

Modern Chronicle, a — Volume 01 eBook

Modern Chronicle, a — Volume 01 by Winston Churchill

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A MODERN CHRONICLE

CHAPTER I

WHAT'S IN HEREDITY

Honora Leffingwell is the original name of our heroine. She was born in the last quarter of the Nineteenth Century, at Nice, in France, and she spent the early years of her life in St. Louis, a somewhat conservative old city on the banks of the Mississippi River. Her father was Randolph Leffingwell, and he died in the early flower of his manhood, while filling with a grace that many remember the post of United States Consul at Nice. As a linguist he was a phenomenon, and his photograph in the tortoise-shell frame proves indubitably, to anyone acquainted with the fashions of 1870, that he was a master of that subtlest of all arts, dress. He had gentle blood in his veins, which came from

Virginia through Kentucky in a coach and six, and he was the equal in appearance and manners of any duke who lingered beside classic seas.

Honora has often pictured to herself a gay villa set high above the curving shore, the amethyst depths shading into emerald, laced with milk-white foam, the vivid colours of the town, the gay costumes; the excursions, the dinner-parties presided over by the immaculate young consul in three languages, and the guests chosen from the haute noblesse of Europe. Such was the vision in her youthful mind, added to by degrees as she grew into young-ladyhood and surreptitiously became familiar with the writings of Ouida and the Duchess, and other literature of an educating cosmopolitan nature.

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Honora's biography should undoubtedly contain a sketch of Mrs. Randolph Leffingwell. Beauty and dash and a knowledge of how to seat a table seem to have been the lady's chief characteristics; the only daughter of a carefully dressed and carefully, preserved widower, likewise a linguist,—whose super-refined tastes and the limited straits to which he, the remaining scion of an old Southern family, had been reduced by a gentlemanly contempt for money, led him 'to choose Paris rather than New York as a place of residence. One of the occasional and carefully planned trips to the Riviera proved fatal to the beautiful but reckless Myrtle Allison. She, who might have chosen counts or dukes from the Tagus to the Danube, or even crossed the Channel; took the dashing but impecunious American consul, with a faith in his future that was sublime. Without going over too carefully the upward path which led to the post of their country's representative at the court of St. James, neither had the slightest doubt that Randolph Leffingwell would tread it.

It is needless to dwell upon the chagrin of Honora's maternal grandfather, Howard Allison Esquire, over this turn of affairs, this unexpected bouleversement, as he spoke of it in private to his friends in his Parisian club. For many years he had watched the personal attractions of his daughter grow, and a brougham and certain other delights not to be mentioned had gradually become, in his mind, synonymous with old age. The brougham would have on its panels the Allison crest, and his distinguished (and titled) son-in-law would drop in occasionally at the little apartment on the Boulevard Haussmann. Alas, for visions, for legitimate hopes shattered forever! On the day that Randolph Leffingwell led Miss Allison down the aisle of the English church the vision of the brougham and the other delights faded. Howard Allison went back to his club.

Three years later, while on an excursion with Sir Nicholas Baker and a merry party on the Italian aide, the horses behind which Mr. and Mrs. Leffingwell were driving with their host ran away, and in the flight managed to precipitate the vehicle, and themselves, down the side of one of the numerous deep valleys of the streams seeking the Mediterranean. Thus, by a singular caprice of destiny Honors was deprived of both her parents at a period which—some chose to believe—was the height of their combined glories. Randolph Leffingwell lived long enough to be taken back to Nice, and to consign his infant daughter and sundry other unsolved problems to his brother Tom.

Brother Tom—or Uncle Tom, as we must call him with Honora—cheerfully accepted the charge. For his legacies in life had been chiefly blessings in disguise. He was paying teller of the Prairie Bank, and the thermometer registered something above 90 deg. Fahrenheit on the July morning when he stood behind his wicket reading a letter from Howard Allison, Esquire, relative to his niece.

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Mr. Leffingwell was at this period of his life forty-eight, but the habit he had acquired of assuming responsibilities and burdens seemed to have had the effect of making his age indefinite. He was six feet tall, broad-shouldered, his mustache and hair already turning; his eyebrows were a trifle bushy, and his eyes reminded men of one eternal and highly prized quality—honesty. They were blue grey. Ordinarily they shed a light which sent people away from his window the happier without knowing why; but they had been known, on rare occasions, to flash on dishonesty and fraud like the lightnings of the Lord. Mr. Isham, the president of the bank, coined a phrase about him. He said that Thomas Leffingwell was constitutionally honest.

Although he had not risen above the position of paying teller, Thomas Leffingwell had a unique place in the city of his birth; and the esteem in which he was held by capitalists and clerks proves that character counts for something. On his father's failure and death he had entered the Prairie Bank, at eighteen, and never left it. If he had owned it, he could not have been treated by the customers with more respect. The city, save for a few notable exceptions, like Mr. Isham, called him Mr. Leffingwell, but behind his back often spoke of him as Tom.

On the particular hot morning in question, as he stood in his seersucker coat reading the unquestionably pompous letter of Mr. Allison announcing that his niece was on the high seas, he returned the greetings of his friends with his usual kindness and cheer. In an adjoining compartment a long-legged boy of fourteen was busily stamping letters.

"Peter," said Mr. Leffingwell, "go ask Mr. Isham if I may see him."

It is advisable to remember the boy's name. It was Peter Erwin, and he was a favourite in the bank, where he had been introduced by Mr. Leffingwell himself. He was an orphan and lived with his grandmother, an impoverished old lady with good blood in her veins who boarded in Graham's Row, on Olive Street. Suffice it to add, at this time, that he worshipped Mr. Leffingwell, and that he was back in a twinkling with the information that Mr. Isham was awaiting him.

The president was seated at his desk. In spite of the thermometer he gave no appearance of discomfort in his frock-coat. He had scant, sandy-grey whiskers, a tightly closed and smooth-shaven upper lip, a nose with a decided ridge, and rather small but penetrating eyes in which the blue pigment had been used sparingly. His habitual mode of speech was both brief and sharp, but people remarked that he modified it a little for Tom Leffingwell.

"Come in, Tom," he said. "Anything the matter?"

"Mr. Isham, I want a week off, to go to New York."

The request, from Tom Leffingwell, took Mr. Isham's breath. One of the bank president's characteristics was an extreme interest in the private affairs of those who came within his zone of influence and especially when these affairs evinced any irregularity.

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“Randolph again?” he asked quickly.

Tom walked to the window, and stood looking out into the street. His voice shook as he answered:

“Ten days ago I learned that my brother was dead, Mr. Isham.”

The president glanced at the broad back of his teller. Mr. Isham’s voice was firm, his face certainly betrayed no feeling, but a flitting gleam of satisfaction might have been seen in his eye.

“Of course, Tom, you may go,” he answered.

Thus came to pass an event in the lives of Uncle Tom and Aunt Mary, that journey to New York (their first) of two nights and two days to fetch Honora. We need not dwell upon all that befell them. The first view of the Hudson, the first whiff of the salt air on this unwonted holiday, the sights of this crowded city of wealth,—all were tempered by the thought of the child coming into their lives. They were standing on the pier when the windows were crimson in the early light, and at nine o’clock on that summer’s morning the Albania was docked, and the passengers came crowding down the gang-plank. Prosperous tourists, most of them, with servants and stewards carrying bags of English design and checked steamer rugs; and at last a ruddy-faced bonne with streamers and a bundle of ribbons and laces—Honora—Honora, aged eighteen months, gazing at a subjugated world.

“What a beautiful child! exclaimed a woman on the pier.”

Was it instinct or premonition that led them to accost the bonne?

“Oui, Leffingwell!” she cried, gazing at them in some perplexity. Three children of various sizes clung to her skirts, and a younger nurse carried a golden-haired little girl of Honora’s age. A lady and gentleman followed. The lady was beginning to look matronly, and no second glance was required to perceive that she was a person of opinion and character. Mr. Holt was smaller than his wife, neat in dress and unobtrusive in appearance. In the rich Mrs. Holt, the friend of the Randolph Leffingwells, Aunt Mary was prepared to find a more rapidly fashionable personage, and had schooled herself forthwith.

“You are Mrs. Thomas Leffingwell?” she asked. “Well, I am relieved.” The lady’s eyes, travelling rapidly over Aunt Mary’s sober bonnet and brooch and gown, made it appear that these features in Honora’s future guardian gave her the relief in question. “Honora, this is your aunt.”

Honora smiled from amidst the laces, and Aunt Mary, only too ready to capitulate, surrendered. She held out her arms. Tears welled up in the Frenchwoman's eyes as she abandoned her charge.

"Pauvre mignonne!" she cried.

But Mrs. Holt rebuked the nurse sharply, in French,—a language with which neither Aunt Mary nor Uncle Tom was familiar. Fortunately, perhaps. Mrs. Holt's remark was to the effect that Honora was going to a sensible home.

"Hortense loves her better than my own children," said that lady.

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Honora seemed quite content in the arms of Aunt Mary, who was gazing so earnestly into the child's face that she did not at first hear Mrs. Holt's invitation to take breakfast with them on Madison Avenue, and then she declined politely. While crossing on the steamer, Mrs. Holt had decided quite clearly in her mind just what she was going to say to the child's future guardian, but there was something in Aunt Mary's voice and manner which made these remarks seem unnecessary—although Mrs. Holt was secretly disappointed not to deliver them.

"It was fortunate that we happened to, be in Nice at the time," she said with the evident feeling that some explanation was due. "I did not know poor Mrs. Randolph Leffingwell very—very intimately, or Mr. Leffingwell. It was such a sudden—such a terrible affair. But Mr. Holt and I were only too glad to do what we could."

"We feel very grateful to you," said Aunt Mary, quietly.

Mrs. Holt looked at her with a still more distinct approval, being tolerably sure that Mrs. Thomas Leffingwell understood. She had cleared her skirts of any possible implication of intimacy with the late Mrs. Randolph, and done so with a master touch.

In the meantime Honora had passed to Uncle Tom. After securing the little trunk, and settling certain matters with Mr. Holt, they said good-by to her late kind protectors, and started off for the nearest street-cars, Honora pulling Uncle Tom's mustache. More than one pedestrian paused to look back at the tall man carrying the beautiful child, bedecked like a young princess, and more than one passenger in the street cars smiled at them both.

CHAPTER II

PERDITA RECALLED

Saint Louis, or that part of it which is called by dealers in real estate the choice residence section, grew westward. And Uncle Tom might be said to have been in the vanguard of the movement. In the days before Honora was born he had built his little house on what had been a farm on the Olive Street Road, at the crest of the second ridge from the river. Up this ridge, with clanking traces, toiled the horse-cars that carried Uncle Tom downtown to the bank and Aunt Mary to market.

Fleeing westward, likewise, from the smoke, friends of Uncle Tom's and Aunt Mary's gradually surrounded them—building, as a rule, the high Victorian mansions in favour at that period, which were placed in the centre of commodious yards. For the friends of Uncle Tom and Aunt Mary were for the most part rich, and belonged, as did they, to the older families of the city. Mr. Dwyer's house, with its picture gallery, was across the street.

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In the midst of such imposing company the little dwelling which became the home of our heroine sat well back in a plot that might almost be called a garden. In summer its white wooden front was nearly hidden by the quivering leaves of two tall pear trees. On the other side of the brick walk, and near the iron fence, was an elm and a flower bed that was Uncle Tom's pride and the admiration of the neighbourhood. Honora has but to shut her eyes to see it aflame with tulips at Eastertide. The eastern wall of the house was a mass of Virginia creeper, and beneath that another flower bed, and still another in the back-yard behind the lattice fence covered with cucumber vine. There were, besides, two maples and two apricot trees, relics of the farm, and of blessed memory. Such apricots! Visions of hot summer evenings come back, with Uncle Tom, in his seersucker coat, with his green watering-pot, bending over the beds, and Aunt Mary seated upright in her chair, looking up from her knitting with a loving eye.

Behind the lattice, on these summer evenings, stands the militant figure of that old retainer, Bridget the cook, her stout arms akimbo, ready to engage in vigorous banter should Honora deign to approach.

"Whisht, 'Nora darlint, it's a young lady yell be soon, and the beaux a-comin' 'round!" she would cry, and throw back her head and laugh until the tears were in her eyes.

And the princess, a slim figure in an immaculate linen frock with red ribbons which Aunt Mary had copied from Longstreth's London catalogue, would reply with dignity:

"Bridget, I wish you would try to remember that my name is Honora."

Another spasm of laughter from Bridget.

"Listen to that now!" she would cry to another ancient retainer, Mary Ann, the housemaid, whose kitchen chair was tilted up against the side of the woodshed. "It'll be Miss Honora next, and George Hanbury here to-day with his eye through a knothole in the fence, out of his head for a sight of ye."

George Hanbury was Honora's cousin, and she did not deem his admiration a subject fit for discussion with Bridget.

"Sure," declared Mary Ann, "it's the air of a princess the child has."

That she should be thought a princess did not appear at all remarkable to Honora at twelve years of age. Perdita may have had such dreams. She had been born, she knew, in some wondrous land by the shores of the summer seas, not at all like St. Louis, and friends and relatives had not hesitated to remark in her hearing that she resembled—her father,—that handsome father who surely must have been a prince, whose before-mentioned photograph in the tortoise-shell frame was on the bureau in her little room. So far as Randolph Leffingwell was concerned, photography had not

been invented for nothing. Other records of him remained which Honora had likewise seen: one end of a rose-covered villa—which Honora thought was a wing of his palace; a coach and four he was driving, and which had chanced to belong to an Englishman, although the photograph gave no evidence of this ownership. Neither Aunt Mary nor Uncle Tom had ever sought—for reasons perhaps obvious—to correct the child's impression of an extraordinary paternity.

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Aunt Mary was a Puritan of Southern ancestry, and her father had been a Presbyterian minister, Uncle Tom was a member of the vestry of a church still under Puritan influences. As a consequence for Honora, there were Sunday afternoons—periods when the imaginative faculty, in which she was by no means lacking, was given full play. She would sit by the hour in the swing Uncle Tom had hung for her under the maple near the lattice, while castles rose on distant heights against blue skies. There was her real home, in a balconied chamber that overlooked mile upon mile of rustling forest in the valley; and when the wind blew, the sound of it was like the sea. Honora did not remember the sea, but its music was often in her ears.

She would be aroused from these dreams of greatness by the appearance of old Catherine, her nurse, on the side porch, reminding her that it was time to wash for supper. No princess could have had a more humble tiring-woman than Catherine.

