's a pity," said the housekeeper, sincerely, "and they do say yer ma does deplorable bad cooking, and yer sisters that's older than you aren't great hands at learning." The housekeeper sat down on a grave near the paling, as if too discouraged at the picture she had drawn to have energy to stand longer.

Winifred looked at the tanager, at the housekeeper, and round her at the happy morning. This sad-eyed, angular woman always seemed to her more like a creature out of a solemn story, or out of a stained-glass window, than an ordinary person whose comments could be offensive. They had talked together before, and each in her own way took a serious interest in the other.

"Sister Sophia has learned to cook very nicely," said the child, but not cheerfully. It never seemed to her quite polite to be cheerful when she was talking to Mrs. Martha.

"Yes, child; but she can't do everything"—with a sigh—"she's put upon dreadful as it is." Then in a minute, "What made you think of coming here after him?"

"I think it's so wonderful." The child's eyes enlarged as she peered through the fence again at the scarlet bird.

"Lolly, child! I'm glad to hear you say that," said Mrs. Martha, strongly. "He's far above and beyond—he's a very holy man."

Winifred perceived now that she was talking of old Cameron, and she thought it more polite not to explain that she had misunderstood. Indeed, all other interests in her mind became submerged in wonder concerning the old man as thus presented.

“He’s mad, isn’t he?”

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"No, he isn't."

"I knew he was very good, but couldn't he be good and mad too?"

"No," said Mrs. Martha; and the serious assertion had all the more effect because it stood alone, unpropped by a single reason.

"When I've milked the Principal's special cow I often come here of a morning, and sometimes I see the saint walking under the trees. I don't mind telling you, child, for you've a head older than yer years, but you mustn't speak of it again. I'd not like folks to know."

"I won't tell," whispered Winifred, eagerly. She felt inexpressibly honoured by the confidence. "Do you think he'll come out now?" Awe and excited interest, not unmingled with fear, were taking possession of her. She crouched down beside the solemn woman, and looked through at the house and all its closed windows. The hedge was alive with birds that hopped and piped unnoticed, even the scarlet bird was forgotten.

"Mrs. Martha," she whispered, "I heard papa say Cameron believed that our Saviour was soon coming back again, and only those people would go with Him who were watching and waiting. Mr. Trenholme said every one was mad who thought that."

"There's a sight of people will tell you you're mad if you're only fervent."

The child did not know precisely what "fervent" meant, but she began to doubt Trenholme's positive knowledge on the subject. "Do you believe the end of the world's coming so soon?"

"Lor, child! what do I know but the world might go on a good bit after that? I can't tell from my Bible whether the Lord will take us who are looking for Him up to His glory for a while, or whether He'll appoint us a time of further trial while He's conquering the earth; but I do know it wouldn't matter much which, after we'd heard Him speak to each of us by name and seen His face." The sad woman looked positively happy while she spoke.

"Oh, Mrs. Martha, are *you* watching like that? But how can you all the time—you must sleep and work, you know?"

"Yes, child; but the heart can watch; and He knows we must sleep and work; and for that reason I'm not so sure but, if we're faithful, He might in mercy give us a word beforehand to let us know when to be expecting more particularly. I don't know, you know, child; I'm only saying what might be."

"But what makes you think so, Mrs. Martha?"

Winifred was quick-witted enough to perceive something withheld.

“There’s things that it’s not right for any one to know but those as will reverence them.”

“Oh, I will, I will,” said Winifred, clasping her hands.

“As I understand it, Mr. Cameron’s had no assurance yet.”

Winifred did not ask what this meant. She felt that she was listening to words that, if mysterious, were to be pondered in silence.

“You know the poor thing whose husband is always tipsy—drunken Job they call him—that you’ve seen listening to Mr. Cameron?—and that weakly Mr. McNider, with the little boy?”

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"Yes," assented Winifred.

"He told them," whispered the housekeeper, "that when he was agonising in prayer it came into his mind to *wait until August this year*. He hasn't any assurance what it may have meant; but that may come later, and p'r'aps the days may be told him; and he's awaiting, and we're awaiting too. There, that's all I have to tell, child, and I must be going."

She gathered her lean figure up from the hillock, and took up her pail.

As for the girl Winifred, a terrible feeling of fear had come over her. All the bright world of sun and flowers seemed suddenly overshadowed by the lowering cloud of an awful possibility. She would no more have allowed herself to be left alone in that sunny corner of the glad spring morning than she would have remained alone where visible danger beset her. Her face bathed in the sudden tears that came so easily to her girlish eyes, she sprang like a fawn after her companion and grasped her skirt as she followed.

"How you take on!" sighed the woman, turning. "Do you mean to say you ain't, glad?"

"I'm frightened," gasped the girl.

"And you been confirmed this spring! What did it mean to you if you ain't glad there's ever such a little chance of perhaps seeing Him before the year's out."

They both climbed the fence, handing over the milk-pail between them. When they had got on to the road and must part, the housekeeper spoke.

"I tell you what it is, Winifred Rexford; we've not one of us much to bring Him in the way of service. If there's one thing more than another I'm fond of it's to have my kitchen places to myself, but I've often thought I ought to ask yer ma to send one of you over every day to learn from me how a house ought to be kept and dinner cooked. Ye'd learn more watching me in a month, you know, than ye'd learn with yer ma a fussin' round in six years. Don't tell yer ma it's a trial to me, but just ask her if she'll send you over for an hour or two every morning."

"Thank you," said Winifred, reluctantly. "Do you think I *ought* to come?"

"Well, I'd want to be a bit more use to my ma if I was you."

"It's very kind of you," acknowledged Winifred; "but—but—Mrs. Martha, if it was true about this—*this August*, you know—what would be the use of learning?"

"Child," said the woman, and if her voice was sad it was also vehement, "them as are mad in religion are them as thinks doing the duty of each day for *His* sake ain't enough without seeing where's the *use* of doing what He puts to our hand."



“Mrs. Martha,” besought Winifred, timidly, “I—don’t like cooking; but do you think if I did this I should perhaps get to be glad to think—be glad to think our Saviour might be coming again so soon?”

“To love Him is of His grace, and you must get it direct from Him; but it’s wonderful how doing the best we can puts heart into our prayers.”

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The scarlet tanager rose and flew from tree to tree like a darting flame, but Winifred had forgotten him.

CHAPTER XIII.

Midsummer came with its culmination of heat and verdure; and a great epoch it was in the Chellaston year, for it brought the annual influx of fashionable life from Quebec and Montreal. To tell the plain truth, this influx only consisted of one or two families who had chosen this as a place in which to build summer residences, and some hundred other people who, singly or in parties, took rooms in the hotel for the hot season; but it made a vast difference in the appearance of the quiet place to have several smart phaetons, and one carriage and pair, parading its roads, and to have its main street enlivened by the sight of the gay crowd on the hotel verandahs.

"Now," said Miss Bennett, calling upon Miss Rexford, "there will be a few people to talk to, and we shall see a little life. These people are really a very good sort; you'll begin to have some enjoyment."

The Rexfords had indeed been advertised more than once of the advantage that would accrue to them from the coming of the town-folks, and this chiefly by Trenholme himself.

"The place will seem far different," he had said, "when you have passed one of our summers. We really have some delightful pleasure parties here in summer." And another time he had said, "When Mrs. Brown and her daughters come to their house on the hill I want you to know them. They are such true-hearted people. All our visitors are genuine Canadians, not immigrants as we and our neighbours are; and yet, do you know, they are so nice you would *hardly* know them from English people. Oh, they add to our social life very much when they come!"

He had said so many things of this sort, ostensibly to Mrs. Rexford, really to Sophia, who was usually a party to his calls on her mother, that he had inspired in them some of his own pleasurable anticipation. It was not until the summer visitors were come that they realised how great was the contrast between their own bare manner of living and the easy-going expenditure of these people, who were supposed to be such choice acquaintances for them. Everything is relative. They had not been mortified by any comparison of their own circumstances and those of Chellaston families, because, on one account and another, there had always appeared to be something to equalise the difference. Either their neighbours, if better off, had not long ago begun as meagrely, or else they lacked those advantages of culture or social standing which the Rexfords could boast. Such are the half-conscious refuges of our egotism. But with the introduction of this new element it was different. Not that they drew any definite comparison between themselves and their new neighbours—for things that are different cannot be compared, and the difference on all points was great; but part of Trenholme's

prophecy took place; the life in that pleasant land did appear more and more desirable as they witnessed the keen enjoyment that these people, who were not workers, took in it—only (Trenholme and Miss Bennett seemed to have overlooked this) the leisure and means for such enjoyment were not theirs.

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"Oh, mamma," said Blue and Red, "we saw the Miss Browns driving on the road, and they had such pretty silver-grey frocks, with feathers in their hats to match. We wish we could have feathers to match our frocks."

And later Sophia, seeking her step-mother, found her in her own room, privately weeping. The rare sight rent her heart.

"If I am their mother" (she began her explanation hurriedly, wiping her tears) "I can say truthfully they're as pretty a pair of girls as may be seen on a summer day. You had your turn, Sophia; it's very noble of you to give up so much for us now, but it can't be said that you didn't have your turn of gaiety."

Now Blue and Red were not in need of frocks, for before they left England their mother had stocked their boxes as though she was never to see a draper's shop again. But then, she had been in a severely utilitarian mood, and when she cut out the garments it had not occurred to her that Fashion would ever come across the fields of a Canadian farm.

Sophia rallied her on this mistake now, but resolutely abstracted certain moneys from the family purse and purchased for the girls white frocks. She did not omit blue and red ribbons to distinguish between the frocks and between the wearers. Trenholme had remarked of the girls lately that neither would know which was herself and which the other if the badge of colour were removed, and Sophia had fallen into the way of thinking a good deal of all he said. She was busy weighing him in the scales of her approval and disapproval, and the scales, she hardly knew why, continued to balance with annoying nicety.

For the making up of the frocks, she was obliged to apply for advice to Eliza, who was the only patron of dressmakers with whom she was intimate.

"I think, on the whole, she is satisfactory," said Eliza of one whom she had employed. "She made the dress I have on, for instance; it fits pretty well, you see."

Sophia did not resent this. Eliza had had a rocket-like career of success in the hotel which pleased and amused her; but she felt that to forgive the Brown family for having a carriage and pair required large-mindedness while her father's carriage still stood in the unfurnished drawing-room, and even Mrs. Rexford had given up hopes of finding horses to draw it.

Very soon after, their annual arrival, Mr. and Mrs. Brown and their two daughters came kindly to call on the new English family. Principal Trenholme found time to run over by appointment and introduce his friends. The visitors were evidently generous-minded, wholesome sort of people, with no high development of the critical faculty, travelled, well-read, merry, and kind. Sophia confessed to herself after the first interview that, had



it not been for their faulty degree of wealth and prosperity, she would have liked them very much. Mrs. Bennett, whose uncle had been an admiral, considered them desirable friends for her daughter, and this was another reason why, out of pure contrariness, Sophia found liking difficult; but she determined for Trenholme's sake to try—a good resolution which lasted until she had taken Blue and Red to return the call, but no longer.

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“And Miss Rexford,” said good Mrs. Brown, “we hear you have had the privilege of knowing Principal Trenholme for a long time before he came out here. He is a very *good* man; for so comparatively young a man, and one, as you might say, with so many worldly advantages, I think it is perhaps remarkable that he is so spiritually-minded. I count it a blessing that we have the opportunity of attending his church during the summer months.” Simple sense and perfect sincerity were written on every line of Mrs. Brown’s motherly face.

“He really is very good,” said one of the daughters. “Do you know, Miss Rexford, we have a friend who has a son at the college. He really went to the college a *very* naughty boy, no one could manage him; and he’s so changed—such a nice fellow, and doing so well. His mother says she could thank Principal Trenholme on her knees, if it was only the conventional thing to do.”

“He is a most devoted Christian,” added Mrs. Brown, using the religious terms to which she was accustomed, “and I believe he makes it a matter of prayer that no young man should leave his college without deepened religious life. I believe in prayer as a power; don’t you, Miss Rexford?”

“Yes,” replied Sophia, tersely. She did not feel at that moment as if she wanted to discuss the point.

“And then he’s so jolly,” put in the youngest Miss Brown, who was a hearty girl. “That’s the sort of religion for me, the kind that can rollick—of course I mean *out of church*,” she added naively.

Blue and Red sat shyly upon their chairs and listened to this discourse. It might have been Greek for all the interest they took in it.

As for Sophia, it could not be said to lack interest for her—it was very plain, she thought, why Robert Trenholme thought so highly of the Browns.

There was a youth belonging to this family who was a year or two older than Blue and Red. His mother, sent for him to come into the room, and introduced him to them. He was a nice youth, but precocious; he said to them:

“I suppose you think Chellaston is a very pretty place, but I’ll tell you what our natural beauties lack as yet. It is such a literature as you have in England, which has done so much to endear the wildflowers and birds and all natural objects there to the heart of the people. Our Canadian flora and fauna are at present unsung, and therefore, to a large extent, unobserved by the people, for I think the chief use of the poet is to interpret nature to the people—don’t you?”

Blue ventured “yes,” and Red lisped in confusion, “Do you think so, really?” but as for any opinion on the subject they had none. Sophia, fearing that her sisters would be cast aside as hopeless dunces, was obliged to turn partially from the praise that was being lavished on Trenholme to make some pithy remark upon the uses of the poet.

Sophia, although half conscious of her own unreasonableness, decided now that the Browns might go one way and she another; but she was indebted to this visit for a clue in analysing the impression Trenholme made upon her. His new friends had called him noble; she knew now that when she knew him ten years before he had seemed to her a more noble character.

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In the next few weeks she observed that in every picnic, every pleasure party, by land or water, Principal Trenholme was the most honoured guest, and, indeed, the most acceptable cavalier. His holidays had come, and he was enjoying them in spite of much work that he still exacted from himself. She wondered at the manner in which he seemed to enjoy them, and excused herself from participation. It was her own doing that she stayed at home, yet, perversely, she felt neglected. She hardly knew whether it was low spite or a heaven-born solicitude that made her feel bitter regret at the degeneracy she began to think she saw in him.

In due time there came a pleasure party of which Trenholme was to be the host. It was to take place in a lovely bit of wilderness ground by the river side, at the hour of sunset and moonrise, in order that, if the usual brilliancy attended these phenomena, the softest glories of light might be part of the entertainment. Music was also promised. Principal Trenholme came himself to solicit the attendance of the Miss Rexfords; but Sophia, promising for Blue and Red, pleaded lack of time for herself. "And I wish your scheme success," cried she, "but I need not wish you pleasure since, as on all such occasions, you will 'sit attentive to your own applause.'"

She felt a little vexed that he did not seem hurt by her quotation, but only laughed. She did not know that, although the adulation he received was sweet to him, it was only sweet that summer because he thought it must enhance his value in her eyes. Some one tells of a lover who gained his point by putting an extra lace on his servants' liveries; and the savage sticks his cap with feathers: but these artifices do not always succeed.

CHAPTER XIV.

Up the road, about a mile beyond the college and the Harmon house, there was a wilderness of ferns and sumac trees, ending in a stately pine grove that marked the place where road and river met. Thither Blue and Red were sent on the evening of Trenholme's picnic. They were dressed in their new frocks, and had been started at the time all the picnic-goers were passing up the road. They walked alone, but they were consigned to Mrs. Bennett's care at the place of assembly. Several carriages full of guests passed them.

"I'm growing more shy every moment," said Blue.

"So am I," sighed Red.

Young girls will make haunting fears for themselves out of many things, and these two were beset with a not unnatural fear of young men who would talk to them about flora and fauna. Sophia had told them that they looked like ninnies when they appeared not to know what people meant, and they could not endure the thought.

Sighed Blue at last, “Do you think it would be dreadfully wicked not to go?”

All the guests had passed them by this time, for they had loitered sadly. It was not that they were not proud of their clothes; they were as proud as peacocks, and minced along; but then it was enough just to wear one’s fine clothes and imagine that they might meet somebody who would admire them.

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"Oh, Blue," said Red suddenly, withholding her steps, "suppose we didn't go, and were to walk back just a little later, don't you think we might meet—?" There was no name, but a sympathetic understanding. It was Harkness of whom they thought.

"I'm sure he's a great deal better looking than young Mr. Brown, and I think it's unkind to mind the way he talks. Since Winifred had her teeth done, I think we might just bow a little, if we met him on the road."

"I think it would be naughty," said Red, reflectively, "but nice—much nicer than a grown-up picnic."

"Let's do it," said Blue. "We're awfully good generally; that ought to make up."

The sunset cloud was still rosy, and the calm bright moon was riding up the heavens when these two naughty little maidens, who had waited out of sight of the picnic ground, judged it might be the right time to be walking slowly home again.

"I feel convinced he won't come," said Blue, "just because we should so much like to pass him in these frocks."

Now an evil conscience often is the rod of its own chastisement; but in this instance there was another factor in the case, nothing less than a little company of half tipsy men, who came along from the town, peacefully enough, but staggering visibly and talking loud, and the girls caught sight of them when they had come a long way from the pleasure party and were not yet very near any house. The possibility of passing in safety did not enter their panic-stricken minds. They no sooner spied the men than they stepped back within the temporary shelter of a curve in the road, speechless with terror. They heard the voices and steps coming nearer. They looked back the long road they had come, and perceived that down its length they could not fly. It was in this moment of despair that a brilliant idea was born in the mind of Red. She turned to the low open fence of the little cemetery.

"Come, we can pretend to be tombs," she cried, and whirled Blue over the fence. They climbed and ran like a streak of light, and before the drunkards were passing the place, the girls were well back among marble gravestones.

Some artistic instinct warned them that two such queer monuments ought to be widely apart to escape notice. So, in the gathering dimness, each knelt stock still, without even the comfort of the other's proximity to help her through the long, long, awful minutes while the roisterous company were passing by. The men proceeded slowly; happily they had no interest in inspecting the gravestones of the little cemetery; but had they been gazing over the fence with eager eyes, and had their designs been nothing short of murderous upon any monument they chanced to find alive, the hearts of the two erring maidens could not have beat with more intense alarm. Fear wrought in them that

sort of repentance which fear is capable of working. "Oh, we're very, very naughty; we ought to have gone to the picnic when Sophia was so good as to buy us new frocks," they whispered in their hearts; and the moon looked down upon them benevolently.

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The stuff of their repentance was soon to be tested, for the voice of Harkness was heard from over the Harmon fence.

"Oh, Glorianna! there was never such sculptures. Only want wings. Hats instead of wings is a little curious even for a funeral monument."

The two girls stood huddled together now in hasty consultation. "We didn't mean to be sculptures," spoke up Red, defending her brilliant idea almost before she was aware. "There's nothing but stand-up slabs here; we thought we'd look something like them."

"We were so frightened at the men," said Blue. They approached the fence as they spoke.

"Those men wouldn't have done you one mite of harm," said the dentist, looking down from a height of superior knowledge, "and if they had, I'd have come and made a clearance double quick."

They did not believe his first assertion, and doubted his ability to have thus routed the enemy, but Blue instinctively replied, "You see, we didn't know you were here, or *of course* we shouldn't have been frightened."

"Beautiful evening, isn't it?" remarked the dentist.

"Yes, but I think perhaps,"—Red spoke doubtfully—"we ought to be going home now."

She was a little mortified to find that he saw the full force of the suggestion.

"Yes, I suppose your mother'll be looking for you."

They both explained, merely to set him right, that this would not be the case, as they had started to Principal Trenholme's picnic.

He asked, with great curiosity, why they were not there, and they explained as well as they could, adding, in a little burst of semi-confidence, "It's rather more fun to talk to you across a fence than sit up and be grand in company."

He smiled at them good-naturedly.

"Say," said he, "if your mother let you stay out, 'twas because you were going to be at the Trenholme party. You're not getting benefit of clergy here, you know."

"We're going;"—loftily—"we're only waiting to be sure there's no more drunken people."

"I was just about to remark that I'd do myself the pleasure of escorting you."

At this they whispered together. Then, aloud—"Thank you very much, but we're not afraid; we're often out as late in papa's fields. We're afraid mamma wouldn't like it if you came with us."

"Wouldn't she now?" said Harkness. "Why not? Is she stuck up?"

Blue felt that a certain romance was involved in acknowledging her parents' antipathy and her own regret.

"Rather," she faltered. "Papa and mamma are rather proud, I'm afraid." It was a bold flight of speech; it quite took Red's breath away. "And so,"—Blue sighed as she went on—"I'm afraid we mustn't talk to you any more; we're very sorry. We—I'm sure—we think you are very nice."

Her feeling tone drew from him a perfectly sincere reply, "So I am; I'm really a very nice young man. My mother brought me up real well." He added benevolently, "If you're scared of the road, come right through my place here, and I'll set you on your own farm double quick."

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It was with pleasurable fear that the girls got through the fence with his help. They whispered to each other their self-excuses, saying that mamma would like them to be in their own fields as quickly as possible.

The moonlight was now gloriously bright. The shrubs of the old garden, in full verdure, were mysteriously beautiful in the light. The old house could be clearly seen. Harkness led them across a narrow open space in front of it, that had once been a gravel drive, but was now almost green with weeds and grasses. On the other side the bushes grew, as it seemed, in great heaps, with here and there an opening, moonlit, mysterious. As they passed quickly before the house, the girls involuntarily shied like young horses to the further side of Harkness, their eyes glancing eagerly for signs of the old man. In a minute they saw the door in an opening niche at the corner of the house; on its steps sat the old preacher, his grey hair shining, his bronzed face bathed in moonlight. He sat peaceful and quiet, his hands clasped. Harkness next led them through, a dark overgrown walk, and, true to his promise, brought them at once to the other fence. He seemed to use the old paling as a gate whenever the fancy took him. He pulled away two of the rotten soft wood pales and helped the girls gallantly on to their father's property.

"Charmed, I'm sure, to be of use, ladies!" cried he, and he made his bow.

On the other side of their own fence, knee-deep in dry uncut grass, they stood together a few paces from the gap he had made, and proffered their earnest thanks.

"Say," said Harkness, abruptly, "d'you often see Miss White up to your house?"

"Eliza, do you mean?" said they, with just a slight intonation to signify that they did not look upon her as a "Miss." Their further answer represented the exact extent of their knowledge in the matter. "She didn't come much for a good while, but last week she came to tea. It is arranged for mamma to ask her to tea once in a while, and we're all to try and be nice to her, because—well, our sister says, now that people pay her attentions, she ought to have a place where she can come to, where she can feel she has friends."

"How d'ye mean—'pay her attentions'?"

"That was what we heard sister Sophia say," they replied, pursing up their little lips. They knew perfectly well what the phrase meant, but they were not going to confess it. The arts of those who are on the whole artless are very pretty.

"Say, d'ye think Miss White's got the least bit of a heart about her anywheres?"



“We don’t know exactly what you mean”—with dignity—“but one of the ladies who boards at the hotel told mamma that Eliza *always* behaves *admirably*’; that’s part of the reason we’re having her to tea.”

“Did she, though? If having about as much feeling as this fence has is such fine behaviour—!” He stopped, apparently not knowing exactly how to end his sentence.

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The girls began to recede. The grass grew so thin and dry that they did little harm by passing through it. It sprang up in front of their feet as they moved backwards in their white dresses. All colour had passed from the earth. The ripple of the river and the cry of the whip-poor-will rose amid the murmur of the night insects.

"Do you sometimes come down here of an evening?" asked the young man. "At sunset it's real pleasant."

"Sometimes," answered Blue. Her soft voice only just reached him.

CHAPTER XV.

So the days wore on till August. One morning Cyril Harkness lay in wait for Eliza. It was early; none of the boarders at the hotel were down yet. Eliza, who was always about in very good time, found him in the corridor on the first floor. He did not often attempt to speak to her now.

"Say," said he, gloomily, "come into my office. I've something to tell."

The gloom of his appearance, so unusual to him, gave her a presage of misfortune. She followed him into the room of dental appliances.

He told her to sit down, and she did so. She sat on a stiff sofa against the wall. He stood with one elbow on the back of the adjustable chair. Behind him hung a green rep curtain, which screened a table at which he did mechanical work. They were a handsome pair. The summer morning filled the room with light, and revealed no flaw in their young comeliness.

"Look here! It's January, February, March"—he went on enumerating the months till he came to August—"that I've been hanging on here for no other earthly reason than to inspire in you the admiration for me that rises in me for you quite spontaneous."

"Is that all you have to say?"

"Isn't that enough—eight months out of a young man's life?"

"It's not enough to make me waste my time at this hour in the morning."

"Well, it's *not* all, but it's what I'm going to say first; so you'll have to listen to it for my good before you listen to the other for your own. I've done all I could, Miss White, to win your affection."

He paused, looking at her, but she did not even look at him. She did appear frightened, and, perceiving this, he took a tone more gentle and pliant.

"I can't think why you won't keep company with me. I'm a real lovable young man, if you'd only look at the thing fairly."

He had plenty of humour in him, but he did not seem to perceive the humour of acting as showman to himself. He was evidently sincere.

"Why, now, one of my most lovable qualities is just that when I do attach myself I find it awful hard to pull loose again. Now, that's just what you don't like in me; but if you come to think of it, it's a real nice characteristic. And then, again, I'm not cranky; I'm real amiable; and you can't find a much nicer looking fellow than me. You'll be sorry, you may believe, if you don't cast a more favourable eye toward me."

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She did not reply, so he continued urging. "If it's because you're stuck up, it must have been those poor English Rexfords put it into your head, for you couldn't have had such ideas before you came here. Now, if that's the barrier between us, I can tell you it needn't stand, for I could have one of those two pretty young ladies of theirs quick as not. If I said 'Come, my dear, let's go off by train and get married, and ask your father's blessing after,' she'd come."

"How dare you tell me such a falsehood!" Eliza rose magnificently.

"Oh," said he, "I meet them occasionally."

She looked at him in utter disdain. She did not believe him; it was only a ruse to attract her.

"How do you know," she asked fiercely, "what ideas I could have had or not before I went to the Rexfords?"

"That's a part of what I was going to say next"—she sat down again—"but I don't *want* to hurt you, mind. I'd make it real easy for you if you'd let me cherish you."

"What have you to say?"

"Just this—that it'll all have to come out some time; you know to what I allude."

She did not look as if she knew.

"Upon my word!" he ejaculated admiringly, "you do beat all."

"Well, what are you talking of?" she asked.

"In this world or the next, all you've done will be made public, you know," he replied, not without tone of menace. "But what I want to speak about now is Father Cameron. I've got him here, and I've never regretted the bread and shelter I give him, for he's a real nice old gentleman; but I can't help him going to people's houses and putting ideas into their heads—no more than the wind, I can't keep him. He's crazed, poor old gentleman, that's what he is."

"You ought never to have brought him here."

"*You'd* rather he'd been stoned in Quebec streets?" He looked at her steadily. "It's because they all more than half believe that he got his ideas when dead, and then came to life again, that he gets into harm. If it wasn't for that tale against him he'd not have been hurt in Quebec, and he'd not be believed by the folks here."

"I thought you believed that too."

He gave her a peculiar smile. "If you was to say right out now in public that you knew he wasn't the man they take him for, but only a poor maniac who don't know who he is himself, you'd put an end to the most part of his influence."

"What do I know about it?" she asked scornfully; but, in haste to divert him from an answer, she went on, "I don't see that he does any harm, any way. You say yourself he's as good as can be."

"So he is, poor gentleman; but he's mad, and getting madder. I don't know exactly what's brewing, but I tell you this, there's going to be trouble of some sort before long."

"What sort?"

"Well, for one thing, drunken Job is calling out in the rum-hole that he'll kill his wife if he finds her up to any more religious nonsense; and she is up to something of that sort, and he's quite able to do it, too. I heard him beating her the other night."

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Eliza shuddered.

"I'm a kind-hearted fellow, Miss White," he went on, with feeling in his voice. "I can't bear to feel that there's something hanging over the heads of people like her—more than one of them perhaps—and that they're being led astray when they might be walking straight on after their daily avocations."

"But what can they be going to do?" she asked incredulously, but with curious anxiety.

"Blest if I know! but I've heard that old man a-praying about what he called 'the coming of the Lord,' and talking about having visions of 'the day and the month,' till I've gone a'most distracted, for otherwise he does pray so beautiful it reminds me of my mother. He's talking of 'those poor sheep in the wilderness,' and 'leading them' to something. He's mad, and there's a dozen of them ready to do any mad thing he says."

"You ought to go and tell the ministers—tell the men of the town."

"Not I—nice fool I'd look! What in this world have I to accuse him of, except what I've heard him praying about? I've done myself harm enough by having him here."

"What do you want me to do then?"

"Whatever you like; I've told you the truth. There was a carter at Turrifs drunk himself to death because of this unfortunate Mr. Cameron's rising again—that's one murder; and there'll be another."

With that he turned on his heel and left her in his own room. He only turned once to look in at the door again. "If *you're* in any trouble, I'm real soft-hearted, Eliza; I'll be real good to you, though you've been crusty to me."

If she was in trouble then, she did not show it to him.

CHAPTER XVI.

Nothing contributes more frequently to indecision of character in the larger concerns of existence than a life overcrowded with effort and performance. Had Robert Trenholme not been living at too great a pace, his will, naturally energetic, would not, during that spring and summer, have halted as it did between his love for Sophia Rexford and his shame concerning his brother's trade. With the end of June his school had closed for the summer, but at that time the congregation at his little church greatly increased; then, too, he had repairs in the college to superintend, certain articles to write for a Church journal, interesting pupils to correspond with—in a word, his energy, which sometimes by necessity and sometimes by ambition had become regulated to too quick a pace, would not now allow him to take leisure when it offered, or even to perceive the

opportunity. His mind, habituated to unrest, was perpetually suggesting to him things needing to be done, and he always saw a mirage of leisure in front of him, and went on the faster in order to come up to it. By this mirage he constantly vowed to himself that when the opportunity came he would take time to think out some things which

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had grown indistinct to him. At present the discomfort and sorrow of not feeling at liberty to make love to the woman he loved was some excuse for avoiding thought, and he found distraction in hard work and social engagements. With regard to Sophia he stayed his mind on the belief that if he dared not woo she was not being wooed, either by any man who was his rival, or by those luxuries and tranquillities of life which nowadays often lure young women to prefer single blessedness.

In the meantime he felt he had done what he could by writing again and again, and even telegraphing, to Turrifs Station. It is a great relief to the modern mind to telegraph when impatient; but when there is nothing at the other end of the wire but an operator who is under no official obligation to deliver the message at an address many miles distant, the action has only the utility already mentioned—the relief it gives to the mind of the sender. The third week in August came, and yet he had heard nothing more from Alec. Still, Alec had said he would come in summer, and if the promise was kept he could not now be long, and Robert clung to the hope that he would return with ambitions toward some higher sphere of life, and in a better mind concerning the advisability of not being too loquacious about his former trade.

In this hope he took opportunity one day about this time, when calling on Mrs. Rexford, to mention that Alec was probably coming. He desired, he said, to have the pleasure of introducing him to her.

“He is very true and simple-heaped,” said the elder brother; “and from the photograph you have seen, you will know he is a sturdy lad.” He spoke with a certain air of depression, which Sophia judged to relate to wild oats she supposed this Alec to be sowing. “He was always his dear father’s favourite boy,” added Trenholme, with a quite involuntary sigh.

“A Benjamin!” cried Mrs. Rexford, but, with that quickness of mind natural to her, she did not pause an instant over the thought.

“Well, really, Principal Trenholme, it’ll be a comfort to you to have him under your own eye. I often say to my husband that that must be our comfort now—that the children are all under our eye; and, indeed, with but one sitting-room furnished, and so little outing except in our own fields, it couldn’t well be otherwise. It’s an advantage in a way.”

“A doubtful advantage in some ways,” said Sophia; but the little children were now heard crying, so she ran from the room.

“Ah, Principal Trenholme,” cried the little step-mother, shaking her head (she was sewing most vigorously the while), “if my children will but profit by *her* example! But, indeed, I reproach myself that she is here at all, although she came against my desire.



Sophia is not involved in our—I might say poverty, Principal Trenholme.” (It was the first-time the word had crossed her lips, although she always conversed freely to him.)
“When

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I see the farm producing so little in comparison, I may say, in confidence, *poverty*; but Sophia has sufficient income of her own." "I did not know that," said Trenholme, sincerely. "She came with us, for we couldn't think of taking any of it for the house expenses if she was away; and, as it's not large, it's the more sacrifice she makes. But Sophia—Sophia might have been a very rich woman if she'd married the man she was engaged to. Mr. Monekton was only too anxious to settle everything upon her."

Trenholme had positively started at these words. He did not hear the next remark. The eight years just passed of Sophia's life were quite unknown to him, and this was a revelation. He began to hear the talk again.

"My husband said the jointure was quite remarkable. And then the carriages and gowns he would have given! You should have seen the jewels she had! And poor Mr. Monekton—it was one month off the day the wedding was fixed, for when she broke it off. Suddenly she would have none of it."

Trying to piece together these staccato jottings by what he knew of the character of his love, Trenholme's mind was sore with curiosity about it all, especially with regard to the character of Mr. Monckton.

"Perhaps"—he spoke politely, as if excusing the fickleness of the absent woman—"perhaps some fresh knowledge concerning the gentleman reached Miss Rexford."

"For many a year we had known all that was to be known about Mr. Monckton," declared the mother, vigorously. "Sophia changed her mind. It was four years ago, but she might be Mrs. Monckton in a month if she'd say the word. He has never been consoled; her father has just received a letter from him to-day begging him to renew the subject with her; but when Sophia changes once she's not likely to alter again. There's not one in a thousand to equal her."

Trenholme agreed perfectly with the conclusion, even if he did not see that it was proved by the premises. He went away with his mind much agitated and filled with new anxieties. The fact that she had once consented to marry another seemed to him to make it more probable that she might do so again. He had allowed himself to assume that since the time when he had seen her as a young girl, the admired of all, Sophia had drifted entirely out of that sort of relation to society; but now, by this sudden alarm, she seemed to be again elevated on some pinnacle of social success beyond his reach. It struck him, too, as discouraging that he should be able to know so little about a girl he had loved in a vague way so long, and now for a time so ardently, and who had dwelt for months at his very door. He blamed the conventionalities of society that made it impossible for him to ask her the thousand and one questions he fain would ask, that

refused him permission to ask any until he was prepared to make that offer which involved the explanation from which he shrank so much

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that he would fain know precisely what degree of evil he must ask her to face before he asked at all. He told himself that he shrank not so much on account of his own dislike, as on account of the difficulty in which his offer and explanation must place her if she loved him; for if she was not bound strongly by the prejudices of her class, all those she cared for certainly were. On the other hand, if she did not love him, then, indeed, he had reason to shrink from an interview that would be the taking away of all his hope. Who would not wrestle hard with hope and fear before facing such an alternative? Certainly not a man of Trenholme's stamp.

It is a mistake to suppose that decision and fearlessness are always the attributes of strength. Angels will hover in the equipoise of indecision while clowns will make up their minds. Many a fool will rush in to woo and win a woman, who makes her after-life miserable by inconsiderate dealings with incongruous circumstance, in that very unbending temper of mind through which he wins at first. Trenholme did not love the less, either as lover or brother, because he shrank, as from the galling of an old wound, when the family trade was touched upon. He was not a weaker man because he was capable of this long suffering. That nature has the chance to be the strongest whose sensibilities have the power to draw nourishment of pain and pleasure from every influence; and if such soul prove weak by swerving aside because of certain pains, because of stooping from the upright posture to gain certain pleasures, it still may not be weaker than the more limited soul who knows not such temptations. If Trenholme had swerved from the straight path, if he had stooped from the height which nature had given him, the result of his fault had been such array of reasons and excuses that he did not now know that he was in fault, but only had hateful suspicion of it when he was brought to the pass of explaining himself to his lady-love. The murmurs of an undecided conscience seldom take the form of definite self-accusation. They did not now; and Trenholme's suspicion that he was in the wrong only obtruded itself in the irritating perception that his trouble had a ludicrous side. It would have been easier for him to have gone to Sophia with confession of some family crime or tragedy than to say to her, "My father was, my brother is, a butcher; and I have allowed this fact to remain untold!" It was not that he did not intend to prove to her that his silence on this subject was simply wise; he still writhed under the knowledge that such confession, if it did not evoke her loving sympathy, might evoke her merriment.

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That afternoon, however, he made a resolution to speak to Sophia before another twenty-four hours had passed—a resolution which was truly natural in its inconsistency; for, after having waited for months to hear Alec's purpose, he to-day decided to act without reference to him. At the thought of the renewed solicitation of another lover, his own love and manliness triumphed over everything else. He would tell her fully and frankly all that had made him hesitate so long, and of his long admiration for her, and how dearly he now loved her. He would not urge her; he would, leave the choice to her. This resolution was not made by any impulsive yielding to a storm of feeling, nor in the calm of determined meditation; he simply made up his mind in the course of that afternoon's occupation.

CHAPTER XVII.

Trenholme went from Mrs. Rexford's door that same day to pay some visits of duty in the village. The afternoon was warm, and exquisitely bright with the sort of dazzling brightness that sometimes presages rain. On his return he met a certain good man who was the Presbyterian minister of the place. The Scotch church had a larger following in Chellaston than the English. The clergyman and the minister were friends of a sort, a friendship which was cultivated on chance occasions as much from the desire to exercise and display large-mindedness as from the drawings of personal sympathy. The meeting this afternoon led to their walking out of the village together; and when the Scotchman had strolled as far as the college gate, Trenholme, out of courtesy and interest in the conversation, walked a mile further up the road with him.

Very beautiful was the road on that bright summer day. They heard the ripple of the river faintly where it was separated from them by the Harmon garden and the old cemetery. Further on, the sound of the water came nearer, for there was only the wilderness of half overgrown pasture and sumac trees between them and it. Then, where the river curved, they came by its bank, road and river-side meeting in a grove of majestic pines. The ground here was soft and fragrant with the pine needles of half a century; the blue water curled with shadowed wave against matted roots; the swaying firmament was of lofty branches, and the summer wind touched into harmony a million tiny harps. Minds that were not choked with their own activities would surely here have received impressions of beauty; but these two men were engaged in important conversation, and they only gave impassive heed to a scene to which they were well accustomed.

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They were talking about improvements and additions which Trenholme hoped to get made to the college buildings in the course of a few years. The future of the college was a subject in which he could always become absorbed, and it was one sufficiently identified with the best interests of the country to secure the attention of his listener. In this land, where no church is established, there is so little bitterness existing between different religious bodies, that the fact that the college was under Episcopal management made no difference to the Presbyterian's goodwill towards it. He sent his own boys to school there, admired Trenholme's enthusiastic devotion to his work, and believed as firmly as the Principal himself that the school would become a great university. It was important to Trenholme that this man—that any man of influence, should believe in him, in his college, and in the great future of both. The prosperity of his work depended so greatly upon the good opinion of all, that he had grown into the habit of considering hours well spent that, like this one, were given to bringing another into sympathy with himself in the matter of the next projected improvement. It was thus that he had advanced his work step by step since he came to Chellaston; if the method sometimes struck his inner self as a little sordid, the work was still a noble one, and the method necessary to the quick enlargement he desired. Both men were in full tide of talk upon the necessity for a new gymnasium, its probable cost, and the best means of raising the money, when they walked out of the pine shade into an open stretch of the road.

Soft, mountainous clouds of snowy whiteness were winging their way across the brilliant blue of the sky. The brightness of the light had wiped all warm colour from the landscape. The airy shadows of the clouds coursed over a scene in which the yellow of ripened fields, the green of the woods on Chellaston Mountain, and the blue of the distance, were only brought to the eye in the pale, cool tones of high light. The road and the river ran together now as far as might be seen, the one almost pure white in its inch-deep dust, the other tumbling rapidly, a dancing mirror for the light.

