

# LINKED LIVES

**A Tale of Yesterday and To-day**

BY

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THE OCCULT BOOK CONCERN

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**To My Husband**

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# LINKED LIVES.

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## CHAPTER I.

### Furnished Lodgings.

"Were you successful?"

"No, mother, not to-day."

"What shall we do! There's not a dollar left in the house and our rent will be due in four days. Oh dear, oh dear, it is so hard to live in a great city and be poor."

"Don't get discouraged so soon; this is only the first day that I have tried. My teacher says there is not the least doubt about my finding a position, and a good one, but it may not be done in a day."

"I'm quite familiar with that story, but would like to know what we are going to do for food and shelter while you are finding this wonderful position," said the mother crossly.

"I shall be sure to find something to-morrow, and now I will get our tea ready; then I will look over the 'Wants,' in the paper. Sometimes there are very good things among them," said the girl patiently.

"Margaret, I am so discouraged that I could cry—when I remember how nicely we lived before your father died. Then we had everything that

money could buy; now we are reduced to the worst kind of poverty. All our household goods have been sold and we are living in furnished rooms—and shabby ones at that. Your gowns, all that were left after the sale, are completely worn out. That is the very last one that is left and it is frayed into fringe at the bottom. Then, I have nothing, nothing! My jewels are all gone. One after another they had to be sold until only my wedding ring is left—and I expect that will have to go for money to keep us alive until you can get something to do. Oh, it is so hard, so hard,” and the woman rocked herself violently in her chair and sobbed aloud.

“Mother, don’t get excited! You will bring on another nervous attack. I am doing all that I can do; I have studied very hard during the last few months and I don’t believe that all my efforts will be in vain. If you will be brave just a little longer you can help me; but by giving away like this you almost drive me crazy.”

“Margaret, you are positively brutal to speak to me like that—when you know how much I have sacrificed to allow you to attend that Business College: and now you tell me to ‘be brave,’ I should like to know the person who could be any braver under such trials as I have had.”

“Mother, do you think that you have been alone in bearing trials—in making sacrifices? It is true you have sold your jewels and elegant house furnishings; but what have I lost? First my social position, second my promised husband, next my piano and music and then all my jewels and pretty

gowns—and do you suppose it is a pleasure to me to live in these shabby rooms after all my life having my own beautiful home on Fifth Avenue? There's one thing I have kept, hoping, because it was papa's last gift, that necessity would not compel me to part with it; but I see now that it must go for money to buy necessities with until a position shall be found," said the girl sadly.

"What is it?" her mother inquired, in her curiosity forgetting her tears.

"My opera glasses. You remember papa gave them to me the last Christmas he was with us. He said the mountings were of solid gold and they must be worth fifty dollars at least."

"And you have kept them hidden away while all my things were being sold! Margaret, you are a very selfish girl," said her mother pettishly.

"Will you have some tea? It's very nice," said Margaret soothingly.

"No!" her mother replied angrily, "I'm too ill to eat anything!" and covering her face with her handkerchief, the woman began sobbing again.

Mrs. Blondell had a frail little body and a most unhappy, peevish disposition. The expression on her face, and her manner gave the impression that she believed mankind had united in the work of irritating and disturbing her. Margaret, her daughter and only child, was a beautiful girl, with a form tall, graceful and well rounded which she carried with a dignity that expressed the independence and strength of character she possessed; and but a glance at her face was needed to see the patience and resignation she had acquired through

suffering. Her hair was intensely black and sometimes, when the light shone strongly upon it, there were purple shadows among its waves and curls. This evening it was parted above the middle of the forehead and was drawn down at each side of her face, thus exposing just the pink tips of her pretty ears, and then it was bunched softly and carelessly at the back of her head. Usually her complexion was a pale olive, but at this moment a sudden dash of color in both cheeks indicated the intensity of feeling she was struggling to suppress. But of all her features her eyes were the most attractive. They were bright, clear and unfaltering and gave outward expression to the soul that was trying to be true to its ideals. But now those beautiful eyes were filled with unshed tears and the sensitive mouth had a way of drooping that showed the result of many inward battles that she had fought with self.

Without replying to her mother's last unkind remark the girl sat down to the meager meal that she had prepared for both, and after pouring her tea commenced buttering some toast. Mrs. Blondell was not satisfied, however, and while rocking and sobbing she burst out a-fresh:

"You are the most heartless girl I ever knew, Margaret! You don't care how badly I feel and have not once asked me about the pain in my side, nor if I have medicine and wine. But you have just deliberately kept those opera glasses for yourself when you knew perfectly well that I needed *things*."

"Mother," said Margaret soothingly, "you are

nervous and tired to-night. If you will drink some tea and eat a little toast and then go to bed and to sleep, you will feel much better to-morrow. I did not think it was selfish to keep my father's last gift, and I believe I have proved how much I cared for you when I gave up my betrothed husband and his home for your sake. Mr. Mortimer said he would fulfil his promise to marry me, but would never take you into his house. He said that when he asked me to be his wife my father was living and was in a position to provide for you; but when papa ended his life so unexpectedly and we afterward found that he had died insolvent, Mr. Mortimer declined to let you live with us. He offered to allow you a sufficient annuity to keep you comfortably in a boarding house but said you could come no nearer to him. I chose between him with the life of luxury as his wife, and you with all the hardships of poverty. Because you were my mother, I felt that my first duty was to attend to your comfort. Nobody understands you nor would have the patience with your nervousness that I have; and although having had no real practical knowledge of work, I shall earn your living and mine.

"It is true you have sacrificed a good many things to pay for my course at college, but you knew that it was but an exchange for something better. We had no home to put those cumbersome house furnishings into, and surely this is no place for you to wear your jewels and elegant gowns. The city is full of magnificent things and we can buy everything we want when the time comes to possess them. And now, mother, don't

be foolish enough to mourn about the past; bid it good-by and look forward with hope to the future. I am well and strong and can take care of you. We may not have the luxuries that we had when papa was here but we shall live."

"Margaret Blondell," exclaimed her mother excitedly, "you ought to be ashamed to tell me—your own mother—that Mr. Mortimer refused to let me live with him. So that was the cause of your broken engagement, was it? You never told me this before. I supposed it was because your father shot himself and Mr. Mortimer thought it would be a disgrace to his family to marry the daughter of an insolvent suicide. That he had an objection to *me* I had not the faintest suspicion and can see no sense in the stand he has taken."

"Perhaps I should not have told you," Margaret replied hesitatingly, "but when you accused me of being heartless and selfish I thought it was time to enlighten you regarding some things you seemed to be quite ignorant of. Then, too, you are so utterly ignorant of your faults——"

"Faults!" exclaimed Mrs. Blondell, "now that is cruel—when you know how ill I am and have been for years—to tell me that I have faults! But you are just like your father. He never had any sympathy for me, he treated me like a washerwoman and always expected me to do things that no lady could do. He used to tell me to get up in the morning and go out into the fresh air and to take breakfast with him, instead of lying in bed till noon and having my breakfast and my coffee brought to me—and yet he knew quite well that I had not

slept a wink all night; and whenever I wakened him to tell him how nervous I was he would say: 'If you wouldn't think so much about yourself you wouldn't have so much trouble.' The very idea! Whom should I think about besides myself? He was positively brutal to me at times and finally killed himself leaving the most insulting note a man ever wrote to his wife!"

"Mother!" exclaimed the girl while the big tears rolled down her cheeks, "I cannot sit and hear you speak so falsely about my father. He was a good man and the best friend I ever had. Oh, it does seem as if I could not live without him; and to think that he was driven to end his precious life because he lost his money—and had two such useless creatures as you and me to support. To think that rather than tell us of his financial reverses he worried about them until he came to feel that life was not worth living and killed himself while I was at a fancy ball. It is this thought that has almost driven me mad. Oh, had he but told me! I would have gladly stripped myself of every gewgaw I possessed and would have sold them to the fools who take delight in such trappings. Then I would have gone behind a counter and I would have toiled there until papa no longer needed my assistance. Oh, had I but known, had I but known!" and Margaret leaned her head upon the table and wept bitterly.

"You are in an unusually disagreeable mood to-night," her mother sneered, "one would think you were hinting that in some way I was to blame for what your father did; but you have not told me

why Mr. Mortimer refused to let me live with him and I insist upon knowing."

For a few moments Margaret did not speak and her mother, becoming very angry, crossed the room and seizing her daughter roughly by an arm shook her violently, and raising her voice to almost a shriek, commanded her to tell why Mr. Mortimer refused to live in the same house with her.

Slowly Margaret raised her head and looking her mother squarely in the face replied: "It was because you are so disagreeable sometimes. He said he did not blame papa for wanting to die and that he should have killed himself years ago had he been married to such a nag as you. He said he loved me better than any one in the world and felt that it would be a great sorrow to separate from me, yet he knew very well that he could not control himself and be a gentleman if you were to be in the same house, where he would be compelled to listen to your whining and complaining and also be a witness to your fits of temper."

Here Mrs. Blondell commenced showing symptoms of violent hysterics. Screaming, wringing her hands and pulling her hair she threw herself face downward on the floor and like a naughty child bumped her head in her demonstrations of rage. Rising and bending over her mother's prostrate form, Margaret tried to quiet the storm of excitement by soothing words. "Do hush," she said, "you will have everybody in this block at our door listening to this noise."

"I don't care! I don't care!" shrieked the angry

woman, "I will call the neighbors and let them know how you insult and abuse your mother!"

"And I shall be obliged to use the cold water treatment if you keep screaming like this," said Margaret as she tried to lift the woman from the floor.

"If you dare put cold water on me I'll bite you!" she shrieked.

Margaret glanced shudderingly at her right hand where were plainly visible the marks of human teeth, then turning again to her mother with a determined look in her eyes she said: "Then I will have you sent to an insane asylum, for these hysterical outbursts have reached their limit and shall be stopped. You drove my poor father to his death in this way and now you shall——Oh——!" she gasped as her mother seized her hand and shut her teeth almost together on one of her fingers.

At this moment a loud ring of the bell and a violent knocking on the door announced a caller and Mrs. Blondell rose quickly from the floor and sat down in a chair, and, after winding her handkerchief hastily around her injured hand, Margaret opened the door to find a policeman standing in the hall.

"What's all dis noise about? Is anybody gittin' killed here?" the man asked anxiously.

Blushing crimson, Margaret replied: "No sir. My mother is ill and has had an unusually severe attack of her old trouble——"

"What's de matter wid yer hand, Miss?" the man inquired suspiciously as he stepped nearer, and,

taking hold of the handkerchief, he pulled it away exposing the injured finger.

"It was hurt while I was trying to assist mother," said Margaret faintly, "I shall attend to it in a moment," and then staggering to a chair and dropping into it she covered her eyes with her other hand. The officer was not easily deceived, however, and turning toward Mrs. Blondell, he asked: "What was ye screechin' about, old woman?"

Turning a scornful glance upon the man, Madam replied: "Whom are you addressing, sir?"

"Yew," said the officer and he grinned broadly at Madam's haughtiness.

"Then you will oblige me by speaking more respectfully," said Madam coldly.

"Wall, I wanter know what ye was yellin' about jest now. De people downstairs says dat ye hev dem screechin' spells an' trash roun' up here like mad—dat ye bite an' kick like a ugly kid what needs likin; an' dey're gittin' mighty tired of it. Now ye've got to shet up 'r t' de station ye go. D'ye hear? Dem's de prints o' yer teeth in dat finger o' hern, an' I've a good notion t' lug ye off now fer what ye hev done. Shall I?" he asked, looking at Margaret.

"Oh, no, please don't," said Margaret imploringly. "I am so sorry we disturbed any one. Mother is not well, you know, and was a little hysterical, that was all."

"Ye'd better hev a doctor see dat finger, er ye might git blood pisinin' inter it," the man said kindly.

"I certainly will attend to it in a moment, sir."

"Wall, all right, Miss," and then turning again to Madam he shook his club threateningly at her and roared: "If I hear any more complaints about yew ye'll go 'long o' me. D'ye hear?"

At sight of the officer's club Mrs. Blondell became thoroughly frightened and commenced to tremble, and believing he had silenced her for the night the man left the house.

A close examination of her finger showed Margaret that a small vein had been severed, and believing it wise to see a physician rather than to attempt to attend to it herself, she bound a fresh handkerchief tightly around it and began putting on her hat.

"Where are you going?" her mother asked.

"To a dispensary to have my finger dressed."

"It seems to me that you are making a great fuss about a little scratch," said Mrs. Blondell, contemptuously.

Untying the handkerchief, Margaret stepped close to her mother's side and held up the injured finger for her to see. "Do you call that a 'little scratch'?" she asked.

But Madam turned her eyes away and replied: "That is just like you—to thrust that thing into my face. I believe you are happiest while causing me the most suffering. You are just like your father, he——"

"Thank God that I am like my father. It is the greatest compliment that you can pay me to tell me so," said Margaret as she left the house in search of a physician.

When Mrs. Blondell was sure that her daughter

was gone she went to the supper table and poured for herself a cup of tea, buttered some toast and commenced eating as if she were really hungry. Muttering between the mouthfuls she said: "If Mr. Mortimer were here in this city I would go this minute and give him a piece of my mind. That remark of his was an insult that I shall never forgive," then after a few moments she continued:

"Gilbert had no right to take his life when I needed it. It was a cowardly and an ungentlemanly act and I shall tell Margaret what I think about it as often as I choose. I know how to make the tears run from her big black eyes and I love to make her suffer. The first time I saw her baby face I wanted to strangle her, and when I learned that her father actually loved her I could have killed them both. What right had he to care more for that little black elf than for me—his wife? It was an insult to me for him to cuddle and kiss her in my presence," and having eaten all the toast and drunk the tea Mrs. Blondell undressed and got into bed.

Having no money with which to pay a physician, Margaret had to take her chances with those whom the city provided for—the poor—and went directly to the nearest free dispensary, and after waiting for half an hour, her turn came to be treated; but when she took a seat in the operating chair she was so ill from nervous excitement that she fainted. The attending physician tried to revive her but in spite of his efforts she lay before him for almost an hour helpless and unconscious. When at last she opened her eyes and saw his anxious face she strug-

gled to an upright position and asked: "What has happened?"

"You fainted," he replied curtly.

Looking around the room and seeing only strange faces, she did not remember where she was until the physician took her hand and commenced making an examination of her injury; then everything came back to her consciousness and she whispered:

"Oh, sir, please excuse me. I am sorry to have made you so much trouble; I will go home at once."

"Not until your finger is dressed. How did this happen?"

"Am I obliged to tell?"

"Certainly," replied the doctor, "otherwise I shall not know how to treat it."

Poor Margaret had not thought that she would be compelled to tell what had caused her injury, and her face crimsoned with shame.

"This looks as if it had been bitten by something or somebody," the physician declared. "Here are the marks of teeth—and I believe human teeth," and he looked straight into Margaret's eyes. "Young woman, tell me the truth, who bit your finger?"

"A lady," replied Margaret faintly.

"A *Lady*!" repeated the doctor while a grim smile settled around his mouth. "I didn't know ladies were in the habit of biting persons' fingers. Was the 'lady' angry when she bit you?"

"Yes, sir, I fear she was."

"Hum—this is bad—very bad. It must be cau-

terized and watched or I shall not be responsible for the results. What is the matter here? There are more marks of teeth. Did the same 'lady' bite you in this place?" he asked, pointing to a partially healed scar in the thumb of Margaret's other hand.

Without raising her eyes the girl replied: "Yes, sir."

"Well, well, this person must be either a cannibal or a lunatic. Who is she? Such a dangerous character should be cared for by the authorities."

Margaret did not reply immediately to the doctor's question and after waiting for a moment he asked again: "Who bit you?"

"I had rather not tell," and Margaret closed her eyes tightly to keep back the tears until the cauterizing was done.

"But I say you must! This fiend in human form shall be looked after. Come, who is she?"

"My mother, sir."

"Your mother!" exclaimed the astonished physician, "what did she do it for?"

"She is very nervous and hysterical and when excited she scarcely knows what she is doing; and if I try to assist her at such times she sometimes bites my hands. I ought never to go near her when she is in one of her moods but she screams and beats her head so dreadfully that I feel something ought to be done for her."

"Is she insane?"

"No, sir, at least, I think not; but at times she seems entirely unable to control either her nerves or her temper."

"Young woman, let me give you some advice.

When your mother has another tantrum, if you don't want to die of blood poisoning or of hydrophobia, just put your hat on and walk out of the house and let her bite her own fingers. She won't die in any of these attacks. I'm getting old—have had a great deal of experience and have seen all kinds and classes of people and their idiosyncrasies. Women have been a study to me and I have learned that hysterics are generally caused by one of two things, either a devilish bad temper or real weakness. The last named patients never attempt to eat other person's fingers and neither kind die very young. And now, my girl, your finger is dressed, but you must let me see it every day until it is well."

Margaret thanked the doctor, who, though brusque and plain spoken, had been kind. As she started to leave the room he called after her: "What did you say your name is?"

With a faint smile she replied: "I have not said."

"Well, what is it?"

"Margaret Blondell, sir."

"Blondell, Blondell? It seems to me that I remember that name. Was your father Gilbert Blondell and was he a member of the Stock Exchange?"

"Yes, sir."

"And he is dead?"

"Yes, sir."

"I knew him well—and you are like him too, come to look at you again. Well, come to-morrow evening—where do you live?" he inquired suddenly. But Margaret did not reply; she was

ashamed to tell this man, who had known her father, that she now occupied furnished lodgings in a poor quarter of the city. Seeing her embarrassment and suspecting its cause the doctor refrained from asking any more questions, and since at that moment another patient claimed his attention Margaret went out unobserved.

At home Margaret found her mother apparently sound asleep and without waking her sat down to read the "Wants," in the newspaper. Among the unclassified there was one that read:

"Wanted, a young woman stenographer at suite 700, ——— Building, Park Row. Braidy and Dorn, Real Estate Brokers."

"Ah," she whispered, "if my finger were well perhaps I could get that position, but this wound may prevent me from doing anything for quite a long time. But I can call on this firm and see what salary it offers and ask it to wait for me just for a few days. Then, too, I can take my opera glasses uptown and perhaps sell them for enough to keep us until I am able to do something. Oh, papa, papa. If you had only known how much I loved you and how my heart would ache after you were gone, you never could have done that dreadful deed that separated us forever—forever is for so long—I don't believe it will be forever. If I could only know where you are—if you are happy or miserable; if I could hear you call me 'Greeta,' as you used to before that awful day."

## CHAPTER II.

### The Phantom.

At this moment the wind swept down the chimney and sent the ashes flying from the grate. "How the wind blows to-night," said Margaret aloud, "I am thankful for even this poor shelter, it is better than none. I wonder if it is true, as many think, that the dead know what the living are doing."

Here another and a more powerful gust of wind shook the window sashes as if invisible hands were trying to wrench them from their places. Margaret rose and after wrapping a shawl round her shoulders, sat down again before the dying fire. "It has grown cold very suddenly," she said, "I don't want to go to bed, and since the fire is so nearly out, I believe I will sit here for a while and think."

Bang! went the door between the two rooms and then it remained closed, shutting Mrs. Blondell into the little bedroom alone. She was not sleeping, as Margaret had supposed, but was watching her daughter and was listening intently to every whispered word she uttered. She was desperately jealous of the love the girl bore for her father's memory, and, as is always the case with jealous per-

sons, the thought had never occurred to her mind to make herself lovable and share that love herself. But instead, she had hated her husband because he had lavished his affections upon their daughter and she had hated Margaret because Margaret had turned to her father and had received from him the caresses which her mother had never wanted to give her. So Margaret and her father had each comforted the other and had been drawn closely together by mutual sympathy, and now that he was gone and the girl had no one to whom she could turn for consolation, her mother experienced genuine pleasure in witnessing her daughter's wretchedness.

When the door between the two rooms closed, the light in the lamp upon the table suddenly flamed up and then went out, and the room was in semi-darkness with only the faint glow from the dying coals and a dim light shining through a window from a distant lamp post. As a draught of cold air blew across her face Margaret drew her shawl closer and shivered.

"I wish I could see my papa," she murmured, "it doesn't seem as if I could go on living my life without knowing where he is." Then she suddenly became conscious that she was not alone—that another presence was near, and looking over her shoulder she thought she saw, standing but a few feet distant, the shadowy form of her father. The bullet hole in his head was plainly visible and his face looked haggard and drawn as if he were in great mental agony.

Margaret did not scream nor faint as many girls

would have done, but, turning around, she faced the phantom and sat staring at it as if frozen in her chair. At that moment there was a scream and a crash in the next room and going quickly to see what had been the cause of the noise, Margaret found her mother lying unconscious upon the floor. Mrs. Blondell had risen from her bed and had softly opened the closed door to enable her to continue her watch upon her daughter's actions. She, too, had seen the shadowy form and was frightened into insensibility. Lifting her mother in her arms, Margaret placed her upon the bed and then turned to look for the specter, but it was gone. This time Mrs. Blondell's faint was not assumed and she was a long time coming to consciousness; when at last she could speak she tremulously asked: "Did you see Gilbert?"

"I saw something."

The trembling woman clutched Margaret's arm and looked wildly around the room but Margaret did not speak; it seemed as if her heart would burst with the thought of the possibility of her father's unhappy condition. Fearing her mother would again become hysterical, she dared not give expression to her own emotions in tears, and feeling that one scene such as they had passed through during the earlier part of the evening was all she could endure, she shut her teeth tightly together, choked back her own grief and turned her attention to the frightened woman who was now clinging to her for protection.

When Mrs. Blondell became satisfied that the phantom had really gone she began sobbing loudly

and vowed shudderingly that she would not live another day in that house and that she would never stay alone another moment. She wept and moaned and called for brandy, ordered bags of hot water placed at her feet and spine, and declared that her blood was frozen in her veins and she knew she was dying. When at last Margaret succeeded in getting her to take an opiate, and she had raved herself into an exhausted condition, she went to sleep, and without removing her own dress, the tired girl lay down beside her mother and for the remainder of the night silence reigned in that small household.

When morning came and the sun shone again some of Mrs. Blondell's courage returned and while Margaret prepared the breakfast her mother held forth upon the events of the previous evening. She declared that the trouble with the policeman and the bitten finger were both the results of Margaret's own selfishness; that she should have known better than to have said such exciting things; that she, herself, was not at all to blame—because she could not help being nervous—and hoped it would be a lesson to teach Margaret to be more respectful to her sick mother and more considerate for her comfort, and since Margaret did not reply, her mother continued: "And to think that Gilbert should appear as a ghost to frighten me. It was cruel of him, but I ought not to expect anything else. He never had any consideration for my feelings but was always doing startling things just to torment me. I wonder if he will dare do that thing again; another such a shock would kill me. Why

don't you speak?" she suddenly asked, looking at Margaret.

"I have nothing to say, you may do the talking this morning—since you seem to be in the mood for it."

"That's just like you! It's no wonder I'm nervous—with such a disagreeable daughter as I have to live with. It's enough to make a saint nervous," the woman declared angrily, but Margaret was getting ready to go out and did not reply.

"Where are you going?" her mother asked.

"Uptown to look for a position and also to try to sell my opera glasses."

"And do you expect me to stay here alone?" Madam asked indignantly.

"I don't expect anything," said Margaret sadly, "if one never expects then one is never disappointed."

"What shall I do? I won't stay here while you are gone!"

"Dress and go to the park; the weather will soon be so unpleasant that you cannot go out and I should think you would enjoy these nice days."

"Now you know very well that I can't go to the park," Mrs. Blondell pettishly replied, "I might be taken ill, or I might see some one who knows me, and I should die of shame if I were to meet any of my old friends while I am wearing these shabby, unfashionable rags."

"Do whatever you please; go to the park or remain at home, but if you never die till you die of shame because you are not fashionably dressed

then you will live forever. A wound to one's vanity was never known to be fatal to anything but to the vanity."

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## CHAPTER III.

### Seeking a Position.

The first thing Margaret did when she reached the business portion of the city was to see about the position that had been advertised in the evening paper. Mr. Braidy, the older partner of the firm was at his desk and alone in the office when she entered and he looked up from the heap of mail he was sorting and bowed very graciously as he asked pleasantly:

"What can I do for you, Miss?"

"I called in answer to your advertisement; I understand that you need a stenographer," said Margaret timidly.

Instantly the gracious smile upon the man's face changed to almost a look of contempt and he sarcastically inquired: "Can you spell correctly?"

"Yes, sir."

"Humph! they all say that but it generally turns out to the contrary. What's your speed?"

"I can take one hundred words a minute very easily," said Margaret without raising her eyes.

"Why don't you claim three hundred and be done with it?" the man asked sourly, "where were you taught?"

Here Margaret gave him the name of the college

where she had received her instructions and offered her references for his inspection. Without a word of approval of the college he held out his hand for the letter and after carefully reading it and making a note of the address of the writer, he remarked:

"This letter recommends you rather too highly—I infer the writer had a personal interest in you, didn't he?"

At this moment Margaret felt as if she were about to suffocate and wondered if all stenographers had to suffer such trials when they applied for positions. She wanted to turn and rush from that office, denouncing this cold, cruel-faced man who sat looking at her as if she were a new desk or a machine that he was thinking of purchasing. But she knew she could not afford to gratify her wild inclination, because she must work or starve and this might be the only chance that she would have for some time to get a position. She had learned, since undertaking the stupendous task of taking care of herself and her mother, that a working girl is not expected to possess nerves nor a back; but must stand, as she was doing then, for any length of time unless her employer should choose to offer her a seat.

For several moments after his last unpleasant remark, Mr. Braidy stared steadily at Margaret's crimson cheeks and while he was studying her and wondering if she would do for the position she was looking at the picture he made. He was a short, heavily built man, with pale, fishy blue eyes and with a scant fringe of sandy hair hanging on his neck. There was a great bald spot on the top of

his head, which rose above this sandy fringe, and that spot was now shining a match to the polished knob on the closet door behind him. His mustache was a fiery red and bristled fiercely beneath his nose, which stood out from his face like the spout to an iron pump. His complexion was decidedly florid, with great brown freckles generously sprinkled over his forehead and cheeks, and at the end of his enormous proboscis was a bright, never paling magenta flush. His manner was supercilious and disagreeable in the extreme and especially so toward persons whom he considered inferior to himself; and as he looked at Margaret with his habitual cold, contemptuous stare the poor girl sent up a silent prayer for help and wondered if she could live and serve this man.

After a long silence he asked gruffly: "How much salary do you want?"

"That depends upon the amount of work required of me," Margaret said faintly.

"Humph!" he grunted, "I suppose you expect twenty-five dollars a week—they all do; whether they know anything or not."

At this last unkindness Margaret raised her eyes and looked the man straight in the face. She was about to reply when he turned his gaze away and grunted again and after what seemed to Margaret an endless pause, he said:

"We might try you. Can you come at once?"

"I have a sore finger which I hope will be well in a day or two; would next week do?"

Margaret felt that it was most necessary to secure this position, for if she could not sell her opera

glasses she did not see how she and her mother could exist for another week. At that moment a sharp pain in her wounded finger reminded her that it could not be used for several days yet, and she was trembling with fear lest the man would not wait so long, when he said:

"Very well, that will do. We shall expect you this day week, and you may leave your name and number so if we should need you sooner we may send for you."

Margaret gave him her address and then bidding him a pleasant "good morning," to which he did not respond by so much as a nod, she left the office. Calling next at a jewelry store she timidly asked a clerk if that house ever bought second hand opera glasses and said she had a pair to sell. Expecting the glasses were a pair of cheap ones, the young man smiled patronizingly at her pretty face as he took the leather case into his hands. But when he had opened it and found it contained as fine a pair of glasses as he had ever seen, he looked suspiciously at Margaret's shabby dress and hat and asked roughly:

"Where did you get these things, Miss?"

Blushing scarlet under the young man's gaze, she replied: "I don't know as that is any business of yours where I got them—so long as they are mine. My question to you was, if this house will buy them and if so how much will it give for them."

"These glasses are worth much more money than you ever paid for them, and the matter must be investigated at once," said the clerk loftily, then calling a small boy in livery he whispered a few words

to him and the lad dashed out of the store and into the street in great haste.

"Will you be kind enough to return my property if you have not the politeness to answer my question?" Margaret asked.

Still holding the glasses, the young man looked sharply at her and replied: "You will have to prove your right before you can have them again, Miss; such girls as you don't sport such things as these honestly."

For a moment Margaret was too much astonished to speak; then, as the man's meaning dawned fully upon her mind she exclaimed:

"Do you think that I stole them?"

That this young man had a ponderous estimation of himself and of his shrewdness was most apparent, and thinking this a good opportunity to display something of his brilliancy, he winked one eye impudently at Margaret, and, leaning over the showcase as far as his short legs would permit, he whispered:

"That is just what I'm going to find out. I think I know who these glasses belong to—they're a pair that were described to us as having been taken from a lady in this city. We have been asked to keep our eyes open for them and should they be offered for sale to hold them for identification. Now they are here, we shall certainly keep them till the owner proves her rights," and before Margaret could reply a policeman appeared at the door with the small boy in livery close at his heels. Pointing

his finger at Margaret, in a commanding tone of voice the clerk said:

"Arrest that woman for a thief!"

Believing himself to be above and beyond the reach of so humble a person as Margaret, this young man had assumed the authority of calling an officer because his employers were not present at the store and also because he wished it to appear that he was a valuable man and possessed great shrewdness in detecting criminals and stolen goods. So he majestically waved his hand to the officer as a signal for him to proceed with the prisoner, and said he would appear as a witness against the young woman when the case should be called. Then, after locking the glasses into a drawer, he proceeded to wait upon a customer who had just come in and the business of the arrest, so far as he was concerned, was finished.

## CHAPTER IV.

### In a Prison Cell.

In obedience to the command of the clerk, the policeman laid his hand heavily upon Margaret's shoulder and said: "Come on, Miss," and then, gripping her arm until she moaned with pain, he hurried her away to the nearest police station, holding her as tightly as if she were a bag of money. The poor girl was so much overcome with shame and fright that she could not speak. On arriving at the station she was rudely pushed into a room with a number of other women who received her with loud cries of welcome and who immediately gathered around her to ask questions.

"What're ye in fer?" inquired an old harridan as she peered impudently into Margaret's face. "Ben shop-liftin' I'll bet!" and the old fiend chuckled with delight at what she believed to be her own shrewd penetration.

