

Annie Thomas Howells
On Grandfather's farm



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(Annie Howells Fréchette)

1844-1938

On Grandfather's farm
and other texts

La Bibliothèque électronique du Québec

The English Collection

Volume 10 : version 1.3

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(Philadelphia : American Baptist
Publication Society, 1897.)

To the Memory
Of my dear father and sister Victoria
and
To my cherished sister Aurelia
The one left of the loving three who made
us so happy on “Grandfather’s Farm”

Juno

It was quite in keeping with the rest of her woes that she had been named Juno ; it was one of the many indignities that had been heaped upon her. The name was always said over with a laugh or a jeer whenever any one first saw poor Juno ; there was so little that was goddess-like about her.

When mamma first saw her, Juno looked around the corner of the barn at her with a pair of soft, big, good-natured eyes, which shone under a bulging, bull-like forehead, for Juno was a calf. And a more forlorn and uncared-for calf never scampered over a Virginia farm – and that is saying a great deal.

The two children and their mamma had come from their Northern home to spend some months with their grandfather on a lovely old farm in Virginia. A happier little couple it would have been hard to find anywhere, full of fancies and theories about the wonders of country life, and always ready to leap from small facts to broad conclusions. They had names, but little use was made of them, as their family used those they had found for each other, and they were still spoken of as

“Sister” and “Brother.” Sister was seven, and had enjoyed the good things of this life a year and a half longer than Brother, and was therefore accepted by him as an authority on most subjects, though she kindly let him know the most about blacksmithing, coopering, and similar trades which they had found in the neighborhood.

Mamma, the children, and Aunt Sie had gone to the pasture to look at the pretty Jersey calves, which crowded about and let them stroke their glossy sides.

“But that is not a Jersey,” said mamma, pointing to the shaggy, half-grown black heifer which came shyly up to them, ready to be either petted or chased away.

“Oh, no ; that is only Juno,” was the answer, quickly followed by a wail as Aunt Sie caught sight of a rose-branch dangling from the calf’s tail. “Juno, you wretched beast, you have been in the garden again !”

Juno could not deny it, and only gave a gruff, though not a saucy, “b-a-a-h !” and galloped away to the farther end of the pasture.

“Is she, like the Juno of old, fond of *dittany*, *poppies*, and *lilies* ?” asked mamma.

“She is fond of everything that can be eaten, from warm mush-and-milk down to arctic overshoes,” was the reply. “To be sure, her appetite has its reason for

being, for I don't think that poor Juno has ever seen the time when her stomach was really full. When she was a little calf, the black woman we had to look after the cows said that calves needed very little care, so she was brought up by that rule. Then when these little pets" – patting the Jerseys – "came along, we had a well-trained Scotch lassie who would have gone without her own supper rather than have let them go without theirs. But it was too late for Juno to profit by this, for with Scotch thrift she said Juno was too old to be treated like 'the wee bit calves', and she chased the poor animal out of the calf-pen.

"Then poor Juno tried to pretend she was a cow, and slipped into the cow-yard when the bran-mash was passed around. But this was looked upon as little less than robbery by the Scotch girl, and Juno was driven out for a 'thieving beastie, trying to tak' fra' the poor coos what they needed to keep up their milk wi'.' So, you see, Juno has not always had a bed of roses to rest on, though she has just come off one."

As they turned to go back to the house, Sister and Brother, who had been drinking in the story of Juno, begged to stay and have a romp with the pretty, fawnlike calves about them. They were popped through the bars by Aunt Sie, and allowed to peel off shoes and stockings by mamma, and left to caper the morning

away on the tender green grass.

When they came in at noon, warm and tired, they were followed at a short distance by Juno. We were rather touched by this, and put it down to fondness for them. Its real cause came out that night, when the small people were being put to bed. Then Sister and Brother did not seem ready to enter the land of dreams until they had freed their souls by a confession. It began with :

“Good-night, mamma.”

“Good-night, and pleasant dreams.”

“Are you going downstairs at once, mamma ?”

“Yes ; good-night again.”

“Just wait a minute, please,” and a hurried talk was held in a whisper, of which mamma caught, “No, you tell, Sister ; you’re the oldest.” “No, you tell, Brother, you make things sound so well, you know.” “Ah, no, Sister, you.” Then mamma brought it to a crisis by asking what they wished to tell.

“We wanted to know what stealing is.”

“Why, it’s taking what does not belong to you.”

“Well, is all stealing very bad ?” asked Sister, sitting up in bed.

“Yes, is it all very bad ?” echoed Brother who,

being merely a kind of shadow to Sister, also sat up. “Would you call taking grandfather’s things stealing ?”

“Of course.”

“Oh-h !” looking uneasily at each other.

“Why do you ask ?”

“We didn’t know – we thought – we – Brother, you explain,” and Sister lay back on her pillow in despair. He came boldly out : “You see, mamma, we felt sorry for poor Juno, and Sister said to me, ‘Let’s make a party for Juno’ ; and I said, ‘Say we do’ ; and Sister and I went to the barn, and Juno, she walked after us, so nice and polite, mamma, and we put her into Jim’s stall, and gave her some oats and corn with some salt sprinkled on it, and we found some meal, and made her some porridge in a bucket, and we set it outside, ’cause Sister said it would cook in the sun, but Juno didn’t wait for it to cook. She just gobbled it up, and she was so gla-d !” and his eyes sparkled at the memory. “If she hadn’t been quite so greedy, though, she’d have had it better, for we were going to trim the bucket with sweet-potato vines.”

“To make it look like salad,” explained Sister.

“Surely, surely, you would not have taken vines from grandfather’s hot-bed ! If you had, he’d have been sorry that I brought you to visit him. About Juno’s party

– you’ll have to tell him in the morning, and ask him to excuse you.”

“D’you think he’ll be very mad ?” they asked solemnly. “Won’t you just mention it to him when you go downstairs now ? You know him so well.”

The next morning there was a session in the library, with closed doors. But mamma fancied there was not a terrible scene, for when she had ‘just mentioned it’ to grandfather the night before, he shut one eye and shook with silent laughter. When the door opened, and the three came out, there was still a severe air hanging about grandfather, while the babies looked as if their little souls had been swept and set in order for the day. As they parted, grandfather said, “But, remember, as a punishment you are to take care of Juno and keep her out of mischief while you are here ; and,” tapping his left palm with his right forefinger, “she is not to have a taste of sweet-potato vines.”

“No, indeed, dear grandfather.”

Nothing could be easier than to promise to keep Juno out of mischief, but they soon found it a very hard promise to keep. She was large enough to jump out of the calf-pen, and small enough to squirm through the pasture fence. She got into the chicken-yard, and galloped around, scaring the hens off their nests, and almost throwing the old turkey gobbler into a fit by

bellowing whenever he gave vent to his just wrath by gobbling. She led the Jersey calves into the wheat-fields of the next farm (and made no end of trouble for her owner), took them for a stroll along the railroad track, and only brought them back when night and hunger drove them home, and when all the tired men and boys on the farm had gone to look for them. Her innocent air, as she came over the brow of some old earthworks, with the calves at her heels, seemed to say, "But for me these young creatures might never have found their way home."

After this last prank Juno was given up to final disgrace by all but her two little friends. She was made to wear a poke, and her usual calfish joy was so overcast by gloom that she only had spirit enough left to gnaw the bark off the young trees in her pen. Her friends hated the poke as much as she did ; and if we all had not been deep in our own affairs, we might have seen that a revolution was brewing.

Juno looked forlornly out from her prison pen, and Sister and Brother ran in wild freedom over the farm, for they were free to take their lunch and be gone all day, only they were told to begin their homeward march when the whistle from the five o'clock express shrieked through the valley.

One morning a very large lunch was asked for, and

there was much flitting in and out of the barn before they, with their little express wagon, went out of sight through the vineyard toward the woods.

The sweet spring day wore away, and all were sitting under the china-tree, enjoying the delicious change from afternoon heat to the coolness of evening, when grandfather suddenly rose, looked about him, and asked : “Where are the children ? It is time they were at home.”

The golden glow of coming sunset, which had seemed so beautiful but that moment to their mamma, turned to a cold gray mist as she rose quickly and looked toward the spot where the two loved little forms and the squeaking express wagon had disappeared so many hours before.

“They ought to be here,” said she. “It’s after six o’clock. They never failed to obey the whistle before.”

“Oh, well,” grandfather said, “they’ve not heard it to-day. They may be hunting arrow-heads, or have found some new wonder, or are down on the low grounds gathering cresses, and think it’s only noon. However, as it is getting late enough for them to be at home, I’ll walk down that way and get them.”

“And I’ll go to the pasture ; they may be playing with Juno,” said Aunt Sie.

“And I’ll run across to Mrs. Brown’s ; perhaps Sol Brown has coaxed them over there,” said Aunt Leashie.

“Well, I’ll go on the upper porch and have a look over the farm, and if I don’t see them, I’ll take a run through the vineyard ; they often hunt for arrow-heads there,” and, as she spoke, the mother tried to believe she didn’t feel cold around the heart.

Each started off willingly, for there are times when it is a greater relief to frightened people to part company than to stay together.

When she reached the porch, which gave a view of the lovely landscape for miles around, she saw nothing but grandfather entering the woods in the hollow, Aunt Sie hastening to the pasture, and Aunt Leashie taking the shortest cut to Mrs. Brown’s. The clear air seemst to ring, and yet to be horribly silent. There came the boys up from the cornfield, each riding a mule. Perhaps in another moment she would see a yellow head bobbing up and down behind. But no, the children were not enjoying a mule ride ; they were nowhere to be seen. She hurried downstairs to question the boys as they passed, who, in reply, told her that they had not seen the children that day. She made a quick search of the chicken-coop and hay-loft before running about the vineyard on the hillside. Once or twice she was sure she heard them, but when she stopped to listen, she found

that it was only the boys talking at the well as they watered their mules. At last she went back to the house and waited.

One after another the others came in ; when the last arrived alone, at seven o'clock, she broke down and cried.

“There, there, don't be frightened,” said her father : “nothing can have happened ; there isn't a dangerous place on the farm. But I'll start the boys out, for I feel anxious to get the little ones in before it grows damp. And it just occurs to me that they may be at the blacksmith's ; I'll step across and see,” and he stepped off with a briskness that would have done credit to a man twenty-five years younger.

The aunties and mother by this time felt the need of company, and went in a group to the darkening woods, where they shouted as loudly as their broken voices would allow. At one place the pasture touched the woods, and here they found that the bars were down ; and when they looked at the cows waiting at the milking-shed, Juno, who of late had been much with the children, was not with them.

“Juno is out, and they are probably trying to drive her home,” said Aunt Sie. “The dear little souls !”

“The little angels !” sobbed Aunt Leashie.

“The dear, care-worn little creatures ! Oh, that miserable beast, I never want to see her again,” wailed their mamma, who little knew how glad the sight of Juno would make her.

A little farther on they found the prints of small, bare feet, half covered by hoof-marks.

“They have been here, but where are they now ?”

Ah, yes, where ?

It was dark in the woods. Outside, the full moon looked down on the lone some, empty fields. They could not bear to look at it, for wasn't there “the man in the moon” with whom those blessed lost babies believed themselves on such friendly terms ? Oh, if he loved them as well as they believed he did, would he, ah, would he, please keep an eye on them, and guide them safely back ?

The horror of the dark woods was too much for the three wretched women, and they kept on its edge, like the whip-poor-wills which now and then broke the awesome silence.

Presently they came in sight of a tumble-down old cabin which had formed part of the ‘quarters’ in slavery times.

“Do you suppose they could be there ?”

“No, I’m afraid not ; they believe the three bears live in it, so I don’t think they would venture in,” answered mamma.

The memory of the dear little ones, whom she now feared she would never again see, crushed her. She sank down, and her face was bowed.

“Oh, my darlings, my darlings !”

“B-a-a-h !”

Her sisters clutched her and dragged her to her feet.

“It is, it is Juno !”

Once more the silence was broken by that voice – sweeter now to them than any trill of mocking-bird or prima donna. This time it took on an inquiring tone.

“B-a-a-h ?”

“She’s in the cabin !” they all exclaimed.

The moon was shining brightly upon the square opening which had been the window ; and framed in it, against the inner darkness, they saw the head of Juno.

“Don’t let us hope too much ; they may not be with her. It would kill me not to find them now,” quavered mamma, as they hurried forward.

In a moment they were at the door, and a glad shout pierced the still evening and reached poor grandfather,

as he stood “completely whipped out,” as he afterward said, not knowing which way to turn next.

The cabin was divided into two rooms, and in the outer one gleamed the light clothing of two little sleepers. The suddenness with which they were snatched from sleep caused a wail from Brother : “It’s the bears, Sister ; it’s the three bears come home.” And the hugs to which they were treated quite carried out the bear idea.

It seemed as if the tears ought to have stopped, but they did not, only now they were what the children called “fun tears,” because they came from laughing.

Questions were asked and the answers were not even waited for. The sleepy little ones were rather vague, but it was learned on the way home (when mamma kindly let the aunts carry their precious ones, while she led Juno by the poke), that feeling that Juno was not happy with her poke, and not well treated, they had decided to take her and live in the cabin, which, after much watching from a safe distance, they had decided was not the home of the bears. They had taken a load of meal for her and a good lunch for themselves ; and they had meant to live on strawberries and water. They were “terribly tired.” They had worked hard all day gathering moss to make themselves a bed. After putting Juno into her room, they had lain down to try

their bed, and had gone to sleep before dark. They were quite willing to go home, especially Brother, who had his own opinion about whip-poor-wills.

Grandfather met them when half-way to the house, and as he took them both into loving arms he was greeted with, “You will take off poor Juno’s poke, won’t you, dear grandfather?”

Juno was urged to eat when she got home, and although she had fed high all day, she consented to worry down a little warm bran mash.

Juno has ceased to be a calf, and we now tenderly speak of her as the “Sacred Cow.”

“Bingo was his name”

“I have been thinking,” said grandfather, as he slowly clicked together the bows of the spectacles which he held in his hand, “that a dog would be great fun for the children, and a protection as well. I don’t think they would ever get lost if they had a good, trusty dog to follow them about.”

“Oh, there is no doubt that a dog would be a perfect joy to them,” replied mamma, at whom he had looked.

“But wouldn’t a dog be a great trouble to you ?”

“No – no very great trouble, and besides, even if he were, I want the children to enjoy their visit to fullness. I’ll speak to Randolph and have him hunt up a dog for me.”

“Why, no, father, don’t do that ; there is Joey Vale. If any one in Virginia can find you just what you want, Joey can. Randolph would be sure to bring some starved hound, – what Sister calls a scanty dog, – with a view to borrowing it to *hunt ol’ har* with,” said Aunt Sie.

“Joey Vale’s collie has had pups lately, we might get one and train it,” said Aunt Leashie. She hated dogs, but loved her small relatives to that degree that she was ready to love their dog, if so doing would add to their happiness.

“Yes, I suppose Joey would be the right man to call upon. Can you girls manage to see him ?”

“I might take the children and go over to-morrow,” said Aunt Sie, who never found herself at a loss to *manage* to give others pleasure.

So it was settled.

The children were asleep upstairs. Each morning was a joyful awakening to them, but the morning which followed this talk was happy beyond any that had ever

dawned. At an early hour, Aunt Sie – dear Aunt Sie, who made even a dull day bright – came into their room just as they were waking. But she made believe to think them still asleep, and began at once talking to mamma :

“I’d like to go over to Mrs. Vale’s this morning, if I had some one to drive Charley for me. But the boys are busy in the corn fields, and really I don’t feel like going alone with that frisky steed. I wonder if I could get one of the children – or both – to go with me. I would feel quite safe if I had Sister to drive, and Brother to look after the buggy in case any of the bolts came loose or some strap should unbuckle.”

“Sister ! did you hear that ? Wake up – wake up,” whispered Brother.

Mamma answered doubtingly : “Possibly you might persuade them to go.”

“Of course we’ll go !” came in a chorus, as the two scrambled out of bed.

“Why, are you awake ? And how good of you to be willing to go ! I was afraid you might want to stay at home – and study, perhaps,” said Aunt Sie, in great surprise, catching them both in her arms.

“And what are we to go to Joey Vale’s for ?”

“Granfather wants me to see Joey on business. You can ask him when you go downstairs.”

It did not take long for them to dress and run downstairs, where they called loudly in search of grandfather. At last they spied him coming from an early visit to the fields, and running to meet him, each took a hand, and dancing along beside him, begged to know why they were to go to see Joey Vale.

“I want you to go and get me a dog.”

“A what?”, unable to believe their ears.

“Yes, a dog. I hear that he has some for sale, and I thought if you two would go over and take a look at them, it would save me a trip.”

They looked at grandfather ; then dropping his hand what they called a “joyful dance,” which was lifting up and down and squealing. To have simply a visit to Joey Vale would have seemed to them the top of happiness, for the admiration which they felt for him was unbounded. He was thirteen years old – “a perfectly enormous boy, half as tall as papa,” was their description as given to their mother after their first sight of him. And besides his weight of years, his acquirements were such as to command an awed respect. He had found Mistress Judy and her little pigs after all the men and boys on the place had hunted for her in vain, and they had heard grandfather say that he had more sense than all the crew put together. And long ago Aunt Sie had told them that a guinea hen that could hide her nest so

that Joey could not find it, would be sharp even for a guinea hen. And then the flutter-wheels and weather-cocks that he could make ! They felt much better acquainted with him when he was not around than when he was, and they spoke of him in his absence as "Joey," while in his presence they usually just coughed instead ; and they secretly marveled at the ease with which their grandfather and aunts carried themselves toward him.

And to buy a dog from a boy like that !

Just as they finished breakfast, Charley was driven up to the door. Brother took a careful look at all the bolts and running-gear and put a stout rope into the buggy ; for he and sister had decided to tie the dog behind and let him trot home.

To one looking on, Charley was not a beast to cause fear in the most timid breast. But the feat of driving him was made greater by a belief of the small people that it was only superior skill which kept him from galloping off a break-neck speed. He was twenty-four years old, but as his grassy pathway through life had been well strewn with oats and corn, he was still sleek and fat, and shone like a ripe chestnut. He knew his own mind about the amount of labor that should be required of a horse of his age, and he cared little what others thought. Nothing but a fly could cause him to alter the dignified

pace which he usually took.

After much talk they set forth. Sister held the reins, Brother the whip, and Aunt Sie sat between the two, and received into each ear a steady flow of talk.

“Now,” said Brother, “I think as Sister gets to drive, I ought to be the one to pick out the road.”

“I think that would be only fair,” answered Aunt Sie, “if you can find the way.”

“To be sure I can find it,” and Brother stood up and pointed with the whip. “After you get through the woods you turn into another road, and that takes you to the road that runs along the top of the world – over there. D’ye see it ?”

Sister nudged Aunt Sie with her sharp little elbow and whispered. “The top of the world ! as if all roads weren’t on top of the world !” Then aloud she asked, “Brother, what shape is the world ?”

“I know ; it’s round.”

“But does it seem round ? It didn’t use to, to me, when I was your age.” Sister always put Brother a good year and a half behind her in wisdom.

“How dit it us to seem to you, Sister ?” Brother asked meekly, not wishing to commit himself.

“It seemed like a high, level bluff, that you could

have jumped off of into the ocean.”

“Yes, that’s the way it used to seem to me – only I used to think you could jump off into a river. I didn’t used to know about oceans.”

“Brother,” said Sister sternly, “you have always known oceans.”

“I mean I didn’t use to know when I was a young chap, and wore long dresses, and stayed in my crib.”

“Now, Aunt Sie, I don’t like that habit Brother has of getting out of things, and I wish you’d forbid it. As if any one expected him to know about the world when he was a goo-goo and stayed in his crib.”

“Oh ! but Brother knew a great many things, even when he was only a goo-goo.”

Starting from this poor Aunt Sie was kept busy with stories of their infancy until they reached the Vale farm. The fierce barking of a collie brought Mrs. Vale to the door, and Joey came from behind the house, where he was chopping wood.

Aunt Sie told their errand, after a little chat with Mrs. Vale, and Joey was at once sent to the kennel and soon returned with three squirming, big-headed pups in his arms, jealously followed by their mother.

“How small they are !” said Aunt Sie.

“They’ll grow fast, and they’re just about weaned now,” Joey told her.

“Oh ! I dare say they’ll grow. They are not just what I wanted – still – What do you think of them, children ?”

“They’re just lovely !” answered Sister, stroking them.

“Will they always stand that way – like stools ?” asked Brother uneasily, as Joey put one down upon its widely spreading legs.

He felt ashamed when Joey laughed and explained that the legs would soon stiffen into good shape. That wise young man also pointed out the “twa een on each side of the head,” which showed them to be high-bred collies, and told of so many clever things their mother could do, that Aunt Sie closed the bargain, and was promised that the pup should reach the farm that evening.

As they turned toward home Brother cast a sad glance at the stout rope which lay useless in the buggy. He had pictured to himself the noble animal – very like those he had seen in pictures of Alpine snow-storms – which was to have trotted home at the end of it. He would have held the rope kindly but firmly – in a manner to let the dog know that, while a master’s

kindness might always be depended upon, a boy's authority must be obeyed too. Still, Brother had the happy way of coming upon blessings, no matter how events turned, and finally said with a faint sigh :

“It's much better for Joey to bring him ; he can explain to the pup's mother, and besides, if we had tied him to the buggy,” – a pause in order to think of some good reason, – “Juno might have chased after us, and hooked him.”

“I think we won't let him associate much with Juno, she's so bad,” replied Sister. In her heart she dearly loved Juno ; still, since the day they were lost, she had assumed rather a condemning tone in speaking of her.

“Certainly, the less he has to do with Juno the better dog he will be,” Aunt Sie agreed.

“Yes, but poor Juno is very young, you know, for a cow – of course, she is a rather old calf ; I don't think she really meant to be bad that day,” faithful Brother could not help saying.

The afternoon was spent in fitting up, for the use of the new dog, grand rooms in a large box.

The windows of the dining room gave a view of the road, and during the evening meal two pairs of eyes watched it constantly. At last a glad shout of “There he

comes !” rose from Brother, and a hasty run was made to the porch by all.

“He hasn’t got it !” wailed Sister.

“He – hasn’t – got it !” echoed Brother.

“Where is the pup, Joey ?” called grandfather, as the boy came within speaking distance.

“He’s here, sir,” was the cheery answer.

“He’s there, Sister. Oh, goody !”

“But I don’t see him.”

Joey patted a long bulge which showed itself on one side of his jacket. As he stopped the bulge was seen to move up, and a moment later a silky head thrust itself out at the collar.

“It’s a good way to carry a pup, and besides I had to slip away from the mother,” said Joey, as he unbuttoned his jacket.

Grandfather took the pup and held him up for all to look at. “There isn’t much of him, is there, Joey ?”

“Not yet, sir. But he’s healthy and strong,” and Joey told off the various marks of a fine dog which the small beast bore.

“Well, well, you know more about that than I do, and I’ll take your word for it all. Here, children, get

Joey to show you how to feed him and put him to bed. He's your dog, and you'll have to see that he's properly brought up. Come, Brother, take hold of him."