The talkers went on, unmindful of dust and heat. Then a cloud came between them and the sun, changing the hue of all things for the moment. This lured them further. The oat harvest was ready. The reaping machines were already in the fields far and near, making noise like that of some new enormous insect of rattling throat. From roadside trees the cicada vied with them, making the welkin ring.

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There were labourers at various occupations in the fields, but on the dusty stretch of road there was only one traveller to be seen in front of the two companions. When they gained upon him they recognised the old preacher who went by the name of Cameron. The poor old wanderer had been a nine days' wonder; now his presence elicited no comment. He was walking cap in hand in the sunshine, just as he had walked in the winter snow. To Trenholme the sight of him brought little impression beyond a reminder of his brother's wayward course. It always brought that reminder; and now, underneath the flow of his talk about college buildings, was the thought that, if all were done and said that might be, it was possible that it would be expedient for the future of the New College that the present principal should resign. This was, of course, an extreme view of the results of Alec's interference; but Trenholme had accustomed himself to look at his bugbear in all lights, the most extreme as well as the most moderate. *That* for the future; and, for immediate agitation, there was his resolution to speak to Sophia. As he walked and talked, his heart was wrestling with multiform care.

With one of those welcome surprises which Nature can bestow, the big swinging cloud which had shadowed their bit of earth for a few minutes and then passed off the sun again, now broke upon them in a heavy shower. They saw the rain first falling on Chellaston Mountain, which was only about a quarter of a mile distant, falling in the sunshine like perpendicular rays of misty light; then it swept down upon them; but so bright was the sunshine the while that it took them a few minutes to realise that this dazzling shower could actually be wet. Its drenching character was made apparent by the sight of field labourers running to a great spreading maple for shelter; then they, literally having regard to their cloth, ran also and joined the group. They passed the old man on the road, but when they were all under the tree he also came towards it.

There is no power in the art of words, or of painting, or of music, to fully describe the perfect gratefulness of a shower on a thirsty day. The earth and all that belongs to her thrill with the refreshing, and the human heart feels the thrill just in so far as it is one with the great plan of nature, and has not cut itself off from the whole by egotism as a dead branch is cut. All under the tree were pleased in their own way. The labourers cooled their sweating brows by wiping them with the shirtsleeves the rain had wet; Trenholme and his friend saw with contentment the dust laid upon their road, listened to the chirp of birds that had been silent before, and watched the raindrops dance high upon the sunny surface of the river.

The old man came quietly to them. The rain falling through sunshine made a silver glory in the air in which he walked saintlike, his hoary locks spangled with the shining baptism. He did not heed that his old clothes were wet. His strong, aged face was set as though looking onward and upward, with the joyful expression habitual to it.

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Trenholme and his friend were not insensible to the picture. They were remarking upon it when the old man came into their midst. There was something more of keenness and brightness in his mien than was common to him; some influence, either of the healing summer or of inward joy, seemed to have made the avenues of his senses more accessible.

"Sirs," he said, "do you desire the coming of the Lord?"

He asked the question quite simply, and Trenholme, as one humours a village innocent, replied, "We hope we are giving our lives to advance His kingdom."

"But the *King*," said the old man. "He is coming. Do you cry to Him to come quickly?"

"We hope and trust we shall see Him in His own time," said Trenholme, still benignly.

"His own time is suddenly, in the night," cried the old man, "when the Church is sleeping, when her children are planting and building, selling, buying; and marrying—that is *His time*. We shall see Him. We shall see His face, when we tell Him that we love Him; we shall hear His voice when he tells us that He loves us. We shall see Him when we pray; we shall hear Him give the answer. Sirs, do you desire that He should come now, and reign over you?"

The labourers bestirred themselves and came nearer. The old man had always the power of transmitting his excitements to others, so that, strangely, they felt it incumbent upon them to answer. One, a dull-looking man, answered "yes," with conventional piety. Another said sincerely that he would like to get the oats in first. Then, when the first effect of the enthusiast's influence was passing off, they began to rebel at having this subject thrust upon them. A youth said rudely that, as there were two parsons there, Father Cameron was not called on to preach.

The old man fixed his questioning look on Trenholme. "He will come to reign," he cried, "to exalt the lowly and meek, to satisfy the men who hunger for righteousness; and the pure in heart shall live with Him. Sir, do you desire that He shall come now?"

Trenholme did not give answer as before.

"Poor fellow," said the Presbyterian, pityingly.

The shower was passing over, and they moved away.

The old man lifted his arm, and pointed to the mountain that stood in all the beauty of its wet verdure. He looked round upon them all, and there was unusual show of excitement in his manner.

"I have a message to you," he said. "Before another Lord's, day comes, *He* will come."

The two ministers heard him as they walked away, and the Scotchman thought to go back and reprove such an audacious word.

“He is mad; they all know that he is mad,” urged Trenholme, dissuading him.

They looked back, and saw the old man still preaching to the labourers under the tree. A mare with its foal, and two half-grown colts, had come up to an open fence within the tree’s shadow, and, with their long gentle heads hanging over, they too seemed to be listening.

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The Scotchman, exhilarated by the cooling of the atmosphere, genially invited Trenholme to a longer walk. Chellaston Mountain, with its cool shades and fine prospect, was very near. A lane turned from the high road, which led to the mountain's base. A hospitable farmhouse stood where the mountain path began to ascend, suggesting sure offer of an evening meal. Trenholme looked at the peaceful lane, the beautiful hill, and all the sunny loveliness of the land, and refused the invitation. He had not time, he said.

So they walked back the mile they had come, and Trenholme little thought how soon, and with what agitation, he would pass that way again.

CHAPTER XVIII.

The next day, before Trenholme had had time to devise a plan for seeing Miss Rexford, Mrs. Martha brought him a telegram. She watched him as he drew his finger through the poor paper of the envelope, watched him as one might watch another on the eve of some decisive event; yet she could not have expected much from a telegram—they came too often.

“Ha!” cried Trenholme, “we are going to have visitors, Mrs. Martha.”

A good deal to Trenholme's surprise, the message was from Alec, and from a point no further away than Quebec. It stated that he was there with Bates, who was ill, and he thought the best thing would be to bring him with him to Chellaston, if his brother had house-room enough.

The answers we give to such appeals are more often the outcome of life-long habit than instances of separate volition. No question of what answer to send occurred to Trenholme's mind as he pencilled his reply, assuring a welcome to the sick man.

When the answer was despatched he saw that, as fate had thrust the notice of this arrival between him and the proposed interview with Sophia; it would be better, after all, to wait only a day or two more, until he knew his brother's mind.

He heard nothing more from Alec that day. The day after was Saturday, and it rained heavily.

“What time will the gentlemen arrive?” asked Mrs. Martha, but not as if she took much interest in the matter.

“I can't tell,” he replied. “They will probably let us know; but it's best to be ready when guests may come any time, isn't it?”

He asked her this with a cheering smile, because her manner was strange, and he wished to rouse her to a sense of her duties.

“Yes, sir; ’twouldn’t seem like as if we was truly expecting and hoping unless we did our best to be ready.”

The fervour of her answer surprised him.

For some time past Winifred Rexford had been spending part of each morning learning housewifery of Mrs. Martha. That day, because of the rain, Trenholme insisted upon keeping her to dinner with him. He brought her into his dining-room with playful force, and set her at the head of his table. It was a great pleasure to him to have the child. He twitted her with her improvement in the culinary art, demanding all sorts of impossible dishes in the near future for his brother’s entertainment. He was surprised at the sedateness of her answers, and at a strange look of excited solicitude that arose in her eyes. It seemed to him that she was several times on the point of saying something to him, and yet she did not speak.

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"What is it, Princess Win?" he cried. "What is in your mind, little one?"

He came to the conclusion that she was not very well. He got no information from her on the subject of her health or anything else; but thinking naturally that the change in the weather might have given her cold, he took pains to wrap her in his own mackintosh and take her home under his own large umbrella.

When there, he went in. He was greatly cheered by the idea that, although he might not tell his mind that day, he was now and henceforth courting Sophia openly, whatever befell; but the open courting, since it had only begun with his resolution of yesterday, and existed only in his own intention, was naturally not recognised. He was received with the ordinary everyday friendliness. But a change had occurred in the family circumstances, nothing less than that they sat now in the long neglected and still unfurnished room which went by the name of the drawing-room. The windows had been thrown open, and the covering taken from the family carriage. There it stood, still wheelless, but occupied now by Sophia and Mrs. Rexford, the girls and the darning basket, while some of the children climbed upon the box. Blue and Red, who were highly delighted with the arrangement, explained it to Trenholme.

"You see, we had a carriage we couldn't use, and a room we couldn't use for want of furniture; so this rainy day, when we all were so tired of the other room, mamma suddenly thought that we'd make the carriage do for furniture. It's the greatest fun possible." They gave little jumps on the soft cushions, and were actually darning with some energy on account of the change.

Trenholme shook hands with the carriage folk in the gay manner necessary to the occasion, but his heart ached for the little mother who had thus so bravely buried her last vestige of pride in the carriage by giving it to her children as a plaything.

"It's more comfortable than armchairs, and keeps the feet from the bare floor," she said to him, in defiance of any criticisms he might have in mind. But all his thought was with and for her, and in this he was pleased to see that he had divined Sophia's mind, for, after adding her warm but brief praise to the new arrangement, she changed the subject.

Winifred went upstairs quietly. Trenholme suggested that he hardly thought her looking quite well.

"She's an odd child," said Sophia. "I did not tell you, mamma, what I found her doing the other day. She was trying on the white frock she had this spring when she was confirmed. It's unlike her to do a thing like that for no reason; and when I teased her she began to cry, and then began speaking to me about religion. She has been puzzled by the views your housekeeper holds, Mr. Trenholme, and excited by old Cameron's teaching about the end of the world."

“I don’t think it’s the end of the world he’s prophesying exactly,” said Trenholme, musingly. “The Adventists believe that the earth will not be ruined, but glorified by the Second Advent.”

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"Children should not hear of such abstruse, far-off things," observed Mrs. Rexford; "it does harm; but with no nursery, no schoolroom, what can one do?"

Trenholme told them of Alec's telegram, and something of what he knew concerning Bates. His own knowledge was scanty, but he had not even said all he might have said when Mrs. Rexford politely regretted that her husband and son, taking advantage of the rain, had both gone to the next town to see some machinery they were buying, and would be away over Sunday, otherwise they would not have missed the opportunity offered by Sunday's leisure to call upon the newcomers.

"Oh, he's quite a common working-man, I fancy," added Trenholme, hastily, surprised at the gloss his words had thrown on Bates's position, and dimly realising that his way of putting things might perhaps at some other times be as misleading as it had just that moment been.

Then he went away rather abruptly, feeling burdened with the further apologies she made with respect to Alec.

CHAPTER XIX.

Trenholme went home and sat down to write an article for a magazine. Its subject was the discipline of life. He did not get on with it very well. He rose more than once to look at the weather-glass and the weather. Rain came in torrents, ceasing at intervals. The clouds swept over, with lighter and darker spaces among them. The wind began to rise. Thunder was in the air; as it became dusk lightning was seen in the far distance.

A little after dark he heard a quick, light step upon the garden path. The voice of the young dentist was audible at the door, and Mrs. Martha ushered him into the study. Trenholme had felt more or less prejudice against this fellow since he had become aware that he was in some way connected with the incident that had discomforted his brother in his lonely station. He looked at him with a glance of severe inquiry.

"I'm *real* sorry to disturb you," said the dentist; "but, upon my word, I'm uneasy in my mind. I've lost old Mr. Cameron."

It occurred to Trenholme now for the first time since he had heard of Bates's coming that he, Bates, was the very man who could speak with authority as to whether the old man in question had a right to the name of Cameron. He wondered if the American could possibly have private knowledge of Bates's movements, and knew that his coming could dispel the mystery. If so, and if he had interest in keeping up the weird story, he had done well now to lose his charge for the time being. Wild and improbable as such a plot seemed, it was not more extraordinary than the fact that this intensely practical young man had sought the other and protected him so long.

“Your friend is in the habit of wandering, is he not?” asked Trenholme, guardedly.

“Can’t say that he is since he came here, Principal. He’s just like a child, coming in when it’s dark. I’ve never”—he spoke with zeal—“I’ve never known that good old gentleman out as late as this, and it’s stormy.”

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“Did you come here under the idea that I knew anything about him?”

“Well, no, I can’t say that I did; but I reckoned you knew your Bible pretty well, and that you were the nearest neighbour of mine that did.” There was an attempt at nervous pleasantry in this, perhaps to hide real earnestness.

Trenholme frowned. “I don’t understand you.”

“Well, ’twould be strange if you did, come to think of it; but I’m mighty uneasy about that old man, and I’ve come to ask you what the Bible really does say about the Lord’s coming. Whether he’s crazed or not, that old man believes that He’s coming to-night. He’s been telling the folks all day that they ought to go out with joy to meet Him. I never thought of him budging from the house till some *manifestation* occurred, which I thought *wouldn’t* occur, but when I found just now he was gone, it struck me all of a heap that he was gone out with that idea. I do assure you”—he spoke earnestly—“that’s what he’s after at this very time. He’s gone out to meet Him, and I came to ask you—well—what sort of a place he’d be likely to choose. He knows his Bible right off, that old gentleman does; he’s got his notions out of it, whether they’re right or wrong.”

Trenholme stared at him. It was some time before the young man’s ideas made their way into his mind. Then he wondered if his apparent earnestness could possibly be real.

“Your application is an extraordinary one,” he said stiffly.

Harkness was too sensitive not to perceive the direction the doubt had taken. “It may be extraordinary, but I do assure you it’s genuine.”

As he grew to believe in the youth’s sincerity, Trenholme thought he perceived that, although he had asked what would be the probable direction of the enthusiast’s wanderings, the dentist was really stricken with doubt as to whether the prediction might not possibly be correct, and longed chiefly to know Trenholme’s mind on that important matter.

“This crazy fellow is astray in his interpretation of Scripture,” he said, “if he believes that it teaches that the Second Advent is now imminent; and his fixing upon to-night is, of course, quite arbitrary. God works by growth and development, not by violent miracle. If you study the account of our Lord’s first coming, you see that, not only was there long preparation, but that the great miracle was hidden in the beautiful disguise of natural processes. We must interpret all special parts of the inspired Word by that which we learn of its Author in the whole of His revelation, otherwise we should not deal as reverently with it as we deal with the stray words of any human author.”

The young man, if he did not understand, was certainly comforted by this official opinion.

“I’m glad to hear you look upon it in that light,” he said approvingly, “for, to tell the truth, if I thought the millennium was coming to-night I’d be real scared, although I’ve lived better than most young men of my age do; but, some way, the millennium isn’t the sort of thing I seem to hanker after very much. I suppose, though, people as good as you would like nothing so well as to see it begin at once.”

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Trenholme looked down at the sheet of paper before him, and absently made marks upon it with his pen. He was thinking of the spiritual condition of a soul which had no ardent desire for the advent of its Lord, but it was not of the young man he was thinking.

"Of course," the latter continued, "I didn't suppose myself there was anything in it—at least"—candidly—"I didn't in the day-time; but when I found he'd gone out in the dark, and thought of all the times I'd heard him praying—" he broke off. "He's real good. I'm a better fellow for having lived with him so long, but I wish to goodness I'd never caught him."

The word "caught," so expressive of the American's relation to the wanderer, roused Trenholme's attention, and he asked now with interest, "May I inquire why you did take possession of him and bring him here?"

"Well, as to that, I don't know that I'd like to tell," said the young man, frankly. "Since I've lived with him I've seen my reasons to be none of the best." He fidgeted now, rising, cap in hand. "I ought to go and look after him," he said, "if I only knew where to go."

It struck Trenholme that Harkness had an idea where to go, and that his questioning was really a prelude to its announcement. "Where do *you* think he has gone?"

"Well, if you ask me what I think, Principal—but, mind, I haven't a word of proof of it—I think he's gone up the mountain, and that he's not gone there alone."

"What do you mean?"

"I mean that I think drunken Job's wife, and old McNider, and some more of the Second Advent folks, will go with him, expecting to be caught up."

"Impossible!" cried Trenholme, vehemently. Then more soberly, "Even if they had such wild intentions, the weather would, of course, put a stop to it."

Harkness did not look convinced. "Job's threatened to beat his wife to death if she goes, and it's my belief she'll go."

He twirled his hat as he spoke. He was, in fact, trying to get the responsibility of his suspicions lightened by sharing them with Trenholme at this eleventh hour, but his hearer was not so quickly roused.

"If you believe that," he said coolly, "you ought to give information to the police."

"The police know all that I know. They've heard the people preaching and singing in the streets. I can't make them believe the story if they don't. They'd not go with me one step on a night like this—not one step."

There was a short silence. Trenholme was weighing probabilities. On the whole, he thought the police were in the right of it, and that this young man was probably carried away by a certain liking for novel excitement.

"In any case," he said aloud, "I don't see what I can do in the matter."

Harkness turned to leave as abruptly as he had come in. "If you don't, I see what I can do. I'm going along there to see if I can find them."

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"As you are in a way responsible for the old man, perhaps that is your duty," replied Trenholme, secretly thinking that on such roads and under such skies the volatile youth would not go very far.

A blast of wind entered the house door as Harkness went out of it, scattering Trenholme's papers, causing his study lamp to flare up suddenly, and almost extinguishing it.

Trenholme went on with his writing, and now a curious thing happened. About nine o'clock he again heard steps upon his path, and the bell rang. Thinking it a visitor, he stepped to the door himself, as he often did. There was no one there but a small boy, bearing a large box on his shoulders. He asked for Mrs. Martha. "Have you got a parcel for her?" said Trenholme, thinking his housekeeper had probably retired, as she did not come to the door. The boy signified that he had, and made his way into the light of the study door. Trenholme saw now, by the label on the box, that he had come from the largest millinery establishment the place could boast. It rather surprised him that the lean old woman should have been purchasing new apparel there, but there was nothing to be done but tell the boy to put out the contents of the box and be gone. Accordingly, upon a large chair the boy laid a white gown of delicate material, and went away.

Trenholme stood contemplating the gown; he even touched it lightly with his hand, so surprised he was. He soon concluded there was some mistake, and afterwards, when he heard the housekeeper enter the kitchen from the garden door, he was interested enough to get up with alacrity and call to her. "A gown has come for you, Mrs. Martha," he cried. Now, he thought, the mistake would be proved; but she only came in soberly, and took up the gown as if it was an expected thing. He bade her good-night. "Good-night," said she, looking at him. There was a red spot on each of her thin, withered cheeks. He heard her footstep mounting her bedroom staircase, but no clue to the mystery of her purchase offered itself to mitigate his surprise. Had she not been his housekeeper now for six years, and during that time not so much as a trace of any vagary of mind had he observed in her.

About an hour afterwards, when he had gone into the next room to look for some papers, he heard quiet sounds going on in the kitchen, which was just at the rear end of the small hall on which the room doors opened. A moment more and he surmised that his housekeeper must have again descended for something. "Are you there, Mrs. Martha?" he called. There was no answer in words, but hearing the kitchen door open, he looked into the lobby, and there a strange vision flashed on his sight. His end of the lobby was dark, but in the kitchen doorway, by the light of the candles she held, he saw his elderly housekeeper arrayed in the pure white gown.

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He paused in sheer astonishment, looking at her, and he observed she trembled—trembled all over with the meek courage it cost her to thus exhibit herself; for she appeared to have opened the door for no other purpose than to let him see her. She said nothing, and he—most men are cowards with regard to women—he had a vague sense that it was his duty to ask her why she wore that dress, but he did not do it. He had no reason to suppose her mad; she had a perfect right to array herself in full dress at night if she chose; she was a great deal older than he, a woman worthy of all respect. This was the tenor of his thought—of his self-excusing, it might be. He bade her good-night again, somewhat timidly. Surely, he thought, it was her place to make remark, if remark were needful; but she stood there silent till he had gone back into the room. Then she shut the kitchen door.

In a little while, however, as stillness reigned in the house, some presentiment of evil made him think it would be as well to go and see if Mrs. Martha had finished trying on her finery and gone to bed as usual. He found the kitchen dark and empty. He went to the foot of her stairs. There was no chink of light showing from her room. The stillness of the place entered into his mind as the thin edge of a wedge of alarm. “Mrs. Martha!” he called in sonorous voice. “Mrs. Martha!” But no one answered. He opened the back-door, and swept the dark garden with the light of his lamp, but she was not there. Lamp in hand, he went upstairs, and passed rapidly through the different rooms. As he entered the less frequented ones, he began to fear almost as much to see the gaily-attired figure as he would have done to see a ghost. He did not know why this feeling crept over him, but, whether he feared or hoped to see her, he did not. The house was empty, save for himself. The night blast beat upon it. The darkness outside was rife with storm, but into it the old woman must have gone in her festal array.

CHAPTER XX.

Trenholme went out on the verandah. At first, in the night, he saw nothing but the shadowy forms of the college building and of the trees upon the road. It was not raining at the moment, but the wind made it hard to catch any sound continuously. He thought he heard talking of more than one voice, he could not tell where. Then he heard wheels begin to move on the road. Presently he saw something passing the trees—some vehicle, and it was going at a good pace out from the village. Shod though he was only in slippers, he shut his door behind him, and ran across the college grounds to the road; but the vehicle was already out of sight, and on the soft mud he could hear no further sound.

Trenholme stood hardly knowing what to think. He wore no hat; the damp, cool air was grateful to his head, but he gave no thought to it. Just then, from the other way of the road, he heard a light, elastic step and saw a figure that, even in the darkness, he could not fail to know.

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"Sophia!" There was fear in his voice.

"Have you seen Winifred?" she cried.

"Winifred? No," he called, back.

"What are you doing here?" she asked, breathless. She never noticed that he had called her by name. The abruptness of her own question was evidently atoned for by some necessity the nature of which he had not yet entirely grasped. Yet a knowledge, gleaned too late from all the occurrences of the evening, leaped up within him to anticipate her tidings.

"Winifred has gone out since dark. Whether she is alone or not I don't know, but she has gone to the mountain. She means to climb it to-night because they have told her that—that——"

His lady-love stopped. Voice and language seemed alike to fail her when she essayed to tell him, and he, awed at the thought of hearing such sacred words from her lips, awed to think that the sword of this fanaticism had come so near as to strike the pure young girl who was so dear to them both, took her pause as if it had told him everything.

"How do you know?" His words were brief and stern.

She was walking on, he thought merely from excitement. As he kept up with her he perceived, more by quickness of sympathy than by any sign, that, in her effort to speak, she had begun to weep. She walked erect, giving no heed to her own tears nor lifting a hand to wipe them, only at first her throat refused to articulate a reply, and when she spoke it was quickly, a word or two at a time, as though she feared her voice would be traitor to her.

"She left a paper for me." And then she added, "She wrote on it—what she was afraid to say—dear child!"

He was silent a moment, listening with bowed head lest she should tell more. He thought he saw her now dash the tears from her face. She was walking fast, and he felt that she must not go further, also that he had no time to lose; so he told her hastily that he thought his housekeeper had gone also to the mountain, and why he thought so. He said that he hoped and believed Winifred would be with her, and that it was not many minutes since they had driven away. He would go at once, hoping to overtake them on the difficult ascent, and Miss Rexford, he said, must go home and send her father and brother to aid him in his search.

She never stopped in her steady walk. "You know they are not at home."

He was shocked to remember it. “Never mind!” he cried, “I will go with your authority. I will bring her back.”

Still she did not waver in her walk. She spoke thickly out of her tears. “You may go to find this woman who has worked for you so long; I will go for Winifred.”

“You must not come,” he said almost harshly. “It is far too late; it is far too wet.”

He stopped to make her stop, but she only went on, getting much in front. Then he ran up to her, laid his hand on her arm, and implored her not to go.

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There was nothing in his words or action that was precisely loverlike, nor did such likeness occur to her; but in the restraint he put upon the lover in him, his manner appeared to assume the confidence and ease of a perfect friendship, and she, scarce noting much how he spoke or acted, still felt that this advance of his gave her a new liberty to tell him that she scorned his friendship, for she had something of that sort seething in her mind concerning him. As to his request just then, she merely said she would go on.

He was very urgent. "Then I will not go," he said, stopping again. "You can't go without me, and if my going involves your going, it is better not to go." He did not mean what he said, but he hoped to move her.

"You can go or stay as you think right," she said. "I am going to get Winifred, poor lamb. I am not in the least afraid to go alone. I have got a pistol in my belt."

So he went with her. They both walked fast. The road was wide and muddy, and the night was very dark.

Trenholme noticed now for the first time that he walked in slippers; he would as soon have thought of turning back on this account as he would have thought of stopping if thorns and briars had beset his path. He felt almost as if it were a dream that he was walking thus, serving the woman he loved; but even as he brooded on the dreamlike strangeness of it, his mind was doing its practical work. If Winifred and Mrs. Martha were in the vehicle he had seen, what time they would gain while driving on the road they would be apt to lose by their feebleness on the mountain path, which he and Sophia could ascend so much more lightly. Wherever their goal, and whatever their purpose, he was sanguine that he would find and stop them before they joined the main party. He communicated the grounds of this hope to his companion. His heart was sore for his lady's tears. He had never before seen her weep. They had passed the cemetery, and went forward now into the lonelier part of the road. Then Trenholme thought of the warning Harkness had given him about the drunkard's violence. The recollection made him hasten on, forgetting that his speed was almost too great for a woman.

In the stir of events we seldom realise to the full the facts with which we are dealing, certainly never perceive at first their full import. Trenholme, however, after some minutes of tramping and thinking, felt that he had reason for righteous indignation, and became wroth. He gave vent to strictures upon superficiality of character, modern love of excitement, and that silly egotism that, causing people to throw off rightful authority, leaves them an easy prey to false teachers. He was not angry with Winifred—he excepted her; but against those who were leading her astray his words were harsh, and they would have flowed more freely had he not found language inadequate to express his growing perception of their folly.

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When he had talked thus for some time Sophia answered, and he knew instantly, from the tone of her voice, that her tears had dried themselves.

“Are you and I able to understand the condition of heart that is not only resigned, but eager to meet Him Whom they hope to meet—able so fully to understand that we can judge its worth?”

He knew her face so well that he seemed to see the hint of sarcasm come in the arching of her handsome eyebrows as she spoke.

“I fear they realise their hope but little,” he replied. “The excitement of some hysterical outbreak is what they seek.”

“It seems to me that is an ungenerous and superficial view, especially as we have never seen the same people courting hysterics before,” she said; but she did not speak as if she cared much which view he took.

Her lack of interest in his opinion, quite as much as her frank reproof, offended him. They walked in silence for some minutes. Thunder, which had been rumbling in the distance, came nearer and every now and then a flash from an approaching storm lit up the dark land with a pale, vivid light.

“Even setting their motives at the highest estimate,” he said, “I do not know that you, or even I, Miss Rexford, need hold ourselves incapable of entering into them.” This was not exactly what he would have felt if left to himself, but it was what her upbraiding wrung from him. He continued: “Even if we had the sure expectation for to-night that they profess to have, I am of opinion that we should express our devotion better by patient adherence to our ordinary duties, by doing all we could for the world up to the moment of His appearing.”

“Our ordinary duties!” she cried; “*they* are always with us! I dare say you and I might think that the fervour of this night’s work had better have been converted into good works and given to the poor; but our opinion is not specially likely to be the true one. What do we know? Walking here in the dark, we can’t even see our way along this road.”

It was an apt illustration, for their eyes were becoming so dazzled by the occasional lightning that they could make no use of its brief flash, or of the faint light of night that was mingled in the darkness of the intervals.

Although he smarted under the slight she put upon him, he was weary of opposing her, because he loved her. “I am sorry that nothing I say meets with your approval,” he said sadly.



It was lack of tact that made him use the personal tone when he and she had so far to travel perforce together, and she, being excited and much perturbed in spirit, had not the grace to answer wisely.

“Happily it matters little whether what you say pleases me or not.”

She meant in earnestness to depreciate herself, and to exalt that higher tribunal before which all opinions are arraigned; still, there was in the answer a tinge of spite, telling him by the way that it did not distress her to differ with him. It was not wonderful that Trenholme, self-conscious with the love she did not guess at, took the words only as a challenge to his admiration.

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"Indeed you wrong me. It was long ago I proved the value I put upon your advice by acting upon it in the most important decision of my life."

She had so long tacitly understood what her influence over him at that time had been that she could not now be much affected by the avowal.

"Indeed, if you recklessly mistook the advice of a vain child for wisdom, it is to be hoped that Providence has shaped your ends for you."

He did not understand her mood; he only thought of protesting his long loyalty to her. "It is true," said he, "that Providence has done more for me than I have done for myself; but I have always been glad to attribute my coming here to your beneficent influence."

Her heart was like flint to him at that moment, and in his clumsiness he struck sparks from it.

"Yet when I remember how you tried to explain to me then that the poor parish in which you were working might be offering the nobler life-work for you, I think that you were wiser than I. In their serious moments people can judge best for themselves, Mr. Trenholme."

He had noticed that, in the rare times she addressed him by name, she never used his big-sounding title of Principal. This little habit of hers, differently read before, seemed now like a clue to guide him to the meaning of her last remark, partly wrapped as it was in her politeness. He was no dullard; once on the track of her thought, he soon came up with her. In surprise he faced her insinuation squarely.

"You mean to tell me that you think I have not done well."

Half startled, she could think of no answer but the silence that gives consent.

"Is it for myself or others I have done ill?" he asked.

"The world here speaks loudly of your exertions on its behalf; I have never doubted the truth of its report."

"Then you consider that I myself am not what you would wish?" There was neither anger nor graciousness in his tone. His mind, arrested, merely sought to know further, and feeling had not yet arisen.

"You alarm me," she said coldly. "I had no thought of bringing these questions upon myself."

But it was of moment to him to know her mind.

"I spoke inadvisedly," she added.

"Yet you spoke as you thought?" he asked.

Fast as they were walking, she could not but notice that they were in the pine grove now, close by the river. Here the gale was loud, reminding her afresh of the loneliness of the place, and, as she felt the force of his question pressing upon her, all her energies rushed in anger to her self-defence.

"Yes, I said what I thought; but I ask your pardon for any truthfulness. Question me no further."

His stronger will was also roused. In bitterness of spirit he told her that he had a right to know her full meaning. He plied her with questions. When in steady tramp they came out on the open stretch of road between the pines and the mountain, over the noise of the swollen river he heard what she thought of him.

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CHAPTER XXI.

That afternoon Alec Trenholme had essayed to bring his friend John Bates to Chellaston. Bates was in a very feeble state, bowed with asthma, and exhausted by a cough that seemed to be sapping his life. Afraid to keep him longer in the lodging they had taken in Quebec, and in the stifling summer heat that was upon, the narrow streets of that city, but uncertain as to what length of journey he would be able to go, Alec started without sending further notice.

As the hours of travel wore on, Bates's dogged pluck and perseverance had to give way to his bodily weakness, but they had reached a station quite near Chellaston before he allowed himself to be taken out of the train and housed for the night in a railway inn. In his nervous state the ordeal of meeting fresh friends seemed as great, indeed, as that involved in the remaining journey. So it came to pass that at dusk on that same evening, Alec Trenholme, having put his friend to bed, joined the loungers on the railway platform in front of the inn, and watched lightning vibrate above the horizon, and saw its sheet-like flames light up the contour of Chellaston Mountain. He did not know what hill it was; he did not know precisely where he was in relation to his brother's home; but he soon overheard the name of the hill from two men who were talking about it and about the weather.

"How far to Chellaston?" asked Alec.

They told him that it was only nine miles by road, but the railway went round by a junction.

Alec began to consider the idea of walking over, now that he had disposed of Bates for the night.

"Is the storm coming this way?" he said.

The man who had first answered him pointed to another. "This gentleman," he said, "has just come from Chellaston."

As the remark did not seem to be an answer to his question about the weather, Alec waited to hear its application. It followed.

The first man drew a little nearer. "He's been telling us that the Adventists—that means folks that are always expecting the end of the world—all about Chellaston believe the end's coming to-night."

Alec made an exclamation. It was a little like hearing that some one sees a ghost at your elbow. The idea of proximity is unpleasant, even to the incredulous. "Why to-night?" he asked.

“Well, I’ll say this much of the notion’s come true,” said the native of Chellaston hastily —“it’s awful queer weather—not that I believe it myself,” he added.

“Has the weather been so remarkable as to make them think that?” asked Alec.

“Tain’t the weather *made* them think it. He only said the weather weren’t unlike as if it were coming true.” As the first man said this, he laughed, to explain that he had nothing to do with the tale or its credence, but the very laugh betrayed more of a tendency to dislike the idea than perfect indifference to it would have warranted.

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In defiance of this laugh the Chellaston man made further explanation. He said the religious folks said it was clearly written in the Book of Daniel (he pronounced it Dannel); if you made the days it talks of years, and the weeks seven years, the end must come about this time. At first folks had calculated it would be 1843, but since then they had found they were thirty years out somehow.

"That would make it this year," agreed the first man. Some others that had gathered round laughed in chorus. They vented some bad language to; but the Chellaston man, excited with his tale, went on.

"All the Advent folks believe that. They believe all the good folks will be caught up in the air; and after that they're to come back, and the world will be just like the Garden of Eden for a thousand years."

He was casting pearls before swine, for some of his hearers chanted gibes. "Is that so?" they sang, to the notes of a response in Church music.

Night had closed in black about them. All on the platform had come together in close group. The wind-blown light of the station lamp was on their faces. In the distance the smouldering storm rumbled and flashed.

"All religious folks believe that," continued the speaker, a little scornfully, "and the Advents think it'll be now; but old Cameron we've had in Chellaston for a year, he tells them it'll be to-night."

Alec Trenholme had by this time received his brother's letters. "A year!" interrupted he almost fiercely. "Didn't he come in January?"

The narrator drew in the horns of his exaggeration. "D'ye know all about him, for there's no use telling if you do?"

"I only thought you might be talking about an old man heard went there then."

"He a'most died, or did really, somewhere below Quebec; and then he got up and preached and prayed, and his folks wouldn't keep him, so he wandered everywhere, and a kind young man we have at our place took him in and keeps him. When he was in the other world he heard the Judgment would happen to-night. Would that be the same man you know?"

"It will be the same man."

"Did you know his people?" asked the other curiously.

But Alec had no thought of being questioned. He brought the speaker back to his place as historian, and he, nothing loth, told of the intended meeting on the mountain, and of

the white ascension robes, in his ignorant, blatant fashion, laying bare the whole pathetic absurdity of it.

Two ribald listeners, who had evidently been in some choir, paced arm in arm, singing the responses to the Litany in melodramatic fashion, except when their voices were choked with loud laughter at their own wit.

Pushed by the disagreeableness of these surroundings, and by keen interest in the old man who had once visited him, Alec decided on the walk. The mountain was nearer than the village; he hoped to reach it in time. He was told to keep on the same road till he came to the river, to follow its bank for about a mile, and when he saw the buildings of a farm just under the hill, to turn up a lane which would lead him by the house to the principal ascent. He walked out into the night.

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At first he was full of thoughts, but after walking a while, fatigue and monotony made him dull. His intelligence seemed to dwell now in his muscles rather than in his brain. His feet told him on what sort of a road he was walking; by his fatigue he estimated, without conscious thought, how far he had walked.

When he had gone for nearly two hours the storm had come so much nearer that the lightning constantly blinded his eyes. He heard now the rushing of the river, and, as he turned into the road by its side, he saw the black hill looming large. Nothing but the momentum of a will already made up kept his intention turned to the climb, so unpropitious was the time, so utterly lonely the place. As it was, with quiescent mind and vigorous step, he held on down the smooth road that lay beside the swollen river.

Some way farther, when the water had either grown quieter or his ear accustomed to the sound, human voices became audible, approaching on the road. Perhaps they might have been two or three hundred yards away when he first heard them, and from that moment his mind, roused from its long monotony, became wholly intent upon those who were drawing near.

It was a woman's voice he heard, and before he could see her in the least, or even hear her footsteps in the soft mud, the sense of her words came to him. She was, evidently speaking under the influence of excitement, not loudly, but with that peculiar quality of tone which sometimes makes a female voice carry further than is intended. She was addressing some companion; she was also walking fast.

"There was a time when I thought you were ambitious, and would therefore do great things."

There was an exquisite edge of disdain in her tone that seemed to make every word an insult that would have had power, Alec thought, to wither any human vanity on which it might fall.

Some reply, she received—he could not hear it—and she went on with such intensity in her voice that her words bore along the whole current of Alec's thought with them, though they came to him falling out of darkness, without personality behind them.

"We may *call* it ambition when we try to climb trees, but it is not really so for us if we once had mountain-tops for our goal."

Again came a short reply, a man's voice so much lower in key that again he could not hear; and then:

"Yes, I have wasted years in tree climbing, more shame to me; but even when I was most willing to forget the highest, I don't think a little paltry prosperity in the commonplace atmosphere of a colony would have tempted me to sell my birthright."

The man she was rating answered, and the clear voice came proudly again:

“You have at least got the pottage that pleases you—you are a success in this Canadian world.”

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Just then the soft, wet sound of feet tramping in mud came to him, and apparently the sound of his own feet was heard also, for the talking stopped until he had passed them. He discerned their figures, but so dimly he could hardly have told they were man and woman had he not known it before by their voices. They were walking very fast, and so was he. In a moment or two they were out of sight, and he had ceased to hear their footsteps. Then he heard them speak again, but the wind blew their words from him.

The tones, the accent, of the woman who had been speaking, told that she was what, in good old English, used to be called a lady. Alec Trenholme, who had never had much to do with well-bred women, was inclined to see around each a halo of charm; and now, after his long, rough exile, this disposition was increased in him tenfold. Here, in night and storm, to be roused from the half lethargy of mechanical exercise by the modulations of such a voice, and forced by the strength of its feeling to be, as it were, a confidant—this excited him not a little. For a few moments he thought of nothing but the lady and what he had heard, conjecturing all things; but he did not associate her with the poor people he had been told were to meet that night upon the mountain.

Roused by the incident, and alert, another thought came quickly, however. He was getting past the large black hill, but the lane turning to it he had not found. Until he now tried with all his might to see, he did not fully know how difficult seeing was.

The storm was not near enough to suggest danger, for there was still more than a minute between each flash and its peal. As light rain drifted in his face, he braced himself to see by the next flash and remember what he saw; but when it came he only knew that it reflected light into the pools on the road in front of him, and revealed a black panorama of fence and tree, field and hill, that the next moment, was all so jumbled in his mind that he did not know where to avoid the very puddles he had seen so clearly, and splashed on through them, with no better knowledge of his way, and eyes too dazzled to see what otherwise they would have seen. In this plight he did not hesitate, but turned and ran after the two he had met, to ask his way, thinking, as he did so, that he must have already passed the lane.

With some effort he caught them up. They must have heard him coming, for their voices were silent as he approached. He asked for the lane to Cooper's Farm, which he had been told was the name of the house at the foot of the mountain path. They both hesitated in their walk. The man, who ought to have answered, seemed, for some reason, suddenly dumb. After waiting impatiently, the lady took upon herself to reply. She said they had not yet reached the turning to the farm. She remarked that they were going to the same place.

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Then they went on again, and he, too, walked quickly, supposing that he could soon pass them and get in front. It is not the matter of a moment, however, to pass people who are walking at a rate of speed almost equal to one's own. He had the awkwardness of feeling, that, whether he would or no, he was obliged to intrude upon them. He noticed they were not walking near together; but when one is tramping and picking steps as best one can in mud that is hidden in darkness, it is, perhaps, more natural that two people on a wide road should give one another a wide berth. At any rate, for a minute all three were making their way through puddles and over rough places in silence. Then, when Alec thought he had got a few paces in advance, he heard the lady speak again, and of himself.

"Did you think you knew that man?"

There was no answer. Alec felt angry with her companion that he should dare to sulk so obviously. After a minute or two more of fast walking, she said again:

"I can't think where he has gone to. Do you see him anywhere?"

