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The Woman Who Never Did Wrong

AND OTHER STORIES

BY

Katherine C. Conway

Author of Lolor's Maples, The Family Sitting Room
Series, Etc.

SECOND EDITION



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J.V. 6/XII/37

THE WOMAN WHO NEVER DID WRONG

"Miss Tallon, Father," announced the house-keeper.

Father O'Connor set his book-mark in at the eviction scene in "Luke Delmege," and with a momentary compression of the lips that meant facing a frequent and not altogether agreeable task passed into the parlor.

This was the meeting day of the Society of St. Martha, and Miss Tallon always called on him directly after adjournment. Through several years' experience he knew that these calls always meant complaints—more in sorrow than in anger, to be sure—of the other officers or of certain members; with a contrast hardly conscious of her own fidelity to duty, and the sacrifices she had made for the Society and its beneficiaries.

For Miss Tallon was president of the Society. She was "the head of everything among the Catholic women of Brucetown," as any member of St. Joseph's parish would have explained to a stranger. Indeed, if the Golden Rose or the Lactare Medal were to be given in Brucetown, all the residents would have deemed it Miss Tallon's inalienable right.

Truly, she had many claims, ancestral and personal, on local Catholic gratitude. Her grandfather had given the site of St. Joseph's, now one of the most valuable properties in the town, together with a generous offering to the building fund. At the dedication of the church, her father's gift was the High Altar, and two memorial windows; and on her parents' death, Miss Tallon and her brothers and sisters, all married but herself, had given a beautiful marble Altar, in keeping with their father's earlier gift, to the Lady Chapel.

In wealth and respectability, the Tallons had long been the foremost Catholics in Brucetown. Miss Tallon, as the eldest and most masterful, held life-tenure of the family residence, a few blocks from St. Joseph's, where her aged uncle and two maids growing grey in the service of the house, abode with her.

She was nearing her fortieth year in single blessedness, and ably keeping up the family tradition of generosity to religion; adding thereunto new forms of social service, not only among the familiar poor, but among the oft-times needy foreigners drawn so numerously to Brucetown in recent years by the big wicker furniture manufactory.

Yet, while every one respected Miss Tallon,

and acknowledged all her claims, there was hardly one who would not have braced himself for a private interview with her, just as Father O'Connor did.

"How are you, Julia?" asked the priest, pleasantly. He had baptized every one of the third generation of the Tallons, and had seen this one grow from infancy to her prim maturity as he himself verged on his vigorous and young-hearted old age.

"Well, considering everything," sighed the lady, standing respectfully, after they had shaken hands, until the priest had settled himself as well as he could in the slippery horse-hair arm-chair opposite her.

"I trust there is no trouble in the family," said Father O'Connor, with kindly solicitude.

"No, indeed; we never have trouble, in the ordinary acceptation of the word," rejoined Miss Tallon, with a perceptible stiffening of her exceedingly erect person.

All the Tallons were as proper as Miss Tallon herself. The young folk were the painful models of the various schools they attended. On their occasional visits to Brucetown, Father O'Connor would have given much to see one of these decorous nephews "hanging on behind" to a grocer's cart; or one of the nieces with a

torn gown or hair disordered in healthful play; just as he wished for an occasional lapse from grammatical accuracy or a hearty laugh from the model aunt herself.

"I thought of possible illness," said the priest, gently. "This is a sickly season."

"Our family rarely has illness. All the children have inherited sound constitutions and get the best of care. No, it is a little worry about our St. Martha's Society. To be frank with you, Father O'Connor, it was a mistake to admit Mrs. Thornton to membership."

"Why, she seems to be a very constant and efficient visitor among the poor."

"That is not the question, Father. It's her bad influence at the meetings. She is so very frivolous; all for dress and jokes and the notice of men, as if she were a badly brought up girl of eighteen, instead of—There, look at her now!"

The lady in question was passing, evidently happy in the company of the tall man of middle age, who, beaming with good fellowship, had to bend a bit to catch the words of the bright-faced, gaily dressed little widow.

"I suppose it's only a matter of taste," said the priest; keeping his mind on the spoken criticism, and ignoring Mrs. Thornton's escort.

“A young woman adorning herself always seems to be like a bird sitting on a bough and preening its feathers. It’s nature, and so long as it’s modest—”

“But Mrs. Thornton is far from young. She is at least as old as I am.”

“And you are still a young girl to me,” he answered.

But Miss Tallon was not to be placated nor diverted from her grievance. Was it zeal undeffiled for righteousness, or was it John Hamilton’s apparent admiration for the little widow that so sharpened the eyes of the woman who never blundered, to the short-comings of her frailer sister? The human heart is a labyrinth in which the wanderer is as often surprised by unlooked-for evil as by unlooked-for good. Few knew its tortuous windings better than Father O’Connor.

Miss Tallon’s “might have beens” as to Holy Matrimony had better ground than most of those of maiden ladies verging on middle age. Was she not an heiress, and good to look at even yet, though a little sharp of feature and angular of figure? Who in Brucetown, or even in the city a hundred miles east of it, where most of her family dwelt, equalled her in delicate refinement of dress—the result, no doubt, of ob-

servant sojourns in Paris, with a well-filled purse!

But the advances of all suitors were repelled with gentle, but unmistakable coldness; and only one besides herself realized that John Hamilton, the playmate of her childhood, the every-day friend of later years, who having acquired a competence, could not be suspected of mercenary motives, might at any time have had that well-controlled heart for the asking. True, he had sacrificed many of his best years to the claims of filial and brotherly duty, but, at last he was free. And now, if he rendered to any woman attentions into which the little world of Brucetown could read the slightest significance, it was to this gaudy, flippant stranger!

This was the thought, albeit vague and unacknowledged, which tortured Miss Tallon, during the uncomfortable silence which had fallen between herself and her old friend.

"But there is nothing so wrong as to be ground for remonstrance," said the priest at last.

"Only that she is slangy and flippant to the verge of irreverence, brazen in her pursuit of men's attentions, and, having a ready though hardly refined humor, she has cast a sort of spell over all our younger members. But know-

ing her brothers and sisters as we do, what could we expect?"

The priest had no answer, for he had himself accounted it a miracle of grace that the youngest of the wild and godless family in question had been brought through her widowhood and the death of her idolized child within the range of his influence, and finally into the Church.

"I had hoped so much for both from a possible friendship between you," he said regretfully.

"I can't imagine what Mrs. Thornton could have done for me," said Miss Tallon coldly. "But," rising, "I must go. I have already taken far too much of your valuable time."

"Don't mention it. My thought was rather of what you might have done for Mrs. Thornton. At least, dear child, knowing all the good God delivered her from in bringing her into the Church, you will make allowance for some little foolishness not yet outgrown, and pray for her perseverance. We who have always had the Faith cannot quite enter into the difficulties of a convert."

"It strikes me that we are more likely to err on the side of over-indulgence than of neglect, where converts are concerned. Good evening, Father."

Miss Tallon was down the steps of the rectory before Father O'Connor had found another parting word.

Now that his attention had been called to it, the good old priest had to admit Mrs. Thornton's flippancy, and her ready and thoughtless wit that seldom stopped to note where its sharp arrows pierced. Had he not more than once in his occasional visits to the Society of St. Martha, seen the droll little moue with which she received the measured utterances of the stately president? Had he not even caught her in a telling caricature of the president's grand manner? The offender received his remonstrance with a penitent sigh, but her lowered eyelids scarcely veiled two mirthful sparkles. There was no doubt, too, that she made the most of her widow's privileges in leading honest John Hamilton on a dance for her amusement.

Yet, among the poorest of his flock, her name was in benediction; her coming the herald of unfailing relief and gladness. But Miss Tallon also was assiduous in her visits to the poor; generous with material goods, lavish of advice and correction.

As one victim of adverse fortune was wont to put it: "Yes; I know she has given me many a thing, but she makes a body feel like a worm of

the earth at the same time. It's 'Why don't you keep yourself clean?' and 'Why don't you mend your clothes?' as if a body had two pair of hands and could be goin' all day, after bein' up all night with a sick baby, to say nothin' of a drunken husband thrown in now and again. But the little woman, God bless her! In she comes, and not a word about the dirt, but she takes the baby up herself, and bathes him as nice as you please, and makes me lie down for a couple of hours while she straightens up things, and leaves a bit of dinner ready for us before she's off. And I've known her many a time to go down on her knees and wash poor old Granny Grogan's feet, makin' nothin' but a joke of it; and the other day she was at the Polacks' 'way down the road where nobody else goes. The poor mother had hardly the clothes to cover her, and didn't that good little creature slip off her own warm woolen skirt, savin' your presence, and put it right onto Mrs. Zamfoxy, or whatever you call her."

Sometimes the priest found a poor sick room made beautiful with the flowers Mrs. Thornton had carried thither. Often he came upon her, perfectly at home in some wretched hovel, while she mended the tattered clothing of the children and made them presentable for school. She

had not much to give. She had to manage her little income well to keep up appearances, but she gave of her time and labor without stint, and forgot the charities of the day in the girlish pranks or flirtation of the evening.

"After all," mused Father O'Connor, "she has never an ill word of anyone, and if only she had the vocation, she would make a grand Sister of Mercy." But he smiled in spite of himself at the thought of Mrs. Thornton in a convent; the while he prayed for something to soften the daily increasing bitterness of Miss Tallon's heart towards the woman who stood between.

* * * * *

It had been a trying day for Miss Tallon. Mrs. Thornton's absence from the meeting of the Society of St. Martha had not been a relief; for on all sides there were regrets for her.

"She is so handy about making things over, and so ready to show one how," said even Rose Deering, erstwhile Miss Tallon's shy and silent worshipper.

For once, Miss Tallon did not call on Father O'Connor after the meeting. She hastened back to the stately solitude of her own home, where she might be free of bitter thoughts of the

woman who was supplanting her, and whose mischievous qualities seemed hidden from all eyes save her own. She would have denied herself even to Mr. Hamilton, who still visited her now and then, but that she met him face to face, in the hall, before the maid could announce him. Almost on his heels came Father O'Connor.

"I haven't seen Mrs. Thornton for more than a week. What has become of her?" asked the former. His hostess had heard the same words forty times that afternoon. This was the last straw. A bitter word that could never have been recalled sprang to her lips, but the priest's heavier voice drowned it unheard.

"Oh, Mrs. Thornton! Why, the children of those poor Zamofskys, down the road from the hollow, all have malignant diphtheria; the mother is in a bad way herself, and could get no help, so Mrs. Thornton went over last week, and shut herself up with them, 'for better or worse' as she says. I found it out only this afternoon. Dr. Stone thinks the children will come through all right—she's a great little nurse—but he fears for her, for all that she makes so light of it."

"She's a brick!" cried John Hamilton, "but she must be relieved. Did you ever hear of anything finer, Miss Tallon?"

The priest held his breath; but the demon was exorcised.

"The woman is a saint," said Miss Tallon, "and I am not worthy to loose the shoes from her feet."

"Oh, Miss Tallon; you would have done as much if you knew." There was no mistaking the sincerity of the man's voice and eyes.

"No matter about me. The question is of relieving her," said Miss Tallon, hurrying to the telephone, as she spoke. She was a woman who always had her wits about her in an emergency.

But the relief came too late. The Zamofsky children would recover; but their brave little nurse was poisoned through and through with the malignant disease.

"I suspected it," Mrs. Thornton said calmly, when Father O'Connor told her, and bade her prepare for her last hour. She was in Miss Tallon's best chamber, with an experienced nurse in attendance. Realizing her change of abode, she smiled faintly.

"Well, Father, in this case it will be as blessed to receive as to give. She is a good woman, with a Puritan streak in her; and I have been her torment....I meant no harm....I never cared a pin for John Hamilton....nor he for me

.....but I was full of....levity, you call it.... and her seriousness drew out all my mischief.... You never knew; but there's insanity in our family.... and I was fearing it, fighting it, all the time.... My only happy hours were when I was in church or with the poor.... Then I forgot.... The rest of the time I just had to keep fooling.... Tell her, and tell her, too, I'm glad to die her debtor.... God was so good to give me that chance with the Zamofskys.... It will count,—won't it, Father?"

"Count, my child! Haven't you laid down your life for those poor strangers? You know what Our Lord has promised for even a cup of cold water given in His Name; and you have given your all."

The tears were on the old priest's cheeks as he gave the last Sacraments to the dying woman, and stood by her through her agony, terrible, but mercifully short.

After Mrs. Thornton's death, Brucetown folk noticed a great change in Miss Tallon. The poor people down in the hollow said she was like their little favorite come back—only without the fun. Instead, were winning gentleness and humility which they could not quite express, but which they came to like as well. But no one

found the change sweeter than John Hamilton; and when, by-and-by he and Miss Tallon decided to spend the rest of their days together, their little world was sure that this was one of the marriages made in Heaven.

A CHRISTMAS RESCUE.

"Sure, it's his one fault, and folks shouldn't be too hard for the seldom time it gets the best of him. 'Tis the lifeless are faultless."

So Henry Morrison's fond old mother stated the case. Worse guilt would still have been venial to her in the son of her love.

"Best-hearted chap in town," said the men who knew him. "Goes months without taking a drop, but when he does break loose, he's a terror. Doesn't know his right hand from his left, for days together."

Various versions of both these opinions reached Kate Bowen, when Henry Morrison's attentions to this best and prettiest of the Green Hill girls began to look serious. But Henry had anticipated alike well-meant warnings and mischievous gossip by an open confession to his best-beloved.

"Yes, it is true. I am thirty years old now, and for five years I used to go off on a spree two or three days at a time every three or four months. But not since I've known you, Kate. For six months, a drop of liquor has not crossed

my lips; and if I had you to come home to, dear, I know I would never taste it again."

Kate was young and inexperienced, and very much in love; with boundless faith in her influence over her lover. He had a fair position, which he had kept through thick and thin, and even bettered within the year; for he was popular with his mates, and among them they managed to cover his bad days. When he was himself, he was the best salesman in the store.

Mrs. Bowen was disposed to lenient views of young men's follies. Kate was twenty-one now, and high time she was settled; for Margaret, aged twenty, and Marion past eighteen, to say nothing of two little maids in their second last year at St. Angela's must have their chance in life.

To Kate, indeed, "going on a spree" was a phrase of little meaning. She came of a strict and sober stock. Her father and her uncles were shining lights in the parish total abstinence society, and model family men in every way. Her twin brothers, the youngest of the household, were but lads of twelve. Father O'Connor, to be sure, bade her think well of the gravity of the change awaiting her, and suggested a probation of six months more for the ardent lover.

Hardly had it begun, however, when he had the chance of a trip to the Pacific coast for his firm. "And in this weather, what a wedding journey it would be, dear!" he urged. Mrs. Bowen reinforced his insistence, and ere six weeks more had gone by, he and Kate were married, and westward bound.

They came home in five weeks, as happy as birds, with picture galleries in their minds and souvenirs for all their kinsfolk in their trunks, to a neat little cottage in Green Hill, a few blocks from the home of Kate's maidenhood. Henry's work was in the heart of the city, and though he could not come home at noon, it was only on the busiest of evenings he missed the delicious little dinner always awaiting him at half-past six. He had been as good as his word. After nearly a year of marriage, the most critical had never discerned "sign or smell of liquor on him," as the dear old mother put it; and those who really cared for him believed his youthful faults and follies were outgrown.

But the first baby came, a boy, "the image of his father," according to nurse and doctor and admiring relatives; but merely a red, wrinkled, pudgy, and expressionless manikin to disinterested observers.

The proud young father lost his head completely and the day following the happy event "set the boy up" so often for all who would drink his health that the long-banished demon came back according to his wont, with seven others worse than himself. At home, all were pre-occupied with the young mother who, simultaneously, had a sudden change for the worse; and they were able to keep the sad truth from her. But it was a pale and shaken man who presented the babe at the baptismal font on the ninth day, and Father O'Connor sighed for his fulfilled forecast. Yet never were more earnest pledges and promises made than on that evening over the second Henry's devoted head; and Kate, who knew not what had mischanced until after she had been up and about awhile, readily accepted all excuses and renewed her faith in him, whose love and tenderness seemed to have grown so mightily to his need of sharing them.

But, alas! the barriers once down, came down again at briefer intervals and for lighter cause; until now, after seven years, he had worked back to the low plane of the periodical drunkard, from which his love for Kate Bowen once bade fair to lift him forever.

