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THE MANHATTAN SERIES

No. 15.

A PROUD DISHONOR.

of
POPULAR
AMERICAN
NOVELS

By GENIE HOLTZMEYER.
(MRS. SYDNEY ROSENFELD.)

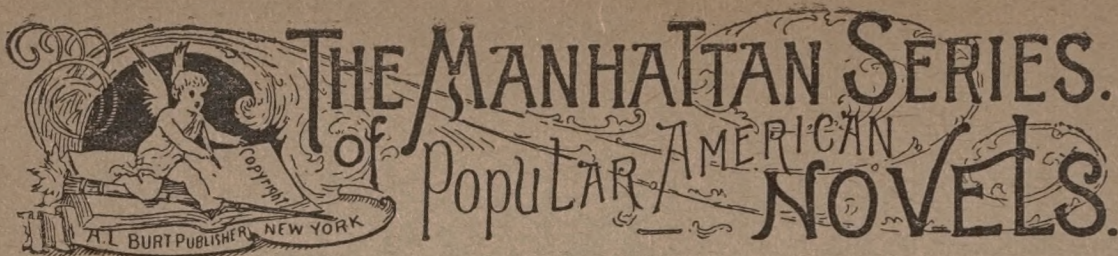


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A PROUD DISHONOR.

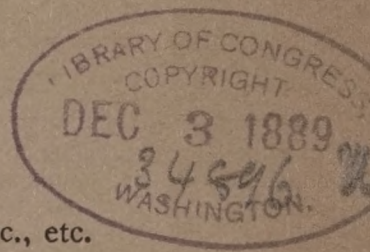
A NOVEL.

By GENIE HOLTZMEYER,

(MRS. SYDNEY ROSENFELD.)

Author of

45
"Heavily Handicapped," "Twixt Heaven and Earth," etc., etc.



"Life never seems so clear and easy as when the heart is beating faster at the sight of some generous self-risking deed. We feel no doubt then, what is the highest prize the soul can win."—*George Eliot.*



NEW YORK:
A. L. BURT, PUBLISHER.

(1889)

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A PROUD DISHONOR.

CHAPTER I.

ABOUT MYSELF AND MY FAMILY.

I PUT MY MUSIC down in the hall, and go into the sitting-room to say good-by to mother.

The moment I open the door I see something is wrong. Mother has arisen from her work-table by the window, and, nervously twisting her watch-chain through her fingers, is listening to the low, business-like tones of a man who stands before her.

His back is toward me, but I instinctively recognize it as a back that wants money. The straight, firm attitude, the unflinching shoulders, say, as plainly as if they were speaking, "Our man has come for money, and our man won't go without it." "Bills," is my inward comment, and I advance to the rescue.

"I am very sorry to press you, Madam," he is saying, with that polite suavity which is worse than a slap in the face, "but my positive orders were to bring back a substantial check or respectfully inform you that further steps will be taken immediately."

“What is it, Mother?” I ask, coming forward.

“From Smith’s, dear,” she says, and her voice sounds so weary.

“Yes, Miss,” the man says, turning to me. “You see it is a large amount, and has been standing some time; and as there have been no orders, lately, Mr. Smith thinks it best to close the account.”

Mother looks frightened. She is not strong enough to bear these petty worries, so I interpose.

“I suppose, in reality, Mr. Smith wishes to know when the account will be settled, and why there have been no orders lately?”

The man shuffles his feet and does not feel so sure of fingering his commission as before I entered.

“Well, Miss, if I could take back a satisfactory answer it might make a difference.”

“Just so; perhaps you would be so kind as to tell him that our family has been smaller lately and our wants fewer, and that we would like to pay weekly, for the future, settling the standing bill little by little, as we can.”

Mother looks at me in surprise, but the man appears satisfied, though sulky.

“I am sure Mr. Smith could not desire a better arrangement. When shall I tell him the first installment will be paid?”

I am nonplussed, but mother comes bravely to the fore.

“My dividend will be due on the 4th of next month. Tell Mr. Smith he shall have a check on the 6th.”

“I will do so, Ma’am;” and with a clumsy bow

the man retires with the same promptitude as his visions of what he would do with his commission have done.

As the hall door bangs after him, mother turns to me.

“Winnie, darling, how are we going to pay weekly?”

“Lottie and I have been talking things over, dearie, and we find we can manage nicely to pay for everything as we get it, and save running up those horrid bills that trouble you so; and then, Mother, by and by we will get on better, and not owe anyone a cent, and have a balance at our bankers, and you shall go into the country and have a lovely time with the——”

“The butcher, Miss——”

“All right, Mary, I’ll come. Never mind, Mother;” I say, laughing at the interpolation, “I could even contemplate with calmness your having a lovely time with the butcher if we did not owe him anything.”

Mother laughs the bright laugh that she keeps through all her worries, and I go down-stairs to settle with the butcher; and as the baker is also there, I send them both away with the assurance of weekly payments and a prospective slice of the dividend.

Then I return to mother.

“I am afraid I must be off now, or I shall lose my lesson,” I say, “but I don’t want to leave you until Lottie comes home;” and I look out over the flower-filled window-sill, which it is our pride to keep so bright, because mother likes it so, and since she be-

came an invalid it is all she can see of God's beautiful earth.

I keep one eye up the street for Lottie and the other on the clock, for I have quite a walk across to the Elevated road and don't want to be late for my lesson.

"I have plenty of time; the trains run every seven minutes. Ah, here is Lottie. Good-by, darling;" and I kiss my pretty mother and start off, admitting Lottie as I go out.

All the way down the street, and some time after I am in the car, I can see in fancy my dear mother as she sits in the sun-lighted room, with the yellow blinds half-drawn, throwing a golden gleam over everything, the windows wide open, and the sweet spring air bringing in soft scents from the mignonette, fuchsias and geraniums that crowd the sill.

It is a pretty room, our sitting-room, for mother can't move about; so it has also to be our living-room. It is perhaps overcrowded with knickknacks and work-baskets, but it is essentially a woman's room and a home-room.

By the big square window are mother's table, chair and footstool; and here she is always to be found, her fingers busy with some exquisite piece of fancy work, her little white hands looking so pretty it is hard to keep from kissing them. She is still a very handsome woman, though pain and care have touched her with heavy hands. As she sits in her black dress, her dainty cap, falling lace collar, and the soft shawl round her shoulders, she is very fair to see. She has such a sweet, kind face, so full of

refinement, with its clear-cut features, delicate complexion, gentle hazel eyes, and dark, smoothly-braided hair.

I think of mother, and from her my thoughts wander to ourselves; and as the car jolts along it occurs to me that I have been distributing the dividend in a most lavish manner, and that unless it is of a more elastic nature than usual it cannot possibly do all it purports to do. I turn hot and cold at the thought, and review our position from the earliest time.

We are the widow and daughters of one of the most intensely Knickerbocker Knickerbockers of all Manhattan Island. It may be a very fine thing to be born into the most exclusive society of New York, but experience teaches me that it is much pleasanter to be born of a thriving business parent who is not unlikely to leave something behind him for his family.

My father, being too much of a gentleman to look after his own affairs, left them in the hands of a person who was eccentric enough to prefer a tarnished honor, a Canadian climate, and my father's wealth, to his distinguished acquaintance, poverty, and the sultry summers of New York. My father was too overcome with astonishment at this exhibition of bad taste to care to live longer, and accordingly lay down the burden of his own life and made way for his invalid wife and youthful daughters to take up theirs. There are but two of us, and girls, of course; 'twould not have been our luck to have had a boy among us to help keep the home together and

share the family burden, which is by no means a light one for girlish shoulders to bear. The total wreck of our fortunes occurred when I was eleven, Lottie fourteen. We were cast high and dry on a barren shore, penniless.

Since then we have been struggling on, somehow, for ten years, and to-day finds us in the same state of insolvent hopefulness that this day five years ago did. We are living in Harlem, doing our best to make both ends meet by the aid of a sentimental incumbrance on our first floor, or, as the advertisements put it, "receiving two or three eligible people into our refined family circle."

Lottie, ever practical and earnest, graduated as early as possible and has been a regular teacher for three years, now. I, alas! am a dunce. After the happy times at Miss Bovee's on Fifth Avenue I hated the High School, where I had to sit among all the odd-and-end girls of the neighborhood. So mother kept me at home with her and educated me herself.

I am at once the pet and black sheep. At the present time I am studying for a singer, and hope ultimately, with concert engagements and pupils, to realize some of the wealth of which I am always dreaming.

I wonder sometimes how we have managed to bear all the troubles that have come to our share, and when I think of what our lives have been I say to myself, "Nothing shall ever induce me to marry." I suppose every woman has the natural longing for baby voices lisping "Mamma," for baby arms clasped

about her neck, and fresh, innocent cheeks pressed to hers; but with me the practical soon overcomes the romantic, and I thank God heartily that I have no hungry mouths clamoring for the food it is so hard to get, no little restless bodies to clothe out of nothing, and in after years no responsibility of launching girls on the world.

Girls are so helpless, they can do so little for themselves; and if they are gifted with that sound common sense which the scoffers term strong-mindedness they are supposed to lose their greatest charm (womanliness), and their more fortunate sisters born with the silver spoon in their mouths make merry over this absence of helplessness.

Strong-mindedness is nothing but the form into which the buffets of the world have molded the plastic clay of a woman's nature.

In the abstract I hate boys, but as a wife I would pray unceasingly for men-children; there is so much more room for them in this world.

How one runs on when one is astride a pet hobby! I was forgetting everything in the desire to spread before the world my not very unique ideas.

I am going to Fifth Avenue and Ninth Street to take my lesson, and I have been so busy with my thoughts that before I have begun to realize that I am on my way, here I am at Jefferson Market. I hurry over to Ninth Street, and in a few moments am at the Signor's door.

"Good-morning, young lady," says the Signor gayly, as I enter. "You are just in ze good time. Mr. Mertens, Miss Ten Eyck."

I bow to a little, fair man, who seems to rise suddenly out of the earth, but who in reality was only hidden by the piano, which it is the Signor's caprice to run all over the room, as the whim seizes him.

"Mr. Mertens is my neighbor," the little old Signor says, settling his skull-cap more closely to his head; "he is looking for some one to launch; Miss Ten Eyck is my pupil; she looks for some one to launch her; I introduce; that is all."

I stand nervously waiting developments; the Signor puts on his glasses and eyes me sarcastically.

"What you think of her?" he asks Mr. Mertens.

The little gentleman rises to the occasion gallantly.

"If Miss Ten Eyck's voice is as charming as herself you have done me a great service," he says.

"She all right," says the Signor. "She all right, or I not make the introduction. She need a little lead here," patting the top of his head, "but she all right. She want to soar too high, but she soon get cured."

"Opera—eh?" says Mr. Mertens.

"Si," says the Signor. "She think Miss Ten Eyck one day prima donna Grand Italian Opera; set Europe afire; but she have not studied enough. She have much that Nature gave her. See the breadth of chest! What lungs! What physique! Ah! She have physique. Mees will move ze piano to ze window?"

I obey without any hesitation—it is such a frequent request that I have learned to think nothing

of it—and push the piano toward the window. The Signor seats himself quickly at it.

“Sing ze scale,” he says.

I obey.

“Zere!” he says proudly, as I give no sign of breathlessness. “Physique! Wonderful! Ver good!”

“Now let me hear her sing,” says Mr. Mertens.

“No!” the Signor objects, “zat is not fair; she take her lesson now, but I give my concert next week. Ze little girl zat sing ze first song have sore throat. Zis little girl can sing instead. You come hear her.”

Mr. Mertens withdraws, and I turn and grasp the Signor’s hand gratefully.

“How can I thank you? How good of you,” I say.

“Bah!” he says furiously, “you waste ze moments in such folly. If you was not useful to me I would not use you.”

“But,” I say.

“Push zat piano back,” he cries. “You dare say one ozer word and I teach you no more. Sing!”

As usual I obey without a word; but whether it is my excitement that makes me sing badly, or whether the Signor is a little captious, I don’t know, but never in my life have I had such a ferocious scolding as I get at this lesson.

I am awfully impatient until I can get home, and I fancy the old Signor guesses as much, for he keeps me long after my time, peering at me maliciously through his bushy eyebrows as he catches me looking at the clock.

At last I am free. At last I speed home, breathless, triumphant and happy. I tell them—mother and Lottie—that I am going to sing at my first concert next week ; and soon we have become absorbed in the serious question of what I shall wear.

CHAPTER II.

MY FIRST APPEARANCE.

I BETAKE MYSELF to the den to practice my scales for one of the three twenty minutes which are my daily allotted task.

Singers studying in a city labor under great disadvantages, which balance pretty evenly with the benefits attained by living within easy reach of the best masters, the best music, and the best concerts. To begin with, the eye of the public is always on them, the ear of the public ever in wait for some harsh tone or false note—and this, too, the gallery public, who are never too delicate to bring the faults of students forcibly to their notice. The discriminating audiences I allude to are the street boys and corner loafers.

Ours is a corner house, and against the lamp-post in front of it half the idle backs in the neighborhood are wont to lean. Toward evening this becomes overcrowded, and the stoop is requisitioned. In return for our support, our friends give such suggestions as may seem good to them.

Scales and exercises they object to *in toto*, sternly refusing to allow them in the evening, or, if I persist, giving me such vigorous assistance that I am bound to stop. When his work is over at night, and

he is free to do us the honor of swarming on our lamp-post, the "Agricultural Irishman" thinks that if folks will annoy him by singing they shall at least sing something amusing. Anything, therefore, that does not meet with the approval of the aforesaid A. I. is soon smothered.

My trials are, however, not alone confined to the evening. I have an implacable enemy in a messenger boy who seems never to be out of our street. Do I start an ascending scale, he immediately begins a descending one. Nor is he too particular as to key—his genius is too great to be prisoned by rules of harmony. He is an infant Wagner, an unconscious disciple of the new school, and whenever he appears on the scene I bow before his superior judgment and close my piano.

I am not alone in my misery; we are living apparently in an artistic neighborhood. In the apartment-houses round the corner dwell a shrill soprano and a deep bass, both studying professionally; immediately opposite is a pianist, a young lady amateur who aspires to be something out of the common, but who never plays studies of any description, merely hammering away at a difficult piece until she knows it. Add to these another soprano and a violinist who board next door and the list is complete, unless mention should be made of a young man who tortures us nightly with an ocarina which he is trying to learn after office hours.

To-day I close my window and practice with care, for to-night I am to sing at the Signor's concert, and I am anxious to do well.

There has been no end of trouble to get me a dress. It is, of course, imperative that I appear with some approach to style, but the wherewithal to provide a stylish dress is not forthcoming. After many consultations, however, woman's ingenuity overcomes all difficulties and a satisfactory result is attained.

Later on I sweep into the sitting-room feeling quite bridal in my pure white gown, handsomely trimmed with mother's Mechlin lace. Lottie follows me as the admiring crowd, and mother surveys the little procession with much pride. My neck and arms are bare of ornament, and I look very nice, I fancy; but mother, without saying a word, goes to the case that contains the few lingering remains of her handsome jewelry and brings me some bracelets and a string of pearls for my neck, then my cloak is folded round me, and away we go, Lottie as chaperone.

I should dearly like a *coupé*, my cab rides are so few and far between; but practical Lottie reminds me of the cost of the white dress and I collapse into the car, feeling selfish for suggesting such a thing. We go over in the Madison Avenue cars, to save the drabbling my dress is likely to get on the stairs of the Elevated station, and it seems an age before we reach Eighteenth Street and Chickering Hall. My song is early in the programme, and I am so nervous lest I shall be late that I can hardly wait to enter the hall.

We are only just in time; and when, after hastily throwing off my wraps, I ascend the platform, the

memory of the countless great artists I have sat and listened to in this very hall strikes me with a crushing blow at my own impudence in daring to sing where they have sung, and I would give worlds to run back into the artists' room and hide my head? What if I fail?

The Signor is behind me, so I dare not go back, and tremblingly I walk down and face my audience.

I am to sing that sweet old song, "Home They Brought Her Warrior Dead." I am going to sing without notes, as it always increases my nervousness to see the music shivering in my trembling and ice-cold hands.

I make a shy bow, and passing my handkerchief across my lips try to remember the first words of my song. They have gone from me utterly!

The accompanist—Heaven be praised!—is indulging in a few preliminary flourishes; but even as my thanksgiving arises he strikes into the symphony, which is only of some few bars' duration, and the words are still miles from me.

I gaze hopelessly, helplessly at my audience. They are waiting patiently now; in one more minute they will be hissing me. As my eyes wander among them I catch sight of a pair of grave eyes fixed on my face. They are those of a man in the orchestra right before me. He sits with folded arms, gazing at me from under his brows, and though his eyes are grave, there is a look of amusement lurking round his mouth which tells me he has read my inward struggles and anticipates a failure, as I do. He seems bored, throws his head back in

a half-contemptuous way, fidgets, looks at the programme to see who sings after me, then glances round to see if there is any chance of escape, and finding himself hemmed in resigns himself to his fate. With yet another look at me, which, interpreted, means that he wishes me at Jericho, he folds his arms, and dropping his head, wonders how to kill time till I am hissed off.

The spirit of contrariness rises up within me. This man thinks I shall fail, and the horrid, cowardly creature is anticipating enjoyment out of my distress. I brace myself up, the words come crowding back to my mind, I sing with all the power and passion at my command, and I realize that I am doing well. At last I come to the words

Yet she neither moved nor wept.

There is a stir through the audience as I sing them; they even thrill me strangely; and now they rouse the enemy. Slowly he raises his head; his eyes meet mine and rest upon me. I have caught his attention; now I will keep it. So I sing on, feeling the pathos of every word I utter; and, watching him, I see he feels it, too. His eyes never leave my face, but rest there until the last note dies away. Then, as I bow, I meet them again, and in them read a mute expression of pleasure, and I leave the platform amid deafening applause.

How proud and happy I feel as I return and bow; how overjoyed when an encore is insisted on. My very soul stirs at the tempest that greets me when I appear in answer to the call, and at the deathlike

stillness that reigns the moment the first chords are struck.

I sing the same song again. The Signor in advising me for a crisis like the present had said, in his sarcastic way :

“While you are a youngster, always give the same song for an encore. Don't let the public think you take the credit to yourself, but give it to the composer; they will regard it as becoming modesty, and like you all the better for it.”

I find he is right. The audience evidently did want the sweet old ballad again, and show their approval of it and me in a most flattering manner.

I return to the artists' room in a whirl of delight, and in and out among the other visions come flashing a pair of quiet eyes. I am only too eager for my turn to come again, and when I return to the platform look instantly for my mascot. He is still there, and watches me so intently that a sudden fear seizes me lest he has seen me staring at him. This time my song does not give so much pleasure; I am only recalled, not encored, but I leave the platform as happy as a bird.

I know how foolish it is, but when Lottie and I are jogging away homeward, above and beyond the pleasure I feel at my success is the still more pleasurable remembrance of a quiet face and an approving smile.

Over the hot cocoa that has been brewed for us on our return we tell mother the whole story of the evening's triumph, and she is so proud and happy, already seeing me the rival of Kellogg.

At last we go to bed. Mother is too tired to keep up any longer, and having given her her sleeping draught, I light the night-light and creep into my own little bed in the corner.

I can't sleep. In every nook where the shadows are darkest I see again the concert-room, the sea of upturned faces, and that one face that haunts me so strangely. I see again the outlines of a perfectly-shaped head, covered with closely-cropped hair that falls into little brown waves at the temples; a bronzed face that belongs to a man accustomed to an open-air life, keen gray eyes, clearly-cut profile, and the line of a straight, firm mouth shaded by a golden-brown mustache. This man has strangely fascinated me. I fall to wondering who he is, what his name is, and keep on forming conjectures about him, until with a start I pull myself up. What has he to do with me or I with him?—a strange man who heard me sing and was evidently bored. Perhaps, after all, he did not notice me; but now I remember that earnest, intent gaze, and I know only too well that he did notice me a great deal. Perhaps he only looked at me in surprise at the rude way in which I was staring at him.

The thought makes me angry. After all, what is this man to me or I to him, that I should let him worry me and deprive me of my rest? Nothing, absolutely nothing. In all probability I shall never see him again.

This idea unfortunately brings no consolation with it. I positively have the audacity to think what a dull affair the next concert will be when I go on the

platform and don't find him among the audience. This is altogether too much; and angrily scolding myself, I drop off to sleep, vowing to sing penitential scales every time I find my mind dwelling on this tiresome man.

Life goes on in the same old way after the concert, and for the next few days there is nothing to disturb its even tenor. Then comes a break, and a glorious one. I get a letter from Mr. Mertens, who, having heard me at the concert, wants to engage me for three of a series he is going to give. Honor and cab-fares are all that will fall to my share; but Mr. Mertens is a well-known man, and the hint he gives about getting me other engagements through these concerts is not to be despised, so I accept with delight.

Mr. Mertens is as good as his word, in a few days I get two more engagements—paying ones, these—and I begin to think I am going to make fame and fortune this very season.

The first concert comes on, and though I scold myself for my folly, I cannot help wondering if the stranger will be there.

I dress myself with the greatest care, and when I ascend the platform I know I am looking my best. Involuntarily I glance round to see if my mascot is on hand. He is not there. I feel disappointed for a moment; then right before me I see an empty seat. I cannot help wishing he were filling it; but before the thought is half-formed, down the aisle he saunters, and in another moment has taken the vacant seat, and with arms folded is again subjecting me to that peculiar gaze.

When my duties are done, and Lottie and I start out on our homeward way, who should be waiting outside but the mysterious stranger. My heart stands still. I feel that he is there just to see me pass, but I say nothing to Lottie, and go home with my head in a whirl.

I look forward to my next appearance with feverish anxiety. I cannot help confessing to myself that I am fascinated by this man, whom I have seen but twice. I fully expect to see him, nor am I disappointed. He is there, and this time there is a faint sign of welcome in his eyes as they meet mine. I feel honestly glad to see him, for I have quite come to the belief that his presence brings me luck.

I have two solos and a part in a trio at this concert, and feel as though I were going to distinguish myself, for I never felt happier in my life; but what is my horror, on going out to sing in the trio, which closely follows my song, to find that "he" has gone. He evidently does not come to hear me, or he would not go out just as I am going to sing. I return to the artists' room feeling cross and humiliated, and see Lottie holding in her hands a magnificent bouquet of white flowers, which she is somewhat angrily contemplating.

"An attendant brought this for you," she says.

"For me?" I say, taking it eagerly. I know it is from him, and I bury my face in the fragrant blossoms to hide the blush of pleasure that will rise. I notice a card attached to the ribbons, and read "Miss Ten Eyck," written in a clear, manly hand, and in the corner the initials "J. M."

“J. M., Jim,” says Lottie, reading it over my shoulder. “Well, for my part, I would like to return this to ‘J. M.’ with my own comments on his impudence.”

“Pardon,” says Madam Y——, taking the bouquet from me and inhaling its delicious fragrance. “Your sister should be much complimented at such a distinction. It is an honor to an artist to be so appreciated.”

“I should be far more inclined to call it an impertinence,” Lottie says, doggedly.

“No. Had the gentleman also sent his name, it would then have been impertinence; but this is intended as a compliment. Your sister should carry the flowers for her last song.”

Carry them for my last song! I should as soon fly. I dare not, though I should like him to know how much I appreciate them. Fate is, however, against me. As I am stepping out on the platform Madam Y—— thrusts them into my hand.

I have hardly advanced a step before I regret her thoughtless kindness, for I cannot help feeling embarrassed, and I have a difficult task before me for which I need all my self-control. Mr. Mertens has asked me to introduce a new song written by a friend of his, and much flattered by the request I have taken it to the Signor, who, after glancing it over amid many expressive twirls of his eyebrows, remarks:

“He ask you to sing zat? Well, I like his nerves. It is rats!”

However, he coached me in it, and I am very glad

to have the opportunity of singing it, if only for its bringing me under the special notice of Mr. Mertens and his friends.

It is an arch little ditty, and needs a cool head to enable me to give it its due expression. I devoutly wish the flowers back at the florists.

Fly, Jenny,
 Spry, Jenny,
 To the haymakers nigh, Jenny.
 Haste thee now, lass. Hurry! Faster!
 Here's a luncheon, my dear,
 With a bone and some beer,
 For little dog Joe—and his master.

Fie, Jenny,
 Sly, Jenny;
 Drop that bright eye, Jenny!
 Why make his poor heart beat faster?
 He quakes now with fear,
 And he dare not draw near,
 Poor little dog Joe—and his master.

Why, Jenny,
 Shy, Jenny,
 Sinks that bright eye, Jenny?
 Why beats *thy* heart so much faster?
 There's not a soul here
 To alarm you, my dear;
 None but little dog Joe—and his master.

Try, Jenny.
 My! Jenny.
 Why do you sigh, Jenny?
 Bolder his words come, and faster.
 Why, what's that I hear?
 'Twas a kiss, I much fear.
 Was't for little dog Joe—or his master?

So runs the song. The lilt of it carries me away with it, and I suppose I sing it well, for the hearty laughter that greets me and the splendid encore that follows are convincing evidence. My bouquet has

brought me luck. I have made a hit, and with a fleeting glance at "J. M." I hurry home to tell mother of my success. She is very much pleased with the account of the whole evening, especially with the flowers, for she does not regard them with the same disgust Lottie does. We put them in water, and admire the beautiful arrangement of ferns and flowers; and then I laugh a little feebly over the mysterious sender, "J. M." For the next few days Lottie teases me terribly. At each ring of the bell she says:

"More flowers from 'J. M.;' or perhaps he has arrived in person to see if the bouquet does not want renewing."

One morning I go down town for some music and to call on Mr. Mertens to see him about some slight alteration I want to make in the arrangement of my songs for the next concert. Mr. Mertens has rooms in one of those nice, old-fashioned houses on Washington Square—a large, comfortable place—just the style of home I would like to settle down in when I have got beyond the love-and-suburban-villa period and come to the solid enjoyments of life.

I am ushered at once into the august presence, and find the great man very affable; but the moment I have transacted my business I rise to take my leave, for I know well how chary these big-wigs are of the words they throw to us small fry, and, when I am particularly anxious to produce a good impression, make myself scarce with the greatest promptitude.

"Oh, by the way, Miss Ten Eyck, I have a letter

for you," he says, as I am half-way through the door.

"For me?" I say, in surprise.

"Yes," he answers. "I hope it may be some fresh engagement;" and searching among the papers on his writing-table he gives me a note.

Where have I seen that bold, manly writing before? I can't recollect, but I take the letter, and burning with curiosity I bid a hasty adieu.

Where shall I read my letter? In the cars, going home? No; I cross to the square, and walking down the long linden walk, turn to open it. The letter bears a large seal, and on it are the magic letters "J. M." It runs thus:

DEAR MISS TEN EYCK:—I trust you will pardon the liberty I take in thus addressing you, but having had the pleasure of hearing you several times, lately, I have become much interested in you—so much so that I am emboldened to ask you if it is not possible for me to become better acquainted with you. I inclose address, and shall be very much obliged for a reply.

I am yours truly,

J. MACADAM.

To say that I am furious at this letter is to use far too mild a term, and the consciousness that the slight is deserved does not in any way lessen the sting. I have been a romantic idiot over this man, making him the hero of my dreams, fancying him far superior to every other man born, endowing him with all the godlike attributes I would like my hero to possess, and lo! he is an ordinary every-day

individual who has such a poor opinion of me that he dares thus to insult me!

I blush with indignation at myself when I reflect that he has probably noticed how I stared at him, and concluded his addresses would be agreeable to me.

Oh, I am well punished for my folly! I go home crushed; but I do not dare to mention the letter. I keep it to myself, and under the pretext of having harmony to study go to the den and think it all out. Several times I essay to burn the note, but at last change my mind—and answer it! I write:

DEAR SIR:—I was both surprised and annoyed at your note. When I accepted your charming bouquet, the other night, I never imagined you would construe that acceptance into a permission to address me. As to our becoming better acquainted, I should have thought you would have endeavored to discover some mutual friend before you even contemplated it.

Yours truly,

WINIFRED TEN EYCK.

After much cogitation and many perusals I post this letter on the sly, and there the matter ends. Evidently “J. Macadam” has taken his snubbing and will trouble me no more.

CHAPTER III.

ABOUT T. M.

I AM AFRAID I am lazy, but I do hate going out in the evening. Nothing pleases me more than for people to come and see us, but to dress and go out is to me one of the most intolerable nuisances.

To-night I am particularly unwilling. I am invited through some friends to an "at home" at Mrs. Messerole's, a woman who is a great power in the musical world of New York; and it is a sort of hall-stamp to be seen at her house, and to be her *protégé* means speedy advancement. I ought to be overjoyed at the opportunity, but I am not, and I am wishing with all my heart that I had not to go.

The friends who are to take me are very desirous that Mrs. Messerole should like me, and are very kind and encouraging about it, but only succeed in making me so frightfully nervous that I would give anything to be free to stay at home. Two of the greatest singers from the Metropolitan Opera are to be there, and when Mrs. Atherton tells me Mrs. Messerole is certain to ask me to sing I feel so awkward and abashed that I tremble at the mere thought of going.

Womanlike, my mood changes as I begin to dress. I get strangely excited and am ready long before the

Athertons, who are staying overnight with us, their home being over in Jersey.

At last we are off, and as we drive along I cannot speak; my mind is full of Mrs. Messerole. I am not superstitious, but I cannot help feeling as though something were going to happen to me to-night. I cannot tell whether it will be a joy or a grief, but there in my heart is the consciousness. I don't say anything of this to Mrs. Atherton—it is really too silly to be worth mentioning—though she is one of those large-hearted women who understand all the faults and foibles of the human heart, and who has as many sympathies for the sinner as the saint.

We reach our destination after what seems to me an interminable drive, and in the wake of Mrs. Atherton's black lace dress I make my *début* at Mrs. Messerole's. My hostess is a fair, pretty woman, *petite* and well-dressed, with a charm of manner that sets me at my ease at once.

We seat ourselves on a velvet couch to listen to a song which a far-famed contralto is going to sing.

I am greatly interested in seeing so famous a personage away from the scene of her triumphs, and find her far handsomer than she looks under the glare of the footlights. Her costume is superb—maize satin trimmed with bronzed beads and relieved with huge clusters of azaleas.

She sings, and I feel myself transported to Heaven. What a voice! What command she has over it—one moment thrilling and soft as a bird's, the next poured out in rich volumes of melody. I could kiss the hem of her dress as she sweeps away from the

piano and returns to her seat beside an equally celebrated soprano. They are both so gifted and handsome they can afford to be good friends.

I am in the midst of my enjoyment when the dreaded moment arrives and Mrs. Messerole, with a sweet smile, beckons me to the piano. My sensations alter; I don't feel as if I were in Heaven, but ardently wish I were.

Every one is very kind, there is a little encouraging hum of applause as I finish, and among it I hear a quiet "brava." The tone is so like that of a certain "brava" which I used to listen for a few weeks ago that I give an involuntary start and look round for "J. M." I don't see him, but I do see Mrs. Messerole advancing toward me.

"Madam Siebel wishes to be introduced to you, Miss Ten Eyck," and in a whirl of delighted amazement I am presented to the great *diva*, who smiles pleasantly, says a few graceful words and then resumes her conversation, and I subside into a seat beside Mrs. Atherton, glad that the moment I so dreaded has come and gone.

I begin to get dull and a trifle bored, and make sly fun of myself for fancying this was going to be an eventful night in the quiet annals of my life's history.

Mrs. Messerole's voice at my elbow rouses me from my reverie.

"Miss Ten Eyck, I want to introduce a great friend of mine to you—he is most anxious to make your acquaintance. Miss Ten Eyck, Mr. Macadam." She glides away, and I raise my eyes to see—him!

I can say nothing; my breath comes quickly, and I feel my face and neck flushing crimson.

“Will you not speak to me?” he says at last.

I try to, but cannot. He takes a seat beside me and pursues:

“Please don’t look so angry, and let me offer some explanation. I beg your pardon for sending that note. When I got your reply I was fearfully angry with myself for having caused you pain, and I have been trying ever since to find some mutual friend through whom I could obtain an introduction and make my apologies.”

My heart flutters with pleasure, but I answer, coldly enough:

“I accept your apology, and there, I think, ends the necessity of further conversation between us.”

He bows his head and is silent. I am dreading lest he should take me at my word and leave me, when suddenly he turns to me and asks:

“Do you mean me to go away?”

I can make no reply.

“You are silent,” he pursues. “Tell me your wishes and I will obey them.”

I hesitate and then answer, resolutely:

“You did not send me flowers and write that note because you thought I was—I was——”

“A lady? Well——”

“You sent them because you thought I was the kind of woman who would like that sort of thing; and now, I trust, finding that I am not, you will be only too glad to make an end of this affair.”

“Indeed, no. I have gone to no end of trouble to

try and meet you, and I should be but a silly fellow indeed to let you go the moment I had found you."

"But when I am a disappointment," I say, sarcastically.

"You are not a disappointment. Must I speak plainly? It seems so, for you are a very downright young lady. I became interested in you, and not being able to see how I was to know you, got desperate and wrote."

"But the flowers?"

"The flowers I sent you as an artist, not as a woman."

The compliment pleases me and I smile.

"That's right," he says. "I like to see you smile; it suits you better than the fierce look with which you greeted me just now. Won't you tell me something about yourself, now that I have made my peace and we are friends? Do you know many people here, and whom did you come with? Is Mrs. Messerole a great friend of yours?"

He is older than I—a man—while I am still on the borderland between girlhood and womanhood, and his calm air of authority sways me and bends me to his will. Had any other man thus questioned me I should in all probability have got in a passion and snubbed him, but Mr. Macadam I answer as quietly as though he had the right to question me.

"I don't know Mrs. Messerole well," I say. "This is the first time I have been here, and the friends who brought me did so with the hope of getting

Mrs. Messerole to use her influence to help me in my profession."

"How proudly you say that," he laughs. "But you have not told me who brought you."

I make a motion toward the Athertons, who are beside me. He glances around.

"What!—the Athertons? This is fortunate!" he exclaims. "Why, I used to know them very well. When Miss Hendricks moves away I will renew my acquaintance; but now that we have a moment to ourselves, tell me something about your own life."

"What do you want to know?" I ask, laughing.

"Anything, everything; there is nothing you can tell me that will not interest me in the highest degree."

Little by little he draws out all there is to tell.

"Now we are quite old friends," he says.

"Hardly," I answer. You seem to have made me unburden my mind about myself, but I am still quite in the dark about you."

He laughs.

"There is nothing worth knowing about me. I am simply an old fellow who has been knocking round the world a bit."

I can hardly repress a smile at this man of five-and-thirty calling himself old; but he is talking, and laughs in a very mirth-provoking way, as he says:

"How nervous you were the first time I saw you. I quite thought you were going to break down."

"Yes, and you got dreadfully bored, and wished me anywhere."

"No, on my word. I was truly sorry for you,

and was wishing I could do something to help you. I wondered how I should have felt if I had been forced to stand up and sing before a whole crowd of people. It is wonderful to me how you can do it. I am sure I should never have courage to open my mouth. Can you see all the people before you?"

"Oh yes, perfectly."

"And see whether they are listening to you, or yawning, or sleeping?"

"Yes, quite as distinctly as we can see the people around us now."

"Then for the future I shall be more careful of my behavior at concerts. I am afraid I have often hurt the singer's feelings by looking bored when the concert was a trifle too long or too classical, and I could not get away. I am not a musical man at all. I like the old-fashioned ballads and Scotch songs that have plenty of lilt to them. But the songs of to-day are too much for me; I can't understand them, they can't sympathize with me, and we mutually annoy one another."

"Well, for an unmusical man you have been to a good many concerts lately," I say, slyly.

"I am afraid you will have to answer for the mania," he says.

And then Miss Hendricks moves away, and he goes to make himself known to Mrs. Atherton.

"You in New York!" I hear her say, in surprised tones. "Why, you are the very last person I expected to meet. Why, it must be quite five years since we saw you last."

"About that," he answers; and then Mr. Ather-

ton comes up, and they enter into a long chat about old times and old friends, and I sit quietly by, feeling strangely contented and happy.

I don't heed what they are saying, but look around me at the well-dressed, pretty women; and then from the inner room, which is so charmingly curtained and lighted that it looks like a fairy bower, comes the delicious strains of a *concerto* for violin and piano.

