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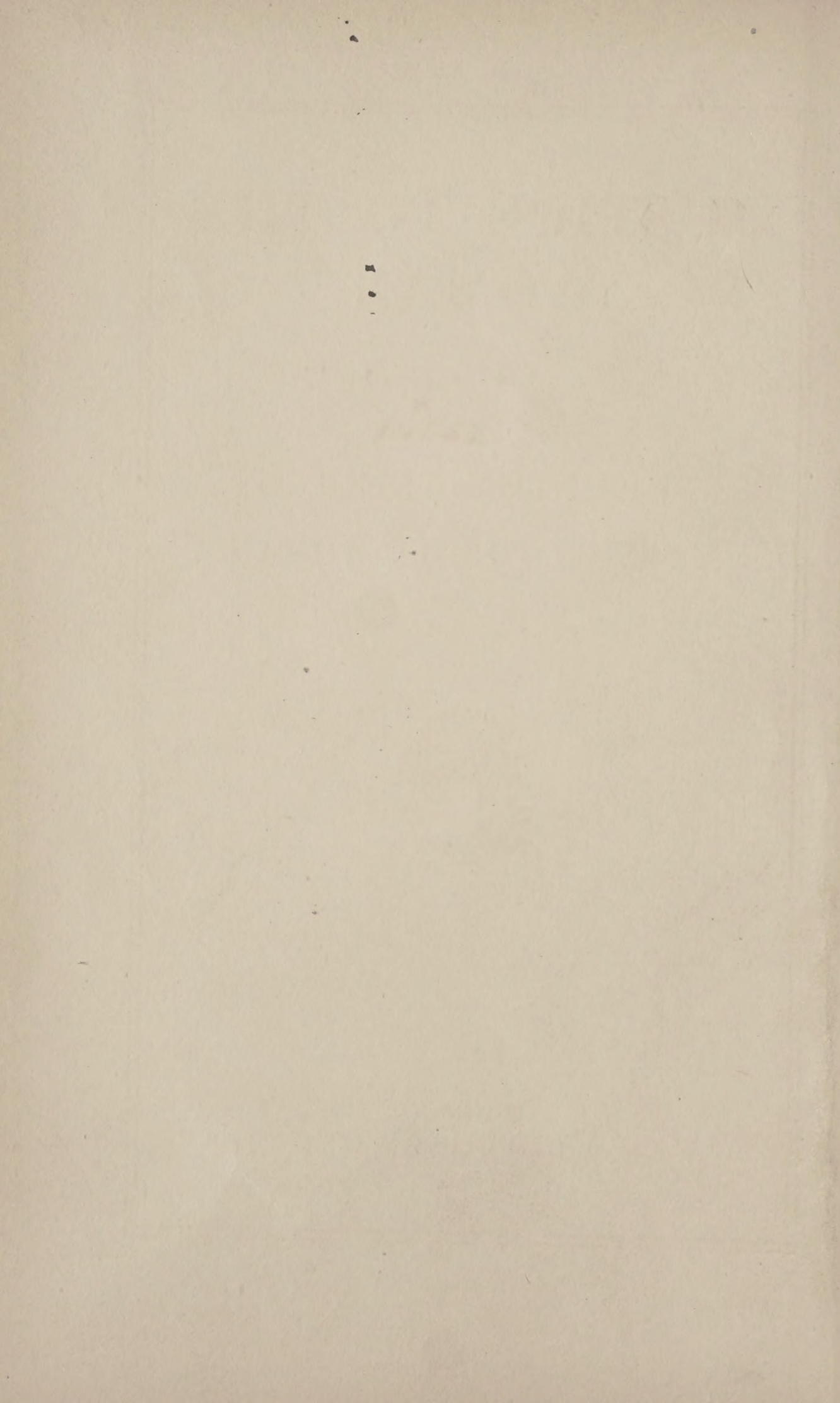
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JUSTICE TO THE WOMAN



# JUSTICE TO THE WOMAN

BY

BERNIE BABCOCK



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RESPECTFULLY INSCRIBED

TO MY ESTEEMED FRIEND

WM. P. F. FERGUSON



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# JUSTICE TO THE WOMAN

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## CHAPTER I.

### THE NIGHT IN THE BOAT.

Dariah Plunkett had just quitted an unusually successful seance in a spiritual Sandtown cabin and was picking his homeward way across a waste of sawdust and between the piles of fresh slabs and miscellaneous scraps of sawmill refuse that littered the borders of Sandtown even to the door-yards of its motley cabins.

The scent of fresh pine hung heavy on the night air, and against the pale sky lit by a waning moon, a ragged outline of smokestacks and logslides showed distinctly, while beyond it all, the restless, lapping waves of the lake beat against a long stretch of beach, their distant echo falling on the heavy air like the labored, half-hushed breathing of some sleeping monster.

Before him, somber against the sky, Black Hill towered, and it was toward the way that twisted itself around this hill, high above the river, that he turned his steps.

Dariah Plunkett walked briskly for a man of fifty some odd years, for a season spent with the spirits gives one a feathery feeling no less in the heels than in the head, and the seance he had but left had been an unusually lively one. Tables had tipped; chairs had paid their compliments to one another and had danced right merrily; knocks had sounded; spirit-fingers had traced messages on slates; and spirit-hands had patted shoulders longing for a familiar touch.

As he entered the gloom of the winding way around Black Hill, it seemed to Dariah that he again heard the voices of spirits.

He stopped and glanced cautiously around.

The conical, grizzly hill, with its top-trimming of stunted pines, frowned in silence.

The slanting rays of the moon fell across the river below, casting long bars, and the morbid gurgle of the water as it washed the roots of the trees was

answered by the far and indistinct tumbling of the lake waves.

After a short pause he started on again, his chin as was its habit jumping and quivering vehemently. This agitation, it should be explained, was due to some spirit agency, which being satisfactory to Dariah himself, caused him small annoyance, and was not to be taken at all times as a sign of inward perturbation.

Midway across the narrow board walk that hugged the gloomy bank high over the stream, he paused a second time.

The scent of a fine cigar distinctly reached his nostrils.

He mused.

Spirits might materialize, but within the bounds of his knowledge smoke had not materialized; so being possessed of the usual curiosity men honestly inherit from their maternal ancestry, he looked and listened.

For a time, only the guttural play of the sluggish water beneath him and the distant swish on the beach line broke the stillness, then the running of

the river water and its distant lake echo were broken by a woman's voice.

Dariah Plunkett listened eagerly, but for a time the rhythm of the water was the only sound that broke the stillness.

Then the woman's voice reached his quick ear a second time, and after another pause, a man's voice sounded, rather sharp and quite distinctly.

“Sit down. You will upset the boat.”

Dariah Plunkett crouched low and peered through the mat of boughs that overhung the steep bank.

When his eyes had become accustomed to the gloom he discovered the outlines of a small boat near the shore.

In one end was a man leaning comfortably on his elbow.

Before him stood a woman, her figure showing indistinctly in the shade.

“I will promise—of course—anything on earth, but sit down”—and he spoke with evident irritation.

“But I am in earnest—awful, awful earnest!”

“So am I.”



The woman stood quietly a moment longer, then said in a wild, despairing way, "But tell me when? For God's sake, tell me when!"

The man straightened up leisurely, and catching hold of the woman's hand, drew her to his side.

For a moment it was still, then she suddenly threw her arms around his neck and pressing her head against his breast burst into a fit of hysterical weeping.

The man bent his head and kissed her.

Dariah Plunkett, scarcely daring to breathe, hung his head over the edge of the walk and strained his eyes.

Whether tragedy or farce he knew not, but the thing gave promise of being more interesting than spirit happenings, which was sufficient guarantee of its importance.

For a short time the sobs of the woman mingled with the faint roll of the distant water and the gurgle in the shadows, then she grew more quiet and the man spoke softly and soothingly, but so closely were his words watched by the man with the jump-

ing chin who hung above, that little of what was said escaped him.

“But I thought you loved me, deary?” he was saying.

“I do—I do,” she answered, catching her breath in a last effort to stop the sobs.

“But real love is proven by patient waiting and implicit trust.”

“And haven’t I waited, and haven’t I trusted? O, haven’t I?” and there sounded again in her voice the note of despair.

“Don’t talk so loud,” he said, the touch of irritation again noticeable in the manner of his speech. “You have trusted well and have been patient, but is there a time limit to be placed on trust when love rules souls?”

“I could wait and wait forever if——”

“Yes, yes,” he interrupted. “You say you could; but do you not love me now as much as if we had been married ten times over?”

“Love you?” and the quick catch came into her voice. “You know it. If all the world with its honor and its wealth were on one side and you stood alone

on the other, I should go to you—and I have done it—I have. But it all seems wrong. I cannot rest—I cannot sleep—I am afraid!”

“Afraid, afraid of what?”

“Something awful might happen before we are married.”

“What awful thing?”

Again there was a pause in the conversation, the stillness broken only by the play of the waters.

Vague and growing fears had beset the woman until she was well-nigh overwhelmed with apprehension, and yet she would not, dared not let these fears resolve themselves into the shape they seemed bent on doing.

“You might—might die.” And she shuddered as she said the words.

The man laughed and threw his cigar stump into the water.

“No danger,” he said, assuringly.

“But if anything should happen before our wedding-day?” he added in a slightly changed voice, “what would you do?”

She turned half around and pointed.

“Do you see right over there, where the water whirls round and round like a black serpent? I would throw myself right into its very center, and if I woke up in hell itself it could never be worse than to live without you. In all this wide world nobody loves me but you—I am alone. Be good to me.”

He brushed back the hair from her forehead.

“Little deary, you are mine. Of course I will be good to you. You shall be treated like a queen and I will never forget you for one minute.”

“And we will be married to-morrow?”

“Hardly so soon, I am afraid.”

“The next day?”

“I should not like to promise.”

“Next Wednesday, then. I cannot wait. I have been ready weeks and weeks and the suspense is driving me mad.”

“Suppose I said next Wednesday, and then found I could not meet the engagement, would you think I had forgotten you?”

“No, no; but give me your sacred promise.”

“Haven't I made you every conceivable sort of a

promise, and sworn to it by everything holy in heaven and honorable on earth?"

"I want another promise, the most solemn promise of all, a vow before Almighty God."

"All right," he said easily, "anything to satisfy you. Fix up your most solemn vow and when it is ready, so will I be."

"When you were little did your mother hear your prayers at night? I suppose all mothers do. Then raise your face to God as you did then and I will say the words for you."

"That's a curious way to take an oath and confoundedly childish, but go ahead," and he lifted his face to heaven at her direction.

"In the presence of Almighty God," she said softly, and he repeated it, "I do solemnly swear and promise that I will marry the woman whose hand I hold and whose trust has been given into my keeping, next Wednesday afternoon."

When she reached the last two words he hesitated, then repeated them, adding, "if possible."

"Do you feel better now?" he questioned.

"What happens to a man who vows a solemn

vow before Almighty God and breaks it?" the woman inquired by way of answering his question.

"He suffers a bitter and endless retribution."

"A bitter and endless retribution," she repeated, then added softly, "This night God has registered your promise."

"You are very childish, Mignon," the man said, with something like a yawn.

"I am afraid so—I thought we should have had a witness."

At this remark the man laughed heartily, but Dariah Plunkett clutched the rough ends of the boards overhead convulsively and leaned dangerously out over the beetling walk, while his chin jumped with unwonted vigor.

He had an idea of the nature of the case, and though he could not distinguish the features of either of the two, he recognized his importance, for indeed the woman had a witness, and he was that man.

A longing desire to drop 'hrough the branches like a panther upon them took possession of him, and he smiled in anticipation of the consternation

such an act would cause, but neither being sure that he would fall into the boat, nor that it would not capsize if he should, he gave up this desire as he had given up many another inviting scheme.

The stroke of an oar drew his mind from the distinction he had achieved and he watched with breathless interest as the man rowed out of the shadows into the bars of light.

The voices of the two were fixed in his mind for all time, but it yet remained for him to see their faces.

When the boat glided into the band of silver hanging across the river, Dariah saw that the man's back was toward him—the back of a broad-shouldered, well-proportioned man, wearing a tall hat.

The woman faced him, but at that distance her features were scarcely distinguishable, but her hair was dark as an ebony frame around her face, and in the flood of low-hanging light she looked almost too beautiful to be real.

The witness arose from his cramped position, gave his knees a couple of twists and then hung over the railing with his eyes fixed on the little boat until it

dissolved into a tiny speck and vanished in the shadows of the bridge piers.

With a short sigh he straightened up, shook himself, and removing his hat, rubbed his brow vigorously with the back of his hand as if to make sure he were yet a creature of the mundane sphere.

His chin worked up and down in regular, rapid strokes.

“S-s-she talks like a v-veery and b-by goll, she is a v-veery;” and he shaded his eyes with his hands and cast a long look across the river.

The irregular silver bars shimmered across the black face of the sleepy river unbroken by a speck.

The dull, far-away break of the running waves pulsated on the night air and caught the ear of the listening man, and he glanced at Black Hill behind him, then once again began a hurried homeward walk, making mental comment on the face he had seen as in a dream, and the voice of the “veery.”

After reaching his home he hastily disrobed, hung his garments on a peg and donning his night-gown and cap stretched himself on his narrow cot to rest, but fate had ordered things otherwise.



Hardly had he closed his eyes when a loose, chuckling rapping was distinctly heard. It sounded first in one and then another corner of the room, and while the noise and the vibration was distinctly heard it seemed to come in contact with neither wall nor ceiling.

At first sound of the loose, indescribable knocking, Dariah Plunkett's eyes flew open and he assumed a sitting posture, for while it was true that he was no Chesterfield in his deportment with ordinary mortals, he was all attention and courtesy in his relation with his spirit friends.

“O-Ouijah?”

This question, meekly put, was answered by three raps, which, being interpreted, spelled “yes.”

“A c-communication?”

Three raps.

“Have you f-found the rascal that s-s-stole my s-s-shoes?”

Two raps.

“Not yet? The fool 'll have them wore to a f-frazz.”

The spirit made no comment on this remark. It was irrelevant.

“ A w-word for Widder S-s-mith? ”

Two raps.

After propounding several other questions and being answered in the negative, Dariah mused a while, and then thinking that perhaps Ouijah had made a mistake, he again sought rest.

Immediately the loose rattling began to play around the corners of the room with renewed vigor.

Sleep was entirely out of the question until the important communication had been received from spirit headquarters.

His mind had been so absorbed with the later occurrences of the night that he could hardly remember the list of those whom the message might be for, and it finally came to his mind that it might be something new, and the foremost question in his mind presented itself.

“ Do you k-know the v-veery? ”

Three raps.

“ Has she a father? ”

Two raps.

“ P-poor thing! A brother? ”

Two raps.

“ No man, b-by goll! She'd ought t-to have. Will the m-man m-marry the v-veery? ”

Three raps.

“ Certain? ”

Three raps.

“ You swear it? ”

Three raps.

Dariah Plunkett rubbed his hands and smiled for joy.

“ When? ”

No answer.

Then Dariah laughed.

“ D-Dariah, you f-fool, how does Ouijah know when the p-party hisself hasn't decided? ”

“ Shall I see them again? ”

No answer.

“ I'm a witness; shall I see them again? ”

No answer.

Dariah waited a few moments longer, meditating on the glorious disposition of a spirit that would take a trip five thousand miles through space to set

at rest a matter that promised to try his strange old soul even more than the loss of his shoes had done.

A third time he sought his bed.

His chin steadied itself into a slow, gentle quiver and stopped; his eyelids drooped and with a long, peaceful snore, he launched into the land of dreams.

## CHAPTER II.

### A LONG DRAUGHT OF DREGS.

Border City was situated on a lake, a river, and three railroads; consequently its mixed population, from the commonest Swede laborer to its most exclusive millionaire mill-owner, recognized its importance.

Border City began on the lake shore where the river ran inland.

Here were spread the mills, irregular in succession, and these with the tenements of Sandtown made the first installment of the city.

The road from the mills wound around Black Hill and ran for a distance as the principal street of the city proper, for here were the shops and churches and boarding-houses and the unpretentious cottages of the middle classes.

Upper Terrace was the last and crowning installment of Border City, and if the toiling hundreds in Sandtown ever wondered why they wrought, they

had but to take a stroll along this boulevard, for here, in magnificent array, were the granite and brick mansions with their outlook over the city and away to where the lake glistened like a long blue satin band.

It was in that part of the city, where a butcher-shop adjoined a shoe-store and a church, and a feed-house occupied the same block, that the Widow Brunhaven kept a boarding-house.

The Widow Brunhaven was not a native of Border City; few persons were, and she did not regret this, for caste among citizens born in Border City was considerably below par, its real aristocracy having brought their social distinction and pedigree from some distant state or city.

The Widow Brunhaven was no exception to this rule. She had been the wife of the late Captain Brunhaven, of some reputation, and had formerly held a position of consequence in her native town.

But when Captain Brunhaven, following the example of his ancestors, died, she found nothing to live on but his cherished reputation, which, in the

face of sundry grocery and meat bills, proved inadequate.

Thus it became necessary for her to look about for a place to keep boarding-house, this being the only branch of economics she understood.

Like the course of empire, she turned her way westward to the thriving little city where boarding-houses were in good demand.

She had some misgivings as to crossing the boundary line and at her age entering this other state, for two reasons.

First, she was not sure that the class of boarders that might come to her would appreciate her position in life due to her late husband's cherished reputation; neither might they fully appreciate the china and silver she had been a lifetime collecting, and either of these offenses would be enough to make her miserable.

But a second and greater fear caused her to hesitate for a time.

The state to which she contemplated moving, had in a moment of excessive chivalry or pure selfishness,

granted the female portion of its citizens their right of franchise.

Mere talk of suffrage, the Widow held to be an exhibition of a dangerous taste, and its exercise beneath the contempt of all well-balanced females; therefore, she weighed well the matter of moving among such a degenerate people, and would no doubt have weighed the matter indefinitely had not necessity intervened to stay the process.

So it happened that in due course of time the Widow Brunhaven found herself installed in a clean, roomy house with enough quiet, respectable people to fill it. The china and silver were more than appreciated by the clerks and bookkeepers who ate at her table, and no ranting suffragist worried her peace or menaced her property.

Indeed, after having cornered all the saloons in a certain narrow limit, the women of Border City had left the matter of voting in the hands of a few war-horses of the movement and had returned to their domestic labors and social functions, just as if they possessed no jawbone of a ballot with which to work mischief on unsuspecting male Philistines.



The Widow Brunhaven kept a house of the first class. Indeed, such a good name had her house earned that strangers on inquiring for the best in its line were referred to her establishment.

Many had come; many had gone; tall, short, lean, fat, old, young, homely, and dashing, both male and female; but among the number of dainty and fair women that it had been her fortune to accommodate, Mignon Dermot stood pre-eminent.

When the Widow Brunhaven first saw her she was certain there stood in her doorway the leading lady of some theatrical company, and in her mind's eye she saw the charming woman domiciled in her best blue-and-white chamber.

After the young person had inquired rates and had selected the smallest and cheapest room in the house, the Widow Brunhaven took occasion to give her stylish dress a more careful examination.

This dress hung in folds that might have been the envy of a fashion plate, but close scrutiny revealed the fact that it had been made over. The shiny shoes that peeped from under its border, on sober second glance, bore evidence of wear and shoe polish. The

gloves that encased her small, slender hands, fitted like a second skin, but they, too, had known previous wear.

Nevertheless the girl was a jewel, such a one as cannot be marred with a setting of made-over stuff, and the Widow Brunhaven found it hard to keep from being rude, so charmed was she with the appearance of her new boarder.

The young woman's head, which she carried like a princess, was crowned with hair as purple black as a raven's wing, and from under the back coil little soft curls clustered against her neck like a baby's hair. From her face it turned back in a shiny roll, but here, as behind, the dark hair strayed out in silky rings.

Her eyes were grey and clear as the deep spots in a mountain stream and her lashes hung above them like a fine-spun fringe.

If her face had been less beautiful, even then she would have been attractive by her form, and voice, which was gentle, with a pleasing turn like a note in minor music; so, notwithstanding that her clothes had been made over and that she occupied the small-

est room in the house, she was by long odds the most attractive boarder the Widow Brunhaven had accommodated and it afforded her some pleasure to have her in the house.

Many had been the solemn head shakes when Cornelius Mansfield first began his practice of dropping into Snyder's big store to chat with the new girl in the notion department while he leisurely selected some worthless trifle, for Cornelius Mansfield had two reputations in Border City.

One appeared in the newspapers, among society notes, and read well.

The other was understood.

Some observing mortals had made dire predictions when Mignon was first seen driving in company with the stylish Mr. Mansfield in his tailored top coat and tall silk hat, and as many as two Border City women—W. C. T. U. mothers—had called upon the fair girl with a solemn note of warning, which had been kindly received but not acted on.

The Widow Brunhaven was not of the opinion of the two mothers. It never occurred to her mind that any man could withstand the charms of the

beautiful face and musical voice, not even the exclusive Mr. Mansfield, though it was well known that he had admittance to the most elegant parlors on Upper Terrace.

So it pleased Widow Brunhaven to have Mr. Mansfield's box buggy tied in front of her door. She watched the progress of the suit with more interest than she had watched a courtship since she had been interested in her own, and this was saying a good deal, for one of her failings had been watching courtships.

Nothing escaped her watchful eye, and when one day she noticed a new ring on the slender finger of her favorite boarder she was almost as happy as the fair wearer herself.

It was not just such a ring as she had supposed a man in the financial position of Cornelius Mansfield would choose for a betrothal ring, still it must have cost quite a pretty sum, and it answered the purpose.

After this, dreams of a wedding in her house came to her vision; a wedding that might raise her house from the strata of bare respectability to that of real society.

When Mignon finally quit the store to prepare for her wedding, the Widow was secretly happy, for the courtship had lasted months and months past the time limit she had set in her own mind.

One week after another slipped away, busy weeks to the girl for she found it necessary to make her own trousseau, but at last it was finished and put away with loving touches and much care, and still the weeks went by and the Widow wondered why she was not notified to prepare a wedding supper, and she began to grow uneasy, the more so because Mignon herself seemed at times restless and quite unnatural.

Turning these vexing thoughts in her mind one day as she sorted spoons and napkins, a new idea suddenly intruded itself.

She dropped the napkin she had been folding, drew her lips tightly, and sat down to think.

As she sat, many things that had passed her unobserved before, seemed demanding her consideration with startling boldness. A dozen fancies of impending trouble flashed across her mental retina as a pos-

sible solution of the procrastinated wedding came to her like a revelation.

With a set face she finished her dining-room work.

She felt the necessity of acquainting herself with the actual condition of affairs. The reputation of her house might be in jeopardy, and yet she shrank from the delicate and painful task which every moment seemed growing more necessary—and more useless.

Slowly she ascended the stairs and paced the narrow back hall.

Twice she passed the door of Mignon's little room, then she tapped softly.

"You will not be here much longer?" she observed, after entering the room.

"A very short while," Mignon replied.

"When are you to be married?"

"Very soon."

"How soon?"

"The day has not been decided on."

The Widow Brunhaven mused a few seconds, then inquired:

"Are you sure you will be married at all?"

Mignon looked up quickly.

“I have the promise of an honorable man,” she said.

The Widow Brunhaven rested her face against her hand, gathering courage for another question, for she was a timid woman.

“Are you engaged to Mr. Cornelius Mansfield?”

“I was sure you knew it,” and Mignon twisted the pretty ring on her finger.

The Widow held out her hand. “Let me see it.”

Mignon slipped it off and handed it to her landlady, who adjusted her gold-rimmed spectacles and looked closely.

“Huh! Why didn’t he have his name and a date in this?” and she drew a plain ring from her own finger and handed it to the girl.

“That’s a ring that means something.”

Mignon examined it and handed it back, then looked again in her own.

“There is not room for so much in mine,” she explained; “but it means the same.”

“Do you believe it? Do you believe him?”

Mignon raised her eyes to the Widow’s face and

said without hesitating, "Believe him? I would trust him with my life."

"I hope and pray he appreciates your faith. What if he should prove false? What would it mean to you?"

The question was quietly put, but the Widow Brunhaven glanced at Mignon in a way that meant much more than words.

Mignon met the searching look of her inquisitor but a second, then her eyes dropped, a pink flush overspread her face and she raised her hand appealingly.

"Please, please do not mention such a thing. The very thought of it would drive me mad. I should put on my hat and go to the deepest hole in the river, and he knows I would; but he cannot deceive me for—he loves me."

There was a note of anguish in the tones that pained the heart of the elder woman, but it also proved her worst fears.

A second time she rested her face in her hand, to get courage to continue the interview. Suddenly she dropped her hand and straightened up boldly, as



if to have the matter over before her heart should fail her.

“ I must talk plainly,” she said. “ The reputation of my house is at stake, and you must find another place to stay, for you are—you are—a sinner.”

Mignon laced and unlaced her slender fingers convulsively as the Widow spoke. When she had finished, the girl fastened her clear eyes on the elder woman's face.

“ You do not mean that I cannot stay until I am married? ”

“ Unless your marriage is very soon.”

“ It will be—I am sure it will be.”

“ To-morrow? ”

“ I am afraid not.”

“ Wednesday? ”

“ I hope so.”

“ I will give you a week.”

Mignon buried her face in her handkerchief and sobbed, then she cast it away, and throwing herself at the side of the astonished Widow, she clasped her hands imploringly.

“ Mrs. Brunhaven, do not call me a *sinner*! God

knows—and he knows, I never meant to be a *sinner!*”

“Don’t take on so. Society holds things good or ill as they turn out. Compel him to marry you, and that at once. Don’t let him put you off. Why have you kept all this from me? I have been your friend.”

“How could I tell you? I have been so sure each day that the next I would be his wife, and I will be. He has not been able to prevent the delay. I do not understand his business, but it will all come right. If it does not——” and she pressed her lips and shuddered, “But it will!”

“It must be inside a week.”

This was the Widow’s parting message, and Mignon understood what it meant.

After her landlady had gone, the half-distracted girl brought out her pen and wrote.

Over and over she penned lines and destroyed them, for she felt that happiness or woe, life or death, hung on them.

At last, a missive was finished that suited her.

After reading it several times she slipped it into

an envelope and sealed it with trembling fingers, breathing a pathetic prayer over it.

It was a plea of a loving, trusting woman whose trust a man was shattering. When it left her hands waves of hope and fear seemed alternately to rush over her as she waited for the answer, which she hoped would be the man.

\* \* \* \* \*

Five days of the fateful week apportioned by the kind-hearted Widow Brunhaven had slipped away with no visible signs of a wedding.

At intervals on the sixth day, the Widow found herself stepping to the door now and then and gazing down the street as if expecting some one.

She determined to have the last scene of the trying ordeal over early on the morning of the seventh day, but her heart failed her, and she continued to wait until after dinner.

If her reputation had not been at stake, she might never have been able to nerve herself to the task, but reputation is a quickening goad.

When she finally started up the stairs after din-

ner, the postman handed in a letter addressed to Miss Mignon Dermot.

The Widow took this letter to Mignon's door and handed it in, but determined not to leave the upper hall until she had seen her boarder on her way to other lodgings.

She paced up and down the hall until, passing Mignon's door, shortly after having handed the letter in, she was startled by a half-smothered groan.

Hastily entering the room, she found her boarder as white as marble, gazing wild-eyed at the letter, which lay open on her lap.

"What does it mean?" she inquired, despairingly, raising her eyes from the paper to the Widow Brunhaven's face.

"Are you going to faint?" inquired the Widow, kindly, stepping to her side.

"No," said the girl, resting her head against the back of the chair, but her eyelids fluttered suspiciously.

The Widow caught up her two hands, clasped tightly together, and found them stiff and cold.

She rubbed her forehead, where perspiration like

dew had formed; she chafed her hands briskly and was about to call for help when Mignon said faintly, "Do not call anyone. I am all right—only I do not understand. What does it mean?" and she pointed again to the letter.

The Widow took it up hurriedly, and read aloud:  
"My Own Little Darling:

"I received your letter a few days ago and was surprised at its contents. It seems very hard for you to trust me. Why is this? You are mine, and it shall be my pleasure to see that you never want for either love or any material thing to make you happy. Believe in me, and be patient, too, for I am going to tell you a bit of news that I am afraid will be as disappointing to you as it was to me. Urgent interests demand that I leave the city immediately. I am going out of the state, and am sorry to say I can tell with no certainty when I will return, but I am afraid it will be much longer than you would like or than I can help. If anything should happen before I see you again, be a brave little Mignon and do not think of the river. That would be foolish. I will stand by you always, and what's the odds if we are

not married so soon as we would wish. I can love you just the same. I enclose a check for one hundred dollars, and will see that you get more when you need it. As my movements during the coming months are to depend largely on circumstances over which I have no control, you need not for the present write to me as I should not get the letters. Take good care of yourself for my sake, dearest, for I shall want to find you at your best when I return, and never doubt me, for I would be less appreciative of your love than I am if I could for one moment forget my own fair Mignon and my many solemn vows to her. Goodby, little darling. C.”

The Widow Brunhaven was silent—she was speechless for a time.

Then she suddenly broke out, “What does it mean? Cannot you tell?” and she glared at the letter fiercely.

“It means that you are an outraged and forsaken girl! It means that he ought to be hung!” and she picked up her apron string and jerked it wrathfully, as if experiencing the pleasure of hanging him.

Then the irate landlady flung the paper on the floor.

Mignon watched it flutter down with large, dry eyes.

“It cannot be—it *cannot* have that meaning!”

“But it is so, I tell you, child! What else can it mean?”

“Read it again. It *must* mean something else!” and Mignon reached eagerly for the paper, but her hand trembled so she could not read, and she handed it to the Widow.

A second time Mrs. Brunhaven read it carefully, pausing here and there to reflect, and shaking her head dubiously.

“What were his vows?” she inquired.

“He vowed before Almighty God that he would marry me.”

“Was the day set?”

“There have been several times suggested.”

The Widow Brunhaven mused.

“Did he ever write you any letters?”

From a little basket near-by Mignon drew a small

bunch of letters and handed them to the Widow, who opened and looked them over, one by one.

“The black-hearted villain!” she exclaimed when the last had been returned to its envelope.

“He has been careful enough not to leave his name on one of them. He will not come again, and it’s my opinion he never intended to.”

“Oh, but he will—he will! God is his witness.”