Honora cannot be unduly blamed. When she reached the “little house under the hill” (as Catherine called the chamber beneath the eaves), she beheld reflected in the mirror an image like a tall, white flower that might indeed have belonged to a princess. Her hair, the colour of burnt sienna, fell evenly to her shoulders; her features even then had regularity and hauteur; her legs, in their black silk stockings, were straight; and the simple white lawn frock made the best of a slender figure. Those frocks of Honora’s were a continual source of wonder and sometimes of envy—to Aunt Mary’s friends; who returned from the seaside in the autumn, after a week among the fashions in Boston or New York, to find Honora in the latest models, and better dressed than their own children. Aunt Mary made no secret of the methods by which these seeming miracles were performed, and showed Cousin Eleanor Hanbury the fashion plates in the English periodicals. Cousin Eleanor sighed.

“Mary, you are wonderful,” she would say. “Honora’s clothes are better-looking than those I buy in the East, at such fabulous prices, from Cavendish.”

Indeed, no woman was ever farther removed from personal vanity than Aunt Mary. She looked like a little Quakeress. Her silvered hair was parted in the middle and had, in spite of palpable efforts towards tightness and repression, a perceptible ripple in it. Grey was her only concession to colour, and her gowns and bonnets were of a primness which belonged to the past. Repression, or perhaps compression, was her note, for the energy confined within her little body was a thing to have astounded scientists: And Honora grew to womanhood and reflection before she had guessed or considered that her aunt was possessed of intense emotions which had no outlet. Her features were regular, her shy eye had the clearness of a forest pool. She believed in predestination, which is to say that she was a fatalist; and while she steadfastly continued to regard this world as a place of sorrow and trials, she concerned herself very little about her participation in a future life. Old Dr. Ewing, the rector of St. Anne’s, while conceding that no better or more charitable woman existed, found it so

exceedingly difficult to talk to her, on the subject of religion that he had never tried it but once.

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Such was Aunt Mary. The true student of human nature should not find it surprising that she spoiled Honora and strove—at what secret expense, care, and self-denial to Uncle Tom and herself, none will ever know—to adorn the child that she might appear creditably among companions whose parents were more fortunate in this world's goods; that she denied herself to educate Honora as these other children were educated. Nor is it astonishing that she should not have understood the highly complex organism of the young lady we have chosen for our heroine, who was shaken, at the age of thirteen, by unfulfilled longings.

Very early in life Honora learned to dread the summer, when one by one the families of her friends departed until the city itself seemed a remote and distant place from what it had been in the spring and winter. The great houses were closed and blinded, and in the evening the servants who had been left behind chattered on the front steps. Honora could not bear the sound of the trains that drifted across the night, and the sight of the trunks piled in the Hanburys' hall, in Wayland Square, always filled her with a sickening longing. Would the day ever come when she, too, would depart for the bright places of the earth? Sometimes, when she looked in the mirror, she was filled with a fierce belief in a destiny to sit in the high seats, to receive homage and dispense bounties, to discourse with great intellects, to know London and Paris and the marts and centres of the world as her father had. To escape—only to escape from the prison walls of a humdrum existence, and to soar!

Let us, if we can, reconstruct an August day when all (or nearly all) of Honora's small friends were gone eastward to the mountains or the seaside. In "the little house under the hill," the surface of which was a hot slate roof, Honora would awake about seven o'clock to find old Catherine bending over her in a dun-coloured calico dress, with the light fiercely beating against the closed shutters that braved it so unflinchingly throughout the day.

"The birds are before ye, Miss Honora, honey, and your uncle waterin' his roses this half-hour."

Uncle Tom was indeed an early riser. As Honora dressed (Catherine assisting as at a ceremony), she could see him, in his seersucker coat, bending tenderly over his beds; he lived enveloped in a peace which has since struck wonder to Honora's soul. She lingered in her dressing, even in those days, falling into reveries from which Catherine gently and deferentially aroused her; and Uncle Tom would be carving the beefsteak and Aunt Mary pouring the coffee when she finally arrived in the dining room to nibble at one of Bridget's unforgettable rolls or hot biscuits. Uncle Tom had his joke, and at quarter-past eight precisely he would kiss Aunt Mary and walk to the corner to wait for the ambling horse-car that was to take him to the bank. Sometimes Honora went to the corner with him, and he waved her good-by from the platform as he felt in his pocket for the nickel that was to pay his fare.

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When Honora returned, Aunt Mary had donned her apron, and was industriously aiding Mary Ann to wash the dishes and maintain the customary high polish on her husband's share of the Leffingwell silver which, standing on the side table, shot hither and thither rays of green light that filtered through the shutters into the darkened room. The child partook of Aunt Mary's pride in that silver, made for a Kentucky great-grandfather Leffingwell by a famous Philadelphia silversmith three-quarters of a century before. Honora sighed.

"What's the matter, Honora?" asked Aunt Mary, without pausing in her vigorous rubbing.

"The Leffingwells used to be great once upon a time, didn't they, Aunt Mary?"

"Your Uncle Tom," answered Aunt Mary, quietly, "is the greatest man I know, child."

"And my father must have been a great man, too," cried Honora, "to have been a consul and drive coaches."

Aunt Mary was silent. She was not a person who spoke easily on difficult subjects.

"Why don't you ever talk to me about my father, Aunt Mary? Uncle Tom does."

"I didn't know your father, Honora."

"But you have seen him?"

"Yes," said Aunt Mary, dipping her cloth into the whiting; "I saw him at my wedding. But he was very, young."

"What was he like?" Honora demanded. "He was very handsome, wasn't he?"

"Yes, child."

"And he had ambition, didn't he, Aunt Mary?"

Aunt Mary paused. Her eyes were troubled as she looked at Honora, whose head was thrown back.

"What kind of ambition do you mean, Honora?"

"Oh," cried Honora, "to be great and rich and powerful, and to be somebody."

"Who has been putting such things in your head, my dear?"

"No one, Aunt Mary. Only, if I were a man, I shouldn't rest until I became great."

Alas, that Aunt Mary, with all her will, should have such limited powers of expression! She resumed her scrubbing of the silver before she spoke.

“To do one’s duty, to accept cheerfully and like a Christian the responsibilities and burdens of life, is the highest form of greatness, my child. Your Uncle Tom has had many things to trouble him; he has always worked for others, and not for himself. And he is respected and loved by all who know him.”

“Yes, I know, Aunt Mary. But—”

“But what, Honora?”

“Then why isn’t he rich, as my father was?”

“Your father wasn’t rich, my dear,” said Aunt Mary, sadly.

“Why, Aunt Mary!” Honora exclaimed, “he lived in a beautiful house, and owned horses. Isn’t that being rich?”

Poor Aunt Mary!

“Honora,” she answered, “there are some things you are too young to understand. But try to remember, my dear, that happiness doesn’t consist in being rich.”

“But I have often heard you say that you wished you were rich, Aunt Mary, and had nice things, and a picture gallery like Mr. Dwyer.”

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"I should like to have beautiful pictures, Honora."

"I don't like Mr. Dwyer," declared Honora, abruptly.

"You mustn't say that, Honora," was Aunt Mary's reproof. "Mr. Dwyer is an upright, public-spirited man, and he thinks a great deal of your Uncle Tom."

"I can't help it, Aunt Mary," said Honora. "I think he enjoys being —well, being able to do things for a man like Uncle Tom."

Neither Aunt Mary nor Honora guessed what a subtle criticism this was of Mr. Dwyer. Aunt Mary was troubled and puzzled; and she began to speculate (not for the first time) why the Lord had given a person with so little imagination a child like Honora to bring up in the straight and narrow path.

"When I go on Sunday afternoons with Uncle Tom to see Mr. Dwyer's pictures," Honora persisted, "I always feel that he is so glad to have what other people haven't or he wouldn't have any one to show them to."

Aunt Mary shook her head. Once she had given her loyal friendship, such faults as this became as nothing.

"And when" said Honora, "when Mrs. Dwyer has dinner-parties for celebrated people who come here, why does she invite you in to see the table?"

"Out of kindness, Honora. Mrs. Dwyer knows that I enjoy looking at beautiful things."

"Why doesn't she invite you to the dinners?" asked Honora, hotly. "Our family is just as good as Mrs. Dwyer's."

The extent of Aunt Mary's distress was not apparent.

"You are talking nonsense, my child," she said. "All my friends know that I am not a person who can entertain distinguished people, and that I do not go out, and that I haven't the money to buy evening dresses. And even if I had," she added, "I haven't a pretty neck, so it's just as well."

A philosophy distinctly Aunt Mary's.

Uncle Tom, after he had listened without comment that evening to her account of this conversation, was of the opinion that to take Honora to task for her fancies would be waste of breath; that they would right themselves as she grew up.

"I'm afraid it's inheritance, Tom," said Aunt Mary, at last. "And if so, it ought to be counteracted. We've seen other signs of it. You know Honora has little or no idea of the value of money—or of its ownership."

"She sees little enough of it," Uncle Tom remarked with a smile.

"Tom."

"Well."

"Sometimes I think I've done wrong not to dress her more simply. I'm afraid it's given the child a taste for—for self-adornment."

"I once had a fond belief that all women possessed such a taste," said Uncle Tom, with a quizzical look at his own exception. "To tell you the truth, I never classed it as a fault."

"Then I don't see why you married me," said Aunt Mary—a periodical remark of hers. "But, Tom, I do wish her to appear as well as the other children, and (Aunt Mary actually blushed) the child has good looks."

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“Why don’t you go as far as old Catherine, and call her a princess?” he asked.

“Do you want me to ruin her utterly?” exclaimed Aunt Mary.

Uncle Tom put his hands on his wife’s shoulders and looked down into her face, and smiled again. Although she held herself very straight, the top of her head was very little above the level of his chin.

“It strikes me that you are entitled to some little indulgence in life, Mary,” he said.

One of the curious contradictions of Aunt Mary’s character was a never dying interest, which held no taint of envy, in the doings of people more fortunate than herself. In the long summer days, after her silver was cleaned and her housekeeping and marketing finished, she read in the book-club periodicals of royal marriages, embassy balls, of great town and country houses and their owners at home and abroad. And she knew, by means of a correspondence with Cousin Eleanor Hanbury and other intimates, the kind of cottages in which her friends sojourned at the seashore or in the mountains; how many rooms they had, and how many servants, and very often who the servants were; she was likewise informed on the climate, and the ease with which it was possible to obtain fresh vegetables. And to all of this information Uncle Tom would listen, smiling but genuinely interested, while he carved at dinner.

One evening, when Uncle Tom had gone to play piquet with Mr. Isham, who was ill, Honora further surprised her aunt by exclaiming: “How can you talk of things other people have and not want them, Aunt Mary?”

“Why should I desire what I cannot have, my dear? I take such pleasure out of my friends’ possessions as I can.”

“But you want to go to the seashore, I know you do. I’ve heard you say so,” Honora protested.

“I should like to see the open ocean before I die,” admitted Aunt Mary, unexpectedly. “I saw New York harbour once, when we went to meet you. And I know how the salt water smells—which is as much, perhaps, as I have the right to hope for. But I have often thought it would be nice to sit for a whole summer by the sea and listen to the waves dashing upon the beach, like those in the Chase picture in Mr. Dwyer’s gallery.”

Aunt Mary little guessed the unspeakable rebellion aroused in Honora by this acknowledgment of being fatally circumscribed. Wouldn’t Uncle Tom ever be rich?

Aunt Mary shook her head—she saw no prospect of it.

But other men, who were not half so good as Uncle Tom, got rich.

Uncle Tom was not the kind of man who cared for riches. He was content to do his duty in that sphere where God had placed him.

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Poor Aunt Mary. Honora never asked her uncle such questions: to do so never occurred to her. At peace with all men, he gave of his best to children, and Honora remained a child. Next to his flowers, walking was Uncle Tom's chief recreation, and from the time she could be guided by the hand she went with him. His very presence had the gift of dispelling longings, even in the young; the gift of compelling delight in simple things. Of a Sunday afternoon, if the heat were not too great, he would take Honora to the wild park that stretches westward of the city, and something of the depth and intensity of his pleasure in the birds, the forest, and the wild flowers would communicate itself to her. She learned all unconsciously (by suggestion, as it were) to take delight in them; a delight that was to last her lifetime, a never failing resource to which she was to turn again and again. In winter, they went to the botanical gardens or the Zoo. Uncle Tom had a passion for animals, and Mr. Isham, who was a director, gave him a pass through the gates. The keepers knew him, and spoke to him with kindly respect. Nay, it seemed to Honora that the very animals knew him, and offered themselves ingratiatingly to be stroked by one whom they recognized as friend. Jaded horses in the street lifted their noses; stray, homeless cats rubbed against his legs, and vagrant dogs looked up at him trustfully with wagging tails.

Yet his goodness, as Emerson would have said, had some edge to it. Honora had seen the light of anger in his blue eye—a divine ray. Once he had chastised her for telling Aunt Mary a lie (she could not have lied to him) and Honora had never forgotten it. The anger of such a man had indeed some element in it of the divine; terrible, not in volume, but in righteous intensity. And when it had passed there was no occasion for future warning. The memory of it lingered.

CHAPTER III

CONCERNING PROVIDENCE

What quality was it in Honora that compelled Bridget to stop her ironing on Tuesdays in order to make hot waffles for a young woman who was late to breakfast? Bridget, who would have filled the kitchen with righteous wrath if Aunt Mary had transgressed the rules of the house, which were like the laws of the Medes and Persians! And in Honora's early youth Mary Ann, the housemaid, spent more than one painful evening writing home for cockle shells and other articles to propitiate our princess, who rewarded her with a winning smile and a kiss, which invariably melted the honest girl into tears. The Queen of Scots never had a more devoted chamber woman than old Catherine,—who would have gone to the stake with a smile to save her little lady a single childish ill, and who spent her savings, until severely taken to task by Aunt Mary, upon objects for which a casual wish had been expressed. The saints themselves must at times have been weary from hearing Honora's name.

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Not to speak of Christmas! Christmas in the little house was one wild delirium of joy. The night before the festival was, to all outward appearances, an ordinary evening, when Uncle Tom sat by the fire in his slippers, as usual, scouting the idea that there would be any Christmas at all. Aunt Mary sewed, and talked with maddening calmness of the news of the day; but for Honora the air was charged with coming events of the first magnitude. The very furniture of the little sitting-room had a different air, the room itself wore a mysterious aspect, and the cannel-coal fire seemed to give forth a special quality of unearthly light.

"Is to-morrow Christmas?" Uncle Tom would exclaim. Bless me! Honora, I am so glad you reminded me."

"Now, Uncle Tom, you knew it was Christmas all the time!"

"Kiss your uncle good night, Honora, and go right to sleep, dear,"—from Aunt Mary.

