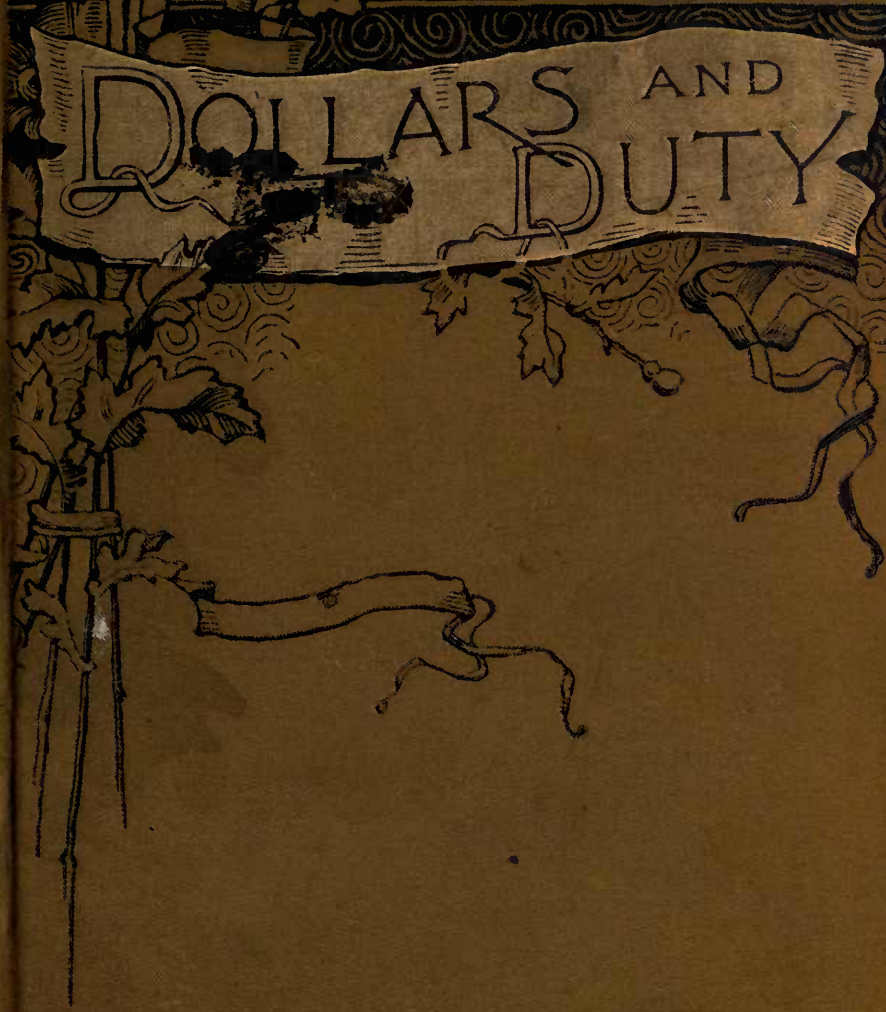
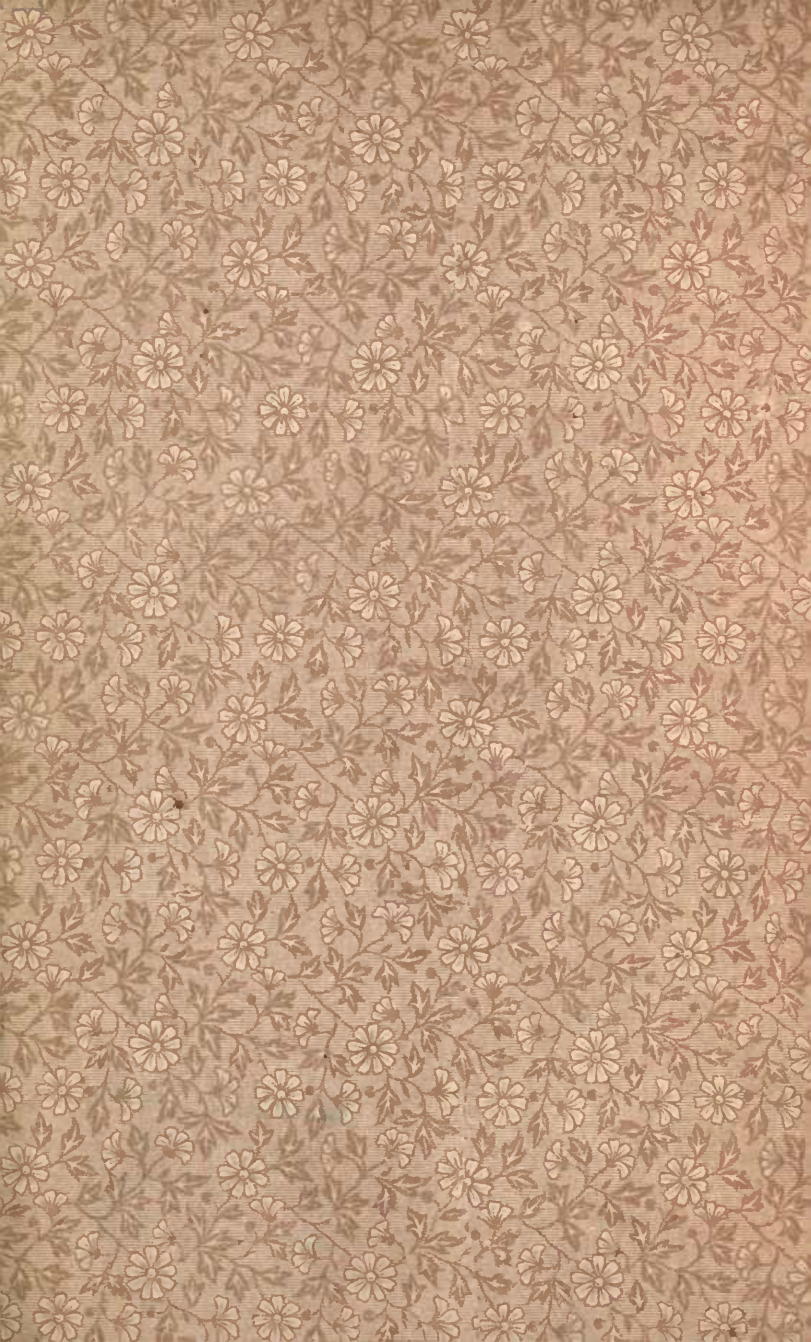


DOLLARS AND DUTY



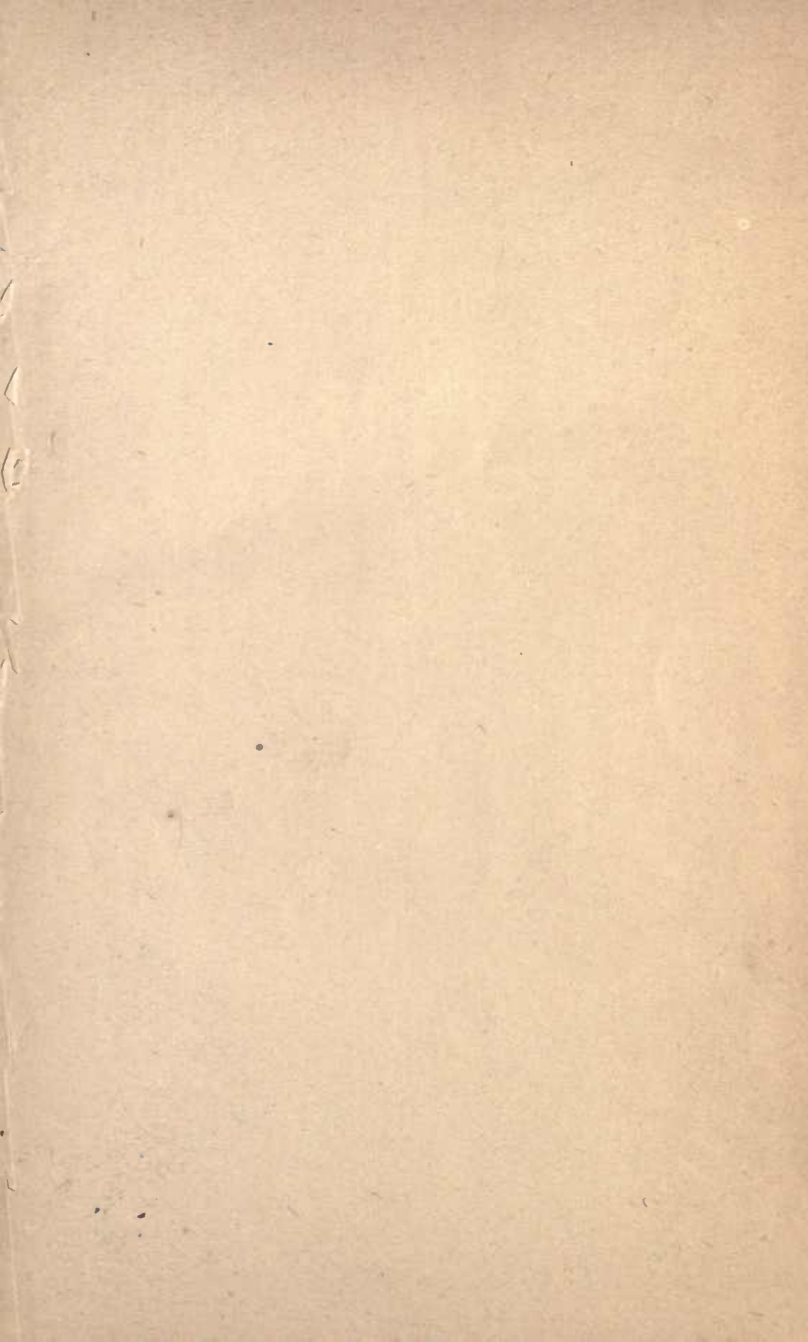




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DOLLARS AND DUTY.

BY

EMORY J. HAYNES.

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DOLLARS AND DUTY.

I.

MY BEAUTIFUL BOY.

“MY Beautiful Boy!”

With a pin-head she wrote it on the frost-work that overlaid the window-pane, that brilliant winter's morning. The shafts of light from oriflamme banners in the eastern sky made every letter gleam with gold. From over the snowy hills, through the leafless branches of old trees all aglow; from the glinting roofs of the low village cottages around, she seemed to draw the glory of this day-dawn for the writing of these words; and, now, from the whole heavens, as she traced the letters larger, clearer, and with added touches of grace,—“MY BEAUTIFUL BOY.”

The wealth of advancing light seemed to realize the uses to which this mother was putting it. It rejoiced to be dipped by the pen of such a love; it filled all the letters and poured over on the

silver pane, on the whole sash, through into the little room, and warming it more than the fresh-started fire of wood that was snapping on the hearth. But—prettiest touch of all in the rising sun—he shed his luster all over the graceful form of the writer herself, burnishing her gray locks as they waved about her brow, freshening her pallor with the hues almost of girlhood, for the instant, and painting her into such a charming picture, that the man, who alone saw it, paused, speechless, with the door-knob yet in his hand. Then, very softly, with slippered feet, the gentleman drew near her. The sunrise was impartial: indeed there was splendor enough for them both; enough to touch his somber study-gown into color, to fire his strong, scholarly face with a smile not its own; enough to adorn his gray hairs, above an expansive brow which made you think of the open sky; enough sunlight was there, had he been so disposed, and had he carried a real pen in his fingers, to have enabled him to write, also, "MY BEAUTIFUL BOY."

But the father was content simply to read what the mother of his son had etched so delicately. His arm stole about her, giving her a surprise that awoke her from her reverie. But she was not startled; she turned her sweet face up to

his, and met him with that nameless ease which they only have who are much accustomed to,—who live, indeed,—in each other's society. For the minister and his wife, this man and this woman, were ever together. She was in his study before him and awaiting him this morning. She was often here, by this very window, silent for hours, then communing for moments only, as he looked up from sermon-writing and rested in the tones of her clear voice. Never did "God join together" two spirits more congenial than these had been, now almost thirty years.

He bent to her tenderly, and, kissing her, looked into her gray eyes, which promptly began to fill with tears, now that sympathy had added the one thrill more necessary to that effect. Then he said,—

"That is what he is, Julia, just that! Our beautiful boy! Our pure, clean, noble boy, my love. Boy, Julia? He is a man now, and a manlier man than our Paul does not walk the earth!"

"I thank God for it, Sylvester!" she added, fervently. "And I, his mother and his confidante, do know all his manly heart."

The slightest shadow of a doubt flitted over

the husband's face. No one else would have caught it, but she did, and the gray eyes asked the question, quick as thought, of his blue eyes. He did not answer, but bent over, stroking her hair, and saying,—

“Was the parting just as hard as ever, love, on this his last vacation?”

“I suppose that was it,” she responded. “At any rate, he has been constantly in my thoughts since I awoke; and just now I was picturing him as about arrived at his room in the college. You remember that early train; and, oh, Sylvester, he has been such a comfort to me, this visit! Was he ever so tender and so strong? How handsome he grows! Why, it seems to me, as I walk beside him, as I measure my feeble steps with his vigorous strides, shortened to my need; as I cling to his arm beneath that broad shoulder; as I glance upward into his cheery face, realizing how tall he is—it seems, father, an impossibility that one so grand should have been born to frail little me. Was he not magnificent,—our boy?”

Her eyes had lost their question in her transport, and, therefore, his face slipped off the dubious shadow which had raised that question, while he yielded to her mood and said,—

“Yes, yes; all that you say, and more. But you and I—why do you disparage our own good looks? Seriously, if you please, are we not tall enough?”

Shaking her head, she promptly lapsed into sadder mood again. “I am worn and broken; I can not realize that I ever had health and vigor. This life of ours—no, forgive me. I know that always pains you; but even you are not the giant whom I married. We two are two bundles of nerves. The churches, I trust,—”

“Have grown richer as we have wasted, my love. Yes, yes,” and he released one of her hands, that he might softly fetter her lips with his own long white fingers. “Yes, you know, Julia, that is the conclusion which we long ago agreed to reach with thoughts in that vein.”

With that this gentle lady, not disputing, though she removed his hand and interlaced her fingers with his own, stood silent as her glances ran about the cosy study, out through the southward-facing windows, which revealed the village-church, her husband’s “workshop,” as he loved to call it, and then slowly back again to this eastward-gazing window, where her etching was now melting in the sun. Noticing the running letters, she smiled sadly and said,—

“So is Paul’s day advancing, and melting his fond childhood, like this childhood’s title, out of all memories, mayhap, but my own. Nevertheless, husband, as I see him grown so giant-like, I arrest him, as it were, by imagination, and shut him up in his little boyhood—his babyhood, even. I think of him, my only boy, as he was not so very many years ago, when—you remember, Sylvester,” she exclaimed, in abrupt and nervous gleefulness, “when he used to stand upon this very rug, his little bare feet taking the steps that we could count then.”

The clergyman’s eyes grew moist; he was, in fact, almost upon the point of taking alarm at the over-wrought mood of the frail lady, who seemed to be well-nigh beside herself in this unusual agitation from parting with her son.

“Sit down, Julia,” he said, gently constraining her into his study-chair, which he quickly rolled before the grate. “We have reason to be very careful of you, sweet wife and mother of my children, these days, as you yourself well know.” He took her rocker for himself, as he tossed his pen on the desk, and, drawing very close, determined to give her all this morning, if necessary, sermons or no sermons.

“Do not fear for me, Sylvester, I am more

tranquil now. I will sit a moment, after which I will walk down the street with one of the girls for the marketing. But, as I was saying—my heart is full of Paul yet—what a comfort he is! What a strong support for our age he will be, when he is fairly launched in business life! I foresee that he will be a great merchant. He has mind, manners, tact, iron energy, unbreakable health, and is the very soul of integrity. He will undoubtedly amass a fortune; but I have prayed much,—oh, so much!—for him that he trust not in uncertain riches. He will be a foremost man in all benevolence, in who knows what vast schemes of philanthropic wealth? He will be that grand creature, a Christian merchant, a truly Christ-like rich man!”

She had spoken rapidly. Her pale cheeks began to glow again with tell-tale spots. She had evidently been all over this ground of dream-land a thousand, thousand times before. And she seemed, almost, to be arguing with her own conscience; in the ill-definable emphasis of her tones at least, so it seemed, as she portrayed her son a rich man, a Christian. Or was she possibly forefending against some anticipated criticism from her husband, who had, for his life-work, “toiled for naught of this world’s

goods," living on a beggarly salary of a few hundred a year? Of course this was only one of a thousand conferences between these two concerning their only boy's future. But never before had she spoken quite so fervently. He would graduate soon; the near event was, doubtless, her present inspiration.

"A Christ-like rich man?" There was no attempt at rebuke in her husband's tone, as he repeated her own last words.

"Indeed, Sylvester, it sounded a shade incongruous to me, as I spoke, I acknowledge. To be sure, Christ was not rich as—as I hope Paul will be. But Paul, being Christ-like out of this humble home and poor enough to begin with, having become rich, might be of Christ-like spirit."

"True enough, Julia. No one who ever knew you could attribute mercenary temper to you, my blessed helper of all these laborious years. I do not wonder that you portray to yourself Paul's home as our home, by and bye." Unguardedly he uttered the sigh of a weary man, as he reclined in the rocker and bent his looks on the grate.

"Possible?" "And thou, too, Sir Noble Heart, harbor a few traitor thoughts?" "Home?"

“Home by and bye?” “Were these the words that betrayed thee?”

Such were the swift questions which her eyes asked, as they glanced up, searching him. Then the minister's wife, long-patient helpmeet, determined, with a great throb of emotion, to pin her heart upon her sleeve for him to see. She leaned forward, kindling with every word, until he thought he had never seen her look so peerless; and, though he trembled for her, he dared not restrain her overflow of soul.

“Sylvester, *this* home the boy shall give us, by the good blessing of the God who gave him to us,—a home at last! Oh, I have dreamed it from his very cradle; the cradle which we have moved from town to town, and one of the few things we have called our own; the cradle of his sisters each in turn before him; then his last; and I used to bend above the dear old rocking crib wherein he lay, and say, ‘He, this one, this man-child, shall make us a home by and bye.’ As his own little, childish heart has been wrung with homesickness on our moves from place to place; as I have seen him often taking his sisters to some hill-top that looked the farthest down the horizon towards the distant village, out of sight, from whence

we were last removed; as I, with them, have felt the strangeness of each new parish circle, and endured its curiosity about my children, the boy himself bristling, and I rebuking him for all our sakes;—oh, how have my secret hopes run out to that fair day when the child should build a home for this itinerant company!—at least for himself. My girls would, no doubt, marry in time——”

“And possibly marry young clergymen?” His face was white as the snow; yet his rebuke went no farther except in a peculiar rising inflection which he gave his question.

With a little start she looked full at her husband, for a moment, and said nothing. But that look had said much; it had said, “You know better. Such a thing is too improbable to be considered in connection with either our Nora or Bella.”

Resuming her speech again, this wife of a preacher unconsciously preached to him. She had grown into his copy, as wives generally do. It came of these years in which she had sat in the pews before him, so deeply solicitous for his success that she always seemed to herself both “to hear for everybody and to preach for him.” She gestured like him, now, though in

a feeble way; her emphasis was like his; her sentences were shaped like his; she easily dealt in longer sentences and more continuous than most women would have used in such familiar conference.

“I have watched that dear young girl to whom Paul is engaged. How sensitive she is! You often see her blush so prettily. How quick her high, though gentle, spirit would be to resent the thousand sibilations that make the ears of a pastor’s wife tingle!”

“But what health she has!” he put in.

“And I once had; but hers is of a kind to continue and to bloom only in the sheltered garden of home. She would wither under the blaze of this public life that I have led, as I have withered. Then our Paul would have what you have had, what nearly every clergyman of our acquaintance has, an invalid wife—and hence a clouded home. Paul’s Clara is too frank and yet too coy. This life in the parsonage would kill her by inches, as it has me; that is, if she could ever bring herself to attempt its necessary submissiveness, which I doubt. Hence I am so glad that Paul, loving Clara, will not be called to serve his Lord in pulpits. Why, the boy himself has a perfect

passion for home, for familiar localities, for the same old hills looking in every morning at his windows, the same dear, neighborly hearts about him from year to year! It is a birth-mark. I gave it him! I have been homesick for years! Were it ever so humble, an abiding place!—a home which births and deaths had made sacred! But, Sylvester, think of it: the birth-chambers and death-chambers of our children are scattered all over this wide New England. It is a day's journey from one lonely little grave to another——”

“Julia, Julia!” he broke in, catching her hot cheeks in his two cold palms. “Do not continue! I can not bear it! And besides, though perhaps you have not thus far, yet you may overstep this limit and say some wicked thing: something that our loving Lord could not overlook. God knows how true and right your great loving heart is! and that no mortal ear save mine has ever heard your plaint; that you have never suffered our children to harbor one adverse thought, but have taught them high esteem and unspeakable veneration for their father's calling in the world. Heaven bless you, and bless heaven for you! But for you I should have long ago turned my back upon it,—this effort

to live for others, to do them good in spite of themselves, this contest with penury, contest with fickle helpers, contest with false brethren in the church, and contest most severe with my own selfish heart! It is well enough to speak out between ourselves; but we are too self-respectful to speak out to the world. Neither the church nor the world has ever known from our lips what we have suffered. We look to God. We please not men, but God. And he holds our crowns in his hands!"

Men—but the idea of it, in this staid minister of the parish! the idea that he was poetic enough, or boyish enough, or human enough,—he played the lover so in smoothing her gray hair and twining its stray locks about his fingers, in calling her the fond old nicknames, in telling her what would lose its luster if inked down here, how great was his affection for her. Why? Had he some blow in reserve?

"But for all that, Sylvester, I have never been the ideal minister's wife, as Clara could not be. See now, the preacher's wife should have iron nerves, not human nerves. She should have a slow, strong heart, not a fluttering thing like Clara's and mine. She should have a moveless countenance, or, better still, a natural

smile, a smile born on her, as some do have, and which is always in place without thinking, when one is combing her hair as when she stands in the church-porch: and not a poor human face that is clouded with a pain or dull with thought and beaming only when, sincere, the heart is full of light."

"I protest that you have made a good minister's wife."

"No. I have been too much devoted to my own children, my own husband, my own home."

"We have had five comfortable years in this village, Julia. You have made this little house very pretty." His eye wandered about the neat room, out into the small cottage-like apartments which opened one into another along the straggling and quaint old structure, wherein every nook and corner bore some mark of that fine taste at adornment so natural to his wife and daughters.

"Yes, indeed," she responded, following his glances and welcoming their compliments. "And you have done wonders for our little lawn, with the trees and vines. How pretty they are in this frost! I pronounce it the most tasty cottage in the village,—which fact some people in the parish do not like. It is a noble view, is it

not?" Her face kindled, as she gazed through the now transparent windows, down upon the winding highway, bordered with white dwellings, and away along the icy river with its clouds of steam rolling up from the falls. Crosston lay at their feet.

The pastor sat so intently regarding her, as she now arose and began to tug his study chair into its proper place by the desk, and as she playfully turned over his papers, remarking, —

"Your sermon-skeleton is waiting."

He responded, "You are happier, now, Julia?"

"Yes, I have talked out my burden of bright hopes for the present. Are you happy?" This last, with a sudden look of slightest apprehension. That dubious shade was on his face again.

"Paul is God's creature more than ours, my wife," said he, gravely. "God loves him, does he not, more than ——"

"Stop, Sylvester!" She turned on him a pleading gaze. "Do not tempt me to answer that last question!"

"Our son has made you his confidante in all things, Julia?" he resumed, gently smiling through the cloud which was now unmistakable.

“My husband, have you something grave, dread—” but she did not say dreadful—“something to say to me, out of Paul’s mind, that he has not said to me?—something that I have always expected to hear, yet hoped I might never hear?”

“Unless it was God’s will, my wife.”

“Unless—unless it was God’s will!” She spoke all the words bravely; just as she had lived bravely and obediently; and in that one sentence revealed more than volumes of the matchless character that she was.

He knew her. He had not walked these years at this woman’s side without learning what springs to touch. He read all the inward struggle of this beloved form now trembling at the arm of his chair and leaning hard on his shoulder. And he knew, too, what reply she would make if he spoke Paul’s secret to her with his next breath. But he had not the heart to speak out now. No, not on this morning when her shattered strength had given him more than usual alarm; not this morning, when he had seen her air-castles in the sun and her joy in them, as he had never seen them. He was puzzling himself how to drop the theme and leave her in the sunshine.

“Has God called him?”

Every word of her question throbbed. He felt their thrill to the tips of her thin fingers that pressed upon his shoulder. She stood indescribably heroic, as he at least could see her. Doubtless many, doubtless most, of those who read of her, can see nothing heroic about her. They will fail to understand what it is all about,—her deep emotion,—a little disappointment. Her son is to be a minister. Half the pious world “would be glad to see a son of theirs a clergyman; would be proud of him!” Glad with the shallow gladness of the uninformed; proud with the foolish vanity of those who do not, can not know what that vain word means when coupled with such a work in life. Incredible, that a prophet’s wife should not desire to be a prophet’s mother? Then ye will be blind to the majestic sacrifice, as no doubt ye are to many other deeds of self-submission in such lives; blind to the beauty of Julia Havens’ pious resignation. For she was struggling to be able to reconcile the gladness with the sadness of one who knew a prophet’s honor and a prophet’s load. Heaven help her in this moment! Surely she will find some one kind reader of her story who will also read aright her heart. The joy,

the sorrow, the hope, the fear; and the disappointment, latest of many.

Sylvester Havens sprang out of his chair and folded her in his arms. He would not, for her precious life, have answered her that day! Forgive him, if you think there is any thing to be forgiven, for he evaded reply by asking,—

“Paul would surely have told you, mother, would he not, had he felt that God called him to be a minister?”

Without doubt Julia Havens would have insisted on a plain answer to her plain asking, but that a pretty girl, “Paul’s Clara,” suddenly appeared upon the threshold, having stolen on them unannounced.

A GRAVE CRISIS.

“I—I came over on papa’s errand.”

“My dear child, good morning. No, do not fear that you ever intrude,” said Mrs. Havens, turning and attempting to recover her composure.

“Papa sent me to say,” the young girl stammered out, in charming confusion over her uplifted muff, for she could not of course be deceived and knew that she had intruded, “to say that Mr. Havens was to take any one of our horses.”

“And replace my one lame beast, calked in yesterday’s drifts, Clara,” said the pastor, advancing and kissing the ruddy cheek that nestled in its hood of down. “But your father was to accompany me. I greatly depended on his support.”

“Papa has to meet a large customer at the factory, I was to add.” She spoke so lightly, as if her errand was nothing. The pastor heard

it so heavily, as if her errand was something hard to bear.

“Is it that church-debt conference?” asked Mrs. Havens in anxious tones.

“Yes, at Mr. Roache’s office this afternoon,” was her husband’s thoughtful reply. Then turning again to this fair and innocent messenger, he asked, “And did your papa say nothing more? He may send me a note, later on?”

“Why, no,” was the reply, as she threw back her heavy furs. “Papa said you would know just what would please him, and of course would do it, no matter what the other gentlemen might say. He remarked to mamma, I think—he was smoking his morning cigar in the library, with the newspaper, and to be disturbed then always annoys him, you know—that he believed he had an appointment with you about the church-debt, which he supposed he should finally have to pay. Papa Norcross was in one of his hard moods. He should not speak as if he owned the church!” Then she tossed her pretty head and was almost minded to be serious for a moment; but reconsidering that purpose, as one who never long harbored the disagreeable, she caught up one of Mrs. Havens’ hands and kissed it lovingly, all pretty dimpled smiles again.

"I know your papa pretty well by this time, my child," said the pastor, seating himself and thoughtfully turning a book, end over end on the desk.

The wife's look into her husband's face seemed to repeat, "Yes, we know him well. He owns many things. He has many a hard mood and is growing harder as he grows in owning."

"Does it trouble you," asked Clara Norcross, "that papa puts you off so cavalierly?"

"You dear little heart," Mr. Havens replied, "you must not read my face so quickly. We had been a little sad over Paul's departure."

"Because," she continued with spirit, ignoring Paul—from whom, by the way, she had a telegram that very moment in her muff,—"because, if it does, papa shall go with you. He never refuses me. I'll ——"

"No, stay"; for she was wrapping her seals about her to fly,—the spoiled child of the village autocrat. "You could do nothing. It is an old trouble, this church debt. It is breeding trouble in the church; that's why my countenance fell."

"Dear, dear!" said the girl, stamping the small foot, "though mamma and I are members, how little we know of church affairs, or church

people, save you. It seems as if church affairs irritated everybody lately. They certainly are making papa very cross and unlovely, mamma and I know, and make this home of yours very sad and very lovely,—that is, I love you more when I see how much you have to endure.” She, herself, looked both vexed and lovely.

“But Clara, dear,” said the pastor, “I do assure you that there are no happier moments in my whole life than when I am preparing my message, or preaching the word of God!”

He spoke so fervently, that the young thing was abashed a little, and then added brightly, “Why do they not leave you to that part then? But oh, I know since I’ve been coming here, how small a part that is of what you do, Pastor Havens! This managing, managing, managing people!” and again she pouted, while her fingers fumbled at that precious telegram, and itched to produce it.

“Managing, and being managed!” sighed the clergyman, and in the next instant forced a laugh,—the dear hypocrite! Indeed, knowing all that he knew, his inward repentance for his outward playfulness was so violent that his features flushed.

“Is it something so serious?” You can never

deceive a good woman who loves you by a false laugh.

"Is it a very grave crisis?" These questions were not spoken, but written on the faces of both women.

"My wife and my child," said the man, "I am heart-sick and discouraged with this matter that is thrown off so lightly on my shoulders by Mr. Norcross. But I do not wonder at Mr. Norcross' action; that is, in one sense. He is independent, is a man of vast affairs; he gets his neck out. To me this is a most serious day. I can tell you no more now."

Clara Norcross was the first, because the younger and quicker. She flew to him and, seating herself on his knee, fluttered out her telegram.

The shrewdest forethought could have availed no better for the peace of a trouble crisis. Of course it instantly engrossed Mrs. Havens and Miss Innocence, its possessor. A telegram is the entrance of a person. This one told of Paul Havens' safe arrival at Amherst College; nothing more, for fear of the sharp eyes of the village operator, a gossip. Yet with this message Paul was back again, to all intents and purposes on these two affectionate women's tongues. The

good man, having listened, escaped on its tidings, and without further cross-examination, from the room.

While these two women are chattering, a few essential biographical scraps, and a pen-stroke or two of portrait-painting, are in place.

Of Mrs. Havens, it is enough to say, since it is hoped that the reader has had a fairly good look at her gentle form and loving, weary face, that in these five and twenty years that she had been Sylvester Havens' wife, she had borne him two daughters, now grown to womanhood, besides this son Paul, the youngest child. She had been an invalid from the rocking of his cradle. It was doubtful if she would ever be any thing else. She was the daughter of a well-known judge of the State of New Hampshire, and had enjoyed, in her youth, all the advantages which such a father could lavish upon her. It was supposed that she would inherit money, whenever the judge died, and this was considered by many wise people a questionable blessing for the young clergyman, her husband. But she was saved this "misfortune," some said providentially. The generous judge died poor, which is not uncommon with the generous. The good wife, however, had been wed in love,

and for love and in love, and home was happy. That she was ever unhappy, worn and broken, though the sunniest invalid you ever saw, were conditions accepted by her, "as the inevitable results of causes from without, ask other minister's wives." You have her own words, and doubtless you would have believed her had you ever heard her speak them,—not many ever had.

Clara Norcross is Mr. Lemuel Norcross' only child. The finest house in this prettiest of New Hampshire villages is her home. Her doting father will give it to her by and bye. He worked very hard for her during many years; that was when she and his now great factory were both in their infancy and childhood. If he works very hard now,—and he does, like a slave,—it is because his factory drives him. Doubtless he thinks that he is still toiling to provide for this precious girl. He indulges her heart full. She manages the manager of the whole smart village of Crosston; yet neither he nor she knows it, for he is so abstracted, and she so artless. She is just as dear to her mother, which is somewhat curious, since her father and mother have grown a thousand miles apart in tastes and likings, late years. This child, favorite of dissimilars, unites them. Her father is a power

in the church, as he is in every thing in this village. He finds much time for the management of ecclesiastical affairs, from coal bills to the pastor's sermons. The mother and daughter of a truth live the religion which their husband and father causes to be preached—pure, lofty, and Christ-like. Does the manager live it? Is not a manager a manager?

Clara Norcross is not very theological. She is simply bright as a gleam of the morning among these granite hills, unselfish and kind in the homes of the poor and the sick, a demure little Miss Propriety, yet a very mischief in all innocent fun and jollity, as if it were the first of Christian duties to be glad—the pure in heart.

She is a pretty girl, you see. Perhaps not tall, with every line of her person, standing there in the study, the graceful curve of beauty. Her hair is brown, her eyes are brown, her cheeks are brown and red—in a word, she is twenty and perfectly healthy. That makes beauty always if the heart be pure; but in her, with such features and such form, it is a delicious, a bewitching sort of beauty—which Paul Havens longs this very moment to see in real flesh and blood, as he studies her photograph in the dis-

tant college room. They are to be married next autumn. It is now January.

"We have set the time, Mamma Havens," said Clara, the instant they were alone. Then promptly, possibly blushing at her own boldness with that never-before-spoken title, she buried her face on "Mamma Havens'" shoulder.

"Who has set the time?" asked the elder lady, in affected surprise.

"Paul and I, before he went back,"—the sounds very faint and muffled.

"When is it, to an hour? Of course you have it all down to the small detail of the hour."

"September 10th, Wednesday of the week"; then, with her head thrown suddenly up, and her brown tresses in charming dis-array, her face a vision of coy delight, "at 4 o'clock P. M., in the church!" With which she stood off to study the effect upon her auditor.

"But, Clara, Paul has n't a cent left, the day he graduates, in July!"

An important fact, you would have said; and the speaker betrayed decided anxiety as she searched the face before her. Miss Norcross' reply might answer the question which her husband had left unanswered, namely:—Had Paul heard that awful call to the ministry?

"Why, Mrs. Havens," quickly continued Miss Cruse, "money does not trouble—that is, I mean, my Paul will not lack," with a bashful laugh.

"True: but he demurred at your supplying money to a great, capable idler, I know."

"Yes, indeed; that is, he hesitated about something and seemed greatly troubled. Papa could not quite make him feel at ease about coming into the office."

"Is he coming into your father's office?"

The question sprung out as if it were a spark from the dear lady's gray eyes.

"Why—why, my precious friend," answered the startled girl, "are you not pleased? You surely do not feel irritated by papa's provoking ways, to that degree?" And the playful girl grew older and more dignified by seconds.

"No, no. Not that. That is, we shall love all of Paul's other home. But I can not explain just why I am so eager to know if Paul has arranged to be your papa's partner. Don't ask me why."

"Yes, he has. We go to Europe, to Lyons, on papa's business for a year. Paul will learn faster there, papa thinks, some things about the silks. Oh, dear! I don't understand that part of it. But, after three mortal hours in the

library with papa, Paul came out into the drawing room to mamma and me, and his hands were cold as ice; poor fellow!"

"Did he seem happy?"

"How could a mere college boy be very happy, deeply agitated by three hours' business in that terrible smoking room?"

"Then he was not happy, do you mean?"

"Not that, either, dear Mrs. Havens. He said, 'I have sealed my fate,' and kissed mamma and me in a wild sort of way."

"And your mamma said?" continued Mrs. Havens, smiling encouragingly.

"Mamma said, 'I am truly thankful to Heaven, Paul Havens, that at last a decision has been reached; thankful both on your own and my daughter's account.' Mamma arose to the occasion, you know, in a solemn way that I never saw her use before. Then she added, in an eccentric vein which I have sometimes seen in mamma, the very absurd remark, 'Paul, I have sometimes thought that you might possibly be a minister.'" The narrator laughed a pretty, though cautious, respectful, and curious little laugh: a ripple that had a world of character in it,—one of those sounds that may mean many things.

Was she also half fearful of such a destiny for her lover? Did she wish to ask some questions, but dared not? They simply studied each other's faces for a moment; then bent eyes on the needle-work which by this time had been whipped out by them both. Needle-work is such a fortress for women. You can grow silent at any convenient time and pretend to be looking for a lost thread, or how to tie a knot.

After an interval of silence, Mrs. Havens was the first to put up her head over the breast-work of her sewing and ask, not seeming very curious, "And what did dear Paul say to that?"

"About becoming a clergyman? He made no reply."

"Your mother would have rather liked that?"

"Yes, possibly, mamma is so good." Then, after biting a thread, "Mamma says we are perfumed with factory oil. A clergyman is highly genteel, my mother often says. But of course what the life may really be——"

"Your mamma does not know," said Mrs. Havens, as she gave the fabric in her lap a great turn over, as if it was the popular opinion concerning the delights of a clergyman's

life. Then she added one question, nearer to the point, though apparently equally careless of the answer. "And your father, what would he have said had a clergyman's son, himself intending to be one, asked his little girl's hand?"

"Papa? The idea! He has even been calling me his boy. He wants a son to take this precious factory. Why, the factory is papa's monument—that and the village. He would die broken-hearted if Paul should—I mean, had chosen the ministry!"

The next question, "And what would you have said, had Paul decided on the ministry?" this, Mrs. Havens did not ask. She thought, she grew very busy, finding threads, reviewing seams, and scanning her work. Indeed she put on her spectacles, which were becoming to her you would have agreed, and hid behind them.

"A penny for your thoughts, Mrs. Havens," cried the young lady at length.

Mrs. Havens' thoughts were very grave; too much so for expression. She had got thus far in them,—

"My son is in danger. He is picking out a path; he, heretofore so frank, so direct, so open, he has decided upon one thing to please Mr. Norcross; he has certainly intimated quite

another thing of late, in his lover's talks about his possible future with this girl. He has said something to my husband that his father was very glad, oh, so piously glad to hear. He has gone back to college, having kept silence with me; this upright young soul, my beautiful boy, is whirling in a tempest!"

But not a word escaped Mrs. Havens' lips. The sewing was, fortunately, very much entangled.

"It is mamma with the sleigh. See!" was the sudden exclamation of Clara, as she arose and beckoned through the window. "You and Nora or Bella; there are seats for three with mamma. You must ride down into the village with us."

It was a most grateful escape. What a relief to a mind which knows not which way to step next, is the privilege of stepping off anywhither with the foot. To walk, to ride, to go!—no matter which way;—oh, the delight of motion when the counsels of the mind are bound moveless!

"New horses?" exclaimed Nora Havens, a sprightly girl, a black-eyed, petite creature, who was always ready with her house-work done, always ready for whatever promised a jolly hour,

and always quick to notice and be glad in her friends' good fortunes. "New horses, Clara?"

"Yes, love," was the reply, as the three fresh passengers were being greeted by Mrs. Norcross at the block. "New ponies, which papa gave me this very morning."

"To console you, so sad at parting with my brother, I suppose," said Miss Nora.

At which they all laughed merrily; except Mrs. Havens, who was almost minded to entertain a nervous chill, notwithstanding they all conspired to wrap her warm in the elegant sleigh-robcs.

"Take my foot-bag. It is fur-lined," said Mrs. Norcross.

Mrs. Havens declined it, thinking, not saying, "Paul's feet! They are amid snares. Will he miss an honest man's way?"

"A brilliant morning, Mrs. Havens," resumed the lady at her side. "But the winds are from all quarters and drift this fresh snow. John, don't drive so fast facing the wind."

"They blow every which way, ma'am," answered back the privileged old coachman.

"They swirl and beat about him," thought Mrs. Havens, meaning her son. "Oh, God! that I only knew! Hast thou,—thou whose

calls are awful if disobeyed,— hast thou called my son? Has his own heart another choice? And yonder great, stone factory another? And this wife-to-be another? His father one wish? I? What is my wish but his happiness in doing his duty?"

The villagers looked upon the load with envy as the turnout sped along. The proud, black creatures, whose glossy forms turned snow to steam, whose performances pleased their pretty owner till she began to exclaim with the discriminating compliments of a genuine horse-woman;—these the village people evidently marked as being new. A mean and jealous watch the people kept on every new luxury that the village lord acquired.

"And there is our pastor's wife along with 'em," said Mrs. Liscom, as she gazed after them from her windows.

"Yes," added Miss Dorothea Baker, a single woman of well-known age, whose sign in the world was, "DRESSMAKING AND FINE SEWING," "Yes, Sister Liscom, as I was proceeding to communicate, they do say that it is evident that our pastor's family is getting very worldly-minded, in view of the wealth Paul will marry with Clara."

"I'm nigh onto sartin' them furs on Nora Havens' back, neow," continued Mrs. Liscom, "was give to her by that Clara Norcross!"

"No doubt of it," said Miss Dorothea, very precisely. "The minister's daughters and Clara Norcross,—you know I speak as an artist,—are the three best-dressed women in church."

"And we never had no other pastor's folks that the Norcrosses cuddled up to so!" said Mrs. Liscom. "On the bias, did you say? Where *is* that fashion plate? Them styles are all new to me." She was searching for a high-colored, cheap publication, which purported to give the latest Winter-street fashions, Boston, Mass. Mrs. Liscom, with Dorothea's, help was "fixin' up" a daughter's wardrobe in hopes that "this ere winter won't pass without marryin' her off!"

But the sleigh-full, mostly joyous, and, though gossipy,—gossiping only good things of every body mentioned,—whirled onward, oblivious of what the Mrs. Liscoms and Misses Dorothea Bakers were saying. Ah, guileless reader, oblivious? No, no; but a thousand, thousand times they had and shall hear it,—though, to be sure not for this one happy hour as the ponies fly on their way.

Good Pastor Havens was not so fortunate. He was asking for his mail in the post-office side of the store, which had also its dry-goods side. Concealed, as the clergyman was, by the great rack of boxes, the deacon on the dry-goods side, buying blankets, did not see him, though the deacon saw the gay sleigh as it flashed past the window.

“Brother Short,” said Deacon Luce, gravely addressing the young merchant, “sech jinin’ of a pastor’s family with the rich! It all comes of that son of his’n a marryin’ Brother Norcross’ gal.” And he shook his head, sincerely distrustful of the future.

“Well, deacon,” was Mr. Short’s reply, “what possible harm can there be in that? Besides, I have found Paul Havens a sensible young fellow and he is not our pastor.”

“Much harm, I say. A rich minister you can’t manage, you orter know. How much off? Come, now, you aint agoin’ ter charge me full price, bein’s I’m a brother in the church, are ye? Ye see, young Brother Short, as how ef Norcross settles on havin’ the pastor’s son for his’n, ’tain’t no ways likely as we’ll get a change of pastors fur years ter cum. Norcross’ll keep ’em here.”

“Change?” exclaimed the merchant, almost hotly “you do not want a change, do you?”

“No, no, I hain’t said so,” said the rich old farmer, owner of five hundred acres; “do n’t go fur to say I do; I only said *ef*——”

And the rest of the conversation the listener most in interest would not suffer himself to hear. But as he lifted his feet into the borrowed Norcross cutter, and resumed his journey to that church-debt conference, poor man, he had to realize a new load. Was the old deacon jealous and discontent? He had never dreamed of it before. Disturbed by such a trifle? Not a trifle at all. This engagement of Paul’s with the great man’s daughter was no trifle. It was a grain of bitter seed, just sown. The village had suspected, feared, guessed, but never known, till within these last few days, and the student’s visit nearly over. The church-debt? That was but a zephyr in comparison with the high winds that might now begin to blow.

“Trifles, trifles,” mused the clergyman, climbing the hills and whipping little gashes in the deep snows at the roadside. “Lives are made up of trifles. What matters it to all this church full of people whom Paul marries? Yet, no doubt, the village is buzzing with the news.

And Norcross is not very popular—is too imperious.” Then, as the runners creaked and groaned along the frosty path, the solitary driver seemed to himself to be holding conversation with these dissonant sounds.

“Reduced to child’s play—play—play,” creaked the runners.

“What?—my great calling?” answered the pastor. “I deny it. The merchant’s bundles become untied, yet he patiently ties the cord again, for gain. These souls of men erratic, they vex me. But shall I not be patient, when it is not for gain, but for the Lord’s own?”

“Impertinent,” creaked the runners.

“A long word for you, that!” was his reply. “Who is free from impertinences?”

“It is these small stings that have always fretted the children of the parsonage. High-spirited Paul—Paul—Paul,” screamed the runners.

“But my son has heard a Voice,” cried the preacher. “If he has not, let him abide among the buyers and sellers. If he has heard even a whisper of the Voice, after a time he will find a hill-top of silence, where the Voice plainly speaks—as I have now!”

Indeed, he had reached the height of his mountain road, and the steaming Norcross horse had halted there for rest.

“Paul shall see, as I do from this spot, these lofty peaks like headlands of the truth! And my son shall observe how they guard the vales where low down dwell and toil the people. Seeing so far, he shall be patient and glad. Paul shall feel a Breath like the breath of these free winds that seem to me to blow right out of Heaven. Oh, how they wreath the snows on these silver mountains! I can discern not a farmer’s roof; not a human creature to share this breath with me. It is all mine, mine! Fresh from God! These winds, unbound, unchained, give me new strength, and, as it were, an inspiration which I am to carry to the factory huts. Paul, my son, they are a symbol. I will put it in a letter to thee I will tell thee how my heart exults, at times, with the thoughts of our great embassy. I,—we, would not exchange our calling with the very immortals, shut in Heaven!”

And the old man lifted up his voice in song, to the music of the bells, and the runners, and the diapason winds among the somber-sheeted fir-trees. A hymn, sung till the frosty

breath that bore it grew faint before the singer's heart had gotten half its utterance.

“The love of Christ their hearts constrains,
And strengthens their unwearied hands.”

It was rapture! He clapped his hands across his breast more from joy than for warmth. He grew silent only to begin again, calling mightily a favorite couplet, —

“High on his everlasting throne
The King of Saints his work surveys.”

Not new, you see, but old, very old and forever full of fire, these snatches of heroic song. The singer's face was fire-lit within his furs, all hoar with his frosty minstrelsy.

“Happy, if with my latest breath
I may but speak his Name!
Preach him to all, and gasp in death,
‘Behold, behold the Lamb.’”

All this Pastor Havens subsequently wrote to Paul. Wrote it? The ecstasy of such moments can not be written.

And what said Paul, bending over the letter, in distant college halls?

III.

IN CONFLICT.

“ I CAN’T say I envy you.”

“ You read father’s letter? A dear, noble letter from a peerless man. Yet I have kept it a month from you, my best friend.”

The first speaker was Paul Havens’ room-mate at Amherst College, Stephen Crane, a pale-faced, quiet student, who combined great strength of mind with almost a womanly gentleness; whose whole soul was fixed in the purpose of a mission in the heart of Africa; who had written Livingston’s Westminster Abbey epitaph in the fly-leaf of his pocket Bible,—*“ Who will help to heal this open sore of the world ? ”* and underneath, had accepted, like an answer, his mother’s writing of his own name, *Stephen Crane*.

Paul Havens loved this man, as he deserved to be loved; he trusted him as he deserved to be trusted. And Crane had learned what lofty meanings love and trust had in the great heart of his friend.

“Why do you decline to envy me?” asked Havens, stopping in his heavy stride back and forth.

“Because,” replied Crane, pausing in his light and girl-like walk on the other side of the round table, “because—look me in the face, Paul—you have been a wretched man ever since you made that engagement.”

“Which engagement? with her?” The deep voice sank to reverence, and the fine blue eyes turned gently on the mantle picture of Clara Norcross. Havens reached out his hand to the picture with a touch like a caress.

“You may well ask which engagement, old fellow. Heaven bless you with the girl, say I. I never saw her, but it is a sweet face.”

“A sweet face and a good!” said Paul, tossing back his wavy hair, and turning his ruddy countenance. “Say good, Steve! For Heaven’s sake, say a good face; one to be trusted; one which would not be a false beacon in this cloudy world.”

“Why, yes, Paul, a good face. She will make a man a good wife—and a rich wife.” This last in a low and deliberate utterance, which was full of meaning.

“I understand. I know,” cried the other, resuming his walk, till the floor shook beneath him. “It is the other engagement. I am to be a—I promised to be a spinner of silks. Well, well; is n’t that a clean calling?”

“You need n’t roar at me, you far from happy man! To spin silks is as honorable as to preach sermons—for some men.”

“For some men!” The young fellow flushed till his cheeks seemed burning with the fire from within. “And why not for me? I’ll—I’ll spin silks,”—and he lifted his great hand clenched,—“or do any thing else that a man may do, for her!” His hand struck the table so that the lamp-light leaped up as if in pain.

The fragile and the strong confronted each other. The slight form quivered, and its hand had instinctively been lifted to its breast; all the blood for a moment went out of its loving face, and then with a great surge came back in almost alarming color. Then the eyes filled, and the voice was quite in a sob, as it said,—

“Paul, Paul! No, no! You would not do literally any thing for the sake even of the woman you loved?”

“Dear old Steve,” responded Paul, weighting each word with the deepest fervor, “I am mak-

ing every body whom I love most miserable!" He put both hands down hard on the table and gazed into the troubled face of his friend, his own face handsome, sad, wild.

"Paul Havens, answer me," resumed his friend. "What did you say to your good father?"

"God help me," groaned Paul, "one thing to father."

"And another thing to Clara?"

"And nothing to my mother!"

"And what to your God, sir?"

"And a long assenting talk with Mr. Norcross! Kind heaven, where am I? I seem to be losing my providential way. Oh! the distress of it, dear Steve! What is my way out?" And he began again his heavy strides across the little dormitory.

The frail man, halting still by the table, his tender glances following his friend, seemed like a lion's keeper, with love as the chain. He said, "You are a Christian, Paul. Obey God!"

"I don't know if I am. What is a Christian in these days? The air is full of so many isms that——"

"Oh, my brother!" It was a veritable cry of anguish. "Would you escape that way out?"

"I know what you mean again," was the an-

swer, and the speaker addressed the floor beneath his pacing feet. "Bred as I have been, in a parsonage; zealous as I have been in this college through all my course for our class prayer-meetings and all high-toned fidelity to the old faith; a debater, a recognized champion for orthodoxy in the club; that I, whom many of you have looked to as a teacher, at whose Christian character no man, I have hoped, could sneer, not of the strong—oh, the conceit of it!—should turn my face up with a doubt written on it! And yet," pronouncing the words very slowly and almost fiercely, "I do!" He suited the action to the words, his broad chest thrown out, and his hands locked behind his back, confronting Crane.

"Doubt what, Paul? For instance—that your own good father is an honest man?" Quickly the slight form almost wound itself like a vine about this oak. Clinging to his friend's shoulder and speaking in a now uncontrolled gush of tears, young Crane went on: "You can not doubt that your father has been serving a real God, all these years; can not doubt that a living Christ has ever been walking just before him in his life of sacrificial devotion to the Christian ministry; can not believe that he, and

I, and all the hosts of them, have been, shall be, following a myth in obeying this calling, leading Voice?" And then, in sobs, this brother's voice was for a moment hushed upon that shoulder.

The shoulder did not resent. It simply replied, "My father? That noble, that heroic, that almost adorable man? I say, Crane, it is the very thought of what he has suffered that almost sours me. You were not born and bred in a parsonage; you do not know the mean insensibility of many to kindness; the dull yawning over truths uttered from the very heart; nor the rude impertinence with family affairs that stings a delicate nature which honest blows could not dismay. You do not know the chagrin of pinching want repaying labors and rewarding talents capable of earning luxury—but you will know; you will hear men freely express the opinion that the ministry is the lap of luxury; that it is, almost universally, about the only vocation in which its followers could get a decent living. Ah, my father! Such a man! Do not think that he has ever answered back to such of the people as complain! Not a word, the silent hero! But I have rebuked them for him, more than once."

“But, Paul Havens,” continued the brotherly face now uplifted, “that is not my question. You do not deny your Lord. You have told me of that boyhood’s hour when you felt that you, too, were forgiven; that hour——”

“Hush!” The shoulder shook now; it grew soft as a pillow. Unutterable memories were at work within. The vision all came in a moment—that boyhood’s hour, that scene in his father’s study, when the greatest of all questions had been asked of his soul, as, sooner or later, it is asked of all souls—that nameless question of the soul’s duty unto God. There is no single theological term that does not cramp it; therefore, let us use not one of them. He reviewed it all—the dusk of evening, and the only light the embers in the grate. The long, long conference begun with the sun shining in upon the preacher and his troubled son; the open Bible which they had been turning, leaf by leaf; the overthrow of doubts as if a fortified city had been taken; and then, at last, the two upon their knees, the preacher and “his little boy” of sixteen years, with those prayers in the twilight, and the peace in “the great light” which was neither from candle nor sun!

Paul Havens threw his arm about his friend;

he pressed his friend's head to his own breast and stroked its locks softly, saying nothing. But his hot cheeks felt a dew that cooled them.

After a little, as they had become seated, the chapel clock, high up in its great tower, striking out the hour of midnight, started them both, the one from his reveries, the other from his prayers.

"But all this does not settle my questions," resumed Paul, "I am not fit to be a minister!"

"It is not mine to speak of your heart-fitness, my dear fellow," promptly answered Crane. "I foresee that you have a long road, and a hard, to traverse before you settle that problem of heart-fitness."

"Yes, heart-fitness; and what does the world of our future auditors, asleep in these village-beds, just now, or just come from the theatres, bound for city-beds, what do they know of the heart-agony by which ministers are made? Not one in ten thousand in the churches, good deacons, pious matrons, and joyous youth, could understand my frame of mind. If they should ever come to know it, you may be sure I should never get a call to a pastorate. No, not men of my stamp, but of yours, are cut out, as they term it, for pulpits."

"Still, I say," with the emphasis of undisturbed

conviction on the pronoun, "that a giant like you can live where I shall break, and then go up higher to my rest. You not fitted? You, who draw men after you; who win all men's love and provoke no man's hate but the mean man's; you, who surpass us all in brilliancy of mental powers; you, a born orator, which is to you, I do believe, like a birth-mark,—for they say there is such a thing; and a pastor's wife is forever preaching for him as she listens to him with her very heart in her throat,—that you are not fitted, if only your heart was right?"