Brother took him by the nape of the neck, which caused Sister to dance wildly from one foot to the other. "Don't carry him in that way – oh, you cruel boy ! See how meek it makes him look, with his little paws curled down and his tail curled up – oh, oh, put him into my apron !"

Here the late owner stopped her, saying that dogs preferred to be carried in that way, and the three went away around the house.

Six weeks passed, and six weeks make a great change in the size of a pup, and in his nature too. During that time he had been named, and "Bingo was his name." His legs had stiffened up ; and now, instead of hanging on to a step by his chin, and whining when he wished to go higher, or rolling over and over with a series of yelps when he tried to go down, he could thump up and downstairs at a fine rate. He had tried various means by which to make himself good friends with Aunt Leashie, the worst of which was to rouse her suddenly from her morning dreams by leaping upon her bed and frolicking over it until its snowy whiteness was starred with tracks of red clay. He had chased every turkey, chicken, and duck on the place ; and he had

insulted Pooley, the cat, over and over again by barking at her and trying to drive her out of the library. At first she had not thought it worth while to notice him, she despised him so, but one day he went a little too far ; he pawed her tail and squeaked around her until she, who had been respected in the house for years, felt that he might be taking her contempt for fear. On that day she laid her ears back until her head looked quite round, made a straight line of her mouth, and stared unblinkingly at him for several seconds ; then, with lightning swiftness, gave him a stinging blow on one ear first, and then on the other, and forever settled her rights. Bingo backed off with loud howls, and never stopped until safely hidden under the sofa, from which refuge he complained loudly to his pitying young friends ; and he gave himself invalid manners for some time afterward.

But, while he was growing, his training was kept up. He was taught to carry grandfather's cane, and although it usually took the whole family to get it again, so thoroughly did he enter into the duty, still it was thought to look well to see a little dog so willing to make himself useful. Then he could play hide-and-seek probably more beautifully than any dog of his age ever played it before. Aunt Sie would sit down upon the grass, and cause him to hide his eyes by holding him with all her strength, until the children, snugly hidden

behind the great rose-bushes, would shout "Re-ad-y !" when, with the warning, "Ready or not, you must be caught," she would let him go, and he would tear madly off in search of them. The sight would prove too much for the small hiders, and they would betray themselves by giggles, whereat Bingo would pounce upon them and chew them joyously, until panting and breathless, they would reach the safe goal of dear Aunt Sie's arms.

In spite of not meaning to, Sister and Brother had not been able to resist taking Bingo to see Juno, and many a gay frolic the four friends had together. There were, it is true, sham battles, in which Juno seemed on the point of hooking Bingo, and Bingo seemed on the point of biting Juno's legs ; but these exciting little plays only raised the spirits of the four, and put them into the humor for a dash down the long, sloping pasture, at the lower end of which they usually landed in something of a heap.

But it was after a trip to Richmond, where they saw a goat-cart drawn by two goats, that the crowning effort of Bingo's life was attempted.

"We'll train Bingo to draw the express," said Brother that night, as he and Sister were talking over the glories of the day.

"Do you think he is strong enough ?"

“Dogs are very strong.”

“If only Pooley wasn’t so crabbed with him, we might have a span,” said Sister.

“Or if Joey would lend us one of the pups.”

“O-h !”

“We’ll ask grandfather to lend us Charley, tomorrow, and we’ll drive over and hire one of Joey’s pups, and we’ll train them to trot together. Won’t we, zip !”

And the little heads settled down upon their pillows, full of beautiful plans which, it is to be hoped, were carried out in dreamland, for the next day came in a downpour of rain which forbade a trip to Joey Vale’s.

But about ten o’clock they went out of sight in the direction of the big barn, under a wide umbrella, with Bingo soberly trotting at their bare little heels. After much counsel they had decided to use their idle time to make a harness for Bingo. A rainy morning, and a big, clean barn, are not bad together, and the little brother and sister were soon cozily settled in the back seat of the family carriage, while Bingo lay sleeping in the front. They were very busy with their harness making, and their fingers and tongues kept time. Now and then Bingo was roused to be measured, but the steady rain on the roof speedily lulled him to sleep again.

At the farther end of the barn, and joined to it, was an open shed under which the fowls could gather out of the rain, and through the open door the two little workers could hear the remarks that the poultry seemed to be making about the weather. Chief in the group was the stately turkey-gobbler, "Mr. Cornelius," who, as usual, was strutting and swelling to the point of bursting.

"He's a fine fellow," said Brother, after watching him awhile in silent admiration.

"He'd be much nicer if only he were a swan," said Sister ; "then we could harness him to a small boat and have him take us around the carp pond. What a lovely swan he'd make ; only his neck ought to be longer and he ought to be snow-white."

"Sister !" cried Brother, standing up, "Sister, I've got it. I've thought of something. It's much better that he's a turkey."

At noon the clouds broke away and the sun shone out. Grandfather, who had been having a long, quiet morning in the library, looked up as the warm ray fell across his book.

"Where are those blessed children keeping themselves all this time ?" he asked of his daughters,

who sat near the porch door enjoying one of their never-ending talks.

“Oh, they and the faithful Bingo are down at the barn. They have –”

“Excuse me, Miss Sie, fur comin’ in with my muddy feet, but I jes’ want to ask de boss if he ’lows de chillun to ’buse Mr. Co’nelius ?” broke in Randolph, coming excitedly to the door.

“Abuse Mr. Cornelius ! Of course I don’t. What in the world are they doing to him ?” asked grandfather rising hastily to his feet.

“Dey’s dun gone an’ hitched him to de spress wagon, ’long with Bingo,” and Randolph’s sternness melted into a broad grin, which showed that deep down in his heart there hid some enjoyment of the fact.

“Cornelius and Bingo hitched into the express wagon ! The boy must be crazy,” and grandfather marched across the porch. His daughters followed and saw a procession making its way toward the house.

With ducks, geese, and chickens all about, each loudly adding to the noise, came the express wagon. Beside it, with stately air, walked Sister, with flower-trimmed head and wand. Behind, giving a helping hand to the wagon and holding the reins of his unruly team, puffed Brother ; while harnassed to the car came

Dignity and Impudence – Mr. Cornelius and Bingo. Poor Mr. Cornelius ! Pegasus chained to a plow must have been gay compared to him. His legs were hobbled, the better to control his speed, and his rounded body was bound in a queerly-made harness. That he felt the insult of his position showed in every feather. His breast bulged, his wings tried to drag upon the ground, his “night-cap” hung far over his beak, and his wattles shaded from a bluish white to a wrathful red. From time to time he uttered what must have been something terrible in turkey language, and made sidewise leaps at the joyous pup, who flopped and capered and gave vent to his pleasure by pawing him in a friendly way with his great muddy feet.

Brother was quite flushed with the work of pushing and urging, when he looked up and saw his family coming to meet them.

“They’ll – go – better after – while – grandfather. I have to boost – Mr. Cornelius a good deal ; he doesn’t under – stand yet. Sister’s the Fairy – Queen and – this is her chariot,” he said, between puffs.

Sister waved her wand grandly.

Grandfather had come out ready to scold them soundly if he found them in mischief, and mamma had meant to help him. But the absence of any meaning to be naughty – their perfect good faith – made them feel

helpless, and they looked about for something to blame. Bingo, with his open look, at once seemed suitable.

“I had hoped that Bingo would keep them out of mischief,” sighed mamma forlornly.

Aunt Sie began in this same sad manner : “I thought he would be a guard to them –”

“And a comfort to father in his old age as well,” added Aunt Leashie.

Grandfather began in a rather high key through trying to keep from laughing : “Children, I am more pained that I can say to see you ill-treat a poor bird.”

Sister’s wand dropped in perfect amazement. “Have we been bad, grandfather ?” and Brother stood up very straight, while his eyes and mouth shaped themselves into a very large and solemn “O,” before he said contritely, “We did not know it was bad, grandfather !”

Lily and Lupine

“To-morrow is a fine day I will drive up to the mines and see about coal for next winter, and attend to some business I have near there,” said grandfather to

his assembled family, as they sat under the Pride of China trees watching the moon rise. “We might cut a tree down, grandfather, and then you wouldn’t have to buy coal,” said Brother, who usually felt that the talk was for himself chiefly. “If you would have Randolph chop it down, Sister and I could cut the branches off and haul it home with Juno ; she’s a sort of ox, you know. Or we could cut it into tiny little pieces and bring it home on our express wagon.”

“Brother !” said Sister severely, for she did not like him to make wild plans even to so near a relative as a grandfather. “It would take us a year to bring a tree from the woods.” Besides, a pleasant thought had arisen in her mind at her grandfather’s words. It was scarcely likely that if he went to the mines he would drive all that long way without a soul to speak to.

“Sister is right !” answered grandfather. “It would take you two many a long summer day to cut up a tree and then drag it first down hill, then across the vineyard, and then up hill to the house. Besides, I have no trees to spare. So we shall have to go and buy coal.”

“We, Brother !” whispered Sister.

“Cobbin,” grandfather went on, dropping back into the use of mamma’s nickname when she was a girl, “has never been to the mines and I think she would enjoy the drive.”

“Y – es,” murmured a light duet, in which was an undertone of disappointment.

“Don’t you want mamma to go ? Don’t you think she would enjoy it ?” asked grandfather, as he drew into his arms the two little figures which had stolen up, one on each side of him.

“Y – es, of yes, she’d be sure to enjoy it. Any one would. Yes, we want her to go, don’t we, Brother ?”

“Yes, of course we do ; we want mamma to have a good time, and it must be very nice to drive to a coal mine,” Brother said quickly.

“I suppose you’ll take old Charley,” came from Sister.

“I have not decided. I may take young Charley and Selim.” (Here grandfather felt quick nudges passed behind his back.)

“If you take the span,” began Aunt Leashie, “why might we not all go, and make a day of it ? We are a lazy set anyhow since Cobbin came, and it would be quite as well to waste our time in driving about the country as in any other way.”

“You are a very sensible young woman,” said Aunt Sie, “and I approve of all you say.”

“It would be jolly,” agreed mamma.

“But how would we all go ?” asked grandfather.

“In the farm wagon. You and Cobbin, who is our honored guest, on the spring seat, Leashie and I on kitchen chairs behind you, and the babies on stools behind us. We would go off in old Virginia fashion. We could take along a coffee-pot and a basket of bread and butter, and have lunch in the woods. That is, we could do all this, only maybe the babies are too stuck up to go in a farm wagon and sit on stools.”

“Aunt Sie, Aunt Sie ! You know we’re not too stuck up ; you know we just hate stuck-up children,” and the two flew at her and kissed and pounded her in the fullness of their joy.

“Well, I don’t know what to do with such an unstylish set of ‘wimen folks,’ ” said grandfather, as if taken by surprise at the turn his plan had taken, though in truth he was not surprised at all, and was generally ready for anything. Indeed he was an ideal grandfather. He and Father Time had long ago come to an agreement with each other. He was not to watch Father Time too closely nor try to get too much out of him, and Father Time was letting his sands glide very slowly and gently through his fingers upon the pathway over which the dear old feet walked. In short, grandfather was taking life easy and enjoying the well-earned sweetness of his ripened years. So, with his pleasant laugh he agreed to

the plan if the babies would go at once to bed, so they might be up next morning bright and early, ready for the journey.

The next morning at daybreak mamma dreamed that her two children had turned into mocking-birds, and had perched high up on a branch of the great cherry tree which grew just outside her window. They were singing at the top of their voices ; and just as they flung themselves into the air – after the manner of mocking-birds in the ecstasy of their song – she opened her eyes with a start and saw two little white figures sitting in the window, with the green dewy branches behind them, twittering together softly about their expected journey. She closed her eyes without speaking and turned over to take her beauty nap. When she woke again, the children were gone. Nothing was left of them but two night-gowns lying in rings by the window. Down below, in the garden, she could hear their voices, and without looking out she knew just how they were bobbing about in the strawberry “patch” gathering berries for breakfast.

“Where are you going, Randolph ?” she heard them call, as the farm wagon rumbled past toward the high-road.

“G’wine to len’ de fahm wagon to Mistah Nellis. Yo’ grandpa dun tol’ me to car’ it ovah to him.”

“Can grandfather have forgotten about the mines, do you think, Sister ?”

“Maybe Randolph is just making it up. You know he often makes excuses to get over to the Nellis place. We’ll go this very minute and tell him.” But when found, grandfather would tell them very little. He did say that he had loaned the wagon, but hinted that there were in the land other things to ride in.

“You are going to take the carriage, maybe ?”

“But maybe I’m not going to do anything of the kind. It is too rough a road for the carriage ; besides, I want to dig up some fine fringe bushes which I know grow up that way,” he had answered, enjoying their puzzle.

After breakfast they stood watching a most tempting lunch being put into a big basket, when the sound of wheels caused them to fly to the door.

“Oh, grandfather, mamma ! Oh, Aunt Sie, Aunt Leashie ! Come, come. Don’t wait a minute !” called two shrill voices.

Up the drive rolled a stately, canvas-topped wagon, with Randolph’s shining black face in its snowy setting.

“Now I understand,” was all Brother could say.

Ever since they had come to Virginia they had from

time to time seen these old-fashioned wagons making their way along the road which led to Richmond, and many were the questions they had asked about them. Their grandfather had told them a delightful story of how he had taken a journey of several weeks in just such a wagon when he was a little boy. This story had caused them to look upon the children of fifty or sixty years ago with feelings of liveliest envy. And now to think they were going in one themselves ! If only they were going to cross a mountain range ! But even with only a day's journey before them they were blessed beyond any children of their acquaintance. Wouldn't they tell about it, when they went back home ? And wouldn't it make that miserable whale, which two little girls had seen while crossing the ocean, and had talked about ever since, seem a pitiably small fish ? Humph, rather.

“Well, well,” called grandfather, “hurry up those baskets and stools and chairs, and get them into the wagon ; we must be off before it gets too hot. Randolph, bring a big armful of hay to throw into the wagon, and don't forget a good feed of oats. Where's Brother ? Oh, looking over the running-gear of course. Trot off to the tool house and get the monkey-wrench ; and Sister, you bring the spade from the garden.”

Away flew the happy little ones on their errands,

and Brother, impressed by the size of the wagon in which the journey was to be taken, brought, besides the wrench, a ball of twine, a hammer, and a strap.

“They may be useful, you know, in case anything breaks.”

“Yes, indeed ; it is well to be prepared for everything when one starts on a journey. Now then, Brother, I see that we won’t get off before noon, if we don’t take matters in hand, and that pretty briskly too.”

“And the sun’s getting high, isn’t it, grandfather ?” blinking up at the sun. “Sister, you carry out the little basket ; I’ll take the big one.” And Brother’s chubby face glowed with virtue and exercise.

At last everything and everybody was ready for the start. Even Aunt Leashie, who at the last moment was missing, came out from the strip of woods which lay between the home farm and its neighbor, carrying in her hand a covered basket, and Brother and Sister felt that if they could only lift the lid they would find some of Mrs. Brown’s delicious wax cherries heaped there.

“Now then, is this party ready ?” asked grandfather, as he gathered up the reins and looked around. “Are you there, Brother ?” Count Sister and see if she is there.” And the wheels began to turn.

Oh, the delight of being in a moving tent that the

little girl and boy nestling in the sweet-smelling hay felt as they watched from beneath the canvas the farmhouse growing smaller in the distance. Suddenly Sister sprang to her feet.

“Oh, please stop, grandfather, please stop. Bingo is following us. Do let me get the poor darling.”

The “poor darling” was indeed following as fast as his short, fat legs could carry him, and soon overtook the wagon, which had been brought to a standstill. His widely staring eyes and excited manner seemed to say, “A little more and I would have missed you. That foolish Randolph tried to shut me into the barn ; but I escaped just in the nick of time, and here I am.”

Brother scrambled out, and with much puffing, and many timid yelps from Bingo, lifted him up to Sister, who took him with tender and comforting words, while grandfather was heard to murmur something about having “hoped to get off without the beast.”

After this they moved noiselessly on for a mile or more over the sandy country road, and then they turned off into the woods, or rather forest of pine of twenty years’ growth that had sprung up on each side of the road, and had taken possession of the land. The children saw their grandfather pointing out to their mother the old corn rows which could be easily traced between the trees, where the corn had once waved high in well-tilled

fields before the war. They turned their eyes upward to trace the height of the trees, and the plumey-green branches seemed to swing and toss against the blue sky. War was a terrible thing to think of, that sweet summer morning, in a wood scented with dittany, honeysuckles, and grape hyacinths.

It was a relief to them when, after a little time, grandfather began to sing in his pleasant old voice softly, as to himself :

*“Let us go, lassie, go,
To the braes o’ Balqinther
Where the blae berries grow.
Mang the bonnie Highland heather.”*

Ah, that was a song to sing driving through the woods on such a day. They leaned out at the back end of the wagon and watched the thin grass rise up from beneath the wheels, and saw with dismay that they crossed a long and crooked mole hill.

Presently the country grew broken and rough, and they halted at the foot of a long, steep hill, and grandfather said they had better walk while he drove to the top.

“It seems just as if we were in the Highlands that grandfather has been singing about,” said Brother as he and Sister let themselves drop softly from the back of the wagon.

“Yes, and Bingo is a collie dog, and his mother came from Scotland with Joey Vale’s family, so that makes it just like the Highlands.”

Bingo whimpered a good deal as he was being taken from the wagon, but his timidity left quickly enough when he found himself on solid ground, and he tore off in fine style after the children as they trotted up hill in advance of the others. Again and again he would rattle off into the bushes which grew along the narrow road, to bark at birds, and when scolded by his young owners, came back with such a rush as to almost upset them.

“We must not let Bingo be so much with Randolph,” said Sister ; “for he says it is not wicked for dogs to bark at birds, and Bingo listens and believes everything Randolph says, and of course it gives him bad habits.”

“Yes, and he says it is dog’s nature to catch ‘ole hars,’ and that we’ll spoil Bingo if we scold him when he digs for moles ; and that he’s going to teach him to go coonin’ next winter.”

Brother and Sister often had long talks with

Randolph on the kitchen porch in the evenings, and while they did not agree to his ideas on the moral training of Bingo, they took without demur his way of speaking certain words which were new to them, and they would have stoutly argued that “ole hars” and “old hares” were quite different animals.

As they neared the top of the hill they noticed some people running wildly about a field on the edge of which stood a cabin. Bingo barked loudly and saucily at them.

“There now ; he probably thinks they are after an ‘ole har.’ You see, Brother, you’ll have to be strict with him.”

“Bingo !” thundered Brother in what he hoped Sister would think a very strick voice ; “those people are just playing hide-and-seek.”

“No, grown-up people don’t play hide-and-seek. I think they are hunting guinea hens’ nests. Now when we get to the top of this hill let’s take hands and run down the other side.”

“Oh, yes, let’s.”

At the top they paused a moment to rest. Then Brother marked a line in the dust with his toes, and each planting a right foot upon this starting point they chanted together in a loud voice :

*“One – two – three,
The bum-bull bee !
The rooster crows,
And away he goes !”*

and sped away.

“Oh dear,” wailed mamma as she and the aunties came upon the scene just as the race started ; “I do wish they would not run so. They will trip and break their necks. Oh ! there they go, all in a heap.”

Sure enough, half-way down the hill they had come upon something over which they had pitched. Mamma and the aunties quickened their steps, reaching the spot just as the two were getting upon their feet, gazing with faces full of wonder and grimed with dust at the object which had stopped the race. For once they had nothing to say. It was no wonder that words failed them for the moment. There, in the dust, crying lustily at his rude awakening, lay a yellow-haired baby. Only for a moment did they stand speechless gazing at it. Then they were upon their knees beside it.

“Oh, you darling, darling baby ! Go ’way, Bingo, you awful beast. At last, at last we’ve found a baby. It’s

fallen out of some stork's nest," glancing up at the tall pines. "Look around, Brother dear, there may be more of them in the grass."

"Don't cry, baby dear, we'll be good to you ; we won't hurt you. We are not robbers or gypsies, even if we do seem so big to you. And this is our little dog ; he's just a silly pup, and he doesn't know any better than to bark," added Brother, as he helped Sister, who was trying to get the baby upon its fat little legs. Then catching sight of grandfather, whose wagon had just reached the brow of the hill, he made a trumpet of his hands and shouted through it :

"We – found – a – ba-by. We – think – it – fell – out – of – a – stork's – nest."

Now the aunties and mamma reached them, and together and by turns all tried to show to the wailing child their friendliness. Granfather came up quickly, and tying the horses by the roadside, joined the group.

"Well, this is a find !"

"And we've so often hunted for babies, and could never find one, and here, when we wasn't looking at all, we ran right over one," explained Brother.

"And what are you going to do with it, now you have found it ?"

"Grandfather !" cried Sister, as she sat back

amazed ; “we’ll take it home, of course !”

“It belongs to us ; we found it. Indeed, indeed we’re not just pretending, grandfather,” Brother said quickly.

“But what will its father and mother say to that ?”

The children grew sober and looked at each other. They had never once thought of a father and mother for their treasure.

“But if it hasn’t any, if we can’t find its parents, then we may keep it, mayn’t we ? It could sleep with us and we’d take all the care of it,” said Brother.

“I suppose we would have to keep it then. But come, Brother, look along the road and see if we can find its footprints, so we will know from which direction it came.” This was business, and Brother started at once on this important task, leaving Sister cooing over the baby, who at last smiled and nestled up to her. It was not many moments until a shout came :

“I’ve found its tracks. The toes are pointing down hill.”

“Then we will have to take it up hill. We’ll go to that cabin we saw just now ; maybe the people who live there will know something about it.”

“Please let Brother and me lead the sweet darling. Oh, if only we can’t find its parents !”

With one of its hot fat hands held by each of its adorers, the baby stepped willingly off up hill, even feeling enough at its ease to make loud “wow-wow” at Bingo, who trotted ahead. The party stopped in front of the cabin. Door and windows were open wide, and the people were still hurrying about the field.

“Hi, hi, there !” shouted grandfather. A man in the field glanced toward them.

“What are you looking for ?”

No answer.

“We’ve found a child asleep in the road. Can you tell us anything about it ?”

At this the man called “Mary, Mary !” and with one bound cleared the fence and came running along the road.

“Dad – dad – dad !” began the baby, bobbing up and down at sight of him.

A woman scuttled under the fence.

“Oh, Bill, have you found him ? My baby, my baby !”

“We found him, ma’am,” the children said quickly ; but she took no notice of them, snatched up the baby, and covering it with kisses ran weeping toward the house. Her husband stayed behind to learn where the

baby had been found ; and to tell how it had been lost for an hour or more, and that the poor mother was “that nigh crazy about it” that she had forgotten to thank them. Then he hurried after his wife, and the group at the roadside saw him take the baby and lift it to his shoulder while the mother clung to its hand as she walked beside him.

“Well, I don’t think it was very polite of her not to say, ‘Thank you, children’,” sighed Brother.

“Still I think she was glad,” Sister owned. “If only she had offered to lend it to us for a few days, it would have been polite of her.”

They walked rather sadly back to the wagon and were tired enough to climb in willingly. Even the active Bingo fell upon the hay and slept heavily until they reached the mines.

It was a busy day, what with finding babies, and looking down abandoned shafts, and watching the creaking loads of coal come slowly out from the mouths of sark, damp pits, and keeping Bingo out of harm’s way. Then too, there were children at the manager’s house with whom Sister and Brother made friends, and from whom they were loth to part as the afternoon drew to an end.

