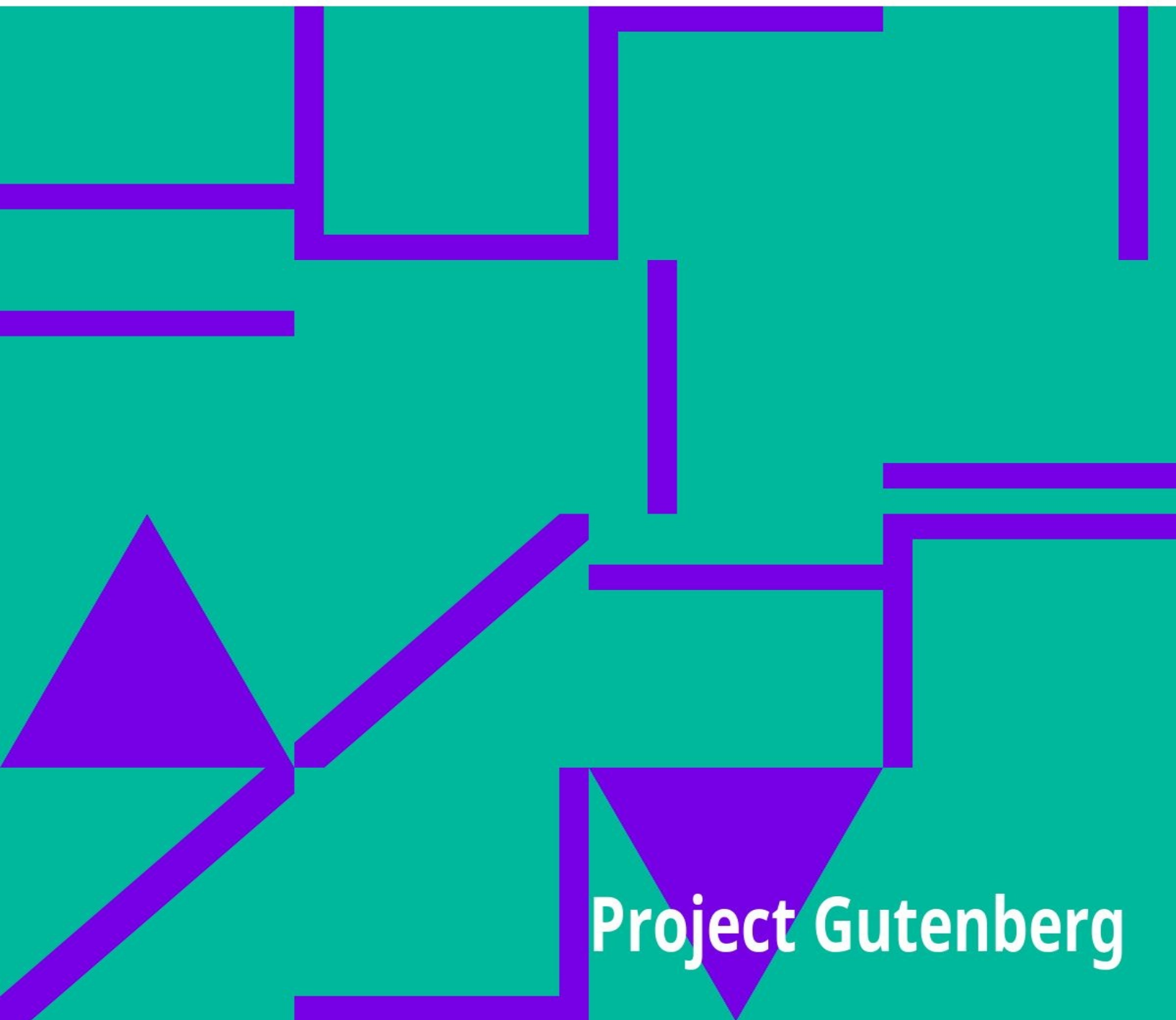


Floyd Grandon's Honor

Amanda M. Douglas

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A MODERN ADAM AND EVE IN A
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FLOYD GRANDON'S HONOR

BY

AMANDA M. DOUGLAS

AUTHOR OF

"IN TRUST," "THE OLD WOMAN WHO LIVED IN A SHOE," ETC.

BOSTON

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TO

DR. AND MRS. THEO. R. LUFF.

Through silent spaces hands may be outstretched,
Remembrance blossom in dim atmospheres;
Friends are not less the friends though far apart;
They count the loss and gain of vanished years.

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FLOYD GRANDON'S HONOR.

CHAPTER I.

"There is a courtesy of the heart. Is it akin to love?"—GOETHE..

It is the perfection of summer, early June, before the roses have shaken off their sweetness, and Grandon Park is lovely enough to compare with places whose beauty is an accretion of centuries rather than the work of decades. Yet these grand old trees and this bluff, with a strata of rock manifest here and there, are much older than the pretty settlement lying at its base. The quaint house of rough, gray stone, with a tower and a high balcony hung out at irregular intervals, the windows and angles and the curious pointed roof, stamp it as something different from the Swiss villas and cottage *ornées* at its feet.

Not very near, though; there is a spacious lawn and a wide drive, a grove of trees that can shut out intrusive neighbors to the south, as well as another dense thicket northward. There is the road at a distance on one side, and the broad, beautiful river on the other. Down below, a mile, perhaps, a rocky point juts out into the river, up above another, so this forms a kind of indentation, an exclusive sort of bay for the dwellers therein, and the whole rather aristocratic settlement is put down on the railway map as Grandon Park.

But it is at the stone house on its very brow where the master, Floyd Grandon, is expected home to-day after years of wandering and many changes. In the library his mother and sisters are gathered. It is a favorite place with Gertrude, who spends her days on the sofa reading. Marcia much affects her own "study," up under the eaves, but to-day she is clothed and in her right mind, free from dabs of paint or fingers grimed with charcoal and crayons. Laura is always Laura, a stylish young girl, busy with the strip of an extremely elegant carriage robe, and Mrs. Grandon, a handsome woman past fifty, has a bit of embroidery in her hands. She seems never exactly idle, but now she holds her work and listens, then drops into musing.

"I wonder what *can* be the matter?" she exclaims presently. "It is full half an hour behind time," looking at her watch.

"Are you in a hurry?" asks a languid voice from the luxurious Turkish lounge.

"Gertrude! How heartless you are! When we have not seen Floyd for seven years!" in a tone of reproach.

"If he were only coming alone——"

"And if we *did* know whether he is married or not!"

This young, impatient voice is Laura's. Not that it will make any great difference to her.

"We cannot dispossess Floyd," says Marcia, in a queer, caustic tone. "And a new mistress——"

Marcia has a great gift for making people uncomfortable.

"You seem so certain that he has married her," the mother comments in a kind of incredulous impatience.

"Well, he was in love with her before. And now their travelling together, his bringing her here, look wonderfully like it."

"Well, what then? She is rich, handsome, an elegant society woman, and just your age, Gertrude."

That rather stings the pale, listless woman on the lounge, who knows her mother's ambition has been sorely crossed by these single daughters.

"Not quite, mother mine. Even six months is something. She will not be able to twit me with seniority."

"But she may with the fact that she has been twice married," says Marcia.

"I am glad I shall be out of the way of all complications," announces Laura, in a joyous tone. "But for mourning and the miserable lack of money I should have been married sooner."

"Laura! At least you owe some respect to your father's memory!" the mother retorts sharply.

"Nevertheless, I am glad not to be dependent upon Floyd. And, mamma, you surely ought to rejoice at the prospect of having *one* daughter well married," with a little exultant ring in her voice. She is only eighteen, and has captured both wealth and position, and is longing so ardently to try her new world. These Grandon girls are not particularly amiable with one another. Indeed, life seems to have gone wrong with all of them, and they feel that Floyd alone is to be envied, thanks to great Aunt Marcia.

"There!" the mother exclaims suddenly, then rising, hurries out on the balcony. A carriage has turned into the drive, it sweeps around the gravelled walk with a crunching sound, and the beautiful bays are drawn up at the very edge of the wide stone steps with a masterly hand.

"Here we are!" cries a young man of one or two and twenty. "There was a slight accident to the down train and a detention. And I absolutely did not know Floyd!"

A tall, finely formed man of thirty or so springs out with an elastic step and clasps Mrs. Grandon in his arms. "My dear, dear mother!" is all that is said for a moment, and their lips meet with a tenderness that comforts the mother's heart.

Then he looks a little uncertainly at the two behind her.

"This is Laura, the child when you went away. It is almost nine years since you have seen her. And Marcia."

"How odd to be introduced to your own brother!" laughs Laura. "But, Floyd, you look like a Turkish pasha or an Arabian emir." And she eyes him with undisguised admiration.

Gertrude now crawls slowly out in a long white cashmere robe, with a pale blue fleecy wrap about her shoulders. She looks tall and ghostly, and her brother's heart fills with pity, as he seems more closely drawn to her than to the others.

Then there is a curious little halt, and with one accord they glance toward the carriage. Floyd flushes under all his wealth of bronze.

"Oh," he says, suddenly, "I have brought you an old friend. I could not bear to leave her in a great city among strangers, and promised her a welcome with you. Indeed, I do not believe she has any 'nearer of kin,' after all."

They all take a step forward, still in wonder. Floyd hands her out,—a very elegant woman, who is one handsome and harmonious line, from the French hat down to the faultless kid boot.

"I told Mr. Grandon it would be awkward and out of order," she says in a slow, melodious voice that has a peculiar lingering cadence. "But he is most imperious," and her smile dazzles them. "And you must pardon me for allowing myself to be persuaded. It was so tempting to come among friends."

Clearly she is not his wife now, whatever she may be in the future. Mrs. Grandon draws a breath of relief, and there is a pleasant confusion of welcome.

"Yes, I told her such scruples were foolish," says Floyd, in a straightforward way that is almost abrupt. Then turning to the carriage, adds, "And here is my little English daughter, Cecil!"

"O Floyd! what a lovely child! Does she really belong to you?" And Laura glances from one to the other, then dashes forward and clasps Cecil, who shrinks away and clings to her father.

"She is rather shy," he says, half proudly, half in apology; but Laura, who does not care a fig for children in general, kisses Cecil in spite of resistance. "Mother, I have added to your dignity by bringing home a granddaughter." Then, with a tender inflection, "This is grandmamma, Cecil."

Cecil allows herself to be kissed this time without resistance but she clings tightly to her father.

"What magnificent eyes! true twilight tint, and such hair! Floyd, how odd to think of you as——"

"You are warm and tired," Mrs. Grandon is saying. "Your rooms are ready upstairs."

"Don't send away the carriage, Eugene," cries Laura, "I want it a little while." Then she follows the small throng up the broad steps and into the spacious hall, while the visitor is keeping up a delicate little conversation with her hostess. Gertrude looks old and faded beside this regal woman. Perhaps she feels it, for she goes back to her couch and her novel.

"Oh," exclaims Eugene, springing up the steps two at a time, "here is Madame

Lepelletier's satchel! You left it in the carriage," handing it to her.

They are all relieved to actually hear her name. Laura leads her to the state chamber, which has been put in elegant order for a possible bride. Then her trunk is sent up, and Laura flits about as only a woman can, uttering gracious little sentences, until, finally excusing herself, she runs down to the carriage and is whirled away upon her errand.

Mrs. Grandon has followed her son to his room. He is master of the house and yet he has never been possessor. Almost ten years ago it was being finished and furnished for the splendid woman in the opposite room, and by a strange travesty of fate he has brought her here to-day. But he has no time for retrospection. He hardly hears what his mother is saying as he stands his little girl on a chair by the window and glances out.

"Yes," he returns, rather absently. "It will be all right. How wonderfully lovely this spot is, mother! I had no real conception of it. What would Aunt Marcia say to see it now? It is worthy of being handed down to the third and fourth generation."

"What a pity your child is not a boy, Floyd; you would have nothing more to ask," his mother says, fervently wishing it had been so.

"I would not have Cecil changed," he responds, with almost jealous quickness. "Where is Jane?" and the young girl lingering in the hall presents herself. "We shall just shake off a little of the dust of travel and come down, for I am all curiosity to inspect the place."

"Will this room do for your little girl and her nurse?" asks Mrs. Grandon. "We hardly knew what arrangements to make——"

"Yes, it is all very nice. Our luggage will be up presently; there was too much for us," and he smiles. "What are your household arrangements?"

"Dinner is at six generally. I delayed it awhile to-night, and now I must go and look after it."

"Thank you for all the trouble." He clasps both of his mother's hands in his and kisses her again. He has dreaded his return somewhat, and now he is delighted to be here.

Down-stairs Gertrude and Marcia have had a small skirmish of words.

"So he isn't married," the former had said, triumphantly.

"But engaged, no doubt. He wouldn't bring her here if there was not something in it."

"I would never forgive her for throwing me over," declares Gertrude.

"But it is something to have been a countess, and she is wonderfully handsome, not a bit fagged out by a sea voyage. Why, she doesn't look much older than Laura. Women of that kind always carry all before them, and men forgive everything to them."

"Floyd doesn't look like a marrying man."

"Much you know about it!" says Marcia, contemptuously. Then hearing her mother's steps, she rejoins her in the long dining-room, where the meal is being prepared in a style that befits the handsome mansion. The table is elegant with plate, cut glass, and china. Mrs. Grandon is lighter of heart now that she knows she is not to be deposed immediately. If the child only were a boy there would be no need of Floyd marrying, and it vexes her.

Laura returns in high good-humor, having done her errand quite to her satisfaction. The bell rings and they gather slowly. Madame Lepelletier is more enchanting still in some soft black fabric, with dull gold in relief. Floyd has washed and brushed and freshened, but still wears his travelling suit for a very good reason. Cecil is in white, with pale blue ribbons, which give her a sort of seraphic look. Yet she is tired with all the jaunting about, and after a while Laura ceases to torment her with questions, as the conversation becomes more general.

While the dessert is being brought in, Cecil touches her father's arm gently.

"I am so sleepy," in the lowest of low tones. Indeed, she can hardly keep her lovely eyes open.

"Will you call Miss Cecil's maid?" he says to the waiter, and, kissing her, gives her into Jane's arms.

"How beautifully that child behaves!" says Gertrude, with sudden animation. "I am not fond of children, but I am quite sure I shall like her."

"I hope you will," her brother answers, with a smile.

"Mr. Grandon deserves much credit," rejoins Madame Lepelletier. "Fathers are so apt to indulge, and Cecil is extremely bewitching. Could you really say 'no' to her?" And the lady smiles over to him.

"If it was for her good. But Cecil's aunt must have the credit of her training." Then he goes back to a former subject, and they sit over their dessert until dusk, when they adjourn to the drawing-room opposite, where the lamps are lighted. Gertrude, as usual, takes a couch. Floyd and his mother pair off, and somehow Laura finds herself growing extremely confidential with their elegant guest, who soon helps her to confess that she is on the eve of marriage.

"Of course we had to wait for Floyd to come home," she goes on. "The property has to be settled, and mamma insists that now Floyd is head of the family and all that. But I was engaged before papa died, and we were to have been married in the spring," at which she sighs. "And I do so want to get to Newport before the season is over. But Floyd is something to papa's will—executor, isn't it?—and we cannot have any money until he takes it in hand."

"How long he has been away!" says Madame Lepelletier, with a soft half-sigh. She would like to believe that she had something to do with it, but the English wife stands rather in the way.

"Yes; he was coming home as soon as his little girl was born, but then his wife died and he joined an exploring expedition, and has been rambling about the world ever since, with no bother of anything. How nice it must be to have plenty of money!" And Laura's sigh is in good earnest.

"You are right there," adds Eugene, who is smoking out on the balcony. "Floyd, old chap, is to be envied. I wish I had been Aunt Marcia's pet, or even half favorite. Business is my utter detestation, I admit. I must persuade Floyd to change about."

"And that makes me think of the wonderful changes here. Why, Grandon Park is a perfect marvel of beauty, and I left it an almost wilderness. I should never have known the place. But the location is really magnificent. Ten years have improved it beyond all belief. I suppose there is some very nice society?"

"In the summer, yes, and yet every one is anxious to get away," returns Laura,

with a short laugh.

Marcia joins the circle and the harmony seems broken. Madame Lepelletier wonders why they so jar upon each other. She has been trained to society's suavity, and they seem quite like young barbarians.

Floyd and his mother talk a little at the lower end of the room, then she proposes they shall take the library.

"Or better still," says he, "get a shawl and let us have a turn outside. The moon is just coming up."

She obeys with alacrity. They cross the sloping lawn almost down to the river's edge. Floyd lights a cigar, after learning that it will not be disagreeable. He glances up and down the river, flecked here and there with a drowsy sail or broken with the splash of oars. Over on the opposite shore the rugged rocks rise frowningly, then break in depressions, through which clumps of cedars shine black and shadowy. Why, he has not seen much in Europe that can excel this! His heart swells with a sense of possession. For the first time in his life his very soul thrills with a far-reaching, divine sense of home.

"I am so glad to have you at last, Floyd," his mother says again, remembering her own perplexities. "Nothing could be done about the business until you came. Floyd," suddenly, "I hope you will not feel hurt at—at what your father thought best to do. Aunt Marcia provided for you."

"Yes, nobly, generously. If you mean that my father divided the rest among you all, he only did what was right, just."

There is no uncertain ring in the tone, and she is greatly relieved.

"Poor father! I had counted on being a stay to him in his declining years, as I should have returned in any event in another year or two. I should like to have seen him once more."

"He left many messages for you, and there is a packet of instructions that I suppose explains his wishes. You see he did not really think of dying; we all considered him improving until that fatal hemorrhage. The business is left to Eugene. Then there are legacies and incomes,"—with a rather hopeless sigh.

"Don't feel troubled about it, mother dear. I suppose Eugene likes the business?"

in a cheery tone.

"No, I am afraid not very well. He is young, you know, and has had no real responsibility. O Floyd, I hope you will be patient with him!"

"To be sure I will." Patience seems a very easy virtue just now. "There is the partner?"

"Yes, Mr. Wilmarth. And a Mr. St. Vincent has an interest, and there is a good deal about machinery that I do not understand——"

"Never mind. Let us talk about the girls. Gertrude looks but poorly. She has never rallied over her unfortunate love."

"I think she always expected to hear something, and would make no effort. She is not really ill. It is only allowing one's self to collapse. She ought to have done better, for she was really beautiful. I thought her prettier than Irene Stanwood in those old days, but no one would fancy *her* the older now."

Mrs. Grandon feels her way very cautiously. She is not at all sure what her son's relations with this handsome guest are, or may be, and she desires to keep on the safe side.

"Isn't she marvellous?" He stops suddenly in his slow pacing. "When I stumbled over her in Paris she seemed to me like some of the strange old stories of woman blessed with unfading youth. And yet I do not believe she had a really satisfying life with her count and his family. It must have been something else, some rare, secret philosophy. Yet she seemed so sort of friendless in one way, and was coming to America for the settlement of the business, so I thought we might as well have her here for a little while. I wonder if it will annoy you?" he asks quickly.

"Oh, no!" she answers in a careless tone. "You are the only one who would be annoyed."

"My epidermis has thickened since those days," he returns, with a laugh. "What an unlucky lot we were! Gertrude, Marcia, and I, all crossed in our first loves! I hope Laura's fate will be better."

"Laura's prospects are very bright," says the mother, in a kind of exultant tone. "She is engaged to a young man every way unexceptionable, and was to have

been married in the spring. She is very anxious now—you see no one can have any money until——"

"I can soon straighten such a bother. When would she like——"

"Mr. Delancy is very impatient now. It would be mortifying to confess that only a matter of wedding clothes stands between, when everything else is desirable."

"Consider that settled then."

"O Floyd! Laura will be so delighted!" There is relief in her tone, as well. A great anxiety has been dispelled.

The bell in the village up above peals off ten, and the still air brings it down with a touch of soft mystery.

"We ought to go back to the house," confesses the mother. "And I dare say you are tired, Floyd?"

"I have had a rather fatiguing day," he admits, though he feels as if he could fling himself down on the fragrant grass and stay there all night. It would not be the first time he has slept under a canopy of stars.

They retrace their steps, and Mrs. Grandon apologizes to her guest, who is sweetness itself, quite different from the Irene Stanwood of the past. There is a stir, and everybody admits that it is time to retire.

Floyd intercepts Laura in the hall, and wonders he has not remarked the flash of the diamond earlier, as she raises her plump hand.

"Mother has been telling me," he says, with a wise, curious smile. "Let me congratulate you. To-morrow we will talk it over and arrange everything. I will be your banker for the present. Only—are you quite sure I shall like the young man?" And he holds her in a tender clasp.

"You cannot help it! O Floyd, how good you are, and how very, very happy it makes me! I began to feel afraid that I had come under the family ban."

"Dismiss all fears." He thinks her a very pretty young girl as she stands there, and he is pleased that his return is bringing forth good fruit so soon.

There is a pleasant confusion of good nights and good wishes, the great hall

doors are shut, and they all troop up the wide walnut staircase quite as if an evening party had broken up. Floyd Grandon, though not a demonstrative man, lingers to give his mother a parting kiss, and is glad that he has returned to comfort her.

CHAPTER II.

When a woman has ceased to be quite the same to us, it matters not how different she becomes.—W. S. LANDOR.

The house is still. Every one is shut in with his or her thoughts. Floyd Grandon goes to the bed of his little girl, where Jane sits watching in an uncertain state, since everything is so new and strange.

How lovely the child is! The rosy lips are parted, showing the pearly teeth, the face is a little flushed with warmth, one pale, pink-tinted ear is like a bit of sculpture, the dimpled shoulder, the one dainty bare foot outside the spread, seem parts of a cherub. He presses it softly; he kisses the sweet lips that smile. Is it really the sense of ownership that makes her so dear?

He has never experienced this jealous, overwhelming tenderness for anything human. He loves his mother with all a son's respect, and has a peculiar sympathy for her. If his father were alive he knows they would be good comrades to stand by each other, to have a certain positive faith and honor in each other's integrity. His brother and sisters—well, he has never known them intimately, even as one gets to know friends, but he will take them upon trust. Then there are two women,—the mother of his child, and that affluent, elegant being across the hall. Does his heart warm to her? And yet she might have been mistress here and the mother of his children. The "might have been" in his thought would comfort his mother greatly, who is wondering, as she moves restlessly on her pillow, if it may not yet be.

Floyd Grandon's story comprehends all the rest, so I will give that.

Some sixty years before this, two sturdy Englishmen and their sister had come to the New World, with a good deal of energy and some money. The freak that led them up the river to this place was their love of beautiful scenery. Land was

cheap, and at first they tried farming, but presently they started a carpet factory, their old business, and being ingenious men, they made some improvements. Ralph Stanwood, another Englishman, joined them. They placed their business two miles farther up, where there were facilities for docks and the privileges they desired.

William Grandon married, but only one of his children reached maturity. James and his sister Marcia lived in an old farm-house, single, prudent, turning everything into money, and putting it into land. When James died he left his business to his brother and his share of the farm to Marcia. When William died the business went to his son James, except the small share belonging to Stanwood.

James married a stylish young woman who never quite suited Aunt Marcia. They lived in the new village in a pretentious house, and came out now and then to the farm. There were five children, and the second girl was named after the great-aunt, who dowered her with a hundred dollars, to be put in the bank, and a handsome christening robe, then took no further special notice of her.

But she liked Floyd, the eldest son, and he was never weary of roaming about the old place and listening through the long evenings to matters she had known of in England, and places she had seen.

"Aunt Marcia," he said one day, "just up on that ridge would be a splendid place to build a castle. All the stone could be quarried out around here. I wish you'd let me build it when I am a man."

She laughed a little, and took a good survey of the place.

Some days after she questioned her nephew about his plans.

"Bring Eugene up to the business," she said, briefly. "Four will be enough for your purse. I will look after Floyd."

Miss Grandon might be queer and unsocial, but she was no niggard. All the friends of her own day were gone, and she had no gift for making new ones, but her grand-nephew grew into her heart.

His mother watched this with a curious jealousy.

"If she had only taken one of the girls! Marcia ought to belong there."

"Nonsense!" replied her husband. "It would be a dull home for a girl. Let her have Floyd. The lad is fond of her, and she loves him. I never knew her to love one of her own sex."

Floyd was sent to college, but the idea of the castle grew in Aunt Marcia's brain. Towns and villages were spreading up the river, and one day she was offered what seemed a fabulous sum for her old home of rocky woodlands. She was still shrewd, if she had come to fourscore, and offered them half, on her own terms, holding off with the most provoking indifference until they came to an agreement. Then she announced her intention of building a home for Floyd, who was to be her heir.

"The property ought to be yours, James," Mrs. Grandon said, with some bitterness. "Why should she set Floyd above all the rest?"

"My dear,—as if it really made any difference!"

But the mother did look on with a rather jealous eye. Floyd came home, and they discussed plans, viewed every foot of soil, selected the finest spot, had the different kinds of rock examined, and finally discovered the right place for a quarry. There was so much preliminary work that they did not really commence until the ensuing spring, and the foundation only had been laid when Floyd's vacation came around again. Meanwhile, houses below them seemed to spring up as if by magic. The mystery and fame of the "castle" helped. No one knew quite what it was going to be, and the strange old lady intensified the whole.

There was no special haste about it, though Floyd was so interested that he had half a mind to throw up his last year at college, but Aunt Marcia would not agree, and he graduated with honors. Meanwhile the house progressed, and if it did not quite reach the majesty of a castle, it was a very fine, substantial building. Floyd threw himself into the project now with all his energy. They would be quite detached from their neighbors by the little grove Aunt Marcia had left standing. There were walks and drives to build, lawns to lay out, new gardens to plan, but before it was all completed Aunt Marcia, who had been a little ailing for several weeks, dropped suddenly out of life, fondly loved and deeply regretted by her grand-nephew.

Her will showed that she had planned not to have her name perish with her. The house and several acres of ground were to constitute the Grandon estate proper.

This was to be used by Floyd during his life and then to descend to his eldest son living. If he left no sons, and Eugene should have a male descendant, he was to be the heir. If neither had sons, it was to go in the female line, provided such heir took the name of Grandon. The rest of the property was left unconditionally to Floyd, with the exception of one thousand dollars apiece to the children.

Floyd was at this period two-and-twenty, a rather grave and reserved young man, with no special predilection for society. And yet, to the great surprise of his mother, Irene Stanwood captured him and rather cruelly flaunted her victory in the faces of all the Grandons. Yet there really could be no objection. She was a handsome, well-educated girl, with some fortune of her own and a considerable to come from her mother.

Mrs. Stanwood and her daughter went abroad, where Floyd was to meet them presently, when whatever they needed for foreign adornment of their house would be selected. They heard of Miss Stanwood being a great success at Paris, her beauty and breeding gaining her much favor. And then, barely six months later, an elegant Parisian count presented a temptation too great to be resisted. Miss Stanwood threw over Floyd Grandon and became Madame la Comtesse.

Essentially honest and true himself, this was a great shock to Floyd Grandon, but he learned afterward that principle and trust had been more severely wounded than love. His regard had been a young man's preference rather than any actual need of loving. Indeed, he was rather shocked to think how soon he did get over the real pain, and how fast his views of life changed.

Meanwhile Gertrude lived out a brief romance. A fascinating lover of good family and standing, a little gay and extravagant, perhaps, but the kind to win a girl's whole soul, and Gertrude gave him every thought. While the wedding day was being considered, a misdeed of such magnitude came to light that the young man was despatched to China with all possible haste to avoid a worse alternative, and Gertrude was left heart-broken. Then Marcia, young and giddy, half compromised herself with an utterly unworthy admirer, and Mrs. Grandon's cup of bitterness was full to overflowing.

Floyd leased his quarry on advantageous terms, and offered to take his mother and two sisters abroad. This certainly was some compensation. Marcia soon forgot her griefs, and even Gertrude was roused to interest. At some German baths the ladies met Madame la Comtesse, and were indebted to her for an act of

friendliness. At Paris they met her again, and here Floyd had occasion to ask himself with a little caustic satire if he had really loved her? She had grown handsomer, she was proud of her rank and station and the homage laid at her feet.

The Grandons returned home and took possession of Floyd's house. He went on to Egypt, the Holy Land, and India. He was beginning to take the true measure of his manhood, his needs and aims, to meet and mingle with people who could stir what was best in him, and rouse him to the serious purposes of life, when another incident occurred that might have made sad havoc with his plans.

While at an English army station he met a very charming widow, with a young step-daughter, who was shortly to return to England. Cecil Trafford admired him with a girl's unreason, and at last committed such an imprudence that the astute step-mother, seeing her opportunity, proposed the only reparation possible,—marriage. Cecil was a bright, pretty, wilful girl, and he liked her, yet he had a strong feeling of being outgeneralled.

That she loved him he could not doubt, and they were married, as he intended to return to England. But her fondness was that of a child, and sometimes grew very wearisome. She was petulant, but not ill-tempered; the thing she cried for to-day she forgot to-morrow.

She had one sister much older than herself, married to a clergyman and settled in Devonshire. Floyd sought them out, and found them a most charming household. Mr. Garth was a strongly intellectual man, and his house was a centre for the most entertaining discussions. Mrs. Garth had a decided gift for music, and was a well-balanced, cultivated woman. They lingered month after month, gravitating between London and the Garths', until Cecil's child was born. A few weeks later Cecil's imprudence cost her life. Floyd Grandon came down from London to find the eager, restless little thing still and calm as any sculptured marble. He was so glad then that he had been indulgent to her whims and caprices.

He was quite at liberty now to join an expedition to Africa that he had heroically resisted before. Mrs. Garth kept the child. Announcing his new plans to his mother, he set off, and for the next four years devoted himself to the joys and hardships of a student traveller.

He was deep in researches of the mysterious lore of Egypt when a letter that had gone sadly astray reached him, announcing his father's death and the necessity of his return home. Leaving a friend to complete one or two unfinished points, he reluctantly tore himself away, and yet with a pang that after all it was too late to be of any real service to his father, that he could never comfort his declining years as he had Aunt Marcia's.

He had some business in Paris, and crossing the channel he met Madame Lepelletier. She was a widow and childless. The title and estate had gone to a younger son, though she had a fair provision. She had received the announcement of Mr. Grandon's death and the notice of settlement, and was on her way to America. A superbly handsome woman now, but Grandon had seen many another among charming society women. He was not in any sense a lady's man. His little taste of matrimony had left a bitter flavor in his mouth.

She admitted to herself that he was very distinguished looking. The slender fairness of youth was all outgrown. Compact, firm, supple, with about the right proportion of flesh, bronzed, with hair and beard darker than of yore, and that decisive aspect a man comes to have who learns by experience to rely upon his own judgment.

"I am on my way thither," he announced, in a crisp, business-like manner. "It is high time I returned home, though a man with no ties could spend his life amid the curiosities of the ancient civilizations. But my mother needs me, and I have a little girl in England."

"Ah?" with a faint lifting of the brows that indicated curiosity.

"I was married in India, but my wife died in England, where our child was born," he said briefly, not much given to mysteries. "An aunt has been keeping her. She must be about five," he adds more slowly.

Madame Lepelletier wondered a little about the marriage. Had the grief at his wife's death plunged him into African wilds?

They spent two or three days in London, and she decided to wait for the next steamer and go over with him, as he frankly admitted that he knew nothing about children, except as he had seen them run wild. So he despatched a letter home, recounting the chance meeting and announcing their return, little dreaming of the suspicions it might create.

Floyd Grandon found a lovely fairy awaiting him in the old Devonshire rectory. Tall for her age, exquisitely trained, possessing something better than her mother's infantile prettiness. Eyes of so dark a gray that in some lights they were black, and hair of a soft ripe-wheat tint, fine and abundant. But the soul and spirit in her face drew him toward her more than the personal loveliness. She was extremely shy at first, though she had been taught to expect papa, but the strangeness wore off presently.

They were very loth to give her up, and Mrs. Garth exacted a promise that in her girlhood she might have her again. But when they were fairly started on their journey Cecil was for a while inconsolable. Grandon was puzzled. She seemed such a strange, sudden gift that he knew not what to do. At Liverpool they met Madame Lepelletier, but all her tenderness was of no avail. Cecil did not cry now, but utterly refused to be comforted by this stranger.

It was to her father that she turned at last. That night she crept into his arms of her own accord, and sobbed softly on his shoulder.

"Can I never have Auntie Dora again?" she asked, pitifully.

"My little darling, in a long, long while. But there will be new aunties and a grandmamma."

"I don't want any one but just you." And she kissed him with a trembling eagerness that touched his heart. Suddenly a new and exquisite emotion thrilled him. This little morsel of humanity was all his. She had nothing in the world nearer, and there was no other soul to which he could lay entire claim.

After that she was a curious study to him. Gentle, yet in some respects firm to obstinacy, with a dainty exclusiveness that was extremely flattering, and that somehow he came to like, to enjoy with a certain pride.

As for Madame Lepelletier, she was rather amused at first to have her advances persistently repelled, her tempting bonbons refused, and though she was not extravagantly fond of children, she resolved to conquer this one's diffidence or prejudice, she could not quite decide which.

One day, nearly at the close of their journey, she teased Cecil by her persistence until the child answered with some anger.

"Cecil!" exclaimed Mr. Grandon, quickly.

The pretty child hung her head.

"Go and kiss Madame Lepelletier and say you are sorry. Do you know that was very rude?" said her father.

"I don't want to be kissed. I told her so," persisted the child, resolutely.

"It is such a trifle," interposed madame, with a charming smile. "And I am not sure but we ought to train little girls to be chary of their kisses. There! I will not see her teased." And the lady, rising, walked slowly away.

"Cecil!" the tone was quietly grave now.

The large eyes filled with tears, but she made no motion to relent.

"Very well," he said. "I shall not kiss my little girl until she has acted like a lady."

Cecil turned to Jane with a swelling heart. But an hour or two afterward the cunning little thing climbed her father's knee, patted his cheek with her soft fingers, parted the brown mustache, and pressed her sweet red lips to his with arch temptation.

He drew back a trifle. "Do you remember what papa said, Cecil? Will you go and kiss madame?"

The lip quivered. There was a long, swelling breath, and the lashes drooped over the slightly flushed cheeks.

"Papa doesn't love me!" she uttered, like a plaint. "He wouldn't want to give away my kisses if he did."

He took the little face in his hands, and said with a traitorous tenderness, "My little darling, I *do* hate to lose any of your kisses. You see you are punishing me, too, by your refusal. I think you ought to do what is right and what papa bids you."

"But I can't love to kiss her." And there was a great struggle in the little soul.

"But you *can* be sorry that you were rude."

The entreaty in the eyes almost melted him, but he said no more. She slipped down very reluctantly, and went across to where madame was playing chess.

"I am sorry I was rude," she said slowly. "I will kiss you now."

"You are a darling!" But for all that Madame Lepelletier longed to shake her.

Her father received her with open arms and rapturous caresses. She gave a little sob.

"You won't ask me again!" she cried. "I don't want anybody but just you, now that Auntie Dora is away."

"And I want you to love me best of all. Heaven knows, my darling, how dear you are!"

He spoke the truth. In this brief while he had grown to love her devotedly.

Madame Lepelletier was very sweet, but she did not consider it wise to rouse the child's opposition, since no one else could beguile favors from her.

Before they reached New York she had allowed herself to be persuaded to go at once to Grandon Park, and Floyd telegraphed, a little ambiguously, used as he was to brief announcements. Madame Lepelletier had made a half-resolve, piqued by his friendly indifference, that he should own her charm. She would establish a footing in the family.

And now, in the quiet of the guest-chamber, where everything is more luxurious than she has imagined, she resolves that she will win Floyd Grandon back. She will make the mother and sisters adore her. She has not been schooled in a French world for nothing, and yet it was not a very satisfactory world. She will have more real happiness here; and she sighs softly as she composes herself to sleep.

Floyd Grandon kisses his darling for the last time, then shutting his door, sits down by the window and lights a cigar. He does not want to sleep. Never in his life has he felt so like a prince. He has this lovely house, and his child to watch and train, and, mayhap, some little fame to win. He makes no moan for the dead young mother in her grave, for he understands her too truly to desire her back, with all her weakness and frivolity. He cannot invest her with attributes that she never possessed, but he can remember her in the child, who shall be true and

noble and high of soul. They two, always.

Laura has fallen asleep over visions of bridal satin and lace that are sure now to come true, but Gertrude tosses restlessly and sighs for her lost youth. Twenty-nine seems fearfully old to-night, for the next will be thirty. She does not care for marriage now; but she has an impending dread of something,—it may be a contrast with that beautiful, blooming woman.

"For I know she will *try* to get Floyd," she says, with a bitter sigh.

This fear haunts the mother's pillow as well. Many aims and hopes of her life have failed. She loves her younger son with a tender fervor, but she does not desire to have the elder wrested out of her hands, and become a guest in the home where she has reigned mistress.

Truly they are not all beds of roses.

CHAPTER III.

"Let the world roll blindly on,
Give me shadow, give me sun,
And a perfumed day as this is."

It is hardly dawn as yet, and the song of countless robins wakes Floyd Grandon. How they fling their notes back at one another, with a merry audacity that makes him smile! Then a strange voice, a burst of higher melody, a warble nearer, farther, fainter, a "sweet jargonning" among them all, that lifts his soul in unconscious praise. At first there is a glimmer of mystery, then he remembers,—it is his boyhood's home. There were just such songs in Aunt Marcia's time, when he slept up under the eaves of the steeply peaked roof.

The dawn flutters out, faint opal and gray, then rose and yellow, blue and a sort of silvery haze. It does not burst into sudden glory, but dallies in translucent seas, changing, fading, growing brighter, and lo, the world is burnished with a faint, tender gold. The air is sweet with dewy grasses, the spice of pines, rose, and honeysuckle, and the scent of clover-blooms, that hint of midsummer. There is the river, with its picturesque shores, and purple blue peaks opposite; down below, almost hidden by the grove, the cluster of homes, in every variety of beauty, that are considered the *par excellence* of Grandon Park. Mrs. Grandon would fain destroy the grove, since she loves to be seen of her neighbors; but Floyd always forbade it, and his father would not consent, so it still stands, to his delight.

"If this is the home feeling, so eloquently discoursed upon, it has not been overrated," he says softly to himself. "Home," with a lingering inflection.

"Papa! papa!" The fleet bare feet reach him almost as soon as the ringing voice. "I was afraid you were not here. Is this truly home?"

"Truly home, my darling."

He lifts her in his arms, still in her dainty nightdress, and kisses the scarlet lips, that laugh now for very gladness.

"Can I stay with you always?"

"Why, yes," in half surprise. "You are the nearest and dearest thing in all the

world." Yes, he is quite sure now that he would rather part with everything than this baby girl he has known only such a little while.

Then he stands her on the floor. "Run to Jane and get dressed, and we will go out on the lawn and see the birds and flowers."

While she is engaged, he gives a brush to his flowing beard and slightly waving hair that is of a rather light brown, and puts on a summer coat. A fine-looking man, certainly, with a rather long, oval face, clearly defined brows, and sharply cut nose and mouth; with a somewhat imperious expression that gives it character. The eyes are a deep, soft brown, with curious lights rippling through them like the tints of an agate. Generally they are tranquil to coldness, so far as mere emotion is concerned, but many things kindle them into interest, and occasionally to indignation. Health and a peculiar energy are in every limb, the energy that sets itself to conquer and is never lost in mere strife or bustle.

"Papa!"

"Yes, dear."

"You will wait for me?" entreatingly.

He comes to the door with a smile. Jane is brushing the fair, shining hair that is like a sea of ripples, and Cecil stretches out her hand with pretty eagerness, as if she shall lose him, after all.

"Suppose I tie it so, and curl it after breakfast," proposes Jane. "Miss Cecil is so impatient."

"Yes, that will do." It is beautiful, any way, he thinks. Then she dances around on one foot until her dress is put on, when she gives a glad bound.

"But your pinafore! American children *do* wear them," says Jane, in a rather uncertain tone.

"I am a little English girl," is the firm rejoinder.

"Then of course you must," responds papa.

"And your hat! The sun is shining."

Cecil gives a glad spring then, and almost drags her father down the wide stairs.

A young colored lad is brushing off the porch, but the two go down on the path that is speckless and as hard as a floor. The lawn slopes slowly toward the river, broken by a few clumps of shrubbery, a summer-house covered with vines, and another resembling a pagoda, with a great copper beech beside it. There are some winding paths, and it all ends with a stone wall, as the shore is very irregular. There is a boat-house, and a strip of gravelly beach, now that the tide is out.

Grandon turns and looks toward the house. Yes, it is handsome, grand. Youth and age together did not make any blunder of it. There is the tower, that was to be his study and library and place of resort generally. What crude dreams he had in those days! Science and poesy, art and history, were all a sad jumble in his brain, and now he has found his life-work. He hopes that he may make the world a little wiser, raise some few souls up to the heights he has found so delightful.

Cecil dances about like a fairy. She is at home amid green fields once more, for the ocean was to her a dreary desert, and the many strange faces made her uncomfortable. She is oddly exclusive and delicate, even chary about herself, but alone with her father she is all childish abandon.

There is a stir about the house presently, and Grandon begins to retrace his steps.

"Don't go," entreats Cecil.

"My dear, we must have breakfast. Grandmamma and the aunties will be waiting."

"Are they going to live there always!" with an indication of the fair head.

"Yes, some of them."

"And are we going to live there for ever and ever?"

He laughs gayly.

"I hope we will live there to a good old age."

"And madame—must she stay there, too?"

"Madame will stay for a little while. And Cecil must be kind and pleasant——"

"I can't like her!" interrupts the child, petulantly.

He studies her with some curiosity. Why should the gracious, beautiful woman be distasteful to her?

"I don't really suppose she will care much," he replies, in a rather teasing spirit.

"But if she doesn't, why should she want me to kiss her?"

"I do not believe she will ask you again. You must not be rude to any one. And you must kiss grandmamma or the aunties if they ask you."

Cecil sets her lips firmly, but makes no reply. Grandon wonders suddenly what charm Aunt Dora possessed, and how people, fathers and mothers, govern children! It is a rather perplexing problem if they turn naughty.

They walk back to the great porch, where Mrs. Grandon comes out and wishes her son a really fond good morning. Cecil submits quietly to a caress with most unchildlike gravity. Marcia comes flying along; she is always flying or rustling about, with streamers somewhere, and a very young-girlish air that looks like affectation at twenty-seven, but she will do the same at forty-seven. She is barely medium height, fair, with light hair, which by persistent application she makes almost golden. It is thin and short, and floats about her head in artistic confusion. Her eyes are a rather pale blue-gray, and near-sighted, her features small, her voice has still the untrained, childish sound of extreme youth. She is effusive and full of enthusiasms, rather unbalanced, Floyd decides in a day or two.

"Good morning!" exclaims the bright voice of Eugene. "Upon my word, you make quite an imposing *paterfamilias*, and Cecil, I dare say, has found the weak place and tyrannizes over you. Come to me, little lady," pinching her lovely pink cheek.

But Cecil almost hides behind her father, and is proof against the blandishments of the handsome young man. He is not quite so tall as Floyd, but grace, from the splendidly shaped head to the foot worthy of a woman's second glance. A clear, rich complexion, very dark hair and eyes, and a mustache that looks as if it was pencilled in jet. Laura has these darker tints as well. Certainly Mrs. Grandon has no cause to be dissatisfied with her two youngest on the score of good looks.

Floyd lifts Cecil in his arms and admits that she does not make friends easily. Then with a change in his tone, "How finely the place has been kept up! Shall I thank you or mother for it, Eugene? Aunt Marcia's old farm has arrived at great

state and dignity. I have seen few places abroad that I like better, though much, of course, on a far grander scale."

"Aunt Marcia 'buidled better than she knew.' Grandon Park is the seat of fashion and taste; isn't that right, Marcia? And Floyd, old fellow, *you* are to be envied. I wish *I* had been eldest born."

Floyd smiles, yet something in the tone jars a trifle. Then the breakfast-bell rings and they move through the hall just as Madame Lepelletier sweeps down the stairs like a princess in cream cashmere and lace. Her radiance is not impaired by daylight. Marcia seems to shrivel up beside her, and Gertrude looks extremely faded, washed out.

They are all bright and gay. Madame Lepelletier is one of the women who seldom tolerates dulness or that embarrassing awkwardness that occasionally settles even in well-bred circles. She is charming and vivacious, she has resolved that they shall all like her, and though she is not a particularly generous person, she has discerned how she may be of use to them and win herself gratitude and friendship. She is too politic ever to make an enemy, and she keeps her friends so well in hand that their possible defection shall not injure her, but rather themselves. Young, handsome, fascinating, and with abundant means for herself, she has been in no hurry to change her state in life. But Grandon Park and its owner look as tempting this morning as they did in her twilight revery last evening.

"What will you do, Floyd?" asks Eugene, presently. "Come up to the factory, or _____"

"Oh," returns Laura, with a kind of merry audacity, blushing a little, "we shall keep him home this morning."

"Well, I must be off. Business, you see. But I shall hold myself free for this afternoon if any of you ladies will honor me," bowing to Madame Lepelletier, who acknowledges it with a ravishing smile that makes every pulse thrill.

Floyd and his mother have the first confidence. There are the sad particulars of the death, now more than six months old. The will has been read, but there is a sealed packet of instruction for Floyd, still in the lawyer's hands. The business seems to be in a rather involved state, what with partners and a patent that Mr. Grandon felt sure would make all their fortunes. The main point relating to

Laura is this: While the mother has a yearly income from the business, the girls are to be paid five thousand dollars down, and five thousand more at the expiration of three years. Laura needs hers for present emergencies. But just now there are notes coming due and no money.

"I can easily arrange that," says Floyd, "by advancing Laura's money. How odd this should be the first marriage in the family, and Laura the youngest!"

"You forget your own," remarks his mother, in surprise.

"Why, so I did." And a flush is visible under the bronze. "It is so like a dream to me, over in one short year."

"And you were very much in love, doubtless? It must have been terrible!"

"It was a most unexpected death," ignoring the first remark. "She was so young, a mere child."

Not even to his mother can he express his manhood's views of the whole occurrence. But he knows that he did not love her deeply, and the consciousness will always give him a little shock. At the same time he settles that he is not the kind of man to be swept off his feet by the passion of love.

Then they call Laura in and Floyd explains the ease with which the matter can be settled. "I shall pay you and take your claim against the estate. What kind of a wedding are you to have? You see I must be posted in these matters, so that I shall do myself honor and credit as the head of the family."

"Of course it will have to be rather quiet, as we are still in mourning, and so many of Arthur's family are out of town. He will be up to lunch to-day: I asked him to meet you. But he thought—early in July," and she colors a little, smiling, too. "We are to go to Newport, that is, you know, we really could plan nothing until you came. And, oh, Floyd, it will be so delightful to have Madame Lepelletier! We have been talking it over, and she will help me do my shopping. She is just as good as she is lovely. But if you only could have ordered me some things in Paris!"

"Why, I never bought any such thing in my life," says Floyd, laughingly. "But I have some trinkets among my luggage that you may like, gems and cameos, and some curious bracelets. I did remember that I had some sisters at home."

"Oh, you are really charming! You cannot imagine how doleful we have been. Eugene could not do anything about the money, and he has been in a worry with Mr. Wilmarth and cross if any one said a word."

Floyd laughs at this. The idea of Eugene being cross is amusing.

Laura flits out of the room much elated. She and Arthur can settle everything to-day, and the shopping will be so delightful, for Madame Lepelletier is quite as good as a Frenchwoman.

Mrs. Grandon sighs, and Floyd looks at her questioningly.

"You are so good, Floyd. It is such a relief to have you. I only hope the business will not weary you out, and that—there will be no real trouble."

He kisses Cecil's little hand that is wandering through his beard, and presses her closer as she sits quietly on his knee. "I shall think nothing a trouble," he says. "It is father's trust to me. Come, you must be gay and happy, and not cloud Laura's wedding with forebodings. Let us take a tour through the house now. I am quite curious to know if I have remembered it rightly."

"I wonder if you can find your way. I must look after the luncheon."

"Oh, yes," he replies. "I think there is no labyrinth."

On one side of the hall there is the long drawing-room, and a smaller apartment that might be a conservatory it is so full of windows, or a library, but it is a sort of sitting-room at present. Then the tower, that has a large entrance, and might be the façade, if one pleased. An oaken stairway winds a little to the room above, which is empty but for a few chairs and a bamboo settee. Up again to another lovely room, and then it is crowned by an observatory. From here the prospect is magnificent. The towns above, that dot the river's edge, and the long stretch below, are like a panorama. How wonderfully changed! How busy and thriving this new world is! He thinks of the leagues and leagues he has traversed where a mill or a factory would be an unknown problem, and the listless stupor of content is over all. Yet buried in the sand or under ruins is the history of ages as prosperous, as intellectual, and as wise. How strange a thing the world of life really is!

Cecil breaks into his thoughts with her tender chatter. She is not an obtrusive

child, and, though bright, has grave moods and strange spells of thought. She is delighted to be so high up and able to look down over everything.

They return at length, and he carries her down-stairs. On the second floor there is a connecting passage to the main house, and two beautiful rooms that he planned for himself because they were retired. Feminine belongings are scattered about, —satchels and fans and queer bottles of perfumery. He guesses rightly that Laura is domiciled here, and in the adjoining chamber Gertrude lies on the bed with a novel.

"Oh, Floyd!"

"Pardon me."

"Come in," she says, raising herself on one elbow. "I am up here a good deal, because I like quiet and my health is so wretched. Everybody else is busy about something, and I bore them, so I keep out of their way."

"You do look poorly," he answers, sympathetically. She is not only pale, but sallow, and there are hollows in her cheeks. Her hands, which were once very pretty, are thin as birds' claws. There is a fretful little crease in her forehead, and her eyes have a look of utter weariness.

"Yes, I am never strong. I cannot bear excitement. Marcia's life would exhaust me in a month, and Laura's fuss would drive me crazy. Have they said anything about her marriage?"

"It is all settled, or will be when her lover comes to-day. Do you like him, Gertrude?"

"He is well enough, I suppose, and rich. You couldn't imagine Laura marrying a poor man."

Floyd Grandon is not at all sure that he understands the hidden or manifest purposes of love, but he has a secret clinging to the orthodox belief that it is a necessary ingredient in marriages.

"You are cynical," he says, with a pleasant laugh. "You do not have enough fresh air."

"But I see Laura." Then, after a pause, "Do not imagine I have the slightest

objection. There will be only two of us left, and it does seem as if Marcia might pick up some one. Floyd——"

"Well," as she makes a long pause.

"Do you know anything about the business? Eugene is so—so unsatisfactory. Where is Laura going to get her money?"

"I shall attend to that. Gertrude, what has been said about affairs that makes you all so desponding?"

Floyd Grandon asks a question as if he expected an answer. Gertrude gives a little twist to her long, slender figure, and pushes one shoulder forward.

"Well, there has been no money, and Eugene cannot get any. And all you hear about is notes to pay."

The house certainly does not look as if there was any lack. The table is bountiful, and he has seen four servants, he is quite sure.

"My not being here has delayed the settlement, no doubt," he answers, cheerfully. "It will all come right."

"You quite put courage into one. I suppose you always feel well and strong; you have grown handsome, Floyd, and there is nothing to make you desponding."

"Yes, I am always well. Do you stay in-doors all the time and read? You must have a change, something to stir your nerves and brain, and infuse a new spirit in you."

"I am too weak for exercise. Even carriage-riding tires me dreadfully. And my nerves cannot bear the least thing. I dread this wedding and all the tumult, only it will be excellent to have it finished up and off one's mind." Then she sighs and turns to her book again.

"We are on a tour of discovery," says Floyd, rather gayly, as he moves forward. "The house seems quite new to me, and extremely interesting."

She makes no effort to detain him. They turn into the hall, and a voice from above calls Floyd.

"Oh, are you up here, Marcia?" beginning to ascend.

"Yes. Here is my eyrie, my den, my study, or whatever name fits it best. I have a fancy for being high up. Nothing disturbs me. I have never been able, though, to decide which I really liked best, this or the tower. Only here I have three connecting rooms. Cecil, you little darling, come and kiss me! Floyd, I must paint that heavenly child! I have been doing a little at portraits. I want to take some lessons as soon as the ships come in. I hope you have brought fair weather, and—is it a high tide that floats the barque in successfully?"

She utters all this in a breath, and makes a dash at Cecil, who buries her face in her father's coat-sleeve.

"Cecil's kisses do not seem to be very plentiful," he remarks. "But how quaint and pretty you are up here!"

The sleeping chamber is done up in white, gold, and blue, and in very tolerable order. This middle room is characteristic. The floor is of hard wood and oiled, and rugs of every description are scattered about. Easels with and without pictures, studies, paintings in oil and water-colors, bric-à-brac of every shape and kind, from pretty to ugly, a cabinet, some book-shelves, a wide, tempting lounge in faded raw silk, with immense, loose cushions, two tables full of litter, and several lounging chairs. Evidently Marcia is not of the severe order.

The third room really beggars description. An easel stands before the window, with a pretentious canvas on which a winding river has made its appearance, but the dry land has not yet emerged from chaos.

"You paint"—he begins, when she interrupts,—

"And now that you have come, Floyd, you can give me some advice. I was such a young idiot when I ran over Europe, but you have done it leisurely. Did you devote much time to French art? I can't decide which to make a specialty. The French are certainly better teachers, but why, then, do so many go to Rome? It is my dream." And she clasps her hands in a melodramatic manner.

"What have you been doing?" he asks, as she pauses for breath.

"I took up those things first," nodding to some flower pieces. "But every school-girl paints them."

"These are exceedingly well done," he says, examining them closely.

"There is nothing distinctive about them. Who remembers a rose or a bunch of field flowers? Half a dozen women have honorable mention and one cannot be told from the other. But a landscape or a story or a striking portrait,—you really must let me try Cecil," glancing at her with rapture. "Oh, there is an article here in the *Art Journal* on which you must give me an opinion." And flying up, she begins a confusing search. "It is so good to find a kindred soul——"

A light tap at the door breaks up the call. It is Jane, who with a true English courtesy says,—

"If you please, Mr. Grandon, Miss Laura sent me to say that Mr. Delancy has come."

Floyd has been so amused with Marcia that he goes rather reluctantly, and finds his sister's betrothed in the drawing-room, quite at home with Madame Lepelletier, though possibly a little dazzled. Arthur Delancy is a blond young man of five or six and twenty, well looking, well dressed, and up in all the usages of "the best society." He greets Mr. Grandon with just the right shade of deference as the elder and a sort of guardian to his *financé*. He pays his respects to Miss Cecil with an air that completely satisfies the little lady, it has the distance about it so congenial to her.

"Floyd," Laura says, with a laugh, "that child is intensely English. She has the 'insular pride' we hear so much about."

"And English hair and complexion," continues Mr. Delancy; while madame adds her graceful little meed.

A very pleasant general conversation ensues, followed by an elegant luncheon, to which Eugene adds a measure of gayety. Afterward the two gentlemen discuss business, and with several references to Laura the bridal day is appointed six weeks hence. The marriage they decide will be in church, and a wedding breakfast at home, quiet, with only a few friends and relatives, and after a week in Canada they will go to Newport.

"But how can I ever get ready?" cries Laura in dismay to madame. "Why, I haven't anything! I shall actually wear you out with questions and decisions. Oh, do you realize that you are a perfect godsend?" and she kisses her enthusiastically.

"Yes," says Madame Lepelletier, so softly and sweetly that it is like a breath of musical accord. "I will settle myself in the city and you must come to me——"

"In the city!" interrupts Laura, with both dismay and incredulity in her tone. "My dearest dear, you will not be allowed to leave Grandon Park, except with myself for keeper, to return as soon as may be."

"But I cannot trespass on your hospitality."

"Mamma, Floyd, will you come and invite Madame Lepelletier to make a two months' visit? I want her for six full weeks, and then she must have a little rest."

They overrule all her delicate scruples, though Mrs. Grandon does it rather against her will. Is it bringing temptation to Floyd's hand, that perhaps might not reach out otherwise!

That is settled. Floyd's boxes and trunks make their appearance, Eugene orders the horses, and the four go to drive on this magnificent afternoon.

"I think," Floyd says to his mother when the sound of wheels has subsided, "this luggage may as well go to the tower room. I wish——" Will he not seem ungracious to declare his preferences so soon?

"What?" she asks, a little nervously.

"It would make too much fuss at this crisis to change rooms with the girls, I suppose?"

"Let Laura take the larger front room? She did have it until we heard you were coming. Oh, she wouldn't mind. But you——"

"I should be out of the way there by myself," he pleads. "All my traps would be handy, and if I wanted to sit up at night I should disturb no one."

"It shall be just as you like. Yes, it would be more convenient for you. Why, we could go at it this very afternoon."

"But Gertrude——"

"Give Gertrude a book and she would sit in the débris of Mount Vesuvius," says her mother.

Mary, the housemaid, is called upon, and cook generously offers her services. Gertrude comes down-stairs grumbling a little. The two rooms are speedily dismantled of feminine belongings, but the quaint old mahogany bedroom suite is taken over because Floyd prefers it to the light ash with its fancy adornments. James, the coachman, and Briggs, the young lad, carry up the luggage. There is a little sweeping and dusting, and Floyd settles his rooms as he has often settled a tent or a cabin or a cottage. He has grown to be as handy as a woman.

He feels more at home over here, not so much like a guest. His room is not so large, but he has all the tower and the wide prospect on both sides. He can read and smoke and sit up at his pleasure without disturbing a soul. The "girls" and the wedding finery will all be together.

"Laura will be delighted," declares Mrs. Grandon again. In her secret heart she feels this arrangement will take Floyd a little out of madame's reach. Beside the tower there is a back stairway leading to a side entrance, quite convenient to Eugene's room. It is admirable altogether.

Floyd begins to unpack with hearty energy. Only the most necessary articles, the rest will keep till a day of leisure. To-morrow he must look into the business, and he hopes he will not find matters very troublesome. He has a good deal of his own work to do, and he sighs a little, wishing the wedding were well over.

Laura leaves her lover at the station, and is not a whit disconcerted by the change in affairs.

She and Madame Lepelletier are going to the city to-morrow to spend several days in shopping, and this evening they must devote to a discussion of apparel. They scarcely miss Floyd, who goes to bed at last with the utmost satisfaction.

CHAPTER IV.

My heart no truer, but my words and ways more true to it.—ROBERT
BROWNING.

"Say good by to papa." And Floyd Grandon stoops to kiss his little daughter. "Jane will take you out to walk, and Aunt Gertrude will show you the pictures again if you ask her."

The evening before she had evinced a decided liking for Gertrude.

"Where are you going?" There was a quick apprehensiveness in her tone as she caught his hand.

"On some business," with a smile.

"Take me, too. I don't want to stay here alone," she cries, imperiously.

There is a soft rustle in the hall. Madame has come down in advance of Laura. The carriage stands waiting to take them to the station.

Floyd bites his lips in annoyance. Since they left Devonshire, Cecil has scarcely been an hour out of his sight save when asleep. He cannot take her now,—the thought is absurd.

"No, my dear. It would not amuse a little girl, and I shall be too busy. Do not be naughty," he entreats.

"I want to go with you. I will not stay here!"

"Cecil!"

"I will run away," she says, daringly. "I will not look at pictures nor walk with Jane."

"Then you will be naughty, and papa cannot love you," bending his face down to hers. "I shall not be glad to come back to a little girl who will not please or obey me."

"Take me, then!" There is a great, dry sob in her throat.

If only Madame Lepelletier were away! His experience with children is so very limited, that he is almost weak enough to yield to this sweet tyranny.

"Kiss me." Eugene has driven around with his horse and the buggy.

Cecil drops her hands by her side, and her large, deep eyes float in tears, but her brilliant lips are set. Just once they open.

"You are naughty to me," she says, with childish audacity.

"Very well." He takes a slow step as if to give her time for repentance. He could bestow an undignified shake upon the proud little mite, but he refrains.

"Jane, come and look after Miss Cecil," he exclaims, authoritatively. Then he gives her a quick kiss, but she stands with swelling chest and eyes glittering in tears, watching him out of sight.

Aunt Laura rustles down.

"Mutiny in the camp," says madame, with a little laugh; and though Cecil does not understand, she knows she is meant.

"Floyd will have his hands full with that child," comments Laura. "She is not so angelic as she looks."

Floyd has stepped into the buggy. Sultan snuffs with his thin nostrils, and paces with proud grace.

"There's a beauty for you, Floyd," Eugene says, triumphantly. "You cannot find his match anywhere about here."

Floyd is very fond of handsome horses, and Sultan stirs a sudden enthusiasm. Eugene expatiates eloquently upon his merits, which are evident. The shady road, the fragrant air, the glimpses of the broad river glittering in the morning sun, and the purple cliff opposite, are indeed a dream of beauty. He more than half wishes there was no business to distract one's mind.

"How it has all changed!" he says, presently. "I was amazed yesterday, looking from the tower, to see how Westbrook had enlarged her borders and indulged in high chimneys. There must be considerable business in the town. There is quite a length of dock and shipping, and streets in every direction."

"Yes. Floyd, will you go to Connery's first or to the factory? The will is in the safe, the letter of instruction at the lawyer's."

"Why not stop and get that? I want to see both, you know."

"And Connery's room is a stuffy little den. Well, we will stop for it, and if you want to consult him afterward, you can."

Mr. Connery has gone to the city on important business. The clerk hunts up the packet, and they go on.

The old factory has altered as well. A new part has been built, with a pretentious business office, and an ante-room that is quite luxuriously appointed, with Russia-leather chairs, lounge, a pretty cabinet, pictures, and several lovely statuettes.

"Now if you want to go through all these things, Floyd, you can do it at your leisure. We can't talk business until we know what basis it is to be on, and the will is a sort of dead letter without further instructions. I have a little errand to do which will take an hour or so, and——"

"Yes," is the quick affirmative. He is holding his dead father's letter in his hand and wishing to be alone with it.

"Here is the will," taking it from the safe. "There are cigars, so make yourself comfortable, and if you should prove the arbiter of my fate, deal gently." And the young man gives a gay little laugh.

Floyd seats himself by the window, but fond as he is of smoking, the cigars do not tempt him. His eyes rest upon these words until they all seem to run together:—"For my eldest son, Floyd Grandon. To be read by him before any settlement of the business." How different these irregular letters from his father's usual firm business hand! Ah, how soon afterward the trembling fingers were cold in death! He presses it to his lips with an unconscious, reverent tenderness.

The love between them had not been of the romantic kind, but he recalls his

father's pride and pleasure in his young manhood, his interest in the house and the marriage arrangement. The later letters of his father have touched him, too, with a sort of secret weariness, as if his absorbing interest in business had begun to decline. He had planned some release and journeys for him, but the last journey of all had been taken, and he was at rest.

Slowly he broke the double seal and took the missive out of its enclosure, and began the perusal.

*To my dear Son Floyd,—*When you read this the hand that penned it will be mouldering in the dust, its labor ended but not finished.

The pathos blurred his eyes, and he turned them to the window. The sun shone, the busy feet tramped to and fro, there was the ceaseless hum of the machinery, but the brain that had planned, the heart that had hoped, was away from it all, silent and cold, and the mantle had fallen on one who had no part or lot in the matter.

The letter had been written at intervals, and gave a clear statement of the business. Mr. Wilmarth had one quarter-share, Mr. St. Vincent had another quarter-share, and a certain amount of royalty on a patent that Mr. Grandon felt would secure a fortune to them all if rightly managed. For this, he asked Floyd's supervision. Eugene was too young to feel the importance of strict, vigorous attention. There was no ready money, the factory was mortgaged, and the only maintenance of the family must come from the business.

A chill sped over Floyd. Commercial pursuits had always wearied and disgusted him. Now, when he understood the bent and delight of his own soul, to lay his work aside and take up this—ah, he could not, he said.

Then he went over the will. To his mother, the furniture and silver, and, in lieu of dower, the sum of two thousand dollars yearly. To his sisters, the sum of five thousand apiece, to be paid as soon as the business would allow, and at the expiration of a term of years five thousand more. The half-share of the business to belong to Eugene solely after the legacies were paid. The library and two valuable pictures were bequeathed to Floyd, and in the tender explanation, he knew it was from no lack of affection that he had been left out of other matters.

The heavy bell clangs out the hour of noon. No one comes to disturb him. It seems like being in the presence of the dead, in a kind of breathless, waiting mystery. The duty is thrust upon him, if it can be done. His father seems confident, but how will liabilities and assets balance? Then he remembers the luxury at home, Eugene's fast horse, and his air of easy indifference. Certainly there must be something.

After a while the quiet oppresses him. He saunters around the room, that wears the aspect of indolent ease rather than business. Then he emerges into a wide hallway, and strolls over opposite. Here is a well-packed storehouse, then a small place in semi-obscurity, into which he peers wonderingly, when a figure rises that startles him out of his self-possession for a moment.

A man whose age would be hard to tell, though his thick, short hair is iron gray and his beard many shades whiter. Short of stature, with very high shoulders, that suggest physical deformity, squarely built and stout, a square, rugged face, with light, steely eyes and overhanging brows. It is a repellent face and form, and Floyd Grandon says slowly,—

"Pardon my intrusion. I—" rather embarrassed at the steady gaze—"I am Mr. Floyd Grandon."

"Ah!" There is something akin to a sneer in the exclamation. "Doubtless your brother has spoken of me,—Jasper Wilmarth."

This, then, is his father's partner. He is utterly amazed, bewildered.

"I heard of your return," he continues. There is something peculiar, as if the man weighed every word. "We have been looking for you," rather dryly.

"I hope my delay has not proved injurious to the business," says Grandon, recovering his usual dignity. "I find that I am executor of the estate with my mother, and I suppose some steps are necessary. I shall qualify immediately. In what condition is the business?"

"Bad enough," is the reply. "Trade is dull, and I am sorry to say that our new machinery, put in at a great expense, does not work satisfactorily."

Floyd is startled at the frankness, as well as the admission.

"Where is the other partner, Mr. St. Vincent?"

"Out of town somewhere," indifferently.

"He holds the patent——"

"That we were wild enough to undertake; yes."

"My father seemed to have great hopes of it."

The high shoulders are shrugged higher. There is something bitter and contemptuous in the man's face, a look that indicates fighting, though what can there be to fight about?

The great bell rings out again. Nooning is over, and there are hurrying steps up the wide alleyway.

"I wonder," Floyd begins, "if you know where my brother went. He said something about Rockwood,—and was to be back shortly."

"If he has gone to Rockwood, I doubt if you see him before mid-afternoon." The sneer is plainly evident here, and Grandon feels some antagonistic blood rise.

"I suppose," he continues, in his usual courteous tone, "that it will be best to have a business meeting as soon as possible. I will consult Mr. Connery; an inventory was taken, I suppose."

"Yes. It is in his hands."

Wilmarth is certainly hard to get on with. To natural brusqueness is added an evident disinclination to discuss the business. Floyd is much too proud to seem curious, though here he has a right to know all, but he feels that he will not be able to make much headway alone.

"I think I will return," he says. "If my brother comes in, tell him, if you please, that I have gone home. We have not discussed any business yet, but will begin to-morrow. Good day."

He goes back, folds up the papers, and places them carefully in his breast-pocket, takes his hat and walks slowly out, wondering if his father really trusted this man. He inspires Floyd with a deep, inveterate dislike, a curious suspicion before he knows there is anything to suspect. He wishes—ah, at that moment he feels inclined to pay the legacies and his mother's pension, and wash his hands of the other distasteful charge. Then some words of his father's come back:

"Remember that Eugene is young and thoughtless, and be patient."

It is very warm as he steps into the street, and he remembers a sort of river road that used to be shady, where he has rambled many a time. Everything is changed, the hills levelled, the valleys filled up, but he presently finds a strip of woodland near the shore edge, and a path much overgrown with blackberry-vines. He picks his way along, now and then meeting with a remembered aspect, when he comes across a sort of Swiss *châlet* on the sloping hillside. Two peaks of roof, odd, long, narrow windows, with diamond-shape panes of glass, a vine-covered porch, an old woman in black, with white kerchief and high-crowned cap suggestive of Normandy; and through an open window a man sitting at a table, with instruments or machinery before him, engrossed with some experiments. A peculiar, delicate face, with a high, narrow forehead, thin white hair worn rather long and now tumbled, a drooping nose, a snowy white, pointed beard, and thin, long fingers, as colorless as Gertrude's.

Somewhere he has seen a picture of an alchemist not unlike this. He can even discern the intent eagerness of the face as the fingers delicately manipulate something. So interested is he that he forgets his recent perplexity, and, seating himself on a rocky ledge, watches. The air is tensely clear, the river blue as the sky in the intervals of shade. Here and there a dappled rift of cloud floating slowly, a picture of virginal beauty, tintured with the essence of a hundred summers. The air is drowsily sweet, and he lapses into forgetfulness,—a traveller's trick.

When he opens his eyes the student is still there; the old woman has had her nap and is knitting. A large-eyed greyhound sits at her side. Floyd has half a mind to break in upon the scholar's sanctity, but remembering that he is now a part and parcel of civilization, refrains and resumes his journey; and now it is of Cecil he thinks. The perplexities of the morning have quite excluded baby naughtiness. Will she be glad to see him,—first in her half-shy, wholly seductive manner, then with her ardent, entire love? He *is* pleased to find her not easily won from him.

The house is very quiet. Bruno, the great dog, comes forward and studies him with sagacious, penetrating eyes. He pats him and says kindly,—

"Your mother knew and loved me, good Bruno."

Gertrude is on the library sofa. "Oh," she cries with a start, "where is Eugene?"

"I have not seen him since morning. Gertrude, is there anything special at Rockwood?"

"Why no,—the Casino, and the track, you know. They speed horses, and sometimes have races, I believe. Have you had lunch?"

"Just a biscuit and a glass of wine will do," he says. "Don't disturb yourself. Where is Cecil?"

"Jane has had her all day. She wouldn't even be friendly with me. Marcia and mother have gone out for calls, I believe."

Just as he enters the dining-room he turns his head. "Gertrude, do you know an odd little cottage on the side of what used to be Savin Rock?"

"A sort of chapel-looking place, with pointed roof?"

"Yes. Who lives there?"

"Why, Mr. St. Vincent."

"The partner, do you mean?"

"Yes."

"Did you ever see him? What kind of looking person is he?"

"Yes. He was here several times. He had the patent, you know. O Floyd, *do* you understand anything about the business? Papa thought he should make a great deal of money. Did you see Mr. Wilmarth? Isn't he queer and——" She ends with a shiver.

"I feel just that way about him myself. But what is St. Vincent like?"

"Tall and thin and deadly pale. A kind of French Canadian, I believe. You see he was so enthusiastic and so sure, and so was papa, but something went wrong. Oh, I do hope we will not lose our money! To be ill and wretched and homeless, for no doubt you will marry again, and——"

Floyd laughs heartily. "You shall not be homeless," he says, "and I will even promise to keep you in books. There, don't distress yourself." How often he has to administer comfort!

His lunch is the matter of a few moments, then he hurries up-stairs. The tower door is open, and there is no one to be seen. He keeps on and on until he catches a flutter of a white dress. Cecil is running around the observatory, and his heart beats as he glances at the dazzling little sprite, with her sparkling eyes and her hair a golden mist about her face. He could watch forever, but it is a daring pastime.

"Cecil," he calls softly.

"O papa!" She stops and flushes a deeper pink, then suddenly remembers in the midst of her delight, and there is a tacit reproach in her eyes.

"Have you a kiss for papa?"

She considers gravely, then with a quick bound she is in his arms.

"What are you doing up here, alone?"

"I ran away, a little. I am close up to the birdies, papa, see!"

A flock of swallows were wheeling and circling around. She claps her hands in glee. "Couldn't you open the windows?"

"Not now. The sun is too warm. And, my darling, I wish you would not come up here without Jane. You might fall."

"Miss Cecil, are you up there?" calls Jane.

Grandon takes her down in his arms. "Jane," he says in a low tone, "never let Miss Cecil out of your sight."