"Steve, let me set you right in one respect," responded Paul. "I have accused myself too severely. I have not intentionally compromised my manhood. If I seem to myself to have taken up contradictory vows, in speaking with father, Clara, Mrs. Norcross, and—and, my God, it is, I do solemnly now assert, only a seeming. I have thought myself decided in each instance, for the moment. Oh, pitiful heavens! That is my problem, returned to me again. What shall I do?"

"I am thoroughly worn out for to-night, Paul," was Crane's reply, as he chafed his forehead. "I must go to bed. I am not strong like you. But you will yet see the light."

“Steve, forgive me. Go to bed. I’ll go walk out on the campus. The moon is shining very clear. Good night; God bless you. I hope you may be asleep when I come in.”

Paul thrust back into his pocket a letter from Clara Norcross, part of which he had intended to bring before his monitor, and putting on his coat went softly out of the room.

Sleep, which this absolutely perfect physical frame always trifled with, was now as powerless over him as over one of the thousand peeping stars in the winter sky. Havens pulled out the letter from Clara. He read it again, by light of the full moon. It was a pretty girlish invitation to join her father and herself for a week’s holiday in Boston.

That is, the Boston rendezvous was the excuse for this particular letter,—the third within a week, and one extra; but Boston was frilled and plaited all about with the graceful and becoming utterances of a bright girl’s affection, with here and there a brilliant flash of comment on village things, the world in general, and the reader in particular. Havens had hardly read its first page, standing there in the broad, deserted hall, using both moonbeams and lamp-light from the smoky, ancient burner,

which some readers will remember, before his handsome features began to relax their iron lines. He soon smiled like one resting after toil. A letter can do that for a man. A letter is often better than bed or bread.

“To introduce me to our city folks?” He talked to the letter very softly, yet aloud. “That means to show off her lover, the witch! She is like my mother and sisters,—not ashamed of my broad shoulders, if I am no society man.”

Being a young man, he confessed to the usual physical prowess and its accompanying pleasant self-consciousness. He contemptuously faced the keen wind that howled through the college grounds and buffeted with his open coat in the doorway. Ah, those winds that “went through college,” from front to back doors!

“I must be prepared to sing, like a sophomore, to her playing a college song or two,” he went on. “Certainly, you charmer! And there will be evenings out enough, and dancing to see. Being engaged, as we are, it is no blushing matter if my little almost-wife—heaven bless the child—suggests that I do not crush my dress-suit into a bag, but bring a trunk!”

He laughed aloud, with the male delight of being looked after in such conjugal minuteness.

It is doubtless well-nigh the most delightful sensation in the world,—the sensation of being cared for, like a married man, which an engaged young fellow receives at first like a shock, every now and then, from the demure, young thing,—his affianced. To her, however, it comes natural enough, no doubt.

He took time to appropriate this. He watched the changeful silhouettes of aged branches against the face of the moon, and saw her face, repeatedly, in those changeful lines. He followed the truant winds, as they flew far out over the sleeping village and lost themselves on the icy surface of the distant river. He stared at Mount Tom and Mount Holyoke, grim watchers, who lay half dozing in the argent light. Then his eye was caught by a long silver wreath of steam that reposed above the body of a passing midnight train. The train, bound city-ward, recalled him to the letter and its errand.

“Her cousins will be curious enough, no doubt, she says, as to the country minister’s son. Clara, have a care what you say!” But his scrutiny between the lines reassured him, as it had a dozen times before, the ambitious fellow! or was it the honor-thy-father-and-mother that was in him? Both, thank heaven!—a lofty

self-respect, an almost reverent regard for his sire.

The letter: "A week of decided rest for my book-worm; from the cloisters to the drawing room."

Paul: "That's sensible! But in my frame of mind, will it help me? Still, problems decided in a cloister are never wisely decided. I have never seen much of this wealthy society of the city world, where my dear girl is so familiar."

The letter: "The theatre and the opera season will be at full height, my student."

Paul: "*O tempora, O mores!* The deacon's daughter! And all her city friends are orthodox church members, she has told me. This is New England Puritanism, in the year 18—. But of course, I forget: every body might go to the opera,—I'll stop at the opera,—every body—except the preacher. How innocent she is about all this. Yet, I do know that she is the very soul of Yankee prudence and propriety. And her piety? Why, ask all the poor of her father's village. This theatre and opera business—it is a question of atmospheres, perhaps. There is one atmosphere in the city home, and another in the New England country parsonage. I have breathed only one. I will go

down with her and breathe the other for a week. I am not a minister yet, at any rate. I am a simple senior—who—has—heard—a Voice!"

He spoke with an upturned face, as if some window in the heavens might almost have been expected to open with rebuke, or invitation. He stood long silent, deeply stirred again. Then he thrust the letter in his bosom and stalked out into the solitude that lay on college hill. Whither he walked he could not tell. What were his thoughts could not be written. Few, even in the ministry, could understand them if written. His friend, Stephen Crane, for instance, could not. Here and there a clergyman who could; and these rare ones are not the least among the disciples in the world's modern pulpits.

When he returned at length, once more under the smoking hall lamp, he read from the letter:—

The letter: "And now, dear Paul, upon my knees, before I sleep, I put my wishes for you into shape of prayers. Wishes are nothing; prayer is every thing. May our dear Saviour make you more and more just like himself. Our Jesus, Paul, for I never pray to him but I remember how your own frank words, even in our lovers' tryst, first led me to adore him. Good-night."

He kissed the letter, and went up to a troubled sleep, after hours of a whirlwind not yet blown out of his sky.

Of course he went to Boston. It was three days later only, that he presented himself at the junction, and soon found the drawing-room car which had just brought his heart from the North.

“Right this way, my boy,” exclaimed Mr. Norcross from the platform, with actually some thing like a warm welcome. In fact, the business-hardened little man, with a great head, was decidedly proud of the fine-looking young fellow, physically in such contrast with himself. With cordial courtesy, and a good humor that always made his coming like a bracing breeze, Havens drew himself up on the step, and together they entered the apartment.

“You are the best of boys,” she said, having given his lips as good as they sent, for the first time in her father’s presence. “I was afraid those horrid senior studies would be in your way.” Then she nestled down into her becoming wraps, with luxurious comfort, and began to purr at him.

Such delightful little confidences, with now and then a seriousness as became a sensible girl, but mostly pretty nothings with which we

busy our tongues when our eyes wish to be free to admire one whom we hold dear. While the wheels were rolling and her tongue was running, she was taking in every thing about him, from his good clothes, to his temper and mood. She decided that he was happy to be with her. That was enough.

While the wheels pounded along the ice-locked earth, while the garlands of steam were being looped and trailed across the wintery fields, while the luxury within wrought frost-work air-castles on the window panes, Paul Havens, the poor-born preacher's son, was actually thrilling with the sense of the affluent hour. It was not the vulgar love of money, but the high-bred consciousness of plenty. Who can describe it but the sensitive soul which has all its life felt the rasping need of close economy.

It was not that the parsonage life had ever felt a pinch of want. Not so, thank thrift! There was always a sweet loaf and always a tasty garment. In the Norcross home, however, an abundant plenty. Paul never entered it but he seemed to encounter that unfamiliar atmosphere of inexhaustible plenty. He felt it now, in Clara's presence. Every want can be supplied. No more a counting of costs, a turning or a

twisting for honesty. With this woman's hand in his, it was probable that never again while he lived need he know what it cost to subsist a week, a term or a year. All the refined tastes of a cultured gentleman could be pursued to gratification. There need be, moreover, no limit to the best and truest impulses of his generous heart.

"How strange it seems at times, Clara," he said, "that you, and all this, have come to me. Think how much more my father deserves it."

"Dear pastor Havens," she responded tenderly. "But then, ministers have their own reward, I suppose."

Paul turned a startled look at her; but that she was innocent he saw in a moment. Yet the arrow stuck for almost all the rest of the way. He managed, however, to conceal it.

Then she spared him for a while to her father, who had gone into the smoking-room; meanwhile she sat in perfect happiness, realizing her delight in him all the more that he was out of sight yet within call. When the gentlemen returned at length, her joy grew stronger; yet she still sat dreaming, gazing out of darkling windows, on the long, low flashes of the scattered street-lamps' fire.

"We are nearly at our journey's end, Clara," said Paul, rousing her.

"Dear old Boston town," she replied, still dreaming, yet surrendering her hand. "You know it well, Paul?"

"Yes, its streets, its walls, its libraries."

"But not its homes, very well, you monk. You have managed to see many cities, in your philosopher way?"

"Yes, Clara, from here to San Francisco, when I need vacations, in the employ of the Government Board of Civil Engineers, you know."

"And Paul, say; there is nothing like dear, delightful Boston, is there? Papa, see here." He put a third head in the group. "Why can't we, I mean Paul and I, manage to have a Boston house for the winters, as well as the nice, country home up where his factories will be? I mean after we return from France, of course." So that was set in motion.

Meanwhile the train had halted, and there was a white-whiskered, courtly little gentleman with a by-no-means plain-faced, but rather courtly girl upon his arm, both of whom were greeting them cordially and handing them into the carriage.

"Why, Uncle," cried Clara, after the introductions, which were hard to manage in the midst of

the hearty and familiar family salutations, and Yankee questions, "Uncle, you did not know I was to bring Mr. Havens along?"

"Oh, yes I did, or rather Puss, here, told me. I'll not crowd you. My own coupé is here also. By the way," and he put his mouth to her ear, with a little pat on her shoulder, "What a splendid looking fellow he is! I say that; but Puss, here, well you know your cousin has high notions. Good heart has Puss. Let her read him as she will, and never you mind. He's fine."

"What is all this privacy, Bill?" inquired the other Mr. Norcross. "We are hungry."

And away went the vehicles, chasing each other through the cow-paths of the old into the straight streets, at length, of the new Boston.

"Ah, the luxury of it: this senior ease and leisure," thought Paul, giving his hair a brush in the elegant chamber assigned him by the host in person, and contriving somehow to await Clara's emergence from the door across the hall. "This being granted leave of absence on your own recognizance, and few questions asked by the Prex! This being treated as a man grown at last, and not as a boy at school! And to be here in this stimulating city, with a week of it, the guest of congenial people; and so cor-

dially received by them, and with her—if only one's mind were at rest!”

“The young lady says, sir, will you wait for her before going down to the library,” said the black porter, appearing at Paul's door, ajar with his rap. “And a letter for you, sir,”

“Certainly.” And while he tore open his letter, he finished his soliloquy. “Mind at ease, and in the senior year? What senior year ever made good its early promises of delightful ease and calm vacations? A man? Yes, indeed, or on the the threshold of it, and you realize the stern fact of it so sturdy! Doubtless, that is the very purpose of the vacations,—that a fellow may try his sail down close to the outer bar and look over at the open sea. That is, with men who have a purpose in life; with all but the rich fellows, to whom college is but a bouquet in the button-hole. It is not strange, I suppose, that I am inclined to be grave as a judge; and then, too, that Voice! But yet,” with a shrug of his shoulders, half desperately, “here's for a week of brightness. Ah!”

He had been reading Stephen Crane's kind letter and not regarding what he read till suddenly he came across this:—

The letter: “I should have had my wits

about me and recognized the name of your host, Brother William Norcross. He is a partner in your sick man's Boston business, and very wealthy, all of which you know I believe; but, better far than that, as perhaps you do not know, he is an active friend of foreign missions, the New England director in the Home Board; and poor, little I have even been admitted to a conference with him in which I tried to enlist his sympathy in behalf of heroic Livingston's land. I understand him to be a very influential church man. I do not feel so anxious about you, now that I recall these facts."

"For me?" asked Clara, all radiant as she approached at this moment, and Paul handed her the letter pointing to the above passage. "Yes, that's Uncle William to perfection," she continued as she read. Then clinging to his arm as they slowly descended the noble stairs, to which she called attention by the way, remarking, —

"Is n't this a perfectly, lovely house?"

"Magnificent!" And he detained her at the turn of the flight before a Bierstadt, on whose grand mountains the most glorious of lights was shed from a rose window, artificially illuminated at night.

“Yes,” she continued, “Uncle William is full of church affairs. I suppose he would have liked you full as well, Paul, though he does indeed admire you as it is, you must know, if you had been a young minister.”

Paul flushed again. But, the innocent, she meant no more now than she did by a similar reference on the train. She went on chattering while he seemed to be looking very critically at the picture, “This house is a very home to ministers. All of them know uncle, you may be sure. And of course, though he really can not in fact, yet he seems to know all of them. No doubt we shall find one or two missionaries, or some other of the dear souls, I mean the clergymen, in the library. Come, we must go down there.”

“Yes, Clara. But you know I never met any of them, and it is not yet late; see, here’s a fine De Hass. Ah, the master!” They were at the next turn of the marbles. “Your cousin, now.”

“Puss? Why Puss is the greatest minister’s girl in the world! I mean that that child——”

“Child?!” broke in Paul with a smile.

“To be sure; she is just twenty-nine. I know,” laughed Clara. “But as I was saying,

my cousin Fidle, otherwise Fidelia, otherwise Puss —and that's nearest right, for she is the slyest, most cat-like good girl," with sincere emphasis on the good, "that you ever met—well she will marry a clergyman, provided,"—very strong emphasis on provided, with a nod of the pretty head,—“she ever finds one to her mind.”

“That is?”

“That is, very, very manly, pious, and most exceedingly intellectual, orthodox to a tittle, as uncle says; one who will be eminent in the profession; but, most of all, submissive to her. See?”

“Quick! A turn down into the conservatory for a moment. The others?”

“Then there is Aunt Matilda, the sweetest, dearest mother in the world; mother to us all, and especially to all the clergymen who come here; generally has one, an invalid, in the house, that he may be near some city physician eminent in throat practice. But she is a lovely woman. She dresses plainly but richly, and always reminds me of what a queen in the mourning should be; though for that matter, she always wears the loveliest smile.”

“There are two others, I've heard you speak of?”

“Yes, cousin Minnie: she’s eighteen, just two years behind me. She’s a lovely girl, but a fly-away. She has a class, though, in Puss’s Mission School, down at North End. They go in the family carriage, in fine style every Sabbath afternoon. Puss is superintendent.”

“And the only son?”

“That’s Andrew. Named after the great governor, though before he was governor, when he was simply ‘a splendid type of a man,’ as papa and uncle always say, and when they only knew that he would sometime be governor. The three gentlemen were fast business friends.”

“You chatterer,” whispered Paul impatiently, “we must go in. Tell me a word of Andrew.”

“Here he comes down the hall,” said she suddenly looking past a bower of exotics. Advancing with a smartly ringing heel, a wholesome-faced young gentleman now appeared among the shrubbery. “He’s all common sense and business; in the Boston house; your partner.”

And with that word she introduced the two young men; immediately following which the party joined the family in the library.

IV.

ON THE AVENUE.

“LET’S leave that till morning, Lem,” Mr. William Norcross was saying, as the young people entered.

The two brothers were standing by the center table, and had been conversing on the business of the house. The younger, Clara’s father, with ever a severe and graven face, brown-haired, complexion brown, eyes keen, the abler man, or, at least, the most devoted business-zealot of the two—for the other was no slave—and the originator of the vast manufacturing interests which they now owned together. The elder, of precisely the same stature and form, twin-like indeed, but otherwise in the utmost contrast.

“Business to-morrow, Lem,” said the latter. His handsome white hair and benignant eyes, his ruddy hues of cheerful content and health, his refined and courtly bearing, his delightful cordiality, which sat upon him always, whether he spoke in his laughing tones with a frequent flash of wit, or whether he was silent in thought,

as he read you, taking your hand; these were the things in contrast with the other man.

“We suppose all these young people are acquainted,” the host continued. “Mother, you have met Mr. Havens, Pastor Havens’ son, that glorious man up in the country. This is my pastor, Brother Crestlake, who has dropped in on us to dine”; this gentleman arose and took Paul by the hand, the host still retaining the floor, and continuing, “Now, we will have our usual evening prayer. I put it before the evening meal, Lem, when I find it catches the children, and every body else. In the morning, it’s hurry off to business, each at different hours. After dinner, it’s society, meetings, the opera, and the like. I catch ’em all at this hour.” Meanwhile, he had himself taken up the large Bible, as the leader—the proper thing for the host always—while winsome Minnie, being youngest, and therefore servant of these holy offices, passed to each person a copy of the Testament and Psalms. “Where do you put it, Lem,” the host asked, turning the leaves for the place.

“In France!” At which everybody shouted. Then the office-worm, looking suddenly up, added, “Eh?”

“Drop business, brother,” said Mr. William. “It is prayer-time.”

“Yes, indeed, dear papa,” exclaimed Clara, who reddened both in sympathy and confusion on her father’s account; for she too well knew that his abstracted answer had saved him a more embarrassing if an accurate answer as to when they had family devotions in the Crosston mansion. In fact, he put it, this family prayer, fifteen years ago, out of the house, not intending, but being too busy to give it place.

A hush fell on the brilliant room, as humble now and reverent a calm as Paul had ever seen the parsonage study wear. The oil lamp and the crystal chandelier may both light up the same inspiring page. Across the tufted floors the household servants stole to take their seats, with folded, aproned arms and restful, grateful looks, forgetting, for the moment, in this temple of the home, God’s first on earth, the differences which man’s later earthly shrines have made. The gilded volumes on their shelves about seemed worshipful on-lookers, as this pious house bent each above the Only Book. Now silver voice of maiden fair, now golden tones of mother, and now the deeper iron tones of the men, as onward ran the story of the dear Lord’s loving look bent on the rich young man.

A chapter read "in course," and yet so apt, though for a little Paul but lightly heeded it. His mind was full of the delightful calm. He took his turn next after Clara's verse, it chanced, but meanwhile smelled the perfume of the flowers that came in all about them, listened to the tinkle of the fountain just through the doors amid the flowers, and thought upon the splendid fittings of the room in which a Christian rich man found his sweetest rest at night, an hour of household prayer.

Still Paul read, unheeding, and yet heeding; as to the ear a welcome strain of music sometimes comes,—inspiring, hallowing, heard, and not heard, for it starts the soul on wings that take one far away. Paul thought of home; his home as pure as this, and like it, in this religious joy; and there was such a sense of gratitude for his own Christian rearing. In all the truest culture he had shared with these, the culture that these valued most was his, the faith and practice of a Christian. Not one was here who did not bear at least the name and vows of a believer. Here for the moment were no young, no old, no rich, no poor, for Christ was all in all. The accents of these women, reading the solemn words, lent added grace to the narrative

of grace and pity. You hear your mother, sister, wife, or daughter, read the Book aloud, especially if you have not heard it read by any one for months, and your spirit quivers with the thrill these tones can give you.

Then suddenly Miss Clara read, "Honor thy father and thy mother; and thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself."

Paul awoke from his dream as he read, "The young man saith unto him, All these things have I kept from my youth up. What lack I yet?"

It was his future father-in-law who took up, in a dry tone, "Jesus said unto him, If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast."

"That means my body, mind, and soul," thought Paul. "These are all I have to sell. Unless I must add the sacrifice of this happy girl at my side."

"And give to the poor," Mr. Norcross went on, "and thou shalt have treasure in heaven. Come and follow me."

As gentle music, the golden tones of the matron of the group, Mrs. Norcross, hostess, closed the reading; which, indeed, was a recitation, for she had shut the volume, and her solitary diamond glistened upon the forefinger that

caressed the Book in her lap. Paul thought like a tear the stone shone. "But when the young man heard that saying, he went away — exceeding sorrowful — for he had — great possessions!"

"Our beloved pastor," said the host softly, as he took down his eye-glasses and lifted his head with a look of calm joy, "Brother Crestlake, will lead us at the Throne of Grace."

Had he been a high priest confessed, instead of the plain, untitled "preaching brother," as New England Puritanism has historically contended, this clerical gentleman would scarce have seemed mitered with a loftier authority in the eyes of this domestic circle. To be sure, his was a wealthy church, of national influence in the denomination, and he himself a man of a confessed brilliancy of talent, in a way. But there was certainly nothing in his reputation, known to Paul, nor in his personal presence, keenly read now for the first time by the bright, young student of successful men, nothing to warrant the dominance, the almost sacred sway, which were accorded him by this company.

Paul thought of his own father, and how becomingly his humble righteousness could have worn such affectionate esteem. Even this astute, business man and millionaire might well revere

Sylvester Havens. Even this bright circle of highly-educated young people might well do deference to the learning, the purity, and the self-denying service of mankind which Sylvester Havens' holy life had displayed for many years. But the sparkling Mr. Crestlake, star preacher, with his five and thirty years, unvexed by hardships, genial gentleman and prophet though he were, that he should be treated with such refinement of reverence !

It put a new phase on the ministerial life for Paul Havens. He had never seen his father handled with such velvet touch, except by the very poor, the grateful sick, or the discerning pious here and there. He had never seen the rich farmer, in all their country pastorates, who did not seem to feel that he owned the pastor as he did his wide-spread acres or his costly herds. He had never seen in Lemuel Norcross, autocrat of Crosston, what he now beheld in William Norcross' delicate consideration for this preacher of religion.

“We will follow you, mother, on the pastor's arm,” said the host with easy decorum, now indicating the dining room with a motion of the hand.

Indeed, the clergyman had arisen from his knees to assume that place of precedence. He

had done it many times before, in this home, and knew just what was expected of him.

Paul must have worn some outward facial index of his thoughts that prompted Clara, as she nestled so happy at his side, for she said, — “It is the pastor and not the man, Paul. I told you how they rendered honor to the preachers here. But do you altogether like him?”

“He is faultlessly dressed, is he not? — though not clerically; and his manners are so very easy,” said Paul.

“Yes, indeed,” as they moved along, “and he will patronize you, as he once tried to me, before we push our chairs back,” she replied, rustling into her place beside Paul at the table.

It was a most superb apartment in which they were now seated; and a board which never knew stint smiled and flashed before them. As they took their places a decent silence followed, till they could hear the click of the passing hoofs on the pavements of the avenue.

“Brother Lem, ask a blessing,” said the host.

Brother Lem was ready; indeed, he was never other than ready for the employment that came next to his hand. But what he said, as he mumbled his stereotyped “blessing,” for all the world like the hum of his factory-wheels, no mortal ear

could hear. Clara knew it, however, by heart, having understood him years ago, and of late years memory giving to his mouthings intelligible meanings.

“Brother Norcross,” prompt and leading with his rich voice, spoke the Rev. Mr. Crestlake, “I congratulate you on that generous gift of five thousand dollars to missions, last week.” The speaker, in an impressive way, aproned himself with his napkin clear to the throat. There was some thing exceedingly pleasing in the sound of this gentleman’s voice.

“We greatly value your approval,” said Mrs. Norcross, as if she had had a hand in the counsels that prompted it; and she had.

“We find few men like your brother,” continued the clergyman, addressing Mr. Lemuel. “A princely giver; a name widely known in all the land, my brother.”

“Bill’s a jewel,” was the taciturn man’s audible comment. His inaudible one might have run, could we know it, “And Bill’s a fool only with his ministers; he do n’t manage ’em as I manage mine.”

“Uncle Will,” said Clara, “you are always handsome when you blush!” And the rest of the pretty girl’s speech did not seem to help the poor

man any: "It makes every body happy to have you praised."

"And to have him prospered, too," said the clergyman, with great sincerity, claiming his impressive lead again. "I am much interested in the spring outlook, commercially, for our home manufactures," he continued. After which he went on to talk shop to the tired and shopworn business-man; and not, altogether, as a curious and entertained learner might converse, to draw out his hearers, either. The clergyman spoke of silks to this world-master of silks as one who himself was by no means uninformed—which was a fact, the bright fellow. To good advantage he displayed his other than theological knowledge. His musical tones and kindly-beaming smile helped him still.

"Is it the opera, to-night?" almost impatiently broke in Mr. Lemuel, at last, at a chance. He addressed his brother's wife, or his own nephew, between whom he sat, and either of whom he thought might have helped him.

But no one helped him change the theme. Indeed, all eyes that were not on the dishes—Clara's, Paul's, Andrew's and Minnie's, these respectfully downcast—were trained on the clergyman. It was no use. If Mr. William Norcross had seen the absurdity of it all, he yet revered

the office of the speaker to that degree that he would not have been offended, but apologetic, deferential, and certainly disposed to help in any errors. It was the pastor! All of which was not lost on Paul Havens, student of men and things,—the high compliment of this child-like rich man's treatment of heaven's evangelist. Really, to be the pastoral guide of such a soul ought to evoke all the nobility that a preacher had in him! Nobility? Say humility, rather, and a very walking and toiling on one's knees to do one's best and be found faithful!

And then there came a sharp analysis of himself. He confessed the "I am not worthy" now, from another point of view than that which prompted him to acknowledge as much to good Steve Crane. Then, it was not that he was not patient enough, not self-denying enough, to endure the unfeeling neglect of the coarse-minded and the dull-hearted in the churches. Now it was that he was not great enough in mind and heart and soul to be the companion and guide of such a soul as this generous host. These two brothers before him were the opposite poles of the possible pastor's world.

"I suppose these young ladies and gentlemen contemplate the present opera season with a

degree of satisfaction," said Mr. Crestlake, willing to yield his business topic, at last.

"It is certainly very brilliant, sir," said Miss Minnie.

"Your father, sir," this to Paul, "would hardly approve, or acquiesce, as we city pastors must." His slightly regretful tone preserved his orthodoxy finely, at the same time that, moving his hand, he seemed to say, "We have jumped clean over the old scruples, much against our will."

"You are very kind and indulgent," said the hostess. "You help us out so with the young people, pastor." Dear heart, and Protestant, she relied upon his casuistry to help her out; she acknowledged his conscience, and denied her own; for she was not so taught concerning the theatres, in her New England girlhood.

"My father, sir," said Paul, rather anxious to reply, "is tried with different social problems. The poor man's impatience and even frenzy under woes of want, for instance."

There was a fine gleam of good steel in the blade thus half drawn. Yet it showed the college boy too plainly; and the reader will observe the fierce contention which was daily torturing the young fellow's soul. All of which

Paul saw, the next moment, biting his lip with modest regret.

"To be sure. A rural pastorate is a different thing from one of our intense city-life pastorates," said the clergyman, as the company were breaking off into the drawing-room. "You are not intending to preach?"

"He is to be my father's partner, sir," volunteered Clara; for Paul was slow to reply, nettled as she thought by the patronizing tone of the clergyman's last remark.

"You will smoke with us, Mr. Havens," said cousin Andrew, approaching and pointing after the older gentlemen, who were passing into a little gem of a smoking-room.

"Ah, that's the after-luxury!" said the clergyman, with a little sigh of relish, which was half apology also, for his own part, as he stepped promptly into the cozy nook.

"No, sir," said Paul, "if you will excuse me, I have smoked my last cigar." This last for Clara's ear.

"Oh, Paul Havens, have you?" cried Clara; and with that she flew up and kissed his clean mouth, smack!

"I don't blame a fellow," said Andrew, in genuine good nature, "if it were to please such

a girl as you are, coz. But you'll excuse us then, my boy? You'll go down to the theatre with us, no doubt; shall meet you when the carriages come to the door." And he joined the other gentlemen.

"Why, Paul!" asked Clara, as the two went on to join the ladies.

"First, to please you, little girl."

"I love you for it!"

"Second, because I will live in perfect health, if possible. I'll be a sound body, if I can not be a sound mind!" He spoke so gravely and seemed troubled.

She insisted then, imperatively, on having him to herself in the great parlors across the hall, if only for five minutes. They walked,—she talked. She asked him questions, east, west, north, and south. She would know what beclouded him.

Dare he tell her?

"Clara, you have seen this clergyman."

"Yes; yes."

"Could I stand where he stands in this city, be worthy of such an *entrée* in this house, and others like it?"

"Why, what do you mean?"

"God help me! Sometimes I burn to try

what genuine effort might do with genuine men about one; for the glory of that dear old faith which my father proclaims, and which this gentleman is set to preach. Yet I have neither the consecration of the one, nor the self-satisfaction of the other. I can't see my own fitness; yet the thought is making me perfectly wretched!"

Blank silence!

"You think me a conceited fool?"

Continued silence.

"You despise me, that I measure myself with this successful man?"

Silence still.

"For, my love,—I speak my heart without reserve to you. This is a precious confidence, and therefore most unreserved. Come. Speak! Could I ever hope to get the ears of this great city? For to work with my father's villagers, and village owners, I could never! That's the absurdity of it. That such a heart as mine should be called!"

"Paul," she said, and seemed so distressed. "You know full well that I could never be a minister's wife."

"Why, now? Tell me why?" pleadingly,—the inconsistent fellow!

"Ask your invalid mother why."

"But intelligent churches have given up the bonnet and ribbon criticism, child."

"Yes, and gone to using the microscope on the husband's rhetoric, doctrines, and private beliefs. Paul, it would be torture to me to see you subjected to the discontent that Puss, here, expresses with her pastors."

"Pastors?"

"Yes, indeed. They change in this church every few years, as I can well remember. Indeed, these nervous, over-strained city people are harder to keep content than our rough country folks. These people are discontented with every thing, from the opera singer to the minister."

"And most discontent with themselves, no doubt," sighed Paul.

"But they do not realize that."

"Your uncle, who reveres the ministry ——"

"Ah, uncle is one in ten thousand! He and Aunt Matilda are of the old generation, and they never suffer a lisp of Sunday-dinner-tearing-the-sermons-to-tatters. But the young generation, when we are alone, — why, sir," with an emphatic squeeze of his arm, "they are lenient to Booth and Florence in comparison with their savagery with the Crestlakes."

“They do not like him?”

“They like him by fits and starts. The nice people in this city, you hermit, neither like nor dislike any thing long. Paul Havens, I know you. A little girl like me has some faint penetration when love inspires her. I tell you, sir, that you little know the cross that one must bear to be a successful preacher in one of these æsthetical churches. No, no, you shall hear me!” And she hovered in front of him and stopped his walk. “To see you, so frank and open as I know you; you so independent and outspoken; you so downright direct when you think yourself right,—to see you attempting to adapt yourself before the changeful moods of people whose religion is largely fashion, bridling your tongue, your hands, your brains, and your feet, or pampered into mannerisms on the other hand—oh, sir, you could never do it! And I, sir, would never try to do it, for my part!”

“You pretty preacher, quite a sermon!” said he. “Your observation of things would surprise any body who had never seen a Yankee girl of twenty; yet, of course, I believe you are wrong.”

But, though he tried to be cheery, it was too grave a crisis in both their lives for much good cheer. He caught her two burning cheeks in his

hands, and looking down deep into her very soul, resumed, "My glorious girl, I have had a week of tragedy!"

"I know it now," she shot in. "I will fight for you and with you; I will save you!"

"And," he continued, as if she had not spoken, "I must try to do my fellowmen some good in this world. It is death to me if I refuse."

"I'll go to the end of the world with you, doing good. See! we shall have thousands," she spoke like a flash of light, and only took the time between his labored breaths.

"What does an earnest man care for these silly social discontents that are in his way? He can march right on, like a giant, like a Christopher, bearing the Christ——"

"Yes, in India he could. I'll go there with you. But, sir, in this Christian city, these trifles would bite, stab, fetter, blind, entangle, craze you! I know you, sir; you are too direct a man. Why, you could never get on as my own father's pulpit-servant! Oh, oh! what have I said?" She bit her lip with confusion, that she should have dared to speak out her mind so bluntly, even to her lover, concerning her father, whom she always dutifully mantled with charity.

Now that last was a fact on which Paul

Havens was well convinced. The reference to Lemuel Norcross, parishioner, brought him back to familiar ground.

“I am not as good a man as my father. No; I could not endure——”

“What Pastor Havens will not long, Paul. The little church at Crosston is killing him, with its petty contentions.”

“Great God, pity me!” cried the young fellow: “I can not, can not endure this indecision long!”

“Paul, there are ten thousand ways of doing good, are there not?”

“Yes, precious.”

“Then let us take all the ten thousand and spend our lives doing good to mankind, if only the Lord will excuse us from that one way.”

Paul noticed, for the first time, that her tone was not as tender, not as afflicted, as he had anticipated. It was cold, resolved; it startled him.

“And what if God will not excuse me?” he asked.

“Then, Paul, he will have to excuse me!”

“What! Clara, do you believe a life is safe that deliberately rebels?”

“Is it a lovers’ quarrel?” suddenly asked Cousin Fidle, alias Puss, putting her face in at

the *portieres*; "because—you will excuse me—the horses are at the door. It's time, children."

"Ah, Miss Norcross, you are right. It is nearly nine o'clock," responded Paul, looking at his watch and decidedly grateful for the opportune intrusion.

"But we have a box, Mr. Havens; only we should be off. Clara, you are dressed, I see," and Puss crept nearer. "I'll look to him, if you'll risk me, till you get cloaked."

Clara had read her cousin's verdict on Paul Havens before the dinner was half over. How? That is more than man can tell; but somehow she had read the verdict. Puss knew that she had, moreover; yet the two ladies had not exchanged a word about the gentleman.

Clara looked full in Puss' eyes now. She was yet trembling with the exertion of will necessary for these last perilous words with the man for whom she could have offered up her young life. Puss' sudden coming left her in the blackest night, as to what effect her defiance had had on Paul.

"But he is not to be a clergyman, if you please, Miss," Clara had said to herself at the toilet table. "Therefore we shall have no rivalry between cousins, my dear, shrewd girl. He is mine, all mine! And a silk-weaver."

Now, however, all was changed. The old settlement made in distant Crosston, it seems, was not standing firm. What if this man, the soul of honor, should say to her, "Then I must obey God, rather than man or woman. You of course, release me, that I may go, endure all things, and do my duty?"

And having said this, possibly within the next few days of their visit, what if the family should need to know the reasons?—as they certainly would, the silk-business being put out of skein by the means.

And what then, Puss being in waiting? Then months,—a year,—years,—Puss waiting. Shrewd, bright, keen, good Puss, all devoted to a city mission; a woman-power—the greatest, by the way, in the city church; kind and admiring Puss,—accomplished and elegant Puss! How superb she looked here and now, dressed in exquisite taste; just enough diamonds; just enough color, a mere bit of it in the shape of a bouquet that peeped from beneath the white down of the cloak that she was drawing about her; otherwise, raven-like from head to foot, and white here there like a dove's feather or two, which the raven might have plucked off in some encounter. So much for a man's remembrance of her.

This dove put her hand to her breast and cast her eyes down, as if missing some of her own soft plumage. She had lost indeed her peace. Pretty dove, never prettier than at this present moment, — drooping the head, the eyes filling with a mist, thinking all these things over, seen in bird's-eye view. The raven being in waiting there, of course the dove dare not coo. The raven offering to wait and let the dove fly. Fly whither? Why, to be sure, only up-stairs for a moment. Still, dove, there's many a wind when once one is on the wing. Who can tell whither you'll fly, if, as your little fluttering heart desires, one does fly now?

Clara turned one swift look on Paul Havens' anxious face. It was enough. She knew then that at least his heart was true to her. It was, she decided, nothing but a woman's fears that had alarmed her.

“Paul, you will go? You will be diverted. You will see duty clearer, after having seen the world as it is, to-night.”

“Yes; yes. Go get ready,” he replied, in perfect good humor. At any rate Puss, waiting and hearing, could not detect the sadness of his tone, and wholly misinterpreted the scene, evidently, for she remarked, as Clara disappeared:

“You do not care for amusements, I suppose, being shut up so long to books?”

“That was not it exactly,” he replied, and fell to conversing in a general way, till the party was off.

V.

A SERIOUS QUESTION.

“YOUR father does not go to opera,” remarked Paul Havens to Andrew Norcross, as the carriages moved down the avenue.

“He has never been in his life, nor has mamma,” replied Puss, taking the answer from Andrew’s slower mouth.

“In which respect, I am like them,” remarked Paul, somewhat gravely, though wishing he had introduced some other topic.

“Can it be true? A young fellow who has seen as much of the world as you have?” Puss said it, Andrew looked it.

“That’s the Puritan of it, cousins,” promptly remarked Clara; and, it must be confessed, with pretty apology in her manner.

“Busy, you know,” shouted Paul, for they had now struck the rougher granite pavements of the old town, “at country schools in country villages.”

“And nearly every body, in our village church, would say ’t was wicked,” cried Clara.

“You do not think so,” roared Andrew.

“Hardly that,” shouted Paul, “though I confess to the subtle influence of a silent, life-long example.”

“His dear, magnificent father would cut his own right hand off, almost,” screamed Clara, though her voice was scarcely less charming at this pitch, “to avoid offending the good brethren.”

“And you have traveled in Europe?” asked Puss, whose voice rather piped and showed its years, straining against the pavement roar.

“Oh, well, that was a knapsack tramp, with a lot of college fellows, worshiping at old shrines, rather than new, you know. Mostly Alps, Greece, Palestine, and Orient,” was Paul’s reply.

“We have been going to theatre and opera only four or five years,” said Andrew. “Still, I’m tired; at any rate, I heartily envy you your new sensations.”

The sensations! To the Puritan student, lover of music, once the class poet, and to be the class orator, an enthusiastic critic of art, and keenly sensitive to artistic effects. The sensations of the reality, to this dreamer whose dreams, over his hired piano in the college room, were raptures. He knew every note of FAUST, the night’s opera, and could play it without the score. Work after work had he and Clara Norcross rendered to-

gether, he with his violin, and she at the piano, in the pleasant Crosston home, for she was as much a musical enthusiast as he. It was in summer days, and over music, that they first became attached.

"Oh, Paul!" she would exclaim, "you should hear it with all its setting!"

"I do not know," he would musingly reply; "how can music be added to? I hear it all, see it, people the scene, and thrill with it, till I'm actually unstrung, here and now."

Clara Norcross put out her hand, as the carriage halted, and touched his under her cloak. Both hands were actually cold. "The realization, at last," thought she, thinking for him, hoping for him, and combining her own exquisite memories of this pleasure-house, till she could not speak for a childlike emotion. "My dream-land made real," thought he. "Do I wish it? Will it survive the rude shock of real voices and real figures, with real men and women, the hundreds of other auditors chattering about me? May be the charm of this music will be henceforth forever gone."

The ring of prancing hoofs and click of carriage doors; the shout of drivers to policemen, and the sharp reply; the gleam of peeping lights, that

flash and fade and reappear again on wheeling, halting, winding vehicles; the slowly moving line, that frets you as it whets you with impatience for the canopy, and your turn to fly out of this black night-air and confusion.

"My dear, your cloak, wind it close."

"And you, sir, shut the door and be patient. See that beggar at the curb. How cold she looks, poor thing! Why will she stand here, to catch a mere glimpse of us silly folks, who have as many troubles in life as she? Dear, dear!" drumming the chilled feet on the carriage floor.

"Go on! go on! Does Michael keep his turn, do you think, Andrew?" Thus we chat and chatter, waiting.

"I see father and Minnie," Clara manages to say.

"I see" the Browns and the Smiths and the Robinsons; all your friends, indeed, you see, except the particular ones you are watching for; as they alight, as they flash in while half hooded, half revealed, as they flit and disappear, making room for your vehicle, if ever they will.

"Here child!" It is Clara who has put out her gloved arm and motioned to the street-waif. "Take that, and sweeter dreams to-night," as

she bestows what uncoun- ted coin she chances to find "in the pocket of this dress."

At last! Now trip it gaily along the passage- ways, like rose petals and green leaves; bright is she, somber-dressed is he; winged on by un- kindly draughts of an air that has a perfume all its own. Were you blindfolded, you would yet know you were at the Academy by the frankincense of old gala nights of years and years that ever lingers. The very atmosphere is very different from that of the church, the home, or the hard, clear, outer world. The faint, far echo of the muffled melody. Come, hasten! At the door of your box, all here? The pleasure of antici- pation reaches its height, just here and now. And some do say that the pleasure of the evening from this moment always begins to decline.

Ah, the sudden blaze of splendor!—the light, which throbs with movement, beaten with count- less fans, loaded with its burden of melody, wafted in little gales up to you, so that you seem to breathe the light and breathe the song. The light, quivering with glances that invite and defy, that woo and court and envy; glances that dart out and retreat, that go on errands of insolence and messages of love. A living light

is quivering with all these. In that light you have come at length to live your little moment, seeing and to be seen. Seeing and being seen, you are yet hearing all the while. That is the peculiarity of it. All your senses have turned to seeing and hearing. Not you, old *habitués*! With you it is all seeing, doubtless, "who is here?" But these two rural idealists, who have come to this vision of enchantment,—it is with their eyes, ears, and hearts that we are concerned. However accustomed Clara was to the scene, she found it impossible to either see or hear for her own enjoyment. She lost her personality in her lover; she literally put herself in his place.

As Paul Havens gazed out on the brilliant audience, whose half-indolent delight lent all their faces at least a momentary smiling peace and aspect of content, Miss Norcross knew, as well as if he spoke it, that he was thinking, like a philosopher: "I have been bred in a higher school of life than these people. Which is the true view of life? father's, I am sure!"

Andrew leaned across the chair-back to point out this great merchant and that, here resting after the day's toil with folded arms and decorous interest, simulating, at least, an artistic

knowledge and a cultured pleasure. "The Governor, just there. And next to him, General Blank," etc.

"Ah?" And forgetting the hearing in a philosopher's seeing, Paul turned his thoughtful face to study them; a face that itself grew fascinating to many observers. It was not the conventional young man's face, perhaps,—this one on which glasses were leveled,—or it was a new social question, "Whose face, a new and handsome in our friend Norcross' box?" But to Clara, the face at her side was significant with a thousand eager questions. Thus, if she had actually read his thoughts and written them down,—

"These hard workers came here to unbend! Is there any harm in that? I wonder if they go to prayer-meetings, on other nights, to unbend and rest? Can these women at their sides lead them to the church for Sabbath rest? Are the two kinds of rest needed—opera rest, and rest of worship—and are they compatible? These younger fellows about town, who pass and repass diamond-studded glasses, how many of them could earn their own living? How many of them earned the price of the two seats they use for this evening? I don't be-

lieve I would need fear to meet them in a competition of real life, bred in the school of hardship." The conceit of it? Yes, but it was a thought and not a speech.

Profusion of dress, soft and dreamy glances from beautiful women to most attentive men, with pretty little comments; the most refined voluptuousness everywhere in sight; then little tempests of passion, beginning at the stage and sweeping out like a tiny gale of emotion, that set all these roses and lilies trembling and swaying. The culmination, now and then, in a languid applause, like effeminate thunder.

"And this is the life we might lead, Clara," Paul whispered. "We might know the best of these people. I might grub for dividends, weaving silk all day, and at night rest in this society and spend the dividends. Is that it?"

"Hush, my dear," she answered. "I don't know. Let's forget the audience and listen to the music awhile."

"What an audience this would be to preach to, Clara! Just think of one with a grave, kind voice stepping out here in front and beginning with that gravest, kindest theme——"

"Please don't think of it, Paul. I will not." But she laughed with him at the absurdity of it;

and they settled back into their seats for the remnant of the seeing and hearing.

Poor Gretchen in the cell! Poor little peasant maidens singing wild songs and sad laments in notes almost divine! Who can read it and not hold his breath lest he miss a single throb of this sacred human sorrow? Who can see it—the wisps of straw in her fair hands, with which the lovely maniac is toying—and not chill after chill freeze his heart with every great sob of the muffled orchestra? Condemned to death? You can not have it so! You start out of your seat to save her, and protest that she is more sinned against than sinning!

These two pure-hearted lovers sat spell-bound. They were forgetting each other, seeing and hearing Margaret. Matchless art of Goethe. Matchless music of Gounod. Paul Havens knew every line of the German poem in its native verbal clothing. Suddenly it dawned upon him that, though he and Clara had often read German poetry together, yet they had never read old *Faust* together. Would he like to hear her render Margaret, answering to his Mephistopheles? What, as they had read Schiller's *William Tell*? Heaven forbid!

Why not, if here you see it? True. And at

the sight of that betrayer, now stolen in to the cell, Paul caught a half-glance at the pallid face of the New England maiden at his side. Her very soul was conjured by the sorcerer, for the moment. Her cheeks gave red and white by turns, and through her parted lips she seemed about to cry out with the spell of sympathy.

“It is the music so affects her,” thought he. “Yes, to be sure, the music and these rarest voices in the world.” Are you sure? Has she often read *Faust*? Has she ever read it? You do not like to think of that plot a favorite one in the literary taste of the woman whom you will marry, you Puritan. Yet we happen to know that Clara Norcross had never read the poem. She had often seen the opera.

Gretchen, Gretchen, what is your fault? Do not whisper it, read it not aloud. And thou, sold to Satan, what hast thou done? Murder and seduction set to thrilling music, glorious music, thrilling music! One is confused; one knows not how to think correctly. One concludes that he would not like his little sister, or his little Christian friends, just at his side in all operas—not in all. In how many operas? Think of what ones—the count will not fatigue you—not one.

“That’s the Puritan of it.” Of course it is.

We confessed as much when we began to transcribe this young possible preacher's mind a night at opera. Pitifully self-centered he, of course. How could he be otherwise, feeling and fearing that God's choice might have centered on him.

The great tenor is now singing. The memory of the church-portal is now before the Gretchen's musing eyes. Angels of good and evil are now calling in sweet and in dreadful chorus. Deep laboring organ tones swell mightily the strain. These thousands sit in awe and hang upon the flexion of a tone! Clara Norcross is in tears for this poor Gretchen, for the morning dawns and she must die! Tears? Many have shed them for the peasant maid; many eyes are shedding them now. Paul Havens' face is wet as any of the women's. Shall he be the better for this weeping? Who can say so? for those who weep are good already; and as for Mephistopheles in this brilliant throng, does he shed any tears?

Suddenly—it always seems suddenly—all was over, and Paul was now throwing the wraps about Clara. There was a great stir everywhere, for most were now retiring. Doors were opening, the outer air was coming in.

“What do you say?” Andrew was asking coldly and curiously.

“Did you enjoy the evening?” Puss and Minnie were inquiring.

“Got a cigar, Andrew? May I smoke, Miss Minnie, in our carriage?” Mr. Deacon Norcross, trustee, silk-weaver, and millionaire was asking, putting on her cloak and his coat. “What do you say to this for an evening, Paul?”

But in all the genteel confusion, Paul Havens managed to get a chance and bent his burning face to Clara's ear: “I say,” he whispered, with nervous fervor, “that I will go out and preach to this sad world the glorious Gospel of the blessed Christ till I die!”

You see, reader, that when you stir a human soul from its depths, no matter with what you stir it, that which is deepest in that soul will rise up and float upon the surface.

Clara Norcross raised her eyes to his, with one of those wonderful, deep looks of hers: “And this is what the opera has done for you? Powerless to allure?” she asked. But her tone was not dissentient. She unmistakably offered her lips to him. He kissed her swiftly, whispering, —

“Do you agree?”

But there is no time for answering at any length. You are being pushed and ruffled along

the corridors; you are nodding to people; you are feeling the wintry blast, and etc.

“It is snowing, Andrew says,” Puss remarks, with a little shudder. “Before the week is out, we’ll try the flyers out on the roads,” which showed where her thoughts were already; but then, she has been going to opera and prayer-meetings, alternately, for several years.

You are at last handed into your carriage. Andrew must smoke. He is not one who goes out between acts, for a cigarette even; and as for a social glass,—why, never! He is a Sabbath-school teacher of a class of boys in that palatial church parlor. But to smoke is to sit with old Michael on the box outside in the snow. What a strange garment of protection is a cigar! Say, rather, what a tyrant! Then, too, Andrew had felt the excitement a little,—the stolid, cool fellow! he, too, had listened for the minister’s son. To-morrow he would converse about impressions when they were alone.

Clara is such a bundle, shrunk into her corner, and saying nothing; but thinking, feeling, hoping, fearing, ah! so many things; all silent and dark without, and her soul aflame within.

“To-morrow, sleighing,” Cousin Fidelia, alias Puss, begins, talking at Paul. “The next day,

—well, some friends at the house in the evening, and the resting and dressing for it will keep us girls busy, while you men are up town.”

Paul answered a respectful “Yes.”

“Then, there is Friday night at church. Of course we shall all want to go there.”

“Yes, certainly.”

“Then there is Saturday night and our baked beans and brown-bread,—home night: papa insists on that; and, indeed, we are very happy. Then Sunday, and you should go hear—let me see,” and she ran over, with perfect familiarity and a touch of local pride, the names of the “best preachers.”

“Yes, certainly,” Paul repeated, in a mechanical way; and Clara shrugged herself into closer wrapping, all nervous chill.

“But you must stay longer,” Cousin Fidelia resumed. “Why, we could use every night next week and repeatedly see or hear something new”; which she proved by calling off the names of lecturers, actors, and artists, in various lines, with great earnestness and with almost warm encomiums on some of them.

To which there being scarce much of any reply, the speaker exclaimed at length,—

“Why, you two simpletons! I do believe you

are both overcome with dear, delightful, old Gounod! You, you pretty dear," with a little shake of Clara at her side; "I'll put you straight to bed, as soon as we get home! Talk about your living here, you poetess! Our society would kill you in a season; or else you'd get hardened—as I have."

Clara managed to chatter out a pretty laugh through her teeth, which were pearls, and the other's envy.

"It is high time this house was still!" Such greeting from benignant William Norcross, trying to be stern, with a mock severity, as he faced them, shaking his *Church Advocate* in one hand and his eye-glasses in the other. At the foot of the broad stairs he stood, saying, "Shoo! Shoo!" to this young flock, and amid a shower of kisses, repeating, as he laughed, "Yes, yes; let the house be still."

It is still. The small hours draw on. The house is asleep; the chambers are each asleep; the streets without are asleep; the lamps along the broad thoroughfares seem ready to go to sleep, if they only dared.

Clara Norcross is not asleep. She is thinking "He surely is mine. I should die without him. But how different he is from all other young

men of my acquaintance. At the opera he is all aflame to preach. At our village church up home, he is so fretted and rebellious, that he asserts he never could work with such contentious people. We were to do good in any other way, any of ten thousands. Strange. He is like the rock in the pasture-stream, by which we love to sit. Can I follow him, whatever course? Can I live, if I do not?"

Puss Norcross is asleep. She is dreaming out what she could make of a fine fellow with such talents, if he were only submissive to her.

Paul Havens is not asleep. He is sitting by his chamber window. He gazes out on the silent city, stretching far away on every side. It seemed like that dark world in which he was agonizing to find his fit and lawful place to work. The miles of blinking lamps, the flush upon the sky over the distant portions of towns where clouds were hovering, from which the call of an occasional loiterer or rumble of a wandering vehicle; these were types to him of his confusion of mind, the dim night wherein he was picking out his way.

The solemn notes of a steeple clock, from out that spire which reached up in the somber sky before him, made him start.

“Great God! Do all young hearts find it so hard to know which way to go? Or is it my intractable self? What shall I say, when, to-morrow, they talk business with me? And what is Clara going to say,—after she has slept? Hast thou no help for me?” And his prayer wrestled wearily with its load.

VI.

IN THE COUNTING-ROOM.

“YOU may as well go up to the store with us, Paul, this morning, now that you are here,” said Mr. Lemuel Norcross, after the family breakfast.

“You will get a knowledge of the streets that lead thither, but not much more.” remarked Mr. William, evidently inclined to excuse him to the young ladies.

“Havens will be at the factories with me, Bill, as I explained,” said Mr. Lemuel. “My idea was, when he and Clara shall have returned—he’ll graduate and that will give them a month for Paris,—fun before work,—eh? When you and I are dead and gone, Bill, it will be Havens at Crosston, and your Andrew here. Still Paul Havens needs to know a mighty deal that he don’t yet know,—about this office. Know! What do you know. my boy?” with a clap on the back. Lemuel Norcross rarely, of late years, grew hilarious except

over busines. "Come. On with your coat, young fellow. Let's be off!"

Clara was prepared to hear Paul say, "I shall never go. I have no purpose to learn." Indeed, she turned white with fear of her father's inopportune outburst. She had resolved, all in a moment, to fly at her father and try, with the tyranny that she had never yet failed to exert, what a passion of petitions could do. Had Paul Havens said it, Clara Norcross would have said, "I will follow Paul, papa!" The woman of it. That was the resolve that came out of her night, counting the strokes of the steeple clock.

But Paul Havens did not say it. That was the man of it, as hers had been the woman of it. Well, partly so; but better say that was the minister of it. Jonah strove hard against the Nineveh journey. Who has written, or can write out, the changeful struggle through which some preachers come to final peace by obedience? Try it, ye mental philosophers; here is a problem for you. Describe it: "Woe is me, if I preach not the Gospel!" Describe it: "I will not! I dare not! I will be rich! I will be free! I have no patience with men. I am not unselfish enough."

Strange. In a night's rest it had returned,

the old self-will. Paul did not even look towards Clara. He replied, very submissively, "Very well, gentlemen, take me along, and show me where — where you make your money at this end of the line." Still vacillating, for he did not say, "where I'm to work." Then he ventured to turn his eyes on Clara.

Poor child, she stood in a sort of daze. Was there any changeful shadow of dis-esteem deepening into contempt in her great eyes? No, Paul Havens, not a shadow. Still it was not a happy look that she gave you; a most distressed and confused, rather. After you are gone, she will fly up-stairs and shut herself in her room. There will come an unbending of the heroic resolution she had taken, all in love for you. She will be glad again; she will jump again at the conclusion that you are not to be a clergyman, after all. She will wonder at her own somersaults of determination, yet will perform them easily, child of luxury, by the help of her love for you.

But to what a wrenching, to what a violence, you are subjecting this young heart, sir. Will there be any truth left to her, following you to and fro of your "duty"? Beware of that, sir. You have this trustful soul in your hands.

Spoil it? Have a care. Will you teach your future wife to obey God, or defy him? Another agony!

Still, happy child, she found a way out for him. She was saying all the day, to herself, as she and her cousins were shopping about Tremont and Washington Streets, or lunching, or dreaming at the window, saying all the day to herself, whatever she was saying audibly to others, —

“I am watching my hero; he goes to battle; I wait; I will share his fortunes; strange battles are his; not many can ever see his sword drawn; his mother and father and I can see him fighting *such* a battle! I love him!”

Paul Havens should have confided to her all his struggle. Her trustful face invited it each afternoon, as he returned from the great store with Andrew, for the balance of the day with the ladies.

But Havens feared to hurt her childlike faith. He had himself inducted her into that faith; he had preached to her the religion of the Cross. Then, too, he found himself actually dreading her withdrawal of an almost reverent trust in himself; she would think him vacillating. He, vacillating? He, who could go through fire and flood—if only he could once be let go!