“A man who cares nothing for torturing a woman whom he can see, cares nothing for offending a God he cannot, nor ever will, see.”

“But how could he deceive me?” and there was something so incomprehensible to the girl in the thought that the woman did not try to explain it; she only said, grimly, “I don’t know how he’s done it, but he evidently has. There is nothing to do now but bear the shame of your sin, trusting heaven to deal him out his retribution.”

Mignon took a few hard breaths.

The Widow watched the young girl closely. She ground her hands together until the stones in her betrothal ring marked her flesh.



Then her eye caught sight of the check lying on the table, and a bit of color came into her face.

She took it up, looked at it, and handed it to the Widow Brunhaven.

“Will you return this? It is not mine. And now I will get ready to go away.”

Mignon's lips were white, but her voice was steady, and rising, she began to gather up her belongings, preparatory to leaving.

The Widow relented, and began to advise her to remain all night; but Mignon was firm.

There was one way to end the trouble that had almost paralyzed her. There was one place to hide her shame; one place where she might hide away from the world, and that was where the river water ran in black circling currents like a whirlpool.

With a feverish eagerness she left the little room, without once looking back.

It was dusk. No one would stop her; none would inquire. In half an hour it would all be over; she would be at rest.

The lamps had not been lit and the hall was dark, yet she stepped softly and rapidly, and on reaching

the front door turned the knob cautiously, but just as the door opened, steps behind her drew her attention, and the Widow Brunhaven, dressed for a walk, came to her side.

“Poor child!” she said, “do you think I have no heart? I will take you to a friend.”

“I am going to a friend,” Mignon protested.

“I will go with you. You are not feeling your best, and young girls should not be on the street alone.”

It was in vain that Mignon protested. The Widow had not forgotten her threat of the week before, and knew she was in no fit frame of mind to care for herself.

So she slipped her arm through Mignon's, and talked as she walked with her, until they suddenly halted before the entrance to a plain brick house, bearing over its door a sign glowing with the words “The Haven,” and here Mignon was put under the sheltering wing of Mother Shephard, who guarded unfortunates because she well knew their longing for a supposed rest under the sullen river waters.

### CHAPTER III.

#### DARIAH PLUNKETT, WITNESS.

A few weeks after fate had, without either his invitation or connivance, constituted Dariah Plunkett a witness, he found himself ill.

Whether the rheumatism that had infested his left leg for years was working its way upward, preparing for one decisive stroke at his heart, or whether the cough in his throat was working itself downward, to work fatal havoc with his lungs, he had not determined; but in order that the purpose of the disease might be thwarted in its evil course, whichever way it had been planned, he made certain preparations.

Dariah Plunkett believed that poultices, cold or hot, were good the world over, and the year around. Accordingly, he made a flaxseed-meal poultice, which weighed about a pound when completed and was as slimy as a serpent. This was spread over the region of his heart, as a counter attraction when the rheumatism should reach this vital point.

As the poultice was somewhat heavy, it was secured to his undershirt by safety pins which, on account of their number, made a sort of a coat of mail over the poultice.

For his cough he took at frequent intervals long gulps of a decoction made by steeping fat pine slivers in ginger-tea, nine parts something stronger.

Dariah Plunkett by preference was strictly temperate, belonging to the Sons of Temperance, and would never have thought of using this decoction had it not been kindly suggested by Ouijah, and prescriptions thus received were not to be lightly set aside, even though an occasional splinter did float down his throat and stick crossway.

But, in spite of the poultice and the pine sliver cough drops, his ailment showed no signs of leaving him. On the contrary, it seemed with every dose of fluid and every application of flax porridge to increase, until he was too ill to leave his bed.

The slightest motion of his head seemed to arouse to fierce activity some host of minute creatures peopling his brain, while his nose and eyes were hot, and presented a steamed appearance.

Lying alone in the twilight of a long, restless day, a familiar, chuckling rap sounded in an upper corner.

“Ouijah?” the prostrate man inquired, feebly.

Three raps.

“H-have you found who s-s-stole my s-s-shoes?”

Two raps.

“The f-fool will have them w-wore to a f-frazz!”

No remarks.

“A message f-for the Widow S-S-Smith?”

Two raps.

“No message. A m-message f-for anybody?”

Two raps.

“For me?”

Three raps.

“You k-know that I a-am s-s-sick?”

Three raps.

“How g-good of y-you.”

Three raps.

“W-will I die?”

Three raps.

“S-s-soon?”

Three raps.

“ M-my race is r-run? ”

Three raps.

“ You are advised of t-this by s-s-spirits in high c-circles? ”

Three raps.

“ Are they l-looking f-for me? ”

Three raps.

“ You k-know who you are t-talking t-to? ”

Three raps.

“ I’m P-Plunkett—P-Plunkett, you know? ”

Three raps.

“ There is n-no h-hope for me? ”

Two raps.

“ And m-y r-race is r-run? ”

Three raps.

Dariah gave a long sigh, and dropped back on his pillow.

After lying until he was somewhat rested, he slowly crept from the bed, and opening his night-shirt, proceeded to unloosen the soggy poultice.

His hands trembled, and after drawing out the last pin, before he could catch it, the slippery bag of

cold porridge fell through his shirt and struck his foot.

He kicked desperately, then went after the offending poultice, and gathering it by the corner, tottered to a window, which he opened. "I d-don't want you found on my cold, dead b-body," he said, flinging it out.

After this exertion he was somewhat weakened, and returning to his bed, took a sleep.

It was not such a long sleep as he had expected to take, for he found himself breathing when morning came, but the host of strange creatures still held unspeakable orgies in his head, tripping their toes incessantly over his sensitive brain; and his nose and eyes were even yet more painfully steamed and watery.

However, as morning came, his intellect cleared up a little, and he remembered that if a man would wind up his earthly race decently and in order, certain preliminaries were necessary.

Firstly, to do things right, he must make a will.

He had nothing but a kit of shoemaker's tools and

a cat, but he argued that what he had was good so far as it went as if it had been more. Accordingly he made the will.

Then, dying men were supposed to unburden their bosoms of whatever secrets lay hidden therein, and it was this second item that was, in his opinion, of the more importance on account of the position he held as witness to the oath made in the boat.

To the end of relieving his burdened heart, he determined to send for a physician of whom he had heard through a friendly washwoman whose child this same physician had cured of a fever, refusing pay therefor, and Dariah Plunkett mentally calculated that such a man would do to trust with his important secret.

Accordingly, he dispatched a neighbor's boy with all haste for Doctor Hernando, and while waiting for him to come he watched the one-legged alarm clock on a stand near by, wondering as the minutes passed if the Doctor would arrive before he lay cold and stiff in death.

When at last he heard the approaching steps of



the physician, he folded his hands across his breast, closed his eyes, and let his breath out in a long, melancholy rasp.

The physician glanced at him, then pressed his long fingers against the old brown wrist, after which, in as cheerful a tone as if death were not hovering immediately over his patient's head, he told him to put out his tongue.

"How long will it b-be b-before?" and Dariah Plunkett gasped, and looked beseechingly at the Doctor.

"Before what, sir?"

"B-before my r-race is r-run?"

"Are you running a race?" the Doctor inquired, gravely.

Dariah Plunkett opened his red-rimmed eyes wider than he had done for three days, and looked at the Doctor reproachfully, then said:

"I h-have received c-communication f-from the s-s-spirit world to t-t-the effect that my r-race is n-nearly run."

"I am afraid your spirit adviser does not understand your case."

“Yes, y-yes; the s-s-spirits understand all t-things.”

“Incorrect diagnosis,” insisted the Doctor, turning to his medicine case.

Dariah shook his head sadly as he watched the physician drop medicine into two glasses.

“M-y r-race is nearly r-run. It is f-for this I s-s-sent for you,” and the hot water flowed from his eyes profusely, in spite of his effort to stay the flood with a corner of the sheet.

The Doctor squinted carefully at the two glasses until the last drop had fallen, when he gave them each a sudden twist that mixed the contents well.

Then he turned again to his patient, with directions as to how it should be taken.

“You are a man w-ho can h-old a t-tongue?” Dariah Plunkett inquired, giving small attention to the unimportant matter of directions.

“I trust so.”

“You k-know the v-value of m-marriage?”

Doctor Hernando closed his medicine case, and balanced it carefully on his knee.

“Marriage is, under certain conditions, a most happy institution.”

Dariah Plunkett sighed and rolled the coverlet. He did not seem to be progressing at all well.

“I’m a w-witness,” he presently said, holding his lean finger toward the physician’s face.

“Indeed?”

“I am; and in v-view of the f-fact that my r-race is nearly r-run, it is n-ecessary that I appoint a d-deputy before I leave f-for s-s-spirit c-circles. Will y-you, s-s-sir, be that w-witness?”

Doctor Hernando set his case gently on the floor, and leaned back in his chair to await developments.

“What is the nature of the occurrence that must need a witness in case of your demise?”

Dariah had up to this time never spoken of his secret to any one but the trustworthy Ouijah, and he felt that he was about to bequeath a solemn trust. He looked carefully around the room, to make sure that there was no one in hiding, and then began his story in a low-spoken but important manner, his chin simply outdoing itself in its mad dance up and down.

“The n-night that Joe S-Smith materialized out

in S-Sandtown, I come along l-late. Whilst I w-was c-crossing over the river w-walk, around the bend in Black Hill, I h-heard a w-woman's voice, and I l-listened and I l-located it. It was in a b-boat, in the s-s-shadow. But I p-peeped, and I s-s-saw, and I'm a w-witness."

"Was it a murder?" inquired the Doctor, beginning to look interested.

"You'd a thought it w-was a goin' to be by the w-way s-s-she was a t-talking and a c-crying, and the way he s-s-swore."

"What was he swearing about?"

Again Dariah cast from his red eyes a look hard to be interpreted. He did not like to be misunderstood, but added shortly:

"He wasn't a c-cussing. He w-was p-putting his hand on a B-Bible and s-s-saying, 's-so help me, G-God.'"

"I see. He was taking an oath."

"That's it. S-s-she begged him like an angel to p-promise, and he s-s-swore, he d-did; and I'm the witness, and as g-good a witness as w-was ever put on t-this m-mouldy earth, by g-goll!"

“What was this man swearing to do?”

“He was a s-s-swearing to m-marry the girl.”

“Who were the parties?”

“S-she was a v-veery.”

“A what?”

“A veery.”

“And what is a veery?”

A look of supreme disgust came into Dariah Plunkett's face.

“They s-s-stay,” he began to explain, almost exasperated by the physician's show of ignorance, “they stay in thickets and brambles and hedges, or a-anywhere else where n-nobody c-can s-s-see them. When the s-s-sun goes down t-they s-s-sing tears in your eyes and they s-s-sing prayers in your h-heart, till even an old b-bell s-sheep will k-keep his wagging head s-s-still to catch the quiver.”

“I should have known if you had said ‘hermit thrush.’”

“S-she's a veery,” repeated Dariah, decidedly; and his statement was let to go unchallenged.

“And n-now,” continued Doctor Hernando's pa-

tient, "I m-must m-make haste to tell y-you the oath, s-s-so you'll know it."

"Very well. Who were the parties?—I mean by name."

"I don't k-know their n-names."

"Where do they live?"

"Another t-thing I have n-not f-ound out."

"You do not know what their names are, nor where they live?"

"I do n-not, s-s-sir."

"What sort of looking persons were they?"

"That's what I c-could not m-make out."

"Then how, I must ask, do you expect to be of any benefit to them—or expect that I shall?"

The old man smiled wisely, and seemed turning something in his mind.

"How would you know them if you should see them again?"

"H-her hair was black l-like a hearse feathers around a white wax f-face."

"A great many women have black hair."

Dariah Plunkett did not appear a bit disconcerted by this news.

“ I h-heard her t-talk, by g-oll. I h-hear her yet, I always w-will.”

“ What did she talk like? ”

“ Like a veery,” and the old man put so much stress in his answer that his physician only held back a smile out of respect.

Dariah allowed his chin full sway for a short time, mentally endeavoring to find a vocabulary sufficient to describe the voice of a veery, but it was useless.

He sighed.

“ Was the man’s hair black, also? ” and there was something of hidden amusement in the Doctor’s voice.

“ I c-couldn’t s-s-see his hair. He w-wore a t-tall hat.”

“ Was he a veery, too? ”

Dariah Plunkett shook his head feebly.

“ I h-haven’t p-placed him yet,” he said, slowly, as if weighing some matter, then added with a touch of uneasiness, “ You d-don’t s-s-suppose he’s a s-s-snake, do you? ”

Doctor Hernando removed his glasses from his

nose and poised them on the ball of his thumb. He was considering this supposition.

“I have no means of telling,” he said, after a pause, “but I should not think a snake would be very good company for a veery.”

“That’s t-the idea!” exclaimed the old man, rising from his pillow in interest, and apparently well pleased at the signs of Doctor Hernando’s returning intellect. “That’s the reason s-s-she needs a witness; having no f-father nor no b-brother, a witness is a most important t-thing.”

“How do you know she has no father?”

“I had n-news to that effect f-from the s-s-spirit world.”

“Your informant the same as the one saying your race has been run?”

“The s-s-same.”

Doctor Hernando smiled.

“Will you act as m-my witness? My race is well-nigh r-run. I s-s-shall s-s-soon be in s-s-spirit realms, and s-s-some folks have not proper respect for s-s-spirit witnesses, s-s-so I would leave one in the f-flesh.”



“ I see where you are right.”

“ And y-you will act? ”

“ I have not the least objection.”

Dariah Plunkett smiled a smile that brought tears as he drew from beneath his pillow a folded paper, which he handed to the Doctor.

It was as odd-looking as its maker, and read somewhat as follows:

“ I, Dariah Plunkett, party of the first part, do solemnly swear, so help me God, that I am witness, and I do furthermore swear that with my two ears I heard the man in the boat, with his tall hat and good cigar, swear to the girl in the boat with the black hair, that he would marry her, so help him God, and I do repeat that I did hear him swear, and I do furthermore swear that my race is nearly run, and I do furthermore swear that I will soon be cold and stiff in death, and I do therefore appoint in my place as witness to the oath the man took in the boat,—Hernando, M. D.”

This was written with many a flourish and was signed by the witness, Dariah Plunkett.

Pinned to it, with one of the safety-pins that had

done poultice duty, was a second paper, reading somewhat after the model of the first:

“I, —— Hernando, M. D., do swear that I will, whenever I get a chance, stand as witness in the shoes of Dariah Plunkett, now dead and buried, and that I will, at such time as is proper, announce to all concerned that I am such witness, so appointed by original witness, so help me God, who has run his race, and I do swear that he did promise to marry her, as witness, now dead, did hear him promise when he hung over Black Hill sidewalk.

(Signed) “——HERNANDO, M. D.”

“Is it legal?” and Dariah waited impatiently for Doctor Hernando to look it over.

Doctor Hernando adjusted his glasses and examined the papers critically.

“As legal as anything of the sort I have ever seen,” he replied, handing them back.

“Keep them,” Dariah instructed, with a smile of satisfaction. “No t-telling when s-she may need a w-witness.”

“But do you suppose I will ever hear of them?”

“ You’ll s-s-see them. I s-s-should, and you’re a p-proxy.”

“ How do you know you would have seen them? ”

“ Ouijah s-s-so informed me.”

“ I take no risks, then,” and again Doctor Hernando smiled.

“ Take t-them home; s-s-sign with red ink; b-bring them in the evening, s-s-so that with my c-closing eyes I may s-s-see that it is legal.”

Doctor Hernando folded the paper carefully and placed it in his inside coat-pocket, and after repeating his directions as to medicine he left his patient.

When he returned in the evening he found him somewhat improved.

“ You are feeling better,” he said, cheerfully.

“ Fatal f-feeling. It always c-comes to boost a man’s hopes before k-knocking him off his legs for the l-last time.”

“ Think so? Well, I will not change the medicine, and I will see you in the morning.”

“ S-s-stiff and dead. Did you d-discharge my l-last request? ”

Doctor Hernando drew from his pocket the paper, brilliantly signed with red ink.

A smile spread over the crooked features of the invalid; then he handed the precious document back.

“It’s all r-right. Take g-good care of it.”

When Doctor Hernando called the next morning he was not surprised to find his patient up and dressed, and two mornings later Dariah Plunkett was pegging away on shoes as if he had never had an attack of the grip; but he would not relieve the Doctor of the important papers, for, according to his method of reasoning, he had already created a second witness, and two witnesses were better than one.

## CHAPTER IV.

### DOCTOR HERNANDO.

When the years of a man's life reach the shady side of thirty, and he finds himself wifeless, and consequently homeless, though he inhabit a palace, his fellows who are interested in him have a right to wonder, at least, what evil cause has thus thwarted the more pleasant course of nature.

Such a man was Doctor Hernando, and such had been the inquiries passed among his acquaintance; but no answer had been formulated, save that his head and heart were all given to surgical knowledge, and his hands to its application, for though the subject had been often commented on among his few personal friends, none had ever spoken of it to him, so it went without saying that he had rather hover over a laparotomy case than over the fairest female figure in a ballroom; or he had rather dandle the surgeon's knife than the softest white hand of the softest white lady in Border City.

All this was true of Doctor Hernando, and more.

Doctor Hernando abominated society, and for this reason was seldom known to grace a Border City function, although often sought, as a man is apt to be who makes a success of his laparotomies and gets fees accordingly.

But there had been a time when society had never heard of Doctor Hernando, and it was in those years of his adolescence that he formed his opinion of society.

At a susceptible time of his life, one of society's most ardent votaries caused her path to cross his, and after the two had tangled and had parted, he found that he had foresworn society and the entire female portion of the race.

If Ben Hernando had been older or younger at the time of this meeting with this woman; if he had been less awkward, less red-headed, more talkative and more active, perhaps he might not have had his early and lasting prejudices aroused; but he was none of these things.

His hair was red.

His face was red, but not of a proper shade to match well with his hair.

He was a bit squint-eyed.

His arms were too long; his legs corresponded, and both arms and legs seemed but temporarily joined to his body, leaving one to hope that the actual joining would take place before any of the four members worked themselves off and got lost.

He was not accustomed to female society, properly speaking.

True, he had two sisters some years older than he, who talked to him on all occasions, but as their talk was mostly advice as to the best method of disposing of his legs when sitting, or a request to hold his book farther from his nose, or to straighten his tie, he did not consider their remarks as characteristic of society.

For the simple functions of society, as it existed in his quiet home town, Ben Hernando had the greatest respect, though he rarely attended them, for the rosy girls were rather shy and he returned the compliment by leaving them to other and more dashing beaux.

But after he had passed the important milestone in his life that marked the years of his majority, there came to visit one of his rosy acquaintances a city cousin, in whose honor a grand party was given, which Ben Hernando allowed himself to be persuaded to attend.

The city cousin proved bewitching.

She was a robust blonde, with her hair puffed in the latest fashion.

Her eyes were of an uncertain bluish cast, and winked.

Her nose was straight, almost to the end, where it became deliciously bulbous, just enough to make it most charming.

She had a city way of swinging her skirts when she passed through a door, or made ready to take a seat.

She had a fashion of tipping her head slightly back and curving the corners of her mouth that entirely captivated the young gentlemen of the modest village, and after her first appearance she had half a dozen sworn lovers and as many suspects.

To her admirers, her age was unknown.



By her actions, she was sixteen.

An older person, on close inspection, would have pronounced her twenty.

She was, in reality, twenty-six.

Ben Hernando looked upon this woman as he had looked upon no other. He was mystified. He was captivated by her polished airs, and when she condescended to smile on him, to chat with him, he forgot himself, for she enchanted him.

He was not one of the six avowed lovers. He was not even a suspect; nevertheless, he was bewitched.

His sisters had some dim idea of this when they discovered that he had gone to call on her, and they sadly feared that he would wreck all their hopes for his future by an early and hasty marriage, and their fears might have been realized had things turned out as Ben Hernando hoped they would.

The city cousin, by name Cora Browne, smiled on all the country beaux of the village, but her most meaning smiles were saved for the loosely-knit, red-headed medical student.

One night she intimated that a moonlight stroll

would be enjoyable, and while resting in a shaded rose garden she said, as she winked her eyes languidly and tipped her head back to its proper angle, "You call me Cora. That is but half my name. The other half I like better. It is 'Myone.' Call me that."

"Myone," he repeated. "It is not a name every one should speak."

"But *you* are not every one, and I want to hear *you* say it," and she waited.

"Myone," he said, mechanically.

"You say it so coldly, as if —, I thought," and she ended the thought with a deep sigh that smote Ben Hernando's heart violently.

It was very quiet in the garden. The air was heavy and fragrant. The moonlight was soft and Cora Browne was bewitching.

"Don't you *mean* it?" she whispered, with something like a quiver catching in the words, and then she leaned her head against a trellis and looked melancholy.

It was a touching attitude she took, but her pains were unnecessary.

Ben Hernando's heart had reached the place to leap the bounds.

"Myone," he whispered, catching her hands, "Myone, *may* I mean it?" and when she assured him that he might as much as ever he wanted to, his cup of happiness was full to overflowing, and he repeated the name many times with the ecstasy of an adoring nun at the shrine of a saint.

Having already decided that this bewitching woman was all he needed to turn the steady-going world into one infinite stretch of bliss, Ben Hernando proposed, and after being duly shocked at the suddenness of his declaration, and pressing her lace handkerchief to her face to hide her blushes, Cora Browne promised, and he drew heavily on his small bank account to get an engagement ring worthy the hand that was to wear it.

If Ben Hernando had been a man of the world he would have taken his bearings and discovered why this woman had thus given her hand into his keeping.

But he asked no questions.

He builded a pinnacle in his mind, on the top of

which the blonde sat enthroned, and before this he worshiped.

All the chivalry in his quiet nature, and there was much, came to the front; all the tenderness, all the glory.

With her delightful modesty he matched a man's integrity. With her purity he balanced his honor, and for her soft glances and rippling whispers he poured out the wealth of his strong first love, and by so much as he did all this, the blonde gauged her charms, for to play with men was her amusement.

Ben Hernando's sisters also discovered quite soon that he was in love.

His studies, his career, which before had been his sole aim in life, seemed now to have fallen into second place.

He was still determined to carry out his plans, for his ambitions were set high, but his purpose was for love now, not for honor or for wealth, and because he was happy they rejoiced with him.

After many vows of affection and many promises of fidelity had been exchanged between them, the

fair blonde went back to her city home, but Ben Hernando knew the old town could never be the same again.

Indeed the world, whichever way he went, would be all beautiful, for loving the blonde he loved the world; but while he loved well, he did not love wisely.

Letters passed between the medical student and his love for a time after he went to college.

One night he sat up very late writing to her in order that she might not be disappointed about receiving her letter.

Returning from the letter box in the morning, he seated himself at the breakfast table, his thoughts dwelling on "Myone," when he heard her name mentioned by a group of students at the other end of the room.

Instantly alert, he saw that they were looking over a paper, from which one was reading the announcement of the marriage of Cora M. Browne to Richard Hadley.

When they had read this a laugh went up and the

crowd condoled with one member who supposed himself to be the man she would some day call her husband.

Ben Hernando sat like a man stunned, and when the others had left the breakfast-room he picked up the paper and took it to his room, where he found that they had read correctly.

The more Ben Hernando reflected on this marriage notice, the more dumfounded he became.

He could not comprehend the situation.

From his desk he took a package of very precious letters and read her last.

It was very sweet, and yet on reading it over, he perceived that it was froth.

After the first shock, he got himself together, and having learned, prepared to live.

He received no more letters from "Myone." For a time he looked for one, and he also expected the ring back, but it never came. It remained with her as a trophy; and as to him, she took pleasure in after years referring to her little escapade with him as if he were one of so many speckled fish she had strung on her line some sunny morning.

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After the first keen shock, Ben Hernando found that he had suffered a yet greater loss, for while he was devoutly thankful that the blonde had proven false before she was his wife, he was sorry that he had lost faith in society at large and women in general.

He never went to the length of doubting that there are in the world women true to the core, and too tender and pure to play with a man's sacred affections and toss them aside like a bauble: he was certain there must be women who appreciate a man's strength and honor, as they wish their own to be held in value, but he had no desire to search for one of these.

He had tried and failed.

So he went through college and won honors.

Then he settled in Border City, where for a time he would have starved had it not been for the help of his admiring sisters.

Still he studied. Still he read. Still he toiled unceasingly, picking up a patient here and there.

His rise was slow, but sure, and after a course of years he found himself with a fair practice. His

surgical cases were winning him some fame. His bank account was started at last. His instruments were not the most in the city, but there were none better. He had been appointed attending physician at a public institution. He had written a series of articles for a magazine, and lived in a good suite of rooms in the best hotel in the city. He led a busy life, yet found time to take a case now and then that was sure to pay nothing but thanks, but this was his way.

The heart that he had determined should never be wasted on a woman was spread around the city on washwomen's children and old men with jumping chins.

In looks, Ben Hernando had somewhat changed during the years.

As Doctor Hernando, his hair was still red. He also wore whiskers, trimmed in the latest and most approved fashion.

These whiskers had had the good grace to come in slightly browner than his hair, for which the Doctor was devoutly thankful.

His face was not ruddy. The fire of his youth



had burned out. Hours of midnight study had bleached his face until it looked quite as much like a doctor's face as any other doctor's did.

His eyes still squinted, but he wore glasses now, rimless glasses suspended by a slender black guard.

Doctor Hernando despised a guard, but his glasses were forever slipping off, and, even with a bank account started, a man does not care to buy a pair of glasses per week.

These glasses, when one became acquainted with him, served as indicators of Doctor Hernando's frame of mind. When deeply interested or perplexed, the glasses were jerked off and balanced on the ball of his right thumb until the suspense of the minute was over, when they would be carefully set astride his nose. Often, before they had been finally adjusted, they would slip off and swing a couple or three times at the end of the guard before being finally established in front of the squinting eyes.

It can hardly be said that the arms and legs of Doctor Hernando inspired a faith in their stability, for as of old, they were too long and too loose; but a first-class tailor helps these unfortunate matters of

disproportioned legs and arms, and Doctor Hernando was well tailored.

If he had not been, it is doubtful if society would have pressed its claims upon him, though society, being uncertain, might have done so.

\* \* \* \* \*

On a night, a few days after Doctor Hernando had been called to the bedside of Dariah Plunkett, he entered his private sitting-room and dropped into an easy chair by a table upon which were a number of new magazines and books.

Taking up one of these, he ran the leaves over carelessly.

Reading of this sort was a pleasure seldom indulged in by Doctor Hernando on account of a sad lack of time, what few moments he found now and then being used in devouring scraps of scientific research and medical lore.

As the leaves fell under his fingers, he watched them flutter until something caught his eye.

He hastily turned the pages back, and holding the magazine to the light, adjusted his eyes to the page, and read some verses under title,

## THE VESPERS OF THE VEERY.

The glory of the setting sun  
Has faded to a lingering flush ;  
Another summer day is done  
And earth broods in the twilight hush.  
Now homeward, men and cattle weary,  
March to the vespers of the veery.

From tangled nook the notes are heard  
That break upon the evening calm ;  
But hidden is the modest bird  
That floods the air with throbbing psalm—  
A song pathetic—searching—cheery—  
The vespers of the unseen veery.

The cattle pausing by the way  
Half lift their drowsy, velvet eyes ;  
The last breeze pauses in its play—  
The last light lingers in the skies,  
As far and near, now brave—now eerie  
Is heard the vespers of the veery.

As throb the bird notes, so my heart  
Throbs to the measure of the lay ;  
It bears me from the world apart,  
It stirs a strange desire to pray,  
It blends wild joy with longing dreary  
The sweet, sad vesper of the veery.

The name of a distinguished writer at the end of this poem assured him that Dariah Plunkett had been right in his mention of a veery, but after he had

finished reading the lines, but one phrase remained in his mind, and that was "the vespers of the veery."

This he repeated several times to himself, then he suddenly dropped the magazine and clapped his hand against his pocket.

His glasses fell off and swung until he had taken from his pocket a paper.

With the paper in one hand, he fastened his glasses on, adjusted his eyes, and read.

Then he settled down in his chair in <sup>his</sup> usual stoop-shouldered way and laughed.

"A veery, a bird of unknown species, probably a snake, a witness, and the proxy of a witness," and again he laughed.

"This is important. This must go on file in the office to-morrow," and he stuck it in his hat.

The next morning, on his way to the office, he found himself repeating the phrase, "vespers of the veery."

The sight of the paper in his hat had recalled the poem, even as the poem had called to his memory the curious paper which otherwise might never have been put on file in Doctor Hernando's private desk.

## CHAPTER V.

### A NIGHT IN THE HAVEN.

Doctor Hernando sat at a table in an upper hallway in the Haven, folding powders.

Against the wall behind the table rested a bracket fitted with medicine shelves. Farther down the hall was a case of drawers holding emergency supplies, and a clock with a dial the size of a dishpan hung in a conspicuous place between the two end windows.

When he had finished folding the last square paper, he pushed the pile aside.

“Does your petrified patient show any signs of life yet?” he questioned, turning to Mother Shephard.

“Not the least. She seems, if possible, to grow more cold and dead every day. If it were not that she seems to have such a horror of seeing anyone, especially you, I should insist on your going in to see her. I really am afraid she is in a serious condition. Whether her unusual composure is forced or natural,

I cannot tell. Once, when she did not know I was near, the hard lines slipped away and a smile flitted across her face, while a bit of color tinged her cheeks, but almost immediately the dead white came again. One day I found her preparing to go out. She said she was going to a friend, but they all say that when they are going to the river, so I must watch her closely."

"Have you learned anything of her previous life?"

"She shows such a disinclination to talk that I question her no more than I must, but she has no father nor mother. She has lived with relatives in the country for some time, but left them to try her fortunes in Border City. Her fate is not surprising, for she is young in years and very pretty. She has wrecked her life by trusting to a fatal limit some man."

"Do not say *man!*" and Doctor Hernando gave the pile of powder-papers a decided spin across the table.

"How long has she been here now?" he inquired, forming the papers into a pile again.

“Two months.”

“And has not created a disturbance in the house, or tried to enlist sympathy by having hysterics?”