"Papa," she begins again, "grandmamma went out in such a pretty carriage. Can't we go, too?"

"Why, yes, I think so. Stay here until I see whether I can find a horse."

He goes out to the stables. The coachman and the gardener are enjoying their afternoon pipes. Everything out here seems on the same lavish scale. There must be money somewhere, Floyd thinks, or debt, and of that he has a horror.

The carriage horses are in, and Mr. Eugene's pretty saddle mare, Beauty. Then Marcia has a pony, and Sultan counts up five. He orders the carriage without any

comment, and actually persuades Gertrude to accompany them, or takes her against her will.

The sun is slipping westward now. They leave the beaten ways and go out among farm-houses and orchards, broad fields of grain and waving grasses, making a mass of subtile harmonies. A feeling of rare content fills Floyd Grandon's soul again. There will be so much to enjoy that he need not grudge the few months spent in this wearisome business.

Dinner is ready when they return. Marcia is in unusually high spirits, but Eugene seems tired and out of humor. He apologizes to Floyd for his defection, something quite unexpected detained him.

"Eugene," he says afterward, "let us have a little talk. I want to know how matters stand. I saw Mr. Wilmarth and he feels doubtful, I should say. What is there about the machinery? The new arrangement does not work? Is there any special indebtedness?"

"Wilmarth is looking after that. Trade has somehow fallen off, but it is out of season. What are you to do?" he asks, cautiously.

"First, begin to pay the legacies,—fifteen thousand to the girls."

"Well, you can't. There are two notes falling due, and the whole thing will have to be squeezed,—if it can be raised. Floyd, you are a lucky chap, with a fortune ready made to your hand. I wish I stood in your shoes. I hate business!"

He says this with a kind of vicious fling.

The handsome, ease-loving face deepens into a frown. It is eager for enjoyment and indifferent to consequences, at once fascinating and careless.

"Would you really like to keep the business, Eugene?" asks the elder.

"I wouldn't keep it a day if Wilmarth could take the whole thing. But there are so many complications and so much money to pay out. I really do not see what is to be left for me," discontentedly.

"If the other two make anything, your half-share ought to be worth something."

"But you see it never *can* pay the—the family."

"It does not seem to me that father would have made just such a will if he had not believed it equitable or possible. I shall ask Connery to call a meeting to-morrow or as soon as possible. When does this note fall due?"

"I really do not know. I told you Wilmarth looked out for those things," he says impatiently.

"Have you any clear idea about the new patent? Is it really worth working? What are Mr. Wilmarth's views on the subject?"

"St. Vincent has to change something or other. He is very sanguine, and wants Wilmarth to wait a little. I don't believe he *has* perfect faith in it."

"I want you to read father's letter," Floyd says gravely.

"Not to-night, old fellow. To tell the truth, my head aches and I feel stupid. We'll look into things to-morrow. Only, Floyd, don't bring up a fellow with too sharp a turn."

Floyd sighs. He will not have much help in his task, he can plainly foresee. There remains Mr. St. Vincent.

"Eugene," and there is a touch of deep feeling in his tone, "I want us to work together harmoniously. Remember that I have nothing to gain in all this. Whatever I do must be for your benefit and that of the family. I have my own plans and aims, but you will always find me brotherly."

"Oh, well, don't pull such a solemn face about it. I dare say it will come out right. St. Vincent will get everything fixed up presently. Every business gets in a tight place now and then. Let us wind up our conclave with a friendly cigar."

Floyd is still holding Cecil in his arms, now asleep, but he will not relinquish his precious burden. Marcia has some guests on the porch; he hears their chatter and laughter. Is he, too; growing captious and uncomfortable?

CHAPTER V.

Still, when we purpose to enjoy ourselves,
To try our valor fortune sends a foe,
To try our equanimity a friend.

GOETHE.

Floyd Grandon resolves upon two steps the next morning, and puts them into execution immediately. The first is a visit to Mr. Connery. The lawyer is a rather elderly, pleasant-looking man, with a mouth and eyes that impress you at once as being quite capable of a certain reserve, trust, secrecy. The ordinary courtesies of the day pass between the two, and Mr. Grandon can well believe Mr. Connery when he says emphatically that he is glad of Mr. Grandon's return.

Floyd proceeds at once to business, and asks his questions in a straightforward manner.

"When I drew up your father's will, Mr. Grandon," replies the lawyer, "according to his showing it seemed a very fair one. To take out actual money would have destroyed the business at once, and that was what he counted on for Eugene. Perhaps it was not the wisest plan——"

"I am afraid Eugene cares very little for the business. Still, he is nothing of a student——" and Floyd pauses.

"Simply a young man of pleasure, who has always had plenty of money and an indulgent father. We may as well look at the facts, and you must pardon my plain speaking. He keeps two fast horses, and is at Rockwood a good deal. There is a race-course and a kind of gentlemen's club-house. It is an excellent place to spend money, if one has it to throw away," Mr. Connery adds dryly.

Floyd flushes and a little chill speeds along his nerves. "Did you know exactly what the claims against the estate were at the time of my father's death?" he asks, getting away from the subject.

"The factory your father owns alone. There is a mortgage of three thousand dollars on it. One half-share of the business, stock, machinery, etc., was his, and this is subject to a note of seven thousand dollars, incurred when the new machinery was put in. Why, it must be about due," and Mr. Connery goes to his

safe. "The expectation was that the business could pay this and then begin with the legacies. But—I am afraid all has not been clear sailing."

"How long has this Wilmarth been with my father?" Floyd asks abruptly.

"Four or five years. You see your father hoped very much from some new process of manufacture. I wish he could have lived. Wilmarth is not a prepossessing man, yet I have never heard him spoken of in any but the highest terms. He is a bachelor, lives plainly, and has no vices, though he may have a desire to amass a fortune. I think, indeed, he rather urged your father to this new undertaking. St. Vincent I really know nothing about. He is an inventor and an enthusiast. Your place, Mr. Grandon, will be a hard one to fill, and you can count on me for any assistance."

"Thank you," returns Floyd, warmly. "I shall see St. Vincent and arrange for a meeting. I neither understand business nor like it, and have some matters of my own demanding my attention, but I must see this placed on a proper basis. I shall be glad to come to you."

Floyd feels as if he had gained one friend. Then he pursues his way to the little nest among the cliffs. The greyhound comes to greet him first, snuffs him critically, then puts his nose in Grandon's hand. By this time the housekeeper has come out, who is a veritable Norman woman.

A great disappointment awaits Floyd. Mr. St. Vincent started an hour ago for Canada, to bring his daughter home, who has been educated in a convent. "But ma'm'selle is a Protestant, like her father," says the old lady, with a sigh.

Then Floyd Grandon betakes himself to the factory. Eugene is out. He has no fancy for discussing matters with Wilmarth at present, so he returns home and busies himself in fitting up a study in one of the tower rooms. Rummaging through the attic he finds an old secretary of Aunt Marcia's, and unearths other treasures that quite stir his sister's envy.

"For those old things are all coming back," she says in a tone of poignant regret, whether at this fact or at the realization of the loss of them he is not quite certain.

The house is quiet and delightful. Marcia amuses him with her artistic flights and wild fancies. Floyd thinks if she would confine herself to the work she could do really well she would be a success, but her ambition is so tinctured with every

new view that she never quite settles, but flutters continually.

That evening Floyd resolves to bring Eugene to a sense of what lies actually before him. He evades at first, fidgets, and grows unmistakably cross.

"The family expenses, Eugene,—how have they been met?" questions the elder steadily.

"They haven't been met at all," says Eugene. "There has only been money enough to pay the men and all that. I told you Laura couldn't have her money. But there was no use breaking up the family,—where could they have gone?"

"I think, then, there has been a good deal of extravagance," is Floyd's decisive comment. "There are five horses in the stable, and four servants. I cannot afford such an establishment."

"Oh, I say, Floyd, don't turn a miserable hunk of a miser the first thing, when you have such a splendid fortune! I wouldn't grudge anything with all that money in my hand."

"Some of it will go rapidly enough. I shall pay Gertrude and Marcia their first instalment, as I have Laura, and my mother must have something. Then, the house debts; do you know where the bills are?"

With Mrs. Grandon's help they get the bills together, and there are some still to come in.

"Of course the house is yours," says his mother in a sharp tone. "You may wish to marry again——"

That is so far from Floyd's thoughts that he shakes his head impatiently and replies,—

"The thing to be considered is *who* is to provide for the family. If the business cannot do it at present, I shall. But it will have to be done within *my* income. My own habits are not extravagant——"

"Well, I should say!" and Eugene laughs immoderately. "A man who travels round the world like a prince, who buys everything he chooses, joins exploring expeditions with lords and marquises, keeps a maid for his daughter,—you have not arrived at that dignity, mother mine?"

"I do not think the maid for my daughter will cost more than one fast horse, Eugene."

"O boys, do not quarrel!" entreats their mother.

"I hope I shall never quarrel," says Floyd, in a steadfast, reassuring tone. "I could lay down my father's charge, he gives me that privilege if I find I cannot save the business without spending my private fortune. If you would rather have me withdraw——"

"Oh, no! no!" cries his mother. She has felt for some time that they were steadily going to ruin under Eugene's *régime*, but he is her idol and she loves him with a curious pride that could deny him nothing; would not even blame him, and wishes him to be prosperous. "I really think you would have no right, Floyd."

"Then if I must work, if I must give my time, interest, and money, I shall have to know how everything stands. I shall have to provide to the best of *my* judgment. You *must* all trust in me, and believe that I am acting for your welfare."

There is no affirmative to this, and Floyd feels really hurt. Eugene sits rolling the corner of the rug under his foot with a kind of vicious force, and is sulkily silent.

"Your father expected, Floyd——" and Mrs. Grandon buries her face in her hands, giving way to tears.

"My dear mother, I shall do everything my father desired, if it is in my power. Eugene," suddenly, "how does Mr. Wilmarth propose to meet this note?"

"Don't worry about the note. You must admit that he knows more about the business than you."

"Very well," Floyd returns, with ominous calmness. "I will pay up the house bills to-morrow, and there will be no change until after Laura's marriage. Let us remember that our interests are identical, that one cannot suffer without the other. Good night."

He bends over to kiss his mother, and leaves the room. He had never mistrusted before that his soul was unduly sensitive, his temper bad, his patience of a poor quality. He is tempted to make a rush back to the old, free, wandering life. But if he does, the family portion will be ruin. He cannot be indifferent to their welfare, nor to the fact that if events go wrongly he will be blamed.

He goes at the business promptly the next morning. With Mr. Conner's assistance he pays Marcia's and Gertrude's portion, and reinvests it. They can have the interest or squander the principal. He calls on several tradesmen and takes their receipts. The note is still a matter of perplexity, and Mr. Connery is appointed to confer with the holder and ask him to meet Mr. Floyd Grandon. Then he settles about a strip of land for which he has been offered a fabulous sum, it seems to him. This will give him all the ready money he will need at present.

Marcia is effusively grateful. "You dear, dear Floyd!" And she kisses him with the ardor of sixteen. "Now I can have a glorious summer. A party of us planned an artistic tour, camping out, living with Nature, and wresting her secrets of tone and color from her, studying in the dim, cathedral like recesses of the woods, apart from the glare and conventionalism of the heartless world——"

"I want you to understand this matter," interrupts Grandon. "It is an excellent investment. Very few sure things pay eight per cent. You will have just four hundred dollars a year for pin money," laughingly. "I think I had better lend you a little at present, so that you will not need to break into your principal. How much will this summering cost?"

"Oh," says Marcia, airily, "two hundred, perhaps. We shall be simple and frugal."

"Then I will write a check for that." He smiles a little to himself. Has any member of the family the least idea of the value of money?

Gertrude is surprised and frightened. "I'm sure, Floyd," and she is half crying, "that I don't want to go away. If you *did* marry I should never meddle or make trouble, but I would like to stay. Any room would do for me, and a few books ——"

"I'm not married yet," he replies, rather brusquely. Do they suppose he means to turn them all out of the house the very first thing?

Laura and madame come home that evening, and the young girl is in a whirl of delight. Madame Lepelletier is the incarnation of all the virtues and graces. They have done wonders in shopping. Such robes, such marvels, such satins and laces and delights dear to the feminine eye, and not half the money spent! Laura's joy raises the depressing atmosphere of the house. Then madame has offered to supervise the workwomen at home, and altogether Laura will be a gorgeous bride.

Floyd hunts up his trinkets. There is an elegant lapis-lazuli necklace, there are some curious Egyptian bracelets, with scarabæi that will render her the envy of her little world. There are some unset emeralds, opals, and various curious gems of more value to a cabinet than to a woman of fashion. A few diamonds and sapphires, but these he shall save for Cecil.

Laura helps herself plentifully, and Marcia is tempted by a few. Madame Lepelletier would like to check this lavish generosity; there may be some one beside Cecil, one day. Floyd Grandon puzzles her. As a general thing she has found men quite ready to go down to her, sometimes when they had no right. But she decides within herself that his affairs need a mistress at their head, that his child will be quite spoiled by the exclusive attention he gives her, and that she could minister wisely and well. She is a prudent and ambitious woman. She does not sow money broadcast like the Grandon girls, but gets the full worth of it everywhere. More than all, Floyd Grandon has stirred her very being. In those old days she might have liked him, now she could love him with all the depth of a woman's soul. Her French marriage never touched her very deeply, so she seems quite heart-free, ready to begin from the very first of love and sound the notes through the whole octave.

But Floyd keeps so curiously out of the way. His study is so apart, he is writing, or out on business, or walking with Cecil. There is a good deal of company in the evening, but he manages to be engaged. At times she fairly hates this wedding fuss over which she smiles so serenely.

"Eugene," Floyd begins, one morning, "I have just had a note from Briggs & Co. One member of the firm will be here to-morrow. I have advised them that their money is in Mr. Connery's hands, and I pay the note for Grandon & Co. When Mr. St. Vincent returns we will go over matters thoroughly and see what state the business really is in."

Eugene has turned red and pale, and now his face is very white and his eyes flash with anger.

"I told you to let that alone!" he flings out. "All the arrangements have been made. Wilmarth has the money."

"I prefer to loan it, instead of having Wilmarth."

"You can't, you shall not," declares Eugene. "I have—the thing is settled. You

have no real business with the firm's affairs."

"You are mistaken there. You have admitted that there was barely enough coming in to pay current expenses, and nothing toward meeting the note. You cannot mortgage or dispose of any part without my advice or consent. I can offer this loan, which I do for a number of years, then there will be no pressing demand——"

Eugene looks thunderstruck; no other word expresses the surprise and alarm.

"You cannot do it!" he says hoarsely, "because—because—well, I hate the whole thing! I've no head for it! You will have to know to-morrow; I have sold half my share to Wilmarth."

"For what amount?" quietly asks the elder brother.

"Twelve thousand dollars."

Floyd has had one talk with Wilmarth of an extremely discouraging nature. Now it seems to him if Wilmarth is willing to invest more deeply, he cannot consider it quite hopeless. He *does* distrust the man.

"You cannot do this, Eugene. In the first place, the half-share is not yours, until the legacies have been paid."

"They never can be! I would take Wilmarth's word as soon as yours. There is no use worrying and scrimping and going without everything for the sake of the others."

"For shame, Eugene. But fortunately the law has to settle this, not any individual preference. Let us go to Mr. Connery at once."

"I shall keep to my bargain, to my word," says Eugene, with sullen persistence. "I don't want any advice, and the thing *is* done."

"Then it will have to be undone, that is all."

Eugene rushes out of the room. Floyd immediately starts for the lawyer's, and after a discussion they seek an interview with Mr. Wilmarth. The whole transaction is a fraudulent one, and Mr. Connery will invoke the aid of the law if there is no other way out.

Mr. Wilmarth is taken very much by surprise, that they can both see. His first attitude looks like battle. Mr. Connery makes a brief and succinct statement, explaining what he puts very graciously as a mistake or an informality, and Wilmarth listens attentively.

"Gentlemen," he says, with a great effort at suavity, "this was young Mr. Grandon's offer. I may as well explain to you," with a stinging emphasis, "that *he* is a good deal in debt and needs money. I should have held this share subject to some demands, of course. Three thousand five hundred was to go to his share of the note, and the rest was to be subject to his call at any time."

Floyd Grandon is so incensed that he shows his hand incautiously.

"Mr. Wilmarth, I offer you twelve thousand dollars for your quarter-share," he says.

"Mr. Grandon, I beg leave to decline it."

The two men measure each other. They will always be antagonistic.

"What will you take to dispose of it?"

"It is not for sale."

"Then you must have faith in the ultimate recovery of the business."

"Not necessarily. If I choose to risk my money it is my own affair. I have no family to impoverish. And all business is a risk, a species of gambling. You stake your money against the demand for a certain line of goods, red, we will say. The ball rises and lo, it is white, but you whistle 'better luck next time.'"

Mr. Connery has been thinking. "So you expected to take half the amount of the note out of Mr. Eugene's quarter-share?" he says.

Wilmarth starts, then puts on an air of surprise that is quite evident to the others.

"That *is* a mistake," he admits frankly. "No doubt we should have found it out in the course of settlement. I trusted most of this matter to Eugene, and he surely should not have wronged himself. But it is all of no consequence now; as well tear up the memorandum. But, Mr. Grandon, if you are to be your brother's banker, may I trouble you to settle these?"

He hands Floyd three notes. They aggregate nearly two thousand dollars. Floyd Grandon folds them without a motion of surprise, and promises to attend to them to-morrow, when the note is taken up.

"Your brother has not your father's head for business," Wilmarth says, with scarcely concealed contempt.

"No. It is quite a matter of regret, since it was to be his portion."

"To-morrow we will meet here for the settlement of the note," announces Mr. Connery. Then they say good morning with outward politeness.

Wilmarth's eyes follow Grandon's retreating figure. He has mistaken his man, a thing he seldom does; but Floyd's antecedents, his refinement, and scholarly predilections have misled him into believing he could be as easily managed as Eugene. Wilmarth has given his adversary one advantage which he bitterly regrets. When Eugene named half for his share of the note he had let it go, and in the two or three after-references Eugene clearly had not seen it. Wilmarth had repeated the statement carelessly, and now he would give much to recall it, though otherwise it might have gone without a thought.

Eugene absents himself all day. Mrs. Grandon is much distressed, but she is afraid to question Floyd. Even the next morning they merely nod carelessly, and no word is said until Floyd brings home the notes.

"Have you any more debts?" Floyd asks in a quiet tone, which he means to be kindly as well.

"No." Then curiosity gets the better of the young man. "Was there an awful row, Floyd?"

"Mr. Wilmarth, of course, saw the utter impossibility of any such agreement. Eugene," slowly, "is there anything you would like better than the business?"

"No business at all," answers Eugene, with audacious frankness. "I really haven't any head for it."

"But you understand—something, surely? You can—keep books, for instance? What did you do in father's time?"

"Made myself generally useful. Wrote letters and carried messages and went to

the city," is the laconic reply.

Floyd is so weary and discouraged that something in his face touches Eugene.

"I wish you wanted to take my mare, Beauty, for part of this," he says, hesitatingly. "She cost me a thousand dollars, but I won back three hundred on the first race. She's gentle, too, and a saddle horse, that is, for a man. You would like her, I know."

Floyd considers a moment. "Yes," he makes answer, and hands Eugene the largest note, which balances it. "Make me out a bill of sale," he adds.

"You're a good fellow, Floyd, and I'm obliged."

For a moment Floyd Grandon feels like giving his younger brother some good advice, then he realizes the utter hopelessness of it. Nothing will sink into Eugene's mind, it is all surface. It may be that Wilmarth's influence is not a good thing for a young man. How has his father been so blinded?

"That man is a villain," Connery had said when they left the factory. "It will be war between you, and you had better get him out if it is possible."

Floyd sighs now, thinking of all the perplexities. What is Mr. St. Vincent like? Will there be trouble in this direction as well?

He has deputed Connery to find him some efficient mechanic to go over the factory and see what can be done. Surely Wilmarth cannot oppose anything for their united interest, unless, indeed, he means to ruin if he cannot rule. There is a misgiving in Floyd's mind that he is purposely allowing everything to depreciate with a view of getting it cheaply into his own hands. Floyd has the capacity of being roused, "put on his mettle," and now he resolves, distasteful as it is, to fight it through.

CHAPTER VI.

There is a ripe season for everything: if you slip that, or anticipate it, you dim the grace of the matter.—BISHOP HACKETT.

A rather curious lull falls in factory affairs. Mr. Wilmarth is gone almost a fortnight. Floyd makes the acquaintance of the superintendent, and finds him an intelligent man, but rather opposed to the new system of machinery.

"We were making money before," he says. "I like to let well alone, but Mr. Grandon, your father, was wonderfully taken with St. Vincent's ideas. They're good enough, but no better than the old. We gain here, and lose there. Of course if it was all as St. Vincent represents, there would be a fortune in it,—carpet weaving would be revolutionized. But I am afraid there is some mistake."

Mr. Lindmeyer comes up and spends two days watching the working. He is very much impressed with some of the ideas. If *he* could see Mr. St. Vincent.

Mr. St. Vincent is ill, but expects to be sufficiently recovered to return soon.

All these matters occupy a good deal of Floyd Grandon's time. Cecil learns to do without him and allow herself to be amused by Jane and Auntie Gertrude, who is her favorite. Marcia teases her by well-meant but very injudicious attention. Guests and friends come and go, wedding gifts begin to be sent in, and that absorbing air of half-mystery pervades every place.

They have all come to adore Madame Lepelletier. Even Mrs. Grandon is slowly admitting to herself that Floyd could not do better, and half resigns herself to the inevitable second place. Laura takes up the idea with the utmost enthusiasm. Gertrude does not share in this general worship; she is too listless, and there is a feeling of being distanced so very far that it is uncomfortable.

Strange to say, with all her irresistible tenderness she has not won Cecil. She

feels curiously jealous of this little rival, who, wrapped in a shawl, often falls asleep on her father's knee in the evening. He always takes her to drive, whoever else goes; and it comes to be a matter of course that Cecil has the sole right to him when he is in the house and not writing.

There has been so much summer planning. Laura wants madame to come to Newport for a month, and partly extorts a promise from Floyd that he will give her at least a week. Marcia's "hermits" come up to talk over Maine and the Adirondacks and Lake George, and finally settle upon the latter. Their nearest neighbors, the Brades, own a cottage in the vicinity, and beg Mrs. Grandon and madame and Eugene to bestow upon them a week or two. Miss Lucia Brade is extremely sweet upon Eugene, who thrives upon admiration, but has a fancy for laying his own at madame's feet.

"Why did you not escort that pretty Miss Brade home?" she says one evening, when Lucia has been sent in the carriage.

"Why? because my charm was here," he answers audaciously, imprinting a kiss upon her fair hand.

"You foolish boy. And I am too tired to remain. I should be dull company unless you want to walk."

There is the wandering scent of a cigar in the shrubbery, and they may meet Floyd, who has absented himself since dinner.

Eugene goes for her shawl and they take a little ramble. He is very averse to finding his brother, and madame tires even of the gentle promenade.

But the next morning her star is surely in the ascendant. Cecil sleeps late. Floyd is down on the porch, reading and smoking, when the flutter of a diaphanous robe, with billowy laces, attracts his eyes and he smiles an invitation.

"Shall I intrude?" The voice is soft, with a half-entreaty almost as beguiling as Cecil's.

"Indeed, no." There is something wistful in her face, and he gives a graceful invitation with his hand to a seat beside him. She is so royally beautiful this morning, with her fresh, clear skin, the rose-tint on her cheek, her deep, dewy eyes, that still have a slumbrous light in them, the exquisite turn of the throat,

and the alluring smile.

"Do you know," she begins, in the seductive tone to which one can but choose to listen,— "do you know that if you had not the burden of Atlas upon your shoulders, I should feel tempted to add just a very little to a smaller burthen."

"My shoulders are broad, you see," and he laughs with an unusual lightness. Somehow he feels happy this morning, as if it was to be a fortunate day. "You have been so kind to Laura, that if we could do anything in return——"

"Oh, women take naturally to weddings, you know! And Laura is such a sweet girl, but so young! I seem ages older. And, shall I come to the point,—I want to establish myself. I cannot always be accepting the hospitality of my dearest friends, and I have a longing for a home. You see American ways have spoiled me already." And she raises her deep, languorous eyes.

"A home?"

"Yes." She laughs a little now. "And I need some sort of banking arrangement, as well as security for valuable papers. I am quite a stranger, you know, and have no relatives."

"Well, you must take us," he answers, in a frank way. "You do not mean a home quite by yourself?"

"Why not? I am tired of hotels and rooms. I want a pretty place, with some congenial friend, where I can call together choice spirits, musical, literary, and artistic, where I can be gay or quiet, read the livelong day if I like." And she smiles again, with an enchanting grace. "I suppose New York would be better for winter. I should have dear Laura to commence with, and not feel quite so lonely. You see, now, I really do want to be anchored to some sort of steadfastness, to do something with my life and my means, even if it is only making a pretty and congenial place in the world where some tired wayfarer may come in and rest. We are so prodigal in youth," and she sighs with seductive regret, while her beautiful eyes droop; "we scatter or throw away the pearls offered us, and later we are glad to go over the way and gather them up, if haply no other traveller has been before us."

He is thinking,—not of the past, as she hopes,—but of her gifts for making an elegant home. His sisters seem crude and untrained beside her. He can imagine

such a lovely place with her in the centre, the Old World refinement grafted on the new vigor and earnest purpose.

"Yes," he answers, rousing himself. She sees the effort, and allows a thrill to speed along her pulses. "But—there is no haste, surely? You would not want to go to the city until cool weather. I hope to be there a good deal myself this winter. I have some plans,—if I can ever get this business off my mind."

There is a curious little exultation in her heart now, but her moods and features are well trained. Her face is full of sympathy as she raises her beguiling eyes.

"It is a difficult place to fill, to give satisfaction," she says, "and you are so new to business. As I remember, you did not like it in the old days."

"No." He gives a short laugh. "And, thinking of myself, I find more excuse for Eugene's distaste. Yet if I were to let it go, the family fortunes would go with it, and I might justly be blamed. I must keep it for the year, at all events."

"Is it—very bad?" she asks, timidly.

"I cannot seem to get any true understanding of the case. When Mr. St. Vincent comes back we shall go at it in real earnest. And, in any event, your portion shall be made safe."

"Oh, do not think of that, it is such a mere trifle! I supposed mamma had drawn it all out until I looked over her papers. Then I had a notice of the settlement, but I should have come home in any event. I had grown tired of Europe, very tired. I dare say you think me *ennuied*, whimsical."

"Indeed, I do not," warmly. "Home is to a woman what the setting is to a diamond. And though the advice of such a rambler may not be worth much, still, whatever I can do——"

He pauses and his eye rests upon her, takes in her exceeding beauty, grace, and repose; the admirable fitness for every little exigency that society training gives. She seems a part of the morning picture, and akin to the fresh, odorous air, the soft yet glowing sun, the rippling river, the changeful melody of flitting birds. He is fresh now, not vexed and nervous with the cares of the day; he has been reading an old poet, too, which has softened him.

An oriole perches on the tree near him and begins an enchanting song. Both turn,

and she leans over the railing, still in range of his eyes. He remembers like a sudden flash that they were here years ago, planning, dreaming, hoping, she his promised wife. Does it stir his soul? Was that merely a young man's fancy for a pretty girl, engendered by friendly companionship? She glances up so quickly that he flushes and is half ashamed of speculating upon her.

"It is delightful! Ah, I do not wonder you love this morning hour, when beauty reigns supreme, before the toil and moil of the world has begun. It stirs one's heart to worship. And yet we, senseless creatures, dance through starry midnights in hot rooms, and waste such heavenly hours in stupid slumber. Do you wonder that I am tired of it all?"

"Papa, papa!" Cecil comes dancing like a sprite of the morning, and clasping his hand, springs upon his knee, burying her face in his beard, her soft lips sweet with kisses. Then as if remembering, turns, says, "Good morning, madame," with a grave inclination of the head, and nestles down on his lap. Madame could strangle her, but she smiles sweetly, and speaks with subtle tenderness in which there is a touch of longing. Floyd wonders again how it is that Cecil is blind to all this attraction.

Then the conversation drops to commonplaces, and the breakfast-bell rings. There is so much to do. To-morrow is the wedding morning, and the guests will begin to come to-day. Floyd will give up one of his rooms and take Cecil. Eugene is in his glory, and is really much more master of ceremonies than Floyd can be. There is nothing but flurry and excitement, but madame keeps cool as an angel. Mrs. Vandervoort and Mrs. Latimer, the bridegroom's sisters, both elegant society women, do not in the least shine her down, and are completely captivated by her.

"Of course she must come to Newport, Laura," says Mrs. Vandervoort. "She is trained to enjoy just such society. And next winter she will be the social success of the city. I delight in American belles," says this patriotic woman, who has been at nearly every court in Europe, and can still appreciate her own countrywomen, "but they do need judicious foreign training."

The wedding morning dawns auspiciously. The house is sweet with flowers. Gertrude is roused from her apathy, and looks an interesting invalid. Marcia is airy and childish, Madame Lepelletier simply magnificent, and the bride extremely handsome in dead white silk and tulle, with clusters of natural

rosebuds.

Floyd gives the bride away, and, much moved, breathes a prayer for her happiness. The vows are said; they come home to an elegant wedding breakfast, managed by colored waiters who know their business perfectly. There are some friendly, informal neighborhood calls, and all is very gay and bright. Eugene, Marcia, and the Brades are going up the river with them; Mr. and Mrs. Delancy will travel leisurely through Canada and come down to Newport to be Mrs. Vandervoort's guests for the remainder of the summer. Madame Lepelletier has some business to settle, and will rejoin them as soon as possible.

There is very great confusion afterwards, but by dusk matters get pretty well settled in their olden channel. Madame declares it an extremely pretty wedding, and praises Laura's self-command, which, after all, was largely compounded of perfect satisfaction.

And now there will be a lull, and it shall go hard indeed if Madame Lepelletier cannot use some charm to draw this indifferent man towards her. She is beginning to hate the child who always rivals her; but certainly she can circumvent the little thing when she has all her time to herself and can use her eyes for her own advantage.

It seems odd to have such a small, quiet breakfast-table, to see his mother in her black gown again, and Gertrude's morning dress tied with black ribbons. They all talk rather languidly, when an interruption occurs. Briggs brings in a note for Mr. Grandon.

"An old woman brought it," he announces, "and she is waiting outside for an answer. She would not come in."

Floyd remarks that it is unsealed. Its contents are brief, but written in a fine, irregular hand.

"Will Mr. Grandon come at once to Mr. St. Vincent, who is ill in bed?"



Grandon rises suddenly and goes out. On the wide step of the porch sits the old

housekeeper, but she glances up with dark, bright eyes.

"You will come?" she begins, eagerly.

"Yes. When did Mr. St. Vincent return?"

"Last night. He is very ill." Her wrinkled lips quiver and she picks nervously at her shawl. "They came to New York, but the journey was too much. He has been there two days with no one but the child, my poor ma'm'selle."

"Yes. I shall be glad enough to see him. Wait a moment," as she rises. "I shall drive over immediately, and it will save you a long walk."

"Oh, no, sir. I can walk."

"You will wait," he says. "Briggs, order the buggy at once. Jane," as the girl comes out on the porch, "take good care of Miss Cecil to-day. Do not let her annoy any one, for everybody is tired." Then he goes in and makes a brief explanation, kisses Cecil, and is off to the waiting vehicle, into which he hands the old woman with the politeness he would show to a queen.

Madame Lepelletier is extremely annoyed. She has counted on a long, idle morning. She has papers for him to overlook, plans to discuss, and now she must spend the time alone.

"Is Mr. St. Vincent's complaint serious?" Floyd asks of the quaint figure beside him.

A tremor runs over her and the bright eyes fill with tears. "It is his heart," she says, with her formal pronunciation. "It has been bad a long, long while, but never like this. You see he never rested here," tapping her forehead. "Day and night, day and night, always working and studying, and letting his bouillon and tea get cold, and forgetting all. I made the house bright and cheerful for ma'm'selle, and I thought he might be happy, a little more at rest; but oh, kind Heaven! it is not the rest I hoped."

Grandon is quite shocked. St. Vincent's death may complicate matters still more. Then he checks his own selfish thought.

"Can I drive in?" he asks.

"Oh, yes, there is a little stable. Master meant to get ma'm'selle a pony. Poor

girl!"

They both alight. Floyd fastens the horse and follows his guide.

"Monsieur will please walk up stairs,—this way."

The hall is small, square, and dark. He treads upon a rich Smyrna rug that is like velvet. The stairs are winding and of some dark wood. A door stands open and she waves him thither with her hand. In this very room he has watched a student working. Here was the table, as if it had only been left yesterday.

He hears voices in the adjoining room and presently the door opens. The furniture is dark and antique, brightened by a few rugs and one glowing picture of sunset that seems to irradiate the whole apartment. The occupant of the bed appears almost in a sitting position, propped up by pillows, marble pale, and thin to attenuation. One wasted hand lies over the spread, handsome enough for a woman, and not showing the thinness as much as the face. The eyes are deeply sunken, but with a feverish brightness.

"Mr. Grandon, I thank you most kindly for your quick response. Sit down here. —Now you can leave us, Denise. I shall want nothing but my drops."

"I am afraid you are hardly able——"

"Mr. Grandon, when a man's life comes to be told off by days, he must do his work quickly, not daring to count on any future. I had hoped—but we must to business. Come nearer. Sit there in the light. No, you are not much like your father, and yet totally unlike your brother. I think I can trust you. I must, for there is nothing left, nothing!"

"You can trust me," Floyd Grandon says, in a tone that at once establishes confidence.

"And one could trust your father to the uttermost. If he had but lived!"

"No one regrets that more bitterly than I, and I thank you for the kindly praise."

"A good man, a just man. And now he has left all to you, and it is a strange, tangled mass. I meant to help, but alas, I shall soon be beyond help." And the brow knits itself in anxious lines, while the eyes question with a vague fear.

"If you could explain a little of the trouble. I am no mechanic, and yet I have

dabbled into scientific matters. But you are too ill."

A spasm passes over his face, leaving it blue and pinched, and St. Vincent makes a gasp for breath.

"No. I shall never be better. Do not be alarmed, that was only a trifle. You have seen Wilmarth, and he has told you; but the thing is *not* a failure, it cannot be! There were some slight miscalculations which I have remedied. If I could find some one to whom I could explain my plans——"

"I know a man. I have had him at the factory and he would be glad to see you. He does not quite understand, but he believes it can be made a success. Wilmarth seems doubtful and strange in some ways——"

"He is working against me,—no need to tell me that! But why?" And the eager eyes study Grandon painfully. "There is some plan in the man's brain. He came to Canada. Do you know what for?"

Grandon looks up in surprise.

"I was amazed. The man may have a better heart or more faith than I credit him with. He was so different in your father's time. It is as if some project or temptation had seized him." Then, after a pause, "He asked my daughter in marriage."

"I thought she was—a child," says Grandon, in amaze.

"So she is. In my country, Mr. Grandon, they manage their daughters differently; not always better, perhaps, but they do not leave them unprotected to the world, to beg their bit of bread, maybe. I have put everything in my invention. It is her dowry."

"And he wished to be the sole master of it?"

"Exactly. She saw him once." And a bitter smile wreaths the deathly face.

"And she does not like him! How could any woman?" Floyd Grandon gives a shiver of disgust.

"I have not told her. Yet a man cannot leave a young girl to make a tiger's fight with the world! She, poor lamb, would soon be rent in pieces."

"Leave her to my care," says Floyd Grandon. "I have a mother and sisters, and a little girl of my own whom I love as my life. Let me take her and do the best I can with her fortune."

"You are very kind. There is one other way. Is your brother at home?"

"He went away yesterday." Floyd almost guesses at what will follow.

"I have a proposal to make. Let him marry my daughter. You are head of the house now, and have the welfare of your family at heart. She is sweet, accomplished, pretty. He will listen to you, and you see it will be to his interest. You can fight Wilmarth then; you will have the best in your own hands."

Floyd Grandon sits in stupid amaze. It might be for Eugene's interest, but the young man would never consent. And a mere business marriage without love—no, he cannot approve.

"This surprises you, no doubt. When I reached New York I was very ill again. I made the physician tell me the truth. I cannot live a month; I may die any day, but it would be horrible to leave my child to battle with poverty, unsucces. If he was to make a fortune he might go into it with a better heart, you know. And your brother is so young. He would be good to her. Not that I fancy Jasper Wilmarth could be cruel to a pretty young girl who would bring him a fortune."

Floyd Grandon rises and begins to pace the floor. Then he stops as suddenly. "Pardon me, I annoy you, but——"

"You think it all strange. It is not your way of doing things. When I saw the young girl I made my wife, I had no word for her delicate ear until her parents had consented and betrothed her. And I loved her—God only knows how dearly. She died in my arms, loath to go. But your young people, they love to-day and marry with no consultation, they quarrel and are divorced. Is it any better?"

"No," Floyd Grandon answers honestly. "But—I do not know my brother's views ——"

"You will write to him. You will explain. Your father, it is said, left all things in your hands. He had confidence, trust. I trust you as well."

"I will do the best I can, and we may find some other way if this fails."

"And you spoke of some person——"

"My lawyer found a young man, a foreigner, Lindmeyer by name. He seems very ingenious. If you will let me bring him?"

"I shall be most glad."

Even as he speaks he throws up his arms with a sudden gasp and motions to the bell. Denise answers the summons. Her master has fainted, and after some moments she restores him.

"I have talked too long," exclaims Grandon, remorsefully.

"No. Some one must know all this before I can die at peace. Find your man and bring him here. And if you should see Wilmarth, do not mention that I have returned. I must have some quiet. Thank you again for coming. And may I hope to see you to-morrow?"

"Yes," answers Floyd, taking the feeble hand. Then he turns to the door, bids the old housekeeper good day, and finds his way out alone, with a strange feeling, as if he were taking a part in a play, almost a tragedy.

He drives straight to Connery and learns that Lindmeyer's address is New York. He will not wait for a letter to reach him, and just pausing at the stable to take in Briggs, goes at once to the station.

It is a long, bothersome quest. The young man does not come home at noon, so he waits awhile and then sets off in search of him, making two calls just after he has left the places, but at last success crowns his efforts. But Lindmeyer cannot come up the next day. There is an expert trial of some machinery for which he is engaged at ten. It may take two or three hours, it may hold him all day.

"Come back with me, then," says Floyd. "You can go over a little this evening, and keep it in your mind, then you can return when you are through. I want the matter settled, and the man's life hangs on a mere thread."

Lindmeyer consents, and they travel up together. The day is at its close as they reach the little nest on the cliffs, but Denise gives Grandon a more than friendly welcome.

"He is better," she says. "He will be so glad. Go right up to him."

He does not look better, but his voice is stronger. "And I had such a nice sleep this afternoon," he says. "I feel quite like a new being, and able to entertain your friend. How good you are to a dying man, Mr. Grandon."

Quite in the evening Floyd leaves them together and returns home. Cecil has cried herself to sleep in the vain effort to keep awake. Madame Lepelletier assumes her most beguiling smile, and counts on an hour or two, but he excuses himself briefly. The letter to Eugene must be written this evening, though he knows as well what the result will be as if he held the answer in his hand.

A little later he lights a cigar and muses over the young girl whose fate has thus strangely been placed in his hands. He is not anxious to marry her to Eugene; but, oh, the horrible sacrifice of such a man as Wilmarth! No, it shall not be.

CHAPTER VII.

Love is forever and divinely new.—MONTGOMERY.

Floyd Grandon, who always sleeps the sleep of the just, or the traveller who learns to sleep under all circumstances, is restless and tormented with vague dreams. Some danger or vexation seems to menace him continually. He rises unrefreshed, and Cecil holds a dainty baby grudge against him for his neglect of yesterday, and makes herself undeniably tormenting, until she is sent away in disgrace.

Madame Lepelletier rather rejoices in this sign. "You are not always to rule him, little lady," she thinks in her inmost soul. He explains briefly to his mother that Mr. St. Vincent is very ill, and that urgent business demands his attention, and is off again.

Somehow he fears Lindmeyer's verdict very much. If there should be some mistake, some weak point, the result must be failure for all concerned. Would Wilmarth still desire to marry Miss St. Vincent? he wonders.

Denise receives him with a smile in her bright eyes.

"He is very comfortable," she says, and Grandon takes heart.

Lindmeyer is waiting for him. His rather intense face is hopeful; and Grandon's spirits go up.

"The thing *must* be a success," he says. "Mr. St. Vincent has explained two or three little mistakes, or miscalculations, rather, and given me his ideas. I wish I had time to take it up thoroughly. But I have to leave town for several days. Could you wait, think? I am coming again to-night. What a pity such a brain must go back to ashes! He is not an old man, either, but he has worn hard on himself. There, my time is up," glancing at his watch.

Mr. St. Vincent receives Mr. Grandon with evident pleasure, but it seems as if he looks thinner and paler than yesterday. There is a feverish eagerness in his eyes, a tremulousness in his voice. The doctor is to be up presently, and Grandon is persuaded to wait. After the first rejoicing is over, Grandon will not allow him to talk business, but taking up Goethe reads to him. The tense, worn face softens. Now and then he drops into a little doze. He puts his hand out to Grandon with a grateful smile, and so the two sit until nearly noon, when the doctor comes.

Floyd follows him down-stairs.

"Don't ask me to reconsider my verdict," he says, in answer to the other's look. "The issues of life and death are *not* in our hands. If you really understood his state, you would wonder that he is still alive. Keep all bad tidings from him," the doctor adds rather louder to Denise. "Tell him pleasurable things only; keep him cheerful. It cannot be for very long. And watch him well."

"Where is Miss St. Vincent?" asks Grandon, with a very pardonable curiosity.

"She has gone out. He will have it so. She does not dream the end is so near." And Denise wipes her old eyes. "Mr. Grandon, is it possible that dreadful man must marry her?"

"Oh, I hope not!"

"He is very determined. And ma'm'selle has been brought up to obey, not like your American girls. If her father asked her to go through fire, she would, for his sake. And in a convent they train girls to marry and to respect their husbands, not to dream about gay young lovers. But my poor lamb! to be given to such a man, and she so young!"

"No, do not think of it," Grandon says, huskily.

"You shall see her this evening, sir, if you will come. I will speak to master."

Grandon goes on to the factory. Wilmarth is away, and he rambles through the place, questioning the workmen. There are some complaints. The wool is not as good as it was formerly, and the new machinery bothers. The foreman does not seem to understand it, and is quite sure it is a failure. Mr. Wilmarth has no confidence in it, he says.

Then Grandon makes a thorough inspection of some old books. They certainly

did make money in his father's time, but expenses of late have been much larger. Why are they piling up goods in the warehouse and not trying to sell? It seems to him as if there was no real head to the business. Can it be that he must take this place and push matters through to a successful conclusion? It seems to him that he could really do better than has been done for the last six months.

It is mid-afternoon when he starts homeward. He will take the old rambling path and rest his weary brain a little before he presents himself to madame. She has a right to feel quite neglected, and yet how can he play amiable with all this on his mind? He wipes his brow, and sits down on a mossy rock, glancing over opposite. Did any one ever paint such light and shade, such an atmosphere? How still the trees are! There is not a breath of air, the river floats lazily, undisturbed by a ripple. There is a little boat over in the shade, and the man who was fishing has fallen asleep.

Hark! There is a sudden cry and a splash. Has some one fallen in the river, or is it boys on a bathing frolic? He leans over the edge of the cliff, where he can command a sight of the river, but there is nothing save one eddy on the shore where no one could drown. And yet there are voices, a sound of distress, it seems to him, so he begins to scramble down. A craggy point jutting out shuts off the view of a little cove, and he turns his steps thitherward. Just as he gains the point he catches sight of a figure threading its way up among the rocks.

"Keep perfectly still." The wind wafts the sound up to him, and there is something in the fresh young voice that attracts him. "I am coming. Don't stir or you will fall again. Wait, wait, wait!" She almost sings the last words with a lingering cadence.

He is coming so much nearer that he understands her emprise. A child has fallen and has slipped a little way down the bank, where a slender birch sapling has caught her, and she is quite wedged in. The tree sways and bends, the child begins to cry. The roots surely are giving way, and if the child should fall again she will go over the rocks, down on the stony shore. Floyd Grandon watches in a spell-bound way, coming nearer, and suddenly realizes that the tree will give way before he can reach her. But the girl climbs up from rock to rock, until she is almost underneath, then stretches out her arms.

"I shall pull you down here," she says. "There is a place to stand. Let go of everything and come."

The tree itself lets go, but it still forms a sort of bridge, over which the child comes down, caught in the other's arms. She utters a little shriek, but she is quite safe. Her hat has fallen off, and goes tumbling over the rocks. He catches a glint of fair hair, of a sweet face he knows so well, and his heart for a moment stops its wonted beating.

He strides over to them as if on the wings of the wind. They go down a little way, when they pause for strength. Cecil is crying now.

"Cecil," he cries in a sharp tone,— "Cecil, how came you here?"

Cecil buries her face in her companion's dress and clings passionately to her. The girl, who is not Jane, covers her with a defiant impulse of protection, and confronts the intruder with a brave, proud face of gypsy brilliance, warm, subtle, flushing, spirited, as if she questioned his right to so much as look at the child.

"Cecil, answer me! How came you here?" The tone of authority is deepened by the horrible fear speeding through his veins of what might have happened.

"You shall not scold her!" She looks like some wild, shy animal protecting its young, as she waves him away imperiously with her little hand. "How could she know that the treacherous top of the cliff would give way? She was a good, obedient child to do just what I told her, and it saved her. See how her pretty hands are all scratched, and her arm is bleeding."

He kneels at the feet of his child's brave savior, and clasps his arms around Cecil. "My darling," and there is almost a sob in his voice, "my little darling, do not be afraid. Look at papa. He is so glad to find you safe."

"Is she your child,—your little girl?" And the other peers into his face with incredulous curiosity.

Cecil answers by throwing herself into his arms.

"She is my one treasure in this world," Floyd Grandon exclaims with deep fervor.

He holds her very tight. She is sobbing hysterically now, but he kisses her with such passionate tenderness, that though her heart still beats with terror, she is not afraid of his anger.

The young girl stands in wondering amaze, her velvety brown eyes lustrous with emotion. Lithe, graceful, with a supple strength in every rounded limb, in the slightly compressed red lips, the broad, dimpled chin, and the straight, resolute brows. The quaint gray costume, nun-like in its plainness, cannot make a nun of her.

"You have saved my child!" and there is a great tremble in his voice. "I do not know how to thank you. I never can."

The statue moves a little, and the red lips swell, quiver, and yet she does not speak.

"I saw you from the cliff. I hardly know how you had the self-command, the forethought to do it."

"You will not scold her!" she entreats.

"My darling, no. For your sake, not a word shall be said."

"But I was naughty!" cries Cecil, in an agony of penitence. "I ran away from Jane."

Grandon sits down on the stump of a tree, and takes Cecil on his lap. Her little hands are scratched and soiled by the gravel, and her arm has quite a wound.

"Oh!" the young girl cries, "will you bring her up to the little cottage over yonder? You can just see the pointed roof. It is my home."

"You are Miss St. Vincent?" Grandon exclaims in surprise. He does not know quite what he has expected, but she is very different from any thought of his concerning her.

"Yes." She utters this with a simple, fearless dignity that would do credit to a woman of fashion. "Her hands had better be washed and her arm wrapped up. They will feel more comfortable."

"Thank you." Then he rises with Cecil in his arms, and makes a gesture to Miss St. Vincent, who settles her wide-brimmed hat that has slipped back, and goes on as a leader. She is so light, supple, and graceful! Her plain, loosely fitting dress allows the slim figure the utmost freedom. She is really taller than she looks, though she would be petite beside his sisters. Her foot and ankle are perfect, and

the springy step is light as a fawn's.

This, then, is the girl whose future they have been discussing, whose hand has been disposed of in marriage as arbitrarily as if she were a princess of royal blood. If Eugene only *would* marry her! Fortune seems quite sure now, and he is not the man ever to work for it. It must come to him.

Once or twice Miss St. Vincent looks back, blushing brightly. She has a natural soft pink in her cheeks that seems like the heart of a rose, and the blush deepens the exquisite tint. They enter the shaded path, and she goes around to the side porch, where the boards have been scrubbed white as snow.

"O Denise," she exclaims, "will you get a basin of water and some old linen? This little girl has fallen and scratched her arms badly." Then, with a sudden accession of memory, she continues, "I believe it is the gentleman who has been to see papa."

"Mr. Grandon!" Denise says in amaze.

"Yes. Your young mistress has saved my little girl from what might have been a sad accident." And he stands Cecil on the speckless floor.

Miss St. Vincent throws off her hat. Denise brings some water in a small, old silver basin, and rummages for the linen. Grandon turns up the sleeve of his daughter's dress, and now Cecil begins to cry and shrink away from Denise.

"Let me," says the young girl, with that unconscious self-possession so becoming to her, and yet so far removed from boldness. "Now you are going to be very brave," she says to the child. "You know how you held on by the tree and did just as I told you, and now, after your hands are washed, they will feel so much better. It will hurt only a little, and you will be white and clean again."

She proceeds with her work as she talks. Cecil winces a little, and her eyes overflow with tears, but beyond an occasional convulsive sob she does not give way. The arm is bandaged with some cooling lotion, and Denise brings her mistress a little cream to anoint the scratched hands. Floyd Grandon has been watching the deft motions of the soft, swift fingers, that make a sort of dazzle of dimples. It certainly is a lovely hand.

"Now, does it not feel nice?" Then she washes the tears from the face, and wipes

it with a soft towel that is like silk. "You were very good and brave."

Cecil, moved by some inward emotion, throws her arms around Miss St. Vincent's neck and kisses her. From a strange impulse the young girl blushes deeply and turns her face away from Grandon.

He has asked after Mr. St. Vincent, who is now asleep. He is no worse. Denise thinks him better. He has not fainted since morning.

"Cecil," her father says, "will you stay here and let me go home for the carriage? I am afraid I cannot carry you quite so far, and I dare say Jane is half crazy with alarm."

Cecil looks very much as if she could not consent to the brief separation. The young girl glances from one face to the other.

"Yes, you will stay," she answers, with cheerful decision. "Papa will soon return for you. Would you mind if I gave her some berries and milk?" she asks, rather timidly, of Mr. Grandon.

"Oh, no! I will soon come back." He stoops and kisses Cecil, and makes a slight signal to Denise, who follows him.

"She saved my darling from a great peril," he says, with deep emotion, "perhaps her very life. What can I do for her?"

"Keep her from that terrible marriage," returns Denise. "She is too sweet, too pretty for such an ogre."

"She shall not marry him, whatever comes," he says, decisively.

Walking rapidly homeward, he resolves to write again to Eugene. Miss St. Vincent is pretty, winsome, refined, spirited, too; quite capable of matching Eugene in dignity or pride, which would be so much the better. She is no "meke mayd" to be ground into a spiritless slave. They would have youth, beauty, wealth, be well dowered. He feels as anxious now as he has been disinclined before. A strange interest pervades him, and the rescue of the child brings her so near; it seems as if he could clasp her to his heart as an elder daughter or a little sister.

He meets Briggs on horseback, a short distance from the house. "O Mr.

Grandon," the man exclaims, "the maid has just come in and Miss Cecil is lost!"

"Miss Cecil is safe. Get me the buggy at once. She is all right," as the man looks bewildered.

Just at the gate he meets the weeping and alarmed Jane and sends her back with a few words of comfort. The house is in a great commotion, which he quiets as speedily as possible. When Mrs. Grandon finds there is no real danger, she turns upon Floyd.

"You spoil the child with your foolish indulgence," she declares. "She pays no attention to any one, she does not even obey Jane."

Grandon cannot pause to argue, for the wagon comes around. He is in no mood, either. He cannot tell why, but he feels intuitively that Miss St. Vincent is quite different from the women in his family.

He finds everything quite delightful at the eyrie. Cecil and Miss Violet have made fast friends, and Duke, the greyhound, looks on approvingly, though with an amusing tint of jealousy. The child has forgotten her wounds, has had some berries, cake, and milk, and is chattering wonderfully.

"What magic have you used?" asks Grandon in surprise.

Miss St. Vincent laughs. She hardly looks a day over fifteen, though she is two years older.

"Will you not let her come for a whole day?" she entreats. "I get so lonesome. I can only see papa a little while, and he cannot talk to me. I get tired of reading and rambling about, and Denise is worried when I stay out any length of time."

"Yes, if you can persuade her," and Grandon smiles down into the bright, eager face. "In England she was with a family of children, and she misses them."

"Oh, are you English?" Violet asks, with a naive curiosity.

"My little girl was born there, but I always lived here until I went abroad, ten years ago."

"And I was born in France," she says, with a bright, piquant smile, "though that doesn't make me quite thoroughly French." Then, as by this time they have reached Cecil, she kneels down and puts her arm around her. "He says you may

come for a whole long day. We will have tea out on the porch, and you shall play with my pretty china dishes and my great doll, and when you are tired we will swing in the hammock. Shall it be to-morrow?"

"I think she must rest to-morrow," Grandon replies, gravely.

"Oh, but the next day will be Sunday!"

"If she is well enough I will bring her in the morning," he answers, indulgently.

Violet kisses her and bundles her up in a white fleecy shawl. The sun has gone down and the air has cooled perceptibly. Cecil talks a while enthusiastically, as she snuggles close to her father in the wagon; then there is a sudden silence. She is so soundly asleep that her father carries her up and lays her on her pretty white cot without awaking her. Dinner has been kept waiting, and Mrs. Grandon is not in an angelic temper, but madame's exquisite suavity smooths over the rough places. Floyd feels extremely obliged for this little attention. He makes no demur when she claims him for the evening, and discusses the future, *her* future, with him. To-morrow she must go to the city.

"I have an errand down, too," he says, "and can introduce you at a banking house. They could tell you better about investments than I."

She is delighted with the result of the evening, and fancies that he is beginning to find the child something of a bore. It was a pretty plaything at first, but it can be naughty and troublesome. Ah, Madame Lepelletier, fascinating as you are, if you could see how his thoughts have been wandering, and witness the passion with which he kisses his sleeping child and caresses the bandaged arm, you would not be quite so certain of your triumph.

He does not write to Eugene, it is so late, and he has a curious disinclination. By this time he has surely decided. A letter may come to-morrow, and it may be better to wait until he hears.

When he wakes in the morning, Cecil is entertaining Jane with a history of her adventures wherein all things are mingled.

"A doll!" exclaims Jane. "Why, is she a little girl?"

"She isn't *very* big," says Cecil; "not like Aunt Gertrude or madame; and the most beautiful dishes that came from Paris! That's where madame was. And she

laughs so and makes such dimples in her face, such sweet dimples,—just a little place where I could put my finger, and she let me. It was so soft and pink," with a lingering cadence. "I like her next best to papa."

"And you've only seen her once!" says Jane, reproachfully.

"But—she kept me from falling on the rocks, you know. I might have been hurt ever so much more; why maybe I might have been killed!"

"You were a naughty little girl to run away," interpolates Jane, with some severity.

"I shall never run away again, Jane," Cecil promises, with solemnity. "But I didn't mean to slip. Something spilled out below and the tree went down, and Miss Violet was there. Maybe I should not have found her if I hadn't fallen."

"Is she pretty?" inquires Jane.

"Oh, she is beautiful! ever so much handsomer than madame."

"I don't think any one can be handsomer than madame," says Jane.

"Now I can go to papa." And Cecil opens his door softly. "O papa, my hair is all curled," she cries, eagerly, "and——"

Has he a rival already in the child's heart? the child so hard to win! A curious pang pierces him for a moment. If Miss St. Vincent can gain hearts so easily, Eugene had better see her, he decides.

The affair is talked of somewhat at the breakfast-table. Floyd Grandon takes it quietly. Mrs. Grandon reads Cecil a rather sharp lecture, and the child relapses into silence. Madame Lepelletier considers it injudicious to make a heroine of Cecil, and seconds her father's efforts to pass lightly over it. A girl who plays with a doll need fill no one with anxiety.

So Mr. Grandon drives his little daughter over to the eyrie just in time to catch Lindmeyer, who is still positive and deeply interested.

"I shall get back as soon as I can next week," he says, "and then I want to go in the factory at once. I shall be tremendously mistaken if I do not make it work."

There is a curious touch of shyness about Violet this morning that is enchanting.

She carries off Cecil at once. There sits the lovely doll in a rocking-chair, and a trunk of elegant clothes that would win any little girl's heart. Cecil utters an exclamation of joy.

Mr. St. Vincent is very feeble, yet the fire of enthusiasm burns in his eyes.

"You have the right man," he says, in a tremulous voice that certainly has lost strength since yesterday; "if he was not compelled to go away; but he has promised to hurry back."

Grandon chats as long as his time will allow, then he goes to say good by to Cecil.

"You think you will not tire of her?" and he questions the bright, soft eyes, the blooming, eager face.

"Oh, no, indeed!"

"Then I will come this evening. Oh," with intense feeling, "you must know, you do know, how grateful I am!"

Her eyes are full of tears, then she smiles. What a bewitching, radiant face! He is quite sure it would capture Eugene, and he resolves to write at once.

"God must have sent you there," he says; then, obeying a strong impulse, he kisses the white, warm brow, while she bends her head reverently.

It is a busy and not an unpleasant day to Floyd Grandon. Minton & Co., the bankers, greet him quite like an old friend, though they find him much changed, and are most courteous to Madame Lepelletier; extremely pleased with so rich and elegant a client, believing they see in her the future Mrs. Grandon. There is a dinner at a hotel, a little shopping, and the delightful day is gone. She has had him all to herself, though now and then he has lapsed into abstraction, but there is enough with all the perplexing business to render him a trifle grave.

She is due at Newport next week. She is almost sorry that it is so soon, but if he *should* miss her,—and then he has promised a few days as soon as he can get away. If that tiresome St. Vincent would only die and be done with it! If he was not mixed up with all these family affairs,—but they will be settled by midwinter. He is not thinking of marriage for himself, that she can plainly see, and it makes her cause all the more secure. She feels, sitting beside him in the

palace car, quite as if she had the sole claim, and she really loves him, needs him. It is different from any feeling of mere admiration, though he is a man of whom any woman might be justly proud. She has learned a little of his own aims to-day: he is to make a literary venture presently that will give him an undeniable position.

But the child is the Mordecai at the gate. He must go for her, so he merely picks up the mail that has come and steps back into the carriage. If she could have dared a little more and gone with him, but Floyd Grandon is the kind of man with whom liberties are not easily taken. And perhaps she has won enough for one day. Sometimes in attempting too much one loses all.

CHAPTER VIII.

For I have given you here a thread of mine own life.—SHAKESPEARE.

Floyd Grandon leans back in the carriage and opens Eugene's letter.

"What idiotic stuff have you in your head? Do you think me a baby in leading-strings, or a fool? You may work at that invention until the day of doom, and have fifty experts, and I'll back Wilmarth against you all. He has been trying it for the last six months, and he's shrewd, long-headed, something of a genius himself, and he says it never can succeed, that is, to make money. I am not in the market for matrimonial speculations, thank you, they are rather too Frenchy and quite too great a risk where the fortune is not sure. To think of tying one's self to a little fool brought up in a convent! No, no, no! There, you have my answer. The whole thing may go to the everlasting smash first!"

Grandon folds it very deliberately and puts it in his pocket. The other notes are not important; he merely glances them over. Will Eugene relent when he receives the second appeal? He is not *quite* sure. But he has done a brother's full duty, and he is honestly sorry that he has failed.

Coming round the walk he sees Cecil in the hammock, and Violet is telling her a fairy story. The doll lies on her arm, and her eyes are half closed. It is such a lovely picture of content, home happiness, that he hates to break in upon it.

"Oh, here is your papa!" cries Violet, who seems to have felt the approach rather than seen it.

"O papa!" There is a long, delightful kiss, then Cecil sits up straight, her face full of momentous import. "Papa," she says, "why can't we come here to live? I like it so much better than at grandmamma's house. Miss Violet tells prettier stories than Jane, and Denise is so good to me. She made me a little pie."

Violet gives an embarrassed laugh. "I really have not been putting treason into her head," she says, and then she retreats ignominiously to the kitchen.

Denise comes forward with an anxious face.

"The master wishes to see you. Mr. Wilmarth has been here," she adds.

Grandon goes up to the sick-room. Mr. St. Vincent is in a high state of excitement. Mr. Wilmarth has renewed his offer of marriage; nay, strongly insisted upon it, and hinted at some mysterious power that could work much harm if he chose to go out of the business.

"If your friend could have stayed until we were quite certain," St. Vincent says, weakly. "I am so torn and distracted! My poor, poor child! Have you heard from your brother?"

"I shall hear on Monday," Grandon replies, evasively.

"And if I cannot live until then?" The eyes are wild, eager; the complexion is of a gray pallor.

"Whatever happens, I will care for Violet," the visitor says, solemnly. "Trust her to me. She saved my little child yesterday, and I owe her a large debt of gratitude. I will be a father to her."

"Mr. Grandon, you are still too young, and—how did she save your child?" he asks, suddenly.

Grandon repeats the rescue, and if he makes Violet more of a heroine than madame would approve, it is a pardonable sin.

"My brave little girl! My brave little girl!" he exclaims, with tremulous delight. Then the eyes of the two men meet in a long glance. A wordless question is asked, a subtle understanding is vouchsafed. Floyd Grandon is amazed, and a curious thrill speeds through every pulse. He is too young for any fatherly relation, and yet—

"It is but fair to wait until Monday," he replies, with a strange hesitation. "And you must calm yourself."

"But nothing is done," St. Vincent cries, with gasping eagerness. "I have lain here dreaming, hoping. I never shall be any better! It is coming with a swift pace, and my darling will be left alone; my sweet, innocent Violet, who knows nothing of the world, who has not an aunt or cousin, no one but poor old Denise."

"Trust to me, command me as you would a son," says the firm, reassuring voice. "And, oh, I beseech you, calm yourself! It will all be well with her."

A change passes over the face. The hands are stretched out, there is a gasp; is he really dying? Denise is summoned.

"Oh, my poor master! Mr. Grandon, that man must not see him again! He will kill him! It was so when he came to Canada. He wants all that my poor master has, and the child, but it is like putting her in the clutch of a tiger!"

"Do not think of it, Denise; it will never be," and a shudder of disgust runs over him.

They bring Mr. St. Vincent back to consciousness, but he lies motionless, with his eyes half closed.

"Was there much talking?" Floyd asks.

"He seemed to get very angry." Then she comes nearer and says in a whisper, "He is no true friend to you, if he is fair to your face. He said that in six months you would ruin everything, and there would not be a penny left for Miss Violet. He spoke ill of your brother. I am not one to carry tales or make trouble, but ——" And she wipes her furrowed face.

"I understand."

They sit and watch him, Grandon holding the feeble wrist. It will not be safe to leave him alone to-night, to leave *them*. There is a duty here he cannot evade.

"I will take my little girl home," he says, presently, "and then I will come back and remain all night. Was the doctor here to-day?"

"Yes. He seemed better then. He was better until—You are a very good friend," she goes on, abruptly. "It is a trusty face—an honest voice——"

"You *can* trust me," he says, much moved. He goes softly down the stairs, and with a few words to Cecil persuades her to leave this enchanted realm. Violet kisses her fondly and clings to her; they have had such a happy day, there has not been a lonely moment in it. The wistful face haunts Grandon through the homeward ride, and he hardly hears Cecil's prattle.

He makes a brief explanation to his mother and leaves excuses for madame, who is lying down in order to be fresh and enchanting for evening. His orders for Jane are rather more lengthy, and she is to comfort Cecil if he should not be

home for breakfast.

He has a simple supper in the little nest among the cliffs. Violet pours the tea with a serene unconsciousness. She is nothing but a child. Her life and education have been so by rule, emotions repressed, bits of character trimmed and trained, though they have not taken all out, he is sure. She is very proper and precise now, a little afraid she shall blunder somewhere, and with a rare delicacy will not mention the child, lest its father should think she has coaxed it from some duty or love. He almost smiles to himself as he speculates upon her. Once there was just such another,—no, the other was unlike her in all but youth and beauty, with a hundred coquettish ways where this one is honest, simple, and sincere. Could *she* have served a table gravely like this, and made no vain use of lovely eyes or dimpled mouth?

He goes up-stairs and takes his place as a watcher. There is nothing to do but administer a few drops of medicine every half-hour. The evening is warm and he sits by the open window, trying *not* to think, telling himself that in honor he has no right to for the next forty hours, and then the decision must come. He could fight her battle so much better if—if he had the one right, but does he want it? He has counted on many other things in his life. For his dead father's sake he is willing to make some sacrifice, but why should this come to him?

The stars shine out in the wide blue heavens, the wind whispers softly among the leaves, the water ripples in the distance. The mysterious noises of night grow shriller for a while, then fainter, until at midnight there is scarcely a sound. How strangely solemn to sit here by this lapsing soul, that but a little while ago was the veriest stranger to him! He has sent Denise to bed, Violet is sleeping with childhood's ease and unconsciousness. A week hence and everything will be changed for her; she will never be a child again.

There is a pale bit of moon towards morning, then faint streaks raying up in the east, and sounds of life once more. A sacred Sunday morning. He feels unusually reverent and grave, and breathes a prayer. He wants guidance so much, and yet—does one pray about secular affairs? he wonders.

Denise taps lightly at the door. She looks refreshed, but the awe will not soon go out of her old face. Mr. St. Vincent has rested quietly, his pulse is no weaker; how could it be to live? He stirs and opens his eyes. They feed him some broth and a little wine, and he drops off drowsily again.

"You are so good," says the grateful old creature, who studies him with wistful eyes. Has she any unspoken hope?

While she waits he goes down to stretch his cramped limbs. The doctor can do no good and will not come to-day. There is no one else to call upon. He must stay; it would be brutal to leave them alone.

Denise has a lovely little breakfast spread for him, but Violet is not present. Denise, too, has her Old World ideas. He goes up again to the invalid, and after an hour or two walks down home. His mother and madame are at church, as he supposed they would be. He talks a little to Gertrude, who is nervous and shocked at the thought of any one dying, and wonders if it can make any difference to the business. He takes a walk with Cecil, who coaxes to go back with him to her dear Miss Violet, but he convinces her that it cannot be to-day; to-morrow, perhaps.

He walks back, rambling down to the spot where Cecil came so near destruction. The land-slide is clearly visible, the young tree, torn up by the roots, is a ghost, with brown, withered leaves, and there are the jagged rocks going steeply down to the shore. If no hand had been there to save! If no steady foot had dared climb from point to point! He wonders now how she did it! It seems a greater miracle than before. And how strange that Cecil should evince such an unwonted partiality for Miss St. Vincent! Does it all point one way to a certain ending?

It is well that Floyd Grandon has taken this path. He goes up through the garden and hears a voice at the hall door.

"You cannot see him," Denise is saying. "He is scarcely conscious, and cannot be disturbed. Your call of yesterday made him much worse."

"But I must see him, my good woman!" in an imperative tone. "If he is going to die, it is so much the more necessary."

"It is Sunday," she replies. "You can talk no business, you can do him no good."

"Who is here with him?"

"No one," she answers, "but his daughter and myself. Go away and leave us to our quiet. If you must see him, come to-morrow."

He takes out a pencil and writes a rather lengthy message. "Give this to him, and

to no one else," he says, sharply, turning away with evident reluctance.

"Oh!" Denise cries as she espies Mr. Grandon, "if I had known you were here; I was afraid he would force his way in."

"I am glad you did not: I shall see that there is some one here all the time now."

"He is much better. He has asked for you, and eaten a little."

A white figure like a ghost stands beside them. Every bit of color has gone out of the blossom-tinted face, and the eyes look large and desperate in their frightened depths.

"What is it?" she says. "Mr. Grandon, Denise, what is it the man said about papa? Is he—dying? Oh, it cannot be! Is this why you do not want me to see him?"

They start like a couple of conspirators, speechless.

"Oh!" with a wild, piercing cry. "Will he die? And I have just come home to stay, to comfort him, to make him happy. Oh, what shall I do? To be left all alone! Let me go to him."

Denise catches her in the fond old arms, where she sobs as if her heart would break. Grandon turns away, then says brokenly, "I will go up to him. Some one must tell him. She ought to be with him."

St. Vincent is awake and quite revived. Grandon touches carefully on this little scene, and proposes that Violet shall be allowed in the sick-room, since the sad secret has been betrayed.

"Oh, how can I leave her?" he groans, in anguish, "alone, unprotected, to fight her way through strife and turmoil, to learn the world's coldness and cruelty! or perhaps be made a prey through her very innocence that has been so sedulously guarded. Heaven help us both!"

"It will all be right, believe me," says the strong, firm voice. "And the shock would be terrible to her if there were no sweet last words to remember afterward. Comfort her a little with your dying love."

He signs with his hand. Grandon goes down-stairs again.

"Violet, my child," he says, with a tenderness no one but Cecil has ever heard in his voice, "listen to me. You must control your grief a little or it will be so much harder for your father. You know the sad secret now. Can you comfort him these few days, and trust to God for your solace afterward? Nothing can so soothe these hours as a daughter's love,—if you can trust yourself not to add to his pangs."

The sobs shake her slender figure as she lies on Denise's sorrowing heart. Oh, what can he say to lighten her grief? His inmost soul aches for her.

"Violet!" He takes her hand in his.

"I will try," she responds, brokenly. "But he is all I have; all," drearily.

"Do you want to see him?"

She makes an effort to repress her sobs. "Denise," she says, "walk in the garden awhile with me. It was so sudden. I shall always shudder at the sound of that man's voice, as if he had indeed announced papa's death warrant."

If Floyd Grandon had not resolved before, he resolves now. He goes back, taking with him the scrap of paper. After reading it, St. Vincent hands it to him. The gist of it all is that to-morrow at ten Wilmarth will come with a lawyer to sign the contracts he spoke of yesterday, and hopes to find Miss Violet prepared.

"There was no agreement," says St. Vincent, feebly. "I cannot give him my darling unless she consents. It is not that we love our children less, Mr. Grandon, that we endeavor to establish their future, but because we know how hard the world is. And of the two, I will trust you."

His breath is all gone. Floyd fans him and gives him the drops again.

Half an hour afterward Violet comes into the room, so wan and changed that yesterday seems a month ago. It is a scene of heart-breaking pathos at first, but she nerves herself and summons all her fortitude. It must be so, if she is to stay there.

St. Vincent dozes off again when the passion is a little spent. He grows frailer, the skin is waxen white, and the eyes more deeply sunken. All that is to be of any avail must be done quickly, if St. Vincent is to die in peace as regards his child.

What if he and Cecil were at just this pass! What if he lay dying and her future not assured? These people are not kith and kin of his that he need feel so anxious, neither are they friends of long standing. Then he sees the lithe figure again, stepping from crag to crag, holding out its girlish arms, with a brave, undoubting faith, and clasping Cecil. Yes, it is through her endeavor that his child is not marred and crushed, even if the great question of life is put aside. Does he not owe *her* something?

She raises her head presently. Denise is sitting over by the window, Grandon nearer. "Is it true?" she asks, tearless now and sadly bewildered, all the pathos of desolation in her young voice,— "is it true? He has always been so pale and thin, and how could I dream—oh, he *will* get well again! He was so ill in Canada, you know, Denise?"

And yet she realizes now that he has never recovered since that time. How can they answer her? Grandon is moved with infinite pity, yet words are utterly futile. Nothing can comfort her with this awful reality staring her in the face.

She buries her woe-stricken face in the pillow again. There is a long, long silence. Then Denise bethinks herself of some homely household duties. It is not right to leave her young mistress alone with this gentleman, and yet,—but etiquette is so different here. Ah, if the other one was like this, if she could go to such a husband; and Denise's old heart swells at the thought of what cannot be, but is tempting, nevertheless.

Towards evening Grandon feels that he must return for a brief while. St. Vincent has rallied wonderfully again, and the pulse has gained strength that is deceptive to all but Grandon.