Instead of trusting her, he contented himself with loving her with a devotion that was expressed in every word, and in every attention of these happy days. There were many of these days. The vacation got lengthened; Paul ran up to college for a week, and then back again; he shouldered the easy senior studies along by "make-ups," and managed to plan out the month of January, off and on, in the city.

"We must have you, you know, at the store just now." Mr. Lemuel Norcross insisted, though he let him off good naturedly every afternoon to the sleighing and the other festivities.

Not daring to thrust his doubts on Clara, Paul did a worse thing. He confided in Puss. Somehow it came about. He had frankly told the latter.

"Yes, I am going into business, to please Clara and my mother,—and, I suppose I ought to be able to add, myself."

"You don't include your good father," Puss replied, and saw it all in a flash, this brilliant woman. They were sitting in the music-room one evening, awaiting the return of Clara and her father from some "shopping for poor mamma, up there in the country." Puss had been wishing for the chance to play to him, and had had it

for over an hour of splendored performances on piano and organ. Music unlocked Paul Havens' confidences always; as it does our air-castles and gives the birds wing, reader. As the two retired to the library and got places before the cozy grate, Paul grew confidential at once. Then, too, his idea was to make a sieve of this mature female mind, sift his hurtful doubts through it not harming the fine steel sieve, of course, and trusting that the sieve would give the grain to Clara. She would explain him to Clara. The idea! But then, that shows you what sort of sentiments he entertained towards Puss. Innocent enough of any thing forbidden.

Puss was all grace and pity at once. No vulgar pity; oh no; but that exquisite compassion of a bright and understanding woman for your mental woes. She was the very impersonation of elegance in her personal contact with you. You would feel the spell of it, to see her fluttered down into the great chair just opposite you, and all delightful attention, languid hands, drooping, eyes beaming, respectful, differential, your obedient servant.

"No. My father is of another mind. But the church is——" and, as he hesitated, she helped him right out with, —

"You have had a call to preach?"

Paul started. But there was such a peculiar smile upon her features that he asked,

"Do you believe in the Divine Call?"

"Well," she replied, ingenuous at once, "that's a term elderly church people use. Papa, now, thinks his pastor has heard Heaven speak in a certain unmistakable, mentally perceived voice, directing him to holy things. He reveres his pastor as the Lord's anointed."

"Oh what a holy life the pastor of such a man ought to lead!" exclaimed Paul. "Think of a churchful of such trustful souls looking into a man's face! It should cleanse him to the very core! And inspire him, too!"

"But," she resumed, quite willing to delve into psychological or theological depths, and charmingly animated, "but I think we younger people regard the ministry as a profession, chosen on grounds of adaptation. We claim the right to view a preacher identically as we do an artist, an attorney, or a physician. Can he please, is he æsthetic, is he scholarly, does he minister to our moral and intellectual culture?"

"Therefore, God help me, I will never stand in the pulpit for your generation. I am absolved.

If I have ever been called, I am excused by the fact that the people of the church in my time recognize no such call. That is what is coming. Then the preacher is a mere public servant, in the most harrowing and critical service on God's earth!"

"You kindle, Mr. Havens," she said, growing calm herself at once and delighted that she had by so much the mastery of this outspoken giant. "Times are changed, you know full well. The church is no longer doctrinal; it is social; it is æsthetical; it affords an opportunity for ethical activity. These are the laity's uses. Your uses, sir, of the church would be a command of men, a ladder of fame, a mastery over your times, the companionship with the most elegant people of this city, for instance."

"What! and no doctrines?"

"Believe what is truth to you, of course."

"Yes, and the torture of it! To be held fast to doctrine by the old, and to be held fast to æsthetics by the young! Mostly, not what you say, but how you say it!" This also very vehemently.

"Have you a message?" very calmly.

"Some direct truth to speak to my fellow-men, do you mean, Miss Norcross? Indeed, I

hope I have—or should have, if I were to undertake it.”

“What now?”

“I would have liked to tell the poor world’s Margarets and Fausts, the way better than despair; of the Lamb of God which taketh away the sins of the world!”

She looked upon him with a single ejaculation only on her lips. “The opera night!” He had risen to his feet. His imposing presence, his rich tones, his handsome young face glowing with emotion from the pent-up passion of many days of silence on this awful theme of his thoughts, these with her own self-acknowledged approval of him, made Paul Havens stand forth, at last, Fidelity Norcross’ long sought ideal. She clasped her long fingers before her. Her really fine eyes grew large in unconscious admiration. She was resolved. She spoke with sudden and intense fervor.

“Preach, sir! Preach that, if you will?”

“Miss Norcross, do you believe in that hope by Christ?”

“I—I—could believe any thing that you preached!”

“That?”

“What?” “How?”

“Do you believe that Jesus Christ can save sad

souls — save Gretchen? Save Faust, even, sold to the devil? Save the bad hearts of your North End Mission?" He stood before her, quivering.

"You greatly move me, sir. Your ideas are majestic. I say to you that you can not remain in obscurity—the whole city would come to hear and heed a man whose soul was under such subjection to an idea! We do not see men in agony over any truth, in our ——"

"Agony, Miss Norcross! Sometimes I am in agony because I fear *I don't believe it!*"

"Oh sir, say not so!" It was a genuine compassion that uttered that cry. Not that this girl, all devoted to ambition, understood him. No; not as well as sweet, simple Clara Norcross would. But that he thought she might, if he tried again.

"You mistake me!" he said. "If you will indulge me, I do n't care a rush for the renown of it. It is not ambition. That *must not* be the motive!"

"Forgive me," she said, seeing her mistake. "I thought out loud when I exclaimed about the whole city heeding you."

"Now, then, please hear me again," he resumed almost pleadingly. "There are times when

my very soul is on fire to proffer this Christ-care to the suffering world." He stopped short.

"Yes. It is papa's doctrine. The old-fashioned doctrine." She spoke eagerly, and leaning forward.

"Then there are hours, alas, when I doubt the very truth itself!" Again pausing

"Because you do not obey."

"Which is good mental philosophy, you keen reader of mind," he added. "Then, at other times, this plentiful, peaceful career in silk weaving offers itself."

"Which you will not find peaceful, sir," she responded.

"Miss Norcross, could you tell your cousin, after this, that I was yet worthy of her love?"

It came so suddenly, this unmasking of his real purpose. For a moment, she was silent. It needed a moment to recover her self-possession. But, quick, Puss Norcross was self-possessed again. She began to discuss the theological point. And this half-wild fellow did not detect the evasion. He fell into her line. After a little, he yielded and talked welcome doubts with her. He almost forgot Clara for the next half hour.

Nor was this the only time, those days, that his confused mind rested itself in the sympathizing discussion of doctrines. For Puss Nor-

cross grew rapidly ardent in her attachment for him. But she was shut up to a queer sort of love making on her part,—namely, interviews for theological discussion.

Her ardor grew by the very hopelessness of her case. She saw his affection for the other young creature at every turn of her eyes. He was perfectly frank; he was transparently honest; except that she saw that he did not trust Clara with the secret of his own mental woes.

But Puss Norcross was of that model that is wonderfully excited to exertion by obstacles. She began to read all the prevalent doubts and its refutation, that she could find in the libraries, and showed herself capable of finding more of this hard reading, or passages that she thought she wanted, than most ladies who search those famous Boston alcoves.

“Loan him to me for a half hour, Clara,” she would say, when the family were assembled for the afternoon chats on nothings. “We have a knotty question about inspiration. See?” and she would hold up some new book.

“An hour if you want him for such uses,” Clara generally responded, for her heart was so sure of him. And in all these recent days Paul Havens had never once recurred to the one dread

question of the ministry. Indeed, he had shown himself an assiduous student of business, going with the gentlemen every morning to the store. It was fully understood here, at distant Cross-ton, and at the college, that this was his lawful excuse for so prolonged a visit to the city.

"We know now imperiously impatient Lemuel Norcross is," Paul's mother had remarked over the situation as the son still wrote "from Boston and the store."

"Yes, that we do!" sighed the pastor, keeping his secret from the invalid and wondering what it would all come to. The one was glad, the other sad, as they sat about the evening fire of logs in the distant hill country parsonage, these winter nights.

Paul and Puss talking doctrines in the drawing-room evening by evening; Clara trying to be patient with the small talk of Minnie, Andrew, and her aunt in the library. Clara could not help being reassured by the prosy business conversation of her father and uncle. Good, obedient Mr. William submitted, as he always had to when his brother was in town, to the bringing the shop into the home. Clara heard it often with a quick and pleased ear.

"Havens takes to it very rapidly, Bill; you

must confess that I have made no mistake in the boy."

To which her uncle would respond, "Yes Lem, your success in selecting other men to carry out your plans has always been remarkable."

"A mighty bright fellow, this Paul!" This her father.

Or it was some snatch of a plan, sweet to her as a song, in which Paul's name was woven with Marseilles, or Paris, or the Crosston factory, by the silken cords of the business.

"He is fighting his battle to such a victory as will please me," she would say to herself. And often, if, on her pillow at night, she had come to resolve "I will ask him, frankly, in the morning; I must know," why, the two coupés the next morning, that rattled him off with the other gentlemen direct from breakfast, reassured her.

It is curious, but true, that many women live as loving wives, and beloved, yet, under a half fear (is it fear?), refrain from asking their good men some questions that they would give the world to have answered without the asking. Clara hoped, and took Hope's answer. Who has not? The memory of former interviews, more-

over, in the Crosston mansion, in which she had seen something of his strife of mind, was to this happy girl terrible. She could not endure to have the scenes repeated. Those conversations had wrought her to such pitch of excitement; they had made life seem so dark. She preferred to live in the sunshine. Selfishly? No, if you consider her indulged life; nor, again, if you remember that the sight of his distress was her most potent distress. To many women the husband is prophet, priest, and king,—that is, if he is wise enough, good enough, and great enough. Clara gave Paul this triple crown over herself; and she would doubtless have confessed, though she had hardly so worded it to herself unaided, that the sight of her lord disputing his duty was too sad to look upon. Her heart said, what many another woman's has: "My hero knows best. He will do right; he is doing right every day." She felt this sentiment unmistakably when, one evening, as his custom was, her uncle had asked, as he closed the Bible reading,—

"Lem, shall we be led by you in prayer?"

Her father had turned to Paul, passing the compliment on to him, and quite willing, by the way, to show off this added accomplishment of

the young partner before his brother, "Paul, you take my place."

This Paul had done in the truest and most reverent spirit. There are public prayers and public prayers. But this was so natural, so sincere, so simple in its requests, and so rich in its diction. Clara thought how much like the Scripture prayers it sounded; as well it might, and all public prayers ought, for it abounded in Scripture, and was modeled on these model prayers.

"He is my priest!" she said. She thrilled with his tones. He seemed to lift her soul to God. Hoping for him, fearing for him at first, and almost grieved by her father's cold tones, she lost her solicitude in self-forgetfulness, and forgetfulness of all else but him who was addressed. She had never till that evening, heard Paul's voice in prayer. Do you remember such an occasion, reader? The first time you heard your father at the family altar just set up? A husband's,—a lover's first audible penitence and petition to heaven? Then you can understand Clara, as she found herself in tears.

"He is my priest," she had said again, as she got upon her feet and went out of the room for a little to recover her calm.

Therefore, no questions; Paul will do right. Paul sees his way clear to be a merchant. Puss can have him in the parlor, discussing modern doubts, all she wishes. Puss is deceived; she has not yet found her clergyman.

But Puss, in that next room that final evening, later on when Paul's visit ended, was content. She always assumed the posture of inquiring skepticism. She simply acted on the resolution, "I'll not let silk and finance fill all his mind. He shall be daily excited with these other themes." To a mind like Paul Havens' nothing fixed belief like the doubt that attacked it.

"I am preaching to you, here, evening after evening," he said to Puss, with a laugh.

"You are in good practice, and coming on," she quietly replied.

"I confess that your conversations have greatly stimulated me, Miss Norcross."

"Think of thousands, instead of one!" she answered; which reply turned him off the track of observation, or he must have seen the quick flush in her face. She was wise enough to know how intense is the interest that is kindled by religious conversation. After all, theological discussion is not a bad vehicle for lovers to take their early rides in. He had, indeed, become much more in-

terested in her than he knew himself. And trust her to detect it.

Neither was she playing a part. His doubts had actually injured her. She said:

“I fear I am not strong enough to be a father confessor to you. I suppose I never had much religion at any time; it has been a mere, benevolence, a thing of taste and intellectual culture with me. Oh, sir, it seems a fearful thing to me, that one so gifted as you are, and believing as I am convinced you do, should dare go and make money and leave this suffering world untaught.”

“You give me pain,” he said. “Am I, then, to confide in no one, but I stab the kind heart that welcomes me?”

“Because, sir, you seem to us one of those few strong fellow-creatures born to keep us all, not to hinder or be helped.”

“God help me, I’ll not hinder you, my kind friend,” he added with decided feeling. Then he fell to work with a will, to unsay all that he had ever expressed of unbelief. He grew eloquent in his advocacy of the truth. He refuted error for her, question after question. He asserted dogma after dogma. She listened under a spell. He spoke from the heart. At length, in a pause, she thrust at him,—

“Sir, you will never weave a yard of silk!”

He got upon his feet, and stood for a moment speechless, while the emotion engendered by his burning evangel, completely mastered him. Wonderful emotion that! The thrilling delight that comes from proclaiming the truths of God! Is there any other joy like it? Is there any other passion of the soul so great and high as that which surges, like a rushing, mighty wind, through the Christian heart just after it has uttered its belief into some ear that was heavy with unbelief? And is there any other look on human face like that look; eager, catching at every word; submissive, even to a positive enslaving by the welcome truth, after despairing doubt; a look of one made glad beyond all hoped-for gladness, which this most intelligent woman had been bending on him? Clara Norcross might have seen that look of faith and felt no pang of jealousy.

Loving Clara Norcross with all his heart, yet Paul's interest in this other woman, whose religious life he had cruelly imperilled and was now trying to rescue, was, for the moment, unspeakable. He said, —

“Miss Norcross, I have now done my best to undo the harm I have inflicted by my frankly

expressed disputes with my duty to preach. Understand, now and finally, that, whatever I may do, the religion of the New Testament is true and firm as the hills of God! I shall never resume the rehearsal of my woes to you, or any other mortal—unless it be to my own father. I have never yet found a human being whom the story of my debate with duty did not harm. It seems like poison. God help you to believe, as, God witness, I do believe!” He turned to re-enter the library,

“One moment!” She actually ventured to catch at his hand.

“Well, dear lady, say on,” he replied, yielding his hand heartily,—indeed proffering it, to relieve her of seeming to herself indelicate.

“For all that, you yet will do yourself this great wrong and dislike? Oh, sir, for the good you have done me, let my gratitude take the shape of exhortation. Turn your back on this money-making! Live the truth!”

For a moment he cast his eyes down at their two clasped hands. He raised his free hand once to his breast, then let it fall irresolute. Then, suddenly decided, he took out a letter from the pocket his hand had sought.

“Miss Norcross, I wish to retain your esteem.

I will show you this letter; that is the very latest and final word of explanation which I will make, to man or woman, for my proposed conduct. Read what my mother says; then tell me, if you can, I may not go make money and build for her and my father a home."

The letter: "My mind is never without your image, my son; my lips are rarely without a prayer for you, our hope, our precious one, these days. The two months since your return have seemed the longest of all your nearly four years' absence from us. Need I say, they have been the most anxious for poor mother's head and heart? For you are now with your strong young foot upon the very threshold of life's real work. Papa tells me, every day, something of his own memories of the trembling, eager, last days of college. I ask him all about it, that I, a woman, may know just how to feel for you; that I may be your confidante. I am, am I not?"

"Speaking of papa, I can see, unmistakably, that he fails in strength. Oh, it breaks my heart to write it, but he looks so tired! He thinks me the only invalid. Would God it were so! But it is not. He is older than a year ago by five years' weariness. The church is restive;

the congregation talks of a new and younger man, especially ever since we got into this elegant, new, and smarter edifice. If it were not for Mr. Norcross' iron hand, I know that we could not stay here. Yet it seems sacrilegious that the power of money should so largely enter into the control of the church. We, papa and I, feel the chagrin of it all the more that the money-power is in our favor just now. Are we hirelings?

"But I will not vex you with troubles with which you are familiar from boyhood—and, thank God! are soon to know no more. I was only thinking aloud of the rest that poor papa needs."

"The other portions, Miss Norcross, are immaterial," said Paul, who had carefully watched her progress over the two neat little pages, and now reached for the letter. With a voice almost hoarse with his emotions, he said, "I received that letter the next morning after my visit with you to the opera. Not a waking hour, but some sentence of it has been in mind."

"I have often heard how sweet and lovely your parents are, sir," said Puss. But what——"

"Miss Norcross, that weary man and his martyr wife are going to have rest! Money? Why,

that man has toiled for thirty years amid the churches, and given us bread and clothes. But to-day he is dependent upon the month's check that Mr. Norcross, treasurer, sends him, and has not a penny beside! Money, Miss? I tell you, so help me God! that that man shall have rest within six months, and a long rest, too! The first disbursement that I make of the ten thousand dollars that is to be placed to my credit on the first of next July—I then enter this co-partnership—will be three thousand dollars payable to Sylvester Havens! If my dear mother, whom may Heaven preserve, is able, I trust that next year will see these two, herself with father, fancy free in Europe. Money! Why, I could laugh as I think of it.”

“But your mother says of money——”

“That it is a profane tyrant in the church. But this is not in the church. It is my money. I earn it. Why may ten thousand other Christians spend all their lives earning it, and not I, and yet be a Christian? Not for self, Miss Norcross, but for the good I can do with it. Why not? That is the strain in which your pious Christian merchant, sitting in the pews, reassures himself. Why not I, son of the pulpit?”

“Because of some possible voice from heaven,

sir, that says to you, 'Is it a small thing that thou shouldst be my servant?'"

"You — woman!"

"Because, if you put your father and mother between you and duty, God may give them another rest, sir, long and sweet, I doubt not, to them,—a rest that remaineth to the people of God."

He broke from her as if she had struck him, and walked towards the library. The Voice had said as much to him, but no mortal voice before had spoken it. The memory of the clear, delicate tones of this woman's voice was to haunt him for many a day.

As for the speaker, she flew off up to her room, in a whirl of excitement, thinking that she should never have said it, wondering how she came to think of it, and asserting to herself over and over that she could not explain to herself why she had so spoken. "He will hate me, — impudent, bold, officious!"

But Paul Havens was far from hating the speaker of that last tremendous warning. Just the contrary.

Sweeping across her room, kicking her slippered feet vengefully against her stiff brocade, swirling her train as she turned and turned, stamping the

foot upon the thick carpet, hands clasped in front, then behind, this stately woman would have liked to inflict some penance on herself. "I have spoiled all — all!" with vigorous gesture. "What avail now to whisper to my father that his proposed young partner can have no heart in the business, — that he is God's messenger? He is fixed. I have crystallized his disobedience. Besides, if it were not so, I have disgusted him with my bold officiousness!" Pacing, pacing, weeping! Yes, with high excitement and chagrin.

VII.

BUILDING A MANSION.

“THIS is the corner,” exclaimed Clara Norcross, touching the bell to halt the coachman.

“Nothing could be found more choice, I should say,” responded Paul Havens. “Take that present house down, I suppose.”

“Oh, certainly; though papa laughed at what he called my extravagant notions. He said that, in the bargain for the property, the house was valued at more than twenty good New Hampshire farms.”

“Still, if it is your idea to build a city home, you will never be content with any thing but your own idea, little bird, from cellar to gable.”

“Of course not. Let’s get out. The snow is very hard, like sand, indeed. That’s why I took the carriage. Yes, I have rubbers, you dear Mr. Caretaker. Let’s look at the street from the windows.” And she had fluttered on too fast for him fairly up the front stoop of the vacant dwelling.

“Why, Clara,” said Paul, “have you the key?”

“Indeed, I have, you dear boy,” fumbling at her little bag. “No, that’s the deed,” as a long paper came first to view. “Here, take it. But the key, the key! Oh, here it is.”

Paul opened the door for her and stepped into the echoing hall. She flew past him as happy as a bird, up the dusty stairway, in at the first door, to the front windows, throwing wide open the blinds.

“There! light of day, come into my home! Hurrah!” she exclaimed, no one seeing or hearing but Paul. “See! away there! and there! and there! Will it not be a cheerful outlook, Paul? Just think of broad windows, higher, larger than these old-fashioned things. The workmen are to go to tearing this down at once. Then the building; all ready for us by the time we return from Europe, a year from now!”

“Well, you child,” said Paul, “if you’ll give me a chance to edge in a word, when did you get all this? Here’s your deed thrust, all crumpled, into this bag, your key, your plan——”

“No, the plans are not yet drawn.”

“Well, this important paper——”

“Oh, yes, I forgot; papa said I was to hand it to you the first thing this morning, and

you would bring it down to the office, or somewhere."

"How did you get it?"

"Papa made a little scene, last night, and formally handed it over to me, while you, sir,"—this with mock reproach and some gravity not all assumed—"were in that wicked parlor having such a long conference with that mischief, Puss!" She gave him one searching look with her brown eyes. Then she broke into a smile of perfect trust, and put up her lips.

Paul laughed aloud. The empty chambers echoed it! The echo was not pleasant; and the young man looked over his shoulder, as if half-expecting to see some one. But, instantly recovering himself, he stooped to take her salutation, when she said,—

"I'll withdraw the proffer," suiting the action to the word, and turning her head.

"You are so slow, Paul Havens, this happy morning. But no, no. I forgot; it is because you go back to that dreadful college again to-night. I ought to be sad, too. But the new house is such an idea." Then she turned her face to him again.

"So your father made a scene over it, eh?"

"Yes. Let's look at—what do you call it?"

a fee simple? The paper! I never saw a deed. Oh, for a chair—two chairs! Here, in the window sill and the morning sun, Paul.”

“No, happy heart; you’ll take cold here. You should have read your deed last night. I suppose that’s why you happen to have it, that you might read it, like an intelligent girl. I’ll take care of it. This is all elegant in prospect. Hurrah, say I!”

“Paul!”

“What?”

“You awake such dreadful echoes in the old shell!” she said, coming close up to him.

Then they went slowly down, out, locked the door, she talking such a merry ripple all the while, and he happy for the moment, as he always was when in the presence of this living sunbeam.

“Left the blinds open, just like a man,” she exclaimed, clapping her hands.

“You can shut them after I am gone,” said he.

“Gone? Yes, but you’ll be up at Crosston by a month from now. Then we shall be together again.”

Yes, vacation March first.”

Wheels of carriages, wheels of cars, wheels of time. There is nothing to be written of this

interval, till the month of March, but of the rolling of these wheels. The wheels that rolled safely, taking Clara and her father back to the frozen, glorious North; the wheels that trundled Miss Fidelia Norcross to and fro of church, mission, opera, theatre, shopping, and society; the wheels that took Paul Havens to his books again. These movements we can describe. But those other wheels which run the clock-work of sharp Time, and pass the product on to long eternity,—wheels that turn softly while we sleep, while we wake, and work, and forget that they are turning; wheels that bring the weights of destiny to the ground and the hour-hands to the moments for which we were born; wheels that we can not see, that mark out decisions for us, and without asking our consent;—who can tell of these? Paul Havens could not; he was busy with studies. He had chosen his life-work. He had told his final choice to pure-minded Stephen Crane, and shut that good friend up to prayer alone.

And yet the wheels were running. It is the first of March. The wintry snows lie cold and crisp upon the New Hampshire hills, blinking back defiance to the lengthening sun of spring. They pile yet high the cheery grates in the

parsonage and in the palace of the village autocrat. Paul is at home; Clara is at home, and literally as much at home in one house as the other. The cousins may run up from Boston to increase the indoor social joy, and to "eat maple-sugar," in frolicsome visits to these hill farms, where stand the naked forests, waiting for the altar-fires of the sugar-makers.

Paul has brought up Stephen Crane, which is both pleasing and displeasing to his mother. Pleasing, because this gentle spirit wins for himself, everywhere, a loving welcome; but almost too warm a welcome from Miss Nora Havens, sweet girl, and like him in so many tastes. This is Steve's third vacation visit. Africa? Poor mother of the Havens brood, have you nursed her for this? Does God ask yet this one sacrifice more? Now that you think of it, wonderful heart of a mother, is there any difference between the children? But think of the honor of it, good soul! So all the deacons and godly folk would talk,—the honor of it. Possibly, within a year, the honors will begin. This young creature will stand amid a few flowers that have been sent down to the ship by the Christians of the city; stand beside her pale-faced husband, sustained by an unearthly resolu-

tion. Oh, God only knows how they are sustained! And then she will go forth to battle with those weak hands against a continent of darkness. Possibly, some one will remember that you had the pangs of birth for such a heroine. Then, in time, two graves! The honor? Are you not ambitious, ye wealthy, scheming mothers, who possibly read this? Possibly the honors are not distributed in this world.

VIII.

THE OLD SCHOOL-HOUSE.

“LET’S all go with your papa to-morrow night.”

“A harmless proposition, Miss Mistress-of-ceremonies.”

Paul and Clara were conferring together on the possible entertainments of these days. She proposed, he assented.

“Harmless,” she resumed. “It will be right jolly. He preaches at the school-house at ‘the Four Corners,’ at early lamp-light. Now, Paul, do please give out the notice just as your father does. Hush! Be still, all of you!” she exclaimed to the parsonage sitting-room full of the two families; for even Mr. Lemuel Norcross, very agreeable and cracking dry jokes, had found time to spend one evening and return the pastor’s many visits. “Hush! I say!” Clara demanded. “Paul can counterfeit his father’s very tones of voice. Paul?” She stood waiting with pretty expectancy.

“Four weeks from to-night,” Paul began, in a

loud tone, "Providence permitting, I will preach here again. Meeting at early candle-light!"

"Perfect, perfect!" shouted a half-dozen voices.

"If I had shut my eyes," said Nora, "I should certainly have said it was papa who spoke!"

"You are my other self," said Mr. Havens, smiling, yet wearing a thoughtful look. "I think the people would be quite willing to hear you, my son."

"I was thinking, coming up on the cars, father," Paul replied, with a sudden gravity and tenderness in his tone, that every one noticed, "that I had heard you preach but once, for more than a year."

Clara gave him a quick look. That last hearing was just before Paul's mid-winter return to college. The identical date of the beginnings of his late struggles of mind! Had the preaching voice of his father any thing to do with her lover's unrest?

"Seriously, father," Paul resumed, "I can not describe nor explain the peculiar power my own father's tones and utterances have on me, as I sit fronting him in the pews. I have often wondered if other ministers' children confessed to the same thrilling spell."

What say you, ministers' children who read this? Returning after long absence to hear it again; hearing it as age has begun to shatter it and you think of the time when it shall be forever hushed,—father's voice; hearing it rising in masterly utterance, or almost sobbing with its tender plea,—father's voice the voice of God to you; what say you of its spell?

A harmless proposition, Paul had pronounced this excursion, and Clara could not understand him. Paul's destiny will exchange wheels for runners, to-morrow's moon-lit evening. We shall get on fast, very fast towards our destiny now. We will all go, two good sleigh-loads, with this white-haired, weary-faced man, whom we all love.

"He is not fit for it," Mrs. Havens said. "He has not been strong enough, all this winter long, for these bleak rides to the distant school-houses and his preaching. But he will persist."

"Do you remember, Paul," said the pastor, trying to speak out very cheerily and strong, "what good times you and I used to have on these night journeys? How I used to finally put you down between my knees, under the buffalo robes——"

"And sing me to sleep, dear father?" Paul exclaimed. "The music of the bells, the run-

ners and your hymns. God be praised for such a sire, sir!" And he cleared his throat. "Father, I have no sweeter memories than these."

Why, then, should he acknowledge to himself any misgiving or apprehension at the thought of such sweet memories made real again? What did Puss Norcross say, that last night in Boston? What waking hour had passed, since she said it, that Paul Havens had not thought of it? What did this white face of his father seem to say now? That other rest, not of this world!

It was one night in a thousand. The bells upon the horses glistened with the diamond dust of hoar frost from their wearers' wreathing breaths. You could not touch a door latch, a gate latch, a buckle on the harness, nor any metallic thing, but it burned like fire. The river, that, opposite the parsonage, murmured over the dam at night when the mills were still, from its strip of black, open water sent up clouds of incense to the peerless blue of a cloudless sky.

"That tells how cold it is, better than a thermometer," said Paul, as he drew on his gloves. "See the river breathe, Steve. It is warmer than this air."

“Oh, such a night! such a world! And to think that this is but his footstool!” exclaimed the reverent student, a southerner by birth. He stood transfixed and caught at Nora’s arm to halt her.

“Right in that first sleigh, you two,” Clara directed them. “And, Mamma Norcross, you and Pastor Havens, the next seat. That fills mamma’s sleigh. John will drive for you, mamma, dear.” In the cold light she stood so warm of color that the moon could not, at its very full, lend ghostly hues to her; stood mounted upon a pedestal of upthrown snow at the path-side, and so pretty in robes of fur, this generalissimo whose sword was a muff.

“Jim!” to her stable-boy who drove up the next sleigh, “Mr. Havens will drive my ponies; you can go back now. You and I the front seat, Paul. Bella take the back. We shall meet Cousin Andrew at the depot when the Montreal train arrives. Got a telegram! Hurry! we should be there. It must be nearly six o’clock”

Now we are off. Now we have Andrew. Now we are clear of the village streets. Now we break through the roadside fence, though there are no fences to be seen, and take to the glorious highway of the glassy river for at least

three miles. Crip! crip! crip! the steel-shod strokes of flying hoofs as rapid as the pulses of these happy hearts. We note the golden lane of light from the moon across the glare of the dead stream, and the "imps of skaters," curling their dark forms in and out of the ray. We shudder as we gaze out where the "air-holes" show the black throat of the cruel river. We hear the far-off melody of some farmer's sleigh-bells jogging towards us; and now meeting them, we vote them, short-strapped necklace of big bells about old Dobbins' neck, more musical in the echoing night than our new-fashioned strings of tiny silvers which can only "crash! crash! crash!" We thought there was a north wind before we started; but we feel none on our cheeks as we speed southward, a part of the wind, on its very wings! We race for John ahead; but the interval does not lessen, and it will not, for John knows how the pastor revels in the movements of good horses. There is not to be found a fleetier than these two spans.

"We *will* catch them!" shouts Clara, and seizes the reins from Paul. "Papa told me the ponies could outstrip mamma's."

How we leap into the cold air till we actually

feel a wind upon our cheeks. We outstrip the north wind! We look down to see a little fizz of sparks, from these steel runners here and there as the ice is roughened. This charioteer! That Jehu ahead! But Clara loves the beasts.

"It is too tremendous a pace, Paul," handing over the reins.

"And your hands are freezing, Clara. Too much city, this winter."

"But we turn here," she directs. "We climb the hills for two miles. Let's sing."

We crawl slowly up the steep, singing hymns, singing college songs, singing the chorus over and over, because our voices seem to learn blending in the choruses. There are little shouts of protest as we catch at snow-laden evergreens and shake their ermine down upon us. The pines and hemlocks which we shook thus, seem to tremble, with a sense of insult, as if they were the high-priests of these solitary hillsides, asleep before their altars till we plucked them by the beard. We slowly enter the solemn aisles of the forest just beyond. Beech, birch, and maple, lofty and uncovered as becomes the congregation, standing erect as if in prayer-time, after the manner of the older New Englanders; these great trees are all of the first settlers. Or the towering congrega-

tion breaks forth into praises as we pass. Doubtless it was the upland winds; but we love to think it is these giant worshipers, murmuring their deep thanksgiving to their God.

We gradually grow hushed; we feel the reaction, possibly; or we own the noble spell; or we are busy with our thoughts. We have noticed, all along, that Paul, at our side, was in one of his quiet moods, though cheerful enough, no doubt.

“In spite of all I can do, you will not come out of your reverie?” A little, low aside, this, from Clara to Paul.

“I must attend to the horses, you know,” he replies, with a square look at her, sincere enough in its tenderness, if that was what she wanted.

“Which does not explain it at all, sir,” after which she is asking herself whether it is best to pout. But two souls that know each other well, can converse without speaking. She yielded to him; she grew sedate; she needed not to be told that that would please him best, just now.

Then, too, it is time to be quiet; we are almost at the school-house door; the mustering farmers are leading their families along the snow-

crust at our very side; hear the stout boots echo on this spotless pavement; the little girls wear boots just like the boys' boots, and we should not wonder if their mothers wore almost the same, this weather. It is time to be reverent, for all their heads are turned towards the sleighs, and we must act up to the dignity of the pastor's party, lest we bring a scandal on him whom we love.

"Every body has sharp eyes here, Andrew," Clara sends back. "Talk about criticism of new bonnets in city churches!" That hushes him and Bella.

The awkward squad of country youth about the door, all eyes, all silence, all health and its comeliness, all eager service with the horses, but not so much as venturing to offer a service to the fine folk whom the horses have drawn.

They nudge each other with the elbow, their hands being in their pockets, as Clara's ponies come to the door-stone. The nudge means "that is Miss Norcross! That's the favored son of heaven who is privileged to court her. Them's her own ponies." But not a vocal word.

"Please be very careful of them, they are so warm," exclaims Clara to Deacon Lucas' six-footed sixteen-year-old, who got at the bridles first.

Ah, the effect! The poor fellow had a speech ready in reply—which he could not utter till he got to his father's barn; then he spoke it to the ponies. Paul had offered to go round with the colts. Fortunate for him he did not go, or young Luce and he would never have been friends again.

Very few of the young men will get in to hear the sermon; they are all in Luce's barn, looking over the turn-outs. They will enter the school-house by and bye, with such a "stamping" of snow-covered feet, a very thunder in the vestibule. And for many reasons, it is doubtful if this convoy of "fine folk" will be any help to the good pastor; fine dress, fine manners, perfume of college, Boston riches; however reverent his company may be, and however innocent, the pastor would have been more welcome alone.

The long-legged adults on the low benches of the children; the lamp and its big reflector on the right; on the left, at the pastor's back, the square box-stove, roaring, red as a rose on top and on either side, and bidding every one beware. The dry heat, in a room without an air-hole, save the door, an atmosphere unendurable, except that, with all these farmers, cleanliness

is next to godliness: the blue flannel frock that smells of the ox is left at home when they assemble for worship; the blackboard at the pastor's back, whose chalkings you go figuring through, while the pastor reads the hymn.

If this classic-faced clergyman had stood robed in the grand cathedral train, and before princes and potentates, he could not have been more reverent and devout, in action or in thought, than here, in this mere perch of a desk, pronouncing,—

“All hail the power of Jesus' name,
Let angels prostrate fall.”

What is it, Paul, what is it? Why, man, all the blood has left thy cheeks at sound of that first stanza. It is the same old voice of your father. Or do you detect some change, pathetic prophecy of other change? Or is it all the dear old boyish memories come suddenly back again that move thee so? We are getting on fast towards our destiny now.

There is a laughter more pathetic and more tender than tears. The dear, droll, halting singing of that hymn! Clara bites her lips and hides her rosy cheek in the shadow of Paul's broad shoulder. We all have rosy cheeks, by the way, and stiff ones too, coming from that

cold into this warmth. But we all try to sing, as Clara is honestly trying, and Paul, with head thrown frankly back, and making no effort to smooth out his broad smile. But the young man's eyes—it may be the effect of the wind and this sudden warmth.

Deacon Luce is chorister, self-appointed, sitting with us face to all,—eyes closed,—big boot beating time, “hum—in, yeu—” after which preliminary, he strikes into the tune, and catches firmly hold on the first word of the stanza. High above all others the deacon's snarl and odd pronunciation, yet profoundly reverent.

“Al—m—m, hail the peower uv,—” and then the swing of a cadence that next comes out strong on “*ann-gels,*” who are to “*praas-trate fall.*” Then the swing to “*forth—the*”; a leap to “*ray-al*”; a joyous jump which lands him safely on “*di-a-dum,*” and then such a victorious soaring away on the high notes with which “Old Coronation” can alone gratify, in that last strain before the repeat. The deacon prolongs it as if most reluctant to retreat even after all his dauntless followers have come to a breathless halt, mouths open with wonder at the heights their leader has attained. When his breath is finally gone, bold captain that he is, for a moment he allows

silence, then inflates again his capacious lungs, a little trap-door in his gullet, gives a flap, which we spell "me—yeh!" and, with a swing of his spectacles, a lunge forward of his body, a thundering beat of his right foot, he leads us off again with "bring forth the," and so on of the repeat.

Every body sings, of course, yet every body is very careful to keep out of the way of the deacon's stalwart scythe. He "leads the gang," in the hay fields, and the throng are just as deferential to him here. Unless we were to notice the very venturesome, and only occasional, attempt to soar independent and unled which wails up from Aunt Abig'l Henlett, who sits in yonder corner. It is not worth mentioning, however. Brother Luce has his own way. Indeed, it is the privilege of leading the singing that, unconsciously perhaps, he prizes highest in these services; and for which he is willing to contribute "the bait to the elder's hoss," and a pumpkin or two in the sleigh to take home. The pumpkins all count, however, be ye sure of that, towards the pew rent which he owes the treasurer of the village church, at Crosston.

And yet, there is so much of genuineness in the singing, there is something so noble, always, in

this majestic hymn itself, borne aloft on this tune of the ages; and we can but feel assured of the clean and wholesome yeoman characters, so thickly crowded round us on this winter's night, honest in their purpose, resorting thither to learn of God. We could easily be melted into deep religious emotion.

“My brethren!” You are not much surprised at the sudden interruption, though it chops off all breaths that are just drawn to begin the last stanza. The pious rapture has quickened the speaker till he can keep his silence no more. It is Enoch Downer, whom all “the deestrick” knows but to love, who puts up his stubby form before us and exclaims,—

“My brethren, I can't keep still no longer. This blessed hour! The fires within me are kindlin'! I jest riz ter say—yeh!” And here his stentorian utterance echoes like his sheep-call upon these lofty hills at summer-sundown. “To say—yeh! that I am in the speret ter night—eh. And though I stand with one foot as it were in the grave, eh—and the other all but, eh, I am bound to live on the Lord's side, eh!”

Of course, Clara had heard this speech before, even from a child, in the village prayer-meeting.

and had made the infantile inquiry as to "what good Mr. Downer meant by saying that he stood with one foot in the gravy and the other in the butter and so forth?" We have all heard it, except Andrew Norcross, Boston cousin. And we always smile. Yet we know the speaker so well and esteem him as so true a man, that we, too, catch an emotion from his sing-song shout of joy. Away we go, again, with that last inspiring stanza of the almost nameless Perronet in a hymn which might well have given its author a place in the love and gratitude of the Christian world.

"Let us pray!"

How solemn is the hush that greets thine invitation, Elder Havens, man of God to every one in this room. As poor, yet making many rich. Poor? Thou art rich, thou preacher, in the rare,—most rare indeed as men go in this world,—the measureless regard of all this room. It is little matter what thou sayest; for any words endorsed by such a life as thine but make us think on the God to whom thou art now inviting us.

"Let us pray." And while we bate our breaths yet hear each other breathe, hear sighs of weary hearts and whispers of "Amen!" it would

seem that we are very far away from the silk house in Boston. The wheels which have been moving are almost still. We are very far away from the new-building palace on Commonwealth Avenue. The wheels are still. We have come to the hour of our destiny at last. It is not in the lecture-room of the very wise college. It is not in the flashing show of the opera night. It is not under the groined roof of the stately church, where brilliant Mr. Crestlake rounds his grave and polished speech. It is in this mean and scanty hut, yet place of wonderful inspiration to many great Americans,—a New England school-house.

At all events, Paul Havens and Clara Norcross, be it where it may, no doubt the mysterious wheels are still. We have come to decisions now. If we were to look up we could not, as our eyes are now, manage to read the swimming figures on the dial. But we dare not look up. We tremble and shake with the inward emotion. Our father's voice in prayer, brings back that other Voice. To disobey is to die!

IX.

THE DECISION.

IT would be profane to attempt a description of that prayer. Indeed, it was not so much what was said. Nor can any analyst put cause for effect in these movements of mind. We show you a mystery, namely, how the God-called preacher, resisting, self-willed, like iron against his call, yet suddenly at last melts—falls! It is as the iceberg, long proud-towered and long, long wooed by the gentle sunbeam, cracks, bows! It is just as your ship is passing; but it was not your glance that caused it. It was the awful product of many days of unconscious sun's rays.

Neither Paul nor Clara lifted their faces till some moments after the simple sermon had begun. When they did, Clara had her handkerchief to her eyes, while her lover held his head erect enough, though his eyes were closed, and through the lids the truant tears were now and then unmistakably stealing. They sat with hands clasped under the concealment of her cloak. She had

reached for his, and be sure he had gladly welcomed her sympathy. Was not that a part of the problem, whether now their hands were being joined for the last time?

“I am not old,” said the preacher, “but yet, I have a strong conviction that my preaching days are nearly done.”

Paul was profoundly moved. He knew the preacher, and that there was no stage-trick, called cant to adapt it to the pulpit, in this weary plaint.

“I bethink me, often, of the way I have traveled. With all its sorrows—and I have joyed to add your sorrows to my own, till I can scarce pass a farm-house which is not replete with such memories—yet it has been a way of inexpressible delight!”

“God bless him!”

“Amen!”

“Yes, yes!”

“And soon I must leave this work—to whom? I hear of your sons going to the city, brethren. It is out of your homes that the exhausted cities, down country, recruit their banks and stores. Your boys are at Dartmouth, and Amherst, and Wesleyan. Oh, we raise bright boys up here. But not a candidate for the ministry has sprung

up from these hills in eight years! And the cry is for ministers. Who will go?"

It was at the very close of his discourse. He had not dwelt upon the appeal in the body of his sermon. It was but a tender, and Paul knew, a most apt, appeal at the end. It followed appropriately his line of thought, and it was a proper word to speak, these vacation days, in the hearing of other ears beside his own.

And yet Paul knew that the words were intended for himself. A preacher may not preach *at* an individual. But, if he is conscious of a sacred friendship between himself and a hearer, he may preach a truth *to* his friend, making him the only and the honored auditor among a thousand. A clergyman's children often know that "father meant us." They are often melted to tears by such appeals; for it seems as if, weary and diffident of direct approach so often vainly iterated in the secrecy of home, the good man had no other recourse left but to preach to them as to strangers. Pitiful plight of their rebellion!

Oh, what tales the pastor's pew could tell,—when it has listened and known that the preacher was racked with pain; when it has listened and known all the hints of his and their bereavement; when it has listened in the place of his

critics and his enemies, his false brethren, and his secret detractors. When it has listened, the pastor's rentless pew—though, to be sure, it might not command much rent, located where it is,—listened to any reference to the time when the preacher's voice would exhort no more. There are pews and pews, but no pew could speak like the pastor's pew.

As Mr. Havens sank into his seat, with that last question yet unanswered, "Who will go?" Paul turned to Clara with this reply:

"I will! Let me pass, please."

"Is he ill? Do go!" she responded; and moving out from the cramped desk she added, "May I not go with you, Paul?"

He turned, involuntarily, and gave her one look, as if to read, if she meant it, a better meaning, even, than a proffer to help the fainting speaker, half overcome in this confined atmosphere. The next moment he was bending eagerly over his father's chair.

"Father!" then grasping both of his hands, since the blue lips moved not. "My father! you are not ill." Instead of which reassurance most fools would have blurted out, "How pale, ghastly you look!" But wise, strong Paul said, "Dear father! Ah, you are looking at me. You appear

and feel stronger now, dear sir! It is the heat—and the unusual unction with which you spoke.”

“My children—” the nerveless clergyman gasped.

“Are all about you, papa, dear!” cried Nora, falling on her knees at his side, and beginning to loosen his neck-wear.

“Yes, papa. Oh, God help us!” exclaimed Bella, straightening up from kissing—and suffocating him. “See! he can not speak! My God, he will die here!—and oh, poor mamma!”

“Hush, child!” said Paul. “No, no, do not come about us so!” This to the little room-full who had sprung forward at Bella’s shriek.

“Bella, Bella, ’t is only a faint,” said Clara, who instantly found comfort for herself in comforting this distracted daughter. What a difference in chicks of the same brood! Nora, the missionary of to-morrow, calm, laborious at her father’s temples, yet wise enough to know all the time that it might be the dreaded paralysis, a family inheritance. Bella herself like one dead in Clara Norcross’ arms.

“Now room! Do—you—hear—men—and—women? Let—us—pass,—please!” Paul Havens had his father’s form in his own unaided arms, and was bearing him, with strides that

shook the floor, to the door. Alone he would have done it, too, but that Andrew Norcross would not suffer him, and lent a hand.

"Here, father, we are, in the fresh air. You are better, now! So, so, my coat for a pillow. There; you will ride home as well as you came, dear sir. You can move your hand!"

No response.

"Can you not move your foot?"

No response.

"Brandy! Yes, yes, you must take it. There can be no harm in brandy now. God created it for such an hour. Drink, father. It has come a quarter of a mile in five minutes, by this young fellow's legs. Now, speak, father. You can move your tongue."

No response.

"At least he swallows," whispers Nora, who has sunk to the snow-covered floor, and got the fond head in her lap, and offered a glass of water.

"If you could but get him to take the brandy," says Andrew, also on his knees by the prostrate form.

"He would die first, I almost think," whispered Bella, who, on her knees, also, is miserably helpless, with head leaned hard and scared face hid on Clara's shoulder. Indeed, it is a kneeling group.

“No. Do not trouble him with the liquor. We know how he hates it. Father, your wish!” exclaims Paul, bending down close. “Oh, speak again, my father!”

What a waiting it is, the waiting to know!—whether about the bed of luxury in chambers of elegance and the watch and pulse in the hands of skill, or here under the blink of the stars that peep in through this open door, and with these hapless young people, unskilled except in love and prayer. We wait an age, so it seems. In fact, it is the barest interval.

But in that interval the student has reviewed the lessons of a life-time. He presses his clenched hands hard between his knees. The drops of agony start out upon his brow, and the winter's breath can not keep them back. In the interval of waiting, he kisses his father like a boy. In that interval, with all the seeming of orphanage, his heart goes out to Clara—kneeling face to face. She is so beautiful in her mingled love and pity. She is the next sacred idol of his heart, and shall be first now, perhaps, in a few moments. She surely will not let him go the ways of life alone. He reaches over and takes her hand, saying,—

“Clara, would God he had lived to hear me say it!”

“Say it now, Paul. Perhaps his spirit will—will—turn back to hear it!”

Quick, then. “*Father! Father! Oh, tongue of a good man. Mine can never plead as thou hast. But, so God help me, I will take up the story that these lips have this night ceased to tell!*”

“Paul, see!” quietly, promptly speaks Nora. “He is far from dead. He heard that!”

“Again, Paul! It is good medicine.” The words spring from Clara’s lips as if one word.

“Father! Great God, witness! Father, *live to hear me preach.* If that is what God means.”

How strange do words sometimes sound,—not often, but once or twice in a life-time, when they are so richly freighted and so unearthly in their cadence, that it seems as if you heard the very soul of a human creature uttering speech.

“I will, my son. Strength—returns. Home!”

Yes, home. Lift him. Embrace ye Paul. He has almost raised our dead! Oh, gently, yet swiftly, make pillows and a couch. Let our tears fall like rain in the joyous revulsion of emotion. Let our prayers be thanks, and our words all prayers that we get safely back to

the Crosston parsonage. Let us but wring each others' hands now and ask for no explanations. There will be many things to tell and wonder over, how Paul brought the dead to life with a word; but it's little matter now what the word was, or how he and this dear, helpful Clara knew what word to speak. We shall do best at home with a physician, and mamma at hand. If it is but "the first stroke, at worst"; and there must be two more, and perhaps he will never have them.

We get away from the kind farmer group. We see him revive by the minute now. This air, with the crown of the Boreal Lights that begin to flash and flash all across the heavens, these are batteries of God-sent power. How the red banners flaunt clear up to the zenith as we fly! Fingers of scarlet and hands of gold! We fairly feel the vital force that is flung down upon us from those mystic finger tips, as we speed away. The sick man lifts his arm to point to the glorious sky. The two women, Clara and Nora, who make his pillow, bend to hear.

"The Northern Lights always — give — me — life!"

"He has got his speech all back, Paul!" They

shout it to Paul, who guides the ponies in their wild descent of the hills.

“Did you notice,” the clever little physician, Clara, resumed to Nora, “how utterly overcome and useless to us young folks Mamma Norcross was?”

“Yes, to be sure. I had n’t thought of her. But now I remember her sobbing in the seat all by herself, and motioning you to leave her with Mr. Crane.”

“Sister Norcross—is—a very sensitive nature,” the clergyman murmured faintly. “Much dependent on her strong husband.”

“That’s true, you—poor dear,” exclaimed the delighted Clara, giving him a motherly little clutch and kiss, after the manner of woman’s sovereignty over all manly age or dignity, when man is ill. But in the next instant came a troubled thought that made her silent. The mention of her father’s strength! She stopped short in her remedial treatment of this man, thinking anxiously of that man.

“What amazement, your mother and Mr. Crane both springing to feet—my first reviving sight by the big school-house lamp,—when Paul said what he did!” Then the invalid added, with ineffable repose, “Thank my God!”

It was Clara Norcross' first return to self-consciousness. She had forgotten all about her father, her own future, and the portentous changes wrought prophetically upon it within the last short hour. But she was awake to the morrow now. She suddenly found herself almost wishing that the flight of the steeds might be checked; she drew back in her seat as if to hinder them. She made some involuntary motion that must have been discoverable to the sick man, for he said, —

“You and Paul,” then pausing, then repeating, “you and Paul will never regret it,—my son, my daughter.”

“Brother told us,” quickly put in Nora, with the best intentions in the world of course, but blundering unaccountably, for a woman, you would say, except that she would have looked upon any thing like jealousy in Clara as impossible, — “what a soul-thrust—that's Paul's expression—your Cousin Fidelia gave him. He'll never forget——”

“Puss Norcross!” exclaimed Clara. Her voice was suddenly grown cold as this winter air. “And what, pray tell, did she say to him which was so important?”

But in the next few moments she would have

given any thing to have that pert, little speech safely back in her own mouth, for she was greeted with one of those blank silences which we use to express both surprise and pain; and she would not, for worlds, distress this precious invalid, as she feared that she had.

Clara welcomed the silence, on second thought. It was easier than conversation in the frosty air, and bounding and thumping down the highland roadway at the top of their speed. Clara Norcross had one peculiarity that might be called exceptional in the only child of opulent indulgence: She kept the troubles of life to herself. It is not a bad peculiarity; it makes your presence a perpetual cheer. If she had ever felt a jealous pang, she would not, on reflection, have revealed it; therefore, Paul had never suspected it. She was glad to hope that he had not overheard her unguarded remark.

There is not a little pride, as well as strength of character, in this reticence of sorrows. But if one be delicately sensitive as well, it is terribly expensive,—one consumes in secret. No one knew the amount of hard thinking that the girl had done within the last year over this question of Paul's possible life-work. It all sprung up anew now, like a spectre, to add to

the already intense excitement of her tender sensibilities this night. It sprung up, like any resurrected trouble, with increased power to terrorize at the mention of her father's and Puss Norcross' name.

"I will follow him, my Paul," she found herself iterating with tongue and lips, and no sound, "no matter what papa may say! What must a woman do, but follow her love, when it is innocent? I am not changeable; I simply follow my hero. Where the men go, the loyal women go. But what a scene we shall have with papa! Europe? The elegant, new Boston home? Puss Norcross shall not win him! Has she been of nobler service to him than I? Am I not also a Christian girl?"

She felt the kindling of this flaming night as it fluttered its gorgeous hues overhead. There is a peculiarity about these electrical displays in the extreme north which is little known to the southerner. They set you on fire. They make the brain a lesser altar, on which to feed unusual fires. Thoughts and emotions revel in ill-control. Clara was almost hysterical.

"See!" suddenly exclaimed the invalid, who, half reclining, could gaze up and almost lose himself in the heavenly vision.

“Good! Good! He points with his right arm, Paul!” shouted the happy Nora.

“Thank God!” said Paul, venturing to turn for a moment.

“See!” the father continued. “It makes the very shape of the cross above us! It is your harbinger, my boy. He is giving me back my life again. He answers prayer. Oh, you know that I am no habitual shouter; but it seems to me I must shout now. God is so good! Glory to his name! If men only knew how blissful it is to serve him. Glory! Paul?” And the speaker sprung into a sitting posture, his striking features radiant and half up-turned, his hand up-flung in favorite gesture.

Paul turned to look with silent wonder. The two beautiful faces at the preacher’s side turned to look with silent wonder.

“Paul,” he shouted with a mighty effort, “we will stand together and point to that cross, you and I, father and son! Hallelujah! The Lord God omnipotent reigneth!”

And, as if to make reply, just then, over the worshipful, upturned faces of the company, over the sleeping forelands couchant on either hand over the glassy river now left by the moon to this holier and more awful glow, the great

crown from the far north moved! It marched like an army with banners, slowly, steadily up, up, up the arc of the sky. It suddenly broke. It wheeled and countermarched its glittering hosts in confusing evolution, on which their earthly eyes now gazed almost appalled. Then the light halted. When all was still, lo there! It was, in fact, a *form of the cross!* More distinct than the watching clergyman had seen before, though watching long its approximations to this shape, a cross of fire.

The cross was still above them for many seconds. They forgot all in contemplation. Thank heaven, it did not endure long, for it was not in flesh and blood to endure the sight and live. While they gazed, with a great flash it was gone. Northerners are familiar with the illusion, — if it is illusion, — of an audible sound accompanying these displays at times.

“I surely heard a voice!” whispered the awe-struck clergyman, sinking back exhausted.

“A voice from heaven,” echoed Paul.

“It sounded like a whisper,” said Nora, trembling and affrighted.

“It surely did. Oh! Oh!” And with this Clara could endure no more. She got to a woman’s relief at once. She bowed her head on

the great furred shoulder of the pastor and sobbed uncontrollably.

A strange happiness this. It is not often given a place in popular descriptions. It can not, doubtless, be described. The pure religious ecstasy of this reclining man, lying as in the restful bosom of God. He had this witness, that he pleased God, no doubt. He had an unearthly joy in the consecration of his son. It might be worth while for fathers to ask if ever, when a son of theirs first took his place in the money-making firm, and it was written on the old sign, "And Son," over the door, such joy came to them; or when a son won his first election, or a great promotion with added stars and bangles in Vanity Fair. Sylvester Havens scarcely spoke again till they reached the parsonage door.