Covering her face with her hands, Margaret tried to shut from sight the horrible scene before her. There were women of all sizes, ages, and of all shades of complexion, from the yellow haired, pallid faced, blue eyed blonde to the blackest, shiniest skinned negro wench that she had ever seen. Some were so intoxicated that they could scarcely

stand; others were singing and dancing to keep up their drooping spirits. A few sat sullenly staring at the others and two or three lay at full length upon the floor and were sound asleep. Too horrified to weep, Margaret sank upon the cold stone, and when her companions in misery saw there was nothing to be gained by questioning her they left her to herself, for which she was truly thankful. Thus for several hours she sat without an idea of the lapse of time; then the matron came to her and whispered:

"Can I do anything for you, my child?"

Raising her eyes to the woman's face she asked: "What will be done with me?"

"Your case will be heard to-morrow and then we shall know."

"To-morrow; and must I stay here until then?"

"I'm afraid so, unless you have friends who will give bail for your appearance," said the woman sympathetically.

"What is it to give bail?"

"Why, some one who owns property must come forward and sign a paper to assure the Court that you will not run away if you should be released; but that you will appear to answer to the charges made against you when your case shall be called. If you have friends I will send for them," said the woman kindly.

"No, I have no friends—it does not matter, I will stay."

"What were you arrested for?" the woman asked.

"I don't quite understand what it was for. I

went into a jewelry store and asked how much they would pay for a pair of opera glasses. The glasses were given to me some time ago, and not needing them now so much as I need money I thought I would sell them. The clerk seemed to think they were not mine and that I had no right to sell them, and, without giving me an opportunity to explain, called an officer, said I was a thief and sent me here while he kept my property."

"That's too bad, and I'm very sorry for you. When you first came in I knew that you were not like the girls that are brought here for shop-lifting, and now I shall make you just as comfortable as possible—although there are very few comforts to be had in a place like this," said the matron sadly.

"Oh, it doesn't matter, I can bear what the others bear."

The woman had now become quite interested in Margaret, and at once supplied her with some food and drink and promised that she should be put into a cell by herself. Margaret thanked her, but seemed indifferent to either comfort or discomfort and sat silently staring straight before her, apparently oblivious to her surroundings. As the day advanced many new arrivals were brought in and at nine o'clock at night the uproar became almost deafening, since each prisoner seemed trying to outshriek or outswear all the others. After a time the excitement began to subside, because many who had screamed themselves hoarse had fallen asleep from exhaustion, and without pillow or blanket were lying or sitting in all positions upon the dirty floor.

At last the matron came, and, touching Margaret on her shoulder, motioned to her to keep silent and to come with her. The girl rose and followed the woman to another cell at a little distance away. Here the matron had arranged a cot with a blanket and a pillow for Margaret to sleep on. Again Margaret thanked her, and with a sigh of relief for the privilege of being once more alone she wrapped the coarse blanket around herself and sank upon the rude bed. The matron whispered that she was sorry the accommodations were so poor, and said that under the circumstances, had Margaret been her own daughter, she could have done no better for her. Then bidding the girl good-night she went out and locked the door.

"I wonder what mother will think," murmured Margaret; "she will be frightened to death at being left alone in those rooms after what happened there last night." Then she looked round at the walls of her little cell. The thought that some one besides herself was present seemed to impress her mind quite strongly, and she held out both hands with an appealing gesture as if she hoped to touch this other one.

Since Margaret's earliest recollections she had been conscious at times of an invisible presence close beside her. In a vague way she had believed it to be a part of herself and had named it Ray, because its coming had always brought to her mind a sense of brightness and buoyancy. Of late it had sometimes seemed so real and so near that she had formed the habit of whispering or talking aloud to it, as if it were a real person, and though she had

never actually seen it or heard it speak, she had always felt a great relief from her sorrows by pouring them out to it. The knotty problems which she had been trying to solve were more easily untangled when she told them to this mysterious other self; and now that she was alone and unable to sleep, her thoughts went backward to the time when her sky had been clear and bright, before these dark clouds had arisen which threatened to envelop her.

"This whole affair is entirely beyond my ability to understand, dear Ray," she said aloud; "for more than a year the events in my life have passed like a play—with one scene following another with lightning like rapidity. When I rise in the morning I have no idea of where the night will find me, and, like you, I feel that I am but a spectator and with you I am watching this drama of life. Sometimes I wonder if you are benumbed and powerless to help me, and then my weakness is terrible to bear. Then I wonder if I am going mad with it all and if there is no explanation to be had. Surely some one knows why I am tossed about like a bit of thistledown and why I seem to go wherever I am carried without volition of my own.

"When I was at the Seminary I was happy and careless, dreaming my day dreams and building my castles of straw the same as did the other girls. Believing that my father possessed abundant wealth, enough to supply me with everything I should need until I should be married and settled in life, I did not try to acquire anything but a fashionable education. I studied music because it was

the proper thing to do, but did not think of taking it up in a practical way, that I might some time be able to teach it. I gained a little knowledge of French: just enough to enable me to chatter incoherently and unintelligibly with my schoolmates. Then I learned how to enter a parlor gracefully, to bow, to dance, to converse brilliantly without saying anything of importance, and to entertain charmingly. Here my education ended, since these few accomplishments were supposed to be all that were necessary for an heiress to possess. When my school days were ended and I was pronounced 'finished,' then came my introduction into society. Because my home was elegant and my father was known as a successful and wealthy speculator, I was received everywhere with open arms. Petted, flattered, imitated and admired, I danced and sang, attended operas and theatres, rode and drove, drank champagne and ate expensive dinners. The gentlemen vied with each other to wait upon me; it had always been that way and I did not suppose it could ever be otherwise. Never having seen the wrong side of life, I did not know that it existed. Sometimes I chanced to read something in the newspapers about the police station and that women were sometimes taken there for various offences; but I did not suppose that such a thing could ever happen to me, and all such things seemed as far distant from me as were the antipodes.

"During my first year in society I met Mr. Mortimer. He was handsome, several years my senior, a bachelor and the nephew of a childless old Judge.

Mr. Mortimer admired me—or said he did—asked me to be his wife and I consented. I thought I loved him; I knew I had never loved any one else, and his devotion to me was agreeable. It was made especially so by the knowledge that he was a great ‘catch,’ for whom many women were striving. Three months after our engagement was announced he began begging me to name a day in the near future for our wedding. About that time invitations were issued for a grand ball to be given at his uncle’s house. It was one of the social events of the season and I was delighted.

“Shall I ever forget that night? I had sent to Paris for my gown. It was a creation in canary colored satin with garnets no larger than pinheads, and seed pearls and emeralds outlining the dainty leaves and flowers in the lace that trimmed it. The satin slippers were of the same shade as the gown and were ornamented with jewelled buckles. There was a girdle of pearls that cost enough to keep us now in comfort for five years.

“I paid a small fortune for the costume—or rather papa did—and I remember how gravely anxious he looked when I asked him for it. But I put my arms around his neck and told him the occasion was going to be a grand one and I really could not do without it. He had never refused me anything and I did not know that there could ever be an end to money. Winding his arms around me and looking down into my eyes he asked:

“‘Greeta, will you be happier to have the dress than to go without it?’ and I thoughtlessly replied:

" 'Certainly, papa, I cannot be happy at all without it.'

" 'Then you shall have it, my child,' he said, and turning away with a sigh he began looking over some papers that were in his desk. I waltzed from the room, singing at the top of my voice, happy because my vanity was going to be gratified. Without thinking for a moment that it might inconvenience papa, I added several items which I had not asked for to the order, and when the bill came home it was two hundred dollars more than papa expected it would be. But I sat on his knee and kissed him and told him he was a Dear, and he paid the bill without complaining, but his face turned pale and his lips were white when he looked over those items.

"Then there was the sensation that my costume created at the ball, and I had the foolish satisfaction of witnessing the looks of envious surprise of many of my friends who could not afford to make such a display. Mr. Mortimer scarcely left my side that evening and we danced together almost too many times to be quite proper. He had no eyes nor ears for any one but me and I was happy.

"In the midst of a waltz a servant came and called Mr. Mortimer to one side and I heard him say, 'Dead—shot himself not half an hour ago.' Then Mr. Mortimer came and whispered: 'Let us go into the library, my love, I have something to tell you.'

"Wonderingly I took his arm and he led me away, and after we were seated he was silent for

several moments while he looked sorrowfully down into my eyes.

"What is the matter, who is dead?" I asked curiously.

"How distinctly that scene appears to me now. The subdued light, the rows of books and the handsome palms that stood in their huge pots in the corners of the room. Ah, that was the last happy moment I shall ever know in this world, dear Ray," Margaret said as she raised her head and looked up at the walls of her cell, and rising to her feet she began pacing slowly up and down the narrow space before the bed.

"It seems as I look back upon that scene that it was the dead calm before the cyclone. Mr. Mortimer looked at me with his eyes full of pity as he said: 'What would you do if your mother should die?'

"What would I do?" I asked vaguely. 'Why, I suppose I should put on black and stay at home for a while.'

"Then he asked: 'What would you do if your father should die?'

"Papa!" I cried. 'Oh, that would kill me!'

"Then he was silent again for a few moments and still I was too stupid to understand what he wished me to. At last he put his arm around my waist and kissed me tenderly as he said:

"My love, you never can know how hard it is for me to tell you this dreadful thing, because I know how dearly you loved him and how devoted you have been to each other; but some one must tell you and since I am your betrothed husband,

and stand nearer than any one else in the world, it seems to be my task.'

"I remember every syllable—the expression upon his face—and I could hear the beating of his heart and mine, but I could not have opened my lips to have saved my life. Dumbly I waited and listened.

"'Margaret, you must remember that you are not alone in the world, for we shall be married soon and then it shall be my privilege to help you bear this sorrow.'

"Then the lights began to dance and the books and palms turned into a great wheel and whirled so fast that I grew dizzy, and just as he was saying, 'your father is dead,' I seemed to slip away from everything and everybody, and the next thing I remembered was waking and finding a nurse sitting beside my bed.

"The shaded lamp in the room was turned low and the silence through the house indicated that it was a late hour of the night. Putting my hand to my head, I found that it was bound with cold, wet bandages, and when I asked what was the matter with me, the nurse whispered: 'You are very ill and if you ever hope to get well you must not talk.'

"Then I remembered everything: the ball, the servant's message, the library and then the blank. The next morning our old physician, he who had prescribed for all my childish ills, came to see me.

"'Am I going to get well?' I asked.

"'Certainly,' he said.

"'But I would rather die if I can go to papa,' I replied.

"But they would not let me go and kept me under the influence of opiates until I was strong enough to sit up and then mother was permitted to come and see me. The first moment she got inside the door of my room, notwithstanding the admonition she had received from both the nurse and the doctor not to speak a word to excite me, her wailings and lamentations began, and before she could be forced from the room she had told me the awful truth that my father had committed suicide and had left us beggars. Then for what seemed to me to be days in succession I saw her fighting with the nurse and the doctor as they dragged her from my sight, and I heard her saying over and over again: 'It is no worse for her to know than it is for me!' Then came the letters of fire that stood out boldly for me to read and I spelled them over and over, read them backward and forward, counted, divided and multiplied them until sometimes they turned into funny little clowns and played at leap-frog with each other; then again they would suddenly form into a procession and march round and round and finally form themselves into words and I would read:

"'YOUR FATHER HAS COMMITTED SUICIDE AND WE ARE BEGGARS!'

"After another long interval of time had elapsed I sat up again and this time mother was not allowed to see me until I came downstairs. When I was able to receive him, Mr. Mortimer called and that day is another never to be forgotten one in my life. When he was announced he was shown into the library where I was reclining in an invalid chair.

I had looked forward to seeing him with a good deal of anticipation because I was feeling so lonely and miserable; but his whole manner had changed and the moment I looked into his face I knew that his love for me had turned cold. My heart gave a few wild throbs and then seemed to lie still. I could not command my voice to speak naturally and I waited for him to speak.

"Bowling politely he stepped forward and took my hand, held it for a moment and then dropped it, took a seat at the opposite side of a table and expressed himself as glad to find me better. His manner was so strange—so different from what it had been, I was chilled and embarrassed and could think of nothing to say. After sitting for a few moments in silence he rose and stood before me. Casting his glances to the floor and in that manner avoiding meeting my gaze he said:

"Margaret, you understand that this is a very unpleasant thing to do—to say what I am going to say—but it might as well be done now and have it over with as to wait any longer. It has been found beyond doubt that your father died insolvent—of course the fact that your money is gone makes no difference with me, because I have enough for both you and me. I am fonder of you than of any one else that I know now, and will fulfil my promise to marry you on one condition and that is that you consent to let your mother live by herself.

"Several months ago I heard that she had a beastly temper, and had driven your father almost crazy with it, but I never knew she was a fiend until an opportunity was given me to witness one of her

paroxysms of rage. I had been investigating some business matters for her—money investments of doubtful value—and was compelled to tell her that they had all ended in failures; and when I said there was nothing left for her but debts, she threw herself upon the floor and screamed, tore at her hair, beat her head and raved like a lunatic. I tried to raise her and put her into a chair but she behaved like an enraged cat and scratched my face with her finger nails while she bit at my hands and pulled my hair out in locks. She called me all the bad names she could think of and threatened to kill me for telling her the truth.

“I dropped her upon the floor and rang for a servant and asked the man what was the matter with her. He actually grinned at me and said this was nothing unusual, since Madam had those spells almost every day and it was from these fits that his master had gone. I left the house and when I had reached the corner of the block she was still screaming. Nothing that I can think of now would induce or compel me to live in the same house with your mother. I am not good enough to do it. I should certainly do something outrageous—give her a thrashing perhaps. I don’t wonder at your father’s shooting himself; the only thing that surprises me is that he didn’t do it years ago. If I marry you I shall provide enough money to supply her actual needs but she cannot live with us. It will be a disappointment to me to give you up, Margaret, but you must take your choice now between your mother and me.”

Here Margaret paused in her walking and seat-

ing herself upon the edge of the bed, she covered her face with her hands, but restlessness seemed to relieve the tension she was laboring under and in a few moments she sprang up again and began pacing up and down as before.

"One would think me crazed to see me now," she whispered, "but it is such a relief to tell this all to you, my Ray, because God seems so far away, and I am sure of your sympathy even though you cannot help me. This is the first of November and it was only a little more than a year ago that Mr. Mortimer gave me my choice between a life of luxury with him or a life of poverty with my mother. How strangely I felt while listening to him as he described his experience with my mother. Having seen her in those moods so many times, they had ceased to interest me, and I suppose he thought I was not following his story, for he suddenly inquired: 'Margaret, are you listening?' and when I nodded he asked:

" 'Well, what are you going to do about it?'

" 'Think it over and let you know,' I said. Then he looked offended, bowed and left me and I never saw him again. When I had considered the matter well, I felt that my duty lay along the path of poverty—that I had no right to desert my mother that I might have a life of idleness and ease. Then, too, I fancied I had caught a glimpse of Mr. Mortimer's real feelings toward me and that he was offering to fulfil his promise to marry me, not so much because he wished to take me into his heart and shield me from sorrow, as because of his sense of honor. And way down under everything he

had a fear that I would be like my mother and lead him a fearful life. The glamour that social life had cast over him was fading out and he had learned that it was not moneyless, homeless Margaret that he had been loving, but it was the heiress, the belle, for whose favors many had striven but he alone had won; and now that the strife was ended and all his opponents had retired from the field, there were none to contend against and his interest was waning. I also had discovered that I did not love him as I had supposed I did, and when he stood before me that day with downcast eyes and shifting glances, I observed for the first time that he was not a manly looking man, and that there were lines round his mouth and at the corners of his eyes that I had never seen before. And knowing that if there were not lines in his character there could be none upon his face, I felt rather relieved to know that I was free, since there no longer existed between us anything but a poor sort of friendship that I knew could not possibly outlast the honeymoon. So I wrote him a letter saying I would remain with my mother and enclosed his ring. Three days afterward he sailed for the African gold fields and I turned my attention to settling up business matters and arranging for mother's and my future.

"Then came the breaking up of our old home. For two months we stayed in the house where I had lived since I could remember anything; then the mortgage was foreclosed and everything was sold at auction except a few articles of plain clothing which we packed into a trunk. The servants

were dismissed, my old friends deserted me, and passed by with averted glances whenever we chanced to meet, and at last there was the sad good-by to the dear old place that had been papa's pride. After that came the furnished lodgings and the Business College with the hard work I had to do to prepare myself for my new life. And how is it going to end, dear Ray, shall I be sent to prison? It would be no more strange or unjust than all the other trials have been. If I could but know *why* these burdens have fallen upon me then I think they would be easier to bear. If a *reason* could be discovered then I should be better satisfied; but to be tossed about for the remainder of my life for no cause that I can understand, seems to be making of me nothing but the victim of a blind, unreasoning fate."

## CHAPTER V.

### A Mysterious Visitor.

At this moment Margaret felt a strange sensation at her heart and sinking upon the bed she leaned her head against the wall while a feeling of utter helplessness came stealing over her body and limbs.

"I wonder if this is death," she murmured. "If it is then I shall soon be with papa," but in another instant she observed that her cell was filled with a subdued light which did not seem to come from any particular point, but made everything visible that was within the four walls, even to the dirt upon the floor and an old newspaper that was lying in a corner. Wonderingly she looked at this strange light, and, as she listened to her own faint heart beats, she whispered:

"Yes, this must be death and the light is from heaven to show me the way over the river."

Suddenly there appeared at the further end of the cell a beautiful woman. This being had long golden hair that fell nearly to her feet in a waving, curling mass. Her eyes were the color of purple pansies and were shaded by long, dark, curling lashes; and her eyebrows were so nearly black that the contrast between them and the dazzling white-

ness of her complexion was almost startling. She wore a long, yellow, silken robe that hung in full folds to her feet, and as she stood looking down at Margaret, an expression of loving pity filled her wonderful eyes.

Margaret gazed at this vision of loveliness for several moments without speaking, and then, as her heart began thrilling in response to the sympathetic vibrations from her visitor, she reached out her arms imploringly toward her and said:

"Are you my angel Ray, and have you come to take me away?"

The woman smiled a little sadly but replied:

"No, not an angel; I am a woman who has witnessed many of your trials and now that you have reached a place in your life where you desire to know why you have to suffer, I may be able soon to help you."

Breathlessly Margaret listened to these words and after her visitor had ceased speaking she asked:

"Do you know why these sorrows have come to me?"

The woman replied: "Yes, I know, but it is not quite time for you to know, since there are more trials for you to bear, and from which I cannot save you. But after those have passed the sun will shine again into your soul. There is one thing against which I wish to warn you. Whatever comes, do not think you can escape it by trying to destroy your body. Many, many times you will be tempted to do this but I bid you resist that temptation with all your strength of will."

"And there is a way by which you may overcome many obstacles which now seem insurmountable to you. Instead of living in the past and permitting your thoughts to dwell upon your misfortunes, as you have been doing for the last hour, while describing to me the unhappy events of your life, turn your thoughts toward the future and create for yourself what you desire. The past is irremediable, the future is full of possibilities. You are a soul, an individualized portion of the body of God, and because you are a part of Divine Essence, you possess latent in yourself, the power to climb to heights at present unknown to you. Instead of sitting here and wondering if you will be sent to prison, arise and say to your miserable fears: *Be gone from me! I am the maker of my own destiny. I shall be free because I have done nothing to deserve imprisonment.* Instead of accepting the false belief that you are to be tossed about for the remainder of your life by a blind unreasoning fate, *stand up and face the future, and speak into existence for yourself the kind of life you wish to live.*"

"I the maker of my own destiny," Margaret repeated, vaguely wondering if she had heard aright. "How can I be that?"

"By recognizing the Divinity which is within yourself."

Wonderingly Margaret listened to these words and attempted to comprehend their full meaning; but her old habit of thought was too strong and her environment so wretched, that she could see nothing beyond the miserable present, unless it

were possibly a more terrible future. While thinking thus the strange, unearthly light began fading and when the shadows had again settled around her and only the faint glimmer of light from a gas jet in the corridor came shining through the little iron barred aperture in the door to her cell, she sank back in an unconscious condition upon the narrow miserable bed.

When Margaret awoke daylight had appeared and the matron was bringing her something to eat. Rising to her feet, she asked her for the time of day.

"Eight o'clock, and your case will be called at ten; and now eat some bread and drink this coffee, for if you have something in your stomach you will be better able to stand the trial," said the woman kindly.

Margaret ate the food and was glad to get it, and although the bread was not made of the finest flour nor was the coffee of the best quality, yet her appetite was good and helped to make both palatable. When her case was called and she was led before the Magistrate, Margaret did not raise her eyes but stood pale and trembling before the crowd of persons who, from morbid curiosity, daily assembled at the police court. Her beautiful face attracted unusual attention from the loungers, who stood round the courtroom and stared boldly at her, or drew near enough to let her hear their words of admiration. But without seeming to heed them she stood with downcast eyes waiting for the charge to be made against her.

Judge Hale, before whom her case was called,

glanced at her somewhat curiously at first, then, with a start, half rose to his feet while the deep flush which spread over his face betrayed feelings he knew, as a Judge, he must suppress. After having recovered his dignity, he settled back into his chair and in a comparatively natural tone of voice called for the prosecuting party in the case.

Here the dandified little clerk stepped quickly forward and, after bowing and smiling blandly at the Judge, he cast a few side glances to the right and left and commenced his story. He said:

"This young person came into our store yesterday at quite an early hour, and, after looking cautiously around to see if others were by, stepped close to me and lowering her voice in a most suspicious manner—almost to a whisper—asked what these opera glasses were worth. Thinking that probably they were nothing but a pair of flashy things, I was greatly surprised upon examining them, to find that their mountings were of solid gold, and their settings were of the finest pearl. Knowing, of course, that a girl of her class was not able to own such things—that is, I mean that she had not come by them honestly—and, happening to remember a report that had recently been made to us of a very fine pair of glasses that had been stolen from a wealthy patron of ours, and believing these answered the description of the lost ones, I thought it best to retain them for identification. So I refused to surrender the property to this person because I did not believe it belonged to her, but sent for an officer to take her in charge until the lady—our patron—could be notified. After

the officer had left with the prisoner, I sent a message to our patron but learned that she is out of the city at present and the date of her return is uncertain. So I ask that this person may be held in the custody of the law until such time as the lady may return, and thereby give her an opportunity to claim her property, providing it is hers." Having delivered the little speech which it was evident he had been rehearsing for this occasion, the young man bowed and smiled in a manner perfectly indicative of the greatly exaggerated opinion which he had of himself and of his astuteness.

But, judging from the different expressions which passed over the face of the Magistrate during the young man's recital of his story, it was plain to be seen that the shrewdness with which the clerk had managed the arrest and detention of this supposed criminal, had entirely failed to awaken admiration in his Honor's heart, because pity beamed from his eyes when he called Margaret forward and asked:

"What is your name?"

Margaret had scarcely looked at the Judge until the moment he spoke to her; but now, stepping forward and raising her eyes to meet his gaze, she flushed, began trembling and finally covering her face with her hands, sank down upon the floor.

Judge Hale bit his lip and for a moment seemed undecided what it was best to do; then calling his clerk, he whispered a few words to him and the man went immediately to where Margaret sat shivering and sobbing. Raising her to her feet, he spoke encouragingly to her and in a few moments

made her understand that she must control her feelings and reply coherently to the question which the Court would ask: that if she were innocent of the crime she was charged with, she need have no fear for when the matter should be explained she would be immediately released. Reassured by the clerk and after giving the Judge a glance in which were mingled shame and an appeal for mercy, Margaret came forward and stood colorless and motionless before him ready to answer his questions.

But now that she was ready the Judge himself became almost as greatly perturbed as Margaret had been, and looking up at the ceiling he seemed to be earnestly trying to count the multitude of cobwebs that had been overlooked there by the near-sighted old janitor. Observing the close attention his Honor was giving to the ceiling, the spectators also directed their glances upward, but seeing nothing but the same old cobwebs that had been there nearly as long as the desks and benches, they began wondering what was the matter with the Court; and when his Honor finally recovered his composure, conversation was buzzing in the courtroom like a swarm of bees. Here was an opportunity to cover his confusion and Judge Hale frowned fiercely at the men in the jury box, cleared his throat and rapped loudly for order; and then with a look of determination upon his face as if the situation were to be disposed of as quickly as possible he repeated his first question:

"What is your name?"

Instantly the newspaper reporters craned their

necks and strained their optics to catch a glimpse of the young woman who had created such consternation in the heart of the Magistrate. These scribes also grasped their pencils and concentrated their attention upon the reply which, when it came, was so softly spoken that they were not quite sure but thought it was, Martha O'Neal.

"What have you to say about this property of which you are suspected of—that is, I mean these opera glasses?" the Judge asked hesitatingly.

"They are mine," Margaret replied, "and if the jeweller's clerk had given me the opportunity I could have proved my ownership—since my name is engraved in full upon the underside of the little gold bar which unites the two tubes. It was purposely hidden from general observation and my father gave them to me the last Christmas that he lived. If you will look closely you will find that what I say is true."

Judge Hale flushed almost guiltily as he took the glasses in his hand and examined them. Finding the name and the date of presentation as well as the name of the giver engraved as Margaret had described, he turned to the young man who stood twisting his mustache and looking superciliously at the prisoner, and with a frown that should have almost annihilated him the Judge said:

"Young man, you ought to be sent to the Island for this piece of scoundrelism! This young lady is not so much a thief as yourself. You have entirely overstepped your authority in taking possession of her property without the permission of your employers or without taking legal advice. She had a

perfect right to offer her own property for sale and you had no business to cause her arrest, with nothing to base it upon but your own idiotic suspicions. You knew these glasses were not your employer's nor ever had been; but because you hoped to ingratiate yourself in the favor of some woman who may occasionally happen to buy a few stickpins of you, you have caused this innocent girl to spend a night in the police station; and then you dare to stand up before me and ask that she shall still be held in the custody of the law for an indefinite length of time until this patron of yours shall return to the city. I happen to know your employers personally, and I shall take great pleasure in informing them of your officiousness. The case is dismissed!"

"One moment, Your Honor!" exclaimed the frightened man, but Judge Hale pointed his finger significantly toward the door and the clerk understood that more words were useless upon the subject in question.

Not knowing that she had been honorably discharged, Margaret stood waiting until a gentleman touched her upon a shoulder and told her she could go.

"May I go home now?" she asked looking at the Judge. For reply His Honor leaned over his desk and gave her a folded paper which she took and passed from the courtroom. But a young reporter, who had been watching for an opportunity for an interview, now stepped close behind her and when she stopped in the corridor to read the note he stopped also and looked over her shoulder.

Unconscious of his presence, Margaret unfolded the paper the Judge had given her and read:

"Miss Margaret Blondell:

"Will you kindly inform me of the whereabouts of yourself and mother? I have something of importance to communicate—had entirely lost sight of you since you moved, and had no idea that matters were so bad as this. Please write or come to see me at my house.

"Your father's friend,

"Nathan Hale."

Before Margaret had finished reading the letter the reporter with notebook and pencil was busily engaged in copying it; but when Margaret suddenly discovered she was being spied upon she turned like a flash, and seizing the man's notebook she tore out the leaves and before the astonished scribe could speak, she had put them in her pocket and tossed the book out of an open window. Then she turned and walked quickly down the corridor and out into the street.

## CHAPTER VI.

### With Suicidal Intent.

When she was free Margaret's first thought was of her mother. Expecting to find her in a state of great nervousness, she made all possible haste to reach home; but before entering her apartment she stopped at the door to listen. Not a sound did she hear—the place was as silent as a cemetery at midnight. Noiselessly opening the door with her latch key, she entered and found her mother lying on the bed and breathing heavily. Her face was livid and drawn, and on a table near at hand stood a box marked *Morphine*. At once Margaret understood the situation. Believing herself to be deserted, her mother had taken the drug with the intention of ending her life. For a moment the girl hesitated, and it almost seemed as if some one were whispering in her ear: "Let her die; she is in your way, and she never loved you. "You will be free when she is gone."

But it was only for an instant that Margaret hesitated and listened to the tempter, and then she ran with all possible haste down the stairs and up the street after a physician. Without stopping to read the name upon the first doctor's sign she saw, she rushed into the office and declared that her

mother was dying and needed immediate assistance. Upon her sudden entrance a middle-aged man arose from an easy-chair, and, stepping forward, said he would attend the case, and then Margaret, with a blush, recognized Doctor Waddley, the physician who had dressed her wounded finger at the dispensary. For a moment her pride said, "You cannot let this man, who knew your father, come into those shabby rooms and see your poverty;" then, remembering that the saving of a human life depended upon the immediate assistance of this man, she bravely swallowed the lump in her throat and said:

"This way, Doctor. I have but just returned from uptown and don't know how long my mother has been in her present condition." Believing it to be but a short distance to the girl's home, the doctor did not call his carriage, but seized his hat and medicine case and started out to keep pace with her hurrying feet. After ten minutes of the most rapid walking he had done in many years, Doctor Waddley dropped his portly figure upon a chair in the little sitting room of Margaret's humble home and gasped: "You're a racer—you've walked me—nearly to—death!"

But Margaret was bending over the bed where her mother was lying and did not hear the doctor's declaration. "I hope we are not too late," she said anxiously; "she looks so ill and I am afraid she will die in spite of all we can do."

At a glance the doctor had seen that the case was not a critical one, and as soon as he had recovered his breath he commenced applying restora-

tives. In the course of half an hour Mrs. Blondell began showing symptoms of recovery, and was soon sufficiently revived to be out of danger. Then the doctor turned to Margaret and insisted upon seeing her finger, and asked why she had not been to the dispensary to have it dressed, as he had previously directed. She replied that she could not come, and since it had not been very painful she had supposed it was a great deal better. When the bandages were undone and the badly inflamed wound was exposed the doctor looked very grave, and said:

"Young woman, do you want to lose your hand?"

"Oh, no, sir; do you think it is so bad as that?" Margaret asked, in surprise.

"Well, perhaps it isn't quite so bad yet, but it might be if it should be neglected like this again," the doctor replied, as he proceeded to take care of the wound.

At this moment a moan from the patient on the bed attracted the physician's attention, and he turned round, to find Mrs. Blondell rapidly returning to consciousness. Putting his finger on his lips as a sign of silence concerning his presence, he seated himself in a chair by a window out of the patient's sight, and then he motioned to Margaret to draw her chair close to the bed. When consciousness had fully returned to the woman she pettishly remarked:

"So you came home at last, did you? You've nearly killed me again!"