“You would hardly expect these things of her if you had seen her. Really, she is unlike any woman we have had here. You will be surprised. By the way, she asked me for writing material to-day, and I hated to tell her that correspondence was prohibited, as it was her first request. She seemed undecided a moment, then handed me a paper, which, to my surprise, was a check for a hundred dollars. This was dated a few days before she came here; she explained that she had received it by mistake, and had requested a friend to return it immediately. Either by mistake, or intentionally, the friend must have put it in the pocket of the hand-bag, where it remained until to-day.

“The girl seemed to take it to heart because it had not been returned, and urged that I send it immediately to the one who had made the check.”

“Man, I suppose?”

“Yes, I suppose so.”

“What name?”

“Something like Marshall, maybe—I was in a hurry at the time, and seeing the name was not familiar, put it in my desk. If you will wait a moment in the lower hall, I will show it to you.”

A few moments later, Mother Shephard joined Doctor Hernando in the lower hall, with a paper, which she handed him.

He paused in the act of drawing on a second glove, and squinted at the bit of paper carefully.

Then he removed his glasses, and balancing them on his thumb, looked at Mother Shephard as if waiting for a question.

“You know him, then?”

“By sight and—reputation.”

“What of him?”

“He is the son of his father, and like him, goes about seeking what he may devour in the way of female honor and virtue—and devouring it. He is worshiped by society.”

“Is he a married man?”

Doctor Hernando had adjusted his glasses to his nose, but he lifted them again and looked at his questioner a full moment.



Then he put his glasses on, saying, "No."

Mother Shephard was thoughtful a few seconds before she said: "Our silent patient was no doubt brought to her present place by a promise of marriage. The old, old story of a ring, a vow, and a betrayed trust."

Doctor Hernando began a second time to put on his glove.

"Women must either dupe or be duped," he said, sarcastically. "I am utterly disgusted with them."

"Our patient is very young."

"A baby should be able to see through the veneering on such a specimen of the devil's ingenuity. What was her bold attraction? Women of maturer years and more discretion are generally preferred by the modern profligate."

"She has not impressed me as a person having a 'bold attraction.' If natural, her face and form would be beautiful and shapely; her voice, with the tenseness taken out and its monotone broken, I think would be quite musical. As she is, her silent misery appeals to me, and knowing what must be before her,

I wonder if it would not be an act of kindness if the good Lord would let her die."

"She will not die. Her overtaxed nerves may give way, though, leaving her a fit inmate for the insane asylum, and the charitable board does not pay us to make lunatics. No; she will not die. She will be all right after a while. How long before her case will require my professional services?"

"A couple of months, perhaps."

"Give her a few doses of the fever-patient's tonic. If anything serious develops, you can call me," and taking up his medicine-case, Doctor Hernando turned toward the door. With his hand on the knob, he looked back to say:

"Do not forget to send that check out."

\* \* \* \* \*

The night on which Doctor Hernando was summoned to the Haven, some weeks later, to attend Mignon, was an uncanny night, even in a place where uncanny nights are not infrequent.

The night wind came screaming in from over the lake and struck the undergrowth of pine woods be-

yond Border City with a force that brought forth a long-continued and dismal moan.

In momentary lulls, the running waves on the lake could be heard distinctly pounding against the piers and dropping with an angry crash back into the boiling surf.

A half-dozen tugs huddled close to the opposite river shore, as if afraid they might be summoned to the relief of some passing ship. The few electric lights cast their gleam against a darkness so dense that it seemed to suck up the rays immediately within a few feet.

Although it was not late when he was summoned, Doctor Hernando found the streets almost deserted, and after a short walk the outlines of the Haven, as they loomed up square and somber, looked indeed inviting.

Arriving at the black front, Doctor Hernando gave the bell two rapid twists, upon which it was immediately opened by a stout German woman.

“Good evening, Mena, how would you like to walk to the beach and back’ for your health to-night?”

Mena smiled broadly, and shook her head, while she helped the Doctor remove his top-coat.

After receiving instructions as to where Mother Shephard could be found, he turned softly up the stairs.

A light tap at the designated door brought the matron of the Haven.

“Doctor Hernando!” she exclaimed. “We have been waiting for you. Come in. Mignon, this is Doctor Hernando. He has come to be your friend.”

Mignon turned her face toward the Doctor and bowed slightly, then turned away.

Doctor Hernando had not seen her before, and was not prepared for seeing just the sort of a person he found before him.

After getting his eyes focused exactly right, he studied her carefully.

She was white; when she passed under the overhanging light, she looked like a piece of delicately wrought wax work. Her face was not round, as it had once been, and pain and scathing disappointment had left their traces on it with a touch of harshness ill-befitting its natural mould.

Her black hair was turned back from her face in a soft, round roll, and the little, loose curls peeped through it here and there; while it fell behind in two long braids below her waist.

Her hands were small, and the quick eye of the physician noted the way in which the thin fingers twisted and untwisted, and at times spread themselves on the arm of the chair, only to rest for a moment—motions telling of mental as well as physical pain.

After asking a few questions, he left the room, and Mother Shephard, having called an attendant, followed him.

“Has our silent patient been all the time as I find her to-night?”

“In what respect?”

“She has no color. Her nerves are dangerously near the snapping point.”

“She is, of course, more nervous to-night—you were in the room—still, she is much the same.”

“Her age?”

“She tells me she will celebrate her eighteenth birthday in this room.”

“ Will you attend her yourself to-night? ”

“ I think I shall. I am sorry for her.”

“ Thank you,” and there was evident relief in Doctor Hernando’s voice.

“ I wish she would scream—even hysterics would be better than nothing. Cannot you give her something to relax her nerves—something you give children when they have spasms? ”

“ Not unless she has the spasm. I think the crying of the child will relax her nerves and make a natural creature of her once again. It is generally so.”

“ She wants to die.”

“ All women do.”

“ But her’s is not a notion that has come with the pain. It has been premeditated and determined.”

Doctor Hernando smiled.

“ What do you think of her? ” Mother Shephard inquired, before returning to the room.

“ You ask too soon.”

On entering the room, they found Mignon walking back and forth.

She paid no attention to them, only answering their questions, until Doctor Hernando said, "Be brave a few hours longer and your troubles will be over."

Then she stopped near him, and a smile softened the corners of her mouth as she lifted her clear grey eyes to his face and said:

"For you think that I will die. I thank you."

Doctor Hernando looked at her a moment, then lifted his glasses and said with an air of decision, "No; not that. I shall not *let* you die."

"You *must* let me," and she still kept her sad eyes fastened on his face.

"But you will have something to live for."

"I want nothing to live for," and with the words, the soft, glad look entirely disappeared and the old expression came again.

A half-moment longer she stood before she resumed her walk, and Doctor Hernando watched her so closely as she walked that not the slightest change in her expression nor the most insignificant motion of her body escaped him.

As the clock ticked the minutes away, she became restless, and after crossing and recrossing the room several times, she came again to Doctor Hernando.

“You know I am in trouble,” she said slowly, and he noticed that with the words a bit of color came into her face, “and I have not one friend in all the world. I thought I had, but it was because I believed it that I am here to-night—and you are here. I have been watched like a child, or I should not be here now, making you trouble and only waiting for the hours to make such a woman of me as I will be to-morrow. I have no thought of living—not a thought. You can make it easier for me to die. Let me die—be my friend—just for to-night.” And she rested her hand on the table at his side.

Doctor Hernando moved his glasses a hair's-breadth on his nose, and seemed waiting for her to say something else.

“You are here to keep me alive to a life of shame and misery. Will this be kind? Do not do it—let me die, and if I *will* not, you are a physician—put one drop or two in a spoon; I will take it and go to sleep. This will save me a walk to the river—it will



be better than the water, for I am afraid of it. Will you?" and there was bitter pleading in her voice.

"You do not know what you are asking," he said, opening his medicine case.

"I am asking you to be my friend," she said, almost beseechingly.

"And I will be," he answered, carefully measuring some drops into a glass.

Then he bade her take a spoonful, and as she did so he watched the trembling motion of the spoon, as if expecting by this means to read her thoughts.

Even to the man who had seen much of shamming and much of agony, much of the courage and much of the cowardice of many women, he looked with a degree of astonishment on the fortitude of this young girl, who with white lips and fingers knit, bore her allotment of mental and physical pain.

The night wore on.

The rain came now and then against the window-pane in splotches, and rattled and muttered down the side of the house.

The pines beyond the border kept up a tireless wailing, and when the lulls came the hollow pound-

ing of the lake waves sounded heavy in the distance.

Mignon, who had been sitting in a low chair on the opposite side of the room, suddenly gave a half-startled moan and rising held out her arms.

When Mother Shephard and her attendant placed her on the bed she was as rigid as the marble she looked to be.

“Poor thing!” Mother Shephard exclaimed. “Perhaps she is to have her heart’s desire.”

Doctor Hernando poured something into a spoon and tried to force it between her lips. After three ineffectual efforts, he succeeded, and while the women rubbed her cold hands he sat closely by and watched her face for the first effects of the drug.

Gradually her hands limbered, her eyelids fluttered, and she looked into the face of the physician bending over her.

“Are you letting me die?” she whispered.

“Die if you want to,” he answered, reassuringly.

A smile came across her face, and catching Doctor Hernando’s hand, she pressed it feverishly.

“Good-by,” she said. “You are the only friend

I ever knew." And then the smile gave place to a pallor of sweeping pain.

The rain drove against the window.

The storm wailed over the gables and moaned on its way, and the natural storm of the elements outside the Haven and the physical storm inside fought their way on together until when morning came the great blue lake lay ruffled and beating like something exhausted, and Mignon had a little child to press against her outraged heart.

Doctor Hernando had been certain that the coming of the child would warm her heart and dispel the unnatural reserve and coldness that had entirely taken her, but he, as well as Mother Shephard, was doomed to disappointment.

When the child was held before her eyes she only gave it a passing glance, then turned her eyes to Mother Shephard reproachfully.

"You have kept me here to die another time. Why have you?"

"Were you fit to die now, dear?"

"Am I fit to live?" she questioned, bitterly.

"Why do the men I trust deceive me?"

“ Because you have trusted the wrong men.”

“ All men are wrong. I trusted one, and this trust brought me here. Then I trusted another—he was so different—I was sure I might, and he leaves me here. They are both alike.”

Doctor Hernando, who was about to leave the room, on hearing his name, listened, and to his surprise learned that this young woman had judged him and consigned him to the collection of specimens represented by Cornelius Mansfield.

This was a little more liberty than he could allow, and stepping to the foot of the bed, he turned his eyes steadily on her.

“ And so you choose to count me a deceiver of the baser sort? ”

She turned her eyes in his direction, but made no answer, and he continued: “ I thank the Lord for this one thing, that you did *not* die. You shall live to learn that there are men who do not deceive women to their hurt, and that I am such a man.”

A full moment she looked into his face, then she said decidedly:

“I shall never trust a man again,” and closing her eyes wearily, she turned away.

“Do not be hard on her,” said Mother Shephard to him, in the hall. “She feels in a way toward men that you do to her sex. You should be especially tolerant.”

“Tolerant? Yes; but she must learn to make distinctions.”

## CHAPTER VI.

### STONE CHANGED TO FLESH.

From his earliest recollection until he had reached the years of his majority, Doctor Hernando's sisters had impressed his mind, by the almost daily repetition, that he had a "contrary worm."

This oft-repeated expression he interpreted to mean that whenever his authorities decreed positively that he should not do a thing, he straightway became possessed of a desire to do that same thing, and generally carried out his plans.

The day after becoming acquainted with Mignon, unmistakable symptoms of the "contrary worm" showed themselves again.

If this friendless young girl had been some society queen and had said to him, with an affected drawl and a lazy twist of her fan, "I choose to think, Doctor Hernando, that you are, after all, like all other men," he would have replied quite gallantly, "Think as you please": but that Mignon should

have judged him, should have trusted him for a short time, and then should have revised her judgment and should have consigned him to a place, in her opinion, alongside Mansfield, irritated him.

It was not customary for the attending physician at the Haven to make more than two calls on such patients as Mignon, but Doctor Hernando determined to visit her off and on for a week or ten days, to be sure that she got on well and to establish himself in her confidence.

On his way to the Haven the day after the child was born, he stopped at a florist's, determined to further his plans by taking a rose or a carnation as a peace-offering.

His first choice fell on flowers snowy white. Without thinking exactly why, he pushed these away.

His next attempt was crimson roses, but a dim recollection of something he had heard a preacher repeat about a scarlet woman caused him to drop these hurriedly, for he felt that he must make his way carefully.

After fidgeting a bit, he had a spray of violets and maiden-hair fern twisted together, and this little

bouquet he placed on the table in the hall outside Mignon's room, leaving them for Mother Shephard to take in.

He found his patient as he had left her—white and indifferent.

He spoke to her kindly, and even went so far as to look at the baby and say it had a nice head, a thing he was rarely guilty of doing.

But it was no use.

Beyond merely answering his questions, his patient paid no attention to him.

On leaving the room, he waited outside the door to hear what Mignon would say when Mother Shephard gave her the flowers.

“See, Mignon,” she said, “Doctor Hernando brought them to you.”

A bright light came into the grey eyes and a round red spot suddenly mounted each cheek.

“I am no longer a child,” she said, clearly; “I am a woman. Tell Doctor Hernando for me that I have learned my lesson well. I do not want his flowers.”



“Do not misjudge him. He meant only a kindness.”

“Kindness—and what does a man’s kindness mean?”

Mother Shephard paused in the act of placing the vase on the table and a whiff of the violet perfume floated across the bed.

Mignon turned her eyes quickly to the flowers, and made a sudden gesture as if to drive back a foe.

“Take them away!” she almost screamed. “The scent of them will drive me mad!”

Mother Shephard took the flowers back into the hallway and held them toward Doctor Hernando, who sat back in his chair twisting his black guard nervously.

“Take them to the cook,” he said. Then, with his glasses swinging at the end of the cord, he went back into Mignon’s room.

When she noticed who stood beside her, a shade of annoyance crossed her face, then she closed her eyes.

Doctor Hernando felt that he had set himself a

hard task when he determined to force this woman's confidence, and the fact that it promised to be difficult but increased his determination.

"Will you be so kind as to tell me," he inquired, after resting his eyes on her steadily a half minute, "why you have selected me especially and ranged me, in your estimation, among a class of God's creation which is its perpetual disgrace?"

"I have not selected you especially."

"That is begging the question. It is not hard to understand why your confidence has been so completely shattered, but I assure you, you do me an injustice. I am your friend. I am the friend of every woman—when she needs a friend."

There was no answer to this speech.

Doctor Hernando adjusted his glasses carefully.

Then he tried again.

"I am sorry I have lost your confidence. What may I do to regain it?"

"You may go away, and never come back," she said, turning her grey eyes full on his face.

"Very well," he said shortly.

He contemplated her a moment longer, then held out his hand, saying, "Good-by; I will not see you again."

A second time she raised her eyes to his.

They were shining like stars, and the red spots marked her cheeks.

For a few seconds the two measured glances, then she slipped her hand under the pillow and turned away, but he did not forget the expression of her face.

\* \* \* \* \*

As the days went by, the hard lines seemed to be cutting deeper and deeper into Mignon's face. The cold, unnatural force that had continually surrounded her, seemed to be wrapping its folds nearer and tighter.

Even the watchful eye of Mother Shephard could detect nothing in her voice or touch that marks the loving tenderness of motherhood. In the hands of a mighty, cruel fate, she seemed as soulless and as passive as a block of marble.

Once in a while the light glowed for a moment

in her eyes with a peculiar brightness, but this soon passed, leaving the large eyes heavy and more deeply sunken in the white, wax face.

Mother Shephard tried in every way to win the confidence of her patient, but her efforts so far had been ineffectual. The unseen barrier of an outraged trust had arisen between the girl and the world.

But Mother Shephard was wise. She knew that outside force would in this case never effect a change, so she put up a silent prayer, for she was a praying woman, and let her seed drop cautiously, hoping that some one seed might find a bit of earthy matter in a heart that seemed all stone.

On the walls of the room several scriptural texts had been hung, and one day a sudden exclamation from the narrow bed drew the good matron's attention to both them and her patient, for Mignon had taken notice of a text which she read aloud:

“I have loved you with an everlasting love.”

For a moment she gazed at it, then turning to Mother Shephard, she said, “You should not have such a lie in this place. There is no everlasting love. Love is just a perfumed, poisoned mist to blind one.

Love is hollow; it is a bitter, bitter curse. Take it away!"

"Do you know what love is, my child? Did you never love any one?" and Mother Shephard moved softly to the bedside.

The wild, unpleasant light leaped into Mignon's eyes, and an unnatural tenseness strained her voice as she answered,

"How can you ask it?"

"Was it a hollow, cursed thing—your love?"

Mignon passed her hand nervously back and forth across the coverlet a number of times before answering.

"A cursed thing? yes; but I found it out too late. When I thought that love was love, I loved the whole wide world—I was happy because the one I loved loved me, loved me with an *everlasting* love. Where is it now? Love is a curse."

"Love is the one supreme thing that makes life worth living."

"It cannot be. Is the life I am living, and am to live, worth living? Love brought me here, here with a spoiled name, a heart turned into stone and a brain

that burns with a blue flame when I think of what was to be and what—is. Take down the card. Love seems all lovely, but it carries its hidden sting, which is worse than death.” And Mignon shuddered, for the river seemed always before her, and the water was sluggish and cold.

“It is not love, my child, that bars the sting. It is sin, and after it has caused the pain and anguish of life, its end is death. Love is sin’s antidote, and while human love is often frail and faulty, and while human passions of the baser sort are often miscalled love, Divine love is truly love, and it is everlasting. Love is the only thing that can untangle your pathway now, take out the stinging thorns of sin, and restore your natural affections.”

“I do not want to be natural. Why should I be? I fight the first suggestion of it every passing minute. I should like to love my little baby, but I will not. I should like to hold its tiny hand, for it is mine—I am its mother, but I dare not. Why did you not let me die? Why did the doctor keep me here when I told him he was only keeping me for days of trouble and a more troublesome ending?”

“Would Doctor Hernando have been really kind to have let you go to meet a holy God as you were that night—as you are now? Some day you will thank him for the desperate fight he made to keep you here.”

Mignon sighed.

“I am not fit to live,” she said, bitterly.

“That is just the trouble, child. When death takes us away, it only carries us to the door of Eternal Life, where we must enter forever. If you are not fit to live in this world for a little time, how are you fit to step into Eternity? God was merciful to let you stay yet longer.”

A few days after this conversation, while Mother Shephard was by the bedside, Mignon looked up and said, “If only my heart were not dead; but it is nothing but a stone. My brain is in a ferment of rebellion and wickedness, and yet, Mother Shephard, I did not mean to be a sinner. I only meant to be happy. It was so restful, so beautiful, to believe that between me and the world of which I am afraid, there stood some one strong and wise who loved me and who would take care of me. I did not mean to be a

sinner—but I am; and the blackness and the sting of it has poured and rushed upon me until the word ‘Sinner,’ like a brand, seems burning every minute of the time against my brain. Some day I will throw myself into the waves, where they rock the wildest and most mournfully, and there I will rock and rock forever.”

“You mean your body will rock.”

“Do you think my soul would carry its brand to the other world?”

“There is no cleansing power in death. It is only the passage-way.”

“Then I am branded forever!” and the girl spoke with wild despair. “O, Mother Shephard, what shall I do?”

“Have you not heard, ‘Though your sins be as scarlet they shall be as white as snow: though they be red like crimson they shall be like wool’? for God so loved the world—all love.”

“God’s love sounds nice to talk of. If I had known of it before, long, long ago, I might not have been here; but the world forgives everything but the



sin of being deceived as I have been. If my sin had been some other, I would pray God to forgive it.”

There was the tone of despair in her words and a spasm of pain crossed her face as she spoke.

Mother Shephard rested her cool hand on the girl's white forehead.

“God knows nothing of special brands of sin. Sin is *sin*. Sin is the transgression of the law. God's holy law you have broken, and it is the burden of this sin that brings your sorrow. Unlike the world, God is especially merciful and tender to such sinners as you.”

“If I only knew that it were so.”

Mother Shephard left the bedside a moment. When she returned she held a book.

“Do you want God's blessed rest, my child?” she said, “Listen! It is a story of the One of whom the Voice said, ‘This is my beloved Son, hear ye Him.’”

Mignon turned on her pillow, and rested her eyes eagerly on the kind face of the woman by her side.

“‘And one of the Pharisees desired him that he would eat with him. And he went into the Pharisee's house, and sat down to meat. And, behold, a woman

in the city, which was a sinner, when she knew that Jesus sat at meat in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster box of ointment, and stood at his feet behind him, weeping, and began to wash his feet with tears, and did wipe them with the hairs of her head, and kissed his feet, and anointed them with ointment. Now when the Pharisee which had bidden him saw it, he spake within himself, saying, This man, if he were a prophet, would have known who and what manner of woman this is that toucheth him: for she is a sinner. And Jesus answering said unto him, Simon, I have somewhat to say unto thee. And he said, Master, say on. There was a certain creditor which had two debtors: the one owed five hundred pence, and the other fifty. And when they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both. Tell me, therefore, which of them will love him most? Simon answered and said, I suppose that he to whom he forgave most. And he said, Thou has rightly judged. And he turned to the woman, and said unto Simon, Seest thou this woman? I entered into thine house, thou gavest me no water for my feet; but she hath washed my feet with tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head.

Thou gavest me no kiss; but this woman since the time I came in hath not ceased to kiss my feet. My head with oil thou didst not anoint; but this woman hath anointed my feet with ointment. Wherefore, I say unto thee, Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much; but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little. And he said unto her, Thy sins are forgiven. And they that sat at meat with him began to say within themselves, Who is this that forgiveth sins also? And he said to the woman, Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace.' ”

Mother Shephard closed the book softly, and Mignon watched her with a hungry interest.

“Go in peace—go in peace”—she said after a short silence, and the words were spoken as one hesitates who shapes an unknown tongue.

“How she must have loved Him—if He were only here now——”

“He is here now. Our Christ is a risen Savior, and as powerful to forgive your sin as He was that of this other woman. The consequence of your wrongdoing you must bear, but the dark spots on your soul may be taken away. Talk to God as you

would to a father or a mother, for His love is greater than theirs could ever be.”

“ Say it for me. Say that I am sorry——” and Mignon stopped, for her eyes, long dry, were filling with tears.

Mother Shephard knelt by the bedside and prayed aloud, a short, simple prayer. When she had finished Mignon was sobbing.

Mother Shephard stooped and kissed her on the forehead, then she left the room.

When she returned a short time later, the young mother had the baby nestled against her heart for the first time, and there was a new light in her face, something restful and sweet, but so sad that the good matron felt herself choking a lump out of her throat.

When she came to the bedside, her patient smiled.

“ You may say to Doctor Hernando for me that if he kept me here I am glad, not that I want to live, but it would have been so terrible to spend an eternity feeling as I have felt for months. Now something has gone—something has come. What is it? ”

“ Old-fashioned people might call it ‘ conversion ’ ;

a more modern generation says 'transformation,' 'resurrection.' The Book says, 'I will take their stony heart out of their flesh and will give them an heart of flesh.' It is the everlasting love, my child."

"Mother Shephard," said Mignon, a few days later, "will you write under the motto these other words, and underscore the last three, 'Thy sins are forgiven, go in peace'? Then when I go away, may I take it?"

\* \* \* \* \*

A few weeks after the birth of the child, as Doctor Hernando was passing through a hallway with Mother Shephard, the low notes of a lullaby song drew his attention.

Doctor Hernando had not seen Mignon since she had requested him to go away and not come back, and Mother Shephard, with a touch of pride, motioned him to stop and look in the room.

Mignon sat with her face turned from them, and held the baby in her arms.

Her soft, black hair was piled loosely upon her

head and the tiny curls peeped out around her face and neck.

Twice she turned her head slightly, so that her face was visible, and Doctor Hernando focused his eyes properly and gazed with admiration.

“Do you think she is all to blame, because she is not an honored wife and mother, because she is not rocking her child beside her own hearthstone instead of at the expense of the state?” Mother Shephard inquired, after leaving the doorway.

“No,” replied Doctor Hernando, stoutly. “It is not wholly her fault. It is the fault of society—the society woman. This woman is infinitely better than the miserable hound who brought her where she is, and yet your society lady would feel contaminated to so much as touch her dress, while he, the hound, they will fawn over and smile upon and cling to because he dances well, talks well, and dresses well. The thing is an abomination in the sight of the Almighty.”

“Men are not in the least to be blamed, I suppose?”

“Men are. But men are putty, most of them.

Women mould society or are moulded. If every woman in Border City who has heard reports implicating the character of Mansfield would shut her door in his face, and tell him why, he would soon be wiser and, it is hoped, more decent; so women mould men. This woman here has been caught in the powers that mould, instead of being of them, therefore she is moulded."

"I think it hardly fair to consider her moulded yet. She is young. She has turned over a new leaf. Her life will turn on a new pivot. She may yet live a useful and an honorable life."

"She may," Doctor Hernando assented, skeptically, "but do you know her chances?" and he paused for Mother Shephard to reply.

"On the street, in the stores, in the elevator, in the car, the woman with a fair face and a pitifully poor dress is a target for the ungodly eyes of an adulterous generation; she must face unspeakable dangers, with vast numbers of men to pull her down, and an equally vast number of women to hold her under foot when once she has made the misstep. This sounds like the wail of a pessimist, but the pity

is, it's true. Our little woman here has not a chance in a thousand."

"Listen," said Mother Shephard, when they had passed some distance down the hall.

The voice was strangely soft and pathetic, and yet the tone was clear as a bell, though she seemed singing rather to a memory or a dream than to anything near.

Suddenly the phrase, "the vespers of the veery," came into Doctor Hernando's mind.

"What does her voice make you think of?" he asked of Mother Shephard.

Mother Shephard reflected.

"Of something calling for a mate, or a woman calling for a friend."

When Doctor Hernando thought of it, the description of her faithful witness did Mignon justice, and he had never seen Cornelius Mansfield with any other than a tall silk hat on.

Without a doubt this was the veery, and a rather pleasant feeling took possession of Doctor Hernando when he thought of his important position as sub-witness.



“I wish you could keep her with you,” he said to Mother Shephard, as they passed beyond the range of her voice.

“But I cannot.”

“Throwing such a young and beautiful woman on the world unprotected, is like flinging a lamb among a pack of wolves.”

“The grace of God can protect her from even wolves.”

“Not when the wolves are society gentlemen, bewitchingly soft-speached, and sweet-smelling with carnation bouquets.”

“Society would not appreciate your estimate of its intentions.”

“Society be——” and then he stopped to catch his glasses, which slipped off, thus saving himself the necessity of apologizing for the use of a word which Mother Shephard, being quite religious, might have objected to.

## CHAPTER VII.

### MANSFIELD CALLS ON MIGNON.

To return to Mansfield: Cornelius Mansfield was not a novice in the art of saying sweet speeches and making vows.

He was so constituted that he could spin them off and roll them out in any desired quantity or quality.

To be sure, he had not made exactly such a vow to any other woman as he had to Mignon, because no other woman had exacted such a promise, and none had trusted him as she had.

When he was with her an influence seemed to hang around him, some dim sense of honor which made him uncomfortable, for her helplessness in a weak way appealed to him, still the idea of marrying her had never once entered his mind, and when her importunities began to be wearisome to him he wrote a letter enclosing a check as a conscience-easer, and then did as cowards have done from time immemorial—ran away.

He called his sudden departure by a more dignified name than running away, however. It was a business trip, for it happened that about this time it became necessary for a member of his firm to cross the state boundary to estimate timber.

After the estimating had been attended to, which, by the way, was done by another man, he went a few hundred miles farther to visit his grandmother, and after her a great-aunt, so that he was for some time absent from Border City.

When he learned upon his arrival home that the check had been returned, he was both annoyed and pleased. Annoyed as a dog is annoyed when it has killed one sheep too many; and pleased because the Haven had relieved him of further complications with his abandoned sweetheart.

Therefore Mansfield settled down to life exactly as if Mignon Dermot had never come into it to be forever undone by its contaminating influence.

Once in a great while he gave her a passing thought and wondered how she was getting along, but he never looked her up; in fact, he would have avoided her if necessary during the first few months

after his return, being uncertain what she might do.

Thus two years passed.

During these two years Mignon had struggled bravely, keeping time with her fingers to the mocking "Song of the Shirt."

Her room was bare; her clothing was poor; her fare was scanty, and her child small and nervous.

After leaving the Haven she bought a sewing-machine on the installment plan, and when nearly the entire amount had been paid she lost it, being two weeks behind with the last payment.

In a sad plight, she went to Mother Shephard for advice.

Mother Shephard told her to call the next day; meantime she put the matter before Doctor Her-  
nando.

"A good example of modern thrift," he said, taking off his glasses. "Charge four prices for a thing, and then take it back because the last farthing of the fourth price is not paid on the jump. Thus we juggle with words and call 'stealing' a sewing machine, a 'business transaction.'"

“I do not see what she is to do. She will not put the child in an asylum, and there is little a woman can do with a baby.”

Doctor Hernando adjusted his glasses.

Then he pulled out his pocketbook, and handed Mother Shephard a bill.

“I had about as soon give a woman a pistol as a sewing machine, only that her intentions with the latter are not suicidal. Will you take the trouble to go to that beastly thief who stole her machine, find what amount the last farthing of the fourth price is, pay it, get a receipt in full, instruct him to take the machine back to the lady at once, and to say that in looking over his bills he found the machine was paid for? Will you do this for her? You know how to manage and, Mother Shephard, have the good sense not to mention my name for twenty minutes before and after you speak of the machine to the lady, else you know what the fate of the machine will be.”

\* \* \* \* \*

Only once during the two years did Doctor Hernando see Mignon.

This happened when he found her one day at the Haven.

When he heard her talking in the parlor he stepped in and bowed cordially.

She returned his salutation with more dignity than was necessary, and then continued her remarks to Mother Shephard, and while she talked he listened to her voice, meantime studying her through his glasses.

Not the smallest detail of her costume escaped him.

Her dress fitted her shapely figure to perfection, but it was plain and sadly the worse for wear. Her shoes were cracked, and on the side of one a thin purple streak announced a break in the leather. Her hat was a rough straw sailor, her veil had seen many birthdays and her hands were bare, yet Doctor Hernando was immensely pleased with her costume.

Her face was beautiful, but with a sad beauty that was almost pathetic, and to Doctor Hernando it seemed, as he saw her before him, that twice two years must have elapsed since he first saw her.