An unearthly happiness, this of Paul Havens. Doubtless, hard to describe, also. You may say, "Sweet to obey conscience." Then multiply that by what? Some celestial multiple. But you have no figures, nor language, with which to write out the product. Self utterly forgotten now, because self was dead and hid. A new-born self in its place.

It was peace and rest in decision, after unrestful years, for he had been fighting this Voice since twelve years of age.

It was his father recovered; not dead, but alive!

It was Clara Norcross prompting him; and therefore assenting to his destiny.

But it was more than all these, which of themselves would fill the cup of most men, a very full cup of this life's joys. It was the Divine favor. The keen blast that whistled over the field and the river whispered softly to him of the Divine favor. The bleak aspect of nature, lifeless and dread, seemed actually to put on a change and to smile like a summer's evening with the Divine favor. He had a sense of safety, in this vast universe; of the inalienable kindness of all things towards himself, so that the very elements seemed to caress him, and he could not have perished had he made a bed of the drifts that blushed beside the path in the hues of this strange sky. He was immortal already; he could not die till his work was done. He exulted in this immunity from death, from injury, from defeat. No pain, no privation, but assumed the appearance of privilege,—Divine favors all. He could not, though he tried to imagine one, foresee a place of labor so somber, so black, so terrible, that it could quench his mysterious eagerness to dare and do for men therein. His felicity was

almost overpowering. He began to fear. He found himself asking, "O God, temper the joy! Let me have strength to endure this Divine favor." It is rare, yet it is not unknown,—this cry for strength to receive all the sudden happiness that is sent. You have been carried to the pitch of rapture by music, and have felt, suddenly and to your surprise, that you could endure no more; hence you began to study the dress of your neighbor, or any other triviality was seized on, to quench the brain-fire. So Paul Havens, for very relief, leaned forward to watch the nigh horse as she reached out over the ice. But it was for a moment only; the mind returned to drink again of the Divine favor.

You have been the subject of a dear friend's "Bless you, I want to make you happy!" But it passes telling, the ecstasy of it, when you hear the Divine "Bless you! I am now making you happy!" Paul remembers how it is written, "If these should hold their peace, the very stones would cry out." He seems to see that ancient Speaker of Jerusalem's street; and suddenly, chanting in low, sonorous tones of reverence, to the notes of an old tune, he gives his heart utterance, —

"Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of hosts; heaven

and earth are full of thy glory: glory be to thee, O Lord most high."

Louder, yet more reverent and solemn, the singer begins to repeat, when the two women's voices join his without the asking, "Holy, holy, holy!"

Once, when they paused at the end of the refrain, from the enameled rocks of a foreland by the river's narrow pass, through which they were slowly winding, came back the echo, soft as angel minstrelsy, as if, indeed, the trembling air was full of benediction, "Lord, most high-high-high!"

In the hush of this great happiness they go on, till they reach the village-street deserted, till they lift their load to the parsonage-path, and it is a load no longer.

"Children," said the clergyman, using his own feet, "we will have no need to tell mother of my slight indisposition till the morning, when I can both tell her and reassure her."

When, a few moments later at her father's door, Paul stood folding Clara fondly for a lover's brief good-night, the other sleigh load not yet having come in sight of the porch that sheltered them, he whispered, —

"We have never seen a brighter hour, my precious girl!"

She lifted her head from his shoulder and looked up into his eyes a moment, not answering. Then she faltered out, "If it would only last, Paul."

"Last? This joy? The favor of God lasts forever, if we obey. What do you mean?"

Turning partly round, she looked through the window of her father's "den," from whence the lamp-light streamed across the portico. Having made sure, she drew Paul aside and pointing in through the gap in the heavy velvet curtains, said, "Come and see."

The manufacturer sat smoking and toiling, so abstracted that he had not heard their footsteps upon the creaking marble.

"Do you know what he is doing?" she asked.

"Trying to add millions unto a million, I suppose." The descent seemed like a fall from heaven.

"For whom, Paul?"

"Shall I answer that he thinks it is for you and me?"

"And then, add to that, that he will call us traitors for this night's resolves," she continued, with a tone of downright distress.

"I shall come straight to see him in the morning. That will certainly be the honest way.

Here comes your mother ; good-night," and Paul bounded along the well-worn path that led from the rich man's home to the rich man's parsonage, for both buildings belonged to Lemuel Norcross. The light from the toiler's lamp fell on the path, a light to Paul's feet, indeed. In its ray the young man halted to read the hour. It was midnight ; as he looked, the light went out. The toiler's day's work was done.

Just here, through the evergreens, the path sharply turning, the rays from his father's bed-chamber met him ; as he looked, that light also went out. Standing a moment under the stars, Paul spoke it to the trees on the lawn,—

"Our fathers have each finished another day's work, and God Almighty can now write them in the ledger."

X.

CARRYING IT OUT.

THE morning is the time for an act of volition; especially if you have slept well. You awake already for sharp and decisive action. The problem of the night before greets you at the bedside, and offers to terrorize you as it did the night before; but you are not the same person who went, weary and affrighted, to that bed. You are a new creature. You are impatient with this tyrant, your problem. You spring up and throttle him. You adjust your dress, and every button settles something. You open your chamber door, boldly, ready to meet forty troubles. Your mind is thronged with resources, and your hands tingle to begin. What an hour for courage is the morning! Volitions of the morning will accomplish something ere the sun goes down. Volitions of the evening often fade like the mists of the night.

If Paul Havens was decided at night, he was invincibly decided in the morning. He resolved to seek his interview at once with Mr. Nor-

cross; and not at his residence, but at the factory office. After breakfasting with his mother and sisters, and ascertaining that his father had passed a comfortable night and was still sleeping, he excused himself and went on foot to the mills.

The great gates of the yard were thrown obsequiously open to his ring, by the lame, little man in the lodge. The gate-keeper was, by the way, a pensioner, who had lost his right foot in a machine which he once served skilfully for the concern. Mr. Norcross would not let so good a man starve; by no means. He had invented the machine which hurt him, and it was invaluable. Pierre Bloc was a French Yankee. His machine was the sword that fought Lyons, and the village knew it. Cruel machine, that had snapped off its maker's foot; kind machine, that had made it possible for Lemuel Norcross to rival Lyons, and so saved all this pile of brick from bankruptcy. Pierre was a child of the Huguenots. His piety was as true as his good face asserted; hence, the thing to do was, to pension him, setting him to keep this lodge, and making him a deacon in the village church.

"Good morning, Mr. Paul," said Pierre, touching his skull cap. "The Lord be with thee, son

of the prophet! The owner is before thee, this early hour, sir; just gone into his office."

"Pierre," responded Paul, "give me your hand. It will do me good to take the hand of a brave man, just now. Your fathers died for their faith, sir."

But beyond the shaking of the honest hand, the young man paused to offer no explanations to the somewhat questioning face of the good deacon. Down the yard the operatives everywhere lifted their caps to Paul. The news was already old that he was to be master here, and the news was popular at every mention of its smallest and latest item. A knot of fellows, heaving at a snow-clogged freight-car, were willing to forego their hold for a moment to look on this spruce, manly form, and give good morning. Another knot of teamsters would insist in moving their great grays, despite his protest, to give the young partner the path which the hoofs had occupied. Paul might have noticed, had he not been so pre-occupied, the vassalage that was offered by the eyes of boys and girls, and strings of youthful operatives who dragged their white-faced procession in and out of doors upon their rounds of treadmill toil. His romance was a twice-told tale in every humble village kitchen,

where these people talked and philosophized about life, the long winter evenings through. "Paul and Clara," it was behind their backs. Every village youth was Paul; every village maid was Clara, all in dreams.

Paul Havens had attained the lawful stature of a man. Not one of these operatives had; the mill atmosphere had stunted all their growths. He had an elastic step and struck his heel down firmly. Not so these, who always shuffled wherever they walked, as if treading along greasy floors; and their tread was soft, like a cat's footfall. Paul had fine color; all these had pallor, with pinheads of black pricked into the wax. Paul had been schoolmate to many, till to college he, to moiling they. He frankly and kindly met their gaze, and spoke old names for short, to set them at their ease. Many looked down and addressed him as "Mister," then studied his back and his fine clothes as he passed on. Such as were Catholics admired him, or, at the worst, envied him. Such as were members of his father's congregation, fellows of the old Sunday-school benches, would have been jealous of the promotion of the preacher's boy, but for pleasant memories of his unselfish boyhood.

As he pushed on down the vast inclosure,

the rows of long, low buildings seemed to draw themselves up like troops at dress-parade, awaiting his command. Every now and then he stopped to think of it: the forces in waiting for him; the snow-covered roofs, like an encampment in winter quarters, ready to conquer the world—the proud commercial world—for him and Andrew Norcross, within the next five and twenty years.

Through an open door the hum of industry; the sound that is like no other sound on earth: a hiss combined with a chatter of ten thousand speakers, not one of which has a soul; a groan, mingled with the lighter sort of laughter, that you may interpret as derision or flattery; a sound that says to the office, in hard times, "We are worms, eating your leaves of gold. Hear us consuming you!" But which says in good times, "We are increasing, amassing, storing. Honey bees are we. Buzz, buzz!" To Paul Havens, the hum of industry was disposed to sing the most fulsome praises.

The blue wreaths of smoke from spire-like chimney-stacks declined to aspire heavenward this morning, but, taking advantage of a low barometrical condition,—there was a March "sugar-snow" in the cloudy southern sky evi-

dently,—the smoke came down and clothed him, did obeisance to him as the coming man, and it choked him.

“Ahem!” clearing his throat. “It is a different sky, a different atmosphere from last night,” pushing on.

The office is to the mass of the mill, what the eye is to the whole head; what the head is to the aggregate bones, sinews, and flesh of the physical man. Not a large building; its doors fly open to him; the envious rows of clerks look up and, biting their pens, sing,—

“Good morning,” a long row of them, like a choir in church. It is in voices bass, contralto, soprano, tenor, though the deep, healthy basses are too few.

Not so confident a step now; yet a nearly calm exterior, as he gives and takes the amiable salutations. Knees quite shaky, now, as he approaches that inner door. He throws back his coat, and fills his lungs so deeply that, noticing also the troubled look he wears, an old clerk, just at the door, remarked a moment later,—

“A sigh! True as heaven it was a sigh!” Then the old man chuckled; his thin lips mumbled, “He’s got it, got it! the Norcross heart-ache; we all get it.” The misanthrope! But

then he had been here for years, very faithful; and had been promoted and advanced, till he was watch-dog on the public side of the inner office-doors. Some men can never endure promotion.

“Ah, my boy, expected you; how’s father? Confound Andrew! Why isn’t the fellow here! Like his father, a little slow. Seat?” All of which the manufacturer had spoken like lightning, and before the clangor of the glass doors had ceased to echo. He was seated, and writing with one hand; he extended the other, the left, in a backward movement, yet cordial enough, no doubt; he did not look up at Paul, but straight across the table, when it was necessary to look up at all, and into the face of a stenographer, who also was at his work.

“What a killing pace you keep up, sir,” said Paul, not knowing which question to answer, and deciding that none of them demanded a reply. He shrank into the proffered seat with a sense of relief.

“Yes. I can lead you boys a dance for the next twenty years. I guess you’ll find—tell him not in the present state of the market—in my judgment thirty days will tell——”

The first sentence flung to Paul, the second to the stenographer, the third, with a splash of

ink, to his own sheet of paper. "How many hours a day can you study, my boy?"

"I have thought I could endure sixteen, sir. But some say that's wicked," Paul replied.

"Wicked?" Scribble, scribble; the pen seemed to be laughing aloud. "I can beat you. I can put in twenty, week in and week out. We shall learn some things, sir. Yes. Here to learn; business growing like a mushroom—tell him I'll see him in Botany Bay, first. Write just that—" with a toss of a letter back to the writer. Scribble, dash. "Yes, wish you were here, now, Paul. Graduation day mere form. Cut it; come now. No; s'pose 't would grieve your father and the women folks."

After a while, Paul saw that it would be necessary to break in by main force with his errand. He could not wait, moreover, for courage was ebbing. He had watched for a chance of courteous interruption, and the half-hour had soon ripened into an hour of the above sort of an interview. Not one man in a thousand would have had as much of an interview as had been granted Paul. Mr. Norcross undoubtedly considered himself very gracious; he was visiting, actually visiting with his future son-in-law, and in business hours!

Paul said, "Mr. Norcross, a serious errand brought me down this morning. Can not we be alone?"

There was something in Paul's voice, when deeply in earnest, that compelled attention. Yet it was very respectful withal. The manufacturer straightened back; looked over at the little writer, as much as to say, "He is furniture," and then said, decidedly, impatiently too, though he probably did not intend it so, for he put on a smile:

"Well,—Paul,—what—is it?—say—on!"

It was like the click of machinery. The man's mind worked like that. He was all concentration on Paul in a moment. A great business is a great mental disciplinarian; superior to the modern college, no doubt.

"You welcome words to the point," Paul said.

"That's me, my dear feller."

When intensely moved, Mr. Norcross always lapsed into the false syntax of his unschooled boyhood. Paul knew this, and measured the man's intensity thereby at once. It was his usual excitement, when at work.

"You see many things at a glance," Paul resumed. "Expressions of gratitude to, and friendship for, you and yours, I sincerely trust, are

not needed. You know how truly attached I am."

"I see. A word's—n'ff on that score. The point."

"I solemnly assure you, my dear sir, that I feel myself called of God to the Christian ministry. You would say I must not dare disobey." There it was—out! and not at all as he had planned to say it.

Silence is needed. Let the patient writer put it down. Let the great clock on the wall tick it down; yes, and tick it out into the lips of the hundred clocks it regulates in a hundred rooms of working men and women, and tick it up into the great dial that is always staring from the tower; tick it into the warp and woof of time, and into the fabric of this imperious Norcross life,—a rotten thread,—a hopeless disappointment, and the first of any consequence, but which makes it possible to rend the whole in twain. Meanwhile the owner of all this has settled himself, imperceptibly more compact, into his chair, and trained his keen eyes on the destroyer of his hopes.

"That is, you prefer beggary to half of this wealth, eh?"

"I beg of you," with great emphasis on beg,

“not to misunderstand me, sir,” said Paul, at first meeting glance with glance, but yielding promptly and casting his eyes to the floor. “It is heaven’s disposal of me, I believe.”

“Ye-as.” It hardly escaped the lips compressed by the chin forced down on the breast. The posture gave the changeless eyes a dreadful gleam, peering from beneath the beetling brows. “Heaven, eh? I have met this idea of heaven ever since I was a boy. It decreed even me a beggar by birth—so I was taught; but I did n’t remain so. Heaven has often crossed my track, but I have had my way in the end. Heaven denied me a son. I took you. But no; heaven does n’t meddle, boy, with our affairs, as you have been taught to believe. I’m not impious; I’m horse-sense!”

“Oh, sir,” cried Paul, snatching at the first pause, at the risk of wrath, “say not so! You believe in God and our religion?”

“Because,” he went on, not heeding, “if heaven intermeddles according to your theory, then heaven and I have met in many a tight place where I came out ahead.”

There must have been something in the young man’s face that betrayed his astonishment at the shocking speech, though he said not a word.

“Hey?” And Norcross sprang into erect posture with a jerk that spun his chair back across the velvet carpet.

“Pardon me, I am not sent to teach you right and wrong,” Paul responded humbly, though it was beginning to be now the deference of old gratitude and new pity, not of fear.

“No, sir!” exclaimed the other fiercely. “Nor no other feller is sent to stand up in a pulpit and tell me,” with tremendous emphasis on me, and an impressive pause, “tell me what I shall do and shall not do. Preach? Yes, indeed. And time was when I suffered it. But, my lad, I am the peer of the preachers. I am one of the powers of the commercial world. I am accustomed to have my own way, sir. I am no longer a dependent. Your father is a good old man. But he often riles me. If I did not know that he would not dare mean me, I would often rise and rebuke him for his pulpit words! Go, preach to men like my brother; he takes it for law and gospel. But that’s because he’s the weaker man. Men of strength resent this public censorship of the pulpit. And I tell you, boy, they are coming to do it more and more. Go, preach to the ignorant and poor!”

Not altogether without a certain quiet dignity,

yet overwhelmed with a sense of the utter misery of the business, the young man arose, saying, "I am not called upon to defend my mission, sir. I leave you to the Scriptures for that. If you only would respect me, notwithstanding your bitter disappointment—"

"Whose is all this to be?" with a swing of his hand towards the enclosed acres of the mill-yard. "This for which I have toiled so hard! A dear, pretty, loving, little girl's, who is utterly incapable of its management, as you must know. Defenseless I leave her, heir to millions that will crush her, when I die. You—she loves—you! You love her, don't ye?"

"I do, indeed, sir," gripping his hat hard.

"And you propose to tie her down," and his voice rose a pitch with every word, "to a mean, small station? I'll—I'll—"

"I wish we might talk about her concern in the matter, sir, and—and calmly."

Without reply, Mr. Norcross arose, thrust his hands deep into his pockets, turned his back on Paul, and walked to the window. He was cooling off. It was time to grow collected, for his only idol was involved. The thought of the complex hold Paul Havens had taken on his life, was almost maddening. Hence he repaired to

the window. The carpet was worn threadbare there. Norcross had stood by this window ten thousand times, cooling off, plotting, studying the auguries of the sky. Fully ten minutes passed. At last, when he could endure it no longer, Paul broke the silence with "I am to understand, Mr. Norcross, that you are not prepared to say any thing further to me, to-day. Is that it?" The poor fellow's knuckles ached from their kneading on the table beside which he stood.

"Humph!" exclaimed the manufacturer, turning abruptly, though not advancing, his hands still plunged in his pockets. "You have me, there. My daughter—"

"Is, of course, perfectly free, so far as our engagement is concerned, if she is unwilling to accept the sort of life mine must be. In some respects, a life of trials for a lady, Mr. Norcross, I fully know. Yet you do not doubt my devotion to her comfort if she should elect to share my lot. And, if you will not misinterpret my reference to it, she would be placed beyond reach of many of the hardships that pinch at the parsonage." Quite calmly the young man got so far in an effort at a peaceful conference, even yet, if this imperious man would only take up his side of the deliberations.

“All of which you have urged upon the young girl as ameliorating considerations of her fate, no doubt.”

“I beg your pardon!”

“Oh, I think you understand what I mean.”

“I choose not to understand, perhaps,” said Paul, toying with a book beneath his hand on the table, and fully determined to get smoothly over the hard places, if possible.

“Now, now,” resumed Mr. Norcross, with exasperating persistency, “you and Clara have talked this all over?” pausing with uplifted forefinger.

“We have, certainly. That is a matter of course. But with a final and dutiful reference to you and her mother, on Clara’s part.” He raised his handsome face as he spoke, and it was certainly not ill-natured, though the flush yet lingered.

“But, Havens, I say,” repeated Norcross, “you will not deny that you have taken into account the fact that your wife would bring wealth into the parsonage?”

Havens bit his lip in silence. Was the man irrevocably resolved, then, to be his enemy? If so, why stay here a moment longer and subject himself to such indignities? Yet a passionate

man is usually very changeable. After the outbreak of a moment ago, Paul reasoned, or perhaps it was more hope and intuition than reason, that this excited gentleman might turn a summersault any instant, and make some repentant overture. With mighty self-control, therefore, Havens only answered the charge of mercenariness with erect head, bitten lip, and flashing eye.

“Well, well, Havens,” Mr. Norocss finally growled out, “sit down. Let’s talk this matter over like gentlemen. That’s right,” as Paul obeyed, resuming his chair. “You must admit, Havens, that I know more of this rough, old world than you do. It ain’t worth serving, boy; not worth serving. You’ll get small thanks for this theoretically fine life you propose to lead. The days of heroes are over. Gold is the god now-a-days. Confound it! I don’t know but I ought to blush to say it to a young fellow like you, full of a mighty generosity; but you’re no fool, and you’ll soon find it out. And I do honestly like you, Paul; you always struck my fancy. I would ha’ made a merchant prince of ye, Paul,” with a slap on Paul’s knee. “And I say, my son,” while his small iron hand clutched Paul’s knee and shook it with rough—almost shall we say, affection, for the moment?—“my

son, I say, I can't give it up yet. I won't give it up! I never give up a reg'lar plan once well thought out. Hey?"

He bent round to look full into Paul's face, while over the hard, strong features, usually all intellect and no heart, there stole a warmer glow than Paul remembered ever to have seen Lemuel Norcross wear. The eyes, too, were not so dry as usual; but then, for that matter, eyes may grow moist from many passions and from the reaction after any passion has subsided.

As for Paul, why, with a sudden flood of boyish emotion, unselfish, beautiful, and possible to youth, he could have hugged the little man and lifted him out of his chair. Yet, there was always a superiority in Lemuel Norcross which forbade much familiarity; so Paul contented himself with warmly grasping the hand on his knee and exclaiming fervently,—

“You make it almost impossible for me to do any thing but please you, my kind, good friend!”

“I thought so,” with a really full-born smile. “I say, Havens, though I'm older and have sort o' felt a property-right in you, and especially on my little girl's account, yet it was not the square thing in me to forget myself so in lettin' fly a moment ago——”

“Do n't speak of it, sir. I—I hope you will not think of asking—of making apologies.”

And yet a moment ago it needed all his memories of Clara and of the sacred scenes through which he had just passed, to stop his lips from demanding a very full apology! The instant that it came, however, decently frank, considering the man and his years, Paul felt the shame-faced regret that younger men generally do over the contrition of their elders.

“It's a bad habit I get into, of pushing things, my lad. Now, of course you can't be driven—of course not.”

Mr. Norcross was not simulating all this change of method; it was simply a phase of his passion. You could see that he was yet deeply agitated: his voice trembled, his wiry frame shook, his whole being was high-strung for the grapple in which defeat seemed worse to him than the burning of half his factories. “Now you will reconsider your resolution, Havens. I am persuaded you will. We have been over this ground before, you know, you and I. You remember, up to the house there. You'll acknowledge that I met your arguments to satisfaction, that evening?”

“Yes, sir,” replied Paul, almost breaking in;

for, poor fellow, he began to fear for himself again. God forbid that he should ever open the actual question again! "But at that time my own mind was not made up. I was very grateful to you——"

"Exactly; I remember you said so. Cigar?" lighting one himself: a sign of decided relaxation, for he never smoked till business was over. This business was nearly over. We shall soon have this affair straightened out. One is on the right tack now,—the kind, the rational tack. Though, confound it! we are rather disappointed in the boy: supposed he was more iron, and less soft wood. Is n't just the kind o' stuff for this business. But perhaps the piety of it is the weak element; that once converted to the new and modern type of decent behavior, and none o' this wild fervor, why, he may be all right yet. At any rate, Clara's involved; she must have some decent man, we suppose. "Cigar, I say, Paul?"

"Why, no, Mr. Norcross, if you please. I've given it up."

"By George, you have! How so?"

"It's not worth mentioning. But I have. Clara disliked it; so did my parents; and it seemed a small thing to gratify them with. Be-

sides, I could n't stand it. Why, Mr. Norcross, you've no idea how wrought up I've been over this question of my calling in life. For the last term in college my nerves nearly gave way. I would n't attempt to traverse that ground again, were it to buy a world of happy days!"

"So, so!" Rather sung out between puffs, with elbow on table, cigar between trembling fingers, and fine head nodding out "You do not tell me!"

"Yes, sir. Believe me, this question has almost cost me my life!" Hand flattened out on table, body leaning forward, and every line of the eloquent face asserting the speaker's truth.

Silence again, with thoughtful regard of the end of the cigar, from which the thin curling smoke may be a type of our hope to dissuade him; and the fire beneath the ashes yet living to our little finger's touch, type of the unquenched purpose in this young heart. Features hardening again. Eyes beginning to snap once more. May be more to the boy, after all, than we have ever yet supposed. Good timber. The more the pity to waste it on sentiment. Good timber to lean on! Good timber to try to

break, also! Contempt gone. Might even hate him. You know a man begins to hate the enemy whom he has ceased to contemn.

“Then you give me no hope that I could convince you that you are wrong-headed, Paul; wouldn't come up to the house to-night, and in my den open the whole subject?”

“My dear sir,” cried Paul, in tones of genuine distress, “I would rather die at once than to re-enact this tragedy! Believe me, in God's name, believe me! It has been to me a mortal tragedy. Now, listen, if you will be so indulgent; only last night with my father——”

“Oh, it is n't worth while, Havens!” Mr. Norcross exclaimed, like a flash, yet his tones cold as ice. Fire and ice in an angry man's tones: you have observed both, reader. But, as for me, I'd rather encounter the fire; especially in the tones of a quick-tempered man. For ice is the last and unchangeable state of such a mind's animosity.

“But heaven help us not to break off thus, sir. I will do any thing in the world to be approved of you, for Clara's sake, and my gratitude for past kindness,—any thing but that.”

“That's the one thing.”

“Ah, Mr. Norcross, that's between a man and his God!”

“Well, Leave it there.”

“That is——”

“That is, we say goodbye, here and now. I hope, for your sake, you have said goodbye at the house, for you are not the man, I s’pose, to attempt to go there after I’ve said you must n’t.”

Paul groaned aloud with indignation, chagrin, grief, and unspeakable heart-ache. In his secret thought, for the instant, he half resolved that he would, just once more, revisit that house. He grasped again his hat and stepped to the door. Suddenly it dawned upon him that he might not be the only victim of this powerful man’s resentment. The thought thrilled him indescribably. Should he attempt to shield his father? He would, at least, say, “One word more: my father is your pastor.”

“Yes, for the present.”

Paul took the hint and fairly ground his teeth, as, utterly losing self-control, he exclaimed, “Spare yourself the trouble of discharging my father in person. Don’t attempt it, sir! I assure you, he will resign. Good day!”

XI.

ON THE ICE.

BUT Paul Havens did not go straight to the Norcross mansion. It was, in the first place, a good mile away. The open air was an elixir to the already turbulent soul. Instead of tranquilizing, the desperate walking excited him. His strong, healthy body seemed to partake now of his mental agitation and to feel it. No doubt it would be romantic to send him straight to Clara; and it would be conventional to fill his heart with religious felicity. But the truth must be written. Hard, stern facts, of the earth earthy, stood so staring this young gentleman in the face, that he acted at once a very unromantic and a most human part. He was not in despair, nor did he feel dismayed. But he had to acknowledge, with every added moment of his physical exertion, a sense of hands clenched, teeth set, and shoulders braced against tremendous and near adversities. He fairly ached to grapple with his loads. He grew too iron-like, as he buffeted the wind; too much like a glad-

iator, as he termed it to himself; he was too defiant to go meet that gentle, troubled girl, who had never in her petted life felt the need of desperate strength, and, therefore, would not understand him in his present mood.

And then, too, no man knows just what he will do when an avalanche begins to thunder above him. Mozart told his troubles to the keys; the Great Frederick to his flute and dogs. Some men go talk to a favorite horse and drive him, while self-possession is returning again. As good a thing as you can do is to be a boy again, if you can retreat so far, and take refuge in some youthful pleasure that was once the business, and may now prove a divertisement of life. Paul Havens was a boy not so very long before. He suddenly thought of it, and almost laughed to think of it. It would afford such vent and outgo for this all-consuming virile force that otherwise threatened to rend him. It was something to do, at a moment when so suddenly existence seemed resolved into doing every thing and doing it all in a moment. Skates!

He entered the pretty little home, hoping to meet no one. He went softly to his father's study under the gable roof, which, in the tiny cottage, had also been his boyish bed-chamber.

His bed had always been in sight of books, in every parsonage the family had inhabited. His father was not there, and he entered. A lot of the boy's toys hung undisturbed about the walls. His childhood's books stood on the shelves beside the volumes of theology—such was his father's tender whim. The old strapped skates weighted down a pile of dusty sermons on an upper shelf. There were two pairs, one which his father used to wear when teaching the lad, not skating only, but trust and companionship with his sire as well.

Paul threw the steels over his shoulder, and then bent down a moment to open a little drawer in the desk. He knew where to look. He took out the savings-bank book which bore his father's name and opened it. He slowly turned leaf after leaf, and noted the pinching, painful economy that the small deposits witnessed. Not that it was fresh information; but it was never so interesting before. What a family history this leather-covered record told! The months without a deposit, and then the draft, two drafts; and the dipping out and draining that almost showed the gravel at the bottom of the shallow well.

“That was the darkest year,” Paul said, and

his lips quivered as he spoke. "The dreadful year when mother was so ill."

But a little farther on, the poor boy bowed his head quite down upon the desk, clutching the book like a vise. He read the story of his father's fond subtractions to give his son an education. He straightened himself up to his full height. He grasped at the book-cases, and swayed with pent-up emotion. He gnawed at his lips, that he might not break forth like a child. Then he spoke, low and almost sobbing, to the empty study chair, as if his father now was sitting there.

"God bless you for your love, sir. I knew it, all along. Have I not the same account, in duplicate, of every sacred penny? Please God I be yet worthy! I had hoped to pay the other half, as I have already earned half. Oh, why did I not break my back to earn all, and save you these now needed charges? A paltry six hundred dollars, between this home and homelessness, this day! Oh, my God, have I done right? Yes, yes, he himself was so happy and would say I had! And my own heart still approves. But how shall I bear this burden if I bear thine, O Lord?"

With a desperate movement he turned and fled out into the hall and down the narrow stairs.

His heavy footfall, on the thin rag-woven carpet stair, betrayed him. His mother came out of the sitting-room, lifting her knitting in her hands, with questioning and startled gesture.

“Paul?” she faltered out. “Why, I did not know you were in the house! What—what is the matter? Papa is——”

That was a fortunate suggestion. He caught at it instantly; and there was no deception in it, though he did suffer this frail woman to suppose that his agitation, which she must so plainly see, was owing to anxiety about his father; for was it not so?

“Where is father, mother? Not in the study, I find.” He spoke very calmly, to reassure this invalid, who must be spared; and yet, how could she be spared or shielded many hours longer?

“He has insisted on going out to see some few sick, my son. He told me of his last night’s distress. But, while I think him better off at home, yet I do not worry. Do not distress yourself, my dear child; papa is only worn a little. We shall all be better soon, you know.”

Better soon? Poor, smiling, hopeful heroine, thinking of rest,—how soon? Puss Norcross, perhaps you were right—the rest that remaineth for the people of God.

But one can not endure it. One must get out into the open air, into solitude, into hard, fierce doing something, or one will faint here like a coward.

“Mother, my head is aching. Tell them all that I’m going to cure it by getting the blood down into my heels. I’ll be in after an hour or two.”

“But Paul, Clara has been over here twice this morning, and—and—is any thing wrong, my child? She looked so anxious. I never saw her wear such a look before.”

He stepped quickly down from the last stair, to approach her, and to take her slight shoulders between his hands, in tender, familiar, chivalric approach, and to say,—

“Nothing is wrong, little mamma. Indeed, every thing is just right, or trying to right itself; and that, too, by a very lofty rule of right: namely, God’s rule! Now, go in for your midday nap,” and he kissed her. But he waited too long; it was a half second by the lady’s old-fashioned watch,—gift of the judge, her father, in the old days of wealth,—which she consulted, obedient to the hint as to napping time.

“Shall I not send Clara and the girls? You know how fond they all are of skating; but

ladies need an escort of late, the factory urchins and lads are so rude."

"No, mother; I'm going to seek very violent exercise for my head—and wish to be alone."

Alone on the ice! Alone and single-handed in the world! Alone, yet with a feeling of competence as against miles and leagues of it, and strength as against the whole heavens full of it—the uprising wind bearing onward the great-flaked "sugar-snow" very soon.

Whither away? Any whither, so one moves with the wind. The strides, swinging long and gallantly; swinging with a vengeance that is like pent-up desperation; and every stride takes one forward a hundred feet in this wind. Swinging and swung till one lies out upon the wind, a toy, or a speck, if you please, in this great white waste that stretches up the river,—a dead world; a world without a sound and without a path; a world into which one is being carried without choice, and yet without wish to decline to go. It is like one's future,—this white, bleak, pathless, grand wilderness of ice, of fleecy meadow and airy, tumbled hill masses on either side. Like one's future, save that this track must be retraced; the burdens are left behind and must be sought and taken up again. Many a troubled

heart has sighed for wings. Paul has wings; that is the sensation. An hour of it, and how far the wings have taken their flight! It is well to think of returning; it is probably time. One thrust more, free as air, blithe as a boy; one more! one more! for it may be the last boy's play for a lifetime. And now turn!

It is quite time; the wind is almost a gale. The convenient shelter of island and lea shore will be welcome. Tack and tack again, beating back. He will work the congestion into his heels, no doubt, readily enough, fighting for a thousand feet like a battle, and for a mile like a campaign. There is need of care, too, for a sugar-snow is a most blinding thing; it is damp and heavy as lead. It is filling the whole heavens now.

What is that! A woman? And so far out from the shore, in this bay? Within a mile of Lake Taskat? A pond-like lake, to be sure, but a fatal ocean to a woman whose skirts are full-set sails, and whose strength is so frail where a man's almost fails! If one had been upon the other tack, or just past those evergreens, he would not have seen her at all.

Who can she be? There is only one woman in the town who can skate like that. Shout it!

“Clara! Clara!” Oh, pitiless sky and winds, let the word reach her.

Poor little thing. She is not skating, not making a thrust, as is plain enough to be seen. She is long past such effort, and is husbanding all her feeble strength, with decidedly good economy, holding herself together and on her feet, helpless, adrift before the gale!

“She has those miserable rockers!” impatiently exclaims Paul, bending low and calculating well the best ways for such desperate effort as will be needed. “Rockers can not break-up. Clara! Do you not hear me? Try to cut the circle backward, towards me!”

Whether that small, dim figure heard or not, who can say? The noise of the storm was a deep roar just here, because of the growling hemlocks that clothed the shore bluff at this point. But the young man did not wait to know what heed she took. With gigantic sweeps he was already “cutting the circle” out into the almost resistless blast; and with good effect, too, for he certainly was nearing her. If he had engineered his are well he would surely intercept the lost girl before she reached the rough ice of the wilderness lake. He will do it! Now

look up. She is swinging her muff. Hark! She utters a faint cry,—

“—am going to turn—”

He stands upon his heels! How helpless he would be now with your “rockers.” But even erection like his can not break up such fearful velocity, though it avails somewhat. Two spurs of ice-dust, two tiny streams of hissing, white ice-powder fly for rods about his steels. If this snow-storm were only an hour older, its deposits would help on this polished surface; but instead of that, it forms billows, that roll up in the March gusts and obscure every object as they chase each other madly far out on the lake. Both he and she can now hear full well the fearful pandemonium which the winds are making out in the grim, gray, impenetrable wilderness beyond.

Clara has thrown herself, left side, to the blast. Her small, strong feet—how he watches them manœuvre magnificently! Tiny toe behind tiny heel, backward circling, with flutter of hateful, fettering furs and petticoat. Yet steadily, for life! Toe behind heel, toe behind heel, cutting the backward circle towards him.

He has calculated his sweep excellently. It all remains with her now. The strategem against

the storm is, that these two half circles shall impinge upon each other. Will they? A moment, a second, more and we shall know. Now crouch down, sir, that the loved burden does not hurl you both off your feet. Stretch out your hands.

“Whirl! Clara!” for they are locked in each other’s arms. “The waltz step, child! Quick! do not give up!” And they are spinning round and round like a top, breathless, dazed, dizzy, but, thank God, safe! They are not now the sport of the storm. These four good feet,—the gigantic and the small—are more than a match for the elements. They are being shot towards the sheltering shore.

Half spent with their exertion, the couple agreed to make the best of their way to the covert of a spruce- and pine-clothed island—a mere pile of picturesque rocks, in whose crevices none but the hardy fir-trees of the north would ever attempt to find root-room. Without much difficulty, the young lady and gentleman reached it, and, for a moment, threw themselves into the snow-bank, for breath. The trees entirely cut off the dread March wind. In another moment Havens had whipped out the ever-ready jack-knife, splintered the skeleton-roots of an overturned pine, which was dry as tinder, and then

with a swift search here and there, got fuel enough for a royal bonfire. As the flames leaped up so cheerily, the young lady's tongue got loosened.

"I'm a good—good mind to cry, now, Paul Havens," she began, rapping her toes together and thrusting them close up to the embers, while she peeped at him over her muff.

"I would n't, Miss Patient," he replied, kneeling on one knee at her feet, and working hard yet at the fire. "You are a gallant little girl, though I ought, no doubt, to say a very adventurous young miss, to start off up this river all alone——"

"You—you know very well, Paul Havens, why I came. You are a downright naughty boy, sir! You keep me in suspense all day, and you go home to leave a dreadful impression on your mamma, and you hint something shocking and desperate about—about your being sick, and then you are gone!"

She was growing lovely every second; cheeks like roses, eyes flashing and filling with tears from the excitement of her peril and her grievance over a lover's neglect, and her lips curling like a child's when just ready to burst into a real fit of sobbing; but of course she would

not. Not she! And the flash of indignant will was the one bit more of color needed to complete the wonderful picture.

“And so you were willing to throw your life away?”

“Not that at all, sir, if you please. To be sure, I felt kindly towards you——”

“Did you, indeed?” he said, and laughed so frankly that this pretence of wrath all thawed out of her bright face, and she surrendered it to a laugh in reply.

“But I really and truly was caught in the wind, Paul. I didn't really mean to follow you clear up here; I am not so simple. And it is very lovely in you, my hero, that you saved my life—after having been the occasion of its peril. And you never did save my life before now, did you, after the story-book fashion? Do please stop mending the fire, and come sit down here by my side. There!” Then nestling close up to him, she asked, “Why did you, now, really, come up here? To be alone?”

“Yes.”

“And you found me, just the same, up here, as if you had come over, like a good boy, to our house and told me all about your battle with papa.”

"How do you know I had any battle?"

"How does a woman know any thing and every thing, you child?"

"But I fear, Miss Sunshine, that you do not appreciate how very grave a crisis our two lives have reached," he said, dropping his elbows to his knees and toying with the fagots.

"Dear me! No. And just now I have your mamma's complaint—I'm ready to fly. But, oh, Paul, it does seem that every thing has been getting so grave, and so much crisis! crisis! It used to be a happy world. You used to be happy. Now we are all sober, sad, and grave, as you call it. Is this what we are to expect in real life?"

"We?"

"Yes, we! I am not afraid of papa; he is always good to me."

"Ah, Clara! Clara! You never saw him thwarted as he is now. Why, child, I would not dare to take you away from him, in his present frame of mind. He is terribly defeated. He thinks his life is going to end in failure. He is gloomy and desperate enough for any course that promises relief."

"We will laugh him out of it. I will laugh you out of your dumps. Why, what a forlorn

clergyman you would be without poor me to shock you,—and your congregation, too, I fear,—into some fun and merriment!”

“I know how true you speak,” he responded, looking very tenderly on her, and speaking very slowly that his earnest words might penetrate her excited mood. “But, Clara, as for the church, I shall not seek one which is already established.”

“Why, what do you mean! Our family,—that is, uncle William would do any thing for you. Papa and he have given ever so many thousands of dollars to the denomination, and——”

“And your father can play with the pastorates like moving on a checker-board. He has fully resolved to black-ball me,—as we would say in *Psi Upsilon*,” and he pointed to the badge of this college fraternity, which she wore on her scarf.

“Never, Paul, never! My father would not descend to such mean revenges!”

“Would not? He has ordered my father to resign this pastorate!”

She simply stared at him in blank astonishment.

“And he shall not have the opportunity to pursue me. We are all going, Clara. I shall

take them all away. I must begin with nothing but a warm heart and the people. But there are people enough. I will find sick to visit, unhappy to comfort, tempted to defend, ignorant to instruct; and I can point them to the Saviour. They will feed me and my father's family, for they are grateful, are the poor. It is the apostolic way. I build on no man's foundation. The great cities are thronged full of the needy. What is it, are you cold?"

"No — that is, I think I am not," she replied, releasing herself with a shuddering motion, and getting upon her feet. "But I want to get back, Paul."

There was something startling in her distressed and alarmed look. Paul sprang instantly to her side and, encircling her, said, "you are right, my dearest. It was cruel for me to enter so much as on the beginning of my plans in such a place. The storm is very heavy. We can never skate back. We must climb to yonder highway and walk to the nearest farm-house. Let's see" — consulting his watch — "yes, the Brookland stage will be along very shortly. Let me take off your skates."

She submitted to his kind offices in silence. Then in silence she took his arm. In silence

she obeyed his careful instructions as to footholds, while they climbed the sharp acivity, up through the dwarf hemlocks and ice-varnished boulders to the highway, which lay like a collar on the headland's neck. It was a difficult scramble at best, more than a hundred feet up, and at an angle of forty degrees or so, at the easiest discoverable spot. Paul had frequently to almost lift Clara in his arms, which was no small task,—the plump burden. Still she kept her silence. Paul knew the resolute girl too well to disturb her present refuge which she had evidently taken in meditation and planning.

At length they gained the highway; a sharp walk of a few moments brought them to a bend in the road, and the mere porch of a farm laborer's hut, which was gleaming out welcomingly from two little windows, for the twilight was shading down. It was not till they stood shaking the snow from each others' garments, in the low porch, and awaiting an answer to Paul's knock, that Clara said,—

“Listen, now, dear Paul.”

“Always. You shall never speak that I will not listen. Remember that, whatever comes.”

“I will plead with papa.”

“No, Clara. You will think better of that.

Can you not see?—or, pardon me, I should have said you can see that that would compromise me, for you are rich and I am poor, and here we are, so your father would say, plotting to mend my fortunes by pulling at his heart-strings through you.”

She stood so nonplussed for a moment, with all her imperious little girlish plans of affectionately storming her father, or of using her own ample pocket-money if that failed, fairly stifling her. She recalled, instantly, how powerless she had been in trying to give her lover money for his education; by no cunning subterfuge of love could she ever succeed in doing more than get a Wilton on his bare-floored college room. Reasoning quick as lightning from this, she saw it all. She said,—

“You are going to apply again to the Government engineers for work; and will not go back to Amherst, except to graduate?”

“Yes, darling, to the coast-survey.”

“You are going to remove your father to Boston, and toil for your bread at figures, while you begin a sort of mission work?”

“How bright are we, that we read thoughts.”

“But for three long years you have been telling me all your thoughts.” And she reached

out her hand and took his, promptly yielded, you may be sure, whatever his judgment may have dictated.

“And, sir,” now both hands into both his, and drawing nearer by the inch, “You will cast me away because I am rich?” And now she was quite in his arms, with her head so up-turned that the red lamp-light through the mean sash in the door of the hut, fell on her beautiful face with pretty effect.

What could he do? He shook like the giant beech, which rustles its dead leaves over the porch in the wind and snow. “Ah, duty. Thy name for an instant is tyranny.” He thought out loud, though his arms encircled her tighter at every word. And think you a woman did not read what that meant?

“Think of a young minister with the scandal of elopement!

“Paul, I am publicly engaged to you. Oh, I know that this is unwomanly, to be pleading with you to take me. I ought to become angry, and proud, and piqued. But I can not be. For it is not Paul Havens the man, with whom I plead. He has wooed me humbly enough. It is Paul Havens the clergyman, bound by chains of custom. I must go with you, Paul. I can

not live, else! I forget every thing, fighting a little girl's fight for life!"

Pity his distress. On one side, his love of this innocent girl; on the other side, the memory of that cardinal doctrine of the parsonage and his father, that a minister's good name is in these days more vulnerable than a woman's. "My son, of all things, nothing kills a minister like a woman scrape," was the homely phrase. An elopement or an abduction,—an angry man like Lemuel Norcross, would surely force it to be; at least, an unsavory escapade with a disobedient daughter, who was heir to millions. Where was the spot on earth that he would flee to that would not blast him in the minds of the unfriendly world? Every other man can fly from scandal, or live it down. Nowhere and never the clergyman. He could say but one thing, and that he said, every syllable weighty with emotion.

"My darling—darling! I am not worthy of your devotion; but, God witness, I love none but you. I shall think of you, side by side with my thoughts of the cause which I am serving. I should have followed you out into the ice-fields of the lake, if heaven had so willed, to die for or with you! I shall never change.

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Think of me, every day, as waiting. Who can tell in what ways the great God may lead your father? I will try to live an honorable life, and win the esteem of honorable men. Go home; wait there, if it seems good to you. Serve your father's happiness, for I tell you he needs it. He is very far from the right frame of mind for the honest living of ten years to come."

"Who's thar?" exclaimed a voice, and a little, old woman stood, candle in one hand and an ear in her other, after the manner of deaf persons, at the opening cottage door. Paul's last words had risen to so loud a pleading pitch that they had availed where his knock had not.

"This is Lemuel Norcross' daughter," said Paul. "We want to wait in your shelter for the Brookland stage."

"A Norcross?" growled a man's voice from within. "But then, a 'ooman's a 'ooman, ef she be a Norcross."

"My friends," Paul began, in a tone by no means conciliatory, for he bristled like an athlete as he pushed back the door and confronted two rough laborers, just emerging from the small kitchen dining-room beyond,—"we must have at least the hospitality of fifteen minutes. This

very cottage and the whole mountain belongs to this young lady's father."

"Yes, it do!" and a coat began to peel off, for free use of arms and fists. "But yew bet that old hog could n't come in here without——"

"Hold, Sim!" shouted the other man. "That's marm's minister's boy. Havens, your dad is a brick! Did n't he come pray with marm as ef she were some pum'kins?—yes, jist like we's rich. God bless his old white head! What a singer and a prayer your dad is! Ye can set right down tew the fire."

And so it was done. Millions could not open these doors; gentle service could.

XII.

STEPHEN CRANE.

AN hour later Paul Havens assisted Clara Norcross out of the stage at her father's door. Mrs. Norcross met them with affrighted looks and, —

“My dear child! You have given me such a shock! And papa's gone to the city for a week. Where have you ——”

“Oh, mamma!” was all the poor child could utter as she threw herself into the lovely arms and pushed her gently towards the open door.

Paul turned away instantly and walked over to the other home. He found the little family room full of happy people, including Andrew Norcross. No one had any solicitude over Paul's absence, till just that moment, when the Norcross coachman, the lazy fellow, had got over to bring his mistress' anxious inquiry.

“Was just going for a hunt,” said Andrew.

“Instead of which I will go to Boston with you on a hunt to-morrow,” replied Paul. Then he sat down and, recognizing the party as one

family, practically, narrated what he thought was necessary of the situation.

Of course it fell like a thunderbolt! Yes and no. It is doubtful if a young man can ever break such fateful news gently. Its abrupt telling gave each one of the auditors in turn a shock as each was affected. For instance, Andrew Norcross exclaimed,—

“Zounds, old fellow! Instead of his partner, you’ll be his victim!” Then he cast a curious glance across to Miss Bella, and allowed his eyes to sink to the floor. It would not do, then. If his uncle was turned against this family, the young courtiers must make different plans; it was a fool’s errand to stop here on his way from Montreal. Oppose his uncle? No man had ever done that and prospered. No soul had ever dared attempt it, that he knew, except his sister Puss.

“Oh, Paul, Paul!” cried Bella, bursting into a paroxysm of nervous weeping. “You fail in every thing! Is it fated that we shall never get on in the world. That school——” after which sobs choked her utterance. She was an industrious and unhappy teacher in the village school. It was not that Mr. Norcross’ head book-keeper was the committee-man. It was, rather, all life

before her, twined in a school-house, somewhere else if not here. She caught Andrew Norcross' dubious glance before she spoke, and gave his downcast face another penetrating look before she put up her handkerchief. Not but that her grief was real enough. Too vividly real. The air-castles were dissolving.

Pretty, gentle Nora was by this time on her brother's knee, with arms clasped about so much of his shoulder as she could compass, and her sweetly smiling face in his sturdy neck. She could feel his pulse, amid the swelling cords, beat across her white temple. Paul could fairly feel, without looking down, the glow of her peaceful smile. She only whispered, —

“Precious brother. We were born to serve, thank the adorable Jesus!”

Straight across the room, in the path of Paul's fixed gaze, came the pale, pure student, Stephen Crane. His eyes were radiant. Such an effulgence was in his face, as made one think of the martyr Stephen's, when he saw the heavens opened. Penniless, charity-student, how different from “Brother” William Norcross, that “power in the denomination”; member of the missionary board, who should send this very Stephen, with this clinging girl, across the seas on the cru-

sade of the Nineteenth century. Paul thought of it, and then instantly flung the contrast a thousand miles out of this beatific hour, as Crane grasped his hand.

“Brother Paul — hm — thou art a chosen vassal — hm.” And the swelling heart so surged to the gates of utterance, that they closed with the tide, and the heart was forced into the hand that wrung and wrung Paul’s, and clung and clung! Doubtless the charity-student, destined to Africa, was tasting angel’s food, was beatific, was in that high realm of felicity before mentioned in these pages, but never described on any pages.

Sylvester Havens was the only calm one in the little room. He sat beaming from his easy chair benignantly, mingled with a strange aspect of manly triumph. He stroked the blue-veined hand of his wife, that lay quivering on the arm of his chair, whither it had fluttered out for help and strength; her only sign or motion. He only said, and waited for his time to say that, —

“There is no man that hath left father or mother, or houses or lands, or wife, for my sake and the Gospel’s, but shall receive a hundred-fold and everlasting life! Be of good cheer, my soldier! All in good time the good God will give my son as good a wife as I have had!”

He caressed the hand. "And I have little doubt it will be my sweet Clara, after all. She will ever be very dear to me. Heaven guard her!"

"Thank you for that, father!" exclaimed Paul.

All this time, the disappointed, yet not disappointed mother, had not spoken. She now silently crossed the room, and threw herself down upon the sofa.

"Let us sing the evening hymn," said Pastor Havens. "How many times we have sung it in this dear room." He did not say, "this is among the last times."

Nora was at the piano. The lady on the sofa closed her eyes, and clasped her long, beautiful hands over her breast. The hymn halted and stumbled a little, at first. Some clergymen's families are quite human; they become foolishly attached to a house, a room, their friends and neighbors. To be sure, some clergymen's families get hardened to these changes; it is the best way; it is sometimes a laborious process to root out every little, clinging fiber of home-love, neighbor-love, and playmate-love from the hearts of the clergymen's children. It has been known to take the heart-strings with it, this extirpation; but time cures all things,—modern church times.

The hymn is doing better now. Father is leading it well. The lady on the sofa does not sing, that is, so that we mortals can hear her. The last verse is somewhat triumphant, especially in the pastor's strong, unartistic, exaltant tones.

“Oh that home of the soul, in my visions and dreams,
Its bright jasper walls I can see,
Till I fancy, but thinly, a veil intervenes
Between the fair city and me!”

Stephen Crane leads in prayer.

When he is done the room is holy. A lambent light as from heaven is in the room. You might feel like taking off your shoes to enter here. The rag-woven carpet has the look of a pavement of which we read in a book that uncovers mysteries. No wonder such a home as this is dear; for these are the common and accustomed scenes, save the element of the heroic which Paul's sorrow and joy have added to-day.

They left the lady on the sofa, hands clasped, eyes closed. But an hour later, when all the house was still, when Paul was in bed, the lady came in and sat down on the side of his bed in the old way.

Paul rose half up and said,—

“Mother, I knew you would come.”

She drew his head over till it rested on her bosom like a little child. Oh, how she pressed him! She stroked his abundant locks back from his brow. She fondled his cheeks with her fingers, which alone were free. She kissed him over and over again, between the fingers that mitered his forehead.

It was a long time before she said any thing; but at last,—“My beautiful boy! my precious, my honored, my heroic son! Mother’s blessing!”

But this description is sacrilege. What else was said in that room, who knows?

The next morning Paul and Andrew took the early train for Boston. Andrew had sent his excuses over to his aunt and cousin by Bella, who had promised to go to the Norcross mansion with them. Paul had said his goodby. He must make haste, if it were possible to get a place on the coast survey, for the spring tide sounding, on the Florida coast. The everglades were perilous. Therefore the work paid large wages. This stalwart was not afraid. He could earn money enough to meet the expenses of his graduation and the removal of his father’s family to the city,—if he could but secure the situation at once, April, May, June.

“I would offer my resignation at once, father,” was his parting advise. “Present it at this month’s church meeting. Don’t so much as think of resisting him. I can then be at the church meeting, as I want to be, before I go South.” He was full of the peculiar good cheer that a bread-winner always enjoys, a recourse in sorrow, when once he is hand to hand with his tasks.

The one sore spot in Paul’s heart was very sensitive to the early gas-light that gleamed on him from Clara’s chamber window as he walked through the gray morning towards the depot. Was she ill?

That was a noble apartment; Paul had once been in it. He remembered how profane he seemed to himself when following Clara up there, to see—what think you? Why, the wedding dress, which the servile French correspondents had too early sent over. He remembered that Mrs. Norcross was at their heels, “to help hold out the skirts,” you know, and display the costly thing.

Paul entered that chamber now, in imagination, and almost blushed to do it. Its windows looked out on acres of snowy lawns. Its walls were hung with paintings that the father renewed and

exchanged in prodigal variety, from his visits to the art sales in New York every winter. The countless little fixings, that make a girl's room so different from a boy's room, his quick eye had caught without intention, and he saw that every trifle was an expensive treasure. Silk and lace, damask and carved wood, perfume and prettiness,—it all passed in confused vision before him then, as it returned distinctly now. He remembered how he almost stepped upon a pair of tiny slippers that monopolized a rug before the grate; and how, after noticing what a fearful thing he had nearly been guilty of, he gave those two little things half the room, carefully avoiding them.

By the way, the slippers were now on their owner's feet, peeping from the frill of her dressing gown, and thrust up, beside her mother's, on the low, glittering fender, in the fitful dance of the English coal-fire. The two ladies had shared the same bed, the same restlessness, and each other's thoughts. They have risen because they can not sleep more, if they try. They have come to no conclusion as to what course to pursue; women can not, when the men they love are drawing swords on each other. Women can only wait till the battle is done;—high-bred

women, we mean, who can not take a hand in it, to throw a plate, swing a fire-shovel, or wag a scolding tongue.

“I shall never marry, mamma.”

“Except Paul, my child.”

“We have certainly concluded that, have we not? And papa——”

“Will not so much as think of asking any thing else.”