"I will come back for the night," he says. "You must not be alone any more. There ought to be some good woman to call upon."

Denise knows of none save the washerwoman, who will be here Tuesday morning, but she is not certain such a body would be either comfort or help. "And he could not bear strange faces about him; he is peculiar, I think you call it. But it is hardly right to take all your time."

"Do not think of that for a moment," he returns, with hearty sympathy.

At home he finds Cecil asleep. "She was so lonely," explains Jane. "I read to her

and took her walking, but I never let her go out of my sight an instant now," the girl says with a tremble in her voice. "She talked of Miss Violet constantly, and her beautiful doll, and the tea they had together, but she wouldn't go to madame nor to her Aunt Gertrude."

Floyd kisses the sweet rosy mouth, and his first desire is to awaken her, but he sits on the side of the bed and thinks if Violet were here what happy days the child would have. She is still so near to her own childhood; the secret is that so far she has never been considered anything but a child. Her womanly life is all to come at its proper time. There is everything for her to learn. The selfishness, the deceit, the wretched hollowness and satiety of life,—will it ever be hers, or is there a spring of perennial freshness in her soul? She might as well come here as his ward. In time Eugene might fancy her. There would be his mother and the two girls. Why does he shrink a little and understand at once that they are not the kind of women to train Violet? Better a hundred times honest, old-fashioned, formal Denise.

An accident has made dinner an hour late, so he is in abundant time. Mrs. Grandon has been dull all day. Laura and Marcia had this excellent effect, they kept the mental atmosphere of the house astir, and now it is stagnant. She complains of headache.

"Suppose we go to drive," he proposes, and the two ladies agree. Madame is in something white and soft, a mass of lace and a marvel of fineness. She has the rare art of harmonious adjustment, of being used to her clothes. She is never afraid to crumple them, to trail them over floors, to *use* them, and yet she is always dainty, delicate, never rough or prodigal. She is superlatively lovely to-night. As she sits in the carriage, with just the right poise of languor, just the faint tints of enthusiasm that seem a part of twilight, she is a very dangerous siren, in that, without the definite purpose being at all tangible, she impresses herself upon him with that delicious sense of being something that his whole life would be the poorer without. A subtle knowledge steals over him that he cannot analyze or define, but in his soul he knows this magnificent woman could love him now with a passion that would almost sweep the very soul out of him. He has no grudge against her that she did not love him before,—it was not her time any more than his; neither is he affronted at the French marriage,—it was what she desired then. But now she has come to something else. Of what use would life be if one had always to keep to sweet cake and marmalade? There are fruits

and flavors and wines, there is knowledge sweet and bitter.

Very little is said. He glances at her now and then, and she reads in his face that the tide is coming in. She has seen this questioning softness in other eyes. If she could have him an hour or two on the porch after their return!

That is the bitter of it. He feels that he has stayed away from sorrow too long. His mother makes some fretful comment, she gives him a glance that he carries with him in the darkness.

A quiet night follows. The doctor is up in the morning. "Comfortable," he says. "You may as well go on with the anodynes. There will be great restlessness at the last, no doubt, unless some mood of excitement should carry him off. Three days will be the utmost."

Briggs comes with Mr. Grandon's mail. There is a postal from Eugene, who considers the subject unworthy of the compliment of a sealed letter.

"No, a thousand times *no*! Bore me no more with the folly!"

Floyd's face burns as he thrusts it in Denise's stove to consume.

"Have you heard?" St. Vincent asks, as he enters the room.

"Yes." The tone acknowledges the rest.

"It is all vain, useless, then! Young people are not trained to pay heed to the advice of their elders. My poor, poor Violet!"

The utter despair touches Grandon. He has ceased to fight even for his child.

What impulse governs Grandon he cannot tell then or ever. It may be pity, sympathy, the knowledge that he can fight Violet's battle, insure her prosperity in any case, protect her, and give her happiness, and smooth the way for the dying. Of himself he does not think at all, strangely enough, and he forgets madame as entirely as if she never existed.

"Will you give her to me as my wife?" he asks, in a slow, distinct tone. "I am older, graver, and have a child."

The light that overflows the dying eyes is his reward. It is something greater than joy; it is trust, relief, satisfaction, gratitude intense and heartfelt. Then it slowly

changes.

"It is taking an advantage of your generosity," he answers, with a voice in which the anguish cannot be hidden. "No, I will not be so selfish when you have been all that is manly, a friend since the first moment——"

A light tap is heard and the door opens. Violet comes in, dressed in clinging white, her eyes heavy, her sweet face filled with awe.

Grandon takes her cold hand in his and leads her to the bed. "Violet," he begins, with unsmiling tenderness, "will you take me for your husband, your friend, your protector?"

Violet has been instructed in some of the duties of womanhood. Marriage is a holy sacrament to be entered into with her father's consent and approval. She looks at him gravely, questioningly.

"I am much older than you, I have many cares and duties to occupy and perplex me, and I have a little girl——"

Violet's face blooms with a sudden radiance as she lifts her innocent eyes, lovely with hope.

"I like her so much," she says. "I am not very wise, but I could train her and take care of her if you would trust me."

He smiles then. "I trust you in that and in all things," he makes answer. It is as if he were adopting her.

She carries his hand gravely to her lips without considering the propriety. She feels so peaceful, so entirely at rest.

"Heaven will bless you," St. Vincent cries. "It must, it must! Violet, all your life long you must honor and obey this man. There are few like him."

Grandon kisses the flushed forehead. It is a very simple betrothal. He has given away his manhood's freedom without a thought of what it may be worth to him, she has signed away her girlhood's soul. Secretly, she feels proud of such a master; that is what her training bids her accept in him. She is to learn the lessons of honor and obedience. No one has ever told her about love, except that it is the natural outcome of the other duties.

"I think," Mr. Grandon says, "you must see a lawyer now, and have all your business properly attended to. There will be nothing to discuss when Mr. Wilmarth comes."

St. Vincent bows feebly. He, Grandon, must go and put these matters in train.

CHAPTER IX.

But he who says light does not necessarily say joy.—HUGO.

Floyd Grandon strides down the street in a great tumult of thought and uncertainty, but positive upon one subject. Every possible chance of fortune shall be so tied up to Violet that no enemy can accuse him of taking an advantage. Surely he does not need the poor child's money. If it is *not* a success,—and this is the point that decides him,—if the hope is swept away, she will have a home and a protector.

His first matrimonial experiment has not left so sweet a flavor in his soul that he must hasten to a second draught. He looks at it philosophically. Violet is a well-trained child, neither exacting nor coquettish. She will have Cecil for an interest, and he must keep his time for his own pursuits. He is wiser than in the old days. Violet is sweet and fresh, and the child loves her.

Mr. Connery listens to the story in a surprise that he hardly conceals. Grandon feels a little touched. "There really was nothing else to do," he cries, "and I like Miss St. Vincent. I'm not the kind of man to be wildly in love, but I can respect and admire, for all that. Now choose the man you have the greatest confidence in, and he must be a trustee,—with you. She is so young, and I think it would be a good thing for you two men to take charge of her fortune, if it comes to that, until she is at least twenty-five; then she will know what to do with it."

Connery ruminates. "Ralph Sherburne is just the man," he exclaims. "He is honest and firm to a thread, and keen enough to see through a grindstone if you turn fast or slow. Come along."

They are soon closeted in the invalid's room. Floyd insists that they shall discuss the first points without him. Violet is walking up and down a shady garden path, and he joins her. He would like to take her in his arms and kiss and comfort her

as he does Cecil, she looks so very like a child, but he has a consciousness that it would not be proper. He links her arm in his and joins in a promenade, yet they are both silent, constrained. Yesterday he was her friend, the father of the little girl she loves; to-day he is some one else that she must respect and honor.

Wilmarth comes and receives his message with deep vexation. Mr. St. Vincent will admit him at three. He is no worse, but there is nothing to hope. Ah, if he were to see the two pacing the walk, he would gnash his teeth. He fancies he has sown distrust, at least.

By noon the contracts, the will, and all legal papers are drawn and signed. Everything is inviolably Miss St. Vincent's. Mr. Connery proposes an excellent and trusty nurse, and will send her immediately, for Denise and Violet must not be left alone. Grandon turns his steps homeward.

"Really I did not know whether you were coming back," says his mother, sharply. "I think, considering Madame Lepelletier leaves us to-morrow morning, you might have a few hours to devote to your own household. It seems to me Mr. St. Vincent lasts a long while for a man at the point of death."

"Mother!" Floyd Grandon is really shocked. His mother is nervous and ill at ease. All night she has been brooding over what she saw in the carriage. Floyd will follow madame to Newport in a week or two, and the matter will be settled. She has no objection to her as a daughter-in-law if Floyd *must* marry, but it is bitterly hard to be dethroned, to have nothing, to live on sufferance.

He turns away, remembering what he ought to tell her, and yet, how can he? After to-morrow, when Madame Lepelletier has really gone,—and yet has he any true right to freedom as long as that? He ought to marry Violet this very day. Since he has resolved, why not make the resolution an absolute pleasure to the dying man?

Grandon feels the position keenly. Never by word or look has he led madame to expect any warmer feeling than friendship; indeed, until last night he had not supposed any other state possible. He could not imagine himself a part of her fashionable life, and he had not the vanity to suppose she cared for him, but now he cannot shut his eyes. There is something in her tone, in her mien, as she comes to greet him, that brings the tint of embarrassment to his cheek. He ought to tell her that he belongs to another, but he cannot drag his sad-eyed Violet out

for her inspection.

"Mr. St. Vincent?" she questions, delicately.

"He can hardly live through another night. There was a great deal of business to do this morning, and it has exhausted him completely. It is so unfortunate,—his having so few friends here."

"What is to become of his poor child?"

"He has been making arrangements for her. I wish he could have lived a month longer, then we would have been quite sure of the success or failure of his patent."

Floyd says this in a grave, measured tone.

"There *is* always a convent," says madame, with a sweet, serious smile. "I believe in this country, or at least among Protestants, there is no such refuge for young or old in times of trouble."

He does not wish to pursue the subject.

"I am so sorry Eugene is not at home. You go to-morrow?"

There is not the slightest inhospitable inflection to this, but if he had said, "Why do you go?" or "You had better wait," her heart would have throbbed with pleasure. One could announce a delay so easily by telegram.

"I meant to see you started on your journey," he begins, and there is a curious something in his tone. "Briggs had better go and see to your luggage, and if you will accept my mother's company——"

"You cannot go?" There is a soft pleading, a regret that touches him, and makes him feel that he is playing false, and yet he surely is not. There is no reason why he should tell her of the coming step when he has hardly decided himself.

"No," he answers, briefly. "I ought not leave St. Vincent an hour. My impression is that he will die at midnight or dawn. I have no one to whom I can depute any of the arrangements."

It does not enter her mind that a little girl who plays with dolls or dishes can have anything in common with him. Possibly he may be made her guardian. She

wants to stay, and yet there is no real excuse.

He arranges everything for her journey, but will not bid her good by. A note can do that more easily, he thinks. Cecil cries and begs to go with him. Why not take her and Jane? He can send them home again if need be. Cecil is wild with delight, and madame really envies her.

Violet receives her guest with tears and tender kisses. She has been sitting with her father, and now he is asleep. Denise has insisted upon her taking a little walk, and she is so glad to have Cecil, though the child is awed by the sad face.

St. Vincent's breath is short and comes with difficulty. Whatever Grandon does must be done quickly. When the dying man stirs he asks him a question.

"If you would——" with a long, feeble sigh, but the eyes fill and overflow with a peaceful light.

"Violet," Grandon says, an hour later, "your father wishes for the marriage now. My child, are you—quite willing?"

She gives him her hand. For a moment he rebels at the sacrifice. She knows nothing of her own soul, of love. Then he recalls the miserable ending of more than one love marriage. Was Laura's love to be preferred to this ignorance?

"Come," he says; "Cecil, too."

"She must be dressed!" cries Denise. "Oh, my lamb, I hope it may not be ill fortune to have no wedding dress, but you must be fresh and clean." Cecil looks on in wide-eyed wonder.

"Is she going to be married as Aunt Laura was?" she asks, gravely.

Grandon wonders how she will take it. If it should give her sweet, childish love a wrench!

They assemble in the sick-room. The two stand close beside the bed, so near that St. Vincent can take his daughter's hand and give her away. The vows are uttered solemnly, the bond pronounced, "What God hath joined together let no man put asunder."

"Cecil," her father says, "I have married Miss Violet. She is to be your mamma and live with us. I hope you will love her."

Cecil studies her father with the utmost gravity, her eyes growing larger and more lustrous. Her breath comes with a sigh. "Papa," as if revolving something in her small mind, "madame cannot be my mamma now?"

"Madame——"

"Grandmamma said when I was just a little naughty this morning that I could not do so when madame was my mamma, that I would have to obey her."

"No, she never would have been that," he returns, with a touch of anger.

"You will love me!" Violet kneels before her and clasps her arms about the child, gives her the first kisses of her bridehood; and Cecil, awed by emotions she does not understand, draws a long, sobbing breath, and cries, "I do love you! I do love you!" hiding her face on Violet's shoulder.

Floyd Grandon has given his child something else to love. A quick, sharp pang pierces him.

There is a little momentary confusion, then Violet goes to her own father and lies many moments with his feeble arms about her, until a slight spasm stirs the worn frame.

It is as the doctor has predicted. A terrible restlessness ensues, a pressure for breath, the precursors of the fatal struggle. He begs that Violet will go out in the air again, she is so pale, but he does not want her to witness this agony. They have had some brief, fond talks, and she is safe. All the rest he will meet bravely.

The hours pass on and night comes. Violet kisses him and then takes Cecil to her own little room, where they fall asleep in each other's arms. The child is so sweet. She can never be quite forlorn with her. So much of her life has been passed apart from her father that it seems now as if he was going on a journey and would come back presently.

But in the morning he goes on the last journey, holding Floyd Grandon's warm hand in his nerveless grasp. "My son," he sighs, and gives his fond, fond love to Violet.

They let her go in the room with Denise; she pleads to have it so. Floyd paces the hall with Cecil in his arms. He cannot explain the mystery to her and does

not attempt it, but she is quite content in the promise that Miss Violet is to come and live with them.

Jane goes over with a note, and instructions to mention nothing beside the fact of the death, Mrs. Grandon and madame get off to New York, and Floyd fortifies himself for the evening's explanation.

Violet is not noisy in her grief. She would like to sit all day and hold the dead hand in hers, watch the countenance that looks no paler now, and much more tranquil than it has for days. She is utterly incredulous in the face of this great mystery. He is asleep. He will come back.

"Violet," Grandon says, at length. Is he going to love and cherish her as some irksome duty? He has never proffered love. In that old time all was demanded and given. Violet will demand nothing and be content. He draws her to him, the round, quivering chin rests in the palm of his hand, the eyes are tearful, entreating. He kisses the red, tremulous lips, not with a man's passionate fervor, but he feels them quiver beneath his, and he sees a pale pink tint creep up to the brow. She is very sweet, and she is his, not his ward, but his wife.

"I hope we shall be happy," he says. "I shall try to do everything——"

"You have been so good, so kind. Denise worships you," she says, simply.

He wonders if she will ever worship him? He thought he should not care about it, but some feeling stirs within him now that makes cold possession seem a mockery.

If they two could go away somewhere with Cecil, and live a quiet, comfortable life, with no thought of what any one will say. But explanations rise mountain high. It looks now as though he must give an account to everybody of what he has done.

A brief note announces it to Wilmarth. There was no friendship before, but he knows there will be bitter enmity now. As business is dull, he suggests that the factory be closed for the whole week. After Mr. Vincent's burial, he, Grandon would like to have a business interview at the office of Mr. Ralph Sherburne, who has all the important papers.

That is done. Cecil is quite willing to stay with Violet, and is really enchanted

with Denise, so he goes home, where dinner is served in its usual lavish manner. His mother is tired, Gertrude ennuied, of course. The atmosphere is trying in the extreme.

"I have something to tell you," he says, cutting the Gordian knot at a clean stroke. "I could not make the proper explanation this morning, but now, you must pardon what has been done in haste." And he tells the story briefly, leaving out whatever he deems advisable.

"Married!" Mrs. Grandon almost shrieks.

Gertrude looks at him in amaze. In her secret heart she is glad that madame is not to reign here in all her state and beauty, shining every one down, but she wonders how he has escaped the fascination.

"Married!" his mother says again. "I did think, Floyd, you had more sense! A child like that,—a silly little thing who plays with dolls! If you wanted a *wife*," with withering contempt, "there was one of whom we should all have been proud! And you have behaved shamefully, after leading her to think——"

"I never gave Madame Lepelletier the slightest reason to think that I cared for her beyond mere friendliness," he says, his face flushing scarlet. "I doubt if she would wish to share the kind of life I shall elect when I get through with this business. She is an elegant society woman, and I shall always admire her, as I have done. I doubt if she would care for me," he adds, but his conscience gives a little twinge.

"When is this new mistress to come home?" asks his mother, in a bitter tone.

"I shall bring her in a few days, and I hope she will be made welcome. This _____"

"I am aware this house is yours," she interrupts.

Floyd is shocked. "I was not going to say that: it was the furthest from my thoughts," he answers, indignantly. "Do not let us quarrel or have any words. You are all welcome to a home."

"It is so pleasant to be reminded of one's dependence." And Mrs. Grandon begins to weep.

"Mother," Floyd says, deliberately, "I am going to bend every energy to make the business the success that my father hoped it would be, and to provide an independence for you all, as he would have done had his life been spared. In this I shall have very little help from Eugene, and trouble with Wilmarth, but I shall do my whole duty."

"I wish your father had never taken up with that St. Vincent; there has been nothing but annoyance, there never will be."

"If there is trouble with my wife I hope I shall have the courage and manliness to endure it," he returns, resolutely. "But I trust no one will try to bring it about," he says, in a tone that implies it would not be a safe undertaking.

Mrs. Grandon rises and sails out of the room. Floyd goes on with his dessert, though he does not want a mouthful.

"Floyd," Gertrude says, timidly, "you must not mind mother. She will come around right after a while. I don't believe she would have been happy if you had married madame, and I am glad, yes, positively glad. Cecil cannot endure her. I will try to like your wife. Is she such a mere child?"

Floyd is really grateful. "She is seventeen," he answers, "and quite pretty, but small. She has been educated at a convent, and knows very little about the world, but Cecil loves her. I hope we shall all get along well," and he sighs. Life is so much harder than he could have imagined it three months ago. He is so weary, so troubled, that he feels like throwing up everything and going abroad, but, ah, he cannot. He is chained fast in the interest of others. "Talk to mother a little," he adds, "and try to make her comfortable. You see I couldn't have done any differently. I never *could* have endured all the talk beforehand."

When he returns to the eyrie he finds Denise holding Cecil and telling her some marvellous story. Violet is in the room with her father. "She would go," Denise says. "It is only such a little while that she can see him."

Cecil and Jane are sent home the following day. There is a very quiet funeral, but the few mourners are sincere. Violet begs to stay with Denise in the cottage, and Floyd cannot refuse. Lindmeyer returns to town and is shocked by the tidings. Grandon appoints a meeting with him the next morning at Sherburne's office. Briggs and the nurse are at the cottage, so Floyd goes home to arrange matters for the advent of Violet.

His mother has settled to a mood of sullen indignation. Why could not Floyd have become guardian for this girl, and between them all they might have brought about a marriage with Eugene, who needs the fortune? If the patent should prove a success, the interest of these two young people would become identical. Floyd has made himself his brother's greatest rival, instead of best friend. Through Violet he has a quarter-share of the business and control of the patent. She is sure this must have been the deciding weight in the scale, for he is not romantic, and not easily caught by woman's wiles. She understands self-interest, but a generous denial of self for another person is quite beyond her appreciation.

Yet she knows in her secret heart that if Floyd gave up, they would go to ruin, and Wilmarth would be possessor of all. She does not fly out in a temper now, but makes the interview unpleasant to her son, though she is really afraid to confess her true view of the matter, little imagining how soon he could have resolved her doubts. She hints at other steps which might have been taken, and he supposes it refers to his marriage with Madame Lepelletier. Tired at length of skirmishing about with no decisive result, Floyd boldly makes a proposal. It is best perhaps that he should be master in his own house, since of course he must provide for all expenses. The furniture he would like to keep as it is, if his mother chooses to sell it to him, and the money would be better for her. He would like her to remain and take charge, since Violet is so young, and he wants her to feel that her home is always here, that he considers her and his sisters a part of the heritage bequeathed by his father, and that independent of the business he shall have enough for all. "Do not forget," he cries, "that I am your son!"

He is her son, but she would like to be entirely independent. The most bitter thing, she tells herself, is to ask favors of children. And yet she cannot say that Floyd has taken the family substance; he has cost his father nothing since early boyhood. They have had his beautiful house, and since his return he has spent his own money freely. She wishes, or thinks she does, that she could pay back every penny of it, and yet she is not willing to give of that which costs her nothing,—tenderness, appreciation. She takes because she must, and nurses her defiant pride which has been aroused by no fault of his.

"I shall expect the girls to make their home with me until they are married," he continues. "I think that old English custom of having one home centre is right,

and as I am the elder it is my place to provide it. I do not know as I shall be able to keep up the lavish scale of my father's day," and he sighs.

Mrs. Grandon remembers well that there was a great complaint of bills in her husband's time, and that Eugene has been frightfully extravagant since. He is off pleasuring, and the other is here planning and toiling. There is a small sense of injustice, but she salves her conscience with the idea that it is an executor's bounden duty, and that Floyd has had nothing but pleasure and idleness in his time.

It is late when he goes to his room to toss and tumble about restlessly, and feel dissatisfied with the result of his work. Has he been unfilial, unbrotherly? Surely every man has some rights in his own life, his own aims. But has he done the best with his? Was it wise to marry Violet? In a certain way she *is* dear to him; she has saved his child for him,—his whole heart swells in gratitude. As for the love, the love that is talked of and written about, or the overmastering passion a man might experience for Madame Lepelletier, neither tempts him. A quiet, friendly regard that will allow him to go his own way, choose his own pursuits, command his own time, if a man must have a wife; and he knows in his secret heart of hearts that he really does not care to have a wife, that it will not materially add to his happiness.

"I ought not to have married her," he admits to himself in a conscience-stricken way, "but there was nothing else to do. And I surely can make her happy, she is satisfied with such a little."

His conscience pricks him there. Is he to turn niggard and dole out to her a few crumbs of regard and tenderness? to let her take from the child what the husband ought to give? If there were no contrasting memory, no secret sense of weariness amid kisses and caresses and caprices pretty enough for occasional use, the dessert of love's feasts, but never really touching the man's deeper life.

"It must be that some important elements have been left out of my composition," he ruminates, grimly. Could even madame have moved him to a headlong passion? Would there not come satiety even with her? Certainly Cecil's welfare was to be considered in a second marriage, and he has done that. If he has blundered again for himself he will make the best of it in the certainty that there is now another and absorbing interest to his life.

CHAPTER X.

I cannot argue, I can only feel.—GOETHE.

Grandon runs carelessly over his mail before the morning meeting at Mr. Sherburne's. Two letters interest him especially and he lays them aside. One is from Eugene. That improvident young man is out of money. He is tired of Lake George and desires to go to Newport. He is sorry that Floyd is getting himself into such a mess with the business, and is quite sure the best thing would be to sell out to Wilmarth. He has had a letter from him in which he, Wilmarth, confesses that matters are in a very serious strait unless Mr. Floyd Grandon is willing to risk his private fortune. "Don't do it," counsels the younger. "The new machinery is a confounded humbug, but if any one *can* make it work, Wilmarth is the man. If St. Vincent wants to get his daughter a husband, why does he not offer her to Wilmarth? If she is as pretty as you say, she ought not go begging for a mate, but when *I* marry for a fortune I want the money in hand, not locked up in a lot of useless trumpery."

A pang goes through Floyd's soul. If he never had offered her to Eugene! It seems almost as if he had stabbed her to the heart. He can see her soft, entreating, velvet eyes, and he covers his face with his hands to hide the blush of shame. He will make it all up to her a thousand times. Ah, can mere money ever take out such a sting?

The other letter is from a German professor and dear friend that he left behind in Egypt, who expects to reach America early in September, and find that Herr Grandon has improved his time and transcribed and arranged all the notes, as he has so many more. There will be little enough time, so the good comrade must not idle. They will have a good long vacation afterward, when they can climb mountains and shoot buffaloes, and explore the New World together, but now every day is of value!

Floyd Grandon gives a smile of dismay. The precious days are flying so rapidly. And everything has changed, the most important of all, his own life. How could he?

He is a little late at the lawyer's, and they are all assembled. He gives a quick glance toward Wilmarth. The impassible face has its usual half-sneer and the covert politeness so baffling. Lindmeyer has been explaining something, and stops short with an eager countenance.

The provisions of the will are gone over again. Floyd Grandon is now an interested party in behalf of his wife. There are the books with a very bad showing for the six months. They have not paid expenses, and there is no reserve capital to fall back upon. It looks wonderfully like a failure. Wilmarth watches Grandon closely. He is aware now that he has underrated the vigor of his opponent, who by a lucky turn of fate holds the trump cards. That Floyd Grandon could or would have married Miss St. Vincent passes him. He knows nothing, of course, of the episode with Cecil, and thinks the only motive is the chance to get back the money he has been advancing on every hand. If *he* only had signed a marriage contract there in Canada! He could almost subject himself to the tortures of the rack for his blunder.

"Gentlemen," says Lindmeyer, who is a frank, energetic man of about Grandon's age, with a keen eye and a resolute way of shutting his mouth, "I see no reason at present why this should *not* succeed. It has been badly handled, not understood. Mr. St. Vincent was not able to make the workmen see with his eyes, and in his state of health he was so excitable, confused, and worried that I don't wonder, indeed, I have this plan to propose. If either of you gentlemen," glancing at Wilmarth and Grandon, "will advance me sufficient means, and allow me to choose my own foreman, perhaps a head man in every department, I will prove to you in a month that the thing is a success, that there is a fortune in it."

The steady, confident ring in the man's voice inspires them all. He is no wild enthusiast. They glance at Wilmarth, as being in some sense head of the business.

He knows, no one better, of all the obstacles that have been placed in the way, so cunningly that no man could put a finger on the motive. It has been his persistent resolve to let everything run down, to bring the business to the very verge of bankruptcy. He did not count on Floyd Grandon being so ready to part with his

money to save it, or of ever having any personal interest in it, and he *did* count on his being disgusted with his brother's selfishness, indolence, and lack of business capacity; all of which he has sedulously fostered, while attaching the young man to him by many indulgences. This part of the game is surely at an end.

Floyd sits silent. How much money will it take? What if he is swallowed down the throat of the great factory! His father's instructions were to the effect that if he could *not* save it without endangering his private fortune, to let it go. There is still ground that he can sell. There might be a new vein opened in the quarry. He *must* risk it.

"If Mr. Grandon," says Mr. Wilmarth, with a slow, irritating intonation that hardly conceals insolence, "feels able to advance for the three quarters, I can look after my share. I must confess that I am *not* an expert in mechanics, and may have been mistaken in some of my views. My late partner was very sanguine, while my temperament is of the doubting order. I am apt to go slowly, but I try to go surely. I am not a rich man," dryly.

"Let it be done, then," returns Grandon. He has no more faith in Wilmarth to-day than he had last week, but he will not work against his own interest, surely!

There are many points to discuss and settle. Lindmeyer will proceed to the factory and get everything in good running order for next week, and hunt up one man who understands this business, an Englishman who is looking around for a permanent position, whom he has known for some years.

"Our superintendent holds his engagement by the year," says Wilmarth, with provoking suavity. "What can we do with him?"

"It is distinctly understood that I am not to be hampered in any way!" protests Lindmeyer.

"Give your man a holiday," says Connery. "Two lords can never agree to rule one household."

"The best thing," decides Grandon.

Then they go to the factory, where an explanation is made to the men. Mr. Brent receives a check for a month's wages in advance, and a vacation. Mr. Wilmarth

looks on with a sardonic suavity, saying little, and betraying surprise rather than ill-humor, but he hates Floyd Grandon to the last thread. The man has come between him and all his plans. No mere money can ever make up to him for being thus baffled.

Floyd Grandon takes his way along to the little eyrie. Down in the garden there is a glimpse of a white gown, and now he need pause for no propriety. Violet starts at the step, turns, and colors, but stands quite still. Denise has been giving her some instructions as to her new position and its duties, but has only succeeded in confusing her, in taking away her friend with whom she felt at ease, and giving her a tie that alarms and perplexes.

She is very pale and her deep eyes are filled with a curious, deprecating light. A broad black ribbon is fastened about her waist, and a knot at her throat. She looks so small, so lovely, that he gathers her in his arms.

"My little darling," he begins, in a voice of infinite tenderness, "I seem to neglect you sadly, but there are so many things."

"Do not mind," she answers, softly. "I am quite used to being alone. I missed Cecil very much, though," and her sweet lip quivers. "Oh, are you quite sure, quite satisfied that I can do my duty toward her? I never had a mother of my own to remember, but I will be very good and kind. I love children, and she is so sweet."

"My little girl, you are a child yourself. As the years go on you and Cecil will be more like sisters, companions; and I hope you will always be friends. I must take you home," he continues, abruptly. "My mother and one sister are there; all the rest are away."

She shivers a little. "Am I to live there?" she asks, timidly. She has been thinking how altogether lovely it would be to have him and Cecil here.

"Why, of course. You belong to me now."

He means it for a touch of pleasant intimacy, but she seems to shrink away. In that old time—the brief year—caresses and attention were continually demanded. This new wife does not even meet him half way, and he feels awkward. He can be fond enough of Cecil, and is never at a loss, but this ground is so new that he is inclined to pick his way carefully, with a feeling that she is

not at all like any one he has ever known.

They are walking back to the house, and when Denise comes to greet them she sees that the husband has his arm around his young wife's waist. Her Old World idea is that the wife should respect the husband to a point of wholesome fear. They are certainly doing very well. She feels so proud of this great, grave man, with his broad shoulders, his flowing brown beard, his decisive eye, and general air of command.

"Have you had any dinner or lunch?" Violet says, suddenly, moved with a new sense of care.

"Yes. But I think we will have a glass of wine and—Have you eaten anything?"

She colors a little. "No," says Denise. "She doesn't eat enough to keep a cricket alive."

"Then we must have some dinner. Denise will get it. Would you like to come upstairs with me?"

He has brought home a few papers to put in her father's desk. On the threshold he pauses. The room is in perfect order. The snowy bed, the spotless toilet-table, the clean towels on the rack, with their curious monogram in Denise's needlework, the table, with an orderly litter of papers, arranged by a woman's hand, and a white saucer filled with purple heliotrope. The arm-chair is a trifle pushed aside, as if some one has just risen, and another chair, as if for a guest, stands there. He understands that she has been busy here. She gives a long sigh.

"My poor darling!"

She is weeping very softly in his arms.

"It is all so sad," she says, "and yet I know he is in heaven with mamma. He loved her very much. Denise told me so. He would not wish to come back even if he could, and it would be selfish to want him. He had to suffer so much, poor papa! But I would like to keep this room just so, and come now and then, if I might."

"You shall. I must talk to Denise." He wonders now how Lindmeyer would like to be here for a month. There are so many things to go over. "Yes," he continues, "this room shall be sacred. No one shall come here but Denise and you."

"Thank you."

They go through to the study. He remembers the picture he saw here one day. Then they continue their walk past her plain little nun's room, with Denise's opening out of it. The house being built on a side-hill makes this just above the kitchen. Down-stairs there are four more rooms.

Never was man more at a loss for some of the kindly commonplaces of society. She seems sacred in her grief, and he cannot offer the stern comfort wherewith a man solaces himself; he is too new for the little nothings of love, and so they walk gravely on, down the stairs again, and out on the porch that hangs over the slope. But she likes him the better for his silence, and the air of strength seems to stir her languid pulses.

Denise summons them to their meal. He pours a trifle of wine for her in the daintiest, thinnest glass, she pours tea for him in a cup that would make a hunter of rare old china thrill to the finger-ends. He puts a bit of the cold chicken on her plate, and insists that she shall try the toast and the creamed potatoes. She has such a meek little habit of obedience that he almost smiles.

When the dessert has been eaten and they rise, Denise says, with kindly authority, "Go take a walk in the garden, Miss Violet, while I talk to Mr. Grandon. Pardon me; madame, I mean."

Grandon smiles, and Violet, looking at him, smiles also, but goes with her light movement, so full of grace.

"It is about the child's clothes, monsieur," Denise begins, her wrinkled face flushing. "She has no trousseau, there has been no time, and I am an old woman, but it is all mourning, and she does not like black. It is too gloomy for the child, but what is to be done?"

Floyd Grandon is much puzzled. If madame,—but no, he would not want madame's wisdom in this case, even if he could have it. There is his mother; well, he cannot ask her. Gertrude would not feel able to bother.

"She wore a dress to the funeral," he says, with the vaguest idea of what it was.

"Her father would have her buy some pretty light things when she was in the city, but her other dresses are what she had at school, gray and black. They are

not suitable for madame. Some are still short——"

"You will have to go with her," Grandon says. "I can take you both into the city some day."

"But I do not know——"

"I will find out what is wanted. Yes, you will go with her; she would feel more at home with you," he says, in his authoritative manner.

Denise courtesies meekly.

"I am going to keep the house just as it is," announces Grandon. "She will like to come every day until she gets a little settled in her new home. I hope she will be happy."

"She could not fail to be happy with you and your little girl." Denise answers, with confident simplicity.

Floyd bethinks himself. Mrs. Grandon must be taken home in the carriage. He will begin by paying her all honor. There is no one to send, so he must e'en but go himself. He finds Violet in the garden and tells her to make herself ready against his coming.

She would like to go in her white dress, just as she is, but Denise overrules so great a blunder, and when Grandon returns he finds a pale little nun in black, with a close bonnet and long veil. Cecil has come with him, and is shocked at this strange metamorphosis. She draws back in dismay.

"Cecil!" The voice is so longingly, so entreatingly sweet that Floyd Grandon stands transfixed. "You have not forgotten that you loved me!"

"But—you are not pretty in that bonnet. It is just like grandmamma's, and the long veil——"

"Never mind, my dear," says her father, and inwardly he anathematizes fashion. Violet is not as pretty as she was an hour ago. The black makes her sunshiny hair look almost red, and her face is so very grave.

They have a nice long ride first. Cecil presently thaws into the mistress of ceremonies in a very amusing manner.

"My doll is not as large as yours," she confesses, "but I will let you play with it. Can't you bring yours, too, and then we will each have one. You are going to live always at papa's house, you know, and you can tell me stories. Jane said I would have to learn lessons, will I?"

"Oh, I should so like to teach you," says Violet, flushing.

"But you must not scold me! Papa never lets any one scold me," she announces, with a positive air.

"I never should," and Violet wipes away some tears. "I shall always love you."

"Oh, don't cry!" Cecil is deeply moved now, and her own lovely eyes fill. Grandon winks his hard and turns his face aside. They are two children comforting one another.

Violet is quite amazed as they drive around the wide sweep of gravelled way. Floyd hands her out. "This is your home henceforth," he says. "You and Cecil are the two treasures I have brought to it, and I hope neither of you will take wings and fly away. I shall look for you both to make me very happy."

He has touched the right chord. She glances up and smiles, and is transfigured in spite of the dismal mourning gear. If she *can* do anything for him! If the benefits will not always lie on his side!

He takes her straight through to the elegant drawing-room. She shall be paid the honors in her own proper sphere. While he is waiting he unties the ugly little bonnet and takes her out of her crape shroud, as it looks to him.

"Mrs. Grandon has gone out to drive," announces Mary, who has been instructed to say just this, without a bit of apology.

Gertrude stands in the doorway. She nearly always wears long white woollen wrappers that cling to her figure and trail on the ground, and intensify the appearance of attenuation. A pale lavender Shetland shawl is wrapped about her. She has had quite a discussion with her mother, in which she had evinced unwonted spirit. Floyd has been good to them, and it will be dreadfully ungenerous to begin by treating his wife badly.

Her brother's face is flashed with indignation. "I am glad you had the grace to come, Gertrude," he exclaims, pointedly, and takes her over to Violet, who looks

up entreatingly at the tall figure.

"Oh," she says, confusedly, "what a little dot you are! And Violet is such a pretty name for you."

"I hope you will like me. I hope——"

"If you can put up with me," is the rejoinder. "I am in wretched health and scarcely stir from my sofa, but I am sure I *shall* like you"; and Gertrude resolves bravely that she will be on the side of the new wife, if it does not cost her too much exertion.

"What a lovely house!" and Violet draws a long, satisfied breath. "And the river is so near."

"You must never go without Jane," annotates Cecil; "must she, papa?"

They all smile at this. "I should not like to have her lost," says papa, gravely.

"Do you ever go out rowing or sailing?"

"I never do," and Gertrude shudders. "I cannot bear the heat of the sun or the chill of evening. But we have boats."

"And I am a crack oarsman," says Grandon. "I shall practise up for a match."

They begin to ramble about presently. It really is better than if Mrs. Grandon was at home. Out on the wide porches, through the library, up the tower, and Violet is in ecstasies with the view. Then they come down through the chambers, and the young wife feels as if she had been inspecting a palace. How very rich Mr. Grandon must be! If papa had lived he might have made the fortune he used to study over.

Violet is quite bright and flushed when the dinner-bell rings, and is introduced to her husband's mother at the head of the elegantly appointed table. She is in rich black silk, with crape folds, and very handsome jet ornaments, and Violet shrinks into herself as the sharp eyes glance her over. Why should they be so unfriendly? All conversation languishes, as Cecil is trained not to talk at the table.

Violet returns to the drawing-room and walks wistfully about the grand piano. Floyd opens it for her and begs her to amuse herself whenever she feels so

inclined. "Is he quite certain no one will be annoyed?" "Quite." Then she seats herself. She has had no piano at the eyrie. This is delicious. She runs her fingers lightly over the keys and evokes the softest magic music, the sweetest, saddest strains. They stir Floyd's very soul as he sits with Cecil on his knee, who is large-eyed and wondering.

Mrs. Grandon saunters in presently. "How close it is," she exclaims, "and I have such an excruciating headache!"

"Ah," says Violet, sympathetically. "I had better not continue playing, it might distress you."

"Oh, no, you need not mind." The tone is that of a martyr, and Violet stops with a last tender strain. Floyd Grandon is so angry that he dare not trust his voice to speak. Violet stands for a moment undecided, then he stretches out his hand, and she is so glad of the warm clasp in that great lonely room.

"Let us go out to walk. It is not quite dark yet. Cecil, ask Jane to bring some shawls."

Cecil slips down. Floyd draws his wife nearer. He would like to hold the slight little thing, but his mother is opposite, and he must not make Violet seem a baby.

"I have put an end to that!" exclaims Mrs. Grandon, vindictively, going back to Gertrude. "That is Laura's piano, and it shall not be drummed on by school-girls. What Floyd could see in that silly little red-haired thing to bring her to a place like this, when he could have had a lady——"

"After all, if he is satisfied," begins Gertrude, deprecatingly.

"He wanted her fortune! He doesn't care a sixpence for her. It was to get the business in his hands, and now we can all tramp as soon as we please."

"Mother, you *are* unjust."

"And you are a poor, spiritless fool, who can never see anything beyond the page of a novel!" is the stinging retort.

She goes to her own room, and the morning's mail carries the news to Eugene and Laura.

Floyd has letters to write this evening, and when Cecil's bedtime comes, Violet

goes up with her. They have a pretty romp that quite scandalizes Jane, who is not at all sure how much respect she owes this new mistress.

"O you sweet little darling!" Violet cries for the twentieth time. "You are the one thing I can have for mine."

"I am papa's first," says Cecil, with great dignity. "He loves me best of anything in the wide world,—he has told me so, oh, a hundred times! And I love him best, and then you. Oh, what makes you cry so often, because your papa is dead?"

No one but poor old Denise will ever love her "best of all." She has had her day of being first. Even in heaven papa has found the one he so long lost and is happy. She can never be first with him again. He hardly misses her, Violet; he has had her only at such long intervals, such brief whiles.

In the silence she cries herself to sleep the first night in her new home.

CHAPTER XI.

Men, like bullets, go farthest when they are smoothest.—JEAN PAUL.

Floyd Grandon begins the next morning by treating his wife as if she were a princess born. His fine breeding stands in stead of husbandly love. Briggs has orders to take her and Miss Cecil out in the carriage every day. Jane is to wait on her. Even Cecil is not allowed to tease, and instructed to call her mamma. He escorts her in to the table, and at a glance the servant pays her outward deference at least.

"Violet," he says, after breakfast, "will you drive over with me to see Denise on a little business? No, Cecil, my darling, you cannot go now, and I shall bring your mamma back very soon. Be a cheerful little girl, and you shall have her afterward."

Cecil knows that tone means obedience. She is not exactly cheerful, but neither is she cross. They drive in Marcia's pony phaeton.

"Nothing in the world is too good for us," Mrs. Grandon says, with a sneer. "There will be open war between her and Marcia."

"She will be likely to have a pony carriage of her own," observes Gertrude, who resolves to mention this project to Floyd.

"Oh, yes. I suppose the economy for others, means extravagance here. We can afford it."

Gertrude makes no further comment.

Violet glances timidly at her husband's face, and sees a determination that she is to misinterpret many times before she can read it aright. She is not exactly happy. All this state and attention render her nervous, it is so unlike her simple

life.

"Violet," he begins, "Denise was speaking yesterday of—of——" How shall he get to it. "There was no time to provide you any clothes, any—You see I am not much of a lady's man. I have been out in India and Egypt, and where they keep women shut up in harems, and never had occasion to think much about it. I want to take you and Denise to the city; perhaps you would go to-day?" with a man's promptness.

Violet is puzzled, alarmed, and some notion of delicacy almost leads her to protest.

"I am too abrupt, I suppose," he says, ruefully, looking almost as distressed as she. "But you see it is necessary."

"Then if Denise——"

He is thinking the sooner they go the better. He will not have his mother saying she came destitute and penniless, or considering her attire out of the way. He went once to the city with Laura, and left her at a modiste's, and he can find it again, so he will take them there and order all that any lady in Violet's station will require. No one need know they have gone. It all flashes over him in an instant. He had meant merely to make arrangements, but now he plans the trip. They can go to Westbrook station, they can return without being seen of prying eyes. He feels a little more sensitive on the subject because he has so lately seen all of Laura's wedding paraphernalia. There will be Laura, and perhaps madame to inspect her, and she must stand the test well for her own sake. He would like to see her always in a white gown; even that gray one was pretty the day she saved his darling.

"Yes," he says, rousing suddenly. "Denise understands all about these matters. You are still so young." Laura he remembers was but a year older, but, oh, how much wiser in worldly lore! No, he would never care to have Violet wise in that way. "And if it had been otherwise,—my child, it was a sad bridal. Some time we will make amends for all that."

Her eyes fill with tears. She is still looking very grave when Denise takes her in the fond, motherly arms. While she is gone upstairs to papa's room, Grandon explains and convinces Denise that the journey is absolutely necessary, and that no one can serve her young mistress as well as she.

He sends a carriage for them while he takes Marcia's phaeton home, and explains to Cecil that her mamma has some important business with Denise, and tells his mother neither of them will be home to luncheon.

Denise looks the neat old serving-woman to perfection, and once started on their journey Violet's face brightens. They find the modiste, who inspects her new customers and is all suavity. Grandon makes a brief explanation, and questions if all toilets must be black.

"It is extremely sad," and Madame Vauban looks sympathetic. "And she is so young, so petite! Crapes seem to weigh her down, yet there must be some for street use. If madame was not purposing to wear it very long, it might be lightened the sooner. Just now there could be only black and white."

"Put plenty of white in it, then," orders Mr. Grandon, and samples are brought out for his inspection. He thinks after this sorrowful time is over she shall dress like a little queen. There are so many lovely gowns and laces, so much that is daintily pretty, appropriate for her. He can hardly refrain from buying her trinkets and nonsense, but he will not have her subjected to hostile criticisms, and he is not sure his judgment is to be trusted. He would doubtless flounder among the proprieties.

"And now," he says, when they are in the street again, "would you like to go anywhere? There is the park, and there must be pictures somewhere. I wish there was a matinee, only it might not be right to go"; and he secretly anathematizes his own ignorance of polite and well-bred circles. But he learns the whereabouts of two galleries, and they stumble over some bric-à-brac that is quite enchanting. Violet has been trained on correct principles. She knows the names and eras of china, and has discrimination. Her little bit of French is well pronounced. She is not so well posted in modern painters, but she has the o'd ones, with their virgins and saints and crucifixions, all by heart.

They are sitting on a sofa resting, and glancing at some pictures opposite. Denise is busy with a homely farm scene that recalls her girlhood, and no one is in their vicinity. One small, white, ungloved hand rests on Violet's lap. Her face is sweet and serious, without the sad gravity that shadows it so often. Indeed, she is very happy. She has not been so much at ease with Floyd Grandon since her marriage, neither has he devoted himself to her entertainment with such a cordial purpose as now. He certainly is a fascinating man to the most of womenkind, even when

he is indifferent to them, but he is not indifferent at this juncture. There is a curious quality in Floyd Grandon's nature that is often despised by enthusiastic people. When it is his bounden duty to take certain steps in life, he resolutely bends his will and pleasure to them. He means honestly to love this wife that circumstances or his own sympathetic weakness has brought him. Just now it seems an easy matter. He has a horror of pronounced freedoms; they look silly and vulgar, yet he cannot resist clasping the little bare hand. The warm touch thrills her. She turns just enough to let him catch the shy, pleased, irresistible light in her eye; no finished coquette could have done it better, but with her it is such simple earnest.

"Are you happy?" he asks, not because he is ignorant, but he wants an admission.

"Oh!" It is just a soft, low sigh, and though her cheek flushes that delicious rose pink, her face is still. The light comes over it like a lustrous wave.

"Why, this is a bit of wedding journey," he says. "I did not think of it before. I wish I could take you away for a week or two, but there is so much on my mind that maybe I should not be an entertaining companion. It will come presently, and it will be ever so much better not to be shaded by grief."

She is quite glad that they are not away from all the old things. She knows so little about him, she feels so strange when she comes very near to him in any matter, as if she longed to run away to Denise or Cecil. Just sitting here is extremely sweet and safe, and does not alarm her.

There is a clock striking four. Can it be they have idled away nearly all day? He rises and draws the bare hand through his arm, he is even gallant enough to take her parasol, while she carries a pretty satin satchel-like box of bonbons for Cecil. Denise comes at his nod; she has two or three of her mistress's parcels, and they take up their homeward journey. He carries her parasol so high that the sun shines in her eyes; but the distance is short, and she says nothing.

Fortunately they reach home just in time for dinner. Cecil is out on the porch, in the last stages of desolation.

"Come up with me and get this pretty box," cries Violet, holding it out temptingly. "And to-morrow we will both spend with Denise, who will make us tarts and chocolate cream."

"You stayed such a long, long while," groans Cecil, not quite pacified.

"But I shall not do it again," she promises. She is so bright that the child feels unconsciously aggrieved.

Mrs. Grandon is very stately, and wears an air of injured dignity that really vexes her son, who cannot see how she has been hurt by his marriage, so long as he does not make Violet the real mistress of the house. He has proposed that she affix her own valuation on the furniture she is willing to part with; he will pay her income every six months, and she will be at liberty to go and come as she pleases. What more can he do?

He explains to Violet a day or two afterward, that between the factory and his own writing he will hardly have an hour to spare, and that she must not feel hurt at his absence. Lindmeyer has come, and with Joseph Rising they are going over all with the utmost exactness. There are sullen looks and short answers on the part of the workmen. It has been gently hinted to them that other vacations may be given without any advance wages. Wilmarth is quietly sympathetic. It is necessary, of course, that the best should be done for Mr. Grandon, who has managed to get everything in his own hands and entangle his private fortune. And though Wilmarth never has been a thorough favorite as old Mr. Grandon, and Mr. Eugene, with his *bonhomie*, yet now the men question him in a furtive way.

"I have very little voice in the matter," explains Jasper Wilmarth, with an affected cautiousness. "I have tried to understand Mr. St. Vincent's views about the working of his patent, but machinery is not my forte. I can only hope——"

"We did well enough before the humbugging thing was put in," says one of the workmen, sullenly. "Mr. Grandon made money. We had decent wages and decent wool, and we weren't stopping continually to get this thing changed and that thing altered. Now you're thrown out half a day here and half a day there, and the new men are nosing round as if they suspected you would make way with something and meant to catch you at it."

"We must have patience," says Wilmarth, in that extremely irritating, hopeless tone. "Mr. Grandon is interested in his wife's behalf, though it is said he has a fortune of his own, and the new method must be made to pay him, if every one else suffers. I am not a rich man, and should be sorry to lose what I thought was

so sure in this concern."

Rising finds his position an extremely disagreeable one. The men are not only curt, but evince a distrust of him, are unwilling to follow his suggestions, and will keep on in their old ways. Lindmeyer finds himself curiously foiled everywhere. It seems as if some unknown agency was at work. What he puts in order to-day is not quite right to-morrow. All the nice adjustment he can theorize about will not work harmoniously, economically. So passes away a fortnight.

"Mr. Grandon," he says, honestly, "I seldom make a decided blunder about these matters, but I can't get down to the very soul of this. There is a little miss somewhere. I said I could tell you in a month, but I am afraid I shall have to ask a further fortnight's grace. I never was so puzzled in my life. It is making an expensive experiment for you, but I *do* think it best to go on. I don't say this to lengthen out the job. There is plenty of work for me to go at."

Grandon sighs. He finds it very expensive. It is money on the right hand and the left, and with a costly house and large family the income that was double his bachelor wants melts away like dew. He is not parsimonious, but his instincts and habits have been prudent. He is making inroads upon his capital, and if he should never get it back? His father, it is true, has advised against entangling his private fortune, but it cannot be helped now. To retreat with honor is impossible and would be extremely mortifying. He will not do that, he resolves. But how if he has to retreat with failure?

All these things trouble him greatly and distract his attention. He sits up far into the night poring over his own work that was such pleasure a few months ago, and he can hardly keep his mind on what so delighted him then. There is quite too much on every hand, and he must add to it family complications. His beautiful home is full of jarring elements. Even Cecil grows naughty with the superabundant vitality of childhood, and is inclined to tyrannize over Violet, who often submits for very lack of spirit, and desire of love.

They are always together, these two. They take long drives in the carriage, and Mrs. Grandon complains that everything must be given over to that silly, red-haired thing! Gertrude does battle for the hair one morning.

"I do not call it red," she says, with a decision good to hear from the languid woman. "It is a kind of bright brown, chestnut. Mrs. McLeod's is red."

"Auburn, my dear," retorts Mrs. Grandon mockingly. "If you are sensitively polite in the one instance, you might be so in the other. One is light red, the other dark red."

"One is an ugly bricky red," persists Gertrude, "and no one would call the other red at all."

"I call it red," very positively.

"Very well," says the daughter, angrily, "you cannot make it other than the very handsome tint it is, no matter what you call it."

"There has been a very foolish enthusiasm about red hair, I know, but that has mostly died out," replies the mother, contemptuously, and keeps the last word.

Gertrude actually allows herself to be persuaded into a drive with "the children" that afternoon. She and Violet happen to stumble upon a book they have both read, a lovely and touching German story, and they discuss it thoroughly. Violet is fond of German poems.

"Then you read German?" Gertrude says. "I did a little once, but it was such a bore. I haven't the strength for anything but the very lightest amusement."

"Oh," Violet exclaims, "it must be dreadful always to be ill and weak! Papa was ill a good deal, but he used to get well again, and he was nearly always going about!"

"I haven't the strength to go about much."

"I wonder," Violet says, "if you were to take a little drive every day; Cecil and I would be so glad."

Gertrude glances into the bright, eager face, with its velvety eyes and shining hair. It is beautiful hair, soft and fine as spun silk, and curling a little about the low, broad forehead, rippling on the top, and gathered into a careless coil at the back that seems almost too large for the head. Why are they all going to hate her? she wonders. She is more comfortable in the house than madame would be as a mistress, and she will never object to anything Floyd chooses to do for his mother and sisters. One couldn't feel dependent on Violet, but dependence on madame might be made a bitter draught. And if the business goes to ruin, there will be no one save Floyd.

Violet reaches over and takes Gertrude's hand. She feels as well as sees a certain delicate sympathy in the faded face.

"If you would let me do anything for you," she entreats, in that persuasive tone. "I seem of so little use. You know I was kept so busy at school."

Gertrude feels that, fascinating as Cecil is with her bright, enchanting ways, Violet may be capable of higher enjoyments. For a moment she wishes she had some strength and energy, that she might join hands with her in the coming struggle.

Indeed, now, the child and Denise are Violet's only companions. Floyd is away nearly all day, and writes, it would seem, pretty nearly all night. His mind is on other matters, she sees plainly. She has been used to her father's abstraction, and does not construe it into any slight. But in the great house, large as it is, Mrs. Grandon seems to trench everywhere, except in their own apartments. Floyd installed Violet in the elegant guest-chamber, but Mrs. Grandon always speaks of it as the spare room, or madame's room.

Violet's heart had thrilled at the thought of the exquisite-toned piano. She had tried it a day or two after her advent and found it locked.

"Do you know who keeps the key?" she had asked timidly of Jane.

"It is Miss Laura's piano," is the concise answer, and no more is said.

But one morning Mr. Grandon asks if Violet can go over to the cottage with him. Her lovely eyes are all alight.

"Get your hat, then," he says, as if he were speaking to the child.

Violet starts eagerly. Cecil rises and follows.

"Oh, she may go, too?" the pretty mamma asks.

Floyd nods over his paper. Mrs. Grandon bridles her head loftily.

"Denise has something for us, I know," cries Violet. "We were not there yesterday. Poor Denise, she must have missed us, but I did want to finish Maysie's dress." Maysie is Cecil's doll, and has had numerous accessions to her wardrobe of late.

Grandon has an odd little smile on his face as he looks up. Violet and he are friends again when they are not Mr. and Mrs. Grandon. The little episode of the wedding journey has faded, or at least has borne no further fruit. Yet as the days go on she feels more at home in the friendship.

"Oh," she begins, in joyous accents, "you have a surprise for us!" She has such a pretty way of bringing in Cecil.

"Perhaps it is Denise."

"It is cream, I know," announces Cecil. Denise's variety of creams is inexhaustible.

Grandon smiles again, a sort of good-humored, noncommittal smile.

It is something that pleases him very much, Violet decides, and a delicious interest brightens every feature.

Denise welcomes them gladly. Lindmeyer has taken up his lodgings at the cottage, but the upper rooms are kept just the same. Grandon leads the way and Violet stares at the boxes in the hall. Her room is in a lovely tumult of disorder. Bed and chairs are strewn with feminine belongings.

"Oh," she says, uttering a soft, grateful cry. "They have come! But—there is so much!" And she looks at him in amazement.

"It is not so bad, after all," he answers, touching the soft garments with his fingers, and studying her. There is a lovely dead silk, with only a very slight garniture of crape; there is the tenderest gray, that looks like a pathetic sigh, and two or three in black, that have the air of youth, an indescribable style that only an artist could give. But the white ones are marvels. One has deep heliotrope ribbons, and another crapy material seems almost alive. There are plain mulls, with wide hems, there are gloves and sashes and wraith-like plaitings of tulle; a pretty, dainty bonnet and a black chip hat, simple and graceful. Madame Vauban has certainly taken into account youth, bridehood, and the husband's wishes. Plain they are, perhaps their chief beauty lies in their not being overloaded with trimming and ornament.

"Oh," she says, "whenever am I to wear them all?" Her black dress has done mourning duty so far, but the summer heats have rendered white much more

comfortable. "They are so very, very lovely!"

Her eyes glisten and her breath comes rapidly. He can see her very heart beat, and a faint scarlet flies up in her face, growing deeper and deeper, as the sweet red lips tremble.

"You bought them?" she falters, in an agony of shame.

"Should you hate to owe that much to me?" he questions.

"I——"

"My dear girl—Tell her, Denise, that she is quite an heiress, and that if all goes well she will one day be very rich. It is your father's gift to you, Violet, not mine."

The troublesome scarlet dies away. She comes to him and takes his hand in her soft palms. "I would be willing to owe anything to you," she says, "but——"

"I owe you the greatest of all; a debt I never can repay, remember that, *always*." And drawing her to him he kisses her gently. "And now I have about fifteen minutes to spare; try on some of this white gear and let me see how you look."

She puts on the white and purple. It has a demi-train, and seems fashioned exactly for her figure. He is awaiting her in her father's room and looks her over with a critical eye. She is very pretty. She can stand comparison now with madame or Laura or any of them. She knows he is quite satisfied with her.

"Now," he continues, "Denise must pack them up again and I will send them down home. After a week or so there will be visitors. Some day you will find yourself Mrs. Grandon. I do not believe you at all realize it yet."

She colors vividly. In the great house she is seldom honored by any name. Even the servants are not quite determined what respect shall be paid her.

Grandon kisses them both and is off. What a pretty, dainty pride the girl has! Yet yesterday he sent the check without a thought of demur, though Madame Vauban has made the trousseau as costly as circumstances and her own reputation will permit. If she is never the heiress he hopes she will be, he must be more than thankful then that she is wife instead of ward.

Violet spends nearly all the morning arraying herself, to Cecil's intense delight.

Denise looks on with glistening eyes. She is as anxious as Grandon that her young mistress shall hold up her head with the best of them.

"But you have a prince for a husband, ma'm'selle," she says.

The prince meanwhile finds matters not so pleasant at the factory. His bright mood is confronted with an evident cloud looming up much larger than a man's hand. The main hall is filled with workmen standing about in groups, with lowering brows and lips set in unflinching resolution, as if their wills were strongly centred upon some object to be fought for if not gained. Grandon glances at them in surprise, then walks firmly through them with no interruption, pauses at the entrance and faces them, assured that he is the one they desire to see.

One of the men, sturdy and dark-browed, steps forward, clears his throat, and with a half-surly inclination of the head begins, "Mr. Grandon," and then something intangible awes him a trifle. They may grumble among themselves, and lately they have found it easy to complain to Mr. Wilmarth, but the unconscious air of authority, the superior breeding, and fine, questioning eyes disconcert the man, who pulls himself together with the certainty that this gentleman, aristocrat as he is, has no right to set himself at the head of the business and tie every one's hands.

"Mr. Grandon," with a sort of rough, sullen courage, "me and my mates here are tired of the way things are going on. We can't work under the new man. We never had a day's trouble with Mr. Brent, who understood his business. We want to know if he is coming back at the end of the month; if not——"

"Well, if he is not, what then?" The words ring out clear and incisive.

"Then," angrily, "we'll quit! We've resolved not to work under the new one. Either he goes or we will."

"He will not go out until I am quite ready."

"Then, mates, we will knock off. We're willing to come to any reasonable terms, Mr. Grandon, and do our best, but we won't stand false accusations, and we're tired of this sort of thing."

Floyd Grandon would give a good deal for a glance into the face of Rising or

Lindmeyer as inspiration for his next word. It is really a step in the dark, but he is bound to stand by them.

"Very well," he replies. "When two parties cannot get along amicably, it is best to separate."

The men seem rather nonplussed, not expecting so brief and decisive a result. They turn lingeringly, stare at each other, and march toward Wilmarth's office.

Grandon goes straight to the workroom. Half a dozen men are still at their looms.

"O Mr. Grandon!" begins Rising, with a face of the utmost anxiety, but Lindmeyer has a half-smile on his lips as he advances, which breaks into an unmirthful laugh.

"Quite a strike or an insurrection, with some muttered thunder! I hope you let them go; it will be a good day's work if you have."

"What was the trouble?" Grandon's spirits rise a trifle.

"The machinery and the new looms have been tampered with continually, just enough to keep everything out of gear. Nearly every improvement, you know, has to fight its way through opposition in the beginning. The men declare themselves innocent, and puzzled over it, but it certainly has been done. There are five excellent weavers left, Rising says."

"I would rather go on with just those a few days, until I am able to decide two or three points. And if you don't object, I should like to remain here at night."

"And we shall need a watchman. A little preventive, you know, is better than a great deal of cure."

Both men take the *emeute* in such good part that Grandon gains confidence. Back of this morning's dispute there has been dissatisfaction and covert insolence, and the two are thankful that the end of the trouble is reached.

Grandon returns to the office heavy hearted in spite of all. There are victories which ruin the conqueror, and even his may be too dearly bought.

A knock at the half-open door rouses him, but before he answers he knows it is Wilmarth.

"Mr. Grandon," begins that gentleman, with a kind of bitter suavity, "may I inquire into the causes that have led to this very unwise disturbance among our working forces?"

"I think the men are better able to tell their own story. They made an abrupt demand of me that Mr. Rising must be dismissed or they would go. Our agreement was for a month's trial, and the month is not ended. I stand by my men."

Grandon's voice is slow and undisturbed by any heat of passion.

"But you do not know, perhaps. They were unjustly accused."

"Unjustly?"

That one word in the peculiar tone it is uttered checks Wilmarth curiously.

"Mr. Grandon," and he takes a few quick steps up and down the room, "do you assume that I have *no* rights, that you have all the power, judgment, and knowledge requisite for a large establishment like this, when it is quite foreign to any previous experience of yours? Is no one to be allowed a word of counsel or advice? or even to know what schemes or plans are going on?"

"Mr. Wilmarth, all that was settled at Mr. Sherburne's office. It was decided that, being the executor and trusted agent of my father, and also the husband of Miss St. Vincent, gave me the controlling voice, and you consented to the month's trial."

"And am I to stand idly by and let you drive the thing to ruin? discharge workmen, break contracts, shut up the place, and have no voice in the matter?"

"You had a voice then!"

"But you very wisely withheld the outcome of your plans. I should not have consented to my own ruin."

"Mr. Wilmarth, if you can decide upon any reasonable price for your share, I will purchase it. It cannot be a comfortable feeling to know yourself in a sinking ship, with no means of rescue. If you are doubtful of success, name your price."

He tries to study the face before him, but the sphinx is not more inscrutable. Yet

he feels that from some cause Wilmarth hates him, and therein he is right. To be thwarted and outgeneralled is what this black-browed man can illy bear. To receive a certain sum of money and see his rival go on to success, with a comparatively smooth pathway, is what he will not do. Floyd Grandon shall purchase his victory at the highest, hardest rate.

"I may be doubtful," he begins, in a slow, careful tone, which Floyd knows is no index to his real state of mind, "but that does not say I am *quite* despairing. I had the pleasure of working most amicably with your father and receiving a fair return on my investment. I have had no dissensions with your brother, who is really my working partner. Your father was more sanguine of success than I, but I am well aware that if business men give up at the first shadow of unsucccess, a wreck is certain. I have no desire to leave the ship. The business suits me. At my time of life men are not fond of change. What I protest against is, that if I, with all my years of experience, find it best to go slowly and with care, you shall not precipitate ruin by your ill-judged haste."

How much *does* this man believe? What are his aims and purposes? What is under the half-concealed contempt and incredulity? If he has cherished the hope of getting the business into his hands he must feel assured of success. Floyd Grandon is not a lover of involved or intricate motives. He takes the shortest road to any point. Fairness, simplicity, and truth are his prevailing characteristics.

"Do you believe honestly that St. Vincent's idea has any of the elements of success?" he demands, incisively.

Wilmarth shrugs his shoulders and the useful sneer crosses his face.

"Mr. Grandon," he answers, imperturbably, "I have seen the elements of success fail from lack of skilful handling."

"You proposed for the hand of Miss St. Vincent," and then Grandon could bite out his tongue if it would recall the words.

"Yes," with half-contemptuous pity. "He had risked everything on the success of this, and the poor child would have been left in a sad plight. Marriage was rather out of my plans."

"And fate happily relieved you," says Grandon, throwing into his face all the

enthusiasm and softness of which he is master. "She did for me the greatest service; but for her, my days would have been a blank and desolation. She saved the life of my child, my little girl," and now he has no need to assume gratitude. "I was a witness myself to the heroic act, but could not have reached her in time. She was the veriest stranger to me then, and aroused within my soul emotions of such deep and rare thankfulness that only the devotion of a lifetime can repay."

"Ah, yes," says Wilmarth, "you would naturally take an interest in her fortune."

"If you mean by that, wealth," and he feels as if he could throttle the man, "I shall care for her interest as I do for my mother, or my sisters. Whatever the result, it is all in her hands; I had no need to marry for money."

"We have digressed widely," suggests Wilmarth, and he hesitates, a little uncertain how to make the next move tell the most cuttingly.

"But you see, with all this in view, I am not likely to rush headlong to ruin. I have taken some of the best counsel I could find. My experience is that a man who firmly believes in the success of what he undertakes is much more likely to succeed, and this Lindmeyer does. Rising has had charge of a large factory in England. The least I can do is to give them every chance in my power to do their best, and that they shall have."

"And the men?"

"They have acted according to their best judgment," and now it is Grandon's turn to smile grimly. "They may be mistaken; if so, that is their misfortune. I hold steadfastly to *my* men until the month ends, and their success will decide the new arrangements."

Again Jasper Wilmarth has been worsted. When he started the disaffection among the men he did not count on its culmination quite so soon, and again he has unwittingly played into Floyd Grandon's hands; how fatally he knows best himself.

"Then the men are to consider themselves discharged."

"They are to consider that they discharged themselves," says the master of the situation.

CHAPTER XII.

If you observe us you will find us in our manners and way of living most like wasps.—ARISTOPHANES.

She sits on the wide, fragrant porch with her lovely stepdaughter, watching for the return of her husband and his German friend, with whom he has no end of business. Certainly Violet makes a most amiable wife. She finds no fault with the all-engrossing business, even in this honeymoon month, but contents herself with Cecil and Denise, with rides and walks, and days spent at the cottage. Denise instructs her in cookery, but she feels as if she should never need the knowledge, since Mrs. Grandon *mère* is at the head of the great house, with servants to do her bidding.

Violet is musing now over a talk had with Gertrude this afternoon. She was trying to persuade her to join them for a drive. It seems such a dreary life to lie here on the sofa when there is the wide, glowing out of doors.

"Our quiet times will soon come to an end," says Gertrude, complainingly. "Marcia returns presently, and Laura will no doubt come back for a visit, but we are rid of her as a permanency," and she flavors her speech with a bitter little laugh.

"What is Laura like? She is only a year older than I," rejoins Violet.

"But ten years wiser. She has achieved the great aim of a woman's life,—a rich husband."

Violet colors delicately. *She* has a rich husband, but it was no aim of her life.

"What is Marcia like?" she inquires, timidly.

"She will fret you to death in a week, a faded flirt with the air of sixteen, who

sets up for a genius. Get her married if you can. It is fortunate that there is some dispensation of fate to take people out of your way."

"I never had a sister," Violet says, half regretfully.

"Well, you will have enough of us," is the rejoinder. "Though I shall try to make no trouble. A book and a sofa satisfy me."

"Were you always ill? And you must have been pretty! You would be pretty now if you had some color and clearness, such as exercise would give you."

Gertrude is comforted by the naive compliment. No one ever praises her now.

"I was pretty to some one a long while ago," she says, pathetically.

It suggests a lover. "Oh, do tell me!" cries Violet, kneeling by the sofa. Marriage is marriage, of course, and Denise has instructed her in its duties, but is not love something accidental, not always happening in the regular sequence?

"It is not much," confesses Gertrude, "but it once was a great deal to me. I was engaged, and we loved each other dearly. I was soon to be married, the very first of them all, but *he* went wrong and had to go away in disgrace. It broke my heart!"

"Oh!" and Violet kisses her, with tears on her cheek. No wonder she is so sad and spiritless.

"I don't mind now. Perhaps it would have been no end of a bother, and I'm not fond of children. Cecil is the least troublesome of any I ever saw, but I couldn't have her about all the time, as you do. Yes, it seemed at first as if I must die," she says, in a curious past-despairing tone.

"He may come back," suggests Violet.

"Oh, no! And then one couldn't be disgraced, you know! But it was mean for Laura always to be flaunting her good fortune in my face. I'm glad she is married, and I only wish Marcia was going off. We could settle to comfort the rest of our lives."

Violet is thinking of this brief, blurred story, and wondering how it would seem to love anyone very much beforehand. She has been trained to believe that love follows duty as an obedient handmaid. She likes Mr. Grandon very much. He is

so good and tender, but of course he loves the child the best. Violet is not a whit jealous, for she does not know what love really is in its depth and strength. But it is a mystery, a sort of forbidden fruit to her, and yet she would like one taste of what

"Some have found so sweet."

The carriage-wheels crumble her reverie to fine sand. She is not sure whether it is proper to come forward, and there are two more in the carriage, a bright, beautiful woman that she fancies is Madame Lepelletier.

Mrs. Grandon does not leave her in doubt as she hastens forward with a really glad exclamation.

"My dear Laura!"

"Wasn't it odd?" says dear Laura. "We really were not meaning to come up to-day, our hands were so full, but we met Floyd on Broadway, and here we are."

She steps out, stylish, graceful, with that unmistakable society air some people never acquire. She is dressed in a soft black and white checked silk, so fine that it is gray, her chip bonnet is of the same color, with its wreath of gray flowers, and her gloves are simply exquisite. All this seems to set off her fine eyes and brilliant complexion.

Violet catches her husband's eye and joins them, with Cecil by the hand. Floyd looks her over. He has allowed himself an uneasy misgiving for the last half-hour, for Violet's dress is usually so unconventional. But she is in one of her new toilets, a soft, clinging material, with the least touch of tulle at the throat and wrist, and a cluster of white roses at her belt; simple, yet refined, with a delicate grace that savors of Paris.

The introductions follow. There is Prof. Freilgrath, quite different from their old, round, bald German teacher. He is tall and martial-looking, with a fine head, and hair on the auburn tint, a little curling and thin at the edge of the high forehead. His eyes are light blue, keen, good-humored, and he wears glasses; his nose is large, his mouth rather wide, but his teeth are perfect. His English has a very slight accent, and he impresses one with scholarly ways at once. Arthur Delancy, a very good-looking young man, seems rather insignificant beside him. Violet experiences a thrill of negative preference; she is glad it was not her fate to

become Mrs. Delancy.

Some one invites them within.

"Oh, no," responds the professor. "Mrs. Grandon knows what is delightful; let us follow her example and sit here on the porch. You Americans are indoors quite too much. And I want to see the child, Mr. Grandon's pretty daughter."

"I must be excused then," declares Laura. "They may entertain you, Arthur, but I must see mamma and take off my bonnet."

The others seat themselves in the bamboo veranda chairs. Cecil is seized with a fit of shyness, which proves coaxable, however. Violet feels compelled, as sole lady, to be entertaining, and acquits herself so well that in a few moments her husband forgets his recent anxiety about her.

Laura follows her mother up-stairs.

"What did possess Floyd to make such an utter fool of himself?" she asks. "When you wrote, I was struck dumb! That little—ninny!"

"You have just hit it. A girl who still plays with dolls, and who learned nothing in a convent but to count beads and embroider trumpery lace," says the mother, contemptuously.

"And he might have had Madame Lepelletier! She has been *such* a success at Newport, and she will be just the envy of New York this winter! She is going to take a furnished house,—the Ascotts'. They are to spend the winter in Paris, and Mrs. Latimer says the house is lovely as an Eastern dream. I never *can* forgive him. And he offered her to Eugene."

"Offered her to Eugene!" repeats the mother.

"Yes. He had hardly reached Lake George when the Grand Seigneur insisted upon his coming back and espousing Miss St. Vincent,—very Frenchy, was it not? But Eugene did not mean to be burdened with a dead weight all his life. We have had enough botherment with that miserable patent, not to have a beggarly girl thrust upon us!"

Mrs. Grandon is struck dumb now. Eugene has missed a fortune. Why does everything drop into Floyd's hands?

"I don't know about that," she answers. "It is a wretched choice for Floyd; she is a mere child compared to him, and she would have done better for Eugene. The patent is likely to prove a success; in that case the St. Vincent fortune is not to be despised."