Margaret's face turned red and then white as

she whispered: "I think she is delirious," but Mrs. Blondell, who had caught the last word, replied:

"I'm not delirious, and you know it. I'm crushed by your cruelty. I never stayed alone a night before in my life, and you left me just for spite, because you were angry about your finger. You were entirely to blame about that, too. If you had not excited me I should not have bitten you—it's all your own fault!"

"Please don't talk; it is tiring you," said Margaret soothingly, fearing the doctor would learn too much about her mother's peculiarities.

"I wonder if you think you can deprive me of the privilege of talking, along with everything else that I have been deprived of," her mother replied angrily.

Margaret now saw that her efforts to conceal her mother's ill-nature were useless, and she turned an imploring look upon the doctor, which meant, do go and leave us alone. But for reasons best known to himself Doctor Waddley chose to remain, and, leaning back in his chair, he shook his head in reply to Margaret's silent appeal. Mrs. Blondell was now fully aroused, and, thinking she and her daughter were alone, she burst forth with fresh fury:

"I want to know where you went and why you did not come home last night!"

"Some time, when you are better, I will tell you," said Margaret softly.

"But I insist upon knowing now!" exclaimed the angry woman, and after a moment she con-

tinued: "You had no friends to visit; where did you go?"

"Some time I will explain everything to you," Margaret replied patiently.

"You shameless creature! I believe you dare not tell me, and I am disgraced!" and Mrs. Blondell began beating her head against the pillows.

Margaret looked at the doctor, who sat silently watching her mother, and whispered: "Please do something; she may hurt herself."

At that moment Mrs. Blondell sprang from the bed and gave Margaret a stinging blow on one of her cheeks. "Take that for neglecting me!" she cried.

Here the doctor stepped forward, and, taking the infuriated woman by both arms, said sternly: "Now, Madam, that will do. This is all humbug, and you shall stop this nonsense at once," and pushing the astonished woman back upon the bed, he arranged her pillows and adjusted a blanket over her.

Mrs. Blondell was too much surprised to resist the physician and waited until she had been comfortably tucked into bed before she ventured to speak again, but when he had straightened himself and stood looking frowningly down at her she raised her head from the pillow and asked:

"Well, who are you, and what do you know about my affairs?"

"I am Doctor Waddley, and I came to pump the poison out of your stomach. I have been attending to your daughter's finger, which a few days ago you very nearly bit off her hand. For the purpose

of determining your actual condition, I have been sitting here watching you for an hour or more, and I have decided to send you to the insane asylum within three days from now," the doctor said seriously.

"I'm sure you don't really mean what you say," whined Madam, who was now thoroughly frightened.

"Yes, I do. I have arranged with your daughter to report your next tantrum to me, and when I hear about it I shall send for an ambulance, and then away you will go," said the doctor sternly. "Good day!" and bowing to Margaret, Doctor Waddley went out and closed the door.

Looking appealingly at her daughter, Mrs. Blondell asked tremblingly: "Do you think he would send me to the ——" and she shudderingly whispered, "insane asylum?"

Margaret had seen through the doctor's ruse, and, deciding to turn it to good account, replied: "If he believes you are mad he will do just what he promises to do with you," and then she went about preparing tea. While she was getting it ready the postman brought a letter, and with her heart beating violently, she opened it, to find that it was from the firm of Braidy and Dorn. Briefly, it stated that her references had been investigated and were found satisfactory, and the firm would expect her to come to work on the following morning.

"Oh, my finger—I shall use it if it does hurt!" she said determinedly.

"Whom is your letter from?" inquired Mrs. Blondell suspiciously.

"From the gentleman to whom I applied for a position yesterday. Oh, I am so glad!" said Margaret joyfully.

"Who will stay with me while you are gone?"

"Who stayed with you while I was at the Business College?"

"But that was before the ghost, you know," and the woman looked apprehensively around.

"Perhaps we may move somewhere else—if I can afford it—after I begin work," said Margaret reassuringly.

"I do hope so. I am so frightened since that night," and Mrs. Blondell shuddered at the thought of the specter.

## CHAPTER VII.

### Braidy and Dorn, Real Estate Brokers.

At an early hour the next morning Margaret started for the office where she was to begin her servitude. Her finger was still sore, but she hoped to be able to favor it until it should be well. Both members of the firm were at their desks when she entered, and Mr. Braidy, raising his eyes, said, "Oh," then turning to Mr. Dorn remarked, "This is the new stenographer," in the same tone and with the same manner that he would have said "this is the new broom that I have ordered."

Mr. Dorn was a much younger man than his partner, and to one unable to read character, he appeared to be a handsome, kindly gentleman. Being the possessor of a good figure, with small hands and feet, he was envied by men and admired by women, and wherever he went he immediately became the center of attraction for matrons as well as for maidens. Men distrusted, despised or feared him, according to the extent of their acquaintance with him, and so, with the members of his own sex, he was not popular. For this he did not seem to care and never made an effort to win another man's friendship. There was a thorough understanding between himself and his partner, that he

should attend to the business which came into the office through their female clientage, while Mr. Braidy should attend to all other kinds of business.

He prided himself on his hypnotic influence over women, and often boasted over his cups that he knew a few tricks which never failed to win for him the favor of the proudest beauty nor the plainest maiden, and thus far it seemed that he had been most successful in escaping the consequences of his acts. He was always looking for fresh conquests and never missed an opportunity to show himself off to advantage to any member of the fair sex whom he met, whether she was a social queen or a humble washer-woman. When severely criticised by his partner for paying unnecessary attention to the scrub woman who came to clean their office, he laughingly replied: "Perhaps she has a pretty daughter, and it is always well to have a friend at court in case I should want one."

This morning, knowing that a new stenographer was expected, Mr. Dorn had taken considerable time to practice a new smile before his mirror; for he was a man who tired of persons and things, and even of facial expressions when they were always the same. In his intense desire to forsake the old and possess the new, he sometimes became tired of his own smile, and when he expected to make a new acquaintance he always added something to himself which he believed would enhance his charms and make him more irresistible than before. So when Mr. Braidy introduced Margaret to him in this rude, ungracious manner, Mr. Dorn was quite ready to dazzle her with his new smile. But

Margaret felt very keenly the contemptuous stare Mr. Braidy had given her upon entering the office, and when Mr. Dorn rose and bowed politely and pointed to the closet where she could hang her wraps, she only glanced at him, while she sent up a silent petition to the gods for strength to help her forward on her path of duty. But Mr. Dorn was not easily discouraged. He knew that his partner was a bear and expected nothing better of him than this, so he stood waiting for Margaret, and when she had reappeared he smilingly remarked that he hoped she would not be frightened at the amount of work that was awaiting her on that first day. He explained that since they had been doing without a stenographer for a few days, the letters had accumulated to quite a large number. Here he paused and after smiling his newest and most winning smile he added:

"But I—that is, we shall try to assist you all that is possible until you become accustomed to the work and—to us."

But Margaret was thinking about her sore finger and had but a vague idea that this gentleman was trying to be kind where the other one was not. When she had taken her seat at her desk she listened intently to the directions Mr. Dorn gave concerning her duties, and without scarcely looking at him, went on making notes for future references.

Mr. Dorn was now greatly surprised. For a young and handsome girl like Miss Blondell to completely ignore his smiles and blandishments was something to which he was totally unaccustomed. Indeed, he did not remember when it had

occurred before, but then he comforted himself with the thought that perhaps it was because she was a little frightened—since this was her first position—and when her nervousness should wear away she would become more susceptible to his attentions. He had decided to make the work as light as possible, when he observed her bandaged finger, and inquired if it were the result of an accident.

Margaret replied that her finger had received a slight injury and although it was still a little sore, it would not inconvenience her a great deal. Here Mr. Dorn assumed a deeply sympathetic manner and expressed himself as "so sorry," and promised not to require very much of her until "the poor little finger should be well." This last remark with his tenderness of tone finally attracted Margaret's attention to himself, and for the first time that morning she turned and looked him squarely in the face. Just then a very audible grunt of disapproval from the senior partner expressed that gentleman's opinion of the sweetness of Mr. Dorn's recent remarks, and the conceited dandy began to think perhaps he had been too openly attentive. So he turned to the pile of letters and began sorting out such ones as had to be answered that day, and for a few moments the silence in the office was unbroken save by the loud wheezing of Mr. Braidy, who seemed to be suffering from a severe attack of asthma.

In that one glance Margaret had caught a glimpse of something in Mr. Dorn's character which gave her a feeling of uneasiness. Why she

distrusted him she could not have told; but a faint reminiscence seemed to float through her mind that somewhere and some time she had met him or some one like him, and that he had done a wrong to somebody, and pausing with her work she leaned back in her chair and tried to think where she had met this man. While she was thinking her hands and feet turned icy cold and a thick mist seemed to pass before her eyes like a vapory cloud. For a moment this cloud seemed to entirely obscure her surroundings, and then, floating backward, it seemed to become the background of a picture of this man and herself, standing together on the bank of a river.

The sun was shining, and among the overhanging branches of a tree beautiful, bright feathered birds were singing, and the verdure around them indicated that the climate was a warmer one than that of New York. She, dressed in a long white linen robe, was holding in her arms an infant who was apparently but a few weeks old, and upon its tiny face she was gazing with a mother's pure love. He was dressed like a Roman nobleman and stood frowning upon her, while she seemed to plead with him for something he was stubbornly refusing to give. Suddenly he snatched the babe from her arms and threw it upon the ground, and when she sprang forward to get it he seized and held her close to himself. Instantly she struck him in the face and for a moment he stood motionless, then, with his face white with passion, he picked up the infant and tossed it far out into the river. Throwing up her hands in horror while upon her face

was pictured an intense agony of fear, she sprang after her child. Then the man stood quietly while she struggled to save her babe. With a smile upon his handsome face he carelessly watched the drowning woman as she rose to the surface of the water and reached out one arm to him imploring his help. But he only made a gesture signifying that she should first throw away the child and then he would come to her relief.

At last, clasping both arms around her babe, the woman slowly sank to the bottom of the river, and all that was left to mark the place where the tragedy occurred were a few whirling eddies and some broken reeds that went floating down with the current. Then this handsome fiend turned and slowly walked away, while upon his face was expressed a devilish satisfaction at being rid of the woman—herself—and his babe.

The scene passed very quickly before Margaret's eyes and as the mist cleared away and she saw again the office with its desks and chairs and the two men busily engaged each with his own thoughts, she rubbed her eyes and wondered if she had fallen asleep and dreamed. Unable to understand the meaning of the picture, and with still an undefined feeling of sadness at her heart, she turned again to her desk. Soon Mr. Dorn requested her to take some dictation, and, forgetting the picture, she gave her whole attention to her work and the circumstance was soon forgotten. At eleven o'clock a messenger boy brought a note which called Mr. Dorn away from the office, and for the remainder of the day she was left alone with

Mr. Braidy, who did not speak to, or look at her once during the afternoon. When five o'clock came and she was leaving the office Margaret bowed and bade the man a pleasant good night, to which he did not respond by even a glance in her direction, and she decided to omit that little attention thereafter.

At home she found her mother suffering from a new complaint, and before she had removed her hat and wraps Mrs. Blondell informed her that she had discovered a large tumor growing on her neck close to the jugular vein, and believed it would be only a short time that she should be a burden to any one. Margaret examined the new affliction very carefully and then smilingly declared that it was nothing but a boil, which would be well in a few days. She attempted to explain to the excited woman that a tumor had never been known to appear so suddenly, nor to develop to such magnitude in one day; but Mrs. Blondell had been reading a newspaper in which a man, who announced himself as a specialist, declared that the most malignant kind of tumor would sometimes suddenly appear in a night, and if not put under immediate treatment the patient's life would be paid as a forfeit.

Vainly did Margaret try to convince her mother that the article she had read was nothing but an advertisement to introduce some remedy or person to the public; but Mrs. Blondell declared that she knew better, that Margaret was not willing to have her treated, but wanted her to die so she would be rid of her. Dropping into a chair, Margaret exclaimed:

"Mother! how can you go to see this physician without money? I have but fifty cents in the world; I have had no lunch nor can I have any this week, but must manage to subsist upon two meals a day until I can draw my first week's salary."

"But you must get it," said her mother coldly.

"Where and how?"

"Now that's just like you to ask me 'where and how.' I don't know how, but it must be got or within six weeks I shall be a corpse, and I don't believe you would care if I should die to-night—I think it would please you very much to get me out of your way. But I don't propose to give up my precious life to make you happy. I am going to be treated and you must get the money."

Without replying, Margaret rose and began preparing their simple meal of tea and toast, and her mother continued:

"Did you sell those opera glasses?"

"No."

"I expected as much; you think you can keep them for yourself, although everything I possessed had to be sold, and now you would keep those glasses if you knew I would die for the need of the money that they would bring."

Margaret paid no attention to her mother's ill natured remarks, and after a moment of silence the woman asked:

"Why didn't you sell them?"

"Because I couldn't."

"Could not sell those elegant things in this great city? Margaret, I am sorry to know that you have added untruthfulness to all your other faults."

This last accusation was more than Margaret could bear and remain silent, and she told her mother how she had offered them for sale, had been arrested, and, after sleeping in the police station all night, had been taken before Judge Hale to answer to the charge of theft.

"I was so overcome with shame," she said, "I had not met him since the night of the ball at his house; but he recognized me and dismissed the case."

"And so that was the reason you left me alone all night, was it? I should think you would be ashamed to look me in the face. A daughter of mine in prison. It's a pity you came home at all," the woman said with a sneer upon her lips.

"Is it? If I had not come home when I did you would now be in the next world."

"No, I should not! Somebody would have found me if you had not. But what are you going to do about those glasses? Will you try again to sell them?"

"No."

"Now I say you shall! I want the money to go to this doctor with, and I will have it!" Mrs. Blondell declared excitedly.

"Get it then," said Margaret quietly.

Mrs. Blondell became speechless with astonishment and sat very straight in her chair, staring stupidly at her daughter. Never before in all her life had she received such a reply to any of her attacks; but Margaret did not appear to care for her surprise, she had reached the limit of her endurance with her mother's nagging, and her own finer feel-

ings were rapidly becoming deadened. The toast now being ready, she announced that tea was prepared and sitting down to the table commenced eating her supper. Mrs. Blondell waited for a few moments, and then, having recovered her composure, she asked:

"Where will you get the money for me?"

"It is not at all likely that I shall get it."

"So you expect to get rid of me in this way, do you? You are mistaken. I shall appeal to the authorities."

"Do so, as soon as you please," said Margaret wearily.

"What is the matter with you, Margaret? You don't seem to care for anything to-night!"

"Mother, I am tired. I have not had a good night's rest for almost a week; I have worked all day with this wretched pain in my finger, and you have scolded and threatened about so many things that I am positively ill with fatigue at hearing your noise. Once I was human and rejoiced in the possession of a soul, but what I have endured of late has seemed to crush it out of me, and I believe I am degenerating into a brute. I don't care for anything nor anybody. All that I want at this moment, now that my meal is finished, is to go to sleep, and that is just as the animals do. I suppose it will be necessary to have my finger dressed, or I shall not be able to use it to-morrow, so I will go to the dispensary; but when I return, I beg you to keep still, just for this one night, and let me have peace."

"You are a heartless, unsympathetic girl, and I

sincerely wish that you had never been born," said Mrs. Blondell bitterly.

"I wish so too," said Margaret as she slowly rose from her chair and began removing the dishes from the table.

"If you do not care to eat anything, I will put the supper away."

"I cannot eat such food as you provide. It makes me ill to think of it! I am so delicate that my appetite requires a change, and you have had tea and toast for breakfast, luncheon and dinner until I positively refuse to touch it again."

"If you cannot live upon such food as I am able to provide, then you must do without anything; because this is the best that I can do at present," said Margaret with a sigh.

"Why don't you get a nice spring chicken and fry it in butter?" Mrs. Blondell asked.

"Because I have not money enough to pay for one, and it does not rain chickens here in New York as it rained quails in Moses' time," the girl replied grimly.

"Your wit is positively insipid!" said Madam contemptuously, but Margaret was putting on her wraps and did not reply.

"Are you going after the chicken?" her mother inquired as she saw her daughter start to go out.

"I am going to the dispensary."

## CHAPTER VIII.

### Under Arrest.

When Margaret returned home her mother's first question was: "Did you bring the chicken?"

"No."

"Well, why didn't you! Didn't I say I could eat nothing until I had one?"

"Then I fear you will fast for a few days."

"You are forcing me to go out and beg!" said Mrs. Blondell, angrily.

"Will you beg for spring chickens fried in butter?"

"I shall tell everybody what a mean, stingy thing my own daughter is; and that she does not provide anything for her sick mother to eat. That will take down your pride, I think!"

"I have no pride. It died when papa died," said Margaret sadly; and getting into bed she turned her face to the wall and went soundly to sleep while her mother sat in her chair rocking, grumbling and threatening. After a while, having failed to get any response to her remarks, Mrs. Blondell went to the cupboard and devoured the last piece of toast that had been left from supper, and then, after drinking all the tea and eating the dregs from the teapot, she overturned a chair and deliberately

dropped a saucepan upon the floor, hoping to awaken and annoy Margaret. But if the girl heard she made no sign, and at last the mother, placing herself beside her daughter in bed, went to sleep.

The next morning Margaret rose and when she had prepared breakfast she called her mother to come and partake of it with her. But Madam was still in the sulks and replied:

"I am going to starve before your face. Starvation and this tumor will very soon rid you of a mother who has always been a martyr to your cruelty. All night I suffered silently this dreadful pain and can feel that my life is being drawn out by this awful thing. That you are glad and will take pleasure in seeing me die by inches, I have no doubt."

Without replying to her mother's attack, Margaret sat down to her breakfast alone, and without rising from her bed, Mrs. Blondell began moaning again. Hastening through her scanty meal, the girl was getting ready to go to the office when her mother called her to come and again look at her tumor. Obediently Margaret went to the bedside and, after examining the swelling, repeated her former statement that it was nothing but a common boil which would be well in a few days. Instantly Mrs. Blondell turned, and before Margaret had time to escape, she struck the girl a blow upon her mouth and cut her lips cruelly.

"There! you saucy thing," the angry woman exclaimed, "take that for your insults! Tell me that

I have nothing but a common boil—as if anything about me could be common.”

The blow had come so suddenly and was so entirely unexpected that Margaret was unprepared for it, and it very nearly knocked her down. As soon as she could recover breath enough to speak she exclaimed:

“Mother, I believe you are the cruellest woman who ever lived——”

“I don’t care!” screamed the mother furiously, and springing from the bed, she made a spring at Margaret, who now stood bathing her rapidly swelling lips. This time, however, Margaret saw her coming, and seizing a pitcher full of cold water, she threw its contents in her mother’s face, drenching her well from head to foot. Mrs. Blondell’s astonishment for once exceeded her wrath, and stopping short in her dripping nightdress, she stood staring helplessly at Margaret, while the girl, now fully aroused in her own defence, said:

“I am going this moment after Doctor Waddley and I shall show him what you have done to me. You shall be sent to the insane asylum at once, because you are not fit to be allowed at large. All my life you have scratched, beaten and bitten me whenever and wherever you chose. As a child I was obliged to bear it because I was not your equal in size or strength. As a woman I have continued to suffer because I was ashamed to make a public exhibition of you. Papa tried to conceal your abominable temper and we both had to suffer for it. He is out of your reach now, but since he died I have had to bear his portion and mine; but this is

the end. I shall provide for you, but I will place you where you cannot injure any one but yourself. It is said that the patients in the insane asylum are ill treated, but I don't believe you will receive any treatment that you do not deserve," and having covered the wound with some court plaster, Margaret commenced tying on her veil.

"Could you do such a dreadful thing and have a clean conscience afterward?" Mrs. Blondell asked tremulously; "you know that I am nervous and sick and when something happens to excite me it is your duty as a loving daughter to bear with my weakness."

"You have the strength to almost knock me down with one blow of your hand, and although you are always pretending to be ill you are able when you are angry to go to any lengths or to do anything you choose. This proves Doctor Waddley's theory to be true—that you are simply vicious—and since this is the case why should I suffer in order that your temper may find expression?"

"Are you going to send me away to-day?" Mrs. Blondell inquired uneasily.

Margaret hesitated while her good nature pleaded for her mother's reprieve. "I shall give you one more trial," she said, slowly, "but you may be sure that at the first sign of another fit of temper I shall send for the doctor," and the girl went out, leaving her mother to consider the evil of her ways.

This morning Margaret was seated at her desk before either of her employers had appeared, but her swollen lips disfigured her face so badly that it

was difficult to recognize her as the beautiful girl who had so greatly interested Mr. Dorn on the day previous. But Mr. Dorn had not forgotten his new stenographer and hastened to his office at a much earlier hour than usual, hoping to get a few words with her before his partner should arrive. Finding Margaret sitting with her back toward the door, he walked over to her and playfully tossing a beautiful red rose over her shoulder, bade her a cheery good-morning.

Since leaving home, Margaret had been struggling to keep back the tears which every few moments filled her eyes almost to overflowing, and this kindly greeting was just what was needed to open the floodgates to her emotions. Bowing her head on the desk before her, she wept and sobbed hysterically, while Mr. Dorn stood looking at her quivering form in astonishment.

"My dear—Miss Blondell, what is the matter; you seem to be in great distress about something," and then, thinking that perhaps her grief had been caused by some bearish act of his partner, he looked around to see if Mr. Braidy were present; but this time that gentleman was absent and therefore innocent. Determined to ascertain the cause of her sorrow, Mr. Dorn seated himself close beside the weeping girl and bent tenderly over her. He wanted to take her in his arms and kiss away the tears; but something in Margaret's manner forbade such familiarity, so he stroked her hair, patted her shoulder and whispered:

"What can be the trouble, my dear Miss Blondell?"

After a few moments Margaret got sufficient control of her voice to say, "Please excuse me, Mr. Dorn, for giving away like this, but I met with an accident this morning before coming to the office and, you know, if a woman is hurt ever so little she must cry."

"Now that's too bad!" said Mr. Dorn with great apparent sympathy, "how and where were you injured?"

For reply Margaret raised her face all tear stained, and showed him her lips, which had now reached an enormous size. Mr. Dorn was horrified and shrank quickly away. He was very fond of pretty women and had thought Margaret the most beautiful creature he had ever beheld; but now, with her reddened nose and swollen lips, she certainly did not look kissable and he was shocked and disappointed.

"Y—yes," he stammered, "it does look rather b—bad, how did it happen?"

"A woman struck me and a ring she wore on her hand made these gashes in my lips."

"A woman!" he exclaimed. "Where were you, and what kind of a woman was she?"

Not wishing to expose her mother's ill-nature, Margaret tried to smile as she replied: "Oh, she was just an ordinary kind of a woman who lives in the same house with me—and who sometimes gets nervous and I might say almost insane—this morning she suddenly conceived the idea that I had insulted her and it was for that she struck me in the face."

"She is crazy," declared Mr. Dorn gravely, "and

I should order a strait-jacket for her and a doctor for you."

"Oh, I don't need a doctor—but a thick veil instead; but in consideration of your feelings I shall sit with my back toward you for a few days," and taking the neglected rose from the desk she thanked Mr. Dorn for it and for his sympathy. And now that exquisite gentleman wanted to say something real sweet, but another glance at the swollen lips decided the matter for that day at least—he never had been able to endure plain women—and muttering something about hoping she would be better to-morrow, he turned away just as Mr. Braidy came into the office.

Margaret had learned better than to waste her attention on Mr. Braidy, and when he came in she did not turn her head nor appear to be conscious of his presence. But Mr. Braidy had a peculiar disposition; if he believed a person was trying to be polite to him he always took extra pains to snub and humiliate that person into silence, and observing that Margaret ignored him completely this morning, she ascended several degrees in his estimation. After waiting long enough to give her ample time to recognize him, he said:

"Good morning!"

Supposing he was addressing his partner, Margaret did not reply to the greeting and at this the old gentleman opened his cold blue eyes to their widest extent and stared hard at the back of her head, while Mr. Dorn, greatly enjoying his partner's discomfiture, turned away his face to hide his laughing. For a moment Mr. Braidy stood look-

ing very foolish while an expression of chagrin rested upon his face; but he soon recovered himself and casting a side glance at Mr. Dorn to see if he had witnessed the snubbing he had received, he took a seat at his desk with his face several shades redder than usual and with the magenta flush on the end of his nose intensified to almost a purple hue.

At noon Margaret put on her wraps and went out, as her employers supposed, to get luncheon; but a midday meal for her was out of the question, and although very hungry she had to content herself with smelling the odors of cooking food as they came floating out to her from the kitchens of the restaurants as she passed. "But the sunlight and fresh air are mine," she murmured, "and I can spend this hour watching the pretty dresses and bonnets on the women who can have dinners and luncheons. Nobody need know how hungry I am and perhaps I can forget it myself."

When the office door had closed behind Margaret, Mr. Braidy turned toward Mr. Dorn and asked: "What do you think of her?"

"Pretty as a pink and sharp as a knife," replied his partner; "what do you think?"

"Oh, I don't think. I hope you won't play the fool with her as you have with all the others," said Mr. Braidy coarsely.

"I make it a point to flirt with every pretty girl I meet—the prettier she is the more interesting the game becomes—and this one will be no exception I can assure you. However, she does not seem quite like the ordinary stenographer; she has

been educated in something besides orthography and punctuation, and therefore it will be the more interesting to win her for a time," said Mr. Dorn, as he carelessly tilted his chair and put his handsome feet upon the desk before him, while his partner, whose portly figure and rheumatic legs deprived him of the pleasure of taking a similar lounging position, had to keep his ponderous heels down upon the floor. But Mr. Braidy was of a bellicose nature, and at once took issue with Mr. Dorn by declaring vehemently that all women were alike and there was no difference between this stenographer and all the others.

"I'll bet ten dollars that you'll be in love with her yourself in less than a month," said Mr. Dorn flip-pantly.

"I'll take that," replied Mr. Braidy, who was always ready to turn a penny into his own private pocket.

"What salary shall we pay her?" Mr. Braidy inquired.

"Ten dollars a week until she learns how much she's worth and strikes for more," Mr. Dorn replied.

"Humph! Eight dollars are enough to start with."

"Call it ten," said Mr. Dorn positively; "she's worth more than that and you know it. Don't be mean with the girl, Braidy, she has a mother to support besides herself."

"I don't care if she has a dozen mothers, she won't get but eight dollars a week if I have anything to say about it."

"Now I say she shall have ten dollars a week," said Mr. Dorn angrily.

"You'll pay it yourself then, for I won't."

"You are a prize hog, Braidy, and, bad as I am, I'm ashamed of you!"

At that moment a boy brought a telegram for the elder man, who instantly forgot his partner's insult and exclaimed: "I'm appointed administrator of my father's estate and must get my train in just forty-five minutes."

"Then you are not going to your father's funeral, but you are going to administer to his estate?" said Mr. Dorn, lifting his eyebrows with assumed surprise.

"I shall be just about in time to view the remains if I get off now," said Mr. Braidy, smiling broadly, and, grabbing his hat and overcoat, he rushed from the office.

When the door had closed behind his partner Mr. Dorn shrugged his shoulders and exclaimed: "Good! I hope that administration business will keep him away for a month at least, and in the meantime I shall have things all my own way. That stenographer is a beauty—when her lips are all right—and I'll see about her salary myself."

At that moment Margaret appeared. The brisk walk in the fresh, cool air had raised her drooping spirits, and the world did not look so dark now as when she had started out. She seemed to bring with her some of the sunshine from out of doors, and her cheeks were glowing with the bright, young blood which the exercise had sent throbbing through her veins. Her eyes sparkled dangerous-

ly for the peace of mind of Mr. Dorn, who sat gazing at her, and for once in his life could not think of an appropriate thing to say. When she was seated at her desk he rose and said:

"Now, Miss Blondell, since you have returned, I will go to luncheon. Mr. Braidy has been called out of town on business—he received news of the death of his father, of whom he was very fond—and he left a good-by for you."

Margaret looked up in surprise. "A good-by for me? This is unexpected, since he has never spoken a civil word to me since I came here. And he was fond of his father? I did not suppose he was fond of any one."

"Oh, yes," lied Mr. Dorn, hoping to make a favorable impression for the firm upon Margaret's mind; "he's not so bad; his roughest side is always the outside, and you have not had an opportunity to see his better nature."

"It is something to know he has one. When does this better nature exhibit itself?" inquired Margaret seriously.

Mr. Dorn was glad to have Margaret look at him and thereby give him a chance to smile directly into her eyes. He gathered all his magnetic power and looking at her with admiration shining from his own handsome eyes, he smiled radiantly as he replied:

"Oh, when you once become acquainted with him, my d—ah! I mean, Miss Blondell, you will understand him better."

Margaret was greatly amused at what she believed were Mr. Dorn's efforts to be polite, and in

her straightforward manner did not once think he was falling in love with her. But since he seemed trying to be agreeable and his manner was such a decided contrast to that of his partner, she thought she ought to be gracious at least, and so, after he returned from luncheon, the remainder of the day was spent in chatting pleasantly about her work and the business in general. At four o'clock Mr. Dorn very considerably told her that since her finger was still sore and her lips were swollen, she could put aside all the unfinished work and have the remainder of the afternoon for herself. Thanking him for his kindness, she arranged the papers in her desk and then, bidding him a pleasant good night, to which he responded almost lovingly, she left the office.

At home she found her mother lying on the bed and moaning dolefully, while her reddened eyelids and flushed face indicated that she had been really weeping. Never in all her life before did Margaret remember having seen any traces of real tears in her mother's eyes, and this new departure was such a surprise that she sat down to wait for the new subject to be introduced. Presently Mrs. Blondell exclaimed:

"I am going to die! I have seen your father again, and he told me that this tumor will kill me in a very short time, unless I get treatment at once!"

The ruse, which Mrs. Blondell had taken nearly all day to invent, was very transparent. She was trying to use the great love her daughter bore for her father's memory for a means by which she

could press Margaret into getting the money that she had demanded for her treatment; and by declaring it to be the expressed wish of her dead father she believed the girl would not refuse. But to her surprise her falsehood did not have the desired effect, for without making a reply Margaret rose and started to go out.

"Where are you going?" her mother inquired suspiciously.

"To bring Doctor Waddley."

"I hate that man!" Madam exclaimed wrathfully.

"He will know what is the matter with you," said Margaret coolly.

"You are conniving together to put me into an asylum to get me out of your way. I understand your plans, but I shall cheat you both!"

Margaret went directly to the doctor and told him of the strange idea her mother had conceived and asked him to call and examine the swelling on her mother's neck. He promised to stop on his way home to dinner, and Margaret returned, to find that her mother had taken a satchel with many of her toilet articles and her best bonnet and cloak, and had left the house. Her first impulse was to follow and bring her back; but on second thought she decided to wait for the doctor and ask for his advice. When he arrived she met him at the door and said smilingly:

"Your patient is gone."