The drive home through the sunny woods, rosy with bright azaleas and sweet with honeysuckle, they will never forget. A glade among the oaks especially pleased them. Under the wide-spreading trees lay great granite rocks, which looked in the evening light like a herd of sleeping elephants.

As they drove slowly up the hill past the scene of their morning's adventure, Brother whispered softly :

“Ah, wasn't it a pity that it had a father and mother !”

At the door of the cabin stood the man, and they could see he was watching for them. At sight of them, he hurried out after having said something to his wife, whom they could see moving about within.

Grandfather stopped the horses to say that he hoped the baby was none the worse for its trudge, and while he and the young farmer were talking, the woman came out with a basket in one hand, and a dish in the other. She came smiling up to the wagon and set the basket in between the children, then passing around to the front “allowed”¹ that after their long drive they would be hungry, and handed in a plate of warm buttered biscuits. She said that the baby was sound asleep ; and she hoped that the ladies would drive up some day and

¹ “Allowed” is the Virginian's expression for “assumed.”

see her. As with thanks and farewells they started again she called to the children :

“Don’ open the basket till you get home. There is a present in it from the baby.”

“What can it be ?” they wondered again and again as they listened to soft stirs within, and tried to peer through the chinks.

“It is alive, whatever it is,” said Brother after a long and careful listening ; “for I can hear breathing. And I think it is a Shetland pony colt,” and he beamed with bright fancies.

“Oh, Brother, what a goose you are ! As if a Shetland pony colt – even a colt – could be carried in a basket by a woman,” and Sister laughed from her wisdom. “It is much more likely to be a dear little pig – or a rabbit. I almost hope it is not a rabbit – though they are so perfectly lovely – for it would make me so miserable to see the dear wee thing carried about by its ears.”

“It is the only way to carry rabbits,” with an air of manly hard-heartedness.

“Maybe it is ; but I would always carry them in my apron.”

“Ho, yes ; but boys don’t have aprons. But if it would make you just perfectly shudder to see me take it

by the ears, I could carry it inside my waist, the way Joey Vale carries pups,” said Brother trying to suit her as far as possible.

“No, no ; it would have to get used to it, and for that very reason I hope it is not a rabbit.”

Brother once more put his ear to a chink and listened long and silently, then with a shout of joy, “It’s pid-juns, Sister. It’s pid-juns !”

“Are you sure, Brother ? Don’t say it if you’re only guessing. All my life I have wanted pidjuns ! Can you see them ? are they snow white ?”

“They sound like snow-white ones,” after another long listening.

“Oh, Brother !”

He was right. When the happy and eventful drive ended at the farmhouse door, the basket was gingerly carried in by the two, and Bingo was firmly shut out – although he was full of curiosity – the cover was removed before all the family, and the happy children saw a pair of pretty meek doves. One was snow-white, the other a soft bluish grey.

“That is a very good shape for the baby to have taken,” said grandfather.

“Oh, yes,” said Sister, looking up from the birds.

“We’ll pretend we found two babies and that they turned into doves. Won’t we, Brother ?”

“Let’s. And, Sister, really and truly, I would rather have doves than babies. The Nellis boys say that their baby just yells some days, and our doves will never yell. They are just as lovely and good as flowers. Say we name them Lily and – and –”

“And Lupine,” said Sister, clapping her hands.

Isabel, Elsie and I.

(The New England magazine. /
Volume 9, Issue 2, October 1890.)

March 21st. – The house is settled, and we seem to be “taking root” successfully. I’ve been sitting a long time at my window, looking across the river at the slopes which are so marvellously green with the wheat of last fall’s sowing, and I’ve been humming as I looked,

*Sweet fields beyond the rolling flood
Seem clothed in living green.*

When the mud dries a little, father says we will cross over and drive up among the hills and see the country. I don’t know whether I want to go. I fear a closer view would show me sharp stones and ugly ruts – “galls,” they call them here – and briers ; and besides, I might disturb my ghosts. Now I only see a velvety surface, over which long spirit lines of soldiers in blue vanish, and I hear, with ears akin to my ghost-seeing eyes, phantom music from the drums and the gleaming bugles,

As the armies march away.

This country makes the war real to me, but almost everything else vague. I wonder if we shall be happy here. Elsie stands bareheaded in the spring sunshine (spring, though March !), and says it warms her through and through ; and she stretches out her hands and takes in an armful of the bright air, and declares she never wants to see the North again, and wishes she knew who the handsome young fellow is we so often meet as we go to the post-office. He always has a flower in his coat. Elsie will soon know ; she always does find out who handsome young fellows are.

Of course, while she is wishing and I am dreaming, Isabel is doing. What a wonderful girl she is ! She has already made friends on all the neighboring farms. In our walks and drives she has found reasons for tapping at many a half-open door (the Southern door seems chronically ajar), ostensibly to ask the way, or for a glass of water (when the glass comes, it is usually a gourd), but really because her neighborly soul cannot endure without a friendly atmosphere. Sometimes the people are shy and often uncouth, but they are human beings, and Isabel loves all mankind. Upon these occasions she leaves Elsie and me perched in the cart or on a fence, resting ourselves after a long trudge ; and after a five minutes' absence we see her emerge with a

sun-bonneted woman, or a lank man in his shirt sleeves, and they go to look at the garden or the pigs ; or they disappear into some tumble-down stable, to see a calf or get a setting of eggs ; or else the people produce a spade and begin digging up some plant or bush, – we are sure it will have some odd local name. All the time we hear her cheery, happy voice, talking away as if she had always known them. No wonder people love her. She harmonizes with whatever is good in everything and everybody.

April 2d. – Oh, this wonderful new world ! This morning, when we had finished breakfast, father proposed that we should go for a walk. We told him it was bad housekeeping to go gadding off in the morning, before the work was done. But the spirit of the South is already upon father, and he said : “Never mind the housekeeping. I want to strike across the woods to the east, and explore the river-bank. Bring baskets and trowels, for we are sure to come across flowers that you’ll want to dig up.” So like obedient girls we hurried off, only saying that we were glad and thankful that hundreds of miles stretched between us and our old thrifty neighbors, that they could not see our rapid demoralization.

We went through the woods and reached the river-bank, – and such discoveries as we made ! A hundred

plants and flowers that were new to us, some in full bloom and others in bud ; over our heads a cloud of dogwood and red-buds ; and here and there, against the delicate green of the young leaves, a glossy, solid holly tree. As we came to an opening in the woods we saw and heard our first mocking-bird. He was upon the top of a high tree, singing gloriously. He seemed to exult in his power of melody, and just as we thought his song finished, he went into ecstasies over his music, and flung himself into the air, whirling over and over, only to alight and begin again. I never want to hear a caged mocking-bird again.

While we girls were shouting out our delight, and father was standing with his hat in his hand (whether as an acknowledgment of the bird or the heat, I don't know), we heard voices, and two men came into sight. Of course we all looked at them, and father and they greeted each other as if they had met before, – and it afterwards appeared that they had met at the post-office. They carried guns. The older began at once to apologize to father for not having called upon him, and begged to be allowed to introduce himself. He was Col. Powell Gilbert, and his companion was “My son, Dan, a lazy fellow who ought long ago to have paid his respects to you, sir.”

Colonel Gilbert has been a very handsome man,

with the air of former elegance still about him. His son is handsome, but by no means elegant. They both have soft, pleasant voices, but “Dan’s” English could be better than it is. He has lovely eyes, though.

We were all going in the same direction ; so after a few minutes’ talk we moved on, – father and Colonel Gilbert first, Isabel and I next, and Elsie and Dan following. That girl is a perfect magnet. He is the handsome young fellow we have seen going by with the flower in his coat.

We came out upon a steep bluff which overlooked the river ; and what a view burst upon us ! Just below us the river was broad and shallow, filled with bowlders, around which the swift water swung or broke in ruddy foam – for it is not the clear sparkling water of the North. Beyond, the land rolled back in soft heights until it uplifted itself into hills, which stretched away to grow into the Blue Ridge. From the cliff upon which we stood hung great clumps of rosy pinks, and the ground under our feet was covered with what our new acquaintances called “turkey violets.” They are the connecting links between pansies and modest blue violets. A bed of them shows a hundred fairy faces, – “real Brownies,” as Elsie said. I don’t think the young man knew what she meant, for he smiled inquiringly as he stooped to gather a bunch of them for her.

After standing a few minutes to enjoy the view with us, the two gentlemen said good by, and disappeared among the bushes ; and presently we heard their guns far up the river.

April 10th. – I have come in from the porch, where I've watched father and Isabel and Elsie drive away to return the visit of the Gilbert household. We have found out about all there is to know of them, and, as Isabel says, we felt no shame in doing so ; for ask as many questions as you please of any one here, you are sure to have one more asked of you in return. Talk of Yankees being inquisitive ! They are “nowhere” as compared with our Southern neighbors. Not that they impress one as prying – rather, they only seem interested in you, and friendly.

Col. Powell Gilbert is late of the Southern army. What would Pillsbury Wood, or Theodora Weld Smith, or any of our old neighbors say, to see us “hob-nobbing with rebels” ? He is a widower, and his maiden sister keeps house for him ; and she, with the son, makes up the family. They all came the day after we met them in the woods, and they *slayed to tea*. It seemed very nice and sociable, but queer ; I don't at all expect to see father and the girls back until bedtime.

I wonder if we are going to have a love affair precipitated upon us ! Elsie with her usual singleness of

purpose has appropriated the son. He is to teach her to ride, and she has already given him his first lesson in tennis. He takes kindly to it, as I fancy he does to everything but hard work. His father looks much more the tennis player by birth, though. They are oddly alike, and yet unlike. I fancy they were exactly the same kind of babies ; but one was born the heir to several thousand acres and as many hundred slaves, while the other came just in time to inherit the results of the lost cause. The father had years of European life and travel ; the son hardly gives a thought to Europe. The father was college bred, and I fancy that what little education the son has he extracted from the local schools. But he is not uncouth ; he is gentle and well mannered by nature. About all the difference after all is, the father went through the polishing process and the son did not. However, I don't know that I am obliged to keep a diary devoted to the Gilbert family.

Yesterday father and I went to see some Northern people, who have just bought a little farm three miles from us. They are from Michigan, and the woman – poor soul – is wretchedly homesick. They are young, and came expecting to make their fortune. The man is tall and brown and used to hard work, but he looks as if he didn't know where to begin first. He is discouraged, and when we came away followed us to the buggy and said that if his wife didn't soon cheer up, he'd have to

take her home. Father immediately seemed responsible – as he always does for people’s troubles – and said, “I’ll send my daughter to see her.” Isabel is father’s panacea.

May 1st. – I am sorry to see the intervals between entries growing longer. It makes me fear that this journal will share the fate of all its predecessors ; though there is this in its favor, – there seems to be plenty to write about now-a-days.

Just as I anticipated, they *did* stay until bedtime. Isabel told me all about the Gilbert establishment. It is rather poverty stricken and – with suitable lamentations over her prying eyes – she confesses that it is also rather dusty and cobwebby. The old garden, she says, is lovely, with dilapidated summer-houses, box-edged walks, licorice vines and jasmynes trailing every-where, and great magnolia trees. In the parlor is a tinkling old piano of *ante bellum* days, and upon it Elsie played, and Dan picked up a genuine plantation banjo which was lying on a chair, and accompanied her.

In accordance with father’s promise, Isabel and I went to see the Michigan people. I need not say that she had reconciled them to their new home before we came away. She began by rearranging the kitchen, and finding out why the stove wouldn’t draw, – I verily believe the poor woman (Mrs. Geddis, her name is) had

made up her mind it was because there was a picture of Stonewall Jackson on the oven door. Mr. Geddis was sent upon the roof to look down the chimney, and after dislodging a few bricks, all went merry as a marriage bell. Then we helped Mrs. Geddis unpack and put up some white curtains, over which she shed a few tears, remembering how she and her mother had “done them up” just before leaving Michigan. While I helped with the curtains, Isabel went over the farm with Mr. Geddis, and on their return talked so enthusiastically about it, that they became quite enamored of their new home, and we left them in fine spirits. She is a wonderful girl !

Upon reaching home we found Dan Gilbert with Elsie on the porch. He had come over to talk with father about trying to get Northern capital to work some fine granite on his father’s place ; but father being on a distant part of the farm, he was talking to Elsie instead – not about granite, I fancy.

May 8th. – The Geddises were here on Sunday, and had a truly refreshing time. They basked in Isabel’s sunshine, and after supper we sat out under the trees and talked of our other homes, and father talked in his comforting, helpful way, and presently Colonel Gilbert and Dan came riding up, and said they had come for the evening. The Colonel was very polite to poor flurried Mrs. Geddis (who was greatly impressed by him), and

kind to her husband, and entertained us by telling some thrilling war experiences of his. We had a happy, cheery evening, and the Geddises departed, evidently feeling themselves to have been in a whirl of gayety. I'm glad to know that Colonel Gilbert remembered his promise to them, to send them a setting of turkey eggs the next day.

They all left at the same time, and in the confusion of going something very awkward happened. We had said good by all round in that mixed-up way people do when there is a buggy and two horses and several darkies crowding in amongst them, and the moon is going behind clouds, and there are shadows of bushes all around. Elsie and I were both in white, and I suppose that was how it happened. Any way, I was standing by Dan Gilbert's horse, patting its neck, and he came along from saying good night to father, and I held out my hand to him. He took it and pressed it tight and whispered, "You've talked to every one but me to-night."

What *will* he think when he finds out it was I? My heart flew! I don't suppose Elsie would have minded it half so much, she is so used to having loving reproaches from her admirers – and she makes so light of them. But I can imagine how deeply in love with him one might be, he looked so handsome even in the dim

light. Elsie *can't* possibly be flirting with him.

June 2d. – It is very odd how suddenly people will settle into each other's lives ! Here it is just two months to-day since we met the Gilberts, and we have really grown so dependent upon each other ! Isabel and I were talking about it last night as we sat in our room, and listened to father and Gilbert *père*, and sister and Gilbert *fils* talking in the garden below. I was not well and Isabel had come up to sit with me. I had been feeling depressed because lately I've had a suspicion that Colonel Gilbert is growing to like Isabel. He said to father the other day, that he was an enviable man with his three daughters, and that he could not help coveting some of his riches, – and immediately he began to praise Isabel. I don't know what we should do if she should marry. We should be like a crew without a pilot. I've always expected Elsie to marry, and although I love her dearly, I would not care ; indeed, I should be glad, for I can't imagine her being an "old maid." But for Isabel to belong to other people ! – oh, that would be awful !

I told Isabel with many tears what I had been making myself miserable over, and she kissed me, and laughed and said, "You need have no fears, little sister ; I've never yet seen any man I'd leave father for, and besides the Gilberts will have to be satisfied with *one* of

us. Then we discussed the *pro* and *con* of Elsie's affair, and we decided that Dan was very much in love with her.

June 16th. – Last week Dan Gilbert proposed that we should have a picnic at “The Ruins,” a poor old dilapidated stone house, which stands upon a bluff overlooking the river, about ten miles from here. Naturally, ruins are no novelty in the South ; but this one enjoys the distinction of having been a ruin long before the war. He has often told us about it, and father was full of curiosity to see it, so our party was easily made up. We four, the three Gilberts and some cousins of theirs, the Randolphs, who are rather nice people, – Miss Willy Randolph (*Willy* seems to be a favorite name for girls in this part of the world) is a lovely girl, or would be if only she would not powder, – and Dr. Michand and his wife, and Mr. and Mrs. Geddis.

Our house was the starting point. Of course Colonel and Dan Gilbert rode. So did Willy Randolph and her brother Lee, and Elsie and I rode with them. Mrs. Randolph and Miss Gilbert, or “Miss Sally,” as she is called by the whole neighborhood, took our places in the carriage.

We started early, so as to avoid the heat, and as our way lay through a pine forest, most of the time along the river-side, it was cool and refreshing. Our riding

party was badly arranged. If Elsie and Dan rode together, that would leave either a brother and sister, or an uncle and niece to one another's company. I was just turning this over in my mind and trying to arrange it, when Elsie trotted off with a gay nod to Lee Randolph, and "Are you to look after me, Mr. Randolph?" I thought for a moment I was to fall to Dan's care, and I didn't fancy that at all – for I confess that I've felt awkward with him ever since the night he mistook me for Elsie. Sometimes I've thought he suspected his mistake, for the first time we met after he looked at me so searchingly, and I know I blushed ridiculously, for my cheeks burnt. I have got to avoiding him since. Elsie has noticed it, and has asked me why I don't like him. I *do* like him, and I assured her so. I wouldn't want the dear girl to think I do not like her lover. Well ! Willy Randolph followed Elsie's example and called out, "Come on, Dan, don't let them go ahead of us !" and that left me to Colonel Gilbert. I was very glad. He is a good talker, and he must have been very fascinating when he was Dan's age. I wonder what sort of a man Dan would have been if he had always been rich and reared in luxury. As it is, he is a very sweet, unselfish fellow – just the kind of man to adore Elsie, who will allow him to sacrifice himself to her as much as he wishes.

The picnic was a great success ; the place was

romantically and beautifully situated, and the sadness of a ruined homestead had its charm. Mrs. Randolph told us all about the people who used to live there – cousins of hers, of course. While she was talking, Dan came to where I was sitting, and asked me to let him show me a view I had not yet seen, and I went. After standing and looking long over the lonely but beautiful scene, Dan said :

“Come, sit down and rest ; you had a climb to get here.”

I sat down on a mossy stone, and he threw himself on the grass beside me.

“You look lazy,” I said.

“And you don’t like lazy men, do you ?”

“I may like them, but I don’t approve of them.”

“Is that the reason you don’t approve of me ?”

“Now you are personal, as well as lazy-looking. Remember, I only said you *looked* lazy.”

“Did I look lazy when I was carrying your parasol up the hill for you ?”

“I didnt look at you.”

“You never do look at me.”

“What, never ?” I quoted.

“Well – hardly ever,” he replied, unknowingly following the text.

“Did you ever hear *Pinafore* ?

He shook his head.

“I never heard an opera.”

“Oh, how dreadful !” I exclaimed.

“I should like to hear one. I love music, though I don’t know anything about it.”

“But you sing well ; you have a beautiful voice.”

“I’m glad I have something you approve of. Do you think you would respect me any more if I sat bolt upright ?”

“No, I don’t know that I should.”

“Well, then I won’t make myself uncomfortable if there is nothing to be gained by it – besides –

The bright summer day

Will soon fade away,

he began in his soft voice, when Elsie’s clear, high soprano rang out from beyond a clump of azalia bushes, finishing, –

*So remember that I love you,
And be true, dear,*

as she, with Willy and Lee Randolph, came into view. It was well they came, for Elsie has demoralized him so, that he probably thinks all Northern girls like to have nonsense talked to them.

June 20th. – We have had quite an exciting time since my last entry. When we reached home from our picnic we found two gentlemen from New York waiting to see father about the much-talked-of granite on Colonel Gilbert's place. They stayed all night, and father drove over with them the next morning to examine it, and since then we have lived on granite. We have not seen the Colonel, and have only caught sight of Dan once or twice riding past with one of the New Yorkers. Poor fellow ! he looked very rustic by comparison. Elsie and Willy Randolph rode to the quarry the day before yesterday, and reported the gentlemen almost too busy to look at or speak to them. What a blessing it would be if Dan found himself transformed into a man of affairs ! But I suppose Elsie would miss him if he wasn't forever idling about here. Indeed, we all miss him.

June 21st. – Last night Dan Gilbert and Mr. Gordon, the engineer from New York, rode over to spend the evening. They seem to have become great friends. The quarry is to be “opened” (I believe they term it) and worked by Northern capital. Father is as happy as if he were the owner himself. Dan must feel pretty sure of Elsie, for last night she flirted outrageously with Mr. Gordon, and it didn’t seem to trouble him in the least. He only said to me, “What a beautiful little thing she is,” and of him, “He is a splendid fellow – only a year older than I am, and he has been a busy man for the last ten years.”

August 20th. – Almost two months have passed since I’ve written a word. We seem to have been very dull of late, – at least I have. The opening of the granite quarry seems to have changed things greatly. Colonel Gilbert, when he comes, never tells us war stories any more ; he and father talk of cubic yards, and derricks, and granite paving-stones, and contracts, and all sorts of uninteresting things. Dan hardly comes at all. I think he is even growing indifferent to Elsie, he is so taken up ; he has charge of the works. Mr. Gordon is still with the Gilberts, and he often calls. Oh, dear ! I am dull. There is nothing to write about. When Elsie had a love affair on hand, it was much more interesting.

August 23d. – This afternoon I was coming from the

post-office, when Dan Gilbert came riding behind me. He jumped off his horse and walked beside me. I said he was really a stranger, and he answered, "Well, you see I've got over being a lazy fellow."

"How do you like it?" I asked.

"Oh, immensely," he answered, laughing. "Do you approve of me more than you used to?"

"Do you approve of yourself?" I asked, very severely.

"Why, yes, if you do."

Then we walked on, laughing and chatting of nothing in particular, until our paths separated. He looked very handsome as he rode away.

August 25th. – Something startling indeed has happened. Elsie is engaged! This morning two letters came bearing the New York postmark, – one for father and one for her. They were from Mr. Gordon. He went back last week and being likely to be detained several weeks – so Elsie says – found himself unable to endure uncertainty, and so wrote, offering himself. Elsie is always herself – cool and unabashed. She likes him, and so does father; consequently I suppose he is to be my brother-in-law. When she first told me (we were alone, as Isabel had gone to see her week-old namesake, Isabel Geddis), I exclaimed, –

“But Elsie, what about Dan Gilbert ?”

Elsie looked simply amazed.

“Why *surely* you didn’t think I’d waste myself on Dan Gilbert ! What a crazy loon !

September 3d. – I must write or I shall go mad. This morning just after breakfast we heard Elsie speaking to some one who had galloped to the porch. Then she rushed in, white and scared, crying to father that one of the men from the quarry had just gone on for a doctor, and wanted father to go at once to the Gilberts. Dan was dead ; a great piece of granite had fallen on him. In a moment it seemed father had gone, and Isabel with him. Elsie walked the floor, crying and wringing her hands, and talking about “dear Dan.” Then she ran off to her room to write the dreadful news to Mr. Gordon ; and I am alone. When I got up this morning I thought how beautiful and full of life the day was ; now it all seems terrible. I can only think of that poor fellow lying dead. Over in the direction of the quarry I can see the derricks standing motionless. Of course everything must have stopped. How different it all is from what it was that day at the picnic – the last day he was “a lazy fellow” ! What was the use of his being killed ? Why might not the old thriftless, idle life have gone on ? Why did I always try to be superior to him – and forever preach activity to him ? How handsome he looked that night he

spoke to me for Elsie ! How *can* Elsie write to her lover about him ? He spoke to me the last time we met about her engagement. He said very quietly that his friend Gordon had succeeded and he had failed (I wonder if he ever asked Elsie to marry him), and then he laughed and said something about Northern and Southern energy. Poor fellow ! I wish I had never teased him ; I did not think he would have cared – and perhaps he did not. I hope he only referred to it so often because I was so uninteresting to him that he could not think of anything else to say to me. I am glad now that he never liked me. I could –

Evening. – What a comfort it is to be able to write that he was not killed. He is cruelly hurt, though, and was unconscious for a long time. But he knew father and Isabel before they came away, and spoke to them. Isabel has gone back to stay with Miss Sally to-night, and in the morning I am to go and take her place. I feel as if I had lived years since this morning. I am tired, and yet I cannot sleep. How terrible death is when it comes near one we – have known, and seen much of, and who seems to be glad to live ! Father says he *will* live, and that he will not be crippled.