Have you ever noticed how a sound will come and go, be now loud and now dim, though all the while you know perfectly well that the object from which it proceeds has never moved? The ticking of a clock, for instance, is especially aggravating in this way. I have lain awake for hours thinking, when suddenly I have become aware of the ticking of the clock on the table at my bedside; I have listened intently to it, and heard it grow faint and dim almost to dying away, and then suddenly break out louder than ever. I used to dabble in Spiritualism, and fancied it was an angel floating through the room.

While I am silently gazing about the room the Athertons' conversation has become so dim and indistinct that it has died out of my hearing, when suddenly Mr. Atherton says:

“Well, Macadam, and how has the world been using you lately?”

“Oh, fairly well. It is not a bad sort of a world.”

“You speak as a prosperous man, but how about your balance at the Bank of Content? If Fortune has been kind to you, what has Fate been doing for you? You must pardon my asking questions, but

when a friend you value suddenly drops out of your circle, and reappears as suddenly after a lapse of years, it is hard to help doing so."

"I am half-inclined to be offended with you for adopting that formal tone," Macadam answers. "I am glad you take sufficient interest in me to care to know how I have fared. To use your own metaphor, I have a fair balance at the Bank of Content; and my credit is good, for I have never overdrawn."

"Have you no deposit account?" Mrs. Atherton says earnestly. "After all these years, have you formed no home ties?"

Mr. Macadam winces, and his voice is strange and a little grave as he replies:

"No, I have no home ties."

"You have no wife, then?" Mr. Atherton says.

I wonder why he is so persistent, for apparently this question is obnoxious to Macadam, who frets under it. He turns his head, and I feel his gaze upon me. He evidently wishes to know if I can hear. I try to look unconscious, but I feel my color rising under this steady scrutiny. He seems deliberating what to reply, and I begin to wonder why he does not answer more readily, and to feel a sense of pain as the idea crosses my mind, "What if he has a wife, after all?" I listen eagerly for the reply that is so long in coming.

"I am a lonely man, Atherton. As I said just now, I have no home ties. How long have you been here? Were you in time to hear S—— sing?"

The conversation glides off into ordinary channels, and at last into the one toward which he has been

trying to guide it. Mrs. Atherton, noticing the frequent glances he has been sending in my direction, offers an introduction.

“Mrs. Messerole has already been kind enough,” he says; “and, indeed, it is through Miss Ten Eyck that I first became aware that you were here.”

I am drawn into the talk, and a truly pleasant chat follows. Then we take our leave.

“Are we to lose sight of you again?” Mrs. Atherton asks.

Macadam looks hard at me and answers:

“Most emphatically, no. I shall remain in New York for the present and look you up soon, and, if I may, often. The same old house on Fifty-seventh Street, I suppose?”

“Oh no; we are living at Madison, now. We will be delighted to have you come whenever you can; only you must let us know beforehand, as we live three miles from the depot. When you do come, it must be with the understanding that you are going to spend a few days with us, for now that we are beyond ordinary calling distance we like to keep our friends, when they come to see us.”

“I shall be only too delighted,” Macadam answers; “but surely it is too far for you to be going back to-night?”

“Yes, our last train leaves at midnight; but we are staying with Miss Ten Eyck’s mother.”

“Oh—in town?”

“Yes; but we are returning to-morrow, and the sooner you come to us the better we shall be pleased.”

He looks disappointed. He evidently wished to find out where I was living, but of course can say no more, and a moment later we are driving away. He gives me one long look as we are bidding adieu, and I know it means that we shall meet again.

A quiet contentment has settled down on my heart. I am not vexed that he said no parting word to me nor ventured to touch my hand; I feel all is well and am happy.

Am I in love with this man? I cannot tell. I have a strange disinclination to speak about him, and in the conversation that ensues, as we roll away, I take no part; and even when I am giving mother and Lottie an account of the night's doings I can find no words in which to speak of him, so he goes unmentioned. How glad I am that I kept that letter to myself!

CHAPTER IV.

IN WHICH I MAKE A VISIT.

ONE MORNING not very long after the reception at Mrs. Messerole's an invitation reaches me to go for a week to the Athertons, at Madison.

There is nothing particular to keep me in town, and Madison is so near that, did anything necessitate my return, I could be home in a couple of hours ; so I accept, and in due course start.

Arrived at Madison, I at first see no one to meet me, and begin wondering if I have made a mistake in the train, when round the corner of the station comes a figure which I recognize with a glow of pleasure. It is Mr. Macadam.

"I began to think you had missed the train," he says, as he greets me.

His manner disappoints me. I feel myself flushing with pleasure at sight of him, and he just touches my hand, hardly looks at me, and then in a business-like way directs a man to gather up my belongings and leads the way to the neat dog-cart that is waiting.

"Atherton talked about fetching you himself, but something called him away and I volunteered in his stead," he says, and then lifts me carefully to my seat, tucks the rug well round me, and looking after

my comfort in every way, swings into his own seat and we are off. Then it occurs to me that he is a man who prefers deeds to words, and that, after all, it is nicer to have a person careful about one than demonstratively glad to see one and careless.

How I enjoy the drive! The birds sing, the sun shines gloriously, and I feel that it will always be sunshine for me when he is near.

How exhilarating it is to be driving swiftly along—to feel the wind rushing madly past you, hurrying as fast to its appointed goal as you to yours; to feel that you are cutting your way through the air, forcing a passage for yourself and defying the strong, keen breeze. It is a wild, intoxicating sensation. “Faster! Faster!” I could cry, as the mare’s nimble feet fly along the road, seeming scarcely to touch the ground they pass over.

“You are very silent,” Macadam says. “Of what are you thinking?”

“I don’t know that I had any thoughts. I was simply happy drinking-in the pleasure of this moment, and neither desiring nor dreaming of another.”

He looks at me curiously.

“You are an odd girl. What makes you so happy?”

“The fact of living and being. The few moments before you disturbed me were worth worlds to me. By the law of compensation I ought to suffer a good deal to make up for the perfect happiness I enjoyed then.”

“But what was it all about?” he asks, seeming rather amused.

“If you must bring it down to earth and measure it by the square inch, it amounts to nothing ; simply driving rapidly through a beautiful country, with the earth in its summer garb and the wind whistling round us.”

“And did that make you so contented? You are lucky to be able to get happiness from so little. I must venture to disagree with you on one point, though, for I should think that with such a disposition as yours, trouble could never touch you.”

“On the contrary, trouble is far more likely to lay a heavy finger on me than on one who would look at things from their commonplace side, and be inclined to think me a trifle mad for being enraptured over so little. But even my little was not perfect, for underlying it was an irritating sense that in a moment something would come to turn my thoughts back to the dull routine of daily life. Everything nice seems to have its alloy of disappointment. I wonder if anyone has ever known a moment in life so satisfying that it left nothing to be longed for, nothing desired?”

He shakes his head gravely, and I go on :

“Every happiness that life gives wants something else to complete it. Is it not so? No matter how keen the enjoyment, there is always that feeling that if only some one thing were added or taken away the sum of bliss would be made up. But there is always that want. Now, a moment such as I have tried to describe is the nearest approach to happiness I know, and is almost perfect. I am out of myself, as it were. The enjoyment comes from the soul—or

rather the spirit—to the senses, filling them to overflowing with content ; but when things are reversed and the happiness comes from the senses then discontent arises, for everything tinged with self is robbed of its purity.”

“You are right,” he says. “But this precise idea never occurred to me before.”

“I suppose, then, your life has been so happy that there have never been days, or even hours, that have seemed so bright to you that you have put them by in the store-house of your memory, to bring out and dwell on when life was dark and troubles heavy?”

“God knows I need to have laid by such treasures, but I have not done so. I have taken what good came to me and made the most of it ; and as for the evil, I have done my best to put it from me and find some Lethean water to soothe my pain. Not so romantic a way as yours, but as effectual. But what a dull topic we have drifted on ! The theory you propound is a strange one, to come from the lips of a bright young girl. You are a bit of a ‘blue,’ I am thinking.”

“Not the tiniest little atom. I am far more of a dunce than a ‘blue.’”

“Then what has given you these ideas ? Have you known trouble ?”

“Yes.”

“What ? Losing a sweetheart ?”

I notice that he looks round anxiously for my reply.

I laugh.

“That is like asking a man who has had his leg

cut off if he has ever had such a bad pain as the toothache."

"Do you mean that you have had real trouble? Tell me what it was."

"There is no past tense to it. It is, and always will be. But it is not of a kind to interest a stranger."

"Please don't regard me in that light; everything that concerns you interests me. I am always thinking about you. Won't you confide in me?"

"There is nothing to confide," I answer, fearful of the earnest tone he uses and yet pleased at the interest he shows. "My trouble is of the most commonplace and prosaic kind—a trouble that in all probability would disgust you. It is but going through the small sieve. Ever since I can remember we have been struggling with the grim specter, Poverty."

Again he nods his head in the grave way he has, and then looks round at me with an amused smile.

"And what part has a child like you been able to take in this struggle?"

"Well, perhaps not much of a part," I answer, apologetically. "You see, I am not able to teach, and my singing has cost a great deal, so I have done little but help my sister to take the weight off mother's shoulders."

"And you call that nothing?" he says with earnest gentleness. "Why, when I spoke I fancied your fight with Poverty meant foregoing a new pair of gloves every now and then. Believe me, I did not mean to laugh at real trouble."

"Oh I don't mind; my sister and I often laugh over our difficulties. They are so innumerable that at times they get grotesque, and we enjoy a hearty laugh at our own expense."

"Is your sister as odd as you are?"

"I am not odd."

"You are the strangest girl I ever met," he says; and then he flicks the mare with the whip, and sends her flying along the road, and for the next few minutes conversation is impossible.

"Tell me," he says, when she slackens speed, "were you not surprised to see me at the station?"

"Yes—you were the last person I expected to see."

"And were you pleased?"

"What a question! I never gave the subject a thought," I answer carelessly, turning my face aside to avoid his gaze.

"I came over on Saturday," he pursues. "I just intended staying over Sunday, but a little bird whispered that a certain young lady was expected during the week, so I was nothing loath to accept Atherton's invitation to stay longer, and shall most likely be here all the time you are."

I don't feel it incumbent on me to say anything civil and make no answer, but a deep contentment settles down in my innermost heart. Ought this gladness to be checked? Am I letting this man flatter all my good sense away when I ought to be arming myself for a battle whose issue will be life or death? I cannot tell, but I do not think so. If Mr. Macadam were just an ordinary trifler he would

hardly have chosen his friend's house for the scene of his conquests, nor selected a girl under the protection of these same friends for his victim. My position toward him has materially altered since the note and bouquet episode. Then I should have been fulfilling a duty in shunning him; now we meet as equals.

"You are very silent," he says, after a time. "Are you enjoying another blissful moment? No—the expression is not serene enough for that. You are puzzling over some knotty point."

"I was thinking about you," I say, without reflecting what I am saying.

He laughs his low laugh of enjoyment.

"I was right, then; you have indeed fixed your thoughts on a knotted, gnarled old stick. Oddly enough I was thinking of you. I wonder whether our thoughts were running in the same groove? I was thinking how we had met and become acquainted, despite a certain savage letter which put all idea of such a thing so entirely out of the question."

He looks slyly at me, but I have no time to reply for here we are.

Mr. Atherton comes to meet me, Mrs. Atherton and the children welcome me at the hall door, and their greetings give me a comfortable feeling that they are really glad to see me and have me with them.

We troop into the drawing-room and have afternoon tea, over which I unfold my budget of news and hear all they have for me in return.

Then I go up to my room, and after awhile comes dinner. After dinner we play billiards—at least I looked on interestedly, for I am an indifferent player, and the anxiety that I must always cause my host about his cloth makes me so nervous that I get no fun out of it.

The evening passes away very pleasantly, and I am quite sorry when bed-time comes. A few minutes after I have gone to my room Mrs. Atherton comes to see if I have everything I want, and as she kisses me good-night says:

“Well, are you quite satisfied with your conquest?”

I laugh and try to look unconscious.

“Ah, you naughty, sly girl, we should never have found anything out from you; but then it is a well-known fact that quiet girls are always the worst.”

“But what have I been doing?” I ask, laying down my brush on the toilet-table and tossing back my hair.

“I declare you look as innocent as your own white gown. But it is no good, Winnie; some one else is not half so discreet.”

“In what way?” I ask quickly, wondering if he can possibly have told about the note.

Mrs. Atherton laughs.

“Oh, he tried to be very cautious, but we soon saw through him. He came to us one Sunday, and kept dropping in little questions about a certain Miss Ten Eyck; at last he said he was very much interested in her, and would greatly like to meet her again. My stupid old husband would not see it at

all, and only replied that he hoped to get you to come to us before long. Poor Macadam was completely nonplussed. At last we settled a day for him to come to us, and he soon found out that you were also coming about the same time. He accepted our invitation for Saturday until Monday, when I am quite sure that he knew you were coming on Tuesday—the hypocrite! I tell you, Winnie, I am delighted about it, for it would be such a nice thing for you.”

I feel the hot blood rushing all over my face.

“But, Mrs. Atherton,” I protest, “he only thinks of me as a pleasant companion.”

“Yes, a pleasant companion for life. Listen to me, Winnie. I have known James Macadam for years, and he is not the sort of man who goes dancing after a whole crowd of women. If he shows a liking for a girl it means something. Jim is a good fellow. We don’t find him the least altered for his absence abroad; he is just exactly the same, unless he is even a little nicer than he used to be. He is very well off, too; and on the whole, dear, it is a remarkably good thing for you. I would rather see you the wife of such a man than the most celebrated singer of the day. Good-night, dear. Sleep well, and dream of Jim Macadam.”

With a light laugh she goes away. I feel, even while she is speaking to me, that she has done me an immense amount of harm. She has meant to be kind, but she has put ideas into my head that had far better have been kept out of it.

I like Mr. Macadam. In a way I am in love with

him—a romantic school-girl sort of way that means little more than a passing fancy; but after Mrs. Atherton leaves me new thoughts come crowding into my brain. The room is not large enough to hold them, and drawing a chair to the window I throw it wide open and lean my arms upon the sill as I look out into the moonlit garden.

I think of him not as I thought before, as a jolly man I like to talk to, but in a newer, holier light. I think of him as my husband; I try to picture a life spent with him. I imagine myself as his wife, caring for him, supplying his wants—a friend and companion, as well as wife.

Sweet thoughts! but thoughts that play the very mischief with me. Never again can I regard him in the old light, after to-night. I have let him take a hold on my life that nothing can shake off. I feel it and know it while I dream, but yet I do not rouse myself; the dream is too sweet.

I know well how wrong I am, for when a woman once thinks of a man in the light of her husband there is no longer the slightest possibility of her forgetting him or turning cold to him. She only thinks thus of one man, and that man has it in his power to make or mar her life as he will.

After a long, long time I leave my window and get to bed, and for once sleep is kind and reproduces my waking visions.

CHAPTER V.

AN ADVENTURE AND ITS RESULTS.

WE HAVE been having some delightful days. The weather has been glorious. To-day, as I go down to breakfast, I think to myself that this is going to be the finest of them all.

“What weather!” I exclaim as I meet Mr. Macadam in the hall. “The sun has never ceased shining for the last three days.”

“The sun has never ceased shining for me since you came,” he says in a half-serious tone, and follows me out on the veranda to wait until the prayer-bell rings.

The Athertons are English to the backbone, and keep up all the customs of the old country in a marked degree. Mr. Atherton came out from England as a young newspaper man. His talents soon attracted the attention of the proprietor of an engineering journal, and after a few years of Herculean labor Tom Atherton was able to send to England for the woman for whom he had been working in his quiet, undemonstrative way; whose image had cheered him in his darkest hours and spurred him on when, in his moments of despondency, he fancied his efforts to make the journal the organ of the East had been unappreciated. My father knew

him when he was a struggling journalist, and my mother had often told me how happy he was after dear Mrs. Atherton came out and they were married, and how he prospered until he became part proprietor of the paper he had helped to build up and bought the lovely home in Madison.

Every morning, therefore, in accordance with the custom of their childhood, the whole household assembles for family prayer, and this is the only rule of the house to which visitors and inmates must alike comply; and to be absent from prayers is to seriously offend both host and hostess.

While we are waiting we chat in our usual bright way, for we are capital friends, Mr. Macadam and I—we agree on so many points. Our tastes are in many ways so similar that we always enjoy our opportunities for a quiet chat.

There seems to be a generally received idea that people like their opposites best; that for a husband and wife to agree, they must disagree on almost every subject. To me it seems a very absurd notion. What is pleasanter than exchanging ideas with a person of your own tastes? What more trying than talking to a person whom you know to be opposed to you in every thought?

My ideas of domestic bliss are certainly very different from this. I should seek a second self—one who would think as I thought, only more wisely; feel as I felt, only more strongly; and see as I saw, only more clearly.

It seems thus with Mr. Macadam. Unless I read him very wrongly he is not a man who would con-

descend to humbug, and I don't think this sharing my tastes is pretense; indeed I am sure of it, for there are one or two points on which we are at issue, and he does not attempt to conceal his real ideas because they happen to be adverse to mine.

I confess I enjoy his society immensely; and whether it is the idle time or the fatal talk with Mrs. Atherton I cannot say, but day by day he grows more into my life, and frequently I have to scold myself for indulging in a dreamland where he is the central figure.

To-day is the birthday of Alice, the eldest girl, and there is to be a high festival. Mr. Atherton is an ardent lover of cricket, and has organized a cricket club in the neighborhood, and has given a meadow adjoining his property for the field.

The birthday is to be celebrated by a cricket match with a New York club, and a garden party is to follow.

People are coming from far and near, and it is to be quite the event of the season.

Mrs. Atherton of course is tremendously busy, and I soon perceive that she finds her house guests dreadfully in the way. She suggests our taking a walk or playing tennis. The day is too hot for either and I am feeling a little despairing, when Mr. Macadam comes to the rescue.

"Would you not like a drive?" he asks me.

"Immensely," I answer; and then Alice clamors to come too because it is her birthday, and as soon as the dog-cart can be brought round we start.

We drive through open country for some time,

and at last turn into a shady lane where the interlacing branches of the trees are in some places so low that they brush our shoulders as we drive beneath them, and we are forced to stoop to prevent them giving us a rough caress on cheek or brow.

"I don't care about this," Mr. Macadam says. "Here's a turn in the road; let us take it."

I feel inclined to remonstrate, and plead for the lane, which too me is too lovely for any minor considerations about comfort to have any weight; but ere I can offer a word in its favor we have turned off.

The new road at the first outset seems wider and vastly superior to the one we have left, and we laugh and joke as happy as three birds, or rather two old birds and a young one who tries to make believe it is quite as knowing as its elders.

By and by the promising road begins to narrow, and goes on getting narrower, until there is only room for the cart. It makes me think of the allegory of the road to destruction, the way is so broad and fascinating at the start; but later, when it has narrowed till there is no room to turn back, it becomes rough and unpleasant, and one has only to save one's breath for the final hurry over the side of the bottomless pit.

To our left is a high embankment, or rather a hilly wood, for the rising ground is thickly covered with firs and pines, which give it a very dismal air; while to the right the road slopes off sharply, and the slope is covered with bracken and underbrush.

I begin to admire the beauty of this contrast, and am surprised at receiving no response whatever from

my companion, so turn to look at him. His face is set and stern.

“Why don’t you admire this?” I ask.

“Because I have to keep my attention for something else,” he answers. “I am wishing I had not taken this road, or that we were off it.”

“Why?”

“Are you nervous?”

“I don’t think so. Why?”

“I am afraid we have a very ticklish bit of road coming.”

The words are hardly said before a sharp turn reveals to us the most awful hill I have ever seen. It is not very long but almost perpendicular, and the road goes sheer down without the slightest wind; moreover it is a mass of bowlders and loose stones as big as a man’s body, and at the bottom is the railroad track.

I feel myself grow pale. Macadam, with his hands firmly grasping the buttons on the reins, says, in a low voice:

“For God’s sake sit still!”

“Is there any danger?”

“Not unless the mare becomes frightened. Keep that nervous child quiet. If she screams or a train passes, the mare will bolt.”

I cannot repress an exclamation of horror.

“Hush, Winnie,” he says, “and trust me. I would not have a hair of your head hurt.”

With an effort I control myself, and turning back to Alice, engage her attention with something behind us.

The whistle of a train sounds in the distance. I turn back horror-struck. We have almost reached the foot of the hill, and bearing down upon us is the train. The mare sees it, rears and snorts, and plunges madly forward. On comes the train, and as we dash over the bowlders as if they were pebbles Alice realizes the situation and screams wildly. On comes the train. It is now but fifty yards from us.

Macadam seizes the whip and brings it down with a mighty crash on the mare's haunches. She rears, plunges, and paws the air, maddened at the unaccustomed chastisement. On comes the train. It is almost upon us; another moment and it will all be over, for no power on earth could stop us this side of the the tracks. Once more the whip descends; again and again; and then, with a snort of agony, the mare makes a vicious plunge forward, and with the speed of lightning dashes across the tracks not ten feet in advance of the flying train.

A loud cry goes up from the men on the engine-cab, but we hardly hear it, for the mare is now wild with fear and running with all her speed. By a merciful providence the road is good and in a few moments begins to ascend a steep hill. The little mare's strength gives out, and soon we are walking quietly along—saved!

Then Macadam turns to me with a strange light in his eyes, and taking my hand in his gives it a firm, warm grasp.

"Thank God you are safe, Winnie!" he says. "That was a narrow escape. You're a brave little woman."

He looks into my eyes, and for a moment we sit thus, hand clasping hand, when we are roused by a shrill little piping voice in the background.

"Oh, you thilly man!" it says. "Winnie ith not a little woman. The 'th a great big woman."

I am extremely obliged to the child, and turn and talk earnestly to her, while Macadam releases my hand and drives on. The embarrassment is by no means so easily got over, however, when we get home and little Alice rushes up to her mother with her story.

"Oh, Mamma," she cries, "we have had thuth a a lovely drive. And we went down a great hill, and Daithy ran away, and when thhe thtopped Mr. Macadam took Winnie'th hand and called her a little woman! Wathn't he a thilly man?"

I murmur something about taking off my hat and make for the door, but not quickly enough to escape Mrs. Atherton's sly laugh.

I take as long as I can to dress, and when I emerge am rewarded by finding Mrs. Atherton too busy receiving her guests to think about me.

We have luncheon and then repair to the cricket field.

It is a broiling hot day, and as I sit in the shade I watch with amazement the fearfully hard *work* the poor cricketers make of their *play*.

I say something of this to Mr. Macadam, who sits beside me. He laughs outright.

"Those are the very last ideas I should have expected from you; you strike me as an athletic sort of girl who would enjoy all sorts of healthy exercise."

I shake my head.

“No? Well, then what do you enjoy? You must have some recreation, and care for something beside music?”

“I don’t understand a country life; all the pleasures I care about I find in town.”

“Nonsense. That is because you don’t know what the country means. You would love it—ah, how you would love it, Winnie—if I could only teach you!”

This is too much; twice in one day he has called me by my name. I determine to speak about it, so making myself as severe and forbidding as possible I say:

“I don’t think I gave you permission to call me ‘Winnie,’ Mr. Macadam.”

He looks at me in an amused way and answers, calmly:

“I don’t know that you did, but why should I not do so?”

I answer him, with the most intense foolishness:

“What would anyone think who heard you?”

“I can make no suggestion, but to avoid such a fearful catastrophe I had better only call you ‘Winnie’ when we are alone.”

I turn away my head and try to frame some properly-forbidding answer, but I can find no word to say to him, and he takes my silence for consent.

“That’s all settled then, like a kind little woman, and we will be ‘Winnie’ and ‘Jim’ when we are alone, and only formal to each other when we are in what is called ‘mixed society.’”

I do not gainsay him, though I am fully aware that I ought not to allow the establishment of a secret understanding, and I turn back to the contemplation of the field with a somewhat perturbed spirit.

Our side is winning, they tell me. I see them all very energetic, and evidently very hot, and I feel glad that they are going to meet with the reward of their labors. At last the stumps are drawn and the heroes of Madison have another victory to add to their list, which, thanks to Mr. Atherton, is already a long one.

The match over, all the guests troop into the drawing-room for afternoon tea. It is tea for the populace. All the country-side seems to be on the lawn. Quite a number are staying to dinner, but the nearest neighbors drift home, to return later for a little carpet dance which is to wind up the evening.

The house is so full that we have to double up. I have for my room-mate a typical Yankee miss, who, when we retire to dress, is full of the forthcoming "hop."

"I am sure it is going to be perfectly elegant. Jack Footner is here, and he always gives me a splendid time! Are you fond of dancing? Of course, as you live in the city, you go to all the hops. Oh, I do wish I lived in the city!"

I smile inwardly at the idea of Lottie and me being constantly invited to balls, and wonder, if we were, what in the world we would go in. We do own a ball-dress, but it is a joint affair, with an ad-

justable bodice that will fit either of us; and, moreover, it has seen much service and is on its last legs, for I've outgrown it, and tore it so much the last time I wore it that no amount of persuasion will make it cover me again, and the family entertains grave doubts whether even Lottie's slim person can figure in it once more with decency.

These thoughts flit through my mind as I look at the girl who, while bemoaning her fate, is shaking out the folds of a beautiful creamy silk, made in the latest fashion; and the contrast is so absurd that I fall into a fit of laughter.

Edith Brewster is quite offended. She fancies I am laughing at her, and as I cannot possibly explain my joke, but, instead, make a feeble attempt at inventing another, which goes off like a damp fire-cracker, there is a chance of our joint occupation turning into a civil war.

"Please don't think I was laughing at you," I say at last. "It was only something that your question suggested. I know I seem rude, but I cannot explain."

She eyes me doubtfully a moment, and then takes the matter good-naturedly, and as we dress we continue to chat.

Miss Brewster is tall, dark and handsome, a decidedly attractive girl, but scatter-brained, with but one idea—men! Oh, the torture this genus inflict on their female friends! In five minutes I have learned what a lot of fellows admire her; how Tom said this, and Dick that, and Harry wound up by rivaling the whole tribe.

“Did you notice Jack Footner? He is such a charming fellow!”

I answer in the affirmative, and go on brushing my hair, wishing Jack Footner, who is a fair, insipid, dudish-looking creature, at the bottom of the sea.

“Well, Jack lives in town, but he has some friends at East Orange, where I live. It is about three miles from here; and, would you believe it, regularly every other Sunday he comes over from the city just to go to church with them, because their pew almost faces ours, and all through the service he sits and stares at me. It’s so embarrassing, because Tom and Dick can see him from their pews, and they are always declaring that I look back at him; but of course I don’t.”

I give a grunt, which I make as interested as I can, and reflect with what delight Mr. John Footner’s friends must hail the off Sundays.

Miss Brewster babbles on:

“I made half a conquest this afternoon, and I mean to finish it to-night and flirt violently just to make Jack angry.”

“Oh, but that’s very unkind.”

“Oh no, it is not; and now I want you to do me a favor. Will you curl my hair? I am so clumsy at it myself, and I want to look as nice as possible to captivate this new man; then I’ll help you to dress and introduce you to Jack Footner.”

“Heaven preserve me from it!” is my mental ejaculation; but aloud I say:

“Won’t you be jealous?”

“Jealous!” she says, seating herself and deliver-

ing her head into my hands. "Oh dear, no! I shall be far too much interested in this new man to care. You were talking to him this afternoon. What is his name?"

A sudden horrid thought comes into my mind. Does she mean Mr. Macadam? I answer, constrainedly:

"I was talking to several men; which one do you mean?"

"Oh, that handsome, military-looking man with gray hair."

"And you have captivated him?" I say.

"Yes. I noticed his eyes following me all the afternoon."

I feel inclined to tell her flatly that I don't believe it; that I know better than she does what he was doing with his eyes all the afternoon; and then the reality of the situation flashes across me. Here am I, combing and curling this empty-headed simpleton to rival me in his eyes! Will I do it? No!

In my right hand I hold the curling-irons, and they are almost red-hot. What if I singe half her fringe off? That will spoil her beauty for her! She says she is clumsy; why should not I be the same? I have no advertisement about the room proclaiming me an artist in hair! I'd like to take the tongs and write CAT all over her face for daring to try and take him from me!

I stand irresolute, determined to damage her somehow, when she begins to babble again about that simple idiot, Jack. Without knowing it she has saved herself from a deadly peril.

“No,” I say to myself. “If this lunatic can please Mr. Macadam more than I can, let her. If he likes her society better than mine, let him have it. I won’t condescend to own her as a rival, for the men who like her won’t like me.”

So I curl her hair and help her to adorn herself, and when she is ready I cannot help acknowledging that she looks remarkably well; and when I too am dressed, I feel that I never looked worse in my life. I also feel irritated and cross as we go down the stairs, and by no means equal to the ordeal of the introduction to Mr. Footner, which (worse luck) takes place the moment we set foot in the drawing-room.

A few moments later I have the pleasure of seeing Miss Brewster introduced to Mr. Macadam, and I watch her dimpling and smiling, and looking so charming that I feel sure he cannot help being fascinated.

I am afraid I give poor Jack Footner a far from pleasant quarter of an hour, for, after all, he would not be a bad fellow if he only had a little sense.

We go into dinner. Mr. Macadam takes her, of course, and I am saddled with this poor, inoffensive booby, who says “Oh, aw, weally,” to every remark I make, and then strokes his moustache and looks as if he thought I should bite him. Mr. Footner may be a beautiful waltzer, but he certainly is the most idiotic talker I ever encountered.

Our conversation goes very lamely, and down the table I see Macadam laughing heartily over something Edith Brewster has just said. Apparently they are enjoying themselves supremely.

Dinner comes to an end at last, and to escape that obnoxious girl's eulogiums on Macadam I devote myself to a very charming old lady, and find her so chatty and amusing that I forget all my ill-temper and only wish men had never been invented—women are so much nicer.

By and by they dance, and my old lady and I retire into the veranda, and sit there chatting in the warm summer night. She wants me to return to the drawing-room and join the dancers, but I won't go. I don't care so much for dancing as some girls do, who I believe would waltz with a chimpanzee if he only had the latest step. I only care to waltz with a man I like, and I don't care to go back to see Edith Brewster whirling about in Macadam's arms and feel myself out in the cold unless I can make shift with the Jacks of the party. I like my old lady, and I am now moderately good-tempered, so I prefer to stay where I am.

"There's a gentleman down there who apparently cares as little for dancing as you do, my dear," says my old friend. "I have been watching him strolling about ever since we came here."

The man comes nearer to us, and I see it is Mr. Macadam. He has not been dancing, then? What a disappointment for Edith, and what a glow of happiness for me!

He is passing us as we sit in the shadow, when the old lady says:

"I am sure you will take cold, dear; you ought to have a shawl."

"Can I get you one?" he says, pausing.

“If you would be so kind,” she says. And he returns in a moment with a soft wrap. He does not recognize me, for he places it round my shoulders with the most distant politeness.

“Thank you,” I say. “I was beginning to feel rather cold.”

He starts.

“Why, Miss Ten Eyck,” he says, “I was looking for you everywhere! I fancied, when I could not find you, that you must have gone to your room, and so took a stroll outside.”

“Have you not been dancing?”

“No. I performed all the duties society required of me at dinner, and I made up my mind to enjoy myself after. We were badly placed. That fair fellow with you wanted to be in my place, and I entertained most unfriendly feelings toward him for being where I was wishing to be.”

That nice old lady gets an idea of the true state of the case, for with the sweetest manner imaginable she says:

“If you don’t want to dance, sir, why not stay and talk to us? I am sure we can make room for you.”

He bows and is introduced, and then seats himself beside me. We have another delightful chat. The old lady proves herself a most charming companion, and I am truly sorry when she says she must go indoors, and advises us to have a waltz to warm ourselves, in case the damp air may have given us a chill.

Macadam and I have one long and enjoyable dance, and then the party breaks up. I go to bed content and happy, and very thankful that I did not

get jealous enough to look on Miss Brewster as a rival, for by keeping outside the lists altogether I have gained the prize for which she was tilting. She amuses me intensely when we are safe within our room.

“I could not keep it up,” she ejaculates, throwing herself into a chair.

“Keep up what?”

“Why, that flirtation with Mr. Macadam. Poor Jack was so terribly upset at the attention he paid me at dinner that I was really afraid he would do something desperate, so I snubbed Mr. Macadam fearfully—I was very sorry, but I could not help it, you know—and he, poor fellow, went away and never danced all the evening. I hope he was not very angry with me.”

“I don’t think so,” I answer, too serene to triumph over her. “From what I have seen of him, I should think he was a very kind sort of man.”

Then I hurry into bed to the tune of what Jack said and did, and the moment my head is on the pillow I close my eyes, and without waiting for a decent interval in which sleep would be likely to come to me I breathe heavily and simulate slumber so admirably that after several futile attempts to get answers from me Miss Brewster rises from the arm-chair and leisurely proceeds to unmake her toilet for the night.

She is asleep long before I am, and I lie thinking over all the events of the day and watch the moonlight silvering the gardens without.

At last I sleep, and it appears to me that I have

only just closed my eyes when I am shaken gently.

“Get up, Miss Ten Eyck! It is such a lovely morning. Do get up.”

“Oh bother,” I growl, and snuggle myself into my nook again.

“It’s time to get up,” my tormentor urges.

This time I rouse myself and sit up in bed, to see the sun streaming brightly into the room and the fair Edith figuring about in a wrapper.

“It can’t be time to get up yet for the tea has not come, and Ellen always brings it at half-past six.”

“Oh, but very likely she has forgotten, there was so much extra work yesterday. Do get up; only fancy if the prayer-bell were to ring.”

I twist myself on to the edge of the bed, and sit there dangling my feet and trying to collect my scattered senses. Miss Brewster is most attentive.

“There are your slippers, and here is your wrapper,” bringing them to me and putting them on. “Now do come to the window and look out; it is a lovely morning.”

I cross to the open window and make a survey.

“Yes, it looks nice enough, but very early.”

Hardly have the words passed my mouth when a tap comes at the door.

“Ellen with the tea,” I cry. “It’s only half-past six;” and with one bound I am back in bed, wrapper, slippers and all.

Ellen corroborates my statement when she comes in; and having sipped my tea, and dallied with the delicate bread and butter, I snoozle down, determined to have another nap.

Edith Brewster comes and stands beside the bed.

“You are never going to sleep again? Why, it is impossible! You are wide awake!”

“I am not wide awake, and I want another sleep. Why on earth can't you let me alone?”

“Because I want you to get up and come for a walk with me; I don't like to go alone. I shall think it so kind of you if you will.”

Like a goose I turn out of my cozy nest and begin to dress, though somewhat sulkily, I must confess. Miss Brewster gets quite impatient as I proceed in my usual deliberate way, and at last will wait no longer but goes to walk in the garden until I am ready.

Thinking that perhaps she is dying for a breath of fresh air, after the fatigue of dancing, I hurry after her. As I reach the hall I hear laughing voices—Miss Brewster's and a man's—and looking through the window I see her busy talking to the ubiquitous Jack.

I see it all in an instant. This is a prearranged meeting, and for some reason I am to be the cloak for it. I turn back indignantly, when another foot-step sounds through the hall. It is Mr. Macadam.

“Good-morning,” he says. “Why, what is the matter? Don't look so cross.”

“I am cross,” I answer. “Miss Brewster insisted on rousing me at this unearthly hour to go for a walk with her, and when I am foolish enough to do as she wishes I find she only wants me to cover a meeting with that stupid young Footner.”

“So you've been having a treat too, have you?”

The redoubtable Jack shared my room, and started getting up at what seemed like the middle of the night. He made so much noise I could not help waking, and when he found what he had done seemed so awfully anxious to get me to sleep again that I was sure there was some fun on hand, and dressed to try and find out what it was. They had their little game all fixed, evidently."

"Yes, and I am going to spoil it for them. No daisy-picking for me!" and I begin to remount the stairs.

"Winnie," says Macadam, "why not accommodate them, and let me come and help you?"

I hesitate.

"It is such a lovely morning," he urges; "and now that you are dressed it is a shame not to make the most of it. Do come."

I am doubting what to say when Edith Brewster runs into the hall, exclaiming:

"What a time she is!" Then she comes suddenly face to face with us.