The child, which was always with her, was a

tiny, blue-eyed waif, with clouds of black hair and a nervous way of twitching its wiry limbs.

Besides having the child to care for, Mignon also had a large bundle.

Before she was ready to go, Doctor Hernando had made the rounds of the house and was waiting in the hall, and as she came out, when he did, he carried her bundle to the gate, and then sought to be of further service by driving her home.

“Your bundle is too heavy,” he informed her, “and the baby is tired. I have finished my round. May I drive you home?” but he got his answer from her eyes before she said, “Thank you, we had rather walk,” and he gave her the bundle without another word.

Some blocks up the street he passed her, toiling along with the bundle on one arm and the baby on the other; but she did not see him, and she walked on slowly, for she was worn with many nights of toil, and weak for lack of proper exercise and food. Baker’s bread and tea afford an existence, why should a seamstress expect more?

Darkness was gathering, and being afraid of the

world, Mignon hastened her lagging steps and finally hailed a car.

She knew that the cost of the ride had been saved to buy a pint of milk, but rather than walk the remainder of the way she determined to drink her tea clear.

\* \* \* \* \*

It was on this same night that Cornelius Mansfield boarded a car, and had just settled himself to look over a paper, when his attention was attracted by a child a few seats in front of him who stood on its knees and smiled back at him.

It was a frail, cunning bit of a child, and Mansfield shook his paper at it.

Something in its face puzzled him for a time, then he smiled, for he had seen his face too often in his dresser mirror not to note the resemblance to it there was in the little face of the child.

From the child, he turned his attention to the mother.

From where he sat he could only see her back, but soon a woman came in with a basket, and Mansfield obligingly vacated his seat, taking a place on



the opposite side, from which position he could obtain a better view of the woman with the child.

She was poorly clad, from her plain hat to her well-fitting dress, and her hands were ungloved, yet there was that air about her that marks the lady.

She wore a spotted veil, which did not hide but rather intensified her beauty—the unusual, sad beauty of a pale, fair face framed in clustering hair as black as midnight.

Mansfield studied Mignon even as carefully and as critically as Doctor Hernando had done.

He, too, was glad to notice that her dress was poor, but he was glad as the wolf is glad when it finds the lamb.

Her old beauty had not gone, but it had changed—something had blended with it, something Mansfield could not fathom; but he sat and drank in her beauty as a thirsty horse drinks water, and a wild desire to hear her talk, to see her laugh, to hold her hand, took possession of him, and he determined to renew his acquaintance with her at any cost.

Each time the car stopped he watched for the woman and the child to get off, and when at last they

did so, he noticed which way they turned, and when he reached the next corner he, too, alighted and hurriedly retraced his steps, following the direction she had taken.

Border City had not yet assumed such magnificent proportions that it was possible for one to become entirely lost, but Mansfield preferred his discovery to be made by person instead of by inquiry.

It was not many minutes before he came in sight of the two, for the woman was tired and the child trudged slowly, holding to her skirt.

After passing off the main street, they shortly entered a barnlike old structure, the second story of which had been fitted into living rooms.

Standing opposite, Mansfield soon saw a light flicker in one of the front rooms, the curtain was drawn by a slender woman, and the watching man, after looking back at the house a couple of times, turned to the street with a fullness of heart that had not been there for months.

\* \* \* \* \*

After lighting her lamp and poking up the fire, Mignon spread a frugal supper.

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Her tea nearly choked her, but she forced it down, for a long night's work lay before her.

The baby fretted and was late getting to sleep, but when it was at last quiet she unrolled the bundle she had brought home and began, with fingers almost too tired and shaky to hold a needle, and with scarcely enough courage to hold back the tears, to draw threads and set stitches.

The future seemed to stretch before her one long vista of want and loneliness.

In all the world there was no one to love her but the sleeping child.

It was for this little one she toiled and prayed, for it she longed, and hoped sometimes, for it she read the text upon the wall and whispered, "By the grace of God," as she pressed its little hand between her two.

Sometimes she dreamed of a time that might come—when the child had grown older—when things would be different, but the cloud of a blighted name hung over all her dreams, no matter how framed, so she put the dreams away and lived from day to day as best she was able.

But this night she did not have a moment to dream over the child.

The child's life, as well as her own, depended on her success in getting her work done, for the larder was bare.

All but a few crusts had been eaten for supper.

The rent was due.

The coal was gone, and her last five cents had been spent for carfare that evening.

Her fingers flew over the linen in her hands. It was for a wealthy woman's table, and would bring her in enough at least to get more bread and tea, with some left for the landlord.

While she bent over her work, a soft knock at the door startled her, and before she could rise, a visitor had entered.

This was a gentleman wearing a light top coat and a tall silk hat.

The perfume of violets, mingled with choice cigar smoke, floated from him as he moved toward her, and Mignon started as one in a dream.

Indeed, it seemed that she was suddenly awaken-

ing from a long, hard dream—that the intervening years had not been.

“Are you not glad to see me, little girl?” he inquired, in the old, familiar way.

Mignon looked into his face a few seconds as if through a mist, then a light burst over her face.

“Glad?” she said, feverishly, “Nobody but God knows how glad I am that you have come at last.”

Mansfield took off his top coat and hat, and placed them carefully on the foot of the bed.

Mignon following his movements with her hungry eyes, noticed the soft hair of the baby, and the sight brought her suddenly back to her senses.

The smile left her face as she gathered her work from the floor, and when she spoke again there was appeal and agony in her voice.

“But why have you not come before? Can you ever know half you have made me suffer?”

He drew a chair close to her, settled himself comfortably, and said, “Force of circumstances has kept me. We are all toys in the hands of fate, don’t you know. But I promised I would come, and here I am. Did you think I could ever forget you?”

“ I was sure once you would be true to me.”

“ And now? ”

Mignon fingered the corner of her linen nervously.

The first unnatural joy of meeting him had quickly gone, and she felt the old, uncertain feeling creeping over her. It was more than a feeling now; it was a warning.

“ Cannot you trust me? Do you not love me? I swear by everything sacred I have thought of you the entire time since you were mine before, and I have loved you better than I love myself. Must I woo you over? ”

A trace of a smile came back to Mignon's face. Mansfield's voice had taken on the peculiar, musical, pleading tone that had once been so irresistible to her.

“ Your love is a very strange love; we will let the wooing go.”

“ And you will be mine once more, and no force of circumstances known to either heaven or hell shall keep me from you.”

“ If,” Mignon added, immediately, “ the chapel

minister marry us to-night. He is at home," and she looked at the clock.

"Marry!" and Mansfield gazed at her in amazement; then he laughed comfortably, and said:

"Haven't you got that notion out of your head yet?"

"What notion?" Mignon questioned quickly, a touch of apprehension perceptible in her voice.

"The notion of marriage. People only marry these days who can do no better. Why should we be married?"

Mignon folded the square of linen carefully and placed it on the table.

Her hands trembled, and for a moment the scanty furniture in the room seemed spinning around.

Mansfield, watching her closely, saw that she was trying to steady herself to speak.

When she looked up, she looked him in the eye. The brightness had gone from her face, the sadness had settled, but this was the beauty that most became her.

"I am not a child now—I am a woman. I am

more, I am a Christian. We must be married to-night."

Again Cornelius Mansfield laughed.

"You are the dearest, most puritan little fool I ever saw. Tell me truly, did you ever think that I intended to *marry* you?"

A staggering rush of feeling swept over Mignon, and she felt that the floods of scalding tears were pumping themselves upward toward her hot eyes; but a powerful quietness came also, and the tears stayed back.

When she spoke, she did so with a steady voice.

"And so you never thought of marrying me?"

"Not for a moment, but I am a man of honor. I told you I would never forget you, and I swear I never have. I promised you that you should never want a friend while I remained on this old planet, and I swear you never shall. I told you you should never want for anything a queen should have, and if you have done so it has been because you have not spoken. Let us straighten up old scores to-night, and begin all over," and Mansfield carefully drew a wallet from his hip pocket and placed it on his knee.



Mignon apparently did not notice the motion.

With her eyes fixed in a penetrating gaze on his face, she never wavered, but seemed reading his thoughts.

“Marriage is all well enough for a certain sort of men,” he proceeded calmly to explain; “men who have not honor enough to stand by their word and need to be bound by a process of law, but I prefer to be free, and what’s the odds, anyhow, if matches are made in heaven? It is love that constitutes true marriage, love, and, before God, I love you as I love no other woman, and you—have you forgotten your love? Have you outlived it? Was it, after all, only a fancy? Am I no more to you, after an absence of two short years, than any other man? Tell me, do you love me?”

“I have nothing to say to you,” she said, turning away from him.

“Least said soonest mended. Then let our relations begin where they were broken off by the iron hand of fate on my part and an iron puritan notion on yours.”

“If we go at once to the chapel minister.”

“ And if we do not? ”

Mignon pressed her lips tightly.

“ Will we waive the ceremony, and live the life? ”

“ No. A thousand times no—not by the grace of God! ” and the star shone dangerously bright in her eyes and the spots glowed on her cheek.

A tinge of scorn swept Mansfield’s face, as he cast his eye around the poorly-furnished room.

“ Evidently God does not appreciate your notions. I will do better. Come with me, and you shall walk on a moquette carpet and sit beside a window hung with real lace. You shall have your meals sent in and a maid to dust your room. You shall be my wife by all that’s fair and square, and——” he turned his head in the direction of the bed, “ the gypsy baby shall wear a gold bracelet and have first place in my will. Be sensible now, little girl. You are looking thin. I do not think you get enough to eat, and God has no desire to have you starve, you are too beautiful. Red spots become your cheeks. Come here ——” and throwing the wallet carelessly on the table, he spread his hand across his knee.

With his motion something broke loose in the bot-

tom of her soul: whether fire or flood or hurricane, Mignon knew not, but it swayed her with the might of an unseen force for a few seconds, as a tempest plays with a leaf. She felt the hot blood race through her veins as if shot from a geyser. She felt an unutterable loathing for the man with his soft words and depraved desires, and with this there was the dying of the last faint hope that she had clung to through the years. Her last small thread of trust had been tested, and had proved rotten to its finest fiber.

Yet, with these conflicting emotions, there also came a feeling of complete mastery, and a strength she had never known.

“Have you anything more to say?” she inquired, when he had finished.

He looked at her quickly. There was a calmness and a coldness in her voice that amazed Mansfield.

He seemed puzzled for a moment, and she added in the same tone, “If you have not, please consider your call at an end. You are in a woman’s room, without her invitation or consent.”

There was an imperious command in her voice, as

she arose from her chair and pointed toward the door, and for another moment Mansfield sat spell-bound in the presence of the royal blood of womanhood.

Then he collected himself.

“Sit down, dearest!” he said pleasantly, “you have misunderstood me. Listen to me—sit down,” and he threw out his arm as if to draw her to him, but she moved aside.

“Say what you must,” she commanded.

“If you cannot, or do not care to come with me, I am sure I may be allowed to come here once in a great while to see my gypsy baby. Don’t you know she is mine, and that I can take her to-morrow, if I choose? I love you too well to take her from you, I only want to visit you. I suppose these visits will be conditional, but name the conditions and do not keep me in suspense.”

“You may come again on one condition.”

Manfield’s face brightened. “Name it; even to the half of my kingdom.”

“When you come again, bring a marriage license.”

“You are mine without a license,” and Mansfield

pressed his full lips together and settled back in his chair.

“I appeal to your honor,” Mignon said. “Leave me.”

“Honor?” and he laughed. “What does a man know of honor when a woman such as you are stands within arm’s length of him? Honor is as the small dust of the balance. You are mine and the world will neither know nor care that you have asked me out. It will believe you called me in. Honor? When have you looked in a glass, that you do not know how beautiful you are?”

“You will not go?”

“I will not.”

Mignon cast her eye around the room, and thought rapidly.

He had spoken the truth. The world would never know that she had asked him out.

Providence sometimes plays a telling part in such small things as the setting of a bed. Mignon thought of it afterward. Only a few days before, just for a change, she had rearranged the furniture in the room

and had put the bed close to the door leading into the hall.

If Mansfield had been between the bed and the door, she could not have escaped, and as it was, she barely got away; but before he was aware of her intentions, Mignon went to the bedside, and snatching the sleeping child in her arms, rushed into the hall.

Mansfield sprang to his feet and dashed into the darkness after her, but she was gone.

At the opposite end of the long hall there was a small, unfinished room, used as a storeroom. A few boxes, bits of carpet, and other litter, had been thrown in here, but the door had a strong wooden bar which fitted into a groove in the wall, and Mignon knew that it could not be broken without arousing the whole floor.

In this little room she took refuge.

The pale light of the moon filtered through the dingy window and gave light enough for her to collect some bits of carpet and an old overcoat, on which she placed the child.

It half-roused and rubbed its fingers across its

mother's cheek, but she patted it and spoke softly, so that it was soon asleep again. Then she removed her underskirt, and after wrapping the child, sat down on the floor by its side.

Several times she imagined she heard footfalls close outside the door; sometimes she thought they were at the other end of the hall, but all was uncertain, and after the moon had gone down she was sure Mansfield must have left the building.

Then she thought.

Rapidly times and scenes and voices and promises came to her.

The scent of the violet and cigar,—the touch of the gloved hand,—the rocking motion of a boat,—the wash of the waves across the distant beach,—the whirling water,—the days of hope and fear,—the letter. As she thought, her aching head grew dizzy and she felt herself to be tossing in a seething whirlpool of despair.

Love, defrauded love; lost faith; lost character, and at last lost hope, for until this night she had held to a faint hope that some time he might come to make good his sacred promise.

Mignon put her hands to her head, and pressed it with her whole force; she clasped her hands above her head and bore down, for the pain in it seemed almost to numb her. She left the child and walked in the darkness back and forth across the narrow room until she sank again weary and trembling by the side of the sleeping little one, and while she sat thus, crushed with a fresh sense of her shame and loneliness and utter helplessness, the Evil One spoke, saying:

“Have you bettered your child by fleeing from its father?”

“Has it the heritage of a name that might be spoiled by living with its father?”

“Have you a right to deny this child the necessities of life when its father is willing, nay anxious, to give it luxuries?”

“Will you rise in the estimation of the world by the step you have taken?”

“What will you do if he persists in the course he has begun?”

“Who will believe you?”

“Who will believe him?”



“Where are your friends?”

These questions, oft-recurring, changing in form and subtlety, beat against her brain with violent force, and she found no argument with which to meet them.

In an agony of spirit, she tried to pray.

She knelt, with her head resting against the dusty framework of the eastern window, until the dim grey of morning softened the dark sky, but her prayer was some unuttered soul-desire, for her lips could shape no words.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### ON AN OLD LOG RAFT.

When the first red glow of morning showed over the chimneys and roofs, Mignon crept out from her hiding place and returned to her room.

She paused at the closed door and listened a moment, then she cautiously turned the knob and softly entered.

There was no one in the room.

With the crying child clinging to her skirt, Mignon collected some bits of wood and started a fire, then she turned to the table, which she had not taken time to clear away the night before. The task of preparing breakfast was a hopeless one, for there was nothing but a few scraps of bread and some warmed-over coffee out of which to make a meal.

Mechanically she crushed some bread into crumbs, dropped them into a cup, and poured some of the warmed-over coffee on them.

This she gave the child, and settling her face in

her hands, she tried to think, for she could not eat any of the crusts and tasteless coffee.

But the child turned away from the cup and cried. Mignon sprinkled a bit of sugar on the crumbs and coaxed the child, still it turned away and continued to whine, casting its eyes pitifully over the bare table.

Again the Evil One whispered in the mother's ear: "Your child is hungry—its father will give it bread."

With a sharp cry, Mignon pressed her hands to her head as if she had been struck, and after sitting a moment, she suddenly left the table, and gathering up her linen, fell to work with feverish haste, for she was depending on this to furnish her next meal.

More than once the work fell from her hands, many times the threads twisted and the pattern blurred so that she found it necessary to take out stitches.

Finally she became so confused that she even forgot the pattern she would trace, and going to her work-basket, was rummaging among the scraps for a book, when her hand struck something strange.

This she hastily drew out, and as her eyes fell upon it, it dropped to the floor as if it had been a viper, for it was Cornelius Mansfield's well-fattened wallet.

For a moment she stood, then closing the door, she fastened it securely, when she returned and picked up the purse.

With many a furtive glance, she looked around, as she sat down to examine it.

Then she forgot to look around; she forgot the tiresome whining of the hungry child; she forgot everything, for she held in her hand a solid roll of good, green money.

She made an effort to count it, but the effort wearied her, instead she fondled the roll and smoothed it gently, as if it were something alive and very tender.

Suddenly she dropped it, and after letting it rest for a moment, she lifted it again and placed it in the wallet.

What should she do with it?

After turning the matter in her mind, she hid the wallet in her bosom and returned to her work.

The child whined on for a time, then having eaten but a few spoonsful, it climbed down and hung around its mother.

All the morning she worked, at dinner-time she did not stop; at two o'clock the linen was done and she prepared to carry it home.

With the bundle on one arm and the child's hand in hers, Mignon started on a long walk to collect the pitiful sum she had earned with her tired fingers.

She had no money, and as one car after another sped past her, she thought of the wealth in her bosom and the wallet seemed to burn against her heart, and she hurried on lest she should be tempted to use it.

When the child became too tired to trudge farther, its mother took it in her arms and toiled on, her footsteps lagging and her burden stooping her shoulders.

As they passed fruit stalls, the child leaned toward them, almost upsetting its mother with the force of its eagerness to get hold of a banana or an orange, and Mignon only managed to get the little one past without a scene of wild childish pleading, by promising to buy an apple on the way home.

After what seemed long drawn-out miles of painful travel, Mignon mounted the steps of an Upper Terrace mansion and rang the bell.

She leaned wearily against the door until her ring was answered, when she was summoned inside by a servant, who took the bundle and disappeared up the polished stairway.

After some moments of waiting, a rustle was heard where silken petticoats tipped the stairs, and the lady of the house stood before Mignon.

Her face was not pleasant, and the delicate linen hung carelessly over her hand.

“The work is not altogether satisfactory,” she said, scrutinizing it carefully.

“I made a mistake last night, for I was very tired, but I took it out and did it over.”

“Still it shows a false stitch or two.”

Mignon sighed.

“I think,” said the lady, thoughtfully, “that you should throw off a part of the regular price on account of the mis-set stitches,” and she rested her eyes on Mignon’s face.

Mignon felt harsh, bitter feelings in her heart as

she cast her eye around the elegantly furnished hallway, the lady's rich morning dress, then at her own shabby skirt and the pinched face of the blue-eyed baby, but she only said meekly, almost beseechingly, "There is *so* much work on it."

"I know," said the lady, "still when one pays for work one expects to get it. I think it is right that I should deduct at least a third of the price. It will really be good for you. You will be more careful another time. Mary——" she called, "bring me my purse."

Almost immediately a girl in a cap came softly down the stairs, and handed the lady a purse, which she opened.

She took out several bills, and a look of annoyance crossed her face.

"Can you change a five?" she inquired of Mignon, knowing before she asked that she could not.

"I am sorry," she said, apologetically, replacing the bills, "but I have not got the change this morning. You will have to come again."

Mignon did not move. Red spots came into her

cheeks, and she stood looking at the lady in bewilderment.

“What shall I do!” she at last found words to say. “I was depending on this.”

“I suppose so,” the lady answered, coldly. “Come back to-morrow,” and she stepped toward the door.

Mignon caught the child by the hand and followed.

When the door had swung shut, she caught her breath and stepped as rapidly as she felt able, for fear the lady might order her away.

As she went the earth seemed to move before her. Fences twisted like snakes. Houses danced and even the path she trod seemed moving up and down underneath her feet.

When they again came to the fruit stands, the child leaned toward them and begged in a baby’s way for something to eat. With a struggle Mignon passed the fruit, but at a baker’s window the child again cried, this time for a cake, and as it repeated over and over, “Hungry, mamma, hungry,” Mignon again heard the Evil One whisper:

“The child will starve; its father will give it



bread," and again the wallet within hand's reach seemed burning like fire, as she pulled the child roughly past a cake-shop and hurried on.

When she came to the turn in the road where the way led to her home, she hesitated, then she turned her face toward the winding way that led around Black Hill over the river, for the water seemed calling her, and for once she was not afraid of it, so that the more it called the faster her feet moved toward it.

The child stopped begging for a cake, realizing in its baby-way that something unusual was taking place.

Mignon's first sight of the river was where it showed through the branches of the trees, and its shimmer seemed inviting. Its hollow gurgle sounded on the still air and she hurried toward it, looking meantime for the black hole where the water eddied lazily and still.

This especial spot she could not see, on coming out at the end of the walk, for over it lay an old log raft.

The logs were brown and heavy-looking, and the dull water fitted into each crack and chink, as if the

raft had grown on the breast of the river. One end of the raft was securely fastened to a place where the bank sloped gently; the other end lay far out in the stream.

Without a glance to see if she were watched, Mignon hurried out on the raft. Under her sudden weight it heaved and stirred itself like a half-aroused, lazy beast, then settled slowly.

The deep, still water rippled away from the brown ends of the logs and washed over them in returning, but Mignon did not see the ripples, she only saw the water—still and dark and deep, and the notion that underneath it there must be rest had driven every other thought from her troubled mind.

As she neared the edge, she clasped the baby, who was now clinging tightly to her neck, and when quite near the edge of the raft, she paused for a final look at the world that she was trying to escape from.

While she paused, suddenly another voice than the voice of the Evil One spoke, saying in the stillness, "I have loved thee with an everlasting love."

As if she had been struck, Mignon staggered back from the edge of the raft.

Beneath her feet it see-sawed, while the child clasped her neck tighter and laughed merrily as she looked around to see who had spoken.

\* \* \* \* \*

While Mignon had been setting the last stitches in her linen-work, one of the mill-hands in Sandtown had been breaking his leg, and about the time she set out for Upper Terrace, Doctor Hernando was making his way hurriedly to the bedside of the newly-made cripple.

Leaving Sandtown after the bone had been neatly set, he drove slowly, so that the breeze might get the iodoform out of his whiskers, and when he came to the road winding around Black Hill he drove still more slowly, for his squinting eye had caught sight of a woman's figure, apparently out in the river, and he wondered what it meant.

On driving closer, he discovered that she was on a raft, and he hurried, for though this was not the popular place for suiciding, still the solitary woman might be contemplating something of the sort.

Keeping his eyes well focused, he drove nearer.

The woman's dress blew thinly in the rising lake wind. Her face he could not see, for she held in her arms a child whose black hair floated against the wind from under a red cap.

Suddenly, Doctor Hernando gave his horse a smart touch with the whip, and almost the next minute he had jumped from the carriage and was hurrying toward the raft, for he had recognized the woman.

While Mignon yet stood motionless, suddenly a long arm was thrown around her and some one was pulling her roughly back toward the shore.

Turning with an alarmed cry, she found herself in the tight grasp of Doctor Hernando.

"What are you doing here?" he demanded, almost angrily.

His answer was a hysterical utterance, whether intended for cry or laugh, he could not tell, and she said, "I do not know."

Doctor Hernando wondered, because she let him draw her away from the water without resistance.

When they were safe on shore, he stopped under a tree.

“Will you go home now?” he said, in the same half-angry, half-reproving manner.

The little child slipped onto the ground, and Mignon leaned wearily against a tree.

“If I can,” she said, faintly.

“Are you ill?” and Doctor Hernando adjusted his glasses, which had dropped off in the excitement of the moment.

“It’s my head,” she explained.

Doctor Hernando studied her closely a few seconds. Then he knew that the flush in her face was not the flush that the wind brings.

Hastily removing his glove, he took her hand in his, and pressed his long, cool fingers against her wrist.

“I have been vexed, forgive my manner,” he said, in a changed tone, “and let me take care of you,” and taking the child in his arms, he led the way to his carriage, not wondering now why Mignon seemed so strange, and ready to obey him.

When they came to the bend in the road where the way led to her home, Mignon watched for him to turn out, but when he did not, she asked no ques-

tions, and when her eye presently caught the glitter of a gilt sign, she knew that she was again at the Haven.

“I have brought you a nice case this time,” Doctor Hernando said to Mother Shephard, when Mignon had been put to bed and the baby had been given a bowl of bread and milk.

Anticipating a serious illness, Mother Shephard sent a messenger to Mignon’s home for some clothing, and Doctor Hernando had taken her there; this was how it happened that he stood for a moment in the little, bare room and looked at the table with its few uneaten crusts, and came to believe that sometimes, even in a great land rolling in prosperity, some people suffer.

While Doctor Hernando was gone, Mignon gave the wallet of money to Mother Shephard, telling her the circumstances under which she came by it, and asking her to return it. She also expressed a wish to see Doctor Hernando.

Mother Shephard was somewhat exercised about the wallet, and as soon as Doctor Hernando returned she called him into the parlor, closed the door and

expressed her views of Mansfield freely, as she told of the occurrence.

Doctor Hernando looked at the wallet as it lay on the corner of the table, then he opened it and counted the money.

“One hundred and eighty-five dollars,” he said. “I have never called myself strictly orthodox, but now I believe there is a hell. Doesn’t the devil understand his cunning? The idea of giving a half-starved mortal a wad of bills like this!”

“I am glad you are getting orthodox. Now that hell is established, heaven will follow as a necessity.”

“To be sure, and any woman who for honor’s sake lives on crusts when she might have one hundred and eighty-five dollars’ worth of milk and honey will have a reserved seat; and she may have it right soon.”

“Do you really think it will be brain fever?” and there was a note of anxiety in Mother Shephard’s voice.

“Will be? It already is.”

Then he pointed to the wallet.

“ Unless you are particularly desirous of returning that (I should like to designate it) money, let me have the job.”

“ You are more than welcome,” and with Mother Shephard’s permission, Doctor Hernando pocketed the wallet, and then went to Mignon.

Her face was rosy, and she rocked her head untiringly against the pillow, pressing her temples at times.

Her eyes were bright, but Doctor Hernando had stood for some minutes beside her before she seemed to notice him.

“ Am I sick? ” she then inquired.

“ You have a little fever.”

“ Will you let me die this time? ”

“ Do you want to die? ” he inquired, kindly.

She did not answer him, but after changing her head position several times, said, “ My head, my head; it aches so.”

“ Yes,” he said, soothingly. “ It will be better to-morrow.”

Again there was a restless pause, after which she said, “ Before I forget, I want to say—I want you to



know—if I had been going to throw myself in the water, I should have done so long before you came. It is wicked to drown one's self."

She closed her eyes, but she did not rest, and in a moment they flew open again.

"Don't think I'm wicked, if you can help it," she said, as if asking a favor.

He made no answer, but pressed his fingers against her temple, and under his touch she was quiet a few seconds before she turned away with a groan.

As Doctor Hernando was leaving the room, he caught snatches of mother-talk and exclamations that confirmed his gravest fears.

When he came the second day, she did not know him, and at times the flashing light in her eye died away to a dull, blank stare, while she talked almost incessantly, telling many things she had not wished known, and sometimes crying.

The third day it was found necessary to cut off her soft, black hair.

"Are you a good barber?" Mother Shephard inquired, holding the shears toward Doctor Hernando.

He took them, and steadying Mignon's restless forehead with one hand, began his task.

The shining blades gleamed through her black hair and he hesitated, then they snapped relentlessly, and Mother Shephard lifted the dark hair and piled it on a towel until the towel was full and Mignon's head was like a child's.

But even with her hot hair gone, and ice always around her head, Mignon continued to drift away before the force of the disease in a way to dampen all Doctor Hernando's professional ardor, and the night when he was certain the turning point must be reached, he returned to the Haven about nine o'clock, and took his place at his patient's bedside.

Mignon had grown calmer during the day, and now breathed so softly that at times none but an experienced eye could tell there was breath left in her body.

When the clock struck twelve, Doctor Hernando sat by the bedside, and Mother Shephard said softly, "Doctor Hernando, it is midnight."

"Yes," he said, absently, "I will go presently."

Then they sat, exchanging a few quiet remarks,

giving Mignon her doses and bathing her head, until the solitary hour of one chimed down the hall, when Mother Shephard said, "Doctor Hernando, it is one o'clock," and he answered her absently, as before, "Yes, I will go presently."

When another hour had gone, Mother Shephard said, "Doctor Hernando, it is two o'clock," and he answered the third time, "Yes, I will go presently."

When the clock in the long hall struck three, lest he might not have heard it, Mother Shephard said, "Doctor Hernando, the clock strikes three," and after quite a pause, he said, "Yes, I will go presently."

Then Mother Shephard smiled, and knew how fruitless would be any further suggestions, still when the clock announced that the night was almost gone, she said again, "Doctor Hernando, the clock strikes four; you have been up all night."

This time he did not answer her.

He rose from his chair, and adjusting his glasses, bent low over his patient.

He took her hand in his, and held it while his fingers touched her wrist.

Then Mother Shephard came to his side, and in the stillness the hall clock could be heard ticking away the minutes.

Lower and lower they bent over their patient, as if to catch her faint heart-beats against their ears.

Then Doctor Hernando suddenly loosened the hand he had been holding, and straightened up.

“Did I understand you to say it is four?” he said, softly, turning to Mother Shephard.

She looked at him, and stepping to the door, glanced at the hall clock.

“Half-past,” she answered.

“I will go now,” and Mother Shephard knew that the crisis had been passed and that Mignon would get well, for her physician smiled, and doctors rarely smile when a patient dies.

The next time he saw her, Mignon was sleeping naturally, with her hand under her cheek.

With her short hair and her frail face, she looked more like a child than a woman, and Mother Shephard and Doctor Hernando stood for a moment in the door and watched the gentle rise and fall of the sheet drawn over her breast.

“Poor little thing!” said Mother Shephard.  
“How can men be so cruel?”

“Until we can agree as to the meaning of the word ‘man,’ a discussion of your question will be useless,” and the emphasis of Doctor Hernando’s answer caused Mother Shephard to smile.

## CHAPTER IX.

### A POCKETBOOK ENCOUNTER.

Mignon was for some time a patient at the Haven.

Her strength had long been overtaxed by days and nights of toil, and it was weeks before her pale face took on a healthy color and her sad eyes a glance of healthy light.

During this time Mother Shephard was very kind, and the child was delighted with its new surroundings, for it got plenty to eat, which was something altogether new, but so profitable that its face filled out and it whined no more.