September 7th. – It is no wonder that I have sat thinking for an hour since I wrote the date. It is no use for one to try to write *what* I have lived through to-day ;

I will only write *about* it – for sometime I – *we* – shall be glad to read it all.

Four days ago I came to stay with Miss Sally, and relieve her of the care of the house, so she could devote all her time to Dan. I did not see him until this morning. She was obliged to be away for an hour, and asked me to sit where I could hear him call if he should want anything. He had been restless all night, and was sleeping soundly, so she thought he would never know she had left him. Colonel Gilbert was asleep in his room, for he had been up all night with Dan. I had not been ten minutes in his room before he roused up, and called for his aunt. I went quickly to him and told him that Miss Sally had been obliged to go and see to the apples that were being picked, and I asked him if there was anything I could do for him.

At first he hardly seemed to know me ; then he said, “Oh, Miss Nettie, is it you ?” and reached out his hand and seemed very glad to see me. Poor fellow ! he looked so white and so different from the way he looked in the old days of health.

“I’m loafing as usual, you see,” he said.

“Oh, please don’t say that – I’m so sorry – I felt so dreadfully when I thought you were dead, and remembered – I would have given anything – I wished then – I thought I would give all the world for the

chance to tell you how sorry I was – and that I didn't despise you as you seemed to think – Oh ! I'm so glad you are alive !”

I was dreadfully frightened after I had spoken ; for his face flushed and he caught my hand.

“Did you *care* ? he asked quickly.

“Oh, Mr. Gilbert, can you think I would *not* care ?” – and I began to cry.

“*Why* were you sorry ? Was it because a man had been killed – or because *I* was dead ?”

“It was because *you* were dead, – and – because everything would always seem different.” I didn't realize what I was saying.

“Nettie, Nettie,” he cried, “do *I* make the world different to you ? Tell me, darling.” – And before I knew it I was down on my knees beside him, and his arm was round my neck.

“Dear, dear Dan, you *are* all the world to me.”

I never knew it until that moment. Now I seem always to have loved him. I know now that that first morning when we met in the woods, and he gave the turkey violets to Elsie, I wished he had given them to me.

Miss Sally was gone more than an hour, and we

talked every minute of the time – or at least I did. I told him about the evening he mistook me for Elsie – and he said it was no mistake at all ; that he knew he was speaking to me ; that he thought I wanted him to understand I did not care for him in the least. He told me he had never thought of Elsie as his wife ; that she was a gay, happy little thing, and he would like her very much as a sister ; and about father and Isabel he thinks just as I do. Indeed, we think alike about many things.

A little later Colonel Gilbert came in from his nap, and asked, “Well, my poor boy, how are you feeling now ?”

Dan smiled brightly, and answered, “I’m not a poor boy any longer, father ; I feel very rich and generous, for I can give you what you’ve always wanted – a daughter.”

The dear old colonel took me in his arms and kissed me, and said, “I’m very glad, very glad, my dear.”

September 10th. – I am at home again. I’ve told father and the girls. I told Isabel how it happened, and she laughed and said, “Well, there is one thing, dear, you’ll have to expect. When he gets well and uppish, he’ll often tell you that you left nothing for him to do but to propose to you.”

Well, he may.

The Logic of Chance.

(The New England magazine. /
Volume 20, Issue 6, August 1899.)

“That’s a good idea !”

Mr. Prior read again the following : “Owing to the destitution which is the result of the continued hard times, it behooves every good citizen to feel for some less fortunate man who is forced to stand idle and listen to the cry of his hungry children, to give him one crust if he has two. We hope our townspeople will respond with their usual generosity to the appeal for assistance on behalf of the worthy poor of the city of C-. We are a comfortable, prosperous community ; let us give of our plenty. Next Thursday evening a concert will be given in the town hall, in which the best talent of our music loving town will take part, and the price of admission to this concert will be *one potato* – or a dozen, or a bagful, just as you wish. The bigger the hearts, the bigger the heap of potatoes will be.”

Now it so happened that Mr. Prior was a young man upon whom what he called “an idea” took a strong hold, especially when it touched his heart as well as his fancy. So after reading the above, he communed with himself as follows :

“I’ll go to that concert, and I’ll send a wagon load of potatoes ! I ought to give freely of the wealth which

father gathered up for me. By Jove ! it stirs a fellow up to think how a man must feel to hear his children crying with hunger and having nothing to give them.”

The following day he had occasion to make a flying visit to C—, the city destined to receive of the plenty of his native town. In one of the stores which he chanced to enter, his attention was attracted by something which lay upon the “notions” counter. At another time he might not have noticed it ; but to-day the dull little object which lay among the feminine dainties presented itself boldly. It was an odd conceit, — a *papier-maché* potato, perfect in modelling and color.

“You see it opens. It is a bonbon box,” explained the young girl who presided at the counter. “You press a spring which is covered by one of the eyes. It’s awfully cute, isn’t it ?”

The *bonbonnière* was speedily transferred to Mr. Prior’s pocket, and he took his way to his train. As he rushed homeward, a plan gradually took shape in his mind. The next morning he went to the bank and diminished his account there by one thousand dollars. This sum was in one bill, and the bill was crisp and new. When he returned to his cheery bachelor quarters, he locked his door and withdrew the potato from its tissue-paper folds. Opening it, he put the neatly folded bill within, and closed it with a snap.

“There, I hope that will do a thousand dollars’ worth of good,” – and he turned it about admiringly. “I can imagine the excitement of the committee when they discover the joke I’ve played on them : for the moment they see this they’ll know it isn’t a potato. They’ll never suspect where it came from. I don’t think I could have given it if I’d had to parade my gift.”

Mr. Prior presented himself early at the town hall next evening, and from fingers trembling with excitement delivered up his precious potato. The hall was crowded with an audience evidently anxious to betake itself to the basement, as soon as the local talent was willing, to see the result of the novel appeal. At last the end came, and the audience swarmed downstairs, where a goodly show greeted it. A monstrous heap of potatoes filled the centre of the room, and around the sides were other farm produce and numerous bundles of well mended old clothing. Our hero quitted the building in an exalted state of mind. He was proud of his town and his neighborhood ; his pride even embraced the whole country. He said to himself that nowhere but in America was such a thing possible.

The next day he took occasion to meet a member of the committee, who hinted that there was still a surprise in store for the public. Of course there was. All day he greeted acquaintances gayly and harped constantly

upon the charity concert. It was the more noticeable, as he had always been a retiring young man. The affair had evidently carried him out of himself. He not only talked loudly, but laughed boisterously in the hotel office.

“What ails Prior ?” asked one of the *habitués* there. “He seems mightily stirred up about something.”

“He has been acting kind of queer for the last day or two. Doesn’t take anything, does he ?”

“Prior take anything ! Why he’s as straight as a post.”

The next issue of the *Watchman* contained the committee’s report. It closed thus : “It is with pleasure and pride that we announce the handing in of a potato ticket to which was attached a check for twenty-five dollars, by one of our public-spirited citizens, whose name is withheld at his own request. Surely we may all feel proud to belong to a town which produces such a man.”

That then was the surprise ! Mr. Prior slept badly that night. Early the next morning he went to the man who had acted as doorkeeper.

“Smith, what did they do with the potatoes which were taken in at the door ? he asked as unconcernedly as possible for a man who was growing anxious about

the success of a joke.

“The tickets ? Oh, just dumped them in with the rest.”

“Dumped them in with the rest !” The perspiration started out upon his palms.

“Why, you didn’t expect us to do ’em up in pink cotton, did you ?”

“Dumped them in with the rest !” he repeated in a dazed manner.

“That’s what we did, sir,” answered Smith.

“I think I’ll take a look at those potatoes,” Prior said in a voice which he hoped did not tremble.

“All right. Go gaze at ’em. You’ll find nigh on to a hundred bushel down there.” And as Prior’s hat disappeared in the stairway he said to himself, “What can the fool want to look at them potatoes for ?”

The anxious man hurried into the dimly lighted cellar. His joke had miscarried ! He must find his thousand-dollar potato – and find it, too, without attracting attention. He was morbidly alive to ridicule, and he was a modest man. He could not face either the ridicule or the praise which would be his, should his gift and the manner of bestowing it become known.

Prior drew off his gloves. He took a long breath and

began rapidly to sort the potatoes over. Night must not overtake him with his work unfinished.

By and by Smith became curious and made an errand to the basement. "Had a good look at 'em, Mr. Prior?" he asked in a patronizing tone.

"I hope I'm not keeping you from any business. Don't let me detain you about the building; I can let myself out."

"Oh, I ain't in no hurry," said Smith; and after whistling about for a little while he went upstairs. He sauntered to the front door of the building, where he stood whistling until a friend who worked in the livery stable near by came along; then he stopped and told the friend of Prior's strange interest in the potato heap. "He's ben down there most an hour – just standin' lookin' at things."

"What's that for?" asked the friend.

"Don't know no more'n you do."

"Let's find out;" and the friend led the way around to a side window of the basement. "I swan if he ain't a-countin them potatoes!"

A little boy with a tin pail who was going past, seeing the men looking in at the window, went to see what they were looking at. "What's that man a-doin' down there?" he asked.

“That’s a crazy man, an’ you’d better clear out, ef you don’t want he should nab you,” explained the friend, who passed for a very humorous fellow with his circle.

The little boy backed off and continued his way until he met another boy, to whom he confided his discovery ; and this boy in his turn shouted across the street to another : “There’s a crazy man down to the town hall, and he’s just slashin’ the beggars’ things ’round. Let’s go see him !” – and they sped along on either side of the street, while the first little boy determined to hide his pail in a convenient mortar bed and go back with them.

They swept others into their wake as they ran. Stray passers-by were attracted by the knot of observers, and soon every window was surrounded. The story told by the jocular friend gained such credence, that timid women ran nimbly past the building, while others with stronger nerves joined the men and boys who rather grudgingly made room for them.

So absorbed was the object of this curiosity that, save for a sense of discomfort, on account of the dimmer light, he was entirely unconscious of it. He worked steadily on. The perspiration stood upon his brow, he trembled with weariness, and his head throbbled from long bending forward. He was therefore

in no condition to meet calmly or with dignity the interruption coming in the person of Smith who felt that this was a fitting time to display his authority.

“Now, then, Mr. Prior, I think you’d better leave off tossin’ them potatoes about. I don’t want ’em bruised and banged up.”

Prior looked up sharply – that is as sharply as a man can who, suddenly assuming an upright position, feels himself spinning around in space.

“I told you not to trouble yourself about me, Smith. This is a public building ; I have a right to stay here if I wish.”

“Not much you haven’t. You just git.”

Mr. Prior took a step toward him. “Do you want to get yourself thrashed, Smith ?”

“Oh, you come off the roof. I guess you ben drinkin’, Mr. Prior. You don’t look over steady on your feet.”

With a bound Prior was upon him, so unexpectedly that, although Smith was more than his match, he fell heavily to the floor. For a moment he was dazed, but then he closed with his assailant, and they flung themselves about the floor in close embrace. The potatoes rolled about, and cabbages, turnips and pumpkins added to the confusion. There was a rush

from the outside, and the stairway was blocked.

“Stop that fighting !” shouted the constable, who had been one of the onlookers.

Public opinion was clearly on the side of Smith. Several men surrounded his panting form, and others ran to pick up his hat ; while Prior was treated with severity, two or three peacemakers keeping an unyielding grip upon his collar long after he had ceased to struggle.

The town having but just outgrown the limits of a village, this breach of the peace meant much to the community. Men talked about it on street corners ; women ran into their neighbors’ side doors to compare particulars ; and at the next meeting of the most influential sewing society the wife of the leading clergyman said that she did not know what the world was coming to, – which caused the ladies present to pass each other scissors and thread in gloomy silence for a time. The society young ladies said they did not see how they could ever notice Mr. Prior again ; while several young lawyers saw no way out of it except through legal proceedings.

Prior kept much to himself, offering no defence for his conduct. This naturally had a depressing effect upon his social atmosphere and its temperature sank steadily.

As the town became more cold and virtuous, he became more morose. He felt that he had been badly treated, that old friends should not have been so ready to turn the cold shoulder, and he said to himself that he would never explain ; he would leave the place and begin life elsewhere.

Now as a matter of fact he had never really begun life anywhere ; he had simply been born. Up to this time he had never thought whether he was even happy ; but he now realized that he was distinctly unhappy. He felt that his old friends and neighbors owed him an apology ; and they felt that he owed them an explanation. He gave notice to his landlord that after a certain date his rooms would be vacant, though he offended the town still more deeply by thus dropping out of it.

As he moved about, his horizon widened, and his native town did not seem so large to him. As a consequence, the grievance associated with it grew less ; and there were times when he even forgot that he had a grievance. But one effect which his growing world had upon him was that he felt his aloneness in it. As spring, with its restlessness and expectancy, came on, this loneliness increased ; and he flew from place to place in search of companionship and happiness.

It was on one of these journeys that he saw one

evening, from the car, a young fellow flit along a country road upon a bicycle. He was not alone ; beside him rode a young girl. They made a pretty picture against the setting sun, which remained with Prior after long miles had intervened. Why had he never thought of a bicycle tour ? Of course he knew that the purchase of a wheel would not include a girl with rosy cheeks, fluffy hair and jaunty cap ; but it would mean swift motion and flight akin to that of the birds, – so he would get a bicycle and glide through the “glad light green” of spring.

There is such a thing in the world as the logic of chance. A learned Scotch philosopher has written a book to prove it. There are a thousand chances to one against a certain thing happening ; but by a mysterious logic life will now and again hit that one strange chance. It has sometimes been so in your life and mine ; and the dice of destiny now dealt wonderfully in the case of Mr Prior.

A fortnight later, after he had bought and mastered his wheel, he was resting by the roadside late one afternoon. Before him stretched a peaceful landscape dotted with farm homes, and behind him stretched a forest untouched by the hand of man. From where he lay upon the grass he could hear swiftly rushing water ; but the thick foliage hid it from his sight. He was just

making up his mind to go and look at the stream when he heard a stealthy sound as of some one stealing through the undergrowth. Peering in its direction, he saw the figure of a woman making its way toward the hidden stream. The face he could not see, but the form was slight and girlish. In a moment it had vanished. It was all so like a dream that if the disappearance had not been followed by a splashing sound, he would have found it hard to believe that he had not been sleeping. He leaped to his feet and ran in the direction of the sound. Only the troubled water, dark and swift, met his gaze. Then two hands were flung up, and a terrified white face showed for a moment on the current and sank again. He flung himself into the stream, and a few strong strokes brought him to where she would next rise ; and as the water was once more parted, he caught the struggling figure and turned toward the shore. The dream still went on – as a nightmare – through the combat in which the drowning arms strove to pull him under the treacherous water, and as he clambered up the steep bank and laid the dripping but still conscious girl upon the grass, she broke the spell by crying reproachfully :

“Why did you bring me back ? Why did you not let me drown ?”

“Oh, don’t – don’t talk like that.” His voice seemed

to him to come from a great distance, and he half wondered if he were speaking. The girl had risen to a sitting posture and was rocking herself to and fro. She made no answer save by the sobs which came from between her chattering teeth. She shivered and rubbed her thin, cold hands together.

“Let me put something warm around you – you are completely chilled,” he said ; and he ran to his wheel and unstrapped his warm coat and drew it around her shoulders. “Take a sip of this ; it will warm you. There now, tell me where you live. I will take you home.” She looked so small and young in her clinging garments that he almost added, “You poor little child !”

“I don’t live anywhere – any more. I am going to die. Don’t stop me,” – and she tried to get upon her feet ; but Prior threw restraining arms around her.

“Don’t say such a thing ! Don’t think again of taking your life – it is terrible !” – and he gathered her hands into his. “Tell me what trouble you are in – if you have no friend to tell it to ; maybe I can help you.”

“No, no, no – you cannot. Oh, I thought it would all have been over by this time !” – and she bowed her wet face upon her clasped hands and was silent. Then lifting her head she looked steadily at him ; and something she saw in his face made her ask : “Would you believe me ? Oh, I wonder if I might tell you.”

“I will believe you – anything you tell me. You are a truthful, earnest girl.”

“Oh, I’m not an earnest girl – I once thought I was – I’m not truthful. And yet I want to tell you the truth. I’m – I’m – oh, I am so wretched ! Will you believe me ?”

“Yes, yes.”

She clutched his hands pleadingly and then pulled them away. “What would you say if I were to tell you that you had saved the life of a thief ? Oh, how my head aches and roars ! Perhaps I had better tell you – for I think I am dying, and I must – must tell some one ; it may save an honest person from being suspected.”

“Tell me if it will relieve you – but not until I can get you somewhere where you can change these cold, wet clothes. I hear a wagon. You must let me stop it. You cant stay here.”

“Oh, don’t leave me – don’t make me go away alone – I am the loneliest creature in the world.”

“Of course I’ll go with you,” Prior answered, as he would have answered a lost child who had attached itself to him as its protector. He ran to the roadside, casting uneasy glances back as he ran, and halted the wagon. It contained an elderly man and woman, and to them he made known the situation ; and somehow,

without planning to mislead, he spoke of the girl, who had so narrowly escaped drowning “by falling into the creek,” he said, as his sister. “If you could keep her to-night it would be a great kindness ; she is not fit to go on – on our journey,” he added.

So, thought they, this young man and his sister were on a bicycle tour, and she – just like a girl ! – had ridden too near the creek and had gone in. Yes, they could not only keep her, but they insisted that he too should accept their hospitality. So they took her into the wagon, while he followed on his wheel.

“Now, mother, find dry clothes for her ; and if her brother can wear any of my things he’ll be the better rid of his wet clothes,” said the farmer as he drew up at his door.

When they met again, an hour later, at the tea table, the young girl was pale and silent. She scarcely spoke ; and Prior had noted with relief that she had not even smiled at his emaciated appearance in the stout farmer’s clothes.

The supper done, the sympathetic hostess led the girl away into the sitting-room and tucked her snugly up on the old-fashioned lounge. When she returned she told Prior that his sister wanted to see him.

She opened her eyes as he entered the room, and

held out her hand. He drew a chair beside the lounge and took her hand. As he would have released it, she said simply and without embarrassment :

“No, I feel better when you hold my hand – I am not so frightened when you are with me – and – I think I am going to die, so nothing matters now.” After a pause, in which he felt her hand tremble, she began again : “Perhaps you think I said what I did – there in the woods – because I was unnerved. I was unnerved, but what I told you was true. I *am* a thief. I got money – it came into my hand unsought, and so far I was not to blame. It was a large sum, five times as large as I could have earned in a year in my little school. It came to me in a very strange way, and at a time when there was a great deal of distress and poverty all about me ; and – fool that I was ! – I presumed to think it had come to me because I knew so well the needs of the poor. Yes, I even had the presumption to think I had been appointed the Lord’s purse bearer ! Oh, what can you think of me ?”

“I cannot think badly of you,” answered the young man softly.

“Oh, but I think badly of myself. This money – it was a thousand dollars – oh, it makes me sick to think of it all – my whole life has been a pretence since then. I had to pretend that what I was giving away was of my

own earning ; and sometimes the honest creatures I helped did not want to take it ; and when I insisted, they called me generous and good. And I made mistakes sometimes. Once I gave money to a man who said his family would be turned into the street if he did not pay his rent, and he took the money and got drunk and tried to kill his wife ; and last month he was sent to the prison. That was the kind of a purse bearer I was – I who thought I understood the poor, just because I was poor !”

“But this money was given to you to distribute. It –”

“No, it was *not* given to me. But it is too late to repent now ; it is all gone. And people whom I’ve helped all winter keep coming to me, and I’ve woven such a web of lies about myself that I have no protection from them. When I say I have no more money to give, they don’t believe me. But I am glad when they abuse me. I give away every cent I can spare, I go shabbily and thinly dressed, – and some days I’m hungry. Yet I can never atone for my dishonesty. I am glad I am going to die.”

“Don’t call yourself hard names ; don’t talk so dreadfully ! I don’t like to question you, but I don’t understand –”

“How I got the money ? Oh, I went to stay over Sunday with a poor woman – oh, it seems so incredible,

I can't expect a stranger to believe me – I can hardly believe myself when I think back to it – and it doesn't matter how I got it – my sin isn't there. It *came* to me. But I *kept it – and I had no right to it*. I kept it ; I stole it.”

Prior, greatly puzzled, said finally : “I think you blame yourself too severely. You say you did not benefit by the money yourself, and I have no doubt you spent it to the best advantage. You say it is all spent. Don't think any more about it or about the past. Think of the future. Have you no friends ?”

“Yes, I have friends – among the poor ; but I cannot go to them. I have no relations. We were once a large family ; but one after another went. Two years ago my last brother died ; and since then I've been alone.” Her voice trembled and her eyes filled with tears.”

“I wish,” said Prior tenderly, “that since I have been the means of thwarting you in your attempt to take your life, you would let me help you. Let me give you back this money you have spent, and you can restore it ; and if you will tell me how, I will help you relieve the poor. The only time I ever tried to be charitable, I – well I made a fool of myself. But don't make plans to-night. You ought now to be sleeping. It has been a terrible day for you. Only you must promise me that you will not – not –”

“Yes, I know. I see now how wicked and cowardly it was. I ought to have taken what I brought on myself.” She took away her hand and said : “I thank you for what you offer, – but – I cannot think to-night ;” then starting up she cried out wildly : “What if I had drowned you ! Oh, don’t be so good to me – don’t –”

Prior went out into the night and walked under the blossoming locust trees, trying to think calmly of what had happened. He knew that the past was a closed chapter – that tomorrow a new one would begin. Yesterday he was alone, with no one but himself to consider. To-morrow he must become responsible for the life he had saved. Strangely he realized that it was a pleasurable sensation. It was a new and delightful feeling to think he was going to take care of a lonely, helpless creature. He thought of the mistake into which he had led the farmer and his wife in his excitement, and it seemed to him that it would be very nice if she really were his sister. Indeed it would be so pleasant if she were walking beside him now and he were still holding her hand. He stood still under the sweet locusts, and her thin, pathetic little hand seemed to steal into his again. Poor little thing ! What sweet brown eyes ! – and how utterly alone she was ! Ah, well, for the matter of that, so was he utterly alone ; and he felt dreary. It must

be awful to be a woman, alone and poor. He resumed his walk, musing about the young girl – and also a little about himself. Suddenly he wondered how she would look if she were laughing – whether she would have dimples about her mouth and in her cheeks. He could not imagine her smiling. The brown eyes came back to him only through tears, and seemed to say, “I am too lonely to smile ;” and his heart answered them, “I am lonely too,” – and he felt very sorry for her – and for himself.