"What is the matter with your lips?" the doctor inquired

"Just a little gash which shows very plainly since I removed my veil. They are much better than

they were this morning, however—what do you think I ought to do about mother? She has been gone for nearly two hours,” said Margaret nervously.

“Stop treating her as though she were a child and let her go wherever she wishes.”

“But I am afraid something will happen to her—she is so irresponsible—and nearly always gets lost when she goes out alone.”

At that moment a man's voice was heard in the hall outside inquiring for Miss Blondell, and Margaret opened her door, to see a policeman standing there. Intuitively she knew that her mother was in trouble, and her heart sank at the prospect. Feeling that his presence would be embarrassing to Margaret during the coming interview, Doctor Waddley immediately said good-night and went out; and, wishing to prevent her inquisitive neighbors from listening to what the officer had to say, Margaret invited the man into her apartment and shut the door. And now, trembling in every limb as if she herself were the criminal, the poor girl stood before that regulator of the people's morals and waited for him to speak. After consulting a small slip of paper in his hand, he asked:

“Are you Miss Margaret Blondell?”

“Yes.”

“Then I have t' tell ye that yer mother is under a'rest fer stealin'!”

“For stealing?” Margaret repeated faintly, and her face turned as white as her own linen collar. “What has she stolen?”

“Money,” said the man, and he looked round

the room at the shabby furniture and mended curtains. Then, looking at Margaret, he continued:

"She went into a res'trunt and when the cashier wasn't lookin' snatched a big pile of bills an' run out. I caught her jest as she was a-boardin' a car an' I never seen a cat scratch and bite like she did. If ye don't believe it look at me," and the man carefully touched his nose where there was a long red mark which commenced between his two eyebrows and ended at an indefinite point somewhere among the hairs of his bristling mustaches.

It was not at all difficult to convince Margaret of the truth of the officer's statement, because the prints of some one's well kept finger nails were plainly visible and distinctly showed the effort that had been made toward marking his face. But the poor girl was too badly frightened to laugh at his lugubrious appearance, and inquired:

"What will be done with her?"

"Sent t' th' Island if ye don't pay her fine."

"But I have no money and I cannot help her," said Margaret sadly.

"All right. Her case'll be called t'morrer mornin' a-fore Judge Hale. Good day," and the officer turned and went out.

"Judge Hale! For mother's sake I must go to-night and see him—he asked me in his note to come. Oh, how can I bear this shame!" and Margaret sank into a chair, and covering her face with her hands burst into tears.

"Why, oh, why is my fate so hard?" she murmured between her sobs. "What have I done to deserve such sorrow? Is there a God, and if there

is, how can He look down upon the wretched creatures whom He has forced into this unwelcome life and without pity or relief let them go on in such misery as mine!" But no answer came to her question, and after a few moments more of weeping Margaret dried her eyes and rose wearily from her chair.

"If I am to see Judge Hale to-night I must go at once," she said, and putting on her wraps she started forth upon her disagreeable errand.

On reaching the home of her old friend she paused and looked up at the windows. The light from the silvery moon shone down upon her to-night as it had on that other night when she had entered that gray stone mansion as the betrothed wife of the nephew of the man to whom she was going now to plead for mercy for her mother's crime. Then she was a courted belle of fashion—now she was a poor stenographer, living more plainly than the maids who had served her in those happy days. And as she stood with a foot resting on the bottom step of the broad stone stairs before the grand entrance, the picture of the events of that other night passed like a panorama before her mental vision. Then, resolutely putting aside the unpleasant memory, she ascended the steps and rang the bell.

## CHAPTER IX.

### Judge Hale at Home.

While waiting for the door to be opened Margaret whispered a petition to her angel Ray for strength to bear the coming interview; and when the self-satisfied footman opened the door she asked if Judge Hale were at home.

"Yes, Miss, but 'e's hingaged," replied the lackey, as he glanced disdainfully at the girl's shabby dress and ungloved hands.

"Then I will wait until he is disengaged," she replied.

"Hi don't think 'e wants t' see the loikes av ye, 'cause 'e 'as 'sting'ished visitors to-night," the man impudently replied, as he began to slowly shut the door in Margaret's face.

The thought that possibly this man would prevent her from seeing the Judge, and the fear of the calamity which might follow the missing of this interview, fired Margaret with desperation, and pushing the man aside she stepped quickly into the hall and exclaimed:

"You have no right to refuse to take my name to Judge Hale, and I shall take no refusal to see me—other than his own."

At this the man became angry, and taking Mar-

garet roughly by an arm, was about to push her from the house, when she turned the full blaze of her magnificent eyes upon him and said:

"You will go this instant and tell your master that Miss Blondell has called in answer to his invitation!"

The lackey hesitated. He did not like to be beaten by a woman, and a shabby one at that. He knew very well that His Honor was alone in the library, and he also knew that his own little piece of deception would be discovered if this girl succeeded in gaining an interview with him. There was something in Margaret's gaze that compelled him, much against his will, to let go her arm and to move toward the library door; but when he had almost reached it a bright idea occurred to him, and stepping behind a drapery he waited for a few moments, and then, coming back into the hall, he said:

"Hit his has hi towled ye; 'is 'onor his hingaged hand won't see ye hat hall!"

Poor Margaret's face blanched to a deathly whiteness and she was about to go when, much to the lackey's chagrin, the Judge himself came out of his library and, seeing Margaret, cordially extended his hand to her in greeting.

"How do you do, Miss Blondell! I have been looking for you every day since—that is—well, well, come into the library. Why didn't you come sooner?"

Now that she had really gained an audience and there was to be no further opposition to this interview with her old friend, Margaret's strength gave

way and she commenced trembling so violently that she could scarcely stand. Seeing her agitation and thinking he knew the cause, the Judge hastily rolled forward an easy chair for her, and without appearing to observe her emotion took the poker and busied himself arranging the firebrands in the open fireplace, while he chatted pleasantly about the weather and other general topics. Margaret knew that she must crush her pride and tell this man of all the unpleasant circumstances that were connected with the present state of her affairs; and then, depending upon his kindness, beg that mercy should be shown her mother. But now that the time had come for her to speak she could not open her lips; and sat silently watching him, in whose hands lay the power to save her mother from prison and herself from becoming known as the daughter of a thief.

Wise and good as he was, Judge Hale did not understand the art of touching gently delicate matters which, to avoid giving pain, must be treated with the finest tact; and now that his fund of general topics was exhausted, he was vainly trying to think of something else to say, when Margaret, rousing herself to meet the situation, said:

"It is useless and painful to you and to me to prolong this interview, and we may as well begin at once to consider the object which brought me here to-night. You kindly invited me, or I never should have had the courage to come to you in this great trouble, and I shall not take your time by going back in detail to the beginning of the events which have brought me to my present con-

dition—because you know about some of them as well as I do; but perhaps you do not know that I am trying to earn my mother's living and my own. When I secured my present position I hoped that the worst of my troubles were over, but on that same day I was arrested for trying to sell my last relic of better days. Through your recognition of me I was spared much humiliation that would have followed had my case been called before some other magistrate. Through your kindness I got my liberty and my name was not given to the public."

"Yes, yes, I know," His Honor interrupted nervously. "Such laxity of law is a disgrace to the State. The way you were put into the police station, without a proper investigation of the case and without reliable witnesses, was a shame; and the idea of that little cock turkey of a clerk having the power to cause your arrest, with nothing to found his suspicions on, was abominable!" declared the Judge angrily, and he waved the poker above his head excitedly. Then he gave the burning brands in the fireplace a few hard blows which scattered them and sent the sparks flying in all directions.

"I lived through it," said Margaret, "and expect I was not the first nor shall I be the last to suffer such humiliation; but that is past, and it is the present which we must consider to-night. Perhaps you do not know that my mother is in the police station now and will be brought before you for examination to-morrow."

"Your mother!" His Honor exclaimed, and dropping the red-hot poker upon the hearth rug, he stood looking at Margaret in speechless aston-

ishment. But the fumes of the burning wool soon attracted his attention, and he seized the hot end of the poker, only to drop it quickly, and then, executing a sort of wild dance, he snapped his fingers as he exclaimed:

"Drat that poker! It is the hottest thing I ever saw. Here, you, Pat! I say, take this burning rag out into the air!" and when the man had left the room with the rug the Judge sat down in a chair and ruefully examined his blackened fingers; and notwithstanding the trouble Margaret was in, she had to smile at the ridiculous situation. After a few moments of silence, when the Judge had recovered his composure, he again took up the thread of conversation and asked:

"How did this happen?"

"Which?"

"Why, your mother's arrest."

Margaret now gave the Judge an account of the life she had lived during the last fourteen months, and ended by telling him what the officer had told her about the theft.

"And to live with and care for her you refused the protection of my nephew?" said His Honor, wonderingly.

"I never could have enjoyed my home knowing that my mother was living as Mr. Mortimer intended to have her live—by herself and without my care and attention. She is not well, has never been accustomed to doing anything for herself, and it was and is my duty to do all for her that I can. I am not sorry that I made the decision that I did, but instead, I believe, I did the best thing for each

and all concerned in the matter," Margaret said slowly.

"I hope you are right; but few girls would have seen it in that light. What shall I do with her to-morrow? Shall I send her to the County Insane Asylum?"

"You would be doing me a great kindness if you could place her in a private asylum; because I cannot bear the thought that she is a pauper. My salary will not permit me to do a great deal, but I can give something toward her support—anyway, I beg you not to send her to prison."

"No, Miss Margaret, I will not, and am glad you told me the circumstances. I was your father's friend and would like to assist you now in any way that I can. Will you not allow me to give you some—that is to say, would you accept a loan—quite in a business way, I assure you," he added hurriedly, as he saw Margaret's crimson face.

"I thank you and understand your motive and your kindness, but I cannot accept that which possibly I could never repay; and a gift I could not receive so long as I can work."

As Margaret rose to go, His Honor accompanied her to the door, and the lackey looked with unconcealed surprise to see his master on such friendly terms with a person so shabbily dressed. As they passed the man Margaret said:

"I came very near not seeing you at all to-night, Judge Hale, because this servant refused to let me in and told me you were engaged with distinguished company; had I not pushed him aside and insisted upon his taking my name to you, he

would have closed the door in my face."

And now again the Judge's hasty temper flamed up and got the better of his self-control and, turning to the frightened man, he roared:

"Pack your traps and get out of my house! You are entirely too officious."

The fellow hung his head and backed toward the rear of the hall.

"Oh, I didn't mean to cause his dismissal," said Margaret quickly; "perhaps he has a family depending upon him for support."

"He has nobody besides himself, and the airs he puts on are more than I can stand. He's a full-blooded Irishman, but tries to ape English mannerisms. Sometimes he forgets his 'haches' and his 'ho's' and rolls out a brogue that has to be heard to be appreciated. This is not the first time he has offended me, and now I purpose teaching him a lesson."

"Well, good night," said Margaret.

"Good night," replied the Judge.

## CHAPTER X.

### The Tempter.

The next morning Margaret was at her desk very early, and was busily at work when Mr. Dorn appeared. Her lips were now almost well and her finger caused her scarcely any annoyance, and notwithstanding her anxiety about her mother, she looked as fresh and dainty as a rose. When Mr. Dorn came into the office she looked up from her work and smiled a pleasant greeting, whereupon he became so greatly overcome by the tender passion that he drew a chair so close to her side that her smile instantly turned to a look of surprise. But he did not appear to see her sudden change of expression, and bending tenderly over her he whispered softly:

"And how are those pretty lips and fingers this morning?"

Turning her face away, Margaret replied: "Oh, better; can't you see that I am not quite such a fright as I was yesterday?"

"You a fright! My de—ah, Miss Blondell, you never could be a fright in my eyes."

Vexed at the man's tenderness of tone and manner, Margaret turned to a drawer and made a pretense of searching there for something, while the

rising color flamed in her cheeks and made her more beautiful than ever. Mr. Dorn feasted his eyes upon her face and form and meditated upon what he could do to place her under ever so little an obligation to himself. While he was thinking Margaret said:

"Mr. Dorn, I have a favor to ask of you."

The gods smile, he thought; then, aloud, he said: "My dear Miss Blondell, I shall be only too happy to give you anything you choose to ask for."

"There is a little matter of business which I must attend to and would like to go out this morning between ten and twelve o'clock. I will make up the lost time after business hours, or you may deduct it from my salary at the end of the week."

"Your wish is granted before it is made, and you shall not make up a moment of time. It makes me so happy to be able to assist you," he whispered tenderly, and drawing his chair still a little closer, he bent his head a little nearer to Margaret.

"Thank you," she said, still keeping her face turned from him, "I do not intend to become troublesome because you are kind, and you need not fear that I shall abuse your generosity."

At that moment, much to Margaret's relief and to Mr. Dorn's disgust, a man came into the outer office to talk about business matters, and before he went out several other persons came in and Mr. Dorn was kept busy until ten o'clock came and Margaret left her desk and started for the police court without speaking to him again.

When Mrs. Blondell was brought before the

magistrate she was in a fit of sulks. The accusation was made, the money she had stolen was produced and counted, and the cashier and several other witnesses were brought forward to give their testimony. Then the policeman was sworn, and when he turned his scratched and court-plastered face toward the Judge that dignitary turned his head while he struggled to preserve his composure. At the same moment a smile spread over every face in the court room, but the unfortunate officer did not join in the laughing; his face was too sore, and his nose, now swollen to almost twice its normal size, was constantly giving sharp twinges of pain and reminding him of the desperate struggle he had with the prisoner.

As he had previously and privately expressed himself to a brother officer, he was "mad," and the harder his nose ached the "madder" he grew, and now that his turn had come to testify he did not intend that the prisoner should be released for lack of evidence from him. When the oath had been administered and he was given the opportunity to speak he bowed respectfully to the Court and said:

"Your Honor, I went to 'rest this pris'ner fer stealin' and found her standin' on a corner, where she was jest goin' t' take a northbound car. Thinkin' she was a woman an' perhaps a lady, I took her be an arm an' told her she was my pris'ner. Before I could wink she turned on me and drove her finger nails into me face an' ripped the skin loose in half a dozen places. Before I could catch her hands she scratched my nose with one hand and tore out my hair with the other—as

you can see, Your Honor," and the officer obligingly bowed his head to show the Court a large spot on his cranium where the hair had been lifted out by the roots.

At this the spectators' smiles broadened into loud laughter, and when the manner was fully understood in which the officer had been made almost bald by the prisoner Judge Hale had to call repeatedly for order before the policeman could finish his story. When quiet was again restored the officer was ordered to proceed, and he said:

"When I did git the han'cuffs on her wrists she opened her mouth, grabbed my coat sleeve between her teeth, tore out a big chunk an' then swallowed the chunk."

Here the crowd roared again, and the stamping and repeated calls for "the cat, the cat," were uproarious. At that same moment Judge Hale was seized with a violent fit of coughing and had to cover his face with his handkerchief while he rapped on his desk again for order. When at last he had recovered himself he rose to his feet, and with a very red face and a suspicious twitching at the corners of his mouth, he frowned fiercely and declared that the next man who laughed should be fined for contempt of court. This threat brought order, and the policeman continued:

"This coat's new an' cost me twenty dollars day before yisterday, an' I want damages fer my injuries an' fer my ruined coat," and the man gazed ruefully at his ragged sleeve.

"Do you swear that all you have said about the prisoner is the truth?" the Judge asked.

Again the policeman's hand went up, and while his eyes rolled in a most tragic manner, he said:

"Before God, I swear that every word I said about this prisoner is the truth, the hull truth and nothin' but the truth."

"How do you know that she swallowed the piece of cloth from your sleeve?" the Court asked.

"'Cause, Yer Honor, I looked all round fer it an' couldn't find it. I thought my wife could mend it in again if I could find the bit of a rag somewheres."

"That will do for you," said the Judge. "Bring the prisoner forward."

Mrs. Blondell had stood pouting while the witnesses were giving their testimony. Margaret had kept out of her sight among the spectators and hoped that a scene would be avoided; but when Judge Hale asked Madam to state her side of the case and she stepped forward to do so Margaret knew by the gleam in her mother's eyes that the trouble was not ended. That His Honor intended to be kind was evident, since he looked at her very pleasantly and asked:

"What have you to say about the matter, Madam?"

Here Mrs. Blondell came as near to the Judge as the desk would permit and with a look of bitterest hatred in her eyes said:

"Judge Hale, I should think you would be ashamed of yourself to sit there and listen to such a mess as these common people—policemen and tradesmen—have told about me, a lady and an old friend of your family. I——"

Bang! went the gavel upon his desk, and His Honor exclaimed:

"That will do! Your opinion of the persons who have testified against you was not called for. I was asking what you had to say for yourself."

"And I decline to answer your question. You are very rude, and unless you can behave yourself like a gentleman I shall have nothing to say to you," and Madam tilted her nose scornfully and pursed her lips disdainfully.

The Judge was now so angry that he was tempted to commit her for contempt of court; but, meeting Margaret's imploring gaze, he refrained and said:

"Mrs. Blondell, I believe you are insane, and I shall turn your case over to a council of doctors to determine whether you shall be sent to an asylum or to jail."

This was the match that fired the magazine in the woman's soul. Looking round the room for a chance to escape, Madam caught sight of Margaret, and with a wild shriek she sprang upon her daughter before the astonished officer who had her in charge could prevent her.

"Here is the cause of it all!" she screamed, and seizing the girl's hat she tore it from her head. With the hat came the hairpins that held the beautiful hair in its place, and as the heavy mass came tumbling over Margaret's face and around her shoulders, Madam buried her hands in it and began pulling it out in great quantities. Screaming with pain and covering her eyes to protect them from her mother's finger nails, Margaret

struggled to get beyond the infuriated woman's reach, and the officer who had so lately lost some of his own locks tried to unclinch Madam's hands from her daughter's hair. But the woman was desperately angry and was ready to fight any one who dared to oppose her, and, turning upon the man, she shut her teeth on one of his fingers. This was too much for him to bear, and he knocked her senseless upon the floor with his club. As soon as Margaret was released she bent over her mother's prostrate form and murmured:

"Oh, I hope she is not dead!"

"I should think you'd wish she was!" retorted the officer, who was now carefully examining his wounded finger. "If she ain't dead she will be if she ever tries that trick on me again."

Here a physician was called and Mrs. Blondell was taken into another room, and the reporters and spectators were locked out while she was being restored to consciousness. After a few moments Madam opened her eyes and looking round the room inquired:

"Where am I?"

"You fainted and we are——"

"Oh, I remember!" Madam exclaimed, and again the old wicked gleam shone in her eyes. "We are at the police station, and you are the cause of it all, Margaret—if I ever get you home again I will kill you."

The doctor turned to Margaret and said that it was not necessary for her to remain any longer and promised to see that her mother should be well cared for until a council of physicians, who

were experts upon insanity, could be held. So, turning to her mother, Margaret said:

"I only had leave of absence from the office for two hours and I must now return. This gentleman will attend to your wants and make you as comfortable as possible. Good-by."

"Don't leave me here, Margaret! I will not kill you—take me home, I'm your mother, you know!" Mrs. Blondell said tremulously. But Margaret went quietly out through the door, which the officer was guarding against intruders, and hurried back to her work.

## CHAPTER XI.

### Mr. Dorn's Proposal.

When Margaret again took her seat at her desk Mr. Dorn observed that she was in some kind of trouble and, instantly assuming a sympathetic tone and manner, he inquired:

"Has anything happened? You look positively wretched, Miss Blondell."

"My mother, who has been ill for some time, is much worse, and I am afraid she is losing her reason."

Thinking he saw an opportunity to make himself agreeable, Mr. Dorn came quickly over to Margaret, and placing an arm around her shoulders, bent his head so close to hers that her hair brushed his cheek, as he whispered:

"Will you not let me comfort you, dear?"

Instantly Margaret turned and pushed the man away from her as she exclaimed:

"Sir! I supposed you were a gentleman."

Flushing guiltily under the steady gaze of Margaret's eyes, Mr. Dorn stammered:

"I beg your pardon, Miss Blondell; I really did not mean any harm. You seem such a child to me that I forgot myself—and I am so fond of children," he added foolishly.

"I am a woman twenty years old," said Margaret coldly, "and you will please not forget yourself again."

With the flush still on his face Mr. Dorn rose and went to a window and, while he apparently gazed listlessly at the buildings across the street, he drummed softly with his fingers upon the glass and planned to make Margaret love him. But something in the girl's looks and manner seemed to disturb his thoughts, and he decided to go out for a walk, believing he could think more clearly when away from her presence. Finally he took his hat and walked slowly and with bowed head past her desk and out of the room, taking very good care to let her see his look of sadness and reproach before he closed the door behind him.

The first moment William Dorn's eyes rested upon Margaret's beautiful face and form he decided to gain possession of her; and so far in his life he had never failed to win any woman whom he had attempted to win. The thought that he should fail to accomplish his purpose in this instance had not entered his mind; but the experiences of the last few moments had taught him that he must proceed slowly and with much more caution than he had sometimes had to do with other girls of her age. After walking for a few blocks he came to one of those green spots that are still left in New York for breathing places for the poor creatures who cannot get out into the country. There were a few trees, a bit of green grass to look at, and some seats to rest upon, and it was here that Mr. Dorn sat down to think of ways and means by

which he could accomplish the object which seemed most important to him at that moment.

"What can I do to make peace with her and to make me seem as innocent as I shall look?" he muttered. "If I could but get her attention for a few moments she would very soon be subject to my will; but she is so deucedly energetic and keeps her fingers flying over those typewriter keys and her thoughts are so intently concentrated upon her work that I can scarcely catch her eyes for an instant. I must make her look at me——"

At that moment a florist's boy passed with a huge bunch of American Beauties in his hands, and Mr. Dorn sprang instantly to his feet. "I have it!" he exclaimed. "I remember how she wept over that one little rose; now I shall bring her a dozen," and, going directly to the nearest florist, he bought twelve of the finest roses that were in the shop, and taking them under an arm he started at a brisk walk for his office.

"These will fix matters," he muttered. "One should not be too hasty with such girls as she. Something will turn up to favor me, and then, my darling, you will not be so independent, but will be glad to have me comfort you in any way I choose," and with an assumed expression of deep humiliation upon his face, Mr. Dorn opened his office door and, walking slowly to Margaret's desk, timidly laid his bunch of roses before her; then, without raising his eyes, he said, while his voice trembled very perceptibly:

"Please forgive me, Miss Blondell; you don't know how sorry I am for what I did. I assure you

that I did not think a wrong thought, and I cannot bear to have you think ill of me," and his manner was so humble and he looked so sincere that Margaret half believed him. Then, his peace offering was so beautiful and she remembered that she must continue to work for the firm, so without raising her eyes she replied:

"Yes, Mr. Dorn, I shall forgive you this time; but shall expect you to remember my age hereafter."

Thanking her humbly and breathing an audible sigh of relief, without speaking again he seated himself at his desk, leaned his head upon his hand and assumed an attitude of deep dejection. Margaret finished her work and at the usual hour prepared to go home; in passing Mr. Dorn's desk she bowed and bade him a pleasant good night, to which he replied with all the humility he could assume.

Mr. Dorn's experiences with women had been extensive and varied, and he prided himself upon knowing just how to manage the fair sex. He knew that humility of manner would never fail to arouse Margaret's pity, and he believed that pity was akin to love. So with great apparent humility he decided to abide his time.

That night Margaret retired very early, but could not go to sleep. She missed her mother's complaining and scolding; then, too, the apartment seemed empty and she felt so dreadfully alone. Mr. Dorn's face kept rising before her mental vision, and she began wondering if he cared for her as much as he seemed to do.

"There is such a strange fascination about him," she murmured, "and a feeling comes over me at times that once he and I were friends. It was not during my short social life, I am sure, and I know I did not meet him at school."

At that moment Margaret's attention was attracted to a bright light on the wall at the foot of her bed. Half rising on her elbow, she looked to see if it were a reflection from something outside her window, but the shade was drawn tightly. Then she watched it as it grew brighter and larger until it seemed as if she was looking through a great aperture in the wall at the same scene that had appeared to her on that first day at the office. Yes, there was the river, the man and the woman with the babe. There was the tree, the birds, and now the tragedy, just as she had seen them all on that other day. And then the light began fading and in another moment it was gone.

"Strange," murmured the girl; "what does it mean?" and then she sank into a deep slumber.

The next morning Margaret wakened with a peculiar sensation of weariness. She had been dreaming all night of Mr. Dorn, and now that she was thoroughly awake she lay for a few moments before rising from her bed, thinking of him and of his misbehavior on the day previous.

"He is handsome," she murmured; "but his influence troubles me. When I am alone with him I feel that I must look at his eyes, and yet, somehow, I seem to know that I should not. Yesterday after he gave me those flowers I seemed to hear him say: 'You do love William Dorn, and

you have not the power to resist him.' Those words kept coming into my mind over and over again until they seemed to be written in fiery red letters and stood out clear and distinct between me and my work. It is my own foolish imagination and I know it, for I do not love him nor any other man!" and springing out of bed, Margaret dashed cold water over her face and neck and then rubbed her flesh with a coarse towel until her skin glowed with the friction.

For three weeks Margaret worked steadily at her desk from eight o'clock in the morning until five at night, and during that time Mr. Dorn never again attempted to so much as touch her hand. His behavior was in every respect above suspicion. He never failed to keep fresh cut flowers on Margaret's desk, however, and in many ways manifested a thoughtfulness for her comfort which won from her the deepest gratitude. But her feelings toward him she, herself, could not understand. Sometimes, when he sat at his desk, silent and with a troubled look upon his face, she felt that she must go over and tell him how sorry she was and ask what she could do to help him. But it always happened that just as she was about to offer her sympathy some one came into the office to talk business, and the moment he became interested in conversation with another person she immediately experienced a revulsion of feeling and was thankful that she had not acted upon what she believed would have been a foolish impulse.

Matters had gone on in this manner until the three weeks were ended, and then Margaret began

to feel a constant daily lassitude. Nearly every night she was troubled in her dreams by Mr. Dorn. Sometimes he seemed to be pleading for her love, and then again she saw him a fiend in human form, following her with a look of passion in his eyes that sometimes frightened her into wakefulness for the remainder of the night. And she had now reached a point where she feared to go to sleep lest the frightful pictures and the troubled thoughts that came with slumber should drive her mad; and yet, notwithstanding her fears, she felt at times an almost irresistible impulse to throw herself at his feet and ask for his protection. During the greater part of the time at the office Mr. Dorn still wore his look of deep humility, which sometimes seemed to express a condition of hopeless mental dejection, and while her employer was in these moods Margaret's heart would seem to be almost bursting with conflicting emotions.

It was while she was suffering from one of the most violent of these paroxysms that a messenger came to tell her that her mother's condition had been considered by the physicians and she had been pronounced insane; and that Margaret could come to see her before she would be removed to a private asylum. At the address given her Margaret found her mother in a fit of deep repentance. Mrs. Blondell was in tears, and when she saw her daughter she clung to her, sobbing and promising never again to scratch or bite if she would only take her home. But the physicians firmly refused to permit Margaret to again assume the care of the patient;

said she had been mad for several years, and was not a safe person to be allowed her freedom.

"It is not for your sake alone, Miss Blondell, that I am refusing her request, but for the welfare of others. She is entirely irresponsible, and the lives and property of her neighbors would be constantly in danger if she were set free. We have been unable to discover any cause for this condition other than frequent indulgences in a very bad temper. The organs of her body are unusually strong, and we have concluded that her mental derangement is entirely due to the fact that she has never controlled her anger. She has now reached the point where she seems to possess the idea that if her wishes are not gratified she will die. She fights to have her way about the most trivial things, as a starving animal fights for food, and she has reached an age now where reformation is impossible. Had she, in her earlier life, been compelled to control her temper she would not be in this condition. But she has been indulged too long. The asylum is the only safe place for her, and there is where she must go."

When Margaret asked what amount she should pay for her mother's support, she was told that because of Judge Hale's kindly offer to bear a part of the expense but ten dollars a week would be required of her; and with a face as white as that of a corpse Margaret rose and, after thanking the physician for his kindly consideration for her, bade her mother good-by.

When Margaret asked the Judge to send her mother to a private asylum instead of the one main-

tained by the county she had no idea of what the cost would be, and when she was told that her share of the expense would be all that she could earn she began to wonder how she could live. All the way back to her rooms she seemed to hear her mother's voice begging to go home, and then an awful fear would seem to seize her heart and paralyze her limbs. During the hours of the long night she tossed and turned in a fever of unrest, and when the morning came the problem was no nearer solved than when she went to bed. With dark, deep circles under her eyes, and with a sad little droop at the corners of her mouth, she went again to her work.

Since Mr. Dorn's first great mistake he had been careful and kindly considerate of Margaret, and now she had grown to believe in him. This morning she felt that he was really the only friend she had, and when he came and stood at a respectful distance and she saw something which she supposed was real sympathy in his eyes, she decided to tell him about her troubles and ask for his advice, and when he said: "I am greatly distressed, Miss Blondell, at seeing you feel so badly—will you not tell me about it?" she began at the beginning and related the story of her life, reserving nothing but the fact that she had been betrothed to Edward Mortimer. And when at the last she told him the price she must pay for her mother's support, he laid his hand tenderly on her head and gently stroked her hair, while a strange light shone in his eyes. But Margaret was sitting with bowed head and did not see the ex-

pression upon her employer's face, and when her story was finished she waited for him to speak and advise her what to do. Trembling with suppressed passion, Mr. Dorn whispered:

"My darling, will you let me help you bear these burdens?" And she, raising her eyes and seeing his handsome face all aglow, mistook his meaning, thought he was asking her to be his wife, and replied:

"Mr. Dorn, I would not deceive you in the least; you have offered to care for me, which is indeed very kind, since you have only known me for so short a time. I fear I do not love you as I ought, although I have seemed to be drawn toward you at times in a way I could not understand; still, if I accept your offer, it will be more because I need your assistance than because I love you. I am telling you this because I think it is honest to do so; I respect you very highly, and after a while I may love you. If you want me on those terms you may have me."

"Oh, my darling!" exclaimed Mr. Dorn in ecstasy, "and do you really consent to be mine?"

"Yes, I consent."

"When?" he asked breathlessly.

"At any time; to-day if you wish," she replied wearily.

"Will you go with me to-night?"

"Yes, I shall not be a very fashionable bride; but if we should be married in the evening the defects in my costume will not be observed."