Who was to blame? He had a well-ordered home, three lovely children, and the sweetest and gentlest of wives. "Too sweet and gentle," said Kate's sister next in age, the tall and strong-willed Margaret, who was a young matron herself now, with the veriest lap-dog of a husband.

But, "God bless you, dear; it's you that'll bring him right yet, where a high-tempered woman would only drive him to the devil," said Henry's mother, who, contrary to the domestic tradition, lavished on her son's wife all the love and confidence she would have given to the daughter whom Heaven had denied her.

Kate, however, had lost faith in herself. She knew now but too well the horror from which her good old confessor would have saved her. If she had it to do again? Ah, me! she loved Henry as well now as on their bridal morn, and here were Henry's children. Oh, if she could be firm and strong like Margaret! But she always melted into tears at Henry's penitence, and always hoped, though faintlier now, that he would keep his oft-renewed and always broken promises.

She suffered unspeakable fear and anguish, not only when he lapsed, but daily in her dread

of this vile magic which changed the man to the beast, like Circe's spell of old.

The leaves of her cherished St. Joseph's Manual were worn thin and brown at the Thirty Days' Prayer; and because of a particularly dreadful outbreak at the November election, she had begun a Christmas novena that somehow, in His wisdom, God would arrest her beloved on the terrible descent to the drunkard's grave.

What chances of promotion he had missed! He was still at the fifteen hundred a year—and five of them now—on which they had married. They were still in the little cottage of their first housekeeping, which was not only crowded, but sadly in need of renovation within and without, while few additions had been made to the furniture of their bridal year. If Kate had not had that indescribable gift of putting the best foot foremost and creating the home atmosphere about her, the house in Green Hill had been a shabby and drear abode, indeed.

But these were the lightest of the loads on her heart. What if he should die in one of those terrible debauches, far from her care and the Sacraments of the Church! Sometimes this fear and horror so possessed her that even the caresses of her children—the two stalwart boys and the tod-

dling baby girl—could hardly bring a smile to her face. But she must keep her wits about her, whatever might befall, for not the least of the evil consequences were the periodical inroads on the family's maintenance, and it was for her to make the dollars that came into her hands as elastic as possible.

Of course, the little ones dreamed of Christmas, and speculated on what Santa Claus would bring. While they slept the mother dressed a cheap doll for Baby Mary, and knitted red mittens and "comforters" for the boys, till her husband tried to stop her busy fingers with promises of "doing the Santa Claus act as it had never been done in that house before." And Kate tried to smile down her presentiments of evil.

* * * * *

It was Christmas eve. It would be a busy evening in her husband's place of employment and Kate did not expect him for the evening meal. She had timidly suggested that he try to get a few moments for confession before his return, so they might approach the altar together on Christmas morning, as their wont was; and he had taken her word in good part. Why, then, was she so uneasy as the day wore on? At least she would do her own share to

win God's favor, and she was one of Father O'Connor's first penitents in the early afternoon.

Then to modest preparations for the Christmas dinner, and to sorting out in her own room, behind lock and key, the few poor little things she had gathered for the children's stockings. Their innocent certainty of Santa Claus and his well-laden sled smote her heart. Little Henry was sure of skates, a cart, a suit of kilts and some picture-books. John, two years younger, looked for a rocking-horse, a drum, a whistle and a rubber ball; while Baby Mary, unable to speak her wishes, hugged her tattered doll, and displayed her own shabby raiment with eloquence beyond words.

Kate's mother came over towards six o'clock, with a big fruit cake. They had meant to do something for the children, she told her daughter, but what with Fred's bronchitis, and their preparations for Marion's wedding on the 7th of January, they had their hands full. And loyal Kate, who, as far as possible, had kept her own troubles from her family, thanked her mother sweetly, and said no doubt their father would get the little ones much more than they ought to have. Strange that in these past years of trial she had grown somewhat away from her

own kindred, and found much more sympathy and comfort with her mother-in-law. This kindly soul came in after the frugal fast-night tea, with home-made candles done up in neat little bags for the Christmas stockings.

“Now, don’t be borrowing trouble, dearie,” she said. “I’ll stay with you till eleven o’clock; for I’m going to midnight Mass at the Cathedral with the O’Gradys; but for fear of anything,—though God is good and I believe all will be well—I’ll take your back-door key, and come home to you afterwards. And you go to bed now, and get the rest you need.

* * * * *

Grim-faced but soft-hearted Officer McDonough, pacing his beat before City Hall about ten o’clock, noticed through the fast-falling snow flakes, a huge, irregular object huddled on the curbstone. Investigating, he found a man almost buried between two enormous bundles, evidently containing Christmas gifts. A youngish man he was, respectably dressed, but so fuddled with drink that the policeman could not get him on his feet, nor rouse him to sufficient consciousness to tell his name or residence. An indistinct muttering of “Green Hill” gave the officer a slight clue, but not enough to act upon.

Officer McDonough was a Catholic and a fam-

ily man, and it grieved him sorely to find another so fallen by the wayside. But his reminders of home and Christmas fell on deaf ears, and his vigorous efforts to shake the unfortunate man back to reason, only resulted in his falling helpless on the road when the muscular grasp of the Good Samaritan relaxed. There was nothing for it but to call the patrol wagon, lift the senseless man and his bundles into it, and send him to the station with word to a friend there to care for him until Officer McDonough should report on relief from duty at half-past four o'clock.

So it befell that when Henry Morrison had slept off the worst of his over-indulgence, and sat up and gazed about him again, he discerned by the light that came over the transom the grated window and forbidding walls of a prison cell. It sobered him instantly, like the touch of imminent danger. The city clocks struck four. So. it was Christmas morning, and on this day of days, the fate he had so often dared had overtaken him. What a Christmas for his wife and children, and the poor old mother! Where were the gifts he had bought to gladden the day for them? Stolen, no doubt, or trampled under the feet of the crowds of last-minute Christmas shoppers. How had it happened? Why, some one gave him a hint in the afternoon

that he stood a good chance of the place—worth two thousand a year—which Peter Johnson would give up on the first of January to go into business for himself; and then, Jack Logan, whom he had lost sight of for so long, nearly took the breath away from him by coming in to pay an old debt of one hundred dollars' borrowed money. They must drink to his friend's mended fortunes. He remembered his Christmas shopping, and several more drinks between purchases; then the snow on his face and then no more until this awful waking.

Well, here was the end of promotion, and the strong probability of discharge from his actual position. Here, in a few hours, was the shame of arraignment with a crowd of common "drunks." To be sure, for the day's sake, he might be let off with a fine and reprimand. He could give a false name, but would that avail to hide his true one, when, in all likelihood, he would be confronted with recognizing eyes? And then, how could he face his little household with empty hands and the marks of his fall upon him?

He buried his face in his hard pillow. He felt for his knife. It was gone, but strangely enough, his money was safe. Well, there were other ways—oh, God, had it come to this!

Where was he? Surely no chimes but St. Mary's could play the *Adeste Fideles* so sweetly.

A key grated in the lock. The heavy door opened quietly. "Get up and come with me," ordered the big blue-coat gruffly. "You're the man that lives at Green Hill. Your things are all safe. I'll be part of the way home with you."

Henry Morrison, unnerved by the sudden relief, fell back on the cot almost unconscious.

"None of that now," said Officer McDonough sternly, dashing a handful of cold water in the pallid face. "Thing for you to do, man, is to get out of here as fast as you can, and see that you never come back."

While he was speaking, McDonough was getting his charge into his overcoat, and pulling his hat well down over his eyes. As the men, carrying the bundles between them, came out at the rear of the station, they faced St. Mary's Church.

"Next car to Green Hill won't go till half-past five," said the blue-coat. "I'm going in here to Mass; for I've had a hard night out in the snow, and when I get home I mean to sleep till dinner time. You come along."

The sexton, evidently a friend of Officer McDonough, put the bundles in the vestibule closet, while the two went in to Mass. Henry Morrison was fain to prostrate himself on the pave-

ment, in humility and thanksgiving for the undeserved mercy of God. It was but a quarter to five and a priest was in the confessional near which he was kneeling. He thought of his promise to Kate, and disappeared behind the red curtain. He dared not approach the altar, but, at least, he could cast off the burden of his sin, and make a promise which with God's help, would never again be broken. The men stayed only for one of the many Low Masses celebrated at a side altar—St. Mary's being the church of a large monastery—for Officer McDonough was sorely fatigued, and his companion longed to relieve the anxiety at home.

It had been indeed, a "weary and all-watched night" to Kate.

Till midnight she had gleams of hope. After that she could but close her eyes and hold fast to her Crucifix, when the worst apprehensions pressed upon her. She was up and pacing the house from door to window, when her mother-in-law let herself in quietly after the Midnight Mass.

"No, mother; I couldn't sleep," she answered to the latter's affectionate remonstrance. "This time, for sure, something awful has happened."

So the two sorrow-stricken women kept vigil, in silence, for the most part; each fearing to

she speak her inmost dread to the other. Finally, lights began to flicker in the neighbors' houses, and footsteps to sound the churchward way on the quiet street.

"In the name of God, Kate," said the older woman, "get ready for five o'clock Mass, and slip in with the crowd. Remember your novena. You've prepared for Communion, and maybe you never needed it more than now. I'll be with the children—and God is good."

The young wife rose and garbed herself for the street, silently, choking down a sob as she looked at the limp little socks hanging at the fireplace. Oh, to be in the dimmest corner of the church and to cast herself into the arms of God's mercy! She would, indeed, need all the strength that Heaven could send her for the shame or sorrow that might await her return.

It was still dark an hour later, as, closely veiled and avoiding all companionship, Kate crept home by the least frequented ways. But what was this? Lights in every window of her house, and her husband at the door to take her in his arms, and wish her a "Merry Christmas." "And with God's help, you'll never have another sad one through me," he murmured. "Yes, I've been at Mass, and at confession, too. Don't ask me any more now. Come and see the children's

presents, and your own and mother's; and here's fifty dollars to help you start a bank account."

Surely it looked as if Santa Claus had emptied his pack into the little parlor; and presently the dear mother, who had disappeared into the nursery at the sound of Kate's returning footsteps, was out with Baby Mary in her arms, and the two boys, in their pajamas, at their heels; and the appetizing odors of good coffee and broiled ham pervaded the house, and there was no happier Christmas breakfast in all the great city.

Kate asked no questions. The long desired promotion came at New Year's, and a big box of the best cigars went to Officer McDonough on the self-same day, and on all New Years thereafter; while the eldest boy, who had a marked taste for business, found a place in Henry Morrison's own department directly he left St. Mary's Grammar School. But it was not until after full five years of his thenceforth perpetual total abstinence that Henry Morrison told his wife of his Christmas rescue.

THE PLACE THAT WAS KEPT.

William Murray had received his call and was within two days of his ordination as sub-deacon. That would be on Wednesday, and on Saturday following, he would be promoted to deaconship. Priesthood would come at the Embertide preceding Christmas. No man of the year among all the candidates for sacred orders was more thoroughly satisfactory than he; and professors and fellow-students alike predicted great things for him in the holy state to which he was so manifestly called. Ecclesiastical seminaries in these old days were not alone severe tests of vocation, but of physical constitution. William Murray, however, after nearly four years of the austere regimen of St. Mary's, kept unimpaired the fresh color and splendid endurance which he had brought with him from the little inland city of his home, and had a boy's relish for a ball game or a tramp through the woods on the festal occasions when these diversions were in order. His unfailing good humor and readiness to help out a brother seminarist not so richly endowed by nature, made him a general favorite.

What if he were one of the few with a well-to-do father behind him, and no likelihood of demands from family necessities on the slender stipend of his curacy six months hence? It was well, as in this case, to see the good things of this world in the hands of one who would use them worthily.

So mused many a student whose own seminary course meant motherly sacrifices incredible, and whose ideas of affluence were measured by a standard far other than that prevailing in these days of the Rockefellers, the Carnegies, and the Schwabs.

Mr. Murray was in his room—not too large nor comfortable for a monk's cell. The candidates for sacred orders were, of course, in retreat, and he was resting in the half hour between the Way of the Cross and the second afternoon meditation. He felt the solemn peace of one who had made a momentous journey in safety, and for whom the Temple's door was opening. A sharp knock interrupted his musings.

"Mr. Murray is wanted in the President's room," announced Brother Felix. The young Levite promptly followed the summons the length of his own corridor, and one flight down to a room somewhat less contracted than his own, but notable chiefly for the big business-

like desk at which the head of the seminary was seated; and for the beautifully wrought and most devotional Crucifix which hung above it.

Father Riordan turned quickly as the door opened in response to his brisk "Come in." He never wasted words. "Sit down, William," indicating a chair near by, "and read your mother's letter. I also have had one from her."

The young man's face was white and rigid as he came to the end of the four pages. He lifted anguished eyes to the President's compassionate gaze, but no words came. One is not fluent in the face of a thunderbolt from a clear sky.

"Your duty is evident, William," said Father Riordan, though there was a tremor in his usually even voice. "Your father is but forty-eight years of age. He may live ten or fifteen years in his present condition. Your mother cannot carry on the business, even if she had not already enough to do in caring for this stricken man. Your brother is married, and there are two—or is it three children?"

"Two little girls, Father," said William thickly; and then after a palpable struggle for self-control, "it seems we have been living pretty close to our means, and there's practically nothing saved."

"It is for you, William, to provide for all these

helpless ones. God knows you can hardly suffer more in hearing this sentence than I suffer in uttering it. I have always been sure of your vocation. Perhaps in some wonderful way God will yet enable you to fulfil it. But now He has spoken clearly and plainly. Your place, for the time being, is at home."

So it came that on the day when his fellow seminarists, called like himself to the first of sacred orders, made the mystical step forward which separated them forever from the love of women and the joys of home, William Murray was taking stock in his father's store in Middleton, and pondering as to how he should strengthen a business which, trusting to its past reputation, had been over long allowed to "run itself." It must be brought back to its best estate for the sake of the crippled body and wrecked intelligence to whom the sad-faced wife was ministering so tenderly in the best chamber above; and for her sake, too, and that of the large-eyed, frightened children who had clung but yesterday to the ex-seminarist as drowning creatures clutch at their only hope.

A good brain with a strong will behind it can be turned to advantage in various directions. William Murray brought to a task uncongenial in itself the conviction of imperative duty and

his natural disposition to make the best of things; together with that business acumen which had made his professors foresee in him a successful administrator as well as a devout priest. He was young, strong, methodical, courteous; ascetic of nature and fond of work. At the end of the first year, he had paid all running expenses, and come out a trifle ahead. At the end of the second, the erstwhile tottering business was firmly on its feet, and there was a growing bank deposit. Within seven years, a modern grocery, with big plate glass windows and five hard-worked clerks had replaced the somewhat dingy store of his father's prime, in which children sent on errands furtively dipped grimy fingers in much too accessible sugar-bins, and barrels of salted mackerel and "siscoes," with a huge stack of dried codfish near the entrance, mingled their odors with those of the coffee, tea, dried fruit and spices in the middle. And this, although the young business man had relentlessly cut off "the bar"—then accounted an entirely natural and proper adjunct of a grocery store—in the very first week of his regency.

The class of custom had steadily risen, and great stacks of bananas, pyramids of oranges, boxes of nuts, a whole counter of glassed goods, with another of dainty confections, gave many

of the matrons on the pretty residential streets near by, easy minds at the advent of unexpected guests.

The young merchant could not be altogether insensible to the pleasure which follows an honest, hard-won success. In outward aspect, the seminarist was obliterated in the business man; yet the old ideal of life still ruled in the upper chamber of his heart. He was frequent at the Sacraments, and kept up with the literature of the vocation inevitably set aside with a fidelity which would have surprised the aforesaid prosperous matrons. These had, one and all, by this time decided there could be nothing "unlucky" in a seminarist who had come home at the call of duty and whose temporal affairs the Lord had so manifestly prospered.

Often of a quiet Sunday, young Murray opened the deep lower drawer of his private desk, and drew forth the breviary which his best-loved professor had given him at parting.

"Through my sister's kindness, I had it ready for you, and I know you will need it yet," Father Morgan had murmured on that sorrowful day; and then, "the lines on the last fly-leaf are pasted in very lightly. You can slip them out if you choose."

But William had not removed the lines, and he

never failed to turn to them when he took up the book. In him, the comon masculine distaste for feminine poetry was counteracted by remembrance of the inspired Magnificat, the canticle of Deborah, and the prayers of Judith and Esther; and he loved the inscription anyway for the handwriting of the young priest who but two years after their parting had died the death of the predestinate. Might not the words prove prophetic?