To this again there was no answer. Alec naturally went the quicker that he might get out of hearing. As he did so he wondered much that his fellow-travellers went so fast, or rather that the lady did, for she, although some way behind, seemed to keep very near to him.

On they went in silence for ten minutes more, when the lady again took up her reproachful theme. Her voice was quieter now, but amid the harmonious sounds of wind and river he still heard it distinctly. The clear enunciation of her words seemed to pierce through the baffling noises of the night as a ray of light pierces through darkness, albeit that there was excitement in her tones, and her speech was, interspersed with breathless pauses.

"I have been rude; but you insisted upon my rudeness, now you are offended by it. So be it—let me say something else! I don't much believe now in all the sentiment that used to seem so noble to me about forgetting oneself. No thoughtful person *can* forget himself, and no candid person says he has done it. What we need is to think *more* of ourselves—to think so much of ourselves that all aims but the highest are beneath us—are impossible to our own dignity. What we chiefly need is ambition."

She stopped to take breath. It seemed to Alec she came near enough to see him as she continued. He could think of nothing, however, but what she was saying. He felt instinctively that it was because of haste and some cause of excitement, not in spite of them, that this lady could speak as she now did.

"Christianity appeals to self-regard as the motive of our best action," she went on, giving out her words in short sentences, "so there must be a self-regard which is good—too

good to degrade itself to worldly ends; too good even to be a part of that amalgam—the gold of unselfishness and the alloy of selfishness—which makes the *ordinary* motive of the *ordinary* good man.”

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Her voice seemed to vibrate with scorn on the emphasized words.

"If we desired to live nearer heaven—" she said, and then she stopped.

Alec turned perforce to tell her, what she must now perceive, that he was still close to them; but this impulse was checked by a sudden thought. Was she not addressing himself? Was there another man now with her?

He stopped, looked backward, listened. He was quite alone with the lady, who went past him now, only looking, as she walked, to see why he was tarrying. In his fierce young loyalty to her he took for granted, without question or proof, that her escort had deserted her in revenge for her disdain. He would willingly have gone back to fetch him up, but the impossibility of finding a man who did not wish to be found, the impossibility, as it seemed to him, of letting her go further alone, the boorishness of calling after her—all this constrained him to follow. He ran to make his communication gently, and, as he ran, courage to make it failed him. He thought of her as delicately accustomed to incessant protection. At the thought of letting her know that she was telling her thoughts to a stranger, that she was alone at such hour and place with him, his throat swelled. He hated to speak words that would be so hateful to her; and when he came by her side breathless, and she spoke to him again, he walked on, waiting till she should stop, trying to formulate what he had to say, listening and watching intently for some sign of the recreant. Again speaking as though she must unburden her mind, she turned into the lane. Over its fences he peered down the dark main road, but neither in flash nor interval could the other man be seen. He had not the slightest notion what the lady was saying now; lofty philosophy or practical sarcasm it might be, it was all lost in his exaggerated idea of what her fear and dismay would be when he spoke.

Before he had a chance to speak, however, he saw, in dark outline, the building of the farm to which he supposed her to be going. It would be a thousand times better to conduct her in silence to the door, which was now so near. To tell her before could serve no end, for even if she should wish to return to seek her late companion she could there obtain an escort. So, with feeling of guiltiness in the part he was acting, and in the surly silence he assumed, Alec let her lead up the lane she must know better than he. Her previous speeches, which he had followed so closely, were only remembered now to give food for conjecture as to who she might be and what relation she held to her late companion. The interest in his own journey and its extraordinary object were lost for the time in the excitement of his knight-errantry.

He was astonished to see that the house, as they neared it, showed no sign of life and light. The lady, whether inmate or guest, must surely be expected; but the very roofs of the house and huge barns seemed to droop in slumber, so black was the whole place and closely shut. Alec was looking out for the house gate in order to step forward and open it, when, to his utter surprise, he saw that the lady with haste passed it, and went on toward the hill.

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He stopped with hand on the gate and called her.

“What is the matter?” she asked, checking her walk. “Are you ill? What is it?”

He supposed that his strange voice would tell her all, but, although she was evidently puzzled, to his further astonishment, she did not realise that he was a stranger.

“Why do you speak like that?” she asked. And she talked on rapidly about some waggon she expected to find at the foot of the path. She went on, in fact, as if unable to endure the loss of time; and he, thinking of the waggon and waggoner as a further point of safety for her, ran after. In a minute they both came out of the lane on a small common. Here were two horses tied under a tree and an open waggon with its shafts laid down.

“Call the man,” she said.

To Alec’s call a man came sleepily from a small barn that was near. He said he had brought about a dozen women in the waggon, and they had gone up the hill. Impatiently she demanded of him how long it was since they had started to walk, and heard it was about a quarter of an hour. She went on once more, with what seemed to Alec incredible speed. But this time he gave way to no further indecision. Where she had darted under the trees he followed in her path.

They were just under the covert of the first trees on a steep footpath when he stopped her, and above him she turned, listening. The scent of moss and fern and overhanging leaf was sweet. So perfect a woodland bower was the place, so delicate did the lady seem to his imagination, that he wished he could tell his concern for her alarm and readiness to devote himself to her cause. But when he saw her shrink from him, he could only stand awkwardly, tell her in a few clumsy words that he and the other man had changed places, he did not know how, and he had thought to take her to the farm.

“Your voice is very like his,” she said, looking at him strangely.

But he now knew certainly, what for the last hour had seemed to him almost impossible, that in very truth the religious assembly was to take place that night; and the thought of it, and of the strange excitement with which others had gone before them on that same path took from Alec, and, he supposed, from the lady also, the power to give much consideration to their own strange encounter. When he had told her of the time he had seen old Cameron at prayer in the lone wintry fields, and how far he had just walked to see him again in the strange conditions of to-night, they climbed on together.

CHAPTER XXII.

There is nothing of which men take less heed than the infection of emotion, a thing as real as that mysterious influence which in some diseases leaps forth from one to another till all are in the same pain. With the exception, perhaps, of the infection of fear, which societies have learnt to dread by tragic experience, man still fondly supposes that his emotions are his own, that they must rise and fall within himself, and does not know that they can be taken in full tide from another and imparted again without decrease of force. May God send a healthful spirit to us all! for good or evil, we are part of one another.

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There were a good many people who went up the mountain that night to find the enthusiasts, each with some purpose of interference and criticism. They went secure in their own sentiments, but with minds tickled into the belief that they were to see and hear some strange thing. They saw and heard not much, yet they did not remain wholly their own masters. Perhaps the idea that Cameron's assembly would be well worth seeing was gleaned partly from the lingering storm, for an approaching storm breeds in the mind the expectation of exciting culmination, but long before the different seekers had found the meeting place, which was only known to the loyal-hearted, the storm, having spent itself elsewhere, had passed away.

There was an open space upon a high slope of the hill. Trees stood above it, below, around—high, black masses of trees. It was here old Cameron's company had gathered together. No woodland spot, in dark, damp night, ever looked more wholly natural and of earth than this. Sophia Rexford and Alec Trenholme, after long wandering, came to the edge of this opening, and stopped the sound of their own movements that they might look and listen. They saw the small crowd assembled some way off, but could not recognise the figures or count them. Listening intently, they heard the swaying of a myriad leaves, the drip of their moisture, the trickle of rivulets that the rain had started again in troughs of summer drought, and, amidst all these, the old man's voice in accents of prayer.

Even in her feverish eagerness to seek Winifred, which had sustained her so long, Sophia chose now to skirt the edge of the wood rather than cross the open. As they went through long grass and bracken, here and there a fallen log impeded their steps. A frog, disturbed, leaped before them in the grass; they knew what it was by the sound of its falls. Soon, in spite of the rustle of their walking, they began to hear the old man's words.

It seemed that he was repeating such passages of Scripture as ascribe the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. Whether these were strung together in a prayer, or whether he merely gave them forth to the night air as the poetry on which he fed his soul, they could not tell. The night was much lighter now than when the storm hung over. They saw Cameron standing on a knoll apart from his company, his face upturned to the cloudy sky. Beyond him, over the lower ranks of trees, the thunder cloud they had feared was still visible, showing its dark volume in the southern sky by the frequent fiery shudderings which flashed through its length and depth; but it had swept away so far that no sound of its thunder touched their air; and the old man looked, not at it but at the calm, cloud-wrapped sky above.

"The Son of Man is coming in the clouds of heaven with power, and great glory."

The words fell upon the silence that was made up of the subdued sounds of nature; it seemed to breathe again with them; while their minds had time to be taken captive by the imagery. Then he cried,

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“He shall send His angels with a trumpet, and a great voice, and they shall gather the elect upon the four winds. Two shall be in the fields; one shall be taken and the other left.” He suddenly broke off the recitation with a heartpiercing cry. “My Lord and my God! Let none of Thy children here be left. Let none of those loved ones, for whom they have come here to entreat Thee, be among those who are left. Let it suffice Thee, Lord, that these have come to meet Thee on Thy way, to ask Thee that not one of their beloved may be passed over now, when Thou comest—*Now!*”

The last word was insistent. And then he passed once more into the prayer that had been the burden of his heart and voice on the night that Alec had first met him. That seemed to be the one thought of his poor crazed brain—“Come, Lord Jesus!”

The little band were standing nearer the trees on the upper side of the open. They seemed to be praying. Sophia came to the end of the straggling line they formed, and there halted, doubtful. She did not advance to claim her sister; she was content to single out her childish figure as one of a nearer group. She tarried, as a worshipper who, entering church at prayer-time, waits before walking forward. Alec stood beside his unknown lady, whose servitor he felt himself to be, and looked about him with no common interest. About thirty people were clad in white; there were a few others in ordinary clothes; but it was impossible to tell just how many of these latter were there or with what intent they had come. A young man in dark clothes, who stood near the last comers peered at them very curiously: Alec saw another man sitting under a tree, and gained the impression, from his attitude, that he was suffering or perplexed. It was all paltry and pitiful outwardly, and yet, as he looked about, observing this, what he saw had no hold on his mind, which was occupied with Cameron’s words; and under their influence, the scene, and the meaning of the scene, changed as his mood changed in sympathy.

A hymn began to rise. One woman’s voice first breathed it; other voices mingled with hers till they were all singing. It was a simple, swaying melody in glad cadence. The tree boughs rocked with it on the lessening wind of the summer night, till, with the cumulative force of rising feeling, it seemed to expand and soar, like incense from a swinging censer, and, high and sweet, to pass, at length through the cloudy walls of the world. The music, the words, of this song had no more of art in them than the rhythmic cry of waves that ring on some long beach, or the regular pulsations of the blood that throbs audibly, telling our sudden joys. Yet, natural as it was, it was far more than any other voice of nature; for in it was the human soul, that can join itself to other souls in the search for God; and so complete was the lack of form in the yearning, that this soul came forth, as it were, unclothed, the more touching because in naked beauty.

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“Soon you will see your Saviour coming,
In the air.”

So they sang. This, and every line, was repeated many times. It was only by repetition that the words, with their continuity of meaning, grew in ignorant ears.

“All the thoughts of your inmost spirit
Will be laid bare,
If you love Him, He will make you
White and fair.”

Then the idea of the first line was taken up again, and then again, with renewed hope and exultation in the strain.

“Hark! you may hear your Saviour coming.”

It was a well-known Adventist hymn which had often roused the hearts of thousands when rung out to the air in the camp meetings of the northern States; but to those who heard it first to-night it came as the revelation of a new reality. As the unveiling of some solid marble figure would transform the thought of one who had taken it, when swathed, for a ghost or phantom, so did the heart's desire of these singers stand out now with such intensity as to give it objective existence to those who heard their song.

Into the cloud-walled heaven they all looked. It is in such moments that a man knows himself.

Old Cameron, lifting up his strong, voice again, was bewailing the sin of the world. “We sinners have not loved Thee, O Christ. We have not trusted Thy love. We have not been zealous for Thy glory. This—this is our sin. All else Thou would'st have mended in us; but this—this is our sin. Have mercy! Have mercy! Have mercy!” Long confession came from him slowly, bit by bit, as if sent forth, in involuntary cries, from a heart rent by the disappointment of waiting. In strong voice, clear and true, he made himself one with the vilest in this pleading, and all the vices with which the soul of man has degraded itself were again summed up by him in this—“We have not loved Thee. We have not trusted Thy love. We are proud and vain; we have loved ourselves, not Thee.”

How common the night was—just like any other night! The clouds, as one looked at them, were seen to swing low, showing lighter and darker spaces. How very short a time can we endure the tensest mood! It is like a branding iron, which though it leaves its mark forever, cannot be borne long. The soul relaxes; the senses reclaim their share of us.



Some men came rather rudely out from under the trees, and loitered near. Perhaps all present, except Cameron, noticed them. Alec did; and felt concerning them, he knew not why, uneasy suspicion. He noticed other things now, although a few minutes before he had been insensible to all about him. He saw that the lady he waited upon had dropped her face into her hands; he saw that her disdainful and independent mood was melted. Strangely enough, his mind wandered back again to her first companion, and he wondered that she had not sent back for him or mourned his absence. He was amazed now at his own assumption

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that design, not accident, had caused such desertion. He could almost have started in his solicitude, to seek the missing man, such was the rebound of his mind. Yet to all this he only gave vagrant thoughts, such as we give to our fellows in church. The temple of the night had become a holy place, and his heart was heavy—perhaps for his old friend, standing there with uplifted face, perhaps on account of the words he was uttering, perhaps in contrition. In a few minutes he would go forward, and take the old preacher by the arm, and try, as he had once tried before, to lead him to rest and shelter from so vain an intensity of prayer. But just now he would wait to hear the words he said. He could not but wait, for so dull, so silent, did all things remain, that the earnestness of the expectant band made itself felt as an agony of hope waning to despair.

Absorbed in this, Alec heard what came to him as harsh profane speech; and yet it was not this; it was the really modest address of a young man who felt constrained to speak to him.

“I don’t know,” he said nervously (his accent was American), “who *you* may be, but I just wish to state that I’ve a sort of notion one of those fellows right down there means mischief to one of these poor ladies in white, who is his wife. I ain’t very powerful myself, but, I take it, you’re pretty strong, aren’t you?”

Alec gave impatient assent; but the men whom he was asked to watch approached no nearer to the women but remained behind the preacher.

All this time old Cameron prayed on, and while it might be that hope in his followers was failing, in his voice there was increasing gladness and fervour.

The clouds above shifted a little. To those wrapped in true anticipation their shifting was as the first sign of a descending heaven. Somewhere behind the thick clouds there was a crescent moon, and when in the upper region of the sky a rift was made in the deep cloud cover, though she did not shine through, the sky beyond was lit by her light, and the upper edges of cloud were white as snow.

As the well of clear far light was opened to the old man’s gaze, his prayer stopped suddenly, and he stood only looking upwards. They did not see so much as know from the manner in which his voice had failed, that for him, at least, there were moments of ecstasy in the assurance of hope.

“Poor fellow!” muttered Alec under his breath, for he felt the poignant disappointment of the awakening.

A sweet sound made some of them turn an instant toward the wood, for a little bird, disturbed in its hiding there, lilted forth a twittering song of joy.

Its notes had not ceased when Alec heard a gasp of terror from the lady near him, and saw, as one sees an act there is no time to avert, that one of the rough fellows who were standing behind the old man had suddenly struck him down by a savage blow upon the head.

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Alec Trenholme ran and sprang upon the man who had struck the blow. Some other man, he did not see which, wrested the club from the fellow's hand. In the moments Alec was grappling with him he became conscious that the old man lying near his feet on the grass was more to him than revenge, and, with the caprice of a boy who turns from what interests him less to what interests him more, he contented himself with hurling the assailant from him, so that he fell heavily down the sloping ground to where his companions stood. Then Alec pushed others aside and lifted the wounded man.

Wounded? His hair was wet with warm blood. There was something done—a good deal done, by many people—to restore him. Alec remembered afterwards that the young man who had previously spoken to him had been active, showing a more personal solicitude than was seen in the awed kindness even of the women. One lives through such scenes with little real perception of their details. He knew at last for certain that he put his burden from him, and throwing himself down laid his ear on the broad, muscular breast. Long as he listened, there was no movement there. The mad old preacher was dead.

CHAPTER XXIII.

When Alec Trenholme rose from the dead man's side he felt his shoulder taken hold of by a familiar hand. He knew at once that it was his brother. It was quite what he would have expected, that Robert should be there; it was surely his business to come after straying sheep.

The manslayer, awed and sobered by finding what he had done, had been easily overpowered. Even his comrades helped to bind him. He was a poor creature at best, and was now in the misery that comes with sudden reaction from the exaltation of strong drink.

Alec saw that his brother was limping, that he seemed in actual pain; he was anxious to know how this was, yet he did not say so. He asked rather if Robert thought that the old man had consciously awakened from his trance of expectation, and they both, in spite of all that pressed, stooped with a lantern some one had lit to look again at the dead face. Just as he might have looked when the heavens seemed to open above him, so he looked now. They talked together, wondering who he really was, as men find words for what is easiest to say, although not relevant to the moment's necessity.

So absorbing is the interest of death to those who live in peaceful times that, now that there was a lamp, all there required to slake their curiosity by lingering gaze and comment before they would turn away. Even the prisoner, when he saw the lantern flashed near the face of the dead, demanded to be allowed to look before they led him down the hill. His poor wife, who had expected his violence to fall only on herself, kept by him, hysterically regretting that she had not been the victim.

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Yet, although all this had taken place, it was only a short time before the energy of a few, acting upon the paralysed will of others, had cleared the ground. The white-dressed women crossed the open to the descending path, huddling together as they walked, their eyes perforce upon the rough ground over which they must pick their steps. There was many a rift now in the breaking clouds above them, but only a few turned an upward passionate glance. Sophia moved away in their midst. Seeing her thus surrounded, Alec did not feel that he need approach.

"I don't know who she is," he said, pointing her out to Robert. "I happened, in a queer way, to come up here with her." He paused a moment. Some sentiment such as that she was a queen among women was in his mind, but it did not rise to his lips. "She would like your help better than mine," he added. "If you will see that she and her little sister are taken care of, I will stay here"—he gave a gesture toward the corpse—"till a stretcher comes."

"I will do my best to take care of them all," Robert Trenholme answered with a sigh.

Old McNider and his little boy walked behind the women. Robert, limping as he went, lifted the sleepy child in his arms and joined himself to the company. They went under the dripping trees, down, down the dark, slippery path. The white robes hardly glimmered in the darkness. Some of the women wept; some of them held religious conversation, using such forms of expression as grow up among certain classes of pious, people and jar terribly on unaccustomed ears. Those who talked at this time had less depth of character than those who were silent, and there was evinced in their conversation a certain pride of resistance to criticism—that is, they wished to show that if what they had looked for had not come that night, their expectation of it had been reasonable, and that their greatest hopes would shortly be realised to the confounding of unbelievers. They did not know the manner of their spirit. Few who indulge in demonstration of piety as a relief to feeling ever perceive how easily the natural passions can flow into this channel.

Jesus wished to try their faith, said they, but they would not cast away their lamps; no, they must keep them trimmed and burning. They could not live unless they felt that dear Jesus might come for them any night.

"Blessed be His holy Name!" cried one. "When He comes the world will see Him Whom they have despised, and His saints they have looked down on, too, reignin' together in glory. Yes, glory be to Jesus, there'll be a turnin' of the tables soon."

To Trenholme it seemed that they bandied about the sacred name. He winced each time.

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One woman, with more active intellect than some of the rest, began to dilate on the signs already in the world which proved the Second Advent was near. Her tone was not one of exulted feeling, but of calm reason. Her desire was evidently to strengthen her sisters who might be cast down. In her view all the ages of the history of the vast human race were seen in the natural perspective which makes things that are near loom larger than all that is far. The world, she affirmed, was more evil than it had ever been. In the Church there was such spiritual death as never before. The few great revivals there were showed that now the poor were being bidden from the highways to the marriage feast. And above all else, it was now proved that the coming of the Lord was nigh, because bands of the elect everywhere were watching and waiting for the great event. Her speech was well put forth in the midst of the weary descent. She did not say more than was needed. If there were drooping hearts among her friends they were probably cheered.

Then some more emotional talkers took up the exultant strain again. It was hard for Trenholme not to estimate the inner hearts of all these women by the words that he heard, and therefore to attribute all the grace of the midnight hour to the dead.

When they got to the bottom of the hill, the farmer, at the request of men who had gone first, had another waggon in readiness to take home the women who had come to the hill on foot or who had sent away their vehicles. Many of them did not belong to the village of Chellaston. It was evidently better that the lighter waggon which had come from Chellaston should go round now to the outlying farms, and that all the villagers should return in that provided by the farmer. Trenholme put in the child, who was now sleeping, and helped in the women, one by one. Their white skirts were wet and soiled; he felt this as he aided them to dispose them on the straw which had been put in for warmth. The farmer, an Englishman, made some wise, and not uncivil, observations upon the expediency of remaining at home at dead of night as compared with ascending hills in white frocks. He was a kind man, but his words made Winifred's tears flow afresh. She shrank behind the rest. Trenholme kissed her little cold hand when he had put her in. Then, last of all, he helped Sophia.

She had no words ready now to offer him by which to make amends. "You have hurt your foot?" she said.

He told her briefly that his foot had twisted under him, so that at first he had not been able to come on for the sprain, and he clasped her hand as he bade the waggon drive on.

Feeling the lack of apology on her own part she thought he had shown himself the greater, in that he had evidently pardoned her without it.

He did not feel himself to be great.

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The cart jolted away. Trenholme stood in the farmyard. The light of a lantern made a little flare about the stable door. The black, huge barns, around seemed to his weary sense oppressive in their nearness. The waggon disappeared down the dark lane. The farmer talked more roughly, now that kindness no longer restrained him, of the night's event. Trenholme leaned against a white-washed wall, silent but not listening. He almost wondered he did not faint with the pain in his ankle; the long strain he had put upon the hurt muscle rendered it almost agonising, but faintness did not come: it seldom does to those who sigh for it, as for the wings of a dove, that they may go far away with it and be at rest. The farmer shut the stable door, put out the light, and Trenholme limped out the house with him to wait for his brother.

CHAPTER XXIV.

All this time Alec was walking, like a sentry, up and down beside the old man's corpse. He was not alone. When the others had gone he found that the young American had remained with him. He came back from the lower trees whence he had watched the party disappear.

"Come to think of it," he said, "I'll keep you company."

Something in his manner convinced Alec that this was no second thought; he had had no intention of leaving. He was a slight fellow, and, apparently too tired now to wish to stand or walk longer, he looked about him for a seat. None offered in the close vicinity of the corpse and Alec, its sentinel; but, equal to his own necessity, he took a newspaper from his pocket, folded it into a small square, laid it on the wet beaten grass, and sat thereon, arching his knees till only the soles of his boots touched the ground. To Alec's eye his long, thin figure looked so odd, bent into this repeated angle, that he almost suspected burlesque, but none was intended. The youth clasped his hands round his knees, the better to keep himself upright, and seated thus a few yards from the body, he shared the watch for some time as mute as was all else in that silent place.

Alec's curiosity became aroused. At last he hesitated in his walk.

"You are from the States?"

"Well, yes; I am. But I reckon I'm prouder of my country than it has reason to be of me. I'm down in the mouth to-night—that's a fact."

A fine description of sorrow would not have been so eloquent, but exactly what he sorrowed for Alec did not know. It could hardly be for the death merely.

Alec paced again. He had made himself an uneven track in the ragged grass. Had the lineaments of the dead been more clearly seen, death would have had a stronger

influence; but even as it was, death, darkness, and solitude had a language of their own, in which the hearts of the two men shared more or less.

At length the American spoke, arresting Alec's walk.

"See here," he said, "if what they say is true—and as far as I know it is—he's got up from being dead *once* already."

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The emphasis on the word “once” conveyed the suggestion which had evidently just occurred to him.

“Oh, I know all about *that* story.” Alec spoke with the scorn of superior information, casting off the disagreeable suggestion. “I was there myself.”

“You were, were you? Well, so was I, and I tell you I know no more than babe unborn whether this old gentleman’s Cameron or not.”

Alec’s mind was singularly free from any turn for speculative thought. He intended to bring Bates to see the dead in the morning, and that would decide the matter. He saw no sense in debating a question of fact.

“I was one of the fellows in that survey,” explained Harkness, “and if you’re the fellow we saw at the station, as I reckon you are, then I don’t know any more about this old gentleman I’ve been housing than you do.”

Trenholme had an impulse to command silence, but, resisting it, only kept silence himself and resumed his tread over the uneven ground.

“’Tisn’t true,” broke in the other again, in unexpected denial of his own words, “that that’s all I know. I know something more; ’tisin’t much, perhaps, but as I value my soul’s salvation, I’ll say it here. Before I left the neighbourhood of Turrifs, I heard of this old gentleman here a-making his way round the country, and I put in currency the report that he was Cameron, and I’ve no doubt that that suggestion made the country folks head him off towards Turrifs Station as far as they could influence his route; and that’ll be how he came there at Christmas time. Look you here! I didn’t know then, and I don’t know now, whether he *was* or *wasn’t*—I didn’t think he was—but for a scheme I had afoot I set that idea going. I did it by telegraphing it along the line, as if I’d been one of the operators. The thing worked better than I expected.”

Alec listened without the feeling of interest the words were expected to arouse. To his mind a fellow who spoke glibly about his soul’s salvation was either silly or profane. He had no conception that this man, whose way of regarding his own feelings, and whose standard of propriety as to their expression, differed so much from his own, was, in reality, going through a moral crisis.

“Well?” said he.

“Well, I guess that’s about all I have to say.”

“If you don’t know anything more, I don’t see that you’ve told me anything.” He meant, anything worth telling, for he did not feel that he had any interest with the other’s tricks or schemes.



"I do declare," cried Harkness, without heeding his indifference, "I'm just cut up about this night's affair; I never thought Job would set on anyone but his wife. I do regret I brought this good old gentleman to this place. If some one offered me half Bates's land now, I wouldn't feel inclined to take it."

Trenholme returned to his pacing, but when he had passed and re-passed, he said, "Cameron doesn't seem to have been able to preach and pray like an educated man; but Bates is here, he will see him to-morrow, and if he doesn't claim the body, the police will advertise. Some one must know who the old man is."

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The words that came in return seemed singularly irrelevant. "What about the find of asbestos the surveyor thought he'd got on the hills where Bates's clearing is? Has Bates got a big offer for the land?"

"He has had some correspondence about it," said Trenholme, stiffly.

"He'll be a rich man yet," remarked the American, gloomily. "Asbestos mines are piling in dollars, I can tell you. It's a shame, to my mind, that a snapping crab-stick like that old Bates should have it all." He rose as with the irritation of the idea, but appeared arrested as he looked down at the dead man. "And when I think how them poor ladies got their white skirts draggled, I do declare I feel cut up to that extent I wouldn't care for an asbestos mine if somebody came and offered it to me for nothing this minute."

Then, too absorbed in feeling to notice the bathos of his speech, he put his hands in his pockets, and began strolling up and down a beat of his own, a few yards from the track Trenholme had made, and on the other side of the dead.

As they walked at different paces, and passing each other at irregular times, perhaps the mind of each recurred to the remembrance of the other ghostly incident and the rumour that the old man had already risen once. The open spot of sloping ground surrounded by high black trees, which had been so lately trodden by many feet, seemed now the most desolate of desolate places. The hymn, the prayer, that had arisen there seemed to leave in the air only that lingering influence which past excitement lends to its acute reaction.

A sudden sharp crack and rustling, coming from out the gloom of the trees, startled them.

"Ho!" shouted the American. "Stand! Is there any one there?"

And Alec in his heart called him a fool for his pains, and yet he himself had not been less startled. Nothing more was heard. It was only that time—time, that mysterious medium through which circumstance comes to us from the source of being; that river which, unseen, unfelt, unheard, flows onward everywhere—had just then brought the moment for some dead branch to fall.

END OF BOOK II.

BOOK III.

"Nothing is inexorable but Love."

CHAPTER I.

That which is to be seen of any event, its causes and consequences, is never important compared with the supreme importance of those unseen workings of things physical and things spiritual which are the heart of our life. The iceberg of the northern seas is less than its unseen foundations; the lava stream is less than the molten sea whence it issues; the apple falling to the ground, and the moon circling in her orbit, are less than the great invisible force which controls their movements and the movements of all the things that do appear. The crime is not so great as its motive, nor yet as its results; the beneficent deed is not so great as the beneficence of which it is but a fruit; yet we cannot see beneficence, nor motives, nor far-reaching results. We cannot see the greatest forces, which in hidden places, act and counteract to bring great things without observation; we see some broken fragments of their turmoil which now and again are cast up within our sight.

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Notwithstanding this, which we all know, the average man feels himself quite competent to observe and to pass judgment on all that occurs in his vicinity. In the matter of the curious experience which the sect of the Adventists passed through in Chellaston, the greater part of the community formed prompt judgment, and in this judgment the chief element was derision.

The very next day, in the peaceful Sunday sunshine, the good people of Chellaston (and many of them were truly good) spent their breath in expatiating upon the absurdity of those who had met with the madman upon the mountain to pray for the descent of heaven. It was counted a good thing that a preacher so dangerously mad was dead; and it was considered as certain that his followers would now see their folly in the same light in which others saw it. It was reported as a very good joke that when one white-clad woman had returned to her home, wan and weary, in the small hours of the night, her husband had refused to let her in, calling to her from an upper window that *his wife* had gone to have a fly with the angels, and he did not know who *she* might be. Another and coarser version of the same tale was, that he had taken no notice of her, but had called to his man that the white cow had got loose and ought to be taken back into the paddock. Both versions were considered excellent in the telling. Many a worthy Christian, coming out of his or her place of worship, chuckled over the wit of this amiable husband, and observed, in the midst of laughter, that his wife, poor thing, had only got her deserts.

In the earlier hours of that Sunday morning rumour had darted about, busily telling of the sudden freak the drunkard's violence had taken, and of Father Cameron's death. Many a version of the story was brought to the hotel, but through them the truth sifted, and the people there heard what had really occurred. Eliza heard, for one, and was a good deal shocked. Still, as the men about the place remarked that it was a happy release for Father Cameron, who had undoubtedly gone to heaven, and that it was an advantage, too, to Job's wife, who would now be saved from further torment at her husband's hands, her mind became acquiescent. For herself, she had no reason to be sorry the old man was dead. It was better for him; it was better for her, too. So, without inward or outward agitation, she directed the morning business of the house, setting all things in such order that she, the guiding hand of it all, might that afternoon take holiday.

Some days before she had been invited by Mrs. Rexford to spend this afternoon with them and take tea. Then, as it was said that Principal Trenholme, in spite of a sprained ankle, had insisted upon taking the Church services as usual, all the fine ladies at the hotel intended to go and hear him preach in the evening. Eliza would go too. This programme was highly agreeable to her, more so than exciting amusement which would have pleased other girls better. Although nothing would have drawn expression of the fact from her, in the bottom of her deeply ambitious heart she felt honoured by the invitations Miss Rexford obtained for her, and appreciated to the full their value. She also knew the worth of suitable attendance at church.

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Sunday was always a peaceful day at Chellaston. Much that was truly godly, and much that was in truth worldly, combined together to present a very respectable show of sabbath-keeping. The hotel shared in the sabbath quiet, especially in the afternoon, when most people were resting in their rooms.

About three o'clock Eliza was ready to go to her room on the third story to dress for the afternoon. This process was that day important, for she put on a new black silk gown. It was beflounced and befrilled according to the fashion of the time. When she had arranged it to a nicety in her own room, she descended to one of the parlours to survey herself in the pier-glass. No one was there. The six red velvet chairs and the uniform sofa stood in perfect order round the room. The table, with figured cloth, had a large black Bible on it as usual. On either side of the long looking-glass was a window, in which the light of day was somewhat dulled by coarse lace curtains. Abundance of light there was, however, for Eliza's purpose. She shut the door, and pushed aside the table which held the Bible, the better to show herself to herself in the looking-glass.

Eliza faced herself. She turned and looked at herself over one shoulder; then she looked over the other shoulder. As she did so, the curving column of her white neck was a thing a painter might have desired to look at, had he been able to take his eyes from the changeful sheen on her glossy red hair. But there was no painter there, and Eliza was looking at the gown. She walked to the end of the room, looking backward over her shoulder. She walked up the room toward the mirror, observing the moving folds of the skirt as she walked. She went aside, out of the range of the glass, and came into it again to observe the effect of meeting herself as though by chance, or rather, of meeting a young woman habited in such a black silk gown, for it was not in herself precisely that Eliza was at the moment interested. She did not smile at herself, or meet her own eyes in the glass. She was gravely intent upon looking as well as she could, not upon estimating how well she looked.

The examination was satisfactory. Perhaps a woman more habituated to silk gowns and mantua-makers would have found small wrinkles in sleeve or shoulder; but Eliza was pleased. If the gown was not perfect, it was as good a one as she was in the habit of seeing, even upon gala occasions. And she had no intention of keeping her gown for occasions; her intention was that it should be associated with her in the ordinary mind of the place. Now that she was fortunate enough to possess silk (and she was determined this should only be the forerunner of a succession of such gowns) people should think of her as Miss White, who wore silk in the afternoons. She settled this as she saw how well the material became her. Then, with grave care, she arranged a veil round the black bonnet she wore, and stood putting on new gloves preparatory to leaving the room. Eliza was not very imaginative; but had she been disposed to foresee events, much as she might have harassed herself, she would not have been more likely to hit upon the form to be taken by the retributive fate she always vaguely feared than are the poor creatures enslaved by fearful imaginations.

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The door opened, and Harkness thrust his handsome head into the room. He was evidently looking for her. When he saw her he came in hastily, shutting the door and standing with his back to it, as if he did not care to enter further.

Eliza had not seen him that day. After what had happened, she rather dreaded the next interview, as she did not know what he might find to say; but the instant she saw him, she perceived that it was something more decisive than he had ever shown sign of before. He looked tired, and at the same time as if his spirit was upwrought within him and his will set to some purpose.

"I'm real glad to see you," he said, but not pleasantly. "I've been looking for you; and it's just as well for you I found you without more ado."

"I'm just going out," said Eliza; "I can't stay now."

"You'll just stop a bit where you are, and hear what I'm going to say."

"I can't," said she, angrily; but he was at the door, and she made no movement towards it.

He talked right on. "I'm going away," he said. "I've packed up all that I possess here in this place, and I'm going to depart by this afternoon's train. No one much knows of this intention. I take it you won't interfere, so I don't mind confiding my design to your *kind* and *sympathetic* breast."

The emphasis he laid on the eulogy was evidently intended for bitter sarcasm. Anger gave her unwonted glibness.

"I'll ask you to be good enough to pay our bill, then. If you're making off because you can't pay your other debts it's no affair of mine."

He bowed mockingly. "You are real kind. Can't think how much obliged I am for your tactful reminder; but it don't happen to be my financial affairs that I came to introduce to your notice." He stammered a moment, as if carried rather out of his bearings by his own loquacity. "It's—it's rather *your* finances that I wish to enlarge upon."

She opposed herself to him in cold silence that would not betray a gleam of curiosity.

"You're a mighty fine young lady, upon my word!" he observed, running his eye visibly over her apparel. "Able to work for yourself, and buy silk skirts, and owning half a bit of ground that people are beginning to think will be worth something considerable when they get to mining there. Oh, you're a fine one—what with your qualities and your fortune!"

A sudden unbecoming colour came with tell-tale vehemence over her cheek and brow.

"Your qualities of mind, as I've remarked, are fine; but the qualities of your heart, my dear, are finer still. I've been making love to you, with the choicest store of loving arts, for eight long months; and the first blush I've been enabled to raise on your lovely countenance is when I tell you you've more money than you looked for! You're a tender-hearted young lady!"

"The only train I ever heard of on Sunday afternoon goes pretty soon," she said; and yet there was now an eager look of curiosity in her eyes that belied her words.

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He took no notice of her warning, but resumed now with mock apology. "But I'm afraid I'm mistaken in the identity. Sorry to disappoint you, but the estate I allude to belongs to Miss Cameron, who lived near a locality called Turrif's Station. Beg pardon, forgot for the moment your name was White, and that you know nothing about that interesting and historic spot."

Perhaps because she had played the part of indifference so long, it seemed easiest to her, even in her present confusion of mind; at any rate she remained silent.

"Pity you weren't her, isn't it?" He showed all his white teeth. He had been pale at first, but in talking the fine dark red took its wonted place in his cheeks. He had tossed back his loose smoke-coloured hair with a nervous hand. His dark beauty never showed to better advantage as he stood leaning back on the door. "Pity you aren't her, isn't it?" he repeated, smilingly.

She had no statuesque pose, but she had assumed a look of insensibility almost equal to that of stone.

"Come to think of it, even if you were her, you'd find it hard to say so now; so, either way, I reckon you'll have to do without the tin. 'Twould be real awkward to say to all your respectable friends that you'd been sailing under false colours; that 'White' isn't your *bona fide* cognomen; that you'd deserted a helpless old woman to come away; and as to *how you left your home*—the sort of *carriage* you took to, my dear, and how you got over the waggoner to do the work of a sexton—Oh, my, fine tale for Chellaston, that! No, my dear young lady, take a fatherly word of admonition; your best plan is to make yourself easy without the tin."

He looked at her, even now, with more curiosity than malice in his smiling face. A power of complete reserve was so foreign to his own nature that without absolute proof he could not entirely believe it in her. The words he was speaking might have been the utter nonsense to her that they would have been to any but the girl who was lost from the Bates and Cameron clearing for all hint she gave of understanding. He worked on his supposition, however. He had all the talking to himself.

"You're mighty secret! Now, look at me. I'm no saint, and I've come here to make a clean breast of that fact. When I was born, Uncle Sam said to me, 'Cyril P. Harkness, you're a son of mine, and it's your vocation to worship the God of the Pilgrim Fathers and the Almighty Dollar'; and I piped up, 'Right you are, uncle.' I was only a baby then." He added these last words reflectively, as if pondering on the reminiscence, and gained the object of his foolery—that she spoke.

"If you mean to tell me that you're fond of money, that's no news. I've had sense to see *that*. If you thought I'd a mine belonging to me somewhere that accounts for the affection you've been talking of so much. I *begin to believe* in it now."

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She meant her words to be very cutting, but she had not much mobility of voice or glance; and moreover, her heart was like lead within her; her words fell heavily.

“Just so,” said he, bowing as if to compliment her discrimination. “You may believe me, for I’m just explaining to you I’m not a saint, and that is a sentiment you may almost always take stock in when expressed by human lips. I was real sick last summer; and when I came to want a holiday I thought I’d do it cheap, so when I got wind of a walking party—a set of gentlemen who were surveying—I got them to let me go along. Camp follower I was, and ’twas first rate fun, especially as I was on the scent of what they were looking for. So then we came on asbestos in one part. Don’t know what that is, my dear? Never mind as to its chemical proportions; there’s dollars in it. Then we dropped down on the house of the gentleman that owned about half the hill. One of them was just dead, and he had a daughter, but she was lost, and as I was always mighty fond of young ladies, I looked for her. Oh, you may believe, I looked, till, when she was nowhere, I half thought the man who said she was lost had been fooling. Well, then, I—” (he stopped and drawled teasingly) “But *possibly* I intrude. Do you hanker after hearing the remainder of this history?”

She had sat down by the centre table with her back to him.

“You can go on,” she muttered.