"Oh, Miss Ten Eyck," she says, "do make haste. Mr. Footner is here, and would like to join us."

"And so should I," Mr. Macadam says; and then we all three go out into the garden.

When I can rouse myself sufficiently early, there is nothing I like better than a before-breakfast walk.

We wander off two and two through the garden and into the meadows that skirt the lawn, and as we go we gather wild flowers, looking so fresh and dainty with the night dews, but alas! so fragile!

I always feel a monster when I give way to my passion for gathering wild flowers. It seems such wanton cruelty to pluck them from the nooks in which they have bloomed—to condemn them to no better fate than to be held for an hour or two in a hot hand, and when their vitality is all crushed out to be thrust, all limp and flabby, into a glass of water which will never revive them as one drop of their own dew would do. Then they are left neglected, and the eyes that in the morning coveted them for their beauty turn from them at noon, and they are cast out to die, forlorn and despised. Poor, pretty, tender things! I feel the cruelty I do you, and yet I covet you—I must possess you! All the joy is with me, all the pain with you. Why should I think about a pain I do not feel? A man-like sentiment, this, though not a manly one.

I am utterly without scruple this morning, for Macadam, finding that I love them all, from the many-tinted leaves of the maple to the delicate little fern-fronds that grow by the road-side, gathers them unsparingly, and I do not seek to restrain him when he adds a wild rose, a dainty blue iris, or even a daisy, to my nosegay.

“Mrs. Atherton said you were going back to-morrow,” he says. “Is it so?”

“Yes, I must get back.”

“Must! Why can you not enjoy a few more days of pleasure?”

“Because I have work to do; I am ashamed of having been so lazy. I have not practiced once since I came!”

"But you have sung for us every evening."

"I know, but that is very different from practicing."

"Well, why not have one good practice and then stay another week?"

"You talk like a millionaire," I say, half-laughing and half-vexed. "You don't seem to understand that singing is my business, and that if I neglect it bankruptcy must follow."

"Of course if you put it in that light there is no more to be said. It is an unfriendly act to try and make you forego what you feel to be your duty; but I hate to have you go; I shall be lost when you are gone."

"That is a pretty compliment to the Athertons," I say. "It is to be hoped that our charges have not overheard you, or you will be in a nice fix."

We turn to make sure they are not within ear-shot, and lo, they are nowhere to be seen, and we are alone. There is a low wall near by, and on it we seat ourselves to wait till they catch up with us.

"We are fine daisy-pickers!" Macadam says.

"It's their fault; they gave us the slip," I exclaim, indignantly.

"Well, somehow, I don't think we were particularly careful in looking after them," he answers in an amused voice.

"Perhaps not, but all the same it is too bad. If Miss Brewster does not mind roaming about the country with men at unearthly hours in the morning, I do. We will go back."

"It is not so wonderfully early," he says, looking

at his watch; "and as we are here, why not stay a bit? This is probably the last chat we shall get together if you go to-morrow; let us make the most of it."

"Well, I will stay just five minutes," I answer; and we sit looking at the sweet, peaceful scene before us.

"When am I to see you again, Winnie?" he asks at last.

"Oh, I don't know; perhaps we may not meet again."

"We will. I am not going to let this be an eternal parting, I assure you. Winnie, may I come and see your mother?"

I am silent. I feel as if a bomb-shell had suddenly exploded at my feet. Call on mother? Why does he ask that? It can be but for one reason; because—because—he likes me; and if he comes, what will he think of us? He will expect the door opened by a neat parlor-maid, or a man, and he will find—well, just my own home; the coziest place on earth, but not the stylish place he expects, and he will go away disgusted.

He breaks in on my reflections.

"What, Winnie?" and his tone is offended; "am I not sufficiently your friend to be allowed to come and see your mother? I am afraid, after all, you have found me but a prosy old fellow whom you don't care to see more of."

"No, oh no," I say in a hurried, confused sort of way, wondering how I am to answer him.

"Then may I not come?" he persists. "I should

so much like to do so. I am deeply interested in you, and I want to know you better. I want you to regard me as a friend in the truest sense of the word, and if we trust to chance and the kindness of the Athertons for meeting I can never hope to be more than an acquaintance."

Still I am silent, and my silence irritates and offends him. Dismounting from the wall, he says, stiffly:

"I did not wish to importune you, Miss Ten Eyck. I owe you an apology for trying to force my society on you."

I look up in his face. It is set and stern, and his eyes have a curious yellow gleam in them. I am distressed beyond measure, but I have not the remotest idea what to do or say.

"Please don't look so annoyed," I manage to say at last. "I did not mean to offend you. You did not understand. There is nothing in the world I should like better than to have you know my mother and sister, but it is quite impossible."

The anger melts out of his face as he sees the distress in mine.

"Don't look so piteous, you baby," he laughs. "Am I such a monster that you are afraid of me? Tell me—why is it impossible?"

He reseats himself on the wall and lays his hand on mine.

"Tell me?" he pleads.

"I cannot."

"What! Is the reason so terrible that you cannot even give it a name? Come, come, little

woman," and he pats my hand gently, "I must hear all about it. Why may I not come and see you at home?"

"Because it is not the sort of home you expect to see," I blurt out. "Because it is but a poor, shabby place, after a house like this; and because we are poor, and not the sort of people for you to call on."

"Well, you are a funny girl," he says, releasing my hand and laughing heartily. "And so the idlers of society are not to visit any but people as idle or wealthy as themselves? You are very hard on the idlers, Winnie."

"Oh, that is not all," I say, determined to have it all out and be done with it. "We are not only poor, but we are all of us workers. I sing, my sister teaches, and mother does all sorts of pretty fancy work."

"I can't see where this bar comes in yet, or why you should not visit, or be visited by, anybody."

"Yes, but," I go on desperately, "even thus we can't make enough to support ourselves. We are obliged to—to—well, if you came in the afternoon, you would see a white-haired old lady seated in an arm-chair by the fireplace. She is neither aunt, cousin, nor yet old friend; and if you came to dinner you would meet another lady and gentleman, who are neither relations nor friends. They are 'boarding in a family,' and we are the 'family' they board with."

He takes my hand again, and looks long and silently into my face; then says, gently:

"Did you think I should not care to know you

because you were struggling bravely against your want of means? No, Winnie, I honor and respect you all far more; and if you will give me the privilege of your friendship I shall feel you are honoring me."

"Do you mean it?" I ask.

"I am half-inclined to be angry with you for doubting me," he answers. "No, Winnie; give me your address, and I will soon prove to you how deeply I am in earnest. I am not going to let you slip away from me, nor am I going to lose a friendship I value for such a trumpery thing as money."

I laugh out gayly.

"It is quite refreshing to hear some one speak so lightly of the great enemy, but——"

I have no time to finish my remark, for a bell rings out loudly.

"Good gracious!" I cry, bounding off the wall. "That's the big bell! They are at breakfast, and we have missed prayers! Oh, what will they ever think? Bother that Edith Brewster!"

I round the corner fult tilt, and almost fall over the object of my remark. I am sure she must have heard me, but she looks so suave and sweet that I tremble lest there is something in the wind.

"Oh, here you are!" she ejaculates. "I have been looking for you everywhere!"

"What have you done with Mr. Footner?" I inquire bluntly. "We found you had left us, so we sat on the wall to wait till you came."

"Oh, he has been in the house some time, and I think it just a little bit unkind of you to have slipped

away so cleverly. We have not had the walk I was longing for—have we?”

I look round at Mr. Macadam, and he gives me a quiet smile. I cannot return it, though, for I feel vexed and annoyed at the way this girl has made me her cat's-paw.

Two minutes later we enter the breakfast-room. To my intense astonishment I see young Footner and Miss Brewster bidding each other a ceremonious good-morning. What can it mean? I am soon enlightened.

Mrs. Atherton calls down the table:

“Where have you truants been?”

Edith Brewster responds, glibly:

“Oh, Miss Ten Eyck wanted to go for an early walk, so we got up, and when we came down we found Mr. Macadam in the hall, and then we started and had such a delightful ramble.”

I look up to set the matter straight. I see clearly the only construction that can be put upon her words, and I don't intend to allow it; but as I begin speaking I meet Macadam's eye, and in it is a look which says, plainer than words, “Don't waste powder and shot over her;” so I refrain, but inwardly I am boiling with indignant fury.

The worst has yet to come. After breakfast, when we are all dispersing, Mrs. Atherton calls me to her.

“My dear Winnie,” she says, putting her arm round me and speaking affectionately, “don't feel hurt at what I am about to say, for I would not vex you, dear, for a great deal; but I think you should

be a little more reserved with Mr. Macadam. We all see the tremendous attention he is paying you, but at the same time it is a little too pronounced, dear, to go out for these early rambles. Don't think I am in the least annoyed, Winnie, for I only tell you because I think so much of you; but remarks were made that I did not like."

And I, because of that look on Macadam's face, do not attempt to exonerate myself, but listen to all Mrs. Atherton says, and even appear to be grateful to her for so speaking; but in my heart I am still burning with fury.

How dare that girl put me in such a position! How mean and contemptible she is to resort to such an expedient to get herself out of a scrape! She must have seen what an idiot I was, for she seemed to rely on my silence with the most perfect confidence. As to that contemptible thing, Footner, words will not express my sentiments; but if he ever gets Miss Brewster for a wife he will be punished enough, so I need not trouble my head about him. But for her! If I only could——! But then I can't; so the best thing to do is to go away alone and growl it out.

CHAPTER VI.

HE CALLS.

I AM AT HOME. It is some few days since I returned, and I have had time to partially forgive Miss Brewster, who did have the grace to make a lame apology about her people not liking Mr. Footner, and being afraid they would know she had had a few words with him in private. I accepted the apology, but I took care to pour the whole grievance into Lottie's sympathetic ear the moment I got home, and numerous and unflattering have been the epithets hurled after the fair Edith.

I have also told them all about Macadam; of course I have not connected him with the flowers, and they know nothing about the note.

Lottie is highly entertained at the firm faith I have in his calling on us—she herself is more than skeptical.

“If you really believe he will come, you had better keep a sharp eye on that dog Fluff and the doorstep; for goodness' sake don't let's disgust the man before he has crossed the threshold. We should look well with Fluff on the topmost step with a bone, and the cat on the lowest with some fish, and each swearing at the other. Such things have oc-

curred, for those two animals are never whipped when they ought to be."

It is after lunch, the table has been cleared, and Lottie and I, having given a few extra touches to mother and ourselves, are doing as we have done each afternoon since there has been a likelihood of Macadam calling—freshening and tidying the room to make the best of ourselves and our surroundings.

Our old lady has caught the infection and has put on her prettiest cap, and when all is in order we sit in state waiting for a visitor who does not seem to be coming.

After awhile mutiny breaks out. Mother had been at work on some plain sewing which I had inveigled away from her, and had given her, instead, some lovely art work; but now she rebels.

"I don't believe this man is coming," she says, "and I am not going to be hindered any longer;" and out comes the plain work.

Then the old lady gets sleepy, and leaning back in her chair to get her nap, takes off her cap, and she too is at rest; and finally Lottie brings out a roll of cloth from one of her secret receptacles and sets to work cutting out.

I retire to the den to study Italian, and passing the kitchen stairs I find the mutinous feeling pervades the whole house.

"I'm agoing to clean my silver," I hear the girl muttering, "and if anyone comes to the door they'll have to go theirselves."

I have not been five minutes at my verbs before there is a tremendous ringing at the bell. I feel

sure it is Mr. Macadam, and pop out of the den just in time to meet Mary coming up the stairs with her sleeves tucked up and a dirty apron on, and send her hurrying back to trim up. Then I make good speed to the sitting-room to find mother bundling away her unpresentable work, and Lottie, with the celerity for which she is deservedly famous, stuffing away her cloth into some cavernous recess of the sideboard; while the old lady, wide awake, wrestles with her cap, and finally settles it with a coquettish tilt to the left.

Our hall is not very spacious. A couple of steps brings the visitor from the outer door to the drawing-room, and possibly only ten seconds elapse between my entry and the announcing of Mr. Macadam; but in that time we have subsided into a calm, industrious family, each busy with some dainty work, and a stranger entering would think we had not stirred for hours

We have a happy knack of doing this sort of thing. Long practice and having but one sitting-room have made us perfect.

Mr. Macadam looks so nice as he enters the room that I feel proud to introduce him to my people, but prouder still to think he wants to come and be introduced.

Mother takes to him in a moment, and as she extends her hand says, warmly :

“I am delighted to have the pleasure of making your acquaintance. My daughter tells me you were very kind to her.”

Then he is introduced to Lottie and our elderly

friend, and in five minutes he is chatting to them as if he had known them for years.

I say very little, for I want to give them an opportunity to find him out for themselves. I have the highest regard for their opinion, and even he will fall in my estimation if they do not like him; but I am not afraid.

“Do you go much to theaters?” he asks Lottie.

He has been looking at her a good deal, and I can see he admires my dark, handsome sister.

Lottie gives me a fleeting glance. The idea of our going to theaters much is evidently delicious to her. She responds, however, in a manner that is perfect:

“No, not often. We go more to concerts.”

Again she gives me a sly glance, which means, “We go to concerts because we get tickets given us; theaters are not much in our way.”

Mr. Macadam evidently thinks she has a soul above theaters, so says:

“Oh, I suppose you don’t care much for plays. Perhaps they bore you?”

“Oh dear, no!” Lottie responds, quickly.

The idea of a play boring her! Why, we are only too delighted to have the chance of jolting down Broadway in the cars, to take up our proud position in the balcony. Bored! There are very few amusements that could bore us. Everything is grist to our mill!

Mr. Macadam is silent a few moments after Lottie’s reply; then he turns to mother.

“Would you allow me to take your daughters to a

theater to-morrow night?" he asks her. "I am afraid it is but an empty compliment to ask you, for I understand you never go out. But if you will allow me to take them I shall be so pleased."

Mother hesitates, glancing from one to the other, and at last consents when our old lady pleads for us.

Then mother begins to question Mr. Macadam. I suppose she wants to find out something more about him before she feels happy in trusting us with him.

"Are you making a long stay in New York?" she asks.

"Oh, I live here."

"Indeed! I understood, from what Winnie told me about your chance meeting with the Athertons, that you had not been long in town, and were only making a short visit."

"No; I had been abroad for five years, and had seen nothing of any of my old friends during that time, as I was constantly traveling."

"You must be glad to be settled now. I can fancy nothing worse than having no home ties; but, then, I am an old woman and an invalid."

Mr. Macadam makes a restless movement. I notice he always winces at any allusion to home ties, and I wonder why he does so. He answers, quickly:

"Yes, I am glad to be settled; but I have no home ties whatever, so that it really makes no difference to me where I am."

And then he changes the subject.

"You are a great worker, are you not? Miss

Ten Eyck told me so much about your artistic handiwork;" and he leans over mother's table and examines the pretty things upon it, and in the conversation that ensues the subject of himself and his doings is not reverted to.

Before he goes everything is fixed for the next night, and he is hardly out of the house before Lottie and I are executing a delighted war-dance over the prospect of the morrow's enjoyment.

He has won his way into the good graces of every one. Our old lady, who has been studying him quietly, gives a very decided verdict in his favor; and old Fluff for once shows a glimmering of sense by fawning on him and making a fuss with him.

Next morning, soon after Lottie returns from her work, a large box arrives addressed to her.

The label bears the name of a fashionable florist, and is directed in a writing that I would know well enough even if it were not for the "J. M." in the corner.

Lottie pounces on the box, opens it, and discovers quantities of the most exquisite flowers packed tightly in cotton wool. After gloating over them for a time she turns back to the address.

Her quick eye lights on the initials.

"“J. M.”" she exclaims. "“J. M.!” Who is ‘J. M.’?"

"James Macadam," I say glibly, and try to bring her attention back to the flowers; but Lottie is not to be thus lightly disposed of. She looks at it steadily a moment.

"I say, Winnie, were not those the initials on the

bouquet you had sent you? The writing seems familiar. Have you got the card?"

"Of course not," I say, burying my flushed face in the flowers. "The idea of keeping such rubbish! Those initials were 'S. M.' I believe."

"No, they were 'J. M.' I remember distinctly saying 'J. M., Jim,'" Lottie returns, positively.

"Well, I can't see that was such a wonderful thing to have said," I respond, crossly.

"No; but Mr. Macadam's initials are J. M., and his name is Jim, and the writing seems so familiar that I feel like saying something to him to-night."

"Now, Mother!" I cry appealingly, "is not Lottie idiotic? Can't there be two men with the initials 'J. M.'? If she does say anything to Mr. Macadam he will probably be very much insulted; and beside, I am not sure the initials were 'J. M.' They might just as well have been 'S. M.' or 'T. M.', and she could as easily have said 'Sim' or 'Tim' as 'Jim.'"

Lottie is unconvinced, but mother clinches the matter by deciding that nothing is to be said to Mr. Macadam, and we set ourselves to filling every available vase with the sweet flowers.

I am not altogether sure that I am not a wee bit vexed at the flowers being sent to Lottie instead of to me. Is this a twinge of jealousy, I wonder?

CHAPTER VII.

ABOUT THE FAMILY BOWL.

SINCE THE THEATRE Mr. Macadam has been pretty often to see us. Indeed every few days he will drop in for a chat, and we are one and all glad to have him come. Fluff quite approves of him, and gets up in his lazy way to greet him, and indeed seems to know his rap at the door.

He seems quite to liven us up; but he is an agreeable friend, nothing more. He does not pay me any particular attention; in fact he talks quite as much to Lottie as to me; and perhaps it may be only my fancy, but I think I detect in his manner to me a something that tells me I am more to him than any other woman.

The other day there was some chance remark made about marriage, and our old lady asked Macadam what he would do with a wife.

"I don't think I shall ever marry," was his instant reply.

Now, what did he mean? If he does not mean to marry, why does he come here so often and make so much of us all? Certainly a young man ought to be free to call on ladies without having intentions wherever he goes; but after the peculiar circumstances of our meeting, the conversations we have

had, and the fact of his coming here as a friend of mine, it does look as if he had some ideas beyond the ordinary ones of pleasant acquaintance.

But why does he say so positively that he does not intend to marry? Perhaps he has not yet made up his mind whether he really likes me. I should fancy he is a man who would wish to know a woman very thoroughly before he took such a serious step as binding himself to her for life.

This may be so, but with one thing and another, I am not in a particularly happy frame of mind. We have had a good deal to worry us lately, and yesterday came the crisis.

That dividend is at the bottom of it all.

Six weeks ago, without any intention to be dishonest, I promised it liberally on every side; and when it came in, the other day, we had to parcel it out in such dribblets that it did nobody any good. I meant to do the best, and it seems I did the worst.

Before mother was up a man came to see her. He was brought to me.

“Good-morning, Ma’am,” he said. “I won’t detain you long; my business is very simple. I am the grocer. The business has been changing hands two or three times, lately, and I have just bought it, debts and all. I want a little ready money to carry on the shop with, and the easiest way to get it is by calling in some of the debts. Well, Ma’am, a month ago you promised the house a check on account, if we would wait. I did not wish to be unreasonable, and would have been content with an ordinary sum; but when I got this,” and he searches in his pocket-

book for a paper, "I thought I had better step round and see if there was not some little mistake."

After a little further search he laid on the table a check for twenty-five dollars.

"How much more did you expect?"

"Well, seventy-five, at least; you see, the bill is a hundred and fifty."

I thought for a few moments and then answered him:

"I am really very sorry, but I am afraid we can't let you have any more just now."

"You must let me have more or I shall press for it," the man said, roughly, buttoning up his pocket-book. "I've a mind not to take that check at all."

"I hope you will," I answered, "and that you will give us a little more time, and we will send you more as soon as possible."

"Well, I'll give you two weeks, and if I have not received fifty dollars in that time I shall press;" and with that he went.

Now, we have not said one word of this to mother, we have no possibility of getting the fifty dollars, and what the man will do when they are not forthcoming is beyond our ken.

We have talked over every available article in our possession, to see if we could not raise the money and settle it without mother knowing, but we have nothing of value left; most of our nice things dwindled away long ago.

Suddenly a thought strikes me. The family bowl! Why did I not think of the family bowl!

The family bowl, as we familiarly term it, is a

large china punch-bowl as old as the hills, and there is an idea among us that it is of great value. In these days of china mania the bowl may be worth a mine of gold. Why could not Lottie or I take it to some china dealer and sell it, and when we come home with a lapful of dollars tell mother of the trouble, and, beside the clamoring grocer, settle up the other debts that worry us, and start free? What a golden vision!

I start up from my chair in the den, where I have been indulging in the foregoing meditations, stand a moment in contemplation of the family bowl, which is mounted upon a shelf on the wall, and then call Lottie.

“Come and help me out with this Italian,” I cry.

Lottie does not know as much about it as I do, but she gathers that I want her for some idea or other, so comes skipping along the hall.

“Well?” she says, sitting down in front of me with her hands on her knees.

“Lottie, let’s sell the bowl!”

She throws up her hands in horror.

“Why, what would mother say? Our great-great-grandmother brought it over with her, and all the family have been christened in it for generations!”

“Come, Lottie, don’t talk rubbish. I don’t care if the immortal George played skittles with it, or the Queen of Sheba gave it as a present to Solomon! If that frightful old thing is worth money, let’s have the money.”

“But——”

“Nonsense! You are much too practical to go in for any sentimental stuff of that sort. Suppose we could sell it for five hundred dollars? Do you suppose that mother would care for an old bit of china when she realized that we had been in a terrible strait and had got out of it so gloriously? As for the christening of our grandmothers, bah! What good does it do us to have the vessel that the heads of the family have been dipped in? Lottie, grandmothers are luxuries, and we are too poor to indulge in them. You don't suppose anybody believes that we had grandmothers, do you? Why, Lottie, we keep boarders! Was there ever a boarding-house keeper that had not seen better days? Believe me we shall be much more unique if we have no family relics at all, and I vote for the sale of the bowl.”

Lottie is silent a few moments, and then she says:

“Well, I think you are right, Winnie; only, I hate to see every decent thing we possess getting sold. Still I suppose it is the thing to do, and as I think I can make a better bargain than you, I'll take it. You are not half sharp enough. The dealer would tell you it was rubbish and you would believe him; whereas I know nothing whatever about china, but I shall tell him the bowl has been in the family for generations, and, when he talks 'marks,' look wise and say nothing.”

We make a parcel of the bowl and Lottie starts off to try her luck.

How anxiously I watch for her return! I have

had my head out of the window at least fifty times before I see her coming, and have made my poor mother so nervous that I verily believe that if I were not the big woman I am she would box my ears.

When at last I see Lottie, I slip out with the old, flimsy harmony excuse, and letting her in quietly, follow her into the den, and closing the door, wait open-mouthed for the news. To my horror the bowl is still in her hand!

She sets it down on the table with a bang.

"Bother the old thing! I'd like to break it!" she says.

I look at her in astonishment. Bumping the sacred bowl is an act of levity I should never have expected from Lottie, but to talk of breaking it is rank heresy! I could almost fancy she had taken leave of her senses!

I must find out the reason for her strange conduct, so I inquire:

"What for?"

"Because it isn't worth ten cents! I took it to ever so many places, and the people one and all laughed at me when I said it was of great value."

"Is that really true? Is this thing, then, rubbish?" I say, as the idea forces itself slowly through my unwilling brain that for years we have been giving honor to a bit of common delf; that we have grown up in a faith which this moment unmask and reveals as a lie, a mockery.

It is a bitter thought!

Against our better judgment we have painfully

acquired a taste for this hideous old basin ; have schooled ourselves into tolerating its ugliness for the sake of its admirable antiquity ; and behold, it is but an ordinary, commonplace crock !

The bowl of our sires has been smashed by some clumsy maid and this monstrosity purchased in its stead !

How those of our friends who understood china must have laughed in their sleeves ? How even the old basin itself must have chuckled !

All my veneration disappears as if by magic, and I share heartily in Lottie's desire for summary vengeance.

“Hateful, deceiving old Panchin !” I say, apostrophizing the now despised family bowl. “To think that you have been given the place of honor—you, who are only a cut above a pudding-bowl !”

My tragic tone is too much for Lottie's gravity, and we indulge in one of those hearty laughs which invariably follow the financial crises which are now of pretty frequent occurrence.

CHAPTER VIII.

I MEET MRS. HAGGERSTONE.

CLOUDS seem to be gathering round us pretty thickly. I fancied I was going to make a good thing of this season, and here it is nearly July, and never a vestige of an engagement has come my way since February.

That grand commencement was only a flash in the pan—the same sort of delusive thing as turning up an ace at whist, and finding it backed by a deuce when you delightedly glance through your hand.

I have written to several people, and almost invariably received the same reply—that their lists were full for the present, but that should anything unforeseen occur (pigs taking to flying, or something of that sort, I suppose) they would be delighted to send for me. I went up to Mr. Mertens', to-day, but he was very far from encouraging.

“The fact of the matter is this, Miss Ten Eyck,” he said; “you have no one pushing you, and you will find getting on very up-hill work, without help.”

“How do you mean? Have I not studied sufficiently yet?”

“On that score I have not a word to say. I think you a charming singer; but I understand you have not made any arrangements with anyone to bring

you out. You have simply studied, and think your own merits will do the rest for you. Am I right?"

"Perfectly."

"Well, my dear young lady, you are building on impossibilities. You cannot do it. Every man connected with the concert business has a certain number of pupils or *protégés* he is bound to push and employ. Outside this ring there is no place for a singer, let her be as pleasing as she will. You, my dear, are outside. You will get stray engagements through your own influence or the illness of some other artist who has been engaged to sing, but an assured position you will never have. I doubt if you could keep yourself with concert singing exclusively. I consider you a very promising young singer, and should advise you to make immediate arrangements with some one to bring you out."

"That would cost money."

"Undoubtedly."

"I am not in a position to pay any."

"Have you no friends?"

"None of whom I should like to ask such a favor."

"Then, my dear young lady, speaking to you as to a singer in whose career I am interested, I say give up the idea of concert work and turn your attention to light opera."

"The stage!" I cry. "Why, my people would never hear of it!"

"They will have to, or let you be idle. If you had exceptional talent I would not say a word; but as you doubtless know for yourself, your talent, though of a very high order, is nothing startling.

You are a very charming singer, nothing more. In concert there are many as good as you; in opera you can outshine them all, for few of these light opera singers have any musical education whatever."

This was very pleasant hearing, truly. Mr. Mertens' words have been ringing in my ears all the afternoon, and I have been wondering how I am to tell mother and Lottie, who are so hopeful about my future. I have hardly said a word to a soul, but sit grim and taciturn, wondering whether they would ever hear of my going on the stage, and if not, whether I shall be able to teach, and earn my salt.

Mother has not been well all day, and has gone to bed quite early. We are all depressed; and though we are not one of those cheerful families who delight in communicating their dismal forebodings to one another, there is still such a strong bond of sympathy between us that when one feels depressed there is a cloud on all our spirits.

Our old lady is the only member of "our refined home circle" at home to-night, and she has made herself so completely one of us that we no longer regard her as a stranger.

A ring comes at the door-bell, we hear a man's voice, and then Mary comes in.

"Mr. Brown," she says.

We happen to know a Mr. Brown, and at once conclude that he has dropped in for a little music. Lottie raises her head with a welcoming smile, which suddenly fades from her face and is replaced by that haughty, queenly grace that becomes her so well. She rises to her feet and says:

"Mr. Brown, I believe?"

"Yes, Ma'am. Are you Mrs. Ten Eyck?"

"No—Miss Ten Eyck; Mrs. Ten Eyck is not well this evening."

"I'll call again, then. I want to see Mrs. Ten Eyck on business."

Lottie and I exchange glances; our old lady rises.

"Shall I go upstairs?" she asks.

"No," we say in a breath, "we will go into the den;" and together we conduct our nocturnal visitor into the little room and light the gas.

"My business is with Mrs. Ten Eyck, young ladies," he says. I am afraid we are wasting each other's time."

"But our mother is ill in bed and you could not possibly see her," we say, and go through the little formula of what is said to one being said to all.

"I am afraid I shall have to wait till I can see Mrs. Ten Eyck," he says, fingering his hat.

"Well, at least you can tell us the nature of your business?"

"Yes, I can do that. It is about Mr. Robinson."

"The grocer?"

"Yes. The two weeks are up and he has not received the fifty dollars."

"Yes, we are very sorry, but we found it quite impossible to send it."

"In that case I must see your mother," the man says respectfully, but firmly.

"What for?" we ask, looking at each other with blanching faces.

“I have a paper to give her that I can only deliver to herself.”

“A paper! What is it?”

“A summons.”

There is dead silence. Lottie and I get close together and furtively grasp hands. The man turns his back and looks at a picture on the wall.

Lottie is the first to speak, and her voice is half-anguished, half-defiant.

“You cannot give her that! It would kill her!”

The man turns and looks at us. This job is evidently distasteful to him.

“I am very sorry, young ladies,” he says, “but I am bound to do my duty.”

“Why can you not give it to one of us?”

“Because it is so much waste paper unless given to the party it is intended for.”

Again a silence; then Lottie says, in a trembling voice:

“Our mother is really so ill that a shock might kill her. Will you not give the paper to us? We will give you our word to deliver it.”

He shakes his head.

“Oh, don’t refuse,” I plead. “You can trust us, and no one need ever know. She is so ill!”

He thinks a moment and then takes a paper from his pocket.

“Well, young ladies, here it is,” he says; “I trust you;” and placing the paper in our hands he bids us a hurried good-night and is gone.

We cannot speak when we are left alone; we stand hand clasped in hand, with averted faces, not

daring to look at each other. At last the dread thought that is in both hearts finds voice. Lottie throws her arms round me, sobbing.

“Who is to tell her?” is her cry.

“Must we?” I whisper back.

“We promised,” Lottie answers, rebukingly.

“Let us go together,” we say at last; and forcing back the tears that would be so glad to come if we would let them, we go to our darling’s bedside, and tell her so gently that she hardly realizes the extent of our misery; then we thrust the hateful thing into a drawer and try to forget it.

Next morning I awake with that sense of oppression which grief always brings—a feeling that tells you before your senses are awake that there is trouble abroad. The rosy glamour of dreams is still upon you, when like the sharp prick of a dagger comes the recollection that drives the mists away from the brain, and the whole trouble unrolls itself in its blackest, saddest form, and you recognize it with horror as your burden, which you must bear not for to-day alone, but for years—maybe until you lay it down on the shores of the dark river.

I rise unrefreshed, eat my breakfast in silence, and after it take up the paper in an aimless sort of way and scan the advertisements. One attracts my eye.

“A lady of position is anxious to meet with an agreeable young lady as companion. One who sings preferred.”

I look at it several times, and without saying a word to anyone answer it.

Something must be done! I can no longer afford idleness, and I am agreeable enough when nothing occurs to ruffle me, and I can sing. Why should not I suit this lady, and get some salary, to be able to share with my home ones?

A week passes and I get no answer. It is a wretched week. Mr. Macadam does not call; our old lady goes away; and, above all, mother is still no better, and obliged to keep her bed.

It is a very warm afternoon, and I have been sitting with mother and expending my superfluous energies in improvising a mosquito netting for her. Poor mother is particularly popular with the flies, but, far from appreciating their attentions, she is driven nearly wild by them.

With the aid of various weapons, the most noteworthy a paper-knife and a wet towel, Lottie contrived to send quite a number to a cooler world, and then went out. Now the wretches have a regular wake, and are arriving in myriads to honor the obsequies by feasting on the bodies of their late brethren.

I am tired and a trifle out of patience when the bell rings loudly, and in a moment Mary comes to tell me that a lady wants to see me.

On the card is written "Mrs. Haggerstone."

For a moment I am at a loss to imagine who it can be, and then the advertisement flashes through my mind and I hurry into the room.

I see before me a tall, handsome woman, with strongly-marked features and dark hair. She has eyes that though large and beautiful have in them

an expression that is almost sinister. She instinctively repels me, despite the fascination of her manner and the rich sweetness of her voice when she speaks.

“You are Miss Ten Eyck?” she asks.

I bow an affirmative, and she resumes:

“My solicitors forwarded me your reply to my advertisement; but as I am particular about the young lady I make my companion I thought I should prefer coming to see you in your own home, to asking you to call on me.”

“Yes,” I say, disliking her more every word she speaks.

“I thought from your note that you would just suit me,” she says, and goes on to ask me a thousand and one questions—some of them rather impertinent ones, I think.

“I intend to travel in Europe for some months, may be for a year. Can you speak French and German?”

“Very little,” I say, dubiously.

“Ah, perhaps you have not been abroad? Well, if you understand the construction of a language, it is very easy to speak it. I think I should enjoy showing the foreign cities to an intelligent companion. I am very weary of them myself. I intend to start in a couple of weeks; could you be ready?”

“Oh, yes, if I decided to go.”

“Well, you had better decide at once;” and she gives a little mirthless laugh that chills my blood. It is strange how repulsive she is to me!

I look at her closely before replying. Her expres-

sion is ever varying—now melancholy, now defiant—but neither into the restless eyes, nor round the straight, lipless mouth, comes one sign of gentleness or softness; and yet she is not a stern woman! She looks like one who is at war with the world.

“Well?” she says, after the pause has become longer than her restlessness can brook.

“I shall have to consult my mother,” I say, bringing my thoughts back from their speculative excursions to the business of the moment.

“Is she here? Can I see her?” and she rises from her seat.

“Unfortunately you cannot; she is not at all well just now.”

“I am sorry, for I hate being unsettled, and would prefer to have things arranged at once. What salary would you want? Would you be satisfied with fifteen hundred dollars a year and expenses?”

“Your offer seems very liberal.”

“Yes,” she answers, “but I expect a good deal in return. My companion must dress well, and that takes money.”

Then she drops business and begins chatting on the various topics of the day. She is a very intelligent woman and a brilliant talker. As she speaks I am half-inclined to think my first impression has been a wrong one; but every now and then some word, some expression, assures me that I was right in attributing to her a coldness and want of sincerity which would make the post of companion to her a very undesirable one.

At last she takes her leave, and having taken a

peep at mother and found her fast asleep, I return to the sitting-room and settle down for a good long think.

I am in a dilemma. I feel like a man who has spent half his life in praying for some special blessing, and when one day, to his surprise, his prayer is answered, he turns round and spends his remaining years in praying to have the special blessing removed. I have been longing and hoping for the chance of making money. I answered the advertisement because I thought it was a chance for me, never expected to have an answer, and now that I have, and it is better than I could have hoped for, I am ready to go down on my bended knees and pray that something may make it impossible for me to accept.

My duty is clearly to give a flowery description of Mrs. Haggerstone to mother, and get her to believe that I want to go with her; but somehow I don't feel that I can do so. The big salary even does not tempt me, and it seems absurd for me to have fifteen hundred dollars a year within my grasp and not want it.

I have not half-time to look round the matter when there comes another ring; but this time it is one that I know, and Mr. Macadam is announced.

"All alone!" he says. "Why, this is pleasant; we shall be able to have one of our old chats, Winnie."

"You won't think it pleasant when you learn that the cause of my being alone is mother's illness."

"Oh, I am so sorry!" he says, and then looks

hard into my face. "You are not well either, are you?"

"Oh, I am all right enough," I respond in a rather dismal voice.

"No, but you are not all right, else why don't you smile and look yourself?"

"Oh, one can't always be amiable."

"May be; but you are not cross to-day—you are tired. Come, confess you have been over-exerting yourself."

"No, I have not," I persist, and am silent, feeling half-inclined to snub him unmercifully and get rid of him.

There is a pause. I feel that I must either be very cross or unburden my mind, so do not speak. The silence gets tiresome, and at last I speak bluntly:

"Mr. Macadam, I am worried and cross, to-day. I don't want absolutely to tell you to go, but I don't think you will find me very pleasant company, for I am full of bothers and can think of nothing else."

He laughs at me.

"Odd as ever," he says. "Well, you cross girl, I shall not go despite your evident wish to be rid of me. I shall stay till your sister or some one comes. Joking apart, Winnie, tell me what is the matter. Have it out and you'll feel a different woman; a secret worry is like a bad tooth—much better out."

I laugh with him, and the influence he has over me exerts itself with its usual power, and in a few seconds I turn a more agreeable face to him and say, half-dolefully:

“Well, as you have elected to stay I will try and get better-tempered.”