Doctor Hernando was attentive to his patient, and on several occasions tried to show a friend's interest in Mignon, but every attempt in this line was turned aside with a quiet dignity, for she gave him to understand that while she appreciated his professional interest, any other was out of the question.

She found fresh flowers in her room when her mind returned, and these were kept around, but no

one ever said they were for her, nor where they came from, and she never asked.

As she grew stronger, she began again to think of returning to her room, and long before she was in a condition to go to work, she made the announcement that she was going away.

When Doctor Hernando had been informed of his patient's intentions, he was displeased, and determined to have an interview with her.

He found Mignon sitting in a wide window-seat. She wore a loose dress and her short hair curled up on the end like a child's.

Doctor Hernando crossed the room, and taking his position on one side of the square bay-window, he fixed his eyes on her.

After a few seconds' steady squinting, he removed his glasses, and said:

“Mother Shephard informs me that you contemplate leaving this place in a few days.”

There was something in Doctor Hernando's attitude conveying the impression of untiring persistency, and the tone of his voice aroused the suspicion in Mignon's mind that he had some objection to this

course of procedure, and she determined to have the matter understood once for all, without further words, so she said, resolutely:

“ Yes.”

“ Why? ”

“ I must.”

“ Why must you? ”

There was a note of discord in her voice, when she answered him:

“ Doctor Hernando, you know that I must earn my bread.”

“ What’s the matter with the bread you get here? I have suspected that you are as comfortable here as you will be away from here.”

“ The state provides comforts for sick folks. When they are able to work, no decent one of them will stay a moment to tax the charity of the community.”

“ The state also furnishes a physician to say when the patients in its care are and are not able to leave. As a rule, my patients have the courtesy to wait for a dismissal before they leave my care.”

Mignon’s face colored slightly.



“Doctor Hernando,” she said quickly, looking into his face, “I beg your pardon, if I have seemed discourteous. I have not meant to be, believe me. I feel that to remain here longer would be presuming on the already overtaxed generosity of both yourself and Mother Shephard. I shall go away; but be sure I thank you for your kindness.”

“You owe me no thanks,” he said, dropping his glasses and leaving them to swing for a minute.

Again Mignon’s face took on the delicate tinge of color but half a blush.

“I understand that in a way I do not owe you any thanks; for your professional services you are paid by the city; but it was not for this alone I intended to thank you. I meant——” and she hesitated.

Doctor Hernando still stood in the position he had first taken, leaning against the window, at the end of the low seat.

She knew that he was studying her, but she continued:

“I meant to thank you for keeping me from the water the day you found me on the raft. It is true,

when I went there I intended to fall in and let the water forever shut out the sight of the world, but a Voice stopped my feet, and instead of throwing myself in, I drew back. Yet I could move no farther. The world was spinning at such a rate I should have fallen in, and from this you saved me. Life is hard, it will always be, I suppose, but as I have made it so myself, I will not complain; at any rate, I must not die until God's time."

Doctor Hernando adjusted his glasses.

Mignon, without looking at him, caught the quick motion of his hand, and wondered what he was about to say.

"Will you be so kind as to look at me?"

Mignon hesitated, then turned her face toward him.

"Thank you," he said.

"I have had a number of patients in my day. Some of these have understood me, some have not; some of them I have understood, some I have not wanted to; but of them all, I find in you the first one who has so far misunderstood me as to seriously

irritate my composure, for I may as well say to you that my right to the title of 'man' is broken into a thousand fragments, if your intimation of my character be right or just. I should like to be understood, and to this end I shall insist on knowing whether you are sincere when you say to me that you think I am so little of a man, that I have so superficial knowledge of the ethics of common decency, that I have so far forgotten an honorable man's memory of a mother or a sister, as to stand before you, and call to your attention the matter of pay for my professional services? What do you mean?"

"Doctor Hernando, I have already said to you that if I have seemed discourteous it was unintentional, I beg your pardon. I thank you for your unusual kindness to me, but that does not change the fact that my bills here are paid by the state."

Doctor Hernando jerked his glasses off, and his squinting steadied itself into a comparatively steady frown.

"That is not the question," he replied. "The question is, 'Do you or do you not think I would outrage or insult a woman's tender feelings—or add

to her pain by so much as a feather's weight?' This is the question."

Mignon hesitated before saying, "I do not know how to talk to you. I have already said I thank you."

"When a man has nothing in the world but his profession and his own good name to be personally interested in, it is a sorry consolation to find his motives misconstrued and his words always misunderstood, even though thanked profusely. You can say to me whether or not you have any confidence in me."

"I was very ill, I am well now; certainly I have confidence in you."

"I am speaking now as a man, not as a physician."

"I am not acquainted with you as a man."

There was a moment of silence, during which Dr. Hernando twisted his glasses slowly around the ball of his thumb.

"Then perhaps you may suggest some method by which I may be able to gain your confidence, for I am determined to have you understand that while there are men who are by every right entitled to your

severest judgment and most unqualified condemnation, I am not one of them. I am your friend."

"If you are, you readily understand that I cannot accept a man's friendship. If you are truly a friend, you will say nothing of a friendship—think nothing of it."

"I suppose that means that if I should meet you to-morrow in the market-place, or in the park, and should lift my hat to you, you would be offended."

"You will not meet me in the park," and Mignon spoke with a smile on her face in which there was more pathos than sunshine.

"You understand that you are not yet dismissed from my care, nor from this institution."

"I think I do not need your services any longer," she said, quietly.

"You mean you do not want them," and she did not dispute him.

"Very well. I will respect your wishes, for you are out of danger now, if you take care of yourself, and your confidence in humanity must be restored. Good-by," and he extended his hand.

Mignon had partly turned away from Doctor Her-

nando; still she saw that he held out his hand, and he knew this.

“Good-by, Doctor Hernando,” she said politely, but she held her clasped hands in her lap.

\* \* \* \* \*

“Mother Shephard,” Doctor Hernando said, before he left the Haven, “it’s no use to try keeping her here. She was never cut out to be a charity patient. Let her go, and lest I should hurry her departure, I have considerably agreed not to see her again, for I am one of the species she cannot tolerate.”

“She is very thankful to you.”

“Thanks get intolerably stale and depressing sometimes. Confidence in some cases is better.”

“Confidence must grow. Her confidence in all mankind has been nipped in the bud.”

“And nipped pretty close; but what shall be done about her? If she goes home and works as she has done, she will be back here in a week, and her last condition will be worse than her first. There should be a fund appropriated by the state for half-dead working-women.”

“The state does well to take what care it does of them. Some rich old man should make an endowment.”

Doctor Hernando laughed.

“My riches are limited, but not my years. Perhaps I can bring your pleasant dream to pass, in the present case; so I hereby endow a fund, it does not matter how much, but mention it to our patient, and tell her to draw on it if worse comes to worst. Be wise in your words. Tell her a man of some years, without family, believing that the whole social and industrial system is wrong and discriminates against women, has bequeathed a fund for the use of such women as have been inmates of the Haven, have proven their right to help by their lives, and who are in need. You know how to fix it up.”

“Is this fund for the exclusive use of any one woman?”

“No; help as many as you can with the allowance I will mention to you to-morrow, but be careful what you say to the one we are speaking of, and for her peace of mind and my honor, do not mention my name.”

\* \* \* \* \*

This was how it happened that Mignon came to depend on the Working Woman's Fund, and every time she drew a small payment, she blessed the aged man who had been so thoughtful, and assured Mother Shephard that it was possible there were a few good men in the world, after all.

\* \* \* \* \*

Doctor Hernando still carried the wallet belonging to Cornelius Mansfield.

It had not been delivered, for two reasons, the first of which was the unusual demand made on Doctor Hernando's time.

The Sandtown man who broke his leg had all kinds of trouble with it.

Mignon, for weeks after he had taken the wallet, required his close attention, and there were a number of other cases in the Haven.

Also, a millionaire on Upper Terrace fell out with his physician, and shortly after fell into Doctor Hernando's hands to be operated on for appendicitis, and as he was successful, his success was published abroad, as success is apt to be when attending a millionaire.



If it had not been for this demand on his time, Doctor Hernando would not have returned the wallet, for he was waiting for an opportune occasion.

When this should be, he had not settled in his mind, but he had some curiosity to see what Mansfield intended to do about it.

So several weeks went by.

One night, after a round of calls that had detained him until after dark, Doctor Hernando, on entering the rotunda of the hotel where he kept rooms, stopped midway across the open hall to look more closely at a couple of men who sat in an alcove made by a bend in the stairs.

A branching palm on a pedestal partly hid the two, still after looking with vigor some seconds, Doctor Hernando started across the tiled floor.

There was the usual din and babel of male voices in the air, and the usual accompanying clouds of blue smoke, so that Doctor Hernando drew quite close to the two men in the alcove without being observed, and at a short distance stopped behind them and leaned comfortably against a pillar.

One of the men wore a tall silk hat which sat well back from a low, pink forehead.

He wore a light top coat, which was open wide and pushed back from his shoulders.

Two fingers of his right hand were playing lazily inside two twists of heavy gold watch-chain.

He mumbled an unlighted cigar, taking it from his mouth now and then to shoot a tiny bit of tobacco onto the tiled floor.

The man he talked to was evidently a man of the same variety, cast in a slightly different mould.

He wore a five-dollar derby well down over his eyes.

He picked his teeth, and when the job had been finished to his satisfaction, he straightened up, as if ready for business, and said with a grin:

“Rather a costly move.”

“Oh I don’t know,” answered Mansfield. “You should see her.”

“But a hundred and eighty-five dollars, man, Whew!” and the speaker tossed the bits of his tooth-pick into the spittoon.

“Christians come high,” and Mansfield laughed.

“And is she a Christian?”

“She’s a Christian—not one of the kind engaged in grab-bag festivals, either.”

The man in the five-dollar derby whistled, then said, “I’m afraid you’re playing a losing game.”

Mansfield lifted his silk hat delicately, and turned back the lop of hair that had fallen on his forehead.

Then he settled his hat again, and said with a satisfied air:

“No, sir; Christians come high, but by that sign they come. See——” and he tapped his left forefinger half a dozen times with his cigar. “See here; six weeks ago, by mistake, I left my wallet in her room, as bare a barn as was ever devised. She was hungry, and crusts are tame eating for a woman who works all day and half the night,—by the tips of her fingers she may work *all* night,—but I forgot my wallet. In a couple of weeks more I will remember about it, and hurry back to get it. Will she have it? No; for Christians are human like the rest of us, even though they had rather not be. She has paid a bit for coal maybe, a little for rent, perhaps she bought a new dress, she needed one. I expect she

has been living high on porterhouse, and likely the kid is wearing red shoes. Anyhow, I'll step in and ask her for the money. She will blush, and she blushes like an angel; she will beg and cry, have hysterics maybe, and promise to pay it back and all such stuff, but I will hold a mortgage on the independent little Christian—and, say, you ought to see her! I'll show her to you when I get a velvet hat on her head with an eighteen-inch plume in it."

The man in the five-dollar derby laughed, then remarked:

"The best-laid plans of mice and men——"

Mansfield held up his hand.

"Poetry ruled out. The way to have spoiled the plan, the *only* way, was to have returned the wallet, and where *is* the wallet now?"

At this juncture, as if in answer to the question, some one moved close to Mansfield and placed his wallet on his knee.

"Here is your wallet," and looking up, the two men discovered Doctor Hernando, who leaned comfortably against the balcony, and taking off his glasses, balanced them on his thumb and squinted.

Mansfield stared a moment in silent surprise, without looking at the wallet.

After scrutinizing him closely for a full minute, Doctor Hernando took the wallet from Mansfield's knee. He adjusted his glasses, twisted the rubber band from the purse, and taking out the roll of bills, held them in his hand.

“What was the price of the Christian? Did I understand you to say there were one hundred and eighty-five dollars in the purse?” and he held the roll conspicuously in view.

“What the —— are you doing with my wallet?” and Mansfield straightened up, indignantly.

But Doctor Hernando paid no attention to him. With slow precision, he counted out the bills, putting them one by one across Mansfield's knee, until the last had been added to the pile, when he said, “One hundred and eighty-five dollars. A nice price, but Christians come high.”

Then he leaned against the balcony and waited.

“I demand an explanation. How came you with my wallet? Was yours a larger one?” and there was

a sneer in Mansfield's tone, to which Doctor Hernando paid not the slightest heed.

“As attending physician at the Haven, I found a patient, some weeks ago, critically ill with brain fever. About the last rational words she spoke was to tell the story of a—‘*man*,’ we will say, to be understood—who had, under sacred promise of marriage, betrayed and then cast this same woman on the world to struggle along as best she might; of a ‘man’ who after years returned, when she was all but ready to drop into her grave with want and wear, and who left his purse, which the woman gave to the matron of the Haven, with the request that it be returned, and which I now take pleasure in returning. During the subsequent delirium of this patient a few other interesting bits of information were collected regarding this—we are saying ‘man’—interesting, but not pretty.”

“Do you know who I am?” Mansfield questioned, his face turning pale with chagrin, and his wide knee trembling until the bills shook.

“You?” and Doctor Hernando focused his eyes on Mansfield and surveyed him carefully. “You do

not wear a plumed helmet. You do not carry a war-axe nor a shield. Your horse is not caparisoned. You do not take dark-haired Jewesses by strategy for your own beastly amusement. You do not disgrace the order of the Holy Brotherhood, but you disgrace the Brotherhood of *man*. You are Brian de Bois Guilbert."

Mansfield was speechless with rage.

"You are Galahad, I suppose," he said, when he could control his voice.

"When I see a woman fighting for her honor, even to the black edge of the grave, I do not try to buy her honorable determination from her for one hundred and eighty-five dollars, nor force it from her by intruding an unhallowed presence in a helpless woman's room."

"The end is not yet," Mansfield said, half under his breath.

"Possibly not, but as a physician, I would advise you to remember the end of de Bois Guilbert. Too much of your sort of loving will spoil your constitution, and the days of hiding fair ladies in castle dungeons are happily past."

“ You are certain? ” and there was a strange note in Mansfield’s speech.

“ You have too much sense to doubt it.”

Mansfield crushed the bills into a wad and pushed them with the wallet into his pocket.

Doctor Hernando, who had before seated himself in the chair vacated by the man in the five-dollar derby, settled a move more comfortably, and Mansfield lit his cigar.

Then the two men sat.

Mansfield smoked slowly, casting furtive glances meantime at Doctor Hernando, who seemed unconscious of his existence.

Not a word was spoken.

From time to time Mansfield moved slightly to dust the ashes from his cigar, but showed no signs of quitting his post.

Each man seemed determined to outsit the other, and after the last smoking end of the cigar had been pitched angrily into the spittoon, Mansfield turned, and said with ill-concealed wrath :

“ Have you anything further to say to me? ”



“If I had, I should say it,” Doctor Hernando replied, smoothly.

“Your presence is an intrusion.”

“You forget we are in a public place.”

After sitting some minutes longer, Mansfield rose, pushed his chair sharply aside, and stood before Doctor Hernando.

“You probably think you have been of service to—this woman. Time will tell if you have.”

Doctor Hernando bowed.

## CHAPTER X.

A MODERN BRIAN DE BOIS GUILBERT.

After she left the Haven for a second time, Mignon's life fell at once back into the old way.

She toiled early and late. Her fare was frugal, and her room no less dreary, but there was this difference now, owing to the kindness of some aged philanthropist, such as her fare was, she had not the continual fear of being actually without food or of being put out of her little home, and at such times as she found it impossible to make ends meet, she went to Mother Shephard, explained her condition, leaving it to the judgment of this wise disburser of funds whether she should receive the modest sum she mentioned.

Each time she drew on this fund her confidence in some unknown, necessarily aged man, increased.

After many weeks, she went again to the elegant place on Upper Terrace, to try a second time for the pay for the linen work.

As she mounted the steps, she shuddered at the recollection of that other day.

Once inside, she waited as before for the servant to summon the mistress, and as before the swish of silk skirts announced the approach of the lady.

She seemed surprised at Mignon's appearance, for her short hair altered her looks, and when, in answer to inquiries, Mignon told the lady of her sickness, the lady held up two white hands and said she was sorry, and on the strength of this sorrow she gave Mignon another square of linen to embroider.

She had not intended to do this, and was so surprised at herself for having been overcome by sympathy, that she remedied the mistake as far as possible by ordering half again as much work put on the article as was usual for the price she paid.

“The rose leaves must stand as high as a crisp new leaf, and shade them carefully,” she explained. “The silk must be very fine, and don't for the world let a knot show in the corner spiderwebs, and be sure and get it done before Friday, for I am going to give a rose tea, and I just must have it.”

Mignon felt like throwing the bundle at the lady's head, but instead she took it meekly, for working-women must at all times appear meek, and thanking the lady for the price of the first piece of work—minus a third deducted for two crooked stitches—she took her leave.

\* \* \* \* \*

After some months, little Telsa, Mignon's child, began to show symptoms of some peculiar condition which Mignon could not understand.

The child had always been nervous and odd, but after her third year the symptoms seemed to aggravate. Sometimes when the child twitched, Mignon thought perhaps it was St. Vitus dance, of which she had heard much and knew nothing, and when the child's rest began to be broken at intervals, she doctored it with such simple remedies as mothers use.

At times the child rested well, played and laughed, then again, with no apparent reason, she threw her spools and playthings away and walked around aimlessly; still, there seemed to be nothing so startling in her manner as to alarm Mignon, until one night, when she was cutting patterns, the papers seemed to

move away from the spot on the table where she placed them.

For a time, she pushed the scraps of paper back where she had first placed them and which was near the child, but they would not remain, and the strange sight of bits of paper moving themselves across the table attracted her attention.

After experimenting for some time with papers of different sizes, she discovered, to her great surprise, that they all moved away from the child.

Other small articles were then placed on the table, and these, while perfectly quiet unless she came near them, moved suddenly away at the child's approach.

Mignon, for a time, was very much worried, and watched the child closely, but as nothing more serious for a time developed, she became in a way used to the strange phenomenon, which was only at times visible, her one care being not to let anyone know of it, but she no longer took the child out with her, and found it necessary to make her trips after a neighbor had returned from work to look after little Telsa.

\* \* \* \* \*

Some weeks after his encounter with Mansfield in the hotel, Doctor Hernando was going down one of the main streets of Border City after lamp-light, when in passing a window of Mansfield's office, which was generally dark, he noticed a light. This of itself would not have attracted his attention, but through the glass partition of the office he saw two men, one of whom wore a tall silk hat and light top coat, and was by these, Mansfield.

Mansfield was standing with his back toward the window, and facing him was a man some taller than he, much thinner, and dressed in a closely-buttoned black coat that came as far toward the floor as was visible through the window. He wore a slouch hat, pulled well down over his face, and a heavy growth of dark beard added to his general dark appearance.

In passing, Doctor Hernando merely noticed the two as they stood together.

Turning down a side street, not long after this, he saw some distance ahead of him a woman.

She was walking hurriedly, and carried a bundle. There was something familiar about her, and yet

something strange, but Doctor Hernando kept her in sight for several blocks.

If she had been carrying a child, or had had one by the hand, he would have been certain of her identity; as it was, he squinted in vain until, in turning a corner, she passed under a light and he could see her plainly.

With the sight he hastened his steps until, when he too turned the corner, she was not more than half a block ahead of him.

It was about this time that Doctor Hernando, on looking across the street, noticed a man, tall and straight, in a black coat that reached nearly to the ground, and a slouch hat, making his way on the opposite side of the street.

The man walked with his eyes cast down and his hat well drawn over them, but he walked rapidly, and seeing him, Doctor Hernando himself took longer strides, for the man across the street had been with Mansfield, and Mansfield was de Bois Guilbert.

Doctor Hernando removed his glasses and tucked them in a button-hole, so that he could better watch

both the nervous-appearing woman and the dark man in the slouch hat.

After a walk of several blocks, during which the three kept at about the same distance from one another, the woman turned a corner, her turn was imitated by the tall, dark man on the opposite side of the street, and followed by Doctor Hernando.

This movement on the part of the man increased Doctor Hernando's suspicions that Mignon was being followed, still he tried to believe it had only happened so, until a second and a third turn had been made by the woman, closely followed by the man on the opposite side of the street.

They had left the well-lighted streets now, and before them lay a long stretch of walk dimly lighted at long intervals by a gas-light.

On coming out into this place, the dark man on the opposite side of the street increased his pace until he passed Mignon.

When he had reached a point at least a block ahead of her, he crossed the street to her side, and turned back to meet her.



The place was dark, Mignon's figure was especially indistinct as she was nearing the middle of the block.

There was not another person in sight.

Suddenly, just before meeting Mignon, the dark man, to Doctor Hernando's astonishment, disappeared, and knowing that his place of disappearance must have been the mouth of an alley-way, he hurried his steps.

As Mignon came to this point she rather hesitated, then as if to have a bad matter the sooner over, she gathered her skirts in her hand and started across the way almost at a run.

Then she, too, suddenly disappeared.

With all haste, Doctor Hernando rushed to the mouth of the alley-way, the whole plot now being clear to his mind.

Against the sky the tops of a line of high board-fence left the suspicion of a line, but near the ground the place was midnight black; the scuffling of feet, however, told him that the two were near the entrance.

His eyes were not yet used to the darkness, but directed by the sound, he rushed toward the spot and shouted.

Immediately the scuffling stopped.

Some one was heard to be running down the darkness, and a woman cried aloud.

Her dark outlines were becoming distinguishable now, and Doctor Hernando stepped toward her.

“Do not be afraid,” he said, “I am your friend.”

“Oh, Doctor Hernando!” she exclaimed, excitedly, breaking into sobs.

“Are you hurt?” he inquired, in a low voice.

“I am nearly strangled.”

“You are very much frightened. Take my arm, and we will get out of this pit, and in the light see what harm has been done.”

Mignon slipped her arm through his, and caught her fingers around his sleeve, and Doctor Hernando knew by the way her arm trembled against his that she was frightened almost into hysterics.

As they turned into the less-dark street, she suddenly stopped.

“What is it?” he inquired.

“ My bundle.”

Doctor Hernando picked it up, for it lay almost beneath her feet, and after tucking it under his arm, they made their way toward the nearest light.

When Mignon had grown composed enough to talk, she said:

“ I met him, but I was in such a hurry I did not notice how he looked. Did you notice him? Do you know him? ”

“ I do not know him.”

“ I wonder——” and she stopped, for she had never mentioned Mansfield’s name to anyone but Mother Shephard, and she never intended to let his name pass her lips again.

But Doctor Hernando understood her pause, and added, quickly, “ He was thin and tall, with a dark beard.”

Something like a sigh of relief escaped her lips.

“ Then he was trying to rob me. I wonder why? Do I look as if I had money? ”

“ There is much that cannot be decided by looks.”

“ But why should anyone think I have money, or anything else worth stealing? ”

Just here they came into a light, and Doctor Hernando noticed that Mignon held her hand away from her body, and that there were dark stains around her wrist.

Stopping under the light, he adjusted his glasses.

“Let me see your hand,” and he wondered if she would.

When she did, he knew that she was not yet over her fright.

There was a long cut running from the inside of her wrist around toward the back of her hand.

Doctor Hernando examined it carefully under the light. It had not been cut by any instrument, and was nothing more than a long scratch.

“It is nothing serious,” he said. “It was probably done by a seal ring, a watch-charm, or a metal button,” and he drew a fresh handkerchief from his pocket.

“This is not surgically clean, but it is clean, and the best at hand to bind it in. I shall not suggest going to the office to dress it. We may go into a drug-store, if you wish, but I think you can attend to

it yourself when you get home. It is really nothing but a scratch."

Then Doctor Hernando's voice changed with the passing of the subject, and he said shortly: "Don't you know you should not be on the streets at night?"

"What is a woman to do who must be out?"

"You used to go in the daytime."

"My baby was well then."

"Then you should always take a car."

"If so, I should always have the money for car-fare, which I have not."

"You were walking to-night."

"Yes."

"The walk is too long," and he turned back to see if there were a car in sight.

"I will go on a car," she said, drawing her hand quickly through his arm, as if she had forgotten, and then he knew that she was getting over her fright.

"I am going with you," he informed her.

"No, no," she said, almost appealingly.

"Why?" he questioned, coolly.

"Have you thought that it takes years to build a

good name, which can be marred in a minute? You have an honorable name; you are very proud of your good name. I had one once. Perhaps in years and years—when my baby is a woman, I may have again.”

Doctor Hernando smiled, but Mignon did not know it from his next remark.

“Between the car stop and your street there are half a dozen alley-ways as black as the one we have been in. Think of my action as you must, but I shall not warrant your poor opinion by letting you pass these alone.”

Mignon made no answer to this, neither did she slip her arm through his again, but he noticed that every time a man approached she stepped nearer him, and this was at least a gain.

Once on the car, the ride was made in silence.

Mignon knew that he was studying her with as much care as if she were some newly-discovered species, indeed she almost felt that she was, and that under the microscope of his keen analysis he would yet know her better than she knew herself. This worried her.

When the ride was over, Doctor Hernando assisted her from the car-step, and they started again into a shadowy place.

“Doctor Hernando,” she said, after they had walked a block in silence, “I thank you for your kindness to me, and I thank the Lord, too. I am sure it must have been a part of His plan that you happened along to-night. If you had not——” and she shuddered.

“But I did not happen along,” he answered, with nice emphasis on the word “happen.”

“You were there.”

“I had followed you seven blocks.”

“Why were you following me?” and there was the old familiar tone of resentment in the words.

“Because I saw you alone, and knew that you were unsafe.”

“And do you often follow lonely women whom you consider unsafe?”

“I have not done such a thing before.”

“Then why should you follow me?”

“Because I am your friend, and hope some time to be recognized as such.”

“But why are you determined to be my friend? I do not understand.”

“Why am I determined to be your friend? Probably because you are the only woman who ever openly defied me—because I am by nature determined to do what certain people and powers declare I shall not do.

“I once rescued a bird from a cat. Its wing was hurt, and I mended it, and this bird I kept in a cage and I watched it recover from the attack of the cat. But the cat I found watching it, too, and the cat was planning to eat it as it watched. Then I determined the cat should not eat the bird, and for weeks a man’s determination was pitted against a cat’s, while the bird’s wing grew strong. When I finally gave the bird its freedom, I smiled as it winged its way over the head of the crouching cat, but I smiled too soon. The next morning the cat ate the bird. And I killed the cat.

“If with the years my interest has transferred itself from birds to humanity, I must not be blamed, my only regret now being that I am denied the pleasure of killing the cat, in whatever guise it may



appear. If I cannot give you friendly advice, accept my professional advice, and unless it is a matter of life and death, keep off the streets after dark. I am going to ask you to promise me that you will, for I have the best of reasons for believing that the man who trapped you to-night very well knew you had no money, he was not a robber—he was a cat in disguise.”

Mignon looked up at Doctor Hernando, with terror in her eyes.

“I am sorry to say this to you,” he continued, “but, trust me, it is true. Will you make me the promise I have asked?”

“Yes.”

“Another bit of advice: Do not trust a key to lock your door, get a bolt, and *use* it.”

After walking a short distance farther in silence, the barnlike proportions of Mignon’s tenement rose in sight.

“And there is yet one more promise,” and Doctor Hernando spoke slowly, as if approaching uncertain ground. “If you should need—really need a friend to do a service for you, would you let me know?”

Mignon was silent a moment. She felt under lasting obligations to Doctor Hernando, but she also felt that she must be very cautious.

“I will think about it,” she said, and Doctor Hernando left her at the door of the tenement.

That night, on returning to his room, he sat down to take a retrospective view of the evening, and to take his bearings on some other little matters.

That there had been a plot, with Mansfield at the bottom, to take by force what he could not get another way, was evident. He remembered Mansfield's words in the hotel.

It seemed hardly possible that a man would so boldly attempt to carry out a design, and yet no man knew better than Doctor Hernando that he was safe enough in attempting it.

Who would believe the woman's report? Against her name there fell the shadow of a sin, and the world makes much of shadows when they have fallen on a woman.

The vexed subject resolved itself in many different shapes, in Doctor Hernando's mind.

As a man, he was experiencing the feelings he

had known when as a boy the helpless flutter of the bird's wing against his hand had aroused his tender pity and his hot displeasure, only that now the woman's hand that had trembled on his arm had mingled with the pity it awakened something stranger and stronger, and while he did not try to analyze this feeling, he found himself possessed of a desire in some way to get between this beautiful and pitifully independent woman and the world.

How to accomplish this, was the question that puzzled his brain; and after the subject had evolved undisturbed for half an hour, a conclusion developed that the only way to take her under his protection, was to make her his wife.

When he had arrived at this conclusion, he was astounded at the riotous lengths to which his mind had run, for this was the one thing not to be thought of.

This was not that he was afraid of society; in fact, it would have afforded him no small degree of pleasure to have shocked society; he felt that he owed it a shock. Neither was it that the shadow of a former sin hung over her life. He did not attach

to a shadow its importance, as generally implied, when he was sure it was but a shadow, and compared to the man who was equally guilty and whose name was on the lips of society, he thought her an angel; and he also deemed her more worthy of respect than many a woman who would not so much as brush skirts with her, for fear of contamination.

But Mignon had no earthly use for him, except professionally, and even here she had been allowed no choice; his services had been forced upon her.

But two things he decided.

One was that he would, if possible, shield her from harm, and unthanked, be her friend. The other was, that he would think no more of her lest he might play the fool by crying once again, with new force, "Myone! Myone!"

\* \* \* \* \*

A few days after the rescue of Mignon, Doctor Hernando was at the Haven, when Mother Shephard gave him a small roll, telling him that Mignon had been there the day before and had left it for him.

With a strange sense of pleasure, he slipped this into his pocket, wondering what it was that she had

sent him, and feeling wonderfully elated because she had thought of him at all.

Perhaps it was some trifle to show her appreciation of his friendship, perhaps it would contain some written line from her, some few words telling him that at last he had won her confidence as well as her thanks.

With the thoughts of the package in his mind, he made his round of calls as quickly as possible, and as soon as he was once more in his carriage he took out the roll.

It was neatly wrapped and tied.

Very carefully he untied the knots and unwrapped the paper, and then out rolled his own linen handkerchief, freshly laundered.

There was not a mark or a touch about it to remind him that it had ever been in her possession, and hastily wrapping it up again, he leaned forward, and threw it with some force. When it fell into a gutter, he smiled with satisfaction.

“Let her go, then,” he said to himself. “I am a fool.”