"O mamma, Mr. Wilmarth assured Eugene that Floyd never *could* get back the money he was sinking in it. He *must* know. You do not suppose Floyd was counting on *that* chance, do you?"

"I don't know what he was counting on," says the mother, angrily; "only he seems to take the best of everything."

"But fancy Eugene marrying to order!" and Laura laughs lightly. "I believe it was a plan of Mr. St. Vincent's in the first place. Well, the silly little thing is not much to look at! Mamma, do you know this Prof. Freilgrath is a great German *savant* and traveller? He and Floyd have been writing a book together about Egypt or Africa or the Nile. Mr. Latimer's club is to give him an elegant reception. Mrs. Latimer met him while they were at Berlin three years ago, when he had just come from some wonderful explorations. Oh, if Madame Lepelletier were only here, she would make Floyd one of the lions of the day! What an awful pity he is tied to that child! And it was so mean of him not to come to Newport, as he promised! The whole thing is inscrutable!"

"It was a hurried, tangled-up mess! I don't pretend to understand it. I don't believe he cares for her, but the thing is done," the mother says, desperately.

"I *was* curious to see her, and when Floyd asked us so cordially to come I would have put off everything. We are to go back again to-morrow, and I am delighted to meet the professor, not that I care much for the Nile or the ruins of buried cities, unless some rare and beautiful jewelry comes to light," and she laughs. "My bracelets have been the envy of half Newport. I wonder—— But I suppose Floyd will save the rest of his 'trumpery' for her! You have not been deposed, *mère!*"

The set expression in Mrs. Grandon's face indicates that deposing her would be a rather difficult matter.

Laura meanwhile has washed her face and done her hair. She rummages in a drawer for some fresh laces she remembers to have left behind, and makes herself quite elegant. As they go down-stairs Mrs. Grandon slips the key in the

piano, and then makes inquiries concerning the dinner.

The "foolish little thing" in her pretty willow rocker has made herself entertaining to the German professor, who is not long in finding that she is quite well read in orthodox German literature, except the poets, and there her teacher has allowed a wide range. She is yet too young for it to have touched her soul, but her eyes promise a good deal when the soul shall be really awakened. And he thinks of the story his friend has told, of her saving his little girl, and pays her a true, fervent admiration that puzzles Laura extremely. Violet does not get on so well with Mr. Delancy, for she knows nothing of society life.

But Laura can "shine her down," and does it speedily. Cecil is sitting on her papa's knee, and he is very content until he finds presently that Violet has lapsed into silence. Laura has the talk with both gentlemen, and is bringing them together in the clever way known to a society woman. Then they are summoned to dinner. Arthur takes Violet; the professor, Laura; and here Gertrude makes a sort of diversion and has the sympathy of both gentlemen.

The evening is very pleasant. Grandon will not have his shy Violet quite ignored, and yet he feels that she is not able to make much headway against the assumptions of society. He realizes that his place will be considerably in the world of letters, and that has come to be a world of fashion. Wealth and culture are being bridged over by so many things, artistic, æsthetic, and in a certain degree intellectual, one has to hold fast to one's footing not to be swept over. If there was some one to train Violet a little! He cannot understand why the family will not take to her cordially.

Laura is thinking of this handsome house and the really superior man at its head, for she has to admit that Floyd has dignity, ability, character, and if he is coming out as a genius he will be quite the style. There is one woman who could do the honors perfectly,—madame,—and she feels as if she could almost wring the life out of the small nonentity who has usurped her place, for of course Floyd would soon have cared for madame if she had not come between.

"It was brought about by a silly romance," she tells madame afterward. "The child had run away from her nurse and was scrambling down some rocks when she caught her, it seems, and Floyd, coming up just that moment, insisted she had saved Cecil's life. Very dramatic, wasn't it? And Cecil is quite idiotic over her. I think she would make an excellent nursery governess. She is just out of a

convent, and has no manners, really, but is passable as to looks. Mamma insists that her hair is red, but it is just the color the Ascotts rave over. Mrs. Ascott would be wild to paint her, so I am glad they will be off to Paris without seeing her. She is in deep mourning and can't go into society. I shall make Floyd understand that. But to think of her having that splendid place in her hands!"

To do Madame Lepelletier justice, she thinks more of the master than of the place, and hates Violet without seeing her, because she has won Cecil's love.

In the morning Mr. and Mrs. Delancy are compelled to make their adieus. Laura goes off with an airiness that would do Marcia credit, and avoids any special farewell with her new sister-in-law. The professor remains, and spying out the piano asks leave to open it.

"It is locked, I believe," says Violet, hesitatingly.

Floyd lifts the cover and looks at his wife in astonishment.

"It was locked," she says, defending herself from the incredulous expression, "the morning after I came here,—and—I thought—the piano is Laura's," she concludes.

"Did you try it more than once?" he asks.

"Yes." She blushes pitifully, but her honesty will not allow her to screen herself to him. "You must never let him think a wrong thing about you," says Denise, in her code of instructions.

It is not at all as she imagines. He is amazed that any member of his family would do so small a thing as to exclude her from the use of the piano.

"Well," he says, "you shall have one of your own as soon as Laura can take hers away."

"Oh!" Her sweet face is suddenly illumined. How delightful it will be through the long days when papa is away! She can begin to give Cecil lessons.

"I suppose you are all for Beethoven," the professor is saying. "Young people find such melody in 'Songs without Words.' But I want you to listen to this nocturne of Chopin's, though it is not a morning song."

Violet listens entranced. Floyd watches her face, where the soft lights come and

go. If she could always look like that!

But Freilgrath cannot spend the whole morning at the piano. They are to drive around, to see the place and the factory, to arrange some plans for work.

"Cannot the pretty mother and child go?" he asks.

"Why, yes," Floyd answers, pleased with the notion.

They stop at the cottage, which the German thinks a charming nook, then drive on to the factory. Violet and Cecil remain within while the two men make a tour of inspection. Floyd's spirits have risen many degrees in the past week. The machinery has worked to a charm, and demonstrated much that St. Vincent claimed for it. There seems no reasonable doubt of its success. Rising will be retained, and is empowered to hire any of the old hands who will come back and obey orders. Several have given in their allegiance, and some others are halting through a feeling of indignation at being falsely accused. But the fact is patent now that all along there has been a traitor or traitors in the camp.

Violet sits there in the carriage talking to Cecil, half wrapped in a fluffy white shawl. She is just in range of a window, and the man watching her feels that Floyd Grandon has more than his share of this world's favors. What has life done for *him*? asks Jasper Wilmarth with bitter scorn. Given him a crooked, unhandsome body, a lowering face, with its heavy brows and square, rugged features. No woman has ever cared for him, no woman would ever worship him, while dozens no doubt would allow Grandon to ride rough-shod over them if he only smiled afterward. He has come to hate the man so that if he could ordain any evil upon him he would gladly.

He has dreamed of being master here, and yet in the beginning it was not all treachery. Eugene Grandon was taking it rapidly to ruin, and he raised no hand to stay. From the first he has had a secret hope in St. Vincent's plans, but there was no one to carry them out. When the elder son came home the probability was, seeing the dubious state of affairs, he would wash his hands of the whole matter, and it would go, as many a man's life work had before, for a mere song. In this collapse he would take it with doubt and feigned unwillingness, and calling in the best talent to be had, would do his utmost to make it a success. But all this had been traversed by the vigilant brain of another.

If that were all! He had also dreamed of the fair girl sitting yonder. A mere child,

trained to respect and belief in her elders, and obedience of the Old World order, secluded from society, from young men, her gratitude might be worked upon as well as her father's fears for her future. Once his wife, he would move heaven and earth for her love. She should be kept in luxury, surrounded by everything that could rouse tenderness and delight; she should be the star of his life, and he would be her very slave. There were instances of Proserpine loving her dark-browed Pluto, and sharing his world. Wilmarth had brooded over this until it seemed more than probable,—certain.

And here his antagonist has come with his inexorable "check!" A perfect stranger, with no hatred in his soul, only set upon by fate to play strange havoc with another's plans, to circumvent without even knowing what he did. If the place had to pass into other hands, as well his as a stranger's, he has reasoned.

He was as well off as if Mr. James Grandon were alive, and he had not railed at fate then. It was because he had seen possibilities, the awful temptations of human souls. It is when the weak place is touched as by a galvanic shock that in the glare of the light we see what might be done, and yield, fearing that another walking over the same road will pause and gather the price of some betrayal of honor, while we look back with envy, the envy of the tempted, not the unassailable.

And because Violet St. Vincent sits there in another man's carriage, this other man's wife, he feels that he has been defrauded of something he might have won with the better side of his nature, which will never be called out now. They will go on prospering; there is no further reason why he should bend a wire, slip a cog, or delay the hurrying wheels. Since Grandon has achieved all, then let them make money, money for which he has little use.

Cecil gets tired, and Violet tells her a story. They are almost to the end when the gentlemen come, but Cecil is exigent, and the professor politely insists. He is fond of even the fag-end of a story, so that it turns out well; and then he will entertain the little miss. Violet finishes with blushes that make her more charming every moment; and Grandon finds a strange stirring in his soul as he watches this pretty girl. He is glad she is his. Some time, when the cares of life press less heavily, they two will take a holiday and learn to know each other better than mere surface friends.

Herr Freilgrath certainly makes an unwonted interest in the great house. He is so

genial, he has that overflowing, tolerant nature belonging to an ample frame and good digestion, he has inexhaustible sympathy, and an unfailing love of nature. The two men settle themselves to work in the tower room, and for hours are left undisturbed, but the early evenings are devoted to social purposes. Even Gertrude is compelled to join the circle, and Violet, whose tender heart is brooding over the lost and slain love, is so glad to see her roused a little.

Freilgrath discovers one day that Violet is a really admirable German scholar. There are some translations to make, and she is so glad to be of service. Cecil objects and pouts a little in her pretty child's fashion. At this her father speaks sharply, and Violet turns, with the same look she wore on her face the day of the accident. It is almost as if she said, "You shall not scold her." Is he losing then the right in his own child? And yet she looks so seductively daring that he smiles, softens, and kisses Cecil in a passion of tenderness.

"You will spoil her," he says, in a low tone.

If they could go on this way forever! But one morning brings Marcia, and the same evening Eugene, who is jaunty, handsome, and with a careless fascination that seems his most liberal inheritance. It is a very warm September evening, and Violet has put on one of her pretty white gowns that has a train, and has a knot of purple pansies at her throat. The elbow sleeves show her pretty dimpled arm and slender wrist, and her hair is a little blown about as he comes up the steps and sees her leaning on the balcony rail. What a pretty vision! Have they guests at the house?

She knows him from his picture and comes forward. He guesses then who it is, but certainly Laura has not done her half justice.

"Mrs. Floyd Grandon!" bowing with infinite grace.

She smiles at the odd sound of the name she so seldom hears.

"Yes."

He takes the soft, warm hand in his and is tempted to press it to his lips, but wisely refrains.

His mother has seen this little tableau from the window and comes out. Even now, if Violet were Eugene's wife, she could forgive her, quite forgetting that it

is not so much her fault or her election.

The delightful harmony comes to a sudden end. That very evening another spirit reigns, a something intangible that makes Violet shrink into silence, and Floyd uneasy. Even Gertrude is less social. Marcia has a curious faculty of making people uncomfortable, of saying wrong things, of being obtrusive. She quite takes possession of the professor, and he hardly knows how to understand her small vanities and delusions, and is glad when the dainty French clock tolls nine, as that is their hour for working. Cecil has been remaining up, much against her grandmamma's wishes, who would have an argument every evening on the subject if she could. So Violet takes the child by the hand and wishes them good night, the gentlemen go to their study, Marcia flits away, and Eugene is left with his mother.

"Upon my word," he says, "I had no idea the St. Vincent was such good form. Floyd has the lucky card everywhere. Is it really true the patent is a success and that there are fortunes in it?"

"Eugene," his mother begins, severely, "it would have been much better for you to have stayed at home instead of wasting time and money as you have done this summer! The lucky card, as you call it, is only taking advantage of circumstances, and if you are going to let Floyd rule everything——"

"Well, what can I help? I had no money to bolster up affairs! Wilmarth was awfully blue. I didn't suppose anything could be made of the business, it was in such a muddle. And it couldn't now, mother, if Floyd had not sunk thousands; I don't see how he expects to get it back if we have anything."

"You threw away your chance!" She must say this, much as she loves him.

"But how could I know that she was pretty and lady-like, and would not mortify a man with her blunders? You do not suppose Floyd is really in love with her?"

"He had the wisdom to marry her," she responds, tartly, loath even now to hear her praised. "It gives him as much interest in the business as—well, more than *you* take."

"I should like to take his money and let him manage it all, since he has turned into such a splendid hand."

"And what would you do?"

"Why, live on my money." And the young man laughs lightly.

His mother feels at that instant as if her whole life was wasted, her affection despoiled. Eugene is careless, heartless, and yet she cannot in a moment change the habit of her motherhood and unlove him. She feels that he cares very little for their welfare, that for everything she must depend upon her eldest son, and the dependence is bitter. It should not be so, and yet she has been curiously jealous of Floyd since the day Aunt Marcia took him under her wing. He has so much, the rest will have such a trifle in comparison! Yet she feels sure it would slip through Eugene's fingers in no time and leave him a poor man again. But our inclination does not always follow our judgment.

CHAPTER XIII.

For two enemies the world is too small, for two friends a needle's eye is large enough.—BULWER.

The brothers spend nearly all of the next morning in the factory. Floyd has left his substitute with the professor, and sent Cecil to ride, so that she shall not distract Violet's attention. He tries to explain to Eugene all that he has done, the money he has advanced, and the future that seems possible. "It will be a long pull," he says, "but when you get through, the result will be a handsome business. Three years ought to do it."

"Three years," Eugene repeats, with a sigh.

For a moment Floyd is provoked. Does Eugene never expect to put his shoulder to the wheel, to take any real care? Must he fight the matter through for them all? But then, there is Violet.

"I shall expect you to take some part of the business, Eugene, and keep to it. Wilmarth is admirable in his department. He is getting out new patterns, and now that he is really convinced of success he will no doubt throw all his energies into it. Will you keep the books and look after the correspondence? I have so much work of my own to do, and we must economize all we can."

"Well," indolently, "don't expect too much of me."

"How would you like to travel, then?" asks Floyd. "Father, I find, did a good deal himself."

"The travelling would be jolly, but I may as well be honest. I've no knack of selling."

"Then begin at the books," returns the elder, decisively. "You ought to be able to

do a man's work somewhere."

"When I made such a blunder about the fortune, eh?" he says, with a half-smile. "Were you really caught, Floyd?"

Floyd Grandon is sorely tempted to knock down this handsome, insolent fellow, even if he is a brother. Oh, if he never had offered Violet to him!

"What I wrote first," he says, "was at her father's desire. Then she did for me a favor of such magnitude that my whole life will not be long enough to repay, but honor led me to be fair to you, or I never should have written a second time. Remember that she is my chosen wife, and forget all the rest."

There is something in the tone that awes the young man, though long afterward he recalls the fact that Floyd did not say he loved her. But he is sobered a little and promises to make himself useful. Floyd has no faith in him or his word. What a heavy burthen it all is!

Laura comes up again, and is all excitement. They are staying at a hotel and Madame Lepelletier is with them, but she is going into her house in a few days, and the Delancys hardly know whether to board or to have a home of their own. There are her beautiful wedding gifts, and there is the pleasure of giving dinners and teas! She discusses it with her mother and Marcia. Eugene, whose advice is not asked, says, "Have a house of your own by all means. Nothing is so independent as a king in his castle."

Violet does not grow any nearer to her new relatives, excepting Gertrude, who has a latent, flabby sense of justice that rouses her now and then when the talk runs too high. There seems to be a grievance all around. If Floyd married her for her fortune, then it is a most shamefully mercenary piece of business; if he married her for a mistress to his home, madame would have been so much more admirable every way, especially now that Floyd is likely to become an attractive and notable member of society.

"Everybody wants to see him," declares Laura, much aggrieved. "Mr. Latimer was talking yesterday. I think they will give him a dinner. And this house ought to be a sort of headquarters,—made really celebrated, you know. I like a good supper and a German, but it *is* the fashion to be literary. Everybody travels and writes a book, and just now all these queer old things have come around. I don't care a penny how long the world has stood or what people did two thousand

years ago; my good time is *now*, but we must keep in the stream. I count myself a very fortunate girl. I can have all that is best in fashion through Mrs. Vandervoort, and all that is intellectual through Mrs. Latimer, so you see I come in for both. Then if Floyd had married Madame Lepelletier, there would have been another set here. But that little dowdy, who doesn't even know how to dress decently! Common respect ought to teach her about mourning!"

"Her trousseau ought to be right; it was made by Madame Vauban," interposes Gertrude.

"Madame Vauban! Never!" ejaculates Laura, in quite a dramatic tone.

"But I tell you it was! And Floyd had all the ordering, I dare say. He isn't fond of mourning."

"And the paying, too," sneers Laura.

"Well, she has the cottage, and if Floyd is going to make such a fortune for her, he *could* pay himself back, granting he did spend *his* money, which I very much doubt."

"The fortune is yet to be made," retorts Laura, with a superior air. "There may never be any. *We* may not ever get *our* own."

"Then," says Gertrude, poising her weapon steadily, "he bought *your* wedding clothes as well."

"He is *my* brother. I should look well asking Arthur to pay such bills."

"Do let them alone," exclaims Gertrude, angrily. "You married to please yourself, and so did he."

"*If* he did. I only hope there may be enough in it to keep him pleased. The marriage is utterly incongruous every way."

Gertrude relapses into silence and her book. Why can they not be peaceable and let each other alone? It was so pleasant before they all came home.

Marcia soon nurses up a grievance. Why is a mere child like Violet to be allowed to spend hours with this wonderful professor, pretending to translate or copy, while she, who has actually translated poems for publication, is kept outside of the charmed circle? How delightful it would be to say, "My dear, I am so busy

translating with Prof. Freilgrath for his new book that I have not a moment for calls." She does not cordially like the professor. He has very little appreciation of art, *her* art, and when one evening she took great pains to explain an ambitious scheme, he said, "O Miss Marcia, such a thing would be quite impossible! You would want years of thorough training before you could attempt it. I should advise something less arduous and better suited to a young lady's desultory pursuits. You have no idea of intense study."

"Floyd," she says, one morning, "why cannot I help with copying or translating? I should be glad to do something."

"Oh," he answers, carelessly, "Violet is able to do all, and satisfies the professor perfectly."

The professor has come to feel the flurry of unrest in the air. These ladies of fashion cannot understand he is here now to work, not to be entertained.

"Mrs. Grandon," he says, one afternoon, as Violet folds the notes she has been making and puts them in their place,—she is so orderly and exact it is a pleasure to watch her,—"Mrs. Grandon, I have been thinking of a plan, and your husband allows me to consult you. I should like to take your cottage for the autumn. It is so charmingly situated, so quiet, and your old housekeeper is a treasure. The ground floor would be sufficient, and nothing would need be disturbed. Some time I might ask up a friend or two, and you could come over; the exercise would be beneficial. You grow quite too pale with so much work."

"Why, yes," replies Violet, with a rift of pleasure. She would like having him there, and it would be pleasant for Denise to prepare meals and keep house regularly. And the change for her, the absolute getting away from this unfriendly atmosphere. "You may have it, certainly."

"Thank you. Can you go over and make arrangements? We both need a little exercise, and we have been beautifully industrious. I do not know what I should do without your swift fingers. Will I order the carriage?"

As Violet is dressing herself, an uncomfortable wonder enters her mind. She hears a good deal of talk about propriety, and she does not know whether she ought to do this alone. Even Cecil is out with Jane. She must ask Denise, but alas, she cannot get at her now. Gertrude is kind to her, and she might—

Violet runs down stairs and relates her perplexity.

"Of course you can," says Gertrude. "Married women go anywhere."

"But if you only would!" beseechingly. "And you have never seen the cottage. Oh, please do!" And she kneels down, taking the nerveless hands in hers.

Gertrude considers. She hates to be disturbed, but her book is unusually stupid, and Violet's eager, winsome face is irresistible. How can they say she is not pretty? And if there is the slightest question they will find no end of fault. She groans.

"I know it is asking a good deal, but it would make me so happy, so comfortable."

"And you are such a dear little thing!"

"Do you really think so? Oh, if you could care about me," and the entreaty in the voice touches the heart of the elder as nothing has in a long while.

"I will go," returns Gertrude, with unwonted decision. "I will be quick about changing my dress. There is the carriage."

Gertrude is not much improved by her mourning. She looks less deathly and washed out in the soft white gowns, but there is a languid grace about her that, after all, moves the professor's sympathy. "It is a better face than the other one," he thinks; "not so silly and self-sufficient." He is ever entertaining, unless deeply preoccupied, and now he addresses most of his conversation to her, and is friendly solicitous about her comfort and her health. "There are such delightful baths in Germany. Is there nothing like them in America?" he asks.

"They are really so," Gertrude answers. "We were in Germany once, when my health first began to break."

"In Germany?" With that he brightens up and questions her, and Violet is pleased that she answers with interest. She so pities poor Gertrude, with her broken-off love story, and she helps the conversation with now and then a trenchant bit of her own that does not lead it away. She is so generous in this respect. She has not come to the time of life when one wishes to amass, or is it that she has not seen anything she covets?

The professor is satisfied with every room. If they can put in a bed he will sleep here, and take this for his workroom. The parlor is still left for the entertainment of guests. Here is a porch and a rather steep flight of steps, where he can run up and down when he wants a whiff of the cool river breeze or a stroll along the shore. Violet explains to Denise that Prof. Freilgrath will want some meals. "You know all about those odd foreign soups and dishes," she says, with her pretty air. "And I shall come over every day to write or to read. You can't think what a business woman I have become."

Denise raises her eyebrows a little. "And Mr. Grandon?" she asks.

"Oh, I expect he will never want to come back home! Denise, wouldn't it be lovely if we lived here, with Cecil? I wish he might want to," in her incoherent eagerness. "It will be another home to us, you see, where I shall feel quite free. Why, I could even come in the kitchen and cook a dish!"

With that she laughs delightedly, her sweet young face in a glow.

The visitors go up-stairs to see the prospect, which is lovely from the upper windows. "This is—this was papa's room," correcting herself. She does not think of him any more as in the grave, but in that other wonderful country with the one he loves so dearly.

"Denise," she says, one day, shocking the old woman, "why should I wear black clothes when papa is so happy? It is almost as if he had gone to Europe to meet mamma. Sometimes I long to have him back, then it seems as if I envied her, when she only had him three years, so long ago. Why should any one be miserable if I went to them both?"

"You talk wildly, child," answers Denise, quite at loss for an argument.

But now, when they come down, Denise has a cup of tea, some delicious bread and butter, cream cheese that she can make to perfection, and a dish of peaches. Violet is as surprised as they, and rejoices to play hostess. They are in the midst of this impromptu picnic when Grandon looks in the doorway, and laughs with the light heart of a boy.

"I was coming to talk with Denise," he says.

"I have made my bargain," the professor answers, in a tone of elation. "It is

delightful. I shall be so charmed that I shall lose the zest of the traveller and become a hermit. I shall invite my friends to royal feasts."

Violet has poured a cup of tea and motions to Floyd, who comes to sit beside her. She is so alluring in her youth and freshness that he sometimes wishes there was no marriage tie between them, and they could begin over again.

"Whatever happened to you, Gertrude?" he asks. "I am amazed that tea-drinking has such a tempting power."

"The fraulein is to come often," says Freilgrath, lapsing into his native idiom. "It has done her good already; her eyes have brightened. She stays within doors too much."

Gertrude's wan face flushes delicately.

When they reach home the dinner-bell rings, and they all feel like truants who have been out feasting on forbidden fruit.

The next day the professor moves, but he promises to come down every evening. Marcia is intensely surprised, and Mrs. Grandon rather displeased. It is some plot of Violet's she is quite sure, especially as Floyd takes his wife over nearly every day. Curiously enough Gertrude rouses herself to accompany them frequently. They shall not find unnecessary fault with Violet. Denise enjoys it all wonderfully, and when the professor sits out on the kitchen porch and smokes, her cup of happiness is full.

Then he goes to the city for several days. There is the club reception to the noted traveller, and though Laura would enjoy a German much more, she does not care to miss this. Madame Lepelletier is invited also, but she is arranging her house and getting settled, and this evening has a convenient headache. There are several reasons why she does not care to go, although she is planning to make herself one of the stars for the coming winter.

She has had occasion to write two or three business notes to Floyd Grandon since she said farewell to him, and they have been models in their way. In his first reply, almost at the end, he had said, "Laura, I suppose, has informed you of my marriage. It was rather an unexpected step, and would not have occurred so suddenly but for Mr. St. Vincent's fatal illness."

In her next note she spoke of it in the same grave manner, hoping he would find it for his happiness, and since then no reference has been made to it. From Laura she has heard all the family dissatisfactions and numberless descriptions of Violet. From Eugene she has learned that Miss Violet was offered to him, and there is no doubt in her mind but that she was forced upon Floyd. She cannot forgive him for his reticence those last few days, but her patience is infinite. The wheel of fate revolves, happily; it can never remain at one event, but must go on to the next. The Ascotts' house is a perfect godsend to her, and her intimacy with Mrs. Latimer a wise dispensation. They are all charmed with her; it could not be otherwise, since she is a perfect product of society. She hires her servants and arranges her house, which is certainly a model of taste and beauty, but she wishes to give it her own individuality.

Mrs. Grandon has written to invite her up to the park, and Laura has begged her to accompany her and see the idiotic thing Floyd has made his wife. She is gratified to know they had all thought of her and feel disappointed, but she means they shall all come to her first, and this is why she will not meet Floyd Grandon at his friend's reception. There is another cause of offence in the fact that through a two months' acquaintance he should never have mentioned his own aims and plans and achievements. If she could only have guessed this! She is mortified at her own lack of discernment.

Laura is in the next morning. Madame has chosen a gown that throws a pallid shade over her complexion, and she has just the right degree of languor.

"Oh," she declares, "you have come to make me wretched, I see it in your blooming, triumphant face! You had a positively grand evening with all your *savants* and people of culture. Is your German a real lion in society, or only in his native wilds?"

"Well, I think he is a real lion," with a fashionable amount of hesitation. "You positively do look ill, you darling, and I was not at all sure about the headache

last night."

"Did you suppose—why, I could have sent an excuse if I had not wanted to go," and madame opens her eyes with a tint of amaze. "Everybody else was there, of course. Did your brother bring his wife? A reception is not a party."

"He had better taste than that, my dear. He would not even bring Marcia, though she was dying to come. It was for the very *crème*, you know. I'm not frantically in love with such things, only the name of having gone. Do you know that Floyd is rather of the leonine order? Isn't it abominable that he should have made such a social blunder? The only comfort is, she is or ought to be in deep mourning, and cannot go out anywhere. Why, we gave up all invitations last winter."

"I wonder, Laura dear, if I would dare ask a favor of your mother? It might be a little rest and change, and yet—I am just selfish enough to consider my own pleasure; I should like to invite her down for a fortnight, and give two or three little spreads, don't you young people call them? You see I am not quite up in slang. A dinner and one or two little teas, and an at home evening, something to say to people that I am really here, though there have been several cards left, and I *must* get well for Thursday. How stupid to indulge in such an inane freak when I have uninterruptedly good health."

"Oh, I am sure mamma would be delighted! Why, it is lovely in you to think of it, instead of taking in some poky old companion."

"I am not very fond of companions. I like visitors best. I dare say I am fickle. And I want some one able to correct any foreign ignorance that may linger about me."

"As if you did not know you were perfect and altogether charming, and that your little foreign airs and graces are the things we all fall down and worship!" laughs Laura. "I could almost find it in my heart to wish I were a dowager."

"You can come without the added dignity of years. I have a motherly interest in you. If you were not married I dare say I should 'ransack the ages' for some one fit and proper, and turn into a match-maker."

"You had better take Marcia in hand; I think of doing it myself. Gert is past hope."

"Marcia is not so bad," says madame, reflectively, "if only she would not set up for a genius. It is the great fault of young American women. Abroad everything is done, even studying music, under an assumed name, but one does not go on the stage."

"Marcia is a fool," says Laura, with most unsisterly decision.

"Well, about your mother. You think I may write. I trespassed upon your hospitality so long——"

"Oh, whatever should I have done without you! And there is another funny thing," says Laura irrelevantly. "Mrs. Floyd has taken up literature. She copies and translates and does no end of work for the professor; and he has hired her cottage, where they all do some Bohemianish housekeeping, I believe."

Madame raises her delicate eyebrows a trifle. "She must be well trained, then," she makes answer. "She may do admirably for your brother, after all."

"Hem!" retorts Laura, "what does a little writing amount to? Only it *is* queer."

Madame never indulges in any strictures on the new wife, rather she treats the matter as an untoward accident to be made the best of; she is not so short-sighted as to show the slightest malice.

Then she takes Laura back to the reception and is interested in hearing who was there and what was done, who was a bore, who is worth inviting, and so on, until Laura finds she has stayed unconscionably. After her visitor is gone she writes the daintiest of epistles, quite as a loving daughter might. She means to sap all the outer fortifications; she even considers if it will not be wise to invite Marcia some time.

To say that Mrs. Grandon is delighted is a weak word. Nothing has ever so taken her by storm since Laura's engagement. She carries the letter to Floyd. Had madame foreseen this?

"Of course you will go." His eyes are on the letter, where every stroke of the pen, every turn of the sentence, are so delicate. The faint perfume, which is of no decided scent, touches him, too; he has never known any one quite so perfect in all the accessories, quite so harmonious.

"How can I?" she says, fretfully. "There is no one to look after the house."

Floyd laughs at that.

"I should suppose the servants might be trusted, and surely Marcia knows enough to order a meal. You do need a holiday. Come, just think you can go. I shall be in the city a good deal the next month, and as Freilgrath has a domicile of his own—yes, you must answer this immediately."

She has a few other flimsy objections, but Floyd demolishes everything, and almost threatens to write for her. There is no reason why they should not all be good friends, even if he has married another person; and he has a real desire to see Madame Lepelletier. He wants to smooth out some little roughnesses that rather annoy him when he thinks of them.

So Mrs. Grandon writes that Floyd will bring her down at the required date. Then madame has not miscalculated.

She goes to a reception at the Vandervoorts', to a charming tea at the Latimers'. People are talking about Freilgrath and Mr. Grandon, and some new discoveries, as well as the general improvement in science and literature. There is an "air" about the "house Latimer" very charming, very refined, and madame fits into it like the frontispiece to a book, without which it would not be quite perfect. "What an extremely fascinating woman!" is the general comment.

Mrs. Grandon has been flurried and worried up to the last moment. She is afraid her gowns are *passé*, that she looks old for her years, and that her prestige as Mrs. James Grandon is over forever. But the instant she steps into the hall at madame's the nervousness falls away like an uncomfortable wrap. The air is warm and fragrant, but not close, the aspect of everything is lovely, cosy, restful. A figure in soft array comes floating down the stairs.

"I am delighted," madame says, in the most seductive tone of welcome. Then she holds out her hand to Floyd; looks at the waiter, and orders the trunk to be taken up stairs. "I was afraid you would repent at the last moment, or that something untoward might happen," she continues. "Will you sit down a moment," to Floyd, "and excuse us, just for the briefest space?"

She waves him to the nearest of the suite of rooms with her slender hand, and escorts Mrs. Grandon up to her chamber adjoining her own, and begins to take off her wraps as a daughter might, as Mrs. Grandon's daughters never have done. The attention is so delicate and graceful.

Floyd meanwhile marches around the room in an idle man fashion. It is in itself a fascination, perhaps not altogether of her choosing, but the fact of her taking it at all presupposes her being in some degree pleased. The art was all there, doubtless, but madame has left her impress as well in the little added touches, the vase where no one expected it, the flowers that suggested themselves, played a kind of hide-and-seek game with you through their fragrance, the picture at a seductive angle of light, the social grouping of the chairs, the tables with their open portfolios. He half wishes some one could do this for the great house up at the park, give it the air of grace and interest and human life.

Madame Lepelletier comes down in the midst of these musings, alone. They might have parted yesterday, the best and most commonplace friends, for anything in her face. He has an uneasy feeling, as if an explanation was due, and yet he knows explanations are often blunders.

"It was very kind of you to think of taking mother out of her petty daily round," he says. "Let me thank you!"

"Oh!" she answers, "do not compel me to apologize for a bit of selfish motive at the bottom. And I am glad to see you. You are in the list of those who achieve greatness, I believe," with a most fascinating smile.

"Or have it fall upon them as a shadow from some other source! I am not quite sure of my own prowess. That will be when I attempt something alone."

"I was so sorry not to meet your friend the other evening, though I hope it is only a pleasure deferred. Do you feel at home in your native land? Was it not a little strange after all these years?"

"I could hardly feel strange after the cordial greeting," he says. "It was delightful; I am sorry you missed it. Will you allow me to present my friend, Prof. Freilgrath, to you?"

"If you will be so kind after my apparent incivility. You know I am so generally well that it seems any excuse on the point of health must be a——"

"You shall not use harsh terms," and he smiles. She is the beautiful, brilliant incarnation of health, a picture good to look upon. He cannot but study her, as he has times before. The splendor of her dark eyes falls softly upon him, her breath comes and goes in waves that would sweep over a less abundant vitality, but it is

the food on which she thrives, like some wonderful tropical blossom.

"Then I am pardoned," she replies. "Now, when will you bring him? Shall I make a little feast and ask in the neighbors, shall I swell out into a grand dinner, or, let me see—covers for four while your mother is here? You shall choose."

"Then I will choose the covers for four," he replies, to her satisfaction.

"The time also. You know your engagements best. Will you stay and take luncheon with us? I have ordered it immediately, for Mrs. Grandon ought to have some refreshment."

Her tone is gently persuasive. Grandon studies his watch,—he has just an hour on his hands.

"Thank you; I will remain." Then, after a pause, "I am really glad of the opportunity. I have been so much engaged that I fear I have behaved badly to my friends. You know we always think we can apologize to them," and he indulges in a grave little smile. "Circumstances prevented my half-promised trip to Newport."

If she would only make some reference to his marriage, but she sits with her face full of interest, silent and handsome.

"We had to have new help in the factory. I knew so little about it that I was full of fears and anxieties, and all the family inheritance was at stake. But I think now we will be able to pull through without any loss, and if it is a success it will be a profitable one. I have been taking up some claims against the estate, and yours may as well be settled. It is my intention to get everything in proper order to turn over to Eugene as soon as circumstances will allow."

"My claim is so small," and she smiles with charming indifference, "it is quite absurd to distress yourself about it. You are likely to succeed in your new undertaking, Laura tells me. Why, we shall hold you in high esteem as a remarkable genius. Men of letters seldom have a mind for the machinery of business or life."

"My father died at a most unfortunate time for the family, it would seem, and his all was involved in this new experiment. There have been months of bad management, or none at all," with one of the grim smiles that often point a

sentence. "My position is one of extreme perplexity, yet I shall endeavor to fulfil my father's hopes and wishes."

"You are very generous. Not every son would place his own aims second."

"I am not doing that," he interrupts, hastily; "I really could not if I would. You must not make me seem heroic, for there is very little of that about me. It is trying to combine the two that makes the severity of the task, but my friend is a host in himself. To him really belongs the credit of our work; still, I have at length discovered that the bent of my mind is toward letters and science, and in another year I hope to do something by myself."

"It is hard to be immersed in family cares at the same time," she answers, with the most fascinating sympathy in her eyes. "Our idea of such men is in the study and the world that they charm with their patient research. I have read of women who wrote poetry and made bread, but certainly both, to be excellent, need an undivided attention. The delicate sense of the poesy and the proper heat of the oven seem naturally to conflict."

He smiles at her conceit, but he has found it sadly true. There is a touch of confident faith in her voice that is delicately encouraging. He has had no sympathy for so long until the professor came, for it would be simply foolish to expect it of his own household, who are not even certain that they can confide in his sense of justice. He has bidden adieu to the old friends and scenes, and is not quite fitted to the new, hence the jarring.

A silvery-toned gong sounds for luncheon. Madame goes to meet her guest and escorts her on the one side, while her son is on the other. It is a charming and deferential attention, and Mrs. Grandon rises in her own estimation, while the dreadful sacrifice her son has made looms dark by contrast.

Afterward, going down the street, Floyd remembers with a twinge of shame that Violet has not once been mentioned. It was his remissness, of course. He could not expect madame to discuss his marriage as one of the ordinary events of life, but he wishes now that he had taken the honorable step. If he only understood the turns and tricks of fashionable life. He has been in wilds and deserts so long, that he has a curious nervous dread of blunders or those inopportune explanations he has occasionally witnessed.

CHAPTER XIV.

To be wise is the first part of happiness.—ANTIGONE.

They are excellently served and complete order reigns at the great house, yet Mrs. Grandon is missed, in ways not altogether complimentary if one put it into words. Marcia delights in playing at mistress. She asks in some of her neighbors to dinner, but Violet, excusing herself, goes over to the cottage. Floyd is not at home to be consulted, and she does not wish to blunder or to annoy him. She wins Marcia's favor to a certain extent, but her favor is the most unreliable gift of the gods. She has no mind of her own, but is continually picking up ready-made characteristics of her neighbors and trying them on as one would a bonnet, and with about the same success. While the rest of her small world is painfully aware of her inconsistency, she prides herself upon a wide range of mental acquirements. She generously allows Violet to try driving Dolly, who is as gentle as a lamb.

Violet draws some delicious breaths, when she feels quite like a bird, but she does not know that it is freedom. She hardly misses Mr. Grandon, who seems to be up at the factory or down to the city nearly all the time. The piano stands open, daring innovation, and she plays for hours, to Cecil's entrancement, and inducts her in the steps of a fascinating little dance. Cecil is growing quite wild and wilful at times, but she is always charming.

They all go up to the cottage one day to a lunch of Denise's preparing. While Gertrude rests, Marcia insists upon visiting the place where Cecil was rescued.

"You dear, brave child!" she cries, kissing Violet with rapture, "I don't wonder Floyd fell in love with you on the spot! If you could only pose just that way to me, and I could paint it! What a picture it would be for exhibition!"

Violet flushes warmly, but by this time she shares the family distrust of Marcia's

splendid endeavors.

"Oh," Cecil whispers, clinging tightly to her hand and shuddering with awe, "if I had fallen down over all those jagged rocks! I shall always, always love you dearly; papa said I must."

How like a dream that far-off day appears!

There is a bit of wood fire burning on the hearth when they return, for Violet remembers that Gertrude is always cold. The table is simple and yet exquisite. Marcia is crazed with the china and some silver spoons that date to antiquity or the first silversmiths.

"If I had money," she begins, when her appetite is a little sated,— "if I had money I should have a house of my own, kept just to my fancy, with an old French servant like Denise, only"—glancing around—"it must be severely artistic. It is so hard that women cannot make fortunes!" with a long sigh.

"I should enjoy one made for me quite as well," rejoins Gertrude, who is always annoyed by Marcia's assumptions of or longings for manhood.

"What a lucky girl you are, or will be if Floyd's plans come out right," and Marcia nods to Violet. "Only I should hate all that wretched waiting!"

"How long must I wait?" There is a lurking smile in Violet's brown eyes.

"How long?—don't *you* know?" accenting the words with surprise. "Why this is quite a mystery. I have heard of heiresses being kept in the dark for evil purposes," and Marcia gives her head an airy toss. "Have you never seen your father's will? Until you are twenty-five—but I shouldn't feel at all obliged to Floyd for tying it up so securely. I dare say he could have persuaded your father differently!"

Violet colors with a curious sense of displeasure. Gertrude gives a warning look, and for fear of that failing in its mission, touches Marcia's foot under the table.

"I suppose he—they both did what they thought best," Violet says, hurt somehow at the signal and a consciousness of some secrecy.

"Oh, of course, of course! Men always do take their own way; they think they are so much wiser than women, selfish beings!" exclaims Marcia, on another

tack. Gertrude bestirs herself to make a diversion, but a latent wonder lingers in Violet's mind. She does not really care about any knowledge being kept away from her, and she has known all along that she was something of an heiress. Did not Mr. Grandon admit that when they talked about the trousseau? A sense of mystery comes up about her like a thick, gray mist, and she shivers. She cannot tell why, but the joy of the day is over.

When they reach home there is company for Marcia, two especial guests, that she takes up to her sanctum, and is seen no more until the dinner-bell summons her. Eugene is in an uncomfortable mood and teases Cecil. Violet seems always a little afraid of this handsome young man, who has a way of making inscrutable remarks. Her music is melancholy this evening, and Cecil is difficult to please, so she is glad when bedtime comes and with it a *résumé* of the times of the wonderful Haroun al Raschid. But when Cecil falls asleep an intense feeling of loneliness seizes her. It seems as if she was somewhere in a wide desert waste.

Mr. Grandon is to spend the night in the city. She wonders where he is! There was the reception to the professor, there was a grand dinner for gentlemen only, at the house of some famous person, there has been business. She would like to imagine the scene for her own interest. How strange, she thinks, to sit three or four hours over a dinner, and yet, if the professor talked, she could listen forever. Does Mr. Grandon ever talk in that manner? A fine thrill speeds along her nerves, a sort of pride in him, a secret joy that he is hers.

Oh, it is only nine o'clock! Violet tries to interest herself in a novel, but it is stupid work. There are voices down-stairs and she catches Marcia's inane little laugh. They never ask her down, because she is in deep mourning, and Gertrude has kindly told her that people do not go in society for at least six months when they have lost a near relative. She has been married only two months, and it has seemed as long as any other six months in her whole life.

Then she wonders why the marriages of books are so different from the marriages of real life. There was Linda Radford, one of her schoolmates, who went away last year to be married to an Englishman and live at Montreal. Linda had a fortune, and the gentleman was a distant cousin. They had always been engaged. Linda had written two letters afterward, about her handsome house and elegant clothes. Then little Jeanne Davray had a lover come from France, who married her in the convent chapel and took her away. Once she wrote back to Sister Catharine. There was a bright, wilful girl, a Protestant, placed in the

convent, who ran away with a married man and shocked the small community so much that the mention of her name was forbidden. Right here are Laura and Mr. Delancy, who are not story-book lovers, either. Oh, which is true? She hides a blushing longing face on Cecil's pillow, and sighs softly, secretly, for what she has not. Denise would call it a sin, for she thinks every word and act of Mr. Grandon's exactly right. Then, somehow, *she* must be wrong. Are the books and poems all wrong? She prays to be kept from all sin, not to desire or covet what may not be meant for her. Oh, what a long, long evening!

Floyd Grandon is a guest at Madame Lepelletier's table. There are three rooms, divided by silken portières, which are now partially swung aside. The lamps in the other rooms are burning low, there is a sweet, faint perfume, a lovely suggestiveness, a background fit for a picture, and this cosy apartment, hung with shimmering silk, and lighted from a cluster of intense, velvety tropical flowers, soften the glare and add curious tints of their own, suggestive of sunlight through a garden. It is not the dining-room proper. Madame has ways quite different from other people, surprises, delicate, delicious, and dares to defy fashion when she chooses, though most people would consider her a scrupulous observer. The four would not be half so effective in the large apartment. There is a handful of fire in the low grate, and the windows are open to temper the air through the silken curtains. Mrs. Grandon is looking her best, a handsome, middle-aged woman. Madame Lepelletier is in an exquisite shade of bluish velvet that brings out every line and tint in a sumptuous manner. The square-cut corsage and elbow sleeves are trimmed with almost priceless ivory-tinted lace; and except the solitaire diamonds in her ears, she wears no jewels. There are two or three yellow rose-buds low down in her shining black hair, and two half hidden in the lace on her bosom. The skirt of her dress is long and plain, and makes crested billows about her as she sits there.

The dinner is over, and it was perfect; the dessert has been taken out, the wine, fruit, and nuts remain; the waiter is dismissed, the chairs are pushed back just to a degree of informality and comfort, and they have reached that crowning delight, an after-dinner chat.

Madame has been posting herself on antiquities and discoveries. There seems nothing particularly new about her knowledge; she is at home in it, and in no haste to air it; she keeps pace with them in a leisurely way, as if not straying out of her usual course. Floyd Grandon feels conscience-smitten that he once

believed her wholly immersed in wedding-clothes and fashions. What a remarkable, many-sided woman she is! a perfect queen of *all* society, and an admirable one at that. Everything she says is fresh and crisp, and her little jest well told and well chosen. The professor beams and smiles, though he is no great lady's man. She might be a *bon camarade*, so free is she from the airy little nothings of society that puzzle scholarly men. There is something charming, too, in the way Mrs. Grandon is made one of the circle,—a part of them, not merely an outside propriety. Every moment she grudges that fascinating woman for her son; she is almost jealous when the professor listens with such rapt deference and admiration. That Floyd's own unwisdom should have placed the bar between himself and this magnificent woman is almost more than she can endure.

He has dropped in one morning and accompanied them to a *matinée*. A foreign friend has sent madame tickets, and he had an hour or two on his hands while waiting for proofs. In all these interviews Violet's name has not been mentioned. His marriage is a matter of course, he is not sailing under any false colors, he has made no protestations of friendship, still he has an uneasy feeling. If Violet only could go into society, yet he knows intuitively the two women never could be friends, though he has no great faith in the friendship of women for women; it is seldom the sort of a stand-up affair for all time that pins a man's faith to another. He wonders, too, what Violet is doing. How she would enjoy these lovely rooms! She could not sit at the head of a table a queen, but then she is young yet. Madame was not perfection at seventeen, and he strongly suspects that he was a prig. Could he take Violet to a *matinée*? If there was someone he dared ask.

It is midnight when the two men walk home to their hotel. Grandon feels as if he has taken too much wine, though he is always extremely moderate.

"She is perfection!" declares the professor, enthusiastically. "You have many charming women, but I have seen none as superb as she. There is an atmosphere of courts about her, and so well informed, so delicate with her knowledge, not thrusting it at you with a shout. You have given me the greatest of pleasure. If I were not an old tramp, with a knapsack on my shoulder, I do not know what would happen! I might be the fly in the flame!"

Floyd laughs amusedly. There is about as much danger of Freilgrath falling in love with her as there is of himself. Would he have, he wonders, if other events had not crowded in and almost taken the right of choice from him? It would not have been a bad match if Cecil had loved her, and she *does* love Violet. His heart

gives a great throb as he thinks of the two in each other's arms, sleeping sweetly. All the passion of his soul is still centred in Cecil.

Yet he feels a trifle curious about himself. Is he stock or stone? He has known of strong men being swept from their moorings when duty, honor, and all that was most sacred held them elsewhere; nay, he has even seen them throw away the world and consider it well lost for a woman's love. If he should never see madame again he would not grieve deeply, but being here he will see her often, and there is no danger.

By some curious cross-light of mental retrospect he also knows that if Violet were the beloved wife of any other man—the large-hearted professor, for instance—he could see her daily without one covetous pang. He likes her very, very much, she is dear to him, but he is not in love, and he rather exults in being so cool-headed. Is it anything but a wild dream, soon burned out to ashes?

Madame Lepelletier, in the solitude of her room, studies her superb figure, with its rich and affluent lines. No mere beauty of pink cheeks, dimples, of seventeen, can compare with it, and she understands the art of keeping it fresh and perfect for some years to come at least. Floyd Grandon is just beginning a career that will delight and satisfy him beyond anything he dreams of to-night. He is not in love with his wife; he did not want her fortune, there were others already made at hand. A foolish pity, the remnant of youth, moved him, and some day he will look back in amazement at his folly. But all the same he has put a slight upon her preference, shown to him, but not in any wise confessed. She has no silly sentiment, neither would she cloud her position for a prince of the blood royal, or what is saying more, for the man she *could* love, but society has devious turns and varying latitudes. One need not run squarely against the small fences it puts up, to gain satisfaction.

Prof. Freilgrath comes up home with his friend the next morning. There are some dates to verify, some designs to decide upon, but he will not remain to luncheon. Grandon steps out to greet Denise, when the opposite door opens, and two quaint laughing figures appear. Violet is wrapped in her shepherd's plaid, the corner twisted into a bewitching hood and surmounted by a cluster of black ribbon bows. She holds Cecil by the hand, who looks a veritable Red Ridinghood, tempting enough to ensnare any wolf. Both are bright and vivid, and have a fresh, blown-about look that walking in the wind invariably imparts. Cecil springs into his arms, and still holding her he bends to kiss Violet.

"You have not walked up?" he asks, in surprise.

"It was not very far, and it is such a lovely, glowing morning," Violet says, with a touch of deprecation.

"We ran," cries Cecil, with her exuberant spirits in her tone. "We ran races, and I beat! And we played a wolf was coming. Mamma has seen real wolves in Canada. But if we had a pony carriage,—because Aunt Marcia is stingy sometimes——"

"O Cecil!" interposes Violet, in distress.

"Would you like one, Violet? You could soon learn to drive," and he glances into her deep, dewy eyes, her face that is a glow of delight.

"Marcia has been very kind, and has let me drive Dolly a little. I should not be afraid, and it would be so delightful."

"You quite deserve it, I have to leave you so much to entertain yourselves. Now rest a little and I will walk back with you."

The professor comes out. "They will stay for lunch, good Denise," he announces, quite peremptorily. "Good morning, Mrs. Grandon; good morning, little one! We have been sadly dissipated fellows, going around on what you call 'larks,' and you ought to scold us both."

"I don't know why!" she rejoins, with a bright smile. She is suddenly very happy; it tingles along every nerve.

"What a pretty—hood, do you call it?" says Grandon, rather awkwardly, trying to unfasten Violet's wrap.

"And the little one is a picture!" adds the professor, glancing from one to the other.

"Mamma made mine," cries Cecil. "She had one when she was a little girl, and her papa brought it from Paris."

Grandon laughs. They go to look at the designs, and Violet makes business-like little comments that surprise them both. She is so eager to have the book done, to see it in proper shape with her own eyes. "I shall really feel famous," she

declares, with a pretty air of consequence, archly assumed.

The lunch is delightful, and Violet confesses that yesterday they all entered with felonious intent, and did eat and drink, and surreptitiously waste and destroy.

"You didn't get Gertrude here?" asks Floyd. "What magic did you use?"

"And Denise made such a lovely fire for her," says Cecil. "She wasn't a bit cold. I wish we could live here, it is so little and nice."

That seems to amuse the professor greatly. He feeds Cecil grapes, and plans how it shall be. Grandon, too, seems in unusual spirits; and presently they have an enchanting walk home. The October day is gorgeous, and they find some chestnuts. The pony carriage is talked over again, and Floyd promises to look it up immediately.

That evening at dinner Marcia says, suddenly, "Did you and the professor dine with madame last night? Mother's letter came this morning, in which she spoke of expecting you. Of course madame looked like a queen in

""The folds of her wine-dark velvet dress.""

"It was—blue or green or something, only *not* wine-color," says Floyd.

"Was any one else there?"

"No, it was just for the professor."

"She might have had the goodness to remember there were more in the family. Mrs. Grandon and myself," declares Eugene, almost in a tone of vexation.

"What was the opera? I think you *are* getting very——"

""Martha,"" he interrupts, quickly. "An acquaintance of madame's sang as *Plunkett*, and did extremely well; a young Italian who only a year or two ago lost his fortune."

"Brignoli used to be divine as *Lionel*," says Marcia. "I don't believe I should like another person in that *rôle*. Of course madame is making a great sensation in New York. What a wonderfully handsome woman she is, and—do you remember, Gertrude, whether any one ever made any great fuss about her in her youth?"

Gertrude colors at this thrust of ancient memory.

"She is the handsomest woman I ever saw," begins Eugene, and his glance falls upon Violet. "Of course she was handsome always, and you need not hint enviously of a lost youth, Marcia. She looks younger than any of you girls to-day. There wasn't one at Newport who could hold a candle to her. The men were mowed down 'n swaths. Not one could stand before her."

"Then *I* say she is a coquette," is Marcia's decisive reply. "I dare say there will be no end of dinners and Germans and lovers. It's fearfully mean in Laura not to take a house for the winter and invite a body down. It is horrid dull here! Floyd, do *you* mean to stay up all winter?"

"Why not? I have not spent a winter here since I was a boy, in the old farmhouse with Aunt Marcia."

"What an awful place it was!" Marcia is quite forgetting her *rôle* of severe high art. "I believe she always chose the coldest days in winter and the warmest days in summer to invite us. I don't see how you endured it!"

"I not only endured it," says Floyd, meditatively, "but I liked it."

"Well, one *might* like it with a fortune in the background," Eugene rejoins, with covert insolence.

The dessert is being brought in, which causes a lull in the family strictures. Floyd frowns and is silent. When they rise, Cecil runs to the drawing-room, and the two follow her.

"Play a little," says her husband; and Violet sits down, thinking of the handsome woman she has never yet seen, but who seems to have bewitched all the family.

Floyd is down twice again before the day on which he escorts his mother home. On one of these occasions he buys the pony. Violet and Cecil are both filled with delight, and Floyd gives his wife a little driving practice. He is so good to her, she thinks, but she sometimes wishes he would talk to her about madame.

They are quite enthusiastic at Mrs. Grandon's return, but her distance and elegance chill Violet to the very soul. She has no part in the general cordiality, and Floyd finds himself helpless to mend matters. For the first time since he has come home he regrets that this great house is his portion, and that half, at least,

had not gone to the rest. He has a desperate desire to take Violet and live in the cottage, as Cecil has proposed.

CHAPTER XV.

"The branches cross above our eyes,
The skies are in a net."

The plans have been made without taking Violet into the slightest account, or Floyd, as master of the house. Laura and madame are to come up for a week, and there must be a dinner and an evening party. Laura was compelled to have such a quiet wedding, and it was really shameful to make so much use of madame and offer her so little in return.

"I really don't know what to do about the rooms," says Mrs. Grandon. "It was absurd in Floyd to take that elegant spare chamber when he had two rooms of his own and all the tower; and if one should say a word, my lady would be in high dudgeon, no doubt."

"Mother," begins Gertrude in a calm tone,—and it seems as if Gertrude had lost her sickly whine in this bracing autumn weather,—"you do Violet great injustice. She will give up the room with pleasure the moment she is asked."

"Oh, I dare say!" with a touch of scorn, meant to wither both speaker and person spoken of, "if I were to go down on my knees, which I never have done yet."

"You forget the house is Floyd's."

"No, I do *not*; I am not allowed to," with stately emphasis. "When Floyd was down to the city he was the tenderest of sons to me. She is a sly, treacherous little thing; you can see it in her face. I never would trust a person with red hair, and she sets him up continually. He is so different when he is away from her; Laura remarked it. How he ever could have married her!"

"It would be the simplest act of courtesy to speak about the room; just mention it to Floyd."

Mrs. Grandon draws a long, despairing sigh, as if she had been put upon to the uttermost.

"We must invite the Brades and the Van Bergens to the dinner, though I suppose Laura will choose the guests and divide them to her liking; only at the dinner we shall have no dancing. Laura is to come up to-morrow."

"If you would like me to speak about the room——" says Gertrude.

"I believe I am still capable of attending to my own affairs," is the lofty rejoinder.

Marcia, with her head full of coming events, waylays Floyd on his return that morning.

"I want some money," she says, with a kind of infantile gayety. "I have bills and bills; their name is legion."

"How much?" he asks, briefly.

"I think—you may as well give me a thousand dollars," in a rather slow, considering tone.

He looks at her in surprise.

"Well," and she tosses her head, setting the short curls in a flutter, "is a thousand dollars so large a sum?"

"You had better think before spending it," he answers, gravely. "You will then have four thousand left."

"It is my own money."

"I know it is. But, Marcia, you all act as if there was to be no end to it. If you should get all your part, the ten thousand, it would be only a small sum and easily spent. What do you want to do with so much just now?"

"I told you I had bills to pay," she says, pettishly, "and dresses to get." Then she lights upon what seems to her a withering sarcasm. "I have no one to take me to Madame Vauban's and pay no end of bills. If I bought dresses like that when I had no need of them and was not in society——"

"Hush, Marcia!" he commands, "you shall have your money. Spend it as you like," and he strides through the hall. He has been sorely tried with Eugene, who will *not* interest himself in work, and has been indulging in numerous extravagances; and business has not improved, though everything in the factory goes smoothly.

Violet is in Cecil's room, teaching her some dainty bits of French. She looks up with a bright smile and a blush, the color ripples over her face so quickly. His is so grave. If she only had the courage to go and put her arms about his neck and inquire into the trouble. She is so intensely sympathetic, so generous in all her moods.

He has come home to take her to drive. It is such a soft, Indian-summery day, with the air full of scents and sounds, but all the pleasure has gone out of it now for him.

"Papa, listen to me," says Cecil, with her pretty imperiousness. "I can talk to mamma in real French."

He smiles languidly and listens. If a man should lose his all, this dainty, dimpled little creature playing at motherhood could set a table, sweep a house, make her children's clothes and perhaps keep cheerful through it. Was there ever any such woman, or is he dreaming?

He goes to hunt up Marcia's property, and is tempted to hand it over to her and never trouble his head about it again. But that will not be the part of prudence, any more than trusting their all to Eugene. Having accepted the burthen, he must not lay it down at any chance resting-place. So he hands it to her quietly at luncheon, and that evening listens courteously to his mother's plans, offering no objection.

"But he did not evince the slightest interest," she declares to Marcia. "And you will see that every possible obstacle will be put in the way."

"And he can spend his money upon pony carriages for her!" retorts Marcia, spitefully.

The pony carriage is indeed a grievance, and when Floyd teaches his wife to ride, as her pony is accustomed to the saddle, the cup brims over. He has announced the visitors to her, and she dreads, yet is most anxious to see Madame

Lepelletier.

"Was not this room hers when she was here in the summer?" asks Violet, standing by the window.

"Yes," answers her husband, but he makes no further comment. It looks like crowding Violet out, and he is not sure he wants that. He will have her treated with the utmost respect during this visit, and it will prove an opportunity to establish her in her proper standing as his wife.

It all comes about quite differently. Violet is at the cottage, and has gone up to take a look at papa's room and put some flowers on the table. All is so lovely and peaceful. There is no place in the world like it, for it is not the chamber of death, but rather that of resurrection.

"Violet," calls her husband.

She turns to run down the stairs. It is a trifle dark, and how it happens she cannot tell, but she lands on the floor almost at her husband's feet, and one sharp little cry is all.

He picks her up and carries her to the kitchen, laying her on Denise's cane-seat settee, where she shudders and opens her eyes, then faints again.

"I wonder if any bones are broken!" And while Denise is bathing her forehead, he tries her arms, which are safe. Then as he takes one small foot in his hand she utters a piercing exclamation of pain. Prof. Freilgrath is away; there is nothing but for Floyd to go for a physician. He looks lingeringly, tenderly at the sweet child face, and kisses the cold lips. Yes, she is very dear to him.

He brings back the doctor speedily. One ankle is badly sprained, and there seems a wrench of some kind in her back. She must be undressed and put to bed, and her ankle bandaged. He makes her draw a dozen long respirations.

"I do not believe it can be anything serious," he says, kindly, "but we will keep good watch. I will be in again early in the morning. There is no present cause for anxiety," studying Grandon's perturbed face.

"I hope there is none at all," the husband responds, gravely. "And—would it be possible to move her in a day or two?"

"She had better lie there on her back for the next week. You see, it is a great shock to both nerves and muscles: we are not quite birds of the air," and he laughs cheerily. "We will see how it goes with her to-morrow."

Floyd returns to the chamber. Violet has a bright spot on either cheek, and her eyes have a frightened, restless expression.

"It was so careless of me," she begins, in her soft tone that ought to disarm and conquer any prejudice. "I should have looked, but I have grown so used to running up and down."

"Accidents happen to the best of people." Then he has to laugh at the platitude, and she laughs, too. "I mean—" he begins—"well, you are not to worry or blame yourself, or to take the slightest trouble. I am sorry it should happen just now, or at any time, for that matter, and my only desire is that you shall get perfectly well and strong. It might have been worse, my little darling," and he kisses her tenderly. Then suddenly he realizes how very much worse it might have been, if she had been left maimed and helpless; and bending over, folds her in such an ardent embrace that every pulse quivers, and her first impulse is to run away from something she cannot understand, yet is vaguely delicious when the fear has ceased.

"I must go down to the park, but I will be back soon and stay all night. Denise will bring you up a cup of tea." Then he kisses her again and leaves her trembling with a strange, secret joy.

Rapidly as he drives home, he finds them all at dinner. "You are late," his mother exclaims sharply, but makes no further comment. Eugene stares a little at the space behind him, and wonders momentarily. But when he seats himself and is helped, he remarks that Cecil is not present and inquires the reason.

"She was very naughty," explains Mrs. Grandon, severely. "Floyd, the best thing you can do is to send that child back to England. She is completely spoiled, and no one can manage her. If you keep on this way she will become unendurable."

Floyd Grandon makes no answer. If Marcia and Eugene would not tease her so continually, and laugh at the quick and sometimes insolent retorts!

"Where is Violet?" inquires Gertrude.

"She is at the cottage. She has met with an accident," he replies, gravely.

"Oh!" Gertrude is really alarmed. The rest are curious, indifferent. "What is it, what has happened?"

"She slipped and fell down-stairs, and has sprained her ankle; beside the shock, we trust there are no more serious hurts."

"Those poky little stairs!" says Marcia. "I wonder some one's neck has not been broken before this. Why do you not tear them out, Floyd, and have the place altered. It has some extremely picturesque points and would make over beautifully."

"It wouldn't be worth the expense," says Eugene, decisively, "on that bit of cross road with no real street anywhere. I wonder at St. Vincent putting money in such a cubby as that."

"The situation is exquisite," declares Marcia. "It seems to just hang on the side of the cliff, and the terraced lawn and gardens would look lovely in a sketch; on an autumn day it would be at its best, with the trees in flaming gold and scarlet, and the intense green of the pines. I really must undertake it before it is too late. Or as 'Desolation' in midwinter it would be wonderfully effective."

"The most effective, I think."

Eugene is angry with Floyd for being the real master of the situation and not allowing him to draw on the firm name for debts. He takes a special delight in showing ill-temper to the elder.

"I am so glad," says Gertrude to Floyd, as soon as there is sufficient lull to be heard. "Broken limbs are sometimes extremely troublesome. But she will not be able to walk for some weeks if it is bad."

"It was dreadfully swollen by the time Dr. Hendricks came. I am very thankful it was no worse, though that will be bad enough just when I wanted her well," he says, with an energetic ring to his voice that causes his mother to glance up.

"It is extremely unfortunate," she comments, with sympathy plainly ironical. "What had we better do? Our dinner invitations are out."

"Everything will go on just the same," he answers, briefly, but he is sick at heart.

His life seems sacrificed to petty dissensions and the selfish aims of others. The great, beautiful house is his, but he has no home. The wife that should be a joy and pleasure is turned by them into a thorn to prick him here and there. Even his little child—

"Jane, what was the trouble?" he asks, a few minutes later, as he enters Cecil's room, where she is having a cosy dinner with her small dishes.

"O papa—and I don't mind at all! It's just splendid up here."

"Hush, Cecil," rather peremptorily.

"Mrs. Grandon was—I *do* think she was cross," says Jane. "Miss Cecil said she would wait for her mamma, and Mrs. Grandon said——" Jane hesitates.

"Isn't it your house, papa? Grandmamma shook me because I said so," and Cecil glances up defiantly.

"What did Mrs. Grandon say?" he asks, quietly, of Jane; for intensely as he dislikes servants' gossip, he will know what provocation was given to his child.

"She said that Miss Cecil wasn't mistress here nor any one else, and that she would not have dinner kept waiting for people who chose to be continually on the go. She took Miss Cecil's hand, and the child jerked away, and she scolded, and Miss Cecil said that about the house."

"Very well, I understand all that is necessary." He has not the heart to scold Cecil, the one being in the house devoted to Violet, and looks at her with sad eyes as he says,—

"Mamma has had a bad fall, and is ill in bed. You must be a good girl to-night and not make trouble for Jane."

"Oh, let me go to her!" Cecil is down from her dainty table, clinging to her father. "Let me go, I will be so good and quiet, and not tease her for stories, but just smooth her pretty hair as I did when her head ached. Oh, you will let me go?"

He raises her in his arms and kisses the rosy, beseeching lips, while the earnest heart beats against his own. "My darling," there is a little tremble in his voice, "my dear darling, I cannot take you to-night, but if you will be brave and quiet

you shall go to-morrow. See if you cannot earn the indulgence, and not give papa any trouble, because you love him."

A long, quivering breath and dropping tears answer him. He is much moved by her effort and comforts her, puts her back in her chair, and utters a tender good night. Gertrude waylays him in the hall for a second assurance that matters are not serious with Violet, and sends her love. He sees no one else, and goes out in the darkness with a step that rings on the walk. It seems to him that he has never been so angry in all his life, and never so helpless.

"She has had her tea and fallen asleep," announces Denise, in a low tone, as if loud talking was not permissible, even at the kitchen door. "I think the powder was an anodyne. There is another for her in the night if she is restless."

He goes up over the winding stairs with a curious sensation. She lies there asleep, one arm thrown partly over her head, the soft white sleeve framing in the fair hair that glitters as if powdered with diamond-dust. The face is so piquant, so brave, daring, seductive, with its dimples and its smiling mouth, albeit rather pale. His stern, tense look softens. She is sweet enough for any man to love: she has ten times the sense of Marcia, the strength and spirit of Gertrude, and none of the selfishness of Laura. She is pretty, too, the kind of prettiness that does not awe or stir deeply or *command* worship. What is it—and an old couplet half evades him—

"A creature not too bright and good
For human nature's daily food."

That just expresses her. What with the writing and the business, he has had so little time for her, but henceforth she shall be his delight. He will devote himself to her pleasure. Proper or not, she shall go to the city and see the gayety, hear concerts and operas and plays, even if they have to go in disguise. But how to give her her true position at home puzzles him sorely. He had meant to introduce her at these coming parties, but of course that is quite out of the question.

Denise comes up presently, the kindly friend, the respectful domestic, and takes a low seat when Mr. Grandon insists upon her remaining awhile. Something in her curious Old World reverence always touches him. He asks about Violet's childhood, whatever she remembers. The mother she never saw; but she has been with the St. Vincents thirteen years. They lived in Quebec for more than half that time; then Mr. St. Vincent was abroad for two years, and Miss Violet went to the convent. Denise is a faithful Romanist, but she has always honored her master's faith,—perhaps because he has been so generous to hers.

There is some tea on the kitchen stove keeping warm, she tells him with her good night, some biscuits and crackers, and a bottle of wine, if he likes better. Then he is left alone, and presently the great clock in the hall tells off slowly and reverently the midnight hour.

Violet stirs and opens her eyes. There is a light, and Mr. Grandon is sitting here. What does it all mean? Her face flushes and she gives a sudden start, half rising, and then drops back on the pillow, many shades paler.

"I know now," she cries. "You came back to stay with me?"

There is a thrill of exultant joy in her tone. Does such a simple act of duty give her pleasure, gratify her to the very soul? He is touched, flattered, and then almost pained.

"You do not suppose I would leave you alone all night, my little Violet?"

"It was good of you to come," she insists. "But are you going to sit up? I am not really ill."

"Your back hurt you, though, when you stirred. I saw it in your face."

"It hurt only a little. I shall have to keep quiet, now," with a bright smile.

"And your ankle must be bathed. I should have done it before but you were sleeping so sweetly. Does your head ache, or is there any pain?"

"Only that in my back; but when I am still it goes away. My ankle feels so tight. If the bandage could be loosened——"

"I think it best not." Then he bathes it with the gentlest handling, until the thick layers have been penetrated. Will she have anything to eat or to drink? Had she better take the second powder?

"Not unless I am restless, and I am not—very, am I?" with a soft little inquiry.

"Not at all, I think," holding her wrist attentively.

"Are you going to sit up all night?" she asks.

"I am going to sit here awhile and put my head on your pillow, so, unless you send me away."

"Send you away!" she echoes, in a tone that confesses unwittingly how glad she is to have him.

Her hand is still in his, and he buries it in his soft beard, or bites the fingers playfully. Her warm cheek is against his on the pillow, and he can feel the flush come and go, the curious little heat that bespeaks agitation. It is an odd, new knowledge, pleasing withal, and though he is in some doubt about the wisdom, he hates even to move.

"You are quite sure you are comfortable?" he asks again.

"Oh, delightful!" There is a lingering cadence in her voice, as if there might be more to say if she dared.

"You must go to sleep again, like a good child," he counsels, with a sense of duty uppermost.

She breathes very regularly, but she is awake long after he fancies her oblivious. She feels the kisses on her cheek and on her prisoned fingers, and is very, very happy, so happy that the pain in her ankle is as nothing to bear.

Dr. Hendricks makes a very good report in the morning. The patient's back has been strained, and the ankle is bad enough, but good care will soon overcome that. She must lie perfectly still for several days.

"When can she be moved?" Mr. Grandon asks.

"Moved? Why, she can't be moved at all! She is better off here than she would be with a crowd around her bothering and wanting to wait on her, as mothers and sisters invariably do," with a half-laughing nod at Grandon. "Her back must get perfectly strong before she even sits up. The diseases and accidents of life are not half as bad as the under or over care, often most injudicious."

"Oh, do let me stay!" pleads Violet, with large, soft, beseeching eyes.

He has been planning how she shall be honored and cared for in her own home, and does not like to yield. To have her out of the way here will gratify all the others too much.

"Of course you will stay," the doctor says. "When a woman promises to obey at the marriage altar, there is always an exception in the case of that privileged and tyrannical person, the doctor."

Violet smiles, and is glad of the tyranny.

"She may see one or two guests and have a book to read, but she is not to sit up."

The guest to-day is Cecil, but Denise makes the kitchen so altogether attractive that Cecil's heart is very much divided. Mr. Grandon spends part of the afternoon reading aloud, but his mellow, finely modulated voice is so charming that Violet quite forgets the subject in the delight of listening to him. Cecil would fain stay and wishes they could all live with Denise.

Yes, there could be more real happiness in that little nest than in the great house. Aunt Marcia's gift has not brought him very good luck, even from the first.

CHAPTER XVI.

What is the use of so much talking? Is not the wild rose sweet without a comment?—HAZZLIT.

Since there is no real alarm about Mrs. Floyd, arrangements go onward. Madame Lepelletier and Mr. and Mrs. Delancy come up on the appointed day, and madame is led to the lovely guest chamber where she reigned before. This is Monday, and on Tuesday the *elite* of Grandon Park and a select few of the *crème* of Westbrook are invited to dinner. Laura is the star of the occasion, but madame is its grace, its surprise, its charm. The few who have seen her are delighted to renew the acquaintance, others are charmed, fascinated.

There has been no little undercurrent of curiosity concerning Mr. Floyd Grandon's wife. The feeling has gone abroad that there is something about it "not quite, you know." Mrs. Grandon has not concealed her chagrin and disappointment; Marcia's descriptions are wavering and unreliable, as well as her regard. This is such an excellent opportunity for everybody to see and to judge according to individual preference or favor, and behold there is nothing to see. Mrs. Floyd has sprained her ankle and is a prisoner in that queer, lonely little cottage, where her father lived like a hermit. The impression gains ground that Mr. St. Vincent was something of an adventurer, and that his connection with the business has been an immense misfortune for the Grandons; that his daughter is a wild, hoydenish creature, who climbs rocks and scales fences, and is quite unpresentable in society, though she may know how to sit still in church.

Floyd Grandon would very much like to escape this dinner, but he cannot. His position as head of the house, his own house, too, his coming fame, his prestige as a traveller, make him too important an object to be able to consult his own wishes. Then there are old neighbors, who hold out a hand of cordial welcome, who are interested in his success, and whom he has no disposition to slight.

He takes madame in to dinner, who is regal in velvet and lace. There is a little whisper about the old love, a suspicion if something that cannot quite be explained had not happened with the St. Vincent girl, the "old love" would be on again. There is a delicate impression that madame was persuaded into her French marriage very much against her will. She is charming, fascinating, perfection. She distances other women so far that she even extinguishes jealousy.