“And about the trouble—won’t you tell it me?”

“Perhaps.”

“Well, now for it, Winnie.”

He draws his chair nearer to mine and leans on the little table that is between us. Mrs. Haggerstone’s card is upon it, and he plays idly with it as he watches my face and waits for my story. Accidentally the card falls from his fingers to the floor. He stoops to pick it up, and in doing so glances at it. He utters a strange cry, and drops the card as quickly as if it burned him.

“What’s the matter?” I ask.

“Nothing,” he answers, in an altered voice. “Nothing, only that name reminds me of someone;” and after a slight pause he adds, “but you have not told me your trouble yet?”

Thus adjured, I tell him of the discouragement I have had from Mr. Mertens, and of my determination to find something to do, and at last touch lightly on my idea of becoming a companion.

He rises and walks up and down the room, and at last comes back to me and looks gravely in my face.

“Is it necessary for you to work, Winnie?” he asks.

“Imperative,” I answer. “This is no longer a house that can support one of its daughters in idleness.”

He again paces the room, as though in deep, anxious thought. What can disturb him so?

After a few moments he comes and leans on my chair.

“Have you any plans?” he asks.

“Nothing definite. I saw an advertisement for a musical companion, answered it, and the lady has just been here.”

He snatches up the card.

“Is this her name?” he asks.

“Yes,” I respond, surprised at his manner.

“Then you shall not go to her!” he says, decidedly.

“And why?” I ask, with some haughtiness. I cannot see why he should control me in this manner.

For a moment he does not reply; then he says, with an attempt to pass the matter off lightly:

“Oh, you must not think of going to anyone with such an unlucky name.”

“Unlucky perhaps to you, but why should it be to me? You are absurd!”

“Winnie, you must not go to that woman!”

“Anyone would fancy you knew her,” I retort, “and had taken the same dislike to her that I have.”

“You don’t like her, then?” he says, a curious smile breaking over his face.

“Like her? No! I have taken the most unreasoning dislike to her. I am sure I should grow to hate her if I saw her often. It was this very feeling that made me appear so gloomy when you came in. I fear the going to her is inevitable, and I dread it.”

“Why should it be inevitable?”

“She offered such a liberal salary.”

“Pshaw! Happiness is to be considered before

salary. I am sure you would be unhappy with her. You dislike her yourself. Should you not obey that instinct which invariably repels a good woman from a bad one, and avoid her?"

"You have a reason for being prejudiced against her."

"I am not prejudiced. I simply believe that pure, innocent creatures like yourself are provided by the Creator with an instinct which warns them against persons that would be hurtful to them; and I ask you now, Winnie, to obey your instinct."

"Would you be so earnest if the lady's name was not Haggerstone?" I persist.

"I hope so."

"Then you have some unpleasant associations connected with the name."

"My bitterest enemy was called by it, and I hate its very sound! Don't remind me of it, Winnie."

His tone is low and fierce, but not fiercer than his face. No kind, genial expression is there now, but every line, every feature, shows such intense anger that I feel I would rather face a lion in the desert than Macadam when he is angry.

He paces the room hurriedly, and then, dropping into a seat, covers his face with his hands and appears to be thinking deeply.

I wait awhile and then get rather fidgety.

"Don't think about it if it pains you," I venture at last.

He looks up, smiles, and comes toward me.

"I can never think of anything that is not happy when I look at you, Winnie," he says. "I wish I

could keep you with me always. Life would be all sunshine, then!"

I make no reply. What can I say? A glad thought wells up in my heart that perhaps this is the moment I so dread and yet so ardently long for. I wait with downcast head and fluttering heart for his next words.

He lays his hand on my shoulder, and I, looking up, meet his eyes fixed on my face with a strange intensity that frightens me. I rise from my seat, meditating flight, but ere I can take the first step he has me in his arms and is pressing his lips to mine.

He releases me as suddenly, puts me back in my chair, and taking two strides across the room stands intently examining a sketch on the walls, and I hear him whistling under his breath.

I look out of the window, and taking up mother's fan try to cool my burning cheeks; but my heart still flutters painfully, and I feel that we are a very guilty-looking couple, and that if Lottie should come back at this juncture she would take in the situation at a glance.

I wait in delightful anticipation for his next words. They come at last.

"What a pretty sketch that is."

His tone is most prosaic, and coming back to his seat, he begins chatting as quietly as if nothing had happened.

I am not blessed with such complete self-control. I cannot speak to him, I cannot look at him, and each time his eyes rest on me I feel my face crimsoning painfully.

“Don’t look so reproachful,” he says at last, when he realizes how farcical are his attempts at conversation. “I was mad just now! Will you forgive me?”

A sharp pain runs through me at his words. What can he mean?

“Forgive me, Winnie! I don’t deserve that you should, but be merciful. There is not a woman in the world in whom I am as interested as in you, and it would grieve me intensely to think I had offended you past forgiveness when I want you to feel for me the deep, true friendship I have for you. Yes, Winnie, I want to be your friend in the best sense of the word; a man on whom you can rely; a brother, who will do more for you than ever brother did for sister. If you will only pardon my indiscretion and trust me you will make me supremely happy, and believe me I will never transgress again.”

Every word has cut me like a knife. He asks to be a friend to me, when for months past he has been teaching me to look on him as a lover! He promises never again to offer a caress, and shows me clearly that he meant nothing more than to insult me! How dare he trifle thus with me!

I rise from my seat to order him to leave the house, but hastily restrain my passion lest he read the true state of my feelings in it and remembers how silently I sat until his words convinced me that I had mistaken his meaning.

It is too late now to rebuke him as he deserves, so I merely move to leave the room, saying, coldly:

“If you will excuse me I think I will go to my mother; she may be awake and wanting me.”

“I have angered you,” he says, lamely.

“You have surprised me,” I say, sweeping past him.

“Miss Ten Eyck,” he says, “I offer you the most humble apologies; pray pardon my ungentlemanly conduct!”

“Don’t mention the matter further,” I reply, laying my hand on the door-knob.

He will not let me pass out.

“You must hear me before you go,” he says. “I have something of importance to say to you; and though I deserve that you should send me away from you, yet I cannot let you do so at this moment, when your mother is ill, and you two poor, unprotected girls are in such sore need of friends.”

“I think we are much better off without such friendship as yours.”

“Be as cutting as you will—I deserve it all; but you must hear me. I have the most urgent reasons for begging you to sit down at once and write a note to Mrs. Haggerstone declining her offer; and my reasons are so urgent that, if you refuse, I shall feel bound to lay the matter before your mother.”

“My mother is not well enough to be troubled, and if she were I don’t think she would raise any serious objections to my going abroad with an agreeable lady.”

“But suppose,” he urges, “that Mrs. Haggerstone were neither agreeable nor a lady? Suppose that you found your travels consisted in making straight

for Monaco, and that, once there, your duties were simply to throw a semblance of respectability over her daily visits to the gaming-table? Suppose that one day, after your face had become to all the visitors that of an habitue, madam staked her all, lost, and made away with herself—where would you be? You might have difficulty in exonerating yourself; you would be penniless and friendless; and if you succeeded in getting other employment, you would be in constant fear of meeting someone that had seen you at the tables.”

“So graphic a picture must have been drawn from life,” I say. “What do you know of Mrs. Haggerstone?”

“This—that at Monaco I have seen just such a woman as you describe, and her name was Haggerstone. Now will you write, or must I get your mother’s permission to investigate this lady’s history?”

I pause, vexed to find that I must agree with him.

“I am much obliged to you for your warning,” I say at last. “I will think it over, and most probably decline. Now you really must excuse me;” and opening the door I usher him out.

I decline Mrs. Haggerstone’s offer, but I never breathe a word to Lottie of what has taken place.

CHAPTER IX.

I BEGIN MY PROFESSIONAL CAREER.

I SUPPOSE the world would take me for a Becky Sharp if I confessed how completely this profession of friendship has hurt me. I have not been scheming to be Mr. Macadam's wife, but from the first moment of meeting I was strongly attracted to him; and when his visits increased, and I saw from his manner that he thought a great deal of me, I allowed myself to drift into loving him in that happy, comfortable way that people have when things go smoothly and orange-blossoms and bride-cake loom gayly in the future.

Now suddenly he comes to me and asks me for my friendship! He had it, and he knew he had it.

I do not understand his motives, nor do I think for a moment that they are unworthy ones, but there is no disguising the fact that either I have been willfully deceiving myself or he has not been behaving as he should do. The Platonic friendship idea is all nonsense—preposterous and ridiculous nonsense; and though he chose to construe my silence into an acceptance, I must find some means of rendering it totally impossible.

Though I love him, my common sense tells me that he is not altogether blameless; that as a man

of the world he ought to know that unless he intended to make me his wife he had no business to come so often to the house, or be so attentive to me as he has been.

I am very unhappy, very sore about it; and as time goes on, and I realize to the full the dampening that has fallen on my life, I determine to occupy myself so that I will have no time to think of my pain; for were it not for the wounded pride which keeps my heartache in subservience I should be a very unhappy woman, in these days when I am bearing the weight of the first sorrow I have kept from mother.

Two or three weeks go by, our difficulties press very heavily upon us, and at each fresh trouble I say to myself, "Oh if I were only earning money!"

I pray for an opportunity, and at last it comes.

The morning's letters are always brought into mother's room for her to sort and distribute. One morning Mary comes in as usual with a package in her hand. I lie half-awake listening to hear if there is one for me, and yet hoping that there may not be, so that I may indulge in the pernicious sweetness of a snooze after I have been called.

"Put those outside," mother says.

"Any for Miss Winnie?" Mary asks.

"Yes, Mary, but I'll keep it till she gets up. She'll go to sleep again if you give it to her."

Mary goes out; but as I don't feel particularly interested, and I am particularly sleepy, I don't make any movement and proceed to take the coveted nap.

Lottie wakes me—Lottie fully dressed, and waving a letter in her hand.

“Winnie!” she cries, shaking me.

“All right!” I answer, testily. “I shan’t be a minute dressing; I’ll be up as soon as breakfast is.”

“Look here, Winnie! Wake up and read this letter!”

I open a second eye, and see mother sitting bolt upright in bed and gazing anxiously at me. I realize that something has happened in connection with my letter, so I turn out, snatch it from Lottie, and read:

DEAR MISS TEN EYCK:—Since I last saw you I have not forgotten you, and have tried on several occasions to get engagements for you; but as I told you, the thing is very uncertain unless you have some one interested in you. Hitherto I have been unsuccessful, but now I think I can offer you something that it will be to your advantage to take. A friend of mine, who manages a light opera company during the season, is organizing a concert company to make a tour through Canada. It will be quite a nice engagement, for he has prevailed upon his prima donna and baritone to go with him, and I would advise your accepting it, as, if he likes you, he will in all probability engage you for his opera company next season to play small parts and understudy, and it will give you an opening in the field to which your talents are best suited. The company starts in eight days, and the salary offered is fifty dollars per week. If this suits you, kindly be at Clarendon Hall at one o’clock P. M. to rehearse the Widow in “Elijah.” By the way, I stated to Mr. Herzog that you were well up in oratorio work,

as he intends giving them in all the towns that have singing societies.

Wishing you the best of luck,

Your friend,

F. CHANDLER MERTENS.

I simply gasp "Oh, Mother, is he not good!" and flying to her, smother her in kisses.

"Do you want to accept it?" she asks.

"Why, yes, Mother!"

"Are you, then, so anxious to leave home?"

"Oh no, no, Mother! But think what I can do with fifty dollars a week. Why, darling, I can send home enough to pay all the bills and make you as happy as the day is long! I am going to be the man of the family, and go out into the world to fight for the home ones."

"Oh, Winnie, you must not go! Fancy your being away for months!"

And then, like the silly women we are, we cling together and vow nothing shall separate us, and then, as soon as our eyes are dry, thank Heaven for the mercy vouchsafed us and gratefully accept the blessing that comes so opportunely.

As soon as breakfast is over I rush to the den to look over the "Widow," and then together, Lottie and I go down to Clarendon Hall.

Mr. Herzog is charming to me, and the rehearsal goes off so well that I am surprised at myself; then I have a long chat with my new manager, and find, to my delight, that Mr. Mertens has spoken so well of me that Mr. Herzog asks to have the refusal of my services for next season, and finally the contract

is signed that in eight days is to make me a breadwinner, and a lonely wanderer among a world of wanderers.

We go home silent and sad at the prospect of the parting which is now so near, and yet Lottie is as pleased as I am that we have something certain to depend on for our darling.

The days pass on; and what days! Every known relative, and lots that we never knew we had, descend upon us and upbraid mother for allowing me to go on a tour, and, when they hear of the opera business that is to follow, snub me for a forward minx. Some regard singers as lost souls, and condemn the entire tribe of professionals as vampires who suck men's blood (through their pocket-books, I presume) and live on champagne and flowers.

The idea of mother allowing her daughter—a Ten Eyck—to go among such a class of people!

They all hold up their hands in holy horror; but I notice that none of them offer me fifty dollars a week to stay at home, though they are all well off and know perfectly the circumstances that make work a necessity to me.

It only adds to the general discomfort which attends the last few days of my life at home; and perhaps, after all, it serves its purpose in drawing my attention away from the terrible parting before us. How am I going to leave that being who has been mother, sister, friend, companion, all combined!

We have only been parted for a few hours before; I have now to look forward to a parting of months, which seem like an eternity. I can see how deeply

mother feels it; and yet, with that goodness and sweet patience which is the very essence of her being, she crushes down the longing love which needs me near her and looks forward to the great future which her resignation of me has put within my grasp.

CHAPTER X.

GOOD-BY!

IT IS A LOVELY afternoon, and I am walking along Broadway with a heavy heart. I have come from the Mystic Flats on Thirty-ninth Street, where Mr. Herzog has his office, and where I had been to get final instructions for the start, and it has just come home to me with crushing force that I am really going away from home.

I stroll along toward the Park, indulging in sad reflections. I have been so busy these last few days that I have not had time to realize that all this bustle means that I am going to leave mother and Lottie, and everything I care for, to lead a new life among new people. How am I to leave mother? And yet how can I stay and see her, with her weak health, constantly worried and anxious about the money that I have not the courage to go and earn for her? Were I a boy I should have to go, and were mother in my place she would never hesitate to make any sacrifice that would benefit her children.

I am a coward—a weak, miserable coward; but how can I leave her when she is all—everything—to me? If I could only take her with me I would brave anything. But alone! To be days and weeks

without seeing her dear, kind face, or hearing her low, sweet voice; to have no one to counsel me, no one to guide me! It seems as if I could not bear it, and yet I must.

I walk on, heeding nothing but my own thoughts, till I am roused by someone standing before me and barring my passage. I look up. It is Mr. Macadam.

“Why, Winnie!” he says, as cheerfully as though our last meeting had been of the most ordinary character, “how grave you look! What are you doing here?”

“I have just come from Mr. Herzog’s office,” I say.

“Indeed! And who may Mr. Herzog be?”

“My manager, of course,” I say unthinkingly, too vexed at his lightness to remember that I do not want him to know anything of my movements.

He stares at me, and then with that air of authority which he always assumes, and which I am powerless to resist, says:

“I am not any nearer understanding you now. We’ll turn into the Park, and then you shall explain yourself.”

“I am in a hurry!” I expostulate.

“Well, then, I will ride home with you; but you are not going to escape until I know everything.”

We walk silently into the Park, and down the path under the bridge that leads to the drive. I am vexed with myself for having spoken to him, but angrier still that I am allowing him to drift into his old, friendly manner. I wish I had passed him by

with some commonplaces, and maintain an obstinate silence, hoping that I may be able to divert his thoughts from the subject in hand and get away with a few remarks about the weather.

He turns aside into a less frequented walk.

“Now, Winnie,” he says, “tell me all about it.”

“There is nothing to tell. I have been making arrangements about singing at some concerts.”

“Oh, I am delighted! When do they begin?”

“In a day or two.”

“Well, I will be there; and do not get yourself any flowers for the occasion.”

“You are very kind,” I stutter, “but I am afraid you cannot be there. The concert is not in New York.”

“No? Where, then?”

“In Montreal.”

“Well, that is rather far; but you may count on me for the next.”

I begin rather to enjoy mystifying him.

“The next one is even farther. I sing three times in Montreal; and then, I believe, go on to Nova Scotia.”

“Why, you are going to have a trip! When do you sing in New York?”

“If I am lucky enough to please my manager I shan't see New York, again, until next May.”

I look up in his face as I speak, and watch his expression change from interest to astonishment, and then to pain.

“Winnie!” he says, speaking quickly, “I do not understand. Tell me how long you will be away?”

“The whole winter, if they like me.”

A light dawns upon him—he grasps the situation.

“You are going on a tour?” he demands, breathlessly.

“Yes.”

There is silence between us, and then I say, half-apologetically :

“I told you the last time I saw you that I must do something, and I am going to do this.”

“Oh, Winnie!” he says ; and his tone is so full of pain that I dare not look at him.

An angry feeling rises in my heart. Why does this man stand sighing, and evidently overcome at my going away, when it lies in his power to prevent it? I neither understand nor care for this friendship, which is so like love and yet so unlike it!

“Winnie,” he says at last, laying his hand on my arm, “this must not be.”

“It must be, and it is,” I respond coldly, shaking off his hand.

“No, indeed. If you think the matter seriously over you will give it up. Fame is all very well, but not when, to gain it, you have to travel round the country in company with a set of people who are strangers to you, and who are certain to be very undesirable companions for a woman of refinement. You cannot tell me that you like the idea.”

“I don’t pretend to ; but I need money, and I mean to earn it.”

“And you would risk everything for a miserable pittance hardly enough to keep body and soul together. You will become a Bohemian, traveling

about in the company of questionable women and vulgar men, and put yourself outside the circle to which you belong! What do your friends say? Why does your mother allow you to sacrifice yourself for mere money-getting?"

"It certainly does seem absurd to sacrifice one's self for the poor satisfaction of having food to eat and clothes to wear."

"What do you mean?" he says.

"Oh, you know well enough," I say, savagely. "Only, you are like the rest of the world, ready to condemn everything you don't understand. I wish I had not seen you! I was wretched enough before. You must have been blind if you did not see how things were going at home; and because I will not sit quietly down and see my mother being deprived of everything but actual necessaries, and my sister killing herself with work, you join in the general chorus, call me a wicked, depraved girl, and predict my final destruction because I dare to do the one thing of which I am capable, and throw in my lot with people who, if not all as refined as 'the people of my own circle,' are certainly quite as honorable, and more kindly!"

"Winnie!" he cries, "spare me!"

"Then, too," I go on, "you are pleased to talk of the 'miserable pittance' for which I am forfeiting the right to the acquaintance of the 'people of my circle.' Allow me to tell you that I shall receive enough to keep myself in the greatest comfort, even after I have sent half my weekly earnings home to my mother."

“But,” he says, “you might——”

“Oh, I know,” I interrupt. “I might find more ladylike employment.”

“You wrong me,” he says; “I was not going to suggest anything of the sort. My regret is that you should be placed in such a false position.”

“Of course we don’t like the idea,” I say, softening. “The separation will be dreadful, but all right thinkers agree that I am doing the best thing in trying to make my way for myself. I don’t suppose anyone will ‘cut’ me for it—unless, indeed, you do.”

“You are unnecessarily severe,” he says, coldly. “If I could prevent your going, I would; but not having the power to do so, I suppose I have no right to criticize.”

“I suppose not,” I say, sharply.

The flicker of a smile comes into his eyes.

“Well, don’t let’s quarrel about it. If you must go, you must; but it shall not be for an hour longer than I can help it.”

“How can you prevent it?” I ask.

“When I can tell you, I will.”

He gives me a glance of such deep meaning that I wonder the more why he does not speak his mind boldly.

There is a pause. We walk on in silence. The sun is shining hotly on us, but no sunlight could warm the cold weight of pain that lies so heavily on my heart. My thoughts are full of the partings that are before me—first with mother, then with Lottie, and last with Jim Macadam. As these thoughts crowd upon my brain I realize that I am now parting with

him; that this moment is the one I so dread; that in a few more minutes I shall stretch out my hand and say good-by as calmly and quietly as though the word did not cut me like a jagged-edged knife; and then I shall turn away and see him no more for months, perhaps forever.

I would give half my life for the hours to stand still, for the parting to be put off only for one day, if we could but be together a short while longer; but, womanlike, I hurry on the moment I long to delay.

“As I start so soon, I suppose I shall not see you again before I leave,” I say, with all the fortitude I can muster.

“Don’t, don’t,” he says; and for a moment we stand gazing in each other’s eyes, and each reading in the other’s face the pain that words dare not express.

“Winnie!” he says, “I cannot let you go; and yet—and yet—I dare not ask you to stay.”

I do not speak, but I read in his eyes a trouble deeper than my own. Am I at last to understand him?

Then he speaks again.

“I cannot let you go! Oh, Winnie, you must have seen how much I thought of you, my sweet little friend; you must know how terrible it is to lose you; but you cannot know what I feel when I would give my life to have you stay and dare not ask you!”

Call me immodest, unwomanly, what you will, but I cannot restrain myself from looking in his face and asking him, simply:

“Why not?”

He starts, his face flushes, and he answers, hurriedly :

“Money ; position ; lots of things, child, that you cannot understand.”

Then my anger and injured pride overcome me.

“If,” I say, fiercely, “I am able to understand what you think of me, I am also able to understand the explanation a man of honor should give.”

“You are right,” he says, sadly ; “but I have no explanation to give.”

I bow, and without another word walk away ; but he follows and seizes my hand.

“Winnie!” he cries, “don’t let us part in anger. It is bad enough that we must part. Some day you shall know all, and until then won’t you have faith in me? Won’t you trust me, and let me be the friend I tried to be? Give me one word of comfort before we part! Tell me that you forgive ; and oh, Winnie, tell me—do you love me?”

“When you have the right to ask me will be time enough for me to reply,” I say, quickly, not giving myself time to think, lest his pleading voice should melt me and I should say words that I would ever after repent.

“Tell me,” he urges ; “but I know you do!”

“If you know, why do you ask?” I say, bitterly. “It is rather I who should say, Why did you make me do so?”

There is a long pause, and then he says :

“I have been wrong—very wrong.”

I turn away, and without another word leave him and make my way homeward.

For me the bitterness of death would be nothing to the pain and humiliation I am suffering now. This man, whom I have allowed myself to love, has avowed his love for me, but in the same breath confessed his inability to make me his wife. This is the end of my dream of happiness!

It is over! With the closing of this day I will close my heart to thoughts of love. I will never nurse my grief, but seize it by the throat and strangle out its miserable life.

Not another sigh shall Jim Macadam wring from me.

CHAPTER XI.

MY PROFESSIONAL TOUR.

HOW I DESPISE traveling! How I hate being whirled about all over the country, with no home but where your trunk is, and no comfort anywhere!

After having been so petted and spoiled at home, I find this nomadic life very trying, and my health, temper and spirits all suffer from it.

I ought to be very happy, for my companions are kindness itself to me, and very lovely people; and I am getting along so well that I have already signed for next season. I get my salary as regularly as my encores, and I am now sufficiently initiated to know that this is quite an unusual thing in a summer engagement.

I know I am wrong to be discontented, but yet I am not happy; my heart is sore and aching. I am battling with my first real grief, and battling alone. When I reached home after parting with Macadam, the sadness of leaving mother and Lottie overmastered every other feeling; and they were already so unhappy, it would have been wicked of me to let them know that I was leaving with a heavy trouble weighing on me which nothing could lighten.

Even now I cannot think of the parting with them. I have been away nearly six weeks, and yet

the moment I think of it fresh tears rise to my eyes. How I have cried since I have been away! It is rubbish to say that crying spoils the voice. I have cried the better part of every night and day, and my voice never was clearer.

Whenever I sleep I imagine myself at home. Once more dear mother's arms are around me, and I feel her hot tears falling on my face as she sobs her good-by. I see Lottie's sad face as she takes me to the depot; and I feel again the utter desolation that came over me as I kissed her for the last time, and the train rolled slowly out of the station; then I awake with a sob and cry on till morning.

Life for me has come to a standstill; I have no hope, no happiness. I suppose if I go on working I shall make money, and that is all I ought to care about; but this pursuit of wealth will debar me from home love, and that other nearer and dearer feeling for which I had dared to cherish a longing.

We are in Quebec. Everyone has said to me:

"Oh, you will enjoy Quebec; it is such a dear, quaint old place."

Now that I am here, I find myself as far from enjoyment as ever.

I stand drumming on the pane of my window at the hotel, too inert to go out, too unhappy to stay in. At last a bright thought strikes me. I will go to the hall and see if there are any letters for me. I had a letter from mother, yesterday, so I really have no reason to expect any; but still there is always a hope, and as long as the post is in existence, so long shall we look for news.

I put on my hat and am soon at the hall. Yes, there is a letter for me. As it is put into my hands I recognize a certain bold writing, and with a beating heart realize that it is from Jim Macadam.

“How dare he write to me!” is my thought, as I turn away and with trembling hands open my letter. It runs thus :

DEAR MISS TEN EYCK :—I begged your mother to give me your address, as I wanted to write and ask you to let me hear from you sometimes, and to beg you, if you are in any trouble, to rely on the assistance of

Yours, sincerely,

JAMES MACADAM.

I gaze at the letter in amazement. How dare he write to me! And, having written, how dare he insult me with his platitudes!

A fury against him rises in my heart—a fury that frightens me. I could raise up my voice and call down the vengeance of Heaven on this man who has made all sunshine die out of my life, and yet dares to treat the matter as lightly as if it did not exist.

He sought me, wooed me, made me love him, and then in a few commonplace words asked for friendship. How I hate him! Oh, God! that I could make him suffer what I am suffering! Why should I not curse him? God, who protects the weak, would hear me and punish him.

No! No!

Curse him? Ask God to punish one whom I still love better than my life? Am I possessed by an evil spirit that prompts me to this wickedness?

I start on, seeing nothing, hearing nothing—walk-

ing on and on, in my passionate desire to quell the misery within me. Suddenly I become conscious that I am passing through a church-yard. I start and turn back; this holy ground is no place for me in such a mood; but yet I dare not, will not, turn. I feel as if I were being pursued by an evil demon, and that I must still flee from it.

I pass through the grave-yard in front of the church and out at the gate beyond, and crossing the road before me, lean on an iron railing, and find myself at the top of a high hill, with Nature stretching out before me in all the glory of her summer beauty.

My passion has been dying out moment by moment. It seems as if the mere passing through God's acre had purified me and brought holier thoughts to my mind, and as 'I drink in the beauty of the scene before me I become calmer. What has been, and what is, is God's will; and who am I, that I should dare to be discontented with my lot and rebel against One whose knowledge is so far above mine!

Humbled and contrite, I turn back into the church-yard and wend my way into the little church, which is open, and falling on my knees, I pray earnestly for guardianship and guidance.

Comforted, I leave the church, and as I step out from the porch my eye falls on the crumpled letter which I still hold in my hand!

Opening it, I read it again. But what sudden change is this? Where is the coldness, where the indifference, I saw before? I read between the

lines, this time, and find a fresh meaning in every word. For some reason that I cannot yet make clear to myself he cannot be my lover, but he will not lose sight of me. He regrets the hasty words spoken that day, and wishes to assure me that if I will but pardon him he will not transgress again.

His intentions are well meant, but he asks an impossibility.

CHAPTER XII.

“HE SHALL FEED HIS FLOCK.”

WE HAVE been quite a trip through Nova Scotia, to Halifax, St. John's, Charlotte, and Heaven knows where. I get confused with all this traveling and lose track of the towns we pass through; but the tour is drawing to a close, and we have gone from Montreal to Toronto, from Toronto to Hamilton, and from thence back to Buffalo, from where we are to work our way round the Lake to Detroit and Chicago, where we disband, to reassemble for the opera rehearsals in two weeks.

As the train steams into Buffalo I have a pleasant feeling that I am going to have a very happy time, which increases as we reach the cozy German hotel at which our 'cellist and his pretty little wife have secured rooms for me. Connecting this feeling, as I do every pleasant thought that comes to me, with home, I hurry off to the music hall to see if there are any letters for me.

I enter at the stage door at the side of the big, gaunt building, and having received and read my letters, stroll into the hall, to see what sort of a place we are going to sing in.

It is an immensely large building, with a stage

and platform combined, so that it can be used either for concert or opera. Its size appalls me. It looks as big as the Academy of Music, only longer, and a regiment could maneuver on the stage with ease.

We are giving a week of oratorio, and commence with the "Messiah." Remembering the trying nature of my great solo, "O, Thou that tellest," and that my voice is not over-powerful, I think I will run it over and see how it sounds.

The acoustics prove good, and finding it easy to sing, I drop down on a roll of carpet which has been left on the stage and begin my favorite, "He shall feed His flock."

The prayerful truthfulness of that melody always fills me with the highest and holiest feelings, carries me away with it, and makes me wish so ardently that my soul were as grand and simple as those wondrous, massive chords, that I can rarely restrain my tears. To-day, as I sit singing in that vast, lonely place, my voice rings back to me with such a depth of solemnity in it that I am awed by my own singing, and my whole soul gushes forth in prayer to Him to whom the secrets of all hearts are open, that He will help me stifle my longings and give me peace.

Suddenly a hand is laid on my shoulder and a voice says:

"Winnie, don't sing like that! I cannot bear it."

It is James Macadam!

"What brings you here?" I cry, springing to my feet, and blushing guiltily at being found thinking of him.

"I was passing the hall, and stopped to ask if they could give me your address."

"What brings you to Buffalo?" I persist, my voice husky with the emotion I try so hard to conceal.

I dare not look at him; I can hardly speak for the tempest of joy the sight of him has roused within me.

"I wanted so to see you, Winnie," he says. "I wanted to know if you were well, if you were happy. I waited and waited for an answer to my note, and when none came I went to your mother for your route, and took the first train to this town."

I am perfectly aware that if I did what was right I should snub Mr. Macadam and assert myself; but I am a weak, foolish girl, and once more under the influence of the man I love, so I yield to the happiness that has come into my heart with his coming, and do not turn away. I will not greet him kindly, however. If I cannot control my heart, I can my words.

"I am sorry you came," I say, stiffly.

He looks rather blankly at me.

"Do you mean it?" he asks.

"I do, indeed!"

"I had intended staying here a few days," he says, hesitatingly. "I thought you might like to make up a little party to see the Falls, and all the places of interest about."

For my life I cannot repress the thrill of delight that runs through me as, in fancy, I picture myself once more enjoying those free, happy chats of old,

or walking at his side listening as he talks to me. But I crush down the feeling as unworthy, and answer him, severely :

“I am afraid I shall be much too busy with work and rehearsals to have any time for excursions.”

He looks into my face.

“You think I had better go back to-night?” he asks.

“Much better.”

There is a long silence. Two or three times he clears his throat, as though about to speak.

The silence becomes oppressive, and I move away from him across the stage and out at the door. I pause in the little garden outside and extend my hand to him in farewell. He seizes it eagerly, and drawing it through his arm, forces me to walk with him along the broad, tree-shaded avenue. He walks rapidly but silently for a few moments; then he turns to me.

“I will do as you wish,” he says. “In a few hours I will put all the distance you desire between us; but be kind to me now, Winnie! I have come so far to see you, and my time with you is so short! Give me one smile! Look up at me once, and let me answer my questions from your eyes! Are you happy?”

What should I do? What can I do? I look up into his face.

“You are not happy!” he says, with an intensity that makes my cheeks burn.

“No!” I answer, simply.

“Have I anything to do with your unhappiness?”

“Yes.”

He is silent.

“Winnie,” he says, at last, “you promised to trust me. Will you not do so for a little longer? One day I can explain all to you.”

I do not answer.

“Oh, child,” he cries, “do not look at me so reproachfully! I cannot speak with those eyes upon me! Winnie, let me write to you!”

“No!” I say, resolutely.

“Just one letter; and if, after reading it, you do not forgive me, I——”

“I will not permit you to address one word to me!” I cry, fiercely. “After our last meeting, I am surprised both at your request and your presence here!”

The scene is becoming rather too much for me. A cab is passing. I hail it.

“Are you going to pass utterly out of my life?” he asks in dismay, as the cab stops.

“Apparently so,” I say coldly, turning from him.

I thank God I have the courage to speak thus to him; but oh, how my heart aches!

I give the direction to the driver, take my seat, and bow to Macadam; but he leans on the door and seizes both my hands in his strong grasp.

“This shall not be our last good-by!” he murmurs. “Remember, I will never give you up!”

The cab rolls on and I lean back, trying to stifle my pain by thinking, sarcastically, how true were my impressions. Buffalo will indeed be full of happy memories to me now; and yet, though I have bid-

den him go, and parted from him in scorn and anger, I don't feel half so unhappy as I ought to.

Why?

Because I have seen him, and because of his last words. Oh, what fools women are!

The next morning, as I am preparing to put away the day in the usual monotonous round of reading, sewing, walking, and not having a soul to speak to till night, I get a letter from Lottie, written in great haste. It tells me that my darling mother is ill in bed, with a very bad cold on her chest. Lottie fears it is a touch of bronchitis, but the doctor hopes she will soon be better.

I am distracted. Mother ill, and I cannot go to her! If I go, the little money I can now send will stop. I feel as if I were tied to a wheel; nay, more—I feel as if I were being broken on one.

I hurry off to the telegraph office, and send a message to Lottie to let me know how mother is.

How anxiously I wait for the reply! When it comes, it merely tells me that she is about the same; but next morning comes word that she is not so well, and by the post a letter from Macadam.

“In spite of your wishes,” he writes, “I am compelled to send you this note. I called at your home after I returned, and I think it is only kind to tell you that your dear mother is very ill indeed, and that I think she would be glad if you came to see her.”

I cannot think! My brain reels! My darling so ill as that! Can it be! Oh, no! no! no! I cannot lose her! She is all I have! Oh, God! don't take her from me! My mother! - My mother!

CHAPTER XIII.

AN UNEXPECTED MEETING.

I AM HURRYING over the familiar door-step. Home once more.

I have laid the matter before the manager, and, there being only ballad nights for the rest of the week, I have obtained leave of absence, promising to be on hand for the opening in Chicago on Monday.

“Is mother so very ill?” I ask, as I rush into the sitting-room.

“Hush! She is asleep,” Lottie says.

It is day-dawn. I have been traveling all night, and have reached home about four o'clock. I hardly had time to touch the bell before Lottie was clinging round my neck, and the pair of us were sobbing as though we were not heart and soul glad to see each other.

“Is mother so very ill?” I ask again.

“Have some breakfast,” Lottie says, evasively. “We will talk after.”

“No, I must hear all about it now. Tell me how she is?”

Lottie shakes her head.

“Very ill, darling,” she says. “The doctor hopes she will get better, but fears she will never be strong again.”

“And you never told me!” I wail.

“Why should I have worried you, darling?” she says. “I was hoping every day that she would improve. When I told Mr. Macadam the doctor’s verdict, and he said you ought to be sent for, I did not gainsay him, for I wanted you home.”

“But, Lottie,” I cry, startled at something in her manner, “mother will soon be well again?”

Lottie throws her arms around me, sobbing.

“Winnie,” she says, “mother will never be better. We may keep her with us a little longer, but the doctor fears she will never stand another winter.”

I am stunned.

“Let me go to her!” I cry, at last.

“No!” says Lottie, firmly; “not while you are like this. When you are quite calm you may, but she must not be excited.”

“But, Lottie, I cannot stay away from her! I must come home—I must, indeed!”

“Yes,” says Lottie, “I wanted to talk to you about that. You ought indeed to be home, now. How soon can you come?”

Her question staggers me.

“Lottie, do you mean——”

“I mean that the sooner you are home, the better.”

“I ought to give a fortnight’s notice,” I say.

Lottie’s answer tells the worst.

“That is too long!” she says, gravely. “It would be better not to go back at all.”

“I will see what I can do, but I fear I must go.”

“Only for a day, then.”

Lottie tries to force me to eat some breakfast, but

my tears choke me. I feared to find my poor darling ill, but never anything so terrible as this.

At last I hear a feeble clapping of hands from the half-open door of the next room.

“Yes, Mother!” cries Lottie, springing up.

“Can she not speak?” I cry, in horror.

“Not loud enough for us to hear,” she answers, and hurries into the next room.

I hear her say “Yes, darling, she is here—I will fetch her;” and then she calls me.