The unconscious irony in that command of Aunt Mary's!—to go right to sleep! Many times was a head lifted from a small pillow, straining after the meaning of the squeaky noises that came up from below! Not Santa Claus. Honora's belief in him had merged into a blind faith in a larger and even more benevolent, if material providence: the kind of providence which Mr. Meredith depicts, and which was to say to Beauchamp: "Here's your marquise;" a particular providence which, at the proper time, gave Uncle Tom money, and commanded, with a smile, "Buy this for Honora—she wants it." All-sufficient reason! Soul-satisfying philosophy, to which Honora was to cling for many years of life. It is amazing how much can be wrung from a reluctant world by the mere belief in this kind of providence.

Sleep came at last, in the darkest of the hours. And still in the dark hours a stirring, a delicious sensation preceding reason, and the consciousness of a figure stealing about the room. Honora sat up in bed, shivering with cold and delight.

"Is it awake ye are, darlint, and it but four o'clock the morn!"

"What are you doing, Cathy?"

"Musha, it's to Mass I'm going, to ask the Mother of God to give ye many happy Christmases the like of this, Miss Honora." And Catherine's arms were about her.

"Oh, it's Christmas, Cathy, isn't it? How could I have forgotten it!"

"Now go to sleep, honey. Your aunt and uncle wouldn't like it at all at all if ye was to make noise in the middle of the night—and it's little better it is."

Sleep! A despised waste of time in childhood. Catherine went to Mass, and after an eternity, the grey December light began to sift through the shutters, and human



endurance had reached its limit. Honora, still shivering, seized a fleecy wrapper (the handiwork of Aunt Mary) and crept, a diminutive ghost, down the creaking stairway to the sitting-room. A sitting-room which now was not a sitting-room, but for to-day a place of magic. As though by a prearranged salute of the gods,—at Honora's entrance the fire burst through the thick blanket of fine coal which Uncle Tom had laid before going to bed, and with a little gasp of joy that was almost pain, she paused on the threshold. That one flash, like Pizarro's first sunrise over Peru, gilded the edge of infinite possibilities.

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Needless to enumerate them. The whole world, as we know, was in a conspiracy to spoil Honora. The Dwyers, the Cartwrights, the Haydens, the Brices, the Ishams, and I know not how many others had sent their tributes, and Honora's second cousins, the Hanburys, from the family mansion behind the stately elms of Wayland Square—of which something anon. A miniature mahogany desk, a prayer-book and hymnal which the Dwyers had brought home from New York, endless volumes of a more secular and (to Honora) entrancing nature; roller skates; skates for real ice, when it should appear in the form of sleet on the sidewalks; a sled; humbler gifts from Bridget, Mary Ann, and Catherine, and a wonderful coat, with hat to match, of a certain dark green velvet. When Aunt Mary appeared, an hour or so later, Honora was surveying her magnificence in the glass.

"Oh, Aunt Mary!" she cried, with her arms tightly locked around her aunt's neck, "how lovely! Did you send all the way to New York for it?"

"No, Honora," said her aunt, "it didn't come from New York." Aunt Mary did not explain that this coat had been her one engrossing occupation for six weeks, at such times when Honora was out or tucked away safely in bed.

Perhaps Honora's face fell a little. Aunt Mary scanned it rather anxiously.

"Does that cause you to like it any less, Honora?" she asked.

"Aunt Mary!" exclaimed Honora, in a tone of reproof. And added after a little, "I suppose Mademoiselle made it."

"Does it make any difference who made it, Honora?"

"Oh, no indeed, Aunt Mary. May I wear it to Cousin Eleanor's to-day?"

"I gave it to you to wear, Honora."

Not in Honora's memory was there a Christmas breakfast during which Peter Erwin did not appear, bringing gifts. Peter Erwin, of whom we caught a glimpse doing an errand for Uncle Tom in the bank. With the complacency of the sun Honora was wont to regard this most constant of her satellites. Her awakening powers of observation had discovered him in bondage, and in bondage he had been ever since: for their acquaintance had begun on the first Sunday afternoon after Honora's arrival in St. Louis at the age of eighteen months. It will be remembered that Honora was even then a coquette, and as she sat in her new baby-carriage under the pear tree, flirted outrageously with Peter, who stood on one foot from embarrassment.

"Why, Peter," Uncle Tom had said slyly, "why don't you kiss her?"

That kiss had been Peter's seal of service. And he became, on Sunday afternoons, a sort of understudy for Catherine. He took an amazing delight in wheeling Honora up and down the yard, and up and down the sidewalk. Brunhilde or Queen Elizabeth never wielded a power more absolute, nor had an adorer more satisfactory; and of all his remarkable talents, none were more conspicuous than his abilities to tell a story and to choose a present. Emancipated from the perambulator, Honora would watch for him at the window, and toddle to the gate to meet him, a gentleman-in-waiting whose zeal, however arduous, never flagged.

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On this particular Christmas morning, when she heard the gate slam, Honora sprang up from the table to don her green velvet coat. Poor Peter! As though his subjugation could be more complete!

"It's the postman," suggested Uncle Tom, wickedly.

"It's Peter!" cried Honora, triumphantly, from the hall as she flunk open the door, letting in a breath of cold Christmas air out of the sunlight.

It was Peter, but a Peter who has changed some since perambulator days, —just as Honora has changed some. A Peter who, instead of fourteen, is six and twenty; a full-fledged lawyer, in the office of that most celebrated of St. Louis practitioners, Judge Stephen Brice. For the Peter Erwins of this world are queer creatures, and move rapidly without appearing to the Honoras to move at all. A great many things have happened to Peter since he had been a messenger boy in the bank.

Needless to say, Uncle Tom had taken an interest in him. And, according to Peter, this fact accounted for all the good fortune which had followed. Shortly before the news came of his brother's death, Uncle Tom had discovered that the boy who did his errands so willingly was going to night school, and was the grandson of a gentleman who had fought with credit in the Mexican War, and died in misfortune: the grandmother was Peter's only living relative. Through Uncle Tom, Mr. Isham became interested, and Judge Brice. There was a certain scholarship in the Washington University which Peter obtained, and he worked his way through the law school afterwards.

A simple story, of which many a duplicate could be found in this country of ours. In the course of the dozen years or so of its unravelling the grandmother had died, and Peter had become, to all intents and purposes, a member of Uncle Tom's family. A place was set for him at Sunday dinner; and, if he did not appear, at Sunday tea. Sometimes at both. And here he was, as usual, on Christmas morning, his arms so full that he had had to push open the gate with his foot.

"Well, well, well, well!" he said, stopping short on the doorstep and surveying our velvet-clad princess, "I've come to the wrong house."

The princess stuck her finger into her cheek.

"Don't be silly, Peter!" she said; and Merry Christmas!"

"Merry Christmas!" he replied, edging sidewise in at the door and depositing his parcels on the mahogany horsehair sofa. He chose one, and seized the princess—velvet coat and all!—in his arms and kissed her. When he released her, there remained in her hand a morocco-bound diary, marked with her monogram, and destined to contain high matters.

“How could you know what I wanted, Peter?” she exclaimed, after she had divested it of the tissue paper, holly, and red ribbon in which he had so carefully wrapped it. For it is a royal trait to thank with the same graciousness and warmth the donors of the humblest and the greatest offerings.

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There was a paper-knife for Uncle Tom, and a workbasket for Aunt Mary, and a dress apiece for Catherine, Bridget, and Mary Ann, none of whom Peter ever forgot. Although the smoke was even at that period beginning to creep westward, the sun poured through the lace curtains into the little dining-room and danced on the silver coffeepot as Aunt Mary poured out Peter's cup, and the blue china breakfast plates were bluer than ever because it was Christmas. The humblest of familiar articles took on the air of a present. And after breakfast, while Aunt Mary occupied herself with that immemorial institution,—which was to lure hitherwards so many prominent citizens of St. Louis during the day,—eggnogg, Peter surveyed the offerings which transformed the sitting-room. The table had been pushed back against the bookcases, the chairs knew not their time-honoured places, and white paper and red ribbon littered the floor. Uncle Tom, relegated to a corner, pretended to read his newspaper, while Honora flitted from Peter's knees to his, or sat cross-legged on the hearth-rug investigating a bottomless stocking.

"What in the world are we going to do with all these things?" said Peter.

"We?" cried Honora.

"When we get married, I mean," said Peter, smiling at Uncle Tom. "Let's see!" and he began counting on his fingers, which were long but very strong—so strong that Honora could never loosen even one of them when they gripped her. "One—two—three—eight Christmases before you are twenty-one. We'll have enough things to set us up in housekeeping. Or perhaps you'd rather get married when you are eighteen?"

"I've always told you I wasn't going to marry you, Peter," said Honora, with decision.

"Why by not?" He always asked that question.

Honora sighed.

"I'll make a good husband," said Peter; "I'll promise. Ugly men are always good husbands."

"I didn't say you were ugly," declared the ever considerate Honora.

"Only my nose is too big," he quoted; "and I am too long one way and not wide enough."

"You have a certain air of distinction in spite of it," said Honora.

Uncle Tom's newspaper began to shake, and he read more industriously than ever.

"You've been reading—novels!" said Peter, in a terrible judicial voice.

Honora flushed guiltily, and resumed her inspection of the stocking. Miss Rossiter, a maiden lady of somewhat romantic tendencies, was librarian of the Book Club that year. And as a result a book called "Harold's Quest," by an author who shall be nameless, had come to the house. And it was Harold who had had "a certain air of distinction."

"It isn't very kind of you to make fun of me when I pay you a compliment," replied Honora, with dignity.

"I was naturally put out," he declared gravely, "because you said you wouldn't marry me. But I don't intend to give up. No man who is worth his salt ever gives up."

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"You are old enough to get married now," said Honora, still considerate.

"But I am not rich enough," said Peter; "and besides, I want you."

One of the first entries in the morocco diary—which had a lock and key to it—was a description of Honora's future husband. We cannot violate the lock, nor steal the key from under her pillow. But this much, alas, may be said with discretion, that he bore no resemblance to Peter Erwin. It may be guessed, however, that he contained something of Harold, and more of Randolph Leffingwell; and that he did not live in St. Louis.

An event of Christmas, after church, was the dinner of which Uncle Tom and Aunt Mary and Honora partook with Cousin Eleanor Hanbury, who had been a Leffingwell, and was a first cousin of Honora's father. Honora loved the atmosphere of the massive, yellow stone house in Wayland Square, with its tall polished mahogany doors and thick carpets, with its deferential darky servants, some of whom had been the slaves of her great uncle. To Honora, gifted with imagination, the house had an odour all its own; a rich, clean odour significant, in later life, of wealth and luxury and spotless housekeeping. And she knew it from top to bottom. The spacious upper floor, which in ordinary dwellings would have been an attic, was the realm of young George and his sisters, Edith and Mary (Aunt Mary's namesake). Rainy Saturdays, all too brief, Honora had passed there, when the big dolls' house in the playroom became the scene of domestic dramas which Edith rehearsed after she went to bed, although Mary took them more calmly. In his tenderer years, Honora even fired George, and riots occurred which took the combined efforts of Cousin Eleanor and Mammy Lucy to quell. It may be remarked, in passing, that Cousin Eleanor looked with suspicion upon this imaginative gift of Honora's, and had several serious conversations with Aunt Mary on the subject.

It was true, in a measure, that Honora quickened to life everything she touched, and her arrival in Wayland Square was invariably greeted with shouts of joy. There was no doll on which she had not bestowed a history, and by dint of her insistence their pasts clung to them with all the reality of a fate not by any means to be lived down. If George rode the huge rocking-horse, he was Paul Revere, or some equally historic figure, and sometimes, to Edith's terror, he was compelled to assume the role of Bluebeard, when Honora submitted to decapitation with a fortitude amounting to stoicism. Hide and seek was altogether too tame for her, a stake of life and death, or imprisonment or treasure, being a necessity. And many times was Edith extracted from the recesses of the cellar in a condition bordering on hysterics, the day ending tamely with a Bible story or a selection from "Little Women" read by Cousin Eleanor.

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In autumn, and again in spring and early summer before the annual departure of the Hanbury family for the sea, the pleasant yard with its wide shade trees and its shrubbery was a land of enchantment threatened by a genie. Black Bias, the family coachman, polishing the fat carriage horses in the stable yard, was the genie; and George the intrepid knight who, spurred by Honora, would dash in and pinch Bias in a part of his anatomy which the honest darky had never seen. An ideal genie, for he could assume an astonishing fierceness at will.

"I'll git you yit, Marse George!"

Had it not been for Honora, her cousins would have found the paradise in which they lived a commonplace spot, and indeed they never could realize its tremendous possibilities in her absence. What would the Mediterranean Sea and its adjoining countries be to us unless the wanderings of Ulysses and Aeneas had made them real? And what would Cousin Eleanor's yard have been without Honora? Whatever there was of romance and folklore in Uncle Tom's library Honora had extracted at an early age, and with astonishing ease had avoided that which was dry and uninteresting. The result was a nomenclature for Aunt Eleanor's yard, in which there was even a terra incognita wherefrom venturesome travellers never returned, but were transformed into wild beasts or monkeys.

Although they acknowledged her leadership, Edith and Mary were sorry for Honora, for they knew that if her father had lived she would have had a house and garden like theirs, only larger, and beside a blue sea where it was warm always. Honora had told them so, and colour was lent to her assertions by the fact that their mother, when they repeated this to her, only smiled sadly, and brushed her eyes with her handkerchief. She was even more beautiful when she did so, Edith told her,—a remark which caused Mrs. Hanbury to scan her younger daughter closely; it smacked of Honora.

"Was Cousin Randolph handsome?" Edith demanded. Mrs. Hanbury started, so vividly there arose before her eyes a brave and dashing figure, clad in grey English cloth, walking by her side on a sunny autumn morning in the Rue de la Paix. Well she remembered that trip abroad with her mother, Randolph's aunt, and how attentive he was, and showed them the best restaurants in which to dine. He had only been in France a short time, but his knowledge of restaurants and the world in general had been amazing, and his acquaintances legion. He had a way, which there was no resisting, of taking people by storm.

"Yes, dear," answered Mrs. Hanbury, absently, when the child repeated the question, "he was very handsome."

"Honora says he would have been President," put in George. "Of course I don't believe it. She said they lived in a palace by the sea in the south of France, with gardens and fountains and a lot of things like that, and princesses and princes and eunuchs—"

“And what!” exclaimed Mrs. Hanbury, aghast.

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"I know," said George, contemptuously, "she got that out of the Arabian Nights." But this suspicion did not prevent him, the next time Honora regaled them with more adventures of the palace by the summer seas, from listening with a rapt attention. No two tales were ever alike. His admiration for Honora did not wane, but increased. It differed from that of his sisters, however, in being a tribute to her creative faculties, while Edith's breathless faith pictured her cousin as having passed through as many adventures as Queen Esther. George paid her a characteristic compliment, but chivalrously drew her aside to bestow it. He was not one to mince matters.