It certainly is a delightful dinner party, and Mrs. Grandon is in her glory. She almost forgives Violet her existence for the opportuneness of the accident. She is just as much mistress as ever, and to be important is Mrs. Grandon's great delight. She hates secondary positions. To be a dowager without the duchess is the great cross of her life. If Mr. Grandon could have left her wealthy, the sting of his death would not be half so bitter.

It is late when the guests disperse. Violet has insisted that he shall not give her an anxious thought, but he is a man, and he does some incipient envying on her account. Of course to have her up-stairs, an invalid, would not better the position, but to have her *here*, bright and well and joyous, full of quaint little charms, and he has never known how full, how over-brimming she was with all manner of fascinating devices until the last few days. If his mother could realize that under this courteous and attentive exterior, the breeding of the polished man of the world, he is thinking only of Violet in white wrappers, with a cluster of flowers at her throat, she would be more than ever amazed at his idiocy.

There is to be a small company at Mrs. Brade's the next evening, a reception to "dear Laura."

"You *must* come," declares Mrs. Brade, emphatically. "We ought to have a chance at our old friend, and you and the boys grew up together. Do you remember how you used to roast corn and apples at the kitchen fire, and go over your Latin? Why, it seems only yesterday, and all my children are married and gone, save Lucia."

"I shall have to be excused," Floyd Grandon says, in a quiet tone, but with a smile that is fully as decisive. "I shall owe to-morrow evening to my wife, who cannot yet leave her room."

"How very sad and unfortunate! Are we never to have a sight of her, Mr. Grandon, except the glimpses in the carriage and at church?"

"Certainly," he answers. "Circumstances have kept us from society, and I have really had no time for its claims, but I hope to have more presently for it, as well as for her."

"We shall be glad to see you, never doubt that. Lucia will be so disappointed to-morrow evening."

Grandon bows. Is there anything more to say proper to the occasion? He has heard so much during the last three months that he has grown quite nervous on the subject of society etiquette.

On the morrow Violet is anxious to hear about the dinner. She is young and full of interest in gay doings, in spite of her early sorrow. He makes blunders over the dresses, and they both laugh gayly; he describes the guests and the old friends, and the complimentary inquiries about her.

"I wish you could be there on Thursday evening," he says, regretfully. "That is to be a party with dancing, and plenty of young people,—Laura's companions."

"And I have never been to a real party in all my life!" she cries. "I suppose I couldn't dance, but I could look on, and there is my lovely dress!"

"You shall have a party for your own self, and all the dancing you want," he answers.

"Can *you* waltz, Mr. Grandon?" she asks, after a moment's thought.

He laughs. The idea of Floyd Grandon, traveller and explorer, whirling round in a giddy waltz!

"It isn't so ridiculous," she says, her face full of lovely, girlish resentment. "At school we learned to waltz, but it was with girls, and—I couldn't ever waltz with any one but you, because—because——" and her eyes fill up with tears.

"No," he answers, quickly, "I shouldn't ever want you to. I will—I mean we will both practise up. I did waltz when I was first in India, but my dancing days came to an end."

She remembers. There was the long sea-voyage and the death of Cecil's mother.

"My darling," he says, distressed at her grave face and not dreaming of what is in her thoughts, "when you are well once again, and the right time comes, you shall

dance to your heart's content. I will take you to a ball,—to dozens of them,—for you have had no real young-girl life. And now, as soon as you can endure the fatigue, we will go to the city to operas and theatres. I was thinking, that first night you were hurt, what a little hermit you had been, and that we would give the proprieties the go-by for once."

He is leaning over her reclining chair, looking down into her velvety eyes and watching the restless sweep of the long bronze lashes. The whole face is electrified with delicious rapture, and she stretches up her arms to clasp him about the neck.

"Oh, you thought of me, then!" she cries, with a tremulous joy. "You were planning pleasures for me, and I just laid and slept," remorsefully.

"But if you had not slept I should have been ill at ease, and could have planned no pleasures. It was your bounden duty."

He kisses her fondly. It is quite a new delight. Is he really falling in love with her? as the phrase goes. It will be delightful to have duty and inclination join.

"I shall be so careful," she says, when they come back to a reasonable composure. "Dr. Hendricks said if I was very careful and not impatient to get about, my ankle would be just as strong as ever. I want it to be—perfect, so I can dance all night; people do sometimes. Oh, if I had hurt myself so that I never could get well!" and her face is pale with terror.

"Don't think of it, my darling."

Cecil comes up, full of importance and in a Holland apron that covers her from chin almost to ankles. "I have made a cake," she announces, "and we have just put it in the oven. It is for lunch. You will surely stay, papa!"

"Surely, surely! Who dressed you up, Cecil?" and he smiles.

"This used to be mamma's," she says, with great dignity. "Denise made it when she lived with her and used to help her work. There is another one, trimmed with red, and I am going to have that also."

Violet smiles and holds out her hand; Cecil takes that and slips on her father's knee, and the love-making is interrupted. But there is a strange stir and tumult in the young wife's soul and a shyness comes over her; she feels her husband's eyes

upon her, and they seem to go through every pulse. What is it that so stops her breath, that sends a sudden heat to her face and then a vague shiver that is not coldness or terror?

Then he wonders when the professor, who has gone on a brief lecturing experience, will be back; they are counting on him for the party, and will be extremely disappointed if he should not reach Grandon Park in time.

"And he will be surprised to find that some one else has come in and taken possession," says Violet.

"He is so nice!" remarks Cecil, gravely. "I like him so much better than I do Uncle Eugene. What makes him my uncle?" with a puzzled frown on the bright face and a resentful inflection in her voice.

"Fate," answers her father, which proves a still more difficult enigma to her and keeps her silent many moments.

The lunch is up-stairs, for Violet is not allowed to leave the room, though all bruises and strains are well and the ankle is gaining every day. The father, mother, and child get on without any trouble, though Cecil is rather imperious at times. Denise will not have any one to help her, and she is in a little heaven of delight as she watches the two. Floyd Grandon loves his wife, as is meet and right, and she is learning to love him in a modest, careful way, as a young wife should. Such a bride as Laura would shock Denise.

Floyd absents himself from the great house, and sends Eugene, who is nothing loth, to wait upon the ladies and perform their behests. Laura does not care so much, and Mrs. Grandon is in her element, but madame feels that as the child was her *bête noire* in the summer, so is the wife now,—a something that keeps him preoccupied. She is very anxious to see the husband and wife together, but every hour seems so filled, and she cannot ask Floyd to take her. "After the party," says Laura, "there will be plenty of time. She is nothing to see, but, of course, we will pay her the compliment."

This evening reception is really a great thing to Laura, who feels that it is particularly for her glory, as the dinner was an honor to her mother. It is not cold weather yet, and the lawn is to be hung with colored lanterns, the rooms are to put on all their bravery; she wants to say to the world, her little world, "This is the house Arthur Delancy took me from, even if I had no great fortune. I can vie

with the rest of you."

Gertrude comes up to the cottage in the morning for a little quiet and rest. She is the only one who has paid Violet the compliment of a call. "And I don't at all care for the fuss and crowd," she says. "I shall be so glad when it is over and one isn't routed from room to room. Oh, how lovely and cosey you are here!"

"Mr. Grandon," Violet begins, with entreaty in tone and eyes, "couldn't we have the professor's chair up to-day, just for Gertrude; it is so deliciously restful. It is shocking for me to indulge in comfort and see other people sitting in uneasy chairs."

Floyd brings it up. Gertrude is so tall that it seems made for her. The soft, thick silk of the cushions, with a curious Eastern fragrance, the springs to raise and to lower, to sleep and to lounge, are perfection. Gertrude sinks into it with her graceful languor, and for once looks neither old nor faded, but delicate and high-bred. Her complexion has certainly improved,—it is less sallow and has lost the sodden look; and her eyes are pensive when she smiles.

She proves very entertaining. Perhaps a little cynicism is mixed with her descriptions of the guests and their raiment, but it adds a piquancy in which Floyd has been utterly deficient. Silks and satins, and point and Venetian seem real laces when a woman talks about them. And the prospect for to-night is like a bit of enchantment.

"Oh, I should like to see it!" Violet cries, eagerly. "I wonder if it will ever look so lovely again. And the orchestra! I wish I could be down in the pretty summer-house looking and listening. Will they dance any out of doors, think?"

"We used to waltz on the long balconies. I dare say they will again. Laura had a delightful ball just before papa was taken ill, when she and Arthur were first engaged. Why, it is just about a year ago, but it seems so long since then," and Gertrude sighs. "Floyd ought to give you a ball when you begin to go into society. Marcia and I had balls when we were eighteen."

"I shall not be eighteen until next June," says Violet.

"Oh, how young you are! Why, I must seem—And think how much older Floyd is!"

"You seem pleasant and lovely to me. What does a few years signify?" protests Violet.

Gertrude watches her curiously for some seconds. "I hope you will always be very happy, and that Floyd will be fond of you."

"Of course he will," returns Violet, with a sudden flush. He is fond of her now, she is quite sure. She can remember so many deliciously sweet moments that she could tell to no one, and her heart beats with quick bounds.

Gertrude knows more of the world and is silent. What if some day Floyd should become suddenly blinded by madame's fascinations? It is always so in novels.

Somewhere about mid-afternoon there is a breezy voice in the house, and a step comes up the stair which is not Grandon's. A light tap, and the partly open door is pushed wider.

"Mr. Grandon allows me the privilege of making a call of condolence," the professor says, with his cheery smile, that wrinkles his face in good-humored lines. "My dear Mrs. Grandon, did you really forget you had no wings when you attempted to fly? Accept my sympathies, my very warmest, for I was once laid up in the same way, without the excuse of the stairs. Ah, Miss Grandon," and he holds out his hand to her, "have you given up the pleasure at the park?"

"I wouldn't let her give up the reception," interrupts Violet. "No one is to give it up for me," and she remembers suddenly that no one has offered.

"I should be a great deal happier and better pleased to remain here," responds Gertrude, "but Laura would be vexed. After all, it is a good deal to her and madame. Mrs. Floyd Grandon will take her turn next year, when she arrives at legal age. She is yet a mere child."

"It is so, *mignonne*, and you could not dance with a lame foot."

"You are going?" Violet says.

"Yes, I hurried back. Mrs. Delancy was so kind as to send a note. And I had a desire to see my friend's house on this occasion. But why were you not moved?" and he turns his questioning eyes on Violet.

"The doctor forbade it," answers Violet. "And I want to get thoroughly well, so I

obey."

"That is good, that is good," replies the professor, in a tone of the utmost commendation.

They have a most agreeable chat until Mr. Grandon comes in, when Denise sends up some tea and wafer biscuits that would tempt an anchorite. The carriage is at the door for Gertrude, and an urgent note for Floyd, who has been deep in business all the afternoon, making up Eugene's shortcomings.

"You must go," Violet says, but it is half questioningly.

"Yes. Gertrude, I shall be very glad to have you keep me in countenance. We will discourse cynically upon the follies of the day and young people in general."

"No," Violet says, with pretty peremptoriness. "Gertrude is going to be young to-night. Oh, what will you wear?"

"There is nothing but black silk," answers Gertrude, "and that never was especially becoming, as I can indulge in no accessories. But Laura's dress is perfection. The palest, loveliest pink you can imagine, and no end of lace. Luckily, Mr. Delancy has not his fortune to make."

Floyd kisses his wife tenderly and whispers some hurried words of comfort. When they are gone the professor drops into his own luxurious chair and does not allow Mrs. Grandon time for despondency. He has an Old World charm; he has, too, the other charm of a young and fresh heart when he is not digging into antiquities.

Some way the talk comes around to Gertrude. She is so delicate, so melancholy, she shrinks so away from all the happy confusion that most women love. "Is it her grief for her father?" he asks.

"I don't think it all that," says Violet, with a most beguiling flush. "There was another sorrow in her life, a—she loved some one very much. If he had died it would not have been as bad, but—oh, I wonder if I *ought* to tell?" and she finds so much encouragement in his eyes that she goes on. "He was—very unworthy."

"Ah!" The professor strokes and fondles his long, sunny beard. "But she should cast him out, she should not keep pale and thin, and in ill health, and brood over the trouble."

"I do not believe her life is—well, you see they all have other pursuits and are fond of society, and she stays too much alone," explains Violet, with a perplexed brow. "She is so good to me, I like her."

"Who could help being good to thee, *mignonne*?" and the look with which he studies the flower-like face brings a soft flush to it. Torture would not make her complain, but she feels in her inmost soul that Gertrude, alone, has been even kind. And she wishes somehow she could make him like her better than any of the others, even the beautiful madame, about whom he is enthusiastic.

"Bah!" he says. "Why should one go mourning for an unworthy love? When it is done and over there is the end. When you are once disenchanted, how can you believe?"

"But you are not disenchanted," says Violet, stoutly. "You have believed and loved, you have made a little world of your own, and even if it does go down in the great ocean you can never quite forget it was there."

"But there are other worlds. See, Mrs. Grandon, when I was two-and-twenty I loved to madness. She was eighteen and adorable, but her mother would not hear to a betrothment. I had all my fortune yet to make. I threw up my hopes and aims and took to commercial pursuits, which I hated. We exchanged vows and promised to wait, and the end of it was that she married a handsome young fellow with a fortune. I went back to my books. A few years afterward I saw her, stout, rosy, and happy, with her two children, and then—well, I did not want her. The life she delighted in would have been ashes in my mouth. It was better, much better. People are not all wise at two-and-twenty."

"If Gertrude had something to do," says Violet, "and that is where men are fortunate. They can try so many things."

The professor goes on stroking his head, and drops into a reverie. "Yes, it is hard," he says, "it is hard." And he wonders not at the colorless life.

But he must smoke his pipe and then dress for the party, so he bids Violet a cordial good evening. She feels a little tired after all the excitements of the day, and is glad to have Denise put her in bed, where she lies dreamily and wonders what love is like.

Meanwhile the reception is at its height, and it is certainly a success. Laura has

discriminated in this affair, like a shrewd woman of the world that she is already. The dinner had to satisfy the *amour propre* of old friends; this was allowed a wider latitude. The rooms are brilliantly lighted, and glow with autumn flowers; the wide out of doors with its rich fragrance shows in colored tones and blended tints, sending long rays over the river. Floyd Grandon may well be proud of his home, and to-night, in spite of some discomforts, he feels that he would not exchange it for anything he has seen that it was possible for him to possess. If Violet were only here! How she would enjoy the lights, the music, the throngs of beautifully dressed women! Floyd Grandon is no cynic. He admires beauty and grace and refinement, and it is here at its best, its finest. Not mere youthfulness. There are distinguished people, who would have gone twice the distance to meet Mr. Grandon and Prof. Freilgrath. The Latimers are really enchanted, and Mrs. Delancy rises in the esteem of many who have looked upon her as simply a bright and pretty girl who has made a good marriage.

Indirectly this is of immense benefit to the business, though that was farthest from Laura's thoughts. There have been rumors that "Grandon & Co." have not prospered of late, and there is a curiously indefinite feeling about them in business circles. The rumor gains credence from this on, that Floyd Grandon's private fortune is something fabulous, and that for family reasons he stands back of all possible mishap; that a misfortune will not be allowed.

If Eugene is not a success amid the toil and moil of business, he shines out pre-eminently on such occasions as these. His handsome face and fine society breeding render him not only a favorite, but a great attraction. Not a girl but is honored by his smile, and the elder ladies give him that charming indulgence which is incense to his vanity. Eugene Grandon is too thoroughly selfish to be silly or even weak, and this very strength of demeanor carries a certain weight, even with men, and is irresistible to the tenderer sex.

If there is a spot that is touched it is his utter admiration for madame. She treats him as if he were still in the tender realms of youth; she calls him Eugene, and asks pretty favors of him in a half-caressing manner that is not to be misunderstood. She puts the years between them in a very distinct manner. She will have no "philandering." He *belongs* to the young girls. She dances with him several times, and then chooses partners for him. She is regal to-night, that goes without saying. Her velvet is a pale lavender, that in certain lights looks almost frost white, and it fits her perfect figure admirably.

Laura has been disappointed in the wish of her soul, her grand stroke.

"Floyd," she said, when he came down, looking the faultless gentleman, "you must open the dancing with Madame Lepelletier. You can walk through a quadrille, so you need not begin with excuses. I have arranged the set."

"In this you *must* excuse me, Laura," he answers, with quiet decision. "I have not danced for years, and, under the circumstances——"

"You don't mean you are going to turn silly, just because—your wife is not here?" and her authority dominates his. "It would not be decent for her to dance if she were here! We never even went to a dancing party after papa's death, until—well, not until this autumn, and I wouldn't marry before six months had elapsed. Then, I have everything planned, I have even spoken to madame. O Floyd!" and seeing his face still unrelenting, her eyes fill with tears.

"My dear Laura——" A woman's slow tears move him inexpressibly, while noisy crying angers him, and he bends to kiss her. "Do not feel hurt, my child. Command me in anything else, but this I cannot do."

"Oh, I know, she made you promise, the mean, jealous little thing!"

"Hush," he commands. "She asked no favors and I made no promises. She would not care if I danced every set."

"That is just it!" cries Laura, angrily. "She doesn't care, she doesn't know——"

"She is my wife!" He walks away, so indignant the first moment that he all but resolves to return to Violet, then his duty as host presents itself. He and the professor and a few others keep outside of the magic circle, but no one would suspect from his demeanor that he had been ruffled for an instant. There is enough enjoyment in the rambles about the lawn and smoking on the balcony. It is the perfection of an early autumn night; in fact, for two or three days it has been unusually warm.

Gertrude looks quite well for her. Madame has added a few incomparable toilet touches. Floyd is attentive to her, and Prof. Freilgrath takes her to supper, promenades with her, and is quite delightful for an old bookworm. Mr. Latimer talks to her and finds her a great improvement on Marcia, but the German keeps thinking over her poor little story. If there *was* something for her to do! and he

racks his brain. There are no crowds of nephews and nieces, there is no house to keep, there is no gardening, and he remembers his own busy countrywomen.

A little whisper floats about in the air that young Mrs. Grandon is not *quite*—but no one finishes the sentence that Laura so points with a shrug. It seems a pity that a man of his position and attainments should stumble upon such a *mesalliance*. The sprained ankle is all very well, but the feeling is that some lack in gift or grace or education is quite as potent as any physical mishap in keeping her away to-night. Gertrude, out of pure good-nature, praises her, but Gertrude is a little *passé* and rather out of society. The professor speaks admiringly, but he is Mr. Grandon's *confrère*, and a scholar is not a very good judge of a young girl's capacity to fill such a place in the world as Mrs. Floyd Grandon's *ought* to be. But all this creates in his favor a romantic sympathy, and this evening men and women alike have found him charming.

CHAPTER XVII.

Of a truth there are many unexpected things in a long life.—ARISTOPHANES.

"With whom did you dance?" Violet asks, her face one lovely glow of eager interest; jealousy and she are unknown at this period.

"Dance? an old fellow like me?"

"You are not old!" and her face is a delicious study of indignation. "You are not as old as the professor."

"But he did not dance, and Gertrude did not dance."

"Oh," her face clouds over, "are people—do they get too old to dance?"

"They certainly do."

"And you said you would dance with me!" she cries, in despairing accents.

He laughs heartily, and yet it is very sweet to witness her abandon of disappointment.

"My darling, I shall not be too old to dance with you until I am bald and rheumatic and generally shaky," he answers, in a fond tone.

"Then it was because—*was* it because *I* was not there?"

"It certainly was"; and he smiles down into the velvety brown eyes. "And it was very base manners, too."

"Oh," with a long, quivering breath, that moves her whole slender body, "how thoughtful you were! And did madame dance much?" she asks, presently. "It must be lovely to see her dance. What did she wear?"

"Violet velvet. Well, the color of some very pale wood violets, such as I used to find hereabouts when I was a lad. Last summer I found another kind."

She considers a moment before she sees the point, and then claps her hands delightedly.

"They are all coming over to call this afternoon, I believe. Isn't there some sort of pretty gown among those things that came from New York?"

"Yes, a lovely white cashmere, with bits of purple here and there."

"And I shall carry you down-stairs. We must have a fire made in the professor's parlor. It will be your reception. The ladies go home on Saturday."

"And now tell me all about it, last night, I mean. Begin at the very first," she says, with a bewitching imperiousness.

In spite of himself a quick color goes over his face. The "very first" was Laura's impossible command. Then he laughs confusedly and answers,—

"The professor was the earliest guest. Then the train came in and the people multiplied."

"But I want to hear about the dresses and the music and the lovely lighted lawn."

The professor comes up and is impressed in the arduous service, but they are not as much at home as in the description of a ruin, though it is a great deal merrier. Cecil strays in and climbs over her father's knee. Her enthusiasm spends itself largely in the kitchen with Denise, compounding startling dishes, playing house in one corner with a family of dolls, or talking to the gentle, wise-eyed greyhound.

After lunch Floyd goes down to the park and rummages through Violet's wardrobe in a state of hapless bewilderment, calling finally upon Gertrude to make a proper selection. Denise attires her young mistress, who looks really pale after this enforced seclusion. Mr. Grandon carries her down-stairs; and if it is not a conventional parlor, the room still has some picturesque aspects of its own, and the two luxurious wolf-robies on the floor are grudged afterward, as Laura steps on them. There is a great jar full of autumn branches and berries in one corner that sends out a sort of sunset radiance, and a cabinet of china and various curious matters. But the fire of logs is the crowning glory. The light dances and

shimmers, the logs crackle and send up glowing sparks, the easy-chairs look tempting. They are all in the midst of an animated discussion when the carriage drives around. At the last moment Mrs. Grandon has given out with a convenient headache and sends regrets.

Violet is curious to see Madame Lepelletier. The lovely woman sweeps across the room and bends over the chair to take Violet's hand. It is small and soft and white, and the one slippered foot might vie with Cinderella's. The clear, fine complexion, the abundant hair with rippling sheen that almost defies any correct color tint, and is chestnut, bronze, and dusky by turns, the sweet, dimpled mouth, the serene, unconscious youth, the truth and honor in the lustrous velvet eyes: she is not prepared to meet so powerful a rival. The Grandons have all underrated Violet St. Vincent. Floyd Grandon is not a man to kindle quickly, but there may come a time when all the adoration of the man's nature will be aroused by that simple girl.

"Oh," says Laura, pointedly, "are you well enough to come down-stairs? Now we heard such a dreadful report that you could hardly stir."

"I was not allowed to stir at first." Violet's voice is trained to the niceties of enunciation, and can really match madame's. Laura's has a rather crude strain beside it, the acridness of youth that has not yet ripened. "The doctor has forbidden my trying my foot for some time to come."

"She has two—what do you call them?—loyal knights to obey her slightest frown," declares the professor.

"Oh, do I frown?" She smiles now, and the coming color makes her look like a lovely flower.

"No, no, it is nod or beck. I cannot always remember your little compliments, and I make blunders," says the professor, quickly.

"She is extremely fortunate," replies madame, who smiles her sweetest smile, and it is one of rare art and beauty. "I am sorry to have missed you through this little visit," she continues, with a most fascinating, delicate regret.

"And I am so sorry." She is sorry now; she feels more at home with Madame Lepelletier in five minutes than she does with any of the family, Gertrude excepted. She knows now that she should have enjoyed the reception, even if she

had no right to dance.

Laura spies out the china, and she has the craze badly. Madame turns to inspect the cabinet. There is a true Capo di Monté, and some priceless Nankin, and here a set of rare intaglios. Some one must have had taste and discernment. Laura would like to cavil, but dares not. The professor tells of curiosities picked up in the buried cities of centuries ago,—lamps and pitchers and vases and jewels that he has sent to museums abroad,—and stirs them all with envy.

During this talk Violet listens with an air of interest. She knows at least some of the points of good breeding, decides madame. She also asks Grandon to bring two or three odd articles from Denise's cupboard.

"You don't admit that you actually drink out of them," cries Laura, in amaze, at last.

"Why, yes," and Violet laughs in pure delight. If there was a tint of triumph in it, Laura would turn savage, but it is so generous, so genial. "I wish you would accept that," she says, "and drink your chocolate out of it every day. Won't you please wrap it some way?" and she turns her eyes beseechingly to Floyd.

The love of possession triumphs over disdain. Laura is tempted so sorely, and Floyd brings some soft, tough, wrinkled paper, that looks as if it might have been steeped in amber, and gently wraps the precious cup and saucer, while Laura utters thanks. They all politely hope that she will soon be sufficiently recovered to come home, and madame prefers a gentle request that she shall be allowed to offer her some hospitality presently when she begins to go into society.

"Oh," declares Violet, when the two gentlemen return from their farewell devoirs, "how utterly lovely she is! I do not suppose princesses are *always* elegant, but she seems like one, the most beautiful of them all; and her voice is just enchanting! I could imagine myself being bewitched by her. I could sit and look and listen——"

"*Mignonne*, thy husband will be jealous," says the professor.

Floyd laughs at that.

"Well, it was a charming call. I was a little afraid Laura would be vexed over the cup; you see, I don't know the propriety of gift-giving, but I *do* know the

delight"; and her face is in a lovely glow. "Why do you suppose people care so much for those things? Papa was always collecting. Why, we could almost open a museum."

"You can sell them, in a reverse of fortune," says the professor, with an amusing smile.

Floyd inquires if she will return to her room, but Freilgrath insists that they shall have tea in here. Mrs. Grandon is his first lady guest.

The carriage meanwhile rolls away in silence. Laura and Gertrude bickered all the way over, and now, if Gertrude had enough courage and was aggressive by nature, she would retort, but peace is so good that she enjoys every precious moment of it; but at night, when Laura is lingering in Madame Lepelletier's room, while Arthur smokes the remnant of his cigar on the porch, she says, with a sort of ironical gayety,—

"Well, were you quite extinguished by Mrs. Floyd? You seem dumb and silent! She looked exceptionally well, toned down and all that, though I did expect to find her playing with a doll."

"She is quite a pretty girl," returns madame, leisurely, carefully folding her exquisite lace fichu and laying it back in its scented box. "Very young, of course, and will be for years to come, yet tolerably presentable for an *ingenue*. And after all, Laura, she is your brother's wife."

"But the awful idiocy of Floyd marrying her! And demure as she looks, she makes desperately large eyes at the professor. So you see she has already acquired *one* requisite of fashionable life."

"There will be less to learn," replies madame, with charming good-nature.

"Oh, I suppose we *shall* have to take her up some time, but I can never get over my disappointment, never! It is seeing her in *that* place that makes me so savage!" and she kisses the handsome woman, who forgives her; and who hugs to her heart the secret consciousness that Floyd Grandon does not love his wife, though he may be fond of her.

Violet improves rapidly, and is taken out to drive, for Floyd cannot bear to have her lose the fine weather. They read a little French together, and he corrects her

rather too provincial pronunciation. Her education is fairly good in the accomplishments, and she will never shame him by any ignorance, unless in some of the little usages of society that he knows no more about than she. Her innocent sweetness grows upon him daily; he is glad, yes, really glad that he has married her.

When she does finally return home she is chilled again by the contrast. Marcia has gone to Philadelphia; Mrs. Grandon is cold to a point of severity, and most untender to Cecil. Her surprise is a beautiful new piano, for Laura's has gone to the city. She begins at once with Cecil's lessons, and this engrosses her to some extent. Cecil is quick and rapturously fond of music, "real music" as she calls it, but scales and exercises are simply horrible. Gertrude comes in now and then, oddly enough, and insists that it rather amuses her. She sits with her in the evenings when Floyd is away, and often accompanies her in a drive. Violet does not imagine there is any ulterior motive in all this, but Gertrude is really desirous of helping to keep the peace. When she is present Mrs. Grandon is not so scornful or so aggressive. Gertrude does not want hard or stinging words uttered that might stir up resentment. If Violet cannot love, at least let her respect. It will be an old story presently, and the mother will feel less bitter about it.

It is such a strange thing for Gertrude to think of any one beside herself that her heart warms curiously, seems to come out of her everlasting novels and takes an interest in humanity, in nature, to go back to the dreams of her lost youth. Violet is so sweet, so tender! If she had known any such girl friend then, but she and Marcia never have been real friends. There is another delicate thought in Gertrude's soul. Laura and her mother have sneered about the professor, with whom they are all charmed, nevertheless; and she means that no evil tongue shall say with truth that Violet is alone too much with him or lays herself out to attract him. She furbishes up her old knowledge and talks with them, she reads the books he has recommended to Violet, and they discuss them together until it appears as if she were the interested one. She nearly always goes with her to the cottage. Sometimes she wonders why she does all this when it is such a bore. Why should she care about Violet particularly? But when the soft arms are clasped round her neck and the sweet, fragrant lips throb with tender kisses, she wakes to a sad and secret knowledge of wasted years.

To Violet there comes one crowning glory, that is the promised *matinee*. Miss Neilson is to play *Juliet*, and though Floyd considers it rather weak and sweet,

Violet is enraptured.

"Would you like to go to a lunch or dinner at Madame Lepelletier's?" he asks.

Violet considers a moment. She cannot tell why, but she longs for this pleasure *alone* with Mr. Grandon. It will be her first real enjoyment with him.

"Would you—rather?"

There is an exquisite timidity in her voice, the touch of deference to the husband's wishes that cannot but be flattering. She will go if *he* desires it. He has only to speak. He remembers some one else who never considered his pleasure or desire.

"My child, no!" and he folds her to his heart. "She wants you to come, some time; she has spoken of it."

"I should like this to be just between *us*." There is the loveliest little inflection on the plural. "And I should like to go there, too."

"Then it shall be just between *us*." Something in his eyes makes the light in hers waver and go down; she trembles and would like to run away, only he is holding her so tightly.

"What is it?" he asks, with a quick breath.

Ah, if she had known then, if he had known, even! He had never watched the delicate blooming of a girl's heart and knew not how to translate its throbs. He kisses her in a dazed way, and no kisses were ever so sweet.

"Well," he says, presently, "we will let Cecil go over to Denise in the morning"—he can even put his child away for her—"and keep our own secret."

It is delicious to have a secret with him. She dreams of it all the long evening; he is looking over some proofs with the professor. And she can hardly conceal her joy the next morning; she feels guilty as she looks Gertrude in the face.

The city is very gay this Saturday morning. They look in some shop windows, they go to a tempting lunch, and then enter the charming little theatre, already filling up with beautifully dressed women and some such exquisite young girls. She wishes for the first time that she was radiantly beautiful; she does not dream how much of this is attire, well chosen and costly raiment.

She listens through the overture; she is not much moved during the first act. Miss Neilson is pretty and winsome in her quaint dress, with her round, white arms on her nurse's knee, looking up to her eyes; she is respectful to her stately mother, and she cares for her lover. The lights, the many faces about her, the progress of the play interest, but it is when she comes to the balcony scene that Violet is stirred. The longing, lingering love, the good night said over and over, the lover who cannot make parting seem possible, who turns again and again. She catches the tenderness in Miss Neilson's eyes; ah, it is divine passion now, and she is touched, thrilled, electrified. She leans over a little herself, and her pure, innocent young face, with its dewy eyes and parted, cherry-red lips are a study, a delight. One or two rather ennuied-looking men watch her, and Floyd forgives them. It seems to him he has never seen anything more beautiful. The unconscious, impassioned face, with its vivid sense of newness, its first thrilling interest, indifferent to all things except the young lovers, steady, strong, tender, sympathetic. Even women smile and then sigh, envying her the rapt delight of thus listening.

When it is over Violet turns her tearful eyes to her husband in mute questioning. This surely cannot be the end, the reward of love? For an instant the man's heart is thrilled with profoundest pain and pity for the hard lesson that she, like all others, must learn. He feels so helpless to answer that trust, that supreme innocence.

Everybody stirs, rises. Violet looks amazed, but he draws her hand through his arm. Several new friends nod and smile, wondering if that is Floyd Grandon's child-wife that he has so imprudently or strangely married? He hurries out a little. He does not want to speak to any one. In the crush Violet clings closely; he even takes both hands as he sees the startled look in her eyes.

The fresh, crisp air brings her back to her own world and time, but her eyes are still lustrous, her cheeks have an indescribable, delicious color, and her lips are quivering in their rose red.

"Where shall we go?" he says. "Will you have some fruit or an ice, or something more solid?"

"Oh!" and her long inspiration is almost like a sigh. "I couldn't eat anything—after that! *Did* they really die? Oh, if *Romeo* had not come so soon, *quite* so

soon!" and her sweet, piteous voice pierces him.

"My darling, you must not take it so to heart," he entreats.

"But they *were* happy in that other country. And they went together," glancing up with an exquisite hope in her eyes. "It was better than to live separate. Mr. Grandon, *do* you know what love like that is?"

She asks it in all innocence. She would be very miserable at this moment if she thought she had come to the best love of her life. Her training has been an obedient marriage, a duty of love that is quite possible, that shall come some time hence.

"No," he says, slowly. He really dare not tell her any falsehood. He did not love Cecil's mother this way, and though he may come to love Violet with the highest and purest passion, he does not do so now. "No, my dear child, very few people do."

"But they could, they might!" and there is a ring of exultation in her tone.

"Some few might," he admits, almost against his better judgment.

"Why, do you not see that it is all, *all* there is of real joy, of perfect bliss? There is nothing else that can so thrill the soul."

They surge against a crowd on the corner crossing. He pauses and glances at her. "Shall we go home?" he asks, "or somewhere else? If it is home, we may as well take a car."

"Oh, home!" she answers. So they take the car and there is no more talking, but he watches the face of youth and happy thoughts, and is glad that it is his very own.

The train is crowded as well. An instinctive shyness would forbid her talking much under the eyes of strangers, if good breeding did not. She settles in her corner and thinks the good night over and over, until she again sees Miss Neilson's love-lit, impassioned countenance.

The sun has dropped down and it is quite cold now. They must go for Cecil.

"Oh," cries Violet, remorsefully, "we forgot Cecil! We never brought her anything! But I have a lovely box of creams at home; only you do not like her to

eat so much sweets."

"Give her the creams." and he smiles at her tenderness.

Cecil welcomes them joyfully. She has two lovely little iced cakes baked in patty-pans.

"One is for you, mamma——" Then she suddenly checks herself. "O Denise, we ought to have baked three; we forgot papa!" she says, with childish *naiveté*.

"Well, mamma will divide hers with me."

A curious feeling runs over him. The child and the father have forgotten each other an instant, but the child and the mother remembered.

It is dark when they reach home. The spacious hall is all aglow with light and warmth. In the parlor sits the professor, and Cecil, catching a sight of his beaming face, runs to him.

Gertrude comes out, and putting her arms around Violet's neck, kisses her with so unusual a fervor that Violet stares.

"I have something to tell you after dinner. You shall be the first. Oh, what a cold little face, but sweet as a rose! There is the bell."

They hurry off and soon make themselves presentable. The professor brings in Gertrude. He is—if the word maybe applied to such a bookish man—inexpressibly jolly. Mrs. Grandon hardly knows how to take him, and is on her guard against some plot in the air. Violet laughs and parries his gay badinage, feeling as if she were in an enchanted realm. Floyd has a spice of amazement in his countenance.

"Now," the professor says, as they rise, "I shall take Mr. Grandon off for a smoke, since we do not sit over wine."

"And I shall appropriate Mrs. Grandon," declares Gertrude, with unusual *verve*.

When they reach the drawing-room she says, "Send Cecil to Jane, will you not?"

But Cecil has no mind to be dismissed from the conclave. Violet coaxes, entreats, promises, and finally persuades her to go, very reluctantly indeed, with Jane for just half an hour, when she may come down again.

Gertrude passes her arm over Violet's shoulder, and draws her down to the soft, silk cushioned *tête-à-tête*. Her shawl lies over the arm,—she did not wear it in to dinner.

"You wouldn't imagine," she begins, suddenly, "that any one would care to marry me. I never supposed——"

"It is the professor!" cries Violet, softly. "He loves you. Oh, how delightful!"

"Why, did he tell you?"

"I never thought until this instant. That is why you are both so new and strange, and why your cheeks are a little pink! O Gertrude, *do* you love him?"

Her face is a study in its ardent expectation, its delicious joy. What does this girl know of love?

"Why—I—of course I like him, Violet. I could not marry a man I did *not* like, or a man who was not kindly or congenial." Then she remembers how very slight an opportunity Violet had to decide whether Floyd would be congenial or not, and is rather embarrassed. "We are not foolish young lovers," she explains, "but I do suppose we shall be happy. He is so kind, so warmhearted; he makes one feel warmed and rested. It did so surprise me, for I had not the faintest idea. I used to stay with you because——"

"Well, because what?" Violet is deeply interested in the least reason for all this strange denouement.

"Because I never wanted any one to say that you, that he," Gertrude begins to flounder helplessly, "were too much alone."

"Who would have said that?" Violet's face is a clear flame, and her dimpled mouth shuts over something akin to indignation.

"Oh, don't, my dear Violet! No one could have said it, because he was Floyd's friend, but you see you were so young, such a child, and I was a sort of grandmother, and you had been in so little society——"

Gertrude breaks down in a nervous tremble, then she laughs hysterically.

"I didn't want you to think *I* was running after *him*," she cries, deprecatingly. "I only came for company, and all that, and he has taken a fancy to have me, to

marry me, though what he wants me for I can't see. I did not suppose I ever should marry. I didn't really care, until Laura began to flaunt her husband in every one's face, and now I shall be so glad to surprise her. What a stir it will make; Marcia will turn fairly green with envy."

Violet begins to be confused. Can any one allow all these emotions with love?

"And you are not a bit glad," says Gertrude, touched at her silence.

"Oh, I am more than glad!" and Violet clasps her arms about Gertrude's neck and kisses her tenderly. Gertrude draws her down on her lap and holds her like a baby.

"Oh, you sweet little precious!" she exclaims. "I don't know how any one could help loving you! The professor thinks you are an angel. But you know *I* should look silly going into transports over a middle-aged man, getting bald on the forehead. I am too tall, too old; but he insists that I will grow younger every year. And I shall try to get back a little of my old beauty. I have not cared, you know, there was nothing to care for, but when you have some one to notice whether your cheeks are pale or pink, and who will want you to be prettily attired—oh, I *am* growing idiotic, after all!"

"So that you are happy, very happy——"

"My dear, I substitute comfort for happiness; one is much more likely to at thirty. But you will not believe me when you hear all. He wants to be married early in January, and take me with him to the Pacific coast and to Mexico. I told him I would have to be carried in a palanquin or on a stretcher, but it would be lovely for a wedding tour!"

"Oh, yes! And you will get stronger and care more for everything; and he will be so pleased to see you take an interest in his pursuits. You must read German and French with him, and make diagrams and columns and jugs and all manner of queer things. You will love to *live* once more, Gertrude, I know you will."

Gertrude sighs happily, yet a little overwhelmed.

"Mamma! mamma!" calls a sweet, rather upbraiding voice, "it is just half an hour."

"Let her come down; we can go on with our talk now," says Gertrude; and the

delighted child flies to her mother's arms.

The gentlemen return presently. Floyd Grandon takes his little girl on his knee, while Violet puts both hands in the professor's and gives him perhaps the sweetest congratulation he will have. Then he wishes to explain matters to Mrs. Grandon and have a betrothal. This all occurs while Violet is putting Cecil to bed. Jane waits upon her young mistress, but the good-night kiss and the tucking up in the soft blanket must be Violet's, and to-night the story is reluctantly deferred.

She finds Mrs. Grandon in the drawing-room when she enters it, dignified and composed, showing in her face none of the elation she feels. For she is amazed and triumphant that this famous gentleman, whose name is the golden key to the most exclusive portals of society, should choose her faded, querulous Gertrude. How much of it is due to Violet she will never know, nor the professor either; but it is Violet who has raised Gertrude up to a new estate out of her old slough of despond, who in her own abundant sweetness and generosity has so clothed the other that she has seemed charming even in the sadness of an apathetical life. Everything is amicably settled. Gertrude does not care for the betrothal party, but to Mrs. Grandon it has a stylish and unusual aspect, and the world can then begin to talk of the engagement.

Violet is strangely perturbed that night. Visions of ill-fated Romeo and Juliet haunt her thoughts. Then she wonders if Gertrude has quite forgotten that old love. Perhaps it would be foolish to let it stand up in ghostly remembrance when something fond and strong and comforting was offered. But which of all these is love? She is yet to learn its Proteus shapes and disguises.

CHAPTER XVIII.

Nothing is courtesy unless it be meant friendly and lovingly.—BEN
JONSON.

The world is amazed that Prof. Freilgrath, the *savant* and explorer, is to take unto himself an American wife. The betrothal party at Grandon Park excites much interest, and the few invited guests feel highly honored. The press has received him and his book with the utmost cordiality; the young women who read everything are wild over it and talk glibly, though it is mostly Greek to them, but then he is the new star and must be admired. Many of them envy Miss Grandon, and well they may.

Gertrude is dressed in soft gray silk, with an abundance of illusion at throat and wrists; a knot of delicate pink satin is the only bit of color, and it lends a sort of tender grace to the thin face, where a transient flush comes and goes. Her betrothal ring is of exquisite pearls. There are congratulations, there is a supper that is perfection. Gertrude is serene, but softened in some strange way, and yet curiously dignified.

Madame Lepelletier is surprised. She considers any marriage a short-sighted step for such a man, and she can only think of Gertrude as a fretful, despondent woman, who will end by being a dead weight upon her husband. Whatever gave him the fancy? for Gertrude was too indolent to set about winning any man.

This is Mrs. Floyd Grandon's first appearance in society, and the guests eye her with a something too well-bred for curiosity. She looks very petite in her trailing dress of dead silk that imitates crape, but is much softer. So quiet, so like a wraith, and yet with a fascinating loveliness in her eyes, in her tender, blossom-like face, in her fresh young voice. She makes no blunders, she is not awkward, she is not loud. Cecil is her foil,—Cecil, in lace over infantile blue, with a knot of streamers on one shoulder in narrow blue satin ribbon and a blue sash. Floyd

is host, of course, so Cecil would be left exclusively with her pretty mamma, if it was not her own choice. Madame watches them. How did this girl charm that exclusive and almost obstinate child? She is indulgent, yet once or twice she checks Cecil, and the little girl obeys; it is not altogether indulgence.

Violet is extremely interested. There are few very young people; several of the gentlemen converse with her, and though she is rather fearful at first, she soon feels at home and likes them better, she imagines, than the women, with one exception, and that is Mrs. Latimer. The two have a long talk about Quebec, its queer streets and quaint old churches, and Mr. Latimer takes her in to dinner, which seems a dreadful ordeal to her, but he is very kindly and entertaining.

Madame Lepelletier resolves to be first in the field. She asks Mr. Grandon to appoint a day convenient to himself for bringing Mrs. Grandon to lunch. She will have Gertrude and the professor, Laura and her husband, and a few friends. Floyd consults Violet, who glances up with shy delight: madame sees it with a secret joy. She will charm this young creature, even if her arts have failed with the husband. She will manage to obtain a hold and do with it whatever seems best; but now she begins to have a sullen under-current of hate for the young wife.

Marcia's feelings are not those of intense satisfaction. Why did not she stay at home and win the professor, for it seems any man whom Gertrude could please would be easily won? Then she is *not* ambitious to be Miss Grandon, the only unmarried daughter of the house. Miss Marcia sounds so much more youthful. She could almost drag off Gertrude's betrothal ring in her envy.

Now there is the excitement of another wedding. Gertrude will have no great fuss of shopping.

"You all talk as if I never had any clothes," she says one day to Laura. "I shall have one new dark silk, and I shall be married in a cloth travelling-dress, and that is all. I will not be worried out of my life with dressmakers."

And she is not. For people past youth, she and the professor manage to do a great deal of what looks suspiciously like courting over the register in the drawing-room. They agree excellently upon one point, heat. They can both be baked and roasted. He wraps her in shawls and she is happy, content. She reads German rather lamely, and he corrects, encourages.

"Fraulein," he says, one day, "there is a point, I have smoked always. Will it annoy thee?"

"No," replies Gertrude, "unless you should smoke bad tobacco."

He throws back his head and laughs at that, showing all his white, even teeth.

"And when I have to go out I may be absent for days at times, where it would be inconvenient to take thee?"

"Oh, you know I should be satisfied with whatever you thought best! I am not a silly young girl to fancy myself neglected. Why, I expect you to go on with your work and your research and everything."

"Thou art a jewel," he declares, "a sensible woman. I am afraid I should not be patient with a fool, and jealousy belongs to very young people."

It is the day before Madame Lepelletier's lunch, and has rained steadily, though now shows signs of breaking away. Violet is in Gertrude's room helping her look over some clothes. Marcia and her mother have quarrelled, and she sits here saying uncomfortable things to Gertrude, that might be painful if Gertrude were not used to it.

"Gertrude," Violet begins, in her gentle tone that ought to be oil upon the waters, "what must I wear to-morrow, my pretty train silk?"

Marcia giggles insolently.

"No, dear," answers Gertrude, with a kindness in her voice. "You must wear a short walking-dress. You are going to take a journey, and trains are relegated to carriages. You can indulge in white at the neck and wrists. In fact, there is no need of your wearing black tulle any more. And Briggs will get you a bunch of chrysanthemums for your belt."

"You can't expect to rival Madame Lepelletier," says Marcia, in the tone of one giving valuable advice.

"No, I could never do that," is the quiet response.

"Except on the *one* great occasion," and there is a half-laugh, half-sneer.

"When was that?" asks Violet.

"Marcia!" says Gertrude, half rising.

"Why shouldn't she be proud of her victory? Any woman would. All women are delighted to catch husbands! I dare say Madame Lepelletier would have enjoyed being Mrs. Floyd Grandon."

"Marcia, do not make such an idiot of yourself!"

A sudden horrible fear rushes over Violet. "You do not mean," she says, "that Mr. Grandon——" What is it she shall ask? Was there some broken engagement? They came from Europe together.

"She does not mean anything——" begins Gertrude; but Marcia interrupts, snappishly,—

"I *do* mean something, too, if you please, *Miss Grandon*," with a bitter emphasis on the Miss. "And I think turn about fair play. She jilted Floyd and he jilted her, it amounts to just that, and for once Violet came off best, though I doubt——"

Violet is very white now, and her eyes look like points of clear flame, not anger. Something has fallen on her with crushing weight, but she still lives.

Gertrude rises with dignity. "Marcia," she says, in a tone of command, "this is my room, and you will oblige me by leaving it."

"Oh, how fine we are, Mrs. Professor!" and Marcia gives an exasperating laugh; but as Gertrude approaches she suddenly slips away and slams the door behind her.

"My dear child," and Gertrude takes the small figure in her arms, kissing the cold lips, "do not mind what she has said. Let me tell you the story. When they were just grown up and really did not know their own minds, Floyd and Irene Stanwood became engaged. She went to Paris with her mother and married a French count, and a few years after, when we were there, Floyd met her without the least bit of sentiment. He never was anything of a despairing lover. She was very lovely then, but not nearly so handsome as now. When we heard they were coming home together from Europe, last summer, we supposed they had made up the old affair. She had no friends or relatives, and we are third or fourth cousins, so he brought her here. This was more than a month before he even saw you, and in that time if he *had* loved her he would have asked her to marry him;

don't you see?"

She gives a long, quivering breath, but her lips are dry. It is not simply a thought of marriage.

"And I am sure if she had been very much in love with him, she would have managed to entangle him. Fascinating women of the world can do that in so many ways. They are simply good friends. Why," she declares, smilingly, "suppose I was to make myself miserable because you translated for the professor, you would think me no end of a dunce! It is just the same. Marcia has a love for making mischief, but you must not allow her ever to sow any distrust between you and Floyd. The woman a man chooses is his *true* love," says Gertrude, waxing enthusiastic, "not the one he may have fancied or dreamed over long before. Now, you will not worry about this? Get the roses back to your cheeks, for there come Floyd and Eugene, and we must dress for dinner."

Gertrude kisses her fondly. She never imagined she could love any woman as well. Violet goes to arrange her hair, and while she is at it Floyd comes up with a cheery word. But she feels in a maze. Why should she care? Does she *care*? Floyd Grandon chose her when he might have had this fascinating society woman. How much was there in the old love?

He is rather preoccupied with business, and does not remark a little tremor in her voice. She rubs her cheeks with the soft Turkish towel until they feel warm, and goes down with him and chattering Cecil. Marcia is snappy. She and Eugene dispute about some trifle, and Floyd speaks to her in a very peremptory manner that startles Violet. He does so hate this little bickering!

Floyd is extremely interested in his wife's appearance the next morning, and regrets that she cannot wear the train; he selects her flowers, and looks that she is wrapped good and warm. How very kind he is! Will she dare believe this is love?

"Do you not look a little pale?" he asks, solicitously.

She is bright enough then and smiles bewitchingly.

When they go up in the dressing-room at madame's, Violet finds Mrs. Latimer, and she is glad to her heart's depth.

"Oh, you dainty little child!" the lady cries. "You look French with your chrysanthemums. What elegant ones they are! I want you to come and spend a whole day with me; we are sort of relatives you know," with a bright smile, "and you will not mind coming to me; then at eight we will give Gertrude and the professor a dinner. Has she not improved by being in love? She used to be quite a beauty, I believe, but the Grandons are all fine looking. I do admire Mr. Floyd Grandon so much."

Violet's face is in a soft glow of hazy pink, and her eyes are luminous.

"Oh," Mrs. Latimer says, just under her breath, "you are one of the old-fashioned girls, who is not ashamed of being in love with her husband. Well, I don't wonder. And you must have had some rare charm to win him against such great odds. If you knew the world well, you would have to admit that women like madame only blossom now and then, and are—shall we call them the century plants of the fashionable world?"—and she smiles—"not that they have to be a hundred years old to bloom; indeed, they seem never to grow old. I like to watch her, she is so elegant and fascinating."

She comes up just then and crosses over to Violet, having stopped for a little chat with Mr. Grandon in the hall. Violet is unexceptionable, though it seems inharmonious to see such a bright young creature in mourning; but the fashionable and the literary world will open its doors to Mrs. Grandon, and madame has the wisdom to be first. She is not much given to caressing ways, but she kisses Violet, and is struck by a peculiar circumstance,—Violet does not kiss her back. She liked this beautiful woman so very much before, and now she feels as if she never wanted to see her. She is absolutely sorry that she has come, for after one has partaken of hospitality the fine line is passed.

Mrs. Latimer is very curiously interested in this young wife. She has listened to Laura's strictures and bemoaning, for Laura has gone down to madame body and soul, but when the professor said, "Mrs. Grandon is such an excellent German scholar, Mrs. Grandon is the most charming little wife," and when she met her at the betrothal she resolved to know her better, and finds her a fresh, sweet, innocent girl. Probably she did appeal strongly to Floyd Grandon's chivalrous instincts when she saved his child's life, but she is worth loving for herself alone.

Mr. Latimer takes Violet in, and she is very glad not to fall to the lot of some stranger. Madame and Mr. Grandon are at opposite ends of the table. It is a perfect lunch, with good breeding and serving, that is really a fine art. Violet *does* enjoy it. Mr. Latimer knows just how to entertain her, and he entertains her for his own pleasure as well. He likes to see her wondering eyes open in their sweet, fearless purity; he watches the loveliest of color as it ripples over her face, the dimples that seem to play hide-and-seek, and the rare glint of her waving hair as it catches the light in its dun gold reflexes.

"I know two people who would rave over you," he says, in a very low tone, just for her ear, "Mr. and Mrs. Dick Ascott. This was their house, you know, and they could not have paid Madame Lepelletier a higher compliment than renting to her,—it is the apple of their eye, the chosen of their heart! They are both artists and we think charming people, but Dick was resolved his wife should have some Parisian art culture. They are to be back in two years, and I hope you will not change in the slightest particular. I command you to remain just as you are."

"Two years," she repeats, with a dreamy smile that is entrancing, and presently glances up with such a sweet, shy look, that John Latimer, not often moved by women's smiles, rather suspecting wiles, feels tempted to kiss her on the spot.

"I hope," she says afterwards, with the most delicious seriousness, "that I shall not disappoint any one two years from this time."

"Don't you dare to," he replies, warningly.

Gertrude and the professor are really the stars of this morning's luncheon, and they are having such an engrossing conversation on the other side of the table that no one but Marcia remarks this little episode. Everything to her savors of flirtation. Marcia Grandon could not entertain a simple, honest regard for any one; she is always studying effects, and she is hungry for admiration. All the small artifices she uses she suspects in every one else, and now in her secret heart she accuses Mrs. Floyd of flying at high game.

Take it altogether, it is a decidedly charming little party. Mrs. Vandervoort, though not a handsome woman, is at the very height of fashion, and is particularly well-bred, as the Delancys are not modern people, but have the blue blood of some centuries without much admixture; there are a few others: madame makes her parties so select that it is a favor to be invited to one.

She seeks out Violet just as they are beginning to disperse.

"My dear Mrs. Grandon," she says, in that persuasive voice that wins even against the will, "I have been planning a pleasure for you with Mr. Grandon. You are to come down here for a day and a night next week, and we are to go to the opera; it is to be 'Lohengrin,' and you will be delighted. You are quite a German student, I hear. Now I am going to make arrangements with the professor and Gertrude."

She smiles superbly and floats over to Gertrude. Violet turns a little cold; to come here for a day, to remain all night—

"Do you know," says Mrs. Latimer, when she is seated in her sister's carriage,—Mr. Latimer is to walk down town,—"I think that little Mrs. Grandon charming. She is coming to me on Tuesday, and we are to give a kind of family dinner to Gertrude. Laura's vexation made her rather unjust, and Mrs. Grandon's hair is magnificent, not really red, at all, and her manners are simply quaint and delicate. She doesn't need any training; it would be rubbing the bloom off the peach. I just wish Winnie Ascott could see her!"

"You and John and the Ascotts have rather a weakness for bread-and-milk flavoring. She is very nice, certainly, and quite presentable, but one can never predict how these innocent *ingenues* will develop. They are very delightful at eighteen, but at eight-and-twenty one sometimes wants to strangle them, as you do Marcia Grandon."

"Marcia is certainly not the black sheep of the family, for she hasn't the vim and color for absolute wickedness, but a sort of burr that pricks and *sticks* where you least desire it. Now, Laura will make an extremely stylish woman of fashion, and tall, fair Gertrude, with her languors and invalidisms, will be picturesque, but an old maid like Marcia Grandon would be simply intolerable! Let us join hands and get her married."

"And I dare say Marcia was one of the sweet innocents," Mrs. Vandervoort remarks, dryly.

"Never, Helen, never! Why, there is a little tint of scandal that she was having a desperate escapade with a married man when her mother took her abroad. No, the two are as far apart as the poles. It is really unjust for you to suppose a resemblance."

"I did not *quite* infer a resemblance, but I doubt if Mrs. Floyd *can* keep pace with her husband, and there are so many silly moths to flutter about such a man. Mrs. Grandon may turn jealous and sulky, or become indifferent and leave him to other people's entertainment and fascinations, and that Madame Lepelletier would never do. They would make such a splendid couple! Like Laura, I regret the wrecked opportunity. They seem made for each other. He no doubt married Miss St. Vincent in the flush of some chivalrous feeling, but she will always be

too childish to understand such a man. There will remain just so many years between them."

"And *I* think she will grow up to a perfect wifeness. She is not yet eighteen."

"And I cannot understand how a man having a chance to win Madame Lepelletier would not urge it to the uttermost."

Mrs. Latimer is set down at her own door, but keeps her confident faith as she talks matters over with John.

"Floyd Grandon is about the one level-headed man out of a thousand," he says, decisively. "Whether it is that he cannot be fascinated with womenkind or holds some resentment concerning the past, I am not sure, but he is able to sun himself in the dazzle of Madame Lepelletier's charms with the most perfect friendly indifference that I ever saw. If he were not, she might prove dangerous to the peace of mind of the young wife, who is simply delightful, but who doesn't know any more about love than the sweetest rosebud in the garden."

"O John! now your penetration is at fault," laughs the wife; "she unconsciously adores her husband."

"Well, I said she didn't *know* about it, and she does not. The awakening will have to come."

Violet meanwhile begins to anticipate the day at Mrs. Latimer's as much as she dreads that at madame's. Cecil is surprised, indignant.

"You don't stay with me now," she says, her voice and her small body swelling with emotion. "You let Jane put me to bed, and you don't tell me any stories."

"But after Aunt Gertrude is married we shall stay at home, and there will be stories and stories. And you *might* like to go to Denise," she suggests, with admirable art. "Briggs could drive you in the pony carriage."

The temptation is too great. She has winked rather hard to make tears come, and now she ungratefully winks them away again and dances for joy.

It is almost noon when they reach the Latimers'. Their house is about as large as madame's, but it has a greater air of carelessness, of disorder in its most charming estate. John Latimer lives all over it, and there are books and papers

everywhere, and *bric-à-brac* in all the corners. The redwood mantel in the sitting-room is shelved nearly up to the ceiling, and tiled around the grate, and is just one picture of beauty. The easy-chairs are around the fire, and softest rugs are laid for your feet. Violet sits down in the glow and feels at home, smiles, blossoms, and surprises herself at her gift of adaptiveness.

The lunch is simple and informal; the men retire to Mr. Latimer's den to smoke and take counsel. Floyd discusses his literary plans and receives much encouragement. There are three small children in the nursery, and thither the ladies find their way. Violet charms them all; even the baby stretches out his hands to come to her. They talk of Cecil, and Mrs. Latimer, by some magic known to herself, draws out of Violet a deliciously naive confession of that romantic episode when she first saw Mr. Grandon.

"Cecil is so rarely beautiful," she says, with the most perfect admiration. "She might not have been killed,—I really do not think she would have been,—but I can understand how terribly Mr. Grandon would hate to have her marred or disfigured in any way. She has the most perfect complexion, and no sun or wind seems to injure it. And you cannot think what an apt pupil she is in music; she plays some exercises very cunningly already, and she is learning French sentences."

Violet's face is a study of delight, of unselfish affection. Mrs. Latimer bends over and kisses her, and Violet clasps her arms about the other's neck.

"You play," she says, presently. "Do you sing any? Come down and try my piano; it is a new upright, and very fine tone."

"I do not sing many of the pretty new songs," says Violet, modestly, "nor Italian. My music and my German teacher was the same person and a German. He liked the old Latin hymns."

She plays without any special entreaty, and plays more than simply well, with taste, feeling, and correctness. You can see that she loves the really fine and impassioned in music, that show and dash have had no place in her training. She sings very sweetly with a mezzo-soprano voice that is clear and tender.

"You need never be afraid to play or sing," is Mrs. Latimer's quiet verdict; and though Violet does not specially regard the commendation now, it is afterward of great comfort.

"You are going to the opera on Thursday night," she begins, suddenly, for it has just entered her mind. "What have you ever heard?"

"Nothing," answers Violet, simply. "Mr. Grandon took me to see 'Romeo and Juliet.'" And she gives a little sigh to the sweet, sad memory.

"And the opera is 'Lohengrin'! I think we must go, I should so like to see *you*. I will ask Mr. Latimer to get tickets, and we must be together."

"Oh, if you only will!" Violet is in eager delight now.

"To be sure I will. Mr. Latimer will settle it before you go. Let us make a call upon them; they must have smoked themselves blue by this time."

They have smoked the sanctum very blue, and are full of apologies. Mr. Latimer dumps the contents of two chairs on the floor, and the opera matter is soon settled. Violet is extremely happy over it.

"Do you realize how late it is?" exclaims Mrs. Latimer, presently. "Gertrude is coming in for a little visit before the play begins."

She arrives just then, and the professor joins the masculine circle with great zest. The three women have a cosy time until Mrs. Latimer has to leave them to give some small attention to her dinner, which proves very enjoyable. There can be no compliments to Gertrude afterward, and the time is drawing near.

"John," Mrs. Latimer says afterward, "I have solved the problem. I know just where the secret charm of Miss St. Vincent came to light, and won against all the beauty and advantages of her rival."

"Well?" he gives a lazy, inquiring laugh, "I dare say you have made five chapters of discoveries."

"It was the child. Why, Mrs. Grandon had the whole nursery in her arms in five minutes, and she never made a bit of fuss! Even baby went to her. That little Miss Cecil adores her. But you couldn't imagine Madame Lepelletier really fond of children. She speaks to them in a lovely manner, but I think they must miss the true heart in it. He chose wisely, since he had to give his child a mother."

"He is a capital good fellow," says John Latimer, "Few men would undertake the family bother he has."

CHAPTER XIX.

"Thou on one side, I on the other."

All her life Violet Grandon will remember "Lohengrin," the perfect evening to the rather imperfect day. In good truth the day disappoints madame as well. Gertrude comes down with Violet, and there is a little shopping to finish. Laura and Gertrude cannot agree in one or two points concerning the wedding. Floyd and the professor are to lunch at Delmonico's with some literary men.

Of course madame is serene and charming, but Violet and she keep distinctly apart. There is no tender confidence, as with Mrs. Latimer. When the girls, Laura and Gertrude, are fairly out of the way, Violet sits shyly looking at some engravings, and answers gently, but makes no comments of her own. She does feel strange with this beautiful woman. She wonders how much Floyd loved her at first, in those long years ago when she was a girl, only she seems never to have been a girl, just as you never can think of her being old.

Madame yawns presently, feels the lack of her *siesta*, and decides that to be brilliant to-night she must have it. Excusing herself for a few moments, she goes away, rather vexed that Violet should be so inappreciative. After all, has the child anything much in her? Is it worth while to expend any great interest upon her?

The dinner passes agreeably, and the carriage comes for them. The professor has been discoursing upon Wagner and his musical theories, but he will not have anything said about this particular opera. So Violet takes her seat, with her husband on one side and the professor on the other, and prepares herself to listen to that hidden mental element that touches the inmost processes of the soul.

Elsa, in her blissful surprise, the mysterious enchantment convincing her of reality, loving, adoring, trusting to the uttermost, and content to live, to take love

without asking herself from whence her lover comes; to hold her happiness on so strong a tenure now because she *does* trust. Wide-eyed, exultant, Violet listens. Cannot her husband read *her* story in her eyes? The beautiful march enchants her. Again she says to herself, Is this love? Though the way is straight and few find it, some blest souls enter in.

And then the question forces itself upon Elsa's soul, it becomes its deepest need, and in that evil hour she sets it above love. There is the thrilling vision and *Lohengrin's* rebuke, and Violet listens and looks like one entranced. *Elsa* asks her fateful question, and the enchantment is gone. Ah, can any tears, any prayers bring him back? Can all the divine passion and repentance of one's life prevail?

The lovely color goes out of Violet's face; it seems for a moment as if she would faint. How can all these women keep from crying out in their anguish?

"*Mignonne*," the professor says, softly, and takes her hand, "come out of thy too passionate dream. That is the musician's soul, but it is not daily food."

Her eyes are blind with tears, and she is glad to rise with the crowd and go.

Gertrude Grandon's brief engagement is shortened by nearly a fortnight on account of a literary meeting at Chicago that the professor must attend. So Christmas day at two o'clock they go to church, Gertrude in dark blue cloth, that is extremely becoming, and fits her tall, slender figure to perfection; just under the brim of her bonnet are two pale-pink crush roses, the only tint of color. No one could imagine so much improvement possible. Floyd gives her away also. He has endeared her by many kindnesses, but the last is placing her present and possible fortune in her hands.

"But if you should never be able to get it all out of the business?" she asks, and her eyes moisten.

"Then," he answers, "the rest is my wedding gift to you. I should like to make it much larger."

"O Floyd, what a good brother you have been! And we have never thought of anything but just our own selves," she adds, remorsefully.

"Yes," he rejoins, "*you* have thought of Violet."

Then they all go down to the city to see Gertrude start on her new journey. Floyd

and the professor wring each other's hands,—they have been like brothers so long! Surely, even if he had thought of it, he could have wished Gertrude no better fate. He is curiously moved by the professor's very earnest regard, though he knows it must half be pity, tenderness. His face is bright and cheerful, and his voice rings out heartily. He will bring back Frau Freilgrath so stout and rosy that no one will recognize her.

They are all very tired when they reach home. Mrs. Grandon is the happiest. She is the mother of two well-married daughters. They will be no further expense or care, and perhaps some one may pick up Marcia. She is no better reconciled to her son's marriage; in truth, as it sometimes happens where no real fault can be discovered, an obstinate person will fall back upon a prejudice. For a governess Violet would answer admirably, but she has no qualification for the position into which she has thrust herself.

January comes in bitterly cold, and the great house is very lonely. Marcia is flitting about, Mrs. Grandon makes another visit to New York, Eugene is moody and distraught, for he is very much smitten with madame, who, to do her justice, does not encourage the passion, though in a certain way she enjoys the young man's adoration. Then, too, he is extremely miserable about money. He hates to curtail any indulgence, he is fond of theatres, operas, *petit soupers*, fresh gloves, and fast horses, and he is put upon an allowance, which makes him hate Floyd and grumble to Wilmarth.

Floyd is deep in a literary venture, or rather it is no venture at all, a series of travels and descriptions of out-of-the-way corners of Asia, with new and marvellous discoveries. He is so excited and interested that he almost forgets other matters, and the time being short, every day is precious. Violet understands this, and amuses herself and Cecil, drives out to the cottage and spends days with Denise, and is a happy, bright little creature. Mrs. Latimer comes up for two or three days, which is utterly delightful.

Madame meanwhile has her hands full. She is sought after, and invitations accumulate on her table. Her callers are the *crème* of the city. Brokers who are up early, drop in to her elegant little teas and bring her bouquets when roses are at their highest. Professional men find a wonderful charm in her conversation. There are generally one or two bright women beside, and the room takes on the appearance of a select party. She gives a superb little dinner, to which Floyd goes, but Violet does not, though warmly invited. Often after working all day he

takes the evening train down to the city, and long before he is back Violet is asleep. They are quietly happy. He is fond, though a good deal preoccupied.

Yet the time does not hang heavily. There have been several more plays and some fine concerts, but when they have taken the late train the pleasure has been somewhat fatiguing. Letters come from Gertrude, who admits that she grows foolishly happy. The professor makes such a delightful husband. She cannot go about a great deal, but he describes places and people to her, and she enjoys it quite as much. Gertrude certainly is not *exigeant*, and she has a touch of tender gratitude that makes the professor feel continually that he has done a good deed by marrying her, which is a flattering unction to the man's generous soul.

March comes in, and the pressing work being done, Floyd turns to the business. It is a success, but he is not any more in love with it. They have demonstrated now that the new looms carry a secret that must revolutionize trade. He holds long interviews with Mr. Connery and Ralph Sherburne. He has the privilege, being joint executor with Mr. Sherburne, of selling out all St. Vincent's right and title, and he has already been offered a fortune for it. He will deal justly and fairly by the dead man's genius, and Violet will be an heiress, which in one way gratifies, and in another way pains. He likes his mother and the world to know that Violet has a rank of her own, since money confers that, and in the future nothing she chooses will be considered extravagant in her. But he hates to be suspected of any mercenary considerations. He always had enough for both.

He lays the matter before Mr. Wilmarth, being quite convinced now that Eugene will never make a business man. He will not hurry matters, but when the legacies have been paid he shall close his connection with the factory.

"But Mrs. Grandon still has a life interest," suggests Jasper Wilmarth.

"That can be hypothecated, or the will gives her the privilege of taking any certain sum that can be agreed upon. It would not impoverish me to pay it myself," he says, with a fine contempt.

"But your brother must agree to all this; it is *his* business, not yours."

"He will agree to it," answers Floyd, in a tone not to be mistaken, since it implies the young man would dispose of his birthright any day for a mess of pottage.

"Still, I should suppose there would be a feeling of honor," says Wilmarth, with

his suave sneer.

"I think my honor has never been questioned, Mr. Wilmarth, nor my integrity."

Floyd Grandon rises and stands straight before him, his face slightly flushed.

"You quite mistake me," he replies, with a covert but insolent evasion; "or I had better have said pride, business pride, I have so much of that," and the lips show a sort of sardonic smile. "That is what your brother lacks; I suppose we have no reasonable right to look for it in you, a literary man."

Jasper Wilmarth always exasperates him, but he says now, with dignified gravity,

"I give you this notice, so that you may prepare for the event. There will be no undue haste, but I should like to have the business settled in from one to two years hence."

So that is his warning! If he *could* have married St. Vincent's daughter! Jasper Wilmarth does not care such a great deal for riches, but he would like to put down this aristocratic fellow whom the world is beginning to worship, who has only to hold out his hand and the St. Vincent fortune will drop into it. When the time of settlement actually comes the partnership will be dissolved; he must either sell or buy; buy he cannot. Floyd Grandon pushes him out. Is there no way to give the man a sword-keen thrust?

He broods over it for days, and at last it comes to him like an inspiration. Marcia has been making calls in Westbrook and stops for Floyd according to agreement. She sits there in the pony carriage in seal sacque and cap, her light hair flying about, her cheeks red with the wind, her face in a kind of satisfied smirk. You can never quite tell where this starts from; it is in the little crease in the brows, in the nose slightly drawn, in the lines about the mouth, and the rather sharp chin. Nature has not been as bountiful to Marcia in the matter of charms as to the others; she has stinted here and there, and it shows clearly as she grows older. But as she gives her head an airy toss and shakes the Skye fluff out of her eyes, he smiles. It would be an immense joke to marry Marcia Grandon; an immense mortification as well! To be Floyd Grandon's brother-in-law, to have the *entr  e* of the great house, to come very near Violet Grandon and perhaps drop a bitter flavor in her cup!

Marcia Grandon is not sharp enough to outwit him anywhere and he would always be master; that is another point scored. Then he might make some moves through her that would otherwise be impossible.

Floyd comes out and springs in the carriage, indulgently allowing her to drive. Violet has had a cold and been in-doors for several days, but looks bright and well when she greets him. She is such a dear, happy little thing!

Not many days after this Wilmarth meets Marcia bowling along in the spring sunshine. He raises his hat, pauses, and with her coquettish instinct she stops.

"Good day, Miss Grandon," he says, with a low bow. "I thought of coming down to call on you. Have you given up all your old habits of designing? We have some large orders and I am quite in trouble about patterns,—I suppose your brother told you?"

"Oh, he never tells *me* anything!" with an assumed air of disdain. "And he would be sure to consult Mrs. Grandon, who draws a little, like every school girl!"

"I dare say he never gave it a second thought," returns Wilmarth, in a reflective manner. "Well, *have* you given it up?"

"I have been painting in oils for the last year or two," and nose and chin indulge in an extra tilt. "I dare say I *could* design, though."

"Well, bring some in, if you can. I believe my brain begins to get rusty. Will you come—soon? You will always find me in my office."

There is something in the inflection of the voice that secretly delights Marcia. She has a taste for mystery and intrigue, but she is not secretive, she has too much vanity.

"I will, as soon as I can get about it," with what she considers well-bred indifference.

She shuts herself up in her studio all the next morning, all the afternoon and evening. She has a good deal of just this artistic faculty. The next day she copies and colors, and on the third Floyd goes to New York, and she drives to the factory. Eugene is out, as fate will have it.

Mr. Wilmarth receives her with just the right touch of graciousness, praises a

little, finds a little fault, suggests a touch here and there, and admits that he is pleased with two, and thinks he shall use them. Marcia goes up to the seventh heaven of delight, and sees before her fame and fortune.

"Look over these," says Mr. Wilmarth. "They do not quite suit me. See if you can suggest anything. These Japanese designs admit of endless variation."

An hour passes ere Marcia consults her watch, and then she professes to be greatly surprised. What must poor Dolly think of her? "For I never make such unconscionable calls," she declares, and fancies that she blushes over it.

"It has been extremely pleasant to me," Mr. Wilmarth replies, in a tone of grave compliment. "I am so much alone. I miss your father more than any of you would suspect, I dare say. We used to consult together so much, and he was in and out a dozen times a day."

"But everything goes on *well*?" says Marcia, in an undecided tone of inquiry.

"Yes, if by that you mean prosperously. We are on the high road to fortune," and he laughs disagreeably. "I only wish your father were alive to enjoy it. It has been a hard pull for the last two years."