As I pass her and step into the darkened room she whispers, “Be brave.”

I advance to the bedside and clasp in my arms the being who is to be our own for such a short time longer.

“Good-by, Winnie. I will let you know how she is; and be sure and come home on Wednesday.”

Lottie is seeing me off for Chicago. Mr. Macadam is with me; he called yesterday, and spent half the day and the whole of this morning in trying to find me a substitute. Everybody who is available is not up in the oratorio we give on Monday; and when, at last, Mr. Herzog has found a lady who can take my place on Tuesday, we are forced to be content.

All thoughts of self are out of my mind. I accept the kindness and aid of Mr. Macadam as naturally as though he were our brother; and, indeed, at this terrible time he is an immense comfort to us both.

“You must let nothing keep you,” he says, as the

carriage rolls away from our door. "I have been to see your doctor, and he says nothing can save her."

I catch my breath hard.

"Nothing?"

"The doctor says she is beyond man's power."

We are silent till we reach the depot. I cannot speak; my voice is choked with tears. He leaves me a moment to get my ticket, but is soon back at my side. We walk down the train to the sleeping-car, and he takes me in and proceeds to find my seat.

"Here it is," he says, pausing before one in which a lady is seated. "Yours is the upper berth."

At the sound of his voice I notice the lady starts, and then continues busily reading, with her head buried in her newspaper.

He settles me in a comfortable corner, buys me papers, and attends to all my wants with that old, lover-like air of proprietorship that is so hard to bear when I know it has no meaning.

"Will you telegraph me when you arrive?" he asks, leaning over the seat. "I shall be so anxious!"

"I shall be back on Wednesday."

"But that is two days hence, and you have two very long journeys before you! Beside, you are so unnerved that you might be ill yourself. Do send me word, dear!"

The word slips out unconsciously. We both glance at the lady opposite. Her paper gives a suspicious flutter; I suppose she is laughing. After this we continue our conversation in an undertone.

"I will meet you on Wednesday," he says. "I wish we could have had you back under happier cir-

cumstances; but it is something to get you back, any way."

The bell rings and he grasps my hand.

"Good-by," I say.

"Good-by, my poor darling!" is his response, and he hurries away.

I gaze out of the window, but am suddenly attracted by a sound like the grinding of teeth and muttered words that sound like "I'll do it! I'll do it!"

I turn sharply round. My companion has dropped her paper, and with her teeth set, her face ashy pale, and her large, dark eyes glowing like fiery coals, is gazing at me with the glance of a fiend.

She must be mad! I look round for the conductor.

She interprets my gaze and smiles. As she does so the diabolical look fades and her face becomes familiar to me. I wonder where I have seen her. She does not leave me long in doubt.

"You do not recognize me," she says.

"I remember your face perfectly," I answer, "but I cannot recall your name."

"My memory is better than yours! I knew you the moment you came in the car with your friend. You are Winifred Ten Eyck, are you not?"

"Yes; but——"

"But you cannot remember having given a day's serious thought to the idea of becoming my companion?"

"Mrs. Haggerstone!" I cry, as the whole circumstance flashes across me.

"Ah, you recognize me at last! But how comes

it that so bright a young lady should have such a sad memory for faces?"

"You have altered," I say, thinking in my own mind that it would have been impossible for her own mother to have recognized her while her face was so distorted with evil passions.

"You think I am looking ill?" she asks.

I dare not tell the truth, so I give an affirmative nod.

She is silent a moment, as though thinking deeply, and then she speaks with the manner of a person who is weighing every syllable she utters:

"I am ill, very ill. I am going abroad in a few days, and I never expect to see America again."

"The climate is too severe?" I ask.

"No," she answers, calmly. "I expect to die in a very few months."

I give a horrified start. She laughs and continues, in the same strange manner:

"It seems a terrible thing to you, no doubt; but I am looking forward to my death with a good deal of anxiety. I have a keen suspicion that there are two or three people who will be just as rejoiced at it as I shall be."

"How horrible!" is all that I can say.

"Yes, it is pretty bad to have outlived your welcome in the world. When such a thing happens, the best thing is to be going, and not keep people waiting too long for you. You think me a cynic, I see, and I can read in your absurdly expressive face that you thank Heaven that someone prevented your coming to me."

I start. What does she know ?

“There, again,” she says, sardonically, “you have simply given yourself away to me. My dear girl, I am no witch, but I can tell you who did it. That friend of yours who saw you off. I can tell you why! Because he did not want you to get away from his control. How did I know he controlled you? I simply read it in your face, which is a book that all who run may read. I can tell you more;” and her large, black eyes scan my face as though she were in truth reading it. “You know that he loves you; and yet he has not asked you to marry him, and you are pining and fretting for him.”

I draw down my veil to hide my face. She laughs.

“I am right, I see. And you are afraid I shall read too much! The spirit of divination is upon me. Give me your hand, and let me read your future.”

She takes my hand, without giving me the opportunity of resisting, and strips off my glove.

“What a foolish, weakly, loving little hand it is!” she says, mockingly. “Just the hand the human hawk loves to see on his quarry—all love, and trust, and confidence. The hand of the silly thing they call a good woman—a creature who was born to love and be loved, and bring up a tribe of little arch-angels! Faugh! I hate such hands!”

She flings it away, and then snatches it back, pores over my palm diligently awhile, and speaks again:

“You have a great deal to suffer, I see, but more

strength to bear it than I supposed. You have immense endurance where your love is concerned, for your whole life is dominated by your heart-line. You will be willing to sacrifice fortune, fame, everything for love; and what a love it will be! You will love but once, but that love will be so enduring that the grave itself won't quench it. This is a weakness you had better be warned of and overcome, or you may live to recall my words with bitter tears, for your heart-line carries all before it. How a man who loved you could make you suffer! And how splendidly you would suffer! You would be a heroine, but only for love's sake. Bah! There's the weakness, again; but it is a weakness that is almost strength. Well, well, what a goody-goody little hand! All halos and martyrs' crowns! Little fool!"

Again she drops my hand, and again snatches it back.

"I said I would read your future. Let me see: there is an obstacle in the way of your love. It will be removed very shortly, but not in the way your lover is planning to remove it. You will marry. For awhile you will fancy you have gained Paradise, and at that moment your Fate will overshadow you."

"And then?" I ask, as she pauses.

"Then you'll suffer and become a heroine!" she answers, dropping my hand and ceasing to be interested.

"But after that?" I persist.

She takes up a paper pettishly.

“Oh, your future is too confused for anyone to read. Come to me, if I am alive then, and I'll tell you the rest.”

She relapses into silence, and I am too much occupied with my own thoughts to care to interrupt her. She is a very uncanny sort of person, and I set her down as a mind-reader; but my dear mother is too much in my thoughts for them to dwell long on anything else, and for the time her words pass out of my mind.

She hardly notices me during the rest of the journey, though, to tell the truth, I avoid her as much as I can. When she emerges from her berth I hurry off to the buffet-car, and as soon as she comes there for her breakfast I return to the sleeper, and bury myself in a book which I send the porter to the library for.

With a little dexterity I manage not to encounter her until we arrive at Chicago and I have gathered up my things ready to leave the car. Then, as I am about to pass her, she stops me.

“Good-by, Winifred Ten Eyck,” she says, her eyes glittering strangely. “We've met twice now; the third is always the fateful time, they say. Well, I suppose ours will be in another world! Marry your handsome lover, my dear, and be happy with him as long as you can. Good-by!”

I shudder as I alight. What an evil woman she is! I could almost fancy she was my evil genius! How strange that trick of divination is!

How terrible to think that she is approaching the most solemn event of her life—the ushering of her

soul from a known to an unknown world, with scoff, jest, and levity in her heart !

Is it possible that such a being can really soon be entering on the same new life as my own dear mother !

CHAPTER XIV.

COME AT ONCE.

ARRIVED at Chicago, I find it all but impossible to brace myself up for my night's work.

I cannot look bright, or feel bright, or sing my best, with this load of care weighing so heavily upon me.

I am more dead than alive when I reach the hall, and cannot bear the kind greetings and inquiries which my companions ply me with. All the time I am wondering how my darling mother is—if she is better, if she is wanting me, if she is calling me.

I cannot tell how I get through the evening's work, but at last it is over; and after getting my trunk and settling my business with the manager I return to the Sherman House, to get a night's rest and take the morning train home.

I am only in the first part, and it is hardly eleven o'clock, when, thoroughly tired out, I go to my room and fling myself on the bed, too excited and anxious to think about undressing.

I must have fallen into a half-doze, when I am aroused by my darling mother's voice calling "Winnie!"

I start up!

Was it a dream? What was it? I do not wait to think, but with hurried hands drag off the dress I

have worn at the concert, put on my walking-dress, and with tempestuous speed fling all my possessions into my satchel, lock it, and with the same haste put on my hat.

When all is ready I suddenly check myself. Why have I done this? What for?

I have no time to reason with myself, for a tap comes at the door.

“A telegram, Ma’am.”

I fling open the door.

“Have I time to catch the New York train?” I ask.

“Yes, Ma’am.”

“Then get a coupé at once; I am quite ready.”

“But, Ma’am——”

“Get the cab! I must not lose that train!”

“But you haven’t read your telegram, Ma’am!”

“I know what it is! Get the cab!” I cry.

When he is gone I open and read the message. I seem to know the words before I look at them. They are only these:

“Come at once.”

What happens after that I cannot remember. I am not conscious of anything until I am at home, and in reply to my unspoken question, Lottie tells me that I am in time.

CHAPTER XV.

“THE FIRST DARK DAY OF NOTHINGNESS.”

IT IS MARCH—more than seven months, now, since we lost mother.

Seven months!

It seems more like seven years since that awful morning that took from us all our hope and all our energy.

We worked so cheerfully when we felt it was for her we were working; but, now that it is only for ourselves, it seems hardly worth while. Sometimes I feel sure that it is not worth while, for life seems so sad and dreary, now she has gone.

She filled a niche in our hearts that is now bare and empty, and we seem to have nothing left to live for.

I cannot speak much of that dark, awful time. I hardly dare think of it, lest tears should fall and soil the delicate lace that lies in my lap, and on which my fingers are busily engaged.

We have never had a moment in which to indulge in the luxury of grief for our lost darling. From the time we bade her our earthly good-by we have had to keep ourselves. If we wanted bread to eat, we have had to do the work that came with such merciful plenty; and as we talked of her sufferings,

and tried to persuade ourselves that it was all for the best, we have been obliged to repress our tears lest they should spoil the sewing on which our daily bread depended.

We have longed for a moment to get away and indulge in an outburst of grief; but even as we have risen from our seats to slip out, we would catch sight of the piles of filmy laces lying round, and feel that we were tied to the wheel and could not get free.

I suppose it is a mercy; but at times our lot seems doubly hard, because we are not only deprived of the mother we idolized, but also of the opportunity to mourn her.

People have crowded round us, full of curiosity to know what we are going to do. We have met all inquiries with the unvarying reply:

“Live on together.”

People have told us that we cannot do it; that we are too young to live alone. But we have been resolute; we will not be parted—the one to be a slave to the monotonous round of teaching, the other to go roaming over the country, singing. We will cling together; on that we are resolved.

We have moved into two front rooms, a hall bedroom, and a sitting-room, on the top floor of a house on Ninth Street. We took them for light house-keeping, and very light our housekeeping is.

In the first flush of our sorrow, when the only thing to be dreaded was separation, and our wants seemed so few that we could easily satisfy them, Lottie persuaded me to throw up my engagement

with Mr. Herzog, and in her turn resigned her school. I had many doubts as to the advisability of so doing at the time, but we have had no one to consult with except Mr. Macadam, and his ideas were all centered on keeping me off the stage; so between them I was overruled, but it was not long before we both realized our mistake. Lottie's salary and the proceeds of the sale of our furniture just covered the debts and the funeral expenses, and we have been all winter entirely dependent upon the money we could earn from week to week by our needle-work.

Lottie has, I know, made application to the Board of Directors to be reinstated in her school, and I have made frequent excursions to Mr. Mertens; but, as he said, such opportunities as I threw away don't come every day, and I must wait till next season to see if anything turns up, though in the meanwhile he will keep a lookout for me.

We have been lucky enough to get introductions to a very swell "lace-worker," and also to a big Broadway store, and it is our business to make all the little dainty vanities in which the neck of woman delights. We turn them out by the dozen, and have many a laugh when we see them labeled "Direct from Paris." We have to sit pretty closely to our work—at least Lottie has. I am not so nimble-fingered, and can only do the unimportant work, while she gives all the fairy touches that transform the lace and muslin into Parisian confections, and bring in the money that pays our room-rent and feeds us.

The hard work is beginning to tell on her, I am

afraid. We go out as much as we can on Sunday; but she looks pale and worn, and were it not for these little breaths of fresh air I fear she would have to give up.

It is hard work for us. Our living depends on our being regular and punctual in sending home our "confections," and, Lottie being so clever with her fancy touches, we have almost more to do than we can manage; therefore, if we take a few hours' relaxation, we are bound to sit up on our return and finish the work that would have been done if we had not been idling. Often it is three and four o'clock in the morning before we get to bed; but we never complain, for we both realize that it cannot last, and take all the comfort we can out of being together while we can.

Lottie sits hour after hour, sewing as if her life depended on it; and when the room gets stuffy, and we have to throw the window up, we have a good deal of fun over the uneasiness of the policeman on our beat at the grinding of our little hand machine.

We laugh and say he will fancy we are coiners, and make bad jokes about the slowness of our system; for, with all our economy, we find it pretty difficult to get along.

We breakfast and lunch in our rooms, cooking on a little old stove we used to use at home in the summer. I do the cooking and housekeeping, while Lottie goes on sewing. For our dinners we go out; and indeed, for the sake of keeping up our credit with Mrs. Frayne, our landlady, regularly every day at six we start out in search of a dinner. It is

only about twice a week that we find one. As a rule, we walk up and down the lime walk in Washington Square ("Unter den Linden," I always call it) until a decent time has elapsed, when we cross to Sixth Avenue, buy some eggs or potted meat, skirt the Square on our way back, and, when once more in the privacy of our apartment, dine off the provisions, which we carefully smuggle upstairs, so Mrs. Frayne shan't see.

When we are very wealthy we go to a fifty-cent *table d'hote* on Sixth Avenue, and once we try an Italian ten-cent restaurant on Thirteenth Street; but we find it full of unkempt, staring foreigners, and in my embarrassment I, the Italian scholar, manage to decipher the bill of fare sufficiently to order five consecutive courses of *spaghetti*, which seems to be a most versatile comestible in the hands of an Italian. However, we never get up sufficient courage to try it again, and five days of the week we dine within Washington Square, and the other two we go to Jacquin's.

We have a few visitors. The most agreeable is a dear, big, burly cousin named George Thorne. With him we take all our outings. George is a speculative fiend, and at some portion of the year is quite wealthy, at others equally impoverished. It's one of his impecunious moments now; but what little he has he lavishes on us in princely style. The nights are getting very close, now, and hardly an evening but George appears, toiling up the interminable flights of stairs with a little brick of ice-cream for us.

Sometimes Mr. Macadam calls, bringing with him a breath of a happier life that brightens us and makes us forget our worries for a time. He brings us flowers and books, and is so kind and thoughtful that it takes a superhuman effort to beat down the old, sweet dream! He is always making covert hints about the time when he will be able to take me out of my present worry, and telling me that he has been seeing his lawyers; but I cannot tell what his manner means—he is more than a friend, but less than a lover.

So, with frequent visits and kindnesses from the Athertons, our life runs on.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE "OLD MAID'S" CORNER.

IT IS A WARM afternoon in April, we are in what Lottie calls "a drive" of work, and, as our wont is, when both hot and busy, we are sitting on the landing, where we get more air and less sunlight.

The rest of our floor is rented to two young men, who only have bed and breakfast at Mrs. Frayne's; consequently we own the whole floor during the day, and as there is a gorgeous landing, all nicely carpeted, we have Mrs. Frayne's permission to carry our work and chairs there and use it as we like.

We are sitting, one each side of the window, sewing away for dear life.

"How are you getting on, old dame?" says Lottie from the depths of her rocker.

"Feebly; it is too hot to work."

"Well, you need not, if you do not care about dining to-morrow," Lottie laughs. "It's dinner-day, and my appetite is getting whetted already."

"If I were as cool as you I would not care," I answer, glancing at Lottie's *négligé* attire and attitude.

She is a young lady who would rather die of heat than wear a wrapper, or let me wear one; so through the longest and hottest days I have to sit

up, armed *cap-a-pie*, with tight bodice, bones and fixings.

For once, though, Lottie has succumbed, and with sleeves rolled back, throat unbuttoned, and her slippered feet on a chair, is taking it easy.

"You'd look pretty if anyone called!" I growl.

I am very sore about the confiscation of a Mother Hubbard gown Lottie found in the bottom of my trunk this morning.

"Prettier than I should in a wrapper?" she retorts. "But say, Winnie, do you think our funds would permit our sending the Princess for some fruit?"

"We might afford ten cents, I think, especially as we are going out on Sunday. I'll go and ring for Cerulia."

The "Princess," or Cerulia, is the Shum-Tum and niece of the establishment, and I am sure Dickens' "Marchioness" was not quainter or blacker. Cerulia is the dirtiest thing in creation, as willing as she is dirty, and as hopelessly stupid as either. Send her for a spool of cotton and she will as likely as not return with a package of tacks.

"I'd better be on the safe side and write 'berries' on a bit of paper, I suppose," I say, rising.

"Let me write it," says Lottie. "Maybe, if you wrote it, she might mistake it for 'beans;' and I do so long for some fruit."

"How will these do?" says a voice behind us, and a tempting basket of strawberries is held before Lottie. We turn, and see Jim Macadam. With one bound Lottie has taken refuge in her bedroom.

Mr. Macadam looks amazed.

“What ever has she flown for? Did I frighten her?”

“Not exactly—that is—very much,” I answer, laughing; and Mr. Macadam follows me into the sitting-room, where, without waiting for ceremony, I begin to prepare the tea.

We always have our afternoon tea; I don't think we could get along without it were we twice as poor.

Mr. Macadam looks on silently as I get our doll's tea-set (as I call it) and arrange it on the basket-table. It looks quite pretty when all is ready. The strawberries are piled in a cool, refreshing-looking heap, and have the place of honor. They are flanked by a plate of thin bread and butter, and kept in countenance by a little vase of roses—another of Mr. Macadam's thoughtful kindnesses. The warm sunlight sends a bright gleam across the table and glorifies my handiwork.

I stand back and survey the arrangement with some pride; it is one of my weaknesses to think I have the knack of making things look pretty and comfortable.

Mr. Macadam evidently agrees with me.

“How pretty that is!” he says, rising and standing beside me. “It seems too dainty for ordinary mortals.”

I make some laughing rejoinder and turn to Lottie, who has just come in. I am surprised to find her whole manner changed. She greets Mr. Macadam gravely, and throughout tea I notice she seems distracted and unlike herself.

When we have finished, she hands me a piece of muslin.

“Will you machine-stitch that for me?” she says, at the same time inviting Mr. Macadam out onto the landing.

A suspicion crosses my mind that she is going to speak to him, for yesterday she asked me if I had any understanding with him, and when I replied in the negative, scolded me gently for allowing him to call.

I reminded her that he had not called more than a dozen times since our trouble; but she only looked grave, and made no reply.

I sew on, wondering what she is saying to him, and as I end a seam I hear him say:

“Then I must not come again?”

And Lottie replies:

“I think not.”

A sharp pain shoots through me. With quick steps I go out on the landing, with the intention of preventing his dismissal, somehow; but once there I realize the enormity of what I am about to do, and check myself in time.

The newspaper lies unopened on a table; I take it up to hide my confusion.

“Fancy—we have not opened a newspaper to-day,” I say.

Macadam rises, and with the little, nervous cough I always notice when he is embarrassed or worried, answers me.

“I am equally culpable,” he says. “Is there anything startling?”

He comes beside me and looks over my shoulder. We take the *Herald*, and I am scanning the outside sheet.

“The news! the news!” he cries, in mock impatience. “We can read the advertisements after.”

“I always read the old maid’s corner first,” I say, obstinately.

I run my finger through the births, engagements, marriages, and finally come to the deaths.

“Adams, Ayrton, Bernheim,” I mumble out, and go on scanning the names till I come to the H’s.

The first of them is Haggerstone!

Involuntarily I pause, and keep my finger on it.

I hear an exclamation from beside me, the paper is torn from my hands, and Mr. Macadam, in a changed voice, reads out;

On Sunday, March 17th, at Villa Carola, Naples, Adelaide Haggerstone, late of New York, aged 47.

A strange exultation is in his voice as he reads, and at the end it is almost a cry of joy. He looks at the paper a minute, reading it again and again, and then I hear him murmur:

“Dead! Dead! Thank God!”

He folds up the paper and puts it in his pocket, and with a hurried, absent-minded bow he snatches up his hat and is gone.

CHAPTER XVII.

SHOULD THIS MEET THE EYE.

TIME goes on. It is getting very warm, and but for the faithful George Thorne, who, still penniless, is yet full of resources, we should surely succumb.

He will not allow us to work, these hot nights, any more; and indeed we have rarely any necessity to do so now, for work is beginning to get slack. About six o'clock he will come to coax us out. Our favorite resort is the Battery, for it is cool, breezy, and inexpensive. At times we go up onto the iron steamboat pier, and on one occasion he takes us down to Coney Island.

What a lovely time we have; only, we get hungry!

My lifelong curse has been an expressive face; and now, as we walk along the broad hotel piazzas, covered with lunching thousands, I can't help *looking* hungry. Lottie nudges me and says "Don't!" and I try my best to look overfed; but finally George remarks that he *feels* as hungry as I *look*, and takes us to a little place close to the band-stand, where we find refreshments and hear Levy play; and then, during the feast, George dives down into his tail-pockets, which are as big, warm, and full of kind-

nesses as his great, honest heart, and according to his regular custom produces a small present for each of us—a paper fan for Lottie and a bag of overheated caramels for me.

Dear George! Your thoughtful kindness saved us many a heart-ache that summer!

The day after our Coney Island outing, Lottie and I, with closed blinds to exclude the heat, are sitting working like slaves, to make up for the time lost yesterday.

Cerulia comes slipshodding in with the newspaper and lays it down between us. It is our general rule to glance at the paper when it comes, and if there is anything particularly interesting to read it aloud in the afternoon.

This morning we cannot spare the time, so we work on without pause till luncheon.

Lottie makes a dash for it, and settles herself to enjoy it while she is eating her bread and cheese.

A sudden exclamation makes me look from my book.

“What’s the matter?” I ask.

“Winnie, here is someone advertising for you!” Lottie cries.

“Never!” and I rush to her side, and read the notice with her.

Should this meet the eye of Miss Winifred Ten Eyck, formerly of One Hundred and Thirty-fifth Street, Harlem, she will hear of something to her advantage by communicating immediately with Messrs. Wood & Turner, Morse Building, Nassau Street—Room 80.

“Good gracious! What can it be! No one can have been so foolish as to have left me a fortune!”

“It’s something to your advantage, anyhow.”

“We have no long-lost relatives, have we, Lottie?”

“None that I know of; but put on your things, and go and see what it is.”

“But the work!” I cry, aghast.

“Never mind that. You hurry off, and I’ll work for two, in the meantime.”

“Whatever benefits me will benefit you, dear old sister,” I say, hugging her.

Lottie nods, and, while I dress, hunts up my baptismal certificate, the date and place of my mother’s wedding, and what little data she can, to prove my identity.

Armed with these, I start off so intensely curious that the deliberate pace of the car-horses drives me nearly frantic. It seems years before we are a stone’s throw from Grace Church; and though I amuse myself by trying to decide whether the average of German firms on Broadway is two or three to the block, it seems an hour before the Post Office Building looms in sight. Soon I am hurrying past the loading mail-carts to the imposing Morse Building.

I endeavor to walk with great dignity past the dozens of men who are hurrying in and out; but at the swing-doors one tries to push me in and another to thrust me out, and I soon conclude that when I come down town I must “step lively,” with the rest of the world.

I stride up to the marble slab with the air of one to the manner born and run it over for the name of my firm.

SEVENTH FLOOR.
Room 80.
WOOD & TURNER.

Without appearing to look for the elevator I discover it hidden away in a dark corner, and joining the hurrying throng, surge into it, and feel quite business-like until the elevator-man offers me his stool of office; and when we reach the seventh and last floor he shows me the view from the staircase window, and the passage on which are Wood & Turner's offices.

On a door to the left, right at the end of this passage, is painted "Mr. Wood;" on another to the right, "Mr. Turner." I am at a loss to know which of these gentlemen to consult, and turn about in hopes of finding yet another with the combined names. I confront another, which bears the inscription "Room 80."

As this was the room mentioned in the advertisement, I enter. The room is divided by a ground-glass partition, and at the noise of the opening door a head bobs up over it.

The head takes a good look at me and disappears, and I hear a whispered conversation going on behind the partition, the result of which is to bring two more heads bobbing up.

I get furiously red and angry at these grinning heads, and in severe tones ask:

“Is Mr. Wood in?”

As I speak, the heads disappear as if by magic, and there is a sudden and tremendous scratching of pens, and a very faint but still audible giggle.

I am thoroughly put out, and lay an impatient hand on the door in the partition, with the intention of confronting the idiots, when a grave voice behind stops me.

“Whom do you wish to see, Madam?”

A quiet, elderly man is standing beside me, and as I take in the situation I become mollified. This is the managing clerk, and during his absence they have been having a good time behind the partition, for it was evidently his arrival on the scene which caused the prompt disappearance of the grinning heads.

“I want to see Mr. Wood,” I say.

“I regret that Mr. Wood is out at present.”

“Mr. Turner, then.”

There is a perceptible flutter behind the partition which sounds like a giggle wrapped up in stiff paper.

The grave man casts an austere eye at the ground-glass; but there is no one visible, and such a tremendous scratching of pens that the clerks seem all to have gone mad with industry.

“Mr. Turner is in, Madam, but engaged at present. Will you send in your name? Mr. Turner will be at liberty shortly. Conried!”

An ugly, common little German emerges from behind the partition—a meek youth, with hair parted down the middle, and such a mild expression that

it would seem impossible for his face to wear the fiendish grin which I saw on it a few seconds ago.

“Take this card to Mr. Turner, and ask if he can see the lady.”

In a minute Conried returns.

“Mr. Turner will be disengaged in a moment. Will the lady step into the office?”

He conducts me along a passage with glass doors on every side, and stopping before one labeled “Mr. Wood,” ushers me into a comfortably-furnished room. I seat myself in the leathern arm-chair and am surveying the table, bespattered with ink, the piles of documents, and the walls covered with oaken presses divided into pigeon-holes, and surmounted with a frieze of deed-boxes labeled “T. Gibson, Esq., Ex’or.,” “Miss Merryweather’s Trees,” and so on, when the door opens and a mild young man enters.

“The *Herald*, Madam,” he says meekly, with a very bold stare.

I take the paper and begin to read, when the door again opens and another simple-looking youth, with another impudent stare, comes in.

“The *Supplement*, Madam.”

He withdraws, and I sit watching the door waiting for further developments.

Sure enough, in a minute or two the ugly Conried comes in, fidgets round for a second, and then aimlessly picking up a torn piece of blotting-paper, makes for the door.

“You’ve forgotten what you came for,” I suggest. He turns, looking very sheepish.

“Were you to turn the paper for me or to bring me a fan?” I ask, sweetly.

He reddens to the tips of his enormous ears and vanishes. Then I am left in peace.

I wait a very long time, and then Conried appears, but such a meek edition of himself that I am sure they have realized behind the partition that I am not to be made game of.

I am conducted into a very luxurious apartment, with hardly any indications of an office about it. The one deed-box is open, and reveals a bottle and glasses; and on the mantel-shelf are some flowers, a pipe, and the photograph of a female, taken in a costume that would find favor at the torrid zone.

With great adroitness Conried snaps-to the deed-box, flashes the flowers and pipe behind a sober tome, and turns the face of the photograph to the wall. So quickly is it all done that I can scarcely be said to have realized the forbidden articles.

A rather flashily-dressed young man sits writing at the desk. He looks up and surveys me boldly through an eyeglass.

“The deuce!” he says.

“I beg your pardon.”

“Really, you must pardon me for having kept you so long,” he says, offering me a chair. “Had I known *who* wanted to see me I would not have kept you a moment.”

At this juncture the door opens and a white-haired old gentleman enters fussily.

“Oh, beg pardon, Turner,” he says, perceiving me. “I did not know you were engaged. I said engaged.”

The repetition is made in an irritated tone, but so promptly following on the first assertion that he must have expected an answer almost before the words were out of his mouth.

“I think this is one of your clients, Wood,” Mr. Turner remarks.

Mr. Wood surveys me, bows, lays down his hat, and seats himself.

“Looks like a case of Turner’s!” he mutters to himself; and then, as though contradicting some one, “I said Turner’s.”

Mr. Turner coughs, and tries to cover the remark, and I gaze round the room, wondering why I look like a case of Turner’s.

Some papers on the nearest desk catch my eye. “Proceedings in Divorce” is pretty extensively indorsed on them. I am enlightened. The giggling clerks took me for a new plaintiff or co-respondent, and hence Mr. Turner’s affability and Mr. Wood’s snappishness.

I am sorry to prove so uninteresting, and feel quite humbled as I remark to Mr. Wood:

“You advertised for Winifred Ten Eyck, this morning.”

“Yes, in the *Times*. I said *Times*!”

“I saw it in the *Herald*.”

“I said *Times*!” Mr. Wood reiterates, angrily.

I don’t want to quibble about the paper, so make no reply.

Mr. Turner comes forward.

“What about the notice?” he asks.

“I am the Miss Ten Eyck advertised for.”

"Indeed! I said indeed!" Mr. Wood snaps out.

"The advertisement stated that I should hear of something to my advantage; I should be glad to do so."

"There are a few preliminaries to be got over first. I want to be assured that you are the right young lady. I said right young lady."

I am getting exasperated with his manner.

"I have brought my certificate of birth," I say, producing it.

Mr. Wood puts on his glasses and examines it carefully.

"Winifred Lilian Ten Eyck," he reads, and refers to some notes. "Yes, the paper says Winifred L. Ten Eyck, but I require further proof. Were you ever a companion to anyone?"

"Never!"

"I said companion."

"No, never!"

"Never!" says Mr. Wood, nodding. "Not the right person."

"I can give you ample proof——"

"I said not the right person," he reiterates, angrily.

"And I said I could give you ample proof that I was the person wanted," I answer, getting angry in my turn. "I think it will be better to give me time to prove my assertion before you are so terribly certain."

Mr. Wood gapes at me with his mouth wide open; he looks as though he expected the earth to open and swallow one or both of us.

"I said not the right person!" He murmurs feebly.

I start to my feet, furious with indignation. Mr. Wood gazes helplessly at me, as though he expected to be shaken; and Mr. Turner gets quickly behind him, and makes signs at me. His countenance expresses the most anguished desire to laugh, as in eloquent pantomime he explains to me that Mr. Wood is a trifle absent, and this is merely a little peculiarity of his.

I subside, feeling rather small, and there is a momentary silence. Mr. Wood is too crushed to speak, so Mr. Turner chimes in.

"We have to be a little particular on this point," he says. "Are you quite sure you were never a companion?"

"I contemplated it once, but gave up the idea."

"How far had you carried it before you abandoned it?"

"I had had an interview with a lady, but I declined the engagement."

"What was the lady's name?"

"Is it necessary to the matter in hand?" I ask, not wishing to regale them with my private history.

"Most necessary," says Mr. Wood, firmly; but as I look at him he gets nervous, rises, and going to the desk in the far window begins to make notes.

Mr. Turner gives me a meaning smile, and takes his seat.

"Most necessary," he affirms; and from the far corner I hear a feeble echo, "I said most necessary!"

"The lady's name was Haggerstone."

"Haggerstone. Did you ever see her again?"

"Yes; I traveled to Chicago with her."

"Where from?"

"Jersey City."

"Did she recognize you?"

"Certainly; we talked together."

"On different topics?"

"No; the subject was principally a personal one."

"Can you oblige me with the gist of the conversation?"

"I had rather not."

"You forget it, possibly?"

"No; I remember it perfectly. It was of such a curious nature that I could not easily forget it."

"I am afraid I must trouble you for it, then."

"It was strictly personal."

"Nevertheless, it is so important to us that we can go no further till we know it."

Mr. Turner looks at Mr. Wood, who murmurs:

"Not till we know it."

I hesitate a few seconds, feeling so utterly silly at having to relate a fortune-telling episode to these men.

"She was pretending to read my destiny," I say, at last.

"Well, what did she tell you?"

"Really, that cannot matter."

"But it does. What was it?"

"That I should shortly marry the gentleman who came to see me off," I say, blushing furiously.

"And his name was——?"

“Macadam.”

“Exactly. Thank you. We are quite satisfied as to your identity. Well, Miss Ten Eyck, before leaving America Mrs. Haggerstone called on us and placed her affairs in our hands, making her will at the same time.”

“Yes.”

“We lately received the melancholy intelligence that our client died in Italy. We sent our representative over, who returned with the necessary certificates, and we then proceeded to administer the will. Mrs. Haggerstone has left you five thousand dollars.”

“Mrs. Haggerstone has left me money?”

“On certain conditions. It would appear that Mrs. Haggerstone was much interested in your welfare. She repeated to us at length the conversation she had with you on the journey to Chicago. She leaves you five thousand five hundred dollars as a wedding present, to be paid you on your wedding morning, and five hundred dollars to buy you a *trousseau*.”

“How generous, and how extraordinary!” I laugh.

“The money for your *trousseau*,” chips in Mr. Wood, whom I had almost forgotten, “will be paid to you when you apply for it.”

“Yes.”

“I said when you apply for it.”

“Of course, you understand there is a condition,” says Mr. Turner.

“What is it?”

“That your husband is Mr. James Macadam.”

I start to my feet!

“What made her say that?”

“The will gives no clew to her motives, only stating her intentions.”

“I did not know she knew his name!”

“I will read you the will,” says Mr. Turner, “and then you will be in possession of all the facts.”

He produces a document, and I hear something about last will and testament, and then Adelaide Haggerstone, and then whole pages of “whereas,” and “moreover,” and “forasmuch,” and “herein before-mentioned,” and then my brain takes a nap through quires of leasehold and copyhold, and then comes the name of Mary Smith, who seems to be becoming possessed of a powerful lot of something. Then comes a pause, another lot of chatter, and finally I hear my name, closely followed by that of James Macadam, and then there is a flourish of trumpets, and Mary Smith as executrix.

“Was Mary Smith her maid?” I ask.

“Yes, up to the time of her death.”

“Isn’t it funny to have made her servant executrix?” I say.

“We thought it odd,” Mr. Turner assents.

“Her will is as peculiar as herself,” I say.

“You thought her odd, then?” cries Mr. Turner.

“I thought her more than odd. I thought her mad.”

“My dear young lady,” Mr. Turner says, quickly, “it is not for us to air that theory, lest some relative gets hold of it, acts on it, and gets the will set aside, and we lose our five thousand dollars.”

“But isn't it strange?”

“Mrs. Haggerstone was a strange woman; she came to us and placed her affairs in our hands in the most eccentric manner. I think, if anyone were to try to set aside her will on the grounds of insanity, we should be most important witnesses. She insisted on taking her affairs out of the hands of her former advisers for no reason whatever, and forced the business on us. Really, we have only a very superficial knowledge of the whole thing.”

“I am trespassing on your time,” I say.

“Not at all,” both partners answer, nevertheless springing from their chairs with the greatest alacrity.

“Will you furnish us with a copy of your certificate of birth?” Mr. Turner says. “And let us know when the conditions are complied with, and we will empower you to draw on us.”

I hurry out, feeling horribly conscious of blushing at this last remark, and make the best of my way home to Lottie.

I think the matter over on my journey back; but there are two mysteries that I cannot solve, namely, why Mrs. Haggerstone left me the money, and why she left it to me on the condition that I should marry Mr. Macadam.

When I tell Lottie about it, she adds another to my list of puzzles.

“How,” she asks, “did Mrs. Haggerstone know Mr. Macadam's name was James?”

This is unanswerable.