But to-morrow ? What was he to do with her ? It was in vain that the very little which was practical in him answered that he was simply to let her alone, that he was in no way responsible for her, that he had done quite enough in risking his life to save hers. The sentimental part of him resented this cold answer with great warmth, and retorted that only a scoundrel would force a human being to stay in this hard world and abandon it to misery. When finally he went to his room, it was with the two sides of him still quarrelling. The farmer’s wife called to him that she had left a note on his table from his sister. Hastily lighting his lamp, he read :

“I could not finish what I wanted to say this evening. But I want to tell you how truly grateful I am to you for still believing in me, when you know how

wicked I have been, – and for saving my life. From this on I will use it only for others. I have no right to it. How I wish I might some day repay you, some day do something to make you happy ! Tonight, as I look forward to the coming years, I feel lonelier than I ever did before. If only I had one friend ! That would give me courage. After to-morrow our paths may never meet again ; but I would like to feel that somewhere in the world, you would think of me now and then, and believe that the life you have given me was being rightly used.”

The young man’s eyes were dim as he finished, and he involuntarily pressed the letter to his lips. Poor, lonely little girl ! Instead of rushing away when she broke down, why had he not still sat beside her and comforted her – and held her hand ? Why need their paths separate to-morrow – when they had so strangely come together ? What could he do for her ? How could he make her life happier ? All that she needed, he said to himself, was sympathy – and protection – and a home – poor, homeless little dove ! – and some one to appreciate her and love her, as such a treasure of a girl deserved to be loved.

Just at this point the practical side of his nature interrupted him, and asked him bluntly why *he* did not sympathize with her, and protect her, and love her, and

give her a home himself? He was stunned at the question. He walked to the window and looked out; and after a time he walked back.

“Why shouldn’t I? I will – that is, if she’ll let me – dear little angel! Oh, no, she wouldn’t give a blundering fool such as I am a thought!”

He picked up the letter again and read it through once more. Then he turned it over. There was more writing on the other side which he had not seen. He read:

“I ought to have told you exactly how I got that money. Can you believe me, when I tell you that I found it among the potatoes, which had been sent by the relief committee to the poor woman whose sick child I was nursing? I was preparing some potatoes for their dinner when I came to one which was hard. Feeling to see why it was so hard, I touched a spring, and it opened in halves! It was a bonbon box, and in it lay a thousand-dollar bill! I ought to have taken it at once to the committee, – but I did not. I have told you how falsely I reasoned. Where the money came from I never expect to know. You, a man, never acting upon impulse, may not be able to understand my course; but remember I am only a foolish, impulsive girl, and try still to think well of me, and believe that I meant to do right.”

**The Chances of War, and
How One Was Missed.**

(Harper's new monthly magazine. /
Volume 63, Issue 376, September 1881.)

There were certain conditions in the life of my hero, whom I shall call Rex, which made it easy for him to live out a certain romance that came to him when he was just twenty-five.

These conditions were an adored and adoring mother, and a widowed sister with two small people who felt as free to borrow his knife and suggest their favorite sweetmeats to him as if they had been his own. So his family was quite complete. It filled his days with cheerful work, and his evenings were not at all those of the typical bachelor. His home was as merry and noisy and turbulent, and his nights just “as devoid of ease,” as if he had been a Benedick. For his sister had come home before his nephew and namesake, little Rex, had weathered through his first three months of colic ; and many a night had he risen from his comfortable bed in response to the wails that came from his sister’s room, and he and little Rex had made a procession of themselves, the good uncle sturdily singing, “Where, oh, where, is good old Daniel ?” his dangling suspenders flapping soberly above his slippered feet, as he trudged contentedly up and down the hall. The conquered Rex junior would finally sink heavily and more heavily against his shoulder, until, when just

about to learn the fate of the Hebrew children, he would succumb to the combined effect of warm flannels, the charms of music, and the solace of camomile, and with a weary final wail pass into that happy oblivion where colic is unknown.

Sometimes on these night marches his old soldiering days would come back to him with great vividness, and with them his romance. At such times Rex junior would be treated to a long walk, so long, indeed, that his mother would sink into such a profound slumber that when she was awakened to have him returned to her, she always roused up to the firm conviction that Rex senior was a burglar intent upon stealing her precious boy. As if any burglar in his right mind *would* steal a three-months-old baby. when there were spoons or anything else in the house to be taken. His romance he had never told in words, but somehow his mother and sister knew there had been one, and they arranged it to suit themselves. He was treated with additional tenderness because it had failed, and so, doubtless, were they. Often one or the other said, “Poor Rex, I wonder who she was ? – what a pity !” but in her deceitful heart she did not think it a pity, for this dream of his did not disturb their hold on him, and a realization of it might have done so. Altogether it was much nicer for things to be just as they were. The tender mystery which shrouded a certain time of his life offered an excuse for

the tide of motherly and sisterly love to ebb and flow in constant waves, the *raison d'être* for the ebb being only to gather fresh strength for the flow.

I've no doubt that they invested the romance with more magnitude than it deserved. They even at times detected a sad shade lingering around their hero's admirable mouth, or giving a far-off look to his eyes, as he sank into the easy-chair which his adoring small relatives tugged forward for him. Later, when these small relatives, who had battered upon gory giant stories from their uncle's lips until they were appeased, and afraid of their own shadows, were being put to bed, the daughter would say, suggestively, to her mother, "Poor dear Rex looks tired to-night" ; then, severely, to her children : "You children have no mercy upon your uncle. You are always riding him when he is in the house. I do wish you would not forever worry him for stories. I could tell you just as nice ones."

This would raise a derisive laugh ; and backed up by the fact that there was not only a lamp burning brightly, but a mother and a grandmother in the room, the audacious small ones would suggest to each other topics for "mother's stories," which, after the substantial fare in that line which their uncle had accustomed them to, they regarded as a very weak diet indeed.

“Yes, the dear boy is not in his best spirits to-night. I dare say he has been *thinking*. I must hurry back to him, so he will not be too lonely, poor fellow.”

It had come to have a perfectly clear meaning to these good ladies when either of them accused this interesting man of having “been thinking”, and was in no wise an intimation that, save periodically, he existed without thought. They simply meant that natural regrets were filling his mind and oppressing his heart.

It is true that, as he walked home from his office the very night in question, he *had* “been thinking” ; but his thoughts ran something in this fashion : “If I could see through the game Sharp and Swindle are playing, I’d feel better. That stupid old Fresh, to let himself be trapped so ! If clients only knew how much gold there is in silence, their lawyers wouldn’t find out so often how much there is in their pockets.” And his mind had flown back to these legal worries when the niece and nephew, ceasing to act as counter-irritants, had flown to bed. But when his mother re-entered the room, and he caught her look of sympathy, he threw his cares to the wind once more, and dispelled her solicitude by saying, cheerfully, “Well, mother, which of us is to beat at chess to-night ?”

“The dear unselfish soul makes such an effort to be gay !” she had consequently remarked to her daughter.

If Rex had set about writing out this experience, which was supposed to have altered his whole life, being one of the concise lawyers, he would very probably have put it all into six lines. But he never had written it out ; he had only thought about it very often. At first the recollection had been full of a tantalizing regret, because it seemed to him unnecessary that the episode should have been left unfinished. When he first had come to know why he had been so ruthlessly snatched out of Paradise, and to find that “some one had blundered,” and made it imperative for the Union army to draw in its lines, he had raged and called the general hard names. Then later he had consoled himself by saying that he was at present but enduring the fortunes of war ; and being a determined man, he promised that when once the war was ended, he would fly back to Paradise.

This promise he kept. But though the magnolias flooded the place with the rich perfume which he had always associated with it, and roses grew rampant, hanging great masses of bloom heavily over the garden fence, the fence was a ruin, and the house which the magnolias had shaded was gone.

Of the fate of its former occupants he could learn nothing. And as he sat on the pile of slanting stone which had once formed the steps, he laughed bitterly to

himself, and exclaimed : “What a fool’s errand I’ve come on ! what a fool I was to expect to find a trace ! Why, a battle has been fought over the very lawn ; cavalry has rushed through the garden, and torn up the flowers and crushed the life out of them ; cannon-balls have crashed through the windows ; perhaps in the very room where I lay and watched her some infernal shell has shattered all the sweet daintiness out of existence ; and the rain of shot has battered the dear old house into dust.”

But he sat and looked at the dust until it gathered itself together once more, and rose into the stately house he had remembered. It was almost as real now as then. Why or how he had ever been taken into it he did not know. He remembered the utter weariness with which the last few miles had been made, how his head ached under the merciless sun, and how he had stumbled blindly along the glaring road. And he remembered vaguely a halt, in which he knew he was being discussed, but to which discussion he was utterly indifferent, and allowed himself to drop a helpless burden upon his comrades’ hands, glad that the time had come when he could be irresponsible.

After that there were days when he was conscious of nothing but pain. Then there was one day when toward evening he opened his tired eyes, and looked about

once more. He had closed them upon a burning heat which shimmered over the fields, framing in a hot dusty column of men moving steadily into an enemy's land. It was a silent procession to his dulled ear, and only the monotonous tramp of heavily clad feet came with muffled sound from the earth. Even when his eyelids drooped over his red eyes, they did not seem to shut out the sight. The men still filed on ahead of him and behind, and the heat still shivered in waves over the empty fields. When he opened them, a cool white curtain was swaying fitfully to and fro before an open window. As it would blow back, he could see the boughs of trees dripping and glistening with rain-drops. He lay and refreshed himself with the sight ; then he looked at the clean matting with which the floor was covered, then at the simple sweetness of the room, and attempting to raise himself upon his elbow, he asked, "Where am I ?"

At his question some one on the veranda came, and gathering the curtain aside, looked in.

"Oh, you are awake," said a girlish voice, and a moment later a young girl came into the room. She came close to his bedside, and looked at him with almost a professional eye, then she laid her hand on his forehead, and said, triumphantly : "Your fever is all gone. You feel much better, I am sure." He gradually

sunk back upon his pillow. “Yes, you had better lie down again. We mustn’t try to get well too soon ;” then slipping her arm under his head, she took a glass from a stand, and lifting his head, placed it to his lips. “Of course you *are* better, still you must take your medicine, or you may have a relapse, you know, and I can’t have that,” and she smiled brightly at him.

The draught she had offered him was as bitter as only a thorough army surgeon could prepare, but no nectar ever tasted sweeter.

He had allowed himself to be put gently back, still content to be irresponsible, and made no reply, not even to thank her. She settled his pillow, smoothed out the quilt, then brought a chair, and sat down beside him. After regarding her patient critically awhile with the loveliest dark eyes he had ever seen, she began :

“Do you know how sick you’ve been ?”

“I don’t know,” he echoed.

“You’ve had a fever,” she informed him.

“Yes ?”

“You do not suffer now, do you ?”

“And it doesn’t make your head ache when I talk ?”

“No, indeed. I’m glad to hear you. You are the first white woman who has spoken to me for two years.”

“Humph ! That is because you were on the wrong side. But I mustn’t excite you, so we won’t talk politics ; besides, we are within the enemy’s lines now.”

“The enemy’s ?”

“Yes, your lines.”

“Then you are a rebel ?”

“Yes ; but I’ve taken care of you ; that is, I’ve given you your medicine. And now if you feel like taking anything to eat, I’ll go and prepare it.”

“No, don’t go,” he said, reaching out and taking hold of her sleeve. “I don’t want to eat.”

She settled herself in her chair again, and gazed at him in the most unembarrassed manner. Then leaning forward, she placed her hand on his forehead once more to note its temperature. Evidently she was accustomed to looking upon him simply as a “case,” and she held her head upon one side, and then said, rather reprovingly, “Your talking *has* made you feverish. Now you must go to sleep.”

“Very well ; only don’t go away.”

“I may have to ; perhaps mamma will call me. However, you shall not be neglected. Mamma will be glad to know you have come to yourself again.”

“And are you glad ?” he asked, idly.

“Oh, you think, because I’m a rebel, I would have been glad to have you die. Now I think that is very unkind of you ;” and the dark eyes were filled with indignant protest.

“No, I couldn’t think that. How did I come to be thrown upon your kindness ?”

“You were brought here and left, and although mamma and I hated the sight of your uniform, you looked so sick that we were willing to take care of you.”

“How good you were !” And he lay silently staring at her a long time without speaking. She was dainty and sweet enough to charm any man, but to Rex, who had for years looked only upon men’s weather-beaten faces, she seemed an angel. Her dress was coarse, for fine fabrics were hard to get in the heart of the Confederacy at that time, but it photographed itself upon his memory. At length he put out his hand and took a fold of the sleeve between his fingers. It was a calico of a dull dark ground, over which were sprinkled dots of a brilliant red. He felt it thoughtfully, and said, “That is a beautiful dress you have on.”

She glanced over it inquisitively, and then burst into a merry laugh. “I don’t think you know much about

dress, if you call this beautiful ;” and taking a fold between her thumb and finger, she held it off, and regarded it scornfully. “Why, it is simply an old cotton dress ; but – Well, we are poor now,” she added, in explanation, with a defiant toss of her head.

“And not proud.”

He looked at her with a laugh in his eyes, which she answered by a merry shake of her pretty head.

“No ; very, very humble.” Then, after a pause, she said, “But if you are well enough to try to tease me, you are well enough to eat,” and she flitted from the room. Almost immediately an elderly lady entered, whom Rex easily recognized as her mother. She came directly to his bedside, and took his hand, telling him, in a pleasant voice, how glad she was to learn from her daughter that he was so much better.

To her our hero tried to express in a more conventional manner than to the daughter his thanks, and his apprehensions that he had given them a great deal of trouble.

“We are glad to have been of service to you,” the lady answered, gravely. “I’ve a poor boy of my own in our army, and he may be glad to find friends amongst enemies some day. It is a terrible war ;” and her face grew sad.

He was trying to find a suitable reply, when his first friend returned to the room, attended by a cheery-looking negress, bearing a tray upon which were spread such dainties as could be procured.

“You *might* have had some broiled chicken,” began the young lady, as she drew a light table up to his bedside, “if –”

“Florence !” said her mother, reprovingly.

The negress chuckled herself out of the room, murmuring something about Mars Lincom’s soldiers liking chickens mighty well.

The two ladies ministered most gracefully and kindly to him as he ate ; and when the evening settled down with its flood of moonlight, they came again and sat beside him. Naturally the war was a subject to be ignored between them, and as total strangers, they had few topics in common without intruding into each other’s lives ; so after a while conversation lagged. The sick man, feeling the restlessness of returning health, nervously fingered the spray of roses which had laid upon his pillow, then dropped his arms beside him, and sighed.

“We have talked too much, and tired you,” his hostess said, regretfully. “We will go now, and you had better sleep ; or would it give you pleasure if my

daughter would sing for you ?

“Oh, I would like to hear her sing,” he answered, eagerly.

“Bring your guitar, then, Florence dear, and sing.”

The daughter willingly obeyed, and a moment later looked in through the window to say, “You know I can not sing, mamma, if you both look at me, so I will sit here, and you can hear me just as well.”

After running her skillful fingers over the strings, calling forth a soft melody, she began a song full of rhythm and sweetness. Her voice was as fresh as the night air, and she sang with an unfeigned pleasure. Rex lay with his eyes closed, listening to the music, and resting in body and soul. For him had come one of those delightful pauses in life in which is no care nor thought for the morrow, which so seldom come to man or woman after once the cares of life are taken up. He did not even enjoy the music ; in an aesthetic mood he listened to it, and accepted it with an invalid’s selfishness. It was sweet ; and he knew how lovely the singer must look, sitting with the moon shining down into her dark eyes. He even pictured her slim white hands flitting about over the strings. He hoped she would sing a long, long time ; he wondered why the music sounded so low, so far away ; he – slept.

Far away a clock struck three. The house was dark and silent. The curtains were closely drawn across the window, through which showed vaguely the light of the declining moon. A delicious sense of security and comfort hovered about him. The echo of the music seemed to linger, and the room was full of the presence of the singer.

As he had fallen asleep, she and her song had drifted away from him, with the moonlight and the sweetness of the roses upon his pillow ; but now with the coming day she was real to him once more. How beautiful she was, and how strong the wish was to see her again ! He would not have long to wait, for already the darkness which precedes dawn had come. Again the clock struck, and soon warm shafts of light shot up from the horizon, and all nature awoke.

Presently a negro came silently into the room to see if he could do anything for him. But he wanted nothing but to think of the bewitching girl until the time when she would come. How would she meet him, now that he was no longer a helpless invalid ? Would she flit in and out as she had done yesterday, perhaps reproach him for falling asleep while she was singing ? He planned out the day, and thought of what he would say, and of her replies. As he began to grow impatient at the slowness

of time, he became conscious that the stillness of morning was being broken by the sound of horses and wheels coming swiftly toward the house, and halting before the door. There were hurried inquiries and responses, and then footsteps crossed the veranda, and the negro led the way into the room, followed by two soldiers.

“Hello, Rex, I’m glad to see you so much better, old man,” and his hand was caught in the strong palm of a former comrade. “It’s lucky you’re well enough to be moved, for our lines are having to fall back, and we are hurrying to get you sick fellows into safe quarters. We’ve orders to have you all in the hospital at – before night. We haven’t a moment to lose, either. The ambulance is at the door, and we’ll have you into it in a twinkling.”

He was aghast. “I can’t be moved ; it would kill me,” he began, almost believing himself. “I’ll take my chances. There would not be much of me left if I were to have a relapse now.”

“There, would be more than if you were sent to convalesce in Andersonville. We’ll look out for you. Poor old fellow, this fever has taken the courage out of you.”

Rex groaned. “Are there no other fellows you could pick up first ? An hour or so might make a great

difference with me.”

“Yes, I’m pretty sure an hour or so would make a mighty difference,” returned his comrade, laughing. “Where are his clothes ?” he asked of the negro. “We must get him into the ambulance at once.”

The clothes were produced, and the unwilling man tenderly helped into them by the soldiers.

“Do you think,” he asked of the negro when all was ready, “that I could see your mistress a moment ? I would like to thank her,” he added, turning to his friends. “She and her daughter have been very kind to me. And I *can’t* go without seeing them.”

“We’ll not dare to wait long ; but of course it will only be civil to thank the ladies.”

The negro was not gone long, when he returned, almost immediately followed by his mistress, who seemed greatly excited over the reason for his hurried departure. Offering her hands, she wished him a friendly good-by.

“I could almost have wished that our army had been held back for a few days longer, until you were better able to be moved ; but I hope you will not suffer from the change. If your friends will leave you, I promise to use my influence in your behalf.”

He looked appealingly at his comrades ; but one

answered : “It would not do to expose you to the trouble of having a Union soldier in your house, and I’m afraid, madam, you could hardly save him from arrest. We all appreciate your offer, though.”

“I do, more than I can tell you, my kind, kind friend,” Rex answered, bending and respectfully kissing her hand. “Will you please give my thanks to your daughter and say good-by for me ? I’ll never forget either of you as long as I live.”

“My daughter !” she exclaimed. “Why, she must come to see you off. Go quickly, Jerry, and tell Miss Florence not to lose a moment. Ah ! this is one of the sad things of war. To think how gladly we would protect you ! but we might not be able to, and I could never forgive myself if evil befell you in my house.”

The soldiers grew visibly impatient, and at last reluctantly said, “We will not dare take any more time, Rex.”

“Then good-by – forever, I suppose.”

“Good-by,” the lady answered, her eyes filling with tears as she watched him go feebly across the room between his friends. As he reached the door, light feet came running along the veranda, and Miss Florence appeared.

“It is too cruel for them to take you away !” she

began, vehemently. "It will kill you. Mamma, why do you allow it ? Why do you take that poor sick man ?" turning indignantly upon the soldiers. "*Our* friends would not touch him. They are too brave to attack the helpless."

The soldiers smiled and said, "We have our orders, miss."

"Orders indeed ! It is a disgrace to your officers to issue such orders. Mamma, why don't you interfere ?"

"Florence dear, you are forgetting yourself. We can only wish him farewell, and pray that he may reach his home safely some day. We will not forget you, my poor fellow," she said, taking his hand once more.

The young girl came toward him with both hands outstretched, and with tears dimming her bright eyes. "I suppose we'll never see you again, but, as mamma says, we will pray that you reach your friends safe and well ; and I hope you will not forget us, for we will remember you. Good-by."

Rex lifted her hand, as he had her mother's and kissed it ; then went with trembling limbs toward the ambulance. He was lifted in, and as they drove away he raised the curtain and looked out. She was standing with one hand against a pillar of the veranda, looking sadly after him. He watched her until he was whirled

swiftly down the avenue and out of the gate ; then shrubbery and walls came between them, and hid her from him. He never saw her after that.

He often wondered whether, if he had known her better, she would have reigned supreme in his heart over all other women, or whether in a longer companionship the charm would have vanished. Now and then he would meet a bright, lovable girl who seemed not averse to win her way into his heart, and he would be half ready to admit her. But at the boundary line of that woman's kingdom a dream-maiden stood and waved back the intruder, and when he felt inclined to quarrel with her arrogant dominion, the dark eyes which met his accusations with conscious power smilingly lured him back to the past, and the shadowy hand which put away a rival was lifted tenderly to his lips to receive once more that farewell kiss, now grown into a pledge of constancy.

Le coureur des bois

(Scribners Monthly, an illustrated magazine for the people. Volume 12, Issue 1, May 1876.)

“Out of the beaver trade rose a huge evil, baneful to the growth and the morals of Canada. All that was most active and vigorous in the colony took to the woods, and escaped from the control of intendants, councils, and priests, to the savage freedom of the wilderness. Not only were the possible profits great, but in the pursuit of them there was a fascinating element of danger and adventure. The bush-rangers or *coureurs des bois* were to the King an object of terror. They defeated his plans for the increase of the population, and shocked his native instincts of discipline and order. Edict after edict was directed against them, and more than once the colony presented the extraordinary spectacle of the greater part of its young men turned into forest outlaws.” – Parkman’s “Old Régime in Canada.”

Chapter I.

It was a cottage of the better class, but that is not saying that it was either elegant or very comfortable, for Canada at that time was very young and poor – in short, was still New France. The cottage was, however, a picture in its way, both without and within. Over the thick stone walls clambered a hardy vine, which was willing to be beautiful and thrive through the brief summer, and not become utterly discouraged during the six months its roots were covered with snow. It had pulled itself up to the roof, holding on to the rough stones ; though that was no great feat, for the children who lived in the cottage often did the same, and had even coaxed a gaudy scarlet bean up too, and together they waved in the summer wind and basked in the summer sun. Within there was a cheery homeliness, which obscured bare walls and scanty furniture. It was so late in the afternoon, that the slanting rays of the sun fell in through the door across the newly scoured floor, drying the white planks before a speck of dust found an abiding place there, and leaving the grain of the wood sharply defined in the dampness.

There were three persons in the room – mother, daughter, and baby boy. The first was a woman of perhaps forty, whose face, though filled with lines drawn by care, hard work, and a bleak climate, still retained much of the beauty of her youth. Her dark eyes, clear and untroubled now, rested fondly upon the baby she rocked in her arms and softly sung to. He was not really a baby, or would not have been if another had come to take his place ; still, as he was the youngest, he had for two years reigned over the family absolutely. Even now, as his tired mother hoped to see the long lashes sink in sleep upon his rosy cheeks, the white lids slowly lifted from the merry brown eyes, and he looked saucily at her. She stooped over him, kissed his pretty mouth, then putting him down, said to her daughter :

“He will not sleep, Marie, and I will not give any more time to the rogue. Take him with thee when thou goest for the cows, and see if thou canst weary him for once.”