"Married!" he exclaimed, and then he turned his face away. But Margaret had commenced work

again and did not observe the sudden change in his voice.

Mr. Dorn was terribly disappointed. After all the hours he had spent trying to hypnotize Margaret into becoming his plaything, and having now reached the point where he believed he was about to enjoy the fruits of his mental labor, to have his plans fall through in this unexpected manner was a little too much for him to patiently bear. He went to the window and stood looking out, while way down deep in his heart he swore wickedly at his bad luck. He tried to think of some way to postpone this wedding, which he had precipitated upon himself quite against his own wishes. He had no intention of marrying any one, but expected to treat Margaret as he had treated dozens of other girls before her. He knew that she had misunderstood him, and what should he do? After considering the matter for a few moments he drew his chair close to hers and, winding his arms around her waist, he pulled her head over against his shoulder and asked for a kiss. Believing herself to be his betrothed wife, Margaret yielded to his caresses, until something in his look and manner frightened her and she struggled to release herself from his embrace; but the devil in the man's nature was too strong to be repressed, and believing the present opportunity ought not to be lost, he almost crushed her in his arms while he rained passionate kisses upon her face and lips.

Margaret struggled and gasped for breath, but Mr. Dorn did not stop until she screamed with fright. At this the scoundrel released her, and

with blazing cheeks and trembling limbs she rose and attempted to leave the room. But Mr. Dorn's influence over her was very strong, and as her hand touched the door knob he looked into her eyes and said:

"Stop!"

Instantly the color faded from her face and she seemed unable to move, but stood looking helplessly at him. After a few moments he beckoned to her to return to her seat, and without taking her eyes from his face she obeyed him. Then, turning away from her, he stepped to a mirror and stood for a little time arranging his cravat, which had become somewhat rumpled during the previous struggle; finally he turned again to Margaret, and, resting his hand on the back of her chair, he looked steadily down at her and asked:

"By the way, what are your ideas about marriage, Margaret?"

He had never before called her by her first name, and although it seemed that his hypnotic influence was strong enough to compel her to mechanically obey him, still there was something held in reserve that he had not gained possession of, and a slight frown settled upon her face as she replied:

"Of true marriage my ideas are rather vague, because I have never given the matter much consideration; but I suppose when a man and woman are wedded their interests become one, and they try to make each other happy by the unselfish devotion each holds in his heart for the other."

"Do you think having a ceremony performed makes their union any happier?"

"For those who love each other and who intend to be true to their vows, the formality of a ceremony neither increases nor diminishes their happiness; but since it is lawful that all marriages in this country shall be solemnized in that way, and since children born of parents not united in that manner are considered illegitimate, it is both right and proper to conform to the customs of the country in that respect as well as in all other respects. It is a trifling thing to do any way, and any one who objects to it is either seeking notoriety in some way or does not intend to keep his vows. Why do you ask?" she inquired, looking curiously up at him.

Margaret's reply and her unexpected question seemed to disconcert Mr. Dorn, and he winced under her gaze, but replied:

"Oh, for no especial reason, only I had not thought of the marriage license when I proposed to-night as—that is—when I mentioned to-night. We cannot be married without a license unless we leave the State. We could take a train and go away, you know," he suggested eagerly, thinking he saw an opportunity for getting her to leave the city with him alone. But here Margaret seemed to have regained her self-possession and replied:

"Oh, there need be no such haste as that. We shall have plenty of time; whenever you get the license we will be married—since we have no angry papa to elude we need not run away."

It had now become quite evident to Mr. Dorn that he had not gained complete control of Margaret. There was something he had omitted to do, and as he realized that she was regaining her

poise and becoming positive to him and to his suggestions, he himself began to weaken, and as the force he had sent out to her began to return upon himself his voice trembled as he asked:

"And you will not go with me until I get a license?"

Turning the glorious light of her eyes full upon him with a look of surprise, she asked:

"Go where with you?"

"I meant—er—to go—out of the State—to be married," he stammered.

"I don't see the necessity," said Margaret quietly; "this is not an elopement, and nobody will forbid the banns."

Mr. Dorn was completely nonplussed. He could not make an evil proposal to that pure-minded girl at that moment, and when she turned her innocent eyes upon him it seemed as if she must see through his thin exterior of respectability and read the villainy in his soul. For another moment he hesitated and then, turning quickly upon his heel, he made an excuse that he had an errand to do and went out to think the matter over and to make more plans by which he could carry out his evil desires.

After he had gone Margaret went to the window where he had stood, and looked out. The sun was just disappearing behind the tall buildings and its last rays were lighting up the spires and metal covered roofs, making them glitter like burnished gold and silver. In the street below crowds of people were hurrying in opposite directions, and she thought: How strange this life is! I am stand-

ing here one hundred feet or more above those persons and from my position they appear as children, and it seems that there is nothing in common between us. It is just the same with social distinctions. They who stand where noble blood or wealth has placed them look indifferently down, from their high position, upon suffering humanity who struggles and labors to live. Neither class understands the other, because the sacred bond of sympathy has ceased to exist between them. But when these positions become changed, and they who occupy the exalted positions are brought down upon a level with those persons upon whom they once looked with indifference and perhaps scorn, then the struggle for life becomes equally divided and heart turns to heart for assistance and love. With one shudder of Mother Earth and all false distinctions are swept away, the palace lies as lowly as the cottage, and all her children, whether they are rich or poor, become homeless and shelterless alike. And so we see there are no real, lasting distinctions that have been, or can be, made by men. God's gifts of the sunlight, the pure air, the rain and the snow come to each and every one of us and life is universal. I feel it pulsating through me now the same as when I was surrounded by wealth and friends; and so God has not withdrawn that which He gave to me. It is only the man-made distinctions that have been changed, and I am just as near to God as I have ever been.

But now I must consider this question of marrying Mr. Dorn. If I become his wife my life will be as great a deception as it would have been had

I married Mr. Mortimer. There is nothing in either of those men for me to love. Mr. Dorn smiles and smiles and shows his teeth like a hungry animal, and while there is a fascination about his presence that Mr. Mortimer never had, yet I cannot rid myself of the feeling that he is not what he seems to be, that he is trying to deceive me. There are times when his eyes look like the eyes of a reptile and remind me of a time when I saw a dear little bird charmed and killed by an ugly snake that lay coiled under a beautiful rosebush. The poor little bird flew round and round above the ugly thing, and although it seemed to realize in a way that it should not go down to it, yet it had not the power to resist its charm, and it kept flying nearer and nearer and dipping lower and lower until finally the snake sprang up and seized it. To-day when I started to leave this room and Mr. Dorn called out to me to stop, his eyes looked like that old snake's eyes, and had my life depended upon going I could not have moved another step away from him; and yet that seems very foolish to me now, because at this moment I am absolute mistress of myself. What does it all mean, and what is this power which he has over me?

Then, too, what is he gaining when he takes me for his wife? He assumes the burden of my mother's support and marries a woman who has confessed that she does not love him. I have nothing to give him besides myself and he fully understands the conditions. It seems that fate is pushing me into this marriage because, however much I shrink from it, it seems the only thing for

me to do at this time. This marriage is the only door that is open to me, and I must enter it whatever the consequences may be. But this is not doing the work that I am being paid to do. I must return to the machine and the business of Braidy and Dorn must be done, and Margaret turned slowly from the window and resumed her type-writing.

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## CHAPTER XII.

### The Last Warning.

When Mr. Dorn left his office he went directly to Central Park, found a seat, lighted a cigar, and began musing after this fashion: Now this is a great mess. I can't marry that girl and I don't want to, for if that old matter should be raked open or somebody should come from home and find me here with another family, it could be made altogether too interesting for me. But this girl will never enter into an aside, and it will have to be marriage or nothing with her, because I seem to be able to but half control her. If I could postpone that ceremony—but that would only be postponing my possession of her. I can't see a way to gain my purpose unless I do marry her and keep the affair a secret. Secret marriages always leak out; but perhaps this one could be kept as long as I should care. I believe I'll risk it anyway. The devil has helped me through everything so far, and I think I can depend upon him this time; and having settled the matter in his own mind, Mr. Dorn returned to his office. Finding Margaret alone, he bent tenderly over her and whispered:

"To-morrow, my darling, I shall get that license, and then the blessed privilege of having you for my

own will be mine. To-morrow evening we shall be wedded, and this will be the last night that you must stay in that miserable place where you have suffered so terribly. But since you have been so frank with me, I feel that I should not be honest with you if I did not tell you about my own financial condition. I am not a rich man, but I am perfectly able to provide comfortably for you—and for your mother. We shall board for a while, and perhaps you will not object to assisting here at the office until Mr. Braidy returns and we can make other arrangements.”

Deceived by his looks and manner, and not wishing to be a helpless burden upon the man who, for love of her, was assuming the care of herself and mother, Margaret quickly replied:

“It will not be necessary to get another stenographer, because I shall be glad to continue with the work.”

At this Mr. Dorn was greatly pleased, since he had feared that Margaret would insist upon being introduced into society as his wife. So he kissed her very tenderly and told her to go home and pack her trunks and have everything ready to be sent for on the following day; and then he held the door open and looked volumes of love into her eyes as she passed out.

Margaret's heart beat quite lightly as she entered her humble abode that day. This is the last time I shall climb these rickety old stairs, she thought, and when she had removed her wraps and had built a fire she sang a little ballad while her tea was drawing. Going to the cupboard, she took all

the crusts and crumbs that had been left after her morning meal and laid them on the table. Then she opened her purse and counted out five pennies and laid them on the table beside the crusts.

"All the money I have in the world—now that my debts are paid," she said. "Shall I spend these pennies for bread and walk to the office to-morrow, or shall I save them for car fare and eat these crusts?" she asked aloud. Glancing out of the window, she saw that the rain was falling in a heavy shower. "I will eat these now and ride to-morrow," she said.

After the frugal meal had been eaten and the table carefully brushed clean from crumbs, Margaret sat down to think. "And this is the last day of my girlhood," she murmured. "Who would have believed that I would ever come to this?" And now the strange dreams that she had had recurred to her mind, and she seemed to feel that her beautiful Ray was near. Leaning back in her chair, she clasped her hands together in her lap and waited for her angel to appear. In a short time the light upon the table began growing dim and then dimmer and finally it went out altogether, and then the same faint glow that she had seen in the prison cell appeared. It grew brighter and brighter until the whole room was flooded with it, and then the woman in the yellow robe came and stood before her. With her heart beating rapidly, Margaret gazed for a few moments upon this beautiful being and said:

"You told me the other time you came that you are a woman the same as I, yet you go wherever

you choose. My door is locked, yet you came into this room without opening the door. Why cannot I do this as well as you if you are human like me?"

"Because of your ignorance of law you are chained to your material body. In your past and present lives your animal or lower nature has controlled your actions, and you have been devoted to the gratification of your animal desires, instead of giving your attention to the growth of the higher, imperishable part of yourself. Therefore you know nothing of the powers which you possess, but which are latent within you," the woman replied.

"How could I know things of which I have never been taught?" Margaret asked. "I should be very glad indeed to learn how to be free like yourself. You said that my lives, past and present, have been devoted to the gratification of animal desires. What do you mean by my past lives; I have never lived until now."

The woman smiled and said: "You do not remember those other lives, but they are stamped with indelible distinctness upon your photosphere, and could you but see and read the meaning of those pictures of the past you would understand that this life is but the result, the consequence, if you choose to call it so, of other lives gone by. There never was an effect without its own related cause. True it is that those mistakes were made in ignorance, but it is by and through those ignorant mistakes that the great Law teaches Its offenders."

Here Margaret felt a wave of indignation sweep over her, and she replied warmly: "It is unjust to

punish one for that which he knows nothing about. I have never sinned so much as I have suffered!"

"You speak hastily and ignorantly," the woman replied pleasantly, "but the time has not come to enter into further explanations of these causes. To-morrow you will unite yourself with a creature who has been nothing for many lives past but a cruel, human scourge. The step you are about to take will complete the drama that you and he commenced five hundred years ago. You will become his victim and expiate, through suffering now, the error you committed then. When you have reached the climax I shall try to save you, and when we meet again I shall be in the flesh. Good by."

Margaret sat up straight in her chair and looked around. "Another dream," she whispered, "and this time she made me understand that she will never come to me again as an angel. If I were superstitious I should think it a bad omen for her to come the night before my wedding day, and call my promised husband a cruel, human scourge—but dreams always mean contrary to what they seem to foretell. If this rule holds good Mr. Dorn will make a good husband and my troubles are at an end," and Margaret lighted the lamp and began her packing.

It was long past midnight when the last thing was done. Not because she had so many gowns to fold and arrange, but because she took this time to read over many old letters and to look at the photographs of friends who in the old days of prosperity had been very dear to her. One by one she

laid them all on the coals in the grate, and when they had turned to ashes she put out her light and went to bed and to sleep.

## CHAPTER XIII.

### Wedded Bliss?

When Mr. Dorn met Margaret at the office the next morning he took her hands and held them both in one of his and drew her close to him, while he whispered: "My darling little wife—that is to be! And you have not changed your mind?"

"No, why should I?"

"You shouldn't, of course; but it seems too good to be true," he said sweetly. "I shall go at once and make arrangement for my birdie's nest," and kissing her lips and casting loving glances over his shoulder, he waved her an affectionate good-by.

"How strangely that man's presence affects me!" Margaret said half aloud. "When he is out of my sight I think of him at times with fear and all kinds of forebodings. When he sits at his desk I admire his handsome face and military figure; but when he comes near enough to touch me I feel as if I should suffocate. How can I ever be his wife?"

At noon Mr. Dorn returned and told Margaret that they would take a carriage and go first to luncheon, then to the house of a clergyman to be married and then to their hotel, and he laughingly declared that he knew the usual order of things was being transposed in this case, since most persons

were married first and took luncheon afterward. But since he desired it to be done in this prosaic manner he hoped she would not object. Margaret replied that it was her wish that her husband should be pleased with the details as well as with the principal things of their new life, and it made no difference to her whether the marriage ceremony came before or after luncheon, so long as they were both happy afterward. Mr. Dorn smiled down at her and declared that their new life should be nothing but poetry and sunshine if he could make it so. And although Margaret smiled back at him and tried to believe in his promises, something down in her heart seemed to whisper: "*It is a lie, a lie. He does not mean a word that he has said.*"

\* \* \* \* \*

At their hotel Mr. Dorn had selected the very best room in the house; not because he wished to please his wife, but because he loved comfort for himself, and wherever he went he made it a point to get the best of everything. This hotel was not a fashionable one and was patronized by tradespeople and transients, but it answered Mr. Dorn's purpose very well because none of his aristocratic friends would be likely to come there and discover his secret. When they entered their pretty little parlor and Margaret saw the glowing fire, easy chairs and pretty rugs, for a moment her heart thrilled with something like happiness. This comfort reminded her of her old home, and when she had passed into the bedroom and saw the pretty brass bedstead, with its dainty lace spread and

draperies, she began thinking that, after all, perhaps she had done well to marry this man.

"How does birdie like her nest?" Mr. Dorn inquired sweetly.

"It is like heaven," Margaret replied softly, while her voice trembled with emotion.

Kissing her lips tenderly, Mr. Dorn said: "Now we will brush up a bit and then go down to dinner."

Margaret's trunk had been brought, and taking from it a silk waist—the last thing that was left of all her pretty clothes—she shook out the lace ruffles, brushed and curled her hair afresh and, after putting on the waist, she went out to meet her husband, who was waiting to go down stairs.

Mr. Dorn was fastidious. He wanted a woman upon whom he bestowed attention to be well dressed, and when he saw Margaret wearing the same skirt she had worn at the office his sense of propriety was deeply shocked. He stood silently biting his lips and twisting his mustaches while he gazed critically at her, and after what seemed to Margaret almost an age he asked coldly:

"Is that the best gown you have?"

"It is all that I have," Margaret replied faintly, while all the blood in her body seemed struggling to get into her face.

"Then I think we will have our dinner served here—we shall enjoy it better, don't you think?" and without waiting for an answer he touched the bell for a servant.

Margaret understood the reason for his sudden change of plan and felt deeply humiliated, but she

choked back her tears and replied: "As you wish."

When the servant appeared Mr. Dorn ordered dinner for two served in that room and then turned to Margaret and said: "I had no idea you were so destitute of clothing—had observed that your dress at the office was shabby, but supposed you had at least one more. The first thing you will do tomorrow will be to go shopping. Make such purchases as are necessary and secure the services of a modiste who will attend to your orders at once."

Margaret stood before her husband and listened to his words until she could not control her feelings another instant; then, covering her face with her handkerchief, she ran into the next room, and, dropping into her dressing chair, she wept stormily. Mr. Dorn had no sympathy for her grief because he knew nothing about that kind of an emotion, and so while she sobbed he stood looking into the fire and speculating upon the cost of a respectable outfit for her. After deciding not to allow the cost of her wardrobe to exceed three hundred dollars, he suddenly seemed to become conscious of her tears and asked what she was crying about.

"Oh, I am so foolishly sensitive," she chokingly replied, "but I once had so much and it was so hard to give up everything. When we lost our home I knew my evening dresses would be of no use to me for a while, and I sold them all, keeping only two street suits and as many fancy waists. Everything is worn out now except this one, and it hurt me to have you feel ashamed of me," and the sobs broke out again.

Mr. Dorn was provoked with Margaret for weep-

ing. He did not want her eyes spoiled and her nose reddened—not that he cared how badly she felt—but he wanted her to look pretty and to smile at him. So he said shortly: “Well, don’t cry! I shall give you money enough to make yourself presentable for the present at least, and we shall see about the future,” and the dinner being served at that moment, Margaret went to the bathroom to bathe her eyes in cold water.

“It was so silly of me,” she murmured; “he didn’t really mean to hurt me, I’m sure, and I shall behave myself better for the remainder of the evening.”

When she returned to the parlor nearly all traces of tears were gone, and as they sat down to dinner she exerted herself to be agreeable. Mr. Dorn was glad to have the domestic sun shine again, and ordered wine and confectionery, nuts and fruits, and since it was the first good dinner Margaret had eaten since her misfortunes had come upon her, she gave herself up entirely to the enjoyment of it. Not having been accustomed of late to drinking wine, the small quantity she took went to her head, and with flushed cheeks and sparkling eyes she looked a vision of loveliness to her husband, who made toasts and drank them until he could not remember the last one and repeated it several times.

Margaret knew that Mr. Dorn was drinking too much, but could not prevent him, and when the last drop of wine was drunk he drew his chair around the table, took a seat beside her and commenced talking confidentially. He was now too drunk to know or care what he said, and to his

shame he began telling Margaret of some of his own latest escapades. Horrified at his remarks, she listened shudderingly to his stories, and when he rose unsteadily from his chair and, seizing her roughly around the waist, began waltzing with her about the room, she nearly fainted from fright.

"You're the, hic, handsomest of them all, hic, my dear, and I believe I'll love you, hic, the longest," he said.

Margaret felt as if she was freezing. There was one spot in her brain that seemed burning with a lurid flame, and she raised her hand to her head to feel if it were hot. Powerless to resist the treatment she was receiving, she weakly submitted to this wild dance in which she was being whirled around the room. Getting out of breath, her husband roughly pulled her toward a large mirror and, stopping before it, he leered into her face with a drunken grin as he said:

"Hic, come now, sweetheart, hic, kiss me. Aren't you proud to have won for yourself, hic, this conqueror of feminine hearts?"

Had Margaret been given her choice between kissing his vile lips or meeting death, at that moment she would have preferred death, and she stood silent and motionless looking at his passion-flushed face, while he stood gazing admiringly at his own reflection.

"I'm king of, hic, hearts!" he exclaimed, while he straightened himself and threw back his shoulders. Then, patting his chest gently, he looked at Margaret with a cunning expression upon his face and said: "Lay your beautiful, hic, head here,

sweetheart, where all your predecessors have sobbed out their, hic, love and their, hic, disappointments."

But Margaret did not accept his invitation, and he, being too drunk and too self-satisfied to observe the state of her feelings, and believing her to be speechless with admiration for himself, continued: "Yes, ma chere, I see how charmed you are with me, hic. You're just like all the others. Hic, I never fail in winning a woman, hic. You said you didn't love me, hic, but now you see, hic, you can't help it," and turning from contemplating his own reflection, he faced Margaret and waited for her answer.

"Don't you?" he persisted.

"If it were possible for me to love a roue, then I should not have far to go for an idol," she replied bitterly, and turning away she took a seat by the fire.

Mr. Dorn did not quite like the tone of Margaret's voice, and he did not hear all her words. He thought she was saying she would not be compelled to look further than to himself for an idol, and he replied: "No, my dear, hic, you shall have no other gods before me," and then he began making preparations for bed.

All that night poor Margaret laid awake upon the couch before the fire while her husband, in his drunken stupor, snored loudly in the next room. She thought of the horrible confessions he had made about his past life, and the words of the woman in the yellow robe were strongly impressed upon her mind.

"And I am wedded for the whole of my natural life to this human scourge," she whispered over and over again. "But twenty years old and may live for forty more years with this creature that has fallen lower than the brutes, I wonder if I am not crazed and if this is not one of the delusions of my brain," and rising, she went to the mirror to look at her own reflection. Closely she studied the expression in the eyes reflected back to her. It was one of horror and despair. Then she observed the deathly pallor of her face, the drawn and haggard look around her mouth, and she lifted the heavy masses of her hair to see if it were turning white.

"Yesterday I thought I had more burdens than any other woman had borne, and believed I could not endure any more. But it was as She said, I had not reached the greatest depths of my sorrow. My hardest, sharpest pain was yet to come. What shall I do? Where shall I go for help!" and falling upon her knees, Margaret bowed her head to the floor and lay shivering and sobbing in her misery.

When Mr. Dorn woke the next morning his head ached and he felt cross. He had a dim recollection of some of the things he had done and said on the previous evening, and seeing Margaret dressed and sitting by the fire, apparently in deep thought, he immediately became vexed with her and exclaimed: "It strikes me that you are rather cool for a bride of a day!"

Margaret did not appear to hear his ill-natured remark, but continued to gaze into the glowing coals before her. She had thought it all out and had decided upon her course of conduct. She

would seem to be unconscious of his sinful life and hoped her influence would make of him a better man. But Margaret was only one of the many girls who has taken upon her frail shoulders the burden of humanizing a brute—thinking it a womanly duty to attempt to make something out of nothing—and each girl began as Margaret did, with the faith that she would succeed where all the others had failed.

Getting no response from Margaret, Mr. Dorn next commenced storming and swearing because the water in the bath tub was too cold. Later he pulled his coat from a hook and tore a hole in the lining, and this called forth another volley of profanity. But Margaret did not seem to mind his outbursts of wrath, and offered in the latter instance to repair the damaged garment. Somewhat mollified by her gentleness and finding that he could not possibly pick a quarrel with her, he stooped and kissed her and remarked, as she gave him the nicely mended coat: "Somehow, I feel ugly this morning, but a good breakfast and a cup of strong coffee will brace me all right."

Margaret thought, he is just like a wolf. When its stomach is empty it can fight and kill, but when it is filled with food it is not to be feared. My papa was not like this; so, surely, men are not all alike.

When they were ready to go down to breakfast Mr. Dorn insisted upon it that his wife should wear her coat and hat, and taking her to the most obscure corner in the dining room, he managed to escape the observation he wished to avoid. At

the office he gave her a roll of bills, and after cautioning her to be prudent, he gave orders for her to buy four times as much as the money would pay for, and told her to have the dresses finished and sent home the very next day. Margaret attempted to explain that it would be impossible for any modiste in the city to complete the work so soon, and that she would not be able to purchase one-half the things he had ordered. At this he swore roundly that it could be done and that she should not appear in the dining room again, or anywhere else, with him until she should have something to wear.

After spending the entire morning shopping, Margaret returned to the office with samples of her purchases for her husband's inspection. After looking them all over he informed her that she had not so much taste as an old black cat that his mother used to have.

"What would you have liked?" Margaret asked, with her eyes full of tears.

"How can I tell when I have not the goods before me to select from?" he snapped.

Poor Margaret felt that her cup of bitterness was indeed full and sat down to her work with a heavy heart; and after Mr. Dorn had scolded until he could think of nothing more to say he declared that he was getting ravenous, and ordered her to remain in the office until he should return from luncheon. Tired and hungry as Margaret was, she was glad to see the door close behind him, and even welcomed the sight of Mr. Braidy when he walked into the room a few minutes later. Looking up and bowing as if he had not been gone an

hour, Margaret went on with her work without speaking, until he suddenly asked :

"Where's Dorn?"

"Gone to lunch."

"Hum—m! How's business?" he asked, putting his hands deep into his pockets, while he stared at the back of Margaret's head.

"You will have to ask my husband."

"Your what!" he shouted.

"I beg pardon," said Margaret, looking up from her work in surprise. "What did you say?"

"I asked what you said!" Mr. Braidy roared in thunderous tones while he scowled blackly at her.

"I don't remember just what I did say," she replied, thinking the man was either drunk or crazy.

"It was something about your husband."

"Oh, yes. I said you would have to ask my husband, Mr. Dorn, about the business."

Mr. Braidy dropped into a chair, exclaiming: "Well, this is a pretty how do you do! Do you mean to tell me that you and Dorn are married?"

"We were married yesterday afternoon; is there anything wrong about it?" she asked in astonishment.

"Good God! What will that man do next? This makes the —well, all right. Are you sure you're married, miss?" he inquired, suspiciously.

"Will you please explain your meaning?" Margaret asked.

"No," he replied savagely. "I don't tell tales nor carry bones. I expected something of this

sort, only it has come a little sooner than usual; that's all."

Just at that moment, and before Margaret had time to reply, Mr. Dorn came into the office. He had eaten a good dinner at his favorite cafe and was in a smiling mood again. Surprised at seeing Mr. Braidy, he extended his hand in greeting; but that gentleman pretended not to see it, and only grunted. With a feeling of suffocation in her throat Margaret rose and left the office.

"So you've gone and married this one, have you?" Mr. Braidy inquired as soon as the two men were alone.

"Who told you?"

"She did."

"I wonder what imp of darkness inspired her to tell it, and if she is going to blab the news to everybody she sees? That's just like a woman to tell everything she knows."

"Did you expect to keep it a secret?"

"Yes."

"Why?"

"For reasons of my own."

"Why did you marry her at all?"

"Because I couldn't get her any other way; but I'm more than half sorry that I went to so much trouble. She isn't worth it—pretty to look at, but cold enough to freeze a man to death. She isn't my style—isn't in love with me—and that's where the trouble lies. I hate to think I have failed, and when my purpose is accomplished I shall be off after fresh conquests," and the bridegroom smiled and carelessly twisted his mustache.

"You're the meanest man I know," said Mr. Braidy, and he brought his fist down upon the desk before him to emphasize his words. "I don't mind cheating a woman out of every cent of money she has in the world, because in money matters I am merciless; but I draw the line at ruining their souls—clean ones, at that!"

"It has been a pastime of mine since I was a lad, and I intend to continue to do it as long as I live. But why are you so stricken with regrets?" Mr. Dorn inquired curiously.

"I've a good mind to knock you through that window into the street below. You deserve it, and the world would then be well rid of one scamp!" Mr. Braidy retorted hotly. But at that moment Margaret returned and the subject was dropped and the remainder of the day was spent in discussing business matters in which both men were interested. When the time came to go home Mr. Dorn made an excuse that he had an errand to do, and in this way managed to avoid accompanying his wife to their hotel. She was rather glad than otherwise to go alone, and on reaching their cozy parlor removed her wraps and made herself thoroughly comfortable on the couch before the fire. When the dinner was sent up Margaret observed that there was but one cover laid, and she asked:

"Why do you not bring covers for two?"

"Mr. Dorn is at dinner downstairs and ordered you served here," the man replied.

"Very well; you need not wait," and when the servant had retired from the room Margaret went to the table and did full justice to the meal. Be-

fore she had quite finished her husband appeared, looking as though he expected to meet with a storm of tears and reproaches. But he was happily disappointed, since Margaret did not seem to observe that he had not dined with her. When the service was removed she took a book and, drawing her chair under the chandelier, began reading.

This was a situation Mr. Dorn could not understand. He preferred to meet tears and reproaches rather than utter indifference. He tapped his toes upon the brass fender for a while and amused himself by stirring the coals; then he rose and stood with his back to the fire and stared at his wife, who seemed entirely oblivious to her surroundings and to him. That any woman could be interested in a book when he was present was a new and a very disagreeable feature in his play. He began humming a strain from a popular opera, and still she did not seem to be conscious of his presence. Finally he exclaimed:

"You are good company!"

After finishing her paragraph Margaret looked up with a bewildered expression in her eyes and asked:

"Did you speak?"

"Did I speak," he mimicked. "If you don't talk to me I shall go and find some one who will."

With her fingers between the leaves of her book Margaret asked: "What would you like to talk about?"

"What are you reading?"

"Emerson's essay on The Oversoul,"

"Let me see it!"

Margaret gave him the book, and after glancing over the page from which she had been reading he turned and deliberately put the book upon the burning coals.

"That is the proper place for such trash," he said. "I would not live with a woman who dabbled in such nonsense as that—or Spiritualism either. They both mean the same thing. As if a man could live after he is dead! What is there to live? All there is to a man is his body, and it seems as if an idiot ought to know that. Why don't you speak?" he demanded crossly. "Have you swallowed your tongue?"

"I have nothing to say. You are at liberty to believe what you choose, and if I do not agree with you it should not matter. A belief or a disbelief in a truth does not change the truth; so where is the good of discussing it?"

"But do you believe that men have souls?" he persisted.

Margaret never understood what caused her to reply as she did, and indeed it seemed as if the words passed her lips without volition: "Yes, some men have souls and some have not. When a man aspires upward he is enlightened by an immortal spirit; but when he sinks lower than a brute it is an indication that his soul has deserted him."

Mr. Dorn was angry. He felt the sting Margaret's words implied, and knowing so much better than she the depths of his own guilt he sarcastically retorted: "Many thanks, my charming wife; you are most complimentary to my sex."

Pray, where did you have so extensive an acquaintance with men as to enable you to arrive at so profound a conclusion?"

Again Margaret heard her own voice saying: "I did not have far to go to reach my conclusions."

"If you mean me, please say so at once!" Mr. Dorn exclaimed with considerable excitement.

"We were speaking of your sex, no one in particular was mentioned; but whoever the jacket fits may wear it—if he likes," replied Margaret coolly as she rose and went to the bookcase for another book.