“I believe,” she goes on, oracularly, “that he

knew her, and prevented you from going to live with her for a reason, and that there is some dreadful mystery at the bottom of the whole thing. I shall ask him all about it, if we ever see him again."

"Lottie!" I cry, "you could not do such a thing! It would be like asking him to marry me!"

"Yes, I suppose it would. All I have to say, Winnie, is that there is too much mystery connected with him to suit me, and I am very glad that I stopped his visiting us."

I don't answer, but I know she is right.

CHAPTER XVIII.

WHAT WILL LOTTIE SAY?

L OTTIE SAYS, one morning, "Winnie, I have something serious to say to you. Has it occurred to you that, now the season is over, the demand for our work is very small?"

"Yes!"

"Well, darling sister, George Thorne has been thinking about it, too, and I have just received this letter from him, saying that one of his patents, the coupler, has been taken up, and he has been offered an awfully nice appointment to oversee the manufacture of them, and—and—he's going to have heaps of money, and—well—that is—I am to meet him this afternoon."

"And tell him whether he may accept it, and take a wife with him to oversee him."

"Why, Winnie, how did you know?"

"Never mind, darling; but you will say Yes. He's a nice fellow, and I would love to have him for my brother. He made such a splendid poor man, that he will simply be too seductive as a rich one. I wish you joy, darling."

"But I haven't decided yet, Winnie, because of——"

"Of me? Well, you sly thing, you know that you haven't just received that letter, but that you have

had it three whole days; and as a nod is as good as a wink to a blind horse, I surmised certain things from certain other things, and my plans are all fixed."

"You'll come and live with us!" Lottie cries, her dark eyes aglow with pleasure.

"No, darling; I have my secret, too."

"Mr. Macadam?"

"Hush, dear, don't mention him. Mr. Mertens is the man you mean."

"Oh, Winnie, you won't go back!"

"Indeed I will," I say; and taking out a letter I show it to her. "See here, Mr. Mertens says he has a splendid opportunity of placing me at once, and I am going this afternoon to accept it; so if you want me to be your bridesmaid, Mistress Lottie, you must make haste and get married."

"But, Winnie, we cannot let you go!"

"Don't say a word, Lottie; you must know that I am—not happy, and work is the only thing for me, believe me."

Lottie understands, and urging me no further, dresses herself to keep her appointment with George Thorne.

After Lottie is gone I run over to Mr. Mertens' office to tell him I'll take the engagement, and come home feeling a little sick at heart. When I go on the road this time it will be a farewell to all thoughts of Mr. Macadam, for despite all that has happened I cannot lose faith in him; but in a few days, now, I will be going away, and it seems as though I should have to do so without hearing an-

other word about him, for he seems to have taken Lottie's decision as final, and bidden farewell to us forever. It is a month, now, since she sent him away.

Cerulia is at the door as I come up the steps:

"Miss Lottie is out, Miss!" she says, holding the door open.

"Yes, she went out before I did," I say, smiling.

Cerulia looks confused, and dashing into the house, makes for the kitchen stairs.

"Has anyone called?" I ask.

"No, Miss, nobody," she answers, and flies down, giggling.

I ascend quietly, feeling a little disgusted at her frivolity.

As I reach our floor I hear a man's tread in our sitting room. My heart stands still. I throw the door open, and there, standing before me, brown, strong, and bonny as ever, is James Macadam.

"Winnie!" he cries, as he sees me, and seizing both my hands, covers them with kisses.

There is a giggle and a sudden scuffling down the stairs, and I have the satisfaction of seeing Cerulia scrambling down at break-neck speed.

"Do let me go, please," I say, trying to be angry, but oh! so glad to see him.

"I will not," he says masterfully, drawing me nearer to him and putting his arm around me.

"Cerulia is outside," I say.

"What does it matter?" he laughs, and bends over me.

In another moment he would have kissed me, but I wrench myself free.

“Mr. Macadam, how dare you!”

“I can dare a good deal now—even your wrath,” he laughs, and follows me to the window, whither I have retreated to cool my burning cheeks.

He possesses himself of my hands again, and looks earnestly at me; then exclaims, suddenly:

“Winnie, you have been ill!”

“No, I am all right,” I say, trying to release my hands. “I hope you have been well.”

“I am a lad again, Winnie,” he says, earnestly. “Are you not glad to see me? You shrink from me. What is it?”

“Nothing. Have you had a pleasant time?”

“I have been to Italy; and though I went on business, it turned out the most perfect pleasure-trip I ever had.”

Instantly I connect his sudden departure for Italy and his business with Mrs. Haggerstone.

“It must have been warm in Italy!” I say with freezing politeness but burning cheeks, for he will not let go my hand.

He seems chilled by my manner, but answers, absently:

“I daresay; I never noticed. What have you been doing, lately?”

“Oh, I have lots of news. Lottie is going to be married quite soon, and I have been equally fortunate in making an engagement.”

He starts, drops my hands, and turns on me angrily.

“Do you mean to tell me you are engaged?”

“Yes!”

He turns away, and looking out of the window he whistles softly. The memory of that other time comes back to me bitterly.

“This, then, is the reason of your coldness to me?”

“I am not aware that I have ever been anything else to you.”

“Winnie, you are not yourself. Have you forgotten me in these few weeks?”

“I hope so.”

He nods his head gravely.

“Since when are you engaged?”

“About two hours.”

“To George Thorne?”

“No; Lottie is engaged to him.”

“Then who the dickens is it?”

“Mr. Mertens,” I say, enjoying his discomfiture.

There is a pause; and then, unable to tease him longer, I add:

“He is to write to me in a day or two to fix the date; and this time I am to be first contralto, instead of second.”

A smile breaks over his face.

“Oh! That’s your engagement, is it?”

“Yes.”

“Then I’m sorry to say you won’t be able to fulfill it.”

“Why not?”

“I have another for you.”

“You have?”

“Yes; as my wife.”

“Jim!”

“Winnie!” he murmurs, in a voice that is but

a whisper, "Winnie! my darling!" and raising my hand to his lips, he kisses it passionately on palm and fingers.

I turn my head; I dare not let him see my face. He has stirred my soul to its very depths, and were my eyes to meet his, I could no longer conceal the deep love I have for him.

"Winnie!" he whispers, and his warm breath is on my cheek. "My darling! Mine alone! No one can part us now!"

A delicious happiness steals over me, and yet a shyness that hangs in heavy weights on my eyelids, preventing me from raising them, and lays its fingers on my lips, keeping me dumb.

My silence disturbs him.

"Oh, Winnie!" he cries, "you will take me?"

He does not give me any time to answer but gathers me to him, and at last I am at rest.

He is the first to break the long, happy silence.

"I sometimes feared this moment was never coming for us," he says.

"I slip my hand in his but make no reply."

"Tell me—did you doubt me?"

"A little," I murmur.

"Did you think I did not love you?"

"No!"

"What, then?"

I hesitate a moment, and then find courage to answer him.

"I thought you loved me, but I sometimes doubted that you loved me enough to—to——"

"Make you my own dear wife?"

I nod my head, and continue :

“And sometimes I thought that you did love me entirely, but that there was some reason why you never told me so.”

He shudders a little, but answers, lightly :

“And what do you think now?”

“I am too happy to think.”

“Little Sybarite! But you must think! Tell me which surmise you suppose was the correct one?”

“I think there must have been an impediment; you look so happy.”

“Who wouldn't, under the circumstances,” he laughs. “But you are a witch, Winnie. There was an impediment; but it is dead and buried, and I have seen its grave!”

His eyes have a fierce yellow gleam in them, and there is a triumphant sound in his voice.

With an impulse I cannot resist I cry out :

“Jim, you are talking of Mrs. Haggerstone!”

“Don't speak of that woman to me!” he cries; and then adds, with a laugh, “What do I know of her?”

I draw away from him.

“If I am to be your wife, there must be no secrets between us. I have neither the right nor the wish to pry into your past life, but your future I am to share, and Mrs. Haggerstone has in a measure to enter into it; therefore I feel that I must ask you about her before my life is irrevocably bound to yours.”

“I tell you she is dead,” he says, irritably. “Why do you torture me about her now?”

“Why have you tortured me through her for so long? Remember, Jim, that though we have never had any understanding, you have been my lover for nearly two years; you have prevented my caring for anyone else by showing that you cared for me, and satisfying yourself that I was not indifferent to you. You know that I have not been happy. At times I would have given the world that we had never met. My love for you has been a misery, and you have known it without my telling you. Had you been able to put an end to it, you would a thousand times have done so. You owe me an explanation, and now is the time for you to make it.”

He is silent; I feel as if I were trembling on the brink of an abyss, and yet I am determined to understand everything now, or give him up forever.

“What makes you think that Mrs. Haggerstone had anything to do with it?” he asks at last.

“You say that the impediment is dead and buried, and you have seen its grave. Mrs. Haggerstone has lately died, and she died in Italy, to which country you have just paid a flying visit. Did I need more convincing proof, it would not be hard to find it. I traveled to Chicago with her; you saw me off, and she talked incessantly of you. Under the guise of telling my fortune, she told me that there was an impediment in the way of our marriage which would soon be removed, though not in the way you expected; and now that she is dead, she leaves me a wedding portion, provided I marry you.”

He starts to his feet.

“My God! Winnie, what does it mean?”

“That is for you to tell me,” I answer, gravely.

He paces the room for a moment, and then comes back to me.

“Pshaw!” he says, as he resumes his seat; “isn’t she dead! Haven’t I seen her grave, and talked to the doctor who attended her!”

He throws his arms about me.

“Winnie,” he says, “you startled me into betraying myself, and to make any further denials would be to lower myself in your esteem. Yes, my darling, it was Mrs. Haggerstone who kept us apart. For months I have been trying to free myself of the bondage in which she held me. Her death has released me; but before I could claim you I had to convince myself that the report was correct, and that she was really dead.”

“But what——”

He interrupts me.

“My darling, I have told you all that you need to know. She is dead, and will never trouble us more. Will you not spare me the long, painful story with which she is connected? If it makes you unhappy not to know, you shall hear it; but will you not spare me, and let it be buried with her?”

I cannot reply. He is asking me a great deal. I feel I ought to know the whole truth, and I want to know it. I look up at him with the intention of telling him I must know all.

He is apparently not thinking of me. His face is drawn, and his eyes have a pained expression in them that tells me he is living over again some

unhappy chapter in his life. I cannot ask him to tell me; I have just promised to be a loving wife to him, and I cannot commence by paining him with my curiosity.

"I will trust you," I say, at last.

"My darling, my little comforter, I knew you would!" he says. "Forgive me that there is one passage in my life that I must keep from you. It is nothing that can touch you or harm you. It is dead, Winnie, and our happiness rises, Phoenix-like, out of its ashes."

Suddenly he drops his grave tone and says, gayly:

"Well, when is it to be?"

"When is what to be?"

"Our wedding, to be sure! I can't wait very long. I have waited too long already. May it be next week?"

"Oh, Jim!"

"The week after?"

"You are absurd!"

"The end of this month, at latest."

"Jim!" I say, flushing hotly, "you are simply ridiculous! I have not begun to think of any such thing yet."

"Well," he says in his old, masterful way, "you had better begin to think of it at once. You'll be Mrs. Macadam before the first of June, or I will know the reason why."

"But what will Lottie say?"

"I don't care a bit!" he says, recklessly, throwing his arms around me.

"Indeed!" says a freezing voice behind us.

We turn, guiltily, to see Lottie standing in the doorway, the picture of virtuous indignation.

“May I inquire what this means?” she says, loftily. “You had better go to your room, dear; and you, Mr. Macadam, will please explain.”

Jim looks awfully uncomfortable.

“We were talking over the date of our wedding.”

“What!” says Lottie, such a change coming over her face

Then I make my escape, but am soon pursued by Lottie, who, amid smiles and tears, tells me that we will have a double wedding, for George has to go to Paris on business on the 19th, and they had already decided to be married on that morning, and make the journey their wedding-trip.

CHAPTER XIX.

MY DREAM.

ALL OUR preparations are made, even to laying the table for breakfast; and having discovered, to our horror, that the clock-hands point to two o'clock in the morning, we have bidden a hasty good-night to Cerulia, already half-scrubbed toward the morning, and dear old Mrs. Frayne, who has given the house entirely up to us.

It is the eve of our wedding. At nine o'clock tomorrow our girlhood days will be over. We have not chosen this unearthly time because we could not wait a few hours longer, but because Lottie and George have to sail at twelve.

Jim has taken some charming rooms for me at the Clarendon. He says that life is going to be one long honeymoon for us, now, and that we need not crowd all our enjoyment into the first few weeks.

The other day he asked me, for his sake, not to touch Mrs. Haggerstone's bequest, saying he did not wish me to be benefited by any person who had been his enemy, and asking me if I would not like to give it as a wedding present to Lottie. Of course I was delighted, and I have a lovely surprise for her in the morning. George is not rich, yet, and it will be a windfall to them.

We are not going to have any bridesmaids.

My wedding-dress is the loveliest brown cloth; Lottie's is grey.

Cerulia is to have a clean white gown, a present from Jim.

There won't be many people at the breakfast; the Athertons, Jim's cousin, and an uncle and aunt of mine.

“Winnie! Winnie! Wake up! What's the matter, darling?”

I open my eyes and see Lottie bending over me.

“What is it?” I cry, sitting up.

“You've been dreaming, old lady,” says Lottie.

It comes back to me.

“Oh, Lottie; such a terrible dream!” I cry, shuddering. “I thought I was walking with Jim in a lovely country lane, and a horrible snake came out of the hedge and sprung at us. In my fear I ran away, and the snake pursued me. I felt a touch on my shoulder, and as I turned I saw the snake change and become Mrs. Haggerstone. I struggled with her to get to Jim, but she laughed and held me back, crying, ‘It's no use; I have parted you!’ and then I awoke.”

“Or rather, I awoke you. In another minute you would have bounced through the wall.”

“But do you think the dream means anything?”

“No! You had nightmare. Turn over and get to sleep again, or you will look a sight in the morning.”

Lottie's practical remarks soothe me as no amount of sympathy would, and following her advice, I am

soon in a sound slumber; nor do I awake till Mrs. Frayne shakes me, telling me it is late, and that Cerulia is there with some coffee.

What a merry half-hour we have, chatting with Mrs. Frayne! We have nothing to cry about, we are both marrying men we love, and we have no home to leave, so the unknown life before us has no shadows cast upon it.

We delay so long that we have to dress with inordinate haste, and are only just ready when the first of the guests arrive, and Lottie and I bowl off to the church in Mrs. Atherton's carriage.

George and Jim are waiting for us at the church door, and I get so confused that, but for being promptly checked, I should have walked up to the altar with Jim, instead of allowing Uncle Edward the proud privilege of marching up the aisle with a blooming niece on either arm.

I seem to be dreaming. It cannot be true that I am about to become Jim's wife.

I listen absently to the service. Whether the clergyman is contemplating a similar act, or has already perpetrated matrimony and regretted it, I cannot tell; but certain it is that he reads with a deliberation and earnestness that double the solemnity, and imbues the ceremony with an air so serious that it becomes dreadful. As he rolls the sentences out, and pauses to let each one give the right amount of chill to our marrow, I get half-hysterical. I feel that I cannot possibly take this fatal step, and that I am wholly unfit to be kneeling here, taking these awful vows.

The feeling communicates itself to Jim. I see him shuddering as the priest, with gruesome emphasis, reads the exhortation, beginning:

“I require and charge you both, as ye will answer at the dreadful day of Judgment, when the secrets of all hearts shall be disclosed, that if either of you know any impediment why ye may not lawfully be joined together in matrimony ye do now confess it.”

There is a long, terrible pause. Jim glances fearfully over his shoulder, and as he does so a low, mocking laugh echoes through the church. Jim starts violently, and turning away from the altar looks round in a nervous way. Everyone turns to see from whence the sound came. There is not a soul in the church but ourselves!

The organ-loft is empty, the nave occupied only with our own friends. Everybody looks at his neighbor. Jim's face is ashy; so is George's; so is Lottie's; so, I doubt not, is my own.

I take a step away from the altar, and for a moment it seems as if there would be no wedding; then the solemn voice of the priest breaks in again.

“Shall I proceed?” he asks.

No one replies. He makes a movement to close his book, when Uncle Edward throws himself into the breach.

Uncle Edward has been married too long, himself, to suffer from any nervous superstitions, and he is not the man to let the establishment of two pauper nieces be knocked on the head by a mere echo.

“Certainly, certainly,” he says—“proceed at

once;" and forgetful of the place and the person, he adds, "My nieces have a steamer to catch."

The clergyman gives him a stony stare, the assembled guests smother a smile, and we turn back to the altar.

The clergyman, bent on revenge, or determined to do his duty, reads the exhortation again, and glancing at the gallery, waits.

No sound comes this time, and the rest of the service is read without interruption.

I hear the words, "Those whom God hath joined together let no man put asunder," and a happy feeling enters my heart. I am Jim's wife now. We are one in the sight of God, and no one shall put us asunder!

CHAPTER XX.

MARRIED.

WE HAVE been married a week, and in my opinion marriage is the one success of life.

What a week! It's nonsense to say time passes quickly when you're happy. I've lived so much in this week that it seems centuries.

Our rooms in the Clarendon are just perfect—filled with flowers, sunny, cozy. I haven't a wish ungratified.

We have been having delicious weather, and been making trips everywhere—to Long Branch (Jim says I can have a cottage there or at Newport, next year, if I like), to Manhattan Beach; but this time we dined *en prince*, with champagne, at the Manhattan. Oh, dear! how nice it is to be able to drink champagne, if you want it! When I was a child, and made by my dear mother to eat cereals, I used to think what a great thing it must be to be grown up and able to eat bacon and eggs for breakfast; now I realize that it is a fine thing to be grown up and married, and able to have everything nice to eat and drink without counting the cost all the while.

Yesterday we went to the June meeting at Jerome Park. I enjoyed it immensely, but of course bet on the wrong horse all the time, and lost.

We have started out for a morning walk down Fifth Avenue when Jim reminds me of it.

“Do you know, Mrs. Macadam,” he says, peering under my parasol, “that you have certain debts of honor to pay?”

“But I have no money!”

“You will have when I have paid you my debt of honor. I owe you five thousand dollars, Winifred.”

“What for?” I cry.

“For a certain little act of kindness you did me about Lottie’s wedding present. I have paid the amount into the First National Bank in your name, and so I think you will be able to pay your Jerome Park losses, and risk a little more at Sheepshead next week.”

“Jim!” I say, “suppose I turn out a regular gambler?”

He stops and seizes my arm. The tigerish look that I saw once before in his eyes comes back.

“If I thought that,” he cries, and seems about to say a great deal more, but relaxes his hold, and adds, gently, “If only people would realize that half the cruel things said to them were spoken unconsciously, there would be very little quarreling in the world. You wounded me badly, little girl; but here we are at the bank, so say no more about it.”

In a few moments I have signed my name, been presented with a check-book, and am standing outside the bank with the dazed consciousness that I am a wealthy person.

“Now that you have so much money,” says Jim, “suppose you go and spend some.”

“Oh, if only mother were here now!”

He presses my hand.

“She would be glad to know that you were happy, so put away your sad thoughts and let us make holiday. Is there nothing there you want?”

He stops before the Specialty Company's window.

“Jim,” I say, after a slight pause, “may I buy some writing-paper?”

“Of course—the money is yours.”

“But may I buy lots of writing-paper and have it initialed?”

“You may buy anything in the world you want,” he answers, smiling.

We enter, and for the first time in my life I am able to indulge my passion for writing-materials. I revel in it. I buy exquisite foreign paper on which to write to Lottie, cards for short notes, letter-paper for ordinary writing, and some tiny tinted sheets, in case I want to leave a message at any time for Jim.

Then I am attracted to a lovely writing-cabinet, and a dozen other pretty and more or less useful trifles. Then paying-time comes, and I think I am going to have the satisfaction of writing my first check; but Jim will none of it.

“This is a little extra wedding present,” he laughs, as we go out. “But what now? Have you any other secret longings to appease?”

I laugh guiltily and nod.

“What is this one?”

“I should like to have lots of perfumes.”

Jim's eyes twinkle; but he takes me to Hazard's, and I revel in perfumes and the hundred and one

delightful little toilet accessories that druggists take pride in mulcting their customers for.

All my life I have longed to have all the writing-things and perfumery I wanted; and as we leave Hazard's it gives me the keenest pleasure to think of the big cut-glass toilet-bottles of which I am now the possessor, and which I can fill from the pints of perfumes to which Jim has treated me—for here, as before, he has not allowed me to pay.

Outside the store he says:

“Where now?”

“Home!” I answer; for I have insisted at both stores on the things being sent by special messenger, and I want to be on hand to receive my treasures and gloat over them.

“What! You are not through?” Jim cries.

“Yes. I don't know of another thing I want.”

“But,” he says, aghast, “don't you want any bonnets or dresses?”

“Am I shabby?” I query.

“Not a bit.”

“Then what do I want clothes for?”

“I thought every woman wanted new dresses.”

“This one doesn't.”

“Do you mean to tell me you are not going to give yourself as much as a hat?”

“No!”

“Nor a visit to Tiffany's?”

“No!”

“And your extravagance began and ended with writing-materials and perfumes?”

“Yes!”

“Well, you are the most extraordinary woman I ever met! You need reforming.”

My reformation begins with becoming the possessor of lots of pretty jewelry, and promising to go this very afternoon to consult a Fifth Avenue Madam on the subject of gowns. Then we start uptown. The sun is fearfully strong, and I make some remarks about the heat.

“Yes,” says Jim, “I think New York is getting a trifle too warm. We must start on our honeymoon—or our ‘moonlight,’ as the foreigner called it.”

“Where shall we go?” I ask, delightedly.

“Have you ever been on a driving tour?”

I laugh at the remark, but answer, gravely:

“Often.”

He is disappointed.

“Oh! Then it would be nothing new to you! We will have to change our plans, unless you don’t happen to know this section of the country. Where have you been?”

“From the Battery to Central Park.”

He stops short and laughs.

“I’ve a good mind to shake you for that.”

“Well, the idea of asking me such silly questions! What was I going to ride in, and what was going to pull me?”

“Would you like to go?”

“Would I!”

“I’ve been thinking that we would get a horse and carriage and drive up to Albany, stopping at the camp at Peekskill, at West Point, going over to Catskill, and coming down by the boat.”

“It would be delicious!”

Jim hails a hansom.

“To Brewster’s,” he says.

My eyes open wide.

“Are you,” I begin, and stop short, amazed.

“I am going to buy you the best carriage Brewster has.”

Imagine my pride as I alight at the costly door, ascend the steps trodden by millionaires, and feel that I am on the same errand as the millionaires.

We go over the first floor, but nothing pleases me much. I am much embarrassed by being consulted all the time, and my ideas on the carriage question are very limited. I never imagined that I should own a carriage, so have never given the subject serious thought, and the fugitive ideas I have had in the transit from Twenty-fifth to Forty-second Street have been simply that I should like the carriage to be roomy, and upholstered in green; and as I glance at the vehicles around me I think, further, that I should like lamps, and silver on the harness. I am therefore quite dumb, and hear Jim and the man talk side-bar buggies and things.

At last we go upstairs, and see buggies by the score. I, however, obstinately refuse to like them. They look to me like a child’s coffin on wheels, and I would not ride in one for anything.

When Jim and the man are beginning to get hopeless with me for refusing to like anything I see, and not being able to describe what it is I do want, the man comes to my rescue.

“I think it is a phaeton the lady wants,” he says,

and leads us down to the basement, where I see the carriage I like—green cloth, lamps, and all.

“If I buy that, you will have to drive. It’s a lady’s carriage,” Jim whispers.

I am a little alarmed; but Jim gives me no time to change my mind, but buys it there and then.

“Now for a horse,” he says, as we are going home. “If you are to do the driving, my little mare Pixie won’t do. I keep her up at Esselmont’s, and we will go up there and see if he has anything to sell.”

Immediately after lunch we set off. Jim has telegraphed for the mare to meet us at One Hundred and Fifty-fifth Street, and after a short but pretty drive we reach Esselmont’s.

“We will go in the back way,” says Jim. “It is prettier than by Jerome Avenue;” and after a lovely drive along such a lane as I had no idea existed in the vicinity of New York, we turn under an archway into a sort of farm-yard.

Here I find my husband is well acquainted; and, further, that years ago, before those sad five years when he disappeared from all his friends, Jim had been the owner of some very fast trotters, and was a very well-known man on the club grounds.

He makes known his desires to the head groom.

The man shakes his head.

“We’ve nothing that will suit you, Mr. Macadam. In fact, we only have a couple of horses for sale—a young mare that will be a corker and beat Maud S., if she don’t break down; a regular bundle of nerves, and no good for a lady; wasted off the tracks. The

other I'm trying to find a good home for; he'll make a nice old lady's horse. We've known him, colt and horse, these twenty years. He was foaled right here in our own stable, and a dandy he's been. Many's the seven-year-old he could give points to to-day; but he's getting old, and he wants a good home, where they'll give him ten miles a day and think they're killing him with work."

"He sounds nice," I suggest, mildly.

The groom looks me over.

"Mr. Macadam don't want to be spending money on a twenty-year-old horse," he says, disdainfully.

Jim is gathering in the reins, as though to depart, when a stableman passes leading a handsome bay, with black points, which to my uninitiated eyes looks a perfect beauty. He has a coat like satin, a long black mane and tail, and the gentlest face. As the boy leads him, the horse rubs his head against the boy and playfully licks him.

"What a darling!" I cry. "That's the sort of horse I would like!"

"That's the horse I was talking of," says the groom.

In an instant I am out of the dog-cart and patting the old horse, who looks on me with evident favor, taking some grass out of my hand, and licking me gratefully for it.

"What is his name?" I ask the boy.

"Jacob, Ma'am."

"Jim, I want you to buy me Jacob."

Jim comes to me and proceeds to look him over, which proceeding appears to consist of pommeling

him and punching him in odd spots, to see if he will jump.

"Oh, he's as sound as a bell," the groom says. "Lots of work in him, but not the sort of horse you ought to have, Mr. Macadam."

"Well, if Mrs. Macadam wants to have him?" Jim says, and laughs.

The groom laughs, too.

"Are you quite sure you want old Jake?" Jim says, provokingly.

"His name is Jacob, not Jake," I answer, crossly, "and I do want him very much."

"Very well, then, wait here for me;" and Jim goes into the house, the groom leaving me to contemplate my new acquisition.

The perfumes and stationery pale into the veriest insignificance beside this new wonder, which is to be all my own. Fancy me, the poor Winifred Ten Eyck of a week ago, owning horse-flesh, and ready to quarrel with her husband because he doesn't think this wonderful locomotive stylish enough for her! The idea! when a few weeks back a darky's mule would have been a wonder to me!

Jim's voice breaks my reverie.

"Can you be ready to start the day after to-morrow?" he is asking; and when I say I can, I hear the delightful mandate to have the horse sent down to the stables at Fifty-fifth Street the next day, and I go home the proudest woman in America.

CHAPTER XXI.

A WET DAY'S WORK.

A WET DAY!" says Jim, despairingly, as he draws up the blinds of our sitting-room at the Getty House, Yonkers. "Whatever shall we do with ourselves?"

The question is rather a serious one, for since our marriage this is the first wet day we have encountered.

We have been terribly busy the last two days, preparing for our start. Jim has engaged a groom to send ahead with our luggage, and secure our rooms, and take charge of the horse; and I have been principally buying trunks, in which to store the presents which Jim showers upon me.

Our future plans are very undecided; but from the fact that Jim is constantly sending home such little gifts as chairs and tables, it looks as if the dearest wish of my heart were to be gratified, and that on our return we shall go to housekeeping.

We have been so enthusiastic about our trip, and have only driven as far as Yonkers to be ready for a start in the morning, that Jim's exclamation is very disappointing.

He seems so inconsolable that I feel quite selfish when I recall that deep down in my traveling-bag I

have a novel as yet uncut, and a ball of silk and some knitting-needles, with which I hope eventually to evolve a pair of socks for Jim; so the day has no terrors for me.

When breakfast is over, Jim seems so depressed that I don't like to fetch my work for fear of appearing as selfish as I feel, so I try to get him amused.

"Wouldn't you like the paper?" I say, handing it to him.

"Not this morning," he says, sighs fearfully, and glances out of the window.

"What would you like to do, dear?" I ask, trying to be unselfish.

"I don't know," says Jim, hopelessly; "we can't go out."

We relapse into silence. I begin to feel what an awful thing it is to have a man on one's hands on a wet day.

"Would you like to play piquet or cribbage?" I suggest, trying my best to conceal my hope that he will refuse.

"If you care about cards, darling, I will play," he says, looking awfully dismal, and searching in his satchel for the cribbage-board.

"I don't care to play very much," I say, and we relapse into silence again.

At last Jim rises, and going to the table draws pen and paper to him and calls me. As I seat myself he produces a pair of pocket-compasses, and drawing some intricate figure, hands it to me and asks if I can do the same.

I am at first mystified. I cannot think what in the world he is after, and with difficulty restrain my laughter as he covers sheet after sheet of paper with strange beasts that he terms cats, and dogs, and pigs. He seems amused, however; and as my one desire is that he should be entertained, I stifle my yawns, and appear vitally interested in his work.

At last the strange beasts are exhausted, and he is apparently at the end of the stock of puzzles and misspelt words which had succeeded them, and I am wondering how on earth I am going to keep up my flagging interest, when the clock strikes.

“Only ten o’clock!” I say, and hurry to the window to conceal an irrepressible yawn.

Jim hears my exclamation.

“I am afraid I have shown you all the puzzles I know,” he says, apologetically. “I don’t know anything else to do, unless—— Oh, yes! There’s the five-cent puzzle! That would surely amuse you for ten minutes, and by that time perhaps I will have thought of something else.”

A light breaks in upon me.

“Jim,” I say, “do you think you are amusing me?”

He looks up at me in the most offended way.

“I have been trying very hard to do so for the last half-hour,” he says.

I burst out laughing.

“Why, you stupid old sweetheart, I was never so horribly bored in my life! I submitted to the infliction because I thought you were enjoying it!”

"I have been wanting to read my paper and write some letters," Jim says, with the air of a resigned martyr.

"And I have a most tempting novel and some knitting that I am very anxious to get at."

Jim looks up at me.

"Have I been making a fool of myself?"

"As near an approach to it as so very clever a person could make!"

Jim says no more and we settle ourselves to our separate enjoyments, and the rainy morning passes away and afternoon succeeds before we have time to think of dullness.

When, at last, the weather clears, it is a little too late in the day to think of seeing the country or driving on to another place, so we make up our minds to stay where we are for the night. It is only raining very slightly, so we send for Jacob and the phaeton and go out for a little air.

I suppose I am a trifle crazier than the rest of the world, but I have a perfect passion for the rain, and to drive in the rain is bliss untold. I love the smell of the damp earth; I love the rain-drops hanging on the leaves; I love the way each insignificant fernlet or blade of grass holds up its head for its share of the good things; and so I take no heed of the few drops that are falling as we start, but give Jacob a flick with the whip, and we are off.

We have decided to drive toward New York, as we shall be going the other way to-morrow, so set out along the avenue westward.

I find I have a decided talent for what Jim calls

“nosing out” by-roads, and yesterday brought him up through woods he never knew existed. I am as yet a little undecided whether I drive Jacob or he drives me. He is certainly the easiest horse to manage, and I feel a little red and guilty each time Jim compliments me on the masterly way I pass a wagon or avoid a stone; for, to confess, it is Jacob who passes or avoids. When anything is coming, he curves away to the right with a grace and precision worthy of his years. I have made a mental note never to let Jim drive my old pet, and preserve the strictest silence on the subject of my friend’s accomplishments. We turn off into a narrow, tree-shaded road, which is dotted here and there with charming houses, situated in trim, luxurious, gardeners’ gardens, and with lawns sloping to the shores of the lovely Hudson.

“That’s a fine place,” says Jim, as we mount a steep hill and turn off into another by-lane.

“Too fine,” I object. “Those people just live to oblige their gardeners. I hate all that carpet-bedding and Henderson’s-catalogue sort of garden. The sort of place I like is one that looks as though the mistress did the weeding and the master trained the creepers; where the good, old-fashioned flowers are blooming side by side, each with its own individuality preserved; where the balsam does its best to show the meaner plants what balsams can be, and the salvia, no longer an accompaniment to the canna (like mint-sauce to lamb), throws out its scarlet mysteries in proud abundance; where the rosebud cries ‘Pluck me!’ and the nasturtium runs riot,

while the sweet-pea thinks out the color of its next bloom, and the zinnia leisurely deepens its tint."

"My darling!" cries Jim, "you must have just such a garden;" and right out in the open the fond fellow kisses me.

We turn off into another road. A whiff of the most delicious perfume greets us.

"This is Elysium!" cries Jim.

The road on either side is bordered with honeysuckle in full bloom, and emitting its own inimitable odor. In a moment Jim is out of the carriage, gathering handfuls of the fragrant flowers.

"What a delicious place! Who would ever think we were so near New York! I really think I would like to live here," I cry.

"Let us look for a house, then," says Jim, half in a joke.

We drive on. The road is now beautifully kept, bordered everywhere with honeysuckle hedges, and beautiful beyond description in the humid atmosphere; but it is too trim to please me.

It is one large park—one huge estate, all groomed and gardened, and painted, till it is fit to be put on the stage for a fancy picture.

We turn off through some lodge gates on to a high road, and winding round a bit, enter a lane, but this time a real country lane.

The birds are singing here; over the way in the park we have just left there was silence. Probably it is not feathered etiquette for the wild birds to trespass in those cultivated precincts, but here in this wooded lane they are holding high carnival.

Who says the American birds can't sing as well as the English? They don't sing like them, for the English birds are all melancholy, long-haired poets, who recall to you all your griefs and grievances, all your sorrows and despairs, and, while they entrance you, make you morbid and unhappy.

The American birds, on the contrary, are of a jovial turn—little comedians, who crack their jokes, tell their funny stories, and say to you, "We're glad we're alive; aren't you?"

They greet us as we enter the lane, and distinctly ask us if we don't think Bohemia better than Murray Hill.

Oh, what a lovely lane!

"If the other was Elysium," I ask Jim, "what is this?"

"Paradise!" he responds.

Jacob picks his way carefully, for we are descending a little hill, and Jacob is a very cautious beast. We pass a very fine house set back in the trees, English fashion, and suddenly come upon a miniature wood. Tall trees raise their branches to the sky, and at their roots nestle ferns, and Solomon's seals, and creeping Jennies. In the middle a little brook babbles through, and as we are admiring it the setting sun bursts through the clouds, and shines redly through boles and leafage.

"How beautiful! How beautiful!" we cry in a breath; and then Jim exclaims:

"By Jove! Winnie, that's a part of the garden belonging to this quaint old house!"

We descend the hill, and sure enough, Jim is right.

By the edge of the road is a high bank, with a low rail-fence on top, over which tiger-lilies peer and creepers peep; then there is a walk; then a high bank, with flower-beds and a fountain; and then comes the house—a quaint, gabled place, with a huge veranda and the rooms built out over it. In the center, above the porch, is a curious oriel-window, with roses creeping up to it and encircling it; and rising behind it all, the lovely woodland we saw a moment ago.

“Oh, Jim!” I cry, “what a lovely place! How I wish we lived here! And oh, Jim, do get out and get me some of those tiger-lilies!”

He is out of the carriage in a moment.

“I’ll go and ask for them,” he says, “for it strikes me that if we lived here we would not like strangers plucking our flowers.”

He goes round to the house, but in a second returns flowerless, but with a curious smile on his face.

“Winnie,” he says, “would you like to get out and inspect the premises? The house is to be let furnished for the summer, and the owner is trying to sell it.”

In a moment I am turning Jacob round, a performance which in less exciting moments is full of terrors for me, and driving in at the gate which I am determined shall soon be my own. I gaze with an air of proprietorship at the lilac hedge on the one side and the spruces on the other, pull up in front of the fountain, and am soon standing in the square hall.

It is a charming house, and ere we leave it I have portioned out the rooms, secured the one with the bay-window for my own especial den, and Jim has feed the janitor to say the house is let, if anyone comes to see it before we return.

How I rattle poor Jacob over the roads back! How I send Jim flying off to the agent, and how impatient I am till he returns and tells me he has hired the house for the four months, with the option of buying it if he likes it!