"You're a wonder, Honora," he said. "If I could lie like that, I wouldn't want a pony."

He was forced to draw back a little from the heat of the conflagration he had kindled.

"George Hanbury," she cried, "don't you ever speak to me again! Never! Do you understand?"

It was thus that George, at some cost, had made a considerable discovery which, for the moment, shook even his scepticism. Honora believed it all herself.

Cousin Eleanor Hanbury was a person, or personage, who took a deep and abiding interest in her fellow-beings, and the old clothes of the Hanbury family went unerringly to the needy whose figures most resembled those of the original owners. For Mrs. Hanbury had a wide but comparatively unknown charity list. She was, secretly, one of the many providence which Honora accepted collectively, although it is by no means certain whether Honora, at this period, would have thanked her cousin for tuition at Miss Farmer's school, and for her daily tasks at French and music concerning which Aunt Mary was so particular. On the memorable Christmas morning when, arrayed in green velvet, she arrived with her aunt and uncle for dinner in Wayland Square, Cousin Eleanor drew Aunt Mary into her bedroom and shut the door, and handed her a sealed envelope. Without opening it, but guessing with much accuracy its contents, Aunt Mary handed it back.

"You are doing too much, Eleanor," she said.

Mrs. Hanbury was likewise a direct person.

"I will, take it back on one condition, Mary. If you will tell me that Tom has finished paying Randolph's debts."

Mrs. Leffingwell was silent.

"I thought not," said Mrs. Hanbury. "Now Randolph was my own cousin, and I insist."

Aunt Mary turned over the envelope, and there followed a few moments' silence, broken only by the distant clamour of tin horns and other musical instruments of the season.

"I sometimes think, Mary, that Honora is a little like Randolph, and-Mrs. Randolph. Of course, I did not know her."

"Neither did I," said Aunt Mary.

"Mary," said Mrs. Hanbury, again, "I realize how you worked to make the child that velvet coat. Do you think you ought to dress her that way?"

"I don't see why she shouldn't be as well dressed as the children of my friends, Eleanor."

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Mrs. Hanbury laid her hand impulsively on Aunt Mary's.

"No child I know of dresses half as well," said Mrs. Hanbury. "The trouble you take—"

"Is rewarded," said Aunt Mary.

"Yes," Mrs. Hanbury agreed. "If my own daughters were half as good looking, I should be content. And Honora has an air of race. Oh, Mary, can't you see? I am only thinking of the child's future."

"Do you expect me to take down all my mirrors, Eleanor? If she has good looks," said Aunt Mary, "she has not learned it from my lips."

It was true: Even Aunt Mary's enemies, and she had some, could not accuse her of the weakness of flattery. So Mrs. Hanbury smiled, and dropped the subject.

CHAPTER IV

OF TEMPERAMENT

We have the word of Mr. Cyrus Meeker that Honora did not have to learn to dance. The art came to her naturally. Of Mr. Cyrus Meeker, whose mustaches, at the age of five and sixty, are waxed as tight as ever, and whose little legs to-day are as nimble as of yore. He has a memory like Mr. Gladstone's, and can give you a social history of the city that is well worth your time and attention. He will tell you how, for instance, he was kicked by the august feet of Mr. George Hanbury on the occasion of his first lesson to that distinguished young gentleman; and how, although Mr. Meeker's shins were sore, he pleaded nobly for Mr. George, who was sent home in the carriage by himself,—a punishment, by the way, which Mr. George desired above all things.

This celebrated incident occurred in the new ballroom at the top of the new house of young Mrs. Hayden, where the meetings of the dancing class were held weekly. Today the soot, like the ashes of Vesuvius, spouting from ten thousand soft-coal craters, has buried that house and the whole district fathoms deep in social obscurity. And beautiful Mrs. Hayden what has become of her? And Lucy Hayden, that doll-like darling of the gods?

All this belongs, however, to another history, which may some day be written. This one is Honora's, and must be got on with, for it is to be a chronicle of lightning changes. Happy we if we can follow Honora, and we must be prepared to make many friends and drop them in the process.

Shortly after Mrs. Hayden had built that palatial house (which had a high fence around its grounds and a driveway leading to a porte-cochere) and had given her initial ball, the

dancing class began. It was on a blue afternoon in late November that Aunt Mary and Honora, with Cousin Eleanor and the two girls, and George sulking in a corner of the carriage, were driven through the gates behind Bias and the fat horses of the Hanburys.

Honora has a vivid remembrance of the impression the house made on her, with its polished floors and spacious rooms filled with a new and mysterious and altogether inspiring fashion of things. Mrs. Hayden represented the outposts in the days of Richardson and Davenport—had Honora but known it. This great house was all so different from anything she (and many others in the city) had ever seen. And she stood gazing into the drawing room, with its curtains and decorously drawn shades, in a rapture which her aunt and cousins were far from guessing.

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“Come, Honora,” said her aunt. “What’s the matter, dear?”

How could she explain to Aunt Mary that the sight of beautiful things gave her a sort of pain—when she did not yet know it herself? There was the massive stairway, for instance, which they ascended, softly lighted by a great leaded window of stained glass on the first landing; and the spacious bedrooms with their shining brass beds and lace spreads (another innovation which Honora resolved to adopt when she married); and at last, far above all, its deep-set windows looking out above the trees towards the park a mile to the westward, the ballroom,—the ballroom, with its mirrors and high chandeliers, and chairs of gilt and blue set against the walls, all of which made no impression whatever upon George and Mary and Edith, but gave Honora a thrill. No wonder that she learned to dance quickly under such an inspiration!

And how pretty Mrs. Hayden looked as she came forward to greet them and kissed Honora! She had been Virginia Grey, and scarce had had a gown to her back when she had married the elderly Duncan Hayden, who had built her this house and presented her with a checkbook,—a check-book which Virginia believed to be like the widow’s cruse of oil-unfailing. Alas, those days of picnics and balls; of dinners at that recent innovation, the club; of theatre-parties and excursions to baseball games between the young men in Mrs. Hayden’s train (and all young men were) who played at Harvard or Yale or Princeton; those days were too care-free to have endured.

“Aunt Mary,” asked Honora, when they were home again in the lamplight of the little sitting-room, “why was it that Mr. Meeker was so polite to Cousin Eleanor, and asked her about my dancing instead of you?”

Aunt Mary smiled.

“Because, Honora,” she said, “because I am a person of no importance in Mr. Meeker’s eyes.”

“If I were a man,” cried Honora, fiercely, “I should never rest until I had made enough money to make Mr. Meeker wriggle.”

“Honora, come here,” said her aunt, gazing in troubled surprise at the tense little figure by the mantel. “I don’t know what could have put such things into your head, my child. Money isn’t everything. In times of real trouble it cannot save one.”

“But it can save one from humiliation!” exclaimed Honora, unexpectedly. Another sign of a peculiar precociousness, at fourteen, with which Aunt Mary was finding herself unable to cope. “I would rather be killed than humiliated by Mr. Meeker.”

Whereupon she flew out of the room and upstairs, where old Catherine, in dismay, found her sobbing a little later.

Poor Aunt Mary! Few people guessed the spirit which was bound up in her, aching to extend its sympathy and not knowing how, save by an unswerving and undemonstrative devotion. Her words of comfort were as few as her silent deeds were many.

But Honora continued to go to the dancing class, where she treated Mr. Meeker with a hauteur that astonished him, amused Virginia Hayden, and perplexed Cousin Eleanor. Mr. Meeker's cringing soul responded, and in a month Honora was the leading spirit of the class, led the marches, and was pointed out by the little dancing master as all that a lady should be in deportment and bearing.

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This treatment, which succeeded so well in Mr. Meeker's case, Honora had previously applied to others of his sex. Like most people with a future, she began young. Of late, for instance, Mr. George Hanbury had shown a tendency to regard her as his personal property; for George had a high-handed way with him,—boys being an enigma to his mother. Even in those days he had a bullet head and a red face and square shoulders, and was rather undersized for his age—which was Honora's.

Needless to say, George did not approve of the dancing class; and let it be known, both by words and deeds, that he was there under protest. Nor did he regard with favour Honora's triumphal progress, but sat in a corner with several congenial spirits whose feelings ranged from scorn to despair, commenting in loud whispers upon those of his sex to whom the terpsichorean art came more naturally. Upon one Algernon Cartwright, for example, whose striking likeness to the Van Dyck portrait of a young king had been more than once commented upon by his elders, and whose velveteen suits enhanced the resemblance. Algernon, by the way, was the favourite male pupil of Mr. Meeker; and, on occasions, Algernon and Honora were called upon to give exhibitions for the others, the sight of which filled George with contemptuous rage. Algernon danced altogether too much with Honora,—so George informed his cousin.

The simple result of George's protests was to make Honora dance with Algernon the more, evincing, even at this period of her career, a commendable determination to resent dictation. George should have lived in the Middle Ages, when the spirit of modern American womanhood was as yet unborn. Once he contrived, by main force, to drag her out into the hall.

"George," she said, "perhaps, if you'd let me alone perhaps I'd like you better."

"Perhaps," he retorted fiercely, "if you wouldn't make a fool of yourself with those mother's darlings, I'd like you better."

"George," said Honora, "learn to dance."

"Never!" he cried, but she was gone. While hovering around the door he heard Mrs. Hayden's voice.

"Unless I am tremendously mistaken, my dear," that lady was remarking to Mrs. Dwyer, whose daughter Emily's future millions were powerless to compel youths of fourteen to dance with her, although she is now happily married, "unless I am mistaken, Honora will have a career. The child will be a raving beauty. And she has to perfection the art of managing men."

"As her father had the art of managing women," said Mrs. Dwyer. "Dear me, how well I remember Randolph! I would have followed him to—to Cheyenne."

Mrs. Hayden laughed. "He never would have gone to Cheyenne, I imagine," she said.

"He never looked at me, and I have reason to be profoundly thankful for it," said Mrs. Dwyer.

Virginia Hayden bit her lip. She remembered a saying of Mrs. Brice, "Blessed are the ugly, for they shall not be tempted."

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"They say that poor Tom Leffingwell has not yet finished paying his debts," continued Mrs. Dwyer, "although his uncle, Eleanor Hanbury's father, cancelled what Randolph had had from him in his will. It was twenty-five thousand dollars. James Hanbury, you remember, had him appointed consul at Nice. Randolph Leffingwell gave the impression of conferring a favour when he borrowed money. I cannot understand why he married that penniless and empty-headed beauty."

"Perhaps," said Mrs. Hayden, "it was because of his ability to borrow money that he felt he could afford to."

The eyes of the two ladies unconsciously followed Honora about the room.

"I never knew a better or a more honest woman than Mary Leffingwell, but I tremble for her. She is utterly incapable of managing that child. If Honora is a complicated mechanism now, what will she be at twenty? She has elements in her which poor Mary never dreamed of. I overheard her with Emily, and she talks like a grown-up person."

Mrs. Hayden's dimples deepened.

"Better than some grown-up women," she said. "She sat in my room while I dressed the other afternoon. Mrs. Leffingwell had sent her with a note about that French governess. And, by the way, she speaks French as though she had lived in Paris."

Little Mrs. Dwyer raised her hands in protest.

"It doesn't seem natural, somehow. It doesn't seem exactly—moral, my dear."

"Nonsense," said Mrs. Hayden. "Mrs. Leffingwell is only giving the child the advantages which her companions have—Emily has French, hasn't she?"

"But Emily can't speak it—that way," said Mrs. Dwyer. "I don't blame Mary Leffingwell. She thinks she is doing her duty, but it has always seemed to me that Honora was one of those children who would better have been brought up on bread and butter and jam."

"Honora would only have eaten the jam," said Mrs. Hayden. "But I love her."

"I, too, am fond of the child, but I tremble for her. I am afraid she has that terrible thing which is called temperament."

George Hanbury made a second heroic rush, and dragged Honora out once more.

"What is this disease you've got?" he demanded.

"Disease?" she cried; "I haven't any disease."

“Mrs Dwyer says you have temperament, and that it is a terrible thing.”

Honora stopped him in a corner.

“Because people like Mrs. Dwyer haven’t got it,” she declared, with a warmth which George found inexplicable.

“What is it?” he demanded.

“You’ll never know, either, George,” she answered; “it’s soul.”

“Soul!” he repeated; “I have one, and its immortal,” he added promptly.

In the summer, that season of desolation for Honora, when George Hanbury and Algernon Cartwright and other young gentlemen were at the seashore learning to sail boats and to play tennis, Peter Erwin came to his own. Nearly every evening after dinner, while the light was still lingering under the shade trees of the street, and Aunt Mary still placidly sewing in the wicker chair on the lawn, and Uncle Tom making the tour of flowers with his watering pot, the gate would slam, and Peter’s tall form appear.

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It never occurred to Honora that had it not been for Peter those evenings would have been even less bearable than they were. To sit indoors with a light and read in a St. Louis midsummer was not to be thought of. Peter played backgammon with her on the front steps, and later on—chess. Sometimes they went for a walk as far as Grand Avenue. And sometimes when Honora grew older—she was permitted to go with him to Uhrig's Cave. Those were memorable occasions indeed!

What Saint Louisan of the last generation does not remember Uhrig's Cave? nor look without regret upon the thing which has replaced it, called a Coliseum? The very name, Uhrig's Cave, sent a shiver of delight down one's spine, and many were the conjectures one made as to what might be enclosed in that half a block of impassible brick wall, over which the great trees stretched their branches. Honora, from comparative infancy, had her own theory, which so possessed the mind of Edith Hanbury that she would not look at the wall when they passed in the carriage. It was a still and sombre place by day; and sometimes, if you listened, you could hear the whisperings of the forty thieves on the other side of the wall. But no one had ever dared to cry "Open, Sesame!" at the great wooden gates.

At night, in the warm season, when well brought up children were at home or at the seashore, strange things were said to happen at Uhrig's Cave.

Honora was a tall slip of a girl of sixteen before it was given her to know these mysteries, and the Ali Baba theory a thing of the past. Other theories had replaced it. Nevertheless she clung tightly to Peter's arm as they walked down Locust Street and came in sight of the wall. Above it, and under the big trees, shone a thousand glittering lights: there was a crowd at the gate, and instead of saying, "Open, Sesame," Peter slipped two bright fifty-cent pieces to the red-faced German ticketman, and in they went.

First and most astounding of disillusions of passing childhood, it was not a cave at all! And yet the word "disillusion" does not apply. It was, after all, the most enchanting and exciting of spots, to make one's eye shine and one's heart beat. Under the trees were hundreds of tables surrounded by hovering ministering angels in white, and if you were German, they brought you beer; if American, ice-cream. Beyond the tables was a stage, with footlights already set and orchestra tuning up, and a curtain on which was represented a gentleman making decorous love to a lady beside a fountain. As in a dream, Honora followed Peter to a table, and he handed her a programme.