But still our place is kept, and it will wait
Ready for us to fill it, soon or late.
No star is ever lost we once have seen;
We always may be what we might have been.

The prospect, it must be confessed, was distant. For the benefit of his parents and the social advantage of his sisters, bright and beautiful girls in attendance at the best of the local convent schools, he had removed the family as soon as his business permitted, to a pretty cottage with a large garden, half a mile down the main avenue. For himself, he used the things of this world like a sojourner of a day, ready to let them go at any moment.

Although Mr. Murray had become a leading parishioner of the Church of the Holy Apostles, and a most generous patron of the various

schemes devised by the rector to eke out the building fund, it was noticed that while he cheerfully treated twenty fair maidens to ice cream at picnic or festival at one fell swoop, he was never seen in company of single girl or woman. He did not appear purposely to avoid these associations. He had many admiring friends among womankind. Mary Griffin, assistant principal of the high school, and the handsomest and cleverest young woman in town, had been heard to say that Mr. Murray's example was a perfect inspiration to her—she being also the mainstay of her own family—and a matron of matchmaking proclivities declared that, as these two persons were well suited to each other, and would probably both be on in years before they were released from present obligations, they ought to be good friends now, and get promptly married when their chance came.

But Mary was too modest and delicate to invite attention, and though William Murray enjoyed his occasional chance meetings with her, she was in his mind but one of the host of good women whom Thomas a Kempis would commend collectively to Heaven.

When William was thirty-two his father had the third shock, and after an interval of consciousness long enough to set his spiritual house

in order and to know that his dear ones were provided for, he passed away in great peace.

A year later, Gertrude, just come of age, confided to her brother her desire to enter the Novitiate of the Sacred Heart at Kenwood, and he won over the sorrowing mother, and himself brought Gertrude to the home of her heart, with a goodly portion. Hardly had Gertrude taken the veil, than young Harry O'Brien sought William's intercession for an early marriage with his remaining sister, Christina. So a family of but two remained in the cottage on the avenue, though the O'Briens set up their roof-tree near, that the young wife might have her mother's company and counsel, especially when the baby came. This important personage was by common desire Uncle William's namesake and Godson.

And now, the staid bachelor uncle, who had heretofore manifested a kindly though distant regard for the five sturdy sons of his elder brother Richard, became the devoted slave of his young sister's first born; and the baby, as soon as he began to take notice, evidently returned the affection with interest. Oftentimes, he would quiet down in his uncle's strong arms when all the blandishments of the little mother had failed. The man felt an indescribable thrill

from those soft baby fingers as they patted his cheek or tugged at his mustache.

From this time, ascetical literature and inspection of the Breviary were set aside, and William made up his mind that, if he ever really had a vocation, God would not have put so many obstacles in the way of its fulfilment.

After all, if he must live in the world like the most of men, why should he forego all that made living sweet? His mother was only fifty-six. He must keep a home for her. She could not be happy on another's floor, as she pathetically put it, and she was a frail creature at best, tried to the breaking point during the good years of her life. William missed sorely the bright presence of his sisters. He missed the flowers which Christina always set on the dining room table. The closed piano and darkened parlor suggested the house of death. He never realized the home's need of something young and blooming for its perfection, as now, nearing his fortieth year, and older still by reason of early and long-borne cares, he returned every eventide to the house bereft of cheer.

If youth could bud and blossom again within its walls how happy both for his mother and himself! If—but he put the thought away at first as if it had been a temptation. It came back

again and again, however, with insistent sweetness.

“Well, William, why not?” said Father Brennan, when the former frankly brought his dream to the light before him who knew his youth’s renunciation, and had been his friend and confidant ever since. “More than one good woman in Middleton, suitable in years and discretion, would thank Heaven fasting, as Shakespeare says, to be the choice of a man like you.”

There was a long silence, and both men’s cigars were half gone before either spoke again. Father Brennan’s hope was not remote from the plans of the match-making matron already mentioned. He knew Mary Griffin’s lovely, self-sacrificing nature, and her long struggle to give home and education to the younger brothers and sisters, all but one of whom would soon be in a position to take care of themselves. Why should not these two needs of love and home accord, since William had evidently put higher aspirations by.

William Murray spoke again. “I know my mother would be glad to see youth and liveliness in the house once more. She has said as much to me a hundred times since Christina’s wedding. But I hope you won’t think me foolish, at

my time of life. It's Rosamond Barry or nobody."

"Rosamond Barry, who stood up with your sister and was Godmother to the little boy! William, she's twenty years younger than you."

"Don't you think I realize that? Perhaps it was because my own youth was cut so short that youth appeals to me. I know if I marry at all, I ought to think of a sensible woman who'll never see thirty again; but a man can't do everything on strict business principles."

"Well, I wish you success, William; and I hope Rosamond will know a prize when she sees it."

"Don't say that, Father Brennan; the good fortune will be all on my side, if she will consider me."

His thought of Rosamond Barry had been of slow growth, but looking back, now that he had given it the freedom of his waking and sleeping dreams, William Murray knew that its first fine filaments had struck root in his heart in the days of her golden-haired childhood, when she was wont to come into his store Saturday afternoons for her five cents' worth of chocolate creams, and always got double measure. The golden hair was of a sunny chestnut now, thick and wavy, and showing the tiniest white parting over a

broad, low forehead. Her large eyes were blue and deep, with wondrous glints in them, and her features delicate and clear-cut. As she sat in the rocker under the vines of his sister's porch, toward sunset the next evening, holding little William in her arms, the man who loved her thought of Raphael's *Madonna della Sedia*.

Nor was he without hope. Within the past few months, he had shown attentions to Rosamond as never to any other woman, and she had not repelled them. At this very moment, the childish locket of which she seemed inordinately fond, hung from the rich gold chain he had sent her on her nineteenth birthday. She had not demurred when a little earlier, he had commemorated their sponsorship of Christina's baby, with a pair of heavy gold bracelets. Nay more, when the theatre season had closed in late April with Madame Modjeska's first appearance in Middleton, she had gone to "Mary Stuart" in his company, and he remembered with a pleasant warmth about his heart that she held out her little hands to him, just as she might have ten years before.

He had put his fate to the touch at this delightful moment under the vines, but that Harry, just home from business, and eager for a frolic with the rosy baby, broke in on their quietude.

After all, however, it was fitter for him to seek her under her father's vine and fig-tree. The Barry's home was but a few doors from Christina's, and thither William wended his way at dusk. Rosamond's voluble aunt met him at the front door. "Would Mr. Murray just take this chair at the end of the porch. Rosamond would be at liberty in a little while, and it was so close indoors." Mr. Murray could but acquiesce in the arrangement. Presently, however, he was aware of voices; one deep and indignant, the other soft and remonstrant.

"Now, Frank, I never had a thought of him."

"But you went with him to see Modjeska!"

"When you were not here to take me. Why he's an uncle and a big brother rolled into one, and Frank—don't think me awfully superstitious, as you wouldn't expect a young American girl to be—but even if he were ten years younger, I couldn't think of a man who left the Seminary within two days of Holy Orders. Why, my aunt told me—" but William Murray, realizing by this time the young lover's subject of conversation, rose heavily like a man half-dazed by a mighty blow, and made his way from the house unnoticed.

As he re-entered his own front door, the maid met him with a frightened face. "Oh, Mr. Wil-

liam, your mother has just been taken awful bad, and Mr. Miller, next door, has run for the priest and the doctor."

The gentle spirit went home to God at day-break. After the funeral William wrote to Father Riordan:

"I am free now. Is there still a place for me? I will be thirty-nine in September, but I am still a young man. I am equally ready for Newfoundland or Louisiana, or a place in a small-pox hospital. I want to enter the Congregation. If you give me any hope, I will ask the Bishop for my exeat."

"Come!" was the answer received within twenty-four hours. Then William Murray sold out his business and his property, and divided half the proceeds among his kindred.

A few weeks later, he met Mary Griffin returning from her school, as he left the Bishop's house with his exeat. She was transfigured to his eyes as if a silvery virginal light shone about her; and he obeyed his impulse to tell his plans to this good woman, and to ask her prayers.

"Your place has been kept," she said softly. "I am very glad for you."

And she was glad. It is infinitely easier to give the vainly beloved to God than to any fel-

low-creature; and the hopeless affection dissolved as she spoke into such kindly interest and good-will as any one may feel for him who is taking the Lord for his portion.

Laying down the rest of his possessions for the enlargement of the Seminary, William entered the Novitiate with his poor religious outfit and cherished Breviary, his dead friend's gift. He was ordained to the priesthood in due season and missioned to New Orleans just before the yellow fever epidemic of 1878. He rested not, day or night. He spent himself like water for the victims. Fifty men and women, some of whom he helped back from the gates of death, were won to the Church from misbelief or unbelief, by his example and ministrations. But his life was the forfeit. Mary Griffin read the telegram in the evening papers:

New Orleans, October 4, 1878.

"The Rev. William Murray, late of Middleton, died here this morning of yellow fever."

She went into the church with a bouquet of red roses to lay before the Blessed Sacrament, and made thanksgiving for the dead priest's early won crown till the sexton came to close the doors for the night.

Mrs. Frank Kelly—Rosamond Barry that was—cried a little, and drew nearer to her husband,

as they sat together in the sombre autumn twilight.

“Oh, Frank, to think that I have known a real martyr, and that I used to buy candy from him when I was a little girl! But, Frank, I’m so glad it wasn’t you.”

A MARRIAGE OF SELF-RESPECT.

Platonic friendships were scouted in our community; and the attentions of Dr. Mortimer Wilson to Teresa Dunn had been so prolonged and open that the most doubtful and circumspect in regard to others' love affairs felt justified in predicting an ultimate marriage. Of course, there lacked not acquaintances of both to wonder "what he saw in her." She was pretty enough, well educated and all that; but not only was she without fortune, but she had actually to earn her own living.

It was a time-honored custom among us that a young lawyer or physician should marry a girl with means; and there was no excuse for a departure from sound precedent on the part of Dr. Wilson, since there were at least half a dozen heiresses who would have welcomed his addresses.

He had made an early success, and his prospects were of the best; for he had wisely chosen a special field instead of the over-crowded one of general practice.

Teresa Dunn's lack of fortune was, to be sure,

somewhat offset by the facts that she came of a refined and once wealthy family; that she was its sole representative, and would bring her husband no detrimentals in the way of marriage relations; that she had been a member of the household of her guardian, a man of established position, until she was able to do for herself; and that her employment was of the intellectual order and well paid. She had obtained a small position in a well-known publishing house at the age of eighteen, and had found her place so congenial and had profited so thoroughly by her opportunities that now, at twenty-eight, she was one of the best readers of *MS.* in the establishment. Within a couple of years she had exchanged her fourth floor back room at Madame Millet's for a small suite somewhat further from town, taking an old family friend to be her chaperon and direct her modest housekeeping.

These circumstances, much honor as they reflected on the young woman's literary and business ability, hardly justified her evident social ambitions, reflected the acquaintances above mentioned, who had not progressed far enough in their social evolution to realize how much more cultivated and interesting was Teresa Dunn than any of the daughters of mere new money in the same circles, who, since their

school days, had lived the conventional social life, intent only on husbands who would lift them to a somewhat higher level of social opportunity than their parents had been able to attain for them; and, not seldom, very impatient of the restrictions of the Church on mixed marriages,—since, as one of them plainly put it, “there are so few really nice Catholic young men.”

Dr. Wilson was one of the few who in advantages of foreign travel, polish of manner and membership in certain exclusive clubs was “nice” enough to fulfill their social ideal, and it was a little aggravating to its cherishers to hear of his attentions to a person who was nobody now, even if her father had made and lost two fortunes ages ago.

Teresa Dunn, however, heard none of these criticisms, and if she had would only have smiled tolerantly at them. She was happy in her friendship with Dr. Wilson, and not impatient for its development into a stronger feeling. Yet, as the indications of such development were too marked for the most diffident of women to miss them, she let her heart keep pace with it, and rejoiced that her friend was a Catholic. Even if her religious loyalty had not taken the lead, her business experience had long ago

made short work of possible delusions as to the superiority of the average non-Catholic young man.

Within the past year and a half, she and her friend had talked together intimately of most matters of human interest. His incessant "you and I" in reference to present points of sympathy and future events had been long ago construed into implicit declaration of love or offer of marriage, by women less delicate in feeling or more anxious for a settlement in life. But though his eyes and voice grew steadily eloquent of a deeper feeling than friendship, he had never yet said: "I love you; will you be my wife?"

Teresa Dunn remembered this in his defence on that bitter day when she became suddenly aware of a change in their relations; that his religious profession was of the shallowest; and he but too ready to sell heart and soul for money.

Yet she loved him still to her own shame, and in her own despite; and knew that he loved her, and would gladly have married her, if she could have given him the help he needed against a threatened calamity.

So, by mutual consent, these two fell apart; and while their social world was still connecting their names as heretofore, Teresa knew that Dr. Wilson had successfully sought the hand of Emily Morgan,

now the only daughter and heiress of Peter Morgan, the rubber merchant and the richest Catholic in town, and that the engagement would be duly announced after Easter. The marriage would take place in June, and the young couple would start on a prolonged tour of Europe and the East. The death of Miss Morgan's only sister, less than a year before, was a present reason for silence; the Doctor's courtship was very quiet, and the two had not yet been seen together in public, even with a chaperon.

It was early January now. Teresa's reprieve was short. Oh, if something might happen before the announcement! She was fighting a hard battle with wounded love and womanly self-respect, and might have gone down in it, but for the work that must be done, if she and the old friend whose earthly Providence she was would keep their little home.

And as she struggled behind locked doors in the darkness, in her agony of pain and humiliation, the resolution grew within her to prove to her unworthy lover ere ever his name was coupled with another's, not only that her love for him was dead, but that she had put between herself and the prying world some proof of its death that could not be gainsaid! But how? A woman's mind is in-

genious, and her will once set to a certain end is hard to baffle.

If her grief made any inroads on her beauty, she so hid them by a little more attention to her toilet, and closer absorption in her work, that even her housemate, who had never ventured a second allusion to Dr. Wilson after his visits had ceased, could hardly detect a change in Teresa's looks or manner.

But a fortnight had passed without clearing the prospect at all, and Teresa's sedulous self-repression was testing her endurance. She was vainly trying this morning to concentrate her mind on a particularly uninteresting manuscript. It was bright and cheerful in her little work-shop with its warm reds and browns, the flowering plants in the windows, and the well-chosen pictures, souvenirs of her thoughtful friends' foreign travels, wherever she turned her eyes; but without it was a chill and bitter day. Hardly a day for callers, she thought, as presently she was aware of the bell, and a protracted argument in the corridor.

"But I am sure she would see me." It was a man's voice, rich and full, with a foreign accent and an indescribable thrill of anxiety. She remembered it as distinguishing one of the clients of her house—the man who had long been planning the novel of the age—an impracticable German dream-

er, she had called him in her own happy days. Her heart stirred with pity for him now. She, too, had been a dreamer, and had found her waking cruel.

"I will see Mr. Hauenstein," she said, opening the door of her study. The little maid retreated, and her visitor entered deferentially, with pathetic gratitude in his large, lustrous blue eyes.

He had his manuscript with him, as she expected.

"Mr. Brooks said I might take it to you myself," he exclaimed, as if to anticipate even a mental protest against his unbusiness-like action.

"It would have come to me in a few days, anyway," she said, with a reassuring smile.

"Be merciful to it," he murmured,—*"it has drained me of my life."*

She looked up quickly. He had changed woefully since their last meeting, not only in loss of flesh and intensified pallor, but in shabbiness of attire and want of self-confidence. Yet he had once evidently been a handsome and athletic man.

As he leaned back in the morris chair to which she had motioned him, his eye-lids fluttered and his breath came in gasps.

She rose and passed quickly into the little dining-room; and presently returned with a foaming egg-nogg. "Drink this," she said imperiously.

He quaffed it eagerly, and the deathlike look passed from his face.

"Keep quiet, while I read your first chapter," she commanded. "We shall have luncheon in half an hour."

"I have not tasted food in two days," he murmured brokenly.

A little later, warmed, fed, and comforted, he dreamed for a while in the morris chair, no sound breaking the silence but the slight rustle of the leaves, as his hostess turned page after page. At last, he roused himself, and watched the alert face of the reader; and when he was aware that she had forgotten him and her surroundings in the creature of his brain, and saw her smiles, yea, and her tears, and finally her tense absorption, as the story reached climax and close, he held his breath and waited, as the prisoner on trial for his life waits the return of the twelve good men and true who hold his fate in their hands.