Then, after a long silence,—

“Paul will go to Boston to-day; but I do not fear Cousin Puss. I only hope we can keep the good-will of the Havens family. Do you think we should go in there to-day, or wait and expect them to come over here?” The brown cheeks were shaded with a brunette’s only possible pallor,—just enough to relieve the red glow of health. She turned her face, anxiously, for the answer. It was her only remaining channel of communication, this old Havens intimacy, it Paul failed to initiate a correspondence.

“Oh, I do n’t know!” responded Mrs. Norcross, in real perplexity. “What everlasting trouble we—that is, papa at least—have with the ministers! I s’pose intimacy will be broke.” As with her husband, excitement told on her syntax.

“Mamma!” the slippers patting the floor reprovingly, the brown eyes showing alarm.

“Oh, I am not about to desert your cause,” the elder lady replied, folding her arms across her ample figure and rocking vigorously. “I always make an exception of Paul Havens. He’s very nice. The others are all superior people, no doubt. I love the pastor; but you know, dear child, that we have never—now, really, never,” and she stopped rocking to speak the serious truth—“found a pastor’s family—that is, you can’t expect the same social station in people who have such small incomes!”

“Mamma, dear!” Slippers in use of two standing feet, flash-like. Pretty hand catching at the bewitching brown lock of wavy hair that fell over one of the flashing eyes. “Why, both those girls had a better education—graduates of college—than I, with my two years at that fussy school in Europe! Bella speaks a purer French and as pure a German; Nora is full as good a musician. It is only by the most assiduous reading that I save myself from blushing for my ignorance, before those two bright girls. The first law of that home is, ‘Be good’; the second law is, ‘Education and refinement.’”

“Is n’t there a third law, my dear?” laughed

Mrs. Norcross, indulgently, in hopes of retrieving her blunder.

“Yes, indeed, mamma; it’s a short one. It is, ‘Do all the good you can.’ Why, it was in last Sunday morning’s sermon! Let me see,” and she swept across the room to take up a morocco note-book that lay atop her Bible. Hastily turning its leaves, she at length read: *‘I will do good unto many. I will wish to do good unto all. I will do wilful hurt to none!’* He said it was no original rule. I am sure, however, that none ever kept it better than dear Mr. Havens. Oh, I mean to make it my rule!”

A rap at the door announced the plain, wholesome face of the housekeeper, Mrs. Needham, who was mistress of servants and general caretaker in this great palace. She followed her rap with her bowing presence, and said,—

“With your permission, ladies: A man from the factory,—that little Frenchman, Bloc,—to inquire for Mr. Norcross.”

“Why, at this early hour?” exclaimed Mrs. Norcross, turning, arms akimbo, and hands pressed on the chair-arms. “Papa has, moreover, printed notices, that the men are not to come to the house.”

“Certainly, ma’am. I reminded him of that; but he seemed very pressing and—and acted troubled. Shall I rap at your husband’s door, ma’am?”

“He’s not at home, Needham. He’s gone to Boston. Left yesterday afternoon.”

The woman took down the message, but shortly returned, reporting “the man all cut up by the news, and asking where he could telegraph the master; or, better still, if Miss Clara would do so, if he, Bloc, told her what to say.”

“I’ll go down, mamma, and see the good old man,” said Clara, gathering a feathery shawl about her shoulders. “It is broad daylight. Then we will dress for breakfast, and ask the Havens girls to drive. That’s a happy solution of that problem.”

She met Bloc at the foot of the stairs, standing, cap in hand, for he “was not dressed for them chairs,” nervously supporting himself on one foot, with thumb braced on one hip, and then changing to the corresponding use of the other side of his little person.

He waited for scarce a good morning before whispering, in a hoarse voice,—for workers amid machinery lose the art of the normal whisper,—“It is trouble at the mills, mum. Inform yourself by me. It is the poverty of life against

the riches of life. It is knives and fire, to even force the master or destroy him. A strike, miss. Behold it thus."

His kind face was all drawn upward, as his thumbs quickly pointed in the direction his shoulders had been shrugged.

"Your father is stern. Men love not sternness; but Yankees are not cut-throats, till a man from the city comes to teach them. Behold him teaching in our lodge. I am loyal!" smiting his breast. "Regard me saying, 'I am a Christian; I will expose you.' Therefore I enter not here, m'moiselle, as a traitor to the lodge. I warned them. Many are with me, the humble Christian. But regard it"; shoulders now down, hands down, thumbs down. "Many are with the Boston man. It will be terrible. I would telegraph. Say Bloc warns him of trouble at the mills; return. I salute you," bowing low. "Adieu." And he was out of the door like Punch in the show, stumping off through the gray light of the morning.

Clara turned, shivering, and flew up the stairway, as cold as the draught of March wind that had entered the great, clanging hall door. But on the landing above she forced herself to stop, to lean against the bronze Mercury which held

the gas-taper flaring about that broad and deserted upper hall. A moment sufficed for her to regain her self-possession sufficiently to go on to her mother's room. She found that lady in the hands of her maid, beginning to dress for "*such* an early breakfast" as she had not taken since she was a poor farmer's daughter on these hills, and sharpened her matutinal appetite by helping the milkers with a favorite cow or two.

"Mamma, be calm!" excitedly exclaimed Clara; "but we must find papa! Our people are being incited to one of those dreadful strikes, of which the papers are now so full!"

"*Our* people? Stop fussin' with my dress, Kit! Clara, *our* village? Heaven help! Why, we have never had such troubles here! Give me a chair, Kit," which the maid, Kit, did, and also proffered the trembling lady the coffee cup which stood on the silver salver.

"Mamma, it is all against papa; it is our own village against papa! Where can we find him?"

Sure enough: where? They telegraphed all day and could not find him. They got answers from Cousin Andrew Norcross and from Uncle William; from business correspondents in New York and Philadelphia, yet could not find him.

XIII.

THE STRIKE.

A LABOR strike is nothing in a vast city like New York or London. The monster population has outgrown its nerves; you may burn half of a great street, whose population from Battery to Harlem River exceeds the whole of Worcester, and the unburnt end does not feel the charred end. There is nothing short of a national excitement that can thrill the whole city of New York. There is not the united spirit and pride in the city, nor shame for its dishonors. What would be a deserted shop or two? How few know where the shops, that is the great coarse brick piles called manufactories more frequently of late, are located? Murray Hill does n't know; the Dry Goods District does n't; Wall Street does n't. Suppose the unknown streets about the unknown hives of toil be choked with angry working men, or Broadway be filled with a vociferous and savagely bannered procession. The first is no more felt than an elephant feels the quarrel of two

buzzing flies upon his rump. The second is scarce looked at, save by the runners about town, unless the procession, at morning or evening, should block the stage in which the abstracted merchant is traveling to or from his home. What do the fine ladies and delicate children, in the metropolis, know about a strike over on the east side, or across in Williamsburg? They scarcely read of it in the morning papers.

Strikes are terrible in the small city. Worcester has a carbuncle between the eyes when workmen quarrel. The whole little city is sick, faint, and trembling. The object being to affect public opinion, it is attained when the whole community is convulsed. "The shops" are the most familiar institutions in town, the "Union railway depot" excepted, which by the way is the beating heart of the little inland city. The strike threatens to strangle the store-keepers and beggar every body. The church is in danger of destruction, and the pastor of starvation, while the strikes continues.

But a strike in a factory village is the worst. It is a horror. It is rare; but when it comes, it destroys like fire in August-parched woodlands. Not a fair social flower but is eaten up. It is

a family quarrel. It is a civil war boiled down to the bitterest extract.

In an upper room over the postoffice, used variously for an "armory," by the one militia company of Crosston, a lodge-room by the Good Templars one evening, the Free Masons another, the Knights of Pythias another, and in its turn by the Brotherly Amalgamated American Workingmen, the members of this last-named association were assembled. There were perhaps two hundred men of all ages crowded into space too strait for half the number.

There was this peculiarity about the audience: every man was American-born. Not an English importation here, not a Canadian, not a French save one. That was the key. All the "foreign help," the "imported fellers," were by themselves, if assembled at all this evening. Indeed, it had been a continual social warfare, of a quiet kind, in these village streets for the last few years; collisions, and bitter hatreds that only waited for an occasion between the Yankee youth and maid, from these hill-farms and villages about, and the "miserable foreigner." For more than a dozen years, from his first little water-wheel shed up to steam-power and many an acre of factory roofs, Lemuel Norcross

had run his mills with the industrious, self-respecting, Protestant, money-saving, New Hampshire, farm-reared men and women, and their children.

But, of late years, this sort of "help" had grown scarce. Hence the execrated "importations," mostly French, from over the sea and from over the St. Lawrence, industrious enough, like slaves indeed, not self-respecting nor money-saving nor Protestant.

In this particular meeting, now being described, a sample of many secret gatherings of the kind those evenings of the winter and spring of 18—, the agitator, John Liverpool, an Englishman, had the floor and was saying,—

"You, American freemen, can ye not see that He," meaning only one "He" in that village of course, and it was never necessary to designate Mr. Norcross more particularly, "owns you, body and soul? Hi am hinformed that only three old settlers, in all this river vale for twenty miles each side of the dam, owns 'is own 'ouse or the soil on which it is built! Hall these stores, the postoffice, the cottages of the merchants, the 'omes of the royal poor workingmen, the public hall, the Hopera 'ouse, the church, 'cept the old Catholic, who always own their

'oly ground, the very cemetery, all belongs to Him! Why, that's just how it is in my country. We all belong to the Lord of Chester!"

"Say, stranger, hold up!" shouted Bill Luce, one of the deacon's boys, who was boss in a spinning-room, at three dollars a day, and had been for ten years. The raw-boned Yankee looked savage. His factory-whitened face was for the moment red as his younger brothers', who yet lingered impatiently on the old hillsides. "Yew talk like a miserable few! He bought and paid for this yere river bottom. This yere industry is all his'n. And I tell ye he can clean us all out'er here afore yew can say Jack Robinson! So what's the yewse in tryin' tew fight?"

"Fight to be free!" exclaimed Liverpool, slapping his chest like an actor.

"Free tew starve? I say, can't you fellers see heow this yere village'll be? The store-keepers'll be agin ye, and they have yer wages trusted a month afore ye get 'em. Neighbors a-cuttin' the throats of neighbors in these narrer streets; the pesky cannucks and polly vous" — his for foreign French — "will be a-roarin' reound here and burnin' up property. Hain't ye had fights 'nuff with them? I tell yew" — pointing

his arm, fist and all, at the agitator,— “we fellers are Ne-ew Hampshire Yanks! We abide law. Confound ye, we keep Sunday, and go tew meetin’! The best thing yew can dew, is to yoke up and gee off!”

A storm of mingled applause and derision greeted the speech.

“For three dollars a day!” calmly remarked Liverpool, sneering at the boss, and folding his arms with two ostentatious sweeps across his chest.

“That’s so! He’s well paid!”

“Let’s bust things!”

“We’re jest his cattle!”

“Who ever saw him smile?”

“Three thousand agin one. Make him divide! We kin dew it!”

The chorus of anger gained upon the calm of good reason. The grudges, the envies, the jealousies of years came to the surface. Many of the older workingmen remembered now how they were school-fellows, in the old “deestrick” school, with the now wealthy and hard master, who lived in his “palace,” while they lived in his cottages. The grudges of their wives, school-mates of Mrs. Norcross, the fireside piques of the incompetent and unsuccessful against the

fortunate and "lucky," all came to add fuel to this fire. Men lost their good sense; every kind deed of Norcross'—and, of course, there were such; the public library, for instance, and good schools—was forgotten in a moment. The village peace of years was never so imperiled before.

There was but one apparent deterrence. The foreigner!

Cries of "Bloc! Go, ask Bloc. What says Bloc?" "He is a white man." "The good Frenchman!" brought the little, gesticulating orator to his feet, skull-cap in hand. He said,—

"One says! Apprehend, the entire one assemble! Light not the mine of the powder! Regard the two churches, already menacing each other, angry. Regard the two arrondissements of the petit village, Catholique, Protestant, American, foreign. The arrondissements already are like two villages; they hate each others' children, even. The industry is peace; the employed fight not. The idleness is one horror!"

"Tell 'em, Pierre," shouted Boss Luce, "about that loafer who is par le vouin' to 'em, jest the same as this English feller to us!"

"It is legitimate that one say it. It is veritable truth!" was Bloc's reply.

“Labor,” roared Liverpool, mounting his gigantic frame on the low desk of the platform, and swinging his arms like pine branches in a gale, “labor makes universal brotherhood! I know Leclerc, the messenger sent from the city to instruct the French. He is a foe of tyrants, as I am. Be brothers in——”

“Shovel out the foreigners!” yelled some one; “it’s our chance to git rid on ’em. Let’s strike for that!”

Instantly, the spark set fire. The agitation, which at first had no definite meaning nor reason in the minds of these thrifty wage-earners, and which would doubtless have failed to enkindle the native workingmen to the passion fit for bad deeds, suddenly flamed up into an ever-increasing conflagration. This one appeal to race-prejudice did it.

It began so casually, at the meeting here partially described. The room soon emptied, to be sure, on this particular night; the habit of early to bed and early to rise to meet the six o’clock bell, was yet powerful. But knots of vociferating madmen went wandering cottage-ward, and for the succeeding days, men bent over bench and loom to consult and to fire each others’ hearts. Evening after evening for the next week, the kitchen

and the "stove-corner" of the village-store where the loungers sat—there was not a bar-room in Lemuel Norcross' village—kindled and smouldered with race-hatred.

Lemuel Norcross should have been "on his own land." He could have enforced peace; he had often been obliged to do it since he first brought the new kind of help into town. Indeed, his bold, hard face could have frowned these Americans into their accustomed respect for their own bread and butter.

But Mr. Norcross was not to be found; no, not for a week of this smudge-fire. After Bloc's warning to Clara, which, in fact, succeeded the night's meeting referred to, the wires were kept loaded with messages by the family, and by the city house. But, beyond the simple trace of him at a bank in Philadelphia, for seven interminably long days the great manufacturer was lost to all the world.

The man in all Crosston who alone expressed no surprise, who remarked frequently with calmness that "there was nothing to be worried about, and he was not surprised at his absence," was the head book-keeper. But this attracted no particular attention at the time.

This book-keeper was the first mortal to get tidings ; it was a telegram ; it simply read, —

“Fixed. Home to-morrow. L. N.”

It was remarked by several that the book-keeper fairly clapped his hands with delight at first ; but instantly, seeming to resume his mask of calmness, he reclaimed and tore up the telegram in the presence of the cashier, to whom he had inadvertently handed it. He then quietly sent word to all concerned, the office operator rattling off the messages, that the manufacturer would be home in the morning. It was not till weeks afterwards, that the cashier and others to whom he repeated the concise dispatch, recalled its suspicious and significant wording, —

“Fixed.” Fixed? Not the peace of the village, however. That very night the smudge-fire puffed into a great blaze. Crosston numbered that day five thousand souls. Thirty-five years ago, two farmers with their families were the only denizens of these meadows ; they yet lived ; their households numbered, with the two old men, ten persons. Subtract ten from five thousand ; you have four thousand, nine hundred and ninety human beings, all of whom were dependent, directly or indirectly, on the mill-wheels, which in turn were dependent on the brain-wheels of one.

XIV.

A NIGHT OF TERROR.

THIS night of March thousands turned against the One. He stood between two races. The French were massed, like an army, down in Franklin Square; an open park-like enclosure, more pretentious than pretty, in that region of mill tenements, which, by common consent, had been abandoned to the foreign element. On one side of the square lay the long, low buildings of the silk mills. Leclere, the fire-brand, was in command there, like a general. They were men, women, and children. They were silent, they were armed with such implements as their race has always used in street fights. The bread knives in the hands of women, the kerosene can and unlighted tow torch in the hands of young girls, were new to the village police, of whom, all counted, there were but six, and two of that number were down with convenient rheumatism. Franklin Square was frenzied with fear, with a foreigner's sense of being a stranger in a hostile

land, with religious fanaticism, and with despair. Franklin Square waited for the armory.

At the armory was the muster of the Brotherly Amalgamated Americans, etc., etc. They had been in session since three o'clock of the afternoon, when, by their quitting their places, the great mills had been forced to shut down. At that time, thanks to heaven who alone knows why the mercy happened, the two factions had swept, without collision, through the mill yards to their respective rallying points. It was like the swirl of dead leaves in gusty April. There was this difference, that all the native-born female help flew home; it was the men and boys only who poured along Webster Street to the armory.

It was then that every trader shut his doors and went to the armory to look on. It was then that the three smart, high, and crowded public schools sent the children screaming home, an hour before the historic New England four o'clock closing hour. It was then that the shopping farmers whipped up and left the streets as deserted as midnight,—that is, absolutely deserted. It was then, at that same three o'clock, that the head book-keeper in the mill office telegraphed to the governor of the State and issued revolvers

to so many of the pale-faced soldiers of the pen as would take them and volunteer to stay with him. It was then that all the Havens family left the parsonage and went over to comfort and to share the peril of Mrs. Norcross and Clara. The village terror decided that point of etiquette. For a week they had not met, till that hour. Why had not so good a man as Pastor Havens taken the initiative and made his pastoral call alone? Because he was sent back to an invalid's bed by the excitement of Paul's last night. He staggered with a cane this afternoon, as he shoved his numb feet along the grass after the wife and daughters, all thanking heaven that the by-path saved them from showing their faces in the empty street. The parsonage and the Norcross mansion overlooked, from high ground, the dreadful Franklin Square; by the winding road they were a mile apart; by gunshot track, not five hundred yards.

"But you, girls, and you, Paul's mamma, might have come before." Clara's brown eyes said it, not her lips, which kissed them all such a welcome, she holding Nora by the two hands as they stepped into the library.

"But we dare not come. We are dependents, and sensitive, foolishly proud, no doubt. We

knew not our welcome." The three women's faces said this, both to Clara and her mother; but not their lips.

None of the women spoke at any length. They sat behind the curtained windows, holding each others' hands, weeping now and then, praying now and then, closing the eyes for long intervals, listening to the good words of comfort that were spoken by the man of God, and waiting. These gentle village ladies had read of such a terror's reign. Yet here it was a canopy of gloom, settling down with the night-fall over pretty Crosston.

As the darkness increased a heavy valley fog, from the melting mood of the spring day, rolled down from the snow fields on the hills and sprung up from the icy river. The gas was hardly able to overcome it in the gorgeous passage-ways and apartments of the mansion. The ranks on ranks of lights in the mills were wanting; in their places flared the prismatic spots of torches, down in the square, which seemed to be burning coals in the fabric of the gray pall.

"It is time for the train," said Clara, who had held the book-keeper's telegram crumpled nervously ever since she received it. In the same hand she now held her watch, and her eyes

consulted also the tall, old-fashioned grandfather's clock which "never was wrong."

"Your father will soon be here," said the pastor. "I haven't shown you my telegram. Perhaps you would like to see it." And he handed a dispatch to the young lady.

As if instinctively she knew what it contained, her face flushed, and her pretty fingers trembled so that she took both hands to hold the paper steady. But she suppressed her joy enough to calmly remark to the company, —

"Paul Havens is coming on the same train!"

"And ——" suggested the pastor, "for you did not read it all."

"Oh, no, I did not, did I?" And her face suddenly lost its glow, as she turned to read again. The second line had been written by the frightened and oft-interrupted operator, in pencil lower on the yellow page. "Miss Fidelia Norcross will be with me."

"What is she coming here for?" asked Mrs. Norcross.

Clara bit her lip a moment, and then responded, "You remember, mamma, dear, that we were expecting her on a visit, with Andrew, just before — oh, ages ago, so it seems, in the old happy days of a little more than a week ago!"

“Hark!” every body said it.

It was the boom of the factory steam-gong. It moaned and groaned out upon the thick night air with dread alarm. Did you ever hear this substitute for the whistle and the bell? In times of peace it makes children shudder. It is the most execrable of sounds. It runs the scale of groans. It is hideous always. But to-night, it was an awful note of terror. To whom was it calling? For there was no one to help the village against itself. The village was rending itself. Therefore it was the cry of despair.

“Hark!” every body said it.

It was the long, low boom of the factory whistle. The monotony of it! Listen five minutes, ten minutes, twenty minutes, to that changeless note, and it seems to drive you mad. The whistle had begun a long wail, which the engineer, as was afterwards learned, who alone stood faithful in his room, meant to continue as long as he could keep steam to run it. To whom was it calling? There was no one to help the village arrayed against itself.

“Hark!” They all said it.

It was the three fire bells; bells of two churches and the bell over the factory office. In a country village the fire bell calls to every

body; all are firemen; every one takes up the cry and shouts "Fire! fire!" But no one helped the bells now. The same waiting stillness, before the tempest, was in the gray-robed streets. For a few moments, every one in the Norcross mansion sat still, as if paralyzed by these notes of the warning that the storm had begun. But as the great silence without continued one, two, three, five minutes—Clara was holding her watch—the village heiress arose and went to the window. With a sort of desperate composure she turned and remarked,—

"It is time for the train. But the factories are on fire! See!" And she lifted the velvet curtains and held them on her ivory arm, from whence their weight drew down her silken wrapper to the elbow.

The blood-red glare which struggled up through the heavy air was instantly flung like bespattering paint over the fine ceiling and walls, and flushed and darkened, alternately, upon the magnificent countenance of the brave girl.

"What is it, my good Bloc?" She let fall the curtain and advanced towards the Frenchman, who, reappearing like a ghost, stood, skull-cap in hand, gesticulating.

"*Informer!* It is His arrival, ahead of time

by engine and the one car. And a mademoiselle and monsieur, your son!" thumbs pointing to the pastor. "It is that the master goes straight to the office,—of the others I know not. You are *restez avec* the mansion, here, till He come!"

"Stay here, and leave papa to those wolves?" exclaimed Clara. "Never! He should have come here and let the miserable business go. It is beyond rescue. But as he did not, I shall go to him!"

"Impossible, my child!" It would be difficult to determine who said it first, or who was saying it now. It was a chorus; and all hands had hold of the daring girl.

"Paul!" she cried, out of the wilderness of restraining arms, "go with me to save papa!"

"Paul Havens indeed stood there, breathless from his running, towering high above Bloc's shoulders. The glad surprise released every one's hold, and amid their joyful cries of welcome, Clara escaped past them all and was locked in Paul's arms once more.

"Say yes, Paul. Take me; take me!" she was pleading.

Take her? Obey that plea? Ah, the rapture of that unexpected moment, after a week of desolation! He had had another plan half

formed,—to stand here on the defensive for the right, one against thousands. But he remembered another woman, and her noble errand, that very moment in process of execution. And why should not the woman whom he loved show herself as noble as the woman who loved him? He replaced his hat upon his head. At that sign, the mother of the young girl flew at him with a shriek.

“You are not so insane as to comply, sir?”

“My dear lady,” said Paul, gently restraining her with one hand, “I have left Puss Norcross going on foot and alone to the black Franklin Square. If this dear girl will accompany my revered father and me, I will take them to the armory——”

“No, no!” shot in Clara. “Papa’s office!”

“Hush, child,” cried Pastor Havens, instantly taking in his son’s idea, and shuffling across the floor towards them. “I should have gone before, to plead with our people, but that I could not walk. Sister Norcross, be at peace here. Suffer these two young people to support me. These Americans are my flock. They fill our church. They will listen——”

“The carriage, then!” sighed the lady, sinking helpless into her chair. “The horses have been

harnessed all the afternoon for flight, but that I dare not fly."

In a moment more the lone vehicle, the only one for hours, was splashing through the slush-cumbered streets; with the call of the gong, the whistle and the bells everywhere abroad in this outer air. Through the throngs of troubled citizens of decent mien, who stood about the entrance of the armory, hands in pockets, or hands hammering their palms, as they argued the matter with each other; through knots of boisterous boys and youth, too young to find admittance up-stairs in the lodge-room of the Amalgamateds; through crowds of idlers of every age, who were not considered up to that grade of "respectable working men," which the Amalgamateds required; yet who now gloried in the chaos that promised to turn up something, they knew not what, to their advantage; through a mob of people who were all agreed, by this time, in one thing, denunciation on the village autocrat; the tradesmen — "because he was not here to prevent so shameful a condition of things"; the vagabond, "because he was rich enough"; the boys and youth, — why? the carriage pressed slowly. It got the right of way at last to the door of the armory. The multitude made

an effort for silence, as it gave way for the three occupants who pressed their persons through the wedged, living mass, and, at last, up the stairs. In the darkness no one recognized them, but they owed the possibility of making any progress at all to the whispered rumor that "it was Norcross' own carriage."

At length, when they stood clinging together upon the landing above, a gas jet revealed them.

"It is the minister!"

This was roared out so loudly that it no doubt penetrated the guarded and bolted door, on which the most thundering knocks of the crowd for two hours had rained in vain. Surely Paul's knock and shout had no effect till the roar helped him.

"Enter, beloved sir. What? A lady! And your son?" answered the mechanic, who showed his face, ushered them in, and quietly closed and barred the door behind them.

It was a remarkable scene that they looked upon. Perhaps two hundred New England faces, from twenty-one years old upward. This company has been sifted since you saw it last, reader. Not a "loafer," not an unthrifty hanger-on is here. It is "only the members." Every face is strong; every face has looked, as often as once

a month, through the wicket window of the Savings Bank. Faces flushed and pale with discussion, sad and troubled, as if uncertain of themselves, vexed and ashamed of a humiliating "fix," into which somehow honorable toilers have "got themselves."

Discarding his living crutches, like an apparition, so ghastly pale was the pastor, his white hair flung back, the hovering hands extended, swift in motion, resistless as an angel of light, this prophet of the valley advanced to the side of the demagogue, Liverpool. One of his long, thin fingers touched that bullock of a man, and: "Cease to betray my people, you deceiver!" parted the pastoral lips.

The Englishman folded himself up like a pocket foot-rule, and actually squat against the wall, for there was not a seat to be had.

"My brethren of the church of God!" resumed the voice which nearly all of them were accustomed to hear on the Sabbath. Ah, it was sweet as music, by the contrast. What a hungry silence leaned forward to drink in the loving, tender tones! "For many of you, yes, many of you, now found in such a scene as this, are my brethren in Christ's church! Oh, the shame of it!" and the voice choked with emotion. "Oh,

ye foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you?" His very pauses were mightier than his speech. "I have then lived among you in vain. In vain I have instructed your little ones; in vain, helped you, penitent; in vain sat by your sick; in vain folded the hands of your dead——"

"Oh, God!" It came out like a groan; it shook a score of repenting hearts; it was the hammer of sacred memories. No one asked who said it; all felt it.

"No. I will not lead you to God in prayer again. What! Pray here? Mention that holy Name here? In vain my years among you. I will go. It is indeed time I left the village."

"God forbid, pastor!" It was a chorus.

"Yes. Mr. Norcross is your brother in the church; that is, I see many here to whom that is a true rebuke. And you have murder in your hearts!"

"Boys, hear the bells! I tell you it is time that men with families, men born under the flag of liberty to all, men who have bowed in the church, and murmured the name of the Christian's Saviour, get out of this! The fire-bells! There shall be no riot of races. Remember who we are!"

It was a nameless man who spoke; one of

hundreds to be found in all these village churches of New England. Black eyes, black hair, black hands, ashen face, mounted on a chair.

“That’s jist what I said, long ago,” answered another nameless speaker, now, with new courage remounted on his chair. “And you fellers laughed, an’ said I was a pious fool, and how this ere wa’n’t a prayer-meetin’. An’ I was jest fool enuff to git down. Pastor, I did n’t bear my cross. ’T wa’n’t easy. ’T ain’t like church here, by a long shot! But we’ll rattle eout that ere m’chine an’ git tew that fire, boys!”

He had red hair, blue eyes, a chest that labored like a bellows, the fair Saxon, the strongest physical type. He sprang forward like a young steer.

“We only needed you, Pastor Havens!” shouted another voice; but to which of half-a-dozen men now leaping to their feet, the voice belonged, it needed the parson’s familiarity to detect.

“Oh, Seth, my brother!” exclaimed Mr. Havens, shaking his finger reprovingly at the speaker.

“Nay, beloved sir,” the man Seth responded, now within embracing distance. “But it’s true; the pond had been gittin’ en’most run dry of

mad feelin's fur a half hour. The sinners here," glancing about, with a clever smile, towards the frowning group of very young men who were knotting together with angry disappointment, in one corner, "may be, wanted tew fight somebody. Yew know Brother Norcross ain't very pop'lar of late. But all the b'lievers, what thought of the old church, stood firm!" The springing tears were almost as ready as the laugh. He wrung the preacher's hand as if it were some heavy lever of a machine.

"I feel as if I'd lost all th' r'lig'n I ever had, pastor, in these blood-curdlin' meetin's," said another, out of the crowd, that now surged forward about the three visitors. Indeed, Paul had more than his match to protect his frail sire and the beautiful, trembling woman from these rough penitents.

"Better have an anxious seat here," said another. "Oh, sir what shall we do?"

"Do?" cried Paul, "what is the fire-bell saying?" The words rung clear, prompt, and cheery above the confusion.

It was enough. The victory was won. With a great thunder, the feet of two hundred pounded out into the hall, down the stairs, and into the street. Perhaps it could have occurred in no

other land than an Anglo-Saxon, in no other country but our country, in no other region as in New England. Perhaps twenty years from now it will have become an improbable, an impossible occurrence even in those Arcadian valleys. For the blue blood of New England, the prophesy shall be written by me.

But it was a fact, good sirs, social philosophers, and publicists, that once on a time the strong Puritan conscience, the love of home and the love of the church of Christ, at a pastor's command, saved fair Crosston from a lapse into barbarism. It was an Englishman who attempted to teach them, "the French must go." The "must go" cry is not indigenous. It is not Christian.

"Fire!" Is there any other sound you ever heard like the country village shout of fire? It laughs, it exults, it weeps, it is in terror. It is the excitement of recreation and of toil commingled. It is the fool's blat and the hero's clarion call. The deep, prolonged bawl of the men is thrilling; but the shrill treble of lads and children carries the excitement yet higher. The quavering voices of women, taking up the cry, add the highest, the wildest agitation to which your throbbing nerves can answer. Dear,

old, dreadful excitement of our boyhood! New York, and all you, great cities, you have lost it, and please heaven, forever; a fire is as prosy as selling cheese, in the great town. Men, whose business it is, go put it out and done with it.

When Paul Havens and Clara Norcross got the exhausted good man down to the waiting carriage, they stood in a vacant street. Not a human being was left in sight.

“Home, Paul,” his father gasped.

“But,—but my father?” said Clara with emphasis on my.

The young man stood hesitating, in a dilemma between the two fathers, when the coachman volunteered, “Please, sir, it’s most out. ’Taint any of the big mills. It’s some sheds in the yard— if the rascals don’t git afeared of this sudden rush of white folks, and fire the big mills.”

“Oh! Oh!” exclaimed Clara, clasping her hands, but forbearing to add any exhortation, as she saw the pitiable condition of the fainting clergyman.

“But drive to brother Norcross’ help, Paul,” said Mr. Havens.

That settled it. Clara caught him in her own

strong arms within the vehicle, and supported him till, very shortly, they were halting over the only pavement that ever echoed in Crosston, the paved main road through the black dust of the mill-yards.

The flame and smoke, a dense canopy, enveloped the lower extremity of the enclosure. But it was evident, as rumor had informed the old coachman, that whatever structure was on fire had been nearly consumed. A stream of water suddenly blurted over the heads of our party. It splashed like a torrent against the side of the office, before which the carriage was halting. It came bending over the high brick enclosure wall from the south, the Franklin Square side, near which the office building was located. It deluged, with its rebounding cascade, both Clara and Paul, who were just alighting. It was an impatient and an unskilful stream; the rural fireman should have brought their palpitating hose through the small gate, a little further to the east.

The spitting, gurgling, cracking, fresh stream was hailed with a great shout. It was defiance as well as joy. Franklin Square, massed black and terror-halted a little further east, heard the shout, as they also beheld the rush of the

Armory, with the decision of despair. They misinterpreted it all; they supposed themselves now doomed to attack. They were nearer the small gate just referred to. If they were packed together before, they—these masses of Franklin Square—were crystalized by pressure into one lump now. A mere girl, armed with a kerosene can, unlatched the gate; she could hardly reach up to the heavy hasp, but she did it and sprang in. A small, dark faced man followed her. It all happened in a trice, Paul and Clara, from the shelter of the office portico saw it all as they shook the water from their faces and half turned to look back towards the carriage where the clergyman yet sat.

As the small, dark-faced man took his turn after the girl through the narrow iron wicket, a bar of light from a dark lantern was suddenly turned on him. Behind him, in the shadow, several powerful men at the word, "Now! my hearties!" in the tones of Lemuel Norcross, moved a huge joist on the trembling gate and it shut, clanging, wedged!

A lady laid hold on the intruder's blue blouse. It was Puss Norcross. She said,—

"Poor Leclere!"

"*Mon Dieu!*" cries the man looking up in

the gleam. "It is the good angel of North End!" And he dropped his wad of cotton wicking to the ground, at the same moment shouting to the girl, his companion with the can, "Heloise! Return! It is she who crossed the little dead hands of thy sister!"

"Yes, Leclere." Puss poured her speech into the man's ears, for he had sunk on his knees before her as if her soft touch on his coat-sleeve were a blow to fell an ox. "Yes. Oh, you wretched man! Think of that calm Sabbath day, when your priests had cast you off, a communist; when the word came to the mission that your babe was dying! Think of her pretty, snowy hair! Her blue eyes! Her two little years that God gave her to dwell with you and the madame! Think, Heloise," for the girl had returned and was kneeling at her father's side, "what we have tried to teach you of the blessed Jesus. You promised, Leclere, never more to be an agitator ——!"

"Good angel, how came you away up here?"

"Never mind that. There is no time to lose. Now turn to those people outside. Be quick! Tell them in good French what the villagers mean: that it is no harm to them. Here, help him up!" For the gate could not be opened and

it was necessary to hoist the man to the top of the wall.

He obeyed like a machine. You know how like mercury the real French heart sends its passion for good or for evil, up or down. His speech was like another torrent. He was always magnetic. His power over an audience had been proved in the streets of Paris, and consigned him to exile over the seas. It required some few moments, if you had consulted the tower clock in the fitful glare and flashes of the night.

It seemed an age, ere the shout broke out, "*Vive Leclere! Vive la Paix! Americans! Norcross!*" But all that came. The man leaped down among them. He flew, like a spirit, from person to person. He was lost among them. And slowly, yet surely, the night began to breathe naturally once more, in the beautiful village.

XV.

TROUBLE AT HOME.

WITH the details of the night's pacification we need not concern ourselves. How the fires went out, how order returned, how native and foreign fraternized and sent up hurrahs for every body, how the revulsion of feeling which always ensues, carried men clear over into the follies of a joy as silly in expression as the forms of their savagery had been. Such events are quickly told.

In the large inner room of the office there met, namely: Pastor Havens, Parishioner Norcross, Paul Havens, Clara Norcross, and Puss Norcross. Mechanically they had assembled, all beating and throbbing with excitement and exhaustion. The steam whistle suddenly sighed deeply, and stopped; the gong wheezed and died; the bell, not to be left alone, ceased its clatter. The room was painfully silent. Pastor Havens had laboriously helped himself to a chair. The manufacturer sunk into one, and his daughter flew into his arms.

“Child!” the man cried with a shock, “you

are dripping wet! The place for you is home! Whose carriage is that at the door?" And he had straightened the girl to her feet; had almost carried her to the gate, but that he was diminutive and she was a solid burden; he had thrown a sofa cover about her, all in the one breath of his exclamation.

"It is your own carriage, sir," answered Paul, offering to go hasten the unblanketing the horses and the turning.

But, Norcross was too quick for him. He himself flung open the door, dashed nervously down the outer office, and saved himself the rest of the journey by shouting to the coachman the necessary orders. Then returning, he began bundling Clara out. Over his shoulder he flung: "You too, Puss, heaven bless you, you plucky lass! But then, you helped to save some of your own property."

"But, papa dear," pleaded Clara, "you do not know how much you are indebted—there, the robe is slipping off! But I don't need it. Go papa, please, or I will, and give it to good Pastor Havens. He has saved the village. He is a sick man."

All of which was ejaculated in a broken way, as her father was fairly hustling her along. She

had never seen him so excited before. His hands upon her person recalled the childish punishment that she last received from him, more than a dozen years ago. Yet she yielded, even to the point of entering the carriage.

Puss Norcross came quickly after and entered the vehicle. Of course, she knew nothing of the recent estrangement of pastor and parishioner, and had her own explanations of the distraught condition of her uncle's mind. She had caught the fumes of his breath, several times, on this eventful evening.

"Now, John, lash 'em!" said Norcross, and the door slammed and clicked.

"Why, uncle, there is room for at least two more," quietly remarked Puss, in surprised tone.

"Go ask 'em then, quick!" was the surly response.

Clara's hand was on the silver handle. The door creaked. The girl's frozen robes clattered against the vehicle. She could hardly kick her icy garments before her. She seemed wonderfully beautiful in the glint of the great lamp over the door, like some arctic goddess in a tableau.

"Papa! I will never leave that good man nor Paul Havens, wet and frozen as I am! Haven't

we had horrors enough for one night, but you must add the misery of brotherly revenge?"

But the half-crazed man stopped to hear no more. He bounded into the office. The manner of his address to the two gentlemen within no one knows. Suffice it that the three soon appeared, and in silence the clergyman was handed into the carriage.

"The back seat," said Clara, looking in and busy about these directions. "Yes, yes, I am all wet, you know." Then she followed, and broke herself into a sitting posture, "Papa, you know I'm a little giant, as you often call me. I have health for—but what will you do?"

"My coupé is always at call here, Clara; I will come up directly I see the office closed, and things a little more straightened. Tell mamma——"

"But, papa, where is—where is Paul Havens?"

"I do not keep track of the young gentleman," was the cynical reply.

Paul Havens was already out of their sight in the darkness. There was nothing, of course, to do but drive on homeward, without explanations, and without delay.

There were explanations in abundance, the next day, at the Norcross mansion. Puss, Clara, and

her mother spent most of the hours in bed or reclining before the golden grates, which leaped with genial flame in rivalry of the sunbeams that flashed in long, unbroken peace through the windows. Not a visitor disturbed their recuperation, nor any household duty or social demand. The Havens group were returned to the parsonage by the same carriage that returned the cousins the night before.

“Don’t you think you ought to dress and go over? The dear man seemed so feeble last night,” said Puss, slipping out of her rocking-chair, and drawing the breadths of silk and lace about her—Clara’s loaned dressing-gown, you know, and “a mile too big” for its present thin, nervous wearer. Puss dropped a knee on the sofa by the window and looked over towards the little, white, gable-roofed parsonage.

“How can I, coz? Think of Paul’s leaving us as he did last night. He evidently feels compelled, after papa’s insane treatment, to go steadily on the course marked out when we last conferred together.” Yet an observer would have seen a light in the brown eyes, and a quiet radiance of good hope upon the face that was so much different from the gloom of the last sad week. She knew him. She knew the

truth as between him and Puss, not from Puss, nor from Paul, but instinctively from their companionship last night all the way of that dread journey.

The day dragged on, with napping, lunching, rocking the chairs, dreaming, and talking. Such a stream of talk.

“I met him in the street,” Puss explained. “He was just coming over from Cambridge, he said, where he had been to consult with Prof. — about his appointment on the coast-survey work.”

You have no doubt that Clara listened to every word of this narrative, as Puss went on. “He had received his appointment, and was to be off for Florida the next day. You know, Andrew had told me just this—the close-mouthed fellow—that Mr. Havens was to go on the survey. Of course we could not understand. Papa stoutly disputed it. Mr. Havens could n’t spare time to come to the house, was stopping at some cheap hotel. It was all so strange. Then came a letter from papa. Then some telegrams about the mill trouble. Then we were so distressed about uncle’s whereabouts. Then I remembered about this unhappy man, Leclere; I think the *Journal* first mentioned his name, as being the occasion of the trouble

here. Of course I found Mr. Havens, and told him my plan. I felt privileged to seek Mr. Paul, being certain of my influence with that communist. We at once decided to come on together. We met your papa at Nashua Junction. It was a great surprise. You know the rest."

"Did papa and Paul have any conversation on the train?" asked Mrs. Norcross.

"Scarcely any. But, though I noticed his want of cordiality,—he spent most of his time in the smoking compartment,—I attributed it to the village trouble. Then what Andrew had said—oh, I don't know! It is all a dream. You have told me the first real facts in the case."

On this face, too, there was a look of satisfaction and hopefulness which grew as the fatigues of the previous day gave way. There was a wide difference in the health, and hence in the recovery, of these two girls.

"I understand," at one time remarked simple Mrs. Norcross to Puss, "that you quite approved of Paul Havens' choice of vocation. You ought to be very happy."

"I?" was the quick response. She managed her face well, however; and then, too, it was not Clara, but her mother, who was putting this question to her. "What is it to me, aunt? No

doubt the property will be managed somehow. For that matter, papa has already given me two hundred thousand. He said it seemed best. Indeed, I think papa feels that we are rich enough, as a family, and wonders at Uncle Lemuel's devotion to business. Perhaps I ought not to tell it,—I don't know,—but sister and I have no prospective interest in the mills now. It's only Andrew whom papa is looking after."

This was so serious a turn to the conversation, that the good matron—who really loved money as much as her husband, being Yankee born and thrifty—did not pursue her motherly purpose, to "drag to light the exact state of things in Puss' heart."

The April day—winter in the morning and spring at midday—had declined again to winter, for the sun was setting. Sleights in the morning, wheeled vehicles at noon, a few sleights at night again; but fewer each evening, over the the grid-ironed streets, toiled past the warm windows of the drawing-room where Clara and Puss stood looking dreamily out, each looping a curtain over her hand and shoulders. What a contrast in hands and shoulders! But the two faces had the identical expression, at the first glance, as the two tongues exclaimed in concert,—

“There goes Paul Havens!”

Then the two faces changed their expression, —one into satisfaction, the other into unmistakable distress, yet with such a gleam of faith over all.

The latter face, Clara’s, said, “It is nearly time for the Boston express. He is to take that, no doubt.” The other face said, “Yes,” and then its owner dropped the curtain which she had been holding, at the same time moving away.

The other face still tarried at the window. A hand was ready. He has not looked back yet. He must pick his way over the ice-ruts of that path that descends abruptly the steep acivity to Franklin Square. It is a short cut for a pedestrian loaded with a hand-bag. He is on the brow of the hill. He looks back. He is very conspicuous, —manly, strong, against the after-glow of the western sky. She can see what, perhaps, no one else could, save his tender-hearted mother, who may be also watching from windows with smaller panes, —that he starts with surprise. She lets the curtain fall behind her. Its purple is the background for her, statuesque, and the afterglow illumines her; howbeit, she had only thought of concealment from that other young lady who was now thrumming the piano.

He has defied judgment, prudence, reason, resolution; all those forces to the winds! He has obeyed his heart and saluted her. She has thrown him one in return—that fond old kiss throwing which is among the earliest motions which our infantile hands are taught.

The usual family dinner soon ensued. The ladies, indeed, were already dressed and waiting for it, when they first took their stations by the window. It was a somewhat stately affair, this family dinner, so far as dressing, servants, courses, and pretensions were concerned. Clara did her best, always, to lend to the ceremonies the true refinement of simplicity and unaffected love. But her mother had borrowed the formalities bodily from books and experience amid the society-ways of such very wealthy people they mingled with on their frequent city visits. She insisted, dear, simple, kindly-intentioned heart, that their wealth and station demanded it.

Brushed, smoothed, and wearing his hard smile, Mr. Norcross entered the dining-room with: "Well, Puss, after our little village-row, you will stay and make us that visit, while you rest. 'Tisn't the best time to come to the country, as you know," handing her with brusque formality to a chair. "Just now we have—well,

there's no opera, my child, and our church is not in a happy state. Pastor's just resigning; here's his note to that effect in my pocket, by the way. But you can go sugaring; you know how you used to like maple sugar, years ago, up here—" the head down, and a meaningless mumble, which no one could understand, though the standing servants and the seated family all bowed the head.

"I am inexpressibly pained to—to hear," Puss returned, "that you are to part with pastor—with the Havens family, uncle."

"Oh, well," he replied, smoothing out his napkin and wrinkling up his face, "it's immaterial. You know pastors now-a-days are birds of passage; have n't altogether liked the man for months; getting old; wanted to pension him off a year ago, but the folks over to the parsonage are pr—are very sensitive people."

"Papa," Clara began, her eyes swimming, for the sudden mention of that resignation in her father's pocket was so unexpected, "papa, he is so paternal in his preaching of late, like some old prophet——"

"Yes indeed," sipping the soup, "altogether too much so. Preaches at—I do n't mind speaking of it here in the family—straight at me,

Sabbath after Sabbath!" But then, glancing up at the lugubrious shadows on the ladies' faces, and remembering that of all things he abominated a "sober dinner," he added, "it's all right. His children can take good care of him. Let's treat them with the utmost kindness while they stay. Mark me," with the smack of hard authority, "that's my wish. Necessary for the peace of the church. The church is every thing. I must guard the church. Let's dismiss the topic."

"But, sir," Puss ventured to resume, "Are not the church greatly attached to him? Have they no voice in this matter? Papa ——"

"Oh, I know Bill's way" he answered, shaking his head as he arose to carve. "Of course there will be a little scene. But they always acquiesce in my judgement. They are good fellows, the brethren. Saved my mills, my dears! Yes, indeed!" carving away. "I know that the simple piety of the common people — Christian people — saved the village from ruin. Distributed a thousand dollars to-day, by way of rewards. A little money goes a great ways. Any choice of cuts, Puss? Do n't know your tastes like the others."

"But, papa," Clara remonstrated, yet very gently, for she had to acknowledge to herself a growing sense of almost fear of her father, of

late, in his changed mood, "do you think it your privilege to so dispose of affairs in — in a Christian church?"

"How, child?" with a blank stare.

"Why, consulting your own wishes only."

"Clara, did n't — I — build — this edifice from corner-stone to cross?"

"Do n't lose patience with me, uncle Lem," said Puss, interlacing her fingers and leaning on the table edge; "but surely, papa paid half the cost of our great church at home, and yet he regards himself the servant of others, — the conservator of the wishes of the humble poor —"

"Now please do n't preach," Mr. Norcross, replied, thinking banter better than argument with ladies, "and I'll show you what I brought, — well, Puss, I did n't expect to find you here of course; but your present is to come, you brave girl, be sure of that. Sleepy?"

"Yes, sir," replied the waiter, who answered Mr. Norcross' use of this name; but it would have been almost worth the life of any colored person in town to have so addressed Mr. Charles Sumner Biglake, chief servant at "the mansion." He was a New Hampshire born negro. He said, "yes, sir," not yes, sar. He folded

his hands under his apron, in the most approved style, and bowed obsequiously.

“Go into the den, and on the center table, right beside my gloves I think,—wonder I haven’t lost the parcels in the last few hours’ fracas,—bring me what you find. If they are not there, two boxes, look in the tail pockets of my overcoat.”

Meanwhile silence, and change of course. The silence, being fatal to hope, grew painful. Mrs. Norcross, who had hardly spoken during the meal, returned to remark that her husband looked “fresher than in the morning, if he had had only two hours’ sleep.” To which it was hardly worthy to be called a reply, the “Oh, I’m well enough. Sleepy! Sleepy!”

But as the man yet lingered, Mr. Norcross said, “Now daught” — short for daughter, — “just choke it down. Please, do! You shall have any thing in the world. Don’t cry. Ah, Sleepy, come at last?”

“Yes, sir. In your cigar-box, sir. Had to hunt.”

“Well,” snatching the parcels and tearing them open. “There, Clara. That’s the new steel gray diamond. Or steel blue, I forget which. It’s the rage now. Two rings. Tiffany’s.

Here, mamma." For he had to toss the precious thing across the table to his wife. Puss, at his right hand, was examining as she passed on Clara's, two pretty heads together.

And so we get off clear of the troublesome ministerial question, no doubt, and back again into our own world of wealth and its spending. This clerical affair was a mere incident at most. It will not be necessary to think of it again before Sunday. The church and Sunday; one day out of seven. We can talk now of where we have been, what city friends we saw, of city gossip and personalities. We can forget, at the dinner table and while we smoke our after-dinner cigar, and the ladies sing and play, and mother sits with folded hands and worships us, forget all our servants and subordinates, whether cooks or clergy.

Or we could have done so until recently. Now however, a letter in our pocket—but that will come up in routine. Now the vision of a strong, resolute young fellow, square set across all our plans of life—but him we have disposed of. Now something else on our mind. Not the village riot, for that is quelled. Not softenings or relentings of heart and pangs of conscience over our proposed treatment of a saintly old

man; not perplexity about our daughter's happiness, for we can buy her any thing which this world can offer.

You have not guessed aright, ladies, though you study intently the fitful and unnatural moods of the man; study as you try dutifully to make his half hour, graciously granted before the toil in his den, as resonant with song and cheer as dutiful and beautiful women can.

Meanwhile, the spring advances. The fiery summer that blazes over the everglades of Florida is transferred into weeping and smiling early spring in New Hampshire. From the mansion to the cottage—rarely from the cottage to the mansion—the ladies come and go. From Key West to Cape Sable, on up the gorgeous, fatal coast to Cape Romano, threading its way through festoons of maiden's hair and lakes of wondrous lilies that seek in vain to defend the virgin rivers,—the government steam launch comes and goes. The snows are all gone from the northern hills, and May has come. The visitors are all gone from St. Augustine even, and many a shape of peril has come. Puss lingers and goes "Maying" with Clara, for the time begins to hang heavy, and when they come into dinner, fresh-plucked trailing *arbutus* smells

sweet upon the table, as no other flower of the older year ever does. Paul Havens also lingers far away, and time is not allowed to hang heavy. When the young engineer comes in, to sleep in fort or under canvas, why there are the day's observations to make up, and a strange stiffness in the back and very bones to be slept away. No news of this bone-ache is sent away in the letters; be careful of that.

Puss and Clara are of one mind about the Havens family. "You told me the truth about them, long ago," says Puss. "The more I see them the more I love them all. I wish it were possible to share our abundance with them."

"Because I know them so well and wish to keep their love," is Clara's reply, "I do not try that. But they have a strong hand," and her voice quavered, "to their defending."

The strong hand was, indeed, earning much. Such service earned its price. It was not the money which troubled Paul Havens. It was that his uniform grew unmistakably too ample: he used to catch at the breast of his coat and gather it in folds. Yet he ate voraciously, and was not weakened, no, not weakened. There are times when the chief officer of an expedition must keep up for his men's sake. There is all of May and

half of June to come yet. They who need much money must earn it. They who would earn much money in a short time must do or suffer many things. Better have the bones ache, than the heart and conscience ache.

Is it not so, Mr. Lemuel Norcross? If the fellow with the aching bones could only have seen the fellow with the aching heart and conscience, and head, yes, and feet, too, running about these days! What could have so disturbed Norcross these days? Not the sense of any wrongs inflicted on the Havens company? Probably not; for this was not the first pastor to be hard handled. Indeed, he was long since quite hardened, lucky man, to the dismissal of employés.

“Will this Congress never get out of Washington? This abominable extra session!” exclaimed Mr. Norcross one evening. “Here it is June tomorrow. Puss, excuse your uncle; but when are you planning to go home?”

“Indeed, uncle,” she answered, with a laugh, “I ought to have gone two weeks ago. My poor little mission——”

“Oh, bother the mission!” was his impatient reply. “Come, let’s all go on to Washington. I must go. I’ll strangle our senator if he do n’t—but no matter. Clara and mother, what say

you? You can take the first peep at the Water Gap, or go along to West Virginia and the mounains."

Clara and Puss exchanged glances. Mrs. Norcross, who evidently was in the secret, merely glanced up over her knitting—she indulged the early habit only at home—as much as to say, "I told you so." All of this took a few seconds of time.

"Settled, then, is it? Sleepy, have my own car put in order for to-morrow noon's New York express," said Mr. Norcross.

"But, papa," Clara objected, approaching and standing over him, familiarly arranging his black locks over his one bold spot, "I was going down with Puss for a month." She did not add that she and Puss had consulted with her mother as to the propriety of the two happening to be at Amherst on Commencement-Day, June 25th.

Curious that they could plan this together? Perhaps so; but together, with Andrew along, there could be no impropriety in it. Then, too, possibly Mr. William Norcross, of the Missionary Board, would join them, for he had developed a decided interest in the "saintly Stephen Crane, destined for the Dark continent," who would then graduate.

But there was no need to tell this. The penetration of this acute man was wonderful. What others inquired to know, Lemuel Norcross knew by intuition; or rather by that rapid and brilliant action of mind that matched motives and reasons with almost the assurance of prophesy. However, he was too politic to reveal his thoughts, assuming a playful air, like velvet covering iron, he said, — “Pshaw! Boston’s dull as a hoe at this season. Besides, I want you to meet a young friend of mine, son of Governor Nevada! There!”

Ah, how the shrewd man, in the very pride of his shrewdness, had blundered, manlike. But still he could not see the flush on the fair face, bending down as the delicate fingers sought out a gray hair and smoothed it in among the raven black.

Two months ago, the loving arms of this trembling creature would have wound about the man’s neck and the brown cheeks would have stifled his veto of her own wishes. But he is a changed man of late, we notice. Hence, the girl looked pleadingly over to her mother with whom this only child still had all power. And it needed a tremendous power to embolden Mrs. Norcross to say it, with many a “hem” and a laying down and taking up of her knitting.

“Father,” she began and approaching him to try on the wristlets, which, with his blue, wool socks, comprised the work now left these needles. “The girls and I rather want to say goodby to the Havenses, next week. You don’t care, do you? Let me try on this wristlet.”

He submitted in silence to the adjustment of the maroon woolen; he neither said that it fitted or ill-fitted; he did not break the stillness for some of those seconds that are so provokingly long; then he arose, lit his cigar over the Argand, and gathering up his hands full of “the house-mail,” turned to remark,—

“You can follow your own inclinations, my dears. I generally am left to myself, of late. I shall go to Washington in the morning. Please let me know, when Sleepy comes in, what you decide. I don’t need a whole car.” And he moved off to the den.

After he was gone, glances and tears argued it out. There was no cackling, as became the intelligent and loving. When the women of a man’s household give him over, he is gone; better hold on hard and long.

So was it. And that very evening, there were goodbys spoken, over in the parsonage sitting-room, and embraces and tears, with hope and

faith to keep some, and doubt and despair to drag down others.