We spend another two days in Yonkers. I hunt up our old servant Mary, and establish her, with her sister, at "The Gables," which is the name of our new home, to clean it and put all in order for our return. Jim has our trunks and traps sent up from the storage; and then, having put the vegetable garden and the lawns in the hands of a gardener, whom I dare to do more than weed the flower-beds till I return (for "The Gables" garden is the garden of my dreams), we set forth on our trip, to be gone about two weeks, by which time we expect all to be in readiness.

CHAPTER XXII.

AT HOME.

I THOUGHT I was happy before, but I have come to the conclusion that I had no idea what the word meant till now, now that I have my own home!

We have been settled about four days, and every hour brings out some fresh charm in house, garden, or situation. Indeed, the happiness is so perfect that it seems unreal. I find myself wondering if it is all a dream and I shall awake amid the old, storm-tossed life again.

The house proves a perfect gem, and a regular bower of roses. They climb over the walls, and hang in creamy clusters at each window, begging to be plucked, crowding out the honeysuckle that puts in its claim for a sunny spot to grow in. They grow in stately bushes on the lawn, and climb all over the arbors.

The Athertons are coming to us next week, and we are talking over our plans.

“Whatever shall we do with them, Jim?” I ask. “The days are all right, but I am afraid they will want no end of amusing in the evening.”

“Oh, we’ll do anything. By and by I’ll get a billiard table—we’ve lots of room.”

"But until it comes?"

"You must give little parties."

"To whom?"

"My dear, simple little Winnie, every neighborhood has its neighbors, and there seem to be some pretty nice places about here."

"But nobody has called upon us yet?"

"Give them time! We have been here exactly four days; but when the folks find out that we are negotiating for the purchase of the place, and that we are not summerers, they are sure to call."

"But, Jim, do you think anyone will call?"

I am standing over one of the pretty tables in the drawing-room, arranging a great bunch of damask roses I have just brought in from the garden. Jim is on the veranda.

He rises and leans on the window-frame.

"Why should they not?" he asks.

A sudden fear takes possession of me. I go to him and nestle closely to him.

"Because, Jim, because——"

"Well?"

"Because everybody knows everything about everybody, nowadays, and they won't want to call on me."

"Why?"

"I've been a professional singer, Jim!"

"Wife," he says, tenderly, "you've been the bravest woman in all the world! I am proud of your past, and don't mean to make any attempt at hiding it. When people see in what love and respect your husband holds you they will honor you, as he does."

My reply is not on record, and I go back to my roses. Jim follows me, and while I am busy filling a lovely old bowl, which I unearthed this morning, he ornaments my white gown with such of the glowing flowers as I will allow him to steal. He is adorning me much in the same lavish fashion as a May Mary, and has just finished by putting a couple of roses behind my ear, when the door-bell rings loudly.

“Visitors!” I say, horrified. “What shall I do?” and I begin to tug at the flowers.

“Stay just as you are. If it is anyone, they’ll think you’ve just come in from the garden. Here, put this on.”

With scant ceremony he claps his own straw hat on my head; and I, who had intended making such a dignified impression on the world of Mosholu, stand blushing and confused, with ruffled hair and flower-decked gown, as the door is opened and Mary hands me some cards.

I have just time to read “Mrs. Richardson and the Misses Richardson,” “Mr. Gerard Richardson,” when they are before me.

Mrs. Richardson is thin, small, old and kindly; the Misses Richardson are thin, small, elderly and gushing; and Mr. Gerard Richardson is young, very handsome and very well dressed; so much I take in at a glance.

They greet Jim as an old acquaintance. Then Mrs. Richardson steps back a few feet and surveys me, and then flutters across to Jim, who does not seem to have the faintest idea who she is.

“The moment we heard your name,” she says, “we thought it must be our old acquaintance, and we lost no time in coming to call on you. You don’t remember us? Not the old lady with the daughter who played the big fiddle? We met at Pau, don’t you remember? And how is your dear wife? This is your daughter, I suppose. How are you, my dear?”

The old lady takes my hand; the little, thin daughters also take my hand. One says:

“What a charming picture!”

The other:

“What a divine harmony!”

“You must not mind them, my dear,” the old lady says. “One fiddles and the other sculpts, but they’re nice enough girls in their way. You must be great friends with us, dear, for your nice mother’s sake. Is she at home?”

“My mother!” I say, and look round at Jim for an explanation.

He is saying something in an undertone to Mr. Richardson, and looks worried.

“I understand,” I hear Mr. Richardson say, and he comes forward.

“You are making a mistake, Mother,” he says. “This is Mr. Macadam. The people you were thinking of were called Mac——Mac——Macpherson.”

Then to me he says:

“You must excuse my mother. We have been traveling so much, and have met so many people, that she gets confused sometimes.”

The old lady bridles

“I am sure the name was Macadam,” she says.

"We met Mrs. Macadam again, after, at Monaco, where she played so much. Don't you remember how I said I wished her husband were with her to stop her, because people were beginning to talk about her?"

I look over at Jim. He is pale and nervous.

"Yes, I remember," Mr. Richardson says. "But that was Mrs. Macpherson. It was in Paris we met Mr. Macadam. Wasn't it, Anna?"

Anna looks short-sightedly at Jim a moment.

"Yes, I believe it was."

"May be," says the old lady, unconvinced; "but I've got it all down in my diary. I'll look it up when I get home."

There is an interchange of glances between the two men.

"What's the use of troubling, Mother? It was in Paris we met Mr. Macadam. Don't you remember his bringing Anna a photographic collection of the sculptures in the Louvre?"

"Now, I thought that was Mr. Macpherson!" says the old lady.

"It was Mr. Macadam," says Anna.

Mr. Richardson and my husband exchange glances full of meaning, and then both look at me. What can it mean?

The daughters are seated one on each side of me.

"So you are Mrs. Macadam?" the old lady says.

"I took you for a child."

"A bride?" says Anna.

"The poet's dream of summer," says the other sister.

I fancy they are poking fun at my appearance, so make an apology.

“Don’t, my dear,” says Mrs. Richardson: “my daughters like it.”

“It’s so unconventional,” they sigh.

“Have you a talent?” asks the irrepressible old lady.

“I don’t think so,” I answer.

“My dear, thank God for it! It’s a dreadful thing to be gifted!”

“I think it must be lovely.”

“That’s a mistaken notion. When God gives talent He takes away common sense. Now, my girls are gifted. Anna chips away, and now and then gets something into the Academy; but what good has it done her? It hasn’t got her a husband. If she had had one ounce of common sense she could have married years ago. And Louisa, too—she didn’t even know enough to tell when to leave off fiddling!”

“I am afraid my wife has a talent, though,” Jim says, joining in. “She sings.”

“Well, you must be fond of music,” the old lady says.

“I wasn’t till I met my wife.”

“She converted you?” says Louisa. “Ah!” and she heaves a sigh.

“Louisa is thinking of the young man she tried to convert,” says the old lady. “He came to propose to her, and before she would let him speak she made him listen to a hundred and forty-seven combinations of the chord of the seventh, on her big

fiddle. When she got to forty-seven he asked her if she hadn't done tuning up; when she got to the hundredth he was asleep; and when he awoke he left the house, and that was the last we saw of him!"

"Ah!" sighs Louisa, "what an escape from a gross spirit!"

Then they rise to go.

"Come and see us quite soon," says the old lady. "We are near neighbors; our property joins this, and we must be great friends."

As the door closes on them, and they drive away, I question Jim.

"What did she mean about meeting you at Pau, and with your wife?"

Jim is not in his usual spirits.

"She is a stupid old woman," he says, angrily. "Doesn't know her grandmother from a breeze-mill, or a hawk from a hand-saw. Every Macanything she meets she fancies she saw at Pau, with his wife. It's her mania, her son says."

"Oh, was that what you were talking to him about?"

"You were watching us, were you?"

"Yes. Were you ever at Pau, Jim?"

"Yes, I've been there."

"Did you meet the Richardsons there?"

"My child, did not you hear the son say that we met in Paris?"

"Oh, Jim, how cross you are!"

"Not more cross than you are importunate."

Taking his hat, he makes a hasty exit, leaving me alone—snubbed!

CHAPTER XXIII.

“I HAVE FOUND YOU OUT.”

ABOUT a month has gone by, and, thanks to the Richardsons, we have been called on by everybody, far and near. All the Park have left cards, we have given a dinner party, and been able to make things pleasant for the Athertons. Now, they having gone, we are settling down to our quiet home life; for after the dinner to-night at the Richardsons we have no gayety in prospect beyond a few little lawn parties.

Jim is out fishing, and I am just returning from lunching with him in the lovely little wooded lane beside the stream, when, as I am nearing home, I see Gerard Richardson and a lady—one of his sisters, I presume.

I pull up and wait; I have grown to like the Richardsons very much, and Gerard and Jim are great friends. They intended fishing together to-day, only at the last moment young Richardson sent an excuse—he had an important appointment, he said.

I intend to chaff him for his laziness, and wait for him to get up to me. He has rounded the bend in the road before I have time to see that the lady with him is not his sister, but a stranger, and a mysteri-

ous stranger, too, for she is so closely veiled it is impossible to see her face. There is, however, a something in her carriage and figure that is very familiar to me.

As they get near enough to recognize me they pause in the middle of the pathway. With a sudden impulse the lady darts forward to meet me. Mr. Richardson stands irresolute a moment, then with a few hurried strides overtakes her, grasps her arm, forces her off the path in among the trees, and in a moment they are lost to sight.

Not a word is spoken on either side, and yet there is something so strange in it all that a vague feeling of alarm steals over me.

I put Jacob to his best speed, and arrive home in such a state of nervous agitation that I determine to send an excuse to the Richardsons and not go to dinner.

When Jim comes in, I tell him. He laughs at me for a simpleton, and overrules my wish to remain at home. Nevertheless it is with a heavy heart, and a crushing sense of impending evil, that I dress myself and start away.

The Richardsons own the English-looking house I noticed, driving down the lane. To-night their avenue is lighted with Chinese lanterns, and carriage after carriage is rolling to the door. It is old Mrs. Richardson's birthday, and consequently a gala occasion.

The weight that is on my spirits refuses to be lifted even by the brilliancy of the scene and company, and it is a relief to me when dinner is an-

nounced and Mr. Richardson offers me his arm, for I feel that we are so much farther on in the entertainment.

The dinner passes dully enough. Mr. Richardson does not mention our meeting in the woods; but that is not remarkable, for he hardly addresses a word to me, and impresses me with being very ill at ease.

When we are in the drawing-room again, and the gentlemen have joined us, some one asks me for some music, and young Richardson, in a very pointed manner, adds his request to the others. So far I have been singularly lucky, and have never been asked to sing. The Park has so many singing young ladies of its own that it does not seek for any more, but obliges the surrounding country. It makes up a choral society and a volunteer choir; and so, without any effort at concealment on my part, the subject of singing has never been alluded to.

When, however, young Richardson approaches me in this very marked style, I feel that the cat has been let out of the bag somehow.

"Mrs. Macadam must favor us!" he says; and turning to some ladies with whom I have been talking, adds: "I find we have a very noted vocalist with us, and it has taken us nearly a month to discover her."

I look at him, and catch a glance that is full of angry determination.

I can't understand his manner at all. He must have taken too much wine. He is evidently bent on making a scene. But why? I have nothing to be ashamed of. I look round for Jim. He is not in

the room. I won't be baited without him at hand to protect me, so I answer, coldly :

“I am afraid I cannot sing to-night.”

“We will hear no excuses,” says Mr. Richardson with forced gayety.

“No, indeed ; pray sing for us,” the rest chorus ; and finding I can't get out of it, I yield.

I sit down to the piano with the intention of singing very badly, to defeat Mr. Richardson's purpose, and then it occurs to me that by doing so I shall show him that I am anxious to avoid being known ; so bracing myself for the effort, I sing, and sing my best.

A perfect storm of thanks greets me as I finish. I look at Mr. Richardson. He is leaning on the piano, gazing intently at me. He makes me so nervous, that I let my fan and gloves fall as I am taking them from the piano. He stoops down and restores them to me ; and is it fancy, or do I catch a whisper :

“Enjoy your triumph ; I shall not disturb you to-night.”

I look at him. There is a distinct meaning in his eyes, and I know it was not fancy.

I am overwhelmed with entreaties for another song, and when that is done, for yet another. At last I rise from the piano, and appealing to Mr. Richardson, who has never moved from his place, ask him to take me where it is cooler and get me some water.

He offers me his arm and we move away.

“Will the veranda suit you?”

“Perfectly.”

We step out upon it and are alone.

I turn and face him. He is regarding me with a bold stare that is intolerable.

“You are not very faint,” he says with a cynical smile. “I surmise you wanted a few moments’ private conversation.”

“Exactly,” I answer, fiercely. “I wanted to ask you what you meant by the words you had the audacity to whisper.”

“You take a high tone, he says, laughing. “As if you need an explanation!”

“I demand it!” I say, haughtily.

He wheels round.

“You do? Well, you shall have it. I have found you out!”

“My dear sir, you have discovered a mare’s nest. I am not a bit ashamed of having been a professional singer, and my husband is proud of it.”

“Your husband!” he says, with a sneer.

“We have attempted no concealment whatever. My husband wished for none. Will you be good enough to have our carriage called? I wish to go home. My husband will call on you in the morning for an explanation.”

“Your husband again!” he says, sardonically. “How long have you been married?”

“What right have you to ask?”

“Never mind. Answer me.”

He grasps my wrists until they pain me, and I am weak enough to answer him.

“Seven weeks.”

He laughs.

“You chose Mosholu as a quiet place where you would not be recognized?” he asks.

I get furious—beside myself—with rage.

“You are a coward!” I say. “You think I am afraid—that I will submit to your brutality, lest you should tell people who I was! But I don’t care one atom! Go in and tell them, if you like. I will go with you; I have some one there who will protect me. You forget I am a wife!”

He laughs again, scornfully.

“You are strangely audacious,” he says, “or else—— My God! I may have wronged you!” Then he goes on, feverishly: “Madam, I beg you, I entreat you, to bear with me a moment longer. There may be a mistake; you may have been confounded with some one else. I beg you answer my questions. I have the most urgent reasons for asking them—reasons which affect your husband strongly.”

His manner impresses me, and that shadow which always hangs over my husband’s past causes me to listen to him. Call it curiosity, if you will, but I cannot help it.

“What do you wish to ask me?” I say.

“Did you know your husband long before you were married?”

“About two years.”

He starts.

“May I ask you where you met him?”

“At Mrs. Messerole’s, in New York; and after at Mrs. Atherton’s, in Madison.”

“And where were you married?”

“At the Church of the Heavenly Rest. My sister was married at the same time.”

He looks me straight in the face. His eyes are soft, and full of kindly light. He takes my hand and kisses it.

“My poor child! Oh, forgive me! I knew in my heart that you were all that was sweet, and pure, and true.”

“Am I *de trop?*” says a voice behind us.

It is Jim!

Gerard Richardson starts violently. I hear him murmur something that sounds like “scoundrel!” I suppose he is afraid of the construction Jim will put on his actions.

But no! His next move is stranger than ever.

“Come with me,” he says, fiercely, to Jim; and laying his hand on his arm he draws him down to the garden.

“I will be with you in a moment; I can’t leave my wife here.”

“Let her be, I tell you. I have something to say to you;” and he drags Jim after him.

I am in a perfect whirl of bewilderment and anger, and quite at a loss what to do, when Mrs. Richardson finds me and takes me into the drawing-room.

A long time elapses. I begin to get nervous, when Gerard Richardson approaches.

“Mr. Macadam has sent me for you. He is not feeling very well, and is waiting for you to go home.”

I hurry out, to find Jim standing at the carriage door.

"At your house in the morning," Richardson says. Jim murmurs an assent, and we drive off.

"Are you ill, darling?" I ask, tenderly, putting my face up for a kiss.

Gently and firmly he puts me from him, pushing me back into my corner of the carriage.

"Oh, Jim! are you angry with me about that young Richardson?" I cry.

"Angry with you, my poor darling!" he says, and taking me in his arms, crushes me in a passionate embrace.

When we reach home, and I see him in the bright light of our cozy room, I am frightened at the change in him. His face is ghastly pale, and his eyes have an agonized look that is terrible.

"You *are* ill!" I cry.

"It is a mere nothing."

"I will run down and get you some brandy."

I start for the door. Jim rushes before me and bars the way.

"For God's sake don't leave me!" he cries.

"Why?"

"Oh, nothing! nothing! I don't want anything! Come and sit beside me."

I obey him.

"Talk of something!" he says, querulously.

"Well, Jim, did Mr. Richardson explain his conduct?"

Jim seems to rouse himself from a reverie.

"Oh, yes! I forgot. He told me he had been

very impolite to you, and asked me to apologize. He said he had made a mistake."

"That's all very well; but you don't know how he behaved."

"Yes, he told me all."

"I am not going to accept his apology, and I am never going to enter that house again."

"Nonsense, Winnie," Jim says, anxiously. "You must accept the apology, and take no further notice of it; his explanation was perfectly satisfactory to me."

"But not to me."

"Let me hear no more of this!" Jim says, angrily. "I am going to see him on business to-morrow, and shall bring him in to lunch, and you are to meet him as though nothing had occurred."

This is the first time Jim has been unkind to me, and without a word I run out of the room, and locking myself in my den, begin to cry.

Jim comes right after me.

"Open the door, my darling!" he calls. "I was a brute; forgive me!" and as I open the door he comes gently in, and kneeling down before me, lays his head in my lap and groans as though in pain.

"Forgive me! forgive me! my poor darling. I must at least be kind to you. Oh, Winnie, promise me never to leave me!"

CHAPTER XXIV.

“I’LL KEEP MY VOW.”

MR. RICHARDSON calls in the morning, and he is closeted with Jim for a couple of hours. Jim comes up to my den once, and fetches a packet of foreign-looking papers from the little jewelry safe, but he does not speak to me.

By and by they pass under the window.

“You will uphold me in this?” Jim says.

“To the end,” Richardson answers. “You are going to do the right thing.”

The luncheon-bell rings. I do not stir; I won’t meet that man without a battle.

My husband comes up for me.

“The bell has rung, darling,” he says. He is looking very pale and ill, but better than last night.

“I’m not coming down,” I answer.

“Winnie, you promised!”

“I did not; you said I had to.”

“But won’t you?”

“Not to meet that man.”

“Young Richardson is the nicest fellow I have met in a long while. He has apologized amply for his foolish mistake. I make it a point for you to overlook it. Won’t you, for my sake?”

I am conquered, and go down to lunch.

Mr. Richardson greets me effusively.

"How good of you to have pardoned me so sweetly," he says, before I have time to speak.

I am on the point of saying that I have done nothing of the sort, when Jim breaks in:

"Yes, of course she has. I hope you are hungry, Richardson."

They both make a tremendous pretense of ravenous hunger, and pile their plates up as though they had eaten nothing in a month; but I am watching them, and I notice they don't eat a thing, while the dogs are stuffed to repletion.

I wonder what this business is that has taken away their appetites—unpleasant, evidently. I hope that young Richardson isn't worrying Jim over some disgraceful scrape or other he has got himself into.

Mr. Richardson leaves almost immediately after lunch, and Jim follows me upstairs as I dress to go out.

He sits by the window, and at last calls me to him.

"What is it?" I ask, kneeling beside him.

"Tell me, Winnie, that you are my wife," he says.

"Of course I am, you silly old thing; have I not this to show it?" and I hold up my wedding-ring.

Jim takes my hand and turns it over, looking at the lines in the palm.

"My poor little girl," he says, "I wish you didn't have such a big heart-line. It will bring you sorrow, Winnie, for it governs your whole life."

"Who was it said that to me before?" I say, wondering. "I remember some one scolding me for

having so much heart, and telling me I had better be rid of it. Oh, I know! It was Mrs. Haggerstone!"

I say the words thoughtlessly, without remembering how painful the name is to Jim; but I regret it almost before the words are out of my mouth, for he crushes me in his arms and cries, wildly:

"Oh, Winnie! Winnie! You will not let anything part us, will you?"

"What nonsense! As if anyone could!"

"But you will never want to be parted from me?"

"Now, why should I want to run away from such happiness as you have given me?"

"But suppose people told you I had done something very wicked. What would you do?"

"I wouldn't believe them."

"But suppose I told you it was true?"

"I wouldn't believe you. I would send for the doctor and have you treated for something."

"And you would not let anything part us?"

"Indeed I would not."

"Promise me."

"No! Suppose you wanted a divorce; how inconvenient it would be!"

"Promise," he says, so seriously that I get serious.

"Jim, darling," I say, "I have already promised to cleave to you for better for worse, for richer for poorer, in sickness and in health, till death us do part, and I'll keep my vow."

"Thank you, my darling," he says.

CHAPTER XXV.

“FOR GOD’S SAKE DON’T LEAVE ME!”

I CANNOT think what is the matter with Jim, and I am beginning to feel terribly unhappy.

Ever since that dinner party at the Richardson’s his manner has changed. I am sure he loves me as well as, if not better than, before; but he is so strange that I don’t know what to make of it. His one cry, morning and night, is a re-echo of that strange request :

“For God’s sake don’t leave me!”

He never lets me out of his sight, but follows me about like my very shadow. Even when I go into the kitchen he comes with me, and waits at the door, or stands whistling at the window until I make a move in another direction.

At first I attributed this perpetual watching to jealousy, and though I was annoyed at such unreasonable conduct I tried to take no notice of it; but now that I see him growing pale and thin I have become fearfully anxious, for I have made a terrible discovery. My husband is not watching me; he is simply afraid of being alone.

A dreadful fear is taking possession of me, and if I could only get away from him I would go and ask some one’s advice; but I never can get a moment’s freedom.

I have thought of writing to Lottie, who is in London now for a few weeks, but what I have to say cannot be written. How should I frame the terrible words :

“ I think my husband is going mad ! ”

The most appalling fancies shape themselves in my mind. I am convinced of his madness, and I am dreading some outbreak of violence. Sleep is torture to me. I am pursued in it by my waking thoughts, and am consumed by hideous dreams of his going mad and trying to take my life.

I watch him closely for symptoms, but find none ; indeed, so far it seems to be only a mania ; but when the mania takes such a strange form, it is surely a sign of incipient madness.

The first sign was the night of the Richardson dinner ; he was all right when he started for that ramble with Gerard, but he came back insane. See how strangely he behaved in insisting I should remain friendly with a young man who had been so grossly insulting ! Most men would have thrashed young Richardson, or done something emphatic ; but the preposterous notion of passing it over could only have occurred to a man whose mind was going.

I wish I could see Mr. Richardson alone ; but my poor husband renders that quite impossible ; indeed, he always seems more restless when the Richardsons call.

It is a dreadful life to lead ; but, strangely enough, I am the only person who perceives anything out of the way in my husband's conduct. We are fêted and dined, invited everywhere, and live in a con-

tinual round of gayety ; and on every side I am met with congratulations on the wonderful devotion of my husband, who, though six more months have rolled by and changed summer into winter, has not begun to assume the careless affection of the husband, but is still intensely the lover.

If the world fancies this conduct of his is devotion I will not undeceive it ; only, I would give——oh ! what would I not give for a few weeks of quiet, a few weeks to bear up and strengthen myself for the still greater grief that is yet before me ! .

With the early spring a young, budding life is to be intrusted to our care, and I—God forgive me!—look forward to it with the most overwhelming apprehension and horror. Suppose my baby should be an imbecile ! Or worse, far worse, suppose that as I watch its understanding growing, and fancy it has escaped the affliction, it should suddenly become mad !

God alone knows what I am suffering, and if I dared, I would pray that the little life might flicker out as it begins to burn.

With all this on my mind I have to appear cheerful and happy, for the slightest cloud on my face plunges my poor husband into such a fearful state of despondency that I dread what may be its result.

How I bear the strain I cannot tell ; but Jim has no idea of my mental sufferings, and my pale face passes off without comment.

Jim has taken a great fancy to young Richardson—so much so, that hardly a day passes that he is not in our house. His manner to my husband,

which on that terrible night was so pointedly scornful and insulting, has changed to a kindness that is almost brotherly in its tenderness, and more than anything else convinces me that he knows the truth.

We have been lunching, Gerard with us; a walk has been proposed, and the meal being over, I hasten to my room to prepare for it.

We are only going to see the skating at Van Courtland's, so I don't need to make a toilet, and in a trice I have my hat and cloak on, and am back before they have begun to expect me.

As I enter, my husband's voice reaches me.

"This life is worse than hell, Gerard," he is saying. "I can't go on with it; I would rather that she knew the worst."

What does he mean?

I dart quickly back into the hall before they have seen me, and pause to think.

Madmen are never conscious of their own insanity, therefore Jim cannot be mad; but if he is not mad, what is the meaning of it all? What fearful trouble is hanging over me?

Without a moment's hesitation I run upstairs, remove my hat and coat, and hastily scribble a note to Gerard Richardson.

"I must see you alone at once," I write, and then go slowly down-stairs.

"Jim, dear," I say, "I am so sorry I cannot go out this afternoon. I promised to stay home in case Miss Fosbrooke called."

I know Jim will stay with me, and he does.

"I am so sorry, Gerard," he says. "Come over to-morrow, and we will go."

As Gerard rises to go I take a flower from the table.

"Let me decorate you!" I say, gayly, and under pretense of fastening the bud in his coat I endeavor to give him the note.

He will not take it!

He sees it, he must understand the meaning look I give him, but he resolutely puts his hands behind him and refuses it.

I am desperate. I slip it into his breast-pocket, and with my eyes command him to take it.

He flushes scarlet, makes a motion as though to return it, glances at Jim and then at me, and, confused and flushed, does a thing he has never done before—he asks my husband to walk with him as far as the gate. I catch a look full of meaning which accompanies the request. My husband gives a slight nod of acquiescence and they leave the room together.

The mystery that surrounds me prompts me to a dishonorable action.

If I step out of the dining-room window and run down behind the hedge of spruce pines that borders the drive I can reach the gate unperceived a moment or two before they do, and if they have anything to say, overhear it.

Quick as thought I open the window, drop out the couple of feet it is from the ground, and hurrying down to the gate, am soon hidden among the thick branches.

I am hardly settled before they are abreast of me.

"What is it?" Jim asks, anxiously, his face pale and drawn.

"Trouble," says Gerard. "Be brave, Jim; our worst fears are realized; your wife suspects something."

"My God!" cries Jim, grasping his arm for support. "What does she suspect? How do you know she suspects?"

"Because she tried to give me a note when she pinned that flower in my coat."

"Well?"

"I pretended not to see it, and put my hands behind me."

"And she didn't give it you?"

"She did give it me; she thrust it in my pocket. It is there now, Jim. Brace up now, before you read it; for I know she would not have resorted to such a desperate measure without some strong reason."

He hands Jim my note, and together they read it.

"I must see you alone at once!" Why, what does it mean?"

"The meaning is quite plain to me," Gerard answers. "She suspects something—fancies I know the truth, and wants to cross-examine me."

"Do you think she suspects *the truth*?" Jim cries, his face ashen.

"No, no, not the truth. But now we must face this difficulty. In the matter of this letter, what am I to do?"

“Can't you see her, find out what she suspects, and throw her off the scent?”

“No, I could not. I might find myself revealing to her just what we most want to conceal. I could not lie to her.”

“How your words cut me!” my husband says, grinding his heel deeply into the graveled path. “Think of my life! One long lie to her—to her, the sweetest, purest, truest woman that ever lived! I would lay down my life for her; and yet each day I have to degrade myself more and more, each hour to steep my soul deeper and deeper into this black pool of deceit and treachery. And for what? To earn her contempt and abhorrence, should she ever learn the truth!”

“Hush! hush! Don't excite yourself,” says Gerard. “You are surely doing what is right.”

“May be,” Jim says, drearily; and then goes on, with growing excitement, “but think of the life I am forcing her to lead. If she knew, she might turn on me and curse me! And yet—and yet—I have not the strength to undeceive her. I have tried! The other night I sat late into the hours, nerving myself for the task. When I was prepared, I went into her room. She was sleeping. I watched her as she lay there, so pure and white, her face flushed like a child's, her lips parted. She looked so innocent and young! I leaned over her. Even in her sleep she was conscious of my nearness. She smiled, Gerard—oh, such a smile of love!—and extending her arms, murmured my name. Ah, Richardson, my resolutions melted like snow before the sun! I fell

back, horrified at myself for what I was about to do. I had gone to the side of that sweet being, whose love for me is her life, with the intention of dealing a vital blow at that love! Could I do it? Could I murder all the hope and joy that is in her because moralists would say that I was imperiling the salvation of two souls? If it be so—if God's laws are what men make them out to be—Heaven must be a worse place than Hell!"

There is a moment's silence, and then he continues:

"I cannot tell her now. I might sacrifice two lives by it! I cannot tell her now, and God knows that when she is the mother of my child I can tell her still less. Could I see her with her pretty baby on her knee, and tell her of the awful blight that is on her life, and my life, and our child's? Never! While I live, I will do all in my power to keep the knowledge from her!"

Gerard lays his arm solemnly around my husband's shoulders.

"My poor friend, you will be doing right; and for your sake, as well as hers, I will do all in my power to help you."

"God bless you!" says Jim.

"Ah, Macadam," says Gerard, "if I could take your burden away with me, and bear it for her sake!"

"All you can do," Jim answers, "is to help me to keep her in ignorance. Good-by!" and they part.

My husband goes slowly into the house. With

fleet steps I regain the dining-room, and sink down into a seat, sick and faint.

The truth they are trying to hide from me is but too clear to me. My idolized husband *is* mad! To-day I have heard him rave!

God have mercy upon me!

CHAPTER XXVI.

I MEET MRS. HAGGERSTONE FOR THE THIRD TIME.

IT IS NOW two days since the terrible truth was revealed to me. Oh, what days of agony they have been! I have tried to appear the same as ever, but the strain has made me weak and ill.

We are at breakfast, when Mary comes in with a telegram.

Jim opens it, hastily scribbles an answer, and then turns to me.

"How long will it take you to get ready?" he asks, handing me the message.

I read:

"Important fall in stocks. Come down without delay."

I look up at Jim for explanation.

"It is from my broker," he answers. "I am evidently going to lose some money. We must go and see to this at once. Get on your things."

"But, Jim, whatever do you want me for?"

"I could not leave you alone."

"I am sorry, dear, but I am not well, to-day, and I cannot go."

"Not go!" he says, in surprise; for this is the first time I have refused him.

"No; I am really not equal to the exertion."

"Very well, dear," he says gently, reseats himself at the table, and hands his cup for more coffee.

"But you must go. The telegram seems urgent," I say, wanting him to go, and yet fearing to oppose him too violently.

"No, Winnie, I cannot leave you here alone," he answers, so quietly and rationally that I cannot believe that it is only a mania.

"I am not in the least nervous," I persist.

"But I am," he replies.

"And you need not be gone long."

"There would be time enough for plenty of things to happen," he answers, with a gloomy frown.

"But you may lose a great deal of money by staying."

"True. Ah, a bright idea! I will ask Gerard to come and stay with you while I am gone."

"My dear boy, what do you think can happen to me?"

"Never mind, I will take care nothing does."

He rings and orders the dog-cart, and the gardener to take the note to the Richardsons.

I make no comment on this last freak, but bustle about to get him started, and soon the dog-cart is at the door and the note on its way to the Richardsons.

I go into the hall to see Jim off, and at the door he turns and throws his arms around me.

"My darling!" he says, "I cannot bear to go. I feel as if something were about to happen—as if this were the last time I should clasp my darling wife to my heart."

"Don't go, then, if you have such forebodings," I say, shuddering.

He kisses me fondly.

"Always remember that I loved you better than life," he says, and is gone.

His last words have such an effect on me that after he is gone a foolish nervous feeling creeps over me. I cannot rest. I long for Jim's return, and wish that I had been able to go with him; and then I begin to wonder how long it will be before Gerard comes. I almost fear that he may not come, lest I question him; but he need not be afraid; I know all, and there is no need of making inquiries.

A note is brought to me.

It is from Mrs. Richardson. Gerard was unexpectedly called to town by the nine o'clock train, but she will send him over the moment he comes in.

A blank feeling of dismay settles down upon me. I am, then, utterly unprotected. I cannot tell what I fear, but I shudder and look anxiously round the room, dreading I know not what. I have that nameless feeling of impending evil which is always worse than the actual trouble itself.

"Good heavens!" I cry, "Jim may not be mad, after all; there may be some hideous danger threatening me!"

I glance round. One window is a little open, as I left it after feeding the birds. Any one might step in and murder me before my cries could reach the kitchen.

I rise and move toward the window to close it, but as I near it a woman's form glides into the room,

and with an agony of fear too great for words I recognize the gleaming eyes and black hair of Mrs. Haggerstone!

I am paralyzed with fear as the figure approaches. Why cannot this dead woman rest in her grave? Why does she haunt me?

The figure advances until within a few yards of me and then pauses, fixing its piercing eyes on me.

I cannot stand the scrutiny, and in a hoarse voice cry:

“Why have you come here? What do you want?”

The figure laughs a hard, mirthless laugh. I gather courage.

“What have I done to you,” I ask, “that you should come back from the grave to terrify me?”

She speaks.

“Come back from the grave! I have not come back from any grave. I am no ghost! Touch me.”

She holds out her arm, and with trembling fingers I grasp it. It is the warm, firm arm of a living woman.

“Are you satisfied?” she asks.

“But I read of your death!”

“That was all a mistake. It was my maid who died.”

I am intensely relieved; this is merely a question of money, then.

“Won't you be seated?” I say. “You must excuse my nervousness, but your sudden appearance startled me. How very distressing the mistake must have been to you!” My relief is so great that

I become garrulous. "How was it that the error was so long left unrectified? I can quite guess the business that has brought you here to-day, and realize fully the unpleasant position you are in. But please don't think a bit about it. My husband will soon put it all right, and you must allow me the novel sensation of being the first legatee who ever had the opportunity of thanking the testator for a legacy."

She takes no notice of my attempt at pleasantry, but stares steadily at me.

"You are right in surmising that I have come to see you on a matter of business, and unpleasant business, too."

"Not unpleasant!" I say, smiling. "I should not think of trying to hold the money; it is a mere question of waiting till my husband returns, when he will write you a check, and I will mail it to whatever address you give me."

"I have not come for my money," she says, showing her teeth.

"For what, then?" I ask, rising to my feet, and meeting her insolence with all the haughtiness at my command.

She rises too, and confronts me, an evil smile curling her lips as she speaks, and lets her words fall syllable by syllable.

"I have come for my husband!"

"Your husband? What do I know of your husband? Who is your husband?"

She laughs as she answers:

"James Macadam."

“I am James Macadam’s wife!” I say, proudly.

“Pardon me, *I* am his wife.”

“Woman! How dare you repeat that falsehood!”

“Don’t get tragic,” she says, reseating herself; “I have brought my certificate with me. I am telling nothing but the truth.”

“What does this mean?” I gasp.

She searches in her pocket-book for a paper, and while so doing continues her story.

“I was married to James Macadam seven years ago in Italy, as you will see by this paper. We were not happy, and separated. On hearing of my death he married you; and he was a trifle too hasty, that was all.”

She hands me the paper; it is a certificate. Oh, the misery that grips me as I read the words that confirm her story, and strike a death-blow to all my hopes. My brain reels, but with a mighty effort I control myself. Then a light breaks in on me.

“Why did you leave me that legacy?” I ask, sharply.

She starts and pauses before she replies:

“Oh, I liked you, and I thought you would make dear Jim a good wife.”

“It is false!” I cry, furiously. “We are the victims of some vile plot of yours! But look you, woman—this shall be sifted to the bottom, and you shall be prosecuted for the crime you have forced others to commit!”

“I would advise you to keep very quiet,” she says, coldly, “for the blow might not fall on the head you intended it for. As soon as I was able to

travel, after my fever, I came to America to straighten matters. After I had been here a few weeks I learned of my husband's second marriage. I sought him out, and also his ally, Gerard Richardson. And now, my dear, be warned. Any attempt you make to strike at me will only end in placing him in a felon's dock, for he has known that he was a bigamist for six months."

"Six months!" I cry.

"Six months," she repeats.

It is just six months since I began to fear his brain was affected; this, then, has been the cause of his strange conduct. In his endeavor to shield me he has been making himself a criminal; and this, too, under the eyes of this woman, his archenemy!