At last, the strained nerves of the reader relaxed; and she came back with a sigh to reality. She had not moved when Mrs. Wallace came in an hour earlier, and made the lights, and now it was very dark outside.

Teresa rose from her desk and moved toward Ferdinand Hauenstein with outstretched hands and shining eyes. "You have kept your promise. It is an exquisite story, and a strong one, too. Of course, my verdict is not final, but I have hardly a

doubt as to the decision of our house. I will do my best to have it hastened."

He spoke no word, but pressed her kind little hand first to his breast and then to his dry and fevered lips.

"Mr. Hauenstein must dine with us," said Mrs. Wallace.

"Indeed, yes," said Teresa, with eyes of cordial invitation. "We have done a great day's work together."

Mrs. Wallace never questioned her young friend's actions, taking it for granted that all literary folk are queer. But her eyes were full of sympathy, as she turned to Teresa after his early leave-taking.

"Poor man! He looks very delicate. An old acquaintance, I suppose?"

"Yes; but I never dreamed of his ability, until today. He has written a wonderful book. I hope our house will see it with my eyes."

Then she sought solitude; for the way had suddenly cleared before her, and she wanted to study her steps.

It was even as she had hoped. Stirred by her enthusiasm, Mr. Brooks, the head of the firm, devoted the next day to Ferdinand Hauenstein's novel, accepted it immediately, set his best artist

at the illustrations, and announced it among the Spring books.

It had a fortunate name, and Teresa made the advance notices her own peculiar care. Never had she worked in her life as for this poor stranger, whom once she had regarded with the half-contemptuous pity which a strong and normal woman ordinarily gives to the man who is too fine for the battle of life. Now and then, she met Dr. Wilson in a casual way, and with the memory of their parting in his heart, he marvelled at her absorbed and interested face. She recognized him, as if he were the most casual acquaintance.

"Either she is a consummate actress, or she is without a heart," he thought; forgetting that he had no right to a grievance in the matter.

But as the book waxed, the author waned. Teresa had no thought, apparently, but to make his last weeks happy. The publishers cheerfully advanced money for his needs, for the book would be on the market by mid-March, and its success was assured. In March came an epidemic of bronchial troubles, and Ferdinand Hauenstein was an early victim.

His doom was sealed, when Teresa carried the first copy of his book to his bed-side. No father ever took his first-born to his heart with tenderer

emotion. "There is only one thing dearer," he whispered hoarsely.

She held her breath. "It is too late for that now," he went on. "But I have dreamed——"

"It may ease your heart to tell your dream," she said softly.

"If I could live for this name, which you have made for me, and if you would bear it."

"But if I would, anyhow," she murmured, hiding her face in his pillow.

"Oh, my dearest; to leave you my own, to know that you would mourn for me and pray for me. God has been too good."

An hour later, Father Doran, the Catholic chaplain of the hospital, married them, with his acolytes, Mrs. Wallace and the physician in temporary residence, as witnesses. The bride lifted her eyes as the last named entered. It was Dr. Wilson. He was paler than she as their eyes met, and he noted a strange look behind the tears in hers. He had come only that afternoon to replace Dr. Thomas, who had been stricken down with pneumonia.

The death-bed marriage and the immense funeral were more than a nine days' wonder among us; and contributed something, perhaps, to the enormous local sales of Ferdinand Hauenstein's novel. Fifty thousand! seventy-five thousand! and demand for

a large amount of unpublished work found among the dead man's effects.

His widow would edit these earlier writings.

"An old friend; her first lover, I suspect," explained Mrs. Wallace; and then we doubted if there really ever had been anything between Teresa Dunn and Dr. Wilson.

But before it came to this, we had another sensation. Miss Morgan was one of the victims of the epidemic, and died a fortnight before the time set for the announcement of her engagement to Dr. Wilson. Then, somehow, it became known that the Doctor was financially embarrassed.

"Perhaps that was why Teresa Dunn threw him over," some one suggested; though his presence at Miss Morgan's funeral and the haggardness of his aspect also afforded food for interesting speculation.

* * * * *

"Teresa, you never loved him; you married him to save your self respect. I know I am unworthy of a thought from you—but oh, if we could put away the past, and by-and-by——"

They had met in front of St. Mary's Church at twilight, one evening in the following autumn, as Teresa came forth from her devotions, and Dr. Wilson from a professional call near by.

"Kindly respect my bereavement, Dr. Wilson,"

she said with gentle coldness. "There will never be any place in my life for you, though I sincerely wish you all success and happiness."

The woman who had befriended a dying stranger, and married him to put her widow's veil between herself and the curious world, had come to love the soul of the man whose name had been her bulwark, as she had never loved him who had earlier won her heart and ruthlessly cast it aside; and she spent her life in greatening her husband's fame and in prayer and charities for his everlasting rest.

THE TRAGEDY OF A BROKEN WORD.

Ward Eleven, of the great Lake port, the scene of our story, bordered the smallest and stormiest of the five island seas on the one side, and the canal on the other. It was a distinctly Irish settlement in the old days of which we write, the grain elevators, the railroad repair shops, and the chances of employment on the lake boats having drawn thither a multitude of the strong-armed sons of Erin. Already they had developed a political leader among them, and the vote of Ward Eleven was a factor most respectfully considered at the local elections.

But Ward Eleven, whatever its political and business importance, was not an ideal residential section. Its main street began at the flats on the edge of the lake, straggling on for over a mile, and rising slightly as it went; its centre devoted to shops and offices; its extreme end to the houses of those earlier settlers, among whom were some Irish Protestants, who had prospered into residences of two and a half stories, with enclosed yards—persons whose ambitions might have inclined them to the West Side, but whose political and financial interests dictated a longer tarrying in the scenes of their humble beginnings.

Down on the flats, the fresh relays of the poorest immigrants made their first abodes. Aged women with short drugget skirts, plaid shoulder-shawls crossed on their bosoms, and white caps with many ruffles shading their wrinkled and weather-beaten faces, sat all day in pleasant weather on the front steps close to the street, knitting worsted socks. Gaunt, young, many-childed mothers came occasionally from the crowded interiors of the stuffy cabins, with lusty babes in arms, "to draw their breath" in the intervals of exacting household tasks.

A malarious atmosphere with a suggestion of tragedy in it, hung over the district. Folk were not as wise in sanitation then as we are today, and the large infant mortality, the recurrent typhoid, and the undue proportion of deaths of adolescents from what the old poetically called "a decline" were generally accounted dispensations of Providence, and part of the risks one had to take in the new country.

The railroad zigzagged through the district, crossing Moose street about the middle, at grade. Most of the children had to traverse the broad tracks alike on their way to the parish or the public school; and the Sisters in the Convent hard by St. Patrick's Church, were not seldom called on to prepare a mangled little body for its coffin,

Few families in the Ward that had not lost a father or a son in an elevator accident, or in a wreck on the treacherous Lake.

The whole place was repulsive to Tom Hartnett, when, on his arrival in America, he took up his abode with his maternal aunt, Widow Nora Dugan, a keen business woman, who owned her little shop and the fairly comfortable living rooms above it, a block beyond the railway tracks on the progressive side of Moose street.

Tom was too kindly and tactful to show any disappointment in his new surroundings, or weariness at his aunt's tale oft-told and with pardonable satisfaction, as to how she had "raised herself" by her own efforts. He was a clever youth, who had made the most of his time at the National School in his native town, and was better grounded in the "three R's" to say nothing of history and geography, than most of the young fellows who had grown up in the new country; and he soon proved a valuable aid to his aunt in the management of her business.

He absorbed America, too, at every breath, spending all his spare moments in getting acquainted with the handsomest parts of the city; and fully resolved that his first step, once he was well on his feet financially, would be into a dwelling where the air was more healthful and the associations cheerier than in his present home.

He would stay by the shop for the time being; for his aunt dealt with him as businesslike as if he had been "a black stranger," paying him just wages from the start, and allowing for kindred ties only in her indignant refusal of "board." Therefore he saved his money, and quickly drew near the realization of his dream to buy a share in a boat, for here was a healthier and more congenial life and more money.

His aunt was proud of Tom—first for his good looks, which he got on her side of the house, as she would naively assert. He stood fully six feet in his stockings, was strongly and symmetrically built, with clean-cut, regular features, and a head of wavy jet black hair; while his eyes—real Irish grey eyes—were already making havoc among susceptible girlish hearts in the neighborhood. Then she was proud—for family's and country's sake alike—of his education, and of his proficiency on the violin and concertina, and other social accomplishments. Nay, for all that she had clung to the ways of her Irish upbringing and to Irish affiliations in the new land, she had pride, though not unmixed with foreboding, in Tom's rapid Americanization. He had gone to a private night-school on the West Side from his first winter, and had rid himself of his Irish accent within the year.

“But what harm,” she mused, “so long as he goes to Mass every Sunday, and is regular at his duty.” Indeed, in this particular, no criticism could be fairly made of Tom, and Father O’Neill often privately proposed him as a model to other young men who were growing careless.

His aunt’s misgivings increased, however, as her keen eyes noted his cold aversion to the unkempt cabins by the lake, and the white-capped grandmothers on the doorsteps. The first unpleasant words she ever had with her nephew were in response to his suggestion that she should discard her checked aprons and wear every day the black silk ones, heretofore sacred to Sunday afternoons.

She was not a woman of many words, but on this occasion, she said some plain things about “folks that were getting beyond themselves entirely.”

The subject was dropped, and matters went on in their former even tenor for another while. Then a graver difference of opinion arose.

Aunt Nora believed in early marriages. Tom was fully twenty-five, and had never a word for a neighbor’s daughter nor a pretty young customer, beyond “bidding her the time of day,” but he spent two evenings a week out of the house as regular as the clock.

He had not gone into politics, and he eschewed

saloons. What could it mean? Current gossip finally made her aware that he was a frequent visitor at the house of William Campbell, who had the best residence on Moose street, with a flock of pretty daughters under its ample roof.

"But them the black and bitter Prodesans," moaned Mrs. Dugan, determined to have it out with Tom, before they slept that night.

He did not deny his friendship with the Campbells, nor his especial interest in Jane, the stately eldest daughter.

"And that's what comes of too much ambition for the style and the riches," cried the faithful old daughter of the Church; "none of your own kind good enough for a second look at them."

"Aunt Nora, be reasonable. I haven't offered marriage to Miss Campbell yet; and if I thought twice as much of her as I do—and God knows I couldn't—it would never go any further, if she didn't agree to all the conditions."

"Well, it's one thing to promise and another thing to keep the promise," said Aunt Nora impatiently; but in her heart, she was somewhat reassured. Maybe the girl would come over to Tom's religion before ever he put a ring on her finger. She had heard of such things "at home"—so she always referred to Ireland—and why not here? And lest she herself might have been too set on trifles

in her dealings with Tom, she became trebly solicitous for his comfort, even to the extent of renouncing her own will in the matter of the checked aprons.

Unhappily, Tom was too deeply in love to notice; though once, as in a dream, he became aware of his aunt's unfailing attendance at the week-day Mass, and of the light which burned steadily at the Blessed Virgin's shrine in her bed-room, and thought, with a passing pang, that it was all for him.

Nor in vain, as he soon remembered with no small elation; for on his proposal of marriage, the question of difference of faith came up, and Jane expressed her absolute readiness to conform to all the conditions demanded by the Church of the non-Catholic party to a mixed marriage.

"Indeed, I'm thinking," the young man said as he joyfully told it all to his aunt, "she may come into the Church before we're married at all."

"Well, I hope that will be the way of it. She'll do more for you when you're courtin' her, than she'll ever do again," said Mrs. Dugan dryly. "But ye have a year before ye yet, and I hope she'll make good use of it.

The girl did go so far as to call with her lover on Father O'Neill, and to accept with apparent pleasure certain books of instruction which that

kindly old priest bestowed on her, and a letter of introduction to Mother Josephine, who was wont to help him with intending women-converts; yet whenever Tom expressed his hope that they might be one in faith before the marriage day, her word was, with pleading eyes uplifted, "But, dear, you wouldn't have me come in before I am convinced."

Tom had a good deal on his mind these days. He had attained his ambition, and bought a third interest in a fine new lake-boat, "The Decatur," of which he was to be first mate. His aunt, meantime, making the best of circumstances, had brought over another nephew to take Tom's place in the shop.

Following her inclination, she would have had little to do with Tom's prospective wife, but, as she put it, she couldn't refuse to be said by Father O'Neill, and maybe it was true that God had a work before her yet.

"But Father, I can't warm to the girl. It isn't that she's not pleasant enough with me, but there's something that sly about her!"

"We must be careful lest we judge rashly," said the priest; but Jane had made a like impression on his own mind. Even her betrothed, who would laugh boyishly in her presence at some immediate evidence of her adroitness, or at an amusing story in which she had got the better of somebody, would

later, in a flash of sanity, remember the incident with distaste. But flashes of sanity are rare in the high fever of first love; and what with helping to fit out "The Decatur," and furnishing his pretty cottage on the West Side, his wedding day was upon him before he realized it.

He alone felt it a shadow on the day that they must be married in the vestry without prayer or blessing; but the shadow of separation for his first business trip a month after the wedding was heavy on both.

"And you will see Father O'Neill, sometimes when I am gone, dear; and study the catechism he gave you." Tom was strapping his satchel as he spoke, and he did not see the mocking glance his wife directed at her sister, who was to stay with her during her husband's absence, as she answered: "Of course, Tom; I'll have the book by heart before you get back."

And then came the last embrace and quick tears, real enough, too; for Jane loved her handsome young husband after her own fashion; and in comforting her, and promising her letters from every port they should stop at, he forgot all things else.

Before the year ended, a new interest was coming into their lives. He got the news of his little daughter's birth at Chicago; and she was more than a week old by that time. How long

the hours till they had taken on cargo, and were headed for home again! His day dreams were of the christening. They would call her for Aunt Nora, of course; and Aunt Nora and his brother Michael would be Godmother and Godfather.

The young mother was up and about to receive him; for she was of the strong womanhood of an earlier time. And the baby! The sweetest, daintiest little creature, with his own Irish grey eyes.

"But we must be quick about the christening, Jane, dear. Three weeks old, and a little heathen yet," he said, touching the child's soft cheek tenderly.

"You needn't fret about that," answered Jane, with a short laugh. "She's christened already."

"Oh, you mean she has had private baptism. But Margaret said nothing in her letter—"

"No; I mean she has had Protestant baptism in my own church. You needn't look like that, Tom. The mother that bears a child has a right to have her say about its religion."

"But, Jane, your solemn promise!"

"A fig for promises! Can't a woman change her mind? There, don't be a fool, Tom."

But Tom was gone.

"Let him work off his temper," she said to her

sister ,an hour later. But it was evidently a slow process. The supper table, daintily spread, waited in vain. The clock struck ten and then eleven.

"I hope he won't be coming home the worse for liquor," ventured the sister. But the wife turned on her like a lioness. "Don't be slandering your betters. Get Frank to go down to the wharf and bring him home."

"The boat was gone half an hour when I got there, and him on it," reported Frank, coming in breathless at midnight. "Say, Sis, that was a pretty mean trick you played on him."

Two days later the worst storm in a generation broke over the lake, and "The Decatur" was lost with all on board.

"Well, there's won't be any more young Prodesans of his stock," said Aunt Nora, with tearless eyes, when the news was broken to her by a kindly neighbor. "God grant he knows I took the one chance I got, and baptized the poor little thing myself the day it was born, when it looked as if the life would blow out of it like the flame of a candle."

The baby died within a year; and within another twelve-month, the young widow was wedded to a rich and elderly North of Ireland man, grand-master of an Orange lodge in Antrim, who had come over to make some investments in the city of her home.

AN ATLANTIC LINER EPISODE.

It was the first ocean voyage of both mother and daughter, and Miss Waldron, aged twenty-five, found it no whit harder to restrain her excitement than Mrs. Waldron, seventeen years her senior. This trip to Europe had been the dream of both their lives, and the expenses thereof had been saved by many sacrifices. Indeed, they had not dared to let their dream come true so soon, but for a friend with influence in high places, who assured the Waldrons that Matilda would, without doubt, secure a speedy promotion from grammar school to normal school teacher, if, in addition to certain special courses which she had been taking during the past few years, she would spend her summer vacation in studious visits to European educational centers.