Who can describe a leave-taking of love? What need of it? I would like to attempt the description, to some happy denizen of another world than this, to whom it might be altogether fresh information. I would begin thus, —

“This is one of the sensations which we mortals often have. It is called a farewell, or a goodby; it is exquisite in its thrill and agitation of the whole being. Now, listen, angel: I portray to you a parting scene. Rehearse this not, O celestial foreigner, to any of my fellow-mortals, for they would all have me in derision for my failure; but I may attempt it with you. Conceive of love; love almost like your celestial passion, at times. Conceive, then, of a rending, a throwing of one heart to the east, and another to the west, so far — what? You can not conceive of that? Then, listen, while I begin again.”

Then I would attempt to portray the June Sabbath that fell down out of the heavens, soft as heavenly light, and over Crosston, four days later than the last recorded incidents of this story. How the June fell, like a blessing, in through the open windows and doors of every

dwelling in all Crosston, except alone the windows and doors of the Norcross mansion. These were closed, blinded, and curtained one very side, save the servants' ell. The June lay softly in through the stone mullions and sashes of the granite church that Mr. Norcross built. The song of birds was everywhere; their morning concerts in June Sabbaths are prolonged till they mingle with the organ rumble, at half-past ten o'clock. Well-bred country birds,—robins, for instance, not your piping city sparrows, those crest-fallen mendicants of the sidewalk,—will often come and sit on the shrubbery that nods in the church-yard, and join in the hymns of praise to the common Father. You may see a devout robin-redbreast, sometimes, listening, unmistakably listening, to the sermon, his pert head turning and debating, no doubt, as he watches the preacher through the open sash by the pulpit, the bird upon the flowering vine of morning-glory.

The buzz of harmless insects is in the drowsy air, their gentle murmur like the sweet air's voice of peace, and you listen as if the balmy air, once a year in June, had been given speech to tell you how it yearns to bless you. The clean-robed children, on their way to church, harken mystified, and then, discovering the cause,

add their glee of laughter to the murmur of the happy insect life. Such peace is in the perfume of a million flowers—heavy, abundant, intoxicating to the tired nerves! Such reverence is in the call of the bell—poor city folk, you hate the bell that rings in your very chamber window—the bell, apart from all, upon the village-green, whose note is softened in the vast spaces of the valley, and mellowed by the verdant, giant hills, and echoed on for miles; till the very flocks on distant pasture uplands, pause from their feeding to rejoice with the unyoked ox of their company bellowing his amen.

One would almost dare hope that bell might be heard in far-away Florida marshes, for it must certainly be heard in heaven, angel; heard in a distant Boston avenue, also; heard in the pretty little park that fronts the president's house in Washington, where a young lady, alone and lost in listening, doubtless, for the bell so far away, stood in the scant shadow of the equestrian Jackson, and wrote the initials of a young man's name in the gravel, with the tip of her sunshade.

And now the orderly muster of the white-robed, flower-decked women, men fresh-starched and shaven, and youth in attire of simple village

coquetry; for there is no other scene for the display of dress, and such dress can hardly offend the God whose day it is most meant to honor. The greetings, too, almost like heaven, angel; so are the week-day strifes forgot. Strifes? What strifes can there be, angel, among them where none are rich, and none are poor; none borrower, none lender; save the tradesman here and there, and he smilingly gracious in that spell which hallows all at the doors of the house of God.

A noble building this, whose cost was never counted; a cathedral fit for a capital. It lacks nothing, but soon is to lack every thing!—at least, so one would judge, to read the thousand faces all inscribed with fear and some with tears already. Yet, speaking of the faces, angel, note how submissive are they all; not stout to resist or utter protest. There is that one blemish on the New England face—the dollar-reverence, and grown plainer of late years since the men left the sterile, honest farms for the great men's shops. All these know full well who built this church of which they have been so proud, in which they have been so happy and now are so miserable. All these are both comfortable and wretched; they are in confusion of

soul between the two. The comfort is most inviting, and they will acquiesce. The bustling old usher in the main aisle has left one pew empty a long while; yet why need he? It will not be filled by its usual occupants; therefore fill it with strangers and ease the staring eyes of many.

"Beloved, it is the last time." Oh, ye memories! Ye grudges and piques that are human! Ye smartings from rebukes and exhortations, rise up and be revenged, now, in many souls. What, no? All forgotten? What, ye confess the motive good and kind? That's the power of a parting, angel, and is the only sweet in the bitter.

Oh, ye memories! The house of mourning and the house of feasting; pictures, with this old pastor painted in the foreground always. He kissed the bride; he kissed your dead and wept like you. But it is the last time. Oh, ye memories!—the secrets of the heart which this man knows; the tale of penitence told at midnight; the rescue from temptation; the cloak of charity, with the whispered words of hope and call to new resolves; the family shame, the family honor, and all the long list of brotherly, not priestly, confidences, given because he was worthy and had earned them, not by authority.

It is a thread woven into the very texture of the village life. The thread has been like a heart-string, quivering with his own vital force; it has wasted him and made him old before his time. But it is over now; it is the last time.

The tearing of such a thread out from a thousand lives sorely hurts us, angel, in a parting. You see, parts of the thread can never be picked out; it is impossible to disentangle all its delicate coils; one does not realize how it is knotted and clasped in about his very heart till a rude hand pulls at it. Doubtless we shall snap and snip the most of it away; but some poor fragments will throb and pain for years.

He leads them forth like a shepherd, from pew to porch, from porch to grassy lawns that undulate to the dusty highway, young and old still clinging; and lingering now about his dwelling. A day to break one's heart!

But the next day is harder. The sun is shining just the same as on any Monday of a ten years gone, the mills are humming, and the sexton peaks the stained glass windows to let out the dust, for he is sweeping. Poor sexton, what else shall do?—for he must earn his bread.

XVI.

BURIED IN A GREAT CITY.

“BURIED in a great city!” exclaimed Bella Havens, as she alighted from the cars in the Boston and Lowell depot.

“Lost in a crowd!” echoed her father, as he leaned hard on the arms of his two daughters, the mother following.

“How many, many bright fellows have I known,” the clergyman continued, meditatively bending forward on his cane in the cheap hack for which they had at length bargained, “who at last came here, and to other great cities, to be buried, as Bella has well put it,” and he gnawed the head of his staff.

“That is, when worn out, you mean,” said Bella, who was quite down.

“Yes, living with some hard-worked son or daughter’s husband.” he added, rubbing the mist from the window with his glove. “Hundreds on hundreds of all professions, no doubt, but especially of my profession. The world’s ear was aching with their fame yesterday, when, snap!

the nerve broke. Then plunged into just such silence and obscurity as these same mean rents," pointing out, for they had now begun to jolt over the miserable pavements of the outskirts of the city.

"But, papa," Mrs. Havens remarked sweetly, laying her hand on his arm, "you do not regret? Our reward is not here?"

The rising inflection told this story, very old in the parsonage, that a minister must ever be preaching, stout-hearted, to the inmates of his own home. This one was ready to re-assert his faith at once. As calm a smile as hers greeted her, as he replied, "No regrets, Julia. It is all well. I have peace like a river! There is not a richer man in this opulent city than I, if the conscious possession of all I need constitutes riches."

"Yet, in fact, dear papa," put in Nora, who had hitherto kept her silence as she held the slip of paper on which Paul had written the street and number of the tenement which he had hired for them, "in fact, we are, indeed, very rich in such a stout friend as our glorious Paul."

"And more glorious Stephen," added Bella, with the slightest possible acid of misery and

envy; envy, not of Steve and Africa,—oh, no, very evidently not that; but envy of her sister's happiness in a satisfying love. Indeed the high-spirited girl had not been especially fitted for her lot in life by college. She had simply been educated out of "her station"; no doubt of it. But that is common enough to need no comment. As for her religion, what she had of it, it simply brought her to her knees, night and morning, but otherwise tortured her. It was of the head, not of the heart. Were it not for her religious scruples, she would go upon the stage to-morrow! She would furnish her life as richly as any of that bevy of actresses, members of a traveling company, whom she saw alighting from the Pullman car just behind their own. An actress,—and lift this dear family; as, if the daily journals only could be believed, such and such an actress has been able to do.

"Perhaps I may yet, if I do not get a school, now that I am here in the city." Bella had allowed the little flash of mental excitement to command her tongue.

"May what, sister?" asked Nora, quickly, for the sisters were confidantes. Many and many a night had the gentle Nora lain, wakeful for argument and dissuasion, under the gabled chamber

ceiling, and Bella postured in the center of the room, high-wrought and magnificent, answering by superb renderings of Shakespeare.

“May get a good school, of course, you happy heart,” laughed Bella, yet she gave her sister’s hand a reproving squeeze under the lap-robe. It said, “Do n’t add my wicked secret to their burden of mind!”—for secret it was to the clergyman and his wife.

It came suddenly back, and to stay, however,—this secret thought of many days. Bella Havens found herself climbing out of this living social grave, into which the family were swiftly descending with every roll of the lumbering carriage-wheels,—climbing up again into the soft sunlight of ease, comforts, and wealth, on the visionary ladder of histrionic fame.

They say it is not strange that a minister’s son is a born public speaker. Why should not the law of heredity assert itself in the daughters? But of course they may not preach.

“What a magnificent creature she is growing to be!” thought Nora, as she sat, also silent. “She has just the commanding personal presence, the superb health and physical courage, the constantly-increasing beauty of features, strangely increasing, too, of late, and like what our mother

once was, no doubt. She has voice, grace, genius, and high intelligence; and she could endure, as an actress must, I am sure, such a slavery to toil! Oh, God! why was not my sister called of heaven to go to distant lands for thee? To go where she could live, and where I shall die?"

"Here we touch bottom, papa, dear!" cried Bella, as the vehicle halted. She descended first to the walk. She put her two strong arms so stoutly about the trembling man. She could not resist the opportunity, as he bent forward, to draw his dear white head close to her breast and kiss him in a very rapture of compassion, love, and secret hope. Her caressing tenderness and her strangely cheerful tones took away the sting of the complaint in her words. "All the rest of the journey is upward, papa," she added, as he got his feet to the earth also.

It is a low one story and a half cottage house, of wood, decent and small, among scattered scores of small, unpretentious dwellings, such as fringe the outskirts of all great cities. Mechanics of uncertain wages and certain large families of children, manual laborers, the employes of the adjacent horse-car stables, are their neighbors. It is better, far, than the six-story tenement house in the city's heart. They will

find these neighbors orderly people, after their own notion of order. In the morning the head hostler at the stables, a respectable colored man, will come from the door opposite. From the next door will issue a bank president of ten years ago, who has incipient softening of the brain, which brought on a hardening of his lot. He can shop for poor groceries, however, while his daughter runs the sewing machine and the family. The physician of the neighborhood came out here from Beacon Street. Rum did it. Even now Beacon Street can not quite surrender him; hence his is the best house here. His drug store is profitable because of the swamps, which the tide uncovers all about here twice each day. Friendly swamps, that defend the colony from real estate speculators—and open the door of home to the weary. Home? Not of earth, but beyond. Scribblers, widows, an army of people whose weapon is the needle, other broken-down clergymen, and widows of missionaries; a philanthropist on yonder corner, to hear whom, defending “Liberty without color,” distant Music Hall once on a time stifled itself, all packed with silk and satin, and wept through its little lace handkerchiefs, listening to the foolish man, till it wished it had been more sensible

and brought real handkerchiefs that could save gloves from spotting. A most interesting colony, if one could only come to know his neighbor, but very reticent people; names, several of them, in the newspapers, large type, twenty years ago.

Very reticent, very secret, shy people, as Nora meets them at the corner grocery, where she buys kindling wood at so much a pound, a few minutes later. "By the pound? Chips?"

"Yes, you coundry gal. Chips is chips mit cidy peobles!"

Very select people, finely chiseled faces, fringed with white whiskers, with airs of refinement, yet so broken-spirited and shy, as Bella meets them at the meat market on the other corner, hesitating over the cut-out of the bone.

"More bone; cut it off! Don't make me pay for so much bone!"

But Bella is in haste. There must be a prompt supper; it is time. And, besides, there is a great hope hastening her steps. It is not intended to come many times to this shop. Ah, thank God for the hope of youth!

"She's a daisy!"

"Good evening, my loss."

Not so shy and reticent people, after all, on the street beyond the light of the market gas-

jets, when one has not yet come to the next rare street-light, Miss Bella! The young girl turns herself with a rural cringing, felt in every fiber of her frame, and a rural blush mantling to the tips of the insulted ears. She turns to look back of the two lounging vagabonds, and send her voice where her eyes have failed, crying,—

“Nora! Nora!”

From the other side of the street her sister answers, however; and quickly joining forces, as it were, the two girls fly along the mired sidewalk with their bundles.

“We do well to learn quickly,” gasped out Nora, “that these are not the village paths.”

“And yet,” exclaims Bella, motioning her sister in at the gate before her, and turning like a lioness, “I imagine that we have to learn to defend ourselves upon the street. The vulgar, drunken creatures!” There was, no doubt, in that splendid form a vigor of defense, thanks to the ozone of the hills, that would have availed against the sodden muscles of the bar-room-fed creatures, whom she had and will have often to meet. Then, too, after a time the lady-like attire of neatness may change to resemble the cheap garb of servant girls; who by the way, reader, may come and go with impunity,

through midnight city-streets on their "Thursdays out."

"I think none but a clergyman's family could set up housekeeping as quickly as this," said Nora, as she excavated a few cooking utensils and plates from the one trunk that had accompanied them.

"A coal fire, papa. Have you, indeed, managed to kindle one?" laughed Bella.

"Yes. It reminds me of college days," replied he cheerily, poking at the stove. He half sat on the edge of one chair, which some former tenant had left standing in the center of the bare floor. "We always burned coal at New Haven, as long ago as when I was there."

Mrs. Havens, who had sat almost motionless with fatigue in the other chair, since the family moved in an hour ago, could not quite keep back the tears.

"Dear mamma!" cried Bella, catching sight of the very first tear, for which she had been watching. With arms about the fond neck, she said, "We ought to have gone to a hotel at first! I'm sure one of Paul's letters was lost. This certainly is no 'furnished house.' But, mamma, dear, do please smile. Within an hour the other trunks must be here surely. Then to-

morrow our own goods will arrive. Oh, we'll change all this!"

The gleam in her fine eyes as she straightened to her feet before her mother, with fingers interlaced and arms stretched down, with face turned towards the staring, uncurtained windows, out into the night! It took a moment or two for recovery, and recall from her desperate high hopes back to the household duties. But she went about the duties with the others helping, very slowly.

Yet, two hours later, on the improvised bed at her sleeping sister's side, and far into the night, this girl was climbing out of the grave.

On the weary and sore morning, as the household goods were being marshaled into place, she was still climbing her ladder. The cheerfulness which father and mother misinterpreted her sister did not mistake, but wept over, in secret little retreats to pray. Days of sultry June, so terrible to these caged country birds, yet days on days of exalted hope to Bella Havens at least.

Nor was her resolution taken unintelligently, so far as either conscience or work was concerned. Is it right? She thought she settled by one constant gaze into the miserable home which

sheltered her parents. Is it possible? She decided by such patient study of histrionic biography as the great libraries afforded a resolute woman who could read five or six languages as readily as her native English; and by the most discriminating scrutiny of herself. This narrative is not pronouncing a judgment in casuistry: it is simply recording facts concerning a country clergyman's daughter, facts of which the author has full possession.

Bella Havens was absent most of the daylight hours, down in the city. No doubt she was looking for work. That she was in the libraries was not known at home; why should it be? Why should they question one who had poured in the school-mistress' earnings to the general treasury, uncounted all?

The family mind, moreover, was about as near full these days, by three thoughts, as as it well could be. Thought first:—Our lonely, new life, which may God make us able to endure thankfully. Thought second:—The twenty-fifth day of July, on which Nora is to marry Steve Crane and take ship for Cape Town with the evening tide. Thought third:—Paul will return, will graduate, will begin his work with us. When? There was little room for another thought,—

what will Bella do? Especially, as the shrewd girl did her best to keep it out of every body's mind, and sought no sympathy.

One day as she was descending the steps of the Public Library, Bella saw a lady stepping down from her carriage at the block.

"Why, Bella Havens!"

"Good evening, Miss Norcross."

"Please say Puss," kissing her.

"You are certainly very kind." And, indeed, she felt it, nor was there really any reason why she should decline this wealthy lady's overtures. She was conscious of purer blood in her blooming cheeks—Puss looked white and winter-killed; conscious of as fine a stature, rounded in symmetry—Puss' arms were very thin, that early summer's day; conscious of power, and conscious of attainments. We mention these things because, being painfully conscious of a marked difference in attire—Puss was graceful and airy as a summer cloud, in her afternoon dress, just stepping from the home library to the public one by the carriage, for a newly noticed book—that poor Bella had to number over these considerations, in her own mind, to prop her halting pride.

"We have absolutely lost sight of you all,"

Puss went on, still clinging to Bella's hand. "I have so many, many questions to ask. Are you here in town?"

"Yes."

"Your family? It is so—pardon me. I have written to Cousin Clara asking whither you had removed, but she, poor child, did not know."

"We are all here, except my brother." But Bella concluded not to admit an intimacy of commiseration; she would not say where nor how the family were buried; and she gave the books a fresh lodge up her hip as she stepped one side.

"Please share my carriage!" exclaimed Puss, turning promptly about. "I came out more for the going somewhere than for books. I will take you home. You know—I greatly esteem your brother, who was once our guest; and papa is the servant of all clergymen."

It was so genuinely kind. And the girl wore such an unhappy face; though she got a little color over the mention of Paul.

"I will ride with you, Miss Norcross, as far as your door. I go up Commonwealth Avenue."

Puss was a lady, reader; no, a good, true woman, is the better word. She saw it all at a glance. She was not to run down this beau-

tiful hare to find out its den. She gave the order, and slowly, up the proud, deserted thoroughfare, the horses ambled.

The two women chatted freely, but of commonplace things, for the most part. There were no confidences, this time. Bella was more at ease of the two, but perhaps that was merely a matter of health. As they passed a certain eligible corner, which we have seen before, Bella called attention to the workmen and the fine site; and as Puss, in the kindness of her heart, evidently evaded the hint that her questioner had let drop, Paul's sister jumped to a secret conclusion, "That is the spot. I had already picked it out, as I have been walking past it these weeks. That might have been the boy's home. So it seems Clara is going on with her building. I wonder who will share it with her?"

"Papa tells me of your sister's approaching marriage with his favorite young missionary, Mr. Crane."

"Yes?"

"And we are all to go on to see him graduate. Papa has something to do with the college."

"It is next week. I suppose none of us will

go." Then determining to be kind she paid for her ride on the spot by adding, "We expect my brother, every day, now. He has not been very well. Florida is terrible at this time of year. Yet he is a very strong man, you know."

How the gray eyes beamed! But it was a very natural reply. "How much you grow to resemble him! Why, it seems almost possible to remark it since last spring. It is as close a counterfeit as a woman could ever be of a man!" The gray eyes seemed to delight themselves in looking on this female Paul Havens.

To turn away the eager glances, if for no other reason, the other responded. "Do the—that is, I mean Clara. Is she to meet you at Amherst?"

"I really do not know about coz. I did not accompany them to Washington. They are quite gay, considering the season, I believe. Uncle Lem is—what do the gentlemen call it?—lobbying? Aunt and Clara have entertained considerably, I believe, to help him. They have Senator Takeit's house, the senator's wife being an invalid and removed to the quiet of the Arlington. We are to be together at Saratoga, in August, I think. I'm expecting a letter from the poor little heart every day. Here we are at

our door. Now, do please come in. Ah, Andrew?"

The young man was just driving to the curb in his single buggy, in from a spin on the Mill Dam. Throwing the lines to his groom, he came forward to answer his sister's call, when suddenly he caught sight of a face at her side. Honest, dull, money-worshiper as he was, and with the fear of his uncle constantly before his eyes, yet the young man was human enough. That face, which had once moved him even to the point of ignoring the penniless condition of its owner—considering that her brother was "booked for partnership"—that face, sublimely beautiful and glowing with high resolves, changed from comely to something mastering! His hat was off in an instant to this princess in country cottons. His whip got under his foot, and he sprawled a trifle, though he kicked the whip into the gutter and came up all right.

"Allow me," and he helped the two ladies to the block and the walk. "I—I was sure I saw you on the avenue, a week ago, Miss Havens."

"Indeed?" The eyebrows arched at him. She kept her mastery of the situation, however, though she gave him her hand again for the

slightest courtesy's sake, and then turned to give it into a longer grasp of Miss Norcross' as she said, —

“No, pray excuse me. I can not come in. I must get home before dark.” Then the books on the hip and arm about them. She was on the point of pursuing her walk.

“But really, Miss Havens,” Andrew began blunderingly, for he at least was painfully conscious of his abrupt departure, weeks ago, from the distant parsonage-home and Crosston, “you will allow us to — to call. Where —— ”

“My dear girl,” Puss cut him off with, in her delicate kindness, “we will not press you to-night; but another day, we shall not take no for an answer. Please, now, you will comply another day? Good-night.”

There was something in Puss' deep gaze that said, “I will not probe your secret; it is something daring. You are trying to do some great thing; you will need a friend; you will let me be your friend.”

At any rate that is what Bella Havens thought she read in those eyes, and she will think so for many a day, till sometime she ventures to prove if she read aright. It is not best to strike down a hand outstretched in kindness. No one

is brave enough to live quite alone. Hence she answers sincerely, —

“Thank you, indeed; I certainly would like to know you better. Good night. Good night, Mr. Norcross.”

As she moves off up the avenue, she soon forgets to wish that she had eyes in her back, for she is absorbed with her day's reading about her art. But he wishes that he had had eyes in his face weeks ago, to see her as she is. He does the next best thing, follows his sister indoors, of course, but, thereafter, promptly across the hall to the library window, which commanded the broad thoroughfare southward for a long distance.

“You are too late, my dear boy, as usual,” said Puss, observing him with that sisterly amiability which is often singularly sinister.

“Thank you, Puss.” He slowly fingered his mustache as he gazed. “Would n't she be something magnificent, if dressed!” Why should he not dress her? Was he not rich enough? Certainly; that's not the point. To the dogs with Uncle Lem and his piques!

“I tell you, you are too dull and too late, brother of mine,” fanning tantalizingly.

“How so, sis? What is she doing here?”

“How should I know?”

“You do know, now; come?”

“I certainly wish I did, bub, but I don't. Is she out of sight yet?”

After looking long through the soft, falling twilight of June, that enfolded and blended the evening promenaders, he added,—

“Out of sight; buried.”

The brother smoked; the sister fanned.

XVII.

LONG BRANCH.

WHAT? Congress has adjourned, before we reach the capitol? Here, you may read for yourself in the morning papers! If we had only been less absorbed in those Boston people, for the last few days, we should have doubtless seen premonitions of the flight of the eagles and sparrows, doves and vultures. The weather has been growing insufferably hot, did we but know it. Now seaside and mountains, springs and prairies, for the noble statesman of Washington.

Nevertheless, this history was perfectly sincere in its promise to take you on to the pure and holy capitol of this land of equality. Since we can not do that and keep track of the individuals, a slice of whose earthly life we are trying to cut off for your amusement and possible instruction,—no story is more than a slice off the loaf of a few lives,—we must try to find them where they are to be found. At Long Branch, it happens, for Coney Island is not yet.

On the veranda of the Hon. Magnus Nevada's cottage sits he, with his guests, namely: the Hon. S. L. Y. Takeit, senator, and plain Lemuel Norcross, whom we know. It is the calm of Sabbath afternoon. The morning was spent in church, in a most Christian manner. It is a pretty little church, a sort of republican court affair, which has this pleasant feature: it is so small that the reporters for the great New York journals have no difficulty in seeing all the pious senators and devout contractors who, with very many other excellent people, bow their heads there. Furthermore, the music is fine, and is liable to be finer — if the court does not fly to some other resort — for, no doubt, a regimental band will ere long be placed at the disposal of the congregation; or, failing that, the orchestral performers from the hotels, if the hops do not detain them too late on Saturday nights. There is, as yet, no dream of Coney Island, with its brilliant and spiritual Sabbath worship, so very convenient, in the vast hotels.

At the farther end of the veranda sit a company of ladies and younger gentlemen. These are wives, daughters and sons of the three gentlemen whom we pointed out just above. These are the Scatterers. The three are the Gatherers. Does

it take so many ladies and young men to scatter all that the three can gather? Indeed, yes, for the Gatherers have combed up millions. Notice Mrs. Norcross, Mrs. Nevada, Mrs. Takeit, and the young misses and sirs of these names, with a neighbor or two, not quite too numerous, but not worth our while to mention. Note Clara Norcross and Mr. Nevada, Jr., who are interesting to us, as, on casual observation, you might judge they were to each other.

Now, then, at the other end of the veranda. It being after dinner, and one cigar being his physician's allowance of late, the Hon. S. L. Y. Takeit has dropped off, as his cigar ashes scattered on his broad-cloth testify, into soothing forgetfulness of all earthly cares. That fact leaves the other two Gatherers free to lay their heads together and mingle fresh smoke. For that matter, it would hardly have seemed offensive had it been openly suggested to Takeit that "he might go to sleep if he wished, as they wished to talk," and he would have trustfully done so, with his fat, soft palm fallen significantly open in his lap, after the Takeit fashion for generations, the great and good man!

"Well, Norcross, you ought to be happy with the way we've fixed the tariff for you." This Nevada.

“Yes, it tides me over this time. But that domestic affair now recurs to distress me. The dear girl’s heart is set, old friend. And you, a Yankee born yourself, and Yank yet, though you are a western silver king now, you know how a Yankee girl hangs on to a love, as any other idea she strikes!” Norcross brushes ashes off his business-garb; he never changes to Sunday clothes.

“Then you despair of my young man’s suit?” replied Nevada, with a hard little laugh, meant both to hide his own pique and to apologize for indulging in the love intrigues of young people,—this man of vast affairs. And yet there was a side to the question, not even beneath his dignity. “It would bunch up a splendid fortune for the young simpletons,—yours joined to mine.”

“Mine!” with an unwordable inflection of doubt and irony. “S’pose they lift the tariff next year?”

“Why, Lem, what ails you? Ain’t my loan big ’nuf?” The huge fellow “never went back on a friend.” “Confound ’em, takin’ off the tariff! I’d like to see ’em try it where a friend o’ mine’s concerned!” Here he excitedly threw away the cigar and filled up with a tre-

mendous quid of fine-cut. You might have noticed how near a ton the box must have weighed, solid silver, with a diamond in its center "to light it up," as they had suggested at Tiffany's; his wife agreed that it needed "lighting up," and so ordered a "few diamonds sprinkled on."

"That's all right. I shall swing it somehow," compressing those iron lips. "As the minister said to-day, all things work together for good——"

"Now, old friend,—" and Nevada's smile was full of pity as he put his hand on Norcross' knee. "That's the only streak in you that gives me uneasiness. I tell ye, ye can't do it. *Be* a man and done with it, or *be* a pious canter like your brother Bill and done with it. This feller, Havens, why, get him a chance on some foreign squadron for a three years' cruise. I can fix that with the President. The boy 'll see lots o' pretty faces in that time. And 't would be doin' him a good turn."

"But he is only in the service temporarily. He's going to be a minister."

With a droll surprise, Nevada turned square round. "A clergyman,—eh?" And then taking some time to digest it," "She's that sort of a young lady,—eh?" which was evidently the most serious aspect of the case.

“Why, no,” Mr. Norcross hastened to put in. “You can’t tell much ’bout a young girl’s real bent of character by that.”

“No, I s’pose not,” resumed Mr. Nevada, after pondering some time in silence. “I confess, to you, Lem, that girls and clergymen ain’t very plain to me. But,” suddenly lighting up with resolution, “though I’m no churchman, yet, in politics, now, there’s influence. S’pose you give a thousand dollars or two to some church debt, or to endow some school. Would n’t that give you influence to prevent the boy’s bein’ settled hereabouts?” He dropped his chair to all fours, and grasped Norcross’ knee. In a moment more, “Why, see here, old feller! We want ministers out’n the mines. I’ll—I’ll build him a church out there, and settle him on the frontier. Capital! Why, man, influence will do any thing,—hey?” And he shook the Norcross knee, as he shook his sides laughing.

“Oh, of course, I understand all that. I’ve fixed him now, already, so far as our state is concerned. But my daughter herself, now?”

“Yes,—the princess herself,” echoed Nevada, less confidently, and tipping back his chair again. “Well, I do n’t know ’bout women. But you’re sure you yourself fancy my Joe?”

“He’s all business, and suits to a dot!” was the quick reply.

“Yes,” resumed the proud father, now with free tongue again. “Likes money just as well as if he had n’t a cent. Never drinks; college educated; traveled in Europe, where he was all business, even on a pleasure trip; fine lookin’. There ain’t many boys like my Joe, old friend! if I do say it. Joseph’s one ambition in life is to make lots of money. Whew! What a pile he’ll have, with what I leave him, if he keeps on! Any girl might be well proud of catchin’ Joe Nevada!” With that he was so heavenly minded, that taking aim by a diamond on his little finger, which he first raised and sighted over in the flashing, summer sun he fired, I do believe, at the whole Atlantic, sleeping yonder, though he hit a bridal rose on the lawn and discolored it. Then he added, “The only p’int with Joe is, he dislikes the West. Want’s to figger in an Eastern city. That’s the blamed r’sult of his Harvard. Likes Boston. So I’m helpin’ him on, Lem. You are my old friend, and ——”

“Oh, I understand. We must put it through somehow; that’s all. Only, I’ve always indulged Clara so much, till lately, and she is so mighty lovely and sweet when I attempt to put

on the screws, that it comes tremendous hard for me."

"I s'pose," was Nevada's final remark to close the subject. "But leave 'em together, man, leave 'em together." Then suddenly looking across the lawns, "Ah!" His broad face lighted up with a glow. "There comes the President,—told me he'd be over for a walk. Wake up, Takeit, and let's go down on the beach." He arose, yawning and stretching, thrusting out his fists from the shoulders. Few cares could sit long on his broad breast.

Takeit was roused and accompanied them. The President seemed so happy, and felt so secure as they shortly walked four abreast. The President was in good hands. Great and good men were supporting him; one with Western millions, one with Eastern millions,—as it was supposed,—and one to whom the location of the millions was of no account, so long as there were millions. Happy President of a great Christian country, whose "bone and sinew," the millions of the common people, commit him to God's care, night and morn, in the same prayer that asks a blessing on their babes.

Joe Nevada, half sitting at perfect ease upon the veranda railing, confronting Clara Norcross,

who, if you observed, never looked sweeter than this moment, all in white and airy elegance. Joe is tall, is of splendid physique, is perfectly dressed, and not aware of it; is dark-eyed, clean-shaved, strong-featured, and altogether the calm, self-possessed man of the world.

“He is as fine-looking as Paul Havens,” thought Clara. “He is as intelligent, as gentlemanly. The features are not unlike,—a striking resemblance which grows upon me,—only this is Paul Havens with a different soul. To be sure, his face brightens to me, because, no doubt, he thinks he has an interest in me. But when I see him turning away, as this moment, to watch his shrewd father, arm in arm with the President of the country for instance, how cold and business-like is his face!”

Fanning, gazing past him over the southward-stretching ocean, following dreamily the ribbon of smoke that lay against the sky above some passing steamer northward bound, and wondering who might be walking the deck,—for it is nearly Commencement Day,—planning how she might beguile her father to hasten on to Boston, the old, hopeless problem of many days now; but Boston is not Amherst, and “to-morrow,” so Puss’ letter said, “we go up there.” Ah, Puss,

what a sorrow you are laying up for yourself! Or, perhaps, you are too able a woman for poor me to cope with.

Thinking on these themes, you may judge how slow the conversation was. Joe Nevada was forced to help it along almost violently over many a pause. Pitying him suddenly, she stopped fanning, and said, —

“I fear from your last remark, Mr. Nevada, that you do not esteem artists as very useful members of society.”

“On the contrary, Miss Norcross, I gave Doré an order for a single design that cost us — father and me — a thousand dollars. He was very grateful at once, and most deferential.”

“Wonderful Doré! Do you know,” she continued, with a little flash of genuine interest, “I could never yet bring myself to even look through his Dante?”

“It is indeed sublimely terrible. Yet, I must confess to greatly enjoying it. I saw his original sketches.”

“How could a man,” with a woman’s emphasis on the could, “ever bring himself to sweet sleep after entertaining such pictures in his creative dreams?”

He laughed coldly, and responded, “Ah, poor

Doré, killing himself! But he makes money; for money, you know, a man can endure almost—well, that INFERNO now; I suppose he received for that——”

“Pray don't tell me!” exclaimed Clara; “for if I knew, it might make the study of the volume possible for me. You know you could manage to keep thinking about the vulgar wages, and so be betrayed into getting the pictures into your mind, to haunt your dreams.”

Joe Nevada's frank features made no disguise possible, and he cared for none. There was something almost engaging in the way he confessed part of his thought.

“Vulgar wages, you child of luxury! But then, we men expect that of women. Indeed, it's pretty. By the way, you are about building a town residence of some magnificence, we all hear; please do tell me about it.”

“Yes; but tell me: You had fine introductions abroad.” She was determined not to have any confidences.

“I did; the very best,” he answered, yielding good-naturedly; “commissions. No letters are to be compared with orders for work, you know.”

“I don't like to think of these famous people in that light,” almost pouting. “Think of our

own Powers, Bonheur, and—" She was going on to mention many names famous in art and song, thinking he might really interest her; but the half-quizzing, half-pitying cast of his features made her indignant,—for the thousandth time, you may know, in the last month,—and her eyes left him, flashing once, and then bending dreamily on the sea.

"Pardon me, Miss Norcross," he made haste to say, getting off the railing and into line of her gaze, by sitting on the steps at her very feet; "but really, now, I appreciate all your enthusiasm. I, too, have built all the shrines that any school-boy ever did, and afterwards had devotion enough to go visit my shrines all over the world—except, of course, religious, holy places. I speak of no names, but I tell you the hard truth: I have yet to see the genius who didn't want a little silver! I have yet to see the great man who had nothing to sell. Provided he is gentlemanly in address, the rich man's card is always honored first in any ante-room of statesman, literateur, scientist, songstress, painter, sculptor, or philanthropist, of this funny world. Really, now, I know and am sorry, for your sake, if it pains you, that I know it. Now, do not look down so scornfully on poor,

unlucky me! It is these people themselves who are to blame for the—the mercenary manners which I'm not the first idol-worshiper to be disenchanted by, I'm sure. Why, who brought Jenny Lind to this country? A showman!"

"I'll never forgive you for that speech!" The tiny shoe patted the sounding piazza.

"Yes, you will," he replied quickly, and flushing a little. "It is an honest speech; at least, Miss Norcross, you respect frankness, now observe," and he spread out his fingers on one hand, while with the tip of his plain walking-stick he commercially counted off the reasons why she would pardon him. "Look at all the fellows that you can see this instant, over my shoulder, rolling by in drags and with tandems. I know these men about town, every one. There's Billy Kates, I presume, in sight: he tells me of his dogs. There's Sam Dowkie; he spends his money for horses and coaches. Perhaps you can see—but I'll not name the men who bet, who control clubs, who run cattle farms for thousands a year. Now, please do not forbid me to justify myself in your eyes. I really would like to use money quite differently; to patronize genius, for instance; to be able to almost command a great painter; to hold up the finger, and a fa-

mous writer would run to see what you wanted, or a college professor, or a senator, or a president, would respond, 'My patron, I love you!' Is n't that a refined ambition?" He pressed the cane hilt firmly against his clean lips, and gazed, straight as an arrow, up into her eyes. Never before had he spoken as much concerning himself, nor seemed in such earnest.

Clara could not disregard those serious eyes; no, though the flashing sea flashed brighter than it had all day, in the freshening breeze, and its whispers now were hoarser, telling wind-borne tales of the South. She said, with a little sigh, 'Yes. That's preferable to some ways of spending such vast revenues as yours.'

"You approve, then?" It came quick as lightning. He bent suddenly forward, laying his hand on the floor at her very feet.

"What, sir?" startled, and attempting to fan again.

"Miss Norcross — Clara, you can not need an explanation, after these weeks that we have passed in each other's society."

She was standing, instantly; her pretty face aglow, as she arched her neck to discover that they were alone; the rest of the party were just disappearing behind the ivy-fluted pillars at her back.

"We are quite by ourselves, most gracious

lady," he said. "Forgive me that I watched for my chance. And now?"

He attempted to seize her hand. But she employed one in brushing back the rich Grecian bands of her hair which the sea-winds troubled, and the other with her skirts, in that pluming-for-flight sort of movement. Her natural color was now paling and returning with incomparable beauty before his eyes. But her lips seemed to manage nothing. Not one of the conclusive little speeches that she had arranged and rearranged many times in preparation was available. Which was not strange, the innocent!

"I beg you not to go," he exclaimed, all fervor and fear, you would have said. "Though, should you be so cruel, I will stand out of the way of your flight," suiting the action to the word. "Yet, listen to the suit of one who has, at least, laid at your feet not only the fortunes of a gentleman—I trust I have shown myself such—but, I may add, the heart of an honest man. At least, an honest man, Miss Norcross; I disguise nothing; hear me. If I can not prattle of love like some simple swain, I can, at least, serve you as if you were a queen. I can make your home the most brilliant social center in all this republican land. You shall have your own

way, as no woman in America ever yet had. All the kindness that many men waste on their fellow-men—and small thanks for it!—I will reserve for you, and you alone. I will be selfish towards the whole world, that I may be unselfish towards you. I will carefully keep every gentle, loving impulse of my nature—and every man is born with some such store, I venture to hope—keep it with strict economy, from every living human being, that I may give all to you, my wife!”

All the woman in her came to the rescue and defense of this young girl now. Her second thought was not of flight; she knew how free she was; her second thought was of the real Paul Havens, of whom this was the counterfeit; the real Paul, who, for the love he bore all men, had seemed to put her aside.

And the woman in her chose even the memory of that unselfish love, as she once knew it and hoped it yet was, before this selfish one. Would you? She said,—

“Mr. Nevada, it may not be becoming in a young lady to stand in seeming consultation over such a theme—” Then she wondered at herself, that she had been able to command so dignified a sentence, and promptly dropped it, fairly exclaiming in maidenly fervor,—

“Do you dream, sir, that love can be stored up like—like honey?” A bee was buzzing at the ivy before her eyes and helped her.

“Why not? It is a world whose first law is economy. I’ll love and live only for you! Though I confess, you superb woman, that I never before felt how little that was to offer!”

The shadowy shape of Paul Havens was so clear, like a spectre, just at this man’s back, that she almost exclaimed his name. Her red lips parted; her eyes dilated; she was hardly responsible for what she said, as in reply she murmured, —

“And do you think that women—that I—care to be loved in that way?”

“Are there many women who are content to take a second place in any man’s heart, Miss Norcross?”

“No—not a second place, sir. That is—not second to any one human rival.” She stopped suddenly, however, for she felt unequal to the attempt of the pretty lecture that was in her mind. He seemed so strong for argument.

“You mean philanthropy,” he said, utterly disguising all cynicism, if indeed, he felt any in his present mood.

“Yes. One ought to love his fellow-man, Mr. Nevada.”

“My dear girl, you shall build a hospital! You shall have an asylum-day twice a week. Really, now, do not smile my serious intent away. You shall live to be the whole world’s good angel.”

“But you, sir?”

He sprung at the hope she had not intended to proffer. “I? Never mind about me. I’ll be the respectable and faithful Judas who carries the bag!” He would have broken into a hearty laugh, but that he was not yet sure of her.

No, indeed; not yet sure of her. She promptly recognized her blunder, and sobered him with, “Why, Mr. Nevada, you and I have scarce any thing in common with respect to that One whom Judas betrayed, and his religion!”

“Clara Norcross, I should always respect your religion — because it was yours!”

“Such devotion almost makes me shudder, sir!”

“I fail to see why, my good angel.”

“Because, Mr. Nevada. That is, does it cost you much to patronize what you hold in so light esteem, that you never think it worth your while to assail it?”

He was at a stand-still. Her penetration was more than he had given her credit for. Of course she was right. This brilliant man of the

world had never taken the trouble to argue the point, even, as to whether "these old myths and fables" were true or false. To patronize her faith, then, would seem to her like indulging a woman's fancy for diamonds and laces. But he was honest; he tapped the floor with his stick, and out with,—

"You are right, Miss Norcross. For better or worse, I've shown you my heart, and yet——"

"One can but respect your frankness, Mr. Nevada," she added, to encourage him to finish.

"Perhaps one whom I love might teach me," looking up brightly.

"I am glad you said that, sir. I shall always pray that you may find the truth. But, Mr. Nevada, marriage for convenience is bad enough. A marriage for conversion nearly always fails. Especially with you it would; so strong a nature, you, and I so weak!"

"You bright woman, you make me admire you all the more!"

"But it should be love between us, not admiration."

"Yes, believe me. Loved before all the world!"

"I—I must not stay to converse longer upon this subject, Mr. Nevada."

“No, certainly not, if you wish to go. But I have one more word to speak.” He now in turn hesitated, and glanced out towards the beach, where the four forms of the President and those good men, his supporters, could be dimly descried. Four forms of power; yet so small and fly-like that, if the sea would, the sea could have licked them up with one lap of its foam-flecked tongue, so it seemed, and the world would have gone on just the same,—though our story would have gone on differently from this point, had the sea so behaved to the land’s lords.

“I am waiting to hear what you have to say, Mr. Nevada,” said Clara, kindly enough. She made him think of an albatross, majestic, colorless now, with crest uplifted and white fluffy wing, like robes gathered for passage; and, as he had more than once caught her seaward glances, he supposed her purpose to be to claim the protection of her father’s society.

“It is this, Miss Norcross: when you meet your father and hear what he has to say, remember, on the honor of a gentleman, you may take it,—I disclaim all possible participation in any schemes of his which may compromise a lady’s liberty.”

The albatross had spread her wings.

As for Nevada, of course, he could not stand there, looking after her, with every body passing and wondering why mortal man should suffer such beauty to tiptoe its undefended way across the thronged drive. He entered the smoking-room, therefore, and studied her from behind the blinds. The identical act and simultaneous, if you please, as this historian has since taken pains to ascertain, that was employing Andrew Norcross, you may remember. Joe Nevada, lighting his cigar, said, "Poor Norcross! He must dig out of his troubles as best he can. I can't intrigue against that glorious girl's happiness. But I must never suffer myself to meet her again." And he sat down to study the Saturday evening's stock quotations with a view of business, his care-all, on the morrow.

Clara paused on the sands a rod or two from the group of great and good men, telegraphing by little urgent signs to her father.

Mr. Norcross excused himself, and advanced to meet her, and was uncertain of himself at once. She was so radiant, so white, so breathless, so child-like in her distress, and then, too, all alone!

"What is it, pet?"

"I want to go straight away from here at

once, papa!" Her cheeks were in one of their pearl-white moments.

"Well, well," and he forced a smile. "It is the Sabbath, and it is against your principles to travel on Sunday. What's up?"

She told him, all in two breaths.

But when she searched his face for signs of surprise, or kindling alliance with his spoiled child, she saw no such signs. With that she promptly read his secret. He knew all, then, and had planned all, just as his hot menace, uttered at Crosston, should have forewarned her.

It is not necessary to describe their attitude: they did not stir from their tracks in the sand. It was a grapple of desperation.

He said: "Clara, this displeases me, gravely."

She said: "Why, papa, am I not free to say at least what I will not do with myself?"

"No, child. You—I—we are bound hand and foot!"

"Is it financial needs of yours?"

"Yes."

"Then let us prepare, at once, to dig a living out of mother's little New Hampshire farm!—or beg, even. No, not beg. We could yet live, if you had lost all. You have indeed lost all, if you depend on the Nevadas, for this young gen-

tleman's last word to me must have meant that. He repudiates unmanly designs to enforce the alliance!"

"What!"

"Hush!" She cried out piteously. "Don't tell every body. Do you think people are watching us?" Then she repeated to the unhappy man Joe Nevada's parting words.

The iron color changed to sickly copper hues in Lemuel Norcross' face. The resolute, undaunted look, habitual, worn a life-time, melted like wax under sunbeams. He caught at the round shoulder of his daughter, and, supporting himself for a moment thus, left the marks of his desperate grief with tracery of lace on the ivory arm.

But the next moment came color enough. Scarlet, red, deeper red, purple! His countenance was alarming—such a surge of blood to the brain. Hoarsely he ground out the words at length:

"Girl! oh, my child! You spoiler of plans! Curses on the day we ever saw that minister's family in our village! Here! Read it for yourself." And he pulled a crumpled telegraph dispatch, with official mark upon it, from his pocket. "I had intended to let your mother give

you this and break the news in a pleasant, common-sense way. But take it!"

Clara held the dispatch in her hand, and, reading the superscription, declined to open it with, "This is addressed to the President. Why should I concern myself with it? Here," proffering it in return.

"Read it!" her father again commanded. "It is unsealed."

She has read it.

"God forgive me! I wish you had n't!" Poor Norcross.

But she has read it again. Again! She tears it in two, as her clenched hands are thrust down and her rigid features are turned staring towards the sea.

"Turn to me, child!"

But now in the sand where she has sunk down, and as her fingers strip the paper to tatters, she is saying, "Dead? Paul Havens dead? It can not be, and the sun so brightly shining! Oh, it was the hot sun, the fever, the everglades! Papa?" looking up all pleadingly now, with every spark of defiance quenched from the tender, wonderful eyes. "Papa?" looking up to break a man's heart, her fingers busy with their destruction. "Papa, you do not believe it, do

you?" And as the man threw himself kneeling at her side and drew her head to his bosom in an alarm of dismay and repentance, she went on: "What did it say, papa? The expedition all down with the fever, and Lieutenant Havens dead? Paul is not a lieutenant, papa!" She caught at that, and a flash of hope illumined the pitiful face, a gleam more heart-breaking than the cloud that it displaced.

"They call him lieutenant, child, while in the service, you know." But then, the male blunderer, instantly he added, "It may all be a mistake." Kissing her, kissing her hands and her cheeks. "Try to forget it. Come. Let's go to mother. Yes, there must be some mistake. You see, the President didn't attach much importance to it——"

"But would he attach much importance to any thing, papa? Any thing so small as one little steamer full of human beings whom he never saw, I mean?" Thus she argued against her own hope, after the old and dreadful manner of all the heartbroken.

The President, sitting on the breezy bench, legs crossed, holding peripatetic court of great and good men, who stand around him puffing incense! The laughter that bursts out now and

then and is borne down to this agonized pair! The President's secretary, reading out various dispatches every now and then, as in duty bound, and then stuffing out his pockets with them! Poor President, he is human! He must have his Sabbath worship; he must have his smoking hour; he must be permitted to listen to the sea. What is one fine fellow, more or less,—generous heart, trained mind, drawing fine lines and angles that the President could no more draw than he could paint a Titian; doing work to be remembered when presidents are forgotten, in the long procession of them;—what is one young, eloquent spirit, more or less, martyr to the love of an old, worn-out minister, in his eyes? The girl sat with her stony, terrible gaze fixed on the distant group.

“Clara! Clara!” cried the wretched Norcross, “are you going mad? Heavens! What shall I do? Come, my child, use your will. Oh, I'll do any thing you say. I'll go have a relief expedition started from some southern port in an hour. I'll ——”

“Stop, papa!” Clara sprang to her feet as soon as her father, and caught him by the arm. “Never go near those men again!”

“What would you have me do?”

Look at her, every body,—this troubled beauty on the glistening sands there! Only you are too far off, every body,—on the drives, up the beach, behind the blinds of cottages, to plainly see, and you all wonder what it means. Color enough now, and courage, too, and faith—if only she had wisdom! Lemuel Norcross, for the moment, as submissive before her as her waiting maid! And I do n't wonder, fearing for her life under his careless—yes, only careless—blow.

“Now how good you are again, dear papa,” her white fingers a bracelet on his wrist.

“No; I am wrong, and you are in the right, therefore I obey you.”

“Dear papa,” kissing his hand, “it is written I should honor you.”

“And written that parents should not provoke their children to anger. I've read my Bible too much or too little, child. I have just enough religion to make me miserable, in a time of trouble—not enough to guide or comfort me! How I want to save your life and your reason! Tell me what will please you. It shall be done.”

Clara's answer was thrilling,—

“Papa, this news is a lie! I know it, know it, know it is! God is too good, that it should be true!”

“Well, well, now,” he replied, determined to encourage her till they could get away from this public place, though he knew how conclusive the dispatch was regarded by the officials yonder. “I would believe that—for a day or two at least. Then what?”

“Telegraph them at Amherst. They are all there!”

“Certainly. Why, the boy was due there to-day. And Andrew can go down on our tug to meet the Savannah steamer. She arrives on Thursdays.”

“You are so good, to help me plan it out.” More kisses: and, though no smiles, almost tears, which will help her just as much. “But Puss—”

“Exactly, Clara. She can do the kind thing by the young man’s——” He caught himself just in time to repress “remains.”

“Yes, she may greet him!” exclaimed Clara, not observing his almost blunder. “Puss may attend him and have him all to herself! God help me to say it! If she will only nurse him back to health again. At Uncle Will’s house! Telegraph Andrew, too, then, papa,” clapping hands excitedly.

“Gracious me!” he exclaimed, as an idea flashed upon him. “Gracious!” Though of late

years the recreant deacon could use stronger exclamations on occasions. "Are you both in love with the boy?"

"I'll walk straight back to the cottage, papa," resumed Clara, ignoring his question, "and be, oh, so calm and silent, if you'll begin now to go—hurry—up to the hotel and send the dispatches."

He turned and walked one way. She turned and walked the other. Had you seen either at a distance, as Joe Nevada did from the smoking-room, glancing up by chance, as the party of the great and good did, glancing down by intention, you might have supposed the lady's errand had been the request to order a carriage for a twilight drive.

"I'll find out the facts for her. That's what it amounts to. The idea that I should ever be going on such an errand. But, heavens! I thought the girl would go mad. What a face! Can it be that she was inspired, and the chap's alive? Why, if so, then let this shrewd Puss catch her mouse and help me out. That's excellent!"

XVIII.

DISAPPOINTED.

MR. ANDREW NORCROSS, coat off, cuffs just being taken off, this hot summer morning, in the private office of NORCROSS BROTHERS, — Street, Boston. Reads telegrams first. Reads several. Suddenly this one.

“Paul Havens dead or dying. , Without doubt, dead. Probably on Savannah Steamer. Do the polite thing all round. If in time, better go meet on our launch. Answer what find out to me. L. NORCROSS.”

“This is shocking! Wonder if Puss knows it. About kill her,—and the other pretty girl, too. Mighty nice fellow. Of course he’s dead. That’s the kind that die. What a horrid thing is Death!” Touching two bells. Then two messengers. “Tell my carriage to wait. Quick! And you, look up office of the Savannah Steamship Company.” Touching another bell. “Call the launch by telegraph. Tell Capt’n to come up to India Wharf at once. Confound it! Wish I knew day of those steamers.”

"It is to-day, sir," replied one of the young messengers. "My uncle is a——"

"Never mind about your uncle. Due to-day, —eh? What hour?" Andrew Norcross had got cuffs on again, and coat was going on.

"I can't tell, sir."

"No, of course not. Here. My hat. I shall be out perhaps all the morning. I say, Sam, I'd give you fifty dollars if you could surprise me with another piece of information as promptly. But of course you could n't. Mr. Wardell, attend to things."

"Please, sir, may I try for the fifty dollars?" asked the young employé, barely anticipating the slammed door.

"Yes!" Andrew looked back to reply. "Tell me where an old clergyman by the name of Havens, recently come from New Hampshire, lives!"

The boy laughed, chagrined, and turned away saying, "Give it up, sir." But fifty dollars was worth trying for still. At least, the information might be worth forty, or thirty, or ten, several days away.

Andrew had often thought of employing the means which were ready at hand enough, for such information. But he had felt that he had

no excuse for such detective work. Even now, it was the impulse of this shocking news that emboldened him. He regretted it, instantly; for, if he did not intercept young Havens alive and on the steamer, of course he would n't feel free to obtrude inquiry at his father's dwelling, so carefully concealed.

"I'm not flattered, Mr. Norcross," said the obsequious agent of the great Southern line, following him to the door, "that so great a house as yours keeps no better track of us. The *St. Johns* to-day, sir; landed all passengers an half hour ago. Yes, sir. Not many, you know, at this time of year. Expecting friends, Mr. Norcross?"

"Well, yes. That is, Lieutenant Havens, of the coast-survey ——"

"Exactly. Very low, if not dead. Indeed, very distressing case. People over from the navy-yard, two or three surgeons, and other blue-coats. Treated with great distinction, sir. But little he cares, poor fellow! A goner, sir, sure. I'm sorry to distress you, but I know that swamp-fever myself. A man's been on the line long's I have, knows them burning eyes."

"Good-day. What a fearful heat! Ah—by the way, were the sick man's family, any of them, here?"

The bowing agent thought so. Quite a family group. "But all gone over to the navy-yard hospital, sir."

Why, yes. Andrew should have thought of that. When it comes to a pinch, this government takes care of its own. It would be quite proper to drive over and make inquiry, certainly. Or, should one wait for the morning-papers? A naval-officer's fate will be in the great newspapers, without doubt, in the morning. Drive over? On the whole, yes.

"At all events, he's out of the reach of our patronage," said Andrew, aloud to himself, for he was alone in his carriage. "Tim, turn round. I'll go back to the store. What pride—the Havenses! Let 'em work it out, then," which sudden turn-about of sentiment was brought about by the sight of the flag proudly floating out on the sky above the navy-yard enclosure. The dear old flag seemed to wave such majestic welcome and care for its own,—red, white, and blue against the brazen heavens, beckoning and promising; it seemed to the conceited young Norcross as if it waved him quite out of the way, as utterly unnecessary, with his "doing the polite thing."

But by the time he had rumbled back to his

store, trying in vain to satisfactorily arrange his telegrams, one to his uncle and another to his father, the generous element in Andrew Norcross' impulsive nature got control again. "Confound the fellow, I like his honors! Hope to the fates he'll pull through. After all, a hospital's a hospital. If they had a decent home to take him to, no doubt they'd carried him off with 'em. I wish I had him with me."