"Poor papa!" Marcia gives a pathetic little sniff. "But then it is something to have gained a success!"

"Yes, when one has friends or relatives to enjoy it. I sometimes wonder why *I* go on struggling for wealth, to leave it to some charity at the last."

"Have you really no one?" Marcia lowers her voice to a point of sentiment.

"Not a living soul to take a kindly interest in me," he answers, in a bitter fashion. "All my kith and kin, and they were not many, died years ago. If I had been attractive to women's eyes——"

Marcia lets hers droop, and does this time manage a faint color. There is a touch of romance in this utter desolation.

"I *must* go," she again declares, reluctantly. "Poor Dolly will be tired to death standing."

"Take these with you, and I shall be sure of another visit," and he hands her the roll.

Marcia glides along as if on air. To her any admiration from a man is sweet incense. It is not so much the person as the food to her vanity. There are women who enjoy the gift with but little thought of the giver. In Mrs. Vandervoort's spacious parlors she has received compliments and attentions from people of note with a thrill of triumph; she is not less pleased with her present interview. It is almost as if Wilmarth had asked her for sympathy, interest, and she has so much to bestow. Gertrude has spent her days in novel-reading, going into other people's joys and woes. Marcia always lives in them directly. She recasts the events, and makes herself the centre of the episode. She is quite certain she could have done better in the exigency than the friend she contemplates. She could have loved more deeply, been wiser, stronger, tenderer, and more patient. There would be no end to her virtues or her devotion. Men are certainly short-sighted to choose these weak or cold or indifferent women, when there are others with just the right mental equipoise.

She springs into her phaeton and starts up Dolly. There is a quiver and glow of spring in the air, grown softer since morning, a breath of sweetness, and Marcia's mood is exultant. She has bearded the lion in his den, and his roar was not terrific. It is the power of Una, the sweet and gentle woman. How desperately melancholy he looked; what a touch of cynicism there was in his tone, engendered by loneliness and too much communing with self. Instantly she feels herself capable of consoling, of restoring to hope, to animation, to the delights of living.

And Marcia enjoys living very much indeed, if she can only have money. There never has been a day when she would have exchanged her pony for Laura's piano. She can play with considerable fashionable brilliance, but of the divine compensations of music she knows nothing. When Violet sits and plays for hours without an audience it seems silly to Marcia. She cannot understand the subtle and intense delight; for her there must always be *one* in the audience, if no more.

She wears an air of mystery at the dinner-table, and is apparently abstracted trying on her new emotions. Floyd is wondering if all this has not been very dull for Violet. If there only was some one to take a vital interest in her. They have begun to make neighborhood calls, and cards are left for Mrs. Floyd Grandon, invitations to teas and quiet gatherings. Violet cannot go alone, and Floyd is so often engaged or away. Mrs. Grandon does not trouble herself about her

daughter-in-law, and says frankly to intimates,—

"Floyd's marriage always will be a great disappointment to me. She is such a child, just a fit companion for Cecil!"

When Floyd watches her in his questioning way her sweet face brightens and her soft brown eyes glow with delight.

"I wonder if you are happy?" he says this evening when they are alone.

"Happy?"

He reads it in her eyes, her voice, in the exultation visible in every feature.

"You are a little jewel, Violet," he replies, tenderly, drawing her nearer and pressing the soft cheek with the palm of his hand, which is almost as soft. "I have been so much engrossed that I am afraid I sometimes neglect you, but never designedly, my darling."

"I know you are very busy," she makes answer, in her cheerful voice, "and I am not a silly child."

He wonders if there is such a thing as her being too sensible, too self-denying! While he could not now take life on the old terms and be tormented daily and hourly by foolish caprices, is there not some middle ground for youth? Are there too many years between them!

"Your birthday will be in June," he says,—he has travelled that far already,—"and you must have a birthday ball."

"And you will dance with me?" she gently reminds, as she slips her arm over his shoulder caressingly.

"Regardless of the figure I shall cut!" and he laughs.

"Oh, but you know you have a handsome figure!"

"And I must do my dancing before I get too stout. Well, yes, I shall be your *first* partner."

"Oh, am I to dance with any one else?" she asks, in a faint tone of surprise.

"Why—yes—quadrilles, I believe, are admissible."

"I wish we had some music, we might waltz anytime," and she pats her little foot on the floor; "just you and I together."

"Well, I shall have to buy a music-box, and we can dance out on the lawn after the manner of the German and French peasants."

She gives such a lovely, rippling laugh that he indulges in a still fonder squeeze. It is very pleasant to have her. That is as far as Floyd Grandon has yet gone.

"But from now to then," he asks, "what can you find to amuse yourself with?"

"To amuse myself?" she asks, rather puzzled. "Why, you are not going away?" and she grasps his arm tightly.

"Going away! No." She *would* miss him then; but, he reflects, there is no one else for companionship. Marcia somehow is not congenial, and Eugene—how much company a pleasant young fellow like Eugene might prove.

"Is there any one you would like to ask here?" He thinks of madame,—she would be a delightful summer guest. He would like to open his house, he does owe something to society for its warm welcome to him.

"I don't really know any one but Mrs. Latimer. Oh," she says, with a bright ring in her voice, "how nice it would be to have them both, and the children! Would your mother mind very much, I wonder?"

"It need be no trouble to her," he says, almost coldly, "and *you* are to have your wishes gratified in your *own* house."

She cannot get over the feeling that she is merely on sufferance. As the time goes on she understands the situation more clearly. Mrs. Grandon does not like to have her Floyd's wife, and she *would* like Madame Lepelletier in the place. But how strange that no one seems to remember the old time when she jilted him, as Marcia says.

"But all that will be so much nicer in the summer," he goes on, reflectively. "The children can run out of doors. Yes, we will have the Latimers and any one else we choose, and be really like civilized people. I hope Gertrude can get back."

"Oh, I do hope so!" she re-echoes.

The next morning he takes Violet and Cecil out for a long drive, way up the

river. It is the last day of March, and there is a softness in the air, a bluish mist over the river, and a tender gray green on the hillsides. The very crags seem less rugged and frowning. It is really spring!

"Oh, how delightful it will be!" she exclaims. "Are there not wild flowers about here? We can have some lovely rambles gathering them. And there will be the gardens, and the whole world growing lovelier every day."

They stop at a hotel and have a dinner, which they enjoy with the appetites of travellers. Just above there is a pretty waterfall, much swollen by the spring rains, then there is a high rock with a legend, one of the numerous "Lover's Leap," but the prospect from its top is superb, so they climb up and view the undulating country, the blue, winding river, the nooks and crags, dotted here and there by cottages that seem to hang on their sides, a slow team jogging round, or fields being ploughed. All the air is sweet with pine and spruce, and that indescribable fragrance of spring.

Floyd Grandon is so happy to-day that he almost wishes he had a little world of his own, with just Violet and Cecil. If it were not for this wretched business; but then he is likely to get it off his hands some time, and as it is turning out so much better than he once feared, he must be content.

If there were many days like this! If husband and wife could grow into each other's souls, could see that it was not separate lives, but one true life that constituted marriage; but she does not know, and does her best in sweet, brave content; and he is ignorant of the intense joy and satisfaction the deeper mutual love might bring. He is a little afraid. He does not want to yield his whole mind and soul to any overwhelming or exhausting passion, and yet he sometimes wonders what Violet would be if her entire nature were stirred, roused to its utmost.

But the morrow brings its every-day cares and duties. Floyd is wanted in the city. He drops into madame's and finds her in the midst of plans. She is to give an elegant little musicale about the 10th, and he must surely bring his wife, who is to stay all night. She, madame, will hear of nothing to the contrary. No woman was ever more charming in these daintily arbitrary moods, and he promises. All the singers will be professional, there will be several instrumental pieces, and the invitations are to be strictly limited.

She touches upon his work with delicate praise and appreciation. It would seem that she kept herself informed of all he did, but she never questions him in any inquisitive manner. She is really intimate with the Latimers, so she hears, no doubt. It *will* be charming to add her to the summer party. There are other delightful people for Violet to know as soon as she can begin to entertain society.

Violet is not much troubled about society these pleasant days. April comes in blustering, then turns suddenly warm, and lo! the earth seems covered with velvet in the wonderful emerald green of spring. She hunts the woods for violets and anemones, and puts them in her father's room,—it is her room now, for she was very happy in it when her ankle was hurt. She moves out her few pictures, a lovely Mater Doloroso, whose grief is blended with heavenly resignation, and the ever-clear Huguenot Lovers. Both have been school gifts. For the rest, her girl's chamber was simple as any nun's.

Marcia makes her second visit to Mr. Wilmarth, and leaves Dolly at home. Now there is a rather curious desire of secrecy on her part; the whole thing is so much more charming enveloped in mystery. Mr. Wilmarth receives her with a brusque sort of cordiality, as if he was rather striving against himself, and she sees it, as he means she shall. The drawings are satisfactory, and he expresses his obligation to her.

"I don't know as I can summon up courage to offer you any ordinary payment," he says, "but if you will accept some gift in its stead,—if you will allow me to make it something beyond a mere business transaction——"

"Oh, it is such a trifle," and Marcia's head takes its airy curve. "I think I should like——"

"Well?" he asks, rather startled.

"Please don't laugh at me," she begins, in a tone of girlish entreaty, which is not bad, "but I have been thinking—wondering if I could turn my gift to any advantage?"

Marcia is really blushing now. It seems paltry to think of working for money, unless one could earn it by the hundreds.

"Yes, I suppose you could," he replies, "but you have a genius for better things. You *can* design very well," and he is in earnest now. "There are a great many

branches. Why?" he asks, abruptly.

"Oh," she replies, "I get so tired of the frivolity of life. I long to do something beyond the mere trifles."

"I suppose you miss both of your sisters," he remarks, with a touch of sympathy. "You are learning now what loneliness is. Although there is your brother's wife _____"

"A child, a mere child, who can thrum a little on the piano and dress dolls for Cecil. I never *could* understand *why* Floyd married her."

"There was the fortune," suggests Mr. Wilmarth.

"Oh, Floyd did not care for that! You see he has had it all tied up so that he cannot touch it."

"Those who tie can sometimes untie," he answers, dryly.

"No. *I* have always thought there was some silly sentiment, or perhaps Mr. St. Vincent asked it of him," she cries, with sudden inspiration, "for Floyd could have rewarded her for saving the child's life."

Evidently the marriage is not pleasing to Miss Marcia. That scores one in her favor as a good ally. Through Eugene he has learned that it was generally unsatisfactory, but he has fancied Marcia just the kind to be caught by a sweet young girl.

He has been considering the point in all its bearings these few days,—whether he really wants to be bothered with a wife, only he need not allow the wife to bother, and whether it would be better to win her openly or not. If the house at the park were her father's, but it is Floyd Grandon's, and he might some day be dismissed. He feels intuitively that Grandon would oppose the marriage from the under-current of enmity between. Of course he could persuade Marcia to secret meetings and a marriage. Would it not be more of a triumph if the whole matter were kept a secret?

He draws from Marcia, with the requisite astuteness, and it does not need much, the state of affairs and her own position at home. She would be ready enough to change it, that he sees. With a touch of secret elation he knows he could make this woman worship him like a bond slave while the bewilderment lasted. He has

never been so worshipped. He has known of several women who would have married him, but it would have been for a home and a protector. He has not been sufficiently unfortunate to inspire any one with that profound and tender pity that women do sometimes give to deformity or accident; he has no particular gifts or genius to win a heart, he is now quite to middle life and cannot reasonably expect to grow handsomer. Under any circumstances he could hardly hope to marry into a family like that of the Grandons, and though he shall not be friends with a single member, still, it will gratify his pride, and Floyd Grandon must be more considerate of his business interests.

All these things run through his mind as he talks to her. She is rather coquettish and vain and silly,—his eyes are pitilessly clear,—and she may afford him some amusement when her unreasoning adoration ends. He sees the fact that he is attracted towards her, moves her curiously. If he is to take a wife he will not have her cold and selfishly considerate, but quaff the full cup of adoration at first, even if it does turn to ashes and dust afterward.

"I wonder," he says, after they have talked away the genial spring afternoon, "when I shall see you again,—when I may present my little gift. Your brother and I are *not* cordial friends. I offered him some advice in the beginning, as an elder might reasonably give to an inexperienced person, which he resented quite indignantly, and he prefers to use his own wisdom. I am not quarrelsome, and so we are comfortable business compeers, but hardly calling friends, and since you are in his house I must deny myself the pleasure. Do you not sometimes go to walk? I know you drive a good deal."

She catches the cue, and her heart bounds.

"I *do* go out to sketch," she says, with admirable modesty.

"Ah, that would be an enjoyment. *Will* you allow me to come?"

There is a most flattering entreaty in his tone.

Marcia considers. Violet and Cecil are forever rambling round, and she knows how easily an interview can be spoiled. It will hardly be safe to appoint one between here and Grandon Park. Down below the park there is a little cove, with a splendid view opposite, and a grove of trees for protection. She will appoint it here. Friday is unlucky. Saturday will be busy for him, so it is settled for Monday of the next week, and he agrees, with a peculiar smile and a pressure of

the hand.

Marcia Grandon walks home in a state of triumph. Experience forbids her to count upon this man as a positive lover, but he *is* an admirer. They have a disagreeable habit of going so far and then taking wing. Marriage seems an event rather difficult of accomplishment, for with all Marcia's flighty romance she shrinks from encountering actual poverty, but it might be this man's admiration is sufficiently strong to lead him beyond the debatable land. She hesitates just a little, then solaces herself with the improbability.

Still, she is in a flutter of excitement when she goes up to her room after luncheon. What shall she wear? Bonnets and hats are tried on, and she passes and repasses before the glass to study the jauntiness or attractiveness of different styles. Her dress is gray, and she finally settles upon a light gray chip, with two long black plumes that almost touch her shoulder. A cluster of pansies would be very effective at her throat. Violet wears them a good deal, so she selects the finest in the greenhouse, and takes a parasol with a lilac lining. She does look very well. Before mourning, her taste was rather *bizarre*, but it has been toned down somewhat.

Jasper Wilmarth is first on the spot. She has dallied so long with toilet questions, that it has given the man's complacency a little start, no bad thing. She catches a glimpse of him and is filled with trepidation, for up to this moment she has not been quite sure but he would *allow* something to prevent.

He takes both hands. The consciousness goes over her that he *is* a lover. He is not a handsome man, with his high shoulders, short neck, and rugged face, but to-day he has taken some pains, and lets his steely eyes soften, his lips show their bit of red under the gray mustache. His necktie is fresh, his clothes have been brushed, and if the soul animating the man was even as good as the body it would be better for all who come in contact with him.

He has resolved to try his utmost at fascination. It is strong, masterly, imperious, but he seems to check himself now and then, as if he wanted her to believe he was holding in the actual man for her sake, and Marcia is immensely flattered. He has brought her a really beautiful bracelet, counting on her personal vanity, and she is quite overwhelmed.

"If it had been any ordinary designer, of course I should have paid the usual

price for the work," he explains, "but I wanted you to remember the pleasure the interviews gave me."

"You rate them too highly," says Marcia, falteringly.

"Ah, I didn't say they gave *you* pleasure," he answers. "You have so much society, so many friends, but a poor unfortunate fellow like me gets early shelved, and crumbs are not to my taste. I am just selfish enough to want a whole piece of cake."

"Well, why should you not have it?" says Marcia, who is well versed in the audacities of coquetry.

"I am not at all sure I could get it, the kind I want."

He folds his hands behind him and they walk down to the shore. Her portfolio she has consigned to a rocky crevice: there will be no sketching she is well aware.

"I think a man—can get a great deal," she says, in a meditative sort of tone. "He can dare almost anything. Indeed, it occurs to me that it is often women who take up with the crumbs."

"And there are seasons in life when one would be glad to offer an equivalent, if one had the nice iced and ornamented cake."

"Oh, you fancy women are always on the lookout for sweets, Mr. Wilmarth," she says, parrying. "There are other things——"

"As what?"

"Strength, power, honor, manliness."

"I wonder," he begins, musingly, "how long strength and manliness would stand against beauty and the soft, seductive flatteries of society. I wonder what they in their ruggedness would win? What a lovely day it is, and what a solemn talk! I shall bore you," suddenly changing his tone.

Marcia protests. They ramble up and down, and skirmish. He has fancied her an over-ripe peach ready to fall, but is surprised at her numerous little defences. It is fortunate for her that she cannot think him in solemn earnest, for her uncertainty adds a zest to his pursuit.

When they part it is with the understanding that she shall not attend the musicale, which she really cares little about, and that he shall spend the evening with her. It is a rather bold step, and his acquiescence sends a tremor through every pulse. What if he *should* prove a lover?

CHAPTER XX.

Love that is ignorant, and hatred have almost the same ends.—BEN
JONSON.

What if Jasper Wilmarth should prove that ardently desired person, a lover? Marcia Grandon wonders what she would do, what she had better do? The years are beginning to fly apace. True, Gertrude married at thirty, after she had lost her greatest attractions, and was quite indifferent whether she pleased or not. Marcia is past twenty-six, and it is but a step to thirty. If she could set up for a genius and have a pretty house of her own, but the house is out of the question, and to be confronted with Violet's youth and freshness every day in the year is much too bitter! Jasper Wilmarth is not a man to be proud of in society, unless it is for his very ugliness and the almost deformity. She thinks of Venus and Vulcan. She might call him playfully her Vulcan; at least, she could to her friends. She will have a house of her own, she will be *Mrs.*, and, after all, the world is much more tolerant to married women than to spinsters of an uncertain age. She is not invited with very young girls any more, but as Mrs. Wilmarth she can ask them to her house and patronize them. Then married women are allowed to flirt shamefully with *young* men; and though Mr. Wilmarth cannot dance, she may have other partners. Altogether, she would be immeasurably better off, even if she did not care very much for him. But there would be a spice of romance, and somehow she half believes she could love him if she was *sure*, and if he loved her. She has weakly and foolishly come to care for more than one who did not love her, to whom the attention was merely pastime, or perhaps amusement. She will be wary and learn first what his intentions really are.

So at the last moment she has a headache and will not go to Madame Lepelletier's. Mrs. Grandon's invitation is for a week, and Eugene takes her down in the morning, and loiters most of the day in the seductive house. When Floyd and Violet are out of the way, Marcia attires herself in a white cashmere

dress and scarlet geraniums, and steals down to the drawing-room wrapped in a Shetland shawl, nervous, curious, and expectant. What if he should *not* come?

It is not Jasper Wilmarth's intention to slight the gods. He is scrupulously dressed, and understands the courtesies of society, if he seldom has need of them. Marcia looks reasonably pretty in this handsome room, where there is just enough light to suggest, not enough to glare, and a subtle fragrance of heliotrope. He might marry women superior to Marcia Grandon who would not bring him her family prestige. They may dislike him, but they cannot quite crowd him out of everything.

Marcia receives him with much trepidation. Acute as he is, he does not understand her, for the simple reason that he does not give her credit for the shrewdness engendered by much experience. If she cannot have the marriage she will have the flirtation, and she suspects the latter.

He does soon set her mind at rest, and she is surprised at a positive offer of marriage. He makes it because he knows she will be the more ready to devise ways of meeting him.

"It is abrupt, I know," he begins, in a peculiarly apologetical tone, "but I wanted you to know my intentions. Circumstances might be rather against us if we undertook the orthodox courtship," and he smiles. "I am aware that I have not the graces of youth and comeliness, and for various reasons your family might oppose. But I am not a poor man, and I think—if a woman loved me—I want her to love me," he says, with sudden vehemence that looks like passion. "I want her to adore me, I want to know what it is to be loved in spite of my drawbacks!"

He has touched the right chord in Marcia's nature. She is always ready to adore when opportunity offers. And though she has loved numberless times, she is ready to begin over again, and yields to the masterful force that experiments with her. The touch of her hand is soft and tremulous, and her kisses are delicate, sweet. He gives himself up to an idiocy he does not believe in, and really enjoys the blissfulness, as an Eastern despot might enjoy the admiration of a new slave.

Marcia is supremely happy encircled by these strong arms. Before her closed eyes floats in magic letters her new name. She will not be the old maid of the family after all. If she did not know the world so well, she would be moved to show her gratitude, but it is much wiser to show her love.

"I shall want to see you," he says, "and we cannot always count on occasions like these. I must leave the opportunities largely to you. A note directed to my box will escape prying eyes. We can have walks together; why, we could even have drives if you were good enough to invite me."

"I should be delighted!" cries Marcia, exultantly.

"Only, we must not choose public thoroughfares." And his smile is fascinating to Marcia, who of late has had no really impassioned love-making.

He puts his arm around her as he stands up to go, and experiences a sort of tender contempt for her. He certainly could grow quite fond of this willing slave, and he will let himself enjoy all the pleasure that can be drained out of it.

Marcia opens the hall door for her lover and closes it again softly. She meets Briggs coming in from fastening the library windows.

"Briggs," she remarks, "that was Mr. Wilmarth. I had some special business with him. I have been drawing patterns; but I would rather his call should not be mentioned."

Briggs bows obediently.

In her own room Marcia gives way to a wild delight. She is sure she does not look to be over twenty, she is glad to be rather small, and can imagine how she will appear beside Mr. Wilmarth's broad shoulders and frowning face. Quite piquant and fairy-like, and then to love with one's whole soul, unsuspected by the sharp eyes of critical kindred, who do not appreciate her lover; to carry about a delicious secret, to plan and to steal out to promised interviews, and at last,—for he has hinted that he shall be a rather impatient wooer,—at last to surprise them by a marriage. She can hardly compose herself to sleep, so busy and excited are brain and nerves.

The musicale is a success, one of the enviable events of the season, and there is a most charming supper afterward. Violet's enjoyment is so perfect that she takes herself quite to task for not being better friends with madame, since Mr. Grandon really desires it. Why should she allow that old dead-and-gone ghost to walk in this bright present? She is never troubled about Cecil's mother, and Mr. Grandon must have loved her; she is never jealous of Cecil. This is nothing like jealousy, she tells herself; it is a peculiar distrust; she does not want madame to gain any

influence over *her*. She is ready enough to admit and to admire her wonderful beauty, but her presence seems like some overpowering fragrance that might lull one into a dangerous sleep.

And yet Violet finds, as the time goes on, that she does come into her life and smooths it mysteriously. Laura has less of that insolent superiority when madame is present, and Mrs. Grandon seems more gentle. Then madame can convey bits of society counsel so delicately, she always seems to know just when Violet is not quite certain of any step.

"I should really have loved her at first," Violet half admits to herself, "if nothing had been said."

Gertrude and the professor are going to Mexico, and will not be back for some time. Everybody is planning for summer. Laura talks of a run over to Europe; the Vandervoorts take Newport as a matter of course, and send thither carriages and horses. Mrs. Latimer spends a few days at Grandon Park, and ends by taking the cottage with Denise, after she has had a luncheon within its charmed precincts. Madame lingers and is undecided, then what she considers a very fortunate incident settles her at Grandon Park, with a lovely cottage, horses, and an elderly half invalid for companion.

About the middle of May, Marcia Grandon makes her grand *coup de grace*. She fancies she has had it all her own way, that she has planned; but some one behind was gently manipulating the cords of his puppet. There have been delicious stolen interviews, notes, and the peculiar half-intrigue, half-deception Marcia so loves. Violet has remarked an odd change in her; Mrs. Grandon has been a good deal occupied, and has grown accustomed to her daughter's vagaries, so no one has paid any special heed. Marcia has ordered a *trousseau* in the city, and one fine morning goes down in her airiest manner, and in pearl silk is made Mrs. Wilmarth. From thence they send out cards, and Marcia writes to her mother, to Laura, who comes in haste, and is both angry and incredulous; angry that Jasper Wilmarth should have been brought into the family, when she had done it the honor to connect it with the Vandervoorts and Delancys.

Marcia is quite resplendent in silk and lace, and does look blissfully content.

"What an awful fool you have made of yourself!" is the tender salutation, since Mr. Wilmarth is not present. "What you ever could see in *that* man passes my

comprehension! He may do for business, but if *I* understand rightly, Floyd is not over-fond of him. I suppose that was why you married on the sly?"

"I married to please myself," says Marcia, bridling, "and I dare say you did the same. I have a husband who is kind and generous and noble, who loves me and whom I love, and if fate has in some ways treated him unkindly, he shall learn that there is one woman in the world brave enough to make it up to him."

She repeats this almost like a lesson learned by rote.

"Bosh," returns Laura, with contemptuous superiority. "I dare say you thought it would be the last chance!"

"Oh, I have heard of women marrying even at forty," retorts Marcia, with a shrill little laugh.

"And to do it in that way! Whatever possessed you to make such an idiot of yourself. To bring *that* man in the family!"

"You forget he is my husband, Mrs. Delancy," and Marcia braves her resolutely.

At this moment the door opens and the obnoxious person enters, having heard his wife's last sentence. He walks straight up to Laura, with determination in every line of his countenance.

"Ah, Mrs. Delancy," he says, and then adds in a meaning tone, with a kind of bitter suavity, "I suppose we do not need to be introduced. Although I never was much of a visitor in my late partner's household, I have known you all, and I suppose am entitled to a little friendly recognition for Marcia's sake. We have taken our step in a most unorthodox manner, but it suited ourselves, our only apology."

"Extremely unorthodox," says Laura, in a biting tone.

"But we propose to make it orthodox as soon as possible. Marcia, brave girl, would have married me in the face of any staring audience. She might have had a younger and handsomer bridegroom, but she can hardly have a husband who will care more tenderly for her."

Laura is rather checked in her angry career. She dare not brave these steel-gray eyes.

"We are all very much surprised; at least I am, having heard no word or hint of it."

"We did keep our secret pretty well, I believe," and he glances fondly at Marcia.

"Well," replies Laura, rising, "I suppose the best wish of all is that you may not regret your step in haste."

"It was not so hasty as that," and he laughs, with the flavor of one who has won.

Laura makes her adieus coldly, feeling outgeneralled by his evident determination not to be put down.

"What are we to do?" she asks of madame, half an hour later. "This horrid reception staring us in the face! Of course people will go out of curiosity. Marcia always did delight in being talked about."

"But is her husband so horribly unpresentable?" and madame's beautiful eyes are filled with sympathy.

"Oh, you can present *anything* here in New York, that is the worst of it!" cries Laura, angrily. "That is why I like Newport. And Marcia is so utterly silly."

"But Mr. Wilmarth?"

"I hate the sight of him, and Marcia used to say everything about him. He's humpbacked or something, and looks like a tiger. Well, I *do* wish her joy if ever he should get in a tantrum. You see, after all, the idea of bringing such a man in the family. Floyd's marriage was bad enough."

"But your *petite* sister-in-law does improve wonderfully."

"Don't call her anything to me," says Laura, disdainfully. "She is simply Floyd's wife. I only wish we were going to sail this very day and get out of all the *escalandre*."

Madame laughs comfortingly. Laura resolves to go up to Grandon Park to see in what estimation the marriage is held there.

They are surprised and puzzled. Mrs. Grandon's mortification is a little assuaged, and in her secret heart she is thankful Marcia has done no worse. She has been lawfully married by a reputable clergyman, she is staying at a fashionable hotel,

and will no doubt have a stylish reception. She has married a man who can not only keep her in comfort, but who is likely to keep her out of any further imprudences, and therefore one need have no care or anxiety about the future. The step certainly has some compensations to her, if they are and must remain unconfessed to the world.

"I do regret it," Floyd says, candidly, "for I am afraid Marcia's romance has led her into an unwise step. I cannot imagine Jasper Wilmarth being tender to a woman. I have never been able to like or admire him, or, for that matter, trust him, and our views seldom accord. I suppose the secret of it was that Marcia was afraid of opposition."

"But what are you going to do, recognize them at once?"

"If at all, why not at once? Why make a little stir and gossip? We shall never be altogether friendly," and Floyd paces the room, for he sees this step complicates business matters still further, "but we can keep people from commenting upon our unfriendliness."

"Of course they will come back here to live, and it might be awkward for you," returns Laura, rather elated that they are not likely to stay in the city. "Well, if there is nothing else to do——"

"We may as well put a pleasant face on the matter and swallow our bitter pill," says Floyd, with a smile of concession.

"Do you know," says Violet, afterward, with a touch of timidity that is quite entrancing, "I cannot help admiring Marcia's courage in marrying a man she loved, even if he was not—and he *is* quite dreadful," with a shivering incoherence. "I saw him when he came to Canada, and he made me think of an ogre. Yet it would be very hard if the whole world hated you for something you could not help, like a deformity."

"I have known several instances of men worse deformed than Mr. Wilmarth being extravagantly loved," says Grandon, thinking how nearly this man might have been her fate, and wondering if she could have reconciled herself to it. "But we are very apt to connect warped bodies with warped minds, and I must confess to a distaste for either. I should like to be sure it was—regard that brought them together."

She remembers that Marcia is rather peculiar, always taking sudden fancies and then dropping them. This she never can give up, never.

"What thought so perplexes that wise little face," asks her husband.

"Oh, she must have loved him or she could not have married him," she says, still thinking of Marcia.

"Does that follow, I wonder?"

"Why, she had her choice, you know, there was no other reason for her to marry him," she answers, innocently.

He wonders just now what Violet St. Vincent would have done had a choice been hers! He is well aware that she obeyed her father, and that he was not distasteful to her. She is sweet and dutiful and fond, not at all exacting, and has the obedience of a well-trained child. Does he care for anything more? Could he have it if he *did* care, if he desired it ardently?

Mrs. Jasper Wilmarth's reception is a crush. It would seem that no one stayed away, and it looks as if they might have brought cousins and aunts. She is in pale blue silk and velvet, and looks very pretty, for Marcia brightens up wonderfully with becoming dress. Mr. Wilmarth's tailor has made the best of his figure, and he brings out the training of years ago, when he had some ambitions. Society decides that it must have been merely a whim, for the man is certainly well enough, and really adores her. Even Laura wonders how Marcia managed to inspire this regard, and decides that the marriage is not so bad, after all, and she shall never have Marcia to chaperone.

Floyd Grandon and his wife are down in the early part of the evening. This is really Mr. Wilmarth's triumph. The greeting is courteous, if formal, and the man has come to *him*, Jasper Wilmarth. As a member of the Grandon family, he is not to be overlooked. As a man, he can win a wife as well as the more favored ones, and there are women present with much less style and prettiness than Marcia.

His whim has not proved so foolish, after all, and Marcia is at present bewildered and conquered by the power he holds over her, brought for a little while out of her silly self by an ennobling regard.

After their reception they take a short tour, and return to Westbrook, where Mr.

Wilmarth has engaged his house. Marcia has a house-furnishing craze, and goes to and fro in her pony carriage, ordering with the consequence of a duchess. Mrs. Latimer comes up to the cottage and gets settled, quite charming Denise by her delightful ways. Madame seems in no especial haste, but she promises, after some solicitation from Floyd, to spend a few days with them and give her advice about the *fête* that is to introduce his wife into society, as well as to celebrate her birthday. It is quite time that Violet was known to the world as the mistress of the house and his wife. He is oddly interested in her dress and all her belongings, and her delight is exquisite to witness.

CHAPTER XXI.

Life is but thought, so think I will,
That youth and I are housemates still.

COLERIDGE.

Violet had imagined the place when Laura's reception was given, but this sight far exceeds her wildest dreams. The moon is nearly at its full, and the lawn lies in a sheet of silver light, while the lamps throw out long rays of color. Roses are everywhere, it is their blossoming time. All the air is sweet and throbs with music that stirs her pulses like some rare enchantment. The odorous evergreens are rich in new and fragrant growth, the velvet turf gives out a perfume to the night air and looks like emerald in the moonlight. Beds of flowers are cut in it here and there, a few clumps of shrubbery, the pretty summer-houses, the sloping terrace, and the river surging with an indolent monotone, make a rarely beautiful picture. The columns upholding the porch roof are wreathed with vines, but the spaces between are clear. The low windows are all open, and it is fairyland without and within. Floyd Grandon paces up and down, with John Latimer at his side, while the band around on the other side are in the discord of tuning up.

"Upon my word, Grandon, you *are* to be envied," says Latimer. "I am not sure we have done a wise thing coming up here this summer. The fuss and pomp of fashion rarely move me to any jealous state of mind, but I am afraid this will awaken absolute covetousness."

Grandon gives a genial, wholesome laugh, and he almost believes he is to be envied, in spite of the perplexities not yet at an end. He is proud of his lovely home, he has a beautiful child and a sweet wife, and if she does not charm the whole world what does he care? There is no one left to fret them in household ways, for he fancies he has seen signs of softening in his mother, and she is having new interests in life, with her daughters well married. There is only Eugene to feel really anxious about.

The carriages are driving up the avenue and there is a flutter through the hall. Floyd goes up-stairs presently and finds Violet in his room waiting for the finishing touches to be added to Cecil's attire. She turns quickly, and a soft flush makes her bewitching, radiant.

"How do you like me?" she asks, in her innocent simplicity.

She is in pure white, his favorite attire for her, but the wraith-like laces draping her lend her a different air from anything he has seen before. The rose-leaf tint in her cheek, her lovely dimpled mouth, the eyes that look browner and more like velvet than ever, and the shining hair give her a glamour of sweetness and youth that stirs his heart to its very depths.

"Like you?" he echoes; "you are beautiful, bewitching!"

She comes a little nearer. His commendation makes her extremely happy. He holds out both hands, and she places hers in them, and kisses her on the forehead; he has fallen so much into the habit that he does it unthinkingly.

"Floyd," says Mrs. Grandon, from the hall, "you certainly ought to go down."

"I am all ready," cries Cecil, who flies out, beautiful as a fairy, in a shimmer of white and pale blue, her waving hair like a shower of gold.

Violet is a good deal frightened at first, although she resolutely forces herself to a point of bravery. She has never been the central figure before, and she has a consciousness that all eyes are turned upon her, and that she hardly has a right to the use of her true name while Mr. Grandon's stately mother is present. Laura is resplendent in silk and lace,—she never affects any *ingenue* style,—and madame is a dazzle in black and gold, her Parisian dress of lace a marvel of clinging beauty, and her Marechal Niel roses superb. She has been mistress and head for several days, but now she is simply the guest, and none better than she knows how to grace the position.

Outside there is a sea of bewildering melody, that pulses on the air in rhythmic waves. The French horns blow out their soft, sweet gales, like birds at early morn, the flutes whistle fine and clear, and the violins, with their tremulous, eager sweetness, seem dripping amber; viols and horns reply, shaking out quivering breaths to the summer night air, until it seems some weird, far-away world. Violet is so entranced that she almost forgets she is Floyd Grandon's wife, being made known to society.

The first quadrilles are full of lovely gliding figures. Violet dances with her husband, then with Eugene. Floyd and Madame Lepelletier are in the same set. It is the first time he has danced with her since they were betrothed. She knows if

she had stayed at home and married him, neither would have been the kind of people they are now, and she does not envy that old time, but she wants the power in her hands that she had then. She would not even care to give up all the years of adulation when rank and title were an open-sesame to golden doors, and even now has its prestige. There is nothing she really cares for but the love of this man, little as she believes in the divine power.

The *fête* is really open now. Guests stroll about and listen to the music, or sit on the balcony chairs and watch the dancing. By and by there are some soft melodious waves with no especial meaning, then the French horns pipe a delicious thrill, "viol, flute and bassoon" burst into beguiling bloom of the Zamora, and hands steal out to other hands, arms cling to arms, and the winding, bewildering waltz begins.

Violet is talking to a young man, one of the Grandon Park neighbors, who stands bashfully wondering if it would do to ask her to waltz. Unconsciously her feet are keeping time, and her heart seems to rise and fall to the enchantment in the air. Then she feels a presence behind her and turns.

"This is our waltz," Floyd Grandon says, just above a whisper, and, bowing to her companion, leads her away.

"Shall we go out on the balcony?" he asks, and the quick pressure on his arm answers him. Out in the wide warm summer night, where the air throbs and glows with some weird enchantment, he puts his arm about her and draws her close; there are several irregular measures, then their figures and steps seem to settle to each other, and they float down the long space, up again, there is reversing to steady her a little, then on and on. He looks down at the drooping eyes with their tremulous lids, at the faint flush that comes and goes, he feels the throbbing breath, and realizes what a powerful and seductive temptation this might become. He is even kindled himself. For the first time he feels himself capable of rousing such a torrent of love in her that her whole soul shall be absorbed in his. Down in this shady corner, while the other couples are quite at the other end, he raises the sweet face, tranced in the beguiling melody of movement, and kisses the lips with all a man's passionate fervor, holds her in such a clasp that she struggles and throws out one hand wildly, as if suddenly stricken blind, and a frightened expression drowns the sweet delight.

"Oh!" and she gives a little cry of pain and mystery.

"My darling!"

The voice is tenderly reassuring, and they float on again, but for a brief moment the lightness seems gone out of her feet. He draws a long, deep inspiration. Sweet, tender, and devoted as she is, it is not her time to love, and he remembers all the years between them. She is as innocent of the deeper depths of passion as Cecil.

There is a long, long throb on the air, almost a wail of regret, from the human voices of the violins. The cornet seems to run off in the distance, and the horns have a sob in their last notes. The dancers stop with languid reluctance. Floyd Grandon leads his wife along as if he would take her down the steps, away somewhere.

"Let us sit here," she cries, suddenly, and there is a curious strain in her voice, a thrill as of fear. Does she not dare trust herself with him anywhere, everywhere?

"Are you tired?" he asks, with a tenderness that touches her.

She still seems like one in a dream.

"No," she answers. "It was enchanting. I could dance forever. I don't know——"

Her voice falters and drops as the last notes of the music have done. It would be a mortal sin to awaken her. She shall dream on until the right time comes.

"Then you liked it?" His voice has a steady, reassuring tone. "There is another; shall we try it again, presently?"

This time it is the "Beautiful Blue Danube."

"Oh, no, no!" she says, vehemently.

The strains begin to float and throb again, light, airy, delicate, with one pathetic measure that always touches the soul. She rouses and listens, then the little hand creeps into his beseechingly.

"Oh," she says, "may I take that back! I think I was beside myself. Will you waltz with me again?"

It is an exquisite waltz, pure, dreamy pleasure, delicious to the last bar, and nothing has startled her. He watches her lovely flower-like face that is full of

supreme content.

"Now," he says, after she has rested awhile, "we must look after our guests. Let us take a stroll around."

Nearly everybody has been waltzing. Marcia and her husband are present. It was quite against his desire that Floyd extended an invitation to Jasper Wilmarth, but he felt he could not do otherwise. He does not mean to be over-cordial with his brother-in-law in the matter of hospitalities. Wilmarth is proud of this victory, because he knows it cost Floyd Grandon something. He is glad, too, of an opportunity of becoming better acquainted with Mrs. Grandon. This does not altogether mean conversing with her, although he has managed several passing talks, but he likes to watch her, and the old thought comes into his mind that with a little better planning he might have won her. A half-suggestion of his had put the thought of Eugene Grandon in the mind of St. Vincent, but he well knew that Eugene would only laugh such a proposal to scorn. The factor he had not counted on was Floyd himself.

Marcia is set wild with the first waltz. She is new to wifehood, and she stands a little in awe of Jasper Wilmarth. There are people, husbands, who object to it. Eugene is too late to secure madame, and stands looking rather bored and sulky.

"Would you mind dancing it with me, just once?" says Marcia, pleadingly.

"Of course not," he answers, indifferently.

"Eugene wants me to waltz with him," she whispers to her husband; and he, in deep conversation with a neighbor, simply nods. There will be time enough for marital training when the worship becomes irksome, and he wants spice instead of sweet. They shall all see that Marcia has an indulgent husband and is not to be commiserated. But when he sees Floyd Grandon floating up and down with that lovely fairy-like figure in his arms, he hates him more bitterly than before. Irene Lepelletier and Jasper Wilmarth could well join hands here. The gulf between them is not so very wide.

Marcia is up in the next waltz as well, but this time with an old admirer. Eugene resists the glances of Lucia Brade and makes a wall-flower of himself. He begins to watch Violet presently, and remark with what entire perfection she waltzes. Who would have suspected it in a little convent-bred girl? She is pretty in spite of all detractions, Laura has discovered. How her shining hair glitters, as if

sprinkled with diamond-dust.

Cecil comes running up to her after they have promenaded around among the guests.

"Mamma," she exclaims, "that was just as we dance. Why can't you dance with me here to all the pretty music!"

Violet glances up to meet her husband's smile of assent. "Next time, Cecil," she says, slipping the little hand in hers.

They do not have to wait very long. After a mazourka comes a waltz, and Cecil is made supremely happy.

"How utterly bewitching they look!" says a low, melodious voice at Floyd Grandon's side. "How tall Cecil has grown in a year!"

"A year!" he repeats. Yes, it is a year ago that his old life ended, and how much has been crowded in that brief while.

"You are a wise man," madame says, in an indescribable tone. "You have not forced your bud into premature blossoming. There might be a decade between Laura and your wife."

"I wonder if Laura had any real girlhood?" he remarks, musingly.

"Why, yes, at fourteen, perhaps. That is the way with most of us. But hers, not beginning so soon, will have the longer reign. How lovely the river looks to-night! I should like to go down on the terrace," she adds, after a moment.

"I am at your service," and he rises.

They cross the lawn amid groups sauntering in the moonlight, keeping time to the music, if they do not dance. The whole scene is like enchantment. They stroll on and on, down the steps and then over the broad strip of grass. The cool air blows up along the shore, and with the tide coming in every ripple is crested with silver. Over at the edge of the horizon the stars dare to shine out amid the silence of the rocks and woods opposite, making a suggestive, shadowy land.

"On such a night," she quotes, with a smile that might beguile a man's soul.

"We could not have had anything more beautiful. And I owe a great deal of the

perfection of the scene to you, since the season was in other hands. Allow me to express my utmost gratitude."

"I am glad to be able to add to your pleasure in any way," she answers, with a kind of careless joy. "Possibly I may add to your displeasure. May I make a confession?" and she smiles again.

"To me?" not caring to conceal his surprise.

"Yes, to you. I shall bind you by all manner of promises, but the murder must out."

"Is it as grave as that?"

"Yes. If you had not gone by the heats and caprices of youthful passion, you would be less able to extend your mantle of charity. I care enough for your good opinion and for that of your family not to be placed in a false light by the imprudence of youth,—shall we call it that?"

"I cannot imagine," he begins, puzzled, and yet almost afraid to trench on this suspicious ground.

"Can you not? Then I give the young man credit for a degree of prudence I was fearful he did not possess."

"Oh," he says, with a curious sense of relief, "you mean—my brother?"

"Floyd," in a low, confidential tone, and she so rarely gives him his Christian name that he is struck with her beautiful utterance of it, "I want you to do me this justice at least, to let me stand higher in your estimation than that of a mere silly coquette, who makes a bid for the admiration of men in general. There was a time when it might have turned my head a little, but then I had no *general* admiration to tempt me. I have been friendly with Eugene, as any woman so much older might be, and the regard he has for me is not love at all, but just now he cannot see the difference. He feels bitter because he cannot have matters as he fancies he would like, and in a few years he will be most grateful for the cruelty, as he calls it."

"Oh," Floyd says, with a sense of shame, "he certainly has not been foolish enough to——"

"You surely do not think I would allow him to make an idiot of himself!" she replies, with an almost stinging disdain. "I should not want him to remember that of me. One may make a mistake in youth, or commit an error, but with added years there would be small excuse. I had a truer regard for him, as well as myself. It was wiser to quench the flame before it reached that height," and she smiles with a sense of approval. "So if you see us at sword's points, you will know that the disease has reached the crisis, and you may reasonably expect an improvement. Indeed, it is time he turned his attention to other matters. Shall you be able to make a business man of him?"

"I am afraid not," replies Floyd Grandon.

"Now that I have confessed, I feel quite free," she begins, in a tone of relief. "I wanted the matter settled before I came up here, and I did want to keep your good opinion, if indeed you have a good opinion of me."

Something in her voice touches his very soul. It is entreating, penitent, yet loftily proud. It says, "I can do without your approval, since I may have forfeited it in some way, yet I would rather have it. You are free to give or to withhold."

"I think," he says, steadily, "this is not the first time you have acted sensibly. I wonder if I shall offend you by a reference to those old days when we both made a mistake. Time has shown us the wisdom of not endeavoring to live up to it. Both of our lives have doubtless been the better, and we have proved that it makes us none the less friends."

There is no agitation in voice or face. He stands here calmly beside the woman he was to have married, and both he and she know the regard has perished utterly. An hour ago he would hardly have said what he has. Why does he feel so free to say it now? She is superbly tranquil as well, but she knows him for a man who holds his honor higher than any earthly thing. If Violet St. Vincent had not come between, she might have won him, but now all the list of her fascinations cannot make him swerve.

"I ought," he continues, scarcely heeding the momentary silence, "to thank you in behalf of my wife as well. You have shown us both many kindnesses. You have been a true friend."

He never makes the slightest reference to any family disagreements or any lack of welcome his wife has experienced.

"I should have done a great deal more if Mrs. Grandon had been less shy of strangers," she makes answer, quietly.

They walk up and down in silence. The river ripples onward, the moon sails in serenest glory, the wind wafts the melody down from the wide verandas, and it trembles on the river, making a faint echo of return from the other side. They are both thinking,—Grandon of Violet, and madame of him. She has found few men so invincible, even among those very much in love. There is a certain expression in his face which she as a woman of the world and read in many fascinations understands; it is loyal admiration, for he is constrained to admire in all honesty, but it falls far short of that flash of overmastering feeling, so often mistaken for love and leading to passion, the possibility of being tempted. It would satisfy her vanity better to believe him incapable of a deep and fervent love, but she knows better. When he is touched by the divine fire he will respond, and she envies bitterly the woman who is destined thus to awaken him. Will it be Violet? She crushes her white teeth together at the thought, imagining that she would feel better satisfied to have it any other woman. But why should he not go on this way? Let him honor the girl whom circumstances and not election have given for a wife, so that in real regard he sets her no higher than a friend.

"We must go back," she says, with a touch of regret in her voice. "One could stay here forever, but there are duties and duties."

He turns with her and they come up the path together. Cecil and Violet stand on the balcony, warm, yet full of youthful gladness. Cecil has acquitted herself so beautifully that the two have been a centre of admiration, and Violet has run away from the compliments. She has been idly watching the two figures on the terrace, and as they come nearer it gives her a curious feeling that she at once tries to dismiss as selfish.

Eugene strolls out to them. He has been on terms of friendly indifference with his pretty little sister-in-law, classing her with Cecil, but to-night he has seen her in a new character, which she sustains with the brilliant charm of youth, if not the dignity of experience. He is sore and sulky. He has not been fool enough to believe madame would marry him, but he would have married her any day. He has been infatuated with her beauty, her charms of style and manner, her beguiling voice; the very atmosphere that surrounded her was delightful to breathe in concert with her. He has haunted her afternoon teas and her evening receptions, he has attended her to operas, and sometimes lowered savagely at the

train that came to pay court to her. Like a wary general she has put off the symptoms of assault by making diversions elsewhere, until the feint no longer answered its purpose. She would not allow him to propose, that would savor of possible hope and encouragement; she has spoken with the friendliness a woman can command. This course of devotion on his part draws attention to them and is ungenerous to her. "How do you know what I mean?" he has asked, in a tone of gloomy persistence.

She gives a little laugh, suggestive of incredulity and a slight flavor of ridicule.

"Because I know it is impossible for you to really mean anything derogatory to me or to yourself," she answers, in a tone of assured steadiness. "If I were a young girl it might be love or flirtation; if I were a coquette it might be an evil fascination such as too often wrecks young men. As I do not choose it shall be any of these, you must not grow sentimental with me."

She looks at him out of clear eyes that *are* maddening, and yet he cannot but read his fate in them. It is thus far and no farther.

"Oh," he answers, with a touch of scorn, "I think I have read of marriages with as great disparity of years as between us! It is supposed they loved, they certainly have been happy."

"But I am not in my dotage," she cries, gayly. "Neither am I such a wonderful believer in love. There are many other qualities requisite for what I call a good marriage."

"I do not suppose I shall ever make a *good* marriage," he says, calmly, but with bitter emphasis.

"And yet you ought. You are handsome, attractive, you can make a fortune if you will; you can grace any society."

"Spare me," he replies, with contempt. "My impression is, that I shall never have faith enough in any woman to marry her."

"Oh, that is so deliciously young, Eugene! It ought to be applauded." And she laughs lightly.

"Good morning," he says, in a furious temper.

He has not been near her since, and chooses to absent himself on a business trip the first three days she spends at Grandon Park, coming home last evening, and meeting her at the breakfast-table this morning, where she has tact enough to cover all differences. He has not danced with her, though they have met in the quadrilles, and he is moody and resentful, although he knows that she is right. But he puts it on the score of money. "If I were the owner of Grandon Park," he thinks, "she would not so much mind the years between."

Therein he is mistaken. It would hurt Irene Lepelletier's *amour propre* to make herself conspicuous, to be held up to ridicule or blame. She does not *care* for marriage; her position is infinitely more delightful in its variety. She can make a world of her own without being accountable to any one, but she has come perilously near to loving Floyd Grandon, when she considered love no longer a temptation, had dismissed it as a puerile insanity of youth.

Eugene catches sight of the two promenaders. Almost beside them now are Miss Brade and Mr. Latimer. There is nothing in it, and yet it stirs his jealousy. Laura has always been so sure that Violet alone interrupted a marriage between them, and in this cruel pang he is grateful to Violet, and glad, yes, exultingly glad that madame never can be mistress here. There is one check for her, even if she triumphs in all things else.

"What an exquisite dancer you are," he says to Violet. "I never imagined you could learn anything like that in a convent."

"I don't think you learn *quite* like it," she says, with a soft little ripple. "I never danced so before; it is enchantment. And I never waltzed with a gentleman until to-night, except to take a few steps with my teacher."

"You like it?" He is amused by the enthusiasm of her tone.

"Oh," she confesses, with a long sigh, "it is rapturous! I am so fond of dancing. I wonder, do *you* think it frivolous?" and she glances up with a charming deprecation.

She *is* very pretty. It must be her dress that makes her so uncommonly lovely to-night, he fancies, but it is all things,—her youth, her joy, her sweet satisfaction.

"Why, no, not frivolous. It is—well, I don't know how society would get along without it," and he gives a short, grim laugh. "We could not have balls or parties

or Germans,—nothing but dinners and teas and musicales and stupid receptions. And there wouldn't be anything for young people to do; the old tabbies, you know, can gossip about their neighbors, and the men can smoke."

"It is all so wonderfully beautiful!" she begins, dreamily. "The lawn is a perfect fairyland, and I never saw so many lovely dresses and handsome people together in my life. And the music——"

The strains floating in the air are quite enough to bewilder one, to steep him in delicious reveries, to transport him to Araby the blest.

"Will you waltz once with me?" he asks, suddenly, taking her hand.

"*Ought* I?" she inquires, innocently. "You see I do not quite understand——"

"No," he answers, "I will take a galop instead, but it is all right enough. Floyd wouldn't care, I know."

He has a jealous misgiving that Floyd will waltz with madame if Violet thus sets him an example.

The galop begins presently. Floyd is busy with the duties of host, and supper is soon to be announced. Madame dances superbly, but neither of them are up now, except that just at the last Floyd takes a few turns with Cecil, whose time of revelry is now ended.

Eugene takes Violet in to supper; not exactly as Floyd has planned, but as she desires. Her next neighbor is very bright and entertaining, and Eugene really does his best. Between them both Mrs. Grandon is vivacious, sparkling, and radiant with the charms of youth and pleasure. Eugene is quite resolved to show madame that he has not been hard hit, and even devotes himself awhile to Lucia Brade, who is supremely happy. There is more dancing, and Violet and Floyd have another lovely waltz. So with walking and talking and lounging on balcony and lawn, listening to the delicious music, the revel comes to an end.

"You have been very happy?" Floyd Grandon says to his wife.

"It has been perfect," she makes answer. "I could ask nothing more, nothing."

He kisses her with a little sigh. Is there something more, and does he long for it?

CHAPTER .

"Love and hay are thick sown, but come up full of thistles."

Mrs. Floyd Grandon is considered fairly in society, and the world decides there is nothing detrimental about her. She is admitted to be pretty, she is well-bred, with some little touches of formalism, due to her training, that are really refreshing to elderly people, and sit quaintly upon her. She is charming, both when her natural vivacity crops out, that has been so repressed, and when she is shyly diffident. Cards and invitations are left for her, and Grandon Park blossoms out into unwonted gayety. The people who go away find no difficulty in renting their houses to those who want to come; perhaps the Latimers have given the impetus, for Mrs. Latimer is one of those women who are always quoted, without having any special desire to achieve a society reputation. The cottage frequently has some visitors of note: its smallness renders large companies impossible.

There is the usual lawn tennis, and croquet, which is rather falling into desuetude, but still affords unequalled opportunities for flirtation. There is boating, and the river looks quite gay with boats with striped and colored awnings to protect the fair ones from the sun. Grandon and Latimer are famous oarsmen, and often gather an admiring audience which gets greatly excited over the victorious champion, though honors keep evenly divided. Then there are garden parties and musical evenings, so there is no lack of amusement.

Violet has become quite an expert driver, and she and her pretty step-daughter, who keep up their adoration of each other, make a lovely picture in the basket phaeton. She rides on horseback very well, and here Eugene is always at her service. In fact, though he never *quite* confesses it, he lets her fancy that he is an unfortunate moth who has been drawn into the flame when he would not have flown of his own account and desire. He is the kind of masculine who must

always be dear to *some* woman, who floats on the strongest current of fascination or sympathy. It has been the former, it is now the latter. The many frank allurements of youth in Violet charm him insensibly. She has a secret sympathy and a curious misgiving that she cannot overcome,—it grows upon her, indeed,—that Madame Lepelletier is dangerous to man and woman.

Had madame more personal vanity in her conquests, she might feel piqued at the defection of her knight, who has not wavered in his allegiance for the last year. She is rather pleased than otherwise, she even breathes little bits of encouragement and commendation to Violet, as if seconding her efforts; and Violet falls into the mistake that many have made before her, of comforting a young man and assisting him to overlive his fancy for another woman, as well as secretly blaming the other. Eugene is so fond of shifting burthens upon other people.

Laura and Mr. Delancy go abroad. Mrs. Grandon accepts several invitations for summer visits. She is less the head of the house now that her daughters are married and away, but she does not abate one jot of her dignity, and is secretly mortified to see Eugene so ready to treat with the enemy, as she still considers her.

Mrs. Jasper Wilmarth is at the summit of delighted vanity. They cannot compete with Grandon Park, but they have taken a rambling old country house on the outskirts of Westbrook, and Marcia has certainly managed to accumulate no end of bizarre articles. The rooms are large and the ceilings low; there are corner fireplaces and high mantels, there are curtains and portières and lambrequins, there are pictures and brackets and cabinets, easels with their "studies," and much *bric-à-brac*. Jasper Wilmarth insists that the sleeping chamber and sitting-room shall be kept free from this "nonsense," as he calls it, and does not meddle his head about the rest. Indeed, he rather smiles to himself to see of what consequence his name has made her. He does not even object to being considered a hero of romance in her estimation, knowing her sieve-like nature, and that whatever is in must drip through somewhere. She adores him, she waits on him with a curious humility that is very flattering, while to the rest of the world she puts on rather lofty airs. They amuse him, and he sees with much inward scorn the respect paid her—for what, indeed? Was she not as wise and as attractive six months ago? Yet he means she shall have the respect and the honor. He will not be the rich man that he once dreamed of, but he has enough to afford

her many indulgences. So when she makes a rather timid proposition for a party of some kind, he listens with attention as she skips over the ground and makes a jumble of festivities.

"I should choose the garden party," he says, briefly, for in his mind he considers it the prettiest for the expense and the most enjoyable. There is no velvet lawn, but there is the remnant of an orchard, and the old trees are still picturesque. They need not have the fuss of a regular supper, but refreshments out of doors, with quartet tables, for the evening will be warm and moonlight.

Marcia is delighted. The pony phaeton flies around briskly, and invitations are accepted on nearly every hand. Floyd Grandon would much prefer to decline, but he cannot, without seeming churlish, and Violet takes it as a matter of course.

Is it a special Providence that interferes? That very morning an important telegram comes, and some one must go to Baltimore. It is not a matter he cares to have Wilmarth settle, and Eugene is not to be relied upon. He could take Violet, but it would look absurd this hot weather, and on such a hurried journey, when he has not hesitated to go alone before. Why should he be so reluctant to leave her, he wonders.

"It's just shabby!" declares Eugene. "Wait until to-morrow. Marcia will feel dreadfully put out if you are not there to-night."

"To-morrow would make it too late to see one of the parties, who is to go abroad." And he knits his brows.

"Well," says Eugene, "I'll take care of Violet to-night, though I can't hope to fill your place. But—I say, Floyd, do you mind if she waltzes with me?"

"Not if she cares to," is the answer, in a tone of reluctance that is quite lost upon the younger. He realizes that he has hardly courage for a direct prohibition when Eugene has just begun to show himself brotherly.

Violet is out driving with Cecil. He hurries up to the Latimers'. She has been there and gone, and there is no more time if he catches his train, and not to do it might be to lose immeasurably. But to go without a good-by to her or Cecil, and the old thought, the ghost that haunts every untoward parting, if he should never see them again, unmans him for an instant. What folly! Why, he is growing as

fearful as a young lover.

He writes a brief farewell in pencil, and lays it on her table. She shall decide about the party herself, but he longs for a kiss, for one look into her lovely, untroubled eyes.

Violet does not return until luncheon is on the table. Eugene is looking out for her.

"Floyd had to go," he begins. "There was some important business, and he had to make a Baltimore connection, but he scoured the town to find you, and was awfully sorry."

It does not occur to Violet that there is anything unusual in his sudden departure, since it is not the first time he has gone with a very brief announcement. A thrill of satisfaction speeds through her at the thought of his wishing to find her, and she is truly very sorry that he should miss anything of the slightest consequence to him.

"I ought not have stayed," she says, with tender regret. "But I remembered I had promised to call on Miss Kirkbride, and I wanted to before I met her to-night. Oh——" and she pauses in vague questioning.

"That is all right. Floyd engaged me for your loyal knight and true," announces Eugene, in a confident tone, bowing ludicrously low.

Violet laughs, then a faint pink is added to the color in her cheek. It is like her husband's thoughtful ways.

"I am not sure I ought to go. Why, I have never been out without Mr. Grandon," she says, in alarm.

"Well, he has often been out without you," returns Eugene, with what he considers comforting frankness. "And then—it wouldn't do at all, you see. Mother is away, and there is not a single member of the family to do honor to Marcia, for if you remained at home I should stay to keep you company. And Marcia made a great point of our coming."

She has been pulling off her gloves, and now goes slowly up-stairs. Cecil has run on before and Jane is busy with her, but she calls eagerly as Violet passes through the hall. There lays the note on her table, a fond farewell to her and

Cecil, a kiss to each, and regrets that he must go in such haste, but not a word about the party.

"I am all ready first," announces Cecil, coming in, attired in a fresh white dress.

"Yes, my darling. That is from papa," as she stoops and kisses her, "who has had to go away without a bit of good-by."

Cecil questions as to where he is gone, and why he went, and why he did not stay until after luncheon; and Violet explains patiently, recalling past times when the child has been almost inconsolable. She is so solaced by her message that she does not think of any other side.

Still, she is not quite satisfied to go without him to so large a gathering, and brings up half a dozen pretty reasons that Eugene combats and demolishes.

"And there will be dancing," she says.

"It would be stupid if there were not," the young man replies. "Such people as the Latimers and the Mavericks can talk forever, but Marcia hardly keeps up to concert pitch in a long harangue, and Wilmarth is not altogether a society man, though I must say he does uncommonly well as a benedict. And you can waltz, too. Floyd actually bestowed the privilege upon me," and he gives a light, flute-like laugh. Certainly when Eugene Grandon pleases he can bring out many delightful graces.

A little pang goes to her soul. Floyd Grandon has never been exclusive or in any sense jealous. Indeed, he has had such scant cause, but she wishes secretly that he had not been so ready to give away that enjoyment, and resolves that she will not waltz with Eugene.

"Come out and lie in the hammock," he says, after lunch. "It is shady, and there is a lovely breeze; you must take a siesta to look fresh and charming, and do honor to the Grandon name. How odd that there are only us two!" and he gives an amusing smile. "What a marrying off there has been since Floyd came home! Four brides in a year ought to be glory enough for one family."

Eugene should, by right, go over to the factory and answer a pile of letters, but instead, he throws himself on the grass, with an afghan under his head, and falls fast asleep. Violet drowns in her hammock and dreams away the happy hours.

Only a little year ago. It runs through her mind like the lapping of the waves in the river.

They are a little late in reaching Mrs. Wilmarth's. It is an extremely picturesque sight, with seats rustic and bamboo, urns and stands of flowers, and moving figures in soft colors of flowing drapery. Some one is singing, and the sound floats outward to mingle with the summer air.

"Marcia certainly deserves credit," declares Eugene. "She is in her glory. She always did love to manage, and maybe she tries her arts upon Vulcan,—who knows."

"Mr. Wilmarth looks happy," says Violet, with gentle insistence.

"I suppose he is,—happy enough. But the marriage always has been a tremendous mystery to me. I should as soon have thought of the sky falling as Jasper Wilmarth marrying, and that he should take Marcia caps it all. I give it up," declares the young man.

"But Marcia is—I mean she has many nice ways," remarks Violet, as if deprecating harsher criticism.

"Well, for those who like her ways."

"You are not quite——" and Violet pauses.

"Generous or enthusiastic or any of the other womanish adjectives." Eugene pauses, for Marcia comes to meet them and Mr. Wilmarth stands on the porch.

"Well, you *have* made your appearance at last!" begins Marcia, with an emphasis rendered more decisive from a remark uttered by her husband a few moments before.

"Yes, but you can be thankful that you have us at all," says Eugene, in a tone of lazy insolence. "We only came as representatives of the great family name whose dignity we are compelled to uphold in the absence of the august head of the house."

Jasper Wilmarth hears this and would like to knock down the young man.

"Where is Floyd?" asks Marcia, sharply.

"Gone to Europe," says Eugene, with charming mendacity.

"Oh," cries Violet, in consternation, "not Europe! It is Baltimore." And fearing Marcia will be hurt she adds quickly, "It was very important business."

"Well, some one else went or is going to Europe. He was in a panic for fear of missing a connection. And he left loads of regrets, didn't he, Violet?"

"He left all that word with you," replies the young wife, wondering in her secret soul if Floyd really meant her to come and why he did not speak of it in the note.

They are in the hall by this time. Eugene nods coolly to Wilmarth, and Violet speaks with a curious inflection, her thoughts are elsewhere, but Wilmarth's steel-gray eyes remark that without reading the motive.

"Where has your brother gone?" he asks of Eugene. "I was not aware of any urgent business when I saw him this morning."

"I dare say it is his own affairs. Some ruin-hunter is no doubt going to the East, and he wants to send for an old coin or a bit of stone with an inscription, or the missing link," and the young man laughs indolently.

Marcia is going up-stairs with Violet. "I think Floyd might have put off his journey until to-morrow," she says, in an offended tone. "He did not come to the dinner, either. Perhaps he thinks we are *not* good enough, grand enough. You are quite sure you have not come against his wishes?"

Violet starts at this tirade, and if she had more courage would put on her hat again and walk out of the house.

"I am very sorry," she begins, but some one enters the dressing-room and she goes down presently to be warmly welcomed by several of the guests. Eugene constitutes himself her knight, and she feels very grateful. It is so strange to go in company without her husband; she can roam about the woods or drive her pony carriage and not feel lonely, but it seems quite solitary here, although she has met most of the people.

Eugene takes her arm and escorts her about. They are a charming young couple in their youth and beauty, and more than one person discerns the fitness. The business, too, would be of so much more account to Eugene, and he is in most need of a fortune. Jasper Wilmarth wonders if a time of regret will come to him.

Wafts of music float out on the summer night air. There is some dancing and much promenading. Marcia has a surprise in store, a series of tableaux arranged out of doors, with a pale rose light that renders them extremely effective, and they are warmly applauded. The guests sit at the tables and enjoy creams, ices, and salads: it is the perfection of a garden party. Marcia is in rather æsthetic attire, but it is becoming, and she is brimful of delight, though she wishes Floyd were here to see. She has a misgiving that he does not mean to rate Jasper Wilmarth very highly, and her wifely devotion resents it, for she is devoted. Jasper Wilmarth is both pleased and interested in the puppet he can move hither and thither to his liking, and occasionally to his service. He is gratified to see her party a success, though somewhat annoyed at the defection of his brother-in-law, who so far has not been his guest. He is piqued, too, about the sudden journey, and remembers now that a telegram came for him this morning. There is no business connection in Baltimore that need be made a secret, unless it is some secret of his own.

"There," exclaims Eugene, "a waltz at length! I began to think the ogre had forbidden so improper a proceeding. Now you are to waltz with me." And he rises, with her hand in his, but Violet keeps her seat.

"Why is waltzing considered improper?" she asks, slowly.

"Upon my life I don't know, unless, like the woman, you have to draw the line somewhere, and it is drawn at your relations or your husband. I have it—bright thought—it is to give *them* some especial privileges that will rouse the envy of the rest of the world. For myself I think it a humbug. There are other dances quite as reprehensible when you come to that, but I've never come to harm in any," and he laughs. "And as for flirting, there are devices many and various; when you reach that point, Madame Lepelletier can do more with her eyes than any dozen girls I know could with their feet. Come."

"I think—I do not feel like it," replies Violet.

"Oh, don't wear the willow!" advises the young man. "You have just been up in one quadrille, and people will notice it. Besides, I was very particular to respect any lingering prejudice my august brother might have had."

"And he said you were to waltz with me?"

"Oh," he rejoins, in a kind of hurt tone, "you really do not suppose I would tell

you a falsehood in this matter! I really do want to waltz with you, but I shouldn't descend to any such smallness as that."

She is touched by his air and disappointment.

"Well," she answers, reluctantly.

Just then madame floats by them. Violet rises, and they go gracefully down in the widening circles. Eugene waltzes to perfection. A few young girls look on with envious eyes, and something about Lucia Brade's face appeals to Violet. She *does* carry her heart on her sleeve, and has always been fond of Eugene Grandon.

"Let us stop," entreats Violet.

"Why, we were just going so perfectly! It was like a dream. How beautifully you do waltz! What is the matter?"

All this is uttered in a breath.

"I want you to go waltz with Miss Brade," says Violet. "She looks so lonely talking to that old Mr. Carpenter."

"Nonsense." And he tries to swing her into line.

"No; I do not feel as if I had any business with the young men," says Violet, rather promptly, standing her ground with resolution.

"See here," exclaims Eugene, suddenly, "if I waltz with her, will you give me another somewhere? If you won't, I shall not dance another step to-night," and he shakes his black curls defiantly.

That means he will keep close to her as a shadow, and she wishes he would not.

"Yes," she answers, "if you will do your duty you shall be rewarded."

"Be good and you will be happy," he quotes.

"Take *me* over to Mr. Carpenter."

"He will prose you to death. See, there is Mrs. Carpenter waltzing with Fred Kirkbride. That is the way young and pretty second wives enjoy themselves," says this candid young man.

Lucia Brade goes off supremely happy. Violet watches them from her rustic seat. She has been a little amazed at Lucia's evident preference, so plainly shown. Mr. Carpenter only needs a listener to render him supremely happy in his monologues, so Violet can follow her own thoughts.

She is wondering why she feels so lost and lonely in this bright scene, and why the waltz did not enchant her! Where is Mr. Grandon—drowsing in a railway car? If he were here! The very thought thrills her. Yes, it *is* her husband she misses,—not quite as she used to miss him, either. He has grown so much more to her, he fills all the spaces of her life. He may be absent bodily, but he is in her soul, he has possession of her very being. Is this love?

A strange thrill runs over her. The lights, the dancing, the talk beside her, might all be leagues away. She is penetrated, possessed by a blissful knowledge, something deeper, finer, keener than she has ever dreamed, not simply the reverence and obedience of the marriage vow that she has supposed included all. And then comes another searching question,—how much of just this kind of love has Floyd Grandon for her?

The waltz has ended, and the lancers begun. She will not dance that, but sends Eugene in quest of another partner, at which he grumbles. The Latimers are not here,—a sick baby has prevented,—though now Violet begins to feel quite at home with many of the dwellers in the park and about. Even madame searches her out presently.

"My dear child," she says, in that soft, suave tone, "are you not well this evening? You are such a little recluse."

"Quite well." And the brilliant face answers for her.

"Then you are not enjoying yourself. You young people ought to be up in every set."

"I did dance. But I like to look on. The figures are so graceful, and the music is bewitching."

"It seems unnatural for one of your age to be merely a spectator. How lovely Eugene and Mrs. Carpenter look together! She is just about your size and dances with the *verve* of youth, which I admire extremely. Gravity at that age always seems far-fetched, put on as a sort of garment to hide something not quite frank

or open, but it never can conceal the fact that it covers thoughts foreign to youth."

Violet wonders if she has been unduly grave this evening. She *has* something to conceal, a sweet, sacred secret that only one person may inquire into. Will he, some day? He has never yet asked her the lover's question to which it would be so sweet to reply.

"There," exclaims Eugene, sitting down beside her, "I have done my duty. The very next waltz, remember."

The last is in a whisper, and it brings the bright color to her face, brighter because madame's eyes are upon her; but fortunately for her peace, madame is wanted.

"Do you know," says Eugene, "I am very glad you married Floyd, for I *do* think it would have ended by his taking her; not that he cared particularly, and the queer thing was that Cecil would not make friends with her; but she is the kind of woman who generally gets everything she tries for. And I do believe she envies you your home and your husband."

"Oh!" cries Violet, much abashed, "do not say so. It seems to me there is nothing that she can envy or desire."

"Don't believe the half of that, little innocent! Oh, listen, this measure is perfection! Come."

She rises, for she cannot endure sitting here and discussing madame, and they all take so much for granted between her and Mr. Grandon.

The waltz is lovely out here in the summer moonlight. She forgets her discomfort in it, and is very happy; but when it ends she feels that her duty is done, that she would like to go home, and mentions her desire to Eugene.

"Why, yes, if you like," he answers. "If it had not been for you the whole thing would have bored me intolerably. Floyd may thank his stars for an excuse to keep away."

They make their adieus to host and hostess. Marcia tosses her head with a curt farewell.

But it has been a success. Doubtless many of the guests came from curiosity; but Mrs. Wilmarth is delighted to have had what would have been an enormous crush inside, and much elated to have it praised on every hand.

"But what idiots Violet and Eugene made of themselves," she says, in the privacy of her own room, when all is quiet and the old orchard is left to the weird dancing shadows of the moonlight, while the insect voices of the night keep up an accompaniment.

"Did they? I thought he was unusually modest and chary of his numerous graces," returns Jasper Wilmarth, with his usual sneer, which is nearly always lost upon Marcia, who has settled it as belonging to his way and not meaning anything.

"That is just what I complain of. They walked round or sat under trees like a couple of spooning lovers. I believe they did waltz once; and Violet did nothing but dance the night of her ball."

"I wonder," Jasper Wilmarth says, slowly, "if Eugene does not, or will not regret giving up the St. Vincent fortune."

"Giving up the fortune!" Marcia turns straight around, with a resemblance to Medusa, since her short, uneven hair stands out every way with the vigorous use of her magnetic brush. "How could he have had the St. Vincent fortune?"

Wilmarth is surprised. Is it possible that Marcia does not know? Have these two men kept the secret from the family?

"Why of course you are aware that it was offered to Eugene!" he answers, composedly.

"No, I am not," she replies, shortly. "Was it to marry Violet?"

He nods. "Yes, she seemed to go begging for a husband. I had the chance first, but I really fancied she was not more than fourteen or so, and I must wait for her to grow up. But St. Vincent was in a hurry, for I suppose he knew his days were numbered, and when Eugene declined—well, no doubt he offered her and her fortune to your brother Floyd, who was more shrewd than either of us."