"Oh, Peter," she cried, "it's going to be 'Pinafore'!"

Honora's eyes shone like stars, and elderly people at the neighbouring tables turned more than once to smile at her that evening. And Peter turned more than once and smiled too. But Honora did not consider Peter. He was merely Providence in one of many disguises, and Providence is accepted by his beneficiaries as a matter of fact.

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The rapture of a young lady of temperament is a difficult thing to picture. The bird may feel it as he soars, on a bright August morning, high above amber cliffs jutting out into indigo seas; the novelist may feel it when the four walls of his room magically disappear and the profound secrets of the universe are on the point of revealing themselves. Honora gazed, and listened, and lost herself. She was no longer in Uhrig's Cave, but in the great world, her soul a-quiver with harmonies.

"Pinafore," although a comic opera, held something tragic for Honora, and opened the flood-gates to dizzy sensations which she did not understand. How little Peter, who drummed on the table to the tune of:

"Give three cheers and one cheer more
For the hearty captain of the Pinafore,"

imagined what was going on beside him! There were two factors in his pleasure; he liked the music, and he enjoyed the delight of Honora.

What is Peter? Let us cease looking at him through Honora's eyes and taking him like daily bread, to be eaten and not thought about. From one point of view, he is twenty-nine and elderly, with a sense of humour unsuspected by young persons of temperament. Strive as we will, we have only been able to see him in his role of Providence, or of the piper. Has he no existence, no purpose in life outside of that perpetual gentleman in waiting? If so, Honora has never considered it.

After the finale had been sung and the curtain dropped for the last time, Honora sighed and walked out of the garden as one in a trance. Once in a while, as he found a way for them through the crowd, Peter glanced down at her, and something like a smile tugged at the corners of a decidedly masculine mouth, and lit up his eyes. Suddenly, at Locust Street, under the lamp, she stopped and surveyed him. She saw a very real, very human individual, clad in a dark nondescript suit of clothes which had been bought ready-made, and plainly without the bestowal of much thought, on Fifth Street. The fact that they were a comparative fit was in itself a tribute to the enterprise of the Excelsior Clothing Company, for Honora's observation that he was too long one way had been just. He was too tall, his shoulders were too high, his nose too prominent, his eyes too deep-set; and he wore a straw hat with the brim turned up.

To Honora his appearance was as familiar as the picture of the Pope which had always stood on Catherine's bureau. But to-night, by grace of some added power of vision, she saw him with new and critical eyes. She was surprised to discover that he was possessed of a quality with which she had never associated him—youth. Not to put it too strongly—comparative youth.

"Peter," she demanded, "why do you dress like that?"

“Like what?” he said.

Honora seized the lapel of his coat.

“Like that,” she repeated. “Do you know, if you wore different clothes, you might almost be distinguished looking. Don’t laugh. I think it’s horrid of you always to laugh when I tell you things for your own good.”

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"It was the idea of being almost distinguished looking that—that gave me a shock," he assured her repentantly.

"You should dress on a different principle," she insisted.

Peter appeared dazed.

"I couldn't do that," he said.

"Why not?"

"Because—because I don't dress on any principle now."

"Yes, you do," said Honora, firmly. "You dress on the principle of the wild beasts and fishes. It's all in our natural history at Miss Farmer's. The crab is the colour of the seaweed, and the deer of the thicket. It's a device of nature for the protection of weak things."

Peter drew himself up proudly.

"I have always understood, Miss Leffingwell, that the king of beasts was somewhere near the shade of the jungle."

Honora laughed in spite of this apparent refutation of her theory of his apparel, and shook her head.

"Do be serious, Peter. You'd make much more of an impression on people if you wore clothes that had—well, a little more distinction."

"What's the use of making an impression if you can't follow it up?" he said.

"You can," she declared. "I never thought of it until to-night, but you must have a great deal in you to have risen all the way from an errand boy in the bank to a lawyer."

"Look out!" he cautioned her; "I shall become insupportably conceited."

"A little more conceit wouldn't hurt you," said Honora, critically. "You'll forgive me, Peter, if I tell you from time to time what I think. It's for your own good."

"I try to realize that," replied Peter, humbly. "How do you wish me to dress—like Mr. Rossiter?"

The picture evoked of Peter arrayed like Mr. Harland Rossiter, who had sent flowers to two generations and was preparing to send more to a third, was irresistible. Every city,

hamlet, and village has its Harland Rossiter. He need not be explained. But Honora soon became grave again.

"No, but you ought to dress as though you were somebody, and different from the ordinary man on the street."

"But I'm not," objected Peter.

"Oh," cried Honora, "don't you want to be? I can't understand any man not wanting to be. If I were a man, I wouldn't stay here a day longer than I had to."

Peter was silent as they went in at the gate and opened the door, for on this festive occasion they were provided with a latchkey. He turned up the light in the hall to behold a transformation quite as wonderful as any contained in the "Arabian Nights" or Keightley's "Fairy Mythology." This was not the Honora with whom he had left the house scarce three hours before! The cambric dress, to be sure, was still no longer than the tops of her ankles and the hair still hung in a heavy braid down her back. These were positively all that remained of the original Honora, and the change had occurred in the incredibly brief space required for the production of the opera "Pinafore." This Honora was a woman in a strange and disturbing state of exaltation, whose eyes beheld a vision. And Peter, although he had been the subject of her conversation, well knew that he was not included in the vision. He smiled a little as he looked at her. It is becoming apparent that he is one of those unfortunate unimaginative beings incapable of great illusions.

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"You're not going!" she exclaimed.

He glanced significantly at the hall clock.

"Why, it's long after bedtime, Honora."

"I don't want to go to bed. I feel like talking," she declared. "Come, let's sit on the steps awhile. If you go home, I shan't go to sleep for hours, Peter."

"And what would Aunt Mary say to me?" he inquired.

"Oh, she wouldn't care. She wouldn't even know it."

He shook his head, still smiling.

"I'd never be allowed to take you to Uhrig's Cave, or anywhere else, again," he replied. "I'll come to-morrow evening, and you can talk to me then."

"I shan't feel like it then," she said in a tone that implied his opportunity was now or never. But seeing him still obdurate, with startling suddenness she flung her arms round his neck—a method which at times had succeeded marvellously—and pleaded coaxingly: "Only a quarter of an hour, Peter. I've got so many things to say, and I know I shall forget them by to-morrow."

It was a night of wonders. To her astonishment the hitherto pliant Peter, who only existed in order to do her will, became transformed into a brusque masculine creature which she did not recognize. With a movement that was almost rough he released himself and fled, calling back a "good night" to her out of the darkness. He did not even wait to assist her in the process of locking up. Honora, profoundly puzzled, stood for a while in the doorway gazing out into the night. When at length she turned, she had forgotten him entirely.

It was true that she did not sleep for hours, and on awaking the next morning another phenomenon awaited her. The "little house under the hill" was immeasurably shrunken. Poor Aunt Mary, who did not understand that a performance of "Pinafore" could give birth to the unfulfilled longings which result in the creation of high things, spoke to Uncle Tom a week later concerning an astonishing and apparently abnormal access of industry.

"She's been reading all day long, Tom, or else shut up in her room, where Catherine tells me she is writing. I'm afraid Eleanor Hanbury is right when she says I don't understand the child. And yet she is the same to me as though she were my own."

It was true that Honora was writing, and that the door was shut, and that she did not feel the heat. In one of the bookcases she had chanced upon that immortal biography of Dr.

Johnson, and upon the letters of another prodigy of her own sex, Madame d'Arblay, whose romantic debut as an authoress was inspiration in itself. Honora actually quivered when she read of Dr. Johnson's first conversation with Miss Burney. To write a book of the existence of which even one's own family did not know, to publish it under a nom de plume, and to awake one day to fetes and fame would be indeed to live!

Unfortunately Honora's novel no longer exists, or the world might have discovered a second Evelina. A regard for truth compels the statement that it was never finished. But what rapture while the fever lasted! Merely to take up the pen was to pass magically through marble portals into the great world itself.

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The Sir Charles Grandison of this novel was, needless to say, not Peter Erwin. He was none other than Mr. Randolph Leffingwell, under a very thin disguise.

CHAPTER V

IN WHICH PROVIDENCE BEEPS FAITH

Two more years have gone by, limping in the summer and flying in the winter, two more years of conquests. For our heroine appears to be one of the daughters of Helen, born to make trouble for warriors and others—and even for innocent bystanders like Peter Erwin. Peter was debarred from entering those brilliant lists in which apparel played so great a part. George Hanbury, Guy Rossiter, Algernon Cartwright, Eliphalet Hopper Dwyer—familiarily known as “Hoppy”—and other young gentlemen whose names are now but memories, each had his brief day of triumph. Arrayed like Solomon in wonderful clothes from the mysterious and luxurious East, they returned at Christmas-tide and Easter from college to break lances over Honora. Let us say it boldly—she was like that: she had the world-old knack of sowing discord and despair in the souls of young men. She was—as those who had known that fascinating gentleman were not slow to remark—Randolph Leffingwell over again.

During the festival seasons, Uncle Tom averred, they wore out the latch on the front gate. If their families possessed horses to spare, they took Honora driving in Forest Park; they escorted her to those anomalous dances peculiar to their innocent age, which are neither children's parties nor full-fledged balls; their presents, while of no intrinsic value—as one young gentleman said in a presentation speech—had an enormous, if shy, significance.

“What a beautiful ring you are wearing, Honora,” Uncle Tom remarked slyly one April morning at breakfast; “let me see it.”

Honora blushed, and hid her hand under the table-cloth.

And the ring—suffice it to say that her little finger was exactly insertable in a ten-cent piece from which everything had been removed but the milling: removed with infinite loving patience by Mr. Rossiter, and at the expense of much history and philosophy and other less important things, in his college bedroom at New Haven. Honora wore it for a whole week; a triumph indeed for Mr. Rossiter; when it was placed in a box in Honora's bedroom, which contained other gifts—not all from him—and many letters, in the writing of which learning had likewise suffered. The immediate cause of the putting away of this ring was said to be the renowned Clinton Howe, who was on the Harvard football eleven, and who visited Mr. George Hanbury that Easter. Fortunate indeed the tailor who was called upon to practise his art on an Adonis like Mr. Howe, and it was

remarked that he scarcely left Honora's side at the garden party and dance which Mrs. Dwyer gave in honour of the returning heroes, on the Monday of Easter week.

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This festival, on which we should like to linger, but cannot, took place at the new Dwyer residence. For six months the Victorian mansion opposite Uncle Tom's house had been sightless, with blue blinds drawn down inside the plate glass windows. And the yellow stone itself was not so yellow as it once had been, but had now the appearance of soiled manilla wrapping paper, with black streaks here and there where the soot had run. The new Dwyer house was of grey stone, Georgian and palatial, with a picture-gallery twice the size of the old one; a magnificent and fitting pioneer in a new city of palaces.

Westward the star of Empire—away from the smoke. The Dwyer mansion, with its lawns and gardens and heavily balustraded terrace, faced the park that stretched away like a private estate to the south and west. That same park with its huge trees and black forests that was Ultima Thule in Honora's childhood; in the open places there had been real farms and hayricks which she used to slide down with Peter while Uncle Tom looked for wild flowers in the fields. It had been separated from the city in those days by an endless country road, like a Via Claudia stretching towards mysterious Germanian forests, and it was deemed a feat for Peter to ride thither on his big-wheeled bicycle. Forest Park was the country, and all that the country represented in Honora's childhood. For Uncle Tom on a summer's day to hire a surrey at Braintree's Livery Stable and drive thither was like—to what shall that bliss be compared in these days when we go to Europe with indifference?

And now Lindell Road—the Via Claudia of long, ago—had become Lindell Boulevard, with granitoid sidewalks. And the dreary fields through which it had formerly run were bristling with new houses in no sense Victorian, and which were the first stirrings of a national sense of the artistic. The old horse-cars with the clanging chains had disappeared, and you could take an electric to within a block of the imposing grille that surrounded the Dwyer grounds. Westward the star!

Fading fast was the glory of that bright new district on top of the second hill from the river where Uncle Tom was a pioneer. Soot had killed the pear trees, the apricots behind the lattice fence had withered away; asphalt and soot were slowly sapping the vitality of the maples on the sidewalk; and sometimes Uncle Tom's roses looked as though they might advantageously be given a coat of paint, like those in Alice in Wonderland. Honora should have lived in the Dwyers' mansion—people who are capable of judging said so. People who saw her at the garden party said she had the air of belonging in such surroundings much more than Emily, whom even budding womanhood had not made beautiful. And Eliphalet Hopper Dwyer, if his actions meant anything, would have welcomed her to that house, or built her another twice as fine, had she deigned to give him the least encouragement.

Cinderella! This was what she facetiously called herself one July morning of that summer she was eighteen.

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Cinderella in more senses than one, for never had the city seemed more dirty or more deserted, or indeed, more stifling. Winter and its festivities were a dream laid away in moth balls. Surely Cinderella's life had held no greater contrasts! To this day the odour of matting brings back to Honora the sense of closed shutters; of a stifling south wind stirring their slats at noonday; the vision of Aunt Mary, cool and placid in a cambric sacque, sewing by the window in the upper hall, and the sound of fruit venders crying in the street, or of ragmen in the alley—"Rags, bottles, old iron!" What memories of endless, burning, lonely days come rushing back with those words!

When the sun had sufficiently heated the bricks of the surrounding houses in order that he might not be forgotten during the night, he slowly departed. If Honora took her book under the maple tree in the yard, she was confronted with that hideous wooden sign "To Let" on the Dwyer's iron fence opposite, and the grass behind it was unkempt and overgrown with weeds. Aunt Mary took an unceasing and (to Honora's mind) morbid interest in the future of that house.

"I suppose it will be a boarding-house," she would say, "it's much too large for poor people to rent, and only poor people are coming into this district now."

"Oh, Aunt Mary!"

"Well, my dear, why should we complain? We are poor, and it is appropriate that we should live among the poor. Sometimes I think it is a pity that you should have been thrown all your life with rich people, my child. I am afraid it has made you discontented. It is no disgrace to be poor. We ought to be thankful that we have everything we need."

Honora put down her sewing. For she had learned to sew—Aunt Mary had insisted upon that, as well as French. She laid her hand upon her aunt's.

"I am thankful," she said, and her aunt little guessed the intensity of the emotion she was seeking to control, or imagined the hidden fires. "But sometimes—sometimes I try to forget that we are poor. Perhaps —some day we shall not be."