## PART II.

### CHAPTER XI.

#### DARIAH DISCOVERS THE VEERY.

Dariah Plunkett was evidently in a state of great agitation.

His chin worked with exceeding velocity, and he muttered fierce imprecations, meantime holding high a ragged fragment of some brown thing.

To a disinterested third party, this stringy fragment would have been a puzzle; to Dariah Plunkett, it was the remains of a boot.

“ A-ny beast that’ll eat b-boots, ’ll eat me. They’ll be nibbling the crust off my forehead, t-tearing out my eye b-brows, and licking my t-toe nails to-night,” and he cast a despairing glance around the room, then raising his face, he flourished the brown remains over his head, and called, “ O-Ouijah, where art t-thou? ”

For a moment he stood in a state of expectancy, but as nothing happened, or seemed about to, with a long and mournful sigh, he rolled the brown remains

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into a wad and stuffed it under his one-legged clock, after which he sat down by his bench to study out a means of escape from his present ill-surroundings.

For three years, without intermission, his life had been made miserable, by one thing or another, in his present abode.

First, half a bushel of brick fell down the inside of the chimney and lodged somewhere, blocking up the air passage, so that the smoke could only make its escape through the front door.

After this, in a twisting storm, a couple of shingles left the roof and sailed away on the reckless breeze, and water added itself to smoke.

Then a post fell down under the house, the floor settled, and left cracks around the doors and windows, and wind added itself to smoke and water.

All this time, Dariah was with his entire energy trying to accomplish one of two things, by laboring alternately with his material landlord and his spiritual counsellor, Ouijah.

The former he prayed to fix the cabin, but the landlord being a hard-hearted creature, would not yield to the old man's importunings.

He then prayed the ever-watchful Ouijah to direct him to another room, but she being all heart, thought it best to let the old man tough it out on strictly natural lines, and he being afraid to leave his habitation of years without the consent of the spirit, lest he should forever estrange himself from her, stayed on, and weathered the elements, and muttered.

But when he awoke one morning, and found his sticky and fresh-smelling new boots missing, his wrath swelled, and he determined that, with or without the consent of Ouijah, he must leave the place at once, if he would not share the fate of the boots.

It generally took Dariah Plunkett from four to twelve hours to become accustomed to a change in his own mind, before he prepared to carry it out, so that he remained yet one more night in his old abode after the rats ate his boots.

Anticipating an attack, however, he was prepared, and with a stout club, a kettle of boiling water, and a bottle of carbolic acid, he awaited the onslaught.

It was with great joy that his silent watch was interrupted about midnight by the familiar, loose,



rattling chuckle, sounding in the upper corner of the room.

“ O-Ouijah? ” he cried.

Three raps.

“ Hail, Ouijah! The r-rats have e-eat my boots, b-by goll.”

Three raps.

“ And you have c-come to k-keep them f-from eating me? ”

Three raps.

A look of joy spread over the man's face; his chin worked with all vigor, and he said, “ How g-good of y-you! ”

Three raps.

“ And I m-must m-move? ”

Three raps.

“ Where to? ”

No answer.

“ F-further south? ”

Two raps.

“ A b-bit to the e-east? ”

Two raps.

“ Do I t-turn to the w-west? ”

Two raps.

“Try it n-north?”

Three raps.

Dariah mused.

“Any r-rats there?”

No answer.

“Any b-body I k-know?”

No answer.

Then Dariah Plunkett knew that Ouijah, having performed her mission, had retired.

The next morning before daylight he had his few belongings prepared for moving, and when other people were breakfasting, he took a bee-line north to find an empty room.

After some search, he came upon a sign on the corner of a barnlike structure, which advertised one room for rent.

Even before he entered it, he was sure this must be the place. So it proved, and having few worldly possessions, before noon of the same day he was pegging away in his new home as comfortably as if he had always been there. His cat purred on a piece of carpet, and voices from adjoining rooms floated

through the board partitions which served as walls, while footsteps sounded in the empty hall now and then.

After a spell for some moments undisturbed by footsteps, out of the corner of his eye he noticed a little figure hovering around his door.

He appeared not to notice the child, and after many moves nearer and back, and nearer again, she finally stepped into the doorway and stopped.

Then Dariah Plunkett turned his face toward her.

She stood leaning against the doorside, with one foot on top of the other, crossways, and her hands behind her.

Her hair was black. Where it left her head, it was soft like a cloud, but the ends went together in precise curls, of which there were not more than four.

Her eyes were rather narrow, and intensely blue, and her face was attractive or not, according to taste.

Dariah Plunkett considered it the most bewitching he had ever set his eyes upon.

By her appearance, the age of the child was hard to tell, for though very small, she carried herself with the mature air of a person of some years.

She did not seem in the least embarrassed by Dariah Plunkett's study of her, seemingly too much absorbed in him to notice that he seemed waiting for her to speak.

After a couple of minutes of careful study on the part of both, she said in a quaint, childish voice, "Does your chin jump like a frog all the time?"

"I-its been a going f-for twenty years n-now."

"What makes it go?"

"The s-s-spirits set its motion for a m-message, but t-they haven't s-s-sent the words yet."

The child looked in wonderment, and as she watched him, she worked her chin in fairly good imitation.

Dariah Plunkett laughed.

"W-w-hats——" he presently began.

"Why don't you say it?" she interrupted.

"Y-your name?" he added, with an effort.

"Telsa."

"M-Mary Telsa or A-Annie Telsa?"

"Telsa, Telsa," she repeated, smiling at his simplicity.

“W-what does y-your mother c-call you?” he again tried.

“Telsa.”

Dariah Plunkett, not to be outdone, made yet another attempt.

“What is your father’s n-name?”

“I have no father.”

“What w-was his n-name?”

“He never had a name.”

Dariah Plunkett stopped for a moment, discouraged, and looked at the child curiously.

“All f-fathers have names,” he said.

“Mine never had,” and she straightened her feet on the threshold.

“T-then he’s different f-father f-from others.”

“So am I different.”

“W-who says s-s-so?”

“My mother.”

Dariah Plunkett took up the shoe that he had placed by his side, and studied the last peg he had put in it.

“Who do y-you play with?” he asked, putting the shoe down again.

“ Nobody.”

“ Don’t y-you like to p-play? ”

“ I never tried it. My mother cries and says, ‘ No, baby,’ when I ask her to go in the street; so I don’t play.”

“ W-why don’t s-s-she let you? ”

The child looked at him earnestly a moment, and then said quizzically, turning her head like a jay, “ Don’t you know I have spells? ”

“ Fits? ” inquired Dariah.

“ No, not *fits*, spells, and I can do things you cannot; but don’t you ever tell anybody I told you so.”

“ W-what can you d-do? ”

“ Won’t you ever tell? ”

“ No.”

“ Honest? ”

“ H-honest, I won’t.”

“ When the spell is first on, before I get tired and dizzy, I can hold my hand out this way, and the table will walk away from it, like a dog or a bear, only, of course, its legs don’t work,” and she held her arm straight before her, with the palm of her small hand turned toward him.

“And when it first comes on,” she continued, “before the pains twist so in my side, I can make the wood-box go around the room, with my mother sitting on it. Can you do that?”

Dariah Plunkett's chin worked rapidly, and he eyed the child with distrust.

“N-no, I c-can't; neither c-can you.”

“O but I can. Put a piece of paper on the table. The strong spell is not here now, but paper will go like the wind.”

Dariah carefully placed his work aside, and after some hunt, placed a sheet of wrapping-paper on the table.

The child crossed the room with a quick, nervous step, and extended her arm toward the paper, when it flew away as if the wind had driven it.

He replaced it on the table.

“D-do it again,” he stammered.

And a second time the child reached her hand toward the paper, and it floated away.

“B-by g-goll!” he exclaimed.

“Try a piece of kindling, or a pencil,” she suggested.

He placed several small articles on the table, one after another, and at the approach of the child's hand they scudded away and fell over the edge of the table onto the floor.

Dariah Plunkett stood before the child in amazement, and she laughed a merry, childish laugh, well-pleased with his consternation.

"That's nothing," she said. "When the spell is strong I can do like this," holding out her hand, "and your whole bench, and all on it, will hurry away crazy, and if you try to stop it, you will fall."

"W-when do you have them s-s-strong?"

"Not every day, and I'm glad, for they make me nearly dead, I'm so tired, for they twist and hurt right here," and she pressed her hand to her left side, below her waist.

"But days they come, it's after dark, before I go to bed. Then I have to stand on the old life-preserver, and I shake all over, and I cannot move, for everything I touch goes crazy and breaks. My mother stays near me, and if she puts her hands on me, they tingle."

"Y-you have a s-s-spirit," Dariah ventured.



“What’s a spirit?”

“A s-s-spirit is—a s-s-spirit.”

“Is it?”

“S-sure.”

“The thing that set your chin going?”

“Y-yes.”

“Well I hope it don’t get me started like that.”

“Its already g-ot you s-s-started.”

The child shook her curly head, thoughtfully.

“No,” she said, “’cause mine stops most of the time.”

“What m-makes you do t-these things, t-then?”

“Something in here,” and again she pressed her hand to her side.

“When the spell is on, when I touch things, a twisting begins away down here,” and she lowered her hand until it lay over the region of her pelvis. “Then it comes up till it gets here,” and she pressed her side, “and here it jumps, and does everything, and my whole side gets hotter and hotter, until half of me is warm and half is cold, and it tumbles all over, and wiggles me, and when my mother puts her hand against my side, it shakes, too, until she takes

it away. So I never play with the others," and the child sighed.

"When will you have a strong spell again?"

"To-night, maybe—maybe not. They are a great trouble, and I get tired standing on the life-preserver. Once in a while I step off on the bare floor, but things act so I don't often forget."

"I w-want to s-s-see you have a s-s-spell."

"Well you can't do it. We are not a show, and you can't peep through the cracks either, for my mother has pasted paper over them, and be sure you never tell anybody I've told you about them. Nobody knows I have spells but us, and I told you because you promised not to tell."

"Maybe y-you'll have a s-s-spell in here, some day."

"You better hope I won't. You have no cushion life-preserver, and my mother would not be here to bathe me and take care of me. I am tired when the spell goes off. Sometimes I cry when it twists too hard, and I always go to sleep. Now tell me what your name is?"

The old man smiled, and said, "My name is Plun-

kett. I'll be your Uncle Dariah, if you s-s-say s-s-so."

"What for?"

"The children w-where I lived l-last year called me 'Uncle Dariah.'"

"Were they nice children?"

"Tolerable."

Just then some one in the hall called "Telsa, Telsa," and the child quickly disappeared.

After she had gone, Dariah Plunkett hammered on his neglected shoe a few moments, and then put it aside again to survey the cracks around the wall.

On all sides of the room but one there was at least one opening through which a sharp eye might have peered, but the cracks in the partition between his room and the room occupied by the child and her mother had been carefully covered.

The wicked notion of pricking a hole with his awl came to his mind, so interested was he in the child, who he supposed to be possessed of a spirit, but it is doubtful if he would have succumbed to even this temptation, had not a greater added itself to tempt him past the limit of man's endurance.

Sitting in the twilight, after eating his first supper in his new home, the notes of a song struck his ear, and with the first vibrations he started up.

The notes came from the room adjoining, and the words ran :

“On the other side of Jordan,  
In the sweet fields of Eden,  
Where the tree of life is blooming,  
There is rest for me.”

Dariah Plunkett rose excitedly, and stepping close to the wall, listened, then exclaimed, “The veery, the veery, b-by goll,” and he went hurriedly into the hall and toward the door of his neighbor’s room.

This he found closed, and returning to his room, he selected the widest crack, and with his awl punched a hole through it. It was a small hole, and his eyes were none of the best, still he could see, for the room into which he looked was light.

In a low chair, a woman sat with the child on her lap, rocking gently.

As he had expected, her hair was black.

Over and over the words of her chorus were repeated, and over and over Dariah said to himself, “The veery, the veery!”

Presently the woman stopped singing to answer some question the child had asked, and while Dariah Plunkett breathed softly, he did not leave the crack.

“What is Jordan?”

“Water—Jordan is a river.”

“Is it far from here?”

“A long way.”

“How will we get across it?”

“We do not have to cross a real river—real water. It means when life is over we will rest.”

“Is life like water?”

“Something like the lake, maybe.”

“You can’t see the other side?”

“No.”

“And rest is there—and the tree of life?”

“Yes.”

“With oranges on it?”

The woman drew the child to her breast, and pressed her lips against the little one’s forehead.

“Oranges? Yes, dear, if you want them.”

“How do you get there?”

“Just set out on this side, and the waves will wash you across.”

“And that is life?”

“That would be death—the crossing would.”

“I don’t understand.”

“Nor I, either, dear. Nobody does; but life is on this side, and rest on the other.”

“And the waves are washing us across?”

“Truly, dearest.”

“I wish they would wash a little higher—a little faster. I’m tired of this side.”

The mother straightened up, and stood the child on the floor.

She reached her hand toward a chair, and the chair drew violently away.

Hurriedly the mother drew a cushion of some sort from under the bed, and stood the child on it, and as she moved her, articles of furniture brushed by the child’s dress seemed suddenly instinct with life, as they tumbled out of the way.

When she rested on the cushion, the commotion was stayed, but the child’s body continued to twist perceptibly.

Dariah Plunkett stood spellbound, and after the spell had worn away, leaving the child exhausted, its

mother put it to sleep, and then Mignon heard strange noises in the new neighbor's room and inarticulate conversation, for Ouijah had come to pay her respects to Dariah, and from her he learned, to his great satisfaction, that a spirit from the sixth realm had taken possession of little Telsa, and through her was rendering such wonders as it was not yet lawful to speak of.

This information, thus early given, knit a bond of affection between the child and "Uncle Dariah," for while Telsa knew nothing of Ouijah's information, she appreciated the efforts on the old man's behalf to entertain her.

\* \* \* \* \*

The morning after Dariah Plunkett had moved, when Doctor Hernando arrived at his office, the first object that met his eye was that of a tall, rather bow-legged old man.

After studying this old man for a minute, Doctor Hernando recognized his old patient, whose race had been so nearly run some seven years before.

When Dariah saw the man he waited for approaching, he walked to the hitching-post to meet

him, and before the Doctor had stepped to the ground, he said, in an excited undertone, "I-I've found t-the veery."

"You have found the what?"

"The v-veery—our v-veery."

"I see. How did you discover her?"

"By her v-voice, to be s-s-sure. I've moved."

"She sings, does she?"

"Like a v-veery, and her words run, 'O-on the other s-s-side of the lake, there's a place to r-rest.'"

"Is she going across the lake?"

Dariah Plunkett looked discouraged.

"S-s-she s-s-says life is a lake, and the r-rest is on the other s-s-side."

"I see. Will you come into the office?"

Dariah Plunkett followed Doctor Hernando, and when they were alone, he said in a whisper, "The v-veery has a little c-child."

"Is that so?"

"Yes," answered Dariah, shaking his head, solemnly.

"What of it?" inquired Doctor Hernando.



Dariah Plunkett opened his eyes wide, then said hurriedly in a low voice.

“Where is the child’s father? Has the c-child ever had a f-father?”

Doctor Hernando was amused with the old man’s evident perplexity and embarrassment, but he preserved a grave face, as Dariah continued:

“Like enough he’s p-proved to be a s-s-snake, b-by goll, but s-s-snake or no s-s-snake, we are witnesses, you and me.”

“And if we find him a snake, of what use are we? Snakes are slippery.”

“But we c-can box even a s-s-snake. The child must have a f-father.”

“After all these years?”

Dariah Plunkett nodded his head, emphatically.

Doctor Hernando surveyed him with interest, then said slowly, “We had as well keep our secret. The man in the tall hat is a snake, and such a one as cannot be boxed, for Cornelius Mansfield will never marry your little woman with the black hair and the voice of a veery.”

“Ay, b-but he will.”

“What is your authority?”

“The s-s-spirits.”

“The same who said your race was run seven years ago?”

“The s-s-same.”

“But you are here yet.”

Dariah Plunkett's chin worked rapidly, but as the spirits put no defense in his mouth, he said nothing.

“Perhaps you were spared to watch the veery.”

Dariah's face brightened at this suggestion, and he said with a smile, “S-s-sure, b-by goll.”

## CHAPTER XII.

### TELSA SEES HER FATHER.

During the five years that had intervened since Doctor Hernando last attended Mignon in the Haven, some few changes had come into his life.

In personal appearance he was unchanged, but professionally the nature of his duties had shaped itself to fit a well-deserved advancement.

He was no longer attending physician at the Haven.

Obstetrical cases, with fevers thrown in, at so much per month, are good for a beginning, but surgical cases at five hundred per operation swell the bank account faster, and gain distinction for their skilled performer.

Now, at the age of forty-two, Doctor Hernando realized the ambitions of his early days, for no one stood higher in his chosen profession than he.

As a consequence, his rooms at the hotel had been refurnished, and a valet cared for them, put

the Doctor's slippers and dressing-gown by his chair, and dusted his books.

As another direct outcome of his enviable professional position, society, which had timidly invited him before, now became profuse in invitations and requests, which were rarely accepted, presumably because his time was too valuable. Still, he had time to visit the washwoman's boy once in a while, and to prescribe for some working-woman's baby.

At long intervals in his busy life, he had moments of lonesome reflection, and the question uppermost in his mind at such times was, why it had been ordained that he must throw his love away on a worthless woman, and why another woman, fair and altogether womanly, must throw her love away on a worthless man. The solution of this problem always evaded him, and invariably he finished such times of thought with the determination never again to entangle himself in the toils of this strangest of fate's puzzles.

Still, like a ghost hovering around the outposts of his life, it haunted him throughout the years, and as often as he opened the door of his private office to

usher in a waiting patient, his eye hastily scanned those in the parlor with the faint hope that perhaps some time Mignon's child, too, might be sick.

But though she never came, and he rarely saw her, he had not by any means lost sight of her; for, while he no longer paid regular visits to the Haven, he found a minute once in a while to drop in for a visit with Mother Shephard.

A few times since he had tossed the handkerchief into the gutter, he had seen Mignon here.

In answer to his courteous greeting, she had spoken kindly, but her early reserve remained unbroken.

From time to time, through the years, she found it necessary to draw on the fund for Working Women. Sometimes months went by without a call, and then Doctor Hernando knew she was either working more hours out of the twenty-four, or getting better pay, and it was with an interest blended of pain and pleasure, when weeks had gone by without a call for help, that he listened while Mother Shephard told him of some sorry plight that Mignon had been in.

But no one ever told him of the child. No one knew. This was the one secret Mignon guarded with jealous care, hoping that little Telsa would outgrow the strange disorder, and fearing the notoriety that her case would cause if she did not.

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Once during the five years, when he opened the door of his private room, and scanned the faces of those waiting in the parlor, Doctor Hernando's attention was more than usually drawn to a woman.

She was a portly lady, with florid complexion, and nose with a well-developed bulb.

Her ample proportions were well hung with stylish black drapery, a black bonnet folded with a widow's veil surmounted a stylish twist of yellow hair, and she had a youthful fashion of turning her head.

When Doctor Hernando swung the door open and said, "Next, please," this lady rose and went into the consulting room.

Doctor Hernando held the door as she passed through, and for a moment after.

Then he followed her, and pointed to a chair.

This lady was not a stranger to Doctor Hernando.

All Border City people knew Mrs. Richard Hadley, both by sight, for since her husband's death she had been much on the street; and by name, for as secretary of the S. P. I. P., known to the initiated as the Society for the Promotion of Intelligence among Pugs, her name was conspicuous in such weekly papers as gave a corner to reports of club women and their doings.

And yet as a type of club woman, Mrs. Richard Hadley did not consider herself a success. She was not recognized by the representative families of Upper Terrace, and the whole blame of this neglect, she piled on the shoulders of her late lamented husband.

In the early years of her life she had, in a distant city, under the chaperonage of a wealthy aunt, figured for several seasons in society. She had received attention, had broken many fickle male hearts, and had finally ended the wholesale destruction of man's tender affections by marrying a crusty, but wealthy, middle-aged man named Richard Hadley.

Richard Hadley was a pioneer citizen of Border

City, had piled up a considerable fortune, and still lived in a modest dwelling near Upper Terrace.

This home Cora Browne, as Mrs. Hadley, undertook to have remodeled, but aside from a porch and a coat of paint, she had been unsuccessful.

And this was not the least of her troubles. Richard Hadley, it is true, possessed money, and in spite of all the wild desires, intrigues, and family differences, he continued to possess it.

Meantime his wife pined to make a display; pined to figure in Border City society, and while she pined, and her husband relentlessly held tight to his pocketbook, the two grew apart until after a few years the best they could do was to disagree without resort to force of arms.

Then Richard Hadley considerably died, and his widow wept hysterically over his coffin and called him back. But even before the funeral bills were paid she was planning how the house should be remodeled, thankful that at last the time had come when her husband's wealth could be turned into good usage and she could get into society once again.

It was something of a blow to her to discover,



when the will was made known, that she had been cut off with the least sum the law allowed her, but even this amount was enough to make considerable display with, and as the will was not made public, society looked upon her as a woman vastly wealthy.

So Mrs. Richard Hadley was greatly respected.

She remodeled the house; had the walls artistically hung and the floors carpeted with up-to-date floor stuffs. She purchased a swell trap, drove a good horse, and her dresses were made by the best modiste in Border City.

Her first advance in society was made when she was elected secretary of the S. P. I. P., this being a most exclusive society, but after this move there seemed to be a distressing halt in her progress, for while society women composed the club, and were social at its meetings, they did not take Mrs. Richard Hadley to their homes with open arms, as she had hoped they would.

There were a number of men in the city who would gladly have shared the fate and fortune of the widow, but of those eligible, not one did she know

whose name on her card would open the doors of society for her, so the eligible men were not to be considered.

Cornelius Mansfield was not, strictly speaking, eligible; still, with a hope something akin to despair, Cora Hadley thought of him, and after her lamented husband had been dead a suitable length of time, she took Mr. Mansfield driving in her dashing turnout, where he exchanged dainty compliments with her.

She had no means of knowing that these same delicate compliments were repeated for their pleasure to Mr. Mansfield's friends, and that in such conversations he invariably referred to her as the "fat Hadley."

When she had been a widow something over a year, it occurred to her that Doctor Hernando was the eligible man for which she looked.

The thought came with such sudden force that it nearly took her breath.

Why had she not thought of it before?

Society was ready to receive him with open arms.

As his wife, no door would be barred. He was

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president of the State Board of Physicians; was on two public committees; had the best instruments and the most exclusive practice of any surgeon in the city, and when she had known him in bygone years, he had been the most susceptible of all her many lovers.

A thought of him as he was then brought a rippling smile over her chubby face.

The thought had come well.

Taking from her jewel-box a ring, long since outgrown, she tried to wedge it on her third finger, and compromised by squeezing it on her little finger.

She was sorry she was fat.

Then she made a handsome toilet, with unusual care, and in her dashing trap went to Doctor Hernando's office, to consult him professionally.

With some misgivings, she waited his summons in the parlor, and for a moment was silent when she stood face to face with him in the inner room.

"Doctor Hernando," she said, sweetly, "I am Mrs. Hadley."

"Mrs. Hadley," he repeated, with a dignified bow.

She looked at him with a half-sad smile and a droop of her eye.

“You do not remember me,” she said, with an affected touch of melancholy. “You once knew me by the name of Cora Browne. I have not outgrown the memories of those sunny days,” and she sighed, at the same time moving her hand so that he could not miss the sparkle of the ring.

“Will you be seated,” he said.

She dropped into a chair.

“I have come,” she said, slowly, as if approaching a painful subject, “to have you examine my hand. I am alarmed about it, perhaps with small reason, but my dear aunt died with a cancer, after years of suffering, and the mere thought of a fate so terrible warns me to take every precaution. Her last days were terrible—her pain was excruciating, and though she bore her agony with great fortitude, her misery haunts me yet. See——” and she held out her hand and pointed to a small spot on the inside of her second finger.

As a rule, Doctor Hernando held a patient's hand

in his when examining a suspected cancerous affection, but on this occasion he folded his hands behind him, and bending over the extended hand, knit his eyebrows.

“You have a wart,” he announced, concluding the examination.

“Only a wart?” she exclaimed, raising her eyes to his face.

“Only a wart.”

She paused, looking a bit confused.

“But even warts are a great inconvenience when one must write a great deal. What shall I do to cure the wart?”

“Get five cents worth of acetic acid, and apply it three times a day with a toothpick.”

A shade more of color than was natural came into her face.

“Isn't this an unusual prescription?”

“This is an unusual case.”

She dropped her eyes to her hand, and looked at it steadily a few seconds.

“You are quite sure, Doctor Hernando, that this will not cause me any serious trouble?” and again

she lifted her eyes with their most appealing glance to his face.

“ I have yet to write on my first death certificate, ‘ Died of a wart.’ ”

“ How your words relieve me,” and she drew out her purse.

“ What do I owe you? ”

“ Three dollars.”

She handed him the amount, and rose.

Doctor Hernando stepped to the door, opened it gallantly, and bowed as she crossed the threshold.

After this attempt, Mrs. Richard Hadley decided that Doctor Hernando was not eligible, and she cast her eyes in other directions, keeping Cornelius Mansfield in sight, for she had heard some small talk of his being a candidate for senator, and a position as senator’s wife was of all things to be desired.

\* \* \* \* \*

After receiving the information that little Telsa’s frail body was at times the habitation of some powerful spirit from the sixth realm, Dariah Plunkett paid her a homage which would have amused an understanding person, but which almost bewildered

Mignon, for no one had ever seemed to love her child.

This old man wanted her often by his bench; he told her stories; he let her have his cat; he made rude toys, and rarely left his shop without bringing her back a cake or bit of fruit, in this way brightening the tedious hours of her life.

Mignon, over-cautious, at first objected, but at last could not withstand the child's pleadings to visit with "Uncle Dariah," and at last she came to trust the child with him when she went out to collect or deliver work, and glad indeed she was to have some one with whom to leave little Telsa, for she was growing so much like her father in features, that Mignon disliked to take her on the streets.

Mignon was never out at night now. If she had not been afraid, she would not have left the child, for it was at dusk that the spells came, and their increasing frequency added a burden to her heart, for it seemed that instead of outgrowing the malady, whatever it was, it was gradually wearing the child's strength away, as after each violent attack she seemed weaker.

One sunny afternoon, Dariah Plunkett proposed to Telsa that they take a walk, and as this was a pleasure that seldom came into her life, she ran eagerly to her mother for permission.

Mignon did not want Telsa to go, but after much pleading and many promises from both the old man and the child, they started out.

With her little hand in his, they strolled along the streets, around the winding way of Black Hill, down the road toward Sandtown, and out across the mill rubbish toward the beach.

When half way across the sawdust and litter, they stopped to rest, and Dariah sat with Telsa on his knee, when two men approaching, drew his attention.

They were walking down a narrow tramway, and were engaged in conversation.

“W-would you l-like to s-s-see your father?” Dariah questioned, looking at the approaching men.

“If I had one.”

“That’s him,” and he pointed in the direction of the two men.

“Which?” said the child, eagerly.



“The one w-with the s-s-shiny hat on.”

Hardly were the words out of his mouth when the child was down from his knee and away.

“C-come back! C-come back!” he shouted, starting after her.

But she was fleet-footed, and running along the track, was soon close behind the two men, clutching at Mansfield's coat-tail, which after a few attempts she caught.

He halted suddenly, and looked around, and while he paused she caught hold of his gloved hand.

“Are you my father?” she cried.

He drew his hand quickly away.

“Who said I was?” he questioned.

“Are you?” she repeated.

“No.”

She looked up in his face, a strange, wondering expression in her eyes, so like his own.

“I didn't think you were,” and there was a touch of disappointment in her voice.

The man with Mansfield laughed.

“Did your mother send you here?” the child's father inquired.

She still studied his face, as if she would divine a mystery.

“Did you ever see my mother?” she inquired, gravely.

“No,” he answered again.

“She does not look like you,” and the child gave him a last, lingering look, and turned away.

Her cloak was shabby; her shoes were worn, and her hands were bare. Perhaps something of the pathos of the occurrence touched Mansfield.

He thrust his hand in his pocket, and drew out a silver dollar.

“Here,” he cried, throwing it after her.

She turned swiftly, watched where it fell, then, quick as a flash, she pounced on it, and with all her small force, threw it back at him.

“That’s money, you little fool,” Mansfield exclaimed, with both astonishment and vexation.

“You *threw* it at me,” the child called back at him.

“Come and get it,” he said, holding it toward her on the tips of his fingers; but by this time Dariah Plunkett had arrived, and Telsa hurried

away with him, looking back every few steps at the figures of the retreating men.

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A few days after this, Mignon was surprised, on returning home from a trip in the city, to find a box at her door.

There was nothing on it to tell where it had come from, and as it was plainly addressed to her, she took it into her room and opened it.

The box contained a handsome cloak, bonnet, and gloves for a child, and some woman's dainty underwear.

A flush came into her face and a flash to her eyes, as these latter garments came to view.

With hands trembling with indignation, she placed them back in the box, folding the handsome cloak carefully, thankful that Telsa was not there to tease for it.

On putting the bonnet back in the box, she discovered a note pinned on it.

The handwriting was familiar.

The words were characteristic.

“Your child lives like a beggar. Will a Christian make a child suffer to carry out a whim?”

As she held the paper, the red spots deepened on her cheeks, and for a moment a sense of suffocation nearly overcame her, but she closed her eyes, and when she opened them a moment later, the hurt of the insult without the shock showed itself in the rims of water that made them bright.

After putting every article in the box as it had been taken out, she closed it, turned the wrapping paper, tied it with the string that had come around it, and then went with the bundle to Dariah Plunkett.

“Do you know Mr. Mansfield?” she inquired.

“That wears a t-tall hat?”

“Yes.”

“S-sure,” and Dariah opened his mouth to say more, but something in the woman’s face stopped the words.

“Will you find him, and deliver this package for me? Be sure and put it in his hand. It is his. It has been brought here by mistake, and must be returned at once.”

“S-sure, b-by goll,” and he put his tools aside, and shambled off with the package.

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After delivering it, he paid a short call on Doctor Hernando, and told him of the occurrence, and for the first time in his acquaintance with the Doctor, he had the privilege of seeing him angry.

“You showed this man to the child, telling her he was her father?”

Dariah Plunkett’s chin worked rapidly.