As Matilda would not go without her mother, Papa Waldron had magnanimously offered to close the little house in the Highlands, and board in town with Aunt Maria, during the ten weeks' absence of wife and daughter. So, with his urgency, and all scruples dissipated by the prospect of speedily bettered fortunes, mother and daughter fared forth like two children on a holiday. As a family, the

Waldrons were singularly unworldly, with kindly hearts to every creature, and inexpectant of any measure save that which they would mete.

The intending travelers had talked their trip over many times, and prepared themselves for the pleasant things which must and the trying things which might happen. They had resolved to be so "natural" that the most penetrating would not suspect how awfully new and strange were the broad Ocean, and the luxuries of a first-class passage. But after Papa had left them, with a bottle of champagne discreetly covered with fresh fruit in the bottom of a basket, as a preservative against seasickness, and they had sent back to him a loving letter from Minot's Light, they soon began to realize that their actual or possible experiences were of no moment to the gay and stylish family groups and parties of friends who crowded the decks of the Columbia.

Two slight, simply dressed, and timid women whose straightened circumstances and unfamiliarity with the ways of the world "stood out all over them," as a rich and slangy girl who vouchsafed them a passing glance, phrased it, were more than likely to be left severely to themselves. They were, happily, sufficient to themselves; though Matilda would resign with difficulty some dreams too young for her years, of pleasant friendships made on ship-

board, and a more interesting log-book for her father than the record of mere rounds of meals and deck-promenades, the occasional sighting of a steamer, and the entertainment for the Sailors' Orphans' Home, on the second last evening out.

They were lingering in delight of a glorious sunset, after most of their fellow-passengers had gone down to dinner, when Matilda noticed an elderly and infirm-looking man sitting quite alone, a few yards away from them and gazing absently out to sea.

She attracted her mother's attention. "Poor old gentleman! He seems to be of as little account as ourselves among all these rich people," she said softly; "and he certainly does not look fit to travel alone."

The mother echoed her daughter's compassionate sigh. "But he might resent our sympathy," she said, with characteristic diffidence. So, for delicacy, they went by on the other side.

But the following morning, as they were taking a turn on deck before breakfast, they saw him again in the same place, and in the same dejected attitude. They lingered this time, with sympathetic eyes on the old man, who seemed oblivious to all about him.

"You speak to him, Matilda," urged Mrs. Waldron.

"Oh, mother, you will know what to say."

"There, like a good girl! Young folks can do anything." And thus adjured, Matilda crossed the deck.

"Good morning," she said gently; "if you are alone as we are, perhaps we might all go down to breakfast together."

He turned quickly. Were there tears in his dim and deep-sunken eyes?

"I will be bad company; I am rather hard of hearing," he answered, "and none too well; but,—if I don't bore you—"

"Nonsense!" exclaimed the young woman cheerfully, "We also are strangers in this crowd, and we'll be delighted to have you with us." Then, "Let me present my mother, Mrs. Waldron."

His bow was perfect in its old fashioned courtesy. "Mr. Maloney," he responded to the unspoken question. In the saloon, the head waiter assigned these three obscure people who wished henceforth to sit together to the end of an obscure table; and between her kindly attentions to the lonely old invalid, and the satisfaction of her own healthy appetite, Miss Waldron enjoyed distant glimpses of elegant women at tables adorned with the costly floral offerings of friends who had seen them off.

On the seven succeeding days, she devoted herself whole-heartedly to the entertainment of their

infirm fellow-traveler; giving him her strong, young arm, as he slowly paced the deck with her; reading, betimes, to him and her mother from some amusing book; and anon, diverting his mind with stories of her Hebrew and Italian school-children, now in the most interesting phase of their making into Americans. Sometimes, too, because he was so sympathetic, she would talk to him of the purpose of her trip, and her hope soon to make life easier for her father.

He told the Waldrons he would leave them at Queenstown. No one would meet him there. He meant to take his relatives by surprise, he added. A sad surprise, thought the kindly women, to those who had known him in happier days. They were on deck at six o'clock, to bid him farewell, and enjoy their first sight of the beautiful Irish shores.

His eyes were misty as he pressed the hands of mother and daughter at parting.

"You'll never lack the friend in need, my child," he said to Matilda; and she reverently bent her graceful head at his fervent "God bless you!"

When the tug was beyond their farewell signals, she reached for the card he had slipped into her mother's hands. "Mr. Michael Maloney," she read, adding:

"Just a poor, fond, old Irishman going home to die."

"I guessed that from the first," rejoined the mother; "but he must have been a long time in America; for he has no accent, and he seems familiar with every part of the country. His time is short, I fear; but you can have the satisfaction of knowing that you brightened a lonely week for him."

In the subsequent excitement of travel and study, and the conscientious effort to make every moment and every penny yield their utmost to the ambitious young teacher, the sad old returning exile was forgotten.

September saw our travelers at home again, with note-books and memories crammed, and strength renewed. But, alas! clouds are wont to follow fast on life's fitful gleams of sunshine, and they found the husband and father seriously ill, of a disease which for many months demanded unremitting care and expensive medical treatment. The promises of the influential friend failed them, and the coveted promotion went to a young lady who boasted among her intimates that she had no need to work for her living; her school meant just pocket money! Oh, for the ease with which good fortune is bettered!

Often during the hard and anxious winter following, Matilda and her mother sighed for the five

hundred dollars so recklessly lost, as it now seemed, in that too confidently ventured trip to Europe.

The balmy June days had come, before Mr. Waldron's danger was past; but the physicians protested against his resuming work without a few month's change of air.

"Poor Papa never had a vacation in his life," sighed Matilda, "and to think of his toiling in the city all last summer long, while we were off on that unlucky trip."

Their small savings had long been exhausted. The young teacher's salary was always spent before it was earned; and there were debts,—a trouble unknown before.

The convalescent was sad and listless. He was ten years older than his wife; and nearly thirty years of monotonous and poorly paid clerical work had told on him. Against his unselfish will, he craved the change which it would be so hard to bring about.

"We might raise something on the house," suggested Mrs. Waldron, in a conference on ways and means with her daughter. "We must get enough to pay off our little debts, and make your father comfortable at Crescent Beach for the summer."

The tinkle of the bell broke on their planning, and Matilda rose to answer it.

Her parents, sitting in the long twilight, wondered at her delay. The front door closed at last on the departing caller, and Matilda returned to the dining-room and lit the lamp.

"Read it," she said, extending a paper to her mother. Her eyes shone, but her voice trembled.

It was an excerpt from the will of the late Michael Maloney, of Cork, Ireland, bequeathing to Miss Matilda Waldron, of Boston, two hundred shares of stock in the C. V. Railroad, a total of \$20,000, at six per cent., "in remembrance of her kindness to an old and uninteresting stranger, and to help her carry out her plans for the comfort of her father in his declining years."

"The gentleman who just called, and who will return to meet you both to-morrow, is the lawyer in charge of certain of Mr. Maloney's interests in America. He tells me that the old gentleman was immensely rich, and has left large bequests to religion and charity both in New England and his native land, besides doing well by his relatives. But why should he have thought of me?" continued Matilda. "Anyone would have done as much as I did for him. Of course, as his lawyer said, he was rather eccentric, as well as generous. We saw the eccentricity of the dear old man for ourselves."

“There’s only one explanation,” said the mother. “God put it into the man’s heart to be the friend in need whom he promised you at parting.”

And, “God rest his kindly soul,” oft prayed the little household, as health came back with prosperity to its beloved head.

THE VOCATION OF VERONICA MELVIN.

If the Melvins' home life had been normal, doubtless Veronica's thoughts had not reverted so often and so longingly to St. Mary's of the Lake, during her first year home from that ideal convent school.

But things were hardly normal at the Melvins. The mother was a disappointed woman, and sometimes hard to get on with. There was a son older than Veronica, at once his mother's idol and her torment; and five boys and girls younger, with the natural frailties of their kind, besides those resulting from violent variations in domestic discipline. The father—but he was simply the money making machine, who never made quite as much as his household needed—concerned himself not at all in domestic matters, having apparently no thought but to refresh himself and retire early nights, that he might rise betimes for the grind of his daily labor.

The family being numerous and inconsiderate, changed their maid-of-all-work many a time in the course of a year, and not seldom had to do for themselves.

Mrs. Melvin would have had more heart for the happiness of home, if her darling son Hugh were

making a better start in life. But in spite of this youth's many good qualities—visible only to his mother, alas!—a cold world persisted in setting him aside for James, three years his junior, who had graduated from the local high school at the earliest age possible, and was already an efficient clerk in a grocery store in the neighborhood, at fifteen dollars a month and with prospects of promotion, since a rival business had its eye on him.

To the community at large, Hugh was a good-looking but good-for-nothing youngster, on whom a heap of money had been spent to no purpose, but who might be made something of with a strong hand over him, and an end to his mother's foolish indulgence. A softened and abbreviated expression of the same opinion from her husband was a frequent cause of gloom or storm in the Melvin household.

And now, here was Veronica making matters worse, by wanting company in the evening, when if she had the least sisterly feeling, she would have nothing to do with the young people of the neighborhood, who had been so disagreeable to her poor, dear brother. Hadn't she spent the last four years among girls of her own age, besides, and what more did she want? mused Mrs. Melvin bitterly, forgetful of the average girl's ineradicable propensity to follow in her mother's footsteps.

The Melvin home was not an attractive place for visitors. The youngest children, twins of seven years, often made the parlor and front hall their play rooms unchallenged; and the venturesome evening guest was wont to trip over forgotten dolls or toys on wheels. For Mrs. Melvin, though extravagant in other directions, had a mania for saving on gas, and would not allow lights in the hallways. The piano was usually out of tune, in consequence of the twins aforesaid, none of the older folk ever remembering to lock it from those reckless little fingers. The dining room served many purposes besides that for which it was designed; and though food was abundant, it was always carelessly served. Then Mrs. Melvin, though still a handsome, young-looking woman, had grown careless of her personal appearance, except when she went forth to church or on shopping expeditions.

The children were critical of one another, and morbidly sensitive, as those of one family who are too much by themselves are wont to be; and many a meal broke up for one or another in a fit of tears; the father, if it were eventide, trudging wearily out to the back garden with his pipe, and James, who was also of uncommunicative nature, and who worked all but one night in the week, making sundry earnest resolutions on his way to the store, to

be married and out of all this torment when he was twenty-one.

There was a mission for a healthy, well-educated girl of eighteen to such a household, and Veronica might have realized it, had she taken wise Mother de Chantal or even her "pet nun" Sister Gertrude into her confidence, during her last year at school. But Veronica would not be outdone in boasting of her expectations by any of her classmates; and her mother, on her rare and brief visits to St. Mary's rose to the emergency; so that our poor little graduate missed the special counsels which her inexperience so sadly needed, for the life awaiting on her return home to Jefferson.

She shed rivers of tears within the first six months—because her mother would not give her a "coming out" party; and discouraged her acceptance of an invitation for an autumn visit to a school friend's home in Winona, lest it might involve the necessity of a return of hospitality, by the simple but effective means of denying Veronica a suitable outfit. And her disappointments were aggravated when an end was made of the calls of her old-time comrade, Will Cunningham, whose friendship rose superior to cheerless surroundings, because that young man had in some manner offended Hugh. This was the worst of all. For Will's sake, since no one else seemed to care, Ver-

onica had been keeping up her music, and was reading on intelligent lines. Against Will's coming, she cleared up the cluttered floors as often as need arose, and kept the parlor swept and dusted. But with him interdicted forever—we are so prone to jump to finalities at eighteen—what was the use of taking the trouble, since no one came in to break the monotony? So Veronica nagged her younger brothers and sisters for their bad manners, and showed as much coldness to Hugh as she dared, and fell back for solace on novels which Mother de Chantal or even Will Cunningham would hardly have countenanced.

Yet, strangely enough, it was at this time Veronica thought most fondly of the convent, and that her letters to Sister Gertrude, and even to Mother de Chantal began to grow long and affectionate. If Veronica had been a frail, anemic girl, she doubtless would have read much low-spirited poetry, and thought of dying young, and having her grave bestrewn with lilies. Being well grown, rosy and hearty, she clung to life. But was life worth living under such distressful circumstances? If she were to be forever debarred from the gaieties of youth, and the companionship which gave life zest, why not make the sacrifice to some purpose, and break with the world once for all? This thought came to her most strongly when she remembered,

as she fitfully did, the trivialty of her occupations and the failing of her piety.

"I can't even be good here," she cried. "Mother seems to delight in crossing me; and Hugh is such a bear! He would try the temper of a Saint. How sweet and peaceful it always is at the convent! every one so self-controlled; cheerful faces on every side; all things so clean and pure and uplifting. Well, my mind is made up. If there isn't a great improvement before long in affairs at home, I shall certainly become a nun."

A twentieth century girl, with no assurance of a vocation, might have been expected to seek some other method of bettering her environment; becoming herself a decisive factor in the improvement of her home and the enlargement of her opportunities. Where were her eyes, as practical James sometimes asked himself, that she noted not the change in the patient and silent father? But there is nothing like a chronic grievance of our own for blinding us to more important matters. Veronica never dreamed of a familiar talk with her father. He wouldn't understand.

With her mother, it was different. She ought to understand, for she had been a girl herself in some remote epoch. The daughter's smouldering discontent with her mother for manifest indifference to natural and proper social aspirations, and her

mother's equal discontent with the daughter's apparent ingratitude for the advantages bestowed on her—not without some domestic sacrifices—grew apace.

“It's poor encouragement to send Grace to St. Mary's next fall, as we planned, if she's to turn out like yourself, always fault-finding with her own, and wanting what can't be had.”

This oft-repeated maternal criticism stung Veronica to the quick, because of the element of truth in it. But it brought no amendment. A change of heart in her case, reflected Veronica must be radical,—so radical, indeed, that after her unfeeling family had seen her solemn separation from the world, they would go home remorseful at the remembrance of the innocent pleasures denied her during her brief sojourn under her father's roof.

Grace was the second daughter of the family, and now in her fourteenth year. She would have been her sister's most devoted ally, had she not already wearied of Veronica's incessant snubbing and correction. As it was, she had no objection to seeing “her high-mightiness” taken down a peg or two; and indeed, though without malice prepense, presently furnished the occasion for such discipline.

“And why didn't you wait for your sister, instead of one streeling after the other, as if you couldn't get along together?” It was Monday

morning, and both girls had gone to St. Joseph's Church, quarter of a mile away, to pay the last tribute of respect at the funeral Mass of an old neighbor. Things were "at sixes and sevens" at home, by eleven o'clock—the latest new maid, who had not returned from her Sunday outing, had just sent her cousin for her experimental bag, and no washerwoman was to be had. Perhaps Mrs. Melvin—who had a bad night on Hugh's account—might well be excused for her nervous irritability; and certainly Grace might have taken second thought before informing her mother that she had got tired of waiting for Veronica, and had left her standing by the vestry steps in deep chat with Will Cunningham, who, of course, had to go to the funeral—he was so politic—because Mr. Moran once did something or other for someone belonging to him.

Veronica came home half-an-hour later, to the stormiest scene of her life. She had entered the house in a propitiatory mood, as became the bearer of good tidings—but she was met by such a volley of invectives and bitter sarcasm—and before all the children, too—that after a responsive outburst of hysterical weeping, she tragically declared the end had come.

When Grace went to call her sister to dinner at one o'clock, her door was locked; and any notion

of humbling herself to the reconciliation which had been so easy if her mother had the faintest suspicion of the happy message, was dispelled by the latter's voice at the foot of the stairs: "Well let her go without, then. Fasting will bring her down from her high horse quicker than anything else."

The die was cast. While the family were at dinner, Veronica stole unnoticed, down the front stairs, her tear-stained face carefully veiled, and a small travelling satchel in her hand. She had two dollars, carefully hoarded out of five her Aunt Ellen in Omaha had sent her at Easter. Half of that would take her to St. Mary's on the Lake, only forty miles away. Veronica was going to her vocation.

* * * * *

"Veronica Melvin, Mother, and she's asking for you."

"Is she alone, Sister?"

"Yes, Mother, and she seems so strange and excited, I put her in the blue parlor."

"Well, you can send Sister Gertrude—no; it is nearly four o'clock," said Mother de Chantal, with a glance at her little silver watch. "See that Veronica has a glass of milk and some biscuits, immediately, and tell her I will be with her in ten minutes."

The good nun smiled faintly, as she turned back

to her unfinished letter. Twenty-five years' experience had made her an adept in the psychology of girls, and she had read much between the lines in those letters of Veronica which had come so frequently to the convent since the lifting of the Lenten interdict.