It seemed to Honora that Aunt Mary derived a real pleasure from the contradiction of this hope. She shook her head vigorously.

"We shall always be, my child. Your Uncle Tom is getting old, and he has always been too honest to make a great deal of money. And besides," she added, "he has not that kind of ability."

Uncle Tom might be getting old, but he seemed to Honora to be of the same age as in her childhood. Some people never grow old, and Uncle Tom was one of these. Fifteen years before he had been promoted to be the cashier of the Prairie Bank, and he was the cashier to-day. He had the same quiet smile, the same quiet humour, the same

calm acceptance of life. He seemed to bear no grudge even against that ever advancing enemy, the soot, which made it increasingly difficult for him to raise his flowers. Those which would still grow he washed tenderly night and morning with his watering-pot. The greatest wonders are not at the ends of the earth, but near us. It was to take many years for our heroine to realize this.

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Strong faith alone could have withstood the continued contact with such a determined fatalism as Aunt Mary's, and yet it is interesting to note that Honora's belief in her providence never wavered. A prince was to come who was to bear her away from the ragmen and the boarding-houses and the soot: and incidentally and in spite of herself, Aunt Mary was to come too, and Uncle Tom. And sometimes when she sat reading of an evening under the maple, her book would fall to her lap and the advent of this personage become so real a thing that she bounded when the gate slammed—to find that it was only Peter.

It was preposterous, of course, that Peter should be a prince in disguise. Peter who, despite her efforts to teach him distinction in dress, insisted upon wearing the same kind of clothes. A mild kind of providence, Peter, whose modest functions were not unlike those of the third horse which used to be hitched on to the street car at the foot of the Seventeenth-Street hill: it was Peter's task to help pull Honora through the interminable summers. Uhrig's Cave was an old story now: mysteries were no longer to be expected in St. Louis. There was a great panorama—or something to that effect—in the wilderness at the end of one of the new electric lines, where they sometimes went to behold the White Squadron of the new United States Navy engaged in battle with mimic forts on a mimic sea, on the very site where the country place of Madame Clement had been. The mimic sea, surrounded by wooden stands filled with common people eating peanuts and popcorn, was none other than Madame Clement's pond, which Honora remembered as a spot of enchantment. And they went out in the open cars with these same people, who stared at Honora as though she had got in by mistake, but always politely gave her a seat. And Peter thanked them. Sometimes he fell into conversations with them, and it was noticeable that they nearly always shook hands with him at parting. Honora did not approve of this familiarity.

"But they may be clients some day," he argued—a frivolous answer to which she never deigned to reply.

Just as one used to take for granted that third horse which pulled the car uphill, so Peter was taken for granted. He might have been on the highroad to a renown like that of Chief Justice Marshall, and Honora had been none the wiser.

"Well, Peter," said Uncle Tom at dinner one evening of that memorable summer, when Aunt Mary was helping the blackberries, and incidentally deploring that she did not live in the country, because of the cream one got there, "I saw Judge Brice in the bank to-day, and he tells me you covered yourself with glory in that iron foundry suit."

"The Judge must have his little joke, Mr. Leffingwell," replied Peter, but he reddened nevertheless.

Honora thought winning an iron foundry suit a strange way to cover one's self with glory. It was not, at any rate, her idea of glory. What were lawyers for, if not to win suits? And Peter was a lawyer.

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"In five years," said Uncle Tom, "the firm will be 'Brice and Erwin'. You mark my words. And by that time," he added, with a twinkle in his eye, "you'll be ready to marry Honora."

"Tom," reproved Aunt Mary, gently, "you oughtn't to say such things."

This time there was no doubt about Peter's blush. He fairly burned. Honora looked at him and laughed.

"Peter is meant for an old bachelor," she said.

"If he remains a bachelor," said Uncle Tom, "he'll be the greatest waste of good material I know of. And if you succeed in getting him, Honora, you'll be the luckiest young woman of my acquaintance."

"Tom," said Aunt Mary, "it was all very well to talk that way when Honora was a child. But now—she may not wish to marry Peter. And Peter may not wish to marry her."

Even Peter joined in the laughter at this literal and characteristic statement of the case.

"It's more than likely," said Honora, wickedly. "He hasn't kissed me for two years."

"Why, Peter," said Uncle Tom, "you act as though it were warm to-night. It was only seventy when we came in to dinner."

"Take me out to the park," commanded Honora.

"Tom," said Aunt Mary, as she stood on the step and watched them cross the street, "I wish the child would marry him. Not now, of course," she added hastily,—a little frightened by her own admission, "but later. Sometimes I worry over her future. She needs a strong and sensible man. I don't understand Honora. I never did. I always told you so. Sometimes I think she may be capable of doing something foolish like—like Randolph."

Uncle Tom patted his wife on the shoulder.

"Don't borrow trouble, Mary," he said, smiling a little. "The child is only full of spirits. But she has a good heart. It is only human that she should want things that we cannot give her."

"I wish," said Aunt Mary, "that she were not quite so good-looking."

Uncle Tom laughed. "You needn't tell me you're not proud of it," he declared.

"And I have given her," she continued, "a taste for dress."

“I think, my dear,” said her husband, “that there were others who contributed to that.”

“It was my own vanity. I should have combated the tendency in her,” said Aunt Mary.

“If you had dressed Honora in calico, you could not have changed her,” replied Uncle Tom, with conviction.

In the meantime Honora and Peter had mounted the electric car, and were speeding westward. They had a seat to themselves, the very first one on the “grip”—that survival of the days of cable cars. Honora’s eyes brightened as she held on to her hat, and the stray wisps of hair about her neck stirred in the breeze.

“Oh, I wish we would never stop, until we came to the Pacific Ocean!” she exclaimed.

“Would you be content to stop then?” he asked. He had a trick of looking downward with a quizzical expression in his dark grey eyes.

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"No," said Honora. "I should want to go on and see everything in the world worth seeing. Sometimes I feel positively as though I should die if I had to stay here in St. Louis."

"You probably would die—eventually," said Peter.

Honora was justifiably irritated.

"I could shake you, Peter!"

He laughed.

"I'm afraid it wouldn't do any good," he answered.

"If I were a man," she proclaimed, "I shouldn't stay here. I'd go to New York—I'd be somebody—I'd make a national reputation for myself."

"I believe you would," said Peter sadly, but with a glance of admiration.

"That's the worst of being a woman—we have to sit still until something happens to us."

"What would you like to happen?" he asked, curiously. And there was a note in his voice which she, intent upon her thoughts, did not remark.

"Oh, I don't know," she said; "anything—anything to get out of this rut and be something in the world. It's dreadful to feel that one has power and not be able to use it."

The car stopped at the terminal. Thanks to the early hour of Aunt Mary's dinner, the western sky was still aglow with the sunset over the forests as they walked past the closed grille of the Dwyer mansion into the park. Children rolled on the grass, while mothers and fathers, tired out from the heat and labour of a city day, sat on the benches. Peter stooped down and lifted a small boy, painfully thin, who had fallen, weeping, on the gravel walk. He took his handkerchief and wiped the scratch on the child's forehead.

"There, there!" he said, smiling, "it's all right now. We must expect a few tumbles."

The child looked at him, and suddenly smiled through his tears.

The father appeared, a red-headed Irishman.

"Thank you, Mr. Erwin; I'm sure it's very kind of you, sir, to bother with him," he said gratefully. "It's that thin he is with the heat, I take him out for a bit of country air."



"Why, Tim, it's you, is it?" said Peter. "He's the janitor of our building down town," he explained to Honora, who had remained a silent witness to this simple scene. She had been, in spite of herself, impressed by it, and by the mingled respect and affection in the janitor's manner towards Peter. It was so with every one to whom he spoke. They walked on in silence for a few moments, into a path leading to a lake, which had stolen the flaming green-gold of the sky.

"I suppose," said Honora, slowly, "it would be better for me to wish to be contented where I am, as you are. But it's no use trying, I can't."

Peter was not a preacher.

"Oh," he said, "there are lots of things I want."

"What?" demanded Honora, interested. For she had never conceived of him as having any desires whatever.

"I want a house like Mr. Dwyer's," he declared, pointing at the distant imposing roof line against the fading eastern sky.

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Honora laughed. The idea of Peter wishing such a house was indeed ridiculous. Then she became grave again.

"There are times when you seem to forget that I have at last grown up, Peter. You never will talk over serious things with me."

"What are serious things?" asked Peter.

"Well," said Honora vaguely, "ambitions, and what one is going to make of themselves in life. And then you make fun of me by saying you want Mr. Dwyer's house." She laughed again. "I can't imagine you in that house!"

"Why not?" he asked, stopping beside the pond and thrusting his hands in his pockets. He looked very solemn, but she knew he was smiling inwardly.

"Why—because I can't," she said, and hesitated. The question had forced her to think about Peter. "I can't imagine you living all alone in all that luxury. It isn't like you."

"Why I all alone?" asked Peter.

"Don't—Don't be ridiculous," she said; "you wouldn't build a house like that, even if you were twice as rich as Mr. Dwyer. You know you wouldn't. And you're not the marrying kind," she added, with the superior knowledge of eighteen.

"I'm waiting for you, Honora," he announced.

"You know I love you, Peter,"—so she tempered her reply, for Honora's feelings were tender. What man, even Peter, would not have married her if he could? Of course he was in earnest, despite his bantering tone, "but I never could—marry you."

"Not even if I were to offer you a house like Mr. Dwyer's?" he said. A remark which betrayed—although not to her—his knowledge of certain earthly strains in his goddess.

The colours faded from the water, and it blackened.

As they walked on side by side in the twilight, a consciousness of repressed masculine force, of reserve power, which she had never before felt about Peter Erwin, invaded her; and she was seized with a strange uneasiness. Ridiculous was the thought (which she lost no time in rejecting) that pointed out the true road to happiness in marrying such a man as he. In the gathering darkness she slipped her hand through his arm.

"I wish I could marry you, Peter," she said.

He was fain to take what comfort he could from this expression of good-will. If he was not the Prince Charming of her dreams, she would have liked him to be. A little

reflection on his part ought to have shown him the absurdity of the Prince Charming having been there all the time, and in ready-made clothes. And he, too, may have had dreams. We are not concerned with them.

.....

If we listen to the still, small voice of realism, intense longing is always followed by disappointment. Nothing should have happened that summer, and Providence should not have come disguised as the postman. It was a sultry day in early September—which is to say that it was comparatively cool—a blue day, with occasional great drops of rain spattering on the brick walk. And Honora was reclining on the hall sofa, reading about Mr. Ibbetson and his duchess, when she perceived the postman's grey uniform and smiling face on the far side of the screen door. He greeted her cordially, and gave her a single letter for Aunt Mary, and she carried it unsuspectingly upstairs.

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"It's from Cousin Eleanor," Honora volunteered.

Aunt Mary laid down her sewing, smoothed the ruffles of her sacque, adjusted her spectacles, opened the envelope, and began to read. Presently the letter fell to her lap, and she wiped her glasses and glanced at Honora, who was deep in her book once more. And in Honora's brain, as she read, was ringing the refrain of the prisoner:

"Orleans, Beaugency!
Notre Dame de Clery!
Vendome! Vendome!
Quel chagrin, quel ennui
De compter toute la nuit
Les heures, les heures!"

The verse appealed to Honora strangely; just as it had appealed to Ibbetson. Was she not, too, a prisoner. And how often, during the summer days and nights, had she listened to the chimes of the Pilgrim Church near by?

"One, two, three, four!
One, two, three, four!"

After Uncle Tom had watered his flowers that evening, Aunt Mary followed him upstairs and locked the door of their room behind her. Silently she put the letter in his hand. Here is one paragraph of it:

"I have never asked to take the child from you in the summer, because she has always been in perfect health, and I know how lonely you would have been without her, my dear Mary. But it seems to me that a winter at Sutcliffe, with my girls, would do her a world of good just now. I need not point out to you that Honora is, to say the least, remarkably good looking, and that she has developed very rapidly. And she has, in spite of the strict training you have given her, certain ideas and ambitions which seem to me, I am sorry to say, more or less prevalent among young American women these days. You know it is only because I love her that I am so frank. Miss Turner's influence will, in my opinion, do much to counteract these tendencies."

Uncle Tom folded the letter, and handed it back to his wife.

"I feel that we ought not to refuse, Tom. And I am afraid Eleanor is right."

"Well, Mary, we've had her for seventeen years. We ought to be willing to spare her for—how many months?"

"Nine," said Aunt Mary, promptly. She had counted them. "And Eleanor says she will be home for two weeks at Christmas. Seventeen years! It seems only yesterday when we brought her home, Tom. It was just about this time of day, and she was asleep in your

arms, and Bridget opened the door for us.” Aunt Mary looked out of the window. “And do you remember how she used to play under the maple there, with her dolls?”

Uncle Tom produced a very large handkerchief, and blew his nose.

“There, there, Mary,” he said, “nine months, and two weeks out at Christmas. Nine months in eighteen years.”

“I suppose we ought to be very thankful,” said Aunt Mary. “But, Tom, the time is coming soon—”

“Tut tut,” exclaimed Uncle Tom. He turned, and his eyes beheld a work of art. Nothing less than a porcelain plate, hung in brackets on the wall, decorated by Honora at the age of ten with wild roses, and presented with much ceremony on an anniversary morning. He pretended not to notice it, but Aunt Mary’s eyes were too quick. She seized a photograph on her bureau, a photograph of Honora in a little white frock with a red sash.

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"It was the year that was taken, Tom."

He nodded. The scene at the breakfast table came back to him, and the sight of Catherine standing respectfully in the hall, and of Honora, in the red sash, making the courtesy the old woman had taught her.

Honora recalled afterwards that Uncle Tom joked even more than usual that evening at dinner. But it was Aunt Mary who asked her, at length, how she would like to go to boarding-school. Such was the matter-of-fact manner in which the portentous news was announced.

"To boarding-school, Aunt Mary?"

Her aunt poured out her uncle's after-dinner coffee.

"I've spilled some, my dear. Get another saucer for your uncle."

Honora went mechanically to the china closet, her heart thumping. She did not stop to reflect that it was the rarest of occurrences for Aunt Mary to spill the coffee.

"Your Cousin Eleanor has invited you to go this winter with Edith and Mary to Sutcliffe."

Sutcliffe! No need to tell Honora what Sutcliffe was—her cousins had talked of little else during the past winter; and shown, if the truth be told, just a little commiseration for Honora. Sutcliffe was not only a famous girls' school, Sutcliffe was the world—that world which, since her earliest remembrances, she had been longing to see and know. In a desperate attempt to realize what had happened to her, she found herself staring hard at the open china closet, at Aunt Mary's best gold dinner set resting on the pink lace paper that had been changed only last week. That dinner set, somehow, was always an augury of festival—when, on the rare occasions Aunt Mary entertained, the little dining room was transformed by it and the Leffingwell silver into a glorified and altogether unrecognizable state, in which any miracle seemed possible.