The upshot of it was that Andrew Norcross telegraphed the meagre news that he had, and left the rest of the tale to be telegraphed by the news-gatherers of the press, which latter gentlemen got from the surgeon at the hospital the brief word, —

"No, not dead; but perhaps it were better if he were dead," with a significant tap of the forefinger on his own forehead.

They accordingly sent abroad the small item that the young man had died, in delirium, during the night.

.

AT AMHERST.

"As brave and true a heart as ever lived!" said the president of the college, and referring to Paul Havens.

It was necessary to make some sort of explanation to the chapel full of people, all in bright June attire, sitting expectant of the great Baccalaureate Sermon before the graduating class, and the second scholar on the list not with them.

The organ had ceased playing. The thunder-storm had not ceased. Was ever a commencement Sunday, or a graduation day, without its appropriate thunder-storm, breaking on the procession and scattering the dear girls and mammas, like a flock of doves, to the shelter of the chapel doors?

"The young gentleman who had been assigned the second honor in this class," the president had begun, "was excused that he might attempt a labor of love in a most honorable field."

The speaker yet stood, in his foolish, black-silk gown reaching down to his feet, which were peeping from the skirts thereof,—did ever feet look so large as a man's beneath a gown?—when the first Long Branch telegram reached William Norcross' hand. Mr. William Norcross, honored trustee, sat upon the stage. With a genuine shiver of distress the benevolent gentleman had instantly passed the dispatch to the President.

A telegram knows no proprieties, it can never

behave impatiently, for it is always master and lord. The preacher laid down the Bible, adjusted his glasses anew, read, spasmodically thrust it out at arm's length where he could read it without glasses,—as old people do, suspicious of spies when news is unwelcome,—and flushing red with sorrow, told the audience. “A painful rumor has reached the government, so telegraphs a friend, that the surveying party under Mr. Havens' command have all been prostrated with the fever. It is even feared that our noble young friend has already perished!”

Did you ever hear that majestic monster,—a vast audience, one composed of many,—utter a groan? You may hear it to best advantage in church, where awe and piety repress the demonstrations of a multitude. It is pitiful. It is one great sob, and then a silence as if the creature's heart had ceased to beat, waiting to hear more, not knowing what to do.

Happy is he, and kind too, who knows how, just then, to be the mouth-piece for this great creature, Audience. The benignant, the wise, the beloved father, as it were, of this community of scholars,—for such it is possible for an American college president to be, did you but know it, graduates of Oxford, Cambridge, and Heidelberg,—he knew what to say. And how tenderly he said it!

“As brave and true a heart as ever lived.”

Ah, ye listening undergraduates, hear that, do ye? He, the thundering Jupiter from Olympus, has just said that of one of you! And said it with broken utterance and tears, too! That one so humble as any of your number could have moved the heart of that great one; for the President is the greatest of great men to you.

Said that, did he? Yes, and more: in the presence of this noble company, he has gone on to portray qualities of soul, high and holy purposes in life, snatches of biography from personal acquaintance with this latest “St. Paul,” which meet and sway the audience with sorrow and emulation. He “sincerely trusts the information is incorrect [sensation], and every effort will be made at once to ascertain, by a warm friend of the young gentleman who is present; I need not mention his honored name, foremost in all good deeds.” Poor man, forgive him this almost unconscious flattery to the rich patron, for the rich patron deserved it for once; and when could a college president, creature of the rich patrons, ever let occasion pass and break the habit of a lifetime?

“Hurrah!”

“Hush! It is the New England Sabbath, boys.” You bring frowns to drive away good

Prex's tears. However, it was the most suppressed hurrah in the world, though freighted with such untold meaning.

"Paul Havens dead?"

"The best fellow in the old hive gone?"

"That giant broken and we frail fellows alive to turn pale over it?"

Let the organ throb under the fingers of a classmate, and let who can sing the hymn: these women and fathers, if they can. But that exclusive, that isolated world, the college world, is moved with a thousand indescribable emotions. Youthful sensibilities answer to the rude touch of "vanity of vanities, all is vanity!" Rivalries, fierce as fire, are quenched in tears. Next to the home-circle there is not a place on earth where death comes with such awful shock, such power to make men feel and think unutterably, as in the college world. A world of poets to be offended by this prose—Death. A world of beginners confronted by the old man's foe—the End. A world questioner, met by the historic answer,—Death. A world of mind suddenly hand-cuffed by a material chain,—Death. Draw in your kites of high ambition, boys. What's the use of the struggle? How he spurned poverty and lived above it! How he shouldered out

obstacles, and beat down a path for himself! Of what fine courage was he, the soul of chivalry! Yet, here it ends, all in a Florida swamp, on the very day of his honors. Will this service ever be done, that we can go to our rooms and talk about him over our books, and bemoan him, forgetting every fault he had, and arrange for a class-meeting to draw up resolutions? Poor Havens, old fellow, you had every man's heart. We are certain—now that you are dead, or dying—that you bid fair to prove, yes we'll agree to it now, the most remarkable young man ever educated within these walls. Everybody can say that now, for it sounds well, and is no matter; it enhances the sensation of the hour.

“Havens? I can see him yet!” says G, who came next to H, of course, in the alphabetical order of the class-room.

“See him yet?” Indeed we can. Who would have predicted it of **such a physique?*” ask all the other H's, whom he often had occasion to pony along in a kindly and neighborly way. See him yet? Every passageway, every flagged walk, every door of the rooms he occupied in the venerable dormitory, seem to reproduce him like so many mirrors. Who shall describe how his society-men “can see him yet” in his place of

laborious honors at the head of their council board? So profound is the sensation of death in college ranks, that one may suggest to the ambitious who graduate and have gone out into the world,—

“You have outlived your opportunity to leave a world desolate by your dying. You must be content now to be mourned by your heirs and a few neighbors; for in this outer world, different from the college world, your departure will leave only that sort of vacancy over which every body will forget to weep, for asking, ‘Who is to be promoted?’”

“A lady has fainted! No wonder. The chapel is a steaming oven, after that June shower.” It was a cautious remark by one of the professors, who promptly began to bustle about, since he was so far from the center of the chapel, where the commotion was transpiring, that there was no danger of his being called upon to be really useful.

“Why—why—it is my daughter!” exclaimed Mr. William Norcross.

Such was the fact. The high-spirited Puss! How chagrined will she feel, a few moments later on, when she has regained consciousness in the ante-room, whither they drag her. People who faint in public places must always expect to be dragged out as if they had suddenly developed a contagion.

“Papa, it is nothing. I—I have had a headache all the morning. It was—that—my fan, please,—that breakfast of fat meats at the abominable boarding place. Why—*will* people prefer such stuff for this hot weather?”

Mr. Norcross laughs now. “She’s all right, gentlemen.” It is mostly gentlemen who proffer their services when a lady faints in a church. “She is all right, you see by the twinkle of her old fun, and her caustic speech.” Then he rubs his chin and bends to whisper, “Better, now darling? Want to get home, do n’t you?”

“Yes, papa, home indeed. To Boston,” Then getting to her full height, this empress in flowing black grenadine with here and there a glow of cardinal, she cleared the room by her glances without having to ask as much. As soon as they were alone she reiterated her request to return to the city. It was, in fact, a determination. “You can stay, you know, papa. I will go down on the evening train.”

“But, Fidelia,”—this being a serious moment he fell back on that name,—“I thought you were very anxious to be here and see Mr. Crane graduate, and enjoy the exercises generally.”

“Papa, do n’t you see,” flirting up her sunshade with a resolute pop, “that I am not able to en-

dure this hot weather? One must walk everywhere in this village, if one wishes to go anywhere."

"To be sure. Let's not walk so fast." They were now down the steps towards the country highway. "To be sure. I see."

And yet he did not see. You need not lower your crest a bit, Miss Puss. No one sees! Why should they, you never having shown your heart at home? and as for these strangers, pouring forth and scattering for Sunday dinner, behind you, why, to them it was the most trivial incident in the world, a lady fainting from the heat. You are not unconscious of the true state of the case. If it were to see *him* here you would stay.

"By the way," rapping his cane suddenly on a stone, the sign to himself to halt. "Here's the telegraph office. I'll follow up that matter of poor Havens."

"Do, please!" She had done all she dared in leading him out of the way to confront the office. "Telegraph Andrew, too, papa. And I'll walk on to change to a traveling dress."

That is about all we have to say of Amherst. Farewell, old gables and towers, smiling above the umbrageous walks of the happiest and most restless of worlds. Goodby, with echo of evening song across the glebe. The train is moving.

Our people are moving out of thee, into a wider and a meaner world. Stephen Crane will return from Springfield, on Monday morning: he has been absent all this Sabbath supplying a pulpit there and earning his bread. He will hear this news of dear Paul, and not stay for the sheepskin, but hurry off on an errand of mercy, the beginning of a very long journey for mercy's own sake; God must know that about this Africa business, for there's no money in it.

Rolling wheels. Backward looks: not that Puss Norcross casts them for the gratification of her own sentiment, so much; but her thoughts are of another who once went out from here so bravely and never will return again. The sinking sun with scarlet shafts flung wide across the meadows, caught in many a cottage window, smartly blazing, and lingering warm upon the chapel tower above the green. She loses the buildings; she catches them again, for the winding stream turns its silver course about, compelling the train to obey. Did he look back, half fearing, half regretting, yet brushing tears away with manly resolution? Did he feel, for himself, as a bright and loving girl feels now for him, putting herself in his place? Perhaps young men are not as impressible and foolish as we girls.

Do n't believe it, sweet woman, at least not of that idealist, Paul Havens. Backward looks? To the noblest and truest men who leave these scenes, there come not in all after life deeper stirrings of the soul than those that are given by the last backward looks as the college fades away. And you, exquisite sympathizer, you are able to enter into Paul Havens very mood and dream. It would seem that your life is the complement of his life, in some sense belonging to it and necessary to its completion, so do your thoughts read his thoughts and his dreams become your dreams. How necessary you have been to him, setting him right in the critical moment, saving him—that is, if he had lived. Lived? He must live! Have you not been his good angel before? Shall it be denied you now? And what good has he done you; his very rescue having been your own rescue, for you have learned a new meaning to religion by your search for arguments.

They are lighting the candles in the car. The sultry night is fire-fly lighted all over the dark meadows. He must live! For whom? What will you say when his true heart steadily turns to the North Star? True: what will I say? But have I not seen it so turning all along? And do I not love him just the same? Has he ever,

by so much as the glint of one of those fire-fly wings, shown any thing more than friendship's affection for me? He is the very soul of honor. Yet I shall go right on loving him just the same. Can you help that, my heart? Just the same; just the same; just the same. The click of the car wheels sings it. I should die without it. I may die with it. I will try to help her, my cousin. I will bite my thin lips hard, and he may—may kiss her full red lips, all his own! I am equal to that. I can do any thing which it is my duty to do, God helping me. To see him a useful, happy man, doing great good to mankind, why I can clench my hands very close and hard and say any thing for that. I am older than he and so might die first and leave him toiling alone. She is younger. What matters it when I die, so I have done my work, and seen him full of fruits in his!

But such tension can not last without its rest. A woman's rest is tears. She clicks the lock of the compartment; and, burying her face in her hands, cries out terribly: "Oh, God! oh, God! Give me grace and strength! How hard it is to live and live rightly!" The door being locked, let us leave her to God and his angels, with her struggles.

XIX.

IN TROUBLE.

CLARA NORCROSS managed to follow up the panic of solicitude into which her distress had thrown her selfish father. Her anguish had been so real that, both from promptings of natural affection, as well as calculating motives, he yielded to her wish and suffered her, with her mother, to go on to Boston, towards the last of the following week.

He reasoned that "women were women, and sometimes the best way to manage 'em is to let 'em have their own way, by which means, in a revulsion of affection, they would return and insist on you having your way,—especially a dutiful daughter would."

Then, too, Joe Nevada was off; had taken himself off with very delicate consideration, it must be confessed. Moreover, his child's health was a vital matter, since she was all he had—and sometime he *must* have a son-in-law.

So the plan was that Clara and her mother were to go on for a short visit at William's,

when, the usual summer party being made up of Puss, her sister, and mother, they should run over to Europe for the summer, or to some country rustivating; anywhere but Crosston. "Probably Europe, for one of the partners must go over to France, now that, etc. etc." Mr. Lemuel had thus planned it, while, for himself, he "would plunge into the thicket of the commercial wilderness, as usual."

The Commonwealth Avenue house is open and full, therefore, as never before in July. Boxes and trunks, however, are now appearing, for two weeks of almost speechless waiting and watching on the part of these two young ladies has convinced them both that the search is best abandoned, as a matter of course. For how could two ladies pursue a gentleman who had chosen to cover his tracks, in a great city?

"We can not do any thing more, girls," said the two mothers—that is, Mrs. Lemuel spoke the words and Mrs. William nodded the head. "If the Haven people wish to decline our charity and pursue their privacy, why, we can't help it."

The two young women blushed and paled according to their several habits. They were mutually annoyed, both by this unsought family conference on such a subject, and by Andrew's

merciless and brotherly remark, as he entered the room with, —

“Oh, he’s here in town, and alive. I have reiterated it to you, that I barely missed him at the steamer. Professor ——, at Cambridge, who is high authority on coast-survey matters, and who regards young Havens with such esteem, he informed me the other night at the club, all about them. The professor visits them. I can tell you their street and number, if you want.”

“Who can be so rude as a privileged brother to his sister, and the other ladies of his home?” asked Mrs. William, severely.

“Ask him if he has seen the young actress ——”

“Minnie!” was the mother’s sharp rebuke to the younger daughter. “If there is not to be courtesy at home, where can you expect to find it? Now, children,” she went on, “I assume that we have all had only a Christian interest in the family of this afflicted clergyman.”

“And how finiky even the deserving poor sometimes are, Matilda!” Mrs. Lemuel thrust in.

“And,” the hostess went on, only regarding the remark by catching her breath, and clouding her benevolent face with a transient shade of pain and pity, “And now we can not serve them,

because they do not need our kind offices, let us say. I have explained the whole situation, their possible extreme want and illness, to our dear pastor, Mr. Crestlake——”

“The dear soul,” was Andrew’s sly comment on Crestlake, as he drew on his gloves by the door, for which he got such a glance from his mother.

“And he,” she continued, “always having money of mine, like a holy almoner——”

“Will know how to alleviate, in the most kid-gloved and munificent way, the woes of a brother clergyman, whose white hairs are sprinkled with ashes!” said Andrew, with borrowed gestures, and resonant tones not his own.

Even Minnie’s face turned against him, on this speech. Every other face having all along been against him, he promptly apologized, remarking smilingly,—

“Dear mamma, yours is the kindest heart in the world. Forgive me, all of you. Now, the upshot of the council is, that I shall telegraph to our New York agent this morning, to engage passage for all of you, with father, on the *Adriatic*, next week. Whew! But your indecision and delay will cost us a pile of money to get on that ship!”

Cost? How delightful it must be to live as oblivious of cost—cost in money, you know, for

there are other costs than money which none can escape—as these five ladies lived! And so the family conference broke up, without another word.

.

It is on the pier, reader. Not the White Star pier in New York, where the rough and the smooth of life meet for an hour; where the bawl of the draymen mingles with the silver farewells of gentle women; where the iron-bound hoofs of huge horses strike the same planks as the tiny slippers of fine ladies; where the stench of offal mingles with the fragrance of floral gifts. It is not the gang-plank of the popular steamer, over whose cleats Cræsus stubs his gouty toes, and disappears within the huge iron casket, to share the fortunes of the meanest sailor, if she sink or swim. That was the pier from whence the Norcross party left their country.

No. It is some weeks later, and on the Cunard wharf, in East Boston. These freighting steamers, as things were then, though bearing the proud Cunard name, will carry a missionary and his bride over the sea for a more economical fare. The sun of August burns its track along the copper-colored eastern sky. The almost deserted streets hide, here and there, a pedestrian in the narrow belt of blue, sickly shade they can

cast. Only the white slaves who must brave the torrid heat, and even they drive slowly, or crawl slowly. Every material thing that can crack, yawns and shrivels, like the wharf planking, in this morning glare. The stillness is like the Sabbath. The steamer has been given her cargo in the night, out of sheer mercy to stevedores, shipping-clerks, and horses.

A cheap hack creeps slowly and gratefully so far under a shed that the panting beasts are sheltered. Its door opens, after many a blow from within, and Paul Havens steps out, on the instant thrusting up his umbrella. It is the same commanding stature, the same broad, shapely shoulders, though the coat hangs somewhat loosely on them; the same bright eye, in the most manly countenance in the world, though marks of recent and departing suffering are chiseled there. There is the same rich, musical ring in the voice as he says, extending one arm,—

“I can support you, father. We can drive no nearer. Steve, you give mother your arm, and I will return for Nora.”

“Do you see any thing of Bella?” the aged invalid asks, as he descends.

“The horse-cars, which she took, run on the other side of this block, father. Ah, there she is!”

“Yes. Oh, such a scolding!” was Bella’s reply for herself. “Five of you, crowded into one poor hack, must have felt it. Never mind, sis,” taking Nora under her sunshade, “There’ll be more carriages in the family when you come—” but, after all, her heart was too full for banter. Yet, through the fast-falling tears, the marble pallor of the speaker gleams with a defiance of poverty, and a menace to their hard lot, quite discordant with the gentler mood of the others.

“I fear the midsummer heat will prevent a very large attendance of dear brethren and sisters from the city churches,” remarked fearless Stephen Crane.

Ah, how illustrious he appeared that day! His bloodless cheeks wore a defiance holier far than the high-spirited woman’s, which we have just noted. Defiance of lurking disease, of the rough old sea, which he dreaded like a child of three years, of the river, and swamp, and mountain, and wilderness, and the horrors of barbarism, and defiance, most of all, of this next terrific hour, when heart-strings should be pulled till they snapped. All this for the love of Christ which constrained him.

“We shall be alone, no doubt,” Paul answered.

“Probably!” said Bella. If it were but possi-

ble to transcribe all the sarcasm, the irony, the vengeance, and the ambition with which this cultured woman spoke that one word! And she never looked more transcendently beautiful than in saying it. What an agony rent this stately creature's soul! The utter misery of sisterly parting, a parting, perhaps, forever. The absolute contrast and comment of Nora's life-work beside her own proud ambitions and purposes. A missionary! An actress! Children of the same loins. Her torturous "contempt for the church which had so cast off and neglected her noble sire." Her resolute purpose to believe her sister was going upon a fool's errand. Yet, every now and then, a changeful mood, and a rising of a great tide of childhood beliefs, offering to her sweet truth and rest in the religion of her father, till she almost was upon the point of casting herself at Nora's feet, confessing. So had it been for these three awful days and nights, last past, since her sister's humble wedding. Pity her. Happier far is that soul which has never believed, than the soul which, once believing, afterwards seeks "liberty" in doubt.

"Bella! Bella!" It was all the chiding her father could trust himself to give with speech, but his fond blue eyes left off seeking a place

for his cane and feet, to fasten upon her face.

"I know it, I know it!" Bella burst out, meaning, probably, that she was all wrong. And she threw her arms passionately about her sister's neck, kissing her over and over again.

"You must, must bear up, dear," whispered Nora. "Every night, in the little, lonely room, remember." That is, remember the covenant that these two cradle-mates had made, that they would give the last waking thought to each other, and pray for each other's repose.

"Good sister," Paul remarked, "they who try to serve their fellows make up their minds before hand that it is the most thankless task. They hear Christ's words, 'ye have done it into me.' Be careful of this slippery deck, father; they are just now flushing it, not being accustomed to regard passenger's arrivals. What do we care whether any one is here to say these heroes goodby or not? We are sure God and angels are here!"

You would have pronounced the speaker a happy man. If there was a trace of iron in the resolute smile he wore; if his full eyes had, at first, cast an understanding glance on Bella speaking bitterly, as if he had once known all

about her bitterness in his own soul; you would yet have seen so calm and clear a radiance prevailing over these that you could not doubt his inward peace. Evidently this brother had won great authority, by his worth, for the fiery Bella did not resent his rebuke nor accuse him of preaching at her. No doubt he lived in this atmosphere of love and the authority of worth in the family.

“Here we are in the cabin, now,” Paul explained cheerfully. A few flowers are there before them, with cards of city clergymen attached, for which orders, with dates, had been telegraphed from Martha’s Vineyard, and various other clerical retreats. A sewing machine was there; a medicine chest was there; a tiny library was there; all boxed and marked with the names of good ladies who had self-sacrificingly asked their husbands for the necessary checks to pay therefor—upon some one’s suggestion that “it would be a pretty thing to do.”

This and that official of the Board had meant to be there and say, oh, ever so many noble words and heroic exhortations; they were generally on the dock as missionaries departed; for they generally felt that they “needed the fresh enkindling of such realistic aspects of a

vocation, which otherwise was apt to lapse into perfunctary routine." But, alas poor gentlemen, "detained in the country, worn out with labors and the summer's heat."

The Secretary of the Home Society was there, his sterling heart alone more than equal to a host, and wearily conscious itself that it needed to be.

Mr. William Norcross, true man and sincere Christian, would have been there, but that he was himself over the seas.

Stephen Crane's parents and other kindred would have been there, but that "he had not a relative on earth, so far as he knew,—except this dear little wife, who clings to him now, and her kin." However, orphan hero, since "we are compassed about by so great a cloud of witnesses" from on high, who shall say that mother and father were not there? Quite likely the mean little cabin was full of beings invisible to mortal eyes.

Pastor Haven's many friends would have been there, no doubt of it, scattered all up and down the land as they are, but that they have "quite lost sight of him of late," "As for his kindred," exclaimed Bella, "why, an old man's kindred are young people, if there are any

nieces and nephews left; and it is remarkable how easy it is to forget an uncle who can leave you nothing but a white, clean name!"

"If it had been any other season of the year," Bella resumes, chatting aside at Paul, "it would have been possible to hold farewell meetings, good brother, with organ peals and banks of flowers, with exhibitions of our hero and heroine, to stir the heart—and open the purse—for this Dark Continent Mission has been much talked about of late, papa says. And, for that matter, it will be much talked about when cooler weather comes, and it is time to take the collections again. It may be necessary then to draw on the imagination, a little, in describing this supernal hour of courageous departure to capture a continent, etc., etc."

"Hush, hush, my unhappy sister," Paul was in vain whispering.

There were a few loving hands outstretched. There were certain godly women who braved the heat, and walked, not being the carriage-owning kind. Some of them had brothers or parents in distant lands; and they knew, you know. Others of them were greatly attached to one Jesus who went about doing good; and that was their motive.

Clang! clang! all ashore. It is their right to be alone now. Clang! clang!

“Oh, my children, my children! My sweet little Nora, latest born!” It is the mother’s wail! How silent this woman has been; they had not heard her speak before; had you? God keep her, with her arms thrown about the daughter; for, if God does not help her, she will never be heard to speak again!

That cry shook down every one’s resolution to be brave. The mother-heart gave the signal and the whole group were conquered! There was a long silence, while, I have no doubt, God put beneath her the Everlasting Arms.

“Mother?” It is Paul who is speaking. He is trying to get these two apart. That proves difficult, for the child is not simply going to Venice for the winter.

“Mother?” It is the panting old clergyman who gasps it out from his chair. “Mother? give her up to sit in my lap for a moment, once more, will you not?”

That does it.

Paul Havens has his mother in his arms now, as tenderly fondled as when her arms held him.

Clang! clang!

“Now let us give them up to God,” the old man murmurs.

Stephen Crane kneels, tearless do you mark it? at the pastor's knee. Bella Havens kneels.

“Great God—we give this precious child up to go do for a dark world what thy Son came to do for it—tell of thy love. Our children are not our own. Thou knowest how we love and trust this dear boy, her husband,”—a thin hand went out to flutter over his head. “Now keep them, O Christ! Thou knowest how we have kept her—ever—since—ever—since she—came, a pretty little babe——”

It is too much, sir. Let us sit in silence. There must be a Day after to-day, when such cross-bearing will be explained, in the realm of a Good God.

“We must go, mother.”

“Yes, my son. Do not fear for me now. Come, oh, my strength! I must, must have it—strength? To stand and watch them as long as the ship can be seen from these shores!”

“Then lean upon Bella. No, Steve, don't go ashore again. Stay with my sister, at any rate on deck. Father? Now, ready.” Then, this to Stephen Crane. “Old friend, there is no cant in this. This comes pretty near being as full a

consecration as man can make. But I think, dear old Steve, this is the happiest, grandest moment I ever lived! The Divine Favor is on us. I'll seek to be as true, God helping me, to the broken hearted of this land as you will be to the darkened souls of that land! 'Grace be with thee, oh my sister, oh, my brother!'

They stand apart on the breezy pier-head these four; on the after deck those two. The long, low boom of the steam whistle moans solemnly. The cry of the sailor, blue-coated and gold-leafed he, is the only spoken word now. The hiss of seething waters answering unto power is followed by the dreaded backward surge at last; and slowly, wearily, reluctantly as becomes her when tearing hearts asunder, the great ship turns to the east. A kindly wind, which flutters the cheap blue veil about sweet Nora's face, as she leans against her husband's breast, would gladly carry for her yet one word more to the group on the pier. But it is not spoken, for the word itself is wanting, and could not be found in all the many tongues that were ever used on earth.

Neither do these on the pier speak. And now they have no tears. But they have faith and joy unutterable—all save one. This torn, weary,

devoted home-circle of the humble preacher, breeding children to be the food of sacrifice; why the staple of their daily bread for years has been, "THY WILL, O GOD, BE DONE."

After a season the ship is but a blot upon the cold blue mirror of eastern sky and sea, and it is time to go home. Yes, for the sun is low and cooler now. Yes, for the hack is hired by the hour. It is high time to go home. The ship is but a speck on the waste. We must go home.

Home? Why, yes—at any rate it was a dwelling place, if not a home.

XX.

A CALL.

“**I** HAVE a call!” cried Paul Havens to the assembled household about the next morning’s breakfast table. “To-day I must assume my parochial cares.”

“Your call!” replied Bella, incredulously. “I had supposed that skillful and managing foe of yours, Brother Lemuel, would be able to prevent any important church of the denomination so much as looking at—is n’t that the pretty phrase they use?—looking at the Rev. Paul Havens, candidate and in waiting!”

“Yet I have it, and here in Boston, sis,” with a placating smile; “and the largest parish under the care of a single pastor in this city!”

“Despite the man!” This Bella, knife and fork laid on the table.

“Oh, you pretty girl, do forget the man!” This Paul.

“Indeed, let us forgive and forget,” pleaded the benevolent old father, from his end of the board. “He must have something good about him. I was reading that he signalized his

daughter's birthday, just before she sailed for Europe, by a single lump donation of ten thousand dollars to—what was it to, mother?"

"Really papa," Bella put in, "one may be excused in forgetting what for. No doubt much more was said by the good newspaper about the giver than the receiver."

"And yet it will all be found in eternity, my dear child, to even Lemuel Norcross' credit."

"Yes, dear sir, in the treasury over against the Temple, along with the widow's mite."

"Well, well," Paul thinks it time to repeat for peace's sake; "notwithstanding all, I have my call. Why don't you ask about it? How much salary I am to get, and how I like my people?"

"How much, then?" asked Bella, to indulge this brother, whom she idolized, after all, in any banter he had on hand to amuse this forlorn morning. The actress, that she was, how soon she could change from frowning to bewitching beaming! She seemed, at least, all glorious sunlight now.

"How much? Not a beggarly cent that I know of! I shall be for once, father, like my great namesake of certain centuries ago. My own hands must minister to my necessities; though with the figuring of my Florida tent-life, rather than making tents."

“Oh, you dear fellow!” exclaimed Bella, suddenly coming near him and eagerly embracing him. “Then you are going to be sensible and take the government’s offer? Five thousand a year, and such a pretty uniform! I knew you had never yet been—been made a reverend.”

“Ordained? No, sis; it’s true I never have been, as yet. But,” with a knowing smile towards his father, “if it will please father that I go through that formality, I can even yet.”

“Come, Paul,” said his sister, her face shadowed again as she bent on his shoulder, “no more of these enigmas. Where’s your church building, then?”

“See here, Bella,” drawing down her face till she could look, as he pointed, under the low, white window-curtain. “On that vacant lot to-morrow morning, not three minutes’ walk from my Episcopal palace, you see a glowing, snowy canvas canopy will be spread. That for summer at least. Doors open. Seats free!”

“That is,” she added, in passing sympathy with the heroism of it, “your call reads, ‘*Go ye out into the highways and hedges and compel them to come in that my house may be full.*’” She repeated the noble words with fine effect.

“A very ancient call, my sister.”

“Yes, and once much sought after, but of late years, the work being somewhat unpoetic, it has lost a trifle of its desirability. Still, I must confess, Paul, considering who signed it, you will regard it as highly authoritative. Oh, well!” with a sigh, “so I must give you over! Shoulder straps and sword, and the five thousand a year. I don’t see but what the actress is to be your main reliance yet, for a coach and horses, papa and mamma.”

“Thirty-five thousand people in this ward, within sight of the scarlet cross which will fly the mizzen-mast!” This, Paul, with enthusiasm.

“Nora’s needle-work! exclaimed Bella, striking her fan on her arm. “I thought she was to take that to heathendom.”

“This is about heathendom, sis. Not a rival church to mine in the whole world!” This, Paul, with gravity.

“Night schools, no doubt?” Beaming again.

“And temperance meetings,” said Paul, yielding to her mood.

“A Magdalen asylum for these young girls who walk wantonly,” she added, soberly and pityingly, for a moment.

“Yes, and even a league of these teamsters and car drivers to prevent cruelty to animals.”

“And your favorite, practical Christianity, an employment bureau!”

“And a cup of cold water from as clear a fountain as Cochituate can spout, my dear. Hurrah!” he cried, winding his strong arms about the great girl, now on his knee, with a hug of boyish enthusiasm that fairly compelled her into protest.

“Perhaps you’d like me, Paul,” she remarked to address your tent full of women on the subject of wholesome cooking, and thrifty, economical housekeeping. Just think of me, doing that!” What a silvery laugh this woman had!

“Indeed, why not? A practical Yankee girl.” said her father.

“And a superb voice for public address, with some practice of late,” added Paul, taking her seriously.

“You could first preach on the text——”

“Children, have ye any meat?” he replied, pat.

“Yes, and ‘they saw a fire of coals with fish laid thereon.’ Our Lord was not above that cooking, my dears,” suddenly remarked Mrs. Havens, yielding to the sunny aspect of things at last.

“Oh, brother, brother!” exclaimed Bella, releasing herself now, and standing meditatively by the window while she gave them her thoughts, “what days on days you will be obliged to spend,

going from house to house, teaching sanitary care, pointing out filthy neglect, kindly rebuking carelessness; for God knows that cleanliness comes next to godliness, and before it in my judgment."

"Yes, I'm ready, I hope, for all that. My idea of a creed is, *Do man any sort of good that is within man's power*. See here, sis, you'll help me at that?"

"Why, I like that creed," she answered, drumming on the window-pane, a tempest rising in her soul.

"Put it this way, my lady. *Whatever Jesus did for men, so far as man can copy, do the same!*"

"Fresh air excursions, for instance?"

"Why not? Any thing. That's in the gospel story, across the lake, you know."

"Where will you get the money, sir?"

"The poor are the friends of the poor. We shall not lack money——"

"Nor ever, ever have to go fawning on the rich Pharisees for your sinews of war?" with a sly and not altogether pretty turn of her stately head.

"Well, there'll be no three-thousand-dollar choirs to pay, Bell. Come now. Don't distill any wormwood into your own cup."

"Ah, well, you go your way, I'll go mine. I'll address the women for you, so far as that

goes; but that's all I'll promise now. I long to hear your preaching, my grand brother; I'll listen to that. I, who have n't darkened a church door since papa ceased to preach. Stay; I can prophesy what you'll preach. It will be novel; or rather the old come into fashion again. This brilliant mind and loving heart—I *am* serious, Paul, now you listen, please—and this persuasive voice will simply explain page after page of that everlasting New Testament of his. There will be no attempt at rhetoric. There will be no sensational themes. Except, though, as 'Thou shalt not steal,' 'Thou shalt not covet,' 'Honor thy father and thy mother,' with all the rest are sensational. Indeed, brother of mine, the plain inculcation of all the commandments would probably produce a sensation in more exclusive churches than yours. As week by week he tells the story of the New Testament; speaking it like fresh news to a sorrowing world; omitting no verse; evading no mystery, but confessing it; telling it affectionately, as he has to me in many a walk of late, and my ears so unwilling; why, men, women, and children will listen marvelously. Believe the actress; she knows; it is her business to study effects. Portray Jesus Christ, sir, as the Great Physician, and men may come to associate

Jesus Christ with that tent—not Paul Havens' tent, after the manner of some brick and stone tabernacles. Men may come to think of Jesus Christ as often as they catch sight of Nora's red cross on the pennant! And it shall seem as if the street and beaten paths up to its doors were frequented by the passing benignant form of Jesus Christ! The sight of Paul's face, father, moving about the simple neighborhood, shall remind the people of the passing Jesus!”

“Bella! Bella!” protested Paul, though his eyes were full of tears, as were all eyes, except the speaker's, for she had kindled quickly, and had spoken with real eloquence. But now the tempest within her was at its height, and her own eyes, too, were filling. She put her hands to her face and left them, on the instant, for her attic room.

It is difficult to describe how busy this young man soon becomes, reducing Bella's prophecy to history. A lump of leaven among five and thirty thousand. His errand, any possible good that man could do. His strength returned. A fever generally either kills or makes a giant of a man. He often worked twenty hours a day. How he thanked God for his endurance.

This queer preacher, now with health equal to

the double task, toiled assiduously to acquire a knowledge of medicine. He spent long hours in the hospitals. The staff at the Naval Hospital were warm friends. Rapid and apt in learning, he soon became more popular with the sick poor of his "parish," than the men of fees. Yet the men of fees acknowledged him; they never dishonored a summons, sent by Paul Havens, "to visit the widow and the fatherless in their affliction." His own study of medicine, begun for other's sake, became a pivot on which his life was almost tempted to another turning; he discovered an aptitude for surgery in himself. Great surgeons are born and not made.

"You have inventive skill, Doc," said the surgeon-in-chief to him. "You have developed intuition, rapidity of movement, the mechanical habit, nerve, and daring, Havens. You should be a saw-bones and done with it!"

"I have a profound reverence, sir, for the human body," Paul replied. "It is a wonderful temple!"

"The crowning reason why you would be an eminent surgeon, Havens!" rejoined the chief.

But Paul would not turn aside; no, not for "inducements," though he felt privileged to make his services pay him something at

times, here and there, among rich patrons beyond his parish limits, thanks to the other doctors.

As for the humble poor they grew to glory in this gentle giant. He was their hero. A strange power over them came with their reverence and gratitude.

All this time not a word to or from Clara Norcross over the seas. He was often tempted to write to her; wondered that she did not take the initiative, for how could he know her address? He wrote a letter, and would have sent it on a venture, but that very day one of the surgeons at the hospital accosted him with,—

“I say, Doc,” I met a friend of yours to-day. Norcross. You know,—brother to the William Norcross, who founded the Ophthalmic wing here, and who, being in Europe, is represented in some final accounts by Mr. Lemuel.” The twinkle in the speaker’s eye might have warned Paul not to encourage the handing over of Norcross’ message. But, being pre-occupied with the case in hand, he answered,—

“Oh! And what did he say of me?”

“Well, to be frank with you, his lordship considered you a fraud, to be exposed here in town yet; had heard of your work of course, as all the town has.”

"Then I'm pretty well exposed already, I fear," said Paul carelessly, and continuing his work with the patient.

"But, I take it the tidings are not pleasant," resumed the surgeon. For however independent of the man you may think you are, yet who can measure the possibilities of millions, my boy? A man with millions, if he be so disposed, can find a tool for any dirty work against your life which he may choose to hire done."

"And the fee for dirty work would not seem to need to be large," Paul added gravely, "if one considered how many dirty fellows pass the corner of Washington and Winter Streets, for instance, in the procession of a half day."

It was not physical fear, however, that oppressed Paul Havens, nor the dread of any discredit which the man might manipulate the press to fling in the air concerning his work; though Paul had great schemes in mind, and would need unbounded public confidence by and by, for their furthering.

It was rather the oppression of hopelessness as regarded Clara. Paul's charity had credited her father with some latent goodness, some shred of the piety he so openly professed, and some paternal tenderness for Clara's weary heart. He

had hoped, in time, if he showed himself a man and worthy, that Lemuel Norcross would see him as he really was.

But this and other similar little indices of a powerful ill-will, which was working against him, relentlessly in the city, broke down such human hope, day by day. The Divine Favor, however, is deathless. He grew happy in his work as his own life grew lonely, for he had the Divine Favor.

It was winter again before Paul became aware that Clara, with the others of the Norcross party, had returned from their European trip. He caught a glimpse of her, one afternoon, sleighing down the broad drive where wealth disports itself in that gayest American winter city.

She did not see him; he felt sure of that. And he did not need to look the second time; one glance was like an instantaneous photograph. He held his head away and passed over the drive on some charity errand which employed him. It was the same wonderfully beautiful face. He lived the day through by gazing on it, as it was pictured anew in his soul. Yet, while it made the day glad, it made it sad, of course. It compelled him to his work anew, for one moment's sight of that face had left life very lonely.

He found himself scrutinizing the face, — seen an instant, remembered ever. It was not happy; he felt sure of that, though high and exciting pleasure filled the avenue, and Cousin Andrew held as proud a rein as any in the throng. Paul remembered how gleeful, like a child, Clara always was when behind horses.

At evening, after tea, when the brother and sister sat alone, Bella would often say, —

“They bowed.”

“So they did to me. But Andrew was more gracious, I think, when you were with me, sis.”

“Mr. William is a genuine man, bub. I wonder he has not noticed your work.”

“He has. I was told to-day, at the hospital, that had he not found himself unusually busy since returning, he would have sought out the young apostle to the Gentiles. How is that for a title?”

“That message means a collision between him and his brother!” exclaimed Bella, promptly.

“How so?”

“The iron will of Lem Norcross never bent, I tell you! If William attempts to be kind to you, Lem will cease to ignore you. Then trouble begins anew for you, and for his daughter, too, no doubt. Is it not singular,” Bella continued,

moralizing, "that it is the man whom you have injured whom you will seek to injure again?"

"True. The injured party can forgive; the injurer, never."

"Then, too, evidently you are more in this man's way, and a heavier obstacle, than ever before," patting his shoulders proudly.

As the winter wore on these young people came to know each others' respective dwellings; and there was not a little of furtive window studying. Paul Havens frequently passed Clara Norcross' handsome residence, nearly finished now, and freely spoke of it to the little home-circle. If he did not mention it for an evening or two, Bella, proud and cold as ever, passing it daily on her way to and from the theatre, frequently brought in some fresh scrap of information for the frugal tea-table.

"They are putting in the most elegant French plate glass, brother of mine."

"Yes." Paul would smile good-naturedly in return.

"And I see the ebony-framed mirrors are built in—almost as handsome as I shall have one of these days! Think of it, dear mamma!"

But this never brought a smile. Such references, frequent and studied, clothed with cheer

and perfumed with the one remaining affection of this haughty young spirit, brought many a cloud and many a tear. Still, what could you have done, you most exemplary parent who are reading this? This young actress was a daughter.

“Wife, she is the only girl-child left us, to nurse our sick days, to bring in sunshine and a merry song,” the father often said. “She is as pure to-day, as artless, as lovely at home,—yes, be sure we watch carefully enough to detect the slightest assailment, as ever she has been in all her life.” What more could a pastor do, or her mother, or her brother, but pray?

“Let her go? Drive her out?” Paul would ask. “No doubt, scores of good people could easily advise us. But not one word will I offer to assail her art; not one! To flame and flare at Bella Havens?”

Then lose her; for this audacious and unhappy soul was held by the one gentle rein of home love. How keen was her tongue, indulged in the utmost refinement of irony, when she saw from the little cottage windows the faces of the Norcrosses turned thither from the driving avenue!

“*They* know where we live, Paul; no doubt of that. They never pass here, on their afternoon airings, but Puss and Clara cast glances this way.”

“No doubt,” Paul answers.

The little house, as was intimated, could be very plainly seen from the drive, not ten rods away.

Rail at her? Reproach her? Curse the theatre, that you might subdue and reclaim her?

“No, no, my-sister!” Paul said it a hundred times if he said it once; and did it, too, putting his arms about her—a noble armful, she! “I do not believe in your mission. It may be destined for some, but a good home is your mission, sis,” kissing her. “Some good man will open your heart yet and find its treasures. Oh, that the grace of Christ could first be welcomed to take out this bitterness, my precious sister! But, remember, Bella Havens, that as long as you live and he lives, your brother gives you his unstinted trust!” And there was often such pathos in his tones that the haughty head of the listener would drop on his shoulder, while the fine eyes filled with tears.

“My children,” the invalid pastor would add, “cling, cling, cling together! Minister to each other without any offence. Bella will yet see the glory of God in our poverty and straitness. When were we ever happier if——”

“Never mind the ifs, father,” Paul says. “My work is your work continued, free and large. It

grows every day, the mustard seed. As for Nora——”

“Was there ever a sweeter, gentler little preacher,” Bella breaks in, drying her eyes, “than that little sister of—of mine, with her precious, precious letters! Why, papa, she has never said one harsh word against the theatre! I wish, almost, that she would, for that I could resist! But oh, sirs, you two preachers, how that girl writes about her Jesus! She is ever telling me of the beauty and joy she finds in Jesus!” Then she,—even she, the self-reliant,—can only bite her red lips and cast down her long eye-lashes tearfully, while she picks at the corner of her handkerchief and moves away to the window.

Everybody’s eyes get filled now. And a sacred, blessed, hopeful silence ensues, while all the others exchange significant glances and the old pastor murmurs:—“Yes! Yes. Blessed way! Prince of Peace! He will yet do it. The promise is, ‘to you and your children.’”

So they took Bella’s proffered earnings and placed them in the common treasury. “I am beginning to earn, you see,” she said; “though not largely: for they that aim high must commence low, pay a great price of almost awful toil and wait long. If you will make the people

laugh or please the lecherous with a bare round arm, not to say more," somewhat bitterly and with a blush, "you may earn much and quickly. But if you will interpret Shakespeare, for instance, you must almost die of fatigue and starvation to do it! I some times wonder if the reward is worth the price; not speaking of the pecuniary reward, which will be weighty, but the sense of personal satisfaction with the uses of one's talents, that is supposing I had them."

"A life spent interpreting the lesser of the world's two books, Shakespeare, not the Bible. I, too, wonder," replied her brother.

It was a matter of surprise, as time passed on, that Paul Havens, becoming one of the most prominent of the younger philanthropic workers of the city, and meeting many of the benevolent people engaged in the numberless departments of charitable endeavor, never met Puss Norcross. Her mission was a private church affair and located at the North End, far away from him. Yet he was often in that vicinity; he even took occasion to look in at doors on several occasions, and saw strangers enough, but no Miss Norcross. Upon making bold to inquire, one Sunday afternoon, the gentleman in charge asked with some surprise in reply.

“Had you not heard? She has been very sick. Came back from Europe in a wretched nervous state. But she is better now. She will be here next Sabbath.”

“Ah, No, I had n't heard. And her benevolent father?”

“Yes, we have missed him very much for a year past, in all our city work. He has usually been foremost in every good thing. But ——” And the gentleman drew Paul's ear to hear a whisper—“that the firm is in some financial straits! There are ugly whispers about concerning the main partner, a brother, Mr. Lemuel Norcross.”

“No! You astonish me!” exclaimed Paul.

“Yes. Fact!” was reiterated with that peculiar, sympathizing smile, a smile of painful regret, of course, with which some times fellow-Christians are obliged to spread ill news of each other. “The two gentlemen are in Washington now, trying to rig the tariff, or some such thing, it is said.”

Paul Havens' heart ached. He remembered now the Crosston bookkeeper's solicitude upon the occasion of the riots. Indeed, he walked home that day recalling a great many things, this and that, which he had thought about and observed.

However, Paul and Puss met in the little North End Mission the next Sabbath. People noticed

how frail she looked and what palor was on her gentle face — till, of a sudden, all changed! Her features glowed and her step became firm and spirited. She came down the noisy aisle to meet her visitor, and spoke first, saying,—

“This is such a pleasure!”

“Indeed, gentle lady,” said Paul, “I have to begin with apology. Had I only known that you were an invalid——”

“And not engrossed with society, the reason why I was not here? But we have looked for a social call, Mr. Havens,” smiling sweetly to soften the rebuke.

“True, Miss Norcross. But, really now, you are fully aware of——of——”

“I know. Uncle Lem. He has, of course, been with us, while Clara’s house is finishing, I understand the delicacy of a sensitive nature. We will not speak of that, come up and sit down with me,” and she led the way to the rostrum. “I find,” sinking into a chair, “that I am not very strong yet.”

Then they fell to conversing about her health, her trip, her home, and this “dear work here, with these people,—children of sorrow.” Some Sunday talk, a good deal Monday talk. Then the inevitable Clara talk at the end.

"I shall have her here to assist me, next week, and hereafter, I expect." How she watched him now!

"Will you? Here? This work?"

There was such a pleasure in his face and joy in his tones. And again the burden of hopelessness—or may be it was her nervous prostration; yes, that was it—fell so heavily on her that she almost gave way for a moment. But it was only for a moment, brave heart, was it? For in another instant she is rattling on, brilliantly.

"Yes, that is, if her father does not send for her to go on to Washington. You know Clara is devoted to her father. But all winter the dear girl has gone about on my charity-list rounds, visiting and doing a world of good among the church poor. She has even driven down here on some good errands; but I could never persuade her that she had the gifts of leadership for my place in the mission. She is what some would call too womanly for rostrum work, you know."

But to tell the truth, the young gentleman was not very certain, is not to this day, just what more was said, there was a good deal more said, though not about Clara Norcross.

You could not expect one woman, however heroic and self-denying, to make the man she loved glad by talking so very long about the woman he loved, she not being that woman. Hence, though Paul listened, entered into her benevolent plans, spoke to her school, and followed her form about with his eyes as she rustled her robes to and fro doing this and that, still it must be confessed the heart of the man was elsewhere.

Clara Norcross engaged in his own kind of work! The sunny, care-free, merry-hearted pet of the Crosston mansion come to delve in the shadows of the city's poverty! "And loving it. Did Puss not say Clara was happy and in love with the work? Ah, if she did not it must still be true. I was not, I could not have been mistaken in that generous nature. Deep as the seed! Rich as the meadow loam where flowers grow unplanted! Blame her not, the sweet child, for the pampered life which her proud and foolish father inflicted on her. Oh, what a wife she would make, for me now! Not that I would ask my wife to share my public work; that is, with her hands. No, no. But think of such a woman, lovely, ever bright and womanly, sitting in my home to meet me when I returned from these labors I have marked out for myself. Think of

it, kind heaven! She there to sympathize with me, she to understand me that I am not throwing life away nor giving my strength for naught; she to enter into all these perhaps wild plans, these revolutionary plans of mine. Her husband no ambitious orator, no earner of fat revenues, but a simple worker with him who went about doing good!"

Paul handed Puss into her carriage and went on his way. All the week he walked in a dream. The old passion, which all the world knows, had him in its complete control. The philanthropist was a mere man. He could have thrown the whole six days away, to be in next Sunday.

At times, however, he hesitated. Was it the privilege of a high-toned gentleman to seek stolen interviews, knowing as he did the relentless opposition of the lady's father? To be sure, she was a woman grown now, no mere child, ignorant of the possible results if they should meet again. And no doubt Puss would tell her, so that Clara's coming to the mission next week would be with her eyes open. The scruple grew upon him. There was an indiscretion about the meeting which was exceedingly offensive to this open nature. Besides, Paul Havens was made aware,

every day, that he was becoming a conspicuous man, and that it behooved him, often associating with white-haired philanthropic gentleman, to "let no man despise his youth."

When Sunday afternoon arrived, Paul did not appear at the North End Mission. As he went about other tasks he said to himself, "No. She herself will not expect me. A young girl's first duty is to her parents. Heaven help me, I'll not play the decoy!" He felt, too, that his position in life was as dignified, to say the least, as the silk weaver's with all his millions; some pride, of course; we don't claim that Paul was a saint.

"Not here," said Clara, glancing up to Puss, as the session closed. "I did not expect him, my hero! Had I expected him I doubt if I should have come. I tell you, cousin, Paul Havens must not be humiliated in our next meeting. Unless it is accidental, I shall make the overture, as I ought."

But their meeting, the first for a long year, was to be accidental. It occurred in this wise.

In every great city there are "best circles" and "best circles." There are the "old families," into whose circle no *parvenue* of a recent wealth, however great, can come. There are

the opulent *parvenues* themselves, who charge an admission fee of certain millions. There is no end of exclusive sets, founded on all sorts of corner-stones; that you know. And you may know that there are people of such genuine piety, unostentatious, quiet, and of real worth, whose employment is benevolence, whose recreations are Christian deeds, into whose "circle" the humblest may be admitted on the passport of a true heart and the promise of usefulness; and from whose "circle" the wealthiest and the most famous would be barred if he had only wealth or fame to offer.

Perhaps *the* very "best circle" of the city was made up of certain earnest Christian men and women who clustered about Mr. William Norcross. Out of this great city perhaps a hundred such people had been called in the passage of a score of years. Many times that number formed this fringe of this cloth of gold. But the golden threads were not many. They had come to know each other in many a hard struggle against the foes of human happiness. They were of all denominational names, ecclesiastically considered. Most of them were of great wealth, or had been at some period of their lives, though subsequent poverty expelled

no one once tried and found true. To touch this body of people was to touch the heart of Boston. It is so in every city. When these people moved, armed with the right, even the newspapers bowed — and what more can be said?

A “parlor meeting” of these people had been collected, one April evening, at the spacious residence of ex-Governor Blank. It had been intended to call the conference at Mr. William Norcross’ house, but that the “Washington business made that beloved gentleman’s presence uncertain,” the ex-governor explained, balancing himself over the back of a chair, on which he leaned. “However,” he was “happy to say that good brother is with us, notwithstanding.” The ex-governor, being a fervent secretary of the dear old sort, “brothered” every body.

It was a most brilliant assemblage, ladies and gentlemen conspicuous by dress, and conspicuous by the absence of it, young and old. There were ranks of chairs, filling room after room, and ranks re-duplicated by mirrors, till it seemed a most imposing presence. It is not to be denied that adventurers were there, also; a soldier of fortune would almost pawn his sword to be admitted. Heaven alone can always detect the

masked man or woman. Lemuel Norcross was there; his brother had often dragged him into such society; and he had been admitted on the card of kinship. Afterwards William had made him pay for it. That was right; the good brother worked tirelessly with the hard brother to save him from his selfishness. And, from one motive or another, Lemuel Norcross had given away much money; we never have denied that fact.

The object of the meeting was to consider the old, old theme: "The moral condition of Boston; the increase of crime, vagrancy, and street-begging, etc." Nothing new, except that Paul Havens was to address the company. In one year he had reached the heart of the city! This old, good heart of the city, ever beating kindly; often weary; never ceasing its throb; and welcoming warmly this fresh drop of blood: "a young and earnest man, who has shown that he has new ideas, and a strong philanthropy." So the chairman put it.

Clara Norcross sat, hand-in-hand with Puss, by the end of the piano, when Paul got to his feet, and not ten feet away from him. In the seated throng she had not noticed him, nor was it known generally, certainly not by these ladies, who was to "talk to the meeting."

EXTRACTS FROM A DIARY.

Dated "COM. AVE., in my room, midnight, April 12. 18—

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"I had not seen his face before for many a long day. Studying it, I scarcely heard a word he said for some minutes. What a surprising honor! Paul Havens here! He talking to the soul of this most conservative city! Both Puss and the writer, two women who were contrasts in every other sense, were alike in this, I am sure, their whirlwind of emotion, their fixed eyes filled with tears. Yet, they sat clinging hard at each other's hands concealed in the folds of their velvets. The writer watched his hands work off their nervousness on the back of his chair; she saw, delighted, the passing away of the hesitating breathings, and the rising tide of self-command and conscious power. She knew when he had forgotten himself—oh, most blissful hour to the orator, always!—and was lost in his theme. She saw that strange marriage of coolness and ardor, of ice and fire, the fine chemistry of oratory. She saw that supreme play of mind, whereby all that a speaker ever read or thought upon a given subject, comes, no doubt, like a troop of slaves, ready for his tongue; and she noted the grace of extempore words, fairer

than any studied grace can ever be! She saw the flash of new thoughts, and the speaker's luxury in them. Can there be any other luxury to be compared with it!"

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"It was the eloquence, not of declamation, but of the most dignified conversation. The speaker's nearness to his hearers almost revealed each fine movement of his soul. There was no place for artificiality. His sincerity enriched his features and transformed them, before their very eyes. For my part, I, Clara Norcross, poor little ninny, grew breathless under the spell. If old men all about me, leaned forward and hung upon his speech, if stronger women were hushed in deepest sympathy, what shall I say of Puss and myself? Yes, poor Puss. Then, I knew how you idolized him. And, somehow, I did not hate you for it, either."

.

"At one time, the audience drawing the long breath that a spell-bound audience at instances does, I just nodded my head to denote the direction in which Puss was to look and whispered, —

"'See! His father and mother!'

"'Yes,' was Puss' reply, 'and see,' with a little nod to the left, 'your father's face!'

Which gave me a great shock. For poor, unhappy papa's face was—was not pleasant to look upon."

.

"It was not until almost the close of Paul's address, the modest history of his work being done, his theories propounded, and at last he came to his appeal to Christ-like motives, that his eyes ventured to meet my own. Mine? Yes, surely mine, though the other pair of eyes were just at my left. Once met, our gaze never parted till he had finished. He was talking to me! He pleaded and persuaded but one heart. He kindled to a fervor and spoke with a tenderness far beyond his previous mood; and like oil on flame, that fact lent a wonderful power to his final words. I hoped he might never cease, but hold me forever in that strong enchantment. And oh, if he had but felt as reluctant to close and yield up the satisfaction which might have fed his hungry heart through my fixed eyes!"