“Thanks for your kind permission. I haven’t got much more to tell, for I don’t know to this mortal minute whether I’ve ever found that young lady or not; but I have my suspicions. Any way, that day away we went across the lake, and when the snow drove us down from the hills the day after, the folks near the railroad were all in a stew about the remains of Bates’s partner, the poppa of the young lady. His remains, having come there for burial, and not appearing to like the idea, had taken the liberty of stepping out on the edge of the evening, and hooking it. So said I, ‘What if that young lady was real enterprising! what if she got the waggoner to put her poppa under the soil of the forest, and rode on herself, grand as you please, in his burial casket!’ (That poor waggoner drank himself to death of remorse, but that was nothing to her.) The circumstances were confusing, and the accounts given by different folks were confusing, and, what’s more, ’tisn’t easy to believe in a sweet girl having her poppa buried quite secret; most young ladies is too delicate. Still, after a bit, the opinion I’ve mentioned did become my view of the situation; and I said to myself ‘Cyril, good dog; here’s your vocation quite handy. Find the young lady, find her, good fellow! Ingratiate yourself in her eyes, and you’ve got, not only an asbestos mine, but a wife of such smartness and enterprise as rarely falls to the lot of a rising young man.’ I didn’t blame her one bit for the part she had taken, for I’d seen the beast she’d have had to live with. No

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doubt her action was the properest she could take. And I thought if I came on her panting, flying, and offered her my protection, she'd fall down and adore me. So, to make a long tale short, I stopped a bit in that locality, hunting for her quite private after every one else had given up hunting. I heard of a daft old man who'd got about, the Lord only knows how, and I set the folks firmly believing that he was old Cameron. Well, *if* he was, then the girl was lost and dead; but if he *wasn't*—well, I twigged it she'd got on the railroad, and, by being real pleasant to all the car men, I found out, quite by the way and private, how she might have got on, and where any girl had got off, till by patience and perseverance I got on your track; and I've been eight months trying to fathom your deepness and win your affections. The more fool I! For to try to win what hasn't any more existence than the pot at the rainbow's tail is clear waste of time. Deep you are; but you haven't got any of the commodity of affection in your breast."

"Why didn't you tell me this before, like an honest man?" she asked; "and I'd have told you you didn't know as much as you thought you did." Her voice was a little thick; but it was expressionless.

"I'm not green. If you'd known you were possessed of money, d'you suppose you'd have stayed here to marry me? Oh no, I meant to get that little ceremony over first, and *spring the mine* on you for a wedding present *after*. The reason I've told you now is that I wouldn't marry you now, not if you'd ten millions of dollars in cash in your pocket."

"Why not? If I'm the person you take me for, I'm as rich and clever now." She still sat with her back to him; her voice so impassive that even interrogation was hardly expressed in words that had the form of a question.

"Yes, and you'd be richer and cleverer now with me, by a long chalk, than without me! If you'd me to say who you are, and that I'd known it all along, and how you'd got here, and to bring up the railroad fellows (I've got all their names) who noticed you to bear witness, your claim would look better in the eyes of the law. 'Twould look a deal better in the eyes of the world, too, to come as Mrs. Cyril P. Harkness, saying you had been Miss Cameron, than to come on the stage as Miss White, laying claim to another name; and it would be a long sight more comfortable to have me to support and cherish you at such a time than not to have a friend in the world except the folks whose eyes you've pulled the wool over, and who'll be mighty shocked. Oh, yes; by Jemima! you'd be richer and cleverer now with me than without me. But I'll tell you what I've come here to say"—his manner took a tone more serious; his mocking smile passed away; he seemed to pause to arrest his own lightness, and put on an unwonted dignity. "I tell you," he repeated slowly, "what I've come here to say—I do despise a young lady without

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a heart. Do you know what occurred last night? As good an old gentleman as ever lived was brutally felled to the earth and killed; a poor man who was never worse than a drunkard has become a murderer, and there's a many good pious ladies in this town who'll go about till death's day jeered at as fools. Would you like to be marked for a fool? No, you wouldn't and neither will they; and if you're the young lady I take you for, you could have hindered all this, *and* you didn't. I brought the old man to this place; I am to blame in that, my own self, I am; but I tell you, by the salvation of my soul, when I stood last night and heard him pray, and saw those poor ladies with their white garbs all bedraggled, around him praying, I said to myself, 'Cyril, you've reason to call on the rocks and hills to cover you,' and I had grace to be right down sorry. I'm right down ashamed, and so I'm going to pull up stakes and go back to where I came from; and I've come here now to tell you that after what I've seen of you in this matter I'd sooner die than be hitched with you. You've no more heart than my old shoe; as long as you get on it's all one to you who goes to the devil. You're not only as sharp as I took you for, but a good deal sharper. Go ahead; you'll get rich somehow; you'll get grand; but I want you to know that, though I'm pretty tricky myself, and 'cute enough to have thought of a good thing and followed it up pretty far, I've got a heart; and I do despise a person made of stone. I was *real* fond of you, for you far exceeded my expectations; but I'm not fond of you now one bit. If you was to go down on your bended knees and ask me to admire you now, I wouldn't."

She listened to all the sentence he pronounced upon her. When he had finished she asked a question. "What do you mean about going to law about the clearin'?"

"Your worthy friend, Mr. Bates, has arrived in this place this very day. He's located with the Principal, *he is*."

"He isn't here," she replied in angry scorn.

"All right. Just *as you please*."

"He isn't here," she said more sulkily.

"But *he is*."

She ignored his replies. "What do you mean about going to law about the land?"

"Why, I haven't got much time left,"—he was standing now with his watch in his hand—"but for the sake of old times I'll tell you, if you don't see through that. D'you suppose Bates isn't long-headed! He's heard about Father Cameron being here, and knowing the old man couldn't give an account of himself, he's come to see him and pretend he's your father. Of course he's no notion of you being here. He swears right and left that

you went over the hills and perished in the snow; and he's got up great mourning and lamenting, so I've heard, for your death. Oh, Jemima! Can't you see through that?"

"Tell me what you mean," she demanded, haughtily. She was standing again now.

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"Why, my dear, if you knew a bit more of the world you'd know that it meant that he intends to pocket all the money himself. And, what's more, he's got the best of the situation; for you left him of your own accord, my dear, and changed your name, and if you should surprise him now by putting in an appearance and saying you're the lost young lady, what's to hinder him saying you're *not* you, and keeping the tin? I don't know who's to swear to you, myself. The men round Turrif's said you were growing so fast that between one time and another they wouldn't know you. Worst, that is, of living in out-of-the-way parts—no one sees you often enough to know if you're you or if you're not you."

"It is not true," she cried. He had at last brought the flash to her eyes. She stood before him palpitating with passion. "You are a liar!" she said, intensely. "Mr. Bates is as honest as"—words failed her—"as—as honest and as good as *you* don't even know how to think of."

He was like a necromancer who, although triumphant at having truly raised a spirit by his incantations, quails mystified before it.

"Oh well, since you feel so badly about it I'll not say that you mayn't outwit him if you put in your claim. You needn't give up all for lost if he does try to face it out."

"Give up what for lost? Do you think I care about this old mine so much? I tell you, sooner than hear a tricky sharper like you say that Mr. Bates is as cunning as you are, I'd—I'd—" She did not say more, but she trembled with passion. "Go!" she concluded. "If you say I'm unfeeling, you say a thing I suppose is true enough; but you've said things to me this afternoon that are not true; and if there's a good honest man in this world, it's Mr. Bates. Sooner than not believe that I'd—sooner die."

The tears had welled up and overflowed her eyes. Her face was red and burning.

"Say, Eliza," he said, gently enough. He was more astonished than he could realise or express, but he was really troubled to see her cry.

"Oh, don't 'Eliza' me!" she cried, angrily. "You said you were going to go—go—go—I tell you, go! What business is it of yours, I'd like to know, to mention Mr. Bates to me? You've no business with either him or me."

"Upon my word! I'll take my gospel oath I've said no more than I do believe."

"I dare say not. You don't know what an honest man is, so how could you believe in one?"

"I've a real soft heart; I hate to see you cry, Eliza."

“Well, Mr. Bates hasn’t a soft heart at all; he’s as unkind as can be; but he’s as much above you, with all your softness, as light is above boot blacking.”

She was not good-looking in her tears. She was not modest in her anger; all the crude rude elements of her nature broke forth. She wrenched the door open although with obstinate strength he tried to keep it shut, desiring stupidly to comfort her. She cast him aside as a rough man might push a boy. When she was making her way upstairs he heard smothered sounds of grief and rage escaping from her.

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CHAPTER II.

When Eliza had been in her own room for about half an hour, her passion had subsided. She was not glad of this; in perverseness she would have recalled the tempest if she could, but she knew not what to call back or how to call. She knew no more what had disturbed her than in times of earthquake the sea water knows the cause of its unwonted surging. She sat angry and miserable; angry with Harkness, not because he had called her heartless—she did not care in the slightest for his praise or blame—but because he had been the bearer of ill tidings; and because he had in some way produced in her the physical and mental distress of angry passion, a distress felt more when passion is subsiding. She ranked it as ill tidings that her father's land had risen in value. She would rather that her worldly wisdom in leaving it had been proved by subsequent events than disproved, as now, by news which raised such a golden possibility before her ignorant eyes, that her heart was rent with pangs of envy and covetousness, while her pride warred at the very thought of stooping to take back what she had cast away, and all the disclosure that must ensue. Above all, she counted it ill tidings that Bates was reported to be in the place. She was as angry with him now as on the day she had left him—more angry—for now he could vaunt new prosperity as an additional reason why she had been wrong to go. Why had he come here to disturb and interrupt? What did the story about Father Cameron matter to him? She felt like a hunted stag at bay; she only desired strength and opportunity to trample the hunter.

Partly because she felt more able to deal with others than with the dull angry misery of her own heart, partly because she was a creature of custom, disliking to turn from what she had set out to do, she found herself, after about an hour of solitude, rearranging her street toilet to walk to Mrs. Rexford's house.

When she had made her way down to the lower flat of the hotel she found Harkness had spoken the truth in saying he intended to go, for he was gone. The men in the cool shaded bar-room were talking about it. Mr. Hutchins mentioned it to her through the door. He sat in his big chair, his crutches leaning against him.

"Packed up; paid his bill; gone clear off—did you know?"

"Yes, I knew," said Eliza, although she had not known till that moment.

"Said he was so cut up, and that he wouldn't stay to give evidence against poor Job, or be hauled before the coroner to be cross-questioned about the old man. He's a sharp 'un; packed up in less time than it takes most men to turn round—adjustable chair and all."

Eliza had come to the threshold of the bar-room door to hear all he said. The sunshine of a perfect summer day fell on the verandah just outside, and light airs came through

the outer door and fanned her, but in here the sweet air was tarnished with smoke from the cigars of one or two loiterers.

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Two men of the village were sitting with their hats on. As they said “Good-day” to Eliza, they did not rise or take off their hats, not because they did not feel towards her as a man would who would give this civility, but because they were not in the habit of expressing their feelings in that way. Another transient caller was old Dr. Nash, and he, looking at Eliza, recognised in a dull way something in her appearance which made him think her a finer woman than he had formerly supposed, and, pulling off his hat, he made her a stiff bow.

Eliza spoke only to Mr. Hutchins: “I shall be gone about four hours; I am going to the Rexfords to tea. You’d better look into the dining-room once or twice when supper’s on.”

“All right,” said he, adding, when the clock had had time to tick once, “Miss White.”

And the reason he affixed her name to his promise was the same that had compelled Dr. Nash’s bow—a sense of her importance growing upon him; but the hotel-keeper observed, what the old doctor did not, that the gown was silk.

“Fine woman that, sir,” he remarked, when she was gone, to anyone who might wish to receive the statement.

“Well,” said one of the men, “I should just think it.”

“She seems,” said Dr. Nash, stiffly, “to be a good girl and a clever one.”

“She isn’t *just* now what I’d call a gurl,” said the man who had answered first. “She’s young, I know; but now, if you see her walking about the dining-room, she’s more like a *queen* than a *gurl*.”

Without inquiring into the nature of this distinction Dr. Nash got into his buggy. As he drove down the street under the arching elm trees he soon passed Eliza on her way to the Rexfords, and again he lifted his hat. Eliza, with grave propriety, returned the salutation.

The big hawthorn tree at the beginning of Captain Rexford’s fence was thickly bedecked with pale scarlet haws. Eliza opened the gate beside it and turned up the cart road, walking on its grassy edge, concealed from the house by ragged lilac trees. She preferred this to-day to the open path leading to the central door. This road brought her to the end of the long front verandah. Here she perceived voices from the sitting-room, and, listening, thought she heard Principal Trenholme talking. She went on past the gable of the house into the yard, a sloping straggling bit of ground, enclosed on three sides by the house and its additions of dairies and stables, and on the fourth side bounded by the river. For once the place seemed deserted by the children. A birch, the only tree in the enclosure, cast fluttering shadow on the closely cropped sod. Sunlight

sparkled on the river and on the row of tin milk pans set out near the kitchen door. To this door Eliza went slowly, fanning herself with her handkerchief, for the walk had been warm. She saw Miss Rexford was in the kitchen alone, attending to some light cookery.

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"I heard company in the front room, so I came round here till they were gone."

"You are not usually shy," said Sophia.

Eliza sat down on a chair by the wall. With the door wide open the yard seemed a part of the kitchen. It was a pleasant place. The birch tree flicked its shadow as far as the much-worn wooden doorstep.

"I was very sorry to hear about last night, Miss Sophia," said Eliza, sincerely, meaning that she was sorry on Winifred's account more immediately.

"Yes," said Sophia, acknowledging that there was reason for such sympathy.

"Is that Principal Trenholme talking?" asked Eliza. The talk in the sitting-room came through the loose door, and a doubt suddenly occurred to her.

"No; it's his brother," said Sophia.

"The voices are alike."

"Yes; but the two men don't seem to be much alike."

"I didn't know he had a brother."

"Didn't you? He has just come."

Sophia was taking tea-cakes from the oven. Eliza leaned her head against the wall; she felt warm and oppressed. One of the smaller children opened the sitting-room door just then and came into the kitchen. The child wore a very clean pinafore in token of the day. She came and sat on Eliza's knee. The door was left ajar; instead of stray words and unintelligible sentences, all the talk of the sitting-room was now the common property of those in the kitchen.

In beginning to hear a conversation already in full flow, it is a few moments before the interchange of remarks and interrogations makes sense to us. Eliza only came to understand what was being talked of when the visitor said "No, I'm afraid there's no doubt about the poor girl's death. After there had been two or three snow-storms there was evidently no use in looking for her any more; but even then, I think it was months before *he* gave up hopes of her return. Night after night he used to hoist a pinewood torch, thinking she might have fallen in with Indians and be still alive and trying to make her way back. The fact of the matter was, Mrs. Rexford, Bates *loved* her, and he simply *could not* give her up for dead."

The young man had as many emphasised words in his speech as a girl might have had, yet his talk did not give the impression of easily expressed feeling.

“Ah, it was very sad.”

“Yes, I didn’t know I could have minded so much a thing that did not affect me personally. Then when he had given up hope of finding her living, he was off, when the spring came, everywhere over the woods, supposing that if she had perished, her body could be found when the snow was gone. I couldn’t help helping him to search the place for miles round. It’s a fine place in spring, too; but I don’t know when one cares less about spring flowers than when one’s half expecting the dead body of a girl to turn up in every hollow where they grow thickest. I’ve beaten down a whole valley of trillium lilies just to be sure she had not fallen between the rocks they grew on. And if I felt that way, you may suppose it was bad enough for Bates.”

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"He seems to have had a feeling heart."

"Oh well, he had brought the girl up. I don't think he cared for anything in the world but her."

"And Dr. Nash saw Mr. Bates as soon as you got him to your brother's? If Dr. Nash thinks he'll pull through I should think you must feel hopeful."

"Yes—well, I left him on the sofa. He's rather bad."

There was a pause, as if Mrs. Rexford might be sighing and shaking her head over some suffering before described.

Sophia had gone to the milk cellar to get cream for tea. Eliza followed her out into the yard.

"I had better not stay to tea," said she, "there won't be room."

"Oh yes, there will; I have a headache, so I'm not going into the dining-room."

"Then I won't stay. I would rather come some night when you are there."

"How handsome your dress looks! You are getting quite a fine lady, Eliza."

"My dress!" said Eliza, looking down at it. It seemed to her so long since she thought of it. "Yes," she continued, stroking it, "it looks very nicely, doesn't it?"

Sophia assented heartily. She liked the girl's choice of clothes; they seemed to remove her from, and set her far above, the commoner people who frequented the hotel.

"You're very tired, Miss Sophia, I can see; and it's no wonder after last night. It's no fun staying to-night, for we all feel dull about what's happened; I'll go now."

Eliza went quietly down the lane again, in shadow of the lilac hedge, and let herself out of the wooden gate; but she did not return to the village. She looked down the road the other way, measuring with her eyes the distance to the roof of Trenholme's house. She walked in that direction, and when she came to Captain Rexford's pasture field, she got through the bars and crossed it to a small wood that lay behind. Long golden strips of light lay athwart the grass between elongated shades cast by cows and bushes. The sabbath quiet was everywhere. All the cows in the pasture came towards her, for it was milking time, and any one who came suggested to them the luxury of that process. Some followed her in slow and dubious fashion; some stopped before her on the path. Eliza did not even look at them, and when she went in among the young fir trees they left her alone.



It was not a thick wood; the evening sun shone freely between the clumps of young spruce. In an open glade an elm tree stood, stretching out branches sensitive to each breath of air, golden in the slant sunlight above the low dark firs. The roots of this tree were raised and dry. Eliza sat down on them. She could see between the young trees out to the side of the college houses and their exit to the road. She could see the road too: it was this she watched.

CHAPTER III.

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Eliza sat still in her rough woodland chamber till the stray sunbeams had left its floor of moss and played only through the high open windows in the elm bough roof. She had seen the cows milked, and now heard the church bells ring. She looked intently through the fissures of the spruce shrub walls till at length she saw a light carriage drive away from the college grounds with the clergyman and his brother in it. She knew now that their house would be left almost empty. After waiting till the last church-going gig had passed on the road and the bells had stopped, she went into the college grounds by a back way, and on to the front of Trenholme's house.

As was common in the place, the front door yielded when the handle was turned. Eliza had no wish to summon the housekeeper. She stood in the inner hall and listened, that she might hear what rooms had inmates. From the kitchen came occasional clinking of cups and plates; the housekeeper had evidently not swerved from her regular work. With ears preternaturally acute, Eliza hearkened to the silence in the other rooms till some slight sound, she could hardly tell of what, led her upstairs to a certain door. She did not knock; she had no power to stand there waiting for a response; the primitive manners of the log house in which she had lived so long were upon her. She entered the room abruptly, roughly, as she would have entered the log house door.

In a long chair lay the man she sought. He was dressed in common ill-fitting clothes; he lay as only the very weak lie, head and limbs visibly resting on the support beneath them.

She crossed her arms and stood there, fierce and defiant. She was conscious of the dignity of her pose, of her improved appearance and of her fine clothes; the consciousness formed part of her defiance. But he did not even see her mood, just as, manlike, he did not see her dress. All that he did see was that here, in actual life before him, was the girl he had lost. In his weakness he bestirred himself with a cry of fond wondering joy—"Sissy!"

"Yes, Mr. Bates, I'm here."

Some power came to him, for he sat erect, awed and reverent before this sudden delight that his eyes were drinking in. "Are you safe, Sissy?" he whispered.

"Yes," she replied, scornfully, "I've been quite safe ever since I got away from you, Mr. Bates. I've taken care of myself, so I'm quite safe and getting on finely; but I'd get on better if my feet weren't tied in a sack because of the things you made me do—you *made* me do it, you know you did." She challenged his self-conviction with fierce intensity. "It was you made me go off and leave your aunt before you'd got any one else to take care of her; it was you who made me take her money because you'd give me none that was lawfully my own; it was you that made me run away in a way that wouldn't seem very nice if any one knew, and do things they wouldn't think very nice, and—and"

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(she was incoherent in her passion) “you *made* me run out in the woods alone, till I could get a train, and I was so frightened of you coming, and finding me, and *telling*, that I had to give another name; and *now*, when I’m getting on in the world, I have to keep hiding all this at every turn because people wouldn’t think it very pretty conduct. They’d think it was queer and get up a grand talk. So I’ve told lies and changed my name, and it’s you that made me, Mr. Bates.”

He only took in a small part of the meaning of the words she poured upon him so quickly, but he could no longer be oblivious to her rage. His joy in seeing her did not subside; he was panting for breath with the excitement of it, and his eyes gloated upon her; for his delight in her life and safety was something wholly apart from any thought of himself, from the pain her renewed anger must now add to the long-accustomed pain of his own contrition.

“But how,” he whispered, wondering, “how did you get over the hills? How?—”

“Just how and when I could. ’Twasn’t much choice that you left me, Mr. Bates. It signifies very little now how I got here. I *am* here. You’ve come after the old man that’s dead, I suppose. You might have saved yourself the trouble. He isn’t father, if *that’s* what you thought.”

He did not even hear the last part of her speech. He grasped at the breath that seemed trying to elude him.

“You went out into the woods alone,” he said, pityingly. He was so accustomed to give her pity for this that it came easily. “You—you mean over our hills to the back of the—”

“No, I don’t, I wasn’t such a silly as to go and die in the hills. I got across the lake, and I’m here now—that’s the main thing, and I want to know why you’re here, and what you’re going to do.”

Her tone was brutal. It was, though he could not know it, the half hysterical reaction from that mysterious burst of feeling that had made her defend him so fiercely against the American’s evil imputation.

She was not sufficiently accustomed to ill health to have a quick eye for it; but she began now to see how very ill he looked. The hair upon his face and head was damp and matted; his face was sunken, weather-browned, but bloodless in the colouring. His body seemed struggling for breath without aid from his will, for she saw he was thinking only of her. His intense preoccupation in her half fascinated, half discomfited her, the more so because of the feverish lustre of his eye.

“I’m sorry you’re so ill, Mr. Bates,” she said, coldly; “you’d better lie down.”



“Never mind about me,” he whispered, eagerly, and feebly moved upon the seat to get a little nearer her. “Never mind about me; but tell me, Sissy, have you been a good girl since you got off like this? You’re safe and well—have you been good?”

“I took your aunt’s money, if you mean that, but I left you my half of things for it; and anyway, it was you who made me do it.”

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"Yes, yes," he assented, "'twas my doing; the sin of all you did then lies at my door. But since then, Sissy?" His look, his whole attitude, were an eager question, but she looked at him scornfully.

"Of *course* I've been good. I go to church and say my prayers, and every one respects me. I worked first in a family, but I didn't let them call me a servant. Then I got a place in the Grand Hotel. Old Mr. Hutchins had got lame, so he couldn't see after things, and I could. I've done it now for six months, and it's a different house. I always do everything I do well, so we've made money this summer. I'm thinking of making Mr. Hutchins take me into partnership; he'd rather do it than lose me. I'm well thought of, Mr. Bates, by everybody, and I'm going to get rich."

"Rich," he echoed, quietly. He looked now, his mind drawn by hers, at her fine clothes, and at the luxuriant red hair that was arranged with artificial display. The painfulness of his breath and his weakness returned now within his range of feeling.

Without having expected to absorb his mind or knowing that she cared to do so, she still felt that instant that something was lost to her. The whole stream of his life, that had been hers since she had entered the room, was no longer all for her. She pressed on quietly to the business she had with him, fearing to lose a further chance.

"Look here, Mr. Bates! It's not more than a few hours since I heard you were here, so I've come to tell you that I'm alive and all right, and all that I've done that wasn't very nice was your fault; but, look here, I've something else to say: I don't know why you've come here to see this old preacher, or who he is, or what you have to do with him; but it would be cruel and mean of you now, after driving me to do what I did, to tell the people here about it, and that my name isn't White, you know. I've very nice friends here, who'd be shocked, and it would do me harm. I'm not going to accuse you to people of what you've done. I'm sorry you're ill, and that you've had all the trouble of hunting for me, and all that; but I've come to ask you now to keep quiet and not say who I am."

He drew great sighs, as a wounded animal draws its breath, but he was not noticing the physical pain of breathing. He did not catch at breath as eagerly as he was trying to catch at this new idea, this new Sissy, with a character and history so different from what he had supposed. His was not a mind that took rational account of the differences between characters, yet he began to realise now that the girl who had made her own way, as this one had, was not the same as the girl he had imagined wandering helplessly among pathless hills, and dying feebly there.

She still looked at him as if demanding an answer to her request, looked at him curiously too, trying to estimate how ill he was. He did not speak, and she, although she did not at all fathom his feeling, knew instinctively that some influence she had had over him was lessened.



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"Of course you can spoil my life if you like, Mr. Bates, but I've come to ask you not. Someone's told me there's a mine found on our clearin'—well, when I took your aunt's gold pieces I meant to leave you the land for them. I'm too proud to go back on that now, *far* too proud; you can keep the money if you want to, or you can give me some of it if you *want* to. I'd like to be rich better than anything, but I'd rather be poor as a church mouse, and free to get on my own way, than have you to say what I ought to do every touch and turn, thinking I'd only be good and sensible so long as I did what you told me" (there was derision in her voice). "But now, as I say, you have the chance to make me miserable if you choose; but I've come to ask you not to, although if you do, I dare say I can live it down."

He looked at her bewildered. A few moments since and all the joy bells of his life had been a-chime; they were still ringing, but jangling confusedly out of tune, and—now she was asking him to conceal the cause of his joy, that he had found her. He could not understand fully; his mind would not clear itself.

"I won't do anything to make you miserable, Sissy," he said, faintly.

"You won't tell that you've seen me, or who I am, or anything?" she insisted, half pleading, half threatening.

He turned his face from her to hide the ghastly faintness that was coming over him. "I—I oughtn't to have tried to keep you, when I did," he said.

"No, you oughtn't to," she assented, quickly.

"And I won't speak of you now, if that's what you want."

"Thank you," she said, wondering what had made him turn his back to her. "You aren't very ill, are you, Mr. Bates?"

"No—you—I only can't get my breath. You'd better go, perhaps."

"Yes, I think I had," she replied.

And she went.

CHAPTER IV.

There are many difficulties in this world which, if we refuse to submit to them, will in turn be subdued by us, but a sprained ankle is not one of them. Robert Trenholme, having climbed a hill after he had twisted his foot, and having, contrary to all advice, used it to some extent the next day, was now fairly conquered by the sprain and destined to be held by this foot for many long days. He explained to his brother who the lady was



whom he had taken up the hill, why he himself had first happened to be with her, and that he had slipped with one foot in a roadside ditch, and, thinking to catch her up, had run across a field and so missed the lane in the darkness. This was told in the meagre, prosaic way that left no hint of there being more to tell.

"What is she like?" asked Alec, for he had confessed that he had talked to the lady.

"Like?" repeated Robert, at a loss; "I think she must be like her own mother, for she is like none of the other Rexfords."

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"All the rest of the family are good-looking."

"Yes," said Robert dreamily.

So Alec jumped to the conclusion that Robert did not consider Miss Rexford good-looking. He did not tell anything more about her or ask anything more. He saw no reason for insulting Robert by saying he had at first overheard her conversation, and that it had been continued to him after she had mistaken one for the other. He wondered over those of her remarks which he remembered, and his family pride was hurt by them. He did not conceive that Robert had been much hurt, simply because he betrayed no sign of injured feeling. Younger members of a family often long retain a curiously lofty conception of their elders, because in childhood they have looked upon them as embodiments of age and wisdom. Alec, in loose fashion of thought, supposed Robert to be too much occupied by more important affairs to pay heed to a woman's opinion of him, but he cherished a dream of some day explaining to Miss Rexford that she was mistaken in his brother's character. His pulse beat quicker at the thought, because it would involve nearness to her and equality of conversation. That Robert had any special fancy for the lady never entered his mind.

Although we may be willing to abuse those who belong to us we always feel that the same or any censure coming from an outsider is more or less unjust; and, too, although the faults of near relatives grieve us more bitterly than the crimes of strangers, yet most of us have an easy-going way of forgetting all about the offence at the first opportunity. There is nothing in the world stronger than the quiet force of the family tie, which, except in case of need, lies usually so passive that its strength is overlooked by the superficial observer. It was by virtue of this tie now that the two brothers, although they had so great a difference, although they were so constituted as to see most things very differently, found themselves glad to be in each other's company. Their hearts grew warmer by mere proximity; they talked of old family incidents, and of the incidents of the present, with equal zest. The one thing they did not immediately mention was the subject of the quarrel about which they had not yet come to an agreement.

One thing that fretted Alec considerably during that Sunday and Monday was that Bates had arrived at Chellaston in such a weak state, and had had so severe an attack of his malady on the Sunday evening, that it was impossible to take him to see the body of the old man who went by the name of Cameron. It was in vain that Bates protested, now more strongly than ever, that he was certain the man was not Cameron; as he would give no proof of his certainty further than what had already been discussed between them, Alec could not but feel that he was unreasonable in refusing to take any interest in the question of identity. However, he was not well enough to be troubled, certainly not well enough to be moved. Alec strode over to Cooper's farm alone, and took a last look at the old man where he lay in a rough shed, and gave his evidence about the death before the coroner.

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What few belongings the old man had were taken from the Harmon house by the coroner before Harkness left, but no writing was found upon them. A description of the body was advertised in the Monday's papers, but no claim came quickly. Natural law is imperious, seeking to gather earth's children back to their mother's breast, and when three warm days were past, all of him that bore earthly image and superscription was given back to earth in a corner of the village cemetery. An Adventist minister, who sometimes preached in Chellaston, came to hold such service as he thought suitable over the grave, and Alec Trenholme was one of the very few who stood, hat in hand, to see the simple rite.

They were not in the old graveyard by the river, but in a new cemetery that had been opened on a slope above the village. It was a bare, stony place; shrubs that had been planted had not grown. In the corner where they untie it, except little by little, in a lifetime, or in generations of lives! Alec Trenholme, confronted almost for the first time with the thought that it is not easy to find the ideal modern life, even when one is anxious to conform to it, began tugging at all the strands of difficulty at once, not seeing them very clearly, but still with no notion but that if he set his strength to it, he could unravel them all in the half-hour's walk that lay between him and the college.

He had not got from under the arching elms at the thin end of the village when two young ladies in an open phaeton bowed to him. He was not absent; his mind worked wholesomely at the same instant with his senses. He saw and knew that these were the Miss Browns, to whom Robert had introduced him at the end of the Sunday evening service. He thought them very pretty; he had seen then that they were very gentle and respectful to Robert; he saw now from the smile that accompanied the bow, that he was a person they delighted to honour. They were driving quickly: they were past in a flash of time; and as he replaced his hat upon his head, he thought that he really was a very good-looking fellow, very well proportioned, and straight in the legs. He wondered if his clothes were just the thing; they had not been worn much, but it was a year since he had got them in England to bring out, and their style might be a little out of date! Then he thought with satisfaction that Robert always dressed very well. Robert was very good-looking too. They were really a very fine pair of brothers! Their father had been a very fine—He had got quite a bit further on the road since he met the carriage, so lightly had he stepped to the tune of these thoughts, so brightly had the sun shone upon them. Now he thought of that pile of aprons he had in his portmanteau, and he saw them, not as they were now, freshly calendered in the tight folds of a year's disuse, but as he had often seen them, with splashes of blood and grease on them. He fancied the same stains upon his hands; he remembered the empty shop he had just

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passed near the general store, which for nearly a year back he had coveted as a business stand. He estimated instinctively the difference in the sort of bow the pretty Brown girls would be likely to give him if he carried his own purpose through. The day seemed duller. He felt more sorry for his brother than he had ever felt before. He looked about at the rough fields, the rude log fences, at the road with its gross unevennesses and side strips of untrimmed weeds. He looked at it all, his man's eyes almost wistful as a girl's. Was it as hard in this new crude condition of things to hew for oneself a new way through the invisible barriers of the time-honoured judgments of men, as it would be where road and field had been smoothed by the passing of generations?

He had this contrast between English and Canadian scenery vividly in his mind, wondering what corresponding social differences, if any, could be found to make his own particular problem of the hour more easy, and all the fine speculations he had had when he came down from the cemetery had resolved themselves into—whether, *after all*, it would be better to go on being a butcher or not, when he came to the beginning of the Rexford paling. He noticed how battered and dingy it was. The former owner had had it painted at one time, but the paint was almost worn off. The front fencing wanted new pales in many places, and the half acre's space of grass between the verandah and the road was wholly unkempt. It certainly did not look like the abode of a family of any pretensions. It formed, indeed, such a contrast to any house he would have lived in, even had painting and fencing to be done with his own hand, that he felt a sort of wrath rising in him at Miss Rexford's father and brother, that they should suffer her to live in such a place.

He had not come well in front before he observed that the women of the family were grouped at work on the green under a tree near the far end of the house. A moment more, and he saw the lady of the midnight walk coming towards him over the grass. He never doubted that it was she, although he had not seen her before by daylight. She had purposely avoided him on the Sunday; he had felt it natural she should do so. Now when he saw her coming—evidently coming on purpose to waylay and speak to him, the excitement he felt was quite unaccountable, even to himself; not that he tried to account for it—he only knew that she was coming, that his heart seemed to beat against his throat, that she had come and laid her hand upon the top of the paling, and looked over at him and said:

"Have they buried him? Did you—have you been there?"

"Yes," said he.



“We have only just heard a rumour that the funeral was taking place. I thought when I saw you that perhaps you had been there. I am so glad you went.” Her eyes looked upon him with kind approval.

He fancied from her manner that she thought herself older than he—that she was treating him like a boy. Her face was bright with interest and had the flush of some slight embarrassment upon it.

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He told her what had happened and where the grave was, and stood in the sweet evening air with quieted manner before her. She did not seem to be thinking of what he said. "There was something else that I—I rather wanted to take the first opportunity of saying to you."

All her face now was rosy with embarrassment, and he saw that, although she went on bravely, she was shy—shy of him! He hardly took in what she was saying, in the wonder, in the pleasure of it. Then he knew that she had been saying that she feared she had talked to him while mistaking him for his brother, that what she had said had doubtless appeared very wild, very foolish, as he did not know the conversation out of which it grew; probably he had forgotten or had not paid heed at the time, but if he should chance to remember, and had not already repeated her words, would he be kind enough not to do so, and to forget them himself?

This was her request, and he guessed, from the tenor of it, that she did not know how little he had heard in all or how much she had said to him and how much to his brother; that she would like to know, but was too proud to ask or to hear; that, in fact, this proud lady had said words that she was ashamed of.

"I haven't said a word to Robert about it, and of course I won't now." It was a very simple thing to say, yet some way he felt a better man in his own eyes because she had asked him. He did not claim that he had paid no attention or forgotten, for he felt just now that all her words were so supremely worthy of deference that he only wished he could remember more of what she had let fall when her heart was stirred. "Of course," he said, "I didn't know it had been Robert, or I would have gone back for him."

He floundered on into the midst of excuses, and her embarrassment had time to pass away, with it the blush on her face, and he felt as if a sun had somewhere set.

"Thank you" (she was all sedateness now) "I fear that Principal Trenholme is suffering very much from his foot and will be kept in for some time. If you had told me that you had repeated my unjust speeches I should have asked you to take some apology, to say that I am quite willing to acknowledge my own—unreasonableness."

He saw that this speech was intended to cover all the ground, and that he was desired to impart as much of the apology as he believed to be needed, and no more. He remembered now that he had intended to plead Robert's cause, but could think of nothing to say except—

"Robert is—Robert really is an awfully good man."

This he said so suddenly and so earnestly looking at her, that she was betrayed into an unintended answer.

“Is he?” And then in a moment she smiled on him again, and said warmly, “He certainly is if you say that; a brother knows as no one else can.”

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She was treating him like a boy again. He did not like it now because he had felt the sweetness of having her at an advantage. There are some men who, when they see what they want, stretch out their hands to take it with no more complexity of thought than a baby has when it reaches for a toy. At other times Alec Trenholme might consider; just then he only knew that he wanted to talk longer with this stately girl who was now retiring. He arrested her steps by making a random dash at the first question that might detain her.

There was much that, had he known his own mind clearly and how to express it, he would have liked to say to her. Deep down within him he was questioning whether it was possible always to live under such impulse of fealty to Heaven as had befallen him under the exciting influence of Cameron's expectation, whether the power of such an hour to sift the good from the evil, the important from the unimportant in life, could in any wise be retained. But he would have been a wholly different man from what he was had he thought this concisely, or said it aloud. All that he did was to express superficial curiosity concerning the sentiments of others, and to express it inanely enough.

"Do you think," he said, "that all those poor people—my brother's housekeeper, for instance—do you think they really thought—really expected—"

"I think—" she said. (She came back to the fence and clasped her hands upon it in her interest.) "Don't you think, Mr. Trenholme, that a person who is always seeking the Divine Presence, lives in it and has power to make other people know that it is near? But then, you see, these others fancy they must model their seeking upon the poor vagaries of their teacher. We are certain that the treasure is found, but—we mix up things so, things are really so mixed, that we suppose we must shape our ideas upon the earthen vessel that holds it. I don't know whether I have said what I mean, or if you understand—" she stopped.

She was complaining that people will not distinguish between the essence of the heaven-sent message and the accident of form in which it comes. He did not quite understand, because, if the truth must be told, he had not entirely listened; for although all the spiritual nature that was in him was stimulated by hers, a more outward sympathy asserted itself too; he became moved with admiration and liking for her, and feeling struggled with thought.

"Yes," he said, dreaming of her alone, "if one could always be with people who are good, it would be easier to do something worth doing."

Notwithstanding her interest in what she was saying, Sophia began now to see the inclination of his heart for her as one might see a trivial detail of landscape while looking at some absorbing thing, such as a race. She saw the homage he inwardly proffered more clearly than he saw it himself. She had seen the same thing before often enough to know it.

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"I think," she continued, "if I had been very ignorant, and had seen a good deal of this old man, I would have followed him anywhere, because I would have thought the spiritual force of his life was based on his opinions, which must therefore be considered true. Isn't that the way we are apt to argue about any phase of Church or Dissent that has vitality?"

But the knowledge she had just come by was making its way to a foremost place in her thought, and her open heart closed gently as a sensitive plant closes its leaves. As he watched the animation of her face, he saw the habitual reserve come over it again like a shadow. He felt that she was withdrawing from him as truly as if she had been again walking away, although now she stood still where his renewal of talk had stopped her. He tried again to grasp at the moment of gracious chance, to claim her interest, but failed.

He went on down the road. He had not guessed the lady had seen his heart, for he hardly saw it himself; yet he called himself a blundering fool. He wondered that he had dared to talk with her so long, yet he wondered more that he had not dared to talk longer. In all this he never thought of social grades, as he had done in connection with the smiles of the Miss Browns. Sophia Rexford had struck his fancy more as a superior being; and to angels, or to the Madonna, we do not seek to recommend ourselves by position or pedigree.

The strong, clear evening light, tinted with gold, was upon everything. He felt that if he could but live near the woman he had left, the problem of living would become simple, and the light of life's best hours would shine for him always; but he entered into no fine distinction of ideal friendships.

CHAPTER V.

In the meantime the elder of the brothers Trenholme had not the satisfaction of meeting with Sophia Rexford, or of going to see the strange old man laid away in his last resting-place.

Robert Trenholme lay in his house, suffering a good deal of physical pain, suffering more from restlessness of nerve caused by his former tense activity, suffering most from the consideration of various things which were grievous to him.

He had been flouted by the woman he loved. The arrow she had let fly had pierced his heart and, through that, his understanding. He never told her, or anyone, how angry he had been at the first stab that wounded, nor that, when the familiar sound of his brother's voice came to him in the midst of this anger, he had been dumb rather than claim kindred in that place with the young man who, by his actions, had already taken up the same reproach. No, he never told them that it was more in surly rage than

because he had slipped in the ditch that he had let them go on without him in the darkness; but he knew that this had been the case; and, although he was aware of no momentous consequences following on this

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lapse, he loathed himself for it, asking by what gradual steps he had descended to be capable of such a moment of childish and churlish temper. He was a product of modern culture, and had the devil who had overcome him been merely an unforgiving spirit, or the spirit of sarcastic wit or of self-satisfied indifference, he might hardly have noticed that he had fallen from the high estate of Christian manhood, even though the fiend jumped astride his back and ambled far on him; but when he found that he had been overcome by a natural impulse of passionate wrath he was appalled, and was philosopher enough to look for the cause of such weakness prior to the moment of failure. Was it true, what Sophia had said, that he had sold his birthright for a little paltry prosperity? He thought more highly of her discrimination than any one else would have done, because he loved her. What had she seen in him to make her use that form of accusation? And if it was true, was there for him no place of repentance?