Meantime, Veronica was disgusted with herself for finding the brimming goblet of cool, rich milk so grateful after her dusty ride on this warm afternoon in early June; but she resolutely resisted the temptation of the sweet and crusty biscuits. What had a heart-broken girl, fairly driven into the convent by the unkindness of her nearest and dearest to do with food? The milk, however, dispelled the dizziness of her head, and suggested some variation in the greeting to Mother de Chantal, which she had rehearsed a hundred times on the train.

The nun finished her letter, read it carefully, sealed and stamped it, and with an upward prayerful look beyond the tree-tops and the blue sky visible over the sash curtains of her cabinet, descended the broad front staircase, and walked softly down the long tiled corridor to the blue parlor at the very end. This was the one parlor on that spacious floor never opened to the pupils' visitors, but sacred to Mother de Chantal's conferences with anxious parents or intending postulants, or any one of the troubled fellow-creatures who came to her with

their griefs, nor departed without some light along the clouded path. For the good Mother, like her sainted patroness of old, was a clear-headed and practical woman, as well as a devout nun. You would have guessed that from her stately bearing, her decided step, her keen grey eyes, and her firm though kindly lips.

She greeted Veronica with affection, but when the latter slipped from her chair, and hiding her face on the nun's breast sobbed out her intention of staying forever and ever, and being done with this hateful world, Mother de Chantal lifted the young face, still flushed with an excitement which could not pass for religious exaltation, and calmly asked:

"Veronica, what does this mean? Where is your letter from your confessor? Why isn't your mother with you? Why are you here unannounced, as unnerved as if you had walked all the way from Jefferson, and evidently"—with a glance at the small satchel—"with not more than a change of clothing in your bag? You know we are always glad of a visit from an old pupil, but intending postulants don't fling themselves into the convent in this fashion."

"Oh, Mother, if you only knew what I have been through since I left school!"

"Well, dear, sit down and tell me all about it."

But, somehow, as Veronica rehearsed her woes

under that wise and attentive gaze, they seemed to grow smaller, and gentle voices pleaded against the blame she laid on her mother and Grace, and even on poor Hugh. A hundred mitigating circumstances recurred to her, and back of all she saw in a new light, the quiet, hard-working father, with the always unsmiling lips, and the pathetic droop in his shoulders.

“And you have run away from home because everything isn’t to your liking; because the wearied and nervous mother of many children is sometimes fretful, because you haven’t the courage to look a somewhat trying situation in the face, and the love and the tact necessary to soften it! Has it ever occurred to you to plan a pleasant surprise for your mother? Have you ever really tried to make friends with Hugh? I am ready to believe he is a trial, but there are few large families without their difficult member. In this case, if his sister really wished to be his friend—”

“But Mother, I have told you the good news I was bringing home for him this morning, when I was turned on as if—”

Mother de Chantal looked so quickly towards the statue of Our Lord, on the pedestal in the corner that Veronica was compelled to follow those earnest eyes. A little red lamp burned before the statue,

on whose base stood out the inscription, "Learn of Me that I am meek and humble of heart."

"Has it ever occurred to you, Veronica, that things may not be going well with your father? I have not forgotten my glimpse of him on your graduation day. He looked very care-worn."

"I never thought of that, Mother, until I began to talk with you; and then suddenly I remembered. But I'm not needed at home, anyway,—"

"That mere fact would not be a sufficient reason why you should enter the convent. Let us grant, for argument's sake, what I don't believe—that you have a vocation. What would be your work in the novitiate? Would you be invited to write poems and paint pictures, or to take a class of sweet little girls to prepare for their first confession? I greatly fear that for a year or two, in the intervals of your religious exercises, Sister-Mistress would keep you busy cleaning up the little girls' dormitories, or mopping the corridors, or peeling vegetables for this large family in the kitchen. Indeed, I believe, she is quite capable of finding even harder tasks for postulants and novices. You would have to live in peace and charity with young women of various nationalities and temperaments. Then after your profession, just when you had begun to love this house as your second home, I or my successor might feel obliged to mission you off to a

new foundation in Manitoba or Oklahoma, where you would have none of the comforts, and perhaps hardly the necessaries of life."

"Even so, Mother. Every one is so gentle and refined in the convent. No scolding—"

"True, child; an unkind or discourteous nun would be a contradiction in terms; yet we older nuns look back to our novitiates and remember vigorous reprimands for neglected charges or broken rules which might pass very well for scoldings, and have been known to bring tears. But we came to the convent to take up our Cross and follow Him"—with another reverent look at Christ of the pierced hands and heart—"and not to fly from the Cross or mock Him with a pasteboard imitation of it. I fear, Veronica, that you are one of the many sentimental girls who fancy that the life of a nun means a rhythmic moving to slow music about the most delicate and graceful tasks—the tending of flowers for the altar, the decoration of the sanctuary, mayhap also, the instruction of stylish girls in beautiful class rooms, with shrines and potted plants galore. Ah, you are blushing! The office bell will ring in a few minutes. While I am gone, read this sensible little book on the religious life, and come to the chapel when the bell rings for the devotions to the Sacred Heart. Sister Martina will

bring you your supper here, and see that you eat a good one. Later, we shall finish our talk."

But before the first antiphon of Compline was intoned, a telegram from Mother de Chantal was speeding to Mrs. Melvin. "Don't worry about Veronica. She will be home to-morrow evening."

* * * * *

"Learn of Me that I am meek and humble of heart!" The words stared at Veronica from corridor shrines on her way to the chapel, and glowed at her in letters of light from above the altar of the Sacred Heart, and were the text of the chaplain's instruction when the evening devotions began. "Meek and humble of heart!" Had she been even kind and patient of heart? she questioned, as she bowed her head during the "Tantum Ergo." Had she in anywise done justice to her convent training, so that her own mother or any other mother of daughters might have said: "I will give Grace or Helena the opportunity which has made Veronica Melvin the home comfort and blessing that she is."

When Mother de Chantal sought her old pupil an hour later, she found a very subdued and diffident aspirant to the convent life.

"After all, Mother, I think I have made a mistake."

"We are of one mind, dear child; but your mother knows you are here, and you will spend

to-morrow with us and go to confession and Communion in the morning. After that, I am sure you will know what you should say to your mother when you get home in the evening. But a strong, well-educated girl like you, where the family is large and the means not quite in proportion, should at least relieve her father of her maintenance. I had to-day an application from Mrs. Montgomery, of Jefferson, for a secretary. You can fill the place well. She will pay you ten dollars a week, and you will be at home evenings. But, let me warn you, I am sending you to no light task. Mrs. Montgomery is advanced in age and arbitrary in manner, and though you will see something of the luxurious side of life, you will have to subdue yourself to satisfy her and to bring in what will mean a good deal to the family treasury. You want to help your father, don't you, dear?"

The tears choked Veronica's utterance. "Oh, Mother, his eyes haunt me."

"There, child, it will make a great change for him to know that he has a daughter who cares. I am going to tell you a little story. Long, long ago, King Henry of Bavaria wearied of the world, and seeking the Abbot of Verdun, begged of him the monk's habit. 'You know that a monk's first duty is obedience,' said the Abbot. The King professed his readiness for any test of obedience. 'Then,'

said the Abbot, 'go forth and reign.' The King obeyed and attained heroic sanctity in the court and camp. I bid you, dear child, go forth and serve. If in a year or two, you should come back—I don't expect it—seeking not an easier but a harder path to Heaven, there will be open hearts and arms for you here. Now, go walk in the garden with Sister Gertrude till the prayer bell rings, and all her free time tomorrow will be yours."

When Veronica reached home in the soft June twilight, her mother was waiting for her at the gate. "Oh, mother, forgive me," she whispered, as the latter took her in her arms.

"Don't say a word about it, child. I was too hasty myself; but I had a bad night, and such a day to face and the girl gone. But I know now what kept you after Mass. I misjudged Will Cunningham, indeed I did. He has taken all the trouble in the world to get a nice place for Hugh, where the work won't be too hard and where the poor boy will be appreciated. But come in, dear. There's a letter waiting for you, marked 'In haste.'"

The front hall was lighted. "The twins fell half way down stairs last night over a string of spools," said Mrs. Melvin in explanation. "Oh, no harm, but a good fright, and a few bruises to teach them to pick up after themselves. But a light won't cost as much as a doctor would, and I think Will

is coming over tonight to explain things to Hugh."

The waiting letter was an appointment with Mrs. Montgomery for the morning, which ended in an immediate engagement.

"Tell your father yourself, dear. He seems kind of down-hearted of late. It will put new life in him to know that three of you are taking hold to help him; and he'll have courage to send Grace to St. Mary's in the fall. She needs many a thing done for her that's beyond me or the high school, and Mother de Chantal is a rock of sense."

By degrees, the Melvins got well on their feet, financially and socially; helped not a little, said the neighbors, by their fine, steady girl Veronica, whom the great Mrs. Montgomery thought as much of and did as much for almost as if she were of her own flesh and blood. And, by and by, Grace came home with her graduating honors thick upon her, and every sign of of a true calling to the religious life, to be bridesmaid at Veronica's marriage to Will Cunningham.

"Her true vocation," said Mother de Chantal, smiling over the wedding cards, and the cake big enough to allow a generous slice to every member of the household, which came with them to St. Mary's.

AN EASTER SUNSET.

Helen Fitzmaurice was nearly thirty years old before any man paid her attention unmistakably lover-like. That, to be sure, would not have been a matter of comment in cultured Massachusetts, for example, where girls are in the grammar school often until their middle teens; and in college after their middle twenties; and where, with the prevalent disposition to lengthen the period of adolescence, it may yet become unfashionable to introduce young ladies into society earlier than their thirtieth winter.

But the thriving little town of Samos, on the Southern Tier of the Empire State, was not especially cultured, for all of its classic name, in the '70's, and girls left their school books at eighteen, at the limit, and entered cheerfully on the important affairs of life—foremost of which was the expeditious securing of a husband. If a decade went by leaving a maid still unwed, she was an old maid, no matter how bright her eyes or fresh her color. Her possible youthful aspect was never allowed to deceive new-comers when these were eligible men; for every one in Samos, in small-town fashion, knew

every one else, and the elder matrons, who were all unofficial registers, as far as births and baptisms went, would have thought it wrong to allow a confiding stranger to become the victim of his own unenlightened eyes.

Samos, because of its high and healthful location, and the lovely lake and pine groves in its neighborhood, enjoyed a modest vogue as a summer resting place for wearied men for whom the fashionable mountain or seaside resort implied only a new and irksome labor. Good hunting and fishing were within easy distance. The Clinton House had an excellent table. There were direct lines to the great cities East and West.

Now and then, an interesting stranger fancied the "spare-room" in one of the comfortable and quiet houses of the well-to-do residents, and romantic events had been known to follow on such choices. So, as the summer came, wardrobes were replenished, and houses swept and garnished, and vast interest was felt in the arrivals at the Clinton House, aforesaid, by all fair maidens, except, indeed, Helen Fitzmaurice. She was that white black-bird of her native place, a pretty girl devoted to serious pursuits, though unostentations of them. Some said that she actually knew Latin, and that the boys who came to her three times a week in the big corner room, opening on the front porch,

were being tutored for college. But others averred that they were only the brightest of the choir boys, with whose training she helped Father Hayes, getting some special instruction privately. There were also those who thought that a woman at once so intellectual and devout was in her proper place only in a convent, and that in the event of her mother's death, Miss Fitzmaurice would, and, indeed, should enter religion. Howbeit, she had little time for the social gaieties of Samos. The girls looked askance at her, as one with whom it would not do to be intimate, as they had reverently received the tradition that men do not like learned women; and the local youth strengthened this conviction by greeting Miss Fitzmaurice with respect deepening into awe, while they invited to picnics and dances the girls of baby-stares and giggles.

Helen was apparently indifferent. Not so her delicate mother, nor her good friend, Father Hayes; who, however, defeated his own ends, by his frequent assertion that "to know Miss Fitzmaurice was a liberal education."

Bearing in mind this well-defined public opinion, one can understand why Samos actually held its breath for a day, when it realized that the richest and most distinguished looking man who had ever registered at the Clinton, was almost a daily visitor at the Fitzmaurices; and when he and Helen had

been further seen rowing on Silver Lake, and walking together in the Grove too absorbed in conversation to notice folks that were just behind them.

It could hardly be denied that Helen "looked like a young girl and was as pretty as a picture," to quote from the daughterless Mrs. Shipley to her next neighbor, Mrs. Butler.

"And she's nine months and seventeen days older than my Mary, who is married eight years, and the mother of five children. Why, Helen Fitzmaurice was a young lady long home with her gold medal from the Convent of the Sacred Heart when my Jennie was a little tot in the primary school."

There was the sharp note of personal grievance in the matron's voice, as she turned impatiently from the distasteful sight of Miss Fitzmaurice, in her fresh white pique, strolling down the shady street which ended in the Grove, escorted by Mr. Dudley Paget. On the strength of some slight social attention, in his earlier days at Samos, pretty, frivolous Jennie Butler had become sorely infatuated with the stranger of aristocratic face and name, and, alas! had not concealed her folly. "And now, to see my poor child cut out, by a woman old enough to be her mother!" sighed Mrs. Butler, with the natural extravagance of one who is wounded in her dearer self.

But Helen was ignorant alike of the tears or

smiles which followed her progress. She knew only that she was supremely happy in the companionship of a man in whom her highest ideals of mind and character were fulfilled, and whose love for her was manifest. Though he had asked no pledge as yet, his every look and gesture revealed his heart. They were sitting on one of the rustic benches, where the Grove bordered on Silver Lake. They had been wont from the beginning of their acquaintance, to speak of serious things, and the man, older in years and in experience, had joy in the beautiful woman beside him, as the man in virtuous love has always, that

“She spake such good thoughts natural, as if she always thought them;”

Though smiling sometimes with tender indulgence for her sweet ignorance of the world of a man's knowledge. But now it was evident that his pleasure was sharply crossed with pain, as if she pressed an unwelcome solution of the problem under discussion.

“And you think he should retrace his steps, and undo the wrong at any cost to himself?”

The waves were crimson under the sunset, and the rich glow delicately touched her soft fair hair and rounded cheek, as she turned a little from him, and looked wistfully out on the water.

“How can you ask me?” she murmured, after a

brief silence. "You know how you would counsel such a man. You would say reparation, though it cost his all of fortune and love and life itself." She lifted eyes of such untroubled trust to his that his heart beat loud in his ears. "Yes," she went on, "a man is a hypocrite and a coward who for any cause lets another suffer in his stead."

The light faded, and a breeze blew suddenly fresh and cool from the lake. From one of the boats turning homeward, came the melody of the popular sentimental song of the season:

"In the gloaming, O my darling,
Think not bitterly of me,
Though I passed away in silence,
Left you lonely, set you free."

"Your mother will think right bitterly of me, if I let you take cold," exclaimed Dudley Paget, with an unwonted lightness of manner, rising, as he spoke. "One can't reckon on the evenings here, in September."

They turned back to the town, skirting the little Catholic cemetery as they went, while Helen felt a strange chill at heart, and the song pursued them.

"It was best to leave you thus, dear,
Best for you and best for me."

When they reached Helen's home, "family company" awaited her, and Mr. Paget lingered but a moment.

Helen was in the garden the following morning, culling a bouquet of the bright-hued late flowers for the Blessed Virgin's altar, for it was the feast of Our Lady of Ransom, when a messenger from the Clinton House handed her a note. She flushed with pleasure at the sight of the well-known hand.

"No answer," said the boy, and he was off like a shot.

Alone in the shadow of the porch, she read: "Good-bye, my dearest. Forgive me; forget me."

"DUDLEY PAGET."

All this was seven years ago. The fateful note had long been hidden away with withered mementoes of that golden summer of her days, and still the faint earthy odor of the late flowers brought back in all its freshness the anguish of that hour.

That the delicate mother should be spared the pain, was Helen's first thought. Filial love and honest self-respect together wonderfully sharpened her woman's wit, and ere long, Mrs. Fitzmaurice ceased to ask for news of Mr. Paget; and because she was growing still frailer, clung more than ever to her strong and self-reliant daughter, and even felt a great but unacknowledged pride in the latter's

frequent assertion that no lover should come between them.