Havens surely did close abruptly, and, even amid the applause, pressed his way directly to Clara's side. She arose and gave him both her hands in the old way. There was a burst of music. There was a throng about him. He was bowing and blushing under distinguished compli-

ments and offering his left hand to distinguished men. He exchanged hands with Clara, confused by his error, but not annoyed and not to be crowded away from her side. The buzz of conversation mingled with the music. A breath of cool air invited them out of doors. Holding her hand still, like country children romping a field, he led her through the hall, out of the press of people and honors. He managed, through a servant, to secure her cloak and his overcoat, with his hat. She threw over head some pretty white woolen thing, which Puss managed to smuggle into her hands, snatched from her own shoulders by the way, the invalid, and out into the grounds the two lovers passed.

The cool of a brilliant April evening was on them. But her cheeks were hot enough; he said as much, and had proved it, too, almost as soon as he had spoken.

"And yours, my dear sir, are not icy," she replied, putting up her soft touch to make more sure. And she gave a little spring as if her glad feet must skip, as she came close under his broad shoulder.

"This is all very wrong, Clara."

"No doubt, Paul. Yet we could not help it, could we, after a whole year?"

“Not if we die for it!”

In an instant the strong resolutions they had made to bravely live apart, became as soft as the April haze that floated up from the distant marshes. The April haze floated up to play with the moon-beams, to entangle granite steeples and stony tower in cobweb harness, and to take the shape of lovers' castles.

He drew her radiant face into the cold light and talked to it. It was the bursting of a torrent. He told the face that he had done his best to forget it, to live as à-Kempis lived, but he could not! He was no great philanthropist, no mighty reformer. He was “but a hungry, starving village lad, fainting for this village lass.” He had had “no dream of this meeting when he came. But it was God's kind will, this meeting. Now that he had met her, now that he held her face and it was still true, he would pawn all his evening's honors to keep it, the face. What evil had they done? How could it be written on high that they should live apart? Who said it?”

The man shook like one palsied as he held that face and talked himself out to it.

The face was its own answer.

They shortly started into a brisk walk, up and down the hard paths of the garden, saying many

things ; walking more briskly yet, for the raw east wind began to come up over the city, fresh from the sea, and plaitings of cloud were formed of the April mist. By the time they re-entered the mansion a chill was in their bones. A storm was drawing nigh.

XXI.

HAVENS AND NORCROSS.

THE following morning, in the striking proximity of adjoining columns, the newspapers bore for head-lines the names HAVENS and NORCROSS. The two columns took all the eyes the town had, and suffered certain scores of other human beings, about whom less important "news" had been scraped together, to escape unobserved. For I take it that most of "the news" in an interesting copy of a morning journal is torture to those whose private affairs are thus served up for the rest of us; and all the Non-Havens, Non-Norcross *dramatis personæ* of that next day's press were glad, and skulked away off the stage in holiday mood. Yet curiously, if your name was Havens—as Bella's was—and it was your bread and butter to be head-lined in the papers,—as it was Bella's,—for nothing short of love or money could you have been printed large, as Bella's brother and his foe were. If you want to get into the papers, the printer's satanic genius will keep

you out. If you do n't want to get in, the same maladroitness will not suffer you to keep out.

For that matter, neither Paul Havens nor Lemuel Norcross read the papers the next morning with any quiet. To Paul, at least, it was like going down Washington Street in his shirt-sleeves, the sensitive fellow; yes, and without a hat, and hearing every body say, with pointing fingers, "That's young Havens. How much will he measure across the back? Wears odd kind of suspenders, do n't he?" The publicity which the honorable and glowing report of last night's "distinguished gathering" gave him; the first sight of the cold short-hand report of his words, wherein he had laid his very heart open to the world; and what men said about that heart, dissecting it, however respectfully, yet a dissecting; and the awful load of public expectation so suddenly setting down on a young fellow, who really had never dreamed of any thing but going about his own business unobserved and unpraised, except by his own heart; all this made his hand shake, you may believe, as he held the paper. Add to that the hour with Clara in the governor's garden, the review of which had kept him awake all night, trying to decide whether or not he should go boldly,

risking all the humiliation of refusal, and ask her father again for the dear girl.

"Give the paper to me, little boy," cried Bella Havens, in high spirits, noticing his agitation. "I'm used to publicity,—or hope to be, you know."

She took the sheet and read the long account clear through, amid a grateful hush of the small home room, and the smoke of an obstinate cooking stove at one side of the table,—for the wind was east, and bad flues felt it; the storm was on.

"Hurrah! Hurrah!" in softest silver cheer, so that the family up-stairs could not hear, exclaimed the girl, waving the paper prettily. "The family name is out at last, gentle people!"

"God help my dear boy!" said the pastor, through his tears.

Paul's mother said nothing. It was not necessary. Over and over again the eyes of mother and son met and told their own story.

"Why, what is this?" It was an unfeigned sensation, though rather too eager to denote pain, from Bella's lips as she, dreaming over the Havens column, suddenly saw the Norcross column right at its side. But you would have overlooked it, too, reader, had your name been Havens. "Well, well! Dear, dear! A news-

paper is like a thunderstorm—you can never tell what moment the next crash will come. Hum—hum. I declare!” and so she went on devouring the tidings, like the hungry lightning to which she had just referred.

The family regarded her in silent and deep expectation, as she folded her arms and bent over the sheet spread across her knee. They saw her dark eyes flash. They saw the color mount high in her face. They saw the rich lips part and the pearl white teeth shut hard. They saw the breast heave, and the foot that was crossed swing nervously its heel against the chair. They saw a cold, cruel, exultant smile beam out, like sunshine on wintery hills, beautiful, dreadful!

“What is it, daughter?” asked the pastor, “we have not had family prayers yet.” He sat with the Bible open in his lap.

“Wait a moment” was all the reply they could get from her.

“What is it? Do tell me!” demanded the mother.

“Ah, there *is* a God in heaven, after all, I guess!” escaped through her teeth.

“Come, Bella, do tell us something! Haven’t you read enough to impart a scrap?” asked Paul.

“Once are the righteous avenged, at least!” the beautiful teeth said, though the eyes could not spare a glance.

There was nothing left for it but to wait in silence. Till at last, rising to her feet, majestic, matchless, beautiful, yet oh, so unlovely, this long suffering daughter of the parsonage flung up her arm high, rustling the paper like a banner of triumph, saying, —

“Lemuel Norcross is a beggar and probably a defaulter!”

“In one night? Impossible!” This, from Paul up-sprung.

“Punished, and by his own hand!” This from the actress.

“*What! Dead?*” He was hoarse. He was reaching up for the journal.

“Oh, no. Not dead, perhaps. He will live, I trust, to suffer his just deserts.” Bella still kept the precious paper high up.

“Girl! Come, out with it, or give it me! I saw him last night, and he appeared as usual. You would say he did, father?”

“That may be,” Bella resumed. “But this is an interview with a very wealthy silver miner, ex-Senator Nevada, and his son, too, I believe,” offering to make sure. “Yes. It seems that for

a year or two these gentlemen have been creditors of our—our pious friend, dear Mr. Norcross. They worked the tariff to shield him, or bridge him over, a year ago. But this session the tariff was changed. Then Mr. Norcross behaved unkindly, indeed, quarreled with these devoted friends of his. They naturally insisted on their rights, and, being neither clergymen nor women, got their rights, or nearly got them; when lo! the good Mr. Norcross' affairs are found to be all honey-combed with irregularities. Not thefts, the street says, but irregularities."

"Where is he?" asks Paul.

"Norcross? To be sure; where is he?" was Bella's reply, as she flung the paper over to her brother and laughed, not loud, but exultantly. "That's what the interviewers want to know; couldn't be found at a late hour last night; his side of the story not told. Heigho! Where is he? I'd like to look on his grave and troubled face myself—at a distance!"

"Oh, my poor child; my precious, beloved child!" sobbed Mrs. Havens, her emotion being a commingling of shock, sympathy with "poor, dear Sister Norcross," and a sort of terror at the pitiable sight of Bella's cruelty and vengeance.

"Poor heart!" It was the tremulous tones of

the clergyman. He half rose to his tottering feet, and grasping his daughter's skirt, drew her towards him, sinking back into his chair. As she yielded to him, resting on the arm of the chair,—he could not have supported her weight,—he began stroking her locks back from the noble forehead, in silence. The tears rolled down his cheeks like rain. His eyes were closed. His lips gave now and then the slightest movement. Bella needed not to be told that he was engaged before the throne of Infinite Mercy, for her, for Paul, for Clara, for the old church at Crosston, and for the once honored parishioner.

Paul sat, bent over the newspaper, gathering the light from the mean window and the dark, stormy day. The day grew darker, and the storm heavier without. Rising now, with stony resolution on his face, he reached for his coat and hat, then bethinking him, he turned to his father with, "At once, if you please, sir!"

"Yes, yes," was the response. "Family devotions before you go."

Then he read the ancient precept, of which no man lives long in this world without being in sore need, beginning, "If thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him to drink." After that, the prayer; and such a prayer! Had it

come to the ears of the wretched Norcross himself it might have been like oil on raging seas, to give momentary peace to his agony and shame.

Straight to the mansion in Commonwealth Avenue; without a moment's hesitation now. As Paul Havens pulled the bell, as the impassive hall-man opened to him, as venerable William Norcross stepped quickly into the vestibule, silently extending his hand; as the ladies of the house glanced up at him in the dim light of the curtained room, removing handkerchiefs from tearful faces,—he felt sure of his welcome.

“Among true friends, there is no etiquette of sympathy in sorrow,” Paul said. “One may offer whatever his heart prompts; therefore, I am here, dear friends.”

“God witness that we are glad you have come, Paul,” said William Norcross, ashen pale, bowed down, and with that aged look which every body has remarked as the result of sudden misery. As he sunk into his chair, he groaned, “Terrible! Terrible!”

“Yes, yes, dear sir; God himself can not help knowing that. Terrible! But his grace—you know.” Paul had seated himself at the old gentleman's side.

A nod of the head was the only reply.

The truest comforter, in almost any trouble, takes your hand with a world of meaning, but attempts little speech and expects little. This trouble, however, was not like death. There is none like this trouble. It is Disgrace, the true king of terrors. Silence? What could any one say? There was little weeping. The instinct is hiding, to escape out of the rays of the sun, or lamp, or glance of even a friend's eye; to be hid from all the world.

Paul glanced round on the hidden faces of the room, and waited. Where was she? Perhaps soon to descend from her chamber. He waited, holding the cold, still hand of this agonized Christian gentleman, who had treated all human kind with justice and mercy all his years.

After a decent interval, as she did not appear, Paul asked,—

“Where is Clara?”

All faces uncovered now; and staring pityingly and surprised upon him.

He sprung to his feet, fairly demanding,—

“*Where is Clara — my — his daughter?*”

“My poor boy,” tremulously answered Mr. Norcross, with some faint purpose of attempting, now, compassion in his turn; “we do not know.”

“Do not know!” Oh, for power to write a tone!

“She has disappeared with — gone after, of course, we think — you know how she loved her unhappy papa!”

“When?”

“Early this morning, my dear fellow. He left a note for her alone, saying she would never see him, again. You understand that some reporters undertook to interview poor Lem round at the governor’s before we left; he took alarm, came home very much agitated, went to his room, then went out on pretext of — of — we are unable to agree as to what his pretext was.”

“But Miss Clara?” reiterated Paul.

“She must have sat long in her room also. I doubt if she had undressed. She had been writing — and about you, too, my dear fellow — pardon us for reading, for we were searching for clues. Here is her diary, with accounts of last evening’s meeting.” And therewith the girl’s uncle handed Paul the little book, into whose pages the reader has been permitted to look.

Paul eagerly took the diary and was on the point of opening it, when he suddenly bethought himself, and returned it with, “Have you been to the store?”

“Young man,” gravely replied Mr. Norcross, “we have turned the key in the store door.

Every thing is gone by the board! I know now that two weeks ago my unhappy brother de— misled me. All is over with the firm, I fear!”

“But, sir, we must bestir ourselves ——”

“We have sent Andrew to employ every possible agency to discover the whereabouts of my brother and his child. All our efforts are now concentrated on that.”

“And, oh, Paul Havens,” suddenly exclaimed Puss, “do help us to find them before it is too late!”. She was standing with her pleading hands clasped and outstretched towards the young man. “Each of us children, Minnie, Andrew, and I, have property. I am sure we are what might be called rich. I have property. It was given long ago. Take all, all of mine! Only save uncle from —— from doing some dreadful thing with himself!”

“You grand young man, go! My husband is utterly prostrate. Andrew is inexperienced, I fear inefficient, though, dear boy —— what is it, dear?” Mrs. William Norcross was the speaker; she sat fanning Clara’s wretched mother, and suddenly broke off her speech to catch the meaning of a sigh.

Paul was on the street before he knew it. Before he knew it he had opened the door of a carriage, waiting at the horse-block. He opened his hand: it contained a roll of bills!

“She must have given me that, noble Puss Norcross.”

“Where will you go, sir?” It was the family coachman’s question.

Sure enough, whither?

Sometimes the mind acts automatically; it thinks for itself, and your volition waits in attendance. In such moments the mind, like the feet, runs back to familiar paths, thinking in the familiar channels of boyhood.

“To the Boston and Lowell Depot.”

Why he gave that order he could never say, except that he was recalling dear, old, happy, Crosston days, before these miseries.

On the way to the station calm reflection confirmed him. All that the city police agencies could do of course Andrew would cause to be done; it would be his first recourse. But no one, perhaps, would think of Crosston.

“A fox, pursued and frenzied by hounds, will travel in a circle and return at last to its den,” thought Paul. “So will this crazed man. Driver?” consulting his watch, “faster! Like the wind! The noon train north!”

A car driver recognized Paul, and pulled off a reverent cap to him. Paul had served the man at the tent.

“You run all night?”

“Yis, your riverence.”

In a brief, cool, accurate word Paul described Clara and her father.

“I saw 'em, sir! Thought strange of sech nice people in a car at midnight and it rainin'. Said to the conductor, them's carriage folks. It was the Montreal express, your riv——”

Paul dashed into the station, caught at the flying rail of a car. His foot slipped on the slimy step.

“My God! He's under the wheels!” It was a shout of many voices.

But he was not under the wheels, the athlete! He swung himself clear. He got a foothold. He heard the depot echo with a cheer, but he only showed his back.

Then the long, the interminable hours of the run to Crosston. Afraid to read the papers for the first hour, yet more afraid of the fever in his brain, he ended by reading, by closely studying every line of every merciful sheet that told, with such gusto of Christian pity, the sad details of a proud man's fall to a Christian public's willing ear. And the accounts were so harmonious, and so truthful! You never know how truthful, even to the smallest incident, a newspaper is till you yourself are a part of

an incident and able to verify all the "facts" which it records. After one such experience you wonder that you ever doubted what you have read in the papers.

It was nightfall when the train reached Cross-ton. A branch train ran in to the village from the main line. The little engine was named "Lemuel Norcross." He owned the rails and the cars, or did once.

As Paul Havens sprung from the car, Joe Nevada and his father alighted also. They were met by a man whom Paul at once recognized as the town sheriff. But young Havens and the Nevadas had never seen each other; Havens had never even heard of them; they had forgotten his name and person; hence the three gentlemen only stared at each other suspiciously.

"Got yer wire," said the sheriff.

Paul, at first, took the remark as addressed to himself, though he had sent no telegram. But in the next breath, hand in hand, the sheriff was unmistakably talking into the greedy faces of the two strangers.

"He's here. His darter is with 'im! Have 'em locked into his office! Sure! Ha! ha! Old Norcross! To think on it! Yes! Hullo Havens!" Suddenly turning to Paul, "I declare!

How is that saintly old father of your'n? Ef ever thare was a good man on arth it's your daddy. I say, Paul, I'm mighty tickled tew think that the man as turned your father out of this town, the best man as ever blessed its sile with the sole of his fut——"

"Gillfillian," exclaimed Paul, "come this way. Now, tell me where they are."

"Oh, we've got 'em, my boy, locked in his office. He's wild, sir, sufferin' terrible."

What else was said by Paul Havens, in a swift five minutes' masonic conversation, no one will ever know. To this day, Havens will never tell. But it was not strange that a country Crosston sheriff should believe a Havens, before all the world.

"Well, well, my man," said ex-Senator Nevada, the rich man and life-long friend,—oh such a friend!—of the rich man Norcross, "since you've got him, me an' my son will find a hotel and take a nip—you'll come with us of course—if there's a decent bottle of wine and any thing to eat in town. Then we'll make our attachment."

"All right, gentlemen," said the sheriff, submissively, with a wink towards Paul.

Up the hills! a sleighfull over the spongy snows. Do you see? Paul Havens is driving.

Clara Havens sits holding the head of a prostrate man, who is very quiet. What servile offices this heroic girl is forced to perform for these maudlin lips! Dead drunk, sirs and madams, this master of ministers and friend of the President! How she cringes, and can never have done with her weeping nor her kissing of his icy forehead. Every now and then she looks up and gets new strength by saying, —

“But Paul, dear, he is my father! I can never leave papa! He has been so good, until of late!”

“Yes, darling,” Paul responds. “God will not forget it, how you and I have clung to our sires.”

After a long while they turn through pasture bars, into a sheeted upland pasture. How drear is this ghostly midnight! the two plunging horses with their load like a huge black fly, the only moving thing in this mountainous expanse of desolation.

It is the old home-farm. This pasture is three thousand feet above the sea at Boston docks where Andrew and all the police are searching for their man. There is no path across the blank Sahara which they traverse. The snow is hardened to a crust, which bears them up. They were fearful it would not.

“Hurrah! It holds! Go!” shouts Paul.

On, up, to the distant maple forest, which, like a bushy forelock, bristles on the forehead of mountain.

It is a "sugar camp." That is, a rude, yet weather-tight building wherein maple sap is being boiled, these days. It is, or was, the property of this ruined man and his wife. Years and years ago Lemuel Norcross "boiled sap" for a living, every spring, right here, a penniless "hired man," and courted the heiress to the farm and in time married her, as you know. The fox is run to his den at last.

A light gleams out fitfully through the chinks and gaps in the boarding. Wreaths of steam pour out, lurid, from the stone chimney; but there is no sound.

"The boy is asleep. Hullo!" Paul shouts it; and, alarmed by the sound, the crows flap off the neighboring aviary of hemlocks five hundred yards away. So clear the air is, so profound the solitude!

"Gosh to blazes!" The red-headed half-sleepy sap-boiler gasps it, suddenly confronting them.

They find it easy to quiet him; they get the great manufacturer into the boys' bunk; they blanket and feed the foaming steeds, though Clara's colts "may die, now we are safe," she says.

There shall be no portrait of the man's awakening, the next dazed morning, nor of the watchers at his side. This was said, however, —

“Is it true, papa?”

“What? That we are beggars?”

“No, sir, but that you have ——”

“I know; don't say it. It's true that we are poor as Job's turkey! Flat! Here, kiss me. Now, let me think a moment. I am no fool, though I seem to think by jerks, lately.”

“But, papa, are you in danger of arrest?”

“I am.”

“Oh, God!”

But still she clung with arms about him, just the same. He would not let them speak for a long while. His really great powers of mind were being addressed to the task of self-extrication. He sat bowed in fitful, restless thought. At last, he looked up, sprung up, put his hands, with a sort of spasm, one on Paul's and the other on Clara's shoulder.

“Young man, I owe you every thing for this opportunity to stop and think; this gaining of time. But, most of all, I owe such worth as yours a most humble confession of my wrong.”

Meanwhile, Havens' moral sense had been awakening. Hitherto he had only acted from the

impulse of generous love and pity for all concerned. But this word, confession, put a new and startling phase upon things. He must not help to compound any man's felony! He put up his hands, deprecatingly. He dreaded, yet he must hear. Then, what should he do? How cruel is life when the doing a good deed so often, for a season, lies entangled with the doing a wrong!

"Young man, you do not wish your future wife's father to go to prison."

"Oh, papa, papa!" sobbed Clara.

"Have you committed any crime against the laws of the land, Mr. Norcross?"

There was something so fateful in the agonized, yet righteous, face of the young man, as he dropped the heavy and direct question, word by word, that the older man paused and withheld his answer. He withdrew his hand from Havens' shoulder and stood leaning on his child alone. At length, he broke the silence with, —

"I am not asking you to save me. It is Andrew."

"But, sir, you must pardon me, that does not answer my question. I know you can understand, fully, why I ask it."

"Buts and ifs for you, sir. Is n't Andrew Norcross worth saving? The great big innocent;

he's a bankrupt, too, and without a fault on earth of his own, if you do not obey me. I tell ye, young folks, a great change began to come over that boy with the shock of the news of Paul's supposed death. It sobered him. Business will sober him more. And—and, why, the fellow is—oh, God, how like sacrilege such words sound again on my tongue!—Andrew Norcross is trying to feel his way towards—is what we used to call, in the happy old days of forty years ago, struck under conviction; and two or three times in the office, lately, asked *me*—think of it!—just how a man found Christ.”

“It's Puss' beautiful work!” cried Clara, with fresh and restoring weeping.

At any other time, such tidings would have melted Paul Havens' heart, also. But not now, no, not now, moved, as he thought he had never been before, by this terrific crisis of love and duty.

At any other time, he would have been impressed by this sad spectacle of an apostate's unspeakable humiliation, in the memory of attempting to discipline an inquirer. No doubt it is the lowest abyss of wretchedness. But now, all Paul's mind was bent upon this quest, “Have you broken the law?”

“Go tell Senators Takeit and Nevada, that I can, and will, make them whole.”

“I can promise nothing, sir, till I know just what I am doing,” was Paul’s inflexible reply, his bloodless face written over with his distress.

“Well, then, would you call lobbying, law-breaking? Say, if money was given, and received? Ah, yes, it was received. Tell those men if they do not cease to pursue me, I will turn on them; that I have it in black and white, where I have put money in Washington, and perhaps the President may advise ’em, for party reasons, to stop where they are. Oh, it’s a queer world, up among the high joints!”

His hands came back, and plunged into his pockets; his legs were braced to hold this man of iron frame, yet relaxed by fasting, till now weaker than water. His eyes stared hard on Paul.

“Do n’t answer, now, my dear Paul, do n’t, do n’t!” cried Clara, throwing her arms about her lover’s neck. “Think how papa has called me your future wife, at last. Think what a strange world it is; how nothing is quite right, here on earth; no, not quite right. What would you do, if it were your father, Paul? Now, do n’t answer; but go do it. Take the ponies,

and do get to a telegraph-office, sending poor mamma word."

"No," put in her father. "Send no dispatches, but leave us here, and go yourself. Nevada has, doubtless, already attached the mills and returned to Boston. He's great on Pinkerton's detective agency; has probably sent them after me; of course they'll find me——"

"They'll never take you, sir, while I live!" It was this glorious girl; and she transferred her wings and feathers from lover to father, instantly; he was not a large man; she was able to give him ample embrace.

"As I was saying," he went on, "they will find me within a week, or so. Therefore, make haste. Tell Bill he's a ruined man, if all debts are paid, and they can be, must be. But his son, Andrew, should have half a million equity, which must be protected." And he rapidly sketched a plan by which Andrew might hope righteously to regain control of the Crosston mills. "Bill's two girls and wife must have two hundred and fifty thousand each; so Bill's all right. And he's getting old, any way. As for me, I'm out. Disgrace never lets up. But I'll never go to prison!"

What a wretched scene it was! This man of

sublime mental gifts, the creator of perhaps the foremost manufacturing concern in America, this master of the politics of a great state, and the acknowledged intimate of the rulers of his native land; more than that, this once honored Christian believer, builder of churches and seminaries, the trusted lay adviser of high-titled clergy; this father of that sweet child,—oh, bitterest disgrace of all!—who nestled her head on his breast, and seemed to lend her eyes to him, in that gaze that waited on Paul's reply; and before his own child a trembling fugitive.

“I prophesy, children,” poor Norcross said, “a long procession of honorable defaulters, about these times. The inordinate love of money has done it. The secret apostasy from the religion of our boyhood has made it possible.”

The two young people listened, for the most part, to his bitter self-upbraidings almost in silence. It seemed to the younger man the greatest kindness he could render the man whom pity was teaching him to love.

“Havens, she tells me you are free,” Mr. Norcross began again. “No ecclesiastical tribunal could arraign you for your acts. I know full well how busy the churches and church-journals will now be in washing all traces of Lemuel

Norcross from their hands. It might have been well, had they dared to busy themselves with this fool of a rich man before: but he was too strong, then, to be called to account for non-attendance at prayer meetings and other pious places: of course, all that they could reasonably expect of him was the honor of his name on their church rolls. Well, now, do as you think best, my boy."

The hardest tasks are sometimes performed the most readily. The very majesty of a great and critical duty fascinates us, enslaves us. Paul Havens could not now be turned aside from an answer to his question. All the pity, all the love that he bore each and all this troubled group, all his devotion to this lovely girl, could not swerve him. He had a sickening sense of misery to come, if the man should by his answer tie his hands. But yet he returned to it with mechanical repetition.

"It is not for such a sin as bribery, sir, vulgar and common enough, that you have fled hither, or these men pursue you. I ask again, have you wrongfully appropriated to your own use money belonging to these men, or any man?"

"No!"

"What, then, is your debt?"

“Do you call God to witness?”

“I dare and do!”

And upon that lie of a desperate man, Paul Havens turned to go upon his generous way of rescue and work for the recovery of all. As he looks back on the scene now, he remembers how strongly and yet strangely he felt that the wretched man must have been speaking the truth; every sacred sanction possible to move a man seemed present to move Norcross to speak the truth. It was indeed a “gambler’s debt,” but of that sort of “gambling” which in lower strata is called cheating, but among great operators and their ring, in this age of speculation, has too often been allowed to escape its just deserts. Alas, who can predict the deeps to which a once honored and honorable man descends at last in ways of modern peculation? Norcross was both lying and driveling prayers in the same breath!

Clara put up her face for his parting salutation, saying, —

“You will come back for him?”

“You will surely come back for her?” echoed Lemuel Norcross.

Paul answered, “As sure as God lets me live!” He turned to begin the long journey.

Father and daughter watched him as, on the lurching, slumping ox-sled, he began the slow descent of the mountain. The horses had been sent to the farm-house with which confidential communications had been established, for food and other necessaries, with a few articles of comfort. Father and daughter watched Paul, as he finally struck off across the glistening snow, against the red west of late afternoon. How little the hopeful young rescuer knew that he had looked on Lemuel Norcross' face for the last time!

XXII.

DISHONORED

“THEY think he’s gone to the queen’s dominions,” said the obliging sheriff, as Paul took the train. “The chaps has got hooks on the mills; and the Pinkies are chasin’ game to Canada.”

This was all Paul needed to know, and almost all he did know, sleeping youth’s tired slumber, till the train rumbled into Boston, the next morning. He lost no time in making his way to Commonwealth Avenue.

Never a quicker family-muster than that which, in morning-wrappers and house-jackets, flutters and stalks into the library, at the tidings, “Mr. Havens!” It is better than breakfast; every one is on hand, instantly, except Puss, but probably she will be right down.

“Found! Safe and sound!”

“Hurrah!” It is boisterous, generous-hearted Andrew, whose blood is thicker than water, after all.

“Hush!” It is William Norcross.

“Oh, God be praised! Tell me, tell me, tell me!” It is Clara’s mother, almost in hysterics.

“Hush! sister, hush! Remember.” It is the gentle mother of this home; and she half turns to fly back up the stairs, but pauses at their foot, listening in two directions.

Paul told his story.

“Exactly!” was William Norcross’ comment, as he heard the reading of his brother’s able plan for Andrew’s recovery of the property. “Send for our lawyer. I’ll turn over all I have, and let’s be at it.” A messenger was dispatched for the head clerk, the bookkeeper, and the attorney, at once. Then the clean old man, breakfast untouched, hands clasped behind him, face scarlet, great veins swollen across his temples, walked the floor impatiently, murmuring, —

“God is good! He shall keep our honor. My poor brother!”

As he came to the last of this triple burthen of his tongue for the twentieth time, the brother’s wife, who, with Paul Havens, had sunk down unobserved and almost fainting, by the window, caught at the old man’s dressing-gown, with, —

“Yes, yes. I should say so. Your poor brother! My husband and child!”

“Why, have n’t you gone in to breakfast, yet?” asked Andrew, in a rough attempt at comforting her. “Bless you, auntie,” and he kissed her.

“If you please, good folk,” Paul seized on the moment. “As your hands will be full of property questions, suppose you leave these Nevadas, Takeits, etc., to me.”

“Why, yes, my boy,” was the old gentleman’s excited reply. “Here, I’ll enlist Governor Blank, our attorney, and any number of — no. The governor and yourself are enough. Take the carriage. I’d go, but, while I know these men, my poor brother kept all these dark matters from my knowledge. I suspected much of late, but knew nothing. I should hinder you. Stay; so would the governor. Go alone; to the Parker House; take only my card; no, not even that; introduce yourself by that scrap of Lem’s handwriting, — his memorandum!”

Just then his wife was passing through the room, having descended, evidently, from the floor above. The old gentleman looked up anxiously into her face, and asked, “How does she seem, mother?”

“Resting quietly, and she heard the good news so sweetly. It has been self last with her, so much of late.” And the speaker’s eyes filled.

“Forgive me,” exclaimed Paul. “How stupid I have been! Your daughter is not well?” There was a genuine sympathy in that tone, but there was a deeper pang in the young fellow’s heart.

“Dear Puss!” her mother responded. “You may not know that she has been frail ever since we went abroad. The shock of this trouble almost destroyed her; we thought her dying, the night after you left; she seems very peaceful, and at rest, now, but—” You know what a mother would do next, quenching her speech.

Paul started up; but who was he, to be invited into the sick chamber of this young lady? Besides, her father and Clara’s mother, in one breath, put in;—

“You have no time to lose, my dear Mr. Havens. Eat something, and be ready for the carriage.”

“Oh, for the love of heaven, make haste! That wretched, weather-beaten sugar-lodge!”

If Havens ate anything, he can not since recall the fact.

He was shortly in the carriage, rolling towards the Parker House.

.
As shrewd Lemuel Norcross had guessed,

Nevada had brought Senator Takeit back with him. A man's a man, and wants his money; yet a man may be a careful politician and want to be President, you know, by and by. It will not do to make an unsavory stench in New England.

"Takeit, how shall we manage this matter? Then, you know, Takeit, that my Joe has set his heart on Boston society, and we don't want to be too hard on any body here. Ain't there consid'r'bl' respect for t'other Norcross here in town? Yet, this wretched Lem! he's euhred me! He's lied to me! I can't stand a liar. He's deceived me. And, with all my faults, the man don't live who can charge a Nevada with goin' back on a friend! Nevada bought in for a rise. I knew he was hard up, but I didn't s'pose he'd dare draw a worthless check or lie on his own stock-book."

Senator Takeit, Senator Nevada, Joe Nevada, this was the party, breakfasting in a private parlor, to whom Paul Havens' strange card was taken. Breakfasting? Well, it was mostly liquefying, solids not being relished, after last night, till later in the day. Joe Nevada, already done with the table, sat heels in the window, tranquilly smoking.

"Havens?" The old man read the card aloud.

“What? Havens?” This from Mr. Joe, thawing out enough to drop heels to floor. “Why, that’s her real name!”

“Whose name, sonny?”

“That’s the real name of Miss Rose Rockle, the sublime young actress that I’ve been raving about.”

“You raving, indeed!” laughed Takeit. “Ice burning.”

Still, there you have it, reader. These gentlemen had rested themselves last evening at the opera, where Bella Havens—stage name as above—was playing some minor part, the old story of hope deferred, though not of heart quite yet faint.

“Show the gentleman up. One of the local boys, I s’pose,” said the elder Nevada. “Clear away.”

Through the wiping of whiskers, Paul was greeted with, “Ah, Mr. Havens. Glad to meet you. Take a seat.” Then introductions, offer of drinks or cigars. What, neither? And such a clean face, clean eye, clean complexion, powerful build, yet so quiet. Evidently not one of the boys. Difficult to know what to say first to him. Visitor himself not embarrassed, but evidently self-repressed, like a big white cloud that may have thunder in it.

“Gentlemen, I come from unhappy Lemuel Norcross!” Oh! There’s the thunder clap.

“The —— you do!” What a shock to this father of his country, member of the paternal upper house! How cruel; for it was too early in the morning. The paternal member never gets on helmet, shield, and sword before twelve, noon.

“Yes. He and his brother propose to surrender, without contest, so much of the property as is their own to satisfy your claim,” etc., etc.

“The dog. Where is he?”

“He has been your friend.”

“Friend! Ha, ha! There’s millions in that, Takeit,” slapping the other senatorial back. Then sternly, “Where is he?”

“That I decline to answer.”

“Then you know? I’ll ——” and he reached for the bell button.

“Don’t do that, sir,” answered Paul. “Calm yourself and listen. Andrew Norcross has an equity in that concern. It ought to be protected.”

“I’ll fight it! I’ll fight it!”

“No, you will not, father, if you wish to carry New England.” Very cool, this other young man’s tone.

“I vow I will, and I’ll have this young villain,

here, arrested within five minutes, as an accomplice of the thief Norcross!" The great man's watch chain clanked on his round person, and the air was sulphurous with words that I have omitted. Ah, how safe the country is in these strong hands! Let the little children pray on, every night at cradle sides, "God bless our native land!"

Paul Havens stirred not a muscle as the enraged man waddled up to him and laid a hand on his coat collar. The coat collar was just a little thread-bare, the garment was neat enough, but there are limits to what you can expect of a coat with the utmost care,—two years, for instance. Paul's business—the doing-men-good business—didn't pay as well as the senator's business, the doing-men business. Shrewd senator! he had noticed that coat. He who would be President of the United States, these days, must notice coats.

"Take your hand off, man!" Havens' tone was soft and low enough.

Mr. Joe Nevada, looking on from his seat by the window, had seen the world, you remember; and that soft, low tone alarmed him at once. It is the alarming kind. With a bound he was between the two lowering men. "Father! Re-

strain yourself. We want no vulgar encounter with this gentleman."

Whereat the hand that steadies the helm of this most Christian state fell off, though rather reluctantly, from Paul Havens' neck.

"Now then, gentlemen," Havens resumed, a smile, half of vexation, half of amusement, playing about his lips, "no doubt I was too abrupt; but really, my business is such that introductions and preliminaries are, in the nature of the case, painful all round. Yet, I should have given you references, probably; for myself, I can refer you to the mayor of this city, to his excellency ex-Governor Blànk, and to almost any of our city clergymen. But, gentlemen, as I have documents in the hand-writing of Lemuel Norcross himself, which you must at once easily recognize, and as this is a painful family matter, on our side at least, really now, I could wish that we might get at the business ourselves. Some privacy would be very gratefully regarded."

"By all means, Mr.—pardon me; the name?" asked Joe Nevada, all politeness, extending his hand.

"Havens," replied Paul, cordially grasping the proffered hand.

"Take a seat, Mr. Havens," resumed young

Nevada. "Father, all you have to do is to send for the lawyer a trifle earlier. There," drawing and turning the chairs for his sire and the other senator, at the same time touching the call bell, "I will venture, father, to write *at once* on my card for you. Your hand trembles a little. I doubt not we can have the attorney here within fifteen minutes. Eh, Mr. Takeit?"

"Exactly," was the other senator's reply. "I am the last man to want to impede peaceable councils," with as sincere a laugh as ever shook a man's sides. "For, to tell the truth, I've been in a mighty pickle. What with my district on one side, and you, old feller," with a tap of his fingers that held a fresh-lighted cigar on the broad back of the older Nevada, "on the other side, zounds! I sh'd ha' been in hot water sure. Peace is my motto. Ha! ha!" Now all broad smiles, cigar in lips, coat caught up by hands that strained into his tight pockets, and face turned up benignantly on the peacefully curling wreaths of thin smoke. After which the lawyers came; noon came; and afternoon, the evening, but the peaceful solution not yet, though evidently coming.

"Can't give up seein' the liar in prison!" This often from the former bosom-friend of "Lem Norcross."

“How like thunder you millionaires love each other, don't ye, when ye fall out?” This or some similar banter from the good-natured Takeit, always ready and prompt to the rescue of the trio of young fellows now working in harmony.

“But he's ruined for life, you know, any way,” said the leading lawyer, with a snap of his fingers, taking his cue from Takeit, though his fee from Nevada senior.

“He will reside in Europe, no doubt, gentlemen,” said Joe Nevada.

“That's the checker!” exclaimed Takeit. “Nor-cross the seas again!”

“I b'lieve you'd joke at a funeral, Takeit!” growled old Nevada, amid the oh's and ah's.

At which the astute and jesting peacemaker shook his sides again and winked to the attorneys all round. “He's thawing out, gentlemen. Known him for years. Never mind my nonsense; go ahead with your affairs. Nevada can't quite endure a liar, and a feller who deceives him ——”

“Struck it to a hair!” roared the gentleman in question, with a gratified thump on the table.

“But this is a matter involving justice to several innocent persons,” said Paul Havens;

“and, as I understand it, Norcross himself is innocent of actual fraud.”

“Right!” was Takeit’s ready help, while a curious smile ran round. “And when,” rising and throwing it over his shoulder, — “when did a Nevada ever refuse a fellow-man justice? I Take-it, never!” The senatorial humor gradually won its way. Happy man he! A peacemaker of a noble type, with real milk — or brandy and water — of human kindness in his veins. “Will reside out of the country. Excellent!” No more that whip-cracking over his senatorial head. The best-fed slave sometimes likes to change masters.

So we go hitching along, the lawyers helping. But there are to be several days of this hitching along before matters of millions and justice and “punishment” to the wicked are fixed all around. Havens comes and goes like a shuttle with a silver thread, meanwhile.

“No actual fraud?” growled Senator Nevada, as the last check and voucher were exchanged, one day. “Young man,” putting his heavy palm on Paul Havens’ shoulder, “that was the phrase you let drop here a week ago or so, when we began this business. I saw at a glance that you were a tenderfoot. But now that I’ve got my

money, I'll show you what a thief this Lem Norcross actually was. Look a' there!" and he spread out the dishonored stock-book of the Crosston mills, wherein the over-issue to Nevada & Co. lay open to the light of day. "That's the stuff the fellow gave me when he took chances on our Colorado properties. Here, take it; it's Andrew Norcross' property now, free and clear. Straighten it out. But I tell ye, you'll never see that precious scamp again."

Let us drop the veil of pity here. Let us not attempt to describe the chagrin,—yes, the agony of shame which this actual knowledge threw on Paul Havens.

But it was all past. He had intended no complicity in the defaulter's escape; he had himself been a victim of the fallen man's falsehood; and, in the person of his future wife, must ever help to bear some portion of the family shame.

XXIII.

OUT OF LIFE INTO LIFE.

MEANWHILE, a different company was gathering each day at the residence on Commonwealth Avenue. Puss Norcross is about taking a long journey, and many are gathered daily in her room to say good-bye. She has no discoverable disease, it is rather the touch of an angel's wing, from which no one ever recovers. Thank God! that touch makes it impossible for a mortal to stay on earth; a mere brush, a gentle fanning every day, every night, of an angelic wing.

It was a sunny going away, out of life into life. The breath of the May mornings were freely admitted to the opened dwelling. The living air of each daybreak was vocal with the minstrelsy of birds who, northward journeying towards rural uplands, always pause for a city season of concerting. The only beauty of the city's summer is May. It was always Puss's favorite season, and never more so than now. She sits much in her chair, rich-robed, white hands, like alabaster, features composed in smiles not of this world,

all in such grace of frailty that she reminds you of lace drapery at a window through which the evening stars might shine.

“Bring them in,” she whispers. She means the fresh flowers from the conservatory; they come every morning, and she watches the gardener as he banks them, braids them, bunches and festoons them, the adorning for her bridal. Poor man, the old florist, I mean, his eyes yet full of tears often, for he can not understand it. But this bride says, “Peter, you shall see, for once, how true the Christian’s hope is: to die is gain.”

“Bring them in,” she softly murmurs, all smiles, and every afternoon, when her strength is firmest, a troop of little children come. They bring garlands on garlands of blessings from the attics of the poor. They have been cautioned below-stairs not to cry; but up-stairs they could not shed a tear—it is all sunshine, joy, ripple of laughter, carol of silver songs and clapping hands. So the immortals ought to go, to their own place, children, “with songs and everlasting joys upon their heads.” This is the logic of a life, little ones, and ye will not forget it, though you forget the logic of many labored sermons.

She sits in the flush of the evening like a prophetess, and seems to be reading the signs

in the rich-hued western sunsets. Tender tints glow on her satin robes, and satin hands and face, as if the tidings were flung out to her through the gates of evening, from One whom the others can not see. "I am he who was dead, and behold I am alive forevermore."

"Yes, yes," murmur the white-whiskered lips of her father. "The Faith of the Ages, darling!"

But no one weeps; it is against the law, the eternal law which few mortals can obey.

"I prophesy that to-morrow, dear boys"—so she addresses the much-perplexed Andrew and Paul—"those gentlemen, or the courts," as the case might be, for she kept closely informed, "will do thus and so. Every day a little nearer."

It is not mine to explain how she foreknew, but to record the fact. This prophetess read out the victories of each day.

"Glorious woman!" Paul exclaimed one evening, almost rushing in with his glad tidings, "your brother has got his rights!"

She smiled on "the unselfish man," as he kissed her hand.

"Sister! Sister! I have a chance again!" It was Andrew, as he flung his arms about her.

Then they explained to her that Andrew would be permitted to succeed to and go on with the

mills at Crosston with his father, "provided he had the commercial ability."

"I knew it," she calmly remarked, "my brother has the ability. He will address himself to a man's task now. Paul, I wonder if your bright sister would come to see me? Bella, I mean. Invite her to accompany your saintly father and mother to-morrow, will you? Tell her this is the chamber of life, not of death." Her soft, thin hand was patting Andrew's bushy head, as it lay against her knee."

"My sister"—softly yet with deep emotion the bowed youth speaks—"could you tell me the way to find your Christ? I—I have no such heaven before my eyes as you are nearing—I seem likely to live long—and with all these added burdens, this great business, could Christ—somehow I think one needs him, even more to live well than to die well."

"If such is your thought, Andrew, Christ must have already found you, for these are not the thoughts of the natural heart."

"Found me, sweet sister?" He looks up fervently to exclaim it. "Does Christ first seek us mortals?"

"It is so written, dear brother. He is the Shepherd who goes to find his sheep."

“Why, then, Puss, I have but to be found of him? To say, ‘Here am I, my Saviour’?” The young man had slipped from the hassock at her feet to his knees at her knee.

“That is all, Andrew. Being saved is faith’s self-surrender to the Crucified One.”

“Oh, my sister, so soon to go to dwell with him, you who have known this Christ so long, while I bow, speak you the words for me, and pray him to receive me, while I stammer out Amen.”

While they were at prayer the door opened, and Sylvester Havens entered. The aged clergyman came often nowadays, and was always a blessing. Indeed, all the Havens family came often of late. You should have heard the symphonies, struck from the harps of these two hearts, as old Pastor Havens sat long and sunny hours in conversation with this woman.

“Good morning, sweet child. Life is a pilgrimage.”

“Good morning, dear servant of Jesus. Life is as a tale that is told.”

“Life is Christ, dear child, and to die is gain.” And then she explained Andrew’s joy.

Often then, when her human heart could not quite contain itself, and it being unlawful to weep in that bright chamber, Minnie, the

sister, would descend to the drawing-room and touch the piano. The welcome melody floating up with overture of joy, ardently loved by this invalid whose passion was music, would seem like the echo of the far-away song, the New Song, which you and I have never heard, reader.

Every day the flush of the spring came over Bella Havens' ice-fields in the soul. But as yet there were no green grasses nor flowers.

"It will be all right to-morrow!" one June evening, Puss had added to this usual remark; "for to-morrow Uncle Lem and Clara are coming back from Crosston."

Out of pity they have never told her the worst. She is never to know that Lemuel Norcross has sunk into a dishonored grave.

"Caged up in their great lonely mansion there in the village for weeks, what a noble daughter that dear child has been to that sick man! They tell me wonderful things of her heavenly ministry to her father. I shudder to think what might have been, had she not spread her wings, like a night bird, and flown after him, that terrible midnight. And how happy it will be for such a man, your Paul, to have such a wife!"

Look at them,—Puss and Clara meeting the next morning; though no eye saw them then

save Paul Havens', who stood regarding these two young women in their greetings. The one in her chair, the other risen now from her kneeling, and standing, in full bloom, at the other's side. The one, like the lace through which the evening star could shine. The other, glowing, substantial flesh and blood, on whom the morning sun was shining. What is this strange thing called beauty?—for both of these wear beauty like a garment; perfect each, wonderful each, yet as unlike as two different worlds. Ah, that is it; it is a matter of two different worlds. "The glory of the celestial is one, the glory of the terrestrial is another."

"Come, Paul." Puss reached out and took his hand as he approached. "I may tell you now, Paul Havens, that I have loved you, very dearly."

Paul bowed himself over the hand, and kissed it with unutterable emotion.

"And now I am so happy to join your hands. Clara, your house on the avenue is almost done, they tell me."

"But, precious cousin——" then the lips melted like wax and could not go on.

"I know," Puss continued, "you think you are a beggar. You suppose the house went to pay your papa's debts. I bought it. Dear

Andrew got the deed for me. It is now in your name. I have talked it all over with papa. I have left all I have, and it is a large sum, you know, to you and Paul."

"Never!"

"Never!"

"Hush! It is done. Paul Havens can now be pastor to the city's poor and take no wages! See? And you, dear girl, will have just this to do, namely: to make his home a sunny place every evening as he comes wearily in from the unsunned abodes of the city's misery. For years and years he will toil, and I shall be looking down. I have happiness beyond telling. I endow no asylum. His heart is the asylum of a hundred thousand of the city's blind. I build no church. He is the church, the unnamed, unclaimed church, for all the weary and heavy-laden, and he is founded on him who went about doing good—any good he could! Kiss me! Now leave me for a while."

They kissed her and left her for a while. Even yet it seems only a little while. A very little while for so much peace and joy to have come to so many hearts.

A little while it seems to Bella Havens, not an actress after all, bending now her high courage to be a fit help-meet to her husband, An-

drew Norcross, in his Crosston toil; a very little while since the flame of that young Christian life caught hers and burned up all its bitterness.

A little while, Pastor Havens, since, after all, from the hands of a disciple was flung to you the price of bread and shelter for your old age in the neat suburban home; where you sit daily in the warm sun of your boy's rising honors, and whisper to him of sweet humility.

A little while, Joe Nevada, senators, presidents—but why mention them? Forgotten in such a little while, a very little while. The swift mutations that overwhelm a silver mine did it. The Nevadas have exhausted their vein. Their names have long since been chalked off the bulletin at the Exchange.

If Nora and her husband, good Stephen Crane, shall return this season, as is expected, having completed their first ten successful years, and so having earned their right to vacation in their native land, why then Paul Havens' splendid residence—the one which Clara built, you remember—will be opened to such a fond reception, and so many of "our best people" will throng to honor Havens' invitation, the bronzed missionaries will almost tremble for "the pride of life."

Yet Paul Havens and Clara, his wife, the grace-

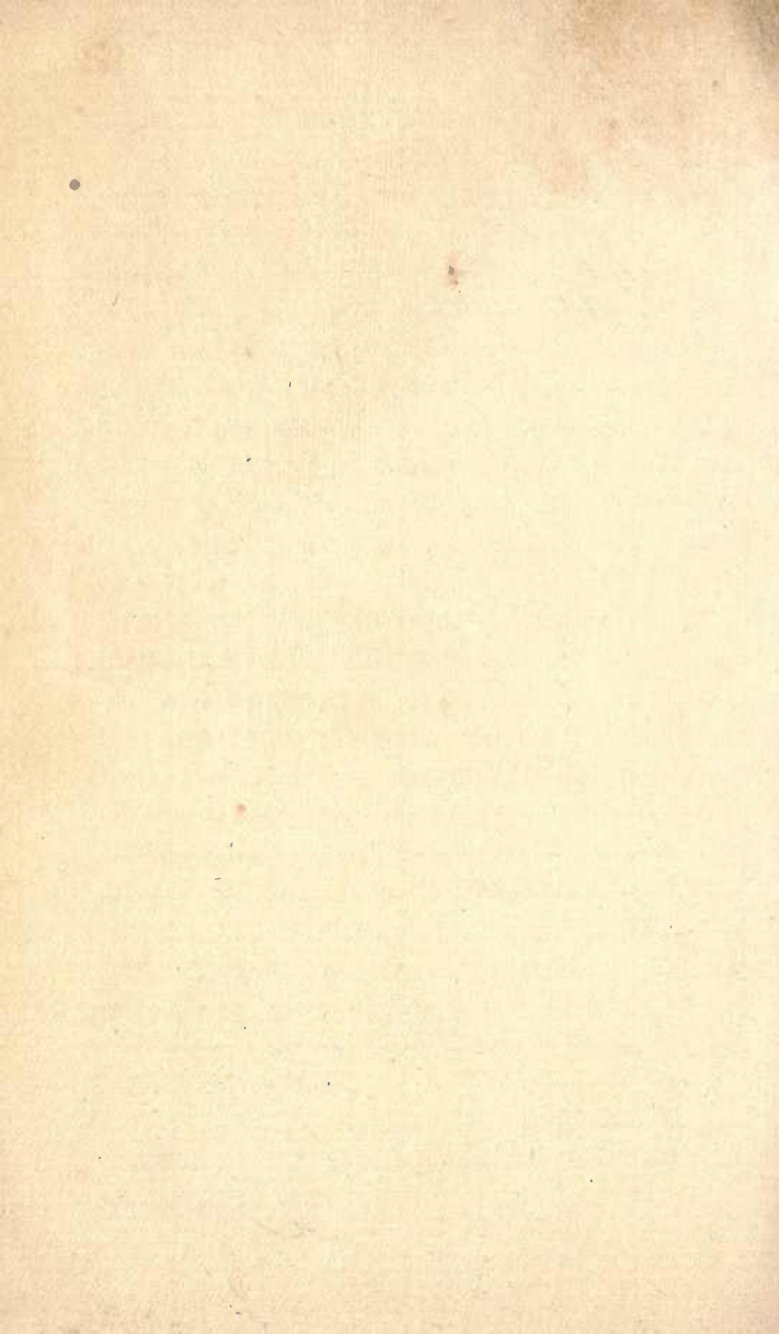
ful hostess of many such meetings of "the best circles," are not leaders in Vanity Fair. This young man, busy about his old errands—doing men any good—and munificent with his wealth, has succeeded to the benevolent and social leadership, which the aged William Norcross resigned.

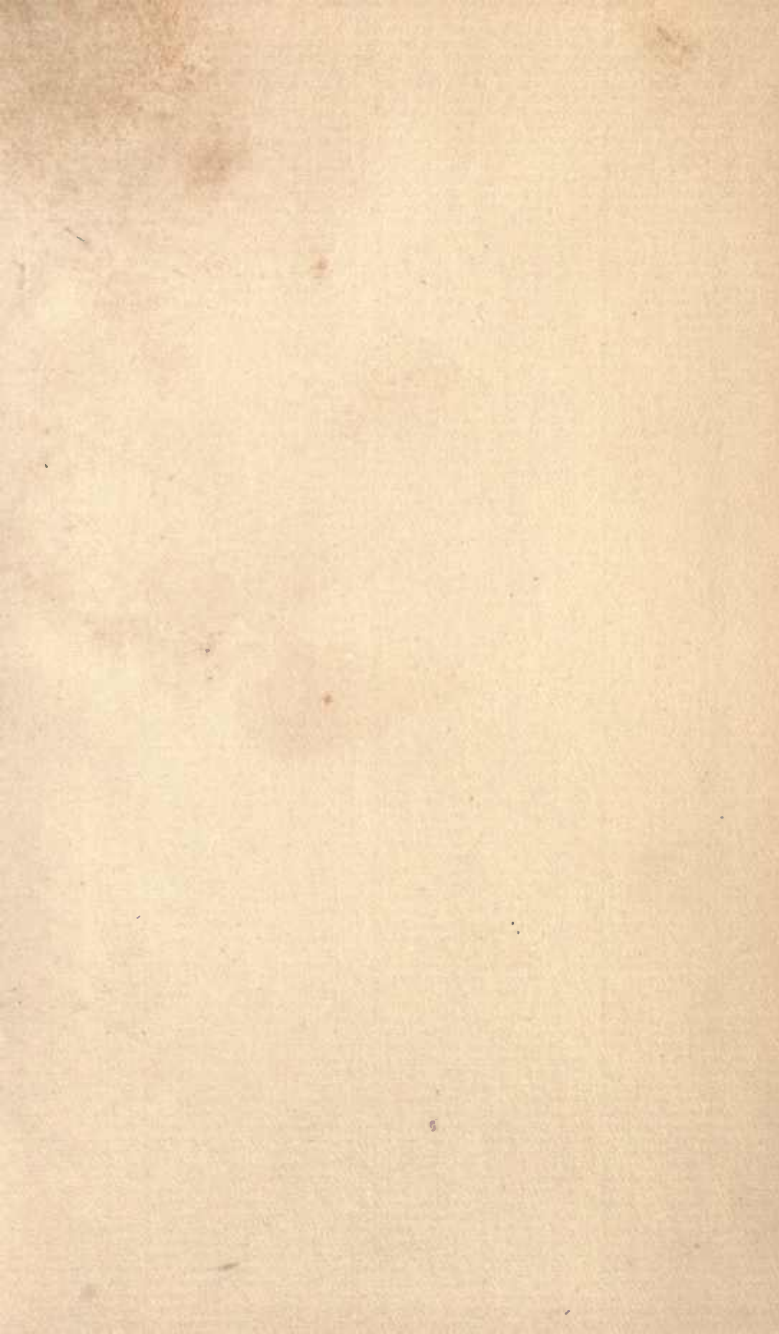
Over and over again, Paul's aged mother, fondling his only child, exclaims, "My beautiful boy, would to God you may live to take up the ministry; such ministry as your father's. Live to do any good you can to man!"

And the beautiful, proud mother of the child, beams on them her approval. This charming wife—I caught sight of her this evening, standing just within the curtains of her wide windows, and revealed against the flash of evening grate, as she watched for his coming—welcomes Paul Havens, the untitled, unsalaried toiler, with good cheer; for she knows that he bends his back all day like a laboring man, among the poor, the sick, the idle, and the vicious, his only business doing men any possible good, to body, and mind, and spirit, in a great city, where his sort of business is never slack.

Try it, some of you rich men, who do not know what to do with yourselves, and who are tired of the club.

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