Marie looked at her mother with a dismayed face, and said protestingly :

“But, maman, he wearies me the most ; he makes me carry him, and stoop with him that he may pick every marguerite he sees, and when I set him down he runs so close to the cows’ legs.”

“Well, well, Marie, do as thou wilt,” answered her

mother, with an easy indulgence, strange in those days when parents spoke to be obeyed. But between her and this only daughter was an affection almost like that existing between sisters. There had been five years of lonely married life before Marie was born, when the silent, hard-working husband had neither time nor thought to banish the gloom and homesickness of his young wife, who could not forget old France and the happy home she had left there. For she was one of the many peasant girls who had come out to Canada in obedience to the order of the King, that the colonists should have French wives in their new home. And when the baby girl was born, the mother's heart beat with a happiness it had not known at sight of the two boys who had come before. From the day the little hands had first offered themselves to assist with an irksome task, the mother looked upon her daughter not only as a help, but as a friend and companion. Marie had hurried through with her childhood, instinctively recognizing the want and need of her mother's heart, and had long shared the cares of the house and the crowd of noisy boys. Happiness and contentment came more fully each year to the cottagers. They prospered, and their farm this afternoon was smiling to the river's edge with swiftly ripening grain.

Marie took up her cap and looked toward the door, then, turning, she said :

“I will take him, maman.”

But her mother answered :

“No, Marie ; thou art always a good, willing girl ; go alone. The walk through the forest will rest thee. Only come back quickly ; thy father and brothers will soon be in and hungry for their supper.”

“Maman,” cried Marie, dropping upon her knees beside her mother and hiding her face upon her bosom, “do not call me good. The word fills me with shame. I am not so good a daughter as you deserve.”

“Ah, little one, thou hast been a comfort to me all thy life,” said the mother caressingly. “Thou art a good modest girl. Now go. See ! little Jacques is wondering at thy tears, and so is thy mother.”

Marie still knelt.

“I have been thinking all day of my sins – of how often I have pained you and given you trouble. Maman, can you forgive it all, and believe that I sometimes sin because I do not know which of two things it is right to do ? And will you love me always, even if I should sometimes be far away from you ?”

“Always, always, Marie,” answered her mother, kissing her, and thinking that her grief meant no more than that which had prompted a hundred similar confessions.

“My sweet maman,” said the girl, as she arose.

Patting the baby’s waving hair and kissing his warm cheek, she started across the fields toward the forest, a corner of which she must cross to reach the pasture.

As she entered the dense shade, she began to look anxiously around, and as soon as she became accustomed to the dusk, she saw coming toward her, under the trees, a young man. She ran hastily to him, as if fearing that that which she had to say would be left unsaid, unless she spoke at once.

“I cannot go with thee, Antoine, I only came to say adieu. Oh, forgive me for disappointing thee, but I cannot go.”

“Cannot go !” he exclaimed, stepping back and looking at her angrily. “Thou art jesting with me, Marie ; thou wilt not break thy promise.”

“Indeed, I am not jesting, Antoine, dear Antoine. Forgive me, and try still to love me a little. I will always be true to thee, and never love, never marry, another, but I cannot go with thee,” she said, laying her hand upon his arm.

He shook it off impatiently.

“Marie, I have risked my life – or my liberty, and that is more than life to me – to come here. I have waited day after day for thee to decide which thou didst

love best, thy mother or me, and now, after keeping me here until thy vanity is sufficiently flattered, thou sendest me away – thou stayest behind to laugh at me – to –”

“Oh, Antoine, how canst thou speak so cruelly ? Let me go back to my mother. Forget the forest and its wild life. Come back to us. Come back to the church and proper ways, and soon the dislike of my parents will vanish ; they will give their consent to our marriage.”

“I cannot go back to be treated like a forgiven outlaw. Come with me if thou wouldst save my soul. With thee – in another place – I will try to live as thou wishest. But if thou forsakest me now, I will go my own way ; I will live the life I prefer,” and Marie’s lover stood darkly regarding her.

Standing together, they formed a picture, Rembrandtesque in its lights and shades. The girl, in the simple dress of her class, with the sunshine of the meadows seeming still to rest in the waves of her bright hair, and a broad expanse of golden light reaching into the forest after her. Facing her the hunter stood, picturesque at any time in his half-civilized, half-savage dress, but doubly so now, the centering point of the deep shadows. He, his dress and his manner harmonized with the forest ; his strong right arm was thrown impatiently up to keep back a green branch

which would have swept against his handsome face, while his left hand was extended – waiting for the next word – either to grasp or thrust away the little hard hands she held out to him. There was no sound except the summer wind, which was too languid to come far into the wood, and only stirred the berry bushes and tall grass which grew along its edge. His eyes never left her face, save when she turned her head to look back at the sunny meadow, the little stone cottage, whose roof she could see, and the shining river beyond. Then she turned to her lover again, and to the silent forest which stretched behind him, and her eyes drooped to the mosses and lichens which grew at his feet, while she tried to find an answer for him. But she was too unused to self-decision to find one, so she at last only looked up, and, reaching out her hands, said with a helpless sob :

“Oh, Antoine !”

He took her hands and said softly :

“Come, Marie.”

“If I go with thee now, Antoine, when wilt thou bring me back to my mother ?”

“When thou hast made a good man of me, Marie, and that will not be long, I promise thee. For how could I be wicked or reckless when I have thee always with

me ? Come, Marie, thy mother is good, she does not need thee, while I – well, I have told thee often that without thee I cannot and will not be good. Thy mother will perhaps weep –”

“Oh, Antoine, I know how she will weep for me ! I know how lonely the long summer days and the dreary winter days will be for her without me, and poor baby Jacques, he will weep for me too. Oh, Antoine !” and she clung to him as the tears overflowed her face.

He pressed her bright head close to his breast, only answering for a time with his kisses. Then he said :

“My own little one, I know how thou lovest thy mother, and how much she is to thee, but cannot I be more ? And, Marie, thy mother does not think so badly of me as all the others do. When she learns that thou art with me, she will say, ‘Poor Antoine, he has now some one to live for, some one to help him escape from hell.’ Marie, if I go away alone,” he continued, “I will return to men like myself, even worse, and then I will have no strength, while if thou art with me – with all thy purity and goodness – thou wilt keep evil spirits away, thou wilt in time teach me how to become good, and draw me back to ‘proper ways.’ And then we will return and live as thy father and mother do.”

“Ah, if I could know all that would come true. But, Antoine, how will my mother know what has become

of me ?”

“I will let her know. Not far from here at an Indian village is good Père Geauteau, and, after he has married us, I will pray him to write and tell them all.”

“And when shall we be married, Antoine ?”

“As soon as our feet can carry us to the priest. Come, come.”

“But it will soon be dark in the forest,” said the girl, drawing back.

“Never fear the darkness, I know every foot of the ground between here and the great lakes. Come, my darling, and when thou art weary I will carry thee.”

“And, Antoine, thou wilt love me well enough to keep all thy vows ?”

“I swear by everything thou believest holy that I will,” and, holding her hand tightly, he hurried her away.

The last dampness had dried from the white floor, little Jacques had laid down in a sunny spot and fallen asleep, the mother was commencing supper and wondering why Marie did not come. When the table was set, and still no Marie came, she walked anxiously to the door and looked across the meadow. The sun was

sinking, and already lay in a softly rounded hollow of the mountain range, sending his last level rays across field and river. All was tranquil, warm, and fair, and yet over her heart crept such a chill as had never rested there before. She gazed steadily toward the forest, longing for the first glimpse of Marie when she would emerge with the cows. As she stood, the sun dropped behind the mountains, and the shadows deepened around the wood, and stretched out across the meadow. Where could Marie be? She lifted the sleeping baby from the floor, and laid him on the bed, mended the fire, and then hurried out along the path which led to the pasture. It was useless to chide herself for her fears. Marie had never idled nor tarried when she had been bidden to hurry. Something must have happened. Perhaps one of the usually gentle cows had become unruly and rushed upon her, or perhaps she had sat down to rest in the forest, – she was tired, poor child, – and had fallen asleep. At the edge of the forest she paused and looked into its black depth for a sight of the familiar dress. She tried to lift up her voice and call, but there was such an oppression upon her that, as in a horrible dream, the sound was scarcely more than a whisper. She stood a moment irresolute, listening to the strange sounds that came to her. A bird darted past her, and made her heart leap until the blood thundered in her ears. Then she dashed forward, looking to the right and

left, but breathing not a word. She had still one hope, still one fear, that when she reached the opening she would find the missing one. The way was short ; she was soon there. As she stumbled over the last fallen branch and reached the clearing, the soft lowing of the patient cows smote upon her heart with the dull, incomprehensible pain, that the unreasoning tranquillity of a dumb brute always has when every pulse is bounding and the brain is whirling with excitement.

Marie had not been there. She hurriedly opened the gate and let the creatures through, then recrossed the forest. As she passed the spot where two hours before Marie and Antoine had stood, and caught sight of the river with its melancholy mists rising over it, she broke into loud sobs and cried out :

“Marie, Marie, where art thou ?”

But her voice only died away among the trees, and no welcome answer came.

When she reached home little Jacques was still sleeping, and the father and tired boys were standing about the door, with that bewildered look which takes possession of the men of a family when they come home and find the mother gone. She rushed to them, breathless and frantic.

“Marie is gone !” was all she could say as she sank

upon the step. But they soon gathered what little there was to tell. Each had his suggestion to make, which neither satisfied himself nor another, and, leaving the supper untasted and the cows unmilked, they started toward the woods.

The mountains ceased to glow as the clouds above them grew dull, and from softest blue vanished into darkest purple ; banks of misty clouds settled into the valleys about their summits ; the light wind died away ; the river lay a silent roadway ; the vast forests took on a denser shade, and the whole world of nature slept as the mother watched.

Chapter II.

The summer days dragged through their long hours at the little cottage. Every morning and every night, the mother looked toward the forest as she opened or shut the door. But the girl for whom she looked did not come. The summer ended ; the vine on the wall turned scarlet, and the gaudy bean fainted to the ground under a cruel frost, the fields were bronzed and the woods all aflame for a few glorious days, then the winter was with the cottagers.

In the forest the summer had passed like a happy dream to the two wanderers. Marie's fears that her mother would have no clue to her whereabouts, were quieted by the promise of the priest, to whom she and Antoine had gone, that he would send a messenger to the curé of her parish, and thus clear away the mystery of her absence. And, not knowing that the message never reached her home, she, after her first hours of remorse and self-reproach, gave herself up to the happiness of wandering alone with the lover from whom she had been separated – save for a few stolen meetings – so long. And the days passed far more swiftly with them than in the saddened home.

After leaving the Indian camp to which Antoine had first directed their steps, it seemed to Marie that they wandered aimlessly on. But the spell of the forest was upon her, and she did not care how long they lingered under the rustling trees, or darted in their bark canoe down flashing streams, whose rocky walls echoed the sound of the foaming rapids, and the wild forest songs of Antoine. They two, it seemed to her, were alone in an uninhabited world – a world into which they had come as from another life. So totally were they separated from the past, that the silence and distance of death seemed to spread between them and the home she had left. But the short summer burned itself out in the forest as well as in the fields. The rich, sweet fragrance

of the dying leaves, and the melody of the busy departing birds filled the air ; their happy, dreamy summer was over, and it was time to prepare for winter.

There was a trading-post not far away, Antoine had said one autumn afternoon, as they sat talking of the coming winter, and to it he argued they had better go. There he could sell his furs to the traders, and there Marie would be secure from at least a part of the suffering the winter must bring her with its many hardships. But with the thought of the companions awaiting her there, came the fear that she would lose him if he once more felt the wild lawless influence that had drawn him from his early home.

“Do not go, Antoine. Let us live here in this happy loneliness where we have each other.”

“My poor little Marie, thou dost not know what the winter will be here,” he answered.

“But I do know what it will be there. Oh, do not take me. I would rather freeze or starve here with thee, than have thee go with those men,” and she clung to him, weeping.

It was in vain that he reasoned, and at last she prevailed. Further up the stream was a hunting-lodge, comfortable for its rude build, but deserted by the trappers in consequence of a rumor that it was haunted

by the spirit of a murdered Indian. To that they had better go, since Marie obstinately preferred cold, hunger, and disembodied spirits, to the company of the reckless band to which her husband had once belonged.

The hut stood a mere foot-print in the wilderness. It was belted around by a bounding stream that even the chains of winter could not fetter, and which now chanted loudly as they looked into its shady depths. In front of them, behind them, everywhere spread the forest, which spoke only of nature, which held back the slender thread of civilization which fringed its border along the great river. And here was to be their home, until Marie's influence should bring under control the wild nature of the *coureur des bois*, and draw him back to ways of peace and prosperity.

The hut was empty, save for a few pieces of roughly constructed furniture, which the hunters had left behind them. But, desolate as it was, it soon took on a look of homeliness under Marie's skillful hands. Against the wall they hung Antoine's gun and other hunting and fishing implements. A bed of fragrant pine branches was made in one corner, from the canoe Antoine brought an armful of soft furs, which he spread upon the floor, and when Marie had filled the empty fireplace with crimson and golden boughs, their home was furnished.

It had not been too early chosen, for the leaves soon fell, the short, wonderful Indian summer was over, the bleak wind roared loudly through the high tree-tops, the snow and rain combated for victory, and a six months' winter had commenced.

In the morning Antoine would go out to hunt and trap, and return at nightfall laden with game. Upon two or three occasions he had gone to the trading-post where he had exchanged his furs, and Marie saw her dress of civilization gradually replaced by the habiliments of a squaw, and her life shaping itself to the requirements of the present.

They were far into the winter before any feet but their own had crossed their threshold. Antoine was on the eve of a visit to the traders, and had flung himself down upon a wolf-skin before the red fire which filled the little cabin with light and heat. Marie sat beside him, talking first of his journey, and then of the spring which was now but a few months away, and as ever urging her husband to return with her, as soon as the winter was over, to the old home, and turn forever from the forest. He listened with a smile which prefaced a promise, yet he argued negatively for the pleasure of hearing her soft persuasive tones. The months she had been with him had wonderfully softened his nature, and made him long to live a life worthy of her love.

Something of this he was about to tell her, when his purpose was arrested by the unusual sound of voices upon the clear night air. Starting up, he flung the door open wide, and saw in the bright starlight two hunters approaching over the glistening snow. The fire-light and the open door offered a welcome of which they availed themselves, without waiting for words to second it. And a few moments later they were unfastening their snow-shoes, and laying aside their guns within the bright room.

As Antoine and his guests stood regarding each other, a look of recognition came into their faces, and with an exclamation of pleasure he clasped the hands of two old comrades. With a few words he accounted for Marie's presence, and after the hunters had partaken of the supper their hostess provided for them, they sat late into the night talking over old adventures. Marie listened silently, and watched her husband with troubled eyes, as, his face glowing with pleasure and excitement, he recalled their exploits of danger and daring. And her heart grew heavy as she heard them plan their journey for the next day together to the trading-post.

Next morning before day they were astir and preparing for their journey, and, as they were about to start, one of the hunters said to Marie :

“Do not be surprised if Antoine does not come back to thee to-night. He is too gay a comrade to lose, now that we have found him. We are going to take him with us, and perhaps thoult not see him again until spring.”

“What wouldst thou do, little one, if I left thee here alone ?” asked her husband, taking her hand.

“I would die, Antoine,” she answered, her eyes filling with tears.

“But let me take thee to the settlement, and leave thee with the other women there, while I go away and gain wealth for thee. I will go with Henri and Jules, where the furs are rich and plentiful, and by spring, Marie, thy husband will be a rich man.”

“Ah, Antoine, thou dost but try me. I know thou wilt not leave me,” she said, laying her head upon his breast.

“Why canst thou not consent, Marie ?” he asked, lifting her face and looking into it, while his own clouded with disappointment. For with the advent of his comrades the old passion had come back to him, almost too strong to be resisted.

“Oh, Antoine, thou dost not love me any longer,” she cried, as she interpreted the look his face wore.

The impatience of disappointment and the galling sense of restraint were upon him, and he felt the jeering mood of his companions as he listened to her reproach.

“Marie !” he exclaimed angrily, “thou art a foolish child !”

“Come, come, Antoine,” laughed his friend. “Thou art much too tender with this baby wife ; thou shouldst never have married, to be held a prisoner. What has become of thy brave spirit, which thou once didst boast could be controlled by no will but thine own ?” and he took up his gun and led the way to the door, looking back at the two as they stood together – Marie tearful, and Antoine flushed and baffled.

“Antoine, do not let us part in anger, even if it is but for a day.”

It irritated him that she should feel so sure of his return at night, and he replied :

“How dost thou know it will be but for a day ? Thou demandest much of me.”

“Do I require more of thee than thou hast required of me, Antoine ?” she asked, turning away from him.

“But thou art unreasonable, Marie,” he said more softly, as he remembered her sacrifice. “Thou art childish, to weep when I talk of leaving thee for a few weeks. Thou wouldst make a fool of me before my friends.”

“Forgive me, Antoine, and go. I will trust thee,” she replied, brushing away her tears and throwing her arms

about him.

He kissed her in silence, and, catching up his load of furs, hurried after the others.

“Which has conquered, Antoine, thee or thy wife ?” was the question as he joined them.

“Never mind which,” he answered sharply, “and I want no more of thy riddle, Jules.”

When they reached the camp Antoine found a crowd of his old companions gathered there. They greeted him uproariously, and questioned him closely as to his long desertion of them. They listened to the story of his tyrannical wife as told by his late guests with many embellishments, and all joined their entreaties that he would bring his wife to the camp, and go with them upon a long expedition they were now planning. The temptation to yield was great, but when he looked around upon the drunken, reckless, half-savage band, and the women who found them agreeable companions, and thought of leaving his pure, helpless Marie with them, even the fascination of the long, dangerous hunt failed.

The day was almost done before he had disposed of his furs, and shaken off the last friend who followed to persuade him. And, when at last he lifted his purchases to his shoulders and slipped on his snow-shoes and

turned homeward, the sun was sinking into its early bed of wintry clouds.

He struck briskly out through the forest, caring not for the darkness, and breathing more freely as the last sound from the camp died away in the distance. His heart grew warmer as each step took him nearer to his wife, and he forgot the darkness and cold, as he pictured her joy when he would take her in his arms, and tell her that she had reclaimed him.

At home Marie had spent a wretched day of fear and doubt. It was in vain that she assured herself that he loved her, that he had always been true to her ; she was forced to remember that he had never been so tried before. And, further, she knew that his vanity had been sorely wounded, that she had subjected him to the ridicule of his friends. Why had she not exercised more tact and shielded him from this ? Why had she, in short, shown herself to be a child, making him perhaps indeed feel her to be a burden ? She tormented herself with these self-reproaching queries throughout the day. But, when evening came, the hope that he might soon be with her, cheered her, and she brightened the fire, and tried to give the little cabin an air of welcome against the time of his return. But the dusk turned to darkness, and the darkness was in its turn dispelled by the late rising moon, and yet he did not come. Again and again

she wrapped a blanket about her, and ran up the river bank in the direction he had gone, in the hope of meeting him. And, not daring to lose sight of the light in her cabin, she would stand and listen, until, benumbed with cold and fear, she would fly back to her shelter, only to be driven remorselessly out again.

During the early part of the night, the knowledge that his heavy burden would make his progress slow sustained her. But when time, and far more than time for his return had elapsed, and he did not come, the horrible fear that he had deserted her, and the dread that he was kept away by some terrible accident, by turns took possession of her mind.

Midnight was passed, and the moon slid slowly along the sky, muffled in the heavy snow which fell in feathery flakes. The last hours of the night were made endurable only by the resolve to go in search of him as soon as day came. When the east showed signs of dawn, something of the comfort which light always brings after a night of suffering came to her. And she consoled herself with many a good reason why he had not come, as she hurriedly made preparation for her departure ; he had not disposed of his furs until too late, or perhaps he had really been angry with her, and had stayed away just to give her this anxious night. She did not know her way to the camp ; all she could do was to

go in the same direction he had gone the day before. Only the day before ! What an eternity lay between her and the time he had given her that half-angry, half-reconciling kiss, and hurried away !

Chapter III.

For a time after Antoine left the camp, he made good progress. As he sped over the ground, absorbed in his thoughts and plans for the future, he found his way more by instinct than care, and before night was really upon him, he was several miles on his way toward his home. He whistled softly to himself as a picture of the bright, warm room, with Marie for its center, arose before him. And he resolved that before he slept he would tell her what he had so nearly told her the night before. Yes, as soon as the spring opened, they would once more take up their wandering life, but this time with their faces toward civilization. During the last twenty-four hours he had seen how impossible a continuation of their present life would be for any time. The unsettled, homeless existence which they must lead in the forest, he now, for the first time, thought of as a wrong to Marie. To him, *the forest* meant wild, happy

freedom – freedom from care, law, or duty, while the life toward which he was forcing himself meant prosaic virtue, and impulse forever controlled. And, although his every feeling rebelled against the change, the determined will which had always made him so uncontrollable, and the broad, generous nature which had once made him break away from all rule, now made him see a duty which he had brought into his life, and seeing which compelled him to perform it.

The moon rose at last and mottled his way with brilliancy and gloom as its light by turns fell through the naked boughs, or was intercepted by the shade of the pines.

The silence of the night was unbroken, save by the low shuffling of his snow-shoes as he made his way through the trackless waste. Now and then he would pause for rest, and then press on, indifferent to the night and its loneliness. The way was long, he was tired from his day of excitement and travel, and he began to feel some misgivings about reaching home in time to save Marie from a night of watching. There was a different trail from the one taken by himself and companions that morning, which would cut off a mile or two of his journey, and into that he would turn. He shifted his course, and was soon at the stream which marked the new trail. Following its guidance a short distance, he

came to a pine-tree which a late storm had uprooted, and which now lay across the frozen river. The sight of the tree decided him to cross and follow the path on the other side. And, yielding to a desire to feel something more solid than crumbling snow under his feet, he shook off his shoes and climbed upon the fallen trunk. As he did so, he noticed that the ice had been shattered by the tough branches, and the water was running swift and cold through the green leaves. He strode forward along the ice-incrusted bark with a free, careless step. In the middle of the stream, he sprang lightly past an interfering bough, slipped as he regained his footing, clutched at the branches overhead, crashed through the wiry tree, and an instant later felt the icy water sweeping over his feet.