Honora pushed back her chair.

Her lips were parted.

"Oh, Aunt Mary, is it really true that I am going?" she said.

"Why," said Uncle Tom, "what zeal for learning!"

"My dear," said Aunt Mary, who, you may be sure, knew all about that school before Cousin Eleanor's letter came, "Miss Turner insists upon hard work, and the discipline is very strict."

“No young men,” added Uncle Tom.

“That,” declared Aunt Mary, “is certainly an advantage.”

“And no chocolate cake, and bed at ten o’clock,” said Uncle Tom.

Honora, dazed, only half heard them. She laughed at Uncle Tom because she always had, but tears were shining in her eyes. Young men and chocolate cake! What were these privations compared to that magic word Change? Suddenly she rose, and flung her arms about Uncle Tom’s neck and kissed his rough cheek, and then embraced Aunt Mary. They would be lonely.

“Aunt Mary, I can’t bear to leave you—but I do so want to go! And it won’t be for long—will it? Only until next spring.”

“Until next summer, I believe,” replied Aunt Mary, gently; “June is a summer month—isn’t it, Tom?”

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"It will be a summer month without question next year," answered Uncle Tom, enigmatically.

It has been remarked that that day was sultry, and a fine rain was now washing Uncle Tom's flowers for him. It was he who had applied that term "washing" since the era of ultra-soot. Incredible as it may seem, life proceeded as on any other of a thousand rainy nights. The lamps were lighted in the sitting-room, Uncle Tom unfolded his gardening periodical, and Aunt Mary her embroidery. The gate slammed, with its more subdued, rainy-weather sound.

"It's Peter," said Honora, flying downstairs. And she caught him, astonished, as he was folding his umbrella on the step. "Oh, Peter, if you tried until to-morrow morning, you never could guess what has happened."

He stood for a moment, motionless, staring at her, a tall figure, careless of the rain.

"You are going away," he said.

"How did you guess it?" she exclaimed in surprise. "Yes—to boarding-school. To Sutcliffe, on the Hudson, with Edith and Mary. Aren't you glad? You look as though you had seen a ghost."

"Do I?" said Peter.

"Don't stand there in the rain," commanded Honora; "come into the parlour, and I'll tell you all about it."

He came in. She took the umbrella from him, and put it in the rack.

"Why don't you congratulate me?" she demanded.

"You'll never come back," said Peter.

"What a horrid thing to say! Of course I shall come back. I shall come back next June, and you'll be at the station to meet me."

And—what will Uncle Tom and Aunt Mary do—without you?"

"Oh," said Honora, "I shall miss them dreadfully. And I shall miss you, Peter."

"Very much?" he asked, looking down at her with such a queer expression. And his voice, too, sounded queer. He was trying to smile.

Suddenly Honora realized that he was suffering, and she felt the pangs of contrition. She could not remember the time when she had been away from Peter, and it was

natural that he should be stricken at the news. Peter, who was the complement of all who loved and served her, of Aunt Mary and Uncle Tom and Catherine, and who somehow embodied them all. Peter, the eternally dependable.

She found it natural that the light should be temporarily removed from his firmament while she should be at boarding-school, and yet in the tenderness of her heart she pitied him. She put her hands impulsively upon his shoulders as he stood looking at her with that queer expression which he believed to be a smile.

“Peter, you dear old thing, indeed I shall miss you! I don’t know what I shall do without you, and I’ll write to you every single week.”

Gently he disengaged her arms. They were standing under that which, for courtesy’s sake, had always been called the chandelier. It was in the centre of the parlour, and Uncle Tom always covered it with holly and mistletoe at Christmas.

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"Why do you say I'll never come back?" asked Honora. "Of course I shall come back, and live here all the rest of my life."

Peter shook his head slowly. He had recovered something of his customary quizzical manner.

"The East is a strange country," he said. "The first thing we know you'll be marrying one of those people we read about, with more millions than there are cars on the Olive Street line."

Honora was a little indignant.

"I wish you wouldn't talk so, Peter," she said. "In the first place, I shan't see any but girls at Sutcliffe. I could only see you for a few minutes once a week if you were there. And in the second place, it isn't exactly—Well—dignified to compare the East and the West the way you do, and speak about people who are very rich and live there as though they were different from the people we know here. Comparisons, as Shakespeare said, are odorous."

"Honora," he declared, still shaking his head, "you're a fraud, but I can't help loving you."

For a long time that night Honora lay in bed staring into the darkness, and trying to realize what had happened. She heard the whistling and the puffing of the trains in the cinder-covered valley to the southward, but the quality of these sounds had changed. They were music now.

CHAPTER VI

HONORA HAS A GLIMPSE OF THE WORLD

It is simply impossible to give any adequate notion of the industry of the days that followed. No sooner was Uncle Tom out of the house in the morning than Anne Rory marched into the sitting-room and took command, and turned it, into a dressmaking establishment. Anne Rory, who deserves more than a passing mention, one of the institutions of Honora's youth, who sewed for the first families, and knew much more about them than Mr. Meeker, the dancing-master. If you enjoyed her confidence,—as Aunt Mary did,—she would tell you of her own accord who gave their servants enough to eat, and who didn't. Anne Rory was a sort of inquisition all by herself, and would have made a valuable chief of police. The reputations of certain elderly gentlemen of wealth might have remained to this day intact had it not been for her; she had a heaven-sent knack of discovering peccadilloes. Anne Rory knew the gentlemen by sight, and the gentlemen did not know Anne Rory. Uncle Tom she held to be somewhere in the calendar of the saints.



There is not time, alas, to linger over Anne Rory or the new histories which she whispered to Aunt Mary when Honora was out of the room. At last the eventful day of departure arrived. Honora's new trunk—her first—was packed by Aunt Mary's own hands, the dainty clothes and the dresses folded in tissue paper, while old Catherine stood sniffing by. After dinner—sign of a great occasion—a carriage came from Braintree's Livery Stable, and Uncle Tom held the horses while the driver carried out the trunk

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and strapped it on. Catherine, Mary Ann, and Bridget, all weeping, were kissed good-by, and off they went through the dusk to the station. Not the old Union Depot, with its wooden sheds, where Honora had gone so often to see the Hanburys off, that grimy gateway to the fairer regions of the earth. This new station, of brick and stone and glass and tiles, would hold an army corps with ease. And when they alighted at the carriage entrance, a tall figure came forward out of the shadow. It was Peter, and he had a package under his arm. Peter checked Honora's trunk, and Peter had got the permission—through Judge Brice—which enabled them all to pass through the grille and down the long walk beside which the train was standing.

They entered that hitherto mysterious conveyance, a sleeping-car, and spoke to old Mrs. Stanley, who was going East to see her married daughter, and who had gladly agreed to take charge of Honora. Afterwards they stood on the platform, but in spite of the valiant efforts of Uncle Tom and Peter, conversation was a mockery.

"Honora," said Aunt Mary, "don't forget that your trunk key is in the little pocket on the left side of your bag."

"No, Aunt Mary."

"And your little New Testament at the bottom. And your lunch is arranged in three packages. And don't forget to ask Cousin Eleanor about the walking shoes, and to give her my note."

Cries reverberated under the great glass dome, and trains pulled out with deafening roars. Honora had a strange feeling, as of pressure from within, that caused her to take deep breaths of the smoky air. She but half heard what was being said to her: she wished that the train would go, and at the same time she had a sudden, surprising, and fierce longing to stay. She had been able to eat scarcely a mouthful of that festal dinner which Bridget had spent the afternoon in preparing, comprised wholly of forbidden dishes of her childhood, for which Bridget and Aunt Mary were justly famed. Such is the irony of life. Visions of one of Aunt Mary's rare lunch-parties and of a small girl peeping covetously through a crack in the dining-room door, and of the gold china set, rose before her. But she could not eat.

"Bread and jam and tea at Miss Turner's," Uncle Tom had said, and she had tried to smile at him.

And now they were standing on the platform, and the train might start at any moment.

"I trust you won't get like the New Yorkers, Honora," said Aunt Mary. "Do you remember how stiff they were, Tom?" She was still in the habit of referring to that memorable trip

when they had brought Honora home. “And they say now that they hold their heads higher than ever.”

“That,” said Uncle Tom, gravely, “is a local disease, and comes from staring at the tall buildings.”

“Uncle Tom!”

Peter presented the parcel under his arm. It was a box of candy, and very heavy, on which much thought had been spent.



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"They are some of the things you like," he said, when he had returned from putting it in the berth.

"How good of you, Peter! I shall never be able to eat all that."

"I hope there is a doctor on the train," said Uncle Tom.

"Yassah," answered the black porter, who had been listening with evident relish, "right good doctah—Doctah Lov'ring."

Even Aunt Mary laughed.

"Peter," asked Honora, "can't you get Judge Brice to send you on to New York this winter on law business? Then you could come up to Sutcliffe to see me."

"I'm afraid of Miss Turner," declared Peter.

"Oh, she wouldn't mind you," exclaimed Honora. "I could say you were an uncle. It would be almost true. And perhaps she would let you take me down to New York for a matinee."

"And how about my ready-made clothes?" he said, looking down at her. He had never forgotten that.

Honora laughed.

"You don't seem a bit sorry that I'm going," she replied, a little breathlessly. "You know I'd be glad to see you, if you were in rags."

"All aboard!" cried the porter, grinning sympathetically.

Honora threw her arms around Aunt Mary and clung to her. How small and frail she was! Somehow Honora had never realized it in all her life before.

"Good-by, darling, and remember to put on your thick clothes on the cool days, and write when you get to New York."

Then it was Uncle Tom's turn. He gave her his usual vigorous hug and kiss.

"It won't be long until Christmas," he whispered, and was gone, helping Aunt Mary off the train, which had begun to move.

Peter remained a moment.

"Good-by, Honora. I'll write to you often and let you know how they are. And perhaps—you'll send me a letter once in a while."

“Oh, Peter, I will,” she cried. “I can’t bear to leave you—I didn’t think it would be so hard —”

He held out his hand, but she ignored it. Before he realized what had happened to him she had drawn his face to hers, kissed it, and was pushing him off the train. Then she watched from the platform the three receding figures in the yellow smoky light until the car slipped out from under the roof into the blackness of the night. Some faint, premonitory divination of what they represented of immutable love in a changing, heedless, selfish world came to her; rocks to which one might cling, successful or failing, happy or unhappy. For unconsciously she thought of them, all three, as one, a human trinity in which her faith had never been betrayed. She felt a warm moisture on her cheeks, and realized that she was crying with the first real sorrow of her life.

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She was leaving them—for what? Honora did not know. There had been nothing imperative in Cousin Eleanor's letter. She need not have gone if she had not wished. Something within herself, she felt, was impelling her. And it is curious to relate that, in her mind, going to school had little or nothing to do with her journey. She had the feeling of faring forth into the world, and she had known all along that it was destined she should. What was the cause of this longing to break the fetters and fly away? fetters of love, they seemed to her now—and were. And the world which she had seen afar, filled with sunlit palaces, seemed very dark and dreary to her to-night.

"The lady's asking for you, Miss," said the porter.

She made a heroic attempt to talk to Mrs. Stanley. But at the sight of Peter's candy, when she opened it, she was blinded once more. Dear Peter! That box was eloquent with the care with which he had studied her slightest desires and caprices. Marrons glaces, and Langtrys, and certain chocolates which had received the stamp of her approval—and she could not so much as eat one! The porter made the berths. And there had been a time when she had asked nothing more of fate than to travel in a sleeping-car! Far into the night she lay wide awake, dry-eyed, watching the lamp-lit streets of the little towns they passed, or staring at the cornfields and pastures in the darkness; thinking of the home she had left, perhaps forever, and wondering whether they were sleeping there; picturing them to-morrow at breakfast without her, and Uncle Tom leaving for the bank, Aunt Mary going through the silent rooms alone, and dear old Catherine haunting the little chamber where she had slept for seventeen years—almost her lifetime. A hundred vivid scenes of her childhood came back, and familiar objects oddly intruded themselves; the red and green lambrequin on the parlour mantel—a present many years ago from Cousin Eleanor; the what-not, with its funny curly legs, and the bare spot near the lock on the door of the cake closet in the dining room!

Youth, however, has its recuperative powers. The next day the excitement of the journey held her, the sight of new cities and a new countryside. But when she tried to eat the lunch Aunt Mary had so carefully put up, new memories assailed her, and she went with Mrs. Stanley into the dining car. The September dusk was made lurid by belching steel-furnaces that reddened the heavens; and later, when she went to bed, sharp air and towering contours told her of the mountains. Mountains which her great-grandfather had crossed on horse back, with that very family silver in his saddle-bags which shone on Aunt Mary's table. And then—she awoke with the light shining in her face, and barely had time to dress before the conductor was calling out "Jersey City."

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Once more the morning, and with it new and wonderful sensations that dispelled her sorrows; the ferry, the olive-green river rolling in the morning sun, alive with dodging, hurrying craft, each bent upon its destination with an energy, relentlessness, and selfishness of purpose that fascinated Honora. Each, with its shrill, protesting whistle, seemed to say: "My business is the most important. Make way for me." And yet, through them all, towering, stately, imperturbable, a great ocean steamer glided slowly towards the bay, by very might and majesty holding her way serene and undisturbed, on a nobler errand. Honora thrilled as she gazed, as though at last her dream were coming true, and she felt within her the pulse of the world's artery. That irksome sense of spectatorship seemed to fly, and she was part and parcel now of the great, moving things, with sure pinions with which to soar. Standing rapt upon the forward deck of the ferry, she saw herself, not an atom, but one whose going and coming was a thing of consequence. It seemed but a simple step to the deck of that steamer when she, too, would be travelling to the other side of the world, and the journey one of the small incidents of life.

The ferry bumped into its slip, the windlasses sang loudly as they took up the chains, the gates folded back, and Honora was forced with the crowd along the bridge-like passage to the right. Suddenly she saw Cousin Eleanor and the girls awaiting her.

"Honora," said Edith, when the greetings were over and they were all four in the carriage, which was making its way slowly across the dirty and irregularly paved open space to a narrow street that opened between two saloons, "Honora, you don't mean to say that Anne Rory made that street dress? Mother, I believe it's better-looking than the one I got at Bremer's."

"It's very simple," said Honora.

"And she looks fairly radiant," cried Edith, seizing her cousin's hand. "It's quite wonderful, Honora; nobody would ever guess that you were from the West, and that you had spent the whole summer in St. Louis."