Marcia drops in an easy-chair, quite astounded. It is true, the secret has been kept from her. Eugene had the grace to swear Laura and madame to secrecy; and

Marcia not being at home when Mrs. Grandon became possessor of it, a little fear of Floyd kept her from confiding it to this untrustworthy member of the family.

"And you would have married her?" cries Marcia, jealously.

"The fortune might have tempted me. I will not pretend to a higher state of grace than your brother, and you know up to that time you had taken no pains to render yourself attractive to me. See how soon I succumbed."

"You delightful old Vulcan!" And Marcia flies across the room to shower kisses on her husband, convinced that she might have had him long before if she had only smiled upon him.

"What a cheat Floyd was!" she declares, "making believe he fell in love with Violet because she saved Cecil. But—the fortune was not certain?"

"I should have made it certain as well as your brother," says Wilmarth. "But if Eugene repents and falls in love with the pretty little thing, there will be a nice row."

"And it does look like it," declares Marcia, who is delighted to ferret out unorthodox loves. "I mean to watch them."

"Do no such thing," he commands. "Eugene will not be very hard hit, and your brother is quite capable of taking care of his wife. They are like two children, but it is a pity Eugene had not been wiser. If your brother had only waited until Eugene had met Miss St. Vincent. The hurry in this matter always did surprise me a little. But I forbid you ever breathing a word to your brother. You see what a foolish husband I am to trust you with secrets," and he laughs.

"No, you are not foolish. Of course I should never speak of it to Floyd," she says, reflectively. She would never have the courage.

"Well, that is all right," patronizingly. "I dare say the rest know it. It was because you were not in their confidence."

That remark nettles Marcia, and she secretly resolves to find out, as Jasper Wilmarth is quite certain that she will. He has spoken of this with a purpose, not simply in foolish marital confidence. He believes Violet Grandon is very much in love with her husband, and he does not care who gives her the stab. It is this

adoration that adds fuel to his hatred of Floyd Grandon.

CHAPTER XXIII.

Men comfort each other more easily on their Ararat, than women in their vales of Tempe.—JEAN PAUL.

Wilmarth learns nothing from Eugene the next day, from the simple fact that the young man neither knows nor cares what took Floyd off so suddenly. Wilmarth has a slight clew in the departure of some person for Europe, and he is quite sure that it relates to the sale of the factory, but in this matter Floyd Grandon, as executor of both parties, is not compelled to discuss the plans long beforehand with him. Floyd does not like the business any better, and Eugene is quite indifferent to it. There is not the slightest prospect of his being able to take the head of the management, and he was certain of that a year ago. He has not been blind to the young man's infatuation for Madame Lepelletier, and he secretly hopes now that it will be transferred to Mrs. Grandon. Certainly such dissipations are much less expensive than fast horses and champagne suppers. As for himself, he sees that he must go as circumstances dictate. He will make some money, but he can never be master here, with his name up in plain solid gilt letters over the entrance, as he once allowed himself to dream. He can strike back a few blows to the man who has interfered with his ambitious projects and understood them to some extent, how far he cannot decide. He is secretly amused at Marcia's warm partisanship, and cautiously feeds the fire he has kindled.

Violet makes herself contented for the next two days in a kind of dreamy fashion, when a note comes from her husband, iterating his regret at not saying good by, and hoping Marcia's party proved a pleasure.

"I shall tell him it did not," she says, rather dolefully, to herself, "but it was not Marcia's fault. Everything was charming and picturesque."

"Do you know," asks Eugene, at dinner, "that we are invited to the Dyckmans'

this evening."

"I *had* forgotten it, and I ought to have sent regrets. But you will go?" and she glances up with animation.

"It will be no end of a bore without you."

"How long since my presence has added such a charm to festive occasions?" she asks, saucily.

"Well, I ought to stay at home with you," he answers, reflectively.

"I am not afraid. The servants will be here."

"I don't want to go," he returns, candidly. "I would much sooner remain at home."

"I wonder," Violet says, "why you have taken such a fancy to me? Is it because you think Madame Lepelletier treated you badly? After all, you ought to have known——" and she pauses, with a furtive glance at Cecil, who is deep in the delights of chocolate ice. "You were so much younger."

"I have been a fool," says the young man, candidly. "But you need not take her part. If you could have seen the way she dropped down upon us last summer, the swift dazzle she made everywhere! I had to drive her out and play the agreeable, for Floyd couldn't stir without Cecil, and he was full of business beside. Then she never seemed much older than—why, Gertrude was ages older than either of us. So she smiled and smiled, and I was an idiot. She was always asking me to come, and the truth is, she is a handsome and fascinating woman, and will have adoration. Look at Ward Dyckman. He is only twenty-six, and he is wild about her, but he has piles of money." And Eugene sighs—for the money.

"Yet she never seems to *do* anything," reflects Violet.

"To *do* would be vulgar and would not fascinate well-bred people. It is in her eyes, in her voice, in the very atmosphere about her, and she *is* wonderfully beautiful. She isn't the spider, she does not spin a net, but she looks at the mouse out of great, soft eyes, and he comes nearer, nearer, and she plays with him, until he is dull and maimed and tiresome, when she gently pushes him away, and is done with him."

Violet shivers. How strange that Mr. Floyd Grandon should not have yielded to her fascination!

"There, let her go," says Eugene, loftily. "And since I don't care to see her to-night, nor the two cream-and-sugar Dyckman girls, nor—anybody, we will stay at home."

Violet makes no further protest. Cecil is sleepy, and begs to go to bed, so Violet plays and sings, and they talk out on the porch in the soft summer night. Eugene indulges in some romantic views, slipping now and then into affected cynicism, out of which Violet gently draws him. He is so much nicer than she used to think him. And, indeed, now that Marcia is gone, there is none of that shameful bickering. She almost wishes Mrs. Grandon *mère* could remain away indefinitely; they would all be quietly happy.

At the Dyckmans' they discuss the Grandon defection. Laura Dyckman thinks Eugene Grandon such a "divine dancer," and to-night young men are at a premium, though there are some distinguished older ones who do not dance.

The next morning Marcia passes Violet and Eugene driving leisurely along. They have had a charming call at the Latimers', and Violet's face is bright and full of vivacity. She bows to them with the utmost dignity, and goes on her way to madame's, whom she finally beguiles out in her pony carriage.

Madame has been extremely complimentary about the garden party, the freshness and unique manner in which it was arranged, and the pretty serving. She heard it again at the Dyckmans', and is now far up the pinnacle of self-complacency.

"I met Eugene and Floyd's wife dawdling along on the road," says Marcia, presently. "I meant to call and see why he was not out last night, but I suppose he had to stay at home and comfort her. I *do* hope Eugene isn't going to make a dolt of himself, and I am sure Violet is as fond of admiration as any one. She was always hanging after the professor until he was positively engaged to Gertrude."

"I think Mr. Floyd Grandon is very fond of having his wife admired," says madame, in her sweet, suave tone. "She is such a mere child, after all, and fond of attention. And the sad death of her father, with her mourning, has rather kept her in the background until recently."

"Well, *one* ought to be enough," returns Marcia, with asperity. "Floyd should display a little good sense, if she has none."

"He is not a jealous husband," and the accompanying smile is judiciously serene.

"Jealous? Well, there is really nothing for him to be jealous about; a man not in love seldom is jealous."

"Not in love?" Madame glances up with subtle, innocent questioning, just raising her brows with the faintest tint of incredulity.

"Oh," says Marcia, with the airy toss of her head, "it was *not* a love-match, although there was so much talk of Violet's heroism, and all that. And I wonder at Floyd, who could have done so much better, taking her after she had been handed round, as one might say, fairly gone begging for a husband!"

"O Mrs. Wilmarth, not so bad as that!" and madame smiles with seductive encouragement.

Marcia is dying to retail her news. If her mother were at hand; but there is no one of her very own, so madame must answer.

"Well," she says, in a low, confidential tone, "Mr. St. Vincent was extremely anxious to have her married. He actually sounded Mr. Wilmarth," and she gives a shrill little laugh of disdain, "and then he offered her to Eugene."

"I think myself it would have been an excellent match for Eugene," says madame, with motherly kindness in her tone. "That was last summer. I should have counselled him to accept if I had been a sister. It does not seem so strange to me. Marriages are always arranged in France."

Marcia is struck with amazement, nay, more, a touch of mortification. Can it be possible that the family have known this since last summer, and she alone has been shut out?

"We Americans are in the habit of choosing our own husbands," she begins, after a pause.

"Yet you see how admirably this would have worked. The business was left to Eugene, and if he had accepted Mr. St. Vincent's daughter he would have had another share, and the right to control the patent. Your brother cares nothing

about the business interests further than they concern the family prosperity, though no doubt he is glad to have his wife an heiress. Men seldom object to money."

Marcia sees it all in that light, for she is not dull, and she is also stirred with a sharp pang of jealousy. If Jasper Wilmarth had known more about her,—he is ambitious, and to control the factory would be a great delight to him. With it all she turns her anger upon the innocent Violet.

"I don't believe Floyd really cared for her money," she says, in an unconvinced tone. "I think he was drawn into it, and she is very ready to—to accept everything that comes in her way."

"Remember that Eugene and she are much nearer in age. I dare say the professor seemed quite like a father to her, and your brother is so grave and scholarly that it is natural to turn to some one young and bright. It seemed to me a great misfortune, and if Eugene had been on the spot I fancy matters would have gone differently. But we really must not gossip about them. They are very happy."

They go on down through the park, and meet acquaintances driving along the boulevard. Eugene and Violet do not choose this well-known way, but Marcia half hopes she shall meet them somewhere and administer a public rebuke in the shape of a frown of such utter disapprobation that both will at once understand. Madame ruminates, as she often has before, on the slender chance that bridged all these matters over before one could utter a dissent. And the most probable sequel will be Eugene's love for his brother's wife. These little incidents are strewn all along life, and are too common to create any particular feeling of surprise.

Marcia will not remain to luncheon, though madame invites her cordially. She is a little late at home, and finds her lord in a rather unamiable state.

"I wonder what Eugene is about?" he asks, sharply. "There are piles of letters to go over, and no end of things to straighten up, and Eugene has not been near the factory this whole morning. He was in only an hour or two yesterday."

"I saw him out driving with Mrs. Floyd," says Marcia, with a sneer that is a weak and small edition of her husband's.

A lowering frown crosses Wilmarth's brow, then an expression quite inscrutable

to Marcia,—amusement it looks like, but she knows he is angry and has a right to be.

"I will go down there this afternoon," she says, with alacrity.

"You will do no such thing. No doubt your brother has engaged Eugene to entertain his wife in his absence. For business men they are both——"

The servant comes in and the sentence is unfinished. But Jasper Wilmarth is thinking that no doubt the handsome young man is very pleasing to Mrs. Floyd Grandon, and if the husband should wake up some day on the verge of a scandal, why, it will be one of those rare strokes of accidental, otherwise poetic justice.

Marcia *does* go "home," as they still call the place. Eugene is not about and Mrs. Latimer is spending the afternoon in an old-fashioned way with a nurse and two children. Marcia's fine moral sense is shocked at the duplicity of Mrs. Floyd, and she announces the fact to her husband at dinner, to which he replies with an uncomfortable laugh.

Eugene brings Violet a letter on his return, and her face is illumined with eager joy. She cannot wait to retire becomingly to her own room, but breaks the seal on the porch, and is deep in its contents.

"Oh!" she cries at first, in disappointment.

"Floyd has gone on to Chicago," announces Eugene. "Wilmarth turned black as a thunder-cloud over the news. He scents treason, stratagems, and conspiracies."

Violet looks up in curious amaze. "Mr. Grandon will never do anything—that is *not* right," she adds, after a moment.

Eugene shrugs his shoulders. "What may be right enough for him might hit Wilmarth hard," says the young man, and the tone implies that he would rather enjoy the hard hitting.

Violet hardly hears that. She colors delicately over the remainder of the letter, which is not long, but touches her inexpressibly. He misses her amid all this haste and turmoil, and it is sweet to be so dear to him, that he really wants her, that he would like to be at home with her.

"Papa sends you a dozen kisses," she says, as Cecil comes flying towards her.

She is so gay and vivacious through dinner, and afterwards they go out on the river, rowed by Briggs, for Eugene is much too careful of his hands and his exertion to undertake such work this delicious evening. He and Violet sing duets as the purple film displaces the glories of azure and gold, and the twilight shadows the dusky bits of wood, the frowning rocks, and the indentations of shore that might be nereid haunts. The sky turns from its vivid tints to a dreamy gray, then a translucent blue, and a few stars steal slowly out. How lovely it all is! How kind Eugene is proving himself, and she wonders that she never remarked his pleasant traits before! Was it being so much in love with madame that made him captious and irritable, or was it Marcia's little ways of remarking upon every word or act that did not quite please her?

"We must go back," she says, presently. "Cecil has fallen asleep, and it will not do to keep her out in the night air. How utterly lovely it is!" and she gives a deep inspiration of content.

"It is because you enjoy everything in that keen, ardent sort of way," says Eugene. "You are very different from what I thought you at first."

"What did you think me?" she asks, in spite of Briggs sitting calmly there.

"Well, you seemed such a little girl," answers Eugene, "and you were always so shy, except with the professor. Did you really like him so much? I should have been bored to death with all that prosy writing. Briggs," turning to the rower, as Violet covers Cecil more closely, "we will steer our barque homeward. It is a shame not to stay out this magnificent night."

"We ought to be on the river a great deal more," returns Violet. "It is so tranquil and soothing, and there is a suggestive weirdness in it, as if you were going on to some mystery."

Her voice drops to such a soft key as she utters the last word. The very air seems full of mystery to her, of messages carried back and forth. Will hers go to the one she is thinking of?

When they land, Eugene takes Cecil in his arms and carries her up the terrace with a strange emotion of tenderness. He is fond of teasing her and hearing saucy replies, but ordinarily he does not care much for children.

Violet helps to undress the sleepy girl and gives her more than the dozen kisses.

Floyd has said in his letter, "I shall keep yours on interest until I come." And she suddenly hides her blushing face on the pillow beside the child. What does all this eager tremor and expectation mean?

"Violet," calls Eugene up the stairway, "come down. Isn't Cecil asleep?"

She would rather stay there and dream, but she seldom thinks of herself first. Cecil is sleeping soundly, and she glides down to talk a little, play a little, and sing a few songs. Listening to her, Eugene begins to consider himself a consummate fool. He would not marry madame if he could. If it were all to do over again,—but then he was *not* prepossessed with Violet when he first saw her, and now it is too late. He has no high and fine sentiments, he simply recognizes the fact that she is the wife of another; and though youth may indulge in foolish fondness, it is generally older and riper natures that are ready for a plunge in the wild vortex of passion.

Their days pass in simple idyllic fashion. Another party is neglected, and even a German passed by, to the great astonishment of Marcia. She has called home several times, but *they* have been out, not always together, though she chooses to think so. Violet has spent hours and hours with Mrs. Latimer, whose great charm is that she talks of Floyd Grandon, and she is amused with her ready, devoted listener.

Marcia does find her at home one morning.

"I think it a shame that Eugene did not go to the Brades' last night;" and her voice is thinner, sharper than usual, a sure sign of vexation. "They had counted on him for the German, and were awfully disappointed."

"I did not want to go," replies Violet, in a soft, excusing tone.

"I don't see what that had to do with it," is Marcia's short, pointed comment.

Violet glances up. "Why, yes, he could have gone," she says, cheerfully. "I told him I did not mind staying alone. I do not understand Germans, and——"

"You could have looked on," interrupts Marcia. "It seems extremely disobliging to the Brades, when they have taken the pains to cultivate you."

"I have never been in company without Mr. Grandon," Violet says, in a steady tone, though her cheeks are scarlet, "except at your garden party, and then *he* asked Eugene to take me."

"Admirable condescension!" returns Marcia, angrily. "But possibly you may subject yourself quite as much to criticism by staying at home so closely with a young man. It is shameful how Eugene has gone on, hardly a day at the factory, and you two driving about and mooning on balconies and dawdling through the grounds. Very late admiration, too, on his part, when he would not take you in the first instance."

"Would not take me in the first instance?" Violet repeats, in a dazed, questioning way.

"Exactly," snaps Marcia. "Perhaps you are not aware an offer of your hand and fortune was made to Eugene Grandon, *and* declined. So you know now what his admiration is worth! He is ready to flirt with any——" silly girl, she means to

say, but makes it more stinging—"any girl who throws herself at his head."

"I do not in the least understand you," Violet begins, with quiet dignity, though her voice has an unsteady sound. "*When* was my hand offered to Mr. Eugene Grandon?"

Marcia is a little frightened at her temerity, but she is in for it now, and may as well make a clean sweep of all her vexations. From Mr. Wilmarth she has gathered the idea that Floyd's marriage has been inimical to him, and that business would have been much better served by Violet's union with Eugene. Then, all the family have disapproved of it, and it has been kept a secret from her. All these are sufficient wrongs, but the fact still remains that in some way Floyd is likely to make a great fortune for Violet, while the rest will gain nothing. More than all, Marcia has a good deal of the wasp in her nature, and loves to make a great buzz, as well as to sting.

"Why," she answers, with airy insolence, "Floyd wished him to marry you and he declined, then Floyd married you himself. Your fortune was too valuable to go out of the family, I suppose. It was about the time your father died."

Violet pales with a mortal hurt.

"I think you are wrong there," and she summons all her strength to combat this monstrous accusation. "Mr. Grandon liked me because—because——"

"Oh, yes; saving Cecil gave color to the romance, and it is all very pretty," says Marcia, with insufferable patronage. "But there was some one else, and he could have had quite as much fortune without any trouble. He was a fool for not marrying her."

"You shall not discuss Mr. Grandon in this manner to me," declares Violet, indignant with wifely instincts.

"Oh, you asked me yourself!" retorts her antagonist. "If you were at all sharp-sighted you could have seen——"

Violet stops Marcia with a gesture of her hand. She stands there white as snow, but her eyes are larger, and gleam black, the color and tenderness have gone out of her scarlet mouth, and she seems to grow taller. Marcia is checked in her onslaught, and a half-misgiving comes to her.

"After all," she says, presently, in a more moderate tone, "I supposed you *did* know something about it. You really ought to have been told in the beginning, as all the rest were, it seems." And she adds the last a little bitterly, remembering she has been shut out of the family conference.

"Mr. Grandon did what was right and best," Violet returns, loyally.

"I suppose we all do what we think best," comments Marcia, with an air of wisdom, and experience sits enthroned on the little strip of brow above her eyes. "Well, I'm sorry you were not at the Brades', and I do think Eugene ought to pay better attention to business, especially now that Floyd is away. And I don't see why he should stay away from parties if you do not want to go."

"There is no reason," answers Violet, coldly.

Marcia bids her good morning, and flies down the steps with the air of one who has performed her whole duty. Now that she has attained to married respectability, she feels quite free to criticise the rest of the world, and she rejoices in the fact that she does carry more weight than a single woman.

Violet stands by the window where Marcia left her. She is very glad to be alone, and thankful that Cecil is at the Latimers' for the day, although she is due there for a kind of nursery tea-party. A whirlwind seems to have swept over her, to have lifted her up bodily and carried her out of the sphere she was in two hours ago, and in this new country all is strange; on this desolate shore where she is stranded the sea moans in dull lament, as if the soul had gone out of that also, and left an aching heart behind. She might dismiss Marcia's tirade as other members of the family are wont to do, but there comes an awesome, shivering fear that it is true in some degree. How many times she has seen Gertrude check Marcia when Floyd was under discussion. She has never tried to pry into family secrets, but she knows there have been many about her; a certain kind of knowledge that all have shared, a something against her. She has fancied that she made some advances in living down the dislike; Mrs. Grandon has been kinder of late, and Marcia, since her marriage, quite confidential. Instead, she has done nothing, gained nothing.

If Gertrude were only here. She has made that one true friend, whom nothing can shake, who, knowing all, came to love her with a tender regard that was not pity. But there is no one, no one. All is a dreary waste.

A step comes up the balcony, and the mellifluous voice is whistling Schumann's Carnival. Whither shall she fly? But even now it is too late, for he meets her in the wide doorway.

"Good heavens! what has happened? You look like a ghost," cries Eugene, in alarm. Then he stretches out his arms, for it seems as if she would fall to the floor.

Violet shrinks back into the room and drops on the divan, making a gesture as if she would send him away.

"I'm not going," he declares, "until you tell me what has happened. Cecil is all right, and you can have had no bad news from Floyd. You were so bright and well this morning, and we are to go to the Latimers' to-night——"

"I cannot!" It would be a shriek if it were not a hoarse whisper, and she covers her face with her hands.

Eugene is amazed. He is not a mysterious young man. He enjoys everything on the surface, and considers it a bore to dive deep for hidden meanings. Something comes to his aid. He skulked out of the road five minutes ago to avoid Marcia, for he knew she would open upon him for his dereliction of pleasure.

"Marcia has been here," he announces. "She has said something to you, the spiteful little cat! See here, I can guess what unmitigated drivel it is. She has accused you of flirting with me, and said I stayed at home to keep you company when I should have been at the German."

The rift of color in Violet's face answers him.

"I believe I should like to wring her neck, the little hussy! Well, you are not to mind a bit of it. In the first place you are a little innocent and do not know how to flirt, even if you have magnificent eyes. You are too honest, too true; and it's all awful stuff, said out of pure jealousy."

He has not comforted her. The awe-stricken face is still ashen, despairing. Any other girl would almost rush to his arms, she seems to go farther and farther away. Her large eyes look him over. He has a handsome face, and now it is kindly, sympathetic.

"Tell me," he says, peremptorily. "You know you've never flirted. Why, you

might make yourself more attractive than ten Marcias could possibly be; and, see here, I've never kissed you, though you have been my brother's wife for more than a year, and—bosh!" with the utmost contempt. "Oh, does it trouble you so?" After a moment, "My dear, dear girl, don't worry about it," and his face is full of genuine distress. The common comfort of life will not apply to this case.

"It was wrong," she says, tremulously. "You have stayed home from business, and——"

He laughs, it seems so utterly absurd. Many a day has he been away from the factory and perhaps not half so innocently employed.

"See here," he begins, "we will let Floyd settle it when he comes home. Good heavens, won't he make it hot for Marcia! I shall tell him myself."

"No, no!" and Violet starts up in anguish. "You must not utter a word!"

"Well, why?" asks Eugene, with a kind of obstinate candor. "I'm sure—flirting, indeed! Why, Marcia couldn't be an hour in the room with any fellow, young or old, that she wouldn't make big eyes at him. I like to see people turn saints at short notice. I'll go off and have it out with her myself, and make her keep a civil tongue in the future."

"Eugene!" Violet cries, in distress, as he is half-way through the hall. Oh, what shall she do? Must she go wild with all this pain and shame?

"Well," he ejaculates, again standing indecisively.

"She said other things," and the dry lips move convulsively. "I must know; I cannot live with this horrible shadow over everything. There is no one else to ask."

He comes and seats himself on the divan beside her, and there is a glimpse of Floyd in his face. His voice falls to a most persuasive inflection as he rejoins, "Tell me, ask me anything, and I will answer you truly. There has never been any horrible thing since you came here, or ever that I can remember. What did Marcia say?"

Perhaps, after all, Marcia did not tell the exact truth, and Violet's despairing face lightens. Marcia may have Charles Lamb's way of thinking the truth too precious to be wasted upon everybody, for she is sometimes extremely economizing. And

Violet *must* know.

"You will tell me if—if Mr. Grandon asked you to marry me—before——"

Eugene springs up and utters a low, angry ejaculation, strides across the floor and then back again. Violet's face is crimsoned to its utmost capacity, and her eyes have that awful beseechingness that cuts him to the soul. If he could, if he dared deny it! but even as this flashes through his brain a stony kind of certainty settles in every line, and he gathers that denial would be useless.

"See here, my dear little sister," and sitting down he takes the small, cold hand in his. "I will tell you the truth. There is nothing horrible or disgraceful in it! Your father proposed that instead of having any business trouble to be years in the course of settlement, I should marry you, as the patent was in such an uncertain state and he had invested everything in it. It simply joined the fortunes, don't you see? Well, I was a dumb, blundering idiot, head over heels in an infatuation, and knew nothing about you, but it will be the regret of my whole life that I did *not* come when Floyd sent for me. And I suppose he fell in love with you himself; he could not have cared for the fortune, he had enough of his own."

Violet draws a long, shivering breath, but her very soul seems icy cold with doubt.

"You did not—despise me?" she cries, with passionate entreaty.

"Despise you? Why, I didn't know anything about you." The young man's lethargic conscience gives him a severe prick. He should not have made light of it to Laura and madame, but he *did* bind them to inviolate secrecy. "If I had seen you I should not have despised you, I should have married you," he says, triumphantly. "If you were free to-day, I should ask you to marry me. I think you the sweetest and most rarely honest girl I have ever met, and you *are* beautiful, though I wouldn't own that at first. Despise you? Why, I would fight the whole world for you, and I will, if——"

"No," she interrupts. Even his spirited defence cannot restore what has been so rudely wrenched away. She feels so old, so weary, so desolate, that nothing matters. "It is not so bad——" and she looks up with piteous eyes.

"Why, there is nothing bad about it at all," he declares, impatiently. "Don't the English and the French plan marriages, and there are people here whose parents

join fortunes, lots of them! Marcia was angry and wanted to mortify you. The idea of marrying Jasper Wilmarth and then lording it over everybody, is too good! And as for flirting—well, I wouldn't dare flirt with you," he says, laughingly. "Floyd would soon settle me. I like you too well, I honor you too much," he continues. "There, will you not be comforted with something? Oh, I have a letter from Floyd, and he will be home to-morrow night! I came to bring it to you."

He takes it from his pocket and hands it to her, but her fingers tremble, and no joy lights up her pale face. Eugene is so sincerely sorry that he holds himself in thorough contempt for his part in the early history of the affair, and he is very angry as well.

"Now," he says, "I am going away, and I shall not be home to luncheon, but I will meet you at the Latimers'. If Marcia dares to make another comment, it will be the worse for her, that's all. My poor child, are you going to keep that dreary face and those despairing eyes for Floyd to see?"

He has a very strong inclination to take her in his arms and shower tenderness upon her; but if he has been drifting that way for the past week, he is rudely awakened now. He looks at her helplessly. If she would only cry; the girls he has seen have been ready enough with their tears.

"Yes, you must go," she says, wearily. "Thank you for the letter, for *all*." Then she walks slowly out of the room.

CHAPTER XXIV.

What act of Legislature was there that thou shouldst be happy?—CARLYLE.

While Eugene Grandon's anger is at white heat he goes to Madame Lepelletier and taxes her with betrayed trust. He knows very well that Marcia could not long keep such a tidbit to herself. Laura is away, and his mother never has repeated the tale, though to him she has bemoaned his short-sightedness, the more since the fortune has been certain.

Madame is surprised, dignified, and puts down the young man with the steel hand in the velvet glove; explaining that Marcia had it from some other source. There really is nothing detrimental in it to Mrs. Grandon. A handsome young man of good family may be selected without insult to *any* young woman, and to decline a lady you never saw cannot reflect on the *personale* of the one under consideration. It seems rather silly at this late hour to take umbrage.

Eugene cools a little, and admits to himself there is nothing in it that ought to make Violet miserable, especially since he has confessed that he would be only too glad to marry her now; and as for the accusation of flirting, he can soon put an end to that by being sweet on Lucia Brade for a week or two. But he really *does* care for Violet, and no one shall offer her any insult with impunity. He means to go at Marcia when opportunity offers. Ah! can it be her husband who gave her the delectable information?

Violet goes to her room and reads her letter, that is tender with the thought of return, and yet it does not move her. Floyd Grandon is fond of her; he pitied her desolate condition long ago, and since he did not need her fortune he took her simply to shield her from trouble and perplexity. She remembers his grave, fatherly conduct through all that time; his tenderness was not that of a lover, his consideration sprang from pity. Yet why was she satisfied then and so crushed now?

Ah! she has eaten of the tree of knowledge; she has grown wise in love's lore. She has been dreaming that she has had the love, when it is only a semblance, a counterfeit; not a base one, but still it has not the genuine ring. He did not esteem her so much at first but that he could offer her to another, and therein lies the bitter sting to her. It is not because Eugene cared so little. How could he regard a stranger he had not seen, if he who had seen her did not care, whose kindness was so tainted with indifference? Even if he had wanted her fortune, she thinks she could forgive it more easily.

She sends word down-stairs presently that there need be no lunch, but she will have a cup of tea. She throws herself on the bed and shivers as if it were midwinter. To-night, why even now, he is on his way home; to-morrow morning she ought to give him a glad welcome. She will be glad, but not with the light-hearted joy of yesterday; that can never be hers again. It seems as if she had been tramping along the sea-shore, gathering at intervals choice pearls for a gift, and now, when she has them, no friend stands with outstretched hands to take, and all her labor has been vain. She is so tired, so tired! Her little hands drop down heavily and the pearls fall out, that is all.

She does not go over to the cottage until quite late, and walks hurriedly, that it may bring some color to her pale cheeks. Cecil and Elsie Latimer have come to meet her, and upbraid her for being so tardy. They have swung in the hammock, they have run and danced and played, and now Denise has the most magnificent supper on the great porch outside the kitchen door. But if *she* could have danced and ran and played with them!

Mrs. Latimer has a cordial welcome, and Eugene makes his appearance. To do the young man justice, he is utterly fascinating to the small host. Violet watches him with a curiously grateful emotion. There is nothing for her to do, he does it all.

"You are in a new character to-night," declares Mrs. Latimer. "It never seemed to me that entertaining children was your forte."

"I think you have all undervalued me," he answers, with plaintive audacity, while a merry light shines in his dark eyes. He is very handsome, and so jolly and joyous that the children are convulsed with laughter. They lure him down in the garden afterward for a game of romps.

"How Eugene Grandon has changed!" says Mrs. Latimer. "He was extremely moody when Madame Lepelletier first fenced him out a little," and she smiles. "How odd that so many young men should take their first fancy to a woman older than themselves!"

"Do they?" says Violet, simply. Somehow she cannot get back to the world wherein she dwelt yesterday.

"Yes, I have seen numberless instances. Sometimes it makes a good friendship for after life, but I fancy it will not in this case. Indeed, I do not believe a man could have a friendship with her, for there is no middle ground. It is admiration and love. She is the most fascinating woman I have ever met, and always makes me think of the queens of the old French *salons*."

Violet answers briefly to the talk. "She is thinking of her husband," ruminates Mrs. Latimer. "She is very much in love with him, which is a good thing, seeing that the young man is disenchanted, and ready to lay his homage at the feet of another."

It is quite dusk when they start for home. Cecil nestles close to Violet, who kisses her tenderly. The child's love is above suspicion or doubt, and very grateful to her aching heart.

"You see," exclaims Eugene, as he hands her out, "that I have begun a new *rôle*. I love you so sincerely that no idle gossip shall touch you through me."

The tears come into her eyes for the first time. She longs to cling to him, to weep as one might on the shoulder of a brother.

The drawing-room is lighted up, and there are two figures within.

"Oh, you are come at last!" says the rather tart voice of Mrs. Grandon, who has telegraphed to Briggs to meet her at the early evening train, finding that she has made some earlier connections on her journey. "I was amazed to find every one away. Ah, my dear Eugene! Cecil, how do you do?" And she stoops to kiss the child.

"Mrs. Latimer gave a nursery tea-party," explains Eugene, "or garden party, was it not?"

"Here is my old friend, Mrs. Wilbur," she says. "Tomorrow Mrs. Dayre and her

daughter will be here. Is not Floyd home yet?"

Violet answers the last as she is introduced to Mrs. Wilbur, a pleasant old lady with a rosy face surrounded by silvery curls.

"What a lovely child!" exclaims Mrs. Wilbur. "Why, she looks something as Gertrude used, and I thought Gertrude a perfect blond fairy. Have you not a kiss for me, my dear?"

Cecil is amiable as an angel, won by the mellow, persuasive voice.

Violet excuses herself as soon as possible. She has a headache and does look deathly pale. Eugene makes himself supremely entertaining, to the great delight of his mother. It is so new a phase for him to do anything with direct reference to another person's happiness or well-being, that he feels comfortably virtuous and heroic. No one shall make Violet suffer for his sake. What an awful blunder it was *not* to marry her, for, after all, Floyd is not really in love with her!

Violet cannot sleep. A strange impulse haunts her, a desire to escape from the chain, to fly to the bounds of the earth, to bury herself out of sight, to give up, worsted and discomfited, for there can be no fight. There is no enemy to attack. It is kindest, tenderest friend who has offered her a stone for bread, when she did not know the difference. She recalls her old talks with Denise concerning a wife's duty and obedience and respect. Ah, how could she have been so ignorant, or having been blind, why should she see now? That old life was satisfactory! She never dreamed of anything beyond. But she has seen the fine gold of love offered upon the altar. John Latimer is no better, finer, or nobler man than Floyd Grandon, and yet he loves his wife with so tender a passion that Violet's life looks like prison and starvation beside it. If she dared go to Floyd Grandon and ask for a little love! Did he give it all to that regal woman long ago, and does the ghost of the strangled passion stand between?

She tosses wearily, and is not much refreshed when morning dawns. Fortunately it is a busy day. Mrs. Dayre, who is a rather youngish widow of ample means, and who spent her early days at Westbrook, a sort of elder contemporary of the Grandons and Miss Stanwood, is to come with her young and pretty daughter, and take her mother with them to the West. Eugene goes to the station, and finds Miss Bertie Dayre a very stylish young woman, with an abundance of blond hair, creamy skin, white teeth, and a dazzling smile. She has been a year in society,

the kind that has made an old campaigner of her already. She is not exactly fast, but she dallies on the seductive verge and picks out the daintiest bits of slang. She is seventeen, but looks mature as twenty; her mother is thirty-six, and could discount the six years easily.

Violet has made friends with Mrs. Wilbur, who finds her old-fashioned simplicity charming. She helps to receive the new guests, not as much startled by Miss Dayre as she would have been six months ago. The world is so different outside of convent walls that it seems sometimes as if she were in a play, acting a part.

In the midst of this Floyd Grandon arrives. Cecil captures him in wildest delight. Violet is glad to meet him first before all these people; alas for love when it longs for no secrecy! She colors and a sweet light glows in her face, she cannot unlearn her lesson all at once. Then she is quiet, lady-like, composed. Floyd watches her with a curious sensation. It is a new air of being mistress, of having a responsibility.

There certainly is a very gay week at Grandon Park. Bertie Dayre stirs people into exciting life. She is vivacious, exuberant, has wonderful vitality, and is never still a moment. Eugene has no need to devote himself to Miss Brade, he cannot even attend to Miss Bertie's pressing needs, and Floyd is called in to fill empty spaces. All men seem created with a manifest purpose of adding to her steady enjoyment.

"I think you were very short-sighted to marry so young," says Miss Dayre, calmly, to Violet, as they are driving out one morning. "What kind of a life are you going to have? It seems almost as if your greatest duty was to be a sort of nursery governess to the child, who is a marvel of beauty. How extremely fond her father is of her! Now *I* should be jealous."

She utters this with a calm assumption of authority bordering on experience. Indeed, Bertie Dayre impresses you with the certainty that she *does* know a great deal, the outcome of her confident belief in her own shrewd, far-sighted eyes.

"But *I* love Cecil very much," returns Violet, so earnestly that Bertie stares.

"There are some women to whom children are more than the husband," announces this wise young woman. "I should want to have the highest regard for my husband. In fact, I mean never to marry until I can find a soul the exact

counterpart of mine. Marriages are too hurried,—too many minor considerations are taken into account, home, money, position, protection, and all that,—but I suppose every girl cannot order her own life. I shall be able to."

Violet smiles dreamily, yet there is infinite sadness in it. If she could have ordered her life, she would have married Floyd Grandon and made the same mistake fate has made for her. Even now she would rather be the object of his kindly, indifferent tenderness than the wife of any other. Eugene's brilliance and spirited devotion do not touch her in any depth of sentiment, and yet he is so kind, so thoughtful for her, she sees it in so many ways.

All this whirl of gayety has had its effect everywhere. Marcia has come down with unblenching audacity to welcome her mother and take the measure of the new situation. Floyd is very cordial,—then Violet has not gone to him with complaints. Marcia is one of those people on whom generosity and the higher types of virtue are completely thrown away. She is full of clever devices that she sets down as intuitions or the ready reading of character. Violet speaks quietly and resents nothing, therefore she is quite sure the young wife's conscience will not allow her to. Conscience is a great factor in the make-up of other people, but her own seems of a gossamer quality. Indeed, she feels rather aggrieved that her *coup de main* has wrought so little disaster. "But it will make her more careful how she goes on with Eugene," she comments to herself. Only Eugene seems not to have the slightest desire to go on with her, and that is another cause of elation.

Floyd Grandon is somewhat puzzled about his wife. He has come to understand the shy deference of manner, the frank friendliness, too, has nothing perplexing in it, but this unsmiling gravity, this gracious repose, amuse at first, then amaze a little. It is as if she has been taking lessons of some society woman, and he could almost accuse madame. She is very gentle and sweet. What is it he misses?

After all, he has not studied women to any great extent, his days have been so filled up with other matters, only she has hitherto appeared so transparent. She has liked him, but she has not been passionately in love, and he has never felt entirely certain that he desired it. Why, then, is he not satisfied?

Oddly enough, he has heard about the waltzing from Eugene, who desires to put it in its true light. It occurs one evening when he and Miss Dayre have been spinning and floating and whirling through drawing-room and hall, while Violet plays with fingers that seem bewitched and shake out showers of delicious

melody. They have paused to take breath.

"Do you not waltz?" asks Bertie of Floyd, with a dazzling lure in her eyes.

"Oh, yes!" answers Eugene for him. "He and Mrs. Grandon waltz divinely together, but take them apart and I warn you the charm will be gone. I tried it a few evenings ago at my sister's, with Mrs. Grandon, and it was a wretched, spiritless failure. I wish there was some one else to play, and you could see them."

Floyd bites his lips, and wonders if Eugene is paying back a mortification.

"Oh, mamma will play," exclaims Bertie, with alacrity. "She is wonderfully good at such music, though Mrs. Grandon plays in exquisite time. Mamma."

"Don't trouble her," entreats Floyd.

Bertie is resolute, Mrs. Dayre obliging, and comes in from her balcony seat.

"Violet," says Mr. Grandon, "will you waltz awhile? Mrs. Dayre has kindly offered to play."

"I am not tired," answers Violet, in that curious, breathless tone which is almost a refusal.

"But I want you to," declares Bertie. "Mr. Eugene has so roused my curiosity."

Floyd takes her hand with a certain sense of mastery, and she yields. It is not the glad, joyous alacrity she has heretofore evinced. Eugene's half-confession, made with a feeling of honor that rarely attacks the young man, has failed of its mission. Some sense of fine adjustment is wanting.

Mrs. Dayre strikes into a florid whirl that would answer for a peasant picnic under the trees.

"Not that," says Eugene. "Some of those lovely, undulating movements. Oh, there is that Beautiful Blue Danube——"

"Which they waltzed when they came out of the ark," laughs Bertie, "but it is lovely."

The strain touches Violet. The great animating hope for joy has dropped out of

her life, but youth is left, and youth cannot help being moved. Mrs. Dayre plays with an enchanting softness, and they float up and down as in some tranced sea.

"She waltzes fairly," comments Miss Dayre, "only she should be taller. I should like to waltz with him myself."

"They are a sort of Darby and Joan couple," says Eugene, evasively, "and his dancing days are about over."

"What a—mistake!" and Bertie laughs brightly. "Why, he is magnificent. Do you know I had a rather queer fancy about him; you expect literary men to be—well, grave and severe. The idea of his marrying a child like that! Why did he do it?"

"Because he loved her," replies the young man, with unblushing mendacity.

"Literary men and the clergy always do perpetrate matrimony in a curious manner. Do they go out much?" inclining her head toward the two floating at the other end of the room.

"Oh, to dinners and that sort of thing!" indifferently. "She is very sweet and has lovely eyes, but she is not the kind of person that I should think would attract him."

"What is it—the 'impossible that always happens'?" quotes Eugene, and as they come nearer Miss Dayre has the grace to be silent.

Floyd Grandon feels that some enthusiasm is missing, the divine flavor has gone out of it. Violet is so gentle, so quiet and unstirred by what only a little while ago carried her captive into an enchanted realm.

"Are you tired?" he asks, presently.

"Oh, no!"

She makes no motion for a release, and they go on. Indeed, it has a kind of pungent bitter-sweet elusiveness for her, almost as if she might come up with the lost happiness. "It is all there is, and she must make herself content," she is saying over and over. She has dreamed a wild, impossible dream.

Bertie Dayre is fond of conquests in strange lands. Even Violet comes to be amused at the frank bids she makes for Floyd's favor, but he seems not to see, to take them with the grave courtesy that is a part of his usual demeanor. Yet the

preference has this effect upon him, to make him wish that another would try some delicate allurements. He is in a mood to be won to love, and Violet is fatally blind not to see that her day has come and take advantage of it.

From this point the summer festivities go straight on. There are guests at Madame Lepelletier's and a series of charming entertainments. The Brades have a houseful, and Lucia is followed by a train of adorers; but what does it all avail, since Mordecai sits stubbornly at the gate? Violet comes to have a strange, secret sympathy with the girl who cannot be content and choose among what is offered.

Madame Lepelletier is no less a queen here than she was in the city; indeed, the glories may be greater, more intense, from being circumscribed. The Latimers and the Grandons are frequent guests and meet people whom it is a delight to know; and Lucia decides there is no such lawn tennis anywhere, no such enchanting little suppers and dances. Eugene is rather resentful at first, but no one can hold out long against madame, and she finds a new way to please him, —to offer a little delicate incense at Violet's shrine. To her there is something in the way these two young people avoid any pronounced attention. Is it indicative of a secret understanding between them? If it has reached that point, she can guess at the subtle temptation for both. Certainly Floyd Grandon evinces no symptoms of any change in his regard; indeed, he does not seem quite so *éprise* as some weeks ago, and there is a mysterious alteration in Violet. She watches warily; she has seen so many of these small episodes. This will hardly culminate in a scandal, for Floyd Grandon is too well-bred, but some day Eugene will speak and Violet's eyes will be opened and she will hate Floyd Grandon for having bound her in chains before she had tasted the sweets of liberty.

It is true Floyd Grandon is rather absent and engrossed. There are many cares weighing upon him, and there seems one chance of turning over the business so successfully that his very desire and hope beget a feverish fear. Two manufacturers of large means and established reputation see in the coming success of Grandon & Co. a rival with whom it will be impossible to cope. Their new methods are beyond all excellent, and there is such a cheapening of process that for a while, at least, profits will be simply enormous. Shall they take the fortune at its high tide? Mr. Haviland has gone to Europe, and on the success of some projects there, the answer will depend. Mr. Murray is in correspondence with him and with Mr. Grandon, and since Floyd hopes so much, he grows nervous and uneasy, except when he loses himself in his beloved work or spends

a quiet evening with John Latimer. He has so little time for the speculations or the endearments of love, that Violet drops into a soft and twilight background. She has everything; she is coming to be admired and treated with the respect due her position. Cecil and she are inseparables, and with all her fondness she does not spoil Cecil or allow her to become the terror of the household.

CHAPTER XXV.

"I watched the distance as it grew,
And loved you better than you knew."

"Violet," Floyd Grandon says, one morning, "I have invited two guests who will come to-day, a Mr. Murray and his daughter. She is a very pretty young girl and fond of society. I think we had better plan some entertainments. What would you like—a garden party? I want to render Grandon Park attractive to Miss Murray."

"Is she like Miss Dayre?" asks Violet, gravely.

"She is a pretty girl with the usual fair hair," and he smiles. "No, I fancy she is not like Miss Dayre, and yet I thought Bertie Dayre oddly entertaining. Miss Murray is fond of dancing. The evening I was there she was full of delight about a German. I don't know but you ought to pay some attention to that," he adds, with a touch of solicitude.

"It is very fascinating," she makes answer. "You know we are invited to Madame Lepelletier's German on Thursday evening."

"I really had forgotten. Why, it is the very thing. I shall go down and get an invitation for Miss Murray, and bespeak madame's favor. They will reach here about two, I think, and must have some lunch. Mother will take charge of that. When Miss Murray is rested you can take her out driving. We might have some kind of gathering on Friday evening."

Violet wonders why so much is to be done for Miss Murray's entertainment, and she shrinks a little at having it on her hands. But Eugene, who has been off on a brief expedition, will return to-morrow, and he can assist her.

Floyd meanwhile saunters out to the hall and takes his hat, with a little kindly nod to Violet, who sits by the window with a book. There has been a quiet week,

from various causes, and now the whirl is to begin again. She has not so much heart in it as youth ought to have or her eighteen years would rightly warrant, and she turns idly again to her page. At times some of Bertie Dayre's comments come back to her with a kind of electric shiver. Is she anything to her husband beyond a pet and tenderly guarded child like Cecil? a companion for her, rather than for her husband. Could Madame Lepelletier have been more to him?

Ah, she could, and Violet knows it in the depths of her soul. It is a bitter and humiliating knowledge. Madame has the exquisite art of filling her house with attractive people, of harmonizing, of giving satisfaction, of rendering her guests at home with herself, of charming grave men and wise scholars, as well as gay young girls. It is true Violet has married him, but was not Floyd Grandon's regard brought about by a pique, an opportunity to retaliate the wrong once done to him? What if there were moments when he regretted it?

He goes down the handsome avenue lined with maples, remembering the old times with Aunt Marcia and all the changes, and recalling Miss Stanwood, as he seldom has until Mrs. Dayre talked her over. He can see the tall, slender, dignified girl, just as he can call up the young student with his head full of plans, none of which came to pass, none of which he would care for now. His life has changed and broadened like the old place, and when this business is fairly off his hands there will be new paths of delight opening before him. He will take Violet away somewhere,—to Europe, perhaps, when Gertrude and the professor go. She is such a simple child, she needs training and experience and years. Youth is sweet, but it is not the time of ripeness.

Madame Lepelletier is on the shaded porch, sitting in a hammock; a scarlet cushion embroidered with yellow jasmine supports her head and shoulders, and her daintily slippered feet rest on a soft Persian rug.

"Ah," she says, holding out her hand, but she does not rise, and he has to bend over to take it. "Sit here," and she reaches out to the willow chair, "unless you would prefer going within. I am living out of doors, taking in the summer fragrance and warmth for the coming winter."

"O provident woman!" and he laughs, as he seats himself beside her.

She makes such a lovely picture here in the waving green gloom, with specks of sunshine filtered about, the cushion being the one brilliant mass of color that

seems to throw up her shining black hair and dusky, large-lidded eyes. There is a suggestion of affluent orientalism that attracts strongly.

"Well, are blessings so numerous that one can throw them aside broadcast? Do we not need such visions as these to take us through the ice and snow and gray skies of a stinging winter day?"

"With your house at eighty degrees and tropical plants in every corner?"

"You are resolved not to approve of my laying up treasure. I breathe delight with every waft of fragrance, and though you may not believe it, the natural has a charm for me. I have been slowly studying it for a year. Is it a symptom of second childhood,—this love of olden pleasures, this longing to retrace?" and she raises her slow-moving eyes, letting them rest a moment on his face.

"Hardly, in your case," and he smiles.

She likes him to study her as he is gravely doing now. She has not posed for him, and yet she thought of him when she came out and settled herself.

"I have a favor to ask," he says, presently, and it would sound abrupt if the voice were less finely modulated.

"I am in a mood which is either indolent or generous. Try me."

Floyd Grandon prefers his request. It is never any direct aid or benefit to himself. Has this man no little friendly needs?

"Of course," she says. "Then I shall be sure of you as a spectator of the pageant. I was not at all certain you would honor me, since Mrs. Grandon does not participate in Germans."

"But I think she would like them," he says. "I suppose disparity in marriages is generally condemned for kindred reasons, one has gone by the heyday of youth, and the other should be in it. Almost I am tempted to try a German. Would Latimer keep me in countenance, I wonder?"

"Yes," she answers. "And Mrs. Latimer would no doubt take you through the figures. Miss Murray is probably skilled in the art."

"And I must give a garden party for her. Would Friday answer?"

"Too soon, unless—how long does she remain?"

"A week or so. It is possible if Mr. Murray should be charmed with the place he would cast in his lot at Grandon Park."

"Where is Mrs. Murray?"

"There is no Mrs. Murray, and only one daughter. I am not quite equal to the care of young ladies. If Laura were here—so you see I am compelled to trouble my friends."

That is all settled and she leads him to other matters. There are higher subjects than Germans between them,—the new literary work, the return of Prof. Freilgrath, a coming winter of more absolute satisfaction than the last, the possibility of much time being spent in the city, and bits of half-confidence that she knows he can give to no other. She is his friend, and there is a secret elation in this; more she does not care to claim.

He drives to the station for his new friends. Violet is awaiting his return with her attendant Cecil, who is the embodiment of brilliant health and rare beauty. Mr. Murray is a fine business-looking man, a trifle past forty, with smiling, shrewd gray eyes, a bright complexion, and full brown beard. Miss Murray is tall, with a willowy figure, a round, infantile face, with wondering blue eyes, a dimpled chin, a rather wide mouth, but the lips are exquisitely curved and smiling; not a regular beauty, but possessing much piquant loveliness and the peculiar gift of interesting you at once. Even Violet is curiously moved as she holds the plump, ungloved hand in hers. Miss Murray's voice has a rather plaintive, persuasive note in it, quite different from the independent ring of Miss Dayre.

Violet conducts her up to a pretty guest-chamber, and listens to the events of the journey and a two weeks' stay at Newport, which has been crowded full of pleasure.

"I hope we shall not seem dull here by contrast," says Mrs. Grandon, and Miss Murray notes the especial refinement of this little lady, who is the wife of the somewhat famous Floyd Grandon.

"I do not expect every place to be quite alike," returns Miss Murray, with cheerful good-nature. "And we met several people at Newport who knew Mr. Grandon. Isn't there a learned German who married some one——"

"Professor Freilgrath, whose wife is Mr. Grandon's sister."

"Are you literary, too?" and Miss Murray's childlike eyes accent the question with a perceptible negative hope.

"Oh, no!" and Violet smiles with admirable expression.

"Well, I am glad," returns the young girl, rather hesitatingly. "I am not much used to them, you see, and I like nice jolly times better. I do almost everything in the way of amusement. Do you play lawn tennis?"

"I do not quite understand it, and blunder dreadfully," admits Violet.

"Oh, I adore it!"

"Then Mr. Grandon's brother will be able to entertain you. He is an excellent player."

"The one they call Eugene?"

"Yes, there is but one."

"Papa and Mr. Grandon talked about him. How old is he?"

"Past twenty-three," answers Violet, "and very handsome."

"Dark or light?"

"Dark, brilliant, with a splendid figure and perfect health."

"I adore dark men," says Miss Murray. "And does he dance?"

"He is an elegant dancer. We are all to go to a German to-morrow evening. Eugene is away now, but will return in the morning."

Miss Murray confesses that she "adores" Germans and rowing and riding. She has a magnificent horse at home. She is not going to school any more, but may consider herself regularly in society.

After all these confidences Violet leaves her to make any change in her attire that she deems desirable, and Miss Murray comes down in a blue silk that is wonderfully becoming. It makes her complexion more infantile, her hair more golden, and her eyes larger. She has a soft, languishing aspect, and really

interests Violet, who does not feel so utterly lacking in wisdom as she did with Miss Dayre, for Miss Murray makes girlish little speeches and "adores" generally.

There is an elegant luncheon of fruit and delicacies, and Mrs. Grandon *mère* presides. Afterward the gentlemen betake themselves to the tower and smoke; Violet and her guest divide between the shady end of the drawing-room and the porch, with its beautiful prospect. When the midday heat begins to abate they have their drive and some trotting on the boulevard. Miss Murray grows quite confidential, not in a weak or silly manner, but with the frank *insouciance* of youth. She seems so generally bent upon having a good time and being liked, admired. She is simply frank where Miss Dayre was independent. She does everything, rows and rides and plays out-of-door games, even to belonging to an archery club. But needlework is her abhorrence, and with all her restless youth she has a great grace of repose as she sits in the willow veranda chair.

Eugene comes through in a night train,—time is so valuable to him,—and is set down, with all his traps, at the door of the mansion just after the gentlemen have had breakfast and departed. Violet catches a glimpse of him and flies up from the summer-house.

"Oh, you have come!" she cries. "I am so glad."

He takes both hands in his, and if the servants were not about, he would draw down the sweet, blooming face and kiss it. There is an eager light in her eyes, a quiver about the rose-red mouth, a certain abandon that is very fascinating.

"Yes," he replies. "It was an awful bore! No game, nor anything but stupid card-playing. Wished myself home fifty times. How lovely you look!" and his eyes study her so closely that she flushes in a ravishing fashion.

"Are you tired to death? I have so much for you to do. There is a German to-night at Madame Lepelletier's, and we are all going. We have a guest, a young lady."

He gives a whistle, and the delight in his face vanishes more rapidly than it ought.

"A Miss Murray," Violet goes on. "You cannot help liking her: I do."

"Then I shall," he returns, with a meaning laugh.

"When you are rested——" Violet begins.

"Oh, I slept like a top! Nothing *could* keep me awake but a troubled conscience. When I get the dust of ages washed off and make myself presentable I will hunt you up. Where shall I look? Only—I'd like to have you a little glad for your own sake. You might care that much."

"Why, I *am* glad, I did miss you," she says, daintily. "We are in the summer-house reading novels."

He unclasps her hands reluctantly. He has been thinking of her day and night when he was not asleep. Madame would be very well satisfied at the completeness with which her rival has dethroned her. His callow passion for her has turned his attention from over-much racing and gaming, and therein was a benefit, but it has also implanted within his breast an intense desire for some woman's admiration, and circumstances have led him to Violet. He has been allowing himself to think that if he *had* met her while she was free he would have cared. She is so lovely and beguiling, how could he have helped it? And he sees in this Miss Murray's coming an opportunity to be more devoted to her, without exposing her to any unfavorable comments.

Violet wonders how he could get through with his toilet so rapidly when he stands in the doorway of the summer-house, fresh, brilliant, his lithe figure the embodiment of manly grace, his dark eyes bright, imperious, and winning, and his smile captivating. A curious light goes over Miss Murray's face at the introduction. Evidently she is surprised and satisfied.

They drop into a gay little chat. The sun comes round with such intense heat that they are driven up to the shady balcony and the hammocks. Violet is in a new and enchanting mood; she is of their kind to-day, bright with youth and enjoyment. She even surprises herself. She hardly knew there was so much merry audacity in her nature, such a capability of riotous delight.

The gentlemen do not return to lunch.

"I suppose Miss Murray's father is one of the literary sort," says Eugene, afterward. "Nothing of the bluestocking about her, though. Isn't she jolly?"

"I am so glad you like her," Violet answers. "I don't know what Mr. Murray is, only he doesn't seem like a—that kind, you know, but I suppose he must be," she settles in her own mind. "They are very wealthy."

"Birds of a feather," laughs Eugene, adverting to Floyd.

The afternoon is a good deal taken up with dresses; Miss Murray has half a dozen that are simple yet extremely elegant. She finally selects a lace robe made over pale pink silk, and she looks bewitching in it.

Eugene is rather puzzled about Mr. Murray at first, but before dinner is ended he learns that the bent of the man's mind is business. What new project has Floyd on hand? There has been some talk of reopening the quarry; at least Floyd has had offers. Or does he mean to build up the remainder of Grandon Park?

Violet is in a soft white silk, with some remarkable pearls and opals that Floyd has had set for her, and a few magnificent roses. Her color and vivacity have come back to her, and as Floyd watches her, a curious remembrance seems to dawn on him. Has she not been well of late that she has seemed so grave and silent, so pale and sad-eyed? Ever since his return she has appeared changed, but now he has his own little fairy back again. What charm in Miss Murray has worked the transformation? Is it kindred youth and sympathy and pleasure?

Miss Murray and Eugene have been explaining the figures to her, even to the extent of practising them in the library, where they idled away much of the afternoon.

"You will try it with me?" Eugene pleads. "I know I can find a partner for Miss Murray."

"No, you must take Miss Murray; some other time we will—yes, you must," peremptorily. "She is my especial guest. I am her chaperone, you know, and am duty bound to provide her with the best and handsomest partner I can find."

"Do you really think so? Then for the sake of the compliment I must do my best."

She smiles upon him, and the young man is unwillingly persuaded. Miss Murray cannot remain forever, but Violet is a part of the present life, and he does not mean that she shall slip out of his reach. Nothing on his part shall crowd her out.

The rooms are lovely, the night and the music enchanting. Violet's face grows unconsciously wistful as she listens and watches the dancers taking their places. Eugene comes for a word.

"I hate to leave you," he declares. "Are you just going to stand and look on?"

She waves him away to his duty, but other eyes note the reluctance.

"Are you not going to allow Mrs. Grandon to dance?" asks madame, in a soft, half-reproachful tone. "She stands there looking like a Peri at the gate, forbidden to enter youth's paradise."

"She is not forbidden," answers Grandon, quickly, with a nervous sense of marital tyranny which he repudiates now and always.

"She is enough to tempt an anchorite," declares Mr. Murray, gallantly. "I could sigh for the days of past and gone youth. Have you forsworn such gayeties, Grandon? But I need hardly ask a man of your stamp——"

"As we have no advantages of acquiring Germans in deserts," interrupts Floyd, with a smile.

"They are the offshoots of civilization," says Latimer, "the superior accomplishments of the men who stay at home. With your permission, Mr. Grandon, I will induct Mrs. Grandon into the enchanting mystery."

Floyd bows with pleased acquiescence, and conducts Latimer to his wife. Her soft, dark eyes express her delight, and something else that he wonders about but does not understand.

Madame executes a little manœuvre which brings them to Miss Murray's vicinity. The young girl nods and smiles. She is serenely happy with her partner, the handsomest man in the room, and he has been saying some extremely pretty things to her.

"You little match-maker," whispers Latimer. "For a first attempt it is audacious."

"I have not attempted," and she colors vividly. "How could I know *you* would offer, or that Miss Murray would accept such an objectionable partner?" she says, archly.

"I suppose I must believe you," slowly, as if he were making an effort, while a

mirthful smile gleams in his eye. "But in the place of the stage father, I 'bless you, my children,'" and he raises his brows, indicating the two. "Eugene Grandon's mission in life is to be purely ornamental; he must have been born with an incapacity for doing anything of any real service to the world, and his manifest destiny is to be some rich woman's husband. Now here is an opportunity too good to lose. My advice is to go on as you have begun."

"But I have not begun," she says, a little nervously.

"Then I advise you to begin."

The band strikes up a few bars with a preliminary flourish, and the music vibrates enchantingly on the summer night air. They take their places.

"I shall blunder horribly," Violet insists. "You will soon be ashamed of me."

"We will see. Of course if you are dreadful I shall scold you, and tell your husband in the bargain. He and Mr. Murray ought to take a turn. I have seen men waltz splendidly."

She laughs, then bethinks herself in time to save the undesired blunder, and they float gracefully through the first figure. It is enchanting. The sunny lustre comes back to Violet's eyes, and her cheeks are abloom, her lips part in a half-smile. As she floats down to where Mr. Grandon and Mr. Murray stand, her husband takes in the supple grace, the happy young face, the half-abandon, and feels that it is the right and the power of youth. Has he cut her off from a full participation of its pleasures? More than once he has questioned his kindness of a year ago.

Mr. Murray is watching his daughter with a vague satisfaction,—his little "Polly," as he sometimes calls her, to whom his life is devoted. All day he has talked business with Mr. Grandon, and they have gone deep into the mysteries of trade and manufacturing. He sees himself that the right parties could control vast interests in this matter. When his friend George Haviland returns from Europe, a few weeks later, a decision will be made, for he understands how troublesome the matter is to Grandon, and how anxious he is to have his father's estate settled. If these two young people should choose to settle another point? He must inquire into the young man's character and habits; but if Mr. Floyd Grandon is a sample of the manhood of the family, there can be no trouble on that score. Grandon Park is aristocratic, undeniably elegant, and, so far as he can see, less given to "shoddy" than many of the new places.

The evening is perfection to those who dance and full of enjoyment to those who do not. There are card-tables, and a disused conservatory is transformed into a luxurious smoking-room, from which the mazy winding German can be seen. There are no wall-flowers, no dissatisfied young women with scorn-tipped noses, and the promenaders, mostly married guests, are well paired. Mr. Murray, who has seen society almost everywhere, is charmed with this.

"What a magnificent woman Madame Lepelletier is," he says to Grandon. "We have some friends who met her in New York last winter, and I do not wonder at their enthusiasm. I little thought I should have the pleasure. There are not many of our countrywomen who could give so charming an evening."

Grandon is pleased with the praise. His eyes follow the regal woman.

"If I had been in his place I would have made a bid for her," says Mr. Murray to himself, and he wonders what induced Grandon to marry such a child as Miss St. Vincent must have been a year ago.

After the supper there is some miscellaneous dancing, a few new steps the younger portion are desirous of trying, and a waltz that delights Violet, since she has her husband for a partner. She is full of pleasurable excitement, and seems alive with some electric power. He goes back to their first waltz; what is it that has fallen between and made a little coldness? Why does he study her now with such questioning eyes, and why is she, with all her brilliance, less tender than a month or two ago? That quaint little touch of entire dependence has merged into a peculiar strength, and she seems quite capable of standing alone. He is strangely roused, piqued as it were.

Violet has been studying a rather ponderous subject for a ball-room, and she is somewhat elated at having arrived at a conclusion unaided, except by the trifling suggestion Mr. Latimer has thrown out. It was Mr. Murray whom Mr. Grandon had some business with awhile ago; she remembers seeing his name in a letter. His friend went to Europe, and this is the Mr. Haviland they talk about. She can almost guess the rest. How odd if Eugene should marry into the new business house, as his brother married the daughter of a member of the old one. Violet resolves that he shall love her. She is sweet and engaging and quite captivated by him, as is evident by her girlish frankness and admiration.

The two go up-stairs together, while the gentlemen indulge in a last cigar.

"It was delightful!" Miss Murray says. "Why, I never saw anything really lovelier at Newport, though there is more magnificence. And Mr. Grandon's dancing is perfection. I never enjoyed a partner better. How very handsome he is! I was envied," she cries, with eager delight; "I saw it in the eyes of the other girls. Tell me if you think he is given to flirting; but you know girls *do* run after such a handsome young fellow! I never should," she declares, naively. "Oh, Miss Brade has asked us to lawn tennis to-morrow, with tea and a little dancing in the evening! And if you want to give *me* a pleasure," she adds, with a seductive smile, "let it be a German. I do adore Germans."

She kisses Violet good night in a sweet, girlish way, and her last thought is of Eugene Grandon's handsome face.

CHAPTER XXVI.

"And what's the thing beneath the skies
We two would most forget?"

Lucia Brade comes over the next morning and renews her invitation to the rather impromptu lawn tennis, including Violet.

"Of course you will go," decides Miss Murray, persuasively, for she must have some one to keep her in countenance with this attractive young man.

It proves rather dull for Violet, though Eugene insists upon giving her a few lessons, and she feels really interested, but she does not want to detach him from Miss Murray. The supper is out of doors and is undeniably gay. Violet obligingly plays most of the evening, accompanied by a violin. She has discussed the German with Lucia, and that evening lays it before her husband.

"Of course," he answers, indulgently. "Let it be Tuesday evening. I wish Eugene would attend to it."

Eugene is elated at being master of ceremonies. They write invitations,—just a young people's party in honor of Miss Murray. Of course madame must be included.

"I don't see why," says Eugene.

"I think Mr. Grandon would rather," Violet replies, with a faint touch of entreaty.

Miss Murray studies on this problem, and afterwards says privately to Eugene, "If I was Mrs. Grandon I should be jealous of that superb woman. Why, she looks as if she could beguile any one."

"Floyd isn't the kind to be beguiled, you see," and he gives a short laugh, but presently admits the old fancy between them.

"Well," says Miss Murray, plaintively, "it *was* something to be a countess. Still, I couldn't give up the man I loved. I wonder—if he at all resembled you when he was that young?"

"No, indeed," and Eugene assumes an air of serene audacity. "The family beauty was kept inviolate for my sister Laura and your humble servant."

The baby blue eyes have a look of admiration that is extremely gratifying to the young man's vanity.

The three are deeply engrossed day and evening with pleasures of all sorts. Pauline Murray takes them with a zest that quite repays her pretty hostess.

"Your sister-in-law is the sweetest little body in the world!" she declares, enthusiastically. "It is quite ridiculous to think of her being step-mother to that lovely Cecil. I wouldn't be called mamma! Fancy Mrs. Grandon taking her into society a few years hence. Why, they will look like sisters."

"Of course," answers Eugene, tartly. "Only an idiot would imagine it a real relationship."

"Was she very much in love with him?" Miss Murray asks, innocently.

"I don't know," returns Eugene, rather impatiently. "I was away when it happened. I think the marriage was hurried a little on account of Mr. St. Vincent's illness."

Pauline Murray speculates. Eugene is very fond of his pretty sister-in-law.

"Do you always go out together?"

"Go out together?" he repeats, with a show of anger. "Why, we never do. At least I never took her to but one party,—my sister's,—and then Floyd was in Baltimore."

"He and papa went to see Mr. Haviland, who was going to Europe." Miss Murray studies him with her innocent baby eyes. Already she is wise in the lore of women's ways, especially young married women who make a bid for the attention of gentlemen. But she has to admit that Mrs. Grandon is very generous of her brother-in-law, and the most delightful chaperone.

Marcia and Mr. Wilmarth have been to Canada for a week, and return in time to be invited to the garden party, which Floyd honestly regrets. True, no business plans have been agreed upon; when Mr. Haviland comes back, if a formal offer can be made, it will be time to explain.

Eugene and Miss Murray have made the garden party as perfect as zest and large opportunity could avail. The dancing is to be a German, principally, but here

they have not madame's experience in selecting and arranging partners. Miss Murray does not mind, since she has secured Eugene. With all her watching she cannot detect any especial fondness on the part of pretty Mrs. Floyd.

Violet is oddly consequential as a chaperone. She has never taken such warm interest in pleasures, and it becomes her youth and vivacity. She is bright and charming, with a touch of authority here and there that renders her quite bewitching.

Yet she has been thinking all this time of her own lot. Had she been alone she would no doubt have brooded over it despondently; but Miss Murray's almost volatile nature kindles the philosophy of hers. She knows now that Floyd Grandon did not marry her for love, that he did not even profess to, and that in most marriages there is at least a profession of love at the beginning, and it is very sweet. Even such half-jesting love as these two young people make unblushingly before her face, in the naughty audacity of youth, is delightful. Mr. Grandon could never do or say such things; he is too grave and sensible.

The house and lawn are lighted up again. There are elegant young men and diaphanous fairies; there is music and dancing; there is nectar and ambrosia and general satisfaction. Violet is too busy to dance, although if she had but known her husband was foolish enough to long to try the seductive atmosphere with her, she would not have been so resolute. Everybody looks happy and content.

"Polly," Mr. Murray says, the next morning, at the late breakfast, "we must be considering our departure. I shall have to go to New York. What part of the earth will it be your pleasure to visit next?"

"Oh," ejaculates Miss Murray, with a regretful emphasis, "the mail has not come in yet?"

"It has not come down. Briggs will be here presently with all personal matters."

Even as he speaks, the supple young fellow, with his well-trained deference, comes in with a budget of letters.

"Hillo!" exclaims Murray, glancing up. "Why, Haviland will be back in about a fortnight! See here, Grandon, can you run out to Chicago with me? The word is favorable, I must go to the city to-day, Polly."

"Why not let Miss Murray remain here, if she is not homesick?" says Grandon.

Pauline Murray's eyes light up with an expression quite the reverse of homesickness.

"I am afraid we shall trespass on a most generous hospitality."

Violet seconds her husband's request. They were to take in Long Branch as they went down, but it will be out of season now, and Pauline must go to her aunt at Baltimore or remain with some friend until the business is settled. So the Grandons' invitation is cordially accepted.

Mr. Murray spends the next two days in the city, while Mr. Grandon is busy with his own affairs, as on the evening of the third they are to start for Chicago. He finds his daughter serenely happy and not yet at the end of pleasures.

"But I think you had better be careful about the young man, Polly," says her father, as they are promenading the lawn at the river's edge, in confidential chat.

"Be careful!" Miss Murray's fair face is a vivid scarlet, and she fans herself violently with her chip hat, as if overcome with the heat.

"Yes, he is a handsome young man, but——"

"And he is pleasant, he has a lovely temper, and—and—I don't know why you should find fault with him, papa," she answers, warmly.

"Why, I have not found fault with him"; and there is a funny twinkle in her father's eye.

"When people say 'but' it always seems like finding fault," says Miss Murray, resentfully.

"Well, don't *you* break the young man's heart. I have a regard for him myself."

Pauline Murray laughs lightly.

"And keep your own in a good condition," advises her father.

But as they stand together on the porch bidding him good by, they appear quite to belong to each other. Mr. Murray understands him pretty well. He has no great inclination for business, but he seems to have no special vices, and can be easily

governed by a liberal indulgence in money matters. There might be worse sons-in-law. The Grandons are a good old family, and carry weight, and Mr. Murray, whose taste is altogether for manufacturing, fancies he sees in this business both interest and profit. So if Polly and the young man decide to like each other—

Eugene Grandon would no doubt fly out indignantly if he fancied his matrimonial matters were being settled by older and as they think wiser heads. For once he is fortunately blind. He likes Pauline Murray because, if she is not the rose, she brings the scent of it continually within his reach. Every day Violet grows more charming and the distance between them lessens. He thinks nothing now of looking her up, of following her about, of planning drives and walks, and while the heads are away, he is cavalier to both ladies. They discuss various tender points and come to love. Eugene no longer sneers and treats it lightly. Violet is touched by the gentle lowering of tone, the faint hesitation, the softness that comes and goes over his face, the dreamy smile, the far light in his eyes, as if his brain was richly satisfied with some vision. This is love, she thinks, exultantly. Mr. and Mrs. Latimer must have had just this blessed experience, but no other marriage, not even Gertrude's, comes up to her ideal. And to think that hundreds must go through the world without this greatest, finest of all joys. She pities them, she pities herself profoundly. There are moments when it seems as if she must throw herself at her husband's feet and tell him that she is famishing for this divine food. And yet in their brief seasons together she grows cold, distant, afraid. She cannot even feel as she did when her ankle was hurt and he so tenderly indulgent. She esteemed that as love, but she knows better now, sad, sad wisdom!

Yet there is something fascinating in this double life she leads. It must be what people take when their great hopes are gone. The diversions of society, the threads of others' lives, the curious, dangerous study of the feelings and emotions of those about her. Only a year ago she was such an ignorant little body, now she is so wise, and she sighs over it.

The days are crowded full of enjoyment. Mrs. Latimer gives the loveliest tea and the most enchanting *musicale* with amateurs. Violet is asked to play, and proposes that Eugene and Miss Murray distinguish themselves in a duet from "Don Pasquale," which they sing admirably. Pauline Murray has a soprano voice, with brilliant execution.

"I do believe," exclaims Mrs. Latimer, studying Violet, "that you will equal

madame as a society woman. I am not sure that I shall admire the cultivated pansy as much as the shy, sweet wood violet, but perhaps it is better. We women with distinguished husbands must keep pace in attractiveness, or the world will take them from us in its sweeping admiration."

"I never did have such a lovely time!" Pauline Murray says, after the *musicale*. "And you know I never should have thought of Robin Adair for an *encore* if it had not been for Eugene." She has come to the young man's Christian name. "Wasn't it a perfect success? I never sang it so well in my life. If papa could have heard it!" And she hums over a stanza,—

"After the ball was o'er
What made my heart so sore—"

Some tears fill Violet's eyes and she turns away. Then, lest her emotion shall make her appear ungracious, she praises liberally.