“I t-thought—I——”

“You are a fool,” said Doctor Hernando, with emphasis.

“But s-s-sometimes a c-child c-can b-bring a man to t-taw.”

“Who wants a man brought to taw?”

“But h-he’s her f-father, and he d-denies it.”

“*Let* him deny it.”

“But the c-child believes h-him.”

“*Let* the child believe him, for he is not, nor ever has been, a father to her, and you are a fool. Here this woman has been for seven of God’s longest years living down her sin of a misplaced faith, and

you come along and by one idiotic move, invite a repetition of the whole trouble. I say you are a fool."

Dariah Plunkett made no denial of the charge. His chin worked convulsively, and Doctor Hernando swung his glasses nervously, at the end of three inches of black cord.

"What did he say when you gave him the box?" Doctor Hernando inquired, after an unpleasant silence.

"S-s-said he'd have me arrested f-for s-s-stealing a lady's package."

"Suppose he does?"

Dariah Plunkett relieved himself by laughing.

"He w-won't. I s-s-shuck my fist under his n-nose, and I s-s-says, 'B-by goll, have me a-arrested, but hold it in y-your mind that I'm a w-witness. I didn't hang onto the b-boards up bank for a s-s-solid hour the night you s-s-swore by God to m-marry the girl in the b-boat, I didn't hang there with my f-fingers in my ears.'"

Doctor Hernando's face relaxed.

"What did he say?"

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“He said, ‘Go to hell.’”

Doctor Hernando smiled.

“Very good advice,” he said, “but stay with us yet a little longer, and look after the child’s mother. If anything happens, drop around and mention it. I am the lady’s physician.”

“Poor veery!” and Dariah shook his head, solemnly. “She’ll need doctoring some day. Her machine runs half the night, and her fingers are pricked through. Poor v-veery!”

## CHAPTER XIII.

### MADAM G'SELLE BLAUVET.

Border City had so long gone without a public exhibition of spiritual phenomena that it created some surprise when bills announcing such an event were fluttered indiscriminately into the yards of both Sandtown hovels and Upper Terrace mansions; but in no one bosom was more enthusiasm inspired by this announcement than in that heaving under the musty coat of Dariah Plunkett.

He held the yellow handbill at a correct distance and laboriously read it from beginning to end; then he lifted his eyes to the top, and beheld with fresh wonderment the rather blurred features of the face with the wondrous star over the head, and the equally wondrous name, "Madam G'Selle Blauvet," underneath.

He adjusted the paper at a slightly different angle, and read it a second time, his chin galloping up and down, delightfully.



Even after a second reading, he seemed in some way to doubt the accuracy of his faculties, and he prepared to read it again.

This time he arose and held the bill at arm's length.

The third reading tallied with the first. It was indeed true that the great and only Madam G'Selle Blauvet would hold a public performance, two days later, in the Opera House, at which time departed spirits would communicate with their friends, would materialize, and would in general perform wonders to convince the most skeptical.

Dariah Plunkett looked long at the face of the woman with the crooked-tailed star overhead, then he folded the paper, and placed it carefully, deep in his inside pocket.

By a remarkable secret, known only to spirits and those having charge of the subscription lists of papers, Madam G'Selle Blauvet knew just which house-door to rap at to find a kindred spirit when she arrived in Border City.

True, her luggage was taken to a hotel, and here she received such inquiring minds as wished to take

advantage of her offer to learn of their future, and incidentally to lighten their purses; but there had been of late so much irrelevant conduct at public exhibitions, that Madam G'Selle Blauvet deemed it wise to consult with a few local believers before the public exhibition.

At a recent meeting, during the semi-darkness, when the spirits were circulating freely among surviving friends, and just after one woman had exclaimed, with sobs of joy, "It is George! O, it is, it is," some ungodly wretch had suddenly laid hold of George's lower garment, when a scream like a cat's, or a woman's, rent the air; a struggle ensued, during which a second ungodly person dispelled the "semi-darkness," when lo, the materialized "George" proved to be a woman of well-developed anatomy and some lungs.

This altogether unprecedented circumstance had cast a damper on the meeting, and the hypnotizing that followed had not been well received.

From her earliest existence, Madam G'Selle Blauvet had been learning wisdom's lesson at the expense of other people's experiences.

She had not attained her present exalted position as supreme mind-reader and spiritual medium, except by a long and tedious course.

There had been a time when no spiritual vision reached her.

At that time she made hair switches in the "back room, third," of a dingy business-house in a metropolitan city.

Indeed, she had had no vision of spirits until after meeting her "affinity," but the "affinity" once having materialized, all other things followed, so that by the time the lady who had formerly made hair-switches, and the "affinity" who had discovered her, had toured two seasons together in a second-rate show, she had learned enough to leave him, while she went out to star for herself.

The best-informed of the spirit fraternity in Border City lived in Sandtown, and took three different papers, and as it happened, this was the man on whom Madam G'Selle Blauvet, the great and only, condescended to call on business.

The visit was short, but interesting and satisfac-

tory, for she quitted the cottage with a carefully-prepared list of possible helpers.

Leaving the Sandtown standard-bearer overwhelmed with pride and nearly awed by the magnitude of his importance, she turned in another direction.

Knowing nothing of this, Dariah Plunkett on answering a knock at his door the day preceding that of the performance, was somewhat surprised to usher into his humble room a pompous and most elegantly-dressed lady.

He stared a moment, but not recognizing in the rather heavy-browed woman anything of the fairy features of the blurred face under the star, he was able to stand securely on his legs and bid her enter.

Once inside, she extended her bare hand, and grasping his horny hand, held it with a sort of squeezing pressure peculiar to great mediums.

“I am Madam G’Selle Blauvet,” she said, with her eyes fastened on his, and her pressure firm on his hand.

Dariah Plunkett gave a start, and trembled vio-

lently, but an added pressure of the hand reassured him.

“I am to give an exhibition of my great and supernatural skill to-morrow night. Have you seen the bills?”

She dropped his hand gently, rather laid it aside, and with a steady eye watched him fumble in his pocket.

When he drew out the yellow bill, his hand trembled, but he finally got it unfolded, and handed it to her.

She glanced at it, made a bow, and bestowed on the well-nigh bewildered Dariah a bewitching smile.

Dariah Plunkett was overwhelmed with her kindness, and his own importance. This was an occasion of even greater moment than when fate had made him into a witness.

“My feats are almost too wonderful to believe,” she said, smacking her lips gently, as if enjoying the lingering taste of some good thing.

“Besides the phenomena of disembodied spirits, I read the mind of man as if it were writ on the sky, and my hypnotic powers have no equal. I have been

referred to you as a man interested in science, and most willing to aid in the spread of light and truth. You are aware that there are in every community skeptical and evil-hearted persons, whose brains are not of sufficient quantity or quality to render them susceptible to my powers. These persons take delight in pressing to the front in public meetings, causing a waste of time, and at last declaring me and my methods fraudulent. In short, they delight to work confusion. For this reason, it is a duty I owe an intelligent public, as well as myself, to be sure of my subjects.

“This will save much valuable time for other manifestations, and will stop the tongues of those evil-minded and ignorant persons who would otherwise cause our undoing. Do you understand?”

Dariah Plunkett's chin worked, and he nodded his head.

Madam G'Selle Blauvet watched him closely.

“Were you ever under hypnotic power, in a trance, or mesmerized?”

His mouth shaped itself, his chin wiggled, but he only shook his head.

“If I shall find that you are a good subject, will you go on the stage for me? I will pay you.”

Again Dariah Plunkett tried to speak, but only succeeded in nodding his head, this time more feebly.

“Very well,” the lady said, moving a step nearer, and raising her hand slowly, without once taking her eyes from his face.

“Look at me!”

Her command was unnecessary. It would have been impossible for Dariah Plunkett to move his eyes a hair's breadth. They were literally fastened by the glitter of Madam's small, dark eye. His chin grew quiet, and when he presently began to talk volubly, it remained still.

Evidently his remarks interested his listener, for she smiled.

“I expect,” she said, thoughtfully, when she had moved away from before him, and his chin had resumed normal motions, “I expect you can render me service. Can I depend on you to-morrow night?”

“S-s-sure.”

From a jeweled chatelaine she took a ticket, which she handed him.

“Present this ticket at the door. Sit midway, and when I call for volunteers, come forward. You need not say you have seen me before. Do not forget.”

“Y-yes’m. N-no’m,” he answered to her remarks, then he watched her go out the door.

\* \* \* \* \*

When she left his door, she turned toward the outer stairs, but her walk in this direction was short.

No sooner did she hear the rapid strokes of Dariah Plunkett’s hammer, than she retraced her steps and tapped softly at Mignon’s room.

Mignon, on answering the knock, was as much surprised as Dariah Plunkett had been, but she had no carefully-folded handbill, and would not have recognized the lady if she had, for they were not kindred spirits.

This the visitor evidently judged, so she mentioned no name, but held Mignon’s hand in her customary close grasp until Mignon seemed to feel the thrill of it, and rather pulled her hand to be free.



“I am a medium,” said the visitor, “and I have come to you with a message from your mother, who is in the sixth circle of happy spirits.”

Mignon invited her to be seated, but said rather coldly.

“I do not believe in spiritism.”

“Many do not,” Madam G’Selle Blauvet said, sweetly. “I am often misunderstood, still when the message comes, as it has come to me for you, I can do no less than deliver it.”

“I do not believe in messages.”

“So the spirit of your mother informs me, but listen: I do not know you, not even your name, only from your mother’s spirit, but I have been directed to your very door. Whether the message be true or not, I cannot say. I only speak as I am bidden.”

“Why should I believe that my mother has ever heard of you or knows anything of me?”

Madam G’Selle Blauvet smiled, sweetly.

“Your mother has instructed me to speak to you of an occurrence which she says will prove to you that she sends the message, inasmuch as this occurrence relates to a most private meeting, which she

could not have been present at, had she been in the flesh, instead of in the spirit."

"What is the meeting to which you refer?"

Mignon asked the question quietly, but an uneasy feeling had taken possession of her, under the strange light of the woman's eyes.

"Your mother knows you have been betrayed by a man, a man who wears a tall hat and speaks smoothly. She also knows and rejoices that you have not erred meaningly, for the man made many promises, and the night in the boat the promise was so sacred and so solemnly sworn to before Almighty God that one of the elect might have been deceived thereby. Your mother, hovering around you in the spirit, heard this oath. It lingers yet in her mind, so that she told it to me, word for word. This is the occurrence of which she instructed me to speak. Shall I repeat the words of the oath?"

Mignon sat during the speech with her eyes fastened on the woman's face, her own as colorless as her white hands.

"You need not repeat it," she said, her consternation being evident.

“I see you are convinced that my message is a genuine one from your mother, who longs to be of use to you. You have had a hard time, and your child——”

“Do you know anything about my child?” Mignon interrupted, sharply.

“In the spirit world all things are known. I know nothing.”

“What was my mother’s message regarding the child?”

“In her words, she said, ‘Tell my beloved daughter to do a mother’s part by the child, as I direct her. The child’s mother—my poor child—cannot battle with the world and come out victor. The world will crush her. I have long been with my daughter, but she has not recognized me, for I cannot speak with human tongue; but with a power not earthly I demonstrate my willingness to held them both. The mother mistakes this for a disease, or a sin, knowing me not. Go to my beloved child, say to her that this is God’s will: The child must manifest this power to the world. The world will gladly give the child her dues, will put in the mother’s

hand money, so that the child will no more want for anything. Hasten to my beloved daughter.’”

The medium had, during the recital of the message, relapsed into a sort of chanting speech, leaning sideways in her chair, with her eyes partly closed.

Mignon sat spellbound, and it was not until the woman had fully roused herself that she spoke.

“Do I owe you anything?” she inquired, fearing that perhaps the woman would trouble her for a fee.

Madam G’Selle Blauvet looked at her hostess sadly, and leaning forward, again took her hand.

“Owe me anything?” she said, in a strangely sad voice. “Do not mention it. I, too, have had trouble. What I do, I do freely. I have only been a mouth-piece for your mother’s spirit. I know nothing, but tell me, has your mother’s message been of benefit to you?”

“Time will prove if it has.”

Mignon shaded her eyes with her hand. She was sorely perplexed.

“If my mother loves me,” she said, looking up, “she should have brought the message to me, and not have given it to another, a stranger.”

“She has tried; but you have not been susceptible.”

Mignon glanced at her visitor.

She was bulky, and rather raw-appearing, but of such are those susceptible of spiritual influences, and Mignon being frail and rather spirituelle, was not susceptible, so, without disputing the fact, she sighed.

The lady moved as far as the door, and then paused, with her hand on the knob.

“As a renowned medium, I give an exhibition tomorrow night in the Opera House. My programme-time is full, but if you choose to take your mother's advice, in other words, if you choose to let your mother help you to better times through the body of your child, I will announce the fact, and will give you a quarter of the net proceeds, which, I assure you, will be a sum not to be despised, as my programme draws crowds, appealing as it does, to reason, heart, and soul. After this first meeting, we can arrange to travel, which will be of benefit to you. Consider my proposition, in behalf of your sainted mother, and because of the bond of sorrow that

should unite all women. I will call early to-morrow morning, hoping to receive a favorable decision," and with a smile, she left the room.

When the door had closed behind her, Mignon threw her arms around the child, who had been standing by, and resting her head against the frail little shoulder, she burst into tears.

The child clasped her arms around her mother's neck, and after waiting a few moments, said solemnly, "Are you crying about spirits?"

Mignon did not answer.

"What is a spirit?"

No answer.

"Is my grandmother's spirit too big for me?" and asking kindred questions, the child babbled on, at times growing impatient, but Mignon was too distracted to answer.

The one great question in her mind was, what did it mean?

She had never believed in spiritism, yet here was a message from the lips of an utter stranger, and the stranger had told her such things as had happened

years before, and she was sure were known only to herself and Cornelius Mansfield.

Suddenly, Mignon pushed the child aside, and after looking at the clock, put her work away, and began a hurried preparation for going out.

This time little Telsa was to go.

\* \* \* \* \*

Doctor Hernando's office hours were nearly over.

An unusual number of patients had swarmed his waiting-room, and it was with a sigh of relief that he saw the number dwindle down until but one patient, a woman with a cock feather in her hat, remained.

When he opened the door to usher into his inner office this last woman, he noticed, to his annoyance, that a late-comer had entered, and waited with a child beside her.

He lowered his head, fastened his close gaze for a second on the new-comer, then followed the woman who had just passed into the consulting room.

His weariness suddenly disappeared.

He inquired with the utmost care of the condi-

tions and symptoms peculiar to the patient under examination.

He forgot that office hours were almost up. He forgot that the horse tied in front of the office was a horse that pawed the curbing when time passed slow—he forgot many things in the joy he would not have admitted, of seeing once more a sad-faced, beautiful woman, whom he had seen in the last five years scarce half a dozen times.



## CHAPTER XIV.

### MIGNON CONSULTS DOCTOR HERNANDO.

When the woman with the aggressive cock feather on her hat had entered a full list of her complaints, and had received professional advice in proportion, she was politely shown from the room, and Doctor Hernando bowed to Mignon.

“Will you leave the child?” he questioned, and on receiving reply that she would, he gave the little girl a pile of magazines to look at, and led the way back into the consulting-room.

“Will you count this a professional visit?” Mignon inquired. “It may seem out of the usual order, but I should not have come had I known what else to do.”

In answer to the first question, Doctor Hernando bowed; in answer to the second, he said, “I did not expect you would.”

Then he adjusted his eyes squarely on her face, and waited.

After a moment's hesitation, as if it cost her something of an effort and she would the sooner have it over, Mignon raised her clear grey eyes to meet those of Doctor Hernando's, wrinkled behind his glasses, and made him a longer and more confidential speech than he had expected.

“They say integrity is its own pay. Where is the pay, if it takes the strength of life itself to secure honesty, to find, after obtaining it, that the honest man forever turns away? Would honor, empty honor, ever pay a woman for the pain it costs her to see her child suffer want, and hear it beg for things she has no power to give it, unless she lets her honor go? No, no. My love of honor for honor's sake alone, could not survive the pleading of my child—the pain it costs to refuse her—for I love her more than I love honor. But honesty and honor are the necessary outcome of the life I am trying to live, and which I must live, if I hope for a reward in the life beyond the grave. If it were not for this, that there is a God before whose bar I must some day stand, would I live another week as I have lived for seven years—hearing my child cry, and seeing her

grow pale? Not for one week. I would forget myself. I would close my eyes to the future that may never come, and take what comfort I could from the present. But the hope, the faith in something better farther on, is a part of my religion, and it is those who have made shipwreck of their lives who most need religion. If it had not been that Mother Shephard, dear kind Mother Shephard, had told me of Christ and His everlasting love, I should long ago have gone to try the rest of the grave. But on this pivotal point, the love of Christ, my life hinges. This bears me up, and helps me on—blindly, but on. But now I find myself in doubt as to my duty. A way seems to have opened by which my life may be changed for the better, and yet—I do not know; I am afraid it means that I must abandon the pivotal point on which my life rests, and I am afraid to do this. You are wise, you understand strange phenomena that would confuse one ignorant like me. You know what psychology means, and I have only heard the word, and the limits of hypnotism you can explain. Tell me——” and she leaned forward eagerly, in her chair, “do you believe in spiritism?

Are all mediums frauds? How do they sometimes know what none has ever told?"

Doctor Hernando slipped his glasses from his nose, and turned them over his thumb.

"Nine-tenths of so-called spiritistic mediums are frauds, pure and simple."

"And the other tenth?" Mignon inquired, anxiously.

"Our fathers would have answered this question by denying the facts, charging the mediums with fraud or—accepting the tenability of the spiritual hypothesis; but we are wiser than our fathers, in that science has made longer strides. We can now admit the honesty of the medium, his honest conviction that the communications are what they purport to be, and also that the medium is unconscious of possessing any psychological power that would render unconscious participation possible. We can admit almost all the claims made by the spiritist, and still have no difficulty in finding a solution for all that is mysterious in the phenomena, in the principles of Natural Law, for most phases of spiritistic phenomena are solved by the Law of Suggestion,

discovered a few years ago by European scientists in their investigations of the problems of hypnotism. In fact, so much study has been given to this subject by not only scientists, but by the average student, that the phrases, 'secondary personality,' 'subliminal consciousness,' 'sub-conscious mind,' 'subjective mind,' etc., are everywhere discussed, and telepathy is becoming more and more understood.

“The greater number of purported spirit messages are undoubtedly drawn from the mind of the medium, though the incidents may have long since been forgotten, for what has once gone into the mind may again come out. Science and spiritism agree well enough the greater part of the way, and even at the diverging line science propounds a question which as yet spiritists have left unanswered.

“Science denies the right of searching in supermundane realms for causes that can be traced to Natural Law. Have I made my views clear?”

“I think you do not believe in spiritism—that departed spirits return to warn their friends, or to help them.”

“I do not think they do.”

Mignon was silent a moment. She changed her position just a little, and looked out the window, conscious that Doctor Hernando's eyes were still on her.

“At any rate,” he added, “keep to the pivot your life has revolved around the last seven years.”

“If I do, I must not accept an attractive proposition to better my child's life; I must stay with the needle and the bare floor, for the pivot that my life swings on is the love of Christ, and spiritists smile at such simplicity. If I only knew,” and Mignon let the suspicion of a sigh escape her lips.

“Are you sure,” she inquired, again looking toward Doctor Hernando, “that *all* things can be explained?”

“For instance?”

“For instance, a case where a stranger came with a message—but I will tell you. To-day a woman came to me, a medium, with a message from my mother. She told me things she surely had no knowledge of. I have never been hypnotized, and she could not have read the things she spoke of in

my mind, for at the time of her visit they were not there to read. She could not have discovered them from another's mind, for no other knows—save one. These things, the strange medium said she had learned from my mother's spirit. How else could she have learned them?"

"What did she charge for her information?"

"Nothing."

"And had no requests to make—no favors to ask?"

"None; only she suggested that I let my child come to her performance, to give an exhibition of the peculiar power that controls her while she has her spells."

"What peculiar power does the child possess that a strange woman could hope to make profitable?"

"Some strange, repellant power that drives such material as wood, fabrics, and crockery, from her with such force that it is useless to try to hold an article when she touches it. Long ago, by the merest accident, I discovered that she could be comparatively comfortable on an old cork life-preserver, which I made into a cushion. She has had these

spells for several years, but they have lately grown on her. The medium says they are caused by the spirit of my mother, who controls the movements of my child, and that it is my mother's wish that I should let the public see the child's power, so that our life will be easier. For myself, I had rather go to prison than to be brought before the public, and for the child's sake, I had rather be dead than to make a wrong move after all these years; but if this should be true, if this peculiar power should be something supernatural sent to the child to make her poor little life easier, have I a right to keep her back? Ought I not, even though it cost me much unhappiness, consent to her appearance before the public? Tell me, Doctor Hernando, how could the strange medium have told me what she did, have brought me the message, unless my mother's, or some other spirit, instructed her?"

There was a tone of despair in her voice, and Doctor Hernando wiped his glasses carefully, before attempting an answer.

"I am really at a loss to understand more than half you speak of, and consequently cannot advise



you with any intelligence. If you care to trust me to the extent of telling me something of the nature of the message purported to come from your mother, I shall be pleased to advise you, for I suspicion that your medium is a consummate fraud. Perhaps I am having the bad grace to misjudge her, but she had a reason for receiving the spiritual visit of your mother.”

“My mother’s message was that her spirit possessed the child at times, and that it did so for the one purpose of helping us.”

“But you would not believe a strange medium, on the unsupported evidence of her own words?”

“I have already told you that she did not expect me to. It was to establish my confidence, that my mother referred to a matter long since dead, and buried past all resurrection.”

Doctor Hernando tapped his fingers against the arm of his chair, thoughtfully.

“I am in the dark,” he said, slowly, “and being so, any further opinion I may express will be valueless. I should like very much to help you, for I see you need help. I should also take pleasure in dis-

covering the motive of your strange medium, yet I cannot insist, nor even ask, that you speak more freely of the evidence which she has brought forward to establish your faith in what purports to be a communication from your mother. This I say, however, I am still your friend. Any confidence you may intrust me with will be honorably preserved."

Mignon dropped her eyes to her lap, and twisted her hands.

Doctor Hernando was watching her, and her nervous motions recalled to his mind the night of his first meeting with her. He understood that a struggle was taking place in her mind.

When she looked at him again, she found him waiting attentively.

"I am going to trust you," she said, "if you have time to listen to a broken thread of the story of a broken life—my life."

"My time is at your command," and it was with difficulty that Doctor Hernando refrained from smiling in pure satisfaction, as he spoke, for at the end of seven years, Mignon had said, "I am going to trust you."

“My father, who was an artist, married my mother, whose home was in the country, and took her to the city. He had the usual luck of an unknown and, I suppose, not first-class young artist, and made no fortune. When he died, shortly after my birth, he left my mother homeless and penniless. She then went to live at her brother’s home, and here she died soon after I was a year old. I have no picture of her, no book, or bit of jewelry, nothing that was my mother’s. I have not even a memory of her, and I am only sure I once had a mother because I find myself existing.

“With many little cousins, I grew on the wide farm, helping my aunt and going to school. I was sent to school much of the time when the others were allowed to stay home, for it was my uncle’s intention to make a school-teacher of me, as I was often told I must earn my own living as soon as I was old enough. But I did not want to teach school. I liked to sew, and make hats, and trim them, and was always wishing I lived in a city, where I could do such work in some big store. When I was seventeen, I felt quite grown, and determined no longer

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to be a burden to my uncle, and I decided to start out in the world. My uncle protested, but it was a weak protest, and I knew when he gave me twenty-five dollars on leaving the farm, and kissed me, how glad he was that I was going, for he had never kissed me before. After arriving in town, I found no work until half my money had been used, and then my position was only that of saleswoman in the notion department of a great store. Here I soon became aware that my face was accounted pretty, for men stared rudely and spoke often to me in a way that you would not understand, but which shop-girls must get accustomed to, and I was afraid of them all, until one day a man came in to buy a hair brush. He stayed a few minutes, and spoke kindly to me. Afterward he came many times, and I always felt that he was my friend, and when, after a while, he asked me to be his wife, I was so happy that the world seemed suddenly turned into heaven. I wonder now that I was ever so happy, but I was, for I loved him, and I trusted him. With my own fingers, I made my wedding-dress, and then I waited for his business to shape itself so that we could be married. You

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think I must have been a fool? I was, but fools do not know themselves fools at the time of the making, else there would be no fools. The last night I was with him, we drifted down the river in a little boat, and in the solitary shadows of the high bank, he swore a solemn oath before God that he would be true to me. It was not his first promise of the kind—it was his last. It was so quiet that the waves lapping on the beach sounded as if under the keel of the boat. There was no one near, and in the shadows no one could have seen who we were, if there had been. The next page in the story was written the night in the Haven, and you know the rest. Now, after all these years—these long, long years, a strange woman—a medium, comes suddenly to me, and tells me what was said that night in the boat, tells it as if she had heard it. I am certain, no one on earth knows this. Tell me, Doctor Hernando, how came this woman with this knowledge?"

Doctor Hernando was grave a moment, then he arose, and crossing the room, began rummaging in one of the drawers of his desk, dropping different small papers in a promiscuous heap before him.

At last, his search was rewarded, for he left the desk, holding two papers, at which he squinted with interest.

When he had recrossed the room, and stood close to Mignon's chair, he stopped, saying, "Some years ago, I was called to the deathbed of an old man, who claimed to be a witness to some sort of a solemn oath, and considering himself dying, and fearing that the promise might be forgotten, appointed me a deputy witness, and I signed a paper to such effect. This paper you may examine before we pass judgment on the medium," and after placing the papers on Mignon's lap, he considerately left the room to try for a moment his luck at quieting the pawing horse.

For a moment Mignon glanced at the queer paper, then she unfolded it, and read the dying testimony of the witness who had heard the oath—as the medium had told it to her. This document was signed "Dariah Plunkett."

A second paper lay under the first, and this she read until her eye struck the signature, when she dropped it.

The matter of the spirit communication was

cleared up, but the knowledge that Doctor Hernando had all the years known so much of her, astonished Mignon, and yet it relieved her in a way she could not understand.

When Doctor Hernando returned, she handed him the papers.

“Have things cleared up any?”

“I understand now, but I am sorry to find Dariah Plunkett has seen fit to tell his secret. I have counted him my friend.”

“It is not likely he told it. He is simple in his way, and I rather think your medium has practised a neat bit of mind-reading or hypnotism on him. But I can now advise you clearly. Keep to the pivot your life has turned on these seven years, whatever that may be, for the life it is shaping is worthy the effort. Let the medium return her communication where she got it, and pardon me for saying that I am surprised that you ever thought for a moment of letting the child appear before a public audience.”

“It made me miserable to think of it, but the child does not mend, and her peculiar ways distress

me. Sometimes much of my time must be spent with her, and if it were not for the kind old gentleman who has endowed the Working Woman's Fund, really I do not know what I should do, for though I hate to go to Mother Shephard, I am sure she knows I only go when I must."

"Let us see the child," and Doctor Hernando opened the door leading into the parlor.

Little Telsa had fallen asleep.

A number of the magazines had slipped to the floor, and the small hand that lay across an open volume in her lap trembled at times while they watched her.

Her black hair hung around her frail face, and her dark lashes lay against her cheeks like two little strips of silken fringe.

Doctor Hernando bent his shoulders, and studied her long and carefully.

When he finally straightened up, without a word, Mignon's eyes filled with tears.

"Your child needs professional care," Doctor Hernando said, shortly, for while he really enjoyed tears, when it was a child that cried, and he hap-



pened along in time to get it a toy, such tears as these, in this especial woman's eyes, annoyed him.

"I have not been able to afford the best of skill, and I could not think of trusting my child to any less, though—if," and she glanced down at the child.

Doctor Hernando did not wait for her to finish. He felt a rising fear that tears might show themselves again, and he said, hurriedly, "Do you know that the old gentleman who endowed the Working Woman's Fund, also made provision for doctors' bills?"

"Mother Shephard has not mentioned it to me."

"She has overlooked it."

"What a good man he must be. It is such men who restore confidence once lost, and whom every working woman should honor. If I could see him, I should thank him; and though I never shall, I ask God's blessing on him every night, for he deserves it."

"He should ask no better thanks than that, but you only think you would thank him," Doctor Hernando said, smiling. "If you should some day discover his identity, you would think of him ever after

as being personally interested in you, an interest you do not allow, and you would straightway refuse the small funds that he now takes pleasure in having you use. Philanthropists must, of all men, be most careful to keep their names private; that is, if they are particular whom they help," and again he smiled.

But his smile was lost on Mignon, for the task of waking the tired child lay before her.

Doctor Hernando's dinner-hour was long passed. His horse pawed the curbing fretfully, and yet he was not impatient to have the visit at an end. He felt, on the other hand, that a good day's work had been done; indeed, so elated was he that he proposed to Mignon to drive her home.

This kind offer was declined, with thanks.

Then he rather insisted on driving the child home as it was really not able to walk, but this offer was also declined, as graciously as a queen ever refused a stubborn knight, and yet with the unalterable decision of a Mede or Persian.

## CHAPTER XV.

### A TROUBLESOME NEW WOMAN.

There lived with Mrs. Richard Hadley a half-sister, some twenty years her junior, named Miss Katie Browne.

Miss Katie Browne was in some respects a typical advanced woman, her first distinguishing mark being an air of independence that the utmost of Mrs. Hadley's remonstrance and warning had been futile to displace.

As stenographer for a consequential lumber firm, she earned a respectable salary, and considering herself of sound mind and good judgment, she spent, or rather saved, her money as she chose, and selected such companions and friends as she found congenial and deemed wise.

In short, she was wholly unlike the one of whom it has been written, "She trembled with fear at a frown."

Cora Hadley had long since proven the truth of this by many an unfruitful frown.

Cora Hadley, at one time, entertained some vague hopes of using her bright-faced, ready-tongued young sister as a catspaw into society, and even after she had abandoned the notion, she secretly felt that the girl might have pressed her way across the boundary of the magic circle, if she had seen fit to expend as much energy in that direction as she had in learning her profession and building up the interests of the "Business Woman's Club."