The fall, when he realized it, seemed only the interruption of a moment, and the slight inconvenience of a pair of wet moccasins which would soon freeze and cease to trouble him. He threw his arm up for a supporting branch by which to extricate himself, but it fell back powerless, and sent a sickening thrill through his frame. Still, even now, he reasoned, his accident could be nothing serious, and he struggled up to free himself from the close-lapping branches. But the short struggle showed him how vain it was. He could neither rise nor sink. The heavy burden on his shoulders held him firmly down. Beneath, his only foot-hold was the

rushing water, and he seemed bound about by a thousand firmly fixed cords in the slender, tough branches. More than the slightest movement was an impossibility, and by degrees the horrible truth that he was chained in a prison, in a spot which might not be traversed for years by human feet, and from which he could only be released by the hand of death, forced itself upon him. He did not submit to the discovery quietly, for, with all the strength of his slender athletic frame, he struggled : but after each fruitless attempt he paused, only to find himself held more firmly in the pine-tree's embrace. The toils which encompassed him were seemingly so slight, that to be baffled by them filled him with fierce rage, and he shook them and beat wildly about him with his left hand to break them away. But the branches only gave out a bruised fragrance as they cut sharply through the cold air and swayed against his face ; and, after an hour or more of combat, he sank back hopeless, to wait. Save for the pain which his arm gave him when he moved it, he was not suffering ; or, if suffering, his mental anguish made him insensible to it. And, as he stood upright in his trap, his mind supernaturally clear, he thought until his imaginings became torture almost unendurable.

Again the picture of his lowly home arose before him. Again, more vividly than ever, he saw Marie, pale and tearful, listening for the step she would never again

hear. Oh, why had he parted from her so coldly ? Why had he not told her his partially formed plans that last night as they sat before the fire ? How plainly he remembered her answer when he asked her what she would do without him – “I would die, Antoine.” As he repeated the words, they brought him a strange joy to know that without him she could not live, that they would meet again ere long, when he could tell her that he had always been true to her, that even when death came to him he was hastening to her.

With the certainty of death came thoughts of the future. His life, in the sight of the church and the world, had been one of outlawry and disobedience to the laws of God and man. What hope was there for him now ? What a vast distance would separate him from Marie, even after they were both dead. Would they ever meet ? Or, would she look as immovably upon him from her saintly heights, as the cold moon now looked upon him from the wintry sky ? How could a dying man repent and be forgiven without the aid of a sanctified prayer ? If only he could see Marie ! She was his church, his priest, his heaven. And, with the remembrance of her love, there came an undefined feeling that if she, in her pure heart, could find him worth loving and saving, God – infinitely purer, holier, and more pitying – would receive his blackened soul and make it white and clean.

As the first gleam of light penetrated the darkness of her long night, Marie prepared for her journey. During the night she prayed as fervently as her distracted heart would allow, that her search might be successful, that the welcome sight of Antoine might greet her eyes before another night. She believed that she would be guided to him, wherever he was, and so she started out to find him, or perish in the wilderness.

Through the slowly dawning day she passed toward the camp. The snow of the night still lay thickly upon the trees, obscuring the pale light and giving the forest a weird, gloomy aspect she had never seen before.

Her wanderings of the summer had taught her some things necessary to know of forest travel. She had learned the signs by which Antoine recognized a trail. So she found her way without great difficulty, though her progress was slow and she often sank down exhausted and unhappy, to rest. But there was comfort in action, and she would soon spring up again and hurry forward.

It was late in the afternoon before she reached the trading-post ; she found it deserted by the hunters, for they had that morning started on their long expedition. But the permanent settlers were there, and, although they could give her little news of her husband, they could at least relieve her of the haunting fear that he

had gone with his old companions. They comforted her, too, with many reasons for Antoine's disappearance. He had, perhaps, come upon the track of some valuable game, which he had followed, and thus been delayed. She had better return to her cabin and wait patiently for him. And there was a shorter trail than the one by which he had come, which she had better take on her return. She would probably find Antoine at the cabin before her.

Refreshed and comforted by her visit to the camp, she turned away from it with a far lighter heart than that with which she had entered it. The dwellers there had laughed at her fears, and she felt that she was foolish to dread for him. He knew the forest as well as she knew the meadows at home. He was armed for any encounter with wild animals ; and from man, she knew he feared nothing. And in her short stay at the camp she had heard how it was believed that her husband bore a charmed life, that woodland dangers always faded before him, and foes always gave him the trail.

Upheld by these reflections, she followed the path which he had taken the night before. At first she flitted like a bird over the snow, thinking how in happy hours to come, she would tell Antoine of her adventurous search for him. But it was not long before she felt the depressing effect of weariness. And as she entered the

new trail the day was done, and she sat down to wait until the rising moon would show her the way.

Wrapping her blanket around her and muffling her chilled face in it, she nestled beside a great tree for what warmth its shelter might give. The day and preceding night had been wonderfully mild, but now the night was growing intensely cold, and she begrudged every moment of inaction. But to go forward she did not dare, for, if she once strayed from her way in the darkness, she was hopelessly lost. The chill air benumbed her mentally and physically, and she had not been long in her sheltered nook before she succumbed to the sleep which anxiety had banished the night before.

Whether she slept for a long or a short time she did not know, for her sleep was as heavy and dreamless as death. She only knew that she sprang to her feet, wide awake, after the first moment of confusion, hearing her name called loudly, as if from empty space. She listened breathlessly for a repetition of the sound, but the forest was perfectly silent. A superstitious feeling that it was an unearthly voice which had called her, came over her and filled her with awe which made her silent. And, crossing herself and murmuring a prayer, she once more went forward through the moonlit woods. But all her buoyancy and hope were gone. It was hard to keep back the tears which loneliness, fear,

and cold forced into her eyes. For the first time in her life, she had to depend entirely upon herself and never before had she been so helpless, so defenseless.

She walked heavily on, benumbed by the cold, with only consciousness sufficient to keep upon the river, which she had been told was her nearest way home.

A short distance before her she saw her path obstructed by a fallen tree, and she was about to scramble up the bank and make her way around it when her heart gave a great bound of fear as she saw the green boughs suddenly moved. The certainty that she now had a fierce, starved animal to face, broke down all her courage, and in an instant the woods rang with a loud cry of despair. At the sound, the green screen was put swiftly aside, and a human face, haggard and pale, looked out at her. Looked blankly at first, then the eyes lit it up and the warm blood flushed over it, and her cry was answered by one of joy and triumph.

“Marie, Marie, art thou here ?”

Where was the loneliness and coldness of a moment before ? That cry peopled the world for her, and filled the forest with the glory of summer. In an instant she was upon the tree, her arms were around her husband’s neck, her kisses upon his lips. For some moments words were not needed ; it was enough that they were together once more. Then Antoine, with his head

drooping weakly upon her breast, said :

“Marie, I knew that thou wouldst come. I could not die without thee.”

“Die, Antoine ! Do not speak of dying. But why art thou here ?” and for the first time she looked about her for the cause.

“I cannot move, Marie. I have been here since last night. My arm is broken. These boughs hold me fast.”

“Oh, Antoine !” and the horror which he felt when he first realized his fate was now felt by her. Still she would not believe the hopelessness of his situation, and, seizing his bonds, tried with all her strength to sever them, and together they fought his strange captor ; but the struggle was short, and Antoine said :

“It is hopeless, Marie. My strength is all gone. I cannot aid thee. I must die here. Take the heavy burden from my shoulders. Sit down beside me, Marie. Let me feel thine arms once more around me, and with thee near me I will not be afraid to die.”

Marie quickly undid the fastenings of his pack and laid it aside, and at once renewed her endeavors to release him. She broke away the slender branches, and then with the knife from his belt began to cut the stronger ones. But just as her labor seemed about to succeed he called out to her :

“Stop, Marie. The ice is broken beneath me. If you release me I shall fall. The current will carry me under the ice and I shall drown. Only let death come to me in thy presence and I am resigned.”

Once more she crept back to him, this time heart-broken and despairing.

“Let me go back to the camp, Antoine, and bring thee aid.”

But he only shook his head, and drew her more closely to him, saying :

“Do not leave me. I should not be alive when thou wouldst return. The sight of thee has given me a respite, but it will not be a long one. I am faint from pain and hunger, and the night is growing fiercely cold. Thou wilt only have to watch with me a short time, little one.”

“What wilt thou do without me, Marie ?” he asked once more, this time his voice full of love and tenderness, all the old impatience gone from it.

“Antoine, do not ask me. Without thee I cannot live. If thou diest here I will never leave this spot. I will stay with my arms around thee, and when death comes to thee it will come to me.”

“No, my sweet Marie. Thou must leave me when I am dead. Go to the camp, and when spring comes some

one will take thee to thy mother, for there are kind hearts among my wild comrades, and for my sake, as well as thine, they will be good to thee.”

“Oh, Antoine, life without thee will be nothing. Do not bid me seek it ; let me lay it down with thine,” she implored him passionately.

“I want to tell thee, Marie, all the good resolutions I was forming as I hurried toward thee, that thou mayest have none but kind remembrance of me in the years to come.”

Then he told her all, and told her timidly and falteringly of the hope that had come to him when he found he must die – of the almost assured belief which her love had taught him to dare to hope for through the infinite love of God. Sobbing wildly, she listened to him and comforted him. Then at last they were silent, she chafing and caressing his cold hands with her almost equally icy ones, and he watching her with happy, patient eyes. The breathless night grew colder and colder, and the far-off stars glittered through the trees. At length Antoine’s arm loosened its pressure ; he leaned heavily against Marie and slept.

With a low, piercing cry which could not reach his dulled brain, the moon, stars, and trees whirled in a labyrinth around her, as she fainted from the consciousness of her woe.

The snow was melting from every sunny slope when Marie looked at the world again. The scene upon which she opened her eyes was so unfamiliar to her, that she thought it all a dream, until a face bent over her which seemed to belong to the winter day, long, long ago, when she had gone in search of Antoine. She looked into the coarse but kindly face, and the past came back to her. With a groan, she turned away.

“Do not tell me ; I know it all. Antoine is dead.”

The girl leaned over her and said softly :

“Joy is sometimes harder to bear than sorrow. Canst thou bear it ?”

Marie turned quickly back.

“Tell me ! Tell me !”

“I will let another tell thee,” and she hurried away.

Marie fell back in silent happiness, and a moment more Antoine clasped her in his arms. Presently he told her how death had been frightened away. After Marie had left the camp that winter day, seeing how cold the night was growing, and fearing that she could not make her way alone, two of the settlers had followed her, and soon after the dull slumber had wrapped Antoine in its fatal sweetness, and while Marie was insensible to

everything, the hunters found them. It was short work for their strong arms to release the prisoner, and, before daybreak, rescued and rescuers were safe in camp. Antoine's recovery was far more speedy than Marie's, and for many weeks he feared that it was he who would have to go through the world alone. But now the two who had parted in death met in life, and life – whose other name is happiness – beamed with loving welcome for them. They watched the coming of spring, and when it burst upon them in its northern swiftness and beauty, they started out under the tender whispering leaves, and wandered toward the great river.

One evening in early midsummer, as the mother stood at the cottage door looking toward the forest, she saw two forms emerge from its shade and cross the meadow. She watched them as they came along the path toward the cottage ; then she staggered down the little garden walk as one of the wanderers, seeing her, bounded to her with outstretched arms, and Marie and her mother were together once more.

Fireworks

(The Galaxy / Volume 14, Issue 3, September 1872)

There was absolutely not an interesting person in the car. I don't even except myself, as people given to sweeping assertions usually do ; for, although I might know what intellectual and moral qualities of mine ought to excite interest in my fellow-travellers, the little broad mirror at the end of the car told me they did not publish themselves in my face. On the contrary, it showed me a pair of tired gray eyes – gleaming, not sparkling eyes – with a red spot below each, which at that distance reminded me painfully of war-paint, a crushed hat, a dusty face, and ill-arranged hair, each and all loudly proclaiming the fact that I had passed the night in a sleeping-car.

I was the only person in the car fortunate enough to have a whole seat to myself, and it was only by dint of much spreading out of shawls, satchels, and a useless book or two, that I had been enabled to keep it. But now I had been looking about in search of an interesting person who might share it with me, for I was dreadfully tired of keeping quiet, of not talking. During the last fifteen hours I had not uttered a word, except to ask the conductor a few questions, which I knew how to answer as well as he did, though perhaps not as briefly. The only recreation or diversion I had had in all that time,

was in buying and eating crystallized pop-corn, shaking my head decisively at the train boy when he laid a package of prize candy down beside me, and in watching a little girl cry herself to sleep, in the agonies which follow the even distribution of peach-fuzz over the neck and cheeks.

My solitude would soon end, I felt sure, for if but one passenger came on at the next station, I would have to resign half of my seat to him or her. At the last station a timid-looking man had been turned into our car by the brakeman, who had said, "All full in there," referring to the car just in front of us. He had looked at my half-empty seat, but met with no encouragement in the limp, uncomprehending look I returned him, and passed on. At the other end of the car he had succeeded – by the help of a brisk shake and shove administered by the conductor – in awakening and bringing to terms of decency a man who was pretending to sleep all over his seat. Of course I watched with interest the subduing of the selfish wretch, and had felt ashamed of myself ever since, and resolved that at the next station, no matter who appeared, I would promptly and hospitably gather up my belongings and offer that person a place.

When we reached the station, we stopped but a moment, not long enough, I thought, to allow of any one coming on ; and as I leaned back in my place with

the easy consciousness of having *intended* to do a civil thing, the door opened and a gentleman came in.

My courage fled at sight of him. How could I ever offer (in a disinterested way) that man a seat beside me? The conductor would think more meanly of me than he probably did when I tacitly refused the timid man's appeal, and the timid man himself would feel an additional slight heaped upon him, if I offered this embodiment of manly strength and beauty the place I had refused him.

While my mind was still in a state of indecision, he answered the question by stopping unhesitatingly beside me, and saying he supposed, as all the other seats were occupied, he would have to ask for one with me. Thus relieved from humiliating myself, I graciously swept my wraps and books into my lap and made room for him. But he took them from me and stowed them away in the rack above my head – all but a book which he kept to look over, and which easily opened a conversation, that while we were together never ceased. We crossed the wide ocean common of every-day literature, returned, talked about the dust, heat, the condition of the road, even about ourselves. I do not remember what he could have learned of me, but I found out that he was a business man (I knew that before he told me, by his practical systematic way of

dealing with every topic he took up), had travelled everywhere, and had seen the world in a wide-awake fashion. He lived in Albany, and was on his way home. He was not married, and he and his mother kept house together.

I could not, if I were to try, describe him personally, for he was one of those rare persons who carry with them an indescribable charm, a grace of their own, which itself cannot be conveyed in words, and without which a description is nothing.

After he came the remaining two hours of my journey flew far faster than we did, and I felt that I must be dreaming when I looked out, and saw that we were actually slackening speed at my station.

“Why, here we are, at home,” I exclaimed in a voice full of dismay, and objectingly. “It can’t be possible.”

He looked as though he thought it impossible too, but began promptly to get my various packages together, when the unrelenting brakeman shouted “Dryden !” in at the door.

“I’ll carry these into the dépôt for you. I wish I could tell you how I’ve enjoyed meeting you ; our acquaintance is just begun, not ended, I feel sure,” he said rapidly as we moved along the aisle.

On the platform stood my sister Nettie and cousin

Allegra. They rushed forward with “Oh, Lucille !” and gave me a rapturous welcome, as we made our way to the sitting-room. My wraps were hastily deposited upon a chair, and he only had time to catch my hands in his for a moment, as he said “Good-by, until we meet again,” to touch his hat to the girls, and hurry back to the already moving train.

I followed him to the door without speaking, and looked after the vanishing train until there was nothing left of it but a line of black smoke which went sidling off over the tree-tops.

“Who was he ?”

“What was his name ?”

“I don’t know.”

“Don’t know ! why didn’t you find out ?” came in concert from my questioners.

“I never thought to, girls.”

“Oh, you mortal goose ! And don’t he know who *you* are, or what your name is ?”

“No, I guess not ; at least he did not ask me.”

“And how in the world are you ever going to meet again, as he said you would ?”

The enormity of our mistake came over me crushingly. How should we ever meet again, or find

each other ? I tried to tell them what little I did know about him, but they declared it simply amounted to nothing. And as we walked home, they loudly and mournfully bemoaned my stupidity in not letting him know my name.

“I’ve not the least doubt he would have written to her,” Nettie said to my cousin, quite ignoring so weak-minded and inefficient a creature as myself in the conversation.

“Of course he would have written to her. Did you notice how he looked at her when he said good-by ?”

“Yes, I noticed ; I don’t think in all my life I ever saw such handsome eyes,” sadly soliloquized Nettie.

“Oh, he was handsome beyond description,” answered Allegra.

And so they went on until we reached home, torturing me by praising what I had allowed “to slip through my fingers.” They had always considered me hopelessly impracticable, and now they gave me up entirely. The pleasure of once more being at home, and of talking over the incidents of my long visit, made me for a while think less of the stranger who had so interested me. Still every day I saw more clearly how much I had liked him, and how thoroughly delightful the two hours spent with him had been. Probably if I

had met him in the usual conventional way in which I had met all the men I knew, I should have forgotten him at once ; hut there was something unusual – just a tinge of romance so dear to every feminine heart – and so I remembered him.

For a week or two the girls, my persecutors, talked continually of him, and I took a mournful pleasure in listening to them, even repeating much of the conversation I had had with him, parts of which, they said, convinced them more than ever that he was greatly interested in me, and in the proper hands might have been made to “come to something.” For lack of a better name, we knew him as Mr. A, using the initial letter of his native city ; and many were the plans we made as we sat at our sewing. The favorite and most probable one was, that he would come to Dryden to look for me, for that was what he must have meant when he said we should meet again.

One evening, about a month after I had returned home, I had wandered in an idle and restless state down through the garden to the gate, where I stood in the soft twilight listening to all the sounds of the dying summer. The late insects were still shrill-voiced and alert, and the low wind which swept through the trees had begun to take up the minor strain into which all nature seemed to have fallen. A melancholy chilliness had crept into

the air, which made me feel that the pleasant happy summer belonged to the past. The evening depressed me, and I wondered why I had come out into it, and was just turning to go back to the house, when I saw, far up the road, one of our little neighbor boys coming whistling along. I waited for him idly, not knowing why, perhaps to catch the tune he was whistling. He was coming from the village, and as he approached me he called out : “I’ve been to the post-office, Miss Lucille ; what would you like to have ?”

“Whatever you have for me, Jack ; a letter first, and if not that I’ll be content with a paper.”

“Well, here’s a letter for you,” and he put a solid white envelope into my hands. The light was not too dim to prevent me reading my name in a familiar yet unknown hand, and in the corner, clear and black, the postmark Albany. I don’t think I stopped even to thank Jack, but flew into the house and up to my room, where a bright fire was burning on the hearth.

Like a thirsty person who has longed for water, and when it is reached adds zest to the pleasure of drinking by looking into the cool depth of the dewy goblet, so I held my treasure in my hand for a moment with the seal unbroken. Then, as I opened it, I said : “I will read it straight through, a word at a time, just as he wrote it ; I will not even look at the name until I come to it.” I only

allowed myself to see that there was a sheet and a half of closely-written paper, then began :

“MY DEAR MISS LUCILLE : I hardly know whether I shall be pardoned for the liberty I take in writing to you, and yet I tell myself I shall be, for I feel so sure you – whom I seem to know so well, and yet may not know at all – will understand me, will know by intuition, how deep my interest in you is.

“When I parted from you a month ago something told me it was not forever – that we should meet again. At first I thought it a strange fancy, which I ought to shake off ; but the desire to see you again and know you better has grown upon me day by day, until now, as I write this letter, I feel sure it will be read by you in the same spirit in which it is written by me.

“I never thought that I believed in fatalism, and yet, if our acquaintance ends as I believe it will, I do. Why did I delay my journey home two days if not to meet you ? And why did I, by the merest accident, read your pretty name on the title-page of the book you had been reading, if it was not to gain a clue by which I might continue our acquaintance ? I thought of these things a great many times, and at last have come to believe that the fates are interested in us. You know

*There is a destiny that shapes our ends,
Rough-hew them as we will.*

“It may be, Miss Lucille, that I mistake you entirely ; that you will regard me as presumptuous and this as unpardonable. If you do, do not write to me ; I will accept silence as my rebuke. And do not fear that I will ever make another effort to make you remember me. But if you think I have done nothing wrong, if –”

I had read thus far when I heard the girls coming noisily up the stairs. They should not disturb me, I said to myself. I would read my letter through alone, and sit in the flickering firelight and think over every sweet word in it. It would be time enough to tell them in the morning. So, hastily springing up, I flew to the door to turn the key, but just as I laid my hand upon the knob the room filled up with a yellow light, and looking back I saw the half sheet of my letter curling slowly up on the glowing hearth. The first part I still held ; the last had fluttered away from my careless hand, and the draught had drawn it into the fire.

In an instant I was shaking the unburned fragment free from fire and ashes, and frantically rubbing its

charred edges in my fingers. The upper half of the page was browned, but legible, but the rest was gone – the name was burned off.

The door burst open and the girls came bouncing in.

“Oh, girls, my letter, my letter !”

“What letter ? What is the matter, Lucille ? Dear Lucille, are you crazy ?”

But I could only hold the black pieces in my hands, sitting on the floor in utter despair, and made them no answer. They sat down beside me, and Allegra picked up the envelope and read the postmark.

“Is it from *him*, Lucille ?”

“From Mr. A, Lucille ?” cried Nettie, seizing the envelope away. “Then why in the world are you making such a fuss ? Do let us see it, oh please do ! A whole sheet ! Do let us see what his name is !”

“I cannot ; oh, Nettie, it is burnt !”

“Burnt ? Why, here it is in your hand.”

“But the last page – the page with *the name on* – *is gone*. It blew into the fire, and now I cannot answer it.”

Profound silence reigned.

“But surely you remember his name ?”

“I had not looked at it. I wanted to read it just as he

wrote it. I never thought to read the name.”

They both fell to crying, partly through sympathy, partly through vexation, and partly through thwarted curiosity.

“Go away, girls. Don’t blame me and don’t pity me. It was your fault and it was mine. Go away ; I want to be alone.”

That was ten years ago.

Nettie is married, and so is Allegra, but I am not. Lately Nettie’s husband has moved to Albany, and last winter she wrote for me to visit her. “If you will let me know when you are coming, I will meet you at the dépôt ;” she wrote, “but if you do not write, take a carriage and drive to No. —”

It was quite late when I left the cars and handed my checks to the driver into whose carriage I got. It was too dark to see distinctly who my companions were, but a little girl was talking gayly to her father, and very soon included me in her conversation. “Are you going to our house too ?” she asked, laying her hand on my arm.

“Lucille, you must not talk to strangers ; it is very rude, my dear,” said her father, drawing her back beside him.

The driver mounted his box, and we rattled out upon the brilliantly-lighted streets. The glare of the lamps lit up our carriage, and opposite me sat Mr. A ! He was little changed – ten years older, of course, but I knew him instantly. My veil was drawn, and so thick that even the sharp eyes of little Lucille – my namesake I felt sure – could not see my face.

What ought I to do ? If I lifted my veil, would he know me ? Ought I not then and there to tell him all ?

But I had no chance, for our ride was short, and in a few moments our carriage halted before an elegant home. “There is mamma at the window, papa, watching for us ; and baby is there too,” Lucille cried as she pressed her face against the crystal side of the carriage. With a pleasant “good night” from each, they left me out in the dark, tired and cold, where I sat stupidly staring after them. The wide hall door opened, and (while a servant came out for the luggage) I saw him through the frosty lace of the window catch his wife in his arms as little Lucille went dancing around them.