Cousin Eleanor smiled a little as she contemplated Honora, who sat, fascinated, gazing out of the window at novel scenes. There was a colour in her cheeks and a sparkle in her eyes. They had reached Madison Square. Madison Square, on a bright morning in late September, seen for the first time by an ambitious young lady who had never been out of St. Louis! The trimly appointed vehicles, the high-stepping horses, the glittering shops, the well-dressed women and well-groomed men—all had an esprit de corps which she found inspiring. On such a morning, and amidst such a scene, she felt that there was no limit to the possibilities of life.

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Until this year, Cousin Eleanor had been a conservative in the matter of hotels, when she had yielded to Edith's entreaties to go to one of the "new ones." Hotels, indeed, that revolutionized transient existence. This one, on the Avenue, had a giant in a long blue livery coat who opened their carriage door, and a hall in yellow and black onyx, and maids and valets. After breakfast, when Honora sat down to write to Aunt Mary, she described the suite of rooms in which they lived,—the brass beds, the electric night lamps, the mahogany French furniture, the heavy carpets, and even the white-tiled bathroom. There was a marvellous arrangement in the walls with which Edith was never tired of playing, a circular plate covered with legends of every conceivable want, from a newspaper to a needle and thread and a Scotch whiskey highball.

At breakfast, more stimulants—of a mental nature, of course. Solomon in all his glory had never broken eggs in such a dining room. It had onyx pillars, too, and gilt furniture, and table after table of the whitest napery stretched from one end of it to the other. The glass and silver was all of a special pattern, and an obsequious waiter handed Honora a menu in a silver frame, with a handle. One side of the menu was in English, and the other in French. All around them were well-dressed, well-fed, prosperous-looking people, talking and laughing in subdued tones as they ate. And Honora had a strange feeling of being one of them, of being as rich and prosperous as they, of coming into a long-deferred inheritance.

The mad excitement of that day in New York is a faint memory now, so much has Honora lived since then. We descendants of rigid Puritans, of pioneer tobacco-planters and frontiersmen, take naturally to a luxury such as the world has never seen—as our right. We have abolished kings, in order that as many of us as possible may abide in palaces. In one day Honora forgot the seventeen years spent in the "little house under the hill," as though these had never been. Cousin Eleanor, with a delightful sense of wrong-doing, yielded to the temptation to adorn her; and the saleswomen, who knew Mrs. Hanbury, made indiscreet-remarks. Such a figure and such a face, and just enough of height! Two new gowns were ordered, to be tried on at Sutcliffe, and as many hats, and an ulster, and heaven knows what else. Memory fails.

In the evening they went to a new comic opera, and it is the music of that which brings back the day most vividly to Honora's mind.

In the morning they took an early train to Sutcliffe Manors, on the Hudson. It is an historic place. First of all, after leaving the station, you climb through the little town clinging to the hillside; and Honora was struck by the quaint houses and shops which had been places of barter before the Revolution. The age of things appealed to her. It was a brilliant day at the very end of September, the air sharp, and

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here and there a creeper had been struck crimson. Beyond the town, on the slopes, were other new sights to stimulate the imagination: country houses—not merely houses in the country, but mansions—enticingly hidden among great trees in a way to whet Honora’s curiosity as she pictured to herself the blissful quality of the life which their owners must lead. Long, curving driveways led up to the houses from occasional lodges; and once, as though to complete the impression, a young man and two women, superbly mounted, came trotting out of one of these driveways, talking and laughing gayly. Honora took a good look at the man. He was not handsome, but had, in fact, a distinguished and haunting ugliness. The girls were straight-featured and conventional to the last degree.

Presently they came to the avenue of elms that led up to the long, low buildings of the school.

Little more will be necessary, in the brief account of Honora’s life at boarding-school, than to add an humble word of praise on the excellence of Miss Turner’s establishment. That lady, needless to say, did not advertise in the magazines, or issue a prospectus. Parents were more or less in the situation of the candidates who desired the honour and privilege of whitewashing Tom Sawyer’s fence. If you were a parent, and were allowed to confide your daughter to Miss Turner, instead of demanding a prospectus, you gave thanks to heaven, and spoke about it to your friends.

The life of the young ladies, of course, was regulated on the strictest principles. Early rising, prayers, breakfast, studies; the daily walk, rain or shine, under the watchful convoy of Miss Hood, the girls in columns of twos; tennis on the school court, or skating on the school pond. Cotton Mather himself could not have disapproved of the Sundays, nor of the discourse of the elderly Doctor Moale (which you heard if you were not a Presbyterian), although the reverend gentleman was distinctly Anglican in appearance and manners. Sometimes Honora felt devout, and would follow the service with the utmost attention. Her religion came in waves. On the Sundays when the heathen prevailed she studied the congregation, grew to distinguish the local country families; and, if the truth must be told, watched for several Sundays for that ugly yet handsome young man whom she had seen on horseback. But he never appeared, and presently she forgot him.

Had there been a prospectus (which is ridiculous!), the great secret of Miss Turner’s school could not very well have been mentioned in it. The English language, it is to be feared, is not quite flexible enough to mention this secret with delicacy. Did Honora know it? Who can say? Self-respecting young ladies do not talk about such things, and Honora was nothing if not self-respecting.

“Sutcliffemanors, October 15th.

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"Dearest aunt Mary: As I wrote you, I continue to miss you and Uncle Tom dreadfully,—and dear old Peter, too; and Cathy and Bridget and Mary Ann. And I hate to get up at seven o'clock. And Miss Hood, who takes us out walking and teaches us composition, is such a ridiculously strict old maid—you would laugh at her. And the Sundays are terrible. Miss Turner makes us read the Bible for a whole hour in the afternoon, and reads to us in the evening. And Uncle Tom was right when he said we should have nothing but jam and bread and butter for supper: oh, yes, and cold meat. I am always ravenously hungry. I count the days until Christmas, when I shall have some really good things to eat again. And of course I cannot wait to see you all." I do not mean to give you the impression that I am not happy here, and I never can be thankful enough to dear Cousin Eleanor for sending me. Some of the girls are most attractive. Among others, I have become great friends with Ethel Wing, who is tall and blond and good-looking; and her clothes, though simple, are beautiful. To hear her imitate Miss Turner or Miss Hood or Dr. Moale is almost as much fun as going to the theatre. You must have heard of her father—he is the Mr. Wing who owns all the railroads and other things, and they have a house in Newport and another in New York, and a country place and a yacht." I like Sarah Wycliffe very much. She was brought up abroad, and we lead the French class together. Her father has a house in Paris, which they only use for a month or so in the year: an hotel, as the French call it. And then there is Maude Capron, from Philadelphia, whose father is Secretary of War. I have now to go to my class in English composition, but I will write to you again on Saturday.

"Your loving niece,

"Honora."

The Christmas holidays came, and went by like mileposts from the window of an express train. There was a Glee Club: there were dances, and private theatricals in Mrs. Dwyer's new house, in which it was imperative that Honora should take part. There was no such thing as getting up for breakfast, and once she did not see Uncle Tom for two whole days. He asked her where she was staying. It was the first Christmas she remembered spending without Peter. His present appeared, but perhaps it was fortunate, on the whole, that he was in Texas, trying a case. It seemed almost no time at all before she was at the station again, clinging to Aunt Mary: but now the separation was not so hard, and she had Edith and Mary for company, and George, a dignified and responsible sophomore at Harvard.

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Owing to the sudden withdrawal from school of little Louise Simpson, the Cincinnati girl who had shared her room during the first term, Honora had a new room-mate after the holidays, Susan Holt. Susan was not beautiful, but she was good. Her nose turned up, her hair Honora described as a negative colour, and she wore it in defiance of all prevailing modes. If you looked very hard at Susan (which few people ever did), you saw that she had remarkable blue eyes: they were the eyes of a saint. She was neither tall nor short, and her complexion was not all that it might have been. In brief, Susan was one of those girls who go through a whole term at boarding—school without any particular notice from the more brilliant Honoras and Ethel Wings.

In some respects, Susan was an ideal room-mate. She read the Bible every night and morning, and she wrote many letters home. Her ruling passion, next to religion, was order, and she took it upon herself to arrange Honora's bureau drawers. It is needless to say that Honora accepted these ministrations and that she found Susan's admiration an entirely natural sentiment. Susan was self-effacing, and she enjoyed listening to Honora's views on all topics.

Susan, like Peter, was taken for granted. She came from somewhere, and after school was over, she would go somewhere. She lived in New York, Honora knew, and beyond that was not curious. We never know when we are entertaining an angel unawares. One evening, early in May, when she went up to prepare for supper she found Susan sitting in the window reading a letter, and on the floor beside her was a photograph. Honora picked it up. It was the picture of a large country house with many chimneys, taken across a wide green lawn.

"Susan, what's this?"

Susan looked up.

"Oh, it's Silverdale. My brother Joshua took it."

"Silverdale?" repeated Honora.

"It's our place in the country," Susan replied. "The family moved up last week. You see, the trees are just beginning to bud."

Honora was silent a moment, gazing at the picture.

"It's very beautiful, isn't it? You never told me about it."

"Didn't I?" said Susan. "I think of it very often. It has always seemed much more like home to me than our house in New York, and I love it better than any spot I know."

Honora gazed at Susan, who had resumed her reading.

“And you are going there when school is over.”

“Oh, yes,” said Susan; “I can hardly wait.” Suddenly she put down her letter, and looked at Honora.

“And you,” she asked, “where are you going?”

“I don’t know. Perhaps—perhaps I shall go to the sea for a while with my cousins.”

It was foolish, it was wrong. But for the life of her Honora could not say she was going to spend the long hot summer in St. Louis. The thought of it had haunted her for weeks: and sometimes, when the other girls were discussing their plans, she had left them abruptly. And now she was aware that Susan’s blue eyes were fixed upon her, and that they had a strange and penetrating quality she had never noticed before: a certain tenderness, an understanding that made Honora redden and turn.

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"I wish," said Susan, slowly, "that you would come and stay awhile with me. Your home is so far away, and I don't know when I shall see you again."

"Oh, Susan," she murmured, "it's awfully good of you, but I'm afraid—I couldn't."

She walked to the window, and stood looking out for a moment at the budding trees. Her heart was beating faster, and she was strangely uncomfortable.

"I really don't expect to go to the sea, Susan," she said. "You see, my aunt and uncle are all alone in St. Louis, and I ought to go back to them. If—if my father had lived, it might have been different. He died, and my mother, when I was little more than a year old."

Susan was all sympathy. She slipped her hand into Honora's.

"Where did he live?" she asked.

"Abroad," answered Honora. "He was consul at Nice, and had a villa there when he died. And people said he had an unusually brilliant career before him. My aunt and uncle brought me up, and my cousin, Mrs. Hanbury, Edith's mother, and Mary's, sent me here to school."

Honora breathed easier after this confession, but it was long before sleep came to her that night. She wondered what it would be like to visit at a great country house such as Silverdale, what it would be like to live in one. It seemed a strange and cruel piece of irony on the part of the fates that Susan, instead of Honora, should have been chosen for such a life: Susan, who would have been quite as happy spending her summers in St. Louis, and taking excursions in the electric cars: Susan, who had never experienced that dreadful, vacuum-like feeling, who had no ambitious craving to be satisfied. Mingled with her flushes of affection for Susan was a certain queer feeling of contempt, of which Honora was ashamed.

Nevertheless, in the days that followed, a certain metamorphosis seemed to have taken place in Susan. She was still the same modest, self-effacing, helpful roommate, but in Honora's eyes she had changed —Honora could no longer separate her image from the vision of Silverdale. And, if the naked truth must be told, it was due to Silverdale that Susan owes the honour of her first mention in those descriptive letters from Sutcliffe, which Aunt Mary has kept to this day.

Four days later Susan had a letter from her mother containing an astonishing discovery. There could be no mistake,—Mrs. Holt had brought Honora to this country as a baby.

"Why, Susan," cried Honora, "you must have been the other baby."



“But you were the beautiful one,” replied Susan, generously. “I have often heard mother tell about it, and how every one on the ship noticed you, and how Hortense cried when your aunt and uncle took you away. And to think we have been rooming together all these months and did not know that we were really—old friends.

“And Honora, mother says you must come to Silverdale to pay us a visit when school closes. She wants to see you. I think,” added Susan, smiling, “I think she feels responsible, for you. She says that you must give me your aunts address, and that she will write to her.”

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“Oh, I’d so like to go, Susan. And I don’t think Aunt Mary would object —for a little while.”

Honora lost no time in writing the letter asking for permission, and it was not until after she had posted it that she felt a sudden, sharp regret as she thought of them in their loneliness. But the postponement of her homecoming would only be for a fortnight at best. And she had seen so little!

In due time Aunt Mary’s letter arrived. There was no mention of loneliness in it, only of joy that Honora was to have the opportunity to visit such a place as Silverdale. Aunt Mary, it seems, had seen pictures of it long ago in a magazine of the book club, in an article concerning one of Mrs. Holt’s charities—a model home for indiscreet young women. At the end of the year, Aunt Mary added, she had bought the number of the magazine, because of her natural interest in Mrs. Holt on Honora’s account. Honora cried a little over that letter, but her determination to go to Silverdale was unshaken.

June came at last, and the end of school. The subject of Miss Turner’s annual talk was worldliness. Miss Turner saw signs, she regretted to say, of a lowering in the ideals of American women: of a restlessness, of a desire for what was a false consideration and recognition; for power. Some of her own pupils, alas! were not free from this fault. Ethel Wing, who was next to Honora, nudged her and laughed, and passed her some of Maillard’s chocolates, which she had in her pocket. Woman’s place, continued Miss Turner, was the home, and she hoped they would all make good wives. She had done her best to prepare them to be such. Independence, they would find, was only relative: no one had it completely. And she hoped that none of her scholars would ever descend to that base competition to outdo one’s neighbours, so characteristic of the country to-day.

The friends, and even the enemies, were kissed good-by, with pledges of eternal friendship. Cousin Eleanor Hanbury came for Edith and Mary, and hoped Honora would enjoy herself at Silverdale. Dear Cousin Eleanor! Her heart was large, and her charity unpretentious. She slipped into Honora’s fingers, as she embraced her, a silver-purse with some gold coins in it, and bade her not to forget to write home very often.

“You know what pleasure it will give them, my dear,” she said, as she stepped on the train for New York.

“And I am going home soon, Cousin Eleanor,” replied Honora, with a little touch of homesickness in her voice.

“I know, dear,” said Mrs. Hanbury. But there was a peculiar, almost wistful expression on her face as she kissed Honora again, as of one who assents to a fiction in order to humour a child.

As the train pulled out, Ethel Wing waved to her from the midst of a group of girls on the wide rear platform of the last car. It was Mr. Wing's private car, and was going to Newport.

"Be good, Honora!" she cried.