Then he remembered the purer air of the dark mountaintop. There he had seen many from his own little cure of souls who were shaken by the madman's fervour as *he* had never been able to move them by precept or example. There he, too, had seen, with sight borrowed from the eyes of the enthusiast, the enthusiast's Lord, seen Him the more readily because there had been times in his life when he had not needed another to show him the loveliness that exceeds all other loveliness. He was versed in the chronicle of the days when the power of God wrought wonders by devoted men, and he asked himself with whom this power had been working here of late—with him, the priest, or with this wandering fool, out of whose lips it would seem that praise was ordained. He looked back to divers hours when he had given himself wholly to the love of God, and to the long reaches of time between them, in which he had not cast away the muck-rake, but had trailed it after him with one hand as he walked forward, looking to the angel and the crown. He seemed to see St. Peter pointing to the life all which he had professed to devote while he had kept back part; and St. Peter said, "Whiles it remained, was it not thine own? Thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God."

There was for him the choice that is given to every man in this sort of pain, the choice between dulling his mind to the pain, letting it pass from him as he holds on his way (and God knows it passes easily), or clasping it as the higher good. Perhaps this man would not have been wiser than many other men in his choice had he not looked at the gathering of his muck-rake and in that found no comfort. Since a woman had called this prosperity paltry, it seemed less substantial in his own eyes; but, paltry or worthy, he believed that it was in the power of his younger brother to reverse that prosperity, and he felt neither brave enough to face this misfortune nor bad enough to tamper with that brother's crude ideals for

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the sake of his own gain. From the length of his own experience, from the present weariness of his soul, he looked upon Alec more than ever as a boy to be shielded from the shock of further disillusion with regard to himself. He had not had Alec's weal a thorn in his conscience for ten months without coming to feel that, if merely for the sake of his own comfort, he would not shoulder that burden again. Now this conception he had of Alec as a weaker man, and of his ideals as crude and yet needing tender dealing, was possibly a mistaken one, yet, so curious is our life that, true or false, it was the thing that at this juncture made him spurn all thought of setting aside the reproach of his roused sense of loss as morbid or unreal. He looked to his early realisation of the all-attractiveness of the love of God, not with the rational view that such phase of religion is ordained to fade in the heat of life, but with passionate regret that by his own fault he had turned away from the glory of life. He thought of the foolish dreamer who had been struck dead in the full impulse of adoration and longing love, and he would have given reason and life itself to have such gate of death open now for him.

His spirit did not rest, but tossed constantly, as a fever patient upon his bed, for rest requires more than the softest of beds; and as even those whose bodies are stretched on pillows of down may be too weak to find bodily rest, so the soul that lies, as do all self-sick souls, in the everlasting arms, too often lacks health to feel the up-bearing.

A clever sailor, whose ship is sinking because of too much freight does not think long before he throws the treasure overboard; a wise man in pain makes quick vows of abstinence from the cause of pain. In Trenholme there was little vestige of that low type of will which we see in lobsters and in many wilful men, who go on clutching whatever they have clutched, whether it be useful or useless, till the claw is cut off. He had not realised that he had fallen from the height of his endeavours before he began to look about eagerly for something that he might sacrifice. But here he was met by the difficulty that proves that in the higher stages of human development honest effort after righteousness is not one whit easier than are man's first simple efforts to put down the brute in him. Trenholme could find in himself no offending member that was not so full of good works toward others that he could hardly destroy it without defrauding them. He had sought nothing for himself that was not a legitimate object of desire. The world, the flesh, and the devil had polished themselves to match all that was best in him, and blended impartially with it, so that in very truth he did not know where to condemn. A brave man, when examined, will confess all that he honourably may, but not more; so Trenholme confessed himself to be worldly, but against that he was forced to confess that a true son of the world would have been insensible to the torture he was groaning under. He upbraided himself for not knowing right from wrong, and yet he knew that it was only a very superficial mind that imagined that without direct inspiration from Heaven it could detect its sin and error truly. Crying for such inspiration, his cry seemed unanswered.

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Ah, well, each man must parley as best he may with the Angel who withstands him in the narrow place where there is no way to turn to the right hand or the left. We desire at such times to be shown some such clear portraiture of the ideal to which we must conform in our place and circumstance as shall cause us no more to mistake good for evil. Possibly, if such image of all we ourselves ought to be were given to our gaze, we could not look in its eyes and live. Possibly, if Heaven granted us the knowledge of all thoughts and deeds that would make up the ideal self, we should go on our way producing vile imitations of it and neglecting Heaven, as they do who seek only to imitate the Divine Example. At any rate, such perfection of self-ideal is not given us, except with the years that make up the sum of life.

CHAPTER VI.

Robert Trenholme had a lively wit, and it stood him many times in lieu of chapel walls for within it he could retire at all times and be hidden. Of all that he experienced within his heart at this time not any part was visible to the brother who was his idle visitor; or perhaps only the least part, and that not until the moot point between them was touched upon.

There came a day, two days after the old preacher had been buried, when the elder brother called out:

"Come, my lad, I want to speak to you."

Robert was lying on a long couch improvised for him in the corner of his study. The time was that warm hour of the afternoon when the birds are quiet and even the flies buzz drowsily. Bees in the piebald petunias that grew straggling and sweet above the sill of the open window, dozed long in each sticky chalice. Alec was taking off his boots in the lobby, and in reply to the condescending invitation he muttered some graceless words concerning his grandmother, but he came into the room and sat with his elbows on the table. He had an idea of what might be said, and felt the awkwardness of it.

"That fellow Bates," he observed, "is devouring your book-case indiscriminately. He seems to be in the sort of fever that needs distraction every moment. I asked him what he'd have to read, and he said the next five on the shelf—he's read the first ten."

"It's not of Bates I wish to speak; I want to know what you've decided to do. Are you going to stick to your father's trade, or take to some other?"

Robert held one arm above his head, with his fingers through the leaves of the book he had been reading. He tried to speak in a casual way, but they both had a disagreeable consciousness that the occasion was momentous. Alec's mind assumed the cautious

attitude of a schoolboy whispering “Cave”. He supposed that the other hoped now to achieve by gentleness what he had been unable to achieve by storm.

“Of course,” he answered, “I won’t set up here if you’d rather be quit of me. I’ll go as far as British Columbia, if that’s necessary to make you comfortable.”

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"By that I understand that in these ten months your mind has not altered."

"No; but as I say, I won't bother you."

"Have you reconsidered the question, or have you stuck to it because you said you would?"

"I have reconsidered it."

"You feel quite satisfied that, as far as you are concerned, this is the right thing to do?"

"Yes."

"Well then, as far as I am concerned, I don't want to drive you to the other side of the continent. You can take advantage of the opening here if you want to."

Alec looked down at the things on the table. He felt the embarrassment of detecting his brother in some private religious exercise; nothing, he thought, but an excess of self-denial could have brought this about; yet he was gratified.

"Look here! You'd better not say that—I might take you at your word."

"Consider that settled. You set up shop, and I will take a fraternal interest in the number of animals you kill, and always tell you with conscientious care when the beef you supply to me is tough. And in the meantime, tell me, like a good fellow, why you stick to this thing. When you flung from me last time you gave me no explanation of what you thought."

"At least," cried Alec, wrath rising at the memory of that quarrel, "I gave you a fair hearing, and knew what you thought."

When anger began he looked his brother full in the face, thus noticing how thin that face was, too thin for a man in the prime of life, and the eye was too bright. As the brief feeling of annoyance subsided, the habitual charm of the elder man's smile made him continue to look at him.

"And yet," continued Robert, "two wrongs do not make a right. That I am a snob does not excuse you for taking up any line of life short of the noblest within your reach."

The other again warned himself against hidden danger. "You're such a confoundedly fascinating fellow, with your smiles and your suppressed religion, I don't wonder the girls run after you. But you are a Jesuit—I never called you a snob—you're giving yourself names to fetch me round to see things your way."

It was an outburst, half of admiring affection, half of angry obstinacy, and the elder brother received it without resentment, albeit a little absently. He was thinking that if Alec held out, “the girls” would not run after him much more. But then he thought that there was one among them who would not think less, who perhaps might think more of him, for this sacrifice. He had not made it for her; it might never be his lot to make any sacrifice for her; yet she perhaps would understand this one and applaud it. The thought brought a sudden light to his face, and Alec watched the light and had no clue by which to understand it. He began, however, defending himself.

“Look here! You suggest I should take the noblest course, as if I had never thought of that before. I’m not lower in the scale of creation than you, and I’ve had the same bringing up. I’ve never done anything great, but I’ve tried not to do the other thing. I felt I should be a sneak when I left school if I disappointed father for the sake of being something fine, and I feel I should be a sneak now if I turned—”

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"You acted like the dear fellow I always knew you were in the first instance, but why is it the same now? It's not for his sake, surely, for, for all you know, from where he is now, the sight of you going on with that work may not give him pleasure, but pain."

"No; I went into it to please him, but now he's gone that's ended."

"Then it's *not* the same now. Why do you say you'd feel like a sneak if you changed? There is, I think, no goddess or patron saint of the trade, who would be personally offended at your desertion."

"You don't understand at all. I'm sick—just sick, of seeing men trying to find something grand enough to do, instead of trying to do the first thing they can grandly."

"I haven't noticed that men are so set on rising."

"No, not always; but when they're not ambitious enough to get something fine to do, they're not ambitious enough to do what they do well, unless it's for the sake of money. Look at the fellows that went to school with us, half of them shopkeepers' sons. How many of them went in with their fathers? Just those who were mean enough to care for nothing but money-making, and those who were too dull to do anything else."

"The education they got was good enough to give them a taste for higher callings."

"Yes"—with a sneer—"and how the masters gloried over such brilliant examples as yourself, who felt themselves 'called higher,' so to speak! You had left school by the time I came to it, but I had your shining tracks pointed out to me all along the way, and old Thompson told me that Wolsey's father was 'in the same line as my papa,' and he instructed me about Kirke White's career; and I, greedy little pig that I was, sucked it all in till I sickened. I've never been able to feed on any of that food since."

In a moment the other continued, "Well, in spite of the fact that our own father was too true and simple ever to be anything but a gentleman, it remains true that the choice of this trade and others on a level with it—"

"Such as hunting and shooting, or the cooking of meats that ladies are encouraged to devote themselves to."

"I was saying—the choice of this trade, or of others on a level with it, be they whatever they are, implies something coarse in the grain of the average man who chooses it, and has a coarsening effect upon him."

"If the old novels are any true picture of life, there was a time when every cleric was a place-hunter. Would you have advised good men to keep out of the church at that time? I'm told there's hardly an honourable man in United States politics: is that less reason, or more, for honest fellows to go into public life there?" (Impatience was waxing

again. The words fell after one another in hot haste.) “There’s a time coming when every man will be taught to like to keep his hands clean and read the poets; and will you preach to them all then that they mustn’t be coarse enough to do necessary work, or do you imagine it will be well done if they all do an hour a day at it in amateur fashion? You’re thoroughly inconsistent,” he cried.

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"Do you imagine I'm trying to argue with you, boy?" cried the other, bitterly. "I could say a thousand things to the point, but I've no desire to say them. I simply wish to state the thing fairly, to see how far you have worked through it."

"I've thought it out rather more thoroughly than you, it seems to me, for at least I'm consistent."

They were both offended; the elder biting his lip over sarcastic words, the younger flushed with hasty indignation. Then, in a minute, the one put away his anger, and the other, forgetting the greater part of his, talked on.

"I'll tell you the sort of thing that's made me feel I should be a sneak to give it up. Just after I left school I went back to visit old Thompson, and he and his wife took me to a ball at the Assembly Rooms. It was quite a swell affair, and there weren't enough men. So old Thompson edged us up to a grand dame with a row of daughters, and I heard him in plethoric whisper informing her, as in duty bound, just who I was, 'but,' added he, as a compensating fact, 'there isn't a finer or more gentlemanly fellow in the room.' So the old hen turned round and took me in with one eye, all my features and proportions; but it wasn't till Thompson told her that father was about to retire, and that I, of course, was looking to enter a higher walk, that she gave permission to trot me up. Do you think I went? They were pretty girls she had, and the music—I'd have given something to dance that night; but if I was the sort of man she'd let dance with her girls, she needn't have taken anything else into account; and if I was decent enough for them, it was because of something else in me other than what I did or didn't do. I swore then, by all that's sweet—by music and pretty girls and everything else—that I'd carve carcasses for the rest of my days, and if the ladies didn't want me they might do without me. You know how it was with father; all the professional men in the place were only too glad to have a chat with him in the reading-rooms and the hotel. They knew his worth, but they wouldn't have had him inside their own doors. Well, the worse for their wives and daughters, say I. They did without him; they can do without me. The man that will only have me on condition his trade is not mine can do without me too, and if it's the same in a new country, then the new country be damned!"

The hot-headed speaker, striding about the room, stopped with the word that ended this tirade, and gave it out roundly.

"The thing is," said Robert, "can you do without *them*—all these men and women who won't have you on your own terms? They constitute all the men and women in the world for you and me, for we don't care for the other sort. Can you do without them? I couldn't." He said the "I couldn't" first as if looking back to the time when he had broken loose from the family tradition; he repeated it more steadfastly, and it seemed to press pathetically into present and future—"I couldn't." The book that he had been idly swinging above his pillow was an old missal, and he lowered it now to shield his face somewhat from his brother's downward gaze.

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"No, you couldn't," repeated Alec soberly. He stood with his hands in his pockets, looking down half pityingly, perhaps with a touch of superiority. "You couldn't; but I can, and I'll stand by my colours. I should be a coward if I didn't."

Robert coloured under his look, under his words, so he turned away and stood by the window. After a minute Robert spoke.

"You haven't given me the slightest reason for your repeated assertion that you would be a coward."

"Yes, I have. That's just what I've been saying."

"You have only explained that you think so the more strongly for all opposition, and that may not be rational. Other men can do this work and be thankful to get it; you can do higher work." His words were constrainedly patient, but they only raised clamour.

"I don't know what you profess and call yourself! What should I change for? To pamper your pride and mine—is that a worthy end? To find something easier and more agreeable—is that manly, when this has been put into my hand? How do I know I could do anything better? I know I can do this well. As for these fine folks you've been talking of, I'll see they get good food, wherever I am; and that's not as easy as you think, nor as often done; and there's not one of them that would do all their grand employments if they weren't catered for; and as for the other men that would do it" (he was incoherent in his heat), "they do it pretty badly, some of them, just because they're coarse in the grain; and you tell me it'll make them coarser; well then, I, who can do it without getting coarse, will do it, till men and women stop eating butcher's meat. You'd think it more pious if I put my religion into being a missionary to the Chinese, or into writing tracts? Well, I don't."

He was enthusiastic; he was perhaps very foolish; but the brother who was older had learned at least this, that it does not follow that a man is in the wrong because he can give no wiser reason for his course than "I take this way because I will take it."

"Disarm yourself, old fellow," he said. "I am not going to try to dissuade you. I tried that last year, and I didn't succeed; and if I had promise of success now, I wouldn't try. Life's a fearful thing, just because, when we shut our eyes to what is right in the morning, at noon it's not given us to see the difference between black and white, unless our eyes get washed with the right sort of tears."

Alec leaned his head out of the window; he felt that his brother was making a muff of himself, and did not like it.

"If you see this thing clearly," Robert continued, "I say, go ahead and do it; but I want you just to see the whole of it. According to you, I am on the wrong track; but I have got

far along it, and now I have other people to consider. It seems a pity, when there are only two of us in the world, that we should have to put half the world between us. We used to have the name, at least

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of being attached.” He stopped to find the thread, it was a disconnected speech for him to formulate. He had put his arm under his head now, and was looking round at his brother. “I have never misrepresented anything. For the matter of that, the man who had most to do with putting me in my berth here, knew all that there was to be known about my father. He didn’t publish the matter, for the sake of the school; and when I had taken the school, I couldn’t publish it either. All the world was free to inquire, but as far as I know, no one has done so; and I have let the sleeping dog lie.”

“I never said you ought to have been more talkative. It’s not my business.”

“The position you take makes it appear that I am in a false position. Give me time to get about again. I ought at least to be more frank with my personal friends. Wait till I have opportunity to speak myself—that is all I ask of you. After that do what you will; but I think it only right to tell you that if you set up shop here, or near here, I should resign my place in this college.”

“I’m not going to stay here. I told you I see that won’t work.”

“Don’t be hasty. As I said, it’s hard lines if this must separate us. I can keep the church. They can’t be particular about my status there, because they can’t pay me.”

“It’s mad to think of such a thing; it would be worse for the college than for you.”

“If I knew it would be the worse for the college it might not be right to do it” (he spoke as if this had cost him thought), “but there are plenty who can manage a concern like this, now it is fairly established, even if they could not have worked it up as I have.”

“I’d like to see them get another man like you!”—loudly—“H’n, if they accepted your resignation they’d find themselves on the wrong side of the hedge! They wouldn’t do it, either; it isn’t as if you were not known now for what you are. They can’t be such fools as to think that where I am, or what I do, can alter you.”

“It is not with the more sensible men who are responsible for the college that the choice would ultimately lie, but with the boys’ parents. If the numbers drop off—”

“Then the parents are the greatest idiots—”

There was a world of wrath in the words, but the principal of the New College, who felt his position so insecure, laughed.

“Yes, you may fairly count on that. A clever woman, who kept a girls’ school, told me once that if she had to draw up rules for efficient school-keeping they would begin:—

'1st. Drown all the parents!'—My own experience has led me to think she was not far wrong."

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Alec stood looking out of the open window with a thunderous face. For several reasons, some of which he hardly understood, he did not want to leave Chellaston; but he had no intention of ruining his brother. It annoyed him that Robert should seriously propose to retire, and more, that he should let jokes and laughter fall on the heels of such a proposal. He did not know that there are hours to some men, coming not in the heat of party conflict, but in the quiet of daily life, when martyrdom would be easy, and any sacrifice short of martyrdom is mere play. And because he did not know this, he did not believe in it, just as the average man does not. His cogitation, however, was not on such abstruse matters, nor was it long, but its result was not insignificant.

“Put your money into it,” he said, “and fight it out! Put part of my money into it, if you like, and let us fight it out together.”

Perhaps the sentiment that actuated the suggestion, even as concerned part of his own inheritance, was nothing more than pugilistic; the idea, however, came to Robert Trenholme as entirely a new one. The proceeds of his father’s successful trade lay temporarily invested, awaiting Alec’s decision, and his own share would probably be ample to tide the college over any such shock to its income as might be feared from the circumstances they had been contemplating, and until public confidence might be laboriously regained. The plan was not one that would have occurred to his own mind—first, because the suggestions of his mind were always prudent; secondly, because such a fight was shocking to that part of his nature which was usually uppermost. It would be far more agreeable to him to turn away from the averted eyes of correct taste than to stand brazenly till he was again tolerated. Still, this very thing he disliked most might be the thing that he was meant to do, and also there is nothing more contagious than the passion for war. Alec’s bellicose attitude aroused party spirit in him. He knew the power of money; he knew the power of the prestige he had; he began to realise that he could do this thing if he chose.

“You are a piece of consummate conceit,” he mocked. “Do you imagine that with a little money, and a very few personal graces, we two can brow-beat the good judgment of the public?”

“The fun of the fight would be worth the money *almost*,” observed Alec parenthetically. Then he jeered: “Brace up, and put on more style; put your groom in livery; get a page to open your front door; agitate till you get some honorary degrees from American colleges! And as for me, I’ll send out my bills on parchment paper, with a monogram and a crest.”

“Do you so despise your fellow men?” asked Robert sadly.

CHAPTER VII.

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For a day or two previous to the conversation of the brothers about Alec's decision, Alec had been debating in his own mind what, after all, that decision had better be. Never had he come so near doubting the principle to which he adhered as at this time. A few days went a long way in Chellaston towards making a stranger, especially if he was a young man with good introduction, feel at home there, and the open friendliness of Chellaston society, acting like the sun in AEsop's fable, had almost made this traveller take off his coat. Had Robert been a person who had formerly agreed with him, it is probable that when the subject was opened, he would have confessed the dubious condition of his heart, and they would together have very carefully considered the advisability of change of plan. Whether the upshot in that case would have been different or not, it is impossible to say, for Robert had not formerly agreed with him, and could not now be assumed to do so, and therefore for Alec, as a part of militant humanity, there was no resource but to stand to his guns, forgetting for the time the weakness in his own camp, because he had no thought of betraying it to the enemy. He who considers such incidents (they are the common sands of life), and yet looks upon the natural heart of man as a very noble thing, would appear to be an optimist.

However that may be, the conversation ended, Alec's heart stood no longer in the doubtful attitude. There are those who look upon confessions and vows as of little importance; but even in the lower affairs of life, when a healthy man has said out what he means, he commonly means it more intensely. When Alec Trenholme had told his brother that he still intended to be a butcher, the thing for him was practically done, and that, not because he would have been ashamed to retract, but because he had no further wish to retract.

"And the mair fules ye are baith," said Bates, having recourse to broad Scotch to express his indignation when told what had passed.

It was out of good nature that Alec had told the one invalid what had been going on in the other's room, but Bates was only very much annoyed.

"I thought," said he, "that ye'd got that bee out of yer ain bonnet, but ye're baith of ye daft now."

"Come now, Bates; you wouldn't dare to say that to my 'brother, the clergyman."

"I know more what's due than to call a minister a fule to his face, but whiles it's necessary to say it behind his back."

"Now I call him a hero, after what he's said to-day."

Alec was enjoying the humour of poking up the giant of conventionality.



“Hoots, man; it’s yourself ye regard as a hero! Set yerself up as a Juggernaut on a car and crush him under the wheels!”

“Oh, I’m going to British Columbia. I won’t take him at his word; but I’m pleased he had pluck enough to think of taking the bull by the horns.”

“But I’m thinking ye just will take him at his word, for it’s the easiest—standing there, patting him on the back, because he’s given up to you!”

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It was as odd a household this as well might be. Alec spent some of his time offering rough ministrations to his lame brother and asthmatic visitor, but more often left them to the sad but conscientious care of Mrs. Martha, preferring to exercise his brother's horses; and he scoured the country, escaping from social overtures he did not feel prepared to meet. To all three men Mrs. Martha was at this time an object of silent wonder. Before the Adventist disturbance she had appeared a very commonplace person; now, as they saw her going about her daily work, grim in her complete reserve, questions which could hardly be put into words arose in their minds concerning her. She suggested to them such pictorial ideas as one gleans in childhood about the end of the world, and this quite without any effort on their part, but just because she had clothed herself to their eyes in such ideas. Bates, who had exact opinions on all points of theology, tackled her upon what he termed "her errors"; but, perhaps because he had little breath to give to the cause, the other two inmates of the house could not learn that he had gained any influence over her or any additional information as to her state of mind.

Bates himself was so incongruous an element in Principal Trenholme's house that it became evident he could not be induced to remain there long. Sufficiently intelligent to appreciate thoroughly any tokens of ease or education, he was too proud not to resent them involuntarily as implying inferiority on his own part. He had, to a certain degree, fine perception of what good manners involved, but he was not sufficiently simple to act without self-conscious awkwardness when he supposed any deviation from his ordinary habits to be called for. Had he not been miserable in mind and body he might have taken more kindly to carpets and china; but as it was, he longed, as a homesick man for home, for bare floors and the unceremoniousness that comes with tin mugs and a scarcity of plates.

For home as it existed for him—the desolate lake and hills, the childish crone and rude hearth—for these he did not long. It was his home, that place; for into it—into the splashing lake and lonely woods, into the contour of the hills, and into the very logs of which the house was built—he had put as much of himself as can be absorbed by outside things; but just because to return there would be to return to his mind's external habitat, he could not now take comfort in returning. All the multiform solace it might have yielded him had been blasted by the girl from the hotel, who had visited him in secret. Before he had seen Sissy again his one constant longing had been to get done with necessary business, financial and medical, and go back to his place, where sorrow and he could dwell at peace together. He would still go, for he cherished one of those nervous ideas common with sick men, that he could breathe there and nowhere else; but he hated the place that was now rife with memories far more unrestful and galling than memories of the dead can ever be.

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He hugged to himself no flattering delusion; in his judgment Sissy had shown herself heartless and cruel; but he did not therefore argue, as a man of politer mind might have done, that the girl he had loved had never existed, that he had loved an idea and, finding it had no resemblance to the reality, he was justified in casting away both, and turning to luxurious disappointment or to a search for some more worthy recipient of the riches of his heart. No such train of reasoning occurred to him. He had thought Sissy was good and unfortunate; he had found her fortunate and guilty of an almost greater degree of callousness than he could forgive; but, nevertheless, Sissy was the person he loved—his little girl, whom he had brought up, his big girl, in whom he centred all his hopes of happy home and of years of mature affection. Sissy was still alive, and he could not endure to think of her living on wholly separated from him. For this reason his mind had no rest in the thought of remaining where he was, or of returning whence he had come, or in the dream of seeking new places. He could think of no satisfaction except that of being near to her and making her a better girl; yet he had promised to have no dealings with her; and not only that, but he now at length perceived the futility of all such care as he might exercise over her. He had thought to shield her by his knowledge of the world, and he had found that she, by natural common sense, had a better knowledge of the world than he by experience; he had thought to protect her by his strong arm, and he had found himself flung off, as she might have flung a feeble thing that clung to her for protection. She was better able to take care of herself in the world than he had been to take care of her, and she did not want his tenderness. Yet he loved her just as he had ever done, and perceived, in the deep well of his heart's love and pity, that she did, in sooth, need something—a tenderer heart it might be—need it more terribly than he had ever fancied need till now. He longed unspeakably to give her this—this crown of womanhood, which she lacked, and in the helplessness of this longing his heart was pining.

“A man isn’t going to die because he has asthma,” had been the doctor’s fiat concerning Bates. He had come to Chellaston apparently so ill that neither he nor his friends would have been much surprised had death been the order of the day, but as the programme was life, not death, he was forced to plan accordingly. His plans were not elaborate; he would go back to the clearing; he would take his aunt back from Turrif’s to be with him; he would live as he had lived before.

Would he not sell the land? they asked; for the price offered for it was good, and the lonely life seemed undesirable.

No, he would not sell. It would, he said, be selling a bit of himself; and if there was value in it, it would increase, not diminish, by holding till the country was opened up. When he was dead, his heirs, be they who they might (this he said mysteriously), could do as they would. As for him, he would take a man back from this part of the country to work in Alec’s place. His cough, he said, had been worse since he had been beguiled into leaving his wilderness to travel with Alec; the pure air of the solitude would be better than doctors for him.

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The journey into which Alec had beguiled him had already had three results: he had sold his lumber at a good price; had found out, by talking with business men at Quebec, what the real value of his land probably was, and would be; and had been put by Dr. Nash into a right way of thinking concerning his disease and its treatment, that would stand him in good stead for years to come; but none of these goodly results did he mention when he summed up the evils and discomforts of the trip in Alec's hearing. If his irascible talk was the index to his mind, certainly any virtue Alec had exercised toward him would need to be its own reward.

He offered to pay Alec his wages up to the time of their arrival in Chellaston, because he had looked after him in his feebleness, and he talked of paying "The Principal" for his board during his sojourn there. When they treated these offers lightly, he sulked, mightily offended. He would have given his life, had it been necessary, for either of the brothers, because of the succour they had lent him; nay more, had they come to him in need a lifetime afterwards, when most men would have had time to forget their benefaction many times over, John Bates would have laid himself, and all that he had, at their disposal; but he was too proud to say "thank you" for what they had done for him, or to confess that he had never been so well treated in his life before.

During his first days in Chellaston he was hardly able to leave his own room; but all the time he talked constantly of leaving the place as soon as he was well enough to do so; and the only reason that he did not bring his will to bear upon his lagging health, and fix the day of departure, was that he could not compel himself to leave the place where Sissy was. He knew he must go, yet he could not. One more interview with her he must have, one more at least before he left Chellaston. He could not devise any way to bring this about without breaking his promise to her, but his intention never faltered—see her he must, if only once, and so the days passed, his mental agitation acting as a drag on the wheels of his recovery.

CHAPTER VIII.

When Alec Trenholme had had the key of the Harmon house in his possession some days, he went one evening, beguiled by the charm of the weather and by curiosity, for the first time into the Harmon garden. He wished to look over the rooms that were of some interest to him because of one of their late inmates, and having procrastinated, he thought to carry out his intention now, in the last hour before darkness came on, in order to return the key that night.

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The path up to the house was lightly barred by the wild vine, that, climbing on overgrown shrubs on either side, had more than once cast its tendrils across. A trodden path there was in and out the bushes, although not the straight original one, and by following it Alec gained the open space before the house. Here self-sown magenta petunias made banks of colour against the old brick walls, and the evening light, just turning rosy, fell thereon. He could not see the river, although he heard it flowing behind a further mass of bushes. He stood alone with the old house in the opening that was enclosed by shrubs and trees so full of leaf that they looked like giant heaps of leaves, and it seemed to him that, if earth might have an enchanted place, he had surely entered it. Then, remembering that the light would not last long, he fitted the key to the door and went in.

Outside, nature had done her work, but inside the ugly wall-paper and turned bannisters of a modern villa had not been much beautified by dust and neglect. Still, there is something in the atmosphere of a long neglect that to the mind, if not to the eye, has softening effect. Alec listened a moment, as it were, to the silence and loneliness of the house, and went into the first dark room.

It was a large room, probably a parlour of some pretension, but the only light came through the door and lit it very faintly. All the windows of the house were shut with wooden shutters, and Alec, not being aware that, except in the rooms Harkness had occupied, the shutters were nailed, went to a window to open it. He fumbled with the hasp, and, concluding that he did not understand its working, went on into the next room to see if the window there was to be more easily managed. In this next room he was in almost total darkness. He had not reached the window before he heard some one moving in an adjoining room. Turning, he saw a door outlined by cracks of lamplight, and as it was apparent that some one else was in the house, he made at once for this door. Before he had reached it the cracks of light which guided him were gone; and when he had opened it, the room on whose threshold he stood was dark and silent; yet, whether by some slight sounds, or by some subtler sense for which we have no name, he was convinced that there was some one in it. Indignant at the extinction of the light and at the silence, he turned energetically again in the direction of the window in order to wrench it open, when, hearing a slight scratching sound, he looked back into the inner room. There was light there again, but only a small vaporous curl of light. Connecting this with the sound, he supposed that a poor sulphur match had been struck; but this supposition perhaps came to him later, for at the moment he was dazed by seeing in this small light the same face he had seen over old Cameron's coffin. The sight he had had of it then had almost faded from his memory; he had put it from him as a thing improbable,

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and therefore imaginary; now it came before his eyes distinctly. A man's face it certainly was not, and, in the fleet moment in which he saw it now, he felt certain that it was a woman's. The match, if it was a match, went out before its wood was well kindled, and all he could see vanished from sight with its light. His only thought was that whoever had escaped him before should not escape him again, and he broke open the window shutters by main strength.

The light poured in upon a set of empty rooms, faded and dusty. A glance showed him an open door at the back of the farthest room, and rushing through this, he opened the windows in that part of the house which had evidently been lately inhabited. He next came into the hall by which he had entered, and out again at the front door, with no doubt that he was chasing some one, but he did not gain in the pursuit. He went down the path to the road, looking up and down it; he came back, in and out among the bushes, searching the cemetery and river bank, vexed beyond measure all the time to perceive how easy it would be for any one to go one way while he was searching in another, for the garden was large.

He had good reason to feel that he was the victim of most annoying circumstances, and he naturally could not at once perceive how it behoved him to act in relation to this new scene in the almost forgotten drama. Cameron was dead; the old preacher was dead; whether they were one and the same or not, who was this person who now for the second time suddenly started up in mysterious fashion after the death? Alec assumed that it could be no one but Cameron's daughter, but when he tried to think how it might be possible that she should be in the deserted house, upon the track of the old preacher, as it were, his mind failed even to conjecture.

The explanation was comparatively simple, if he had known it, but he did not know it. Someone has said that the man most assured of his own truthfulness is not usually truthful; and in the same sense it is true that the man most positive in trusting his own senses is not usually reliable. Alec Trenholme flagged in his search; a most unpleasant doubt came to him as to whether he had seen what he thought he saw and was not now playing hide-and-seek with the rosy evening sunbeams among these bushes, driven by a freak of diseased fancy. He was indeed provoked to a degree almost beyond control, when, in a last effort of search through the dense shrubbery, he skirted the fence of Captain Rexford's nearest field, and there espied Sophia Rexford.

Those people are happy who have found some person or thing on earth that embodies their ideal of earthly solace. To some it is the strains of music; to some it is the interior of church edifices; to the child it is his mother; to the friend it is his friend. As soon as Alec Trenholme saw this fair woman, whom he yet scarcely knew, all the fret of his spirit found vent in the sudden desire to tell her what was vexing him, very much as a child desires to tell its troubles and be comforted.

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CHAPTER IX.

That evening Mrs. Rexford and Sophia had been sitting sewing, as they often did, under a tree near the house. Sophia had mused and stitched. Then there came a time when her hands fell idle, and she looked off at the scene before her. It was the hour when the sun has set, and the light is not less than daylight but mellow. She observed with pleasure how high the hops had grown that she had planted against the gables of the house and dairies. On this side the house there was no yard, only the big hay-fields from which the hay had been taken a month before; in them were trees here and there, and beyond she saw the running river. She had seen it all every day that summer, yet

"I think I never saw the place look so nice," she said to her step-mother.

Dottie came walking unsteadily over the thick grass. She had found an ox-daisy and a four-o'clock.

"Here! take my pretties," she said imperiously.

Sophia took them.

"They's to be blowed," said Dottie, not yet distinguishing duly the different uses of flowers or of words.

Sophia obediently blew, and the down of the four-o'clock was scattered into space; but the daisy, impervious to the blast, remained in the slender hand that held it. Dottie looked at it with indignation.

"Blow again!" was her mandate, and Sophia, to please her, plucked the white petals one by one, so that they might be scattered. It was not wonderful that, as she did so, the foolish old charm of her school-days should say itself over in her mind, and the lot fell upon "He loves me." "Who, I wonder?" thought Sophia, lightly fanciful; and she did not care to think of the wealthy suitor she had cast aside. Her mind glanced to Robert Trenholme. "No," she thought, "he loves me not." She meditated on him a little. Such thoughts, however transient, in a woman of twenty-eight, are different from the same thoughts when they come to her at eighteen. If she be good, they are deeper, as the river is deeper than the rivulet; better, as the poem of the poet is better than the songs of his youth. Then for some reason—the mischief of idleness, perhaps—Sophia thought of Trenholme's young brother—how he had looked when he spoke to her over the fence. She rose to move away from such silly thoughts.

Dottie possessed herself of two fingers and pulled hard toward the river. Dearly did she love the river-side, and mamma, who was very cruel, would not allow her to go there without a grown-up companion.

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When she and her big sister reached the river they differed as to the next step, Dottie desiring to go on into the water, and Sophia deeming it expedient to go back over the field. As each was in an indolent mood, they both gave way a little and split the difference by wandering along the waterside, conversing softly about many things—as to how long it would take the seed of the four-o’clock to “sail away, away, over the river,” and why a nice brown frog that they came across was not getting ready for bed like the birdies. There is no such sweet distraction as an excursion into Children’s Land, and Sophia wandered quite away with this talkative baby, until she found herself suddenly cast out of Dottie’s magic province as she stood beyond the trees that edged the first field not far from the fence of the Harmon garden. And that which had broken the spell was the appearance of Alec Trenholme. He came right up to her, as if he had something of importance to say, but either shyness or a difficulty in introducing his subject made him hesitate. Something in his look caused her to ask lightly:

“Have you seen a ghost?”

“Yes.”

“Are you in earnest?”

“I am in earnest, and,” added he, somewhat dubiously, “I think I am in my right mind.”

He did not say more just then, but looked up and down the road in his search for someone. In a moment he turned to her, and a current of amusement seemed to cross his mind and gleamed out of his blue eyes as he lifted them to hers. “I believe when I saw you I came to you for protection.”

The light from pink tracts of sunset fell brightly upon field and river, but this couple did not notice it at all.

“There is no bogie so fearful as the unknown,” she cried. “You frightened me, Mr. Trenholme.”

“There is no bogie in the case,” he said, “nor ghost I suppose; but I saw someone. I don’t know how to tell you; it begins so far back, and I may alarm you when I tell you that there must be someone in this neighbourhood of yours who has no right to be here.” Then to her eager listening he told the story that he had once written to his brother, and added to it the unlooked for experience of the last half-hour. His relation lacked clearness of construction. Sophia had to make it lucid by short quick questions here and there.

“I’m no good,” he concluded, deprecating his own recital. “Robert has all the language that’s in our family; but do you know, miss, what it is to see a face, and know that you

know it again, though you can't say what it was like? Have you the least notion how you would feel on being fooled a second time like that?"

The word of address that he had let fall struck her ear as something inexplicable which she had not then time to investigate; she was aware, too, that, as he spoke fast and warmly, his voice dropped into some vulgarity of accent that she had not noticed in it before. These thoughts glanced through her mind, but found no room to stay, for there are few things that can so absorb for the time a mind alive to its surroundings as a bit of genuine romance, a fragment of a life, or lives, that does not seem to bear explanation by the ordinary rules of our experience.

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That mind is dulled, not ripened, by time that does not enter with zest into a strange story, and the more if it is true. If we could only learn it, the most trivial action of personality is more worthy of our attention than the most magnificent of impersonal phenomena, and, in healthy people, this truth, all unknown, probably underlies that excitement of interest which the affairs of neighbours create the moment they become in any way surprising.

Sophia certainly did not stop to seek an excuse for her interest. She plied Alec with questions; she moved with him nearer the Harmon fence to get a better look at the house; she assured him that Chellaston was the last place in the world to harbour an adventurer.

He was a little loth, for the sake of all the pathos of Bates's story, to suggest the suspicion that had recurred.

"I saw the face twice. It was first at Turribs Station, far enough away from here; and I saw it again in this house. As sure as I'm alive, I believe it was a woman."

They stood on the verge of the field where the grass sloped back from the river. Sophia held the little child's hand in hers. The dusk was gathering, and still they talked on, she questioning and exclaiming with animation, he eager to enter the house again, a mutual interest holding their minds as one.

He began to move again impatiently. He wanted a candle with which to search the rooms more carefully, and if nothing was found, he said, he would go to the village and make what inquiries he could; he would leave no stone unturned.

Sophia would not let him go alone. She was already on perfectly familiar terms with him. He seemed to her a delightful mixture of the ardent boy and the man who, as she understood it, was roughened by lumberman's life. She lifted Dottie on her shoulder and turned homeward. "I will only be a few minutes getting Harold and some candles; don't go without us, I beg of you," she pleaded.

He never thought of offering to carry the child, or call her brother for her; his ideas of gallantry were submerged in the confusion of his thoughts. He watched her tripping lightly with the child on her shoulder. He saw her choose a path by the back of the white dairy buildings, and then he heard her clear voice calling, "Harold! Harold!" All up the yard's length to windows of house and stable he heard her calling, till at length came the answering shout. In the silence that followed he remembered, with a feeling of wonder, the shudder of distaste that had come over him when he found that the other creature with whom he had been dealing bore a woman's form. He could not endure to think of her in the same moment in which he longed to hear Miss Rexford's voice again and to see her come back. In the one case he could not believe that evil was not the

foundation of such eccentricity of mystery; in the other he thought nothing, realised nothing, he only longed for Sophia's return,

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as at times one longs for cool air upon the temples, for balm of nature's distilling. He never thought that because Sophia was a woman she would be sure to keep him waiting and forget the candle. He felt satisfied she would do just what she said, and even to his impatience the minutes did not seem long before he saw her return round the same corner of the outbuildings, her brother beside her, lantern in hand.