Mr. Dorn was astounded. He could not remember that a woman had ever before talked like this to him. "I'll get even with her for that," he muttered; but what his plans were he did not say, and when Margaret turned toward him again he had apparently recovered his amiability. Playfully catching her hands, he commenced whirling her in a gay waltz, and exclaimed:

"Smile on me, darling. I don't like you to look so severe. Are you angry because I let you dine alone?"

"No."

"Then kiss me sweet," he whispered, and Margaret obediently held up her face to be kissed.

## CHAPTER XIV.

### Housekeeping?

For the remainder of the evening Mr. Dorn's manner was the quintessence of sweetness and affection. Margaret made a mighty effort to appear interested in his small talk and insipid sallies of wit, at which he always did the laughing; but her heart was like a dead lump in her breast and she felt that slowly but surely emotion was becoming paralyzed or dead within her. The week following Mr. Dorn had nothing but sweet words, smiles and compliments for his wife, and when the gowns came home and were tried on he declared that she was the finest looking woman in the city, and that he should be very proud to introduce her anywhere as his wife. Matters went on like this for almost two weeks, and then one evening, after sitting in a deep study for some time, he suddenly looked up and asked:

"Margaret, how would you like to go house-keeping?"

"Very much," she replied.

"There is a little vine-covered cottage across the river that happens to belong to me. It's a regular robin's nest, and I have been thinking that we could live there for about one-half the money

it is costing us at this hotel; and then we could have pansy beds and lettuce and cucumbers, and we would be so much happier all by ourselves."

Margaret smiled. "It is rather late in the season for pansy beds and lettuce, since it is now past the middle of December; but I have no doubt that we could spend the Winter there quite comfortably, if you choose to do so."

"Oh, of course; I didn't think what time of year it is; I will send men out there to-morrow to take measurements for carpets and curtains, and I will order the furniture, and then next week we can begin housekeeping. You don't care to go and see the place, do you?" he asked anxiously.

"No."

Mr. Dorn was relieved. He did not want his wife to see the "robin's nest" until it was quite ready for occupancy; and had Margaret not been so indifferent to everything concerning her own life and his she would have seen that he was plotting mischief. But she did not seem to care where or how they lived, so long as the bills were paid; and if her husband smiled, it was the same to her as if he frowned; and when he swore, sometimes she did not hear. Mr. Dorn could not understand her, and proposed making a change to please himself; and now that the subject had been introduced, and no objections had been made to his plan, he made all possible haste to get the cottage ready for use.

The following Monday morning was the day appointed for the moving, and on the preceding Sunday he filled their rooms at the hotel with

roses, ordered palms and ferns and had the chandeliers festooned with ivy and red berries. He paid Margaret many compliments and waxed eloquent over the dream their married life would be in their new home. Surprised at all this gush and sentiment, Margaret waited to see what it all meant. After her packing was done, and just as she was about to close and lock the last trunk, Mr. Dorn, as if having just thought of it, said: "Oh, my dear, what did you do with our marriage certificate?"

"I have it somewhere."

"Please let me see it; I never read such a document, and am curious to know what it is like."

Raising her eyes, Margaret saw a peculiar expression upon her husband's face at that moment, which he seemed trying to conceal, and instantly she remembered what Mr. Braidy had said to her at the office on that first day after his return. "Are you sure you're married, miss?" he had asked; and many times since then she had thought of it and shuddered lest she should find that there had been some mistake. Now like a flash a suspicion came into her mind that her husband was trying to get possession of their marriage certificate, and she understood at once the cause for all his recent tenderness.

"It is packed away at the bottom of one of my trunks, and it will be too much trouble to get it now. Some other day will do as well," she said quietly.

With a frown and a smothered curse Mr. Dorn turned away, and Margaret, hearing the impreca-

tion, decided to take good care that he never should get possession of that particular paper.

When at last everything was ready and the expressman had come for the trunks Mr. Dorn suggested that they should go at once and take dinner in their new home that same evening.

"Have you secured the services of a cook and a housemaid?" Margaret inquired.

"I have planned to give you a great surprise, my dear; now please do not ask questions; you know I told you I would attend to everything and save you the trouble," and Mr. Dorn tried to look as if he were keeping a great secret.

After crossing a ferry and driving for two hours and a half out into the country their carriage stopped before a tiny wood colored cottage setting well back from the road and almost hidden among the trees. The house was covered with vines and was surrounded by a large yard. An attempt had once been made to beautify the place, as was shown by the remains of some flower beds and a few rose bushes, which had now grown into a wild tangle on each side of an almost obscured pathway that led from the gate to the front door. The vines that covered the cottage had become woven into such a network over the windows that the small panes of glass of which the windows were composed were scarcely visible. And over the portico at the front door the tendrils were hanging and swaying in the breeze like a ragged veil.

Mr. Dorn opened the little gate that creaked loudly as he swung it back to let Margaret pass through, and he bowed and smiled and bid her wel-

come to their little home with as much apparent sincerity as if he were bestowing upon her a palace instead of a cot. Then, walking quickly up the path, he unlocked the front door with a latch key and, pushing it open, stood aside for her to enter. Margaret stepped inside and looked around.

There were just three rooms—a parlor, a bedroom and a small kitchen—and the appearance of everything indicated that the house had been hastily and cheaply furnished for a temporary residence. There were brown shades at the windows, a few small carpet rugs were spread here and there on the floors and the place was as cold and comfortless as it was possible for the house to be.

"It is very strange that the maids are not here and that there is no fire or lights. They promised to come at eight o'clock this morning and to have everything ready for our arrival," said Mr. Dorn, as he avoided meeting his wife's eyes.

Margaret shivered. "There has been no fire in this house for many months," she said; "look at that," and she pointed to a great black hole in the wall that had once been used for a fireplace, but which was now perforated with small holes and crevices where the rats had lived and raised their families undisturbed for several generations of the rodents.

"I told those men to clean everything and make the place comfortable, and this is the way they obeyed my orders. Because I did not come in person to oversee everything they did, they have left things in this way!" said Mr. Dorn with great assumed indignation.

Stepping into the little apology for a kitchen, Margaret saw a tiny old coal stove with rusty doors and cracked griddles, a plain square board table, and two hard wooden bottomed chairs. On the shelves in the pantry stood some earthenware dishes that were still partly wrapped in packing paper. Returning to the little parlor, she passed on to the sleeping room, and saw there a small round table covered with a coarse cloth, a cheap iron bedstead with springless mattress, a pair of tiny pillows and two chairs standing one on either end of a small cotton rug.

"Did you expect to live in this place?" Margaret asked in surprise, looking full at her husband.

"My dear, I am as much disappointed as you are. You see, I depended upon some one else to attend to the furnishing and arranging of this house, and the work has not been done according to my orders. I shall go at once to the city and find out about it. If you can manage to make yourself comfortable until I return I will set everything straight in a very short time," and Mr. Dorn started for the door.

"But it is cold, and I cannot stay here without a fire. How did you expect that we could live in these three small rooms? Where can we put a maid and a cook? This is not any better than a woodman's hut. I really do not understand your manner of planning," said Margaret, and her voice indicated her disappointment.

"My love, I will see if there is not some fuel that we can make a fire with. I ordered some coal delivered yesterday, but shall not be surprised if that or-

der was not filled either. This house is very much smaller than I supposed; you see, my dear, I never came into the place before—have driven past and thought it such a romantic spot for us to spend our honeymoon. I came into possession of it through the foreclosure of a mortgage, and I had no idea it looked like this inside,” and Mr. Dorn went to the rear of the house to see what he could find. The order of coal amounted to a few baskets full of the bituminous kind and some kindlings.

“Oh, yes,” he called, “here it is. You can make a good fire and warm the house very well, and I will soon have the existing conditions changed—when I get back to the city,” and kissing Margaret hastily, and without offering to assist her at building the fire, he went out and closed the door behind him.

“And this is the ‘robin’s nest!’ That is just about what it is fit for,” said Margaret, and then she laughed hysterically. “Fancy Mr. Dorn stretching his shapely limbs upon that springless bed and covering himself with those coarse cotton sheets and that ninety-eight cent blanket. I know just how much it cost because the price mark is still in a corner. And think of William Dorn combing his dark, wavy locks and parting them by guess—for I see no mirror in the house. And then there are those cups and saucers and that coarse, unbleached cloth. Fancy His Highness drinking coffee from those earthen bowls and wiping his handsome mouth on a corner of the tablecloth—for there are no napkins anywhere. No, my husband does not intend to come back to this place, and unless I go

where he is I shall probably never see his face again," and Margaret sat down to think.

After considering the situation carefully she rose and said: "I shall build a fire and make myself as comfortable to-night as it is possible for me to be, and when to-morrow comes I shall meet it with the best knowledge that I have then," and, removing her gloves and wrap, she brought in a basket of coal, and with plenty of kindling soon had a fire roaring in the great cave-like fireplace. When this was done there was a loud knock at the door, and Margaret opened it, to find an expressman waiting outside with the trunks. When the baggage had been brought in she observed that her husband's trunks were not among the lot, and she asked the man why he had not brought them all. He replied that the others had gone to the Windsor Hotel, on Fifth Avenue, by order of Mr. Dorn.

If there had been a shadow of doubt in Margaret's mind concerning her husband's intentions toward her, this last circumstance dispelled that doubt. She understood that he had deliberately deceived and deserted her and had brought her here to live or die alone, he cared not which. When the expressman had gone she drew a chair before the fire and sat down. "I shall stay here until he himself tells me that he does not want me any longer," she murmured, and after a few moments more of deep thought she said: "Somehow, I am glad to know that he does not intend to return, and at this moment I am really more thankful than sorry," and notwithstanding her unpleasant and uncomfortable surroundings, she felt a little thrill

of happiness at the thought of being free from her husband's influence.

It was quite late the next morning when Margaret awoke and, as was her custom, she lay for a few moments thinking and planning for the day. Afterward she rose and dressed and went about building the fires in both the stove and the fireplace, and after preparing some breakfast from the little basket of grocer's sundries that she found beside the package of dishes in the pantry, she sat down to the square table in the kitchen and ate her simple meal. Then she went out into the yard and examined the vines and the remains of the flower beds and stood for a long time watching the persons who passed; for this was real country, and no one seemed to think it strange for her to be standing at the gate alone. After a while a messenger boy stopped and asked if Mrs. Dorn lived in that house. Margaret replied that she was Mrs. Dorn.

"Then here is a letter for you," he said, and gave Margaret a small square white envelope.

For a moment Margaret hesitated before opening the letter; then she tore it open quickly and read:

"My Dear Miss Blondell:—

"This is to tell you that you are free. With high tide to-morrow I shall be off to Europe—am now on board steamer—and when you receive this I shall be many miles out to sea.

"I thought it better to tell you the truth than to allow you to wait and watch for me. I shall never return to you because you are not my wife. I was

married when we met, and my wife accompanies me on this voyage. Our wedding—yours and mine—was only a joke, and my real name is not William Dorn.

“Yours truly,  
“\_\_\_\_\_.”

“Not his wife!” Margaret exclaimed; “then what am I?” and again Mr. Braidy’s words came back to her mind: “Are you sure you are married, Miss?” Slowly the truth settled down upon her, and seemed to envelop her soul like a great, black mantle. She leaned heavily against the little gate and stood for a long time staring straight before her. After a while, moving as if she were in a dream, she turned and went into the little cottage and sat down in one of the high-backed wooden chairs, and still holding the letter in her hand, her eyes closed, her head fell back against the stiff wooden spindles and she became unconscious.

Hours passed and Margaret did not move, and scarcely seemed to breathe. But as the twilight began to fall a carriage stopped before the house, a woman alighted and, opening the gate, walked quickly up the path. Without stopping to knock on the door, she opened it and stepped into the house, and though the fire had burned entirely out and there was no light in the room, she went immediately to the unconscious girl and placing her hand upon Margaret’s head, stood silently watching her respiration, which was so faint as to be scarcely perceptible. After a few moments Mar-

garet stirred slightly, and then the woman took her hand and said:

"Come, come, my child, I want you."

But Margaret did not seem to understand. Then the woman lifted her and, putting an arm around her waist, half carried her to the open door, and when Margaret felt the cool, fresh air she revived a little and stood up.

"Who are you, and what do you want with me?" she said wearily.

"I am Doctor Bennet, and I have come to take you home with me," the woman replied kindly.

"I do not know you," said Margaret, "and you had better let me die here alone. There is really nothing else that I can do—for this is the end."

"No, you are not going to die," the woman replied, and she led Margaret out to the carriage and pushed her into it. Then, seating herself beside her, she gave the order, "Home," and they were driven rapidly away.

During the drive back to the city Doctor Bennet and Margaret sat side by side and neither spoke. The Doctor seemed to be in deep meditation, and Margaret lay back in her corner of the carriage in a stupor. At last the coachman reined his team up to the curb in front of a large double house in a cross street in New York City and, opening the carriage door, helped the Doctor lift Margaret from the carriage. Then they carried her up the steps and into the house.

It would seem that Margaret was expected and that a room had been prepared for her, for without a direction being given she was taken directly to a

large, beautiful chamber and was laid upon a deep, soft bed, and when the servants had left the room Doctor Bennet commenced undressing the helpless girl. Carefully and tenderly she brushed and braided her long, black hair and then brought a soft, silken wrapper, and, after completely disrobing the girl, put it on her and tied it together in front with creamy satin ribbons. Placing the pretty form between the fine white linen sheets, she covered her over with a silken comfortable, turned the flame in the shaded lamp down to a tiny point of light, put fresh coals upon the open grate fire and left the room.

It was not very long before Margaret was sleeping naturally. The stupor had passed away, the color returned to her cheeks and lips, and her breath came and went regularly. During the night the doctor came in once to see her, but did not speak, and so Margaret slept on and on until late into the following morning. Then, as suddenly as she had gone to sleep, she woke and looked around the room.

"I wonder where I am," she murmured; "can it be that this is home?" and rising on her elbow, she examined her gown, looked closely at the bed, and then sprang out upon the floor.

Outside the sun was shining and the whole room was flooded with its light. Margaret went to a window and looked out. There were carriages and pedestrians passing up and down before the house, and on a lamp post at a corner some distance away she thought she read "5th Ave."

"This is not my room," she said slowly, "and I

wonder what has happened. Perhaps I have been ill and dreamed all those dreadful things," and she rang for a servant. A strange girl answered the bell, and Margaret looked at her curiously.

"Where is Hulda?" she asked.

"There ain't no Hulda here," the girl replied.

"Will you please tell papa that I want to see him?"

The maid looked bewildered. "I'm sure I don't know what you mean, m'am; there ain't no gents in this house."

Margaret's hopes began to fade, and after a moment she asked: "Whose house is this?"

"Doctor Bennet's, and she keeps mostly women patients. I guess you hain't ben here long or you'd know whose house you was in."

"Will you please tell the doctor that I would like to know when I can see her?" Margaret asked.

The maid left the room, and in a few moments Doctor Mata Bennett, the founder of the hospital, came in, and, walking over to where Margaret was standing, extended a pretty white hand and smilingly bade her good morning.

"Why, you are the woman who came to me in my dreams—or you are greatly like her," she added, as she saw the doctor smile. "You and Ray are one and the same, aren't you?" Margaret asked curiously.

"Yes, I believe I have heard you call me angel Ray, but now you see I am not an angel; I am just a woman—like yourself."

"The last time you came to see me was on the night before my——," and Margaret faltered. She

could not say marriage, because she remembered now that it was not a marriage. But the doctor looked at her with such loving pity that the tears started to run down Margaret's cheeks when the doctor said:

"To all intents and purposes, so far as you were concerned, it was a marriage; and there is not a shadow of shame attached to you. Then, too, it is something to be thankful for, because your two lives were so strongly linked together, on account of your past relationship, that you were obliged to pass through this climax before you could be free from those unhappy conditions. It was not a misfortune, because it had to be in order that a greater good could come to you. But now that old debt is paid, and we will talk about the philosophy of it all at another time.

"In your closet are the garments you wore when you came here. If you will dress and go down to luncheon and will then amuse yourself for the remainder of the day, at eight o'clock this evening I shall be pleased to receive you in my room, and will then explain to you many of the reasons why you have suffered so much during the last two years of this life. And now perhaps you will excuse me, since there are a number of patients waiting to see me," and, bowing graciously, the doctor left the room.

"How strange," murmured Margaret; "this woman is my Ray, to whom I have told my troubles since I can remember anything; and now I meet her, as she told me that I would, in the flesh," and Margaret commenced combing her

hair. By the time she was dressed she began to feel the pangs of hunger quite severely, and, hurrying down to the dining room, she found a number of women sitting at small tables eating and chatting pleasantly together. When she appeared a servant came forward and said: "You are to have a seat at the doctor's private table," and soon Margaret was enjoying a delicious meal. After luncheon she inquired the way to the library and was shown into a large, well lighted room, which seemed to be the reading room for the household.

There were two long tables covered with papers and magazines, and there were low, easy rockers and high, stiff-backed chairs. There were also some light, cane-bottomed couches with soft cushions and pillows, and on one side of the room were book-cases containing the works of the best writers of the day. The atmosphere pervading the apartment was quiet and restful, and Margaret had no sooner entered it than she began to feel the spirit of peace, such as she had never experienced in all her life before, stealing over her troubled soul. While she was wondering about the strangeness of her position in that house, and was trying to remember how she came there, a young girl came in and, seating herself in an easy chair, smiled pleasantly at Margaret and said:

"You are a new arrival, I imagine, since I saw you in the dining room for the first time to-day."

"Yes," said Margaret, "and I feel quite strange and unaccustomed to the house."

"It's very pleasant here; the doctor makes

everybody feel at home—and the way she cures the patients who come to her is marvelous to see. I have been in this house for three months, and there has not been a death here since I came; and she cures every disease from corns to cancers," and the girl laughed at her own comparisons.

"May I ask what kind of a house this is?" Margaret inquired.

"Why, how did you happen to come here without knowing where you were going?" the girl asked in surprise.

"I was brought here while I was unconscious, and had never heard of the place until I awoke this morning in my room. Then I saw the doctor just for a moment, when she told me to amuse myself until this evening, when she would see me in her own room."

"If you are to have the privilege of going into her private apartments you must be in high favor, for nobody else that I know ever got the chance to even look behind that sacred door," the girl said, enviously.

"I am sure I didn't know it was a special favor, and I feel quite overcome with the knowledge you have given me," Margaret said modestly; "but you have not answered my question about the kind of house this is."

"It is a private hospital for women. Doctor Bennet takes every one who wants her care, and then each patient gives what she can afford toward maintaining the house. Some give dollars and others give dimes; but if one cannot give money, then she must serve as cook, housemaid

or nurse for a certain length of time after she is cured. Religious beliefs make no difference with her. She would take a Heathen as soon as a Christian, and do just as much for her. The doctor is really a wonderful woman, and when you come to know about her power you will be amazed.

"Now, don't ever mention this, but I have seen her raise a dead person and bring back the life into her. It was this way: A woman was brought here during the hours that the doctor was out visiting patients. With this woman were two small children. They were all put into a room together and were forgotten by the girl, who should have looked after them. When the doctor came home she asked me to go and light the gas in the new patient's room. I went and found the poor thing dead and the little children asleep cuddled down beside their mother on the bed.

"When I saw the dead woman's eyes staring, and felt how cold she was, I screamed, and then Doctor Bennet came hurrying up stairs. Shutting the door and locking it against all the others who came running to see what was the matter, she told me to 'hush,' and then went to the bed and looked at the corpse. I was just paralyzed and couldn't move nor speak—whatever the matter was with me I don't know—but I saw her take the hand of that poor dead thing, and after she had stood for a while looking steadily at her, without so much as winking or moving, that poor creature shut her mouth and moved her head. In a few minutes more she commenced to breathe, and within an hour she was telling the doctor all about herself—

and the strange part of it was she never knew that she had been dead, but just couldn't remember anything that had happened after being put into bed in that room. The doctor told me never to tell anybody, and I promised her faithfully not to——"

"And this is the way you keep your promise?" said a pleasant voice, and when both girls looked around Doctor Bennet was standing in the doorway.

"Forgive me," said the girl in confusion, "but it was so wonderful I really couldn't keep it to myself. Besides, I think the whole world ought to know what you can do."

"But a promise should be sacredly kept; however, I shall forgive you, but never trust you with any more of my secrets," the doctor said seriously; and with a very red face the girl left the room.

## CHAPTER XV.

### Five Hundred Years Ago.

At eight o'clock in the evening of the same day Margaret knocked at the door of Doctor Bennet's private apartments and was admitted. On stepping into the room she saw no one, and yet the door had been opened and closed for her. For a moment she stood waiting for the doctor to appear, then she heard her voice, as if coming from another room, saying:

"Please be seated, Margaret, and I will be with you in a moment."

Wonderingly the girl gazed at the strange objects around her. The carpet was of rich green velvet, and opposite the door through which she had entered was a large mirror profusely decorated with vines and flowers painted upon it. Midway in the wall at her right was an open fireplace heaped high with crackling, burning logs of wood. Above it was a richly carved mantle, and on each end was standing a silver urn, alike in size and shape, and each was inscribed with a name and date of birth and death. Between these two stood another urn of rare old china, bowl-shaped, with its neck drawn in and covered with a top designed to represent a coiled serpent, with head raised in

the center and with two small glittering emerald eyes. On either side of this urn were handles to lift it by.

A little higher than the mantle and about two feet from the wall swung a handsome jeweled censer, suspended from the ceiling by a slender golden chain, and from this censer streamed long spirals of greyish white smoke that curled and writhed like living serpents, and gave out a pungent, spicy odor that reminded Margaret of a queer old shop that she had visited several years before, down in the Syrian quarters of the city, where a handsome, dark eyed man, dressed in an oriental gown and turban, had waited upon her and the friends who went with her into his place to see the goods he kept for sale. And she remembered smelling this same strange perfume then, and wondering where it came from, since everything in the shop seemed permeated with it, even to the man's robe and turban. And around the little vase that she had bought of him had lingered for a long time this strange odor that was so different from anything she had ever smelled before.

Before the fire and under Doctor Bennet's censer was spread a large oriental rug of a strange and intricate pattern, which indicated that it was of a very ancient design and workmanship. On the center of this rug and between two large easy chairs stood a small table, with each of its legs carved to imitate twisted serpents standing on their heads. On the tips of the tails of these wooden serpents rested a marble slab, inlaid with precious stones. There were emeralds, carbuncles,

rubies and amethysts formed into queer designs, which reminded Margaret of hieroglyphics she had seen at the National Museum in Washington, but which she had never understood the meaning. Against the wall at the left were ancient looking book-cases ornamented with carved symbolical designs and containing books and rolls of parchment and board-bound manuscripts. There were also tablets of stone with strange characters cut into their surfaces, and altogether it was the most wonderful collection of literature that she had ever seen.

Then her gaze wandered away from the book-cases and their contents and rested upon another article of furniture. It was a couch upholstered in yellow satin, and supporting its silken pillows was a great coil of terrible looking snakes. The reptiles were intertwined in such a manner as to seem to have just crept from beneath the couch, and with their heads raised, eyes glittering and fangs visible the sight of them struck terror to the heart of Margaret, who turned toward the door trembling in every limb. But just at that moment she heard the doctor's voice saying:

"Don't be frightened; the serpents are dead and stuffed and can do you no harm," and turning round, Margaret saw approaching from the other end of the room the beautiful woman of her dreams. Again she was dressed in the yellow trailing robe and had her golden hair unbound and falling almost to the hem of her gown, and there were the same dark, pansy blue eyes that she had seen in both visions of her. Slowly and reveren-

tially Margaret sank upon her knees, and bowing her head whispered:

"Again you come to me. This time I do not dream or feel the strange sinking sensation at my heart which has always preceded your visits. Will you tell me why you always came just before some dreadful thing was about to happen to me?"

Taking Margaret by both hands, the doctor gently raised her to her feet and, leading her to one of the large easy chairs, she pressed her into its capacious depths; then seating herself in the other one, she said:

"I am ready now to explain what had been such a mystery to you, and this evening will show you why you have suffered so much in this life. In order to make these facts clear to your mind I must be permitted to make the explanation in my own way, and shall first put you into a state of partial hypnosis. While in this condition you will see many scenes from a past life, in which you associated with the same souls who have, in this life, been drawn back here to finish, with you, the lessons begun, and through tragedy or injustice left unfinished. For you must know that the great Divine Law compels us all to complete some time and some where upon this earth all the lessons we have started out to learn. By the Divine Law nothing is ever forgotten or overlooked, and since a life is lived in so short a space of time it is necessary to come again and again for the purpose of meeting those with whom we have studied life's lessons before. Every human being to-day is just what he has made himself, and that uncertain, in-

tangible thing which we call 'luck' is but the working of a law which we ourselves have put into operation either for or against ourselves. But you will understand me better as we proceed with the pictures.

"And now I shall turn back the pages of our history to a point five hundred years ago in order that you may see where and under what circumstances you first met the soul who now wears the personality you call William Dorn. I shall also show you the soul who was betrothed to you in this life, but who, after that betrothal was broken, left you to suffer humiliation and poverty alone. Then there will be that soul who, five hundred years ago, by your own unreasoning, jealous fury, was deprived of the experiences of a lifetime and was retarded just that much in its development. It came again to you in this life in the relationship of mother, and is filled with a hatred for you that she herself does not understand, and which has made her a constant source of annoyance and sorrow to you.

"As we unroll the panorama of those old scenes you will temporarily live over again all those old loves and bitternesses. There will be the little babe who came into your life only for a few weeks, but whom you loved with the only pure, unselfish emotion that you were then capable of experiencing. In this life that soul was called Gilbert Blondell, and you have never loved, nor will you ever love, another soul as you love him. This is because he is the other half of yourself, and started forth with you on the morning of this great Cos-

mic Day to gain the knowledge through experience that you both must have before you and he can become perfected souls. Many times in the ages gone by you have met, and for a life or two have had the happiness of each other's society, only to become separated again and again; and as each separation became harder and harder to bear you both rose in this great scale of evolution through which all souls are passing at this time.

"Then there was I living the life of a Roman nobleman, and with but one object in view—the perpetuation of my ancient name and estates. In my mistaken ambition I neglected my paternal duty toward by one little daughter, and in my ignorance of the working of the Divine Law sought to maintain my name at the expense of that daughter's—your—natural rights. But the time has now come for me to do my duty, and where I failed before I shall now fulfill the law which regulates the relationship between parent and child."

Wonderingly Margaret listened to the doctor's words. "And do you wish me to understand that all these persons who have come into my life for good or ill have known me before this, and are now punishing or rewarding me for my treatment of them in some other life?"

"You do not quite understand. You have been neither punished nor rewarded by these persons, because they were but unconscious instruments of the great Law, which is always working to push us onward and upward. Your relationship with these persons was a result of your behavior toward them

at another period of your existence," and, rising, the doctor placed her hand lightly on Margaret's head and began looking steadily down into her upturned eyes. In a few moments every muscle in the girl's body relaxed, her head fell back upon the head rest of her chair, and her gaze became steadily fixed upon the wall above the mantle.

Margaret was now in a receptive but not an unconscious condition of mind, and was oblivious to all her surroundings except that square bit of wall on which were to be painted the object lessons for her to learn; and we shall also witness the unrolling of this wonderful astral film on which were photographed by the Divine Camera so many years ago these pictures of the past. And while this great, wise soul, with her knowledge and magic power, develops and brings forth those astral negatives for Margaret to see, we shall share with her this study of soul history.

\* \* \* \* \*

Rising into view we see a grand stone castle, standing high upon a rocky bluff and overlooking a river that winds in and out among deep gorges that it has cut through massive rock ages and ages ago. This is the River Di Sangro and these are the Appennine Mountains, in Italy. The scenery along this river and around this old castle—which bears the same name as the river—is awful and sublime. There are deep ravines opening wide beneath broad, shelving rocks, and there are gaping fissures so deep that one shudders to behold them.

Following the windings of this river, we see a

foaming torrent dashing over heaps of rocks; and then, just below the whirling eddies, it drops into a smoothly flowing current, and here and there along the shore are openings among the trees, with grassy banks sloping down to the very water's edge; and from among the thickly growing rushes peep great clusters of fragrant water lilies. But now we leave the river and its scenery and stand looking at the grand old castle and its inmates.

There is a spacious chamber where an aged man—a physician—and his attendants are anxiously awaiting the birth of a child. And now we see him giving into the outstretched arms of a nurse a dark-eyed, black-haired baby girl; and the woman retires into an adjoining room to bathe its noble little body and to robe it in the dainty silken garments that lie ready for its use. The man again turns his attention to the mother of the babe, who is nothing but a child herself and looks so helpless and so small, lying on that great, wide bed, with its massive posts and canopy of silken damask hangings.

But something in the woman's condition has alarmed this man and his attendants. He is hastening to use restoratives, and, raising the fainting woman in his arms, he calls a page and sends him in great haste to bring his master. The boy runs quickly down the broad stone stairs and knocks upon the door at his right hand. Entering the room in answer to a command from within, he bows before a nobleman who sits, with others of his rank, beside a table well supplied with cakes and wine and luscious looking fruit. The page speaks

but a word or two, and his master rises to his feet and, bowing to his friends, hastens up the stairs and, going to the bedside of his little wife, he kneels and speaks to her. But the doctor shakes his head and waves his hands. He gives the man no hope that she will live.

Surprised and shocked, the master calls the page and sends him down to tell the waiting noblemen the disappointing news that a girl, instead of the expected son and heir, is born and that the lady of the house is sinking rapidly. Then, kneeling down again, the man of noble birth buries his face among the pillows, and we see his shoulders heave and tremble with his sobs.

Confusion reigns in every room. Servants are running up and down and falling over each other in their haste to be of use. And is there not a cause for this? Is not their lady dying, and is it not a fact that the child, which should have been a son, was born a girl? And is not this the third wife who has failed to bear an heir? In groups the women servants gather and discuss the dreadful news, and they conclude that still another noble lady must be brought, and perhaps another and another, before a son will come to bear the honored name and rule the vast estate of this their noble lord.

The scene has changed again. The body of the lady of the house is dressed and ready for the tomb. With bared heads bowed in reverence, the funeral cortege lifts the bier, and ten good priests, with lighted candles in their hands and robed in funeral garb, are walking two by two along the path that

leads them to the chapel on a hill. For many years within the tomb beneath this sanctuary the noble dead of the Di Sangro family have been laid; and now the entrance to the vault is opened wide, and, looking down, we see a stone sarcophagus all lined with damask cloth and ready to receive this noble corpse.