It was not so easy to satisfy interested neighbors, had Helen been disposed to attempt the task. But she knew her little world, and passed the gauntlet of curious eyes and leading questions silently and bravely. Then, suddenly, thanks to one who had once found Helen a friend in need, a fresh rumor started; and by its self-confidence and persistence, was of antidotal value beyond the wont of the second story. It was peculiarly agreeable to a rich and ambitious widower, with four boys, two of whom were in the choir; and he gave it confirmation strong by declaring that he had seen Paget taking the night-train for the West, almost direct from the Fitzmaurices, and that he looked like a man who had got a good setting down.

But when Mr. Johnson came to plead his own cause, his past beneficent intervention availed him not at all.

"Splendid woman," he said, at the time, and often afterwards, "to think so much of her mother," but within six months, he had consoled himself with little Jennie Butler.

Helen was in her third year's mourning for the delicate mother. She tutored openly and above board, now, to maintain herself in the little home. Her contemporaries, most of them comfortable mat-

rons, said that Helen Fitzmaurice was queerer than ever, for wasn't she still studying, as if she was a girl of fifteen; going off in the summer for special courses, and once even spending a season at Oxford; as if one had to know the world and all to get a pack of boys ready to pass their examinations for college.

But her boys in class, and her boys in choir were the chief consolations of the lonely woman's heart. Father Hayes was still her steadfast friend, though he had almost lost patience over her refusal of the widower; and stoutly maintained in his instructions to the young ladies' sodality, that while the single state is an admitted vocation, it is usually a dismal experiment for a woman.

Easter was as late that year as it can possibly be, and the air was balmy as in June. The door-gardens were full of violets and daffodils, and the fruit-trees in leaf, and heavy with fragrant blossoms. Helen was full of the spiritual joy of the feast, and her choir-boys had surpassed themselves at Mass and Vespers. Never had the things of faith seemed so tangible, as now while she took the shaded path to the cemetery, to kneel beside the graves of her dear ones, and comfort herself with the thought of that resurrection which shall be modelled on His, who by dying has destroyed our death, and by rising again has restored us to life. Who could

be lonely on this day of all the days that the Lord hath made, when the gulf between time and Eternity narrows till one can look across and see the saved and glorified rejoicing under the palms of Paradise? Youth and strength leaped in her blood, and gladness in her spirit, and hardly had she wondered to see the Risen Lord walking in His beauty where the dust of His servants rests in hope.

How long she knelt by the graves of her father and mother she never could tell. She came back to herself with the consciousness of the lengthened shadows and of a human presence. She rose, turned hastily, stood for a moment transfixed, as if she had indeed seen a resurrection, then swayed, and but for a strong arm outstretched, had fallen on her mother's grave.

"I have not changed beyond memory?" he asked, still holding her hand. And without waiting for her word, "You have hardly gained a year. I was at Vespers, and I followed you here, watching from a distance as you prayed. I thought forgiveness would be easier here."

"Forgiveness!" she echoed, weakly. "I never judged nor condemned you; nor told my grief, even to my mother. I felt it would all be explained sometime; and when no word came, I believed you

were dead. Oh, I have prayed for your soul for years and years."

"And you have raised up my soul. Listen! But let us go from here, and sit by the lake, as we sat that last evening, in a sunset just like this."

They went on under the trees together, and again the lake glowed at their feet, crimson in a cloudless sunset.

"Listen," he said, again. "I went away that night to do your bidding. For I was the man of my story, thief and defaulter, whose friend, victim of circumstantial evidence, was suffering in his stead. I was the hypocrite and coward of your most just condemnation. In the light of your sincerity and goodness, I saw myself truly. I went back to San Francisco, and at the cost of fortune and love, and a life dearer than my own—for my mother died under the shame of it—I released my friend, and took upon myself my righteous punishment. First, it was all for you, my dearest love; but by-and-by, through your prayers and God's mercy, my childhood's faith came back, and then it was for Him, who bore our shame to save us: the narrow cell, the prison garb, the labor, far less than my due if they lasted till the end of time! One night there was a fire in the prison—I saved the warden's child—no matter how—God gave me the chance."

The listening woman noted, oh, so proudly, the scarred hands and forehead of the man beside her.

"Then there was a clamor for my release. The Governor granted my pardon. I got the residue of the family estate. You knew me of old by my mother's name, taken unworthily to hide under. I bear it legally today. I am fifty years old. Perhaps I shall live for twenty years. Counsel me again, you who were so wise and true before. What shall I do with my life?"

No word from her. He looked at her, but the face was turned away, and the glow of the sunset was again on the hair and cheek, as on that other evening.

"Be my friend. I have thought of what I might do, here where no one will ever know. Here near you—"

But still no word. "Have I fallen too low for hope? A poor, scarred and broken man, an ex-convict—"

Then, she turned quickly, and in the rosy radiance her face was as the face of an angel.

"Oh, nobler and dearer than ever! Fire-tried and purified; dead and risen again. It will be my glory to be your friend."

But, man-like, pressing his advantage, for he saw her tears,—“You are all alone now—and friends must part.”

"Why?" very faintly.

"Oh, Helen, would you—just as if it were seven years ago, and I were the man you believed me to be?"

"You are a better man than he," she murmured, laying her hand in his. And in happy silence, they watched the Easter sunset, which was the sunrise of the blessed day of their united lives.

TWO WOMEN FRIENDS.

They were nearly of an age, and had equally the gentlewoman's traditions and training; but while Maud Tyrconnell had walked thus far in sheltered paths, encompassed with the warmth and cheer of a loving home, Winifred Deane had been early sent forth by reverses of fortune to face the rough ways of the world. As time went by, the difference of environment accentuated the difference of character, but neither disparity of worldly condition nor long separations chilled at all the friendship begun in childhood's days at Maplehurst.

Both were past their middle twenties now; but still, as fifteen years before, Winifred, generous, ardent, and impulsive, looked up to her calm and far-sighted friend, and accepted her gently-given, but always just judgment as the decisive word in personal and social perplexities.

"Never has a cloud come between us," Winifred would say, exultingly; and then, with real humbleness of heart; "I wish I were more like Maud. I am always revising myself by her."

Greater unlikeness there could hardly be, even in appearance. Maud, whom no one but her kindred and this one bosom friend ever spoke of but as "Miss Tyrconnell," was a little above medium height, but her extreme slenderness made her look tall, and her distinguished bearing stately. She had abundance of soft black hair, large lustrous black eyes,—“nun’s eyes,” her sister said—and the delicate, creamy complexion, not often seen with black hair, revealing her Irish ancestry. Her taste in dress was modest, but faultless.

“She always looks just right,” said Winifred, with a sort of despairing delight, as she contrasted herself with her beloved ideal.

For Winifred was but five feet two, and so well rounded as to look rather dumpy. Her face was also round, her wholesome fair skin showed a few freckles, and her mobile red lips, and big, honest, gray eyes were not as well-schooled in the concealment of emotion as they should have been after seven years on the staff of a newspaper. Her rich brown hair, which curled prettily over her forehead in the morning, when fresh from the discipline of comb and brush, was wont to slip its pins and look tousled after a day’s hard work; and sometimes she forgot the details that make even a simple toilette dainty and elegant.

"Bright, breezy, energetic, adaptable," people said of her; but "exquisite" they said of Miss Tyrconnell.

"Our Winifred Deane," her chief called her, with the fatherly familiarity of a man of twice her years; adding, when he mentioned some feat illustrative of her professional ability and endurance: "She makes me think of a little steam-tug."

Winifred was his best interviewer. Her bright frankness and simplicity disarmed the stiffest; her accuracy had never been questioned; her sympathy and imagination showed her subject at his best in print: and she was the lady, withal, getting the best results without descending by a single step to the methods which some foolish newspaper folk are not ashamed to boast of.

It was in a professional way, and while he was candidate for a high State office not sought before by any of his party, that Winifred first met Robert Donald. He was charmed with her modest ease of manner, and her instant grasp of his ideas; and still more with certain fine and tactful touches in the brief portrait sketch preceding the interview on the first page of "The Mirror," the following morning. With a manful desire to serve the bright little worker, he stepped into the Mirror office on his way to

luncheon, and expressed his appreciation to her chief.

"And now that I am here," he added, "I shall take the opportunity to thank Miss Deane in person."

"Great little woman, our Winifred," said the editor, "but she does her work at home mostly;" and to his secretary: "Please give Miss Deane's address to Mr. Donald."

This gentleman bethought him then of a few lines of grateful acknowledgment to Miss Deane, but he heard so much in praise of the interview at his club and from the manager of his campaign, that the face of the young journalist, with its smiling lips and sparkling eyes, and soft brown curls over a brow of child-like openness rose pleasantly before him; and he decided that she well deserved a ten minutes' call, especially as he had also to see a rich, invalid client in the neighborhood.

Miss Deane's modest home was on a short side street, sloping down hill from the broad avenue on which his client's mansion stood.

"Poor little thing! a five-room flat in an apartment house," he thought, as he found the number of the suite and rang the bell. But the room which served as parlor and study was neat and tasteful, and as cheery as its mistress, and the

ten minutes' lengthened into an hour before the caller realized it.

Robert Donald was elected to the desired office, whose duties, well paid, but not too exacting, but slightly limited his practice; and when the fatigues of the campaign were over, he began to time his visits to his client on Manchester avenue in such wise as to be able to finish the evening at the little home around the corner. He met Winifred's mother, a reserved woman with the impress of past sorrows on a refined and thoughtful face; and, by-and-by, the son and brother, "Father Thomas" in home speech, senior curate of the suburban Church of Our Lady of the Rosary.

The priest was a robust, athletic man in his early thirties, temperamentally his sister's counterpart, though evidently more beloved of the dark and quiet mother.

"When I have a parish," he began one evening—

"Fifteen years from now," interjected his sister, roguishly.

"When I have the parish to which I shall certainly be promoted over all my seniors in a very few years because of my remarkable merits," he resumed, tweaking his sister's rosy little ear in chastisement, "I shall take mother."

"And what shall I do?" cried Winifred. "No, sir, I'll fortify my happy home, and you'll have to take her by violence."

The mother smiled, but kept silence.

"I disapprove of civil war," said the lawyer, pleasantly; "and on your brother's promotion," with a lingering glance at Winifred, "I shall come in and arbitrate, and you must promise to accept my decision."

But her face was bent over her mother's tangled skein of Berlin wool; and the arrival of an express package of review-books gave a new turn to the conversation, and reminded the visitor that it was waxing late, and time to take his leave.

He recalled his pleasantry with a slight annoyance. "Some women make much of these trifles," he mused, as he crossed the three squares intervening between Manchester avenue and the route of the city-bound electrics. "I don't think Miss Deane is that kind," he continued, with relief, and then: "Whither am I drifting, anyhow?"

It might be best, he reasoned, to interrupt this pleasant, informal intercourse for a while. Anyhow, a momentous case was on, in the interest of which he had to journey almost to the Rockies; so, for full six weeks, the little home on

Linden street saw not the brilliant man of the world whose sudden and interesting friendship had so brightened it.

It was mid-May when he returned. He had not sent even a picture-postal to the little interviewer. He thought of her, this evening, as the warm breeze, laden with the fragrance of mignonette, fluttered his library curtains:

“And farewell the dear little dusk room,
Redolent of roses as a dell,”

he read, absently from the book taken down at random.

“Hang farewell poetry! I believe I’ll go and see Miss Deane. I’ve just thought of a good thing in her line, that I can put in her way, and I believe the poor little soul needs all her chances. I wonder if she has minded my staying away all this time.”

His question was answered in a way full flattering to his vanity by the slight constraint which she vainly tried to keep out of her voice and eyes. It pleased him that she had felt his absence and silence; it pleased him better that she strove to act as if they were of no moment. But before his visit was ended he had re-established the pleasant relation of intellectual com-

radeship, and even brought a shade of gentle sympathy over the bright face by his minute account of the cares and labors of the past few weeks.

Then, the work proposed was of a nature to bring her quick intelligence into play, and to move her to gratitude to the friend—surely she might think of him as a friend—who had remembered her at this eventful time, and given her a signal chance to distinguish herself.

She did the work well; made a great hit for the *Mirror*, and was immediately rewarded with a raise in her salary. All of these happy incidents demanded on her part a letter of grateful acknowledgment to Mr. Donald; and moved him to a call of congratulation. After that, he went back to the frequent informal calls of his earlier acquaintance.

Now and then he still asked, "Whither am I drifting?" He would have scouted the idea of his being in love. Back in his young manhood was a bitter story of a brief and tempestuous married life. He manfully took his share of the blame for it; remembered the penitent and pathetic deathbed with remorseful tenderness, but resolved against another marriage.

"A man who goes into bonds the second time deserves no pity if they cut," he told himself;

and remembering also his professional knowledge of other men's troubles—"the chances are that they will."

In these latter days, however, he began to feel that a man must have society, and there was no good reason why a confirmed old bachelor, or even an ironclad widower like himself, should not have a bright and sensible woman friend.

But if by any chance or means, he was destined to be hypnotized again into the marriage-bond, would Winifred Deane be his choice? He dismissed the question; but he knew all the time that while he delighted in her cheerful and stimulating company, he could not vision her apart from her books and pen. He never saw her heading a man's table, or tending an invalid, or bringing up a child. And yet, and yet—when any good thing came to him, he could not rest till he had seen her eyes brighten at his word of it.

He had thus far resisted his occasional temptation to invite her to public places of amusement; aware that, according to the rather provincial standards of her circle, for unwedded man and maid to be seen thus together implied proximate betrothal. He would not have their friendship marred by gossip. He was sure Miss Deane saw the matter from his own view-point; bless her comradely little heart! for she always

welcomed a third party to their conversations; never discussed her personal or family affairs with him; and never tried to lead him to speak of his with her.

Now the summer was on, and the temptation to theatre or opera would not recur till October—and meanwhile—well, the wise live just one day at a time.

What were her prospects for the summer? That little flat must be dreadfully stuffy in the hot weather. He called one evening towards the end of June, and as the parlor was undeniably warm, and Winifred longed for a breath of air after a day of close application, she willingly agreed to his suggestion to walk in the near-by park.

“But with such a delightful chance ahead, I don’t mind a few days more in town,” she said, in answer to his commiseration. He would be detained in town himself, later than usual, he told her. But her chance?

“Oh, I have not yet told you. We had more interesting things to speak of. I am to have July and August at Ostia-on-the-Lake. Now don’t laugh. It is a very hopeful experiment at combining summer pleasuring with mental improvement. Some of our social leaders are keenly interested intellectually, to say nothing

of the stock they hold, for it is on a good business basis. I am to be special correspondent of the *Mirror*, with all my expenses paid, and my discretion as to the number and length of letters. Father Thomas will take mother to visit relatives in Hartford, and will spend his fortnight with her. My work! Why, it is a picnic, pure and simple; no work at all. There's a Catholic church within a stone's throw of the settlement, and my dearest friend, Miss Tyrconnell, will come down for a month. Perhaps you remember. You noticed her picture on my desk."

Yes, he remembered the refined and gracious picture. "The portrait of a lady," he had said, restoring it to its place. But Miss Tyrconnell was of no present concern to him.

"You ought to know," he said, with a slight accent of reproach, "that I am interested in everything that makes for your success or well-being. I think I have tried to prove this."

He knew he was ungenerous, and he despised himself for it; but something urged him on. The moonlight sent only the tiniest flickers through the thick leafage of the elm-bordered path. He could not see his companion's face.

"And I have tried to prove my appreciation of all that you have done for me," she answered, with the constraint he had noticed once before.

"I owe this chance entirely to my success with what you put in my hands last month. If I have not said so until now, it was not ingratitude which kept me silent."

"You misunderstand me," he said, with shame for the evident embarrassment he had caused her. "I only mean that I want you to think of me as a friend, who would sometimes rather hear about these little personal things you make so light of, than about books and public affairs." There! As usual, he had spoken beyond his intention.

The woman at his side, whose head came but little above his broad shoulder, said gently:

"You are very kind. Perhaps, then, you will read my letters in the *Mirror*."

He escorted her to her door, and went his way, half relieved and half piqued by her unbroken guard; but she, kneeling at her bed-side, with heart divided between fear and longing, prayed:

"Oh, God, let me not set my heart on it, unless it is sure!"

* * *

Winifred Deane and Maud Tyrconnell lodged in the same cottage at Ostia. Winifred had a front room, commanding a view of the grove, with glimpses of the shimmering lake between

the trees; her friend had the room behind, looking out on a bit of pine-woods, and untroubled by the morning sun. For, as the elderly cousin who accompanied her, said: "Maud was not so strong this summer, and fresh air and long sleeps were the main things."