So in the waning daylight the three went together to the Harmon house, and found torn bits of letters scattered on floor and window-sill near the spot where Alec had last seen the unlooked-for apparition. The letters, to all appearance, had belonged to the dentist, but they were torn very small. The three searched the house all through by the light of more than one candle, and came out again into the darkness of the summer night, for the time nothing wiser concerning the mystery, but feeling entirely at home with one another.

CHAPTER X.

Although Mrs. Rexford had been without an indoor servant for several months of the winter, she had been fortunate enough to secure one for the summer. Her dairy had not yet reached the point of producing marketable wares, but it supplied the family and farm hands with milk and butter, and, since the cows had been bought in spring, the one serving girl had accomplished this amount of dairy work satisfactorily. The day after Sophia and Harold had made their evening excursion through the Harmon house, this maid by reason of some ailment was laid up, and the cows became for the first time a difficulty to the household, for the art of milking was not to be learnt in an hour, and it had not yet been acquired by any member of the Rexford family.

Harold was of course in the fields. Sophia went to the village to see if she could induce anyone to come to their aid; but, hard as it was to obtain service at any time, in the weeks of harvest it was an impossibility. When she returned, she went in by the lane, the yard, and the kitchen door. All the family had fallen into the habit of using this door more than any other. Such habits speak for themselves.

"Mamma!"—she took off her gloves energetically as she spoke—"there is nothing for it but to ask Louise to get up and do the milking—the mere milking—and I will carry the pails."

Louise was the pale-faced Canadian servant. She often told them she preferred to be called "Loulou," but in this she was not indulged.

Mrs. Rexford stirred Dottie's porridge in a small saucepan. Said she, "When Gertrude Bennett is forced to milk her cows, she waits till after dark; her mother told me so in

confidence. Yes, child, yes”—this was to Dottie who, beginning to whimper, put an end to the conversation.

Sophia did not wait till after dark: it might be an excellent way for Miss Bennett, but it was not her way. Neither did she ask her younger sisters to help her, for she knew that if caught in the act by any acquaintance the girls were at an age to feel an acute distress. She succeeded, by the administration of tea and tonic, in coaxing the servant to perform her part. Having slightly caught up her skirts and taken the empty pails on her arms, Sophia started ahead down the lane.

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Just then some one turned in from the road. It was Eliza, and she was in too much haste to take heed of the milking gear.

"Oh, Miss Sophia. I'm so glad I've met you, and alone. We've been so busy at the hotel with a cheap excursion, I've been trying all day to get a word to you. Look here!" (she thrust some crumpled letters into Sophia's hand) "I thought you'd better see those, and say something to the girls. They'll get themselves into trouble if they go on as silly as this. It seems it's some silly 'post office' they've had in a tree between them and that Harkness. I've had that letter from him, and certainly, Miss Sophia, if he's as much to blame as them, he's acted civil enough now. He had a better heart than most men, I believe, for all he bragged about it. He forgot where he had thrown their letters as waste paper, and you'll see by that letter of his he took some trouble to write to me to go and get them, for fear they should be found and the girls talked about."

Sophia stood still in dismay.

"There!" said Eliza, "I knew you'd feel hurt, but I thought you'd better know for all that. There's no harm done, only they'd better have a good setting down about it." She began to turn back again. "I must go," she said, "the dining-room girls are rushed off their feet; but if I were you, Miss Sophia, I wouldn't say a word to anyone else about it. Some one came in while I was getting these letters, but it was dark and I dodged round and made off without being seen, so that I needn't explain. It wouldn't do for the girls, you know—"

Sophia turned the letters about in her hand. One was from Cyril Harkness to Eliza; the others were poor, foolish little notes, written by Blue and Red. Louise came out of the yard and passed them into the field, and Sophia thrust the letters into her dress.

That Eliza should naively give her advice concerning the training of her sisters was a circumstance so in keeping with the girl's force of character that her late mistress hardly gave it a thought, nor had she time at that moment to wonder where the letters had been left and found. It was the thought that the family reputation for sense and sobriety had apparently been in the hands of an unprincipled stranger, and had been preserved only by his easy good-nature and by Eliza's energy, that struck her with depressing and irritating force. Had the girls come in her way just then, the words she would have addressed to them would have been more trenchant than wise, but as Eliza was by her side, retreating towards the road, she felt no desire to discuss the matter with her.

She observed now that Eliza looked worn and miserable as she had never seen her look before, unless, indeed, it had been in the first few days she ever saw her. The crowded state of the hotel could hardly account for this. "I hope, Eliza, that having despised that suitor of yours when he was here, you are not repenting now he is gone."



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The girl looked at her dully, not understanding at first.

“Speaking of Cyril Harkness?” she cried; “good gracious, no, Miss Sophia.” But the response was not given in a sprightly manner, and did not convey any conviction of its truth.

“You must be working too hard.”

“Well, I needn’t. I’ll tell you a bit of good fortune that’s come to me. Mrs. Glass—one of our boarders—you know her?”

“The stout person that comes to church in red satin?”

“Yes; and she’s rich too. Well, she’s asked me to go and visit her in Montreal in the slack time this next winter; and she’s such a good boarder every summer, you know, Mr. Hutchins is quite set on me going. She’s promised to take me to parties and concerts, and the big rink, and what not. Ah, Miss Sophia, you never thought I could come that sort of thing so soon, did you?”

“And are you not going?”

Sophia’s question arose from a certain ring of mockery in Eliza’s relation of her triumph.

“No, I’m not going a step. D’you think I’m going to be beholden to her, vulgar old thing! And besides, she talks about getting me married. I think there’s nothing so miserable in the world as to be married.”

“Most women are much happier married.” Sophia said this with orthodox propriety, although she did not altogether believe it.

“Yes, when they can’t fend for themselves, poor things. But to be for ever tied to a house and a man, never to do just what one liked! I’m going to take pattern by you, Miss Sophia, and not get married.”

Eliza went back to the village, and Sophia turned toward the pasture and the college. The first breath of autumn wind was sweeping down the road to meet her. All about the first sparks of the great autumnal fire of colour were kindling. In the nearer wood she noticed stray boughs of yellow or pink foliage displayed hanging over the dark tops of young spruce trees, or waving against the blue of the unclouded sky. It was an air to make the heavy heart jocund in spite of itself, and the sweet influences of this blithe evening in the pasture field were not lost upon Sophia, although she had not the spirit now to wish mischievously, as before, that Mrs. and Miss Bennett, or some of their friends, would pass to see her carry the milk in daylight. It was a happy pride that had been at the root of her defiance of public opinion, and her pride was depressed now,

smarting under the sharp renewal of the conviction that her sisters were naughty and silly, and that their present training was largely to blame.

The Bennetts did not come by, neither did Mrs. Brown's carriage pass, nor a brake from the hotel. Sophia had carried home the milk of two cows and returned before anyone of the slightest consequence passed by. She was just starting with two more pails when Alec Trenholme came along at a fast trot on his brother's handsome cob. He was close by her before she had time to see who it was, and when he drew up his horse she felt strangely annoyed. Instinct told her that, while others might have criticised, this simple-hearted fellow would only compassionate her toil. Their mutual adventure of the previous evening had so far established a sense of comradeship with him that she did not take refuge in indifference, but felt her vanity hurt at his pity.

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At that moment the simple iron semi-circle which the milk maid used to hold her pails off her skirts, became, with Sophia's handling, the most complex thing, and would in no wise adjust itself. Alec jumped from his horse, hung his bridle-rein over the gate-post as he entered the pasture, and made as if to take the pails as a matter of course.

Pride, vanity, conceit, whatever it may be that makes people dislike kindness when their need is obvious, produced in her an awkward gaiety. "Nay," said she, refusing; "why should you carry my milk for me?"

"Well, for one thing, we live too near not to know you don't do it usually."

"Still, it may be my special pleasure to carry it to-night; and if not, why should you help me with this any more than, for instance, in cooking the dinner to-morrow? I assure you my present pastoral occupation is much more romantic and picturesque than that."

But he took the half-filled pails (she had not attempted to carry full ones), and, pouring the contents of one into the other, proceeded to carry it.

"Since it is you who command," she cried, "shall I hold your horse in the meantime?"

With provoking literalism he gave a critical glance at the bridle. "He's all right," he said, not caring much, in truth, whether the cob broke loose or not.

So she followed him across the road into the lane, because it hardly seemed civil to let him go alone, and because he would not know what to do with the milk when he got to the yard. She did not, however, like this position.

"Do you know," she began again, "that I am very angry with you, Mr. Trenholme?"

He wished for several reasons that she would cease her banter, and he had another subject to advance, which he now brought forward abruptly. "I don't know, Miss Rexford, what right I have to think you will take any interest in what interests me, but, after what happened last night, I can't help telling you that I've got to the bottom of that puzzle, and I'm afraid it will prove a very serious matter for my poor friend Bates."

"What is it?" she cried, his latest audacity forgotten.

"Just now, as I came out of the village, I met the person I saw in the Harmon house, and the same I saw before, the time I told you of. It was a woman—a young woman dressed in silk. I don't know what she may be doing here, but I know now *who* she must be. She must be Sissy Cameron. No other girl could have been at Turriks Station the night I saw her there. She *is* Sissy Cameron." (His voice grew fiercer.) "She must have turned her father's hearse into a vehicle for her own tricks; and what's more, she must, with the most deliberate cruelty, have kept the knowledge of her safety from poor Bates all these months."

“Stay, stay!” cried Sophia, for his voice had grown so full of anger against the girl that he could hardly pour out the tale of her guilt fast enough. “Where did you meet her? What was she like?”

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"I met her ten minutes ago, walking on this road. She was a great big buxom girl, with a white face and red hair; perhaps people might call her handsome. I pulled up and stared at her, but she went on as if she didn't see me. Now I'm going in to tell Bates, and then I shall go back and bring her to book. I don't know what she may be up to in Chellaston, but she must be found."

"Many people do think her handsome, Mr. Trenholme," said Sophia, for she knew now who it was; "and she is certainly not—the sort of—"

"Do you mean to say you know her?"

"Yes, I know her quite well. I had something to do with bringing her to Chellaston. I never knew till this moment that she was the girl you and Mr. Bates have been seeking, and indeed—" She stopped, confused, for, although it had flashed on her for the first time that what she knew of Eliza's history tallied with his story, she could not make it all match, and then she perceived that no doubt it was in the Harmon house that Eliza had so faithfully sought the letters now held in her own hand. "Really," she continued, "you mustn't go to work with this girl in the summary manner you suggest. I know her too well to think anything could be gained by that. She is, in a sense, a friend of mine."

"Don't say she is a *friend* of yours—*don't!*" he said, with almost disgust in his tone.

They had halted in the lane just outside the yard gate, and now he put down the pail and turned his back on the still shut gate to speak with more freedom. As he talked, the brisk air dashed about the boughs of the spindling lilac hedge, shaking slant sunbeams upon the unpainted gate and upon the young man and woman in front of it.

Then, but in a way that was graphic because of strong feeling, Alec Trenholme told the more real part of the story which he had outlined the night before; told of the melancholy solitude in which Bates had been left with the helpless old woman in a house that was bewitched in the eyes of all, so that no servant or labourer would come near it. In talk that was a loose mosaic of detail and generalisation, he told of the woman's work to which the proud Scotchman had been reduced in care of the aunt who in his infancy had cared for him, and how he strove to keep the house tidy for her because she fretted when she saw housework ill-done. He explained that Bates would have been reduced to hard straits for want of the yearly income from his lumber had not he himself "chanced" to go and help him. He said that Bates had gone through all this without complaint, without even counting it hard, because of the grief he counted so much worse—the loss of the girl, and the belief that she had perished because of his unkindness.

"For he *loved* her, Miss Rexford. He had never had anyone else to care for, and he had just centred his whole heart on her. He cared for her as if she had been his daughter and sister, and—and he cared for her in another way that was more than all. It was a

lonely enough place; no one could blame a woman for wanting to leave it; but to leave a man to think her dead when he loved her!"

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Sophia was touched by the story and touched nearly also by the heart of the man who told it, for in such telling the hearts of speaker and listener beat against one another through finer medium than that which we call space. But just because she was touched it was characteristic in her to find a point that she could assail.

"I don't see that a woman is specially beholden to a man because he loves her against her will."

"Do you mean to say"—fiercely—"that she was not beholden to him because he taught her everything she knew, and was willing to work to support her?"

"Yes, certainly, she was under obligation for all his kindness, but his being in love with her—that is different."

But Alec Trenholme, like many people, could not see a fine point in the heat of discussion. Afterwards, on reflection he saw what she had meant, but now he only acted in the most unreasonable of ways.

"Well, I don't see it as you do," he said; and then, the picture of suppressed indignation, he took up the pail to go inside and dispose of it.

"I don't know how it can all be," said Sophia considering, "but I'm sure there's a great deal of good in her."

At this, further silence, even out of deference to her, seemed to him inadequate. "I don't pretend to know how it can be; how she got here, or what she has been doing here, dressed in silk finery, or what she may have been masquerading with matches in the old house over there for. All I know is, a girl who treated Bates as she did—"

"No, you don't know any of these things. You have only heard one side of the story. It is not fair to judge."

"She has ruined his life, done as good as killed him. Why should you take her part?"

"Because there are always two sides to everything. I don't know much of her story, but I have heard some of it, and it didn't sound like what you have said. As to her being in the Harmon house—" Sophia stopped.

"Do you mean to say," asked Alec, "that she has been living here all the time quite openly?"

"Yes—that is, she has given a false name, it seems, but, Mr. Trenholme—"

"If she has lied about her name, depend upon it she has lied about everything else. I wouldn't want you to go within ten feet of her."

Although the fallacy of such argument as Alec's too often remains undetected when no stubborn fact arises to support justice, Sophia, with her knowledge of Eliza, could not fail to see the absurdity of it. Her mind was dismayed at the thought of what the girl had apparently done and concealed, but nothing could make her doubt that the Eliza she knew was different from the Sissy Cameron he was depicting. She did not doubt, either, that if anything would bring out all the worst in her and make her a thousand times more unkind to Bates, it would be the attack Alec Trenholme meditated. She decided that she ought herself to act as go-between. She remembered

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the scorn with which the patronage of a vulgar woman had that evening been discarded, and whether Eliza herself knew it or not, Sophia knew that this nicety of taste was due chiefly to her own influence. The subtle flattery of this pleaded with her now on the girl's behalf: and perceiving that Alec Trenholme was not amenable to reason, she, like a good woman, condescended to coax him for reason's sake. To a woman the art of managing men is much like the art of skating or swimming, however long it may lie in disuse, the trick, once learnt, is there to command. The milk, it seemed, must be taken down the cellar steps and poured into pans. Then a draught of milk off the ice was given to him. Then, it appeared, she must return to the pasture, and on their way she pointed out the flowers that she had planted, and let him break one that he admired.

When they reached the field Sophia proffered her request, which was, that he would leave his discovery in her hands for one day, for one day only, she pleaded. She added that he might come to see her the next afternoon, and she would tell him what explanation Eliza had to give, and in what mood she would meet her unfortunate guardian.

And Sophia's request was granted, granted with that whole-hearted allegiance and entire docility, with a tenderness of eye and lightness of demeanour, that made her perceive that this young man had not been so obdurate as he appeared, and that her efforts to appease him had been out of proportion to what was required.

When he mounted his horse and rode off unmindful of the last pail of milk, for indeed his head was a little turned, Sophia was left standing by the pasture gate feeling unpleasantly conscious of her own handsome face and accomplished manner. If she felt amused that he should show himself so susceptible, she also felt ashamed, she hardly knew why. She remembered that in his eyes on a previous occasion which she had taken as a signal for alarm on her part, and wondered why she had not remembered it sooner. The thing was done now: she had petted and cajoled him, and she felt no doubt that masculine conceit would render him blind to her true motive. Henceforth he would suppose that she encouraged his fancy. Sophia, who liked to have all things her own way, felt disconcerted.

CHAPTER XI.

After tea Sophia took Blue and Red apart into their little bedroom. An old cotton blind was pulled down to shield the low window from passers in the yard. The pane was open and the blind flapped. The room had little ornament and was unattractive.

"How could you write letters to that Mr. Harkness?" asked Sophia, trying to be patient.

“We didn’t—exactly,” said Blue, “but how did you know?”

“At least—we did,” said Red, “but only notes. What have you heard, Sister Sophia? Has he”—anxiously—“written to papa?”

“Written to papa!” repeated Sophia in scorn. “What should he do that for?”

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"I don't know," said Red, more dejected. "It's"—a little pause—"it's the sort of thing they do."

Sophia drew in her breath with an effort not to laugh, and managed to sigh instead. "I think you are the silliest girls of your age!"

"Well, I don't care," cried Blue, falling from bashfulness into a pout, and from a pout into tears. "I *don't* care, so now. I think he was much nicer—much nicer than—" She sat upon a chair and kicked her little toes upon the ground. Red's dimpled face was flushing with ominous colour about the eyes.

"Really!" cried Sophia, and then she stopped, arrested by her own word. How was it possible to present reality to eyes that looked out through such maze of ignorance and folly; it seemed easier to take up a sterner theme and comment upon the wickedness of disobedience and secrecy. Yet all the time her words missed the mark, because the true sin of these two pretty criminals was utter folly. Surely if the world, and their fragment of it, had been what they thought—the youth a hero, and their parents wrongly proud—their action had not been so wholly evil! But how could she trim all the thoughts of their silly heads into true proportion?

"I shall have to tell papa, you know; I couldn't take the responsibility of not telling him; but I won't speak till this press of work is over, because he is so tired, so you can be thinking how you will apologise to him."

Both Blue and Red were weeping now, and Sophia, feeling that she had made adequate impression, was glad to pause.

Red was the first to withdraw her handkerchief from dewy eyes. Her tone and attitude seemed penitent, and Sophia looked at her encouragingly.

"Sister Sophia"—meekly—"does he say in his letter where he is, or—or"—the voice trembled—"if he's ever coming back?"

For such disconsolate affection Sophia felt that the letter referred to was perhaps the best medicine. "I will read you all that he says." And she read it slowly and distinctly, as one reads a lesson to children.

"Dear Eliza."

"He didn't think she was 'dear'" pouted Blue. "He told us she was 'real horrid.'"

Sophia read on from the crumpled sheet with merciless distinctness.

"Come to think of it, when I was coming off I threw all my bills and letters and things down in a heap in the back kitchen at Harmon's; and there were some letters there that



those 'cute little Rexford girls wrote to me. They were real spoony on me, but I wasn't spoony on them one bit, Eliza, at least, not in my heart, which having been given to you, remained yours intact; but I sort of feel a qualm to think how their respected pa would jaw them if those *billets-doux* were found and handed over. You can get in at the kitchen window quite easy by slipping the bolt with a knife; so as I know you have a hankering after the Rexfords, I give you this chance to crib those letters if

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you like. They are folded small because they had to be put in a nick in a tree, called by those amiable young ladies, a post-office.”“I’m real sorry I made you cry, Eliza. It’s as well I didn’t remain or I might have begun admiring of you again, which might have ended in breaking my vow to be—Only your ex-admirer, CYRIL, P. H——.”

“Oh!” cried Blue, her tears dried by the fire of injury, “we never talked to him except when he talked to us—never!”

“There’s a postscript,” said Sophia, and then she read it.

“P.S. They used to cock their eyes at me when they saw me over the fence. You had better tell them not to do it; I could not bear to think of them doing it to anyone else.”

“Oh!” cried Red, “Oh—h! he never said to us that we cocked our eyes. He said once to Blue that the way she curled her eyelashes at him was *real* captivating.”

Sophia rose delivering her final word: “Nothing could be more utterly vulgar than to flirt with a young man who is beneath you in station just because he happens to be thrown in your way.”

CHAPTER XII.

When Sophia went to the hotel next morning, Eliza was not to be found. She was not in, and no one knew where she was. Mr. Hutchins was inclined to grumble at her absence as an act of high-handed liberty, but Miss Rexford was not interested in his comments. She went back to her work at home, and felt in dread of the visit which she had arranged for Alec Trenholme to make that day. She began to be afraid that, having no information of importance with which to absorb his attention, he might to some extent make a fool of himself. Having seen incipient signs of this state of things, she took for granted it would grow.

When the expected caller did come, Sophia, because the servant could still do but little, was at work in the dairy, and she sent one of the children to ask him to come into the yard. The dairy was a pleasant place; it was a long low stone room, with two doors opening on the green yard. The roof of it was shaded by a tree planted for that purpose, and not many feet from its end wall the cool blue river ran. A queen could not have had a sweeter place for an audience chamber, albeit there was need of paint and repairs, and the wooden doorstep was almost worn away.

Sophia, churn-handle in hand, greeted her visitor without apology. She had expected that this churn-handle, the evidence of work to be done, would act as a check upon feeling, but she saw with little more than a glance that such check was superfluous;

there was no sign of intoxication from the wine of graciousness which she had held to his lips when last she saw him. As he talked to her he stood on the short white clover outside the door's decaying lintel. He had a good deal to say about Bates, and more about Sissy Cameron, and Sophia found that she had a good deal to say in answer.

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The churn was a hideous American patent, but light and very convenient. They talked to the monotonous splash of the milk within, and as work was not being interrupted, Alec was at length asked to sit down on the worn doorstep, and he remained there until the butter "came." He had gone up in Sophia's esteem many degrees, because she saw now that any escape of warmer sentiment had been involuntary on his part. She blessed him in her heart for being at once so susceptible and so strong. She fancied that there was a shade of sadness in his coolness which lent it attraction. With that shadow of the epicurean which is apt to be found upon all civilised hearts, she felt that it did her good to realise how nice he was, just as a fresh flower or a strong wind would have done her good. She said to him that she supposed he would not be staying much longer in Chellaston, and he replied that as soon as Bates would go and his brother was on his feet again he intended to leave for the West. Then he begged her to lose no time in seeing Eliza, for Bates had taken to hobbling about the roads, and he thought a sudden and accidental meeting with the girl might be the death of him.

Now this assertion of Alec's, that Bates had taken to walking out of doors, was based on the fact told him by Mrs. Martha and his brother, that the day before Bates had wilfully walked forth, and after some hours came back much exhausted. "Where did you go?" Alec had asked him fiercely, almost suspecting, from his abject looks, that he had seen the girl. He could, however, learn nothing but that the invalid had walked "down the road and rested a while and come back." Nothing important had happened, Alec thought; and yet this conclusion was not true.

That which had happened had been this. John Bates, after lying for a week trying to devise some cunning plan for seeing Sissy without compromising her, and having failed in this, rose up in the sudden energy of a climax of impatience, and, by dint of short stages and many rests by the roadside, found his way through the town, up the steps of the hotel, and into its bar-room. No one could hinder him from going there, thought he, and perchance he might see the lassie.

Years of solitude, his great trouble, and, lastly, the complaint which rendered him so obviously feeble, had engendered in his heart a shyness that made it terrible to him to go alone across the hotel verandah, where men and women were idling. In truth, though he was obviously ill, the people noticed him much less than he supposed, for strangers often came there; but egotism is a knife which shyness uses to wound itself with. When he got into the shaded and comparatively empty bar-room, he would have felt more at home, had it not been for the disconsolate belief that there was one at home in that house to whom his presence would be terribly unwelcome. It was with a nightmare of pain and desolation on his heart that he laid trembling arms upon the bar, and began to chat with the landlord.

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"I'm on the look-out for a young man and a young woman," said he, "who'll come and work on my clearing;" and so he opened talk with the hotel-keeper. He looked often through the door into the big passage, but Sissy did not pass.

Now Mr. Hutchins did not know of anyone to suit Bates's requirements, and he did know that the neighbourhood of Chellaston was the most unlikely to produce such servants, but, having that which was disappointing to say, he said it by degrees. Bates ordered a glass of cooling summer drink, and had his pipe filled while they discussed. The one tasted to him like gall, and the fumes of the other were powerless to allay his growing trepidation, and yet, in desperate adventure, he stayed on.

Hutchins, soon perceiving that he was a man of some education, and finding out that he was the oft-talked-of guest of "The Principal," continued to entertain him cheerfully enough. "Now," said he, "talking of people to help, I've got a girl in my house now—well, I may say I fell on my feet when I got her." Then followed a history of his dealings with Eliza, including an account of his own astuteness in perceiving what she was, and his cleverness in securing her services. Bates listened hungrily, but with a pang in his heart.

"Aye," said he outwardly, "you'll be keeping a very quiet house here."

"You may almost call it a religious house," said Hutchins, taking the measure of his man. "Family prayer every Sunday in the dining-room for all who likes. Yes," he added, rubbing his hand on his lame knee, "Canadians are pious for the most part, Mr. Bates, and I have the illeet of two cities on *my* balconies."

Other men came in and went out of the room. Women in summer gowns passed the door. Still Bates and Hutchins talked.

At last, because Bates waited long enough, Eliza passed the door, and catching sight of him, she turned, suddenly staring as if she knew not exactly what she was doing. There were two men at the bar drinking. Hutchins, from his high swivel chair, was waiting upon them. They both looked at Eliza; and now Bates, trembling in every nerve, felt only a weak fear lest she should turn upon him in wrath for being unfaithful, and summoned all his strength to show her that by the promise with which he had bound himself he would abide. He looked at her as though in very truth he had never seen her before. And the girl took his stony look as if he had struck her, and fell away from the door, so that they saw her no longer.

"Looked as if she'd seen someone she knew in here," remarked Hutchins, complacently. He was always pleased when people noticed Eliza, for he considered her a credit to the house.

The others made no remark, and Bates felt absurdly glad that he had seen her, not that it advanced his desire, but yet he was glad; and he had shown her, too, that she need not fear him.

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And Eliza—she went on past the door to the verandah, and stood in sight of the boarders, who were there, in sight of the open street; but she did not see anyone or anything. She was too common a figure at that door to be much noticed, but if anyone had observed her it would have been seen that she was standing stolidly, not taking part in what was before her, but that her white face, which never coloured prettily like other women's, bore now a deepening tint, as if some pale torturing flame were lapping about her; there was something on her face that suggested the quivering of flames.

In a few minutes she went back into the bar-room.

"Mr. Hutchins," she said, and here followed a request, that was almost a command, that he should attend to something needing his oversight in the stable-yard.

Hutchins grumbled, apologised to Bates; but Eliza stood still, and he went. She continued to stand, and her attitude, her forbidding air, the whole atmosphere of her presence, was such that the two men who were on the eve of departure went some minutes before they otherwise would have done, though perhaps they hardly knew why they went.

"Mr. Bates! You're awfully angry with me, Mr. Bates, I'm afraid."

He got up out of his chair, in his petty vanity trying to stand before her as if he were a strong man. "Angry!" he echoed, for he did not know what he said.

"Yes, you're angry; I know by the way you looked at me," she complained sullenly. "You think I'm not fit to look at, or to speak to, and—"

They stood together in the common bar-room. Except for the gay array of bottles behind the bar the place was perfectly bare, and it was open on all sides. She did not look out of door or windows to see who might be staring at them, but he did. He had it so fixed in his faithful heart that he must not compromise her, that he was in a tremor lest she should betray herself. He leaned on the back of his chair, breathing hard, and striving to appear easy.

"No, but I'm thinking, Sissy—"

"You're dreadfully ill, Mr. Bates, I'm afraid."

"No, but I was thinking, Sissy, I must see ye again before I go. I've that to say to ye that must be said before I go home."

"Home!" She repeated the word like the word of a familiar language she had not heard for long. "Are you going home?"

"Where will ye see me?" he urged.

"Anywhere you like," she said listlessly, and then added with sudden determination, "I'll come."

"Hoots!" he said, "*where* will ye come?"

"Where?" she said, looking at him keenly as if to gauge his strength or weakness.

"You're not fit to be much on your feet."

"Can you come in the bush at the back of the college? It would be little harm for you to speak to me there. When can ye come?"

"To-morrow morning."

"How can ye come of a morning? Your time's not your own."

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"I say I'll come." She enunciated the words emphatically as Hutchins's crutches were heard coming near the door. Then she left the room.

CHAPTER XIII.

The wood behind the college grounds and Captain Rexford's pasture had appeared to Bates to be a place possessed only by the winds of heaven and by such sunshine and shadow as might fall to its share. He had formed this estimate of it while he had lain for many days watching the waving of its boughs from out his window, and therefore he had named it to Eliza as a place where he could talk to her. Eliza well knew that this wood was no secluded spot in the season of summer visitors, but she was in too reckless a mood to care for this, any more than she cared for the fact that she had no right to leave the hotel in the morning. She left that busy house, not caring whether it suffered in her absence or not, and went to the appointed place, heedless of the knowledge that she was as likely as not to meet with some of her acquaintances there. Yet, as she walked, no one seeing her would have thought that this young woman had a heart rendered miserable by her own acts and their legitimate outcome. In her large comeliness she suggested less of feeling than of force, just as the gown she wore had more pretension to fashion than to grace.

When she entered the wood it was yet early morning. Bates was not there. She had come thus early because she feared hindrance to her coming, not because she cared when he came. She went into the young spruce fringes of the wood near the Rexford pasture, and sat down where she had before sat to watch Principal Trenholme's house. The leaves of the elm above her were turning yellow; the sun-laden wind that came between the spruce shades seemed chill to her; she felt cold, an unusual thing for her, and the time seemed terribly long. When she saw Bates coming she went to the more frequented aisles of the trees to meet him.

Bates had never been a tall man, but now, thin and weak, he seemed a small one, although he still strove to hold himself up manfully. His face this day was grey with the weariness of a sleepless night, and his enemy, asthma, was hard upon him—a man's asthma, that is a fierce thing because it is not yielded to gracefully, but is struggled against.

"Oh, but you're ill, Mr. Bates," she said, relapsing into that repeated expression of yesterday.

"I'm no so ill as I—I seem," he panted, "but that's neither here—nor there."

This was their greeting. Round them the grass was littered by old picnic papers, and this vulgar marring of the woodland glade was curiously akin to the character of this crucial interview between them, for the beauty of its inner import was overlaid with much



that was common and garish. A rude bench had been knocked together by some picnicker of the past, and on this Bates was fain to sit down to regain his breath. Sissy stood near him, plucking at some coloured leaves she had picked up in her restlessness.

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"You think of going back to the old place," she said, because he could not speak.

"Aye."

"Miss Bates is keeping pretty well?"—this in conventional tone that was oddly mortised into the passionate working of her mind.

"Oh, aye."

"Why wouldn't you sell it and live in a town?"

"It's the only air there I can be breathing," said he; the confession was wrung from him by his present struggle for breath. "I'm not fit for a town."

"I hear them saying down at the hotel that you're awfully ill."

"It's not mortal, the doctor says."

"You'll need someone to take care of you, Mr. Bates."

"Oh, I'll get that."

He spoke as if setting aside the subject of his welfare with impatience, and she let it drop; but because he was yet too breathless to speak his mind, she began again:

"I don't mind if you don't sell, for I don't want to get any money."

"Oh, but ye can sell when I'm gone; it'll be worth more then than now. I'm just keeping a place I can breathe in, ye understand, as long as I go on breathing."

She pulled the leaves in her hand, tearing them lengthwise and crosswise.

"What I want—to ask of ye now is—what I want to ask ye first is a solemn question. Do ye know where your father's corpse—is laid?"

"Yes, I know," she said. "He didn't care anything about cemeteries, father didn't."

He looked at her keenly, and there was a certain stern setting of his strong lower jaw. His words were quick: "Tell on."

"'Twas you that made me do it," said she, sullenly.

"Do what? What did ye do?"

"I buried my father."

"Did ye set Saul to do it?"

"No; what should I have to do asking a man like Saul?"

"Lassie, lassie! it's no for me to condemn ye, nor maybe for the dead either, for he was whiles a hard father to you, but I wonder your own woman's heart didn't misgive ye."

Perhaps, for all he knew, it had misgiven her often, but she did not say so now.

"In the clearin's all round Turrifs they buried on their own lands," she said, still sullen.

"Ye buried him on his own land!" he exclaimed, the wonder of it growing upon him.

"When? Where? Out with it! Make a clean breast of it."

"I buried him that night. The coffin slipped easy enough out of the window and on the dry leaves when I dragged it. I laid him between the rocks at the side, just under where the bank was going to fall, and then I went up and pushed the bank down upon him." She looked up and cried defiantly: "Father'd as soon lie there as in a cemetery!" Although it was as if she was crushing beneath her heel that worship of conventionality which had made Bates try to send the body so far to a better grave, there was still in her last words a tone of pathos which surprised even herself. Something in the softening influences which had been about her since that crisis of her young life made her feel more ruth at the recital of the deed than she had felt at its doing. "I made a bed of moss and leaves," she said, "and I shut up the ledge he lay in with bits of rock, so that naught could touch him."

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"But—but I dug there," cried Bates. (In his surprise the nervous affection of his breath had largely left him.) "I dug where the bank had fallen; for I had strange thoughts o' what ye might have been driven to when I was long alone, and I dug, but his body wasna' there."

It was curious that, even after her confession, he should feel need to excuse himself for his suspicion.

"There was a sort of cleft sideways in the rock at the side of the stream; you'd never have seen it, for I only saw it myself by hanging over, holding by a tree. No one would ever have thought o' digging there when I'd closed up the opening with stones; I thought o' that when I put him in."

He got up and took a step or two about, but he gave no gesture or prayer or word of pain. "The sin lies at my door," he said.

"Well, yes, Mr. Bates, you drove me to it, but—"

Her tone, so different from his, he interrupted. "Don't say 'but,' making it out less black. Tell what ye did more."

Then she told him, coolly enough, how she had arranged the bedclothes to look as though, she slept under them: how she had got into the box because, by reason of the knot-hole in the lid, she had been able to draw it over her, and set the few nails that were hanging in it in their places. She told him how she had laughed to herself when he took her with such speed and care across the lake that was her prison wall. She told him that, being afraid to encounter Saul alone, she had lain quiet, intending to get out at Turrif, but that when she found herself in a lonely house with a strange man, she was frightened and ran out into the birch woods, where her winding-sheet had been her concealment as she ran for miles among the white trees; how she then met a squaw who helped her to stop the coming railway train.

"We lit a fire," she said, "and the Indian woman and the children stood in the light of it and brandished; and further on, where it was quite dark, we had got a biggish log or two and dragged them across the track, so when the train stopped the men came and found them there; and I went round to the back and got on the cars when all the men were off and they didn't come near me till morning. I thought they'd find me, and I'd got money to pay, but I got mixed up with the people that were asleep. I gave the squaw one of your aunt's gold pieces for helping, but"—with a sneer—"the passengers gave her money too. I made sure she'd not tell on me, for if she had she'd have got in jail for stopping the train."

“Puir body,” said he; “like enough all she had seen o’ men would make her think, too, she had no call to say anything, though she must have known of the hue and cry in the place.”

“More like she wanted to save herself from suspicion of what she had done,” said Eliza, practically.

She still stood before him on the path, the strong firm muscles of her frame holding her erect and still without effort of her will. The stillness of her pose, the fashionableness of gown and hat, and the broad display of her radiant hair, made a painful impression on Bates as he looked, but the impression on two other men who went by just then was apparently otherwise. They were a pair of young tourists who stared as they passed.

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"By Jove, what a magnificent girl!" said one to the other just before they were out of hearing. There was that of consciousness in his tone which betrayed that he thought his own accents and choice words were well worthy her attention.

Eliza turned her back to the direction in which the strangers had gone, thus covering the spare man to whom she was talking from their backward glances. Bates, who was looking up at her face with his heart-hunger in his eyes, saw a look of contempt for the passing remark flit across her face, and because of the fond craving of his own heart, his sympathy, strangely enough, went out to the young man who had spoken, rather than to her sentiment of contempt. The angel of human loves alone could tell why John Bates loved this girl after all that had passed, but he did love her.

And perceiving now that she had told what she had to tell, he turned his mind to that something that lay on his mind to say to her. With the burden of the thought he rose up again from his rude seat, and he held up his head to look at her as with effort; she was so tall, that he still must needs look up.

"All's said that need be said, Sissy, between us two." His voice was almost hard because he would not betray his wistfulness. "Ye have chosen your own way o' life, and I willna raise a cry to alter it; I'm no fit for that. If I could shape ye to my pleasure, I see now I'd make a poor thing of it. Ye can do better for yourself if—if"—his square jaw seemed almost to tremble—"if ye'll have a heart in ye, lassie. Forgive me if I seem to instruct ye, for I've no thought in me now that I could make ye better if I tried."

He stopped again, and she saw his weak frame moving nervously; she thought it was for want of breath.

"You're awfully ill, Mr. Bates," she said, in dulness repeating words that she seemed to have got by heart.

Her stupid pity stung him into further speech.

"Oh, lassie, it's not because I'm fond of ye that I say it, for what does it matter about me, but because of all the men in the world that love women. It's God's voice through them to you; and (although I can't rightly frame it into words) because God set men and women in families, and gave them to have affections, I tell ye the soul in which the pride o' life, or pleasure, or the like o' that, takes the place of the affections is a lost soul." Again his harsh mouth trembled, and the words came with effort. "Sissy Cameron, ye've not known a mother nor a sister, and your father was hard, and I who loved ye was worse than a brute, and I can't rightly say what I would; but when I'm gone, look round ye; lassie, at the best women ye know that are wives and mothers, and if ye can't greet at the things they greet at, and if ye laugh at things they don't laugh at, and if ye don't fear to do the things they fear, then, even if your cleverness should make ye queen o' the whole world, God pity ye!"

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"Yes, Mr. Bates," she said, just as she used to when she said the catechism to him and he admonished her. She had listened to him with that dull half-attention which we give to good-sounding words when our heart is only alert for something for which we yet wait. She had it firmly in her mind that he was going to say something on which would hang her future fate, that he would either still ask her, in spite of all she had said, to go back with him, or would tell her that he would not have her now, as the American had done. All her sensibilities lay, as it were, numb with waiting; she had no purpose concerning the answer she would make him; her mind was still full of invective and complaint; it was also full of a dull remorse that might melt into contrition; either or both must break forth if he said that which appealed to words in her.

When Bates saw, however, that the little sermon which he had wrung from his heart with so much pain had not impressed her much, he felt as if he had never known until then the sharpest pain of sorrow, for although he did not know what he had hoped for, there had been hope in proportion to effort, and disappointment, the acutest form of sorrow, cut him to the heart. He did not moan or bewail, that was not his way. He stood holding himself stiffly, as was his wont, and pain laid emphasis on the severe and resolute lines upon his face, for a face that has long been lent as a vehicle for stern thoughts does not express a milder influence, although the depths of the heart are broken up.

She looked at his face, and the main drift of what he had said was interpreted by his look; she had expected censure and took for granted that all this was reproof.

"I don't see, Mr. Bates"—her tone was full of bitterness—"that you've got any call to stand there handing me over as if I was a leper."

To which he answered angrily, "Bairn, haven't I told you once and again that take your sin on my own soul?"

"Well then"—still in angry complaint—"what right have you to be looking and talking of me as if nothing was to be expected of me but ill?"

So he believed that it was worse than useless to speak to her. He drew his hand over his heavy eyebrows. He thought to himself that he would go home now, that he would start that day or the next and never see her again, and in the decision he began walking away, forgetting the word "good-bye" and all its courtesy, because oblivious of everything except that thought that he was unfit for anything but to go and live out his time in the desolate home. But when he had got about twenty paces from her he remembered that he had said no farewell, and turned, looked back, and came to her again, his heart beating like a boy's.

She stood where he had left her, sullen, with head slightly bent, and tearing the same leaves. Bates recognised her beauty to the full, as much as any other man could have

done, but it only hurt him and made him afraid. He looked at her, timid as a child, yet manfully ignoring his timidity, he tried to smile to her as he said,

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“Bairn, I may never see ye in this world again; give your old teacher a kiss.”