Days and nights seem to have wings. The travellers return, and Mr. Haviland, back from Europe, comes up to Grandon Park. The gentlemen retire to the tower and discuss business over cigars, and the result is an offer for all right and title to the interest of Grandon & Co. left by James Grandon to his family, and for Mr. St. Vincent's patent. The last is so liberal that Floyd accepts at once; the rest must be considered by the parties concerned, but it has the consent and advice of Floyd Grandon and Mr. Connery.

It is late when the conclave breaks up, but Grandon goes up-stairs with a lighter heart than he has carried in many a long day. He has hardly dared to believe in this conclusion, and there will no doubt be some hard fighting before the matter is ended, but he indulges in a long, exultant breath of freedom. His life will be his own henceforward.

Passing through Cecil's room, he finds both heads on one pillow. Violet has waked Cecil with her good-night kiss, and the exigent child has prisoned her with two soft arms and drawn her close to her own pink cheek and rosy, fragrant lips. They seem like a picture, gold and chestnut hair intermingled, complexion of pearl, and the other of creamy tints, soft as a sun-ripe peach. She has fallen asleep there, as she so often does, for youth and health defy carking cares. How lovely they are! Floyd Grandon suddenly counts himself a happy man, and yet he does not waken her with the kisses he longs to shower on brow and cheek and

lip. If he did, how brave she would be for the temptation of to-morrow.

After breakfast Floyd summons his mother and Eugene into the library. Lucia Brade calls in her pony phaeton and entices Pauline, who is always ready for a pleasure. Violet flutters about her room, sends Cecil and Jane out for a constitutional, and then picks up a book. Summer is on the wane, and the air has a fragrance of ripening grapes, sun-warmed fruit, and the luxurious sweetness of madeira-blooms. The voices from the library touch her faintly. Mrs. Grandon's has a high, aggressive swell now and then, and Eugene's drops to that sort of sullen key she knows so well in the past. What is taking place? Will there be some new trouble for Floyd?

She walks down to the summer-house from some half-defined, delicate motive. After a while the three gentlemen go away, Floyd giving a questioning glance around. She drops her book on her knee and lapses into a wondering mood, when a step breaks her reverie.

Eugene is flushed and angry, yet it does not make him the less handsome, though it is very different from his usual indolent ease.

"What is the matter?" she asks, for form's sake, for she almost knows.

"Matter!" and he kicks viciously at a pebble that has dared to rear its head in the smooth walk, sending it over on the grassy lawn. "The matter is that Floyd is selling us all out with a high hand. That is what Murray's visit and all this going to and fro mean. He has had an offer, and he doesn't care for anything so long as *you* come out on the topmost round."

"I?" Violet flushes and her eyes grow moist.

"Well, it isn't your fault, after all, and one need not grudge you anything," he says, strangely moved. "Yes, these men want to buy out the whole thing, and you'll have a private fortune of your own that will be stunning! Floyd isn't green at bargain-making. Now they have gone over to tackle Wilmarth, and a sweet time they will have of it. I should like to see the fun. But what am I to do afterward?" and he studies the greensward gloomily.

"You?" she repeats, and the matter settles itself beautifully to her vision. "Why, you will marry Miss Pauline Murray."

"Marry!" Eugene strides up and down with a grim sense of the irony of fate. Once he was asked to marry Miss St. Vincent to save his fortune, now it is Miss Murray. He is a part of the business, to be bandied about and knocked down to the highest bidder.

"You do love her?"

Violet says this with the rarest, tenderest entreaty.

"Love her? No, I do not." He comes nearer to Violet with his eyes aflame, his face pale, and his lips savagely compressed. "Have *you* been so blind? Did that show deceive you? Why, you must guess, you must know it is you and not she whom I love."

Violet sits astounded. She is too much amazed even to resent this. Surely he cannot have been so deceitful, so false-hearted.

"You like me," she begins, tremulously, "and I am your sister, your brother's wife _____"

"And you might have been mine! It maddens me when I think of it."

"And it humiliates me."

"Oh, my darling, you must forgive it!" and Eugene throws himself at her feet. "If I could have seen you, could have known you——"

"You did not like me when you first saw me," she interrupts, with quiet dignity.

"No, because I held to an obstinate, hateful prejudice! But when I came to know you——"

"And through all this time, Eugene, you have been offering a false admiration to Miss Murray," she continues, with a grave, sad demeanor, "and you have been thinking of me in a manner that will make me despise myself forever. How do you suppose I shall meet Mr. Grandon's eyes?"

"As if he cared! Oh, you know he doesn't, Violet. That is the wretched part of it all."

She turns so pale and sways to and fro in her willow chair, like a lily, when something has struck the stem but not broken it off, her lips and pretty dimpled

chin quivering, as if in an ague, her eyes strained, imploring. To be told of that. To have no power to deny it.

"I am his wife," she says, and she tries to rise but falls back.

"Oh, my poor girl, my miserable little darling, don't I know that! But, see here, Violet, I'm not a villain if I am an unfortunate wretch. I never thought of any wrong or harm; you are too dear to me, you are like some sweet little baby that a man wants to take in his arms and kiss and comfort and hold forever. That is how you ought to be loved. But I know a good deal better than you that going off and setting one's self up against the law and society and respect, kills a woman. There isn't any love worth such a sacrifice; only—I wish I had come to know you well before you belonged to any one. And you ought to give me some credit that I never made a fool of myself or did a single act that Floyd mightn't see. You've been to me like a little angel. See here, you are worth ten of Madame Lepelletier, with all her beauty. Why didn't Floyd marry *her*? She has about as much real soul as he."

"Oh, don't!" she cries, in the depths of her anguish. "You wrong him. You can never know how gentle and kind he was when papa died, and how good he has always been to me. I am not so beautiful and fascinating, or learned like Mrs. Latimer, but Cecil loves me."

She is crying now, not in any great sobs, but her eyes are wind-blown lakes of crystal tears whose tide overflows. She has fallen back on the one great comfort, the one pearl saved from the wrecked argosy.

"A man who could be cruel to you ought to be hanged!" he says, passionately, and her tears move him beyond description. "Floyd isn't cruel; he is simply cold, indifferent. Oh, my poor little girl, how can I comfort you?"

"You cannot comfort me," she says, drearily. "I read a long while ago, in the convent,—I think it was,—that it is not given to every one to be happy, that one can be upright and honest and pure, and do one's duty, but that happiness is a blessing of God that is given or withheld, and we must not waver on that account. Now let me go, and you must never again say any of these things to me."

She rises feebly, but he is still on the floor of the summer-house at her feet. Something about her awes him; he is vain and weak and fond of trying on

emotions, he has little sense of present responsibility, but, as he has said, he does love her, and it is perhaps the best experience of his whole life. A weak or silly woman would have dragged him down in spite of his worldly common-sense, but she seems to stir the manliness within him. At this instant he could really lay down his life for her; it is the one supreme moment of his indolent, vacillating manhood.

"I have made you still more miserable," he cries, remorsefully. "Oh, what shall I do! Why is it that you may know a thing in secret all your life, and yet the moment you speak of it, it is all wrong? I oughtn't have said a word, and yet it doesn't really make anything different. See, I haven't so much as touched your hand; you *are* different from other women, you are like a pure little angel shut in a niche. And I mean to do whatever will make you happiest. If you would like me to marry Miss Murray——"

"Oh," she sighs with a great gasp, "don't marry any woman unless you love her!"

He rises then, though he still stands in the doorway. "Forgive me for being such a brute," he implores. "I shall never hurt or offend you again. I would give my right hand to see you happy. You must, you do believe this!"

"I believe it," she says, and they look into each other's eyes. A great crisis has come and gone, they both think, a lightning flash that has revealed so much, and then shut again in blackness. Could she have loved him? she wonders.

She walks slowly towards the house, and going to her room throws herself on the lounge, pressing her throbbing temple upon the pillow. All the wretchedness of her life seems to have culminated, the little doubts she has thrust out or tried to overlive. Somehow she appears to have worked a great and unwitting change in the Grandon family. Once, when Denise was in a discursive mood, she told Violet of Mr. Wilmarth's proposal of marriage. What if she had married *him*? Violet thinks now. Marcia talks about her "Vulcan" with a curious pride, and he certainly is indulgent. In that case Violet would have marred no lives.

A soft rustle comes up the stairs, and she knows who stands in the doorway.

"Oh, are you ill?" Miss Murray kneels by the couch and tosses her hat aside. "How pale and wretched you look! Does your head ache?"

"Yes," Violet admits.

"And you were so well this morning! Where is everybody? What has become of Eugene?"

"They have all been talking business," says Violet, "and have gone——"

"I suppose Mr. Grandon told you long ago, like a good husband, but you have been very discreet. Papa and Mr. Haviland are to take the business, and I suppose I shall come to live at Grandon Park. I just adore it! I never had so nice a time anywhere. Did Eugene go with them?" abruptly flying round to the subject of most importance to her.

"I think not," Violet says, slowly.

"Let me bathe your forehead"; and the soft fingers touch her gently. "Now, if I shut out the sun you may fall asleep. Don't get really ill!"

"I shall soon be better," Violet returns, faintly.

Miss Murray glides down-stairs, searches the porch, the summer-house, and the shady clump of trees. There is no Eugene visible. None of the gentlemen are home to lunch, but there are some calls to break the afternoon silence. Mrs. Grandon drives out. Violet has dressed herself and comes down, wan and white, making a pretext with some embroidery. Cecil is to take tea with Elsie Latimer, a regular weekly invitation.

Pauline Murray fidgets. Her father has imparted some other knowledge, confidentially, that he shall not object to the young man for a son-in-law if his daughter so wills. She has stoutly declared that she does not mean to marry anybody, and her father has laughed, but a whole day without Eugene seems interminable. She has asked about him at least a dozen times. An awful fear fills Violet's soul. Is it right that Eugene should marry her with no real love in his heart for her? and if he does not—how will she take it? He *has* been tender and lover-like, but how much of it was meant? Oh, why is the world all in a tangle? Her heart beats and her pulses throb, her lips are dry and feverish, and she has a presentiment of some ill or trouble to come. How will she meet Mr. Grandon? When she thinks of him she feels like a traitor.

The three return together, but Floyd goes to the stable to see about one of the carriage-horses slightly lamed, and when he comes Mr. Haviland sits talking to Violet. Mr. Haviland is older than Mr. Murray, a tall, rather spare man, with gray

hair and close-cropped gray beard, that give him a military air. A little color comes into her face, and Grandon remarks nothing amiss; indeed, she looks very pretty and interesting, as she sits talking of her father.

"Where is Eugene?" he asks presently, as he sees Mr. Murray and his daughter walking in the grounds.

It seems to Violet as if she must scream. Is *she* his brother's keeper? Oh, what if—and it seems as if she must faint dead away at the horrible suspicion that he may never come back. No wonder her voice is tremulous. But even as she gasps for breath Eugene appears around the winding walk, and she is reprieved.

"What is the matter?" Floyd Grandon asks, startled by all these changes.

"My head aches."

"I thought Mrs. Grandon looked pale," says Mr. Haviland.

Miss Murray has caught sight of Eugene and waves a square of lace sewn around a centre of puzzling monogram. He has been desperate, moody, savage, and repentant by turns. He has meant to kneel at Violet's feet and confess his sins, and never love any other woman while the breath of life is in his handsome body. But the first is utterly impracticable, and after having been Miss Murray's devoted cavalier he cannot snub her in the face of all these eyes. He waves his hand and turns toward them, feeling that Violet is watching him and positively impelling him to this step; so he goes on and on to meet his fate. The cordial greeting of Mr. Murray, who thinks none the worse of him for his outburst of the morning, in a few words restores the easy footing of yesterday. Pauline smiles with winning tenderness; it does almost seem as if he was being crowded out of his rights, and there is enough to make amends. He sees it all; what does it matter? One never comes up to any high ideals, and ideals are for the most part tiresome, unattainable.

When the first bell rings they saunter up the path, Miss Murray on Eugene's arm. Her eyes have a kind of exultant softness; she has misread the pain and pallor of his face and her power of bringing back its warm, joyous tints, but ignorance is bliss. Violet looks up and meets the dark, questioning eyes, with their half-resolve, and Floyd Grandon intercepts it all. Why does she turn so deadly pale?

He says something about making ready for dinner, and they all go up-stairs,

leaving her with Cecil. She has that curious, transfixed feeling, as though when she moved she was in a dream. Floyd Grandon has seen her sad, shy, quiet, gay, joyous, and in almost every mood but this. What is it? he wonders. Eugene's eyes wander stealthily now and then, and when she catches them a shiver goes over her.

To-night Cecil is unusually wakeful and very amusing to Mr. Murray. They all sit on the porch and discuss business. Mr. Wilmarth is likely to make a good deal of trouble. To-morrow, it seems, they are to meet at the lawyer's and the matter is to be put in process of settlement. The new partners are in haste to get to work.

At last Violet is glad to rise and bid them good evening. Mr. Murray finally obtains a kiss from Cecil, and is triumphant over so rare a victory.

At the top of the stairs a hand is laid on Violet's arm.

"It was fate," pleads Eugene, weakly, "and your wish. I saw it in your eyes."

"Love her," she answers, with a convulsive shiver,— "love her with your whole soul."

Floyd Grandon knows who entered the hall a moment ago and who now emerges in the soft light.

CHAPTER XXVII.

You have heard with what toil Secunder penetrated to the land of darkness, and that, after all, he did not taste the water of immortality.

—SAADI.

The three men talk late. The two young people on the porch have no duenna, for Mrs. Grandon retired early,—indeed, she has left Miss Murray quite to Violet, and she thinks if Eugene lets slip this chance he will be foolish above what is written. He plays at love,—it is no new thing for him,—but he convinces "Polly" without any actual questions and answers that he cares for her, and the next morning there is a delicate little triumph in her demeanor, a tender overflow of pity, as if, after all, she might not take him, and then he would be heart-broken.

Violet is much better. She thrusts her secret out of sight, and Floyd is brief and business-like, something more, but he would be much too proud to own it.

"Violet," he says, "you must go to Mr. Sherburne's with me this morning. Your father deputed that gentleman and myself to act in your behalf if at any time we should have an offer to dispose of his inventions. His dream has been more than realized, and I am glad to have it go into the hands of men who will do justice to it. I shall also dispose of the share in the factory, and that part will be settled."

"Eugene——" she says, with a certain tremulousness, and she cannot keep the color out of her face. "Will he be—will——"

"I have advised Eugene to dispose of his part. He has no head, no desire, and no ambition for business. But whatever he does, it is now in my power to settle my father's estate, and I shall be glad to do it."

There is a discernible hardness in his voice. She seems to shrink a little from him, and he feels strangely resentful.

Mrs. Grandon has a talk with her son before he goes. The new firm have made her an offer to pay down a certain amount, or, if she insists, the stated income shall be kept for the present.

"I certainly should take their offer," says Floyd. "Your income will not be as large, but on the one hand it would die with you, and on the other you are more independent. I will add to it ten thousand dollars."

"You are very kind," she says, with a touch of gratitude. "But Eugene will be thrown out of business, and your father *did* hope it would remain in the family. He was so proud of his standing."

"I have counselled and besought Eugene, and it is pouring water in a sieve."

"He should have married Violet," she says, in a tone that avenges madame. "If you had waited——"

Floyd is deathly pale for an instant. If he *had* waited. If this useless money could belong to Eugene.

"You will be ready this afternoon," and he leaves the room.

Has he defrauded his brother? He could have held out a hope to the dying man and temporized. As his ward, Eugene might have come to admire her, or been tempted by the fortune. He hates himself that he can put her in any scale with mere money, and yet, does she not care for Eugene? What has the varying moods of the last six weeks meant, if not that? What the little interchange of glances last night? Curiously enough, Mr. Murray is quite taken with Eugene. Perhaps the elder brother does not do full justice to the fascinations of the younger. Has he been too tried and vexed and suspected, until his whole nature is warped and soured? Perhaps he is unfit for civilization, for domestic life in the realms of culture and fashion, and he wishes with much bitterness of spirit that he was back in his congenial wilds and deserts.

Violet is waiting for him, attired faultlessly. She looks pale and troubled, he can see that, and the sweet, frank expression with which she has always challenged his glance is no longer there. It is not altogether suspicion, but she really *does* evade his glance. She has the miserable secret of a third person, that, if known, might work incalculable harm, and she must keep it sacred. Beside, she is training herself to believe that Eugene will recover from his ill-fated passion and

truly love Pauline Murray.

"Are you ready?" Grandon briefly asks, and hands her to the carriage. The drive is quite silent. They find all the parties engaged at Mr. Sherburne's, and proceed at once to business. On behalf of Messrs. Haviland and Murray the offer is made for all right and title possessed by Violet St. Vincent Grandon, and by Floyd Grandon, her husband, in all interests, inventions, etc., with much legal verbiage that alike confuses and interests Violet. But the sum offered seems enormous to her! She gazes blankly from one to another, as she hears again that all income thereof is to be hers, that no one can touch the principal until she is twenty-five, that it is settled solely upon her and her children forever.

"Oh!" she exclaims, with a vague glance at her husband, but his face is absolutely impassible.

Mr. Sherburne takes her into his private office and questions her after the usual formula as to whether force or persuasion or bribes have been used, and whether she does all this of her free consent, and smiles a little at her utter innocence. It is well she and her fortune are in the hands of a man of such perfect integrity as Floyd Grandon. Then they both sign all necessary papers, and the morning's work is completed. Violet goes home, a rich woman beyond any doubt or question, but a very miserable one. She would like to give at least half the money to Eugene, but she does not dare make the least proposal. She feels afraid of Floyd Grandon's steady, searching eyes.

In the afternoon she and Pauline are left together, but the lawyers have a rather stormier session than in the morning. Mrs. Grandon has a vague suspicion that Eugene will come out of this much worsted. He will spend his money and there will be nothing left. The young man is in a curious mood. He is well aware that he never can or will confine himself to business routine, that he is the product of the nineteenth-century civilization, termed a gentleman, rather useless, it may be, but decidedly ornamental.

The showing of the last nine months has been profitable beyond expectation. It is true there has been no income used for family expenses, and the legacies can be paid. Mrs. Grandon finally decides to dispose of her claim, and everything is adjusted for the law's inspection, approval, and ultimate signature. Floyd Grandon has redeemed his trust, has obeyed his dead father's wishes, and circumstances have proved that the dying man did not over-estimate the worth of

what he was leaving. But it has been a severe and distasteful duty, and only the closest attention, the best judgment, and most wary perseverance, have saved the family from ruin. He gives his advisers full credit for their help and sympathy; but it has been a great strain, and he is immensely relieved. The dissolution of the old firm and the arrangement of the new one are matters for time, but happily he will be out of that. Wilmarth and Eugene take the first, and the others are quite capable of managing the last. He has a secret pity for Wilmarth, and yet he knows he has been Eugene's worst enemy, that he would not have scrupled at any ruin to attain his end. That he is Marcia's husband he must always regret, and they have not yet reached the end of dissensions.

Eugene drives slowly homeward, ruminating many matters. He has his college education and various accomplishments, and in the course of a month or so will have some money. He has no more taste for a profession than for business; and though various phases of speculation look tempting, he is well aware that he has not the brains to compete with the trained athletes in this department. He can marry Pauline Murray, and he will, no doubt, end by marrying some rich woman. He looks covetously at Violet's fortune and calls himself hard names, but that is plainly out of his reach. He could love Violet so dearly, with such passion and fervor, but it is too late, and he sighs. She would like him to marry Miss Murray; he will please her and Polly, who is undeniably charming, and do extremely well for himself. Why not, then? He cannot hang here on Floyd forever.

Polly is wandering through the grounds in the late summer afternoon, her blue-lined parasol making an azure sky over her golden head, her white dress draping her slender figure in a strikingly statuesque way. She is the kind of girl to madden men and win admiration on the right hand and on the left, and he *does* like the women on whom the world sets a signet of approval. No sweet domestic drudge for him, and if Violet *has* a fault, it is this tendency. When a man begins to discover flaws in his ideal the enchantment is weakening.

He saunters up to her, and she blushes, while a touch of delight gleams in her eye.

"Do you know," he begins, in a melancholy tone, "that I have sold my birthright, but not for a mess of cabbages, as the camp-meeting brother called it."

They both laugh,—Polly with a mirthful ring, Eugene lazily.

"And now I must take my bag of gold on one end of a stick and my best clothes done up in a bundle on the other, and go out to the new Territories. A young man grows up governor or senator, or some great personage there. I think it must be in the atmosphere,—ozone or odyle, what is it?"

She laughs again, a pleasant sound to hear. He is so very handsome in this mock-plaintive mood, with his beseeching eyes.

"You know I ought to do the world some good."

"Yes. And the Presidents come from the West. I would rather be a President."

"Oh, you couldn't, you know"; and he laughs again. "Is there nothing else that would satisfy your ambition?"

"Nothing!" She seems to shake a shower of gold out of the waving hair on her brow.

"Nothing," he repeats, disconsolately. "Then I may as well go. You see before you a struggling but worthy young man, born to a better heritage, but cruel fate _____"

"Well, cruel fate," she says, as if prompting him.

He turns, and she blushes vividly. He bends lower until the warm cheek, soft as a girl's, touches hers, and the lips meet. Then he draws her arm through his, and takes her parasol.

"I wonder," he says, presently, "if I could get enough together to buy you of your father? Might I try?"

"You mercenary wretch!" she cries, but the tone is delicious.

"See here," he says, "some fellows have the cheek to ask such a gift for just nothing at all. I rate you more highly."

That is very sweet flattery. Her eyes droop and the color comes and goes.

"You might ask him," she says, in a tone of irresistible fascination, "but I do not believe you will have *quite* enough."

"Then I shall start for Dakota."

They ramble up and down, and Eugene allows himself to sup of delight. Does it make so much difference, after all, whom he marries? Polly is very charming and her lips are like rose-leaves. She loves him also, and she isn't the kind to bore a man.

Late that evening Violet steals out on the porch for a breath of the dewy air. Cecil has been wakeful and the stories almost endless. Floyd has not come home to dinner, and she feels strangely nervous.

Eugene has some idle moments on his hands.

"Come down the walk!" he exclaims, "I have something to tell you"; and he draws her gently toward him, taking the limp hand in his. As they go down in the light Floyd Grandon turns into the broad avenue, unseen by either.

"Well, I have done it," Eugene begins. "If I am miserable for life it will be your fault."

The treacherous wind carries back the last, and Floyd hears it distinctly in one of those electric moods that could translate a quiver in the air.

They are too far away for her answer.

"You will *not* be miserable," she says, firmly. "No man could be miserable with Pauline Murray, if he did his duty and tried, *tried* with his very soul to the uttermost. And you will, you will."

Eugene Grandon has an insincere nature, while hers is like crystal. He is extremely fond of sympathy from women, and her urgent tone makes him seem a sort of hero to himself. If he must endeavor earnestly, there is something to be overcome, and that is his love for her. The pendulum vibrates back to it.

"I shall try, of course," he says. Violet St. Vincent, with her fortune, is no light loss, but he does not distinguish between her and the fortune. "It was the best thing to do," he continues, "though I had half a mind to throw up everything and go away."

She feels she should have admired and approved this course, but Pauline would have been wretched. She does not dream that in this early stage another lover would have comforted Pauline. She is so simple, so absolutely truthful, that her youthful discernment is quite at fault.

"You must let yourself be happy," she says, and then she remembers how she has let herself be happy and the bitter awakening. But in this case there is nothing to break a confidence once established.

"And what are you going to do?" he asks, suddenly.

It is like a great wave and almost takes her off her feet.

"You must not think of me, nor watch me, nor anything"; and an observant man would note the strain of agony in her voice. "It was very good in your brother to take care of me as he did. Mr. Sherburne said to-day that not one man in a hundred would have brought the matter to such a successful issue. And you know if everything had been lost, why, I should have been a burthen on him. Think of *us* having nothing at all! What could you do?"

He shrugs his shoulders in the dark, and he knows he should not want her or any other woman in poverty.

"I shall have a pleasant life," she continues. "I can do a great deal for Cecil; and I can copy and translate, and Mr. Grandon is so fond of music. I know we shall be happy when this business no longer perplexes him and he has a little leisure. He is always so good and thoughtful. You couldn't expect him to love a little girl like me, fresh from a convent, with no especial beauty," she says, with heroic bravery.

"And you will forget about me," the young man returns, with jealous selfishness.

"I shall forget nothing that is right to be remembered," she says, steadily; "and I like Miss Murray; we shall be friends always. She seems such a young girl and I am only eighteen. We shall love each other and take an interest in each other's houses. Now that Gertrude is away, no one cares very much for me."

"It is a shame!" he interrupts, indignantly. "You and Polly must always love each other. We shall live somewhere around Grandon Park, I suppose."

"And we will all end like a fairy story," she declares, trying to laugh, but it is such a poor, mirthless sound.

She sees with secret joy that he is somewhat comforted, and she trusts to Polly's fascinations to achieve the rest. Love is not quite what poets sing about, unless in such lives as Mr. and Mrs. Latimer.

The air is so fragrant, the night so beautiful, that the moments fly faster than she thinks. The clock strikes ten, and in a little trepidation she insists that it shall be good night, and glides up the path and through the hall, and in Cecil's room comes face to face with Mr. Grandon, who has been home long enough to divest himself of coat, necktie, and collar. She stands quite still in amaze, the quick flush he has always admired going up to the very edge of her hair.

"You are out late walking," he says, in a tone that seems to stab her. "I trust you were not alone."

"I was not alone." He is quite welcome to know all. "I was with Eugene. He ——" How shall she best tell it? Alas! the very hesitation is fatal. "He is engaged to Miss Murray."

"He abounds in the wisdom of the children of this world," comments Floyd Grandon, with bitter satire. "It is the best step he could take, but I hope Miss Murray will never regret it. She is young to take up life's most difficult problem, a vain, selfish, handsome man."

Violet's lips are dry and her throat constricted. Mr. Grandon is displeased; he has not been well pleased with Eugene of late. She can make no present peace between them; something in the sad depths of her heart tells her that it is useless to try. That this man before her, her wedded husband, who has never been her lover, should be jealous, is the last thought that would occur to her. She is a little afraid he suspects Eugene, but there never will be any cause again. She will not rest until she sees him devoted to Miss Murray. She can make no confidence, so she kisses Cecil, and begins to take some roses from her hair with untender fingers and the nervousness that confesses her ill at ease.

Floyd Grandon walks over to the window. For perhaps the first time in his life he is swayed by a purely barbaric element. Men beat or shoot or stab their wives under the dominion of such a passion! He is almost tempted to fly down-stairs and confront Eugene and have it out with him. To go at this fragile little wraith, who is now pale as a snow-drop, would be too unmanly. He holds himself firmly in hand, and the tornado of jealousy sweeps over him. Why has he never experienced it before? Can it be that he has come to love her so supremely? His brain seems to swim around, he drops into the chair and gives a gasp for breath at this strange revelation. Yes, he loves her, and she would be happier with Eugene! He has marred the life he meant to shield with so much tenderness.

When his passion is spent an utter humiliation succeeds. He is ashamed at his time of life of giving way to any emotion so strongly; he has clipped and controlled himself, governed and suppressed rigorously, and in a moment all the barriers have been swept away. Is this the high and fine honor on which he has so prided himself?

Some other steps are coming up the stairs. There is a little lingering good night, a parting of the ways, and Eugene goes to his room. What is there in this false, handsome face that can so move the hearts of both these women? Does Violet fancy herself beloved, the victim of a cruel fate? Does Pauline Murray believe she is going to happy wifehood when her husband-elect secretly desires another?

Floyd Grandon sits there until past midnight. Violet has breathed her patient, tender, penitent prayer, wept a few dreary tears, and fallen asleep. She looks hardly more than a child, and he could pity her if he did not love her so much, but in its very newness his love is cruel. It is not him for whom she secretly sighs, but another. And a dim wonder comes to his inmost soul—did ever any woman longing, and being denied, suffer this exquisite torture?

The world looks different in the flood of morning sunshine. Mr. Murray's cheery, inspiriting tones are heard in the hall below, Cecil's bird-like treble, Mr. Haviland's slow but not unmelodious tone, and Pauline's witching mockery. Her father has been teasing her, and when Violet comes down, she stands in the hall, golden crowned and rose-red, slim and tall, and is the embodiment of delight.

It all comes out, of course. Eugene bears his honors gallantly, and looks handsomer than ever. Mr. Murray is really proud of Polly's choice, for, after all, the principal duty of the young people will be to charm society. Eugene is a high-bred, showy animal, with regular points and paces, and is not to be easily distanced on the great course of fashion. Violet watches him in dim amaze. Is he assuming all this joy and delight?

"It's just too lovely!" Polly says afterward, when she gets Mrs. Grandon alone. "And do you know, I *was* jealous last night when you and Eugene meandered up and down the shrubbery;" and a secret elation shines in her eyes. "I made him tell me all you said; *did* you really want him to marry me? Do you love me, you dear little angel?"

If she is a little struck at Eugene's way of confessing to his sweetheart, she does

not betray any suspicion of mendacity. She can truly say she likes Pauline, and that she is glad of the engagement, that she and Polly are certain to be the best of friends. The warm arms around her are so fond, the kisses so delicately sweet, the exaggerations of feeling are so utterly delicious, that Violet yields to the fascination and adores Polly to her heart's content, and Polly promises that Eugene shall dance with her and be just the same real brother that he was before.

It seems as though business had but just begun. The elders talk law: it is the surrogate's office and the orphans' court and published notices. Eugene formally dissolves partnership with Jasper Wilmarth, and for a "consideration," which he insists is Polly, transfers his half to Mr. Murray. Wilmarth is offered a large price for his quarter-share, but he resolves to fight to the bitter end. Of course he must give up, but he means to make all the trouble possible. Marcia flies hither and thither like a wasp, stinging wherever she can, but in these days Violet is guarded a good deal by Polly and her lover. Grown bolder, she at length attacks Floyd, accusing him of treachery and avarice and half the crimes in the calendar. Violet's fortune is flung up,—"The fortune no one else would touch, though it was offered to them," says Marcia, crushingly.

Floyd loses his temper.

"Marcia," he says, "never let me hear you make that accusation! Mr. Wilmarth went to Canada for that deliberate purpose, and urged his suit up to the very last day of Mr. St. Vincent's life. He would have been too glad to have swept the whole concern into his hands, and swallowed up your portion as well. It has been an unthankful office from first to last, and but for my father's sake I should have thrown it up at once."

Marcia is white to the lips. Either Jasper Wilmarth has deceived her, or her brother Floyd standing here does not tell the truth! To foolish Marcia there has been something quite heroic in Mr. Wilmarth refusing so tempting an offer and choosing *her*.

"He did not care for such a mere child," she says, with obstinate pride.

"But he *did* care for the money. And in the mean while he was depreciating the business and doing his utmost to ruin it. If *you* love him," he says, "well and good, but do not insist that I shall. I can never either honor or esteem him. I saw through him too easily."

"I think you are very indiscreet, Marcia," exclaims her mother, when Floyd has left the room. "Do try to keep peaceable. It is a shame to have you quarrelling all the time! How could he help disposing of the business? It was only held in trust until it could be settled."

For Mrs. Grandon has resolved herself into quite a comfortable frame of mind. Eugene will not come to grief; on the contrary, his prospects are so bright that her spirits rise accordingly. He is her darling, her pride. She has no foolish jealousy of the young girl who is to be his wife,—she could not have chosen better herself. Her motherly cares are at an end, her income is assured. She would rather have Madame Lepelletier in Violet's place, but she will not allow the one bitter to spoil so much sweet.

Madame Lepelletier is somewhat amazed at the turn affairs have taken. Eugene has not been the trump card she hoped. There is so much going on at the great house that she is quite distanced.

But one evening Floyd comes down with a message that he has not cared to trust to others. It is a little cool, and she has a bit of fire in the grate, though the windows are open to the dewy, sweet air. All is so quiet and tranquil, and for a month there has been little save confusion and flying to and fro at home.

She remarks that he is thinner and there is a restlessness in the eyes, while the face is set and stern.

"You are working too hard," she begins, in her sympathetic voice. "All this has been a great care. You ought to have something——"

His sensitive pride takes the alarm. Does she, too, think he had his covetous eye on the St. Vincent fortune?

"Don't!" he interrupts, in a strained, imploring tone. "I should hate to have you of all others think I was moved in whatever I have done by any thought of personal gain. I could wish that not one dollar of gain had come to me,—and it has not," he says, defiantly. "I will confess to you that I was moved by the profoundest pity for a dying man, and I was afraid then that we should all go to ruin together."

"Ah," she returns, and a beguiling light plays over her face like some swift ripple, "I never looked upon it in any other light. I knew you better than you

believed I did."

He has one friend, he thinks, in a daring, obstinate sort of way quite new to him.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

Desires unsatisfied, abortive hope,
Repinings which provoked vindictive thought,
These restless elements forever wrought.

SOUTHEY.

"Good night," John Latimer says, as they stand at the gate of the eyrie. They have been spending a delightful evening. Prof. Freilgrath is on his way home, and after a brief visit must make a flying trip to Germany. Latimer has half decided to go with him, and has been persuading Floyd. It looks very tempting, —a two or three months' vacation.

"I ought to go up to the factory," he begins, abruptly. "Our watchman is down with the rheumatism. The foreman stayed last night, and I promised to send in some one to-night. Am I growing old and forgetful?"

Latimer laughs as he asks how much money is in the safe. If half a million, he will go.

"At all events I will walk up and see," Grandon says, and strides along.

There is no moon, but he has been over the road so many times that it is no journey at all. Silence and darkness reign supreme. He unfastens the door with his skeleton key, lights a burner in the hallway and a safety lamp which he carries with him. How weird and ghostly these long passages look! The loom-rooms seem tenanted by huge, misshapen denizens of some preadamic world. He stands and looks, and fantastic ideas float through his brain.

The engine-room is satisfactory. Everything is right, except that once or twice he catches a strong whiff of kerosene, which he hates utterly. The men may have been using it for something. He inspects nooks and corners, even looks into Wilmarth's little den. How often to traverse a man's plans, makes an enemy of him for life, he ruminates.

He turns out the light in the hall and enters the office, remembering two letters he laid in the drawer. How shadowy and tempting the little rooms look! He enters and throws himself on the lounge. A few weeks longer and the place will know him no more except for a chance visit. There have been many cares and

trials since the day he sat here and read his father's letter, and his whole life has been changed by them.

"But I have done my duty in all honor and honesty," he cries, softly, as if the dead man's spirit were there to hear. "I have defrauded no one, I have taken no money upon usury, I have been true to the living, true to the dead." And again he seems to see St. Vincent's closing eyes.

The bell tells off midnight. The strokes sound slower and more august than by busy daylight. If ever the ghost of the dead returned—

No ghost comes, however. He may as well throw himself down here and sleep, as to tramp to the park. No one will miss him.

He says that bitterly. Even Cecil is weaned from him. He is no longer her first thought. Is life full of ingratitude, or is he growing morose, doubtful of affection?

He lies there awhile, thinking of Violet and the foolish madness he has resolved to overcome. It is well enough for youth and inexperience, but a man of his years! Is there another woman in the world who could have loved him, would have loved him with maddening fervor? Is the old Eastern story of Lilith true? Does she come to tempt him at this midnight hour?

That is his last thought. When he turns again he is rather cramped, and he knows he has been asleep. But a curious impression is on his mind, as if some one came and looked at him. The lamp burns, the corners of the room are shadowy. An ugly chill creeps up his back, and he rises, stretches himself, whistles a stave of rondeau, and inspects the outer room. All is as usual. He will go back to bed. Or had he better take another turn through the factory?

The door is locked. Did he take out the key? It is always hung in one place, and the nail is empty. He cudgels his brains for remembrance, but surely he left the key on the outside.

What can he do? An old traveller, he ought to be fertile in expedients. He is certainly trapped, and if so, some one is in the factory.

After a moment, he softly opens the iron shutters and vaults out. Some rubbish stands in the corner of the yard; it looked unsightly to him yesterday, but he is

thankful now, and scrambles on the unsteady pile until he can spring up to the top of the high street fence and let himself drop on the other side. How odd that the dog should not hear. There is a long ray of light flashing out of a window. Something is wrong.

He lets himself in at the main entrance again. There is a smothering smell, a smoke, a glare. He rushes to the engine-room, but it is up-stairs as well, everywhere, it seems, and he flies to the alarm bell.

Some stalwart grip seizes him from behind and throws him, but he is up in a flash. Ah, now he knows his enemy! He makes a frantic endeavor to reach the rope, and the other keeps him away. Neither speak, but the struggle is deadly, for the one has everything at stake, honor, standing, all that enables a man to face the world, and a revenge that would be so sweet. To-morrow the last business of the transfer is to be completed, to-night's loss will fall on the Grandon family.

Neither speak. The man who has been detected in a crime fights desperately; the life of his more fortunate rival is as nothing to him. If the place burns and Grandon's dead body is found there, who is to know the secret covered up? If his dead body is *not* there, it is disgrace and ruin for his enemy, and he will struggle with all the mastery of soul and body, with all the inspiration, of revenge, of safety to himself.

Grandon is strong, supple, and has a sinewy litheness, beside his height. His antagonist has the solidity of a rock, and though his body is much shorter, his arms are Briarius-like, everywhere, and more than once Grandon is lifted from his feet. It seems as if the awful struggle went on for hours while the fire is creeping stealthily about with its long blue and scarlet tongues. He hears a crackling up-stairs, it grows lurid within, and he remembers stories of men struggling with fiends. There floats over his sight the image of Irene Lepelletier; of Violet, sweet and sad-eyed. Will it be too late for her to go to happiness? Will Pauline Murray's love be only a green withe binding the Samson of these modern days. One more desperate encounter, and Wilmarth comes down with a thud. He seizes the rope and rings such peals that all Westbrook starts. Then he runs through the passageway, but is caught again. Whatever Wilmarth does he must do quickly.

Some voice in the street shouts, "Fire!" Grandon with a free hand deals his adversary a blow, and the next instant he has the street door open.

"What's wrong?" cries a voice. "Who is here?" And the man, a workman, though Grandon does not recognize him, rushes through in dismay, but his presence of mind saves worse disaster. The hose in the engine-room is speedily put in motion, and the hissing flames seem to explode.

Grandon follows in a dazed manner. There are other steps, and an intense confusion like pandemonium prevails. One stentorian voice orders, and men go to work with the forces at hand. The dense smoke is enough to strangle them, but the waves of fire are beaten down. In a moment they rise again, and now it is a fight with them. Fortunately they can be taken singly, they have not had time to unite their overmastering forces.

By the time the engines have reached the spot, the fire is pretty well conquered. They open the windows to let out the thick, black smoke. Every one questions, no one knows.

"Wait until to-morrow," says Floyd Grandon, who looks like a swarthy Arab, he is so covered with grime.

Farley, who is foreman of one department, and lives almost in the shadow of the building, who was first on the spot, is much puzzled. "There is something wrong about all this," he declares. "The fire broke out in four separate places. That was no accident!"

The morning soon dawns. The smoke dissipates slowly, and they find the damage very small to what it might have been, but the signs of incendiarism are unmistakable. Grandon goes carefully through the place, searches every nook and corner, but discovers no trace of Wilmarth. Then he despatches a messenger for Eugene and the two gentlemen still at Grandon Park.

Meanwhile he walks up and down the office in deep thought. It seems easy enough to tell a straightforward story, but what if Wilmarth should deny all participation in it, treat it as a dream or a false accusation on his part? He was here alone, he cannot deny that, and he has no means of proving that Wilmarth was here with him. He found the office door locked on the outside, as he supposed he should. No one could believe for a moment that he would set fire to the place when he had just disposed of it to his advantage, and yet not made a complete legal transfer, but never was a man placed in more confusing circumstances. Shall he attack Wilmarth with the power of the law? He is his

sister's husband, and it will make a family scandal just when he believed he had all difficulties settled, and how is he to prove his charge? Wilmarth is not a man to leave a weak point if he can help. His plans have all been nicely laid. Floyd feels certain now that he did enter the office, attracted perhaps by a gleam of light. What if he had not wakened until the fire was under full headway! Locked in, confused, his very life might have been the forfeit, and he shudders. He is not tired of life at three-and-thirty, if some events are not shaped quite to his liking.

He washes up and tidies himself a little, but his coat he finds rather a wreck after the deadly struggle. He sends one of the men out for some breakfast, and shortly after that is despatched, the Grandon carriage drives up, its occupants more than astonished. The brief alarm in the night has not reached them.

Floyd leads them into the office and the door is closed. He relates his singular story with concise brevity, and the little group listen in amazement.

"The man has been a villain all the way through," declares Eugene, with virtuous severity. "He did actually convince me last summer that St. Vincent's plan would prove a complete failure, and that the business would be nothing, yet he made me what I considered generous offers for so poor an establishment. But for Floyd," he admits, with great magnanimity, "I should have played into his hands."

"I think," Floyd announces, after every one has expressed frank indignation, "that for a day or two we had better keep silent. I will have the damage repaired, and now, it seems, having him at your mercy, you can compel him to a bargain," and he glances at Murray.

They agree upon this plan and go over the building. The machinery is very slightly damaged; the stock, not being inflammable, has been injured more by water, but they find rags and cotton-waste saturated with kerosene. Once under good headway the building would surely have gone.

"Mr. Grandon," and a lad comes rushing up-stairs, "there is some one to see you in a great hurry, down here in a wagon."

It is Marcia's pony phaeton, and two ladies are in it, one a Mrs. Locke, Marcia's neighbor.

"I have been down to Grandon Park," she begins, nervously. "I had some

dreadful tidings! What a terrible night! Your sister——"

"What has happened to Mrs. Wilmarth?" he cries, in alarm. Can her husband have wreaked his vengeance upon her?

"Her husband was found dead this morning in his library. He had been writing, and had not gone to bed. She discovered him, and it was an awful shock. She has just gone from one faint to another. Her mother sent me here, though Mrs. Grandon has gone to her."

Are the horrors of this strange night never to cease? For a moment Floyd seems stricken dumb, then the tidings appear quite impossible.

"No one could do anything," Mrs. Locke says. "A physician came, but he was quite dead; and he, Dr. Radford, ordered some members of your family to be sent for immediately."

"Eugene," calls Floyd. "Here, change coats with me if I can get into yours. There is trouble at Marcia's. Remain here until I send you word," and he springs into the large carriage, driving away at full speed.

The house wears an unusual aspect. Several people are gathered on the porch. Floyd hurries within, and goes straight through to the library, lifting the portière. Dr. Radford is sitting by the window. Jasper Wilmarth is still in his chair, his head fallen over on the desk, pillowed by one arm. The swarthy face is now marble pale, the line of eyebrows blacker than ever, the lips slightly apart.

Radford bows and steps forward. "Mr. Grandon—I am glad you have come, for there is a little—a—I wish to tell *you*—before any steps are taken. It is suicide, beyond doubt, by prussic acid. Can you divine any cause?"

Floyd Grandon is as pale as the corpse, and staggers a step or two; but when the terrible shock abates, an admiration for his enemy pervades his very soul. It is what he would have done rather than meet criminal disgrace.

"I have been treating him for a heart trouble, not anything critical, and a local affection that caused him some anxiety. My first thought was that he had taken an overdose of medicine, but I detected the peculiar odor. Had there better be an inquest?"

Floyd shivers at the thought of the publicity. Death seems by far the best solution

of events, but to make a wonderment and scandal—

"Is it absolutely necessary?"

"Not unless the family desire it."

"Doctors are sometimes taken into strange confidences," Floyd Grandon begins, gravely. "A difficulty came to my knowledge last night that supplies the clew. Since the man could not have retained his honor, this is the sad result. But having paid the penalty, if he might go to his last rest quietly——"

"There can be no suspicion of foul play. His wife left him here writing, at eleven. He seemed rather as if he wished her away, and she retired, falling soundly asleep. He has sometimes remained down all night, and even when she entered the room this morning she supposed him still asleep. I should judge the poison had been taken somewhat after midnight. There are various phases of accidental death——"

"Let it be managed as quietly as is lawful," decides Floyd Grandon.

Dr. Radford bows. "A post mortem will be sufficient, though that is not absolutely necessary. You prefer it to pass as an accidental death?"

"The family would, I am positive. Can I intrust the matter with you?"

"Certainly."

"Well. Prepare the body for burial. Mrs. Wilmarth may choose to order the rest."

He finds Marcia still in hysterics, and his mother half bewildered. "It is so horribly sudden!" she cries. "Poor Marcia! she did really love him!"

Let her keep her faith in him if she can. Her short wedded life has been the froth and sparkle on the beaded cup, never reaching the dregs. This man has hated him because he interfered with his plans and unearthed his selfish purposes, but *he*, Grandon, has no desire for revenge. Let him wrap himself in the garment of dead honor, his shall not be the hand to tear it asunder.

He takes the tidings back to the factory with him. They look over Wilmarth's desk. There are no private papers, but they find two notices that the insurance policy has expired. For almost a week the place has been uninsured.

"Well," he comments, with a grim smile, "we shall at least escape an inquisitorial examination. Jasper Wilmarth planned better for us than he knew. But this must be renewed to-day, and the damage repaired as speedily as possible. The transfer will have to wait until after the funeral. As for the rest, we may as well keep our own counsel."

They all agree with him. The factory will be closed for repairs. That it was an incendiary fire they must perforce admit, but beyond that they will make no unnecessary talk. Eugene drives down home and does a few errands, but the others are busy all day arranging matters for the future. Before Floyd goes home he visits Marcia, who is still wild with her grief. The house is full of friends. The library is closed and watchers are there. Mrs. Grandon will remain.

So it is almost night when Floyd reaches home. Violet and Pauline know there was a fire that would have worked complete devastation if Floyd had not fortunately gone to the factory. Eugene has given him the setting off of a hero, and would like to picture to their wondering eyes that deadly struggle, but is bound by a sacred promise. They are horrified, too, by Mr. Wilmarth's sudden death. Violet's heart swells with pity as she sees the pale, tired face and heavy eyes. She would like to fly to his arms with infinite sympathy, but he is never very demonstrative, and now it seems ill-timed. She starts to follow him upstairs, but Briggs intercepts her,—cook wants to know something, and she has to give a few orders. There seems some difficulty about dessert, and she attends to its arrangement, then the bell rings.

Dinner topics are quite exciting. The Brades come in afterward, and several of the near friends.

"I must beg to be excused," Floyd says, after smoking a cigar with the gentlemen. "I am dead tired and half asleep. Good night," softly, with a little pressure on Violet's arm. Cecil runs for a kiss, and he passes through the group on the porch. Violet's heart swells and for an instant she forgets what she is saying. When, three hours afterward, she steals noiselessly to his room, he is locked in slumber. If she dared bend and kiss him! If only he *loved* her!

The excitement does not in any wise die out, but the one incident seems to offset the other. Mr. Haviland returns to his family, as some time must elapse before the completion of the matter, but they are to take full possession on the first of October. Mr. Murray is planning some kind of a home for Polly that will

presently include her husband. Eugene really blossoms out in a most attractive light. Prosperity and freedom from care are the elements on which he thrives serenely. He could never make any fight with circumstances,—not so much from inability as sheer indolence. For such people some one always cares. "Life's pure blessings manifold" seem showered upon them, while worthier souls are left to buffet with adversity.

Marcia is inconsolable, Mrs. Grandon advises a little composure and common sense, but it is of no avail. Madame comes, with her sweet philosophy and sweeter voice, and Violet with tears, but nothing rouses her except the depth of crape on her dress and the quality of her veil. Grandon Park and Westbrook are shocked by the awful suddenness. There is always a peculiar awe about an accidental death, and it passes for an overdose of powerful medicine Mr. Wilmarth was in the habit of using.

The dead face holds its secret well. A rugged, unhandsome one at the best, it is softened by the last change; the sneer has gone out of it, and an almost grand composure settles in its place. Floyd Grandon studies it intently. A few trifling circumstances roused his distrust, and—was it destined beforehand that he should cross Wilmarth at every turn? He has saved his enemy's honor as well as his own, and a great pity moves him.

Floyd attends Marcia; no one else can control her. Eugene takes Violet and his mother, Mr. Murray has his own pretty daughter and Madame Lepelletier. Besides this there is a long procession to the church, and carriages without number to the beautiful cemetery two miles distant. The world may not have much admired Mr. Wilmarth, but it knows nothing against him, and his romantic marriage was in his favor. So he is buried with all due respect in that depository of so many secrets, marred and gnarled and ruined lives.

Marcia is brought home to her brother's and takes to her bed. The day following is Sunday, a glorious, sun-ripe September day. The air is rich with ripening fruit, the pungent odor of drying balsams, chrysanthemums coming into bloom, and asters starring the hillsides. The sky is a faultless blue overhead, the river takes its tint and flows on, a broad blue ribbon between rocky shores. A strange, calm day that moves every one to silence and tender solemnity.

But to Sunday succeeds the steady tramp of business. Fortunately for Marcia, and Floyd as well, Mr. Wilmarth has made a will in the first flush of marital

satisfaction, bequeathing nearly everything to her, except a few legacies. It increased her adoration at the time, and did no harm to him since he knew he could change it if he saw passionately, decorously, and she can also enjoy her new found liberty.

Laura's return is next in order, and she is not a little surprised at the changes. The Murrays are still at Grandon Park; Floyd insists upon this, as he really does not want Marcia to return, brotherly kind as he proves to her. The Latimers go to the city, and the professor is again domiciled a brief while at the cottage that seems so like home. Laura and Mr. Delancy set up a house of their own, and Marcia has a craze about the furnishing, making herself quite useful. Laura considers her rather picturesque, with the brief romance for background. But Eugene's engagement delights her.

"Upon my word, mamma," she exclaims, "you are a singularly fortunate dowager! Just think; less than a year and a half ago we were a doleful lot, sitting around our ancestral hearth, which was Floyd's, spinsters in abundance, and a woful lack of the fine gold of life, without which one is nobody. And here you have two distinguished married daughters, an interesting widow, a son who will serenely shadow himself under the wings of a millionaire, and—well, I can almost forgive Floyd for marrying that red-haired little nonentity. Who ever supposed she was going to have such a fortune? And if she should have no children, Eugene may one day be master of Grandon Park! Who can tell?"

For, after all, Floyd's interests seem hardly identical with their own.

CHAPTER XXIX.

Passion is both raised and softened by confession. In nothing perhaps were the middle way more desirable than in knowing what to say and what not to say to those we love.—GOETHE.

All this time Floyd Grandon has scarcely had an hour's leisure. When the last paper is signed, he draws a long breath of satisfaction. He has done his whole duty and succeeded better than any sanguine hopes he has ever dared to entertain. He has settled, so to speak, the lives that pressed heavily upon him, and they can sustain themselves. He has come out of it with the honor he prizes so highly. And what else? What has he saved for himself?

That the distance should widen between himself and Violet was not strange. He has a horror of a jealous, suspicious husband, and believes thoroughly in the old adage, that if a woman is good she needs no watching, and if bad she can outwit Satan himself. But this is no question of morals. He could trust Violet in any stress of temptation. She would wrench out her heart and bleed slowly to death before she would harbor one wrong thought or desire. In that he does her full justice. She has seen the possibility and turned from it, but nothing can ever take away the vivid sense, the sweet knowledge that there might have been a glow in her life instead of a colorless gray sky.

He makes himself accept the bald, hard fact. He will not even trust himself to long for what is denied, lest he be stirred by some overmastering impulse as on that one night. She shall not suffer for what is clearly not her fault. She has no love to give him, nothing but a calm, grateful liking that almost angers him. That is his portion, and he will not torment her for any other regard.

They drop into an almost indifferent manner toward each other, except that it is so kindly solicitous. There are no little bits of confidence or tenderness in private, as there used to be, indeed, they are so seldom alone. He seems to leave

her with Eugene and Polly, as they have all come to call her by way of endearment, and there is something wonderfully fascinating about these young people; they make love unblushingly; they can pick a quarrel out of the eye of a needle just for the purpose of reconciliation, it would seem, and they make up with such a prodigal intensity of sweetness; Polly strays down the walk to meet him or fidgets if he stays a moment longer than usual; Eugene hunts the house and grounds over to find her just to say a last good-by for an hour or two. Violet suspects at times that Polly runs away for the pleasure of being found. He puts flowers in her hair, and she pins a nosegay at his lapel, she scents his handkerchief with her own choice extract, and argues on its superiority and Frenchness. They take rides; her father has bought her a beautiful saddle horse, and they generously insist that Violet shall accompany them because Floyd is always busy. It may be foolish, but it is very sweet, and Violet's heart aches with a pain thrust out of sight, for the heart of eighteen has not yet learned to despise sweetness. The level, empty years stretch out so interminably.

She has tried to comfort herself with the sorrows of others as a medicine. Lucia Brade, who has carried her preference for Eugene so openly, must be secretly brokenhearted, she thinks, and she looks for heavy eyes and a smileless face. But no, while there was hope Lucia waited; now that he is gone irrevocably, she bestirs herself instead of donning sackcloth. She is twenty, and of the eligibles about she must select a husband; so she no longer snubs the young men, but makes herself amiable and seductive, is always going or having company. There is no grave buried in her heart, only a rather mortifying sense of failure that she will eradicate as soon as possible.

Even Eugene seems to recover from the passion she feared would blight his life. She is sincerely glad, and yet—is *she* incapable of inspiring a lasting regard? Is there some fatal lack in her? Gertrude is delightfully pleasant, but she misses some old grace in her. It is her husband who has taken possession of the empty soul and filled it to the exclusion of others. What the professor says and does and thinks is paramount and right. There is no appeal from his judgment, so far as others are concerned, though she reserves little rights for herself. Gertrude is very much married already; the stronger will has captured the weaker. She can admire the professor with out stint, so there is nothing to militate against her regard.

Violet always comes back to Polly. The naive, wondering eyes, the soft, sweet

lips abloom with kisses, the limpid, purling voice that goes through pleasant meadows, shaded woods, little interruptions of stones and snags and dead grasses of yesterday that must be swept away, over cascades laughingly, dripping sweetness, and never seeming to settle. She calls upon Violet to see faults in Eugene—"for I know he is not perfect," she says, with her pretty worldly wise air; and when Violet has timidly ventured to agree, she proceeds to demolish and explain away such a monstrous fancy!

Mr. Murray declares every day that he must send Polly to Baltimore, but instead Polly goes to the city and buys ravishing fall costumes, and Violet pleads to have her stay. Mr. Haviland purchases a house in the park and brings his family, a wife and two sisters and six children, and the two ladies have to be amiable to them. Polly, Violet, and Eugene visit every house that is even suggested as for sale, and make wonderful plans.

Not that Eugene is in the house from "early morn till dewy eve." He develops quite a business capacity, and can follow a strong lead excellently. He is no longer tossed to and fro by Wilmarth's sneers and innuendoes, or bracing himself to fight against what he considers Floyd's inexperience. Mr. Murray belongs to the wise children of this world, and possesses the secret of suavity, good-humor, and judicious commendation. Already he is an immense favorite in the factory, and the men are willing to run at his slightest beck. Eugene makes himself useful in many ways with the books and correspondence.

By the time Floyd is at liberty, Violet seems to have settled into a placid routine, and it is youth with kindred youth. Floyd is nearly twice her age, he remembers with dismay, but he does not feel old; on the contrary, it seems as if he could begin life with fresh zest. Neither would he have her emerge too rapidly from youth's enchanting realm. Only—and the word shadows so wide a space—can he do anything to make good the birthright he has unwittingly taken? She is rich, accomplished, and pretty, worth a dozen like Polly, it seems to him. Must her life be drear and wintry, except as she rambles into the pleasaunce of others? He could give up the seductive delights that have never been his, yet he has come to a time when home and love, wife and child, have a sacred meaning, and are the joys of a man's life.

The garden parties begin to wane, but there is no lack of diversion for the young. Mr. Murray is not insensible to the charms of society, such as he finds at Madame Lepelletier's. He has travelled considerably, has much general

information as to art and literature, men and events. With madame, the professor and his wife, and Floyd Grandon, the evenings pass delightfully.

Violet is left out of them more by accident than design. The elders simply light their cigars and stroll down the avenue. Gertrude accepts madame's hospitality with an air of perfect equality that sits admirably upon her. She has attended dinners at San Francisco and various other centres, given in honor of the professor, and more await them in Europe. She is not so dazzling and has not the air of courts, but she has the prestige of a famous husband and has recovered some of her youthful beauty. Irene Stanwood has not distanced her so immensely, after all.

If madame has been surprised at some turns of fate, there is one that has no flavor of disappointment thus far, and the crisis has nearly passed. She has attained all that is possible; she is Floyd Grandon's friend; she can gently crowd out other influences. He defers to her, relies upon her judgment, discusses plans with her, and she secretly exults in the fact that she is nearer to the strong, daring, intellectual side of his nature than his girl-wife can ever be. The danger of a love entanglement has passed by, he will settle to fame and the society of his compeers, and she will remain a pretty mother to his child, and the kind of wife who creates a wonder as to why the man has married her.

Eugene finds her in the corner of the library one evening, alone, and with a pat on her soft hair, says tenderly,—

"You poor little solitary girl, what are you doing?"

She glances up with bright, brave eyes, and with a bit of audacity that would do credit to Polly, says,—

"How dare you call me poor when you know I am an heiress! As for being little, you can tell me the more easily from Polly," and she laughs over the chasm of solitude that she will not remark upon.

"Yes," he answers, mirthfully, "it would be sad to make a mistake now, for I can't help loving Polly."

"Why should you? I am so glad you love her with your whole soul, for you *do*. She will always be my dearest friend, and if you neglect her or make her unhappy——"

"Oh, you *are* an angel, Violet!" he cries, with actual humility. "You are never jealous or hurt, you praise so generously, you are always thinking how other people must be made happy. You give away everything! I am not worth so much consideration," the crust of self-love is pierced for a moment and shows in the tremulous voice, "but I mean to make myself more of a man. And I can never love you any less because——"

"Because you love Rome more," and she compels herself to give a rippling laugh. "That is the right, true love of your life, the others have been illusions."

"Not my love for you," he declares, stoutly. "It will always hold, though it has changed a little. Only I wish you were——" Can he, dare he say, "happier"?

"Don't wish anything more for me!" and she throws up her hand with a kind of wild entreaty. "There is so much now that I can never get around to all. You must think only of Polly's happiness."

"Which will no doubt keep me employed"; and he laughs lightly. "By Jove! there won't be much meandering in forbidden pastures with Polly at hand! You wouldn't believe now that she was jealous last night, because I fastened a rose in poor Lucia's hair that had come loose. Wouldn't there have been a row if I had given it to her? But she is never angry jealous like some girls, nor sulky; there is a charm—I cannot describe it," confesses the lover in despair. "But we three shall always be the best of friends."

"Always," with a convulsive emphasis. She has no need to insist that he shall thrust her out of his soul. She can take his regard without fear or dismay. She slips down from her seat on the window ledge, and they go to find Pauline and devote the remainder of the evening to music.

A few days after the two go to the city to see a wonderful picture of Gérôme's just arrived. They stop at Mrs. Latimer's, who promises to accompany them if they will stay to lunch, and they spend the intervening time in the nursery. A rollicking baby is Polly's delight, a baby who can be pinched and squeezed and kissed and bitten without agonizing howls.

At the table Gertrude's departure is mentioned.

"Oh," exclaims Mrs. Latimer, "has Mr. Grandon resolved to go? John is so anxious to attend some great gathering at Berlin. If they do go I must give a little

farewell dinner, and we," with a gay laugh, "will be up on exhibition, as widows of that indigenous plant having a tubular stem, simple leaves, and secondary color."

Polly laughs with bewitching humor and heartiness.

It is well for Violet that of late she has been trained in a Spartan school. Last summer her flower-like face would have betrayed her in its changing tints. Now she steadies her voice, though she must answer at random.

"He has not quite decided, I think."

"It would be a nice little run for them, though I have made John promise to be back by Christmas."

All the afternoon Violet ponders this in a sore, bewildered state. She has enough wifely pride to be hurt at the lack of confidence. Once he said when the cares of business were over they two would have a holiday. Will he ever desire one with her?

That evening Cecil climbs upon her lap and puts her soft arms about Violet's neck, and she presses the child in a long, passionate embrace.

"Oh, why do you hug me so tightly?" Cecil cries, with a touch of wilfulness.

The hands suddenly unclasp. Is her love to prove a burthen even here? Does no one want it?

"Mamma——" Cecil bends down to kiss her. "O mamma, are you crying? Don't cry, sweetest." She has caught this from the lovers. "Oh, you know I love you—better than anybody!"

The ambiguity is almost like a stab. The child has told the truth unwittingly. Violet is like a person drowning in a wide dreary ocean, when some stray spar floats thitherward. It is not a promise of rescue, yet despair clutches it.

"Not better than—papa?" Then a mortal shame crimsones her face and she despises herself.

Cecil draws a long, quivering breath. "I *did* love papa best," she whispers, "but now——"

"No, you must still love him best," Violet cries, in all the agony of renunciation.

"But who will love you best?" she asks, innocently. "Mamma, I shall love you best until I grow to be a big lady and have a lover like Polly. Then you know I shall have to care for him!"

Is her best of all love to come from a child not of her own blood, instead of the husband of her vows?

"Yes," Violet answers, in a strange, mirthless tone, while there is a smile on her dry lips. "You must care for him so much that he cannot help loving you. Oh, my darling, the only joy of all this dreary world is love!"

If Denise could hear her young mistress utter that in such a soul-rending tone, her heart would break.

Grandon meanwhile ponders the future, *their* future. He has had one impulse of the heroically sentimental order, a possible freedom for Violet in the years to come, while she is still young, and a chance with life and fortune to retrieve the mistake into which she was hurried through no fault of her own. Would it be a violation of the divine law? This is not a usual case. She has clearly been defrauded of a great right. Can he restore it to her? If she were poor and dependent, he could give her so much she would hardly miss the other.

He is angry that Eugene and Pauline should flaunt their happiness in her sad eyes. For they have grown very sad. She goes clad in lovely soft raiment now, yet he can recall the little girl in her gray gown, holding up her arms with strength and courage to save Cecil from disaster. He smiles as he calls up the flash in the spirited eyes, as she said, with true motherly instinct, "You shall not scold her!" If the eyes would only flash again!

When he remembers this he cannot relinquish her. It would take too much out of his life. He could not see any other man win her, even if the law made her free. He should hate to think of other lips kissing her with lover's kisses. Ah, he is selfish, jealous still, a man among men, no more generous, just as eager to quaff the beaker of love as any other. Since she is his, he will not give her up. But to keep her in this cold, passive fashion, to have her gentle, obedient, affectionate, when he knows she has a woman's fond, warm soul!

Would a separation awake any longing, any desire? This is one reason why he

entertains the plan of the six weeks abroad, yet it is horribly awkward to discuss it with her. Still, it must be done.

It is a rainy Sunday afternoon, and he roams about the house unquietly. Mr. Murray has gone to his partner's, Mrs. Grandon is with Laura, the lovers are in the drawing-room, with Violet at the far end playing propriety. Does it hurt her, he wonders, to have Eugene so foolishly fond of another?

He catches up Cecil, who is running through the hall, and carries her out to the conservatory, where she culls flowers at her own sweet will. "This is for Polly, this for Eugene, and this for mamma."

"Cecil," he asks, suddenly, "have you forgotten Auntie Dora, and Lily and Fen and Lulu? Do you never want to see them?"

"Will they come here?" she asks, with wide-open eyes.

"How would you like to go there? to sail in a great ship again?"

"With madame?" she questions, laconically.

The color mounts his brow. "No," he replies, gravely, "with papa."

"And mamma?"

"What if mamma does not want to go?"

The lovely face grows serious and the eyes droop, as she answers slowly,—

"Then I should stay with mamma. She would have no one."

"But I would have no one either," he says, jealously.

"Then why do you not stay with mamma? She cries sometimes," and Cecil's voice has a touch of pitiful awe. "Why do you not put roses in her hair and kiss her as Uncle Eugene does Polly? She is sweetest."

"When does she cry?" he asks, smitten to the heart.

"At night, when it is all soft dark, and when she puts her face down on my pillow."

"Take your flowers in to them," he cries, suddenly. Is it because any love has

gone out of Violet's life that she weeps in the soft dark? He strides up and down with his blood at fever heat. Is it for Eugene? The idea maddens him!

When he enters the room, Violet has the red rose at her throat. He sits down by her and finds her grave, composed. No lovely warm color flutters over her face. She has trained herself so well that she can even raise her eyes without any show of embarrassment. Her exquisite repose would rival madame's; indeed, she might almost be a statue with fine, clear complexion, proudly curved lips, and long-fringed lids that make a glitter of bronze on her rose-leaf cheek. How has this girl of eighteen achieved this passionless grace?

As the night sets in the rain pours in torrents. There is dinner, music, and Cecil makes various diversions up and down the room. Eugene and Polly make love in their usual piquant fashion in dim obscurity, he audaciously stealing kisses under cover, for no earthly reason except that stolen kisses have a more delicious flavor.

Violet goes up-stairs with Cecil; for though Jane is equal to toilet purposes, there is a certain seductive way of tucking up and smoothing pillows, of stories and good-nights in which Violet is unsurpassed.

"Come down in the library after you are through," Grandon says. "I want to see you." He wonders if people can divine what is in each other's soul unless eyes and lips confess it. Intuition, forsooth!

She finds the room in a soft glow from the large lamp on the library table. Mr. Grandon is seated on one end of the divan, pushed a trifle from the window, and motions her hither. He has been thinking somewhat bitterly of having to leave his lovely home when he has just won the right to stay in it tranquilly. A sense of resentment swells up in his soul.

She listens with gentle respect to his proposed journey, that seems definitely settled, and replies in a grave, steady tone, not devoid of interest, "that it will no doubt be very pleasant for him." Objecting or pleading to accompany him does not really enter her mind.

"What will it be for you?" he asks, in a manner that would be savage were his breeding less perfect.

Ah, she dare not say! People live through miserable times, sorrow does not kill

them!

He is chagrined, disappointed at her silence. It is unnatural for her to be so calm. She may even be glad—monstrous thought! His impatience and resentment are roused.

"Violet," he begins, with a certain asperity, "there occasionally comes a time in life, married life, when the mistake one has made is realized in its full force. That we have made a mistake becomes more apparent as time goes by. If I could give you back your liberty"—and his voice softens unconsciously—"God knows I would gladly do it. I could not see how events would shape themselves when I took it from you, and your father during his illness——"

Her calmness breaks. She throws up her hand in pitiful entreaty, her old gesture to shelter herself in time of trouble. She cannot have her father indirectly censured, she cannot listen to that humiliating episode from *his* lips. If she understood him better she would know the almost brutal frankness, a kind of family usage, is not one of his faults.

"Oh," she cries, in anguish, "I know! I know! You were very good, you were generous. I know now it was not as most people marry, and that you could not love me, that you did it to save me, but almost, I think, it would have been better ——" for Jasper Wilmarth to have taken me, she is on the point of saying, but she ends with a strong, convulsive shudder.

Who has been so cruel and dastardly as to tell her this? Ah! he guesses wildly.

"This is Eugene's tale!" he cries, angrily, his face in the white heat of passion. "He shall answer to me as surely as there is a heaven!" and he springs up.

Her arms are round him in their frantic endeavor to drag him back, her face is pressed against his breast, her silken hair blinds his very eyes.

"You shall not!" she declares, in her brave, unshrinking voice, that, somehow, she has found again. "There shall be no disturbance on my account! Eugene did not tell me until I compelled him, it was some one else. I think you have wronged him in your mind. He was kind, tender, brotherly."

"Whom then?" he demands, in a tone that terrifies her, and she sways like a lily.

"It was Marcia; she was vexed about something, but you will forgive her. And

Denise told me about Mr. Wilmarth—in all honor to you. She adores you. And, I could not remain blind, there were many things. But I do not want to be free, indeed I do not. I will be content"; and she gives a long, heart-breaking sob.

"My poor child! my little darling!" and his arms enclose her with a fond clasp, though her face is still hidden. It is so easy to go through a labyrinth with a clew. This is what Eugene's fondness meant, and he forgives him much. This is why she has grown grave and cold and retiring! He is back again with her dying father—has he kept faith? She has been his wife, it is true, but was there not a higher meaning in the bond? Her heart beats against his like some prisoned bird. She is so near—are they to be kept asunder all their lives? If she did not love Eugene, may she not learn to love him?

"You said I could not love you," he cries. "How do you know, who told you? Is your wisdom of so blind a quality?" and he raises the face full of tears, that shrinks from being seen with all its secrets written in a burning blush.

"Violet! Violet! are we both to blame? Is there not some certainty when people love each other?" He bends his face to hers, and kisses into the lips the sweet and sacred knowledge that electrifies her, that seems to rend the horizon of remembrance with a flash. Out there on the porch in that first entrancing waltz he half told his secret, that he had begun to love her! The knowledge comes with a thrill of exultation.

"I think you love me a little," he says, "but, Violet, I want no grateful, gentle, passive regard. I must have my wife sweet, fond, adoring! Am I not as worthy of love as other men?"

She raises her face and they glance steadily into each other's eyes, then hers droop under the stronger and more imperious will, the lip quivers, the flush deepens.

"If you will—be glad—to have me love you," she murmurs, brokenly.

"Glad!" And the tone tells the rest.

He brings her back to the seat where they were so cold and grave a brief while ago. Is there any need of envying Polly in the great drawing-room? The rain pours in torrents, but it is a divine summer within.

"Violet," he says, a long while afterward, "we have never been real lovers, you know. I am not sure but it would be better for me to go abroad. We could write letters, and you could decide how much you cared."

She glances up in a dismay so wild that he feels inclined to laugh in pure joy. She studies out the meaning: it is for *her* to say whether he shall go or not.

"Oh, I shall keep you here! I shall be jealous and exigeant like Polly, and you _____"

She is the bright-eyed, sunny-faced girl he found on the rocky shore, and there is the same buoyant ring in her voice.

"I shall be a jealous, tyrannical husband," he rejoins, giving the rose-leaf cheek a soft pinch. "You will hardly dare dream your soul is your own."

"No, I shall not dream it," she answers, with gay audacity.

John Latimer is greatly disappointed, as well as the professor, at Grandon's defection. There is a charming dinner party at the Latimers', and Mrs. Latimer dolefully declares that she must be the single spear of grass. The following Saturday the friends go to see the travellers off. Gertrude may remain abroad several years, "Unless," says the professor, "I grow homesick for my little cottage among the cliffs and my good Denise."

If her husband's eyes study all the changes that make Violet's face radiant and fascinating, some other eyes watch them with a vague suspicion. Has the chasm been bridged over? Has the man found the chords of his own soul, and united them in the divine melody to which exceptional lives are set? He may have friends among women, for he is chivalrous, high-minded, and attractive, but he will never need any *one* friend greater than the rest. There is no secret niche for her, they are all open-columned temples, that the world may see, except the Holy of Holies where he will keep his wife.

The world is all before Madame Lepelletier. She can marry well, if she chooses, she can make a charmed circle for herself if she so elects, but she feels strangely old and *ennuied*, as if she must have lived in centuries past, and there was no new thing. Yet the face in the mirror does not tell that story. How curiously she has come into the lives of these Grandons a second time, and gone out with as little result. Is the stone of Sisyphus the veiled myth of life?

Violet and Grandon are not unblushing lovers like Polly and Eugene, and their most pronounced honeymoon hours are spent in the little cottage, under Denise's rejoicing eyes. There are always so many things to talk over, and the years to come must be the more crowded to make up for one lost in the desert.

Polly's engagement gets shortened from two years to six months. Mr. Murray sets up a house, and Eugene is an important factor. He fits admirably into the life that has come to him; men of this stamp are saved or lost simply by the result of circumstances, and his are sufficiently strong to save him.

Marcia will flit and flutter about until she captures another husband. She makes an attractive heroine of herself, but how near she came to tragedy she will never know. Floyd Grandon dismisses these ugly blots on the old life; he can well afford it in the perfect enjoyment that comes to him, a little fame, much honor, and a great deal of love.

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