Her slight delicacy enhanced her beauty, thought Winifred, noticing the increased brilliancy of the lovely, wistful eyes. Warmer than ever was her greeting, tenderer even than of old her interest in all that concerned Winifred.

Miss Tyrconnell found a change in her friend, unaccountable, but sure. True, Winifred's work had followed her, but this had happened before; and now, as in other years, the friends spent every free hour together. Winifred was gayer and more communicative than ever, but "with a difference." Home and work and friends in common, and the lights and shadows of the fleeting moment, all furnished forth topics inexhaustible; and yet—

"I never knew Winifred to talk so much and say so little. What means this feverish and overstrained elation?" But these two friends had kept their friendship perfect by their consideration for each other's reserves; and Miss Tyrconnell gave no sign of her perception of the puzzling change.

The cause of it was revealed to her a week later, directly she saw the meeting of her friend and the tall, and well-dressed stranger, hastening toward her with beaming face and hand outstretched. Miss Tyrconnell was already dressed for dinner, and awaiting her slower cousin on the veranda. Winifred, bethinking her of a reference-book to be returned to the next cottage, had started on ahead, her friends meaning to overtake her. At the unexpected apparition, the book was forgotten. Miss Tyrconnell was near enough to see the quick flush and the slight start forward, as if the woman's heart outran her.

"I never dreamed of seeing you here," exclaimed Winifred. Yet, as Robert Donald smiled down on her, she was aware that deep in her heart, from the first moment of her arrival at Ostia, was the certainty of his coming, and she was now but playing a part for which she had been hourly rehearsing.

"I wanted to see what your academic shades are like; and," with a more intent gaze at her slightly downcast face, "I wanted to see you."

She found no word ready; and welcomed the diversion of Miss Tyrconnell's appearance with her cousin. Introductions followed.

"I'll join you in a few minutes at dinner; I've

bespoken a place at your table," said Mr. Donald, and he was better than his word. The place, vacated by the sojourner of a day, was next to Winifred and opposite to Miss Tyrconnell. The latter was neighbored on one side by her cousin, on the other, by a young college professor, who directed all his conversation to her, and laid his ideas on the social question before her as if they were offerings at the shrine of a saint.

Mr. Donald had so much to say to Winifred this first evening, he had little thought for her friends. It was not till the next night that he really saw Miss Tyrconnell. A sudden rain-storm had turned the cottagers into their spacious, electric-lighted sitting rooms. There was no programme in the assembly hall. His own abiding place was on the outskirts of the little settlement; but when the storm broke, he had taken Winifred and her friends home from dinner, and what more natural than for him to await clearing skies beside their pleasant hearth-stone?

The older persons chatted about the whist tables, on one side of the spacious apartment; the younger, crowded about the piano, singing college songs, and now and then, I fear me, a "rag-time" ditty. There were a few unclassified,

standing at doors and windows, watching the storm. One of these was Robert Donald. Turning at last, impatiently, from the monotonous driving of the rain, he saw Miss Tyrconnell in the remote corner, with Winifred beside her. The clear, beautiful face of the former shone out from the shadows.

"Oh, Lily-in-Bloom!" he murmured, with a heart full of reverential admiration.

How had he been so long blind to the heavenly vision! She took the color out of every woman in the room. Her black gown of soft, clinging silky stuff, was set off with rich lace, yellow with age, which fell over her slender wrists and delicate little hands. Her hair rippled back from the fair forehead to a thick knot, low on her well-formed head. Her profile was perfect enough for a cameo. She inclined in a listening attitude towards Winifred. He knew not why, but all at once, the little friend he had come so far to seek was lost in the commonplace of the rest of the group. A woman might have told him that Winifred was too short and round to wear a white silk bodice, finished at neck and wrists with plain broad bands; and that her pretty hair should have been arranged so as to increase the length, and not the width, of her honest little face.

It was Winifred who was first aware of the involuntary, prolonged gaze of Robert Donald, and who, lifting her own eyes, read the homage in his to her beautiful friend, and knew how she herself had fallen by the contrast. She grew pale, and stopped short in the middle of a sentence; and Maud, noticing the break, was not surprised to see Mr. Donald advancing to their corner.

Winifred had read of love at first sight. Had she not here a chance to study the phenomenon at close range, and with the most poignant interest? Robert Donald had announced at his advent that he would stay for three days. But these lengthened into ten, and it was clear that he would stay now until Miss Tyrconnell's departure. The guests smiled at this manifest infatuation. Some of them spoke to Winifred about it.

"Thank Heaven," she murmured, to her own aching heart; "they know no reason why they should not speak of it to me."

He did not, it is true, entirely neglect Winifred. They were both among the early breakfasters, and he was always glad to see her. He noticed not the pallor and heaviness of eyelids that testified of wakeful nights. If Winifred could not conceal these signs of trouble, at least

she had woman's wit enough to try to cover them with an assumed gaiety and interest in her friend's pre-occupation, which to any but an infatuated and self-centred man, had been the most transparent of deceptions, and sadder than tears.

Next to talking with Miss Tyrconnell, Robert Donald enjoyed talking about her, especially with Winifred, who, too proud and too loyal for aught else, was more than ever enthusiastic about the friend of all her life. She found, indeed, a fierce delight in setting forth every circumstance of interest and honor in her friend's surroundings, in extolling her accomplishments and her deeds of charity, and enduring the self-torment of the suggested contrast. Things had gone too far for a reaction, she believed; and all she could hope to bring out of this struggle was her unimpaired self-respect.

Sometimes after these chats with Winifred, Mr. Donald would fancy Miss Tyrconnell in her place as queen of the home of some rich and cultured man whose tastes were identical with her own. How well she talked! How still better she listened! What a kind heart she had; and how resourceful she was that evening when a stout and near-sighted lady stumbled on the steps of the assembly-room and sprained her

ankle! Miss Tyrconnell had travelled extensively in Europe, and the Orient, too. Poor Winifred, whose longest journeys even in her own land, had been south to Washington, and west to Cleveland!

Intercourse with Miss Tyrconnell, however, was not easy. Her cousin was usually beside her like her shadow. Sometimes, indeed, the former came in alone while he and Winifred were lingering over their coffee; and then, he immediately became so entranced at the prospect of a few words with the beautiful stranger—the cousin never being more than five minutes behindhand—that Winifred was wont to plead waiting work and slip away, before he had a chance to show himself oblivious of her existence.

Again, he had twice met Miss Tyrconnell in the afternoon, on her way to the little Catholic church, which was but a few steps from the last of the cottages—in sight, indeed, of his own windows. What a beautiful thing is piety in a woman! Of course, he had done with love forever, but if he were a marrying man, he certainly would not marry any but a woman of deeply religious nature.

But after he had twice timed himself so as to be with her on her pilgrimage to St. Joseph's,

it befell that the cousin was fain to make her devotions at the same time. Doubtless, the difficulty of a moment of solitude for two added zest to his desire for it. The most observant and critical, indeed, could not say that Miss Tyrconnell was a shade more gracious to this distinguished victim of her charms than to the young and penniless college professor already noted; nor with anything like the welcome in her eyes at his approach which greeted the old Grand Army man, who had served under Burnside with her eldest uncle.

To Winifred, she was the soul of love and thoughtfulness, neither seeking nor avoiding references to Mr. Donald in their conversations; but always appearing to take it for granted that he was a person of only casual interest to them both.

Winifred was working late this Friday night in her cottage, deserted, save by herself and the boy—waiting down stairs to take her “copy” to the post-office for the last mail. There was no sound save the click of her Hammond. She liked the noise. The type-writer, like the sewing machine, has become a fine thing for overwrought feminine nerves to subside on.

It had been a hard day for the poor little journalist. It began with the usual breakfast

chat about Miss Tyrconnell, and later, Mr. Donald had declined a trip on the lake because Miss Tyrconnell would not be of the party, and had sat absent-minded on the veranda of their cottage for hours after luncheon in the vain hope that she would come out for awhile with her embroidery.

More clearly than even the least interested spectators of this little mid-summer drama, Winifred saw that her friend was giving no encouragement to Robert Donald's undisguised admiration. Indeed, she scarcely let her light shine in his presence. But could she maintain this indifference? Could any woman long resist this man of men? questioned the fond little heart, whose experience of lovers had been confined to the callow youth whose devotion had made her lose her place as nursery governess, when first she was cast upon her own resources; and that older, but even more distasteful admirer, a superficial and castle-building newspaper man, who had tried two years before to induce her to cast her lot with his, and help him start a farming journal in Nebraska.

As to Robert Donald. If nothing serious happened this summer, would not the Christmas holidays find him in the city of Miss Tyrconnell's home?—and then—

Most of the cottagers were over at the assem-

bly. hall. A fervid melodrama, by amateurs above the ordinary, had brought in the young folk, who—granted soft breezes and moonlight—must otherwise have been hunted down, corralled, and forcibly detained at any indoor event.

As Winifred lifted her eyes from her work for a moment, she saw Maud Tyrconnell and Robert Donald pacing slowly across the moonlit lawn, and evidently much engrossed in conversation. They took the path to the grove, and as she gazed, were lost to sight in its shadows. Well, had she not realized that it had to end this way? and what was she but a "copy"-making machine that dared not get out of order? Winifred set her little white teeth hard to keep back a choking sob, and somehow or other, as the slave of necessity must in such crises, she finished her task, with her usual skill, and after a desperate prayer for courage and concealment, lay down on her bed to watch with wide-open, tearless eyes till daybreak.

"I could not forego an interview with you to-night," said Robert Donald, somewhat daunted, now that he had formally sought a private conversation, and brought the stately lady to this quiet spot for it. Of a truth, there was no invitation to ardor in the pure, pale face, turned

towards him, indeed, but looking beyond him on the rippling waters, glorious in the moonlight. He was a resolute man, however, and the long-sought chance should not be lost for a faint heart.

"You cannot help knowing that it has been the rarest of delights, a happiness I had never hoped to know, to meet you; and I cannot part from you, without the certainty that we shall meet again in the near future."

His eyes might as well have glowed on a marble image. Maud Tyrconnell had not been beautiful and lovable all her life in vain; and she knew what the words were that trembled on the lips of this man so late a stranger to her. But she was determined they should not be spoken. She would prove her power over Robert Donald to the uttermost; but not to gratify her vanity with another rejected lover.

"We shall probably never meet again—in this world," she said, quietly.

"What do you mean?" he exclaimed, with consternation in his voice.

"It is a time for absolute frankness, Mr. Donald. I know I can trust my secret to your honor. I suffer from a practically incurable disease. My one chance in a million for life is in the treatment of a German specialist, whom I shall

see in Berlin, next June. In the event of the miracle of a complete recovery, I have a promise to keep. An alleviation of the trouble means perhaps a year or two of life in an invalid's chair. But the strongest probability is death under the surgeon's knife, and without the surgeon, there is death within the year, anyway."

The man's heart contracted with pain and horror; but the woman's voice was as calm and matter-of-fact as if she were stating a case of the remotest personal interest.

"My God! My God!" he groaned. "I never should have dreamed it. Does any one know? your family, your friends?"

"No one but my physician knows what I have told you. My cousin is aware that I am not as well as usual; and when the time comes, I shall take her with me to Berlin, and—at the last—I will, of course, tell her the truth. But meantime, why should I make my poor mother die a thousand deaths, anticipating mine? I have not loved deeply, outside of my family circle—except—well—well, my dear little Winifred. I am twenty-eight years of age; nearly two years older than she. I have kept my sorrows to myself all my days. Why should I do differently now, when no one can help me, and my word would but cast a shadow over my home?"

Robert Donald was benumbed with pity. The whole aspect of life had changed as if an Alpine snow-drift had suddenly fallen upon a garden of tropic roses. The woman at his side, drawing closer the soft, white cloak which enveloped her frail figure, looked like a spirit that might rise and float back to her native Heaven as he gazed. At last he murmured—

“Will you tell Win—Miss Deane?”

She smiled sadly.

“I joined her here with the express purpose of telling her, but it was not so easy as I had expected. Winifred has her own sorrows, though she has told me nothing. For the first time since we both were children, she keeps a secret from me. Never, Mr. Donald, must she know that I have given you this confidence. Some day, in a few days, perhaps, you will understand why this must be so.”

“You are the noblest and best woman I have ever known,” said the man, in an awe-stricken voice, pressing his lips to the fringe of the sleeve of her loose garment. How had he dared to dream of loving her!

“Not nearly so noble, not nearly so good, as my dear little friend—your friend as well—who needs only a woman’s due of rest and happiness

to make her favor something for a king to covet."

"She is a grand little woman," he assented, heartily; "I owe it to her that I know you, and——"

She checked the word. "Except for my family and Winifred, the world holds nothing that I will not easily let go."

"But—forgive me if I am bold. If you had been well—if you should recover. God still works miracles."

"Whatever comes, Mr. Donald," and she looked upward radiantly; "some one dearer to me than life is waiting for me. I told you I have a promise to keep."

Still beside him in the body, she had receded millions of miles from him in the spirit. But she turned kind eyes upon him, and said, with a faint smile:

"I had not thought to speak so freely to one whose name even was unknown to me a fortnight ago."

"Did Miss Deane never mention me to you? She showed me your picture, and told me of your long friendship in the first weeks of our acquaintance. She speaks of you every day, and with enthusiasm. I never saw such friendship between women."

"Winifred never mentioned you till she introduced us the evening you came. One of my few earthly wishes is to see my little friend as happy as she deserves to be before I go."

A faint light was dawning on Robert Donald, and in the midst of it, as once before, he saw Winifred's face, not with smiling mouth and sparkling eyes, as the first time, but with drooping lips and the heaviness of unshed tears, like a sad and weary child's.

"Poor little Winifred!" he sighed to his heart. He was walking on a snowfield, under the splendid Aurora Borealis, and longing for the hearth-fire of home. The air grew chill, and in the unclouded moonlight, the familiar scene was ghost-like. Was he, indeed, in some realm beyond the grave, with atmosphere too rarified for his breathing?

Miss Tyrconnell shivered. "I must go in," she said. The spell was broken. They parted at the cottage door, and seeing no light in her friend's room, Miss Tyrconnell quietly retired.

* * * * *

During the few remaining days of Robert Donald's stay at Ostia-on-the-Lake, he was a changed man.

"Makes me think of a fever-patient who has had a good dose of anti-pyrene," said the keen

and clever woman physician who sat opposite him at the next table.

His former fervid pre-occupation with Miss Tyrconnell was over. He met her now with a frank and simple cordiality, which did not exclude the rather uninteresting cousin, and had ample room for his next neighbor. Indeed, he was noticed one morning going off from the dining room with Miss Deane, magnanimously leaving the young college professor to unshared converse with Miss Tyrconnell. They walked together to the parting of their ways, at a rustic bench, under a great pine-tree, by the lakeside. Winifred turned in the direction of her own cottage.

"I have a letter to send off today."

Robert Donald put forth a detaining hand.

"You can spare an hour for me. I go this evening, and we may not meet again for a month."

"I think we shall both live through it," she said, with a little forced laugh.

She looked taller in her black muslin gown, and her cheeks were far less round and rosy than their wont. The refining hand of pain had passed over every feature. She had indeed "revised herself" on her beloved model, but at what cost? She drew away from the detaining hand

on her little wrist, with an assumption of dignity which badly masked her real feeling. But the man's grasp was strong and possessing.

"Sit down," he said, masterfully. "I want to talk to you. Do you know that every day you grow more charming?"

Her face was averted, and she shook two big tears off her long lashes before she answered: "But not like Miss Tyrconnell."

"No," he rejoined, steadily. "Miss Tyrconnell is an angel to revere, but you are a woman to love—and I love you."

Miss Tyrconnell passed a few yards from them, on her way to the church, unseen of either.

"Finding his true place in the rebound, as I expected," she said, smiling to herself. "And they will be happy, too, though Winifred might have done better—but she will never know that."

Her prediction was justified; though she passed away in a foreign land, as she had foreseen, the following June, while Winifred's wedding ring was still strange on her finger. It was a dark and sudden cloud on her bridal joy, even if tempered by the indulgent and sympathizing love of her husband.

"I have often wondered," she said to him, in these days, "how you could have cared for me,

after you knew her. Indeed, I once was sure you were in love with her."

"There was never any possibility of love between Maud Tyrconnell and myself," he answered gravely; "but I owe it to the light she shed on everything about her, that I discovered my love for you before any one had a chance to come between us."

After this, Winifred never thought again of the mysterious moonlight walk in the grove at Ostia-on-the-Lake.



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