"I have been trying to save you for months," she goes on in a hard, unsympathetic voice, "but you were so closely guarded that it has been impossible till now. My ruse was a good one, was it not?"

"Am I to understand that you got my husband and his friend away by means of forged telegrams?"

"If you like to put it that way, yes."

"You did this thing that you might come here and gloat over my misery!" I cry, with dilated eyes.

"I was anxious to save you from a life of sin," she begins; but I interrupt her, fiercely:

"Enough! That is a term you shall not dare to use to me! What sin there is, lies at your door! You planned this thing. Ay, deny it as you will; but God and your own conscience know that the guilt lies on your soul!"

She cowers at my words, but answers, coldly :

“It is idle to look for gratitude in this world.”

“Gratitude!” I echo. “You have had the satisfaction of seeing the result of your scheme. Is not that enough?”

“Nearly!” she answers. “The debt I owed Mr. Macadam was a heavy one, and I don’t think it is quite liquidated yet. But this has nothing to do with the matter. The question is, What are you going to do?”

“What am I going to do?” I repeat the words after her; they seem to have no meaning for me.

“Yes,” she persists. “Do you propose to sit here and wait for Mr. Macadam’s return? I suppose you don’t intend to go on living in infamy?”

“Silence!” I cry, furiously. “Don’t try to taunt me! There is no question of infamy. What was virtue an hour ago cannot now be vice.”

“What a thorough woman you are, Miss Ten Eyck! Always ready with some wise saw or weak axiom for the critical moment.”

“Your errand is fulfilled; you can leave the house.”

“Certainly,” she says, rising gracefully. “Live on here in your self-styled virtue. I wish you every happiness. Will you kindly direct me to Mrs. Richardson’s house? She is a dear old friend of mine, and will be delighted to know I am alive. Can I give her any message for you? Good-day,” and with a sweeping bow she glides out of the window, and I am alone.

Her parting shot rankles. She is going to see the

Richardsons, and I know what that means. Inside of three hours our pitiful story will be the common talk of the country-side.

I cannot face it; but to flee from it means——

Yes, the terrible truth has forced itself upon me; we must part. To save my husband from blame I must leave him. Leave my husband! My husband? Oh, God! he is my husband no longer!

I must go, and go while there is yet time. Were I to see his face, or hear his voice, I would give up the whole world for him. But no; his honor should be dearer to me than aught else; I will go.

If the world hears our story now, who will blame him? He has tried to shield the woman he loves from the malice of the woman who has wronged him. But if I should not go; if I should let a shadow fall across this love that has been so pure and holy; if I, who to this hour have been an honored wife, should sully the dignity of that proud title—— No! The thought is madness. I must go.

My wretched reflections are interrupted by the entrance of Mary with a telegram.

It is from Jim, telling me to meet the 12.10 train.

“Mary!” I cry, hastily, “get me a satchel ready, and order the carriage to take me to the station.”

“No bad news, Ma’am, I hope,” says the girl.

“Yes, the worst. I must go.”

Mary hurries out to execute my orders, and I follow her upstairs, and hastily pack a few necessaries.

This done, I sit down at the little rosewood writing-table which was my dear husband’s first present to me, and write him my good-by:

MY DARLING:—I know all. *She* has been here. Forgive me that I leave you, but I must not stay. I do not blame you, poor love, and no one will do so if I go. You were all I had in the world, Jim.

Yours, till death,

WINNIE.

I leave this sealed on the desk, and take one long, last look round the room that has seen so many happy hours.

My eyes rest on the mirror. I go and stand before it. Here, where my very feet are, will he stand. This cold glass, that reflects my face now, reflected his this morning; and yet it can give me no smile from him. I glance round the room; to think that he used all these things such a short time ago, and now they bear no trace of him! A terrible tragedy has taken place; and yet they stand here unmoved, as they did yesterday; they have no sympathy for me now, and they will have none for him when, in an hour, he comes and cries out to them in his agony. They will tauntingly remind him of me, as they now do me of him; but never a sign will they give him of the love I leave behind, with them, for him. His pillow will not give him back the burning kisses I am pressing on it, when it touches his dear head. These slippers will say no word of the jealous sobs I breathe over them because they may touch his feet, while I dare not. I am alone in my anguish. Some one must suffer every day, and it is my turn to-day. They reproach me with their stolidity. Would I have the whole world stop because I am sad?

Carriage-wheels on the path.

I must go!

Oh, God! is there a pain worse than this?

Good-by, dear room! Oh, be kinder to him than you have been to me! Good-by! I must press yet one more kiss on that seal, because it will touch his fingers. And now, dear husband, dear home, good-by!

When I get to New York, I am quite at a loss to know where to go. My head pains me sadly, I feel confused, and the way people stare at me worries me.

A man comes up to me.

“Want a cab, lady? Any baggage?”

He takes my satchel and puts me in a carriage.

“Where to, please?”

“I have no idea,” I answer; “I can’t recollect!”

A policeman comes up and begins to question me. I see a crowd of curious faces, and begin to feel very faint, when suddenly, among all the strange people, I see some one who seems familiar to me. It is a dirty little girl, with rough, unkempt hair, who pushes herself up to the cab and peers in.

“Lor’!” she says, “if it ain’t Miss Winnie!”

I gaze at her a moment, unable to think who she is; then a flash of memory returns to me. It is the Princess!

“Oh, Cerulia!” I cry, “take me home to your aunt!”

Then all is blank.

CHAPTER XXVII.

A FRIEND IN NEED.

I HAVE BEEN ill a long time, they tell me. Mrs. Frayne says it is two months since Cerulia found me at the Grand Central Depot, and it is just a month since I began to walk about again. I am feeling so well and strong that it is time I began to think of the future.

I have tried to be thankful for my recovery! I know everyone ought to be grateful to God when He gives back life and health; but oh! I want my life so little.

I have lain for hours, gazing at the ceiling of my old room—the room I slept in the night before I married—and thought and thought until my brain has seemed bursting.

Dear old Mrs. Frayne, with that singular want of tact that characterizes her class, fancied I should be more comfortable in my old rooms, and so turned their occupant out; and, as I am slowly recovering, added one more burden to my already overweighted heart by surrounding me with things that constantly remind me of the past.

I ought not to say a word about it, though, for her kindness to me has been wonderful and unremitting. She tells me that after Cerulia and the police-

man brought me to her, and the doctor had been sent for and restored me to consciousness, I told her my miserable story, and implored her not to let my poor Jim know where I was. She talked the matter over with her husband, and they decided to keep my secret; and though at first several people came to her to know if I were at her house, she always denied it; and now I am lost to them, and free to shape my future as I will.

How lonely I feel! I have nothing to comfort me. My little baby only lived a few hours, and I never heard its infant cry. I wonder whether I have missed a sorrow, or the greatest joy a woman's life could know?

My little stock of money was long since exhausted, and though Mrs. Frayne insists that I owe her nothing, I know that I am living on her bounty; and now that I am well again, I begin to wonder what I shall do. I dare not go to the bank for the money that lies there, because they will be sure to keep a watch for anyone going there from me. I speak to Mrs. Frayne.

"You ain't strong enough for sewing," is her comment.

"No, I think I will try and get into some opera company," I say; and as I think of it, the idea becomes more pleasant to me. I try my voice. It is weak, but has lost nothing in quality. Work will distract me, and I need the salary, so I make up my mind to try my luck once more with Mr. Mertens.

I choose a nice, bright day for my visit.

Mr. Mertens is delighted to see me, and full of sympathy for me; for, according to Mrs. Frayne's directions, I tell him I have lost my husband.

"My dear girl," he says, "I think I have the very thing for you. A friend of mine is sending a piece over to England. He was asking me if I knew of an attractive singer to go with him, to sing a couple of ballads, and take part in some glees. I think it would just suit you. The voyage will set you up, and by the time you get to the other side you will be as jolly as ever."

"Very well," I say, apathetically.

"The time is very short," he says. "The company has been engaged two weeks, but they could not find the singer to suit them. I have authority to engage anyone I think suitable, and I will settle with you now, if you think you can be ready by Saturday."

"I could be ready to-morrow."

"Have you no friends to say good-by to?"

"No! No one now."

"Poor girl! poor girl!" and he pats my hand.

His kindness is too much for me; I burst into tears.

"There! there! Don't fret; the change will do you a world of good. Go home and rest yourself. I have your address; I will write you all particulars; and be ready to sail on the 15th."

Unconsciously I turn into the old, familiar walk in Washington Square, to think over the interview, and the true significance of Mr. Mertens' last words dawns upon me.

On the 15th I must be ready to journey far, far away from Jim; so far that I may never look on his face again.

I gaze round me at the old, familiar scene, with slow tears falling. What memories this Square has for me! When first I used to tread these walks I was a young, happy girl, and now in a few months I am a woman, worn and broken-hearted.

It was here that I read that first letter from him; here that I used to come when the first shadow of this sorrow crossed me; here we used to walk in those few short days before we were married, when we were such happy lovers. We made a pilgrimage here only this winter, man and wife, and I showed him where I used to walk and think of him, and we planned how we would plant just such a walk down to the second gate, to remind us of our sweethearting. This very month we would have planted the trees! And now I stand looking on the well-known spot with widowed eyes and barren heart, alone, wretched, soon to be exiled.

A hand is laid on my shoulder.

“Mrs. Macadam!” some one says. “Thank God that I have found you at last!”

I turn round, and see Gerard Richardson before me.

I try to turn away, but the sight of his face fills me with deep emotion, and I lean weak and trembling against a tree.

“You have been ill!” he cries. “Why did you not send for us? Why did you leave us? We have searched everywhere for you, and feared you were lost to us forever!”

“I wished to be so.”

“How could you be so cruel? If you knew what Jim had suffered!”

At the mention of my husband I cannot control myself.

“Tell me,” I cry; “is he—is he——”

“He is heart-broken. He has been to California in search of you. We heard that after that woman had done her fiendish work she set out for San Francisco, and that she had another lady with her. The idea possessed Jim that you were the lady; he followed, only to find it was the maid, Mary Smith—the woman whom Mrs. Haggerstone told us had died in Italy at the time she herself was reported to have died.”

My yearning to hear of my lost love overmasters me.

“Tell me about him. How does he look? What does he do? Where is he? Tell me everything, anything.”

He seeks to calm me, and answers, gently:

“He is terribly shaken and altered; hardly the same man. He has but one idea, and that is to find you. His only desire is to know where you are, and to provide for your wants. He never hopes that you will see him or forgive him.”

“Forgive him!” I cry.

“Yes!” says Mr. Richardson, warmly. “You have been very hard on him. He did you no wrong wittingly; you were both sinned against; and yet you fled from him, as if he were the greatest villain on earth. Nay!” as I would interrupt him, “hear me

first! Had you seen him as I did, you must have pitied him. For six months he had known the trouble that was overshadowing you, and had borne it bravely, hoping to shield and spare you. At first he wanted to travel, but I dissuaded him thinking—poor fool that I was!—that with a staunch friend at his side he could better protect you from that woman's villainy; for I have been his staunch friend since I learned the truth. Think of the woman we have had to contend with! That day I met you in the woods she was with me, and had just told me that you knew she was alive all the time, and that there had never been a pretense of marriage between you. Do you remember how I treated you that night at our house? That woman told me she had sought me out as the one who had known her as Jim's wife, and made me promise to vindicate her and see her righted. I wanted at first to publicly disgrace you, but when it came to the moment I could not; I liked you too well. I then thought I would warn you to leave the neighborhood. Do you remember how angry you were with me? Your indignation was so genuine that I felt there must be a mistake somewhere, and fancied poor Jim had deceived you. A few words with him revealed the whole truth. My God! I will never forget his face when I told him she was alive. I believed in him before he showed me the certificates from the doctors and people which he had obtained in Italy, when he read of her death; and then we set about thinking what was best for you. We saw the woman several times; she accepted money from us to go

away, and even went so far about hoodwinking us as to commence proceedings in divorce against Jim. He made no defense, and we hoped, before the spring came, to have him a free man. But how were we to guess the depths of that woman's villainy? She was just playing us, till she could find a favorable opportunity to get at you and ruin all. The day of the trouble she summoned us both to town with bogus telegrams. When I found out that mine was a hoax I hurried to the station, fearing the worst; there I met Macadam in an agony of mind that was piteous to see. When we reached the house we were quite prepared to find you knew the worst; but that you should be gone was an unexpected blow to us, and it staggered us. When poor Jim realized it, I thought he would have gone mad. It was terrible. Since then he has rested neither night nor day in his passionate desire to find you."

He pauses, but I cannot speak; I am suffering a grief too deep for words.

"There has been a universal feeling of sympathy for you both, since it became known that Mrs. Haggerstone had refused to give Jim his divorce, because it was her wish to come back and live with him."

I shudder. The idea of another woman being to him what I have been, kills me.

"I suppose you left home in the first madness of your despair?" he asks.

I nod my head.

"And what do you intend to do now?"

"Sing!" I say, taken off my guard.

“Sing!” he cries. “You cannot contemplate such a thing!”

“If I tell you, you must promise to keep my secret until I give you leave to tell it.”

“I promise.”

“Then I am under engagement to go to England in a few days.”

“You will never do this!” he cries.

“I will, indeed. I must do something.”

“You need not. Why not let Jim provide for you?”

I flush hotly at the idea of receiving as a bounty what such a short time ago was mine by right.

“No, never!” I say, firmly.

“Mrs. Macadam,” he says, nervously, “don’t you think you could see Jim every now and then?”

The thought sends the blood coursing through my veins, but in a moment my better judgment re-asserts itself.

“No,” I say, firmly.

He sits down beside me, and leaning toward me, speaks gently to me:

“Mrs. Macadam, you must know the friendship I have for Jim; since this trouble came upon him, I have been daily and hourly learning the true nobleness of his character. I have done all in my power to save him, and I think I must have proved to you the affection I have for him.”

“Indeed you have,” I respond, warmly.

“Then,” he continues, “you will understand that in what I am about to say my motives are of the best. I have a difficult and delicate task before me, but

for Jim's sake I beg you to hear me through. I have always regarded you with the profoundest admiration and the purest affection; you have always been to me a woman far above other women; and it pains me to think that through no fault of your own you are placed in a position hurtful to your womanly feelings and self-respect. It is Jim's greatest trouble that he should have placed you in such a false position, and we have talked frequently about the proposition I wish to lay before you. Will you let my name shelter you and restore you to your rightful position?"

"What!" I cry in horror.

"Nay, hear me!" he says, interrupting me. "Don't fancy I am daring to speak of love to you; I would cut my tongue out rather than so insult you. I offer you my homage and my name. I have but one desire, and that is to alleviate your pain."

His goodness overpowers me, and I sob weakly.

"I did not mean to pain you," he says, humbly.

"You are too good," I murmur, "but it is impossible."

"Why?" he asks.

"Because of Jim. What comfort could your name be to me when my whole heart was crying out to him?"

"True," he says; "but, then, you are alone, weak and helpless, and you need some one to protect you."

"Hush!" I cry. "Every word you utter is sacrilege! Could you stand with a weeping widow, beside the dead body of the husband she had wor-

shipped, and ask her to be your wife? Would you have me defile the sacred chamber of my dead love by plighting anew the vows from which I am not released? Go! Leave me alone with my dead; it is all I have, all I want!"

I rise to leave him, but he detains me.

"Mrs. Macadam," he says, "may I speak a half-framed thought that has been pursuing me ever since we met? Why will you not go back to your husband?"

I start violently.

"If the words to which you have just given utterance were from your heart," he goes on, "and you so cling to his memory that you would rather be an outcast for his sake than the honored wife of another, it is because you feel you still owe him a wife's duty. Is it not so?"

I bow my head.

"Then you ought to give him that duty, for he loves you with his whole soul, and without you, life is a blank to him. Ah, Mrs. Macadam, you are made of a different stuff from most women; you are capable of rising above the poor conventionalities of the world. Let me put the situation before you. On one hand is a man whose whole being is wrapped in yours; whose very life is in your keeping."

"His life!" I cry, aghast.

He goes on, without heeding me.

"On the other hand is what? Social prejudice! Your union with my poor friend was no common one. You are husband and wife in the truest sense of the word. You are one in thought, in heart,

and desire. Yours was no earthly contract; it was a holy bond. Let me ask you, will you let anything but death sever it?"

"No! no!" I moan.

"And yet you are allowing the machinations of an evil woman to do so!"

"No!—only before the world, and to save his name from dishonor! In heart and soul I am still his wife, and shall be till I die!"

"You have sufficient strength of mind to suffer yourself, that he may be happy; but what if I tell you your sacrifice is in vain, for you forget that it is not alone yourself that you are sacrificing. Cannot your fortitude carry you a little further? Won't you give up your present for his future? I assure you, Jim will not live six months without you. Will you, then, cost him his life? He needs you; be brave, and go back! If you hesitate on social grounds, believe me, since it has become known how that woman withdrew her plea for divorce, there is not a soul who would censure you."

"Hush!" I cry. "It is my duty to protect his honor, not to stain it."

"Mrs. Macadam, your duty is at his side. Whatever clouds may arise between you, nothing should separate you."

"But," I murmur, "he is not my husband now."

Gerard Richardson rises to his feet and says, solemnly:

"In the sight of God he is your husband; and it is to God, not to man, you must answer, if you finish the work another has begun, and drive him in

the madness of despair to take the life that was given him for a higher purpose."

With these terrible words he leaves me. I am broken, helpless, and bewildered; but above the whirl of confusion in which I am ring the words:

"In the sight of God he is your husband!"

CHAPTER XXVIII.

“IN THE SIGHT OF GOD.”

I DON'T KNOW how long I sit in the Square after Mr. Richardson leaves me. I think so many things that I could almost fancy I had been sitting there for years. My mind dwells on the old, happy days. I live over again every hour of my past. I dream of the loving husband who was all in all to me; and ever and anon, through the mazes of my dream, come the words, “In the sight of God he is your husband!”

They seem written in letters of fire on my brain. I read them on the pavement before me. Wherever I turn I see them; and at last a sort of happiness steals over me as I dwell on them. After all, she has not taken him from me. In God's eyes he is mine.

I know not what to do. I have no thoughts that shape themselves into anything definite. I feel so helpless, so alone.

“Oh, God!” I cry, in my pain, “guide me! guide me!”

A calmness creeps over me, and there arises in my heart an intense longing to go home. I try to combat it, but it is too strong for me, and I find myself, without power to do otherwise, taking a

cab. I tell the driver to drive for his life to catch the 5.40 train at Forty-second Street.

As in a dream, I take my ticket and hurry on to the platform. I am but just in time; the door is banged too, behind me, and we are off.

I remember nothing of that journey; only, ever before me are the words, "In the sight of God he is your husband!"

I am roused by the brakeman calling out—
"Riverdale!"

I jump off the cars hastily, half-dazed. It is quite dark, and Riverdale station is over a mile from our house. I have passed my station, Kingsbridge. I am dimly glad of my mistake. Here I am not known; at Kingsbridge I might have been recognized.

A drizzling rain is falling as I get out of the train; I draw my cloak round me and shiver. I am conscious that I have no umbrella, and the damp, desolate walk appalls me.

I push on, however, cheered by a feeling that I have come for some special purpose; and as I walk along the dark, lonely road, the hope rises in my heart that I may see him.

At last I reach our lane. I meet no one as I walk toward my old home. This wet night, I suppose all the neighbors are at their own firesides.

I pass the Richardsons, and at last come to the gate—our own gate.

A man is leaning over it.

My heart leaps; but no! It is only our gardener. My fears are groundless; that Charles is leaning

over the gate is a sure sign that his master is away.

I draw back into the shadow of the wall and wait. It seems as if that man never would go. Despite the pelting rain, which is becoming heavier, Charles stands at the gate whistling in an undertone that irritates me so that I feel as if I cannot bear it without screaming. I wait and wait, and he keeps on whistling, till my agitation reaches such a point that I have become hysterical, when I hear wheels and the sound of a whistle down the road. It is the postman, and Charles has apparently been waiting for him, for he lifts himself off the gate and steps out into the road to meet him.

Now is my opportunity. Covered by the darkness, I stealthily cross the road and slip in at the open gate; and thus, like a thief, I enter the grounds of which a few weeks ago I was the proud mistress.

I prowl round the house, and try to peep in at the windows. The drawing-room is closed, the dining-room is just about to be, and I have to withdraw quickly into the shadow as Mary comes to pull down the blinds. I catch a glimpse of the familiar room; it looks so bare and empty that my heart aches afresh for the misery that has fallen on us all.

Then I make my way round the veranda to Jim's study. It is lighted! Can it be that he is here?

The blind is up, and summoning all my courage, I look in. Yes! yes! Oh, my God! He is there!

I press my face to the glass, and drink in every line of his dear form. His head is bowed on his crossed arms, and I cannot see his face. Then he

raises it, and calls out "Come in!" and I start back into the shade, horror-struck at the change I see in him.

His hair is nearly white. He looks twenty years older than when I saw him last. All the ruddy color has left his face, and the sunken cheeks are a dull gray, the weary eyes lusterless.

Lottie enters—Lottie, with the shadow of a deep grief on her face.

"Well!" he cries, eagerly.

The window is a little open, and I can hear, as well as see.

Tears spring to Lottie's eyes.

"No news," she says, gently. "The postman has passed."

He says nothing, but drops his head on his hands, wearily.

"Oh, Jim!" she says, "do have courage; we shall hear."

"No, Lottie!" he answers, and his voice is so different from the old, ringing tones. "She has gone, and we shall never hear of her again."

"Don't think that!" she urges.

"Leave me, dear—I am better alone;" and with a gentle pressure of the hand she leaves him.

Oh, if he knew how near I was to him! Dear God! would it be a sin to obey the longings of my heart, and, rushing in, throw myself on his breast, and tell him I will never leave him? Am I not choosing a selfish course? We have been equally wronged, and should I not help him to bear his burden, rather than add to it by my silence and absence?

He begins talking to himself.

“No news! no news! If she were alive she would not keep me in this suspense. She is dead!”

He paces the room for a few minutes, and his face works convulsively; then it takes a strange expression that is half-resolution, half-madness.

He sits down at his desk, and opening a drawer, takes out a pistol. Ah, Heaven! what does it mean!

He turns it over in his hand.

“Yes!” he cries, “she is dead, and this shall join us!”

He raises it, then lowers it, to see if it is all in order.

I cannot bear it! I dash the window open and rush into the room; but ere I am inside there is a flash and a loud report, and in my agony of terror, lest Jim has shot himself, consciousness leaves me, and I fall heavily to the floor.

When I come to myself I am lying on the sofa, and a sea of faces seem leaning over me—Lottie, Gerard Richardson, Mary, and the doctor; but the one face I look for is not there! I start up, only to fall back helpless.

“Where is he! Where is he!” I cry, struggling with the restraining hands.

They move aside, and to my joy I see him coming slowly toward me.

I try to hold out my arms to him, but one seems too heavy to move. It seems to take years before he is near me, and years before I hear his voice.

“Winnie!” is all he murmurs.

Then slowly, gradually, he winds his arms round me. I feel his lips on mine. The happiness is too much for me; again all is oblivion.

Never in after years can I forget the joy of that second awakening. The first thing that I open my eyes upon is his dear face; my head is pillowed on his shoulder; nothing between us now.

Again I try to lift my arm, but it will not move. I look into his eyes, and mutely ask him why. He bursts into tears.

“Winnie, my darling, my own, it was I; I shot you!”

“And not yourself! Thank God!”

“I did not recognize you for the moment, and before I had time to think had shot you. Oh, my darling, I thought I had killed you! Forgive me! Forgive me!”

“Jim!” I say, weakly, “I have nothing to forgive, dear. It is you who must forgive me. I was wicked to leave you, for you had done me no wrong. I see it all now; and, Jim, if you will take me back I will never leave you again.”

“Take you back!” he cries, his eyes shining. “Oh, my darling!”

I interrupt him.

“Jim, in the sight of God I am your wife; and what I am in His eyes I will be before all the world, if you will let me. I cannot live without you.”

For answer he presses kiss after kiss on my lips, and the compact is sealed.

Dr. Williams comes forward and insists on my be-

ing kept quiet, so my darling has to leave off talking, but not before he has murmured:

“You have given back life to me!”

Lottie sits down beside me; she is weeping.

“Oh, Lottie!” I cry, “you do not think I have done wrong?”

“Hush!” she says. “I think you have done right; my tears are happy ones;” and I sink into a sweet, peaceful sleep, Jim’s hand in mine. Together, never to be parted again!

CHAPTER XXIX.

FOUR YEARS LATER.

THE following letter to Mrs. Atherton from her friend Mrs. James Macadam explains itself:

MY DEAR MRS. ATHERTON:—The happiness of to-day has only been marred by your absence; but with Alice so ill, I know how impossible it is for you to leave her. I have stolen a few minutes to write to you, before dressing for the big dinner party which Mr. Richardson has arranged on the sly in our own house, and to which there are more than thirty self-invited guests. They are giving us a perfect ovation.

But I must tell you my story properly, merely, as a second preface, telling you that we found the house exactly as if we had only left it yesterday; and as I sit at my bedroom window, with the roses climbing in to welcome me, it seems as if we had never been away at all, and the merry voices on the lawn make me think it is one of our old garden parties. Indeed, I could not realize it, if I did not see before me a scrap of paper, which I have just unearthed from a corner of the desk—a bit of the fatal letter I wrote Jim at this desk four years ago.

I cannot let this happy day pass without thanking you for your unvarying kindness to me after we left Mosholu, and your goodness to me in my very equivocal position. I believe, but for the persistent way in which you and the Richardsons visited me, and made much of me, I should not to-day be congratu-

lated as a happy wife, but gazed upon as a sort of reclaimed outcast who had at last been dragged within the bounds of respectability.

I felt quite like a young bride, when we set out from the New York home you did so much to make happy for us, after that bold defiance of society which I have never regretted. Lottie, George, and the Richardsons came with us to the church, and there, in the same church that first saw us united, we once again uttered our vows.

Jim did seem so happy; and ever since the confirmation of the unhappy woman's death came, the day before yesterday, he has been the gayest of the gay; and now I shall no longer see a shadow on his face.

After the ceremony we started for Mosholu, to go back to the dear home we have always kept in readiness for our return.

Short as the time was, the news had got abroad, and when the train arrived at Kingsbridge the platform was lined with the Broadriggs, the Dupuys, the Wheatley girls, and Dr. and Mrs. Williams. There was such a hand-shaking and welcoming! Everybody brought me flowers, and as I stepped into the carriage little Maggie Britton gave me a large bouquet of flowers, saying:

"This is from us all, dear Mrs. Macadam, to tell you how glad we are that you have come back."

Of course I began to cry, and everybody rushed at me to kiss me, and everybody was crying, too; and then I kissed the old signal-man, thinking it was Mr. Dupuy; and then we all laughed; and at last we got into our carriage and drove away. They had dressed dear Jacob with roses, and it was my dear old pet who took me home. I felt so happy that I began crying again. Jim told me not to be silly, but I noticed he was using his handkerchief very suspiciously. When I told him of it, he said he had a cold; you know what men are.

When we got home, there were the Marson children strewing flowers from the gate up to the door, and from the door into the hall. I have been walking on flowers ever since I left Kingsbridge. I am so glad Jim insisted on my having a new dress for the occasion; I should have felt dreadful if they had been making so much fuss over me and I in an old gown.

Somehow, Jim always knows what is best.

I suppose some censorious people would think I don't deserve my happiness; that I have been doing wrong, and ought to spend the rest of my life in sackcloth and ashes. I meant to sacrifice myself to save Jim from despair, and worse; and it is the kindness of such friends as you that has saved us from suffering for our defiance of the world and its opinions.

You have all made a sort of heroine of me; but why? I only did what any woman in my place would have done; only, I was a little bolder than others. In the unwritten history of most loving married lives, there are far greater deeds done by women who go down to their graves unlauded and unsung. I have often wondered, when you and others have been talking to me of the sacrifice I made, if any of you would have done otherwise if you had been in my place. I consider I have been very fortunate; we can all talk of our love, but it does not often fall to our lot to be able to prove it.

By the way, would you like to hear that woman's story? I have never asked Jim about her, but this morning he told me all.

You remember the five years that you lost sight of him? It all happened then.

Jim was staying at Homburg; he had been there a few days, and was beginning to find it rather dull, when one evening, at the *table-d'hôte*, he noticed a new face. It was that of a strikingly beautiful

woman. Jim lost no time in inquiring about her, and soon found out that she was a very wealthy American lady, a widow, named Adelaide Haggerstone. She was traveling with her brother, and Jim contrived to get acquainted with him and be introduced to her.

The widow received Jim's attentions with evident favor, and I suppose it flattered him to be the favored swain of the handsomest woman at the baths; and I have no doubt he flirted outrageously. The result was what might have been expected. The widow appeared to fall hopelessly in love, and when Jim announced his intention of leaving Homburg she fainted and made scenes.

Jim felt guilty and fled.

Unfortunately his flight was not far enough. It was late in the afternoon, and not wishing to spend the night on the train, he only went as far as Frankfurt. He arrived about seven o'clock, and was in his room reading, when the door was flung violently open, and a veiled woman rushed in and flung herself at his feet sobbing. It was Mrs. Haggerstone! She avowed her love for him, and announced her intention of dying at his feet if he did not return it; and all this with an audience of grinning chambermaids and a guest or two.

Jim had not time to collect his senses before the brother made a violent entry through the crowd, and declaring his sister's reputation compromised, demanded satisfaction or matrimony. Jim preferred fighting to marriage, and on hearing his decision the lady became hysterical, and the brother turned to the crowd and denounced Jim as a libertine and a scoundrel, and whipping out a pistol, began to talk of shooting him like a dog. This brought the landlord, who confiscated the pistol, turned away the crowd, and closed the door. Then he informed Jim that he had sent for the police, and unless the quar-

rel were arranged instantly he would have them all three arrested. Of course Jim could not subject a lady to the horrors of a foreign prison; and thus coerced, he promised to marry Mrs. Haggerstone as soon as the preliminaries could be arranged. He returned to Homburg, and in a few days the wedding took place.

They had been married hardly a week, when Jim found out the reason why they had pursued him. They had fancied him some English nobleman, traveling *incognito*.

Mrs. Haggerstone had come to Europe in hopes of buying a title with her money; in America she was too noted a character to get an *entrée* into society. She was an ex-circus rider, who had eloped with a wealthy pork-packer. The guilty pair being overtaken by the injured wife, the two women had a smart encounter, in which the circus-rider came off victorious, and administered such a sound thrashing to the wife that the loving husband's admiration knew no bounds; he got divorced from his wife, married the Haggerstone woman, and died soon after, leaving the bulk of his fortune to her.

The affair was of quite recent date, and American society was turning a cold shoulder to her, when she met Jim. He had been abroad some months, and had heard nothing about it. He was occupying a suite of rooms at the hotel, and was living so extravagantly that the landlord, finding him twangless, and not eccentric, fancied he must be some great English lord, instead of an ordinary American gentleman, and he was always spoken to as "Milord!"

Mrs. Haggerstone's brother made inquiries, when he found Jim's attentions getting rather marked; and thanks to the lies of Jim's valet (who, to add to his own importance, swore that his master was none other than the Duke of Marlborough), the trap was set.

No sooner had Mrs. Haggerstone found out the true state of the case than she threw off all restraint; swore she had been duped; resumed her old, vulgar habits; drank, smoked, swore, and played cards all day long, and finally began to gamble feverishly.

Jim forbade her visiting the tables, and left Homburg for Vienna. One evening he missed her, and after a few hours' search found her in one of the most notorious private gambling-houses in the city. Nothing could make her give up her habits. Jim kept constantly moving from city to city, hoping a change would cure her, but it did not. If they were in a small town where she did not know of any gaming-table, she would send her brother to find three people to make up a poker-table, and play till the daylight shone.

At last she announced herself tired of the Continent and anxious to see England, and added that it was about time Jim introduced her to his aristocratic relatives—for by this time she had found out that Jim, though not the Duke of Marlborough, or even an Englishman, was yet connected with some very fine English families, and had the *entrée* to London society.

Jim was obdurate. He told her bluntly he would not take her to England, and never so long as he lived would he introduce her as his wife.

Three months had passed, and they were at Carlsruhe. Jim had for the past six weeks been endeavoring to get the woman to agree to a separation, when a budget of letters was forwarded from Paris. Jim was out when they arrived, and Mrs. Haggerstone, whose notions of honor were none of the finest, began to look them over.

One particularly interested her; it was from England. The postmark was four weeks old, and it bore the monogram "B," with a viscount's coronet over it.

With the aid of a little ingenuity and hot water she was soon reading it.

It began "My Dear Coz," and went on to say how the writer was going to be married, and wanted Jim to come to the wedding, and added that in case this letter did not reach him the writer and her husband would be in Carlsruhe on the 3d of September, and Jim must try and meet them there.

The letter was signed "Edith Blandford."

Mrs. Haggerstone's curiosity was whetted, and turning the letters over, she searched till she found one that looked like a card of invitation. It also bore a coronet; and no sooner was it opened than her breath was taken away by reading that the Duchess of Netherby requested the pleasure of Mr. James Macadam's company at the wedding of her daughter, Lady Edith Blandford, to Marmaduke, Viscount Bothwell. She sealed up the letter, and then it occurred to her that this was the 3d of September, the very date and place where Lady Edith had asked Jim to meet them. Here was the opportunity for the desired introduction to English society.

She sent to inquire, and found the viscount had arrived, and was staying in that very hotel. Presently Jim came into her room, looking flushed and annoyed, and told her that they had to leave the place at once.

There was a scene. She accused him of running away because his friends had arrived; and Jim, astonished that she should know, found out that she had been tampering with his letters. He was, of course, awfully indignant, and vowing to be done with her forever, left the room.

Time passed. Jim did not return; and knowing him well enough by this time to feel sure he would never introduce her, she determined to play a bold game.

She learned that the viscount would dine at the

table-d'hôte, and dressing herself in her best, went down to the big gallery that led to the dining-room and waited. A number of people were sitting and strolling about, and presently a lady and gentleman appeared who were undoubtedly English.

She advanced toward them.

"Lady Bothwell!" she said.

The gentleman put up his glass and looked at her, and hastily sending the lady back to her room, confronted Mrs. Haggerstone. It appears that the viscount, hearing that Jim was in the hotel with his wife, went to look him up. Jim seemed far from pleased to see him, made evasive replies to his inquiries about his wife, and roused the viscount's suspicions. When, an hour later, he got a note from Jim saying that important business had called him to Paris, and he was sorry to be obliged to go without calling on his cousin, the young man's suspicions were confirmed; and when Mrs. Haggerstone addressed his wife, he flatly told her that he considered her an insolent, infamous woman, and left the hotel.

Mrs. Haggerstone never forgave Jim. She followed him to Paris, and found he had taken up his quarters in bachelor apartments, where she could not join him. Jim refused to see her or speak to her, and she could not appeal to his friends, as she did not know them.

What business had to be arranged was done through the lawyer, and this was the last Jim saw or heard of her till he read of her death.

In Italy, where he went to make sure all was right, he saw the maid, Mary Smith, who actually handed over to him her jewel-case and a box of papers. Jim returned to America, as he thought, a free man.

He declares even now that the whole thing was the result of an accident; that she and her maid

were both ill with fever, and when her maid died the authorities made a mistake in the name.

But remembering the legacy, and that Mary Smith, her maid, is alive to this day, I believe she had planned her diabolical revenge from the moment she met me on the cars going to Chicago, and that she just waited until things were ripe for the execution of her scheme, and hoodwinked the authorities somehow. She had two English servants with her at the villa, we have since found out; and all I can say is, I hope the one that died did die of the fever.

I think her conscience must have pained her, for they say the quantity of morphine she took was appalling; and no wonder that she eventually died of it.

The coroner's verdict was death from an overdose of opium; and now that she is really dead, and in her grave, I am willing to try and forget the wrong she did us, and let the dead past bury its dead.

Now good-by. Jim has just come in to see what is keeping me; he says I could not have spent my time to better purpose, and tells me to give you both his love, and say we are dying to have you here with us, and that dinner will be served in three minutes and I am not dressed. So, with warmest love,

Believe me,

Your happy but hurried

WINIFRED MACADAM.

THE END.

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