Eliza stared, then lent her face to be kissed. She was surprised at the gentleness of his sparing caress, so surprised that when she lifted her head she stood stock still and watched him till he was out of sight, for, driven by the scourge of his feeling, he went away from her with quick, upright gait, never looking back.

She watched him till he disappeared into Trenholme's house. When she walked home she did not sob or wipe her eyes or cover her face, yet when she got to the hotel her eyes were swollen and red, and she went about her work heedless that anyone who looked at her must see the disfigurement of tears.

CHAPTER XIV.

In the latter part of that day Bates suffered a fierce attack of his malady. Everyone in Trenholme's house, including the master himself on crutches, became agile in their desire to alleviate the suffering, and he received their ministrations with that civility which denoted that, had conventionality allowed, he would not have received them; for to fling all that is given him at the heads of the givers is undoubtedly the conduct that nature suggests to a man in pain. Having need, however, of some help, Bates showed now, as before, an evident preference for Alec as an attendant, a preference due probably to the fact that Alec never did anything for him that was not absolutely necessary, and did that only in the most cursory way. When Alec entered his room that night to see, as he cheerfully remarked, whether he was alive or not, Bates turned his face from the wall.

“I think it right to tell ye,” he began, and his tone and manner were so stiff that the other knew something painful was coming, “I think it right to tell ye that Eliza Cameron is alive and well. I have seen her.”

In his annoyance to think a meeting had occurred Alec made an exclamation that served very well for the surprise that Bates expected.

“Her father,” continued Bates, “was decently buried, unknown to me, on his own land, as is the custom in those parts of the country. The girl was the person ye saw get up from the coffin—the one that ye were so frightened of.”

This last word of explanation was apparently added that he might be assured Alec followed him, and the listener, standing still in the half-darkened room, did not just then feel resentment for the unnecessary insult. He made some sound to show that he heard.

“Then”—stiffly—“she took the train, and she has been living here ever since, a very respectable young woman, and much thought of. I'm glad to have seen her.”

“Well?”

“I thought it right to tell ye, and I’m going home to-morrow or next day.”

That was evidently all that was to be told him, and Alec refrained from all such words as he would like to have emitted. But when he was going dumbly out of the room, Bates spoke again.

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“Ye’re young yet; when ye feel inclined to give your heart to any young thing that you’ve a caring for, gie it as on the altar of God, and not for what ye’ll get in return, and if ye get in answer what ye’re wanting, thank God for a free gift.”

Then Alec knew that Sissy had been unkind to Bates.

The night being yet early, he willingly recognised an obligation to go and tell Miss Rexford that their mutual solicitude had in some way been rendered needless. It was easy for him to find the lady he desired to see, for while the weather was still warm it was the habit in Chellaston to spend leisure hours outside the house walls rather than in, and Alec Trenholme had already learned that at evening in the Rexford household the father and brother were often exhausted by their day’s work and asleep, and the mother occupied by the cribs of her little ones. He found the house, as usual, all open to the warm dry autumn evening, doors and windows wide. The dusk was all within and without, except that, with notes of a mother’s lullaby, rays of candle light fell from the nursery window. As his feet brushed the nearer grass, he dimly saw Miss Rexford rise from a hammock swung on the verandah, where she had been lounging with Winifred. She stood behind the verandah railing, and he in the grass below, and they talked together on this subject that had grown, without the intention of either, to be so strong a bond of interest between them. Here it was that Alec could give vent to the pity and indignation which he could not express to the man whose sufferings excited these emotions.

In spite of this visit Sophia sought Eliza again the next day. As she entered the hotel Mr. Hutchins begged a word with her in his little slate-painted office, saying that the young housekeeper had not been like herself for some time, and that he was uneasy, for she made a friend of no one.

“Are you afraid of losing her?” asked Miss Rexford coldly, with slight arching of her brows.

He replied candidly that he had no interest in Eliza’s joys or sorrows, except as they might tend to unsettle her in her place. Having, by the use of his own wits, discovered her ability, he felt that he had now a right to it.

Sophia went upstairs, as she was directed, to Eliza’s bedroom on the highest storey, and found her there, looking over piles of freshly calendered house linen. The room was large enough, and pleasant—a better bedroom than Sophia or her sisters at present possessed. Eliza was apparently in high spirits. She received her guest with almost loud gaiety.

“What do you think’s happened now, Miss Sophia?” cried she. “You remember what I told you about Mrs. Glass? Well, there’s two young gentlemen come to the house here yesterday morning, and she’s entertained them before at her house in town, so they



struck up great friends with her here, and yesterday she had her supper served in the upstairs parlour, and had them, and me, and nobody else. She says one of them saw me out yesterday morning, and was 'smitten'—that's what she calls it."

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Eliza gave an affected laugh as she repeated the vulgar word, and coloured a little. "She says if I'll come to see her in town she's no doubt but that he'll 'propose.'".

"But I thought you were not going?"

"I don't care for her," said Eliza, as if ingratitude were a virtue, "but I rather like the young gentleman. That makes a difference. Look here! She says he's getting on in business, and would give me a carriage. How do you think I should look driving in a carriage, like Mrs. Brown? Should I look as grand as she does?"

"Much grander, I daresay, and much handsomer."

"They all give dinner parties at Montreal." Eliza said this reflectively, speaking the name of that city just as an English country girl would speak of "London." "Don't you think I could go to dinner parties as grand as any one? And, look here, they showed me all sorts of photographs the Montreal ladies get taken of themselves, and one was taken with her hair down and her side face turned. And Mrs. Glass has been up here this afternoon, saying that her gentlemen friends say I must be taken in the same way. She was fixing me for it. Look, I'll show you how it is."

Her great masses of hair, left loose apparently from this last visit, were thrown down her back in a moment, and Eliza, looking-glass in hand, sat herself sideways on a chair, and disposed her hair so that it hung with shining copper glow like a curtain behind her pale profile. "What do I look like, Miss Sophia?"

"Like what you are, Eliza—a handsome girl."

"Then why shouldn't I marry a rich man? It would be easier than drudging here, and yet I thought it was grand to be here last year. It's easy enough to get up in the world."

"Yes, when anyone has the right qualities for it."

"I have the right qualities."

"Unscrupulousness?" interrogated Sophia; and then she charged the girl with the falsehood of her name.

Eliza put down her looking-glass and rolled up her hair. There was something almost leonine in her attitude, in her silence, as she fastened the red masses. Sophia felt the influence of strong feeling upon her; she almost felt fear. Then Eliza came and stood in front of her.

"Is he very ill, do you think, Miss Sophia?"

“Not dangerously.” Sophia had no doubt as to who was meant. “If he would only take reasonable care he’d be pretty well.”

“But he won’t,” she cried. “On the clearin’, when he used to take cold, he’d do all the wrong things. He’ll just go and kill himself doing like that now, when he goes back there alone—and winter coming on.”

“Do you think you could persuade him not to go?”

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"He's just that sort of a man he'd never be happy anywhere else. He hones for the place. No, he'll go back and kill himself. I'm sorry, but it can't be helped. I'm *not* sorry I came away from him; I'm not sorry I changed my name, and did all the things I s'pose he's told you I did, and that I s'pose you think are so wicked. I'd do it again if I was as frightened and as angry. Was he to make me his slave-wife? *That's* what he wanted of me! I know the man!"—scornfully—"he said it was for my good, but it was his own way he wanted." All the forced quiescence of her manner had changed to fire. "And if you think that I'm unnatural, and wicked to pretend I had a different name, and to do what I did to get quit of him, then I'll go among people who will think it was clever and a fine joke, and will think more about my fine appearance than about being good all day long."

Sophia was terribly roused by the torrent of feeling that was now pouring forth, not more in words than in silent force, from the young woman who stood over her.

"Go!" she cried, "go to such people. Marry the man who cares for your hair and your good looks. Urge him on to make money, and buy yourself clothes and carriages and houses. I have no doubt you can do it! I tell you, Eliza Cameron, such things are not much worth picking up at a gift, let alone selling the nicer part of yourself for them!"

The two had suddenly clashed, with word and feeling, the one against the other.

The window of Eliza's room was open, and the prospect from it had that far-off peace that the prospect from high windows is apt to have. The perfect weather breathed calm over the distant land, over the nearer village; but inside, the full light fell upon the two women aglow with their quarrel.

Sophia, feeling some instinctive link to the vain, ambitious girl before her, struck with words as one strikes in the dark, aiming at a depth and tenderness that she dimly felt to be there.

She believed in, and yet doubted, the strength in the better part of Eliza's heart; believed, but spoke hurriedly, because she felt that a chilly doubt was coming over her as to whether, after all, there was any comprehension, any answering thrill, for the words she said.

Her own stately beauty was at its height, at its loveliest hour, when she spoke. She had been, in girlhood, what is called a beauty; she had dazzled men's eyes and turned their heads; and when the first bloom was past, she had gone out of the glare, having neither satisfied the world nor been satisfied with it, because of the higher craving that is worldly disability. She had turned into the common paths of life and looked upon her beauty and her triumph as past. And yet, ten years after the triumphs of her girlhood, this day, this hour, found her more beautiful than she had ever been before. The stimulus of a new and more perfect climate, the daily labour for which others

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pitied her, had done their part. The angels who watch over prayer and effort and failure; and failure and effort and prayer, had laid their hands upon her brow, bestowing graces. As she sat now, speaking out of a full heart, there came a colour and light that gave an ethereal charm to her handsome face. There was no one there to see it; Eliza Cameron was not susceptible to beauty. God, who created beauty in flowers and women, and knew to the full the uses thereof, did not set flowers in gardeners' shows nor women in ball-rooms.

Sophia had spoken strongly, vividly, of the vanity of what men call success, and the emptiness of what they call wealth, but Eliza, self-centred, did not enter into this wide theme.

"You despise me," she repeated sullenly, "because of what I have done."

"What makes you think I despise you?"

She did not intend to draw a confession on the false supposition that Bates had already told all the story, but this was the result. Eliza, with arms folded defiantly, stated such details of her conduct as she supposed, would render her repulsive, stated them badly, and evoked that feeling of repulsion that she was defying.

Sophia was too much roused to need time for thought. "I cannot condemn you, for I have done as bad a thing as you have done, and for the same reason," she cried.

Eliza looked at her, and faltered in her self-righteousness. "I don't believe it," she said rudely. She fell back a pace or two, and took to sorting the piles of white coverlets mechanically.

"You did what you did because of everything in the world that you wanted that you thought you could get that way; and, for the same reason, I once agreed to marry a man I didn't like. If you come to think of it, that was as horrid and unnatural; it is a worse thing to desecrate the life of a living man than the death of a dead one. I stand condemned as much as you, Eliza; but don't you go on now to add to one unnatural deed another as bad."

"Why did you do it?" asked Eliza, drawn, wondering, from the thought of herself.

"I thought I could not bear poverty and the crowd of children at home, and that fortune and rank would give me all I wanted; and the reason I didn't go through with it was that through his generosity I tasted all the advantages in gifts and social distinction before the wedding day, and I found it wasn't worth what I was giving for it, just as you will find some day that all you can gain in the way you are going now is not worth the disagreeableness, let alone the wrong, of the wrong-doing."



"You think that because you are high-minded," said Eliza, beginning again in a nervous way to sort the linen.

"So are you, Eliza." Miss Rexford wondered whether she was true or false in saying it, whether it was the merest flattery to gain an end or the generous conviction of her heart. She did not know. The most noble truths that we utter often seem to us doubtfully true.

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Now Sophia felt that what Eliza had said was only the fact—that it was very sad that Mr. Bates should go ill and alone to his lonely home, but that it could not be helped. To whatever degree of repentance and new resolution Eliza might be brought, Sophia saw no way whatever of materially helping Bates; but she urged the girl to go and visit him, and say such kind and penitent things as might be in her power to say, before he set forth on his melancholy journey.

“No,” said Eliza, “I won’t go”; and this was all that could be obtained from her.

The visit was at an end. Sophia felt that it had been futile, and she did not overlook the rebuff to herself. With this personal affront rankling, and indignation that Eliza should still feel so resentful after all that had been urged on behalf of Bates, she made her way into the street.

She was feeling that life was a weary thing when she chanced, near the end of the village, to look back, and saw Alec Trenholme some way behind, but coming in the same direction. Having her report to give, she waited and brought him to her side.

Sophia told all that had just passed, speaking with a restful feeling of confidence in him. She had never felt just this confidence in a man before; it sprang up from somewhere, she knew not where; probably from the union of her sense of failure and his strength. She even told him the analogy she had drawn between Eliza’s conduct and the mistake of her own life, alluding only to what all her little public knew of her deeds; but it seemed to him that she was telling what was sacred to her self-knowledge. He glanced at her often, and drank in all the pleasure of her beauty. He even noticed the simplicity of the cotton gown and leather belt, and the hat that was trimmed only with dried everlasting flowers, such as grew in every field. As she talked his cane struck sometimes a sharp passionate blow among plumes of golden-rod that grew by their path, and snapped many a one.

The roadside grass was ragged. The wild plum shrubs by the fences were bronzed by September. In the fields the stubble was yellow and brown. The scattered white houses were all agleam in the clear, cool sunshine.

As he listened, Alec Trenholme’s feeling was not now wrought upon at all by what he was hearing of the girl who had stumbled in and out of his life in ghostly fashion. Her masquerade, with all its consequences, had brought him within near touch of another woman, whose personality at this hour overshadowed his mind to the exclusion of every other interest. He was capable only of thinking that Sophia was treating him as a well-known friend. The compunction suppressed within him culminated when, at her father’s gate, Miss Rexford held out her hand for the good-bye grasp of his. The idea that he was playing a false part became intolerable. Impulsively he showed reluctance to take the hand.

“Miss Rexford, I—I’m afraid you think—”

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Then he remembered the promise by which he was bound to let Robert tell his own story. Confused, he seemed to know nothing but that he must finish his sentence to satisfy the interrogation in her eyes.

“You think I am a gentleman like Robert. I am only a—”

“What?” she asked, looking upon him good-humouredly, as she would have looked upon a blundering boy.

“I am only a—a—cad, you know.”

His face had an uncomfortable look, hot and red. She was puzzled, but the meaning that was in his thought did not enter hers. In a moment that romantic didacticism which was one of the strongest elements in her character had struck his strange words into its own music.

“Oh, Mr. Trenholme!” she cried; “do not so far outdo us all in the grace of confession. We are all willing to own ourselves sinners; but to confess to vulgarity, to be willing to admit that in us personally there is a vein of something vulgar, that, to our shame, we sometimes strike upon! Ah, people must be far nobler than they are before that clause can be added to the General Confession!”

He looked at her, and hardly heard her words; but went on his way with eyes dazzled and heart tumultuous.

When at home he turned into the study, where his brother was still a prisoner. The autumn breeze and sunshine entered even into this domain of books and papers. The little garden was so brimful of bloom that it overflowed within the window-sill.

When he had loitered long enough to make believe that he had not come in for the sake of this speech, Alec said, “I’m going to the West—at least, when Bates is gone, I’ll go; and, look here, I don’t know that I’d say anything to these people if I were in your case. Don’t feel any obligation to say anything on my account.”

Principal Trenholme was at his writing-table. “Ah?” said he, prolonging the interrogation with benign inflection.

“Have you come to doubt the righteousness of your own conclusions?” But he did not discuss the subject further.

He was busy, for the students and masters of the college were to assemble in a few days; yet he found time in a minute or two to ask idly, “Where have you been?”

“For one thing, I walked out from the village with Miss Rexford.”

“And”—with eyes bent upon his writing—“what do you think of Miss Rexford?”

Never was question put with less suspicion; it was interesting to Robert only for the pleasure it gave him to pronounce her name, not at all for any weight that he attached to the answer. And Alec answered him indifferently.

“She has a pretty face,” said he, nearing the door.

“Yes,” the other answered musingly, “yes; ’her face is one of God Almighty’s wonders in a little compass.”

But Alec had gone out, and did not hear the words nor see the dream of love that they brought into the other’s eyes. There was still hope in that dream, the sort of hope that springs up again unawares from the ground where it has been slain.

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CHAPTER XV.

It had not been continued resentment against Bates that had made Eliza refuse Miss Rexford's request; it was the memory of the kiss with which he had bade her good-bye. For two days she had been haunted by this memory, yet disregarded it, but when that night came, disturbed by Sophia's words, she locked out the world and took the thing to her heart to see of what stuff it was made.

Eliza lived her last interview with Bates over and over again, until she put out her light, and sat by her bedside alone in the darkness, and wondered at herself and at all things, for his farewell was like a lens through which she looked and the proportion of her world was changed.

There is strange fascination in looking at familiar scenes in unfamiliar aspect. Even little children know this when, from some swinging branch, they turn their heads downwards, and see, not their own field, but fairyland.

Eliza glanced at her past while her sight was yet distorted, it might be, or quickened to clearer vision, by a new pulse of feeling; and, arrested, glanced again and again until she looked clearly, steadily, at the retrospect. The lonely farm in the hills was again present to her eyes, the old woman, the father now dead, and this man. Bates, stern and opinionated, who had so constantly tutored her. Her mind went back, dwelling on details of that home-life; how Bates had ruled, commanded, praised, and chidden, and she had been indifferent to his rule until an hour of fear had turned indifference into hate. It was very strange to look at it all now, to lay it side by side with a lover's kiss and this same man her lover.

Perhaps it was a sense of new power that thrilled her so strangely. It needed no course of reasoning to tell her that she was mistress now, and he slave. His words had never conveyed it to her, but by this sign she knew it with the same sort of certainty we have that there is life in breath. She had sought power, but not this power. Of this dominion she had never dreamed, but she was not so paltry at heart but that it humbled her. She whispered to herself that she wished this had not been; and yet she knew that to herself she lied, for she would rather have obliterated all else in the universe than the moment in which Bates had said farewell. The universe held for her, as for everyone, just so much of the high and holy as she had opened her heart to; and, poor girl, her heart had been shut so that this caress of the man whose life had been nearly wrecked by her deed was the highest, holiest thing that had yet found entrance there, and it brought with it into the darkness of her heart, unrecognised but none the less there, the Heaven which is beyond all selfless love, the God who is its source. Other men might have proffered lavish affection in vain, but in this man's kiss, coming out of his humiliation and resignation, there breathed the power that moves the world.

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She did not consider now whether Bates's suffering had been of his own making or hers. She was not now engaged in an exercise of repentance; compunction, if she felt it, came to her in a nervous tremor, a sob, a tear, not in intelligible thought. Her memory gave her pictures, and the rest was feeling—dumb, even within. She crouched upon the floor and leaned her head against the bedside. Dry, trembling sobs came at intervals, passing over her as if some outside force had shaken and left her again; and sometimes, in the quiet of the interval, her lips smiled, but the darkness was around. Then, at length, came tranquillity. Her imagination, which had been strained to work at the bidding of memory, in weariness released itself from hard reality, and in a waking dream, touched, no doubt, into greater vividness by hovering hands of Sleep, she found temporary rest. Dreams partake of reality in that that which is and that which might be, are combined in their semblance of life. Eliza saw the home she had so long hated and lived its life once more, but with this difference, that she, her new present self, was there, and into the old life she brought perforce what knowledge of the world's refinements she had gained in her year of freedom. The knowledge seemed to her much more important than it was, but such as it was, she saw it utilised in the log house, and the old way of life thereby changed, but changed the more because she, she the child Sissy, reigned there now as a queen. It was this idea of reigning, of power, that surely now made this dream—wild, impossible as she still felt it to be—pleasant. But, as she pondered, arranging small details as a stimulated imagination is wont to do, she became gradually conscious that if love were to reign long, the queen of love would be not only queen but slave, and, as by the inevitable action of a true balance, the slave of love would be a ruler too. This new conception, as it at first emerged, was not disagreeable. Her imagination worked on, mapping out days and months to her fascinated heart. Then Sleep came nearer, and turned the self-ordered dream into that which the dreamer mistook for reality. In that far-off home she saw all the bareness and roughness of the lonely life which, do what she would, she could not greatly alter; and there again Bates kissed her; she felt his touch in all its reality, and in her dream she measured the barrenness of the place against the knowledge that her love was his life.

The soul that lay dreaming in this way was the soul of a heavy-limbed, ungracious woman. She lay now on the floor in ungainly attitude, and all the things that were about her in the darkness were of that commonest type with which ignorance with limited resource has essayed to imitate some false ideal of finery, and produced such articles as furniture daubed with painted flowers, jute carpets, and gowns beflounced and gaudy. Yet this soul, shut off from the world now by the curtain of sleep, was spoken to by an angel who blended his own being into recollections of the day, and treated with her concerning the life that is worthy and the life that is vain.

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Eliza awoke with a start. She raised herself up stiff and chilly. She looked back upon her dream, at first with confusion and then with contempt. She lit her lamp and the present was around her again.

“No, I will not go,” she said to herself. The words had been conned in her fit of rudeness to Sophia Rexford that day, but now they had a wider meaning.

All sweet influences sent out from Heaven to plead with human hearts withdrew for the time, for—such an awful thing is life—we have power to repulse God.

CHAPTER XVI.

Robert Trenholme was still obliged to rest his sprained ankle, and was not yet going out, but an opportunity was afforded him of meeting his friendly neighbours, at least the feminine portion of them, in company, sooner than he anticipated.

The day before the college reassembled it happened that the sewing-circle connected with the church met at Mrs. Rexford's house. The weather was unusually warm for the season; the workers still preferred to sit out of doors, and the grass under the tree at the front of the house was their place of meeting. About a dozen were there, among whom Mrs. and Miss Bennett were conspicuous, when Mrs. Brown and her daughter drove up, a little belated, but full of an interesting project.

“Oh, Mrs. Rexford,” they cried, “we have just thought of such a charming plan! Why not send our carriage on to the college, and beg Principal Trenholme to drive back here and sit an hour or two with us? It's so near that, now he is so much better, the motion cannot hurt him; this charming air and the change cannot fail to do him good, so confined as he has been, and we shall all work with the more zeal in his presence.”

The plan was approved by all. If there were others there who, with Sophia Rexford, doubted whether greater zeal with the needle would be the result of this addition to their party, they made no objections. They could not but feel that it would be a good thing for the invalid's solitude to be thus broken in upon, for, for some reason or other, Trenholme had been in solitude lately; he had neither invited visitors nor embraced such opportunity as he had of driving out.

Trenholme answered this invitation in person. The motherly members of the party attended him at the carriage door when he drove up, and, with almost affectionate kindness, conducted his limping steps to a reclining chair that had been provided. His crutch, and a certain pensive pallor on his countenance, certainly added to his attractions. Even Sophia Rexford was almost humble in the attentions she offered him, and the other maidens were demonstrative. In spite of such protestations as he made,

he was enthroned, as it were, in the most comfortable manner. Fur sleigh robes were spread on the grass for a carpet, and the best of them was used as a rug about his feet.

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The majority of women are best pleased by the company of a man whom other men admire. Trenholme had never descended to being, even in leisure hours, a mere “ladies’ man”; if he had been that he would not have had his present place in this company. Yet he was not bored by finding himself the only man among so many women; he knew most of these women, their faults and their worthiness, far too well not to be at ease with them, even if he had troubled to give a second thought to their largess of kindness. He had responded to their unexpected call to meet them together because he had something to say to them, and he said it that afternoon in his own time and in his own way. Had he needed to borrow dignity to sustain their jubilant welcome, his purpose would have lent it to him, and, for the rest, all his heart was overshadowed and filled with the consciousness of Sophia Rexford’s presence. He had not seen her since the night in which they had walked through midnight hours together. He could not touch her hand without feeling his own tremble. He did not look at her again.

It was a pretty scene. The women, on their carpet of faded ox and buffalo skins, were grouped on chairs and cushions. The foliage of the maple tree above them was turning pink and crimson, shedding a glow as of red curtains, and some of its leaves were already scattered upon the ragged grass or on the shelving verandah roof of the wooden farmhouse. The words that fell in small talk from the women were not unlike the colour of these fading leaves—useless, but lending softness to the hour.

“And *your* sewing-party will quite bear the palm for this season, Mrs. Rexford, quite the palm; for no other has been honoured by the presence of the Principal.”

It was Mrs. Bennett who spoke; her upright carriage, thin nose, and clear even voice, carried always the suggestion of mild but obstinate self-importance.

The birdlike little hostess, confused by the misapplied praise, remonstrated. “’Tis Mrs. Brown,” cried she, “who bears the palm.”

Here the younger ladies, to whom nature had kindly given the saving sense of humour, laughed a little—not too obviously—in concert with the man thus lauded.

Then they all fell to talking upon the latest news that Chellaston could afford, which was, that a gentleman, a minister from the south of Maine, had arrived, and by various explanations had identified the old preacher who had been called Cameron as his father. It seemed that the old man had long ago partially lost his wits—senses and brain having been impaired through an accident—but this son had always succeeded in keeping him in a quiet neighbourhood where his condition was understood, until, in the beginning of the previous winter, the poor wanderer had escaped the vigilance of his friends. It was partly on account of the false name which had been given him that they had failed to trace him until the circumstances of his tragic death were advertised.

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"The son is culpable. Mad people should be shut up where they can do no mischief." About half the ladies present joined in this comment.

Mrs. Rexford looked round uneasily to see that her young daughter Winifred had not joined the party. Indiscreet usually, she was wonderfully tender in these days of Winifred.

"I am not sure that if he had been my father I would have shut him up." Trenholme spoke and sighed.

"If he had been my father," Sophia cried vehemently, "I would have gone with him from village to village and door to door; I would rather have begged my bread than kept him from preaching. I would have told the people he was a *little* mad, but not much, and saner than any of *them*."

There was enough sympathy with Sophia's vivacity among her friends to make it easy to express herself naturally.

"What is one false opinion more or less?" she cried. "Do any of us imagine that *our* opinions are just those held in heaven? This old man had all his treasure in heaven, and that is, after all, the best security that heart or mind will not go far astray."

The youngest Miss Brown was sitting on the fur rugs, not very far from Trenholme. She looked up at him, pretty herself in the prettiness of genuine admiration.

"It is such a pity that Miss Rexford is sitting just out of your sight. You would be lenient to the heresy if you could see how becoming it is to the heretic."

But Trenholme was not seen to look round. He was found to be saying that the son of the late preacher evidently held his father in reverence; it seemed that the old man had in his youth been a disciple and preacher under Miller, the founder of the Adventist sect; it was natural that, as his faculties failed, his mind should revert to the excitements of the former time.

Mrs. Bennett had already launched forth an answer to Sophia's enthusiasm. She continued, in spite of Trenholme's intervening remarks. "When I was a girl papa always warned us against talking on serious subjects. He thought we could not understand them."

"I think it was good advice," said Sophia with hardihood.

"Oh yes, naturally—papa being a dean—"

Trenholme encouraged the conversation about the dean. It occurred to him to ask if there was a portrait extant of that worthy. "We are such repetitions of our ancestors," said he, "that I think it is a pity when family portraits are lacking."

Mrs. Bennett regretted that her father's modesty, the fortunes of the family, *etc.*; but she said there was a very good portrait of her uncle, the admiral, in his son's house in London.

"I do not feel that I represent my ancestors in the least," said Miss Bennett, "and I should be very sorry if I did."

She certainly did not look very like her mother, as she sat with affectionate nearness to Sophia Rexford, accomplishing more work in an hour with her toil-reddened hands than her mother was likely to do in two.

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"Ah, ladies' feelings!" Trenholme rallied her openly. "But whatever you may *feel*, you assuredly do represent them, and owe to them all you are."

"Very true," said the mother approvingly. "Papa had black hair, Principal Trenholme; and although my daughter's hair is brown, I often notice in it just that gloss and curl that was so beautiful in his."

"Yes, like and unlike are oddly blended. My father was a butcher by trade, and although my work in life has been widely different from his, I often notice in myself something of just those qualities which enabled him to succeed so markedly, and I know that they are my chief reliance. My brother, who has determined to follow my father's trade, is not so like him in many ways as I am."

If he had said that his father had had red hair, he would not have said it with less emphasis. No one present would have doubted his truthfulness on the one point, nor did they now doubt it on this other; but no one mastered the sense and force of what he had said until minutes, more or less in each case, had flown past, and in the meantime he had talked on, and his talk had drifted to other points in the subject of heredity. Sophia answered him; the discussion became general.

Blue and Red came offering cups of tea.

"Aren't they pretty?" said the youngest Miss Brown, again lifting her eyes to Trenholme for sympathy in her admiration.

"Sh—sh—," said the elder ladies, as if it were possible that Blue and Red could be kept in ignorance of their own charms.

A man nervously tired can feel acute disappointment at the smallest, silliest thing. Trenholme had expected that Sophia would pour out his tea; he thought it would have refreshed him then to the very soul, even if she had given it indifferently. The cup he took seemed like some bitter draught he was swallowing for politeness' sake. When it, and all the necessary talk concerning it, were finished, together with other matters belonging to the hour, he got himself out of his big chair, and Mrs. Brown's horses, that had been switching their tails in the lane, drove him home.

The carriage gone, Mrs. Brown's curiosity was at hand directly. She and Mrs. Rexford were standing apart where with motherly kindness they had been bidding him good-bye.

"I suppose, Mrs. Rexford, you know—you have always known—this fact concerning Principal Trenholme's origin. I mean what he alluded to just now." Mrs. Brown spoke, not observing Mrs. Rexford but the group in which her daughters were prominent figures.



Nothing ever impressed Mrs. Rexford's imagination vividly that did not concern her own family.

"I do not think it has been named to me," said she, "but no doubt my husband and Sophia—"

"You think they have known it?" It was of importance to Mrs. Brown to know whether Captain Rexford and Sophia had known or not; for if they knew and made no difference—"If Miss Rexford has not objected. She is surely a judge in such matters!"

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"Sophia! Yes, to be sure, Sophia is very highly connected on her mother's side. I often say to my husband that I am a mere nobody compared with his first wife. But Sophia is not proud. Sophia would be kind to the lowest, Mrs. Brown." (This praise was used with vaguest application.) "She has such a good heart! Really, what she has done for me and my children—"

A light broke in upon Mrs. Brown's mind. She heard nothing concerning Mrs. Rexford and her children. She knew now, or felt sure she knew, why Miss Rexford had always seemed a little stiff when Trenholme was praised. Her attitude towards him, it appeared, had always been that of mere "kindness." Now, up to this moment, Mrs. Brown, although not a designing woman, had entertained comfortable motherly hopes that Trenholme might ultimately espouse one of her daughters, and it had certainly advanced him somewhat in her favour that his early acquaintance with Miss Rexford was an undisputed fact; but in the light of what Mrs. Rexford had just said of her daughter's good-heartedness all assumed a different aspect. Mrs. Brown was in no way "highly connected," belonging merely to the prosperous middle class, but, with the true colonial spirit that recognises only distance below, none above, she began to consider whether, in the future, her role should not be that of mere kindness also. To do her justice, she did not decide the question just then.

The voice of her youngest daughter was heard laughing rather immoderately. "Indeed, Mrs. Bennett," she laughed, "we all heard him say it, and, unlike you, we believed our ears. We'll draw up a statement to that effect and sign our names, if that is necessary to assure you."

Her mother, approaching, detected, as no one else did, a strain of hysterical excitement in her laughter, and bid her rise to come home, but she did not heed the summons.

"Yes, he *did* say it. That handsome brother of his, to whom I lost my heart two weeks ago, does really—well, to put it plainly, knock animals on the head, you know, and sell them in chops, and—what do you call it, mamma?—the sirloin and brisket. 'How do you do, Mr. Trenholme? I want some meat for dinner—chops, I think.' Oh, how I should love to go and buy chops!"

Sophia was kneeling over a pile of work, folding it. She asked the boisterous girl for the cloth she had been sewing, and her voice was hard and impatient, as if she wished the talk at an end.

Mrs. Bennett arose and wrapped her cape about her thin shoulders, not without some air of majesty. There was a bitter angry expression upon her delicate face.

"All that I wish to say in this matter is, that I never knew this before; others may have been in possession of these facts, but I was not."

“If you had been, of course you would have honoured him the more for triumphing over difficulties,” answered the elder Miss Brown, with smooth sarcasm.

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“Yes, certainly *that*, of course; but I should have thought him very unsuitably placed as an instructor of youth and—”

The right adjustment of the cape seemed to interrupt the speech, but others mentally supplied the ending with reference to Miss Bennett.

“Miss Rexford, being one of Principal Trenholme’s oldest friends, is not taken by surprise.” Some one said this; Sophia hardly knew who it was. She knelt upright by the packing basket and threw back her head.

“I met him often at my own uncle’s house. My uncle knew him *thoroughly*, and liked him well.”

Most of the women there were sensibly commenting on the amount of work done, and allotting shares for the ensuing week. It would take a week at least to rouse them to the state of interest at which others had already arrived.

Her cape adjusted, Mrs. Bennett found something else to say. “Of course, personally, it makes no difference to me, for I have always felt there was *something* about Principal Trenholme—that is, that he was not—It is a little hard to express; one feels, rather than speaks, these things.”

It was a lie, but what was remarkable about it was that its author did not know it for one. In the last half-hour she had convinced herself that she had always suffered in Trenholme’s presence from his lack of refinement, and there was little hope that an imagination that could make such strides would not soon discover in him positive coarseness. As the party dispersed she was able to speak aside to Sophia.

“I see how you look upon it,” she said. “There is no difference between one trade and another, or between a man who deals in cargoes of cattle and one who sells meat in a shop.”—She was weakly excited; her voice trembled. “Looking down from a higher class, we must see that, although all trades are in a sense praiseworthy, one is as bad as another.”

“They seem to me very much on a level,” said Sophia. There was still a hard ring in her voice. She looked straight before her.

“Of course in this country”—Mrs. Bennett murmured something half-audible about the Browns. “One cannot afford to be too particular whom one meets, but I certainly should have thought that in our pulpits—in our schools—”

She did not finish. Her thin mouth was settling into curves that bespoke that relentless cruelty which in the minds of certain people, is synonymous with justice.



It was a rickety, weather-stained chaise in which Mrs. Bennett and her daughter were to drive home. As Miss Bennett untied the horse herself, there was a bright red spot on either of her cheeks. She had made no remark on the subject on which her mother was talking, nor did she speak now. She was in love with Trenholme, that is, as much in love as a practical woman can be with a man from whom she has little hope of a return. She was not as pretty as many girls are, nor had she the advantages of dress

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and leisure by which to make herself attractive. She had hoped little, but in an honest, humble-minded, quiet way she had preferred this man to any other. Now, although she was as different from her mother as nature could make her, precepts with which her mind had been plied from infancy had formed her thought. She was incapable of self-deception, she knew that he had been her ideal man; but she was also incapable of seeing him in the same light now as heretofore.

Miss Bennett held the reins tight and gave her horse smart strokes of the whip. The spiritless animal took such driving passively, as it jogged down the quiet road by the enclosure of the New College.

Unconscious that her words were inconsistent with what she had so lately said, Mrs. Bennett complained again. "My nerves have received quite a shock; I am all in a tremble." It was true; she was even wiping away genuine tears. "Oh, my dear, it's a terribly low occupation. Oh, my dear, the things I have heard they do—the atrocities they commit!"

"I daresay what you heard was true," retorted Miss Bennett, "but it does not follow that they are all alike." Without perceiving clearly the extent of the fallacy, she felt called upon to oppose the generalisations of a superficial mind.

So they passed out of sight of Trenholme's house. Inside he sat at his desk, plunged again in the work of writing business letters. We seldom realise in what way we give out the force that is within us, or in what proportion it flows into this act or that. Trenholme was under the impression that what he had done that afternoon had been done without effort? The effort, as he realised it, had come days and weeks before. Yet, as he worked through the hours that were left of that day's light, he felt a weariness of body and mind that was almost equivalent to a desire for death.

CHAPTER XVII.

Sophia Rexford stood and watched the last of the afternoon's company as, some driving and some on foot, they passed in different directions along the level road. It was a very peaceful scene. The neighbourhood lay sunning itself in the last warmth of the summer, and the neighbours, to all appearance, were moving homeward in utmost tranquillity. Sophia was not at peace; she was holding stern rule over her mind, saying, "Be at peace; who hath disturbed thee?" This rule lasted not many minutes; then suddenly mutiny. "Good Heavens!" she cried within herself, "how indiscreet I have been, making friends with these men. Shall I never learn wisdom—I who have sought to direct others?" The recollections that came caused her, in the sting of mortified pride, to strike her hand with painful force against a chair near her. The bruise recalled her to calm.

The chair she had struck was that large one in which Robert Trenholme had reclined. It aided her to ponder upon the man who had so lately been seen on its cushions, and, in truth, her pondering bewildered

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her. Why had he not said as much to her years before, and why had he now said what he did, as he did? She thought she had known this man, had fathomed him as to faults and virtues, though at some times she rated their combination more reverently than at others. Truth to tell, she had known him well; her judgment, impelled by the suggestion of his possible love, had scanned him patiently. Yet now she owned herself at fault, unable to construe the manner of this action or assign a particular motive with which it was in harmony. It is by manner that the individual is revealed (for many men may do the same deed), and a friend who perforce must know a friend only by faith and the guessing of the unseen by the seen, fastens instinctively upon signs too slight to be written in the minutest history. At this moment, as Sophia stood among the vacant seats, the scene of the conversation which had just taken place, she felt that her insight into Robert Trenholme failed her. She recalled a certain peace and contentment that, in spite of fatigue, was written on his face. She set it by what he had said, and gained from it an unreasoning belief that he was a nobler man than she had lately supposed him to be; in the same breath her heart blamed him bitterly for not having told her this before, and for telling it now as if, forsooth, it was a matter of no importance. "How dare he?" Again herself within herself was rampant, talking wildly. "How dare he?" asked Anger. Then Scorn, demanded peace again, for, "It is not of importance to me," said Scorn.

Blue and Red and Winifred and the little boys came out to carry in the chairs and rugs. A cool breeze came with the reddening of the sunlight, and stirred the maple tree into its evening whispering.

As Sophia worked with the children the turmoil of her thought went on. Something constantly stung her pride like the lash of a whip; she turned and shifted her mind to avoid it, and could not.

She had deliberately deceived her friends when she had asserted that her uncle had known all Trenholme's affairs. She had not the slightest doubt now, looking back, that he had known—a thousand small things testified to it; but he had not made a confidante of her, his niece, and she knew that that would be the inference drawn from her assertion. She knew, too, that the reason her uncle, who had died soon after, had not told her was that he never dreamed that then or afterwards she would come into intimate relationship with his protegee. To give the impression that he, and she also, knowing Trenholme's origin, had overlooked it, was totally false. Yet she did not regret this falsehood. Who with a spark of chivalry would not have dealt as hard a blow as strength might permit in return for so mean an attack on the absent man? But none the less did her heart upbraid the man she had defended.

Sophia stood, as in a place where two seas met, between her indignation against the spirit Mrs. Bennett had displayed (and which she knew was lying latent ready to be

fanned into flame in the hearts of only too many of Trenholme's so-called friends) and her indignation against Trenholme and his history. But it was neither the one current of emotion nor the other that caused that dagger-like pain that stabbed her pride to the quick. It was not Robert Trenholme's concerns that touched her self-love.



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She had gained her own room to be alone. "Heaven help me," she cried (her ejaculation had perhaps no meaning except that she had need of expletive), "what a fool I have been!"

She rehearsed each meeting she had had with Alec Trenholme. How she had dallied with him in fields and on the road, seeing now clearly, as never before, how she had smiled upon him, how she had bewitched him. What mischance had led her on? She sprang up again from the seat into which she had sunk. "Mercy!" she cried in an agony of shame, "was ever woman so foolish as I? I have treated him as a friend, and he is —!"

Then for some reason, she ceased to think of herself and thought of him. She considered: had he made no effort? had he felt no pain? She saw how he had waveringly tried to avoid her at first, and how, at last, he had tried to warn her. She thought upon the epithet he had applied to himself when trying to explain himself to her: she lifted her head again, and, in a glow of generous thought, she felt that this was a friend of whom no one need be ashamed.