The funeral rites are done. We see the priests replace the great stone slab, arrange the candles at the head and foot, and then they slowly climb the stairs. In the room above they pause and chant a Requiem and then pass out and close the chapel door.

Again the scene has changed, and now we see the little daughter of this noble house in childhood. Eight years have passed, and she, a wilful little mistress of the castle, drives her nurse and all the servants almost mad with her caprices. Her father has just told her of a new mamma that is to come, and said that she must now be good and love this gentle lady who will be the future mistress of the house. Frowningly she listens to his words, and as he goes declares that she will kill the one who dares to give commands to her.

The wedding day has come and there are preparations for a feast. The child has heard the servants say that she will be dethroned; that her despotic rule is at an end, and they will not obey her any more. Wild with jealous rage, she steals into the room prepared for her new mother's use and stands and thinks of all the things that she can do to make this woman miserable; and then, comparing all this elegance with her simple little room, she

grits her teeth and shakes her tiny fist and vows to be a thorn in that fine lady's flesh when she shall come to take her rights away.

'Tis evening. The new mamma has come, and the child is brought to greet her. But she makes an ugly grimace, puts out her tongue and runs away. Her father sends a page to bring the little maiden back. She is caught, but bites and strikes the man and vows she will not come. Taking her in his arms, the servant brings and sits her down upon the floor before her angry father, who shakes and slaps her for her naughtiness and tells her to go at once and beg her mamma's pardon. The gentle lady smiles and tries to take her hand, but the little maiden strikes her in the face and spits upon her gown. Again the father calls a page and sends the child away and tells the man to lock her in a turret chamber of the house, to stay alone till she will ask forgiveness and promise to obey her mother's will.

A week has passed, and still the tiny maid refuses to submit. But now she has a plan. She will pretend to yield till such time comes as she can get revenge on both her father and his wife; and when the servant comes again she tells him she is sorry she was bad and has decided to be good. Immediately she is released, and when brought again before the lady of the house she humbly bows and kisses both her hands. Then, turning to her father, asks him to forgive and promises to obey. Deceived by her pretended penitence, her father reinstates her as his child, and peace is now restored.

A year has passed; the child has grown to be a

larger maid, and something great has just occurred. At last a son and heir to this old name and great estate has just been born. With banners floating in the breeze from turret tops, the castle has a gala day appearance. The serving maids and men are hurrying up and down the halls in holiday attire; and there are smiles and greetings everywhere. But the daughter of the house is furious. With tiny face convulsed with rage, she sits among the vines and flowers in the summer house and pouts. A servant comes and tells her of her father's joy, and, remembering what her nurse had said about the day when she was born and how her father's friends had gone away when it was known that she was but a girl, she shakes her fist, and while she laughs she says: "*Oh, I will show them what a girl can do. Dance, dance to-day, you fools—to-morrow you shall mourn !*"

'Tis evening of the second day. We see the young son wrapped in eiderdown and silk and lying on his tiny bed. The nurse is dozing in her chair and all within the house is still. The servants, dancing on the lawn, are busy with their sport and wine. The mother of the babe is resting peacefully. And now the daughter of the house steals up the stairs and to the room where nods the nurse beside her sleeping charge. Quickly she snatches up the child and, running down a back stairway, goes out into the moonlight, down the nearest pathway to the river bank and, sitting down upon a rock close to the water's edge, she gazes long and earnestly upon the baby's face.

"And so you came to 'break my nose' and crowd me from my place," she says. "It shall not be, for I will kill you here and now," and searching for a stone she ties it with the baby in the little silken shawl and, climbing on a rock, she throws the bundle far out into the middle of the stream. A splash, a wail, a few more whirling eddies, and the Di Sangro son and heir has disappeared. His sister hurries up the narrow path and, creeping up the stairs, gets into bed. The nurse awakes and finds the infant gone. She screams and calls her lord.

With face as white as fear can make it, he orders all his men to search the grounds. The mother swoons and great confusion reigns. The daughter of the house pretends to sleep, and while the hunt goes on she is forgotten. For miles and miles the woods beyond the grounds are filled with men, and after days and days of fruitless search the nobleman returns, to find his wife a corpse.

Ten years have passed. The child is now a woman grown, and very beautiful to look upon. Her father, bowed and aged, has lost much of his pride and lets her rule the house. A lover comes to woo and wed, and she is graciously disposed. A courtship follows, an engagement is announced, and now an older brother of this lover comes to see the bride that is to be. With heartless coquetry the maiden falls in love with this new face, and while pretending to be true to one is really false to both.

And now her wedding day has come, and while the maids are waiting in her room to help her dress she steals away to kiss and be caressed by him with

whom she has no right to be, and lingers till she hears them calling her to come.

The nuptial knot is tied, and in the midst of dancing and of mirth a messenger arrives and calls her husband and her father to one side. The king has sent for them, and they must go at once. They stop just long enough to say good-by, then go and leave this other man to guard the castle and console the bride. Infatuated with this other handsome face, the wife is glad to have her father and her husband go, and says good-by to both and smiles and cares not if they never should return.

A year has passed, and maternity has come to crown this girl. A child is born to these two guilty souls, but motherhood has wakened in this faithless wife a love so strong that, like a tigress with her young, she will not let the little one be fondled or caressed by any but herself. Her lover, jealous of the child, commands that it be given to a nurse. She refuses to obey and, fearing lest some mishap shall befall the babe, she holds it in her arms and never lets it from her sight.

And now another messenger arrives and says that peace has come. The war is done. The father and the banished bridegroom will return almost as soon as he who brings the news.

"God pity me! What shall I do?" the wife exclaims, and rushes to her lover for advice. He smiles and shows his teeth, but can suggest for her no plan.

"My father's grief and husband's wrath will kill me and my child; and you cannot escape, for they will murder you," she cries.

"Go hide the child, and they may never know that it was born," he says. "Come now with me and I will find a place," and striding down the pathway to the river bank, he stops beneath the overhanging branches of a tree. The mother follows quickly with her child. They pause to rest. She, gazing lovingly upon the babe, seems not to know the man is near. He speaks some words of love to her, but so absorbed is she with fondling the child she does not hear. He frowns with jealousy and, catching up the babe, he flings it on the ground.

The mother screams and tries to reach her little one, but her lover holds her closely in his arms and will not let her go. She struggles to be free and strikes him in the face. Quickly he turns and, picking up the babe again, he flings it to the fish and laughs to hear her plead to him to save its little life.

And now the mother rushes down the bank and springs into the swiftly flowing stream. She gets the child and tries to swim to shore. The current is too strong. She holds the babe and battles for its life and hers. Her lover stands and smiles.

"Let go that thing and I will come to you," he calls; "hold on to it and both shall die."

"I do not want to live without my child," she says, and sinks beneath the waves.

The man waits now to see if she will rise again; the moments pass; he hears a bugle call. His brother has arrived; he turns and slowly climbs the hill.

The warriors meet and greet this man and kiss his treacherous face. He bows and smiles and wel-

comes them with all his knightly grace. "Where is my wife?" the husband asks. "I left her in your care."

"I do not know," his brother says; "this morning she was here."

And now the servants are sent forth to find the missing bride. The grounds and woods and fields are searched—wherever she could hide—is hunted through for many days, and still she is not found. "My wife is dead," the husband moans, and raves like one gone mad.

"My child, my child," the father sobs, "the last to bear my name, is gone. Oh, God, help me to bear this pain, this grief. My last bright star is set. My sky is overcast. Old age comes on and still no son have I to bear my name and rule this grand estate. Ah me! ah me! that I should live to see this day."

\* \* \* \* \*

Here the doctor removed her hand from Margaret's head and told her to rise and walk about the room with her; and, linking arms, for a few moments the two women paced up and down the floor in silence.

"Did you understand the meaning of the pictures?" the doctor inquired.

"I am confused about some of the characters and their relationship to me," Margaret replied. "While those scenes were passing I seemed to be living that faithless woman's life. I remembered the story as if it were my own and felt all her pas-

sions and emotions. But now that the pictures have faded and I am here with you, I feel like myself again, and I do not understand how she could have been so wicked."

"Five hundred years ago you wore the personality called Isabella Di Sangro; but twice since then you have returned to this plane of consciousness and have lived lives in which you have suffered much, and have been purified through that suffering. The unholy passions which discolored the life which you have just seen pass before you have been burned out of your soul, and this is the reason you cannot understand why you were so 'wicked' then. You have now grown to a point of development where you are incapable of repeating the mistakes that were portrayed in those pictures. My object in showing you the scenes was to teach you something about the working of the great Law, and to answer your question of '*why*' which you have been asking all your life. The causes engendered then, as you have seen, have produced the results which you complain of now. Did you recognize any of the souls who played through that drama with you as any whom you have met here?"

"The handsome man who let me drown reminded me of William Dorn. He had the same slow way of smiling and of showing his teeth—like an animal. My father, Don Di Sangro, reminded me of you; since he had the same purple blue eyes that you have. The man whom I married was like Edward Mortimer; but the others, I cannot think whom they were like. You said my papa in this life was my child then. There was the

same kind of love in my heart for the infant when I held it in my arms that I feel for papa now. But how could it be possible for the child whom I threw into the river to be my mother in this life, since it was a male child and she is a woman; and how could you have been Don Di Sangro then and the beautiful creature that you are now?"

"Souls are sexless," replied the doctor smilingly, "and must have experiences which will develop all sides of their natures. Should a soul take upon itself a female personality at each return to this plane of consciousness it would never come into contact with the masculine elements of life *as a man*, and that experience being lacking, its development would be incomplete. If a soul were always to be a warrior, it would never have the maternal side of its nature brought forth and accentuated, and the finer, softer qualities of that soul would be left latent. We must be fathers and mothers, masters and slaves, warriors and men of peace, in order that we may reach the goal that we are all striving for—that of perfection; and now I think we had better say good-night, since it is well on toward midnight. I hope you will feel at home in this house and let me keep you with me for as many months or years as you would like to remain. Alone in the world as I am, I have no one to assist me, except those who come for aid and in return give their services for a time."

The tears came into Margaret's eyes as she replied: "You are very kind to me, a homeless, friendless girl; and if you think that I can be of any

service, I shall be very glad indeed to stay with you."

"I know your nature and your capabilities, and will make you my first assistant in the hospital work; and now good-night," and the doctor held the door open for Margaret to go.

Overcome with gratitude, Margaret did not speak, but taking the doctor's hand she raised it to her lips and kissed it and then bowed and left the room.

## CHAPTER XVI.

Fire! Fire! Fire!

The days and weeks had passed quickly and very pleasantly since Margaret had found her kind friend and new home, and it was now the afternoon of the seventeenth of March, eighteen hundred and ninety-eight. The morning duties were done and Margaret was sitting at a desk in the library answering letters which had come in the morning mail for the house. From among the mass, which were nearly all of a business nature, two were laid aside. These were addressed to her personally, and she intended to read and answer them after she had disposed of the others.

At the upper left hand corner of one of them was printed the return card of Nathan Hale. The other was enclosed in a large square envelope and was addressed to Miss Margaret Blondell, in care of Nathan Hale, and had been forwarded to her from his house. This letter bore a foreign postmark, but Margaret recognized the handwriting upon it as that of Edward Mortimer. Had this letter been received a year ago instead of now, she would have opened and read it before all the others; but to-day she quietly put it aside and, without heightened color or the least tremor of

nerves, she continued to answer the letters which she considered of more importance.

When the last one had been written, stamped and deposited in the basket ready to go to the mail box, Margaret took up Judge Hale's letter and opened it. Evidently it had been written hastily and while the writer was laboring under considerable excitement, and it read:

"My Dear Miss Blondell:—

"I am writing to inform you of the death of your mother. By the last post I received a note from her physician saying she was found dead in a closet, where she had hidden. The door was locked on the inside and had to be forced open. Your mother fastened herself into the closet and was smothered to death.

• "I have ordered the remains prepared for burial and shall await directions from you in regard to the final disposition of them.

"I also received a letter from my nephew, Edward Mortimer, and one for you, which I forward. The first tells me how much he regrets the decision you made when your engagement was broken. He also asks me to see you and intercede for him in order that he may become reinstated in your favor. Although I should be very happy to have you become my nephew's wife, I realize the futility of any argument I could bring to bear to induce you to reconsider your refusal of him.

"With best wishes for your success in the work you have undertaken, believe me to be,

"Yours sincerely,

"Nathan Hale."

"And so the poor little mother is dead," murmured Margaret with a sigh. "It is better so, I suppose, and I shall not mourn for her, nor shall I pretend to," and she opened the other letter, which read:

"Cape Town, South Africa,  
"January First, 1898.

"Dear Margaret:—

"I cannot keep silent any longer, and am writing to you on this first day of the New Year, when we are all making good resolutions and beginning new.

"I have found that you are absolutely necessary to my happiness. Margaret, say you will be my wife after all and I will sail for home on the first steamer that leaves here after I get the word from you to come.

"Forgive what I said about your mother's pettishness. I should have recognized her weakness as a misfortune rather than a fault. I will do everything in my power to make her comfortable and happy *with us in our home*.

"Forgive and forget all the past, Dear, and let us start anew. Lovingly yours,

"Edward Mortimer."

"And so at last he thinks he loves me and would like me to be his wife," Margaret whispered. "Too late! too late! I could not marry while this shadow is upon my name, and I would not marry Edward Mortimer any way——"

"The Windsor House is all afire, Mam, an' the

folks is a-jumpin' out o' the windies!" shouted a maid, putting her head into the library.

Rising quickly, Margaret went to a window and saw crowds of persons on both sides of the street running, shouting and jostling each other in great excitement. Hurrying up the stairs to the roof of the house, she saw from that higher point of view the awful sight which will never be forgotten by those who witnessed that terrible holocaust.

The flames were roaring and bursting through the trembling, cracking walls, and persons standing at the windows above the flames were shrieking and moaning and reaching out their hands begging for help from those who stood in the street below. The firemen were working with might and main to save all lives that could be reached. But the doomed building burned as if it were saturated with oil, and its destruction was far advanced before many of the souls who were imprisoned in the upper rooms of the house became conscious of their imprisonment or of the awful fate awaiting them. To many of these unfortunates the clanging of the gongs as the fire engines and the hook and ladder trucks came rushing upon the scene was the first warning they had received of the terrible tragedy that was even then being enacted. Then came the agonizing sight of human beings standing upon the smoking, smouldering window-sills, while around and behind them the fiery tongues of flame writhed and lapped, reaching out at those shuddering, shrieking victims as though possessed by an evil con-

sciousness that delighted to destroy everything and everybody within its reach.

When it finally became known that further aid from the firemen was impossible, because of the bulging, trembling walls, then came the horrible sight of human forms hurling themselves from the windows where they had stood and begged for help. And as each one came crashing down upon the pavement he was lifted tenderly and taken to a place where he could be cared for by loving hands. For when a calamity like this comes upon a community it awakens, for those who suffer, the sympathy of each and every soul who has escaped that suffering, and many handsome homes of persons possessed of luxury and wealth were opened that day to receive the victims of the Windsor Hotel fire.

While Margaret was standing motionless and dumb watching the awful scene a maid came to her, and with her face white with fear told her that the doctor had opened her house to every one who needed assistance, and asked if she would come and help with the patients. Realizing that there was a duty for her to do, she hurried down the stairs and found the halls on the first floor, the library and the parlor filled with sufferers from the fire, and the doctor working with all her tremendous force to relieve and save those who had the faintest spark of life still left in their bodies.

With absolute self-control this great soul passed quickly but quietly from couch to couch and from cot to cot, and sometimes it was with just a touch of her hand, a word or a glance that she soothed

and quieted the sufferers. Wonderingly Margaret watched her, and while she was conscious of the force which emanated from the doctor and witnessed the great work it did, she could not understand how it came to her nor how it was controlled with such marvelous results.

At about five o'clock in the afternoon some firemen brought in another body so blackened and bruised that at first it was unrecognizable. The men said the unfortunate man had probably waited for relief to come to him until he found that it was impossible, and had then jumped from a fourth story window into the court below. Doctor Bennet went immediately to him, and when Margaret came to offer her assistance she saw the doctor bending over the almost shapeless mass of flesh and heard her whispering strange, unintelligible words as if repeating a prayer in an unknown tongue. Thinking this an unusual case, Margaret waited until the doctor had finished speaking and then stepped forward and inquired if there was not something she could do to assist her. Making a motion for her to remain, the doctor took the patient's hand as it hung limp and helpless over the edge of the couch. Then she closed her eyes and stood motionless and erect for several moments. Soon the man began moaning, and as his breath commenced to come and go with regular inhalations and exhalations Margaret realized that his soul had been called back to dwell still longer in that miserable prison house of clay.

"Oh, why did you do this?" she asked with tears in her eyes; "he never can be anything but a

wretched sufferer—scarred and crippled for the remainder of his life. It would have been so much kinder to let him go!”

With loving pity beaming from her eyes the doctor turned to Margaret and replied: “There is something here for him to do. A wrong that he has done which must be righted before he leaves this plane of consciousness. Bringing him back at this moment will save him and you many years of suffering.” And then turning to the patient she said:

“William Dorn, you have but an hour to live, and you are now fully conscious. Here is Margaret Blondell; have you anything to say to her before you pass on to the next life?”

“Margaret Blondell, Margaret Blondell,” the man repeated slowly, as if trying to remember the name. Then, after a few moments of silence, he said: “Yes, there is something I could tell if I wished to.”

Looking steadily at the man, the doctor said: “It will be better for your future peace and welfare if you tell the truth. There will be one less burden to hold you in the land of shadows where you are going if you do right now.”

For a few moments the man seemed to be considering the doctor’s words; then, reluctantly and as if against his will, he slowly and hesitatingly said:

“Margaret Blondell is my wife, although when we were married I believed that I was deceiving her. Twenty years ago I was lawfully married to a woman of great wealth and social distinction.

Three children were born to us before I deserted her, because it took me five years to get all her money into my possession. That was the greatest length of time that I ever lived with one woman, and it was not until a month after I deserted Margaret that I learned my wife had been dead a year. So my marriage with Margaret was legal. When I left her at the cottage I did not go abroad, but told her that was my intention, hoping that she would destroy herself because of my desertion of her and of the disgrace that she would suffer for the rest of her life. It was very annoying to me to know that my plans in that respect had failed, and when I went to the cottage and found it empty and with no traces of her death having occurred I was bitterly disappointed. But I found our marriage certificate in one of her trunks and destroyed it, which was some satisfaction to me."

"Is that all you have to say?" the doctor asked.

"Margaret cannot be very proud of the family she married into," the man continued, "because I am nothing but the illegitimate son of a second rate French actor, and my mother was a pretty grisette. My real name is Louis Le Roy, and I have lived the same kind of life that my father lived before me. Gambling, drinking and deceiving have been my chief amusements. I never was true to anything nor anybody—never wanted to be anything else than just what I was. I don't know whether there is a future for me or not. You spoke of the land of shadows—this must be that place, for there is nothing here but darkness," and

the wretched man commenced moaning and writhing with pain.

Margaret was now trembling and almost fainting from nervous excitement, and after the doctor had led her gently to a seat she whispered soothingly: "Compose yourself, my child; such scenes as these are very trying, but we must meet them bravely and be strong."

"How much longer will he suffer?" Margaret asked, while the tears ran down her cheeks in little rivulets.

"Not long. His present career is done. The life he has so miserably spent is almost gone. Had I not believed it better for you to know the true relationship between you I should not have brought the soul back to make this confession. But it will be better for you and for your child—when it comes—to know it was born in wedlock, even though its father was not worthy of its respect," and Doctor Bennet turned away to give her attention to other sufferers who were making demands upon her.

After wiping away her tears and becoming a little more composed Margaret returned to her husband's side, and bending over him whispered: "I am very sorry for you and have forgiven the wrong you tried to do to me. Will you make your peace with God before you die?"

Now that the magnetic influence of Doctor Bennet had been removed the man's old nature reasserted itself, and, notwithstanding the pain that was tearing at his vitals, he replied: "And I am very sorry that I told the truth—don't know what

made me do it—don't care for your forgiveness, and don't believe there is a God——”

And then a great trembling seized him, and this time the soul took its departure, never to return to that material body again. When Margaret knew that her husband was dead she went to Doctor Bennet and asked what she should do with the remains.

“What would you like to do?” the doctor kindly inquired.

“I would like to have him buried beside my mother, who, I am informed, died the day before yesterday.”

“Why bury either? Have both bodies cremated and then scatter the ashes among the flowers,” the doctor suggested.

“But cremation seems so dreadful,” said Margaret shudderingly.

“It is kinder to those who go than it is to bury their bodies, and thus keep the souls bound for years to those slowly mouldering forms. For until the last two atoms composing those bodies have become separated and have been re-absorbed by mother Nature into the roots, flowers and grasses that grow above the graves, the souls cannot be free, but will be magnetically held in close proximity to those small heaps of disintegrating flesh and bones. But we will decide the question of burial later. You may now give this body to the undertaker who is already in charge of the other dead and let it be taken away. This evening I will come to your room and we will discuss the matter at greater length.”

At a few minutes before eight o'clock that evening Margaret went to her room, and, after bathing her face and hands and changing her street costume for a comfortable house gown, she lay down to rest, and, falling asleep, became unconscious of the flight of time until the doctor's voice awakened her. Springing up, she found the doctor sitting in a low rocker near her couch and ready to talk; and again taking up the subject of the burial of dead bodies, the doctor said:

"I believe I perfectly understand your feelings concerning this matter. From your standpoint your repugnance toward cremation is natural, since it has been a religious and a national custom among the Jewish and Christian peoples to bury their dead. Most Christians hope, by preserving the bodies, to make it possible for them to be raised to life again on some future resurrection day. For hundreds of years it has been believed by many intelligent persons that an angel called Gabriel will some time blow a trumpet and thereby assemble together all the dead who have ever lived; and they also have believed that these superannuated men and women will continue to walk around this earth and be happy in those old resurrected bodies. Originally this belief was founded upon the hope for immortality of the flesh, for our remote ancestors knew very little about the soul; and those who believed at all in its existence had a vague notion that it was some sort of an appendage of the body. At that time every one believed the body was the man and must be resurrected in order that immortality could be established.

"But the human race has now evolved to a point where those old customs and beliefs should be abolished, since we have come to understand that it is the soul who lives, and the body is but the material vehicle through which it functions on this plane of life. It is quite time that we should become wise enough to absolutely destroy these old vehicles when we are through with them and cease providing graveyards and monumental tombs, costing thousands of dollars, for the purpose of containing metallic caskets filled with struggling microbes that battle with each other for months and sometimes for years in their efforts to gain freedom.

"Then, too, it is a kindness to the souls to liberate them from these decaying prisons. Each material body is held together by the magnetism of its soul body, and can go to pieces only when that magnetic soul body is withdrawn from it. The artificial preservation of the body therefore retains the magnetism within the physical vehicle and prevents its return to the soul. A limitation is therefore inflicted upon the soul by the preservation of its material body after it has signified its desire to leave it; for then, that which has been a temple becomes a prison from which the soul turns in loathing and disgust. This retardation of disintegration also endangers the health of the living, since it prevents nature from reabsorbing those microbic lives into newer forms of life."

"I believe I understand the lesson which you wish to teach, and shall be glad to comply with your wishes. The lodge to which papa belonged

had his body cremated, but I was so ill at the time that I knew nothing about it until many weeks afterward, and it has been a source of great grief to me that I had not his grave to visit and to put flowers upon," said Margaret sadly.

"It would have been a mistaken kindness," said the doctor, "and would have only served to keep fresh in your mind your loss and your separation from him. And the habit of regularly visiting the cemetery to mourn over his grave would have caused him to participate constantly with you in your sorrow. Thus you would have held him here with your weeping and longing, for you should remember that you are a magnetic center in the great universal sea of consciousness, and whatever you think about you attract to yourself. If it be a soul and you refuse to release it after the change called death has come to it, then you force that soul to suffer the pain of witnessing your sorrow."

"And do you think it was my longing to see papa and calling to him that caused him to appear that night in our little rooms down town when mother was so frightened? He looked so unhappy and miserable then," said Margaret musingly.

"Souls do not cease loving because they have passed through the change called death, and since your father had been in such perfect sympathy with you before he left the body, it is natural to suppose that his love has not changed and is as great now as it was then. It may be that you saw him or it may be that you imagined that you did," said the doctor thoughtfully.

"Never again will I wish papa back to this world.

I did not know the harm I was doing," said Margaret sadly.

"Very few persons know the power they possess to make others happy or miserable; but it is a truth that we cannot think without affecting other minds or souls for good or ill, according to the kind of thoughts we send forth. For thought is force which we are constantly using either wisely or ignorantly, constructively or destructively, for ourselves and for others," said the doctor, rising.

"What did you mean by saying that I am a magnetic center and attract to myself whatever I think about?" inquired Margaret.

"I meant that you and I and every other individual mind or soul are centers of consciousness in the great Universal Consciousness, in which we live and move and have our being. We are entirely dependent upon the Great Consciousness for everything we have, because it is really the means of transportation between us. It is consciousness and therefore responds to our conscious demands, and whether we demand or desire good or evil it will bring to us just what we wish for if we persist long and earnestly enough with our wishing.

"For illustration, five hundred years ago the mind or soul whom we know now as William Dorn desired to live a life of falsehood and deceit. He wished to be and was faithless to his brother and to you. He wished to kill his own illegitimate child and permitted you to drown before his eyes rather than to yield in his determination to continue to do evil instead of good. He thought of nothing at that time but the gratification of his own selfish,

sensual desires, and because of this kind of thinking he drew to himself abundant opportunities for such gratification. The reason these opportunities were so numerous was because of his positive and forceful manner of thinking.

"The Great Consciousness brought him what he desired *because he desired it*. It would have brought him goodness and purity and the opportunities for good had he wished for them. The power to select was his own, and he chose what seemed to please him best then; and because of those desires he was brought to express himself in human form in this life, where more abundant opportunities were given to him to gratify his desires, which were still of the evil or destructive kind. He was born the illegitimate child of an immoral man and woman, and in that environment he continued to receive what he had desired in the life previous—a further opportunity to continue on in his chosen manner of thinking and living.

"His father in this life was in the same current of thought with his son, and was able to teach the boy what he desired to know. That William Dorn made the most of his opportunities was shown by the life he lived and his condition of mind when he passed out of this life. You were brought together by the Universal Consciousness in that other life because you both desired to express yourselves in a similar manner, and each was an instrument to assist the other in that expression. You were brought together again in this life because you had not received the full benefit from your unwise asso-

ciations, and you had not learned the lesson which must be taught by those experiences.

"It is by giving to us *what we desire* that the Divine Law or Universal Consciousness teaches us to desire good instead of evil—wisdom instead of ignorance. It is by experience alone that we learn, and if in our ignorance we desire or demand conditions which create pain and suffering, after a while we learn through those conditions that we have made mistakes. When our desires become changed our conditions change in consequence, because all conditions are the results of past desires and follow after those desires as surely as night follows day. Ignorance of the law excuses no one, and every soul must take the consequences of its own thinking, which is creative."

"And because in a fit of jealousy I threw my baby brother into the river five hundred years ago and deprived that soul of getting the experiences of that life, it came to me in this life in the relationship of mother, and made my life miserable by reason of her jealousy?" Margaret asked.

"'With what measure ye mete it shall be measured to you again,'" quoted the doctor, and then she continued: "And because I, as your father, Don Di Sangro, neglected to do my full duty to you when I had the opportunity, but was filled with the unjust desire to follow the customs of all other titled noblemen of that time and have my property and name possessed by a son instead of by my first born child, who was a daughter, and because I tried to deprive you of that which should have been your natural inheritance, you are brought into my life

now and I must do the duty now that I neglected and overlooked then. I must teach you as a parent should teach a child. There are indeed sins of omission as well as sins of commission, and I, too, must make reparation for the mistakes of the past."

For a long time Margaret sat without speaking, and then, looking at the doctor with tears in her eyes, she said softly: "Thank you, my friend, for all the help you have given to me. I believe I am beginning to understand the '*Why*' of things a little better than I did. And now I have something more to tell you. To-day I received a letter from Mr. Mortimer asking me to reconsider my refusal of his offer of marriage and to be his wife."

"I do not wish to influence you, since I believe that every soul should be permitted to work out its own salvation in its own way, but if you were thinking of some time accepting Mr. Mortimer's proposal for the sake of the home and protection the marriage would be to you, let me say that it will not be necessary, since my home shall be yours so long as you may need or desire it."

"I shall write to Mr. Mortimer to-night and tell him of my marriage and widowhood, and refuse his offer as gently and kindly as I can," said Margaret.

## CHAPTER XVII.

### 'Sconset by the Sea.

A little more than two years had passed, and when the July days came again Margaret and her little son left the city home. The doctor, faithfully at work regardless of either heat or cold, had made the necessary arrangements to spare her "children," as she called these two, and send them to the seashore, where the boy could have the sunshine and salt sea air, and where Margaret would get the rest and sleep she needed. For during the last two years Margaret had earned her holiday. She had stood beside the doctor in all her work and had faithfully performed such duties as were given her to do; and now her form had grown quite thin and the constant tired look upon her face indicated that she was in great need of rest and change of scene.

After due consideration old 'Sconset by the sea was selected for the resting place. The doctor, through an agent, rented a fisherman's tiny cottage, which was furnished and fitted all ready for occupancy, and Margaret and little Gilbert went there to spend two months of their vacation. 'Sconset was such a quaint old place, where the fisher folk for many generations past had lived their

simple lives, dressing in the styles of their ancestors and going each Sunday to the little old church, where the services were the same as they had always been since the oldest person in the place could remember.

For more than one hundred and fifty years some of these tiny cots, like the one Margaret had taken, had stood with their old wooden figure heads perched in their gables or on their narrow eaves. Those figure heads had all been taken from the wrecks of ships that had some time met their fate on the sand bars and among the shoals somewhere on the barren, unfriendly coast of the island of Nantucket. And these old wooden heads seemed to be looking solemnly out to sea, and one would almost imagine that they were watching for the return of the hard-handed men who toil with hooks and seines to earn the bit of bread and meat with which they keep themselves and families alive. For there was not a wealthy native in 'Sconset.

The summer that Margaret was there an enterprising widow had opened a small boarding house and for a few weeks had taken boarders. But all those persons who came to stay at the boarding house were of modest means, and, like Margaret, needed absolute rest and quiet from the strenuousness of city life. And there they could rest, for there were no wheels to disturb nor bells to ring, except upon the antiquated locomotive that drew its tiny train over the narrow gauge road to and from old Nantucket, seven miles away. Twice each day the stillness of the place was broken by the ringing of this bell, which sounded like an an-

cient cow bell, cracked and dulled with constant use. Aside from the arrival and the departure of these trains, there was nothing to be heard except the thunder of the surf as it broke upon the beach below the cliff.