I used often while in the city to ride past his house with my sister, but I always averted my eyes from the door-plate. His name could never be mine, and I had no interest in knowing it.

**A Visit to a Country-House, and
What Came of It**

*(Harper's New Monthly Magazine.
Volume 55, Issue 328, September 1877)*

Mount Pleasant, *June 23.*

Dear Kate, – *I* do not think Mount Pleasant is a very original name for a country place either, but I'm rather sorry you take that aggressive view of the name. It is plainly because you are not here. If you were, you would own that there is at least some propriety in it, for we are really on a little mount, and it certainly is very pleasant.

I thought, the evening I came, that I had never seen a pleasanter place. We drove up the long hill by a winding road, until we could look quite over the tree-tops, out on the ocean several miles away, and still above us was the house, with its sloping lawns, already brilliant with flaming hearts and triangles of flowers. All along the drives were little rustic nooks, damp and cool with trickling springs. Some were of bark and moss, and looked so natural! but were not natural enough, I've since found out, to tempt snails and thousand-legged worms and other horrid things into them. Then when we reached the house, it was all quite like a story, I assure you. On the porch sat Mrs. Meredith and Charley, and two young ladies of the regulation blonde and brunette type, each in white, and each wearing pink bows and ribbons as ornaments. (I

noticed that, the moment I saw them, though I had an awful headache, and I felt sure I would sooner or later find out the reason. I knew, though a blonde might warm up with pink in the winter, that, unless she had a reason for it, she would set her dark rivals wild with envy by looking entrancingly cool in watery green or cloudy blue in the summer. I've heard too many conversations between you and Lina not to know that.) Sitting on a camp-stool near by them, smoking lazily, was a handsome fellow, who watched our progress with a pair of the bluest eyes I ever saw. There were other people about, some patronizing the croquet ground, and others sitting under the trees. Now you must confess that this was a nice opening scene for my visit.

Of course Mrs. Meredith and Charley came hurrying to meet me, and welcomed me so warmly that I was quite indignant at you for saying, "You'll regret it if you let those eommon rich people drag you off for the summer," and wagging your head in that knowing way which aggravates me so, especially when I know you are more than half right.

Well, that was only two days ago, to be sure ; still I do not yet regret coming. Indeed, I believe I am going to have a good time.

I have an exquisite room, all chintz and French paper ; and though, I suppose, you would say, "Rather

bambooish, isn't it ?" if you were to see it, you know *I* like bamboo furniture, so I think my room is perfectly lovely.

I have settled all of the people in my mind now, and know where they all come from. The two pink girls are Miss Dall and Miss Rogers. The gentleman who was smoking when I came is Mr. Mitchell. Then there is a Yale student and Miss Harmon (quite a nice girl) and Nellie Parker (an odious little wretch, just a year younger than I am, who last night brought confusion into the parlor by introducing one of those awful cards from which the ages of unsuspecting persons can be told) and Henry Wells, to whom she is engaged.

To-morrow we are to have a picnic, and the next evening a ride in a hay wagon. What is to be done after, I do not know, and I'd not tell you if I did, until I see how you take this much.

I wish you would write to me at once, and tell me how you are beginning *your* summer.

Your affectionate sister, Gertie.

Home, *June 25.*

Dear Gertie, – Your letter came only this evening at tea-time, and you see how promptly I reply.

I'll only write you a few words now, until I *have* begun my summer. You know the only decided trait in auntie's character is indecision ; so we have wavered between morning and evening boats ever since you left us last week. It would have been rather dull if aunt, Lina, Hattie, and I had not sat upon our strapped trunks down in the ball, and quarreled daily, in the most united and harmonious manner, over these unreasonable delays. But now I think we are really off to-morrow.

I do hope you will have a good time. You must forget all I said about the Merediths. I know it is a great relief to poor auntie to have only three girls instead of four on band. So it is a good thing, after all, that you went.

Yes, your visit did begin quite "like a story," and *I* don't see why something might not come of it. Indeed, I don't see how such a nice girl as you are can stay two months in a country-house (with a background of Mrs. Meredith, Charley, and the "pink girls" to throw you into relief) without something coming of it. My mind's eye already sees you (and Mr. Mitchell perhaps) bowing before the foot-lights at the close of the tragedy, comedy, or farce, whichever it proves. All I ask is, don't let it be Charley Meredith ; for although I often snub you and treat you badly, I really do love you, and the mere thought of your ever being his wife gives me

“quite a turn.”

Affectionately, Kate.

P.S. – Don’t expect me to approve of hay-wagon rides. They are hideous ! One always tears one’s dress or falls in getting out, and fells to the earth the awkward wretch who is helping one. Naturally that makes him hate you ; and poor but proud as we are, we do not like to wear mended dresses, and can not afford to buy many new ones. So be careful of yours, my dear.

I shall look soon for one of your journalistic letters. The “laters” and “evenings” and “midnights” are always so interesting !

Mount Pleasant, *June 30.*

Dear Katie, – It is just a little over a week since I came, and oh, Katie, you never saw such a lovely time as I am having.

I’ve found out the secret of the ribbons and bows. Yesterday morning Mr. Mitchell and I walked down the drive just after breakfast. It was lovely – I mean the morning – and we stopped to rest in one of those pretty little grottoes I told you about. I had on my –

Evening.

It is late, but I must at least finish that sentence before I go to bed. You see, just as I got nicely started this morning, I heard Mr. Mitchell at the foot of the stairs calling "Miss Gertie ! Miss Gertie !" I know, Kate, that *you* will think a week too short a time for him to call me Miss Gertie ; but people can't help getting well acquainted in a short time when they are in the same house. Well, I went to the top of the stairs and asked him what he wanted. He said, "Oh, you are writing, are you ?" Then he came part way up, and I sat down on the upper step, and he came and sat down on the one just below. I was still holding my pen, and he said I must have an interesting correspondent, to devote such a glorious morning to him. Then he took my pen, closed it, and put it into his vest pocket, saying I should not waste any more time with it until he chose to let me. So we sat on the cool stairs all morning. Miss Dall and Miss Rogers dragged their crisp white morning dresses up and down past us, getting ready, in the most ostentations manner, for a morning walk. I asked him, while they were in their room, if he didn't think it would be better for him to give me my pen and go with them, but he said, "No, thank you ; it is much nicer here." So they went off, smiling at me sweetly, but in

their hearts longing to push me down stairs, I know.

I don't remember what all we talked about. He looked at my rings, and told me a very interesting story about a moss-agate he wears – a very handsome one that he picked up when he was in the West. Then later he asked me whom I was writing to, and when I would not tell him, he begged to know the last word I wrote. I said “my,” which launched him into wildest speculations as to the word which followed.

And that brings me back to the sudden break in my letter. I was going to say I had on my pink cambric, and while we were sitting on a great stone, he said, “What a pretty dress ! Pink is my favorite color.” So that must explain the secret of the rosy ties, etc., which adorn Miss Dall and her friend. Good-night, I will finish this in the morning.

Morning.

We are just going for a drive, and I will hurry this into an envelope, and mail it while we are at the village.

Hastily, but affectionately, Gertie.

Newport, *July 3.*

Dear Gertie, – And who are “we,” pray tell ? As the sublime Dundreary says, “This is becoming monotonous.” But why don’t you describe this remarkable Mr. Mitchell ? What is he like ? I can not form a very clear idea of him. If he is conceited, don’t wear your pink cambric again. I don’t know about the stair scene, Gertie. It speaks well for him that he has been out on the plains ; it shows that he has some energy (I wonder if he went *à la* John Brent ?). But I must confess that I do not think it was very original in him to look at your rings – a great many young men have looked at mine. Still he *may* not be stupid. You are getting old enough now to know a stupid fellow when you see him. How old is he, and what object or aim has he in life ?

I am having a gay time, but it is too unmercifully warm to try to tell you about it.

Lovingly, Kate.

Mount Pleasant, *July 20.*

Dear Kate, – I have been so busy that I’ve actually not had a moment in which to write, and your letter

now lies before me dated seventeen long – or short – days ago.

The day it came, I was the only one to receive a letter, and as I sat on the porch reading it, Mr. Mitchell came along and said he thought I ought to divide, as he had none. Well, just for fun, I folded it up so he could read only these two lines, “How old is he, and what object or aim has he in life ?” He laughed, and said to tell you that by Miss Nellie’s card he was just thirty-five, but that for the present he did not mean to tell his object or aim in life.

I can describe him to you, Katie, but not very well. He is tall and handsome, has dark waving hair, which he parts in the middle, dresses nicely, wears black neckties, and is rather lazy.

About the plains, I am afraid he crossed them in a parlor-car, and because he had nothing else to do. He does not seem very, very happy all the time ; indeed, there are times when he seems even sad. He reads beautifully, has published a volume of the loveliest poems – for private circulation – and when he is at home writes a good deal for one of the city dailies. He does not follow any profession, as he is rich enough to live without one. I once asked him why he did not, and he replied that he did not like to feel tied to any thing ; so I suppose *you* will think him frivolous.

There are two or three new people here. Miss Dall, the blonde, has put on blue. Miss Rogers and Charley are devoted to each other, so Mr. Mitchell has no one but me. Katie, you know it is nice to have some one devote himself entirely to you, and it is rather flattering, too, to have some one make a study of your character, and surprise you by telling you of traits you possess that even your own sister never discovered, but which you yourself always knew existed.

Now, Katie, you are not for a moment to think I am in love. I only write so much about him that you may see what kind of a man he is.

Midnight.

The-tea bell rang, and I had to go. After tea Mr. Mitchell and I went for a walk, and when we came back we sat on the porch, talking. Every one else was in the parlor, and we could hear the babble of tongues, the shuffling of cards, and the continual runs and trills under Miss Nellie's fingers, so Mr. Mitchell carried our chairs out under the trees. I suppose it is the easiest thing in the world for two people to fall into a sentimental mood, if they happen to be sitting under the trees on a perfect summer night, with nothing in the

wide world to do but realize the soft warm shadows around them, and watch the sad moon through the leaves as it sails through the fleecy sky, and talk idly of whatever suggests itself. At all events, we became sentimental.

He began by saying, “How much more appropriate it seems for you to be out here in the moonlight than in that sultry parlor playing cards !” You see, Katie, he always has a way of making me the prominent feature of every conversation, which is oddly flattering and embarrassing. And then he went on to say that he envied me being so young and innocent and inexperienced, and he made me talk to him. I ran on telling him all of my foolish, childish ideas of life and love – which you have always condemned, Katie – and every thing. He laughed at some and sighed at others, and finally did not say any thing, but just took my hand, and held it quite solemnly.

Now I suppose it is very foolish to write all of this to you, but I’ll *tell* it as soon as I see you, so I might just as well write it, for I know you’ll want to hear.

After a while I asked him why he was so still, why he did not talk to me. He replied, “I have half a mind to answer the question which your saucy sister asked, and tell you what my aim in life has been since I met you. But I do not know that you would care to hear.” I told

him that I could not do worse than laugh at him, and that would only be treating him as he deserved, since he had often laughed at me. He said, "Don't laugh at me ; I could stand any thing but that." So I promised I would not. "You kind little creature," he answered, "I know you would not. Ah, Gertie, what a dear little loving wife you'll make some happy fellow ! If only I might be he !" And oh, Katie, was there ever any thing so dreadful ? – just as he said this, Miss Dall and Charley came right up to where we were sitting, and she cried out, "How sentimental you two do look ! Don't you know, my dear Miss Gertie, that you are courting consumption, sitting out here in the dew ?" But in spite of her concern at my imprudence, she very willingly took Mr. Mitchell's chair, and talked to him and Charley for nearly an hour, until I said I was tired and going in. Then she sprang up, and said she was going too, and we all four entered the house together. I only saw Mr. Mitchell a moment alone in the hall, and he whispered as he said good-night, "How cruel you all are !"

Katie, you know I could not help knowing what he was going to say, and I've sat up here for the last two hours thinking it all over, and I'm so happy that sleep is out of the question. I've never half told you what a splendid, noble fellow he is, because, until this evening, I never felt sure he loved me, and I did not want you to

think me a goose, going into raptures over some one who did not care for me. But, Katie, he is just simply perfect. Ah, if only you knew him !

I can scarcely wait until morning comes, so he can finish telling me what he began.

Well, good-night. I've actually written myself sleepy. Before you get this, I suppose I'll be the happiest girl in the world. Your loving sister, Gertie.

Newport, *July 22.*

Dear Gertie, – I do not think I ever read a more aggravating, a more tantalizing, letter. What possessed you to send it in that half-finished state ? Why didn't you keep it a day or two longer, so you might have told all ?

How can you endure Miss Dall after she has treated you so ? It was clearly malice. She knew very well what she was doing. I only hope *I* will come across her some day. You poor little innocent ! But I needn't pity you, for I suppose by this time you are “the happiest girl in the world,” and will be taking on the grand airs of an engaged young lady by the time I see you. I really do not know that I can write any thing more than to send you my blessing, and wonder what kind of an

engagement ring Mr. Mitchell will give you.

Write to me at once. I have not yet told aunt and the cousins, for I am waiting to subdue them with the complete story. Lina has been pluming herself so over a conquest she has made, and it will be such fun if you are married ahead of her.

I hope you remember that I said I felt sure something would come of your visit. I am jubilant over your success and my prophetic spirit, and would express myself more enthusiastically if it were not so late and so warm.

Good-by. Kate.

Mount Pleasant, *July 22.*

Dearest Katie, – Can't you get me away ? Do make some excuse. Let us go to the mountains for the rest of the summer. Do think of some plan, for I can not stay here.

Oh, if only I had not sent that last letter ! It is bad enough for me to know it ; but to think I have told you too ! Burn it until not an atom remains, and scatter the ashes. Now that I have told you a part, I'll tell you all.

The next morning when I went down to breakfast

every body was at the table. *He* was there, and said good-morning in such a cool, unconcerned way, and I was so nervous and embarrassed that I could hardly speak to any one. Mrs. Meredith insisted that I looked pale ; feared I had taken cold ; and said she would not allow me to sit under the trees another evening. I said I was well, and, as soon as I could, got away from them all and went out upon the porch. In a moment *he* came to me, with my hat in his hand, and said that a walk would bring back my color ; and so we started. We wandered off to the wood, I every moment thinking he would resume the conversation of the evening before, but he did not. When we were well into the woods, he found a mossy log for us to sit upon, and, Katie, he talked of *every thing* but the one subject, and he finally took a volume of poems from his pocket, and read from them until it was time for us to return. I felt as if I had been dreaming ; I was perfectly bewildered. After lunch I went to my room, and staid there the rest of the day.

In the evening they all went for a moonlight drive ; but before they started, Mr. Mitchell sent me a bunch of wild roses and a note saying he was sorry I had a headache, and asking me to be well and charming as ever in the morning. I prepared to be “well and charming” by lying awake half the night, trying to think it all out. I could not make any thing of it. He had said a great many things during the month that I felt sure he

wanted me to understand but in one way ; and, last of all, he had said what I told you ; and then, though we had been alone together for hours, and I had longed to have him speak the few words which I knew he ought to have spoken, he had been silent.

Then I thought that perhaps he had somehow waited for encouragement, and that he might have thought I did not want him to speak. This was such a relief that I fell asleep at once, glad for an excuse to feel angry with myself instead of with him.

I got up well and happy this morning – how long ago it seems ! – and when I went down stairs, I wore some of the sweet wild roses, and the fragrance from them seemed to re-assure me. Every body, and especially Mr. Mitchell, who met me at the foot of the stairs, was glad to see me, and the day passed off pleasantly enough.

Just after sunset, he came and asked me to take a drive with him, and after accepting a carriage load of wraps from Mrs. Meredith, we started. Katie, I never can tell you what my feelings were when we started upon that drive, and much less can I tell you what they were when we returned.

To-day I am eighteen, you know, and as we drove along I told him so. “Only eighteen !” he exclaimed. “Your life is just beginning. I wonder what kind of a

life it will be ? Ah, little Gertie, if only I could have a place in it !”

I did not answer ; I could not, you know. How could I ? He had not asked me to *give* him a place in my life ; how could I *offer* him one ? I thought of all these and a hundred other things as we drove along in silence. He was the first to speak finally, and then resumed, as if he, too, had been thinking : “Well, Gertie, I can only hope it will be a happy life, and – that you will allow me always *to be your friend.*” Then, without waiting for a reply, he checked the horse and began to talk of the view, which the moonlight made almost as plain as day. We were on a hill overlooking the sea. But what did I care for the effect of the moon upon the sail of a little pleasure-boat, or the gilding of the water in its wake ? Oh, Katie, I’ll remember that scene to my dying day. It was marvelously beautiful, but its peacefulness made it hateful to me.

What queer creatures girls are ! While he was talking, I was remembering some of the experiences you girls had known of – of men making women believe they loved them, and then, when they had gained their love, turning away and laughing at them. I knew then that I was one of these victims ; but I determined that he should not have the satisfaction of laughing at me, so I began to talk and laugh gayly

enough ; but, oh, bow wretched I was !

Soon I asked him to drive back. On the way I know I said all kinds of foolish, reckless things, for I did most of the talking, he being strangely silent. I suppose he was disappointed that I should be so indifferent to him. As he helped me out, something of his old manner returned, and he made a low bow before offering me his hand, saying something about every child being allowed to be a queen upon her birthday, and that he hoped each year would find me as much beloved as now. What mockery ! As I sprang to the ground I answered, "Oh, don't talk of love ! You are very sentimental tonight ; the moonlight must have intoxicated you." You will despise me, Katie, I know you will, when I tell you I regretted these words as soon as they were uttered, he turned so white and looked as if I had struck him. He did not reply, and I have the comfort of knowing that he thinks I do not care for him.

Send for me at once. I *can* not endure another day here, I am so very, very unhappy, and I shall never be glad or happy again. I had thought him so good and noble ; but now – Come or send soon. Gertie.

Newport, *July 24.*

My poor Gertie, – You may look for me next week. I can not get away any sooner. Endure the days as well as you can, and keep out of his way. I can't write any thing to comfort you, if it is all as you think. But are you sure you have not made a mistake ? You *may* have misunderstood him, though hardly. All I can say is, keep your self-respect, even if you do break your heart. That is, your heart won't break ; it will only ache fearfully, and make you wish you were dead. Perhaps it would be better if you were, for a girl with such a bitter experience at eighteen is not likely to be a very sweet person ten years later. But we'll talk it all over when we meet. I dare say you've done right.

Your loving sister, Kate.

P. S. – I'm awfully disappointed, too. Now Lina will be too uppish for any good at all.

Mount Pleasant, *July 24.*

My dear Katie, – Oh, these midnight epistles ! I'm almost afraid to write this one, lest, as soon as it is

gone, I should tear my hair and wail with regret, just as I've done after sending the last two.

To-day you'll get my letter of two days ago. It will throw you into a rage, and this will arrive forty-eight hours later, to subdue it, I hope. I feel, after doing so much mischief and making people I love so wretched, that I'm not worthy to write them a letter or speak to them any more. But indeed I was too miserable to know I was an idiot – a blind, stupid creature breaking some one else's heart as well as my own. Still, if you are not too much disgusted with me, I might try to tell you why I write this letter. Don't read it if you have too great a contempt for me.

Let me see – where did I leave off? Oh yes, just after that terrible drive. Well, the next day I did not go down until nearly noon, and there was no one to be seen, as every body had gone for an impromptu picnic arranged at breakfast. It was quite late when they returned, and I only saw Mr. Mitchell before all the others. We all talked just as if nothing perfectly awful had happened, until he lit a cigar and went into the garden to smoke. Soon after, I said good-night and ran up to my room, from the window of which I could see him walking about the garden. I watched him until he went in, and although I hated myself for doing so, it was still a comfort, and I did not feel so desolate. When

he disappeared, I went miserably to bed, but not to sleep.

What we have done all day is not worth writing. He was away with Charley Meredith until evening. After tea, I was sitting by an open window listening to him and some of the others talking outside. Presently he left them, and began walking up and down on the terrace. As he passed the window he saw me and stopped. I don't think he wanted to talk to me, but I suppose he felt obliged to, as no one else was entertaining me. The same feeling, I fancy, prompted him to ask me, rather stiffly, if I would like to go into the garden.

Now, Katie, foolish as I know it was, I had been adding to my miserable feelings by remembering how rude my last words to him had been, and I had determined that, the first opportunity I had, I would say something to efface them. So, although I felt he was angry with me, and did not really wish me to walk with him, I said I would go, knowing it was probably my only chance to speak to him.

It was very difficult to begin, as he was so indifferent and quiet. But I was not going to give up my intentions, all the more because I felt that he put on that lofty air to show me he had a contempt for me.

Now I don't ask you to respect me for the silly way in which I conducted the conversation. I know you'll

think me very weak ; but I'm so happy and so glad I persisted in opening it !

At last I said I was going home. His only reply was, "Indeed ! I thought you were to stay some time longer." This sounded so very disagreeable that my humility fled, and I said, angrily, "I do not tell you because I think you care whether I go or stay." He looked at me, and asked, as indifferently as ever, "Why should I care ? You do not wish me to." Then I did not know what to say next, and I felt so baffled. Indeed, I did not dare speak again, lest he'd see how near to crying I was. I suppose he *did* see, for he added, in a friendlier tone, "Well, I hope we part friends ?" I replied, "I hope so too. I feel as if you think I was very rude the other evening. I want to tell you why I said –" I had to stop there, for I suddenly remembered that I couldn't tell him ; besides, he interrupted me with, "Oh, never mind ; you ladies usually make these matters worse when you try to mend them. I was foolish to care for your words ; you are a mere child, compared with my years."

As soon as he called me a child, I acted like one. I knew I would cry in another moment, and so turned quickly to go into the house, saying, "Haven't you been cruel enough already, without saying that ?" He caught my arm. What do you mean by saying I have been

cruel, Gertie ? What have I done ?”

I sat down upon a bench near by, and he sat down too. I was crying in good earnest now, but I answered as well as I could : “You know what you have done ; you know you have made me perfectly wretched. You have pretended to care for me – when you did not – when you were just making fun of me.” He seemed quite stunned, but said, “I do not understand you at all. Do tell me what you mean. I too have been ‘perfectly wretched’ because you gave me so clearly to understand that you cared nothing for me. You have remained coldly silent upon two occasions when I tried to speak to you of something I longed to have you hear. I did not blame you for that, for I thought you a candid, honest little girl, and if you did not love me, I did not wish to make you hear. I was foolish to think you *could* love me. But when you openly sneered at what you called my *sentiment*, I then saw that, young as you were, you had learned to play most skillfully with a man’s best feelings –” I could not stand another word, and I cried out, “Oh, how *could* you think so mean a thing of me ? How could you doubt me ? Didn’t you know all the time that I loved you ? How could I help loving you ?”

And oh, Katie, we were so perfectly happy after that storm ! We sat and talked a long time, and could

scarcely forgive ourselves for making each other so unhappy. That is about all there is to tell. Don't disarrange your plans on my account, for I'm quite willing to stay.

Mr. Mitchell goes to Newport next week, where he will see aunt. I know you'll all think him perfectly splendid. He is *such* a darling, and I'm so happy ! Good-night.

Your loving sister, Gertie.

P.S. – You see something *has* come of my visit, after all.

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