The bell for the evening meal rang. There are hours in which we transcend ourselves, but a little thing brings us back to the level on which we live. As Sophia hastily brushed her dark hair, mortified pride stabbed her again, and scorn again came to the rescue. "What does it matter? It would have been better, truly, if I had had less to do with him, but what has passed is of no importance to anyone, least of all to me!"

As she had begun at first to rule her heart, so did she rule it all that evening. But when she was again within her room alone she lingered, looking out of her small casement at the fields where she had met Alec Trenholme, at the road where she walked with him: all was white and cold now in the moonlight. And soon she leaned her head against the pane and wept.

Those are often the bitterest tears for which we can furnish no definite cause; when courage fails, we see earth only through our tears, and all form is out of proportion, all colour crude, all music discord, and every heart a well of evil, and we bewail, not our own woes only, but the woe of the world. So this proud woman wept, and prayed God wildly to save the world out of its evil into His good—and did not, could not, tell herself what was the exciting cause of her tears.

CHAPTER XVIII.

Just as that day had turned rosy at the close and then white with the lesser light of night, so did the summer now fade away in a blaze of colour, giving one last display of what life could do before leaving the land to the shroud of the winter's snow. Cool bracing winds, of which there had already been foretaste, now swept the land. The sun

seemed brighter because the air was clearer. The college boys had returned, and were heard daily shouting at their games. A few days made all this outward difference. No other difference had as yet come about.

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Now that harvest was over and Captain Rexford was more at leisure, Sophia felt that she must no longer postpone the disagreeable duty of speaking to him seriously about his younger daughters. She chose an hour on Sunday when he and she were walking together to a distant point on the farm. She told the story of the flirtation of poor little Blue and Red slightly, for she felt that to slight it as much as possible was to put it in its true proportion.

"Yes," said Captain Rexford. He took off his hat and brushed back his hair nervously. He had many difficulties in his life. "Yes, and then there is Winifred."

"Girls here are not kept always under the eye of older people, as is usually considered necessary in England; but then they learn from their infancy to be more self-reliant. We have taken the safeguards of governess and schoolroom suddenly from children almost grown-up, and set them where no one has had time to look after them. They would need to have been miraculously wise if, with time on their hands, they had not spent some of it absurdly."

"Yes," he said again unhappily, "what must we do about it, my dear? Your hands are already full." He always leaned on Sophia.

"I fear there is only one thing to do. We cannot give them society; we cannot give them further education; they must have the poor woman's protection—work—to take up their time and thoughts. We have saved them from hard work until now, and it has not been true kindness."

He did not answer. He believed what she said, but the truth was very disagreeable to him. When he spoke again he had left that subject.

"I am sorry for this affair about the Trenholmes. I like Trenholme, and, of course, he has shown himself able to rise. The younger fellow is plain and bluff, like enough to what he is."

"His manners are perfectly simple, but I—I certainly never imagined—"

"Oh, certainly not; otherwise, you would hardly have received him as you did. For us men, of course, in this country—" He gave a dignified wave of his hand.

"Are you sure of that, papa,—that I would not have received him?" It was exactly what she had been saying to herself for days; but, now that another said it, the sentiment involved seemed weak.

"I am aware"—his tone was resigned—"that your opinions are always more radical than I can approve. The extreme always seems to have, shall I say, some attraction for you; but still, my daughter, I believe you are not lacking in proper pride."



"I am too proud to think that for a good many days I have liked a man who was not fit for my liking. I prefer to believe that he is fit until I can have more conclusive proof to the contrary."

Captain Rexford walked some minutes in sterner silence. He had long ceased to regard Sophia as under his authority.

"Still I hope, my dear, the next time you see this young man—rudeness, of course, being impossible to you, and unnecessary—still I hope you will allow your manner to indicate that a certain distance must be preserved."

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Her own sense of expediency had been urging this course upon her, but she had not been able to bring her mind to it.

"I should show myself his inferior if I could deliberately hurt him," she cried, with feeling. The trouble of a long debate she had been having with herself, her uncertainty what to feel or think, gave more emotion to her voice than she supposed.

"My dear daughter!" cried the father, with evident agitation.

Sophia instantly knew on what suspicion this sudden sympathy was bestowed. She was too indignant to deny the charge.

"Well, papa?"

"He is, no doubt, a worthy man; but"—he got no help from his daughter; she was walking beside him with imperious mien—"in short, my dear, I hope—indeed, if I could think that, under false pretences, he could have won—"

"He is the last man to seek to win anything under a false pretence." The coldness of her manner but thinly veiled her vehemence; but even in that vehemence she perceived that what proofs of her assertion she could bring would savour of too particular a recollection. She let it stand unproved.

"My dear child!" he cried, in affectionate distress, "I know that you will not forget that rank, birth—" He looked at her, and, seeing that she appeared intractable, exclaimed further, "It's no new thing that ladies should, in a fit of madness, demean themselves— young ladies frequently marry grooms; but, believe me, my dear Sophia"—earnestly—"no happiness ever came of such a thing—only misery, and vice, and squalor."

But here she laughed with irresistible mirth. "Young women who elope with grooms are not likely to have much basis of happiness in themselves. And you think me capable of fancying love for a man without education or refinement, a man with whom I could have nothing in common that would last beyond a day! What have I ever done, papa, that you should bring such, an accusation?"

"I certainly beg your pardon, my daughter, if I have maligned you."

"You *have* maligned me; there is no 'if' about it."

"My dear, I certainly apologise. I thought, from the way in which you spoke—"

"You thought I was expressing too warm a regard for Mr. Alec Trenholme; but that has nothing whatever to do with what you have just been talking about; for, if he were a groom, if he chose to sweep the streets, he would be as far removed from the kind of

man you have just had in your mind as you and I are; and, if he were not I could take no interest in him."

The gloom on Captain Rexford's brow, which had been dispelled by her laughter, gathered again.

"Separate the character of the man from his occupation," she cried. "Grant that he is what we would all like in a friend. Separate him, too, from any idea that I would marry him, for I was not thinking of such a thing. Is there not enough left to distress me? Do you think I underrate the evil of the occupation, even though I believe it has not tainted him? Having owned him as a friend, isn't it difficult to know what degree of friendship I can continue to own for him?"

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"My dear, I think you hardly realise how unwise it is to think of friendship between yourself and any such man; recognition of worth there may be, but nothing more."

"Oh, papa!"—impatiently—"think of it as you will, but listen to what I have to say; for I am in trouble. You were sorry for me just now when you imagined I was in love; try and understand what I say now, for I am in distress. I cannot see through this question—what is the right and what is the wrong."

"I do not think I understand you my dear," he said.

She had stopped, and leaned back on the roadside fence. He stood before her. All around them the yellow golden-rod and mullein were waving in the wind, and lithe young trees bent with their coloured leaves. Captain Rexford looked at his daughter, and wondered, in his slow way, that she was not content to be as fair and stately as the flowers without perplexing herself thus.

"Papa, pray listen. You know that night when I went to seek Winifred—you do not know, because I have not told you—but just before the old man died. When he stood there, looking up and praying that our Saviour would come again, there was not one of us who was not carried away with the thought of that coming—the thought that when it comes all time will be *present*, not *past*; and, papa, the clouds parted just a little, and we saw through, beyond all the damp, dark gloom of the place we were in, into a place of such perfect clearness and beauty beyond—I can't explain it, but it seemed like an emblem of the difference that would be between our muddy ways of thinking of things and the way that we should think if we lived always for the sake of the time when He will come—and it is very easy to talk of that difference in a large general way, and it does no good—but to bring each particular thing to that test is practical. Here, for instance, you and I ought to reconsider our beliefs and prejudices as they regard this man we are talking about, and find out what part of them, in God's sight, is pure and strong and to be maintained, and what part is unworthy and to be cast away. Is it easy, even in such a small matter as this?"

Captain Rexford took off his hat in tribute to his theme, and stood bareheaded. He looked what he was—a military man of the past and more formal generation, who with difficulty had adapted himself to the dress and habits of a farmer. He was now honestly doing his utmost to bring himself to something still more foreign to his former experience.

"To put it in a practical way, papa: if our Lord were coming to-morrow, how would you advise me to meet Alec Trenholme to-day?"

"Of course," began Captain Rexford, "in sight of the Almighty all men are equal."



"No, no," she pleaded, "by all that is true, men are not equal nor are occupations equal. Everything has its advantages and disadvantages. It is not as well to be stupid as to be wise, to be untaught as to be taught, to be ugly as to be beautiful; it is not as good to kill cattle as to till the soil, and it is not as good to be a farmer as to be a poet. It is just because moralists go too far, and say what is not true, that they fail. External things are of more importance to their Creator than they are even to us."

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Captain Rexford brushed his hat with his sleeve. The thing that he was most anxious to do at that moment was to pacify his daughter.

“But if you feel this difference so keenly, Sophia, what then perplexes you?”

“I want to know how to deal with these differences, for the way we have been accustomed to deal with them is false. This case, where one brother is at the top of our little society and the other at the bottom, shows it. Not all false—there comes the difficulty” (her face was full of distress), “but largely false. If we have any spiritual life in us it is because we have heard the call that Lazarus heard in the tomb, but the opinions we will not let God transform are the graveclothes that are binding us hand and foot.”

“My dear, I certainly think it right that we should live as much as possible as we should wish to have lived when we come to die, but I do not know that for that it is necessary to make a radical change in our views.”

“Look you, dear father, if we were willing to step out of our own thoughts about everything as out of a hindering garment, and go forth in the thoughts in which God is willing to clothe us, we should see a new heaven and a new earth; but—but—” she sought her word.

“There may be truth in what you say” (his words showed how far he had been able to follow her), “but your views would lead to very revolutionary practices.”

“Revolution! Ah, that takes place when men take some new idea of their own, like the bit, between their teeth, and run. But I said to live in His ideas—His, without Whom nothing was made that was made; Who caused creation to revolve slowly out of chaos” (she looked around at the manifold life of tree and flower and bird as she spoke); “Who will not break the reed of our customs as long as there is any true substance left in it to make music with.”

“It sounds very beautiful, my dear, but is it practicable?”

“As practicable as is any holy life!” she cried. “We believe; if we do not live by a miracle we have no sort or manner of right to preach to those who do not believe.”

Captain Rexford would have died for his belief in miracles, but he only believed in them at the distance of some eighteen hundred years or more.

“How would you apply this?” he asked, mildly indulgent.

“To the question of each hour as it comes. What, for instance, is the right way to act to Alec Trenholme?”

When she came to his name for some reason she left her standing-place, and they were now walking on side by side.

“Well, Sophia, you bring an instance, and you say, ‘put it practically.’ I will do so. This village is badly in need of such a tradesman. Even the hotel, and other houses that can afford it, grumble at having to obtain their supplies by rail, and we are badly enough served, as you know. I have no idea that this young man has any notion of settling here, but, *suppose he did*” (Captain Rexford said his last words as if they capped a climax), “you will see at a glance that in that case any recognition of equality such as you seem to be proposing, would be impossible. It would be mere confusion.”

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"And why should he not settle here? Are we, a Christian community, unable to devise a way of treating him and his brother that would neither hurt their feelings nor our welfare, that would be equally consonant with our duty to God and our own dignity? Or must he go, because our dignity is such a fragile thing that it would need to be supported by actions that we could not offer to God?"

"You know, my dear, if you will excuse my saying so, I think you are pushing this point a little too far. If it were possible to live up to such a high ideal—"

"I would rather die to-night than think that it was *impossible*."

"My dear" (he was manifestly annoyed now), "you really express yourself too strongly."

"But what use would it be to live?" She was going on but she stopped. What use was it to talk? None.

She let the subject pass and they conversed on other things.

She felt strange loneliness. "Am I, in truth, fantastical?" she sighed, "or, if Heaven is witness to the sober truth of that which I conceive, am I so weak as to need other sympathy?" This was the tenor, not the words, of her thought. Yet all the way home, as they talked and walked through the glowing autumn land, her heart was aching.

CHAPTER XIX.

The day came on which Bates was to go home. He had had a week's petulant struggle with his malady since he last passed through the door of Trenholme's house, but now he had conquered it for the hour, and even his host perceived that it was necessary for him to make his journey before the weather grew colder.

His small belongings packed, his morose good-byes said, Alec Trenholme drove him to the railway station.

Both the brothers knew why it was that, in taking leave of them, Bates hardly seemed to notice that he did so; they knew that, in leaving the place, he was all-engrossed in the thought that he was leaving the girl, Eliza Cameron, for ever; but he seemed to have no thought of saying to her a second farewell.

The stern reserve which Bates had maintained on this subject had so wrought on Alec's sympathy that he had consulted his brother as to the advisability of himself making some personal appeal to Eliza, and the day before Bates started he had actually gone on this mission. If it was not successful, hardly deserved that it should be; for when he stood in front of the girl, he could not conceal the great dislike he felt for her, nor could he bring himself to plead on behalf of a man who he felt was worth a thousand such as

she. He said briefly that Bates was to start for home the next day, and by such a train, and that he had thought it might concern her to know it.

“Did he tell you to tell me?” asked Eliza, without expression.

“No, he didn’t; and what’s more, he never told me how you came here. You think he’s been telling tales about you! You can know now that he never did; he’s not that sort. I saw you at Turrif’s, and when I saw you again here I knew you. All I’ve got to say about *that* is, that I, for one, don’t like that kind of conduct. You’ve half killed Bates, and this winter will finish him off.”

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"That's not my fault," said Eliza.

"Oh? Well, that's for you to settle with yourself. I thought I'd come and tell you what I thought about it, and that he was going. That's all I've got to say."

"But I've something more to say, and you'll stay and hear it." She folded her arms upon her breast, and looked at him, a contemptuous, indignant Amazon. "You think Mr. Bates would thank you if you got me to go away with him because I was afraid he'd die. You think"—growing sarcastic—"that Mr. Bates wants me to go with him because *I'm sorry for him*. I tell you, if I did what you're asking, Mr. Bates would be the first to tell you to mind your own business and to send me about mine."

She relapsed into cold silence for a minute, and then added, "If you think Mr. Bates can't do his own love-making, you're vastly mistaken."

It did not help to soothe Alec that, when he went home, his brother laughed at his recital.

"She is a coarse-minded person," he said. "I shall never speak to her again."

This had happened the day before he drove Bates to the station.

It was a midday train. The railway platform was comparatively empty, for the season of summer visitors was past. The sun glared with unsoftened light on the painted station building, on the bare boards of the platform, upon the varnished exterior of the passenger cars, and in, through their windows, upon the long rows of red velvet seats. Alec disposed Bates and his bundles on a seat near the stove at the end of one of the almost empty cars. Then he stood, without much idea what to say in the few minutes before the train started.

"Well," said he, "you'll be at Quebec before dark."

As they both knew this, Bates did not consider it worth an answer. His only desire was that the train should be gone, so that he might be left alone. He was a good deal oppressed by the idea of his indebtedness to Alec, but he had already said all on that head that was in him to say; it had not been much.

An urchin came by, bawling oranges. They looked small and sour, but, for sheer lack of anything better to do, Alec went out of the car to buy a couple. He was just stepping in again to present them when, to his surprise, he became aware that one of the various people on the platform was Eliza Cameron. When he caught sight of her she was coming running from the other end of the train, her face red with exertion and her dress disordered. She looked in at the windows, saw Bates, and entered where Alec had intended to enter, he drawing aside, and she not even seeing him.

The impetus of his intention carried Alec on to the outer porch of the car, but his consideration for Bates caused him then to turn his back to the door, and gaze down the long level track, waiting until Eliza should come out again.

The prospect that met his gaze was one in which two parallel straight lines met visibly in the region of somewhere. He remembered learning that such two lines do, in truth, always meet in infinity. He wondered drearily if this were a parable. As he saw his life, all that he desired and all that was right seemed to lie in two tracks, side by side, but for ever apart.

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The advent of Eliza had sunk into less significance in his mind by the time he heard the engine's warning bell. He turned and looked into the car. There sat the man whom he had left, but not the same man; a new existence seemed to have started into life in his thin sinewy frame, and to be looking out through the weather-beaten visage. This man, fond and happy, was actually addressing a glance of arch amusement at the girl who, flushed and disconcerted, sought to busy herself by rearranging his possessions. So quickly did it seem that Bates had travelled from one extreme of life to another that Alec felt no doubt as to the kindly triumph in the eye. Explanation he had none. He stepped off the jolting car.

"Is she coming out?" he asked the conductor.

"No, she ain't," said a Chellaston man who stood near at hand. "She's got her trunk in the baggage car, and she's got her ticket for Quebec, she has. She's left the hotel, and left old Hutchins in the lurch—that's what she's done."

The train was moving quicker. The conductor had jumped aboard. Alec was just aware that all who were left on the platform were gossiping about Eliza's departure when he was suddenly spurred into violent movement by the recollection that he had absently retained in his possession Bates's ticket and the change of the note given him to buy it with. To run and swing himself on to the last car was a piece of vigorous action, but once again upon the small rear porch and bound perforce for the next station, he gave only one uncomfortable glance through the glass door and turned once more to the prospect of the long level track. Who could mention a railway ticket and small change to a man so recently beatified?

The awkwardness of his position, a shyness that came over him at the thought that they must soon see him and wonder why he was there, suggested the wonder why he had desired that Bates should be happy; now that he saw him opulent in happiness, as it appeared, above all other men, he felt only irritation—first, at the sort of happiness that could be derived from such a woman, and secondly, at the contrast between this man's fulness and his own lack. What had Bates done that he was to have all that he wanted?

It is an easier and less angelic thing to feel sympathy with sorrow than with joy.

In a minute or two it was evident they had seen him, for he heard the door slide and Bates came out on the little platform. He had gone into the car feebly; he came out with so easy a step and holding himself so erect, with even a consequential pose, that a gleam of derision shot through the younger man's mind, even though he knew with the quick knowledge of envy that it was for the sake of the woman behind the door that the other was now making the most of himself.

Alec gave what he had to give; it was not his place to make comment.

Bates counted the change with a care that perhaps was feigned. If he stood very straight, his hard hand trembled.

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"I'm sorry ye were forced to come on with the cars; it's another added to all the good deeds ye've done by me." He had found a tongue now in which he could be gracious.

"Oh, I shall soon get back," said Alec.

"I suppose ye've seen"—with attempted coolness—"that my young friend here, Eliza Cameron, is going back with me."

"So I see." If his life had depended upon it, Alec could not have refrained from a smile which he felt might be offensive, but it passed unseen.

"When she saw ye out here, she asked me just to step out, for perhaps ye'd be so kind as to take a message to a young lady she has a great caring for—a Miss Rexford, as I understand."

"All right." Alec looked at the rails flying behind them, and stroked his yellow moustache, and sighed in spite of himself.

"I'd like ye to tell Miss Rexford from me that we intend to be married to-morrow—in the city of Quebec; but Sissy, she would like ye to say that she'd have gone to say good-bye if she'd known her own mind sooner, and that she preferred to come" (he rolled the r in this "preferred" with emphasis not too obvious) "—ye understand?"—this last a little sharply, as if afraid that the word might be challenged.

Still looking upon the flying track, Alec nodded to show that he challenged nothing.

"And she wishes it to be said," continued the stiff, formal Scot (there was a consequential air about him now that was almost insufferable), "that for all I've the intention in my mind to spend my life in the old place, she thinks she'll very likely break me of it, and bring me to live in more frequented parts in a year or two, when she'll hope to come and see her friends again. 'Tis what she says, Mr. Trenholme" (and Alec knew, from his tone, that Bates, even in speaking to him, had smiled again that gloriously happy smile), "and of course I humour her by giving her words. As to how that will be, I can't say, but"—with condescension—"ye'd be surprised, Mr. Trenholme, at the hold a woman can get on a man."

"Really—yes, I suppose so," Alec muttered inanely; but within he laid control on himself, lest he should kick this man. Surely it would only make the scales of fortune balance if Bates should have a few of his limbs broken to pay for his luxury!

Alec turned, throwing a trifle of patronage into his farewell. Nature had turned him out such a good-looking fellow that he might have spared the other, but he was not conscious of his good looks just then.



“Well, Bates, upon my word I wish you joy. It’s certainly a relief to *me* to think you will have someone to look after that cough of yours, and see after you a bit when you have the asthma. I didn’t think you’d get through this winter alone, ’pon my word, I didn’t; but I hope that—Mrs. Bates will take good care of you.”

It was only less brutal to hurl the man’s weakness at him than it would have been to hurl him off the train. Yet Alec did it, then jumped from the car when the speed lessened.

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He found himself left at a junction which had no interest for him, and as there was a goods train going further on to that village where he had stopped with Bates on their first arrival in these parts, he followed a whim and went thither, in order to walk home by the road on which he had first heard Sophia's voice in the darkness.

Ah, that voice—how clear and sweet and ringing it was! It was not words, but tones, of which he was now cherishing remembrance. And he thought of the face he now knew so well, hugged the thought of her to his heart, and knew that he ought not to think of her.

Everywhere the trees hung out red and yellow, as flags upon a gala day. He saw the maples on the mountain rise tier above tier, in feathery scarlet and gold. About his feet the flowering weeds were blowing in one last desperate effort of riotous bloom. The indigo birds, like flakes from the sky above, were flitting, calling, everywhere, as they tarried on their southward journey. Alec walked by the rushing river, almost dazzled by its glitter, and felt himself to be, not only an unhappy, but an ill-disposed man.

"And yet—and yet—" thought he, "if Heaven might grant her to me—": and the heaven above him seemed like brass, and the wish like a prayer gone mad.

CHAPTER XX.

Sophia had lived on through a few more quiet days; and now she knew that the problem to which she had set herself was not that one pleasantly remote from her inmost self, as to where her duty lay in helping on an ideal social state, but another question, that beside the first seemed wholly common and vulgar, one that tore from her all glammers of romantic conception, so that she sat, as it were, in a chamber denuded of all softness and beauty, face to face with her own pride. And so lusty was this pride she had deemed half-dead that beside it all her former enthusiasms seemed to fade into ghostly nothings.

At first she only determined, by all the chivalrous blood that ran in her veins, to continue her kindness to the Trenholmes. She foresaw a gust of unpopularity against them, and she saw herself defending their interests and defying criticism. In this bright prospect the brothers were humbly grateful and she herself not a little picturesque in generous patronage. It was a delightful vision—for an hour; but because she was nearer thirty than twenty it passed quickly. She touched it with her knowledge of the world and it vanished. No; social life could not be changed in a day; it would not be well that it should be. Much of the criticism that would come in this case would be just; and the harsher blows that would be dealt could not be stayed nor the unkindness defied; even in the smaller affairs of life, he who would stand by the wronged must be willing to suffer wrong. Was she ready for that? The longer she meditated, the more surely she knew

that Alec Trenholme loved her. And when she had meditated a little longer—in spite of the indignation she had felt at the bare suggestion—she knew that she loved him.

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The fine theories of universal conduct in which she had been indulging narrowed themselves down to her own life and to sternest, commonest reality. Christianity is never a quality that can be abstracted from the individual and looked upon as having duties of its own.

She fought against the knowledge that she liked him so well; the thought of being his wife was the thought of a sacrifice that appalled her. A convent cell would not have appeared to her half so far removed from all that belongs to the pride of life; and lives there anyone who has so wholly turned from that hydra-headed delight as not to shrink, as from some touch of death, from fresh relinquishment? Her pulses stirred to those strains of life's music that call to emulation and the manifold poms of honour; and, whatever might be the reality, in her judgment the wife of Alec Trenholme must renounce all that element of interest in the world for ever. Our sense of distinction poises its wings on the opinion of men; and, as far as she had learnt this opinion, a saint or a nun (she knew it now, although before she had not thought it) had honourable part in life's pageantry, but not the wife of such as he. The prospect in her eyes was barren of the hope that she might ever again have the power to say to anyone, "I am better than thou."

It did not help her that at her initiation into the Christian life she had formally made just this renunciation, or that she had thought that before now she had ratified the vow. The meaninglessness of such formulas when spoken is only revealed when deepening life reveals their depths of meaning. She asked, in dismay, if duty was calling her to this sacrifice by the voice of love in her heart. For that Love who carries the crown of earthly happiness in his hand was standing on the threshold of her heart like a beggar, and so terrible did his demand seem to her that she felt it would be easy to turn him away.

"I," she said to herself, "I, who have preached to others, who have discoursed on the vanity of ambition—this has come to teach me what stuff my glib enthusiasm is made of. I would rather perjure myself, rather die, rather choose any life of penance and labour, than yield to my own happiness and his, and give up my pride."

She arrayed before her all possible arguments for maintaining the existing social order; but conscience answered, "You are not asked to disturb it very much." Conscience used an uncomfortable phrase—"You are only asked to make yourself of no reputation." She cowered before Conscience. "You are not even asked to make yourself unhappy," continued Conscience; and so the inward monitor talked, on till, all wearied, her will held out a flag of truce.

Most women would have thought of a compromise, would have, said, "Yes, I will stoop to the man, but I will raise him to some more desirable estate"; but such a woman was not Sophia Rexford. She scorned love that would make conditions as much as she scorned a religion that could set its own limits to service. For her there was but one

question—Did Heaven demand that she should acknowledge this love? If so, then the all-ruling Will of Heaven must be the only will that should set bounds to its demand.

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In the distress of her mind, however, she did catch at one idea that was, in kind, a compromise. She thought with relief that she could take no initiative. If Alec Trenholme asked her to be his wife—then she knew, at last she knew, that she would not dare to deny the voice at her heart—in the light of righteousness and judgment to come, she would not dare to deny it. But—ah, surely he would not ask! She caught at this belief as an exhausted swimmer might catch at a floating spar, and rested herself upon it. She would deal honourably with her conscience; she would not abate her kindliness; she would give him all fair opportunity; and if he asked, she would give up all—but she clung to her spar of hope.

She did not realise the extent of her weakness, nor even suspect the greatness of her strength.

CHAPTER XXI.

Robert Trenholme had not told his brother that he had made his confession when he took tea with all the women. He knew that in such cases difference and separation are often first fancied and then created, by the self-conscious pride of the person who expects to be slighted. He refrained from making this possible on Alec's part, and set himself to watch the difference that would be made; and the interest of all side-issues was summed up for him in solicitude to know what Miss Rexford would do, for on that he felt his own hopes of her pardon to depend.

When he found, the day after Bates's departure, that Alec must seek Miss Rexford to give Eliza's message, he put aside work to go with him to call upon her. He would hold to his brother; it remained to be seen how she would receive them together.

That same afternoon Sophia went forth with Winifred and the little boys to gather autumn leaves. When the two brothers came out of the college gate they saw her, not twenty yards away, at the head of her little troop. Down the broad road the cool wind was rushing, and they saw her walking against it, outwardly sedate, with roses on her cheeks, her eyes lit with the sunshine. The three stopped, and greeted each other after the manner of civilised people.

Trenholme knew that the change that any member of the Rexford family would put into their demeanour could not be rudely perceptible. He set no store by her greeting, but he put his hand upon his brother's shoulder and he said:

"This fellow has news that will surprise you, and a message to give. Perhaps, if it is not asking too much, we may walk as far as may be necessary to tell it, or," and he looked at her questioningly, "would you like him to go and help you to bring down the high boughs?—they have the brightest leaves."



“Will you come and help us gather red leaves?” said Sophia to Alec.

She did not see the gratitude in the elder brother’s eyes, because it did not interest her to look for it.

“And you?” she said to him.

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"Ah, I" (he held up the cane with which he still eased the weight on one foot), "I cannot walk so far, but perhaps I will come and meet you on your return," and he pleased himself with the idea that she cared that he should come.

He went into his house again. His heart, which had lately been learning the habit of peace, just now learned a new lesson of what joy might be. His future before him looked troublous, but the worst of his fears was allayed. He had loved Sophia long; to-day his love seemed multiplied a thousandfold. Hope crept to his heart like a darling child that had been in disgrace and now was forgiven.

The others went on down the road.

Alec told his news about Eliza as drily as facts could be told. If he touched his story at all with feeling, it was something akin to a sneer.

"She'll get him on to the track of prosperity now she's taken hold, Miss Rexford," said he. "Mr. and Mrs. Bates will be having a piano before long, and they will drive in a 'buggy.' That's the romance of a settler's life in Canada."

When they had left that subject Sophia said, "Now he is gone, are you going away?"

"Yes; in a day or two. I've fixed nothing yet, because Robert seems to have some unaccountable objection to getting rid of me just at present; but I shall go."

"It is very fine weather," she said.

"There is too much glare," said he.

"You are surely hard to please."

"What I call fine weather is something a man has something in common with. If one were a little chap again, just leaving school for a holiday, this would be a glorious day, but—what *man* has spirits equal to" (he looked above) "this sort of thing."

His words came home to Sophia with overwhelming force, for, as they went on, touching many subjects one after another, she knew with absolute certainty that her companion had not the slightest intention of being her suitor. If the sunny land through which she was walking had been a waste place, in which storm winds sighed, over which storm clouds muttered, it would have been a fitter home for her heart just then. She saw that she was to be called to no sacrifice, but she experienced no buoyant relief. He was going away; and she was to be left. She had not known herself when she thought she wanted him to go—she was miserable. Well, she deserved her misery, for would she not be more miserable if she married him? Had she not cried and complained? And now the door of this renunciation was not opened to her—he was going away, and she was to be left.



Very dull and prosaic was the talk of these two as they walked up the road to that pine grove where the river curved in, and they turned back through that strip of wilderness between road and river where it was easy to be seen that the brightest leaf posies were to be had.

Nearest the pines was a group of young, stalwart maple trees, each of a different dye—gold, bronze, or red. It was here that they lingered, and Alec gathered boughs for the children till their hands were full. The noise of the golden-winged woodpecker was in the air, and the call of the indigo bird.

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Sophia wandered under the branches; her mind was moving always. She was unhappy. Yes, she deserved that; but he—he was unhappy too; did he deserve it? Then she asked herself suddenly if she had no further duty toward him than to come or go at his call. Did she dare, by all that was true, to wreck his life and her own because she would not stoop to compel the call that she had feared?

Humility does not demand that we should think ill of ourselves, but that we should not think of ourselves at all. When Sophia lost sight of herself she saw the gate of Paradise. After that she was at one again with the sunshine and the breeze and the birds, with the rapture of the day and the land, and she ceased to think why she acted, or whether it was right or wrong. The best and worst hours of life are in themselves irresponsible, the will hurled headlong forward by an impulse that has gathered force before.

And what did she do? The first thing that entered her mind—it mattered not what to her. The man was in her power, and she knew it.

When the children's arms were full and they had gone on homeward down a pathway among lower sumac thickets, Alec turned and saw Sophia, just as stately, just as quiet, as he had ever seen her. So they two began to follow.

Her hand had been cut the day before, and the handkerchief that bound it had come off. Demurely she gave it to him to be fastened. Now the hand had been badly cut, and when he saw that he could not repress the tenderness of his sympathy.

"How could you have done it?" he asked, filled with pain, awed, wondering.

She laughed, though she did not mean to; she was so light-hearted, and it was very funny to see how quickly he softened at her will.

"Do not ask me to tell you how low we Rexfords have descended!" she cried, "and yet I will confess I did it with the meat axe. I ought not to touch such a thing, you think! Nay, what can I do when the loin is not jointed and the servant has not so steady a hand as I? Would you have me let papa grumble all dinner-time—the way that you men do, you know?"

The little horror that she had painted for him so vividly did its work. With almost a groan he touched the hand with kisses, not knowing what he did; and looking up, frightened of her as far as he could be conscious of fear, he saw, not anger, but a face that fain would hide itself, and he hid it in his embrace.

"Oh," cried he, "what have I done?"

Stepping backward, he stood a few paces from her, his arms crossed, the glow on his face suddenly transcended by the look with which a man might regard a crime he had committed.

“What is it?” she cried, wickedly curious. The maple tree over her was a golden flame and her feet were on a carpet of gold. All around them the earth was heaped with palm-like sumac shrubs, scarlet, crimson, purple—dyed as it were, with blood.

“What have I done?” He held out his hands as if they had been stained. “I have loved you, I have dared, without a thought, *without a thought for you*, to walk straight into all the—the—heaven of it.”

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Then he told her, in a word, that about himself which he thought she would despise; and she saw that he thought she heard it for the first time.

Lifting her eyebrows in pretty incredulity. "Not really?" she said.

"It is true," he cried with fierce emphasis.

At that she looked grave.

He had been trying to make her serious; but no sooner did he see her look of light and joy pass into a look of thought than he was filled with that sort of acute misery which differs from other sorrows as acute pain differs from duller aches.

"My darling," he said, his heart was wrung with the words—"my darling, if I have hurt you, I have almost killed myself." (Man that he was, he believed that his life must ebb in this pain.)

"Why?" she asked. "How?"

He went a step nearer her, but as it came to him every moment more clearly that he had deceived her, as he realised what he had gained and what he now thought to forego, his voice forsook him in his effort to speak. Words that he tried to say died on his lips.

But she saw that he had tried to say that because of it she should not marry him.

He tried again to speak and made better work of it. "This that has come to us—this love that has taken us both—you will say it is not enough to—to—"

She lifted up her face to him. Her cheeks were flushed; her eyes were full of light. "This that has come to us, Alec—" (At his name he came nearer yet) "this that has taken us both" (she faltered) "is enough."

He came near to her again; he took her hands into his; and all that he felt and all that she felt, passed from his eyes to hers, from hers to his.

He said, "It seems like talking in church, but common things must be said and answered, and—Sophie—what will your father say?"

"I don't know," she said; but happiness made her playful; she stroked the sleeve of his coat, as if to touch it were of more interest to her. "I will give him my fortune to make up, and come to you penniless."

"He won't consent," he urged.

There was still a honeyed carelessness in her voice and look. "At the great age to which I have attained," said she, "fathers don't interfere."

"What can I do or say," he said, "to make you consider?" for it seemed to him that her thoughts and voice came from her spellbound in some strange delight, as the murmur comes from a running stream, without meaning, except the meaning of all beautiful and happy things in God's world.

"What must I consider?"

"The shop—the trade."

"When you were a very young butcher, and first took to it, did you like it?"

"I wasn't squeamish," he said; and then he told her about his father. After that he philosophised a little, telling something of the best that he conceived might be if men sought the highest ideal in lowly walks of life, instead of seeking to perform imperfectly some nobler business. It was wonderful how much better he could speak to her than to his brother, but Sophia listened with such perfect assent that his sense of honour again smote him.



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"Art thinking of it all, love?" he said.

"I was wondering what colour of aprons you wore, and if I must make them."

They began to walk home, passing now under the sumac's palm-like canopy, and they saw the blue gleam of the singing river through red thickets. Soon they came to a bit of open ground, all overgrown with bronzed bracken, and maidenhair sere and pink, and blue-eyed asters and golden-rod. So high and thick were the breeze-blown weeds that the only place to set the feet was a very narrow path. Here Sophia walked first, for they could not walk abreast, and as Alec watched her threading her way with light elastic step, he became afraid once more, and tried to break through her happy tranquillity.

"Dear love," he said, "I hope—"

"What now?" said she, for his tone was unrestful.

He trampled down flowers and ferns as he awkwardly tried to gain her side.

"You know, dear, I have a sort of feeling that I've perhaps just fascinated and entranced you—so that you are under a spell and don't consider, you know."

It was exactly what he meant, and he said it; but how merrily she laughed! Her happy laughter rang; the river laughed in answer, and the woodpecker clapped applause.

But Alec blushed very much and stumbled upon the tangled weeds.

"I only meant—I—I didn't mean—That is the way I feel fascinated by you, you know; and I suppose it might be the same—"

They walked on, she still advancing a few paces because she had the path, he retarded because, in his attempt to come up with her, he was knee-deep in flowers. But after a minute, observing that he was hurt in his mind because of her laughter, she mocked him, laughing again, but turned the sunshine of her loving face full upon him as she did so.

"Most fascinating and entrancing of butchers!" quoth she.

With that as she entered another thicket of sumac trees, he caught and kissed her in its shade.

* * * * *

And there was one man who heard her words and saw his act, one who took in the full meaning of it even more clearly than they could, because they in their transport had not his clearness of vision. Robert Trenholme, coming to seek them, chanced in crossing



this place, thick set with shrubs, to come near them unawares, and seeing them, and having at the sight no power in him to advance another step or speak a word, he let them pass joyously on their way towards home. It was not many moments before they had passed off the scene, and he was left the only human actor in that happy wilderness where flower and leaf and bird, the blue firmament on high and the sparkling river, rejoiced together in the glory of light and colour.

Trenholme crossed the path and strode through flowery tangle and woody thicket like a giant in sudden strength, snapping all that offered to detain his feet. He sought, he knew not why, the murmur and the motion of the river; and where young trees stood thickest, as spearsmen to guard the loneliness of its bank, he sat down upon a rock and covered his face, as if even from the spirits of solitude and from his own consciousness he must hide. He thought of nothing: his soul within him was mad.

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He had come out of his school not half an hour before, rejoicing more than any schoolboy going to play in the glorious weather. For him there was not too much light on the lovely autumn landscape; it was all a part of the peace that was within him and without, of the God he knew to be within him and without—for, out of his struggle for righteousness in small things, he had come back into that light which most men cannot see or believe. Just in so far as a man comes into that light he ceases to know himself as separate, but knows that he is a part of all men and all things, that his joy is the joy of all men, that their pain is his; therefore, as Trenholme desired the fulfilment of his own hopes, he desired that all hope in the world might find fruition. And because this day he saw—what is always true if we could but see it—that joy is a thousandfold greater than pain, the glory of the autumn seemed to him like a psalm of praise, and he gave thanks for all men.

Thus Trenholme had walked across the fields, into these groves—but now, as he sat by the river, all that, for the time, had passed away, except as some indistinct memory of it maddened him. His heart was full of rage against his brother, rage too against the woman he loved; and with this rage warred most bitterly a self-loathing because he knew that his anger against them was unjust. She did not know, she had no cause to know, that she had darkened his whole life; but—what a *fool* she was! What companionship could that thoughtless fellow give her? How he would drag her down! And *he*, too, could not know that he had better have killed his brother than done this thing. But any woman would have done for Alec; for himself there was only this one—only this one in the whole world. He judged his brother; any girl with a pretty face and a good heart would have done for that boisterous fellow—while for himself—“Oh God,” he said, “it is hard.”

Thus accusing and excusing these lovers, excusing and again accusing himself for his rage against them, he descended slowly into the depth of his trouble—for man, in his weakness, is so made that he can come at his worst suffering only by degrees. Yet when he had made this descent, the hope he had cherished for months and years lay utterly overthrown; it could not have been more dead had it been a hundred years in dying. He had not known before how dear it was, yet he had known that it was dearer than all else, except that other hope with which we do not compare our desires for earthly good because we think it may exist beside them and grow thereby.

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There are times when, to a man, time is not, when the life of years is gathered into indefinite moments; and after, when outward things claim again the exhausted mind, he wonders that the day is not further spent. And Trenholme wondered at the length of that afternoon, when he observed it again and saw that the sun had not yet sunk low, and as he measured the shadows that the bright trees cast athwart the moving water, he was led away to think the thoughts that had been his when he had so lightly come into those gay autumn bowers. A swallow skimmed the wave with burnished wing; again he heard the breeze and the rapid current. They were the same; the movement and music were the same; God was still with him; was he so base as to withhold the thanksgiving that had been checked half uttered in his heart by the spring of that couchant sorrow? *Then* in the sum of life's blessings he had numbered that hope of his, and *now* he had seen the perfect fruition of that hope in joy. It was not his own,—but was it not much to know that God had made such joy, had given it to man? Had he in love of God no honest praise to give for other men's mercies? none for the joy of this man who was his brother? Across the murmur of the river he spoke words so familiar that they came to clothe the thought—

“We do give Thee most humble and hearty thanks for all Thy goodness and—loving kindness—to us—and to *all men*.”

And although, as he said them, his hand was clenched so that his fingers cut the palm, yet, because he gave thanks, Robert Trenholme was nearer than he knew to being a holy man.

THE END.

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