There was something in the atmosphere in that quiet place which seemed to close one's eyes and glue down one's lids, and Margaret found it very easy to sleep for fifteen hours out of each twenty-four. It was such a restful change to take her boy down to the beach, and while he dug and shoveled in the sand, made mimic mountains and decorated them with dead and dried sea urchins, she lay and dreamed of her future and of his, when he should become a man and they would have a home that was all their own. For the love that Margaret bore her child was most intense. Never for a day had a nurse been permitted to have the care of him, and in all her day dreams she saw him in the relationship of companion to her.

In eyes and features he was almost an exact counterpart of his grandfather, Gilbert Blondell, for whom he had been named, and since his birth Margaret had entirely ceased to mourn for her father, but seemed content with the presence of her child. She had taught him to call her "Greeta," that name so dear to her because it was the love name her father had given her; and now she was very careful never to impress upon the child's mind the thought that she was other than his dearest playmate and friend.

One morning, when the sun was shining brightly and the breeze from the ocean was refreshingly

cool, Margaret had been helping little Gilbert with his creations of sand heaps; and while she was digging and tossing the sand about herself and him she suddenly became conscious of the presence of two persons, and, looking up, saw, standing a few feet distant, Judge Hale and Edward Mortimer. Dropping her sand shovel and blushing almost guiltily, Margaret stepped forward and offered her hand to the Judge, who grasped it cordially. Then, turning to Mr. Mortimer, she bowed a little stiffly, but did not offer her hand to him.

"This is a surprise," said the Judge; "we didn't expect to find anybody we knew down here. My nephew returned to New York one day last week, and it was so warm in town we thought we would both like a little run down here—glad to find you, though. When did you come?"

"A week ago."

"Are you alone?"

"My child is with me," Margaret replied, looking over to where the boy was at play.

"Your child!" both men exclaimed. "I—we didn't know there was a child," the Judge added in surprise.

"My boy was two years old last month. I will bring him so you may see what a fine lad he is," and Margaret proudly brought the child to be inspected.

Judge Hale loved children and was especially fond of little boys. Immediately he began making overtures of friendship to the child, who met him more than half way, and in a few moments Margaret and Mr. Mortimer were forgotten, while "His

Honor" got down upon his knees and began digging with both hands in the sand and shouting like a schoolboy when the yellow sand came pouring down upon his hat and inside his collar.

After standing silently and awkwardly for a few moments unable to think of anything to say, Margaret suddenly remembered that she had an awning, and asked Mr. Mortimer if he would like to sit there with her until his uncle should finish his frolic and return to them. Bowing courteously and thanking her very formally, Mr. Mortimer accepted the invitation, and soon Margaret and he were seated under the bit of canvas as far apart as they could possibly get and still be protected from the sun. And then came the task of entertaining each other. After all the commonplaces had been exhausted an embarrassing silence fell between them and neither could think of anything to say. When the situation had become almost distressing the Judge came running, all out of breath, and, dropping down upon the sand under the awning, he wiped the perspiration from his face and said:

"That lad is a fine little chap and looks very much like your father. It is indeed a rare case to see a child so closely resemble a grown person; but your father never wore a beard, you remember, there was nothing to conceal his mouth and chin, and it would almost seem that Gilbert Blondell's head had been placed on those baby shoulders. When he looks at me with that steady gaze that I remember so plainly as one of your father's characteristics, it gives me a most peculiar feeling that is impossible to describe or define. And when he

laughs then he is Gilbert Blondell and no mistake. Really, I do not understand it," and the Judge seemed quite disturbed about the resemblance.

Margaret was greatly pleased to have this man, who knew her father so intimately, speak in this way about her child, and, looking the pleasure she felt, she replied:

"Thank you for saying that. To me papa seems to be in every look and act of the child, and many times I have wondered if I were alone in seeing him so plainly. Knowing papa so well as you did, your judgment is better than almost any one's that I know, and you make me very happy in your recognition of him. For if it is true, as many think, that souls sometimes return and live again in baby bodies, then it must be that this child is my papa come back to me——"

"And do you believe such a heathenish thing as that?" Mr. Mortimer interrupted, and, turning his gaze full upon Margaret, he allowed the contempt he felt to express itself upon his face.

Returning his gaze with a dangerous flash from her black eyes, Margaret asked: "And what is there that is unreasonable or heathenish about it?"

"It is directly contrary to the Christian teachings and has never been taught from any pulpit in the world; and I believe it is generally conceded that there is nothing higher nor better than the Christian religion."

"Conceded by whom?" Margaret asked.

"Why, by everybody I know," said Mr. Mortimer vaguely, looking toward his uncle for a confirmation of his views.

"Christianity, so called, composes less than one-third of the population of the earth; and there are more people living who make re-embodiment a cardinal point in their religion than there are who do not. How can you say it is generally conceded that there is no religion higher nor better than Christianity when its followers form a minority among the peoples of the world?" Margaret asked gravely.

"Because we have the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth," said Mr. Mortimer superciliously.

"In other words, we are the chosen people, and every one not worshipping at our altars and accepting our creeds are heathen?" Margaret asked.

"That is just the point I wished to make clear," said Mr. Mortimer loftily.

"Then it required God a long time to make His choice, since Christianity has only been in existence since Jesus' time, which is not quite two thousand years. What became of all the people who lived before the Christian era?"

"I really do not know, nor do I care," said Mr. Mortimer, suddenly becoming conscious that his side of the argument was rather weak. "I don't trouble myself about things that don't concern me. It is quite enough for me to know that I live in the Christian era and therefore shall be saved. The others may or may not have been saved, and it is no concern of mine. But I am surprised to know that your views have changed so much during the time I have been away."

"My views have not changed. I have added re-

embodiment to my old faith, that is all; and in no way does it conflict with my love for the great Nazarene. When I read the four Gospels under this new light I find many things there which confirm my faith and which show that the Nazarene also believed in re-embodiment."

Edward Mortimer was shocked. He had never carefully read the four Gospels, nor any portion of the Scriptures, but he had been a regular attendant at church since his earliest recollection. It was true he had never paid close attention to what was said in the pulpit, although apparently he had listened reverentially to each word that fell from his pastor's lips. From the devout expression upon his face during service a careless observer would be led to believe him a devoted religionist, and he considered himself an earnest student of theology. His sense of propriety was now outraged because the woman whom he had come so near to making his wife had declared herself to be a believer in this heterodox doctrine. It was too much for the young man to bear in one morning, and he rose to his feet. But his uncle was not quite ready to go. He wanted to rest, and when this pause came in the conversation he asked Margaret how long she intended to stay in 'Sconset.

"I have a little cottage called 'Rest,' just up there on the edge of the cliff, and I expect to remain until the end of August—unless the fogs make my stay unpleasant," she replied.

"And we are at the widow's boarding house; we have engaged accommodations for a month and for as much longer as we like it. You see, Edward

wants surf bathing. After his long stay in South Africa he is very glad to get back to the bracing salt sea air of our northern climate; but we shall meet you often, and I hope to have a frolic with the boy once a day at least. Do you go in?" the Judge inquired.

"I have never learned to swim, and this beach is not safe for beginners. Ten feet from where the surf is breaking there is a sudden depth of twenty feet or more, and, knowing this, I do not dare venture in," said Margaret.

Mr. Mortimer had been thinking while his uncle was talking, and he had concluded that it would be wiser for him to put aside his righteous indignation and be agreeable, since Margaret was the only pretty woman in the place, and since his uncle did not seem surprised at her strange views. With a mind as changeable as a weather vane, he suddenly veered round and decided to make the most of her company, and, smiling down at her, he said: "I know the baths will be delightful, and shall be glad to teach you to swim if you would like to learn."

"Thank you," replied Margaret laughing; "I think I will not make the attempt."

"Then let me teach the boy; I have been told that a child can learn even sooner than grown persons."

"Oh, I wouldn't trust my baby to those cruel waves," said Margaret quickly.

"Not with me?" and, bowing his head, Mr. Mortimer tried to look reproachfully into Margaret's eyes.

"Not with any one," she answered, flushing deeply and looking away from him.

"Then you do not trust me," he murmured.

"Not with my child."

"Nor with yourself?"

"There is something so strong and resistless in that roaring surf, and I feel so helpless when it strikes me, that I am afraid of it. So I will watch you sometimes—with your permission," and, rising, Margaret took her child by the hand and, bidding both men a good-morning, went up the stairs and disappeared in her cottage.

Then Judge Hale and Mr. Mortimer sat down upon the sand to smoke and talk.

"She's more beautiful if possible than when I went away, and I can't forgive her for breaking our engagement," said Mr. Mortimer impatiently.

"I told you not to take the position you did about her mother. The trouble with you was that you didn't know what you wanted. Margaret is like her father, and a finer character than Gilbert Blondell is very hard to find. That child of hers is a remarkable——"

"Oh, bother the child!" said the young man pettishly. "I don't see what it was born at all for. She watches it every minute, even when I was talking to her. I tell you I must have Margaret, and the more obstacles there are in the way the more I desire to marry her."

"And yet you were ready a moment ago to go off in a huff because she expressed religious views different from yours. Edward, you are the most

vacillating creature I ever saw, and sometimes I am ashamed of you."

"Yes, I was stunned by her notions about re-embodiment and all that. It was so sudden and startling, you know. But when I had thought about it I saw there was no real harm in it, and I shall not mind it any more."

"I half believe in it myself," said the Judge musingly.

"Then you wouldn't object to her as my wife on account of her views?"

"Not at all; but if she should marry you after the way you have behaved when all her fashionable friends deserted her, she is not the sort of girl I think she is."

"But I outdid all the other fellows who went wild after her. Why can't I win her now when she has no friends or admirers—and didn't I change my mind before I knew her mother was dead, and didn't I ask her to reconsider her refusal to be my wife?" and Mr. Mortimer looked triumphantly at his uncle.

"So you did. It was the only courageous thing you ever did, and it will probably be the only thing that will give you a chance to win her. But what about her child; have you no objections to that?"

"Oh, I'll bundle the boy off to school. There are a dozen ways to get rid of him. Whom did she marry? You never told me anything about her husband."

"I never saw him. I lost sight of her for several months after her mother was sent to the asylum, and when I heard from her again she was living at

this private hospital as Doctor Bennet's assistant. To that address I was instructed to send my letters and the physician's monthly reports about her mother. Doctor Bennet's private check paid all the bills that were presented, and that is all I know about it."

"Who is this Doctor Bennet? Is she anybody? I never knew there was such a person."

"If you mean by 'anybody,' if she is a woman of social distinction, then I must say she is not. All that I know about her is this: She opened her doors to receive many of the victims of the Windsor Hotel fire and did a great deal of good at that time. I have been told that she makes a specialty of women's diseases and takes care of the extreme poor as well as of those who are able to pay for their treatment. She never advertises her house nor her practice, and was not heard of by anybody of influence until that fire. Then several persons who had friends taken there attempted to make her acquaintance, hoping to find out who she was, but nobody got any information about herself. All that could be learned was that she is a very handsome woman, a splendid surgeon and physician and does not curry favor with any one. Do you remember Tom Dowd? His brother Will was in her house for two weeks after the fire, and Tom went every day to see him. He said she moved about among her patients, putting her hands upon one and another and whispering encouragement to each until it sometimes seemed as if a touch of her hand had the power to almost cure them. And after she had made her round of visits everybody in

the dormitory went to sleep, and when they awakened all were decidedly better.

"Tom's wife felt so grateful after Will was cured that she got up a little luncheon and invited the doctor to come and meet a few of her friends. She thought she had found a curiosity and wanted to introduce some of the heavy swells of her set to it. But her little scheme didn't go through. She received a note in reply saying that the doctor never attended social functions of any kind because her work kept her too busy. It was a great disappointment to Tom's wife, because she wanted to know more about her. Then several other ladies tried to cultivate her acquaintance, but she doesn't care for society and will not accept invitations——"

"How would it do to hire a carriage and take Margaret for a drive over this island? One must commence somewhere, and since she is alone down here a drive might please her," Mr. Mortimer interrupted.

"Suppose you try it," said the Judge.

On the evening of the same day that she met Judge Hale and his nephew Margaret received a note from Mr. Mortimer asking her to drive with him and his uncle on the following morning. At first Margaret was inclined to refuse the invitation, but when she remembered how kind the Judge had been to her and that he was to be one of the party she decided to accept, and very informally sent word by the messenger that she would be ready at ten. Mr. Mortimer was delighted and dressed himself for the occasion with the greatest of care.

He had planned to have his uncle sit on the front seat with the driver, thus giving the back seat and Margaret to himself. Great was his disappointment, therefore, when they stopped at the cottage and he saw Margaret bringing her boy to drive with them.

"Why didn't she leave that brat at home!" he muttered. But Margaret did not hear his question and smilingly said:

"You didn't invite little Gilbert, but I never leave him behind when I go anywhere," and then she stood waiting to be helped into the carriage.

For a moment Mr. Mortimer was so angry that he could not think what to say. Then an idea struck him. "Y—yes, of course; we are delighted to have the boy go along. Just put him in front with the driver—where he can see the horses. Children like that place best, I believe," and he smiled brightly at his own scheming.

But Margaret had caught sight of his face and replied: "No. With your permission he will sit with me," and without waiting for Mr. Mortimer to reply she took her seat, and before that astonished gentleman had time to think she had placed the boy between them and then settled herself among the cushions as serenely as if she did not know that her would-be lover was inwardly boiling with rage.

Mr. Mortimer was now furiously angry, and the more he thought about that child the more angry he became. He was also foolish enough to manifest his displeasure by answering in monosyllables all remarks addressed to him during the drive. This was because he had never learned to control

either his emotions or the outward expression of them. When his rudeness became so pronounced as to be no longer bearable the Judge and Margaret ceased speaking to him altogether and carried on an animated conversation without his assistance. On arriving at Wauwinnet Judge Hale ordered a shore dinner at the hotel, and while waiting for it to be served he took little Gilbert and Margaret down to the beach.

When Mr. Mortimer discovered that no one cared about his moods he followed, and, taking his place beside Margaret, he looked disapprovingly at his uncle's undignified antics with the boy. After watching them in silence for a few minutes he said loftily:

"Some persons behave very foolishly when children are about. One would never imagine uncle capable of acting so silly."

"I see nothing foolish nor silly in the pranks he is playing. This fun is a relaxation from his judicial duties, and is both harmless and healthful. Look at the color in his cheeks," said Margaret, and she laughed aloud at a great sprawl Judge Hale had just made while attempting to turn a summersault.

"You never did quite agree with me, if I remember correctly."

"No? I had forgotten whether we agreed or not. We never discussed anything of importance, did we?" and Margaret looked up inquiringly into his face.

"We used to talk about everybody we knew, and the styles and social affairs; but you never saw

things the same as I did. Margaret, why don't you care for me? Don't you know I am perfectly miserable without you?"

It was out at last, and without waiting for her to speak Mr. Mortimer continued: "I have loved you for years, and when you refused me because I didn't like your mother I went away and tried to forget you, but it was impossible. Then I wrote asking that our engagement should be renewed, but you had so far forgotten me as to marry some one else. When I got your letter telling me of your marriage and widowhood I felt that life was no longer worth living. Then I was suddenly seized with an intense desire to see New York again and came home, to find you down here on the first week of my return. The moment I saw you the old love commenced to burn stronger than ever, and now I am so miserable because half the time you don't seem even conscious of my presence—this very moment, while I am pouring out my heart's best love to you, you are watching that child. You constantly put him between us and before me, and I don't like it!"

Rising to her feet, Margaret looked at Mr. Mortimer with a glance that made him seem to shrivel as she replied: "Although trying not to do so, I have seen your childish, petulant jealousy, and at last your positive rudeness concerning my boy. I would have been glad to have avoided this interview, but since you have forced it perhaps it is better to have it over and done with. When you showed me the seamy side of your character that day after my illness and gave me my choice be-

tween poverty with my mother and luxury with you, I chose the first for two reasons: Because I believed it my duty to care for her, and because what I had seen of you in that short half hour convinced me that we could never be happy together as husband and wife; and, judging from your behavior since we met here, your disposition has not improved since we parted. As an illustration of your disagreeableness I will mention your conduct during our drive out here. Because I brought my child you acted like a cad. You expected he would be left at home with a maid and that I would spend the whole day with you. Just why you expect so much of my attention I do not understand, since you have done nothing to deserve it. I married Mr. Le Roy because I needed his assistance toward maintaining my mother, and I told him frankly what I was going to marry him for——”

“Then you didn’t love him?” Mr. Mortimer interrupted eagerly.

“No,” said Margaret sadly, “I did not love him.”

“That is a small crumb of comfort for me.”

“My husband’s memory is one thing that you have no reason to be jealous of,” replied Margaret composedly. “But now my baby’s presence offends you and you wish to see him relegated to the nursery whenever you see fit to bestow your attentions upon his mother. After an absence and silence of almost four years you return and expect persons and things to be immediately turned round and adjusted to your liking. Because you have now concluded to marry me, all those who are nearest and dearest to me must be neglected for

your sake. You have made a mistake in your judgment of me. I am not the foolish, fickle minded woman you supposed. My child is more than all the world to me, and no man nor woman shall ever come between him and me."

At this point in the conversation Judge Hale came, leading the little lad to where Margaret and Mr. Mortimer were standing. The old gentleman was flushed and almost breathless, but his eyes were sparkling and he was laughing like a boy.

"It's been many years since I had such a tumble as this, and I am sure I shall enjoy those clams when they are ready," he said, and then, observing that his nephew was somewhat perturbed, he walked on to the hotel and took a seat on the veranda.

"Then you refuse to be my wife?" Mr. Mortimer asked.

"Yes."

Bowing coldly, Edward Mortimer turned and walked down to the edge of the water and stood looking out to sea with an aggrieved expression upon his face. His grief was not caused so much by the fact that Margaret did not love him as it was because he had been refused something he wanted; and his disappointment would have been just as intense had he been refused an opportunity to buy a handsome filly or a cart. Since he could remember anything, his wishes, with very few exceptions, had been gratified. He could count on his fingers the few instances when he had been refused anything, and for one who had always had his way this was a fearful thing to bear.

He thought of poison and pistols and wondered what he could do to force her to yield. But a pistol wound was a dangerous thing to have and poison was nasty to swallow, and so he decided to try neither unless he had to. Finally he decided to look pained and sorry and as pale as possible, and, turning toward the house, he saw his uncle holding the boy on his knees and Margaret sitting near him in a low rocker. Now that she was not to be had she looked more radiantly beautiful than ever before, and, groaning inwardly, he seated himself just near enough to the happy group to hear the funny stories his uncle was telling and to watch the color come and go in Margaret's cheeks.

When dinner was announced and the party went into the dining room Mr. Mortimer's face still expressed displeasure, and he paid no attention to Margaret or his uncle. But they both managed to get on very well without his attentions, and when the carriage came round to the door to take the party home Judge Hale—as if the thought had just occurred to him—said carelessly:

"If you please, Edward, I will exchange seats with you and will ride back with Margaret and the boy." Without replying, Mr. Mortimer took his seat beside the driver, and the journey homeward was begun. Then all went well until the carriage turned down the narrow street where Margaret lived, when suddenly a tandem bicycle came whirling round the corner and whizzed past the party.

'Sconset horses were not accustomed to meeting such a strange looking machine as this, and those two old roadsters were surprised. They reared

and stood for a moment straight upon their hind legs. The old fisherman dropped the lines and sprang from the carriage to the ground, leaving his passengers to take care of themselves, and Mr. Mortimer, becoming greatly excited, seized the dangling straps and pulled upon them with all his strength, while he shouted: "Whoa! whoa! whoa!" Between his pulling and shouting he managed to draw the rearing horses backward until they lost their balance and came crashing over upon the carriage and its occupants.

For a few moments the old fisherman stood staring at his smashed vehicle and his imprisoned passengers, and when his scattered wits had re-assembled sufficiently to enable him to move, he started out after assistance, and very soon the news of the accident had spread all over the place.

Mr. Mortimer was taken, crushed and unconscious, from beneath the broken carriage and died before he was removed to his boarding house. Both of Judge Hale's legs were broken and it was feared that he was seriously injured internally. Margaret escaped with a few bruises and a badly sprained wrist, and little Gilbert was not injured at all. When Judge Hale's condition was made known to Margaret she insisted upon his being taken at once to her cottage, and then she sent a boy to Nantucket with a message to telegraph to Doctor Bennet asking her to come at once to her assistance; and after making the sufferer as comfortable as it was possible for him to be under the circumstances, she sat down to wait for news from the doctor.

The hours dragged slowly by until the shadows of evening came. Little Gilbert had been put into his bed and was sleeping soundly. The housemaid had gone to her home for the night and the cottage was as silent as a church at midnight. The sufferer had ceased moaning, had dropped into a quiet rest and seemed to be unconscious of his condition. Margaret had received no reply to her telegram other than that she had been made conscious mentally that it had been received and that help would come to her.

The shaded lamp upon the table was turned so low that only a dim light pervaded the room where she sat, and in the little alcove where the Judge was lying the shadows were so deep that the outlines of his figure were scarcely visible to her. When the hands of the old clock upon the wall pointed to the hour of ten Margaret became conscious that the doctor was present in that same strange but beautiful form in which she had appeared to her in the prison cell and at her miserable rooms. At the moment she became conscious of the doctor's presence the same strange, sinking sensation at her heart came upon her and took away her power to rise from her seat or to move from the position in which she was sitting. Then, in a few moments the room became faintly illuminated by the weird blue light that she had never seen except when the doctor desired it, and when that wonderful light had grown so bright as to burst into a refulgent glow she saw the radiant soul of Doctor Mata Bennet standing by the bedside of

the sleeping man and looking earnestly down at him.

Realizing instinctively that she must not speak, Margaret watched the process of restoring the broken limbs of the unconscious man to their normal condition. Stretching out her hands over the patient, this beautiful soul sent strong electric currents streaming through and around his body until he was completely enveloped in a sea of blue electric light, and as this light grew brighter the sleep of the patient grew deeper and deeper until he seemed to be overcome by a great stupor. Then Margaret realized that a mental anæsthetic had been administered to him which would make him wholly unconscious of the treatment he was going to receive. For perhaps thirty minutes this great soul stood at work with her wonderful power; then the blue light began to fade and, turning to Margaret, she said:

"Get bandages and wind this man's limbs carefully—as you have done many times for the patients at the hospital. Keep him in bed for seven days and then give him his liberty. It will not be necessary for me to come again. The broken bones are joined and his vibrations have received such an impetus that on waking in the morning he will believe himself to be fully recovered," and, smiling a good-by, she faded from Margaret's sight.

How dark and dreary the little cottage seemed when the strange light was gone and only the poor little lamp with its tiny point of yellow flame was left. Rising, Margaret went and looked at her friend. He was sleeping as soundly as if nothing

had happened to him, and she began getting the bandages ready. Margaret was methodical in everything she undertook to do, and went about putting on those bandages with all the care of an experienced surgeon, and when the task was done and the last stitch was taken which held them in their places, she felt a thrill of satisfaction at having been able to do something to help this good man who, in the old days had been so kind to her.

When morning came Judge Hale suddenly awoke with the striking of the clock at the hour of nine and sat up in bed. "Why, how's this?" he asked in surprise.

Going quickly to his bedside, Margaret put her hands upon his shoulders and said: "Please don't move! You really must remain quiet now, but after a while you may get up if you can."

Dropping back upon his pillows, the Judge closed his eyes and lay for a few moments trying to recall what had happened and why he was there with Margaret in her cottage instead of in his own room at the boarding house; and when the memory of the accident returned he asked:

"Were the others hurt, too?"

"Mr. Mortimer was injured and I received a slight sprain—which is quite well now. The driver saved himself by jumping, and my baby was not hurt at all."

"How badly was Edward injured?" the Judge inquired.

Averting her eyes, Margaret replied: "Quite seriously. He will be sent back to New York to-day."

"Please don't try to deceive me. Was Edward killed?"

"Yes."

Then for a long time Judge Hale lay thinking, with his eyes closed, and, believing he desired to be left alone, Margaret went into the little kitchen after his breakfast of milk and eggs and toast, which the maid had prepared for him. When she returned, bringing the tray, he had recovered his composure and said:

"Margaret, did you know that the death of my nephew has left me without a near relative in this world?"

"I did not know."

"Yes, that is true. Edward was an only child, and his mother, my sister, died when he was born. My brother was never married and was killed in the war of the rebellion. I am an old man without an heir and with nobody to care whether I live or die."

"I am very sorry," said Margaret, and the tears filled her pretty eyes. "I wish you would not feel that nobody cares for you, because I do."

After another long silence Judge Hale said: "Margaret, will you let me legally adopt you and your boy, and will you come and live at my house until I get ready to go over the river?"

After thinking for a few moments Margaret replied: "When you are well and strong again, if you want us we may come; but now I wish you would eat something," and, drawing a small table close to the bed, she placed the tray upon it, and then, raising his body to a half reclining position

and putting another pillow under his head, she assisted him until his meal was finished. After the tray had been removed the Judge still wanted to talk, and since talking had not been prohibited Margaret drew her chair near and prepared to indulge him.

"After the horses came crashing back upon the carriage I felt myself being lifted out of the wreckage and heard somebody say that my legs were broken, and now I find them both bandaged from my toes to my hips. Will you tell me who attended me and when the work was done?"

"While you slept last night Doctor Bennet came and placed the bones in their proper positions, and then I bandaged the limbs according to her directions," said Margaret.

"The accident occurred yesterday afternoon at about sundown, and you say the doctor came last night while I slept. To reach this place from New York City it requires at least twenty-four hours of continuous traveling. How could it be possible for her to get here at the time you mention?"

"I cannot explain the details of how she came, but while you were unconscious I saw her working over you last night between the hours of ten and eleven," said Margaret positively.

Seeming to have forgotten the incongruity in the dates that Margaret had given during her previous assertion, the Judge asked musingly: "Do you believe in dreams?"

"Some dreams are prophetic of coming events and some are caused by indigestion or imperfect circulation of the blood. I have had very wonder-

ful experiences in dreamland myself and should like to hear about yours," said Margaret smiling and hoping to turn his attention away from the subject of his miraculous restoration to health.

"Then I will tell you what I dreamed last night. I was lying on the bank of a dark, deep, swiftly flowing river, and was so near the edge of the shore that I seemed in great danger of sliding down into the stream. And it seemed that I was helpless and alone, and that all the friends I ever had or loved had passed over that same river and were somewhere on the other side. While I lay there thinking and wondering if it would not be well to let go my hold upon the grass—to which I was holding with all my strength—and follow my friends, a light, something like what one sees during a terrific thunderstorm on a very dark night, commenced to shine round me. It was very dim at first, and did not come in flashes like the lightning, but it became a steady glow that seemed more like a blue liquid current that was bathing my body from head to feet. Then came such restfulness and peace as I have never experienced since I was a child lying in my mother's arms. With the sensation of restfulness that came with the wonderful light the tension upon my nerves and muscles relaxed, all feeling of uncertainty and doubt passed away, and when I again looked for the river it had disappeared and I seemed to be lying on a bed of violets, while, floating in the air just above me, was a Being who shone like the sun. It was robed in a yellow, silken, gauzy substance so thin that its perfect figure and delicate pink flesh seemed to radiate

through the garment like the sunshine. Its eyes were of the same color as the violets on which I was lying, and there was a golden halo about its head and shoulders which reminded me of the mental picture that I had made of God years and years ago when my mother told me that He shone so brightly that no man could look upon His face and live.

"This Being looked down upon me and smilingly said: 'Peace be unto you,' and then my eyelids dropped down over my eyes, and although I tried very hard to keep looking at the vision, my lids closed tightly, as if they were sealed, and I knew nothing more until I woke and found myself here with you."

"A very beautiful dream," said Margaret smilingly.

"It was not an ordinary dream," said the Judge musingly. "I don't know what was done for me while I slept, but if both my legs were broken—and I have good reason to believe they were—then they have been mended in a miraculous manner, and no common practitioner did it, either. Won't you tell me all you know about it?" and Judge Hale raised himself on an elbow and looked pleadingly at Margaret.

"Gladly would I tell you if it were not betraying a confidence to do so," Margaret replied. "I can say, however, that your dream was not an ordinary one, and that you were at least partly conscious of the work that was being done for you. But until Doctor Bennet herself is ready to explain away the mystery it must remain."

"It has been whispered about the city that this strange and beautiful woman who calls herself Doctor Mata Bennet possesses great power to heal the sick, as was demonstrated in many cases with the victims of the Windsor Hotel fire. There were a number of persons whose lives were saved at that time who shake their heads and look unutterable things when her name is mentioned. And did you know that several society women tried very hard to make her acquaintance and failed?"

"I did not know," said Margaret; "the doctor never tells me anything about her private affairs, but from what I have seen of her since living at the hospital I should think she would not be likely to accept social invitations, since she is so deeply absorbed in her work. Then, too, I could never imagine that great soul participating in the frivolities that attend social functions. Her presence alone would make gossipers and scandal-mongers ashamed. They never could tear characters into pieces when she was by, because there is something about her which calls out the very best of every one's nature. Faults and foibles sink out of sight at her very approach, and they do not appear again until long after her presence has been removed."

## CHAPTER XVIII.

### At Home.

It is the evening of the Thanksgiving Day following the last scene of our story, and we find Margaret and her boy at home in Judge Hale's handsome house. The old gentleman has fulfilled his promise and has legally adopted these two children for his own. He has made them joint heirs to his wealth and good old name, and to-night we find the three formed into a happy group before the open fire in the library.

Little Gilbert is perched upon the Judge's knee, and Margaret is standing near gazing at the burning coals and thinking of that other night, which was only a little more than three years ago, when she stood in almost that same spot asking that mercy should be shown her mother for the crime she had committed. And as the panorama of events which had occurred since then passes before her mental vision she shivers a little and sighs.

Observing the thoughtful expression upon her face, the Judge suddenly inquires: "What are you thinking about, Margaret?"

"Of how the Great Divine Law has brought good to me and to mine. Of how, through trial and suffering, I have been brought to know some-

thing of Its absolute justice. And I am giving thanks for just the few fragments of truth which I have received and which shall be the foundation for my future growth and development."

Reverently bowing his head, Judge Hale added: "And most heartily do I join with you in giving thanks for the blessings I have received. For a great peace has indeed come unto me."

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