Katie Browne, after the manner of the aggressive new woman, considered it a part of her duty to look after the interests of the representative old woman, and with a weakness hardly accountable for, Mrs. Hadley, to a surprising length, let herself be looked after by her younger sister, especially asking her advice when it came to furnishing a house, or matching shades of hat trimming, for Katie was something of an artist.

When it came to a choice of companions, however, Mrs. Hadley saw the great deficiency in the make-up of the new woman, for the men and women Mrs. Hadley insidiously courted and worshiped at a distance, had the effect on Katie of causing her nose to

turn up and her brain to shape sarcastic remarks, which her lips were quick to utter; and at mention of no one name were these exhibitions of disgust more marked than at that of Mr. Cornelius Mansfield.

After he had actually called on her sister, Katie Browne appointed herself a committee of one to wait on Mrs. Richard Hadley, and give her some advice.

This meeting took place at the breakfast table, where advice was often passed between the two, and was characteristic of Katie Browne.

“Cora Hadley, why have you let that man come here?” she inquired, pointedly, and with some emphasis.

“Why not? He is fairly good company and is good looking.”

“Good looking,” and the words were dropped with scorn, “as so many pounds of steak would look moulded into shape and squeezed into a proper frock.”

“All tastes do not run in the same groove. If you like clothes-pins and darning-needles, like them.”

Katie spread half a slice of toast, and stirred her coffee.

“I suppose,” she said, meditatively, “you’ll get married again, it’s second nature for you to pine for a man, you need one to lean on, but Mr. Mansfield is not the man you want, and you couldn’t get him if you did; besides, you are all the way from five to ten years older than he is.”

“You talk like a child. You chew your words, and mix them with your toast, so that if there is any sense in them it goes down your throat.”

Katie laughed, merrily.

“I said you were older than he is. I repeat the charge.”

“I have not a record of his age.”

“I had not thought of that,” and again Katie laughed.

“I said you would be taking another husband some day, some one to lean on, and I see now that you are wise not to admire the clothes-pin style. Such a one might not be able to sustain the weight of too much happiness.”

Mrs. Hadley looked cross, and indeed it was un-

kind for Katie to refer to her growing size, for Mrs. Richard Hadley was not to be blamed for her pounds.

“And I said,” continued Katie, relentlessly, “that you could not get Mr. Mansfield, if you wanted him, which, thank goodness, you do not.”

“How do you know that? I had twenty-three proposals of marriage before I married, and experience is worth something.”

“We have been sparring, Cora, let us talk now, for I must go,” and Miss Katie consulted her watch, closing it with a snap.

“You don’t want the beefy Mr. Mansfield. Don’t let him come here. His reputation is—you know his reputation. The girls in our club hardly dare be seen speaking to him.”

Mrs. Hadley arose from the table, and poking at her back hair, said, sweetly:

“Katie, do not let my intentions worry you. I do not intend to marry Mr. Mansfield. He is not what I want. He may have some money, but so have others, and while I have little enough, goodness knows, I intend to get into congenial society when I marry again. Mark that, and unless Mr. Mansfield

should get the nomination for senatorship, he would hardly be a fish worth baiting a hook for."

"You make me sick!" exclaimed Katie.

"Your slang is distressing," retorted Cora.

"Do you mean to stand there and allow me to infer that if Mr. Mansfield were the proper fish, you would bait your matrimonial hook and angle for *him*?"

"Why not, if his name on my card, or mine on his, would open the doors of society to me? I most assuredly would angle for him—and catch him."

"But, Cora Hadley, Cornelius Mansfield is not fit for a decent woman to speak to, let alone talk of marrying."

"Do you *know* anything so very bad of him?" and there was little concern in Mrs. Hadley's voice.

"*Know* anything? No, I do not *know* anything; but where there is so much smoke, there is generally a little fire."

Cora Hadley smiled.

"Where will you find a paragon of virtue these days, and what woman would want a 'sissy,' if he were on earth?"



Katie stood looking at her sister with severe condemnation.

“To hear a woman—a *woman*, talk like that!” and she brought the words out slowly, between curled lips.

“You are a disgrace to your sex, Cora Hadley, and I hope if you find it expedient to fish for this man, that you *get* him. Your victory will be your punishment, and the day he comes here, I leave. I think a little too much of myself to lower my standard to anywhere near his level.”

“You had better cool off, or you’ll explode somewhere between here and the office, and your righteous indignation is wasted, anyway, for I have no more use for Mr. Mansfield than I have for the coachman—unless——” and she paused to reflect; then added, “Your estimation of his morality is based on hearsay. I will warrant the opinion that you never knew a person whose good name has been spoiled by an association with Mr. Mansfield, or a woman whose life he has wrecked, though they tell it on him. Wait until you prove his sins, before con-

signing him to the bottomless pit," and she turned away.

"The looks of him should suffice," Katie remarked, as she gathered her belongings.

Long before she had reached her destination, all thoughts of Mr. Cornelius Mansfield were out of Katie Brown's mind. The possibility of her sister ever marrying him seemed too remote to cause a fear.

But the subject was brought to her mind again not many weeks later, by a conversation she overheard.

It happened on a Sunday afternoon, when she was in the back parlor, reading.

Mrs. Hadley had been out airing herself in her shining trap, and had just returned, when a visitor was announced.

Without being seen, Katie listened to a conversation so unusual, she forgave herself for listening.

"M-Mrs. R-Richard H-Hadley?" a quavering voice inquired, and when assured that he was talking to the lady in question, he proceeded: "I—I am P-Plunkett, P-Plunkett. I come as messenger, to

bring m-message from the s-s-spirit of the departed, your d-dearly beloved h-husband."

"How did you come to have the message?" Mrs. Hadley inquired.

"O-Ouijah brought it."

"What, or who, is Ouijah?"

"The s-s-spirit of a s-s-squaw. S-s-she knows all things."

"Where did she meet Mr. Hadley?"

"In s-s-spirit realms."

"In spirit realms?" repeated Mrs. Hadley. "Well, Mr. Hadley was never fond of squaws when here, and I am not prepared to believe he is talking private matters with them on the other side."

There was a silence, almost painful.

Katie put her hand over her mouth, and moved on tiptoe, so that she could, if possible, see the strange messenger.

"What message does he send?" Mrs. Hadley at length inquired.

"H-he s-s-sends warning."

"What warning—what about?"

"A-bout a man."

“What man?” and there was both curiosity and vexation in her voice.

“He s-s-says you will know w-who he means.”

“I think your message must be correct. He always presumed a great deal,” and Mrs. Hadley showed some irritation.

“The man w-wears a coat colored like a m-mouse, and his h-hat is t-tall and s-s-shiny.”

“Oh!” exclaimed Mrs. Hadley, “who says he does?”

“The spirit s-s-so informs me.”

“Well, go on. What else did the spirit say?”

“He s-s-sends warning. He s-s-says, ‘Beware! The man’s a s-s-snake. The veery has his heart. He w-will never marry a-any other.’”

“Veery?” she exclaimed. “Did Richard Hadley send this senseless message to me?”

Dariah Plunkett gazed steadily and sadly at the wife of the late Richard Hadley, then said: “The veery’s a w-woman. Her h-hair is black. The c-child looks l-like its f-father.”

“And did my late husband instruct you to bring me this mess of news?”

“S-s-sure.”

“He showed his usual good sense. Thank him for me, and tell him to keep comfortable. I shall not disgrace him.”

The words were spoken with a peculiar accent, not altogether pleasant, but the mouthpiece of the spirit Ouijah looked immensely relieved, and after leaving the room, hastened home, feeling better than he had felt since he had, some days before, seen Mrs. Hadley driving with Mr. Mansfield.

If Ouijah had been more considerate, the message would have the sooner been delivered, for the moment his eyes fell on the florid couple, rolling along and smiling at each other, Dariah Plunkett had expected some advice from the spirit of the woman's departed husband.

Not many days after the delivery of this message, Dariah's thoughts were effectually diverted from the affairs of Mrs. Hadley by the sudden and serious illness of little Telsa.

For some weeks Mignon had taken the child to Doctor Hernando's office, each time more effort and more coaxing being required, and each time found

the child returned weaker. Her peculiar spells still came, and seemed to grow stronger and more enervating, until at last the child was exhausted, and a fever crept into her veins.

Doctor Hernando had entered Mignon's name on his book as Mrs. King, for he apprehended some notoriety, though he tried to keep the matter of the child's peculiar condition quiet.

As days went by, little Telsa grew no stronger.

Doctor Hernando came regularly, studied her case carefully, and finally brought other physicians to see her, but no one of these had ever seen a similar case. Indeed, there were but two or three parallel cases known to the profession, and in making a report of the case of little Telsa, they could only say, "That under peculiar conditions, the human organism gives forth a physical power which, without visible instruments, lifts heavy bodies, attracts or repels, according to a law of polarity."\*

As was to be expected, some little talk of the strange child got abroad, but owing to Doctor Hernando's strict watchfulness, the range of the talk

\* See case of Angelique Cottin.

was small, and nothing of it got into the papers.

Among those of Mignon's customers, who had sent work from time to time but whom she had not seen, was a certain stenographer, who was particular about her sewing, but who paid promptly.

While little Telsa was sick, this lady called in person to get a dainty skirt, which had been much beruffled by hand.

As this skirt was not quite done when she called, Miss Katie Browne sat by the bedside of the child, to wait while Mignon set the last hurried stitches.

With her first glance at the child, Miss Browne had almost stopped in the middle of the floor, so amazed was she by the sight of a face, familiar yet strange, for little Telsa's face, though wan and worn, yet bore the unmistakable stamp of her parentage.

After she sat down, time and again she forced herself to turn her attention from the child to the sad-faced, beautiful mother who, with white, thin fingers, and stooped shoulders, set stitch after stitch with her gleaming needle.

She tried to glance around the small room, neat

and clean, but bare to painfulness; but it was no use, her eyes went back after each attempt to the little face on the pillow, at last with a perceptible start, for she recognized the likeness.

Mignon, looking up, caught the expression on her face, and Miss Browne said, hastily, "Your child looks like—like a gentleman I have seen," but her stammering explanation only made her attempt worse, for Mignon's face flushed, and she dropped her eyes again to the nearly-completed skirt.

Miss Katie Browne, fully understanding that she was undertaking a delicate task, nevertheless determined to discover, if possible, something that would be of actual service to her, if it should become necessary for her at any future time to sustain charges preferred against Mr. Mansfield, for she now fully believed the substance of the message that the strange old man had said came from the spirit of the departed Richard Hadley.

After a few seconds of an embarrassing silence, she looked straight across at Mignon, and said:

"I beg your pardon for seeming rude, but I have a grave reason for speaking as I do.



“I am going to ask you a question which may make a difference in a woman’s life. If you knew that the man whom this child is the exact picture of were paying attention to a woman, with the supposed intention of some time marrying her, what advice would you give her, if she should, in all sincerity, ask you of him?”

Mignon bent over the stitches yet a moment.

When she lifted her head, her face was white, but she spoke with a firmness uncommon to her way.

“I should say to that woman, that if she values happiness, or honor, or love, or life, or the hope of heaven, not to trust him. I would warn her with my last breath to beware of him, for he is false. He has not heard of honor—he does not know what virtue is: then I would ask this woman, out of pity for a child that has never known a father’s love, and out of pity for a woman whose name has been spoiled because she trusted him, not to speak of the advice for which she asked.”

Miss Katie Browne sat a moment, speechless; but a warm flush was gathering in her cheeks and a flame had already kindled in her eye.

She arose, and paced the room, excitedly.

Mignon was moved to pity, for she imagined she had grieved a woman who was trusting him.

“If I have jarred your trust in him, I understand your pain. Trust once destroyed, builds slowly, yet I can say no less.”

Miss Katie Browne stopped suddenly and faced Mignon.

“Do you for a moment think that *I* have trusted him? Not much! I have questioned you for the benefit of another—a woman who insists that this man has been misjudged—wholly misjudged.”

Mignon turned her eyes to little Telsa, who was sleeping quietly.

“Would she believe if she should see?” she inquired, softly.

“I doubt it,” said Miss Browne, with a peculiar shrug of her shoulders. “There’s none so blind as a woman when she chooses to be blind.”

## CHAPTER XVI.

### IN WHICH VENGEANCE IS PLOTTED.

On her return home with the bundle containing her much-beruffled skirt, Miss Katie Browne stalked through the house, calling, "Cora, Cora, Cora Hadley!" and when at last a sleepy answer came from an upper room, she mounted the stairs, two at a time, and dashed into her sister's apartment, where, after tossing her bundle on the bed, she ranged herself in front of her sister.

"What's the matter?" Mrs. Hadley inquired, rubbing her eyes.

"If you value your self-respect, or regard your reputation, don't you ever be seen speaking to Mr. Cornelius Mansfield again," and Miss Browne held her finger warningly before her sister's face. "Don't you ever let him set his foot in this house again. He ought to be hung!"

"Is that so?" and an irritating yawn followed the words.

“Now, Cora Hadley,” Katie continued, warmly, “let’s have no mincing matters. You are a widow, with a passably good name, and I hope some small remnant of sense left. I am no widow, and not angling for a fish, but Mr. Cornelius Mansfield, although wearing trousers, is not a man, he is a monstrosity of some sort, and don’t you let him over your threshold again.”

“What has Mr. Mansfield done to so annoy you?” and Cora Hadley spoke sweetly. “Make yourself comfortable; take off your hat, and recount his sins.”

“Having just seen his child, and the woman who should be his wife, I don’t feel very comfortable. Your crazy spiritist wasn’t so far wrong, after all. The man’s a snake. You had better take Richard’s warning, if you will not mine.”

A smile that drew her mouth down disagreeably at the corners, played over Mrs. Hadley’s face.

“Richard,” she said, “he wouldn’t turn over his finger for my comfort when he was here. Do you suppose he would exert himself in his grave, or wherever he may be, in my behalf? As for the

woman and the child, a woman who would admit such a thing, if it were true, is the woman who would lie, if it were not."

"Cora Hadley, you shall see that child! Then you will not say 'lie.' It is the picture of him, and I knew it was his own when I first set eyes on it."

"Very well; granted the child is his, what of it?"

Miss Browne stood in speechless amazement a moment before she repeated the words. "What of it? Well, nothing, if you don't know, but for my part, I choose to associate with respectable people."

Mrs. Hadley laughed, sweetly.

"You will not make Mr. Mansfield an angelic sister-in-law, I fear," she said.

"Don't talk like a fool," advised Katie, wrathfully. "If I thought there was the remotest danger of such a relationship, I should call a specialist in at once to sound your brain."

"Then call your specialist, for I generally catch the fish I bait for, and now that Mr. Mansfield has been nominated for senator, without a shadow of a chance of defeat, he will serve my purpose well, and when you wish to be entertained at the capitol, you

will forget your brother's reputation and his multitude of shocking sins. As the wife of a senator, I expect to shine."

"Cora Hadley, would you, for the sake of being a senator's wife, for the sake of getting into what you call select society, marry a——"

"A what?"

"A libertine," Miss Browne whispered, under her breath, watching her sister, and expecting an explosion.

The explosion did not follow.

Mrs. Hadley smiled as peacefully as before.

"I would marry anybody, Katie, my dear, to get where I am determined to get. You forget that men have many liberties denied to women. Only a puritan would let the moral character of a man worry her. I am not a puritan. My few winters in society, years ago, created an appetite that has lasted through the years, as an early taste of blood lasts a lion. I am now angling for a senator. I shall angle well, and if some dark-haired woman keeps his heart, what matters it? His name will be on my card. The other woman is not of his sort, nor of mine."

“For which, being a decent-appearing woman, she is no doubt thankful.”

Cora Hadley turned away, impatiently.

“Don’t talk to me of her! Do you suppose for a minute that Mr. Mansfield would marry such a woman as this one you have dug up in your rounds among working women? Do you suppose he would stoop to make such a woman his wife?”

“Why shouldn’t he, in the name of common sense? She is better than he is, ten times over.”

“Society does not see such matters as you do.”

“No, indeed! Society is a freak. A man and a woman, equally guilty, stand before society, asking for recognition. Society says to the woman, ‘Away,’ and it pushes her to foreordained destruction, and though she battles for years to regain a lost foothold, society stands ready, at all times, to push her back; the man, the male sinner, society takes in her lap, coddles him under the chin, and says, ‘He is a man,’ when in truth he is a beast, and should share the fate of the woman, or a worse one.”

“And what do you propose to do about it?” asked Mrs. Hadley, still unruffled.

“Listen,” said Miss Browne, contracting her brow, and resting her hands on her hips. “Listen, I want to tell you. I propose to go to the polls on next election day, and register my disapproval of such a man by voting for his opponent. That’s about all I see that a woman can do.”

This information proved to be the bomb.

Its explosion was evident.

The hair brush that Mrs. Hadley had been idly brushing her hair with, fell from her hand, and she turned a horror-stricken face to her sister.

“Vote—you, Katie Browne—*vote?*” she gasped.

“That is what I said.”

Mrs. Hadley sank into a chair, quite overcome.

“You will disgrace your sex—your name.”

“Maybe I will; but if my sex must be disgraced, I propose it be disgraced a different way than by being numbered among the constituency represented by such a specimen of degenerate morality as Cornelius Mansfield. More than this, I propose to recite the tale of the other woman at the club, and I give you my word for it, the club will spoil their good names as I intend to spoil mine, almost to a woman.”



Mrs. Hadley had gradually regained her composure.

“Very well,” she said, stooping to pick up the hair brush. “Joy go with you in your effort to thwart my future, but you’ll have your labor for your pains. Women will not so far forget their proper place as to vote—that is certain. Peg away, only do not say anything about my private financial matters. It takes all sorts of bait to catch some fish; and now let me see the skirt made by the toiling fingers of the dark-haired woman who has your future brother-in-law’s heart.”

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True to her resolve, soon after the Business Woman’s Club was called to order, the next afternoon, Miss Katie Browne arose, and said:

“Madam President: I move you that we dispense with the regular business of the hour, unless it is of the utmost importance. I have a most urgent matter to present for the consideration of this meeting.”

A look of surprise went around the room.

The Business Woman’s Club often looked surprised, when Miss Browne made remarks.

“Do I hear a second to the motion?”

The motion was duly seconded and carried, and Miss Browne was accorded the floor.

“Madam President and Ladies,” she said, with a bow, adjusting her face veil. “For some months I have been having sewing done by a woman who lives in one of Stern’s old barny tenements. This work I have always sent to the woman, whom I never saw until a few days ago, when I called to get a skirt. I found her sewing for dear life, by a bedside where a delicate child lay sick. The room was pitifully bare and poverty-stricken. The woman was pale and tired, and her small, white hands were almost transparent and very nervous. Her face I can neither describe nor forget, but the Madonna never looked sadder. But it was the child in the bed that attracted my attention, for its little, feverish, pinched face, is a perfect miniature of the face of a man we often see around town.

“To make a long story short, and to spare as much as possible the feelings of the worked-to-death little woman, who bears every mark of being a lady, I will only say that this decent-appearing man, whose

name and face are familiar to every inhabitant of Border City, is the father of this child—and its mother cannot claim his name, for she was never married to him. Ladies, this young woman, as I have reason to believe, was betrayed because she believed this man—this man who has broken every promise he ever made, and trampled under his feet every plea she ever sobbed. Society has put its signet of ostracism against her name, and as far as society at large is concerned, the grave is her only refuge from the consequences of her sin of trusting too far, this man. This man, ladies, still figures in society, and women pay him homage, for some reason incomprehensible to me, and smile with pride to see his name in the papers in connection with their functions. The woman toils unceasingly for herself and his child, while he struts around hotels and parlors. His child wears a patched cotton nightdress, while he wears a coat well-tailored, and an eight-dollar hat. The woman who should be his wife eats crusts dipped in tea, while he dines sumptuously on port wine and soft-shelled crabs. His child has never known a father's care, and has no legal right

to her father's name, and the mother is wearing her life out fighting the wolf from the door and battling for the good name that society will never freely grant. Now, ladies, this man has had the impudence to announce himself a candidate for the suffrages of the people of our state, and inasmuch as women are people in our state, women should make themselves heard. For my part, I have taken my solemn oath that, so helping me God, no libertine shall, with my consent, ever represent me in the halls of state—no profligate shall make the laws by which I must be governed. He may be elected, he may make laws, but he will do it over my minority protest, and to this end I intend to do what I never expected to do, namely, to go out on election day and register my disapproval of this man by voting for his opponent, who, I learn, is decent if nothing more; and I expect you, ladies of this club, to stand by yourselves and your own interests, by standing by the working woman—the woman whose lot has not been as pleasant as ours, whose name may not be as pure in the eyes of the world, but who may be every whit as

strong and womanly as we would be had her environments and temptations been ours.”

After this mysterious and most interesting speech, Miss Browne gave her face-veil a little twist, and sat down.

“Who is the man? Who is the man? Who is the man?”

The question was shouted by half a dozen women at the same time.

“By name and reputation he is Cornelius Mansfield, Senator-nominate from the Fifth Congressional District, and the vote of Border City will elect or defeat him.”

A dead hush fell on the club, for the space of one minute.

This hush was the gasp that precedes an outbreak, and in the animated buzz that followed it, a great many things were said that had never been printed in the papers about Mr. Mansfield.

Finally the president rapped for order.

“Madam President,” the assistant cashier of a bank, arose to remark, “this matter should be

brought before this meeting in such shape that action can be taken by this club as a body, and that will invite the co-operation of every club of women in this city. We can do no less than register our unqualified disapproval of this man, and if we work wisely, we may save the reputation of the Fifth Congressional District. In order to bring the matter before this meeting, I move the adoption of this resolution," and she handed the secretary a slip of paper.

The eyes of the club then turned to the secretary, who read as follows:

Resolved, That we, the members of the Business Woman's Club, believing in the honor of men and the virtue of women, do believe and declare that no man morally unclean, and therefore morally unfit, should ask nor dare expect the suffrage of a decent and intelligent people. And we further declare that we will register our disapproval of any and all such candidates at the polls, and will also use our influence to increase such disapproving sentiment.

This resolution called forth the usual amount of discussion.

Some women thought it was not strong enough, some thought it not long enough. Some moved to "insert," and some moved to "strike out," but at last it was worded to suit the majority, and adopted.

After another period of discussion, delegates were selected; one to attend the club-meeting of every club in the city, bringing before such meeting the story of Mr. Mansfield and his reputation, in order to defeat, if possible, the man that sought to represent the women of the Fifth District, Border City included.

Thus it happened that during the next week, the club women of Border City, behind closed doors, discussed the moral character of Cornelius Mansfield, and many and dreadful were the tales told of him,—enough to fill a volume, and almost with one accord the women grew indignant to think that such a man had had the effrontery to offer himself as a candidate in a state where women had the ballot.

When the matter was brought before the W. C. T. U., more than one mother waxed eloquent, and they had prayers.

During the discussion, a timid-looking woman on

the back seat, arose to make an inquiry of the delegate who represented the Business Woman's Club, and which happened to be Miss Browne.

"Do you know how old the child is?" she asked, timidly.

"I have been informed it is seven."

"And the woman—what does she look like? What is her voice like?"

Everybody had now turned their attention to the soft-voiced old widow.

"She is rather small, very pretty, with a sad face. Her hair is black, and curls around her face, and her voice—her voice is as pleasant—as subdued minor music."

The widow leaned eagerly forward.

"Was the child born in the Haven, do you know?"

"Mother Shephard tells me that she was."

"And the woman's name?" the old lady inquired, almost in a whisper.

"We call her Mrs. King. This is not her name, but she is sensitive to publicity, as we would be."

The widow gasped, and twisted her handkerchief.



There was a painful pause, such a one as one grows accustomed to in prayer-meetings when those present are awaiting a spiritual blessing.

The W. C. T. U. ladies waited with bated breath, for the widow was evidently agitated.

“Ladies,” she presently found courage to say, “I was born in a state where woman’s place was at home, and the men folks did the voting. I have always held it to be outside a woman’s sphere to vote. More than this, I have been sure a lady could not vote and remain a lady. Ladies, I shall be at the polls as soon as they open next election day, I shall be waiting there to vote against Cornelius Mansfield. If after this I can be a lady no more, very well. Cornelius Mansfield must taste his retribution, and it is a woman’s place to administer the dose. Ladies,” and her voice faltered, “I shall vote.”

“Ladies,” and she hesitated yet longer, “I shall vote.”

“Ladies,” and a third time she paused, solemnly, “I shall vote,” and she put great emphasis on the announcement.

A smile went around the room, then some one be-

gan to sing "Praise God," and the Widow Brunhaven was thankful for it, for her heart thumped so she feared it would make its escape, still she moved her lips, framing the words, "I shall vote."

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At the general meeting of club representatives, Mother Shephard, who was present by invitation of Miss Browne, made a few remarks.

After her remarks, a general discussion followed, the assemblage, individually and collectively, deciding that Cornelius Mansfield must be defeated. As an after-thought, one kind-hearted woman proposed that a letter be sent to Mr. Mansfield, informing him of the fact that the women of Border City condemned his shocking morals, and would vote for his opponent, *unless* he married the woman, of whom they had heard, before election.

Mother Shephard smiled, when this was proposed, and listened to the animated discussion of the question.

After quarter of an hour of speech-making, the motion was carried, and a committee appointed to draw up the document that was virtually to give Mr.

Mansfield his choice of marrying Mignon, or taking his chances on being elected, with a considerable array of women against him.

It must be stated here that the S. P. I. P. received the delegate from the Business Woman's Club rather coldly, and tabled the resolution, thus saving their names the disgrace of appearing with the others.

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While the club women were thus exercising their rights without her knowledge, Mignon was more closely than ever confined, for little Telsa did not mend.

Faithfully the sore-hearted mother carried out Doctor Hernando's most minute instructions, and more than once he assured her that she was a famous nurse.

Mignon prayed, too, these days, prayed that the child might soon get well, and that when she did so, the strange disorder that had spoiled her childhood would not come again.

Doctor Hernando stopped every few days at the Haven to tell Mother Shephard of the child's condition, and dropping in for a moment the day after the

club women had met, Mother Shephard told him of the movement on foot by the women to force Mansfield to marry Mignon, and if he would not, to use their influence the day of election to defeat him.

“Isn't it a superb plan, and worthy the women who are carrying it out?” Mother Shephard inquired.

“It is a most idiotic move. Why couldn't those women have turned out and voted him down unconditionally? Our poor little friend has trouble enough on her hands at present, without being annoyed by that totally depraved Mansfield.”

“I know, but suppose he marries her? Had you thought of that? See then how her life would be changed.”

Doctor Hernando took off his glasses, and slowly turned them over his thumb.

Then he leveled his eyes at Mother Shephard.

She bore his careful scrutiny well.

“Would you like to see her the wife of Mansfield?” he asked, gravely.

“He would not be the most desirable husband—she is ten times too good for him—but, Doctor Her-

nando, she has *such* a hard time, and how can it ever be any different?"

Doctor Hernando regarded her another long minute.

He placed his glasses on his nose.

They slipped off.

He placed them carefully on again, and with a parting squint at Mother Shephard, said: "I have always supposed you to possess good sense," and turning, he left the hallway.

Mother Shephard smiled, as he strode down the flagstone pavement, and her face took on a thoughtful expression.

A notion had more than once come to her, when thinking of Doctor Hernando and Mignon, but it had been too impossible to admit of enlargement.

## CHAPTER XVII.

### MANSFIELD AGAIN CALLS ON MIGNON.

Cornelius Mansfield was in his room for the night.

It was not the same room he had once occupied, for his bank account now warranted the use of but one room, whereas he had formerly had two.

Cornelius Mansfield, having been moved by the impulse of the greedy boy, had the year before, when he thought he saw a chance to make an independent fortune, bought all the salable stock in a certain mining interest.

But the Joplin Zinc mines had turned out mud and gravel, to the exclusion of all more valuable stuff, and Mansfield took his dividends in mud.

After this, he still owned interests in other properties, but he found it necessary to mortgage one property to keep another running, and by bits he got his financial affairs sadly tangled, as greedy men often do.

Still, he had money enough to dress well on, eat

well on, and furnish ladies with carriages and bouquets, as occasion demanded.

This night he had seated himself to consider the important question of matrimony.

He had lost heavily; he was on the edge of bankruptcy: these facts did not warrant the presumption that he would find it easy to get a wife. But he had unbounded confidence in his charms, besides he was a prospective senator, and no woman underrates the position offered her as senator's wife, especially when it was as sure a thing as it seemed to be in his case. Elections had in years past run pretty close in his district, but the party on whose ticket his name blossomed had never suffered defeat, and its partisans had declared it never should.

Mansfield knew the job of serving the people would not always last, and he correctly reasoned that he would be older, and perhaps not so desirable as a husband at the end of that time, so he determined to take a wife.

His preferences were for a young and fresh heiress; some Upper Terrace maiden, who would look upon his worldly experience and years with awe,

who would cling to him, whose life was as pure as an Easter lily, and whose inheritance would not fall short of a hundred thousand.

But in running the list of such maidens over in his mind, many difficulties presented themselves, the first and greatest in each case being the father of each said girl, so with reluctance he turned from what he preferred to what was more possible.

His next thought was of those other maidens—not so young nor so trusting, but with unsullied names and fat purses, those ladies who have weathered many summers at the seaside and many winters in the city as ornaments to society.

In the cases of these, Mansfield argued that the fathers would not be so particular, as all fathers want their daughters to marry some time.

There were several eligible ladies outside this Upper Terrace circle, some of whom had money, but to these he only gave a passing thought, with the exception of Mrs. Hadley, to whose memory he gave a smile.

“If the ‘fat Hadley’ wasn’t such a deuced fool, and if she had two hundred thousand instead of one,



I'd—no, I wouldn't either, not for five hundred thousand," and Mansfield lit a cigar.

Then he propped his feet on the edge of the table, and with his head and shoulders well tumbled down in the chair, he had just begun to formulate the course of proceedings he was to follow in obtaining a wife, when a knock was heard at the door.

"Mail, sir," the porter said, thrusting in a roll of papers.

Mansfield tossed the papers on the table, and after opening the letters, one after the other, added them to the pile, until the last one had been opened.

Hardly had he finished reading this last document, when his heels struck the floor with a crash, and he sat upright.

The intelligence conveyed by the communication in his hand was neither lengthy nor profound, and yet by its brief simplicity it seemed to strike him.

Again he read it.

"Mr. Cornelius Mansfield,

"Border City.

"Sir: A portion of the women of Border City object to being represented by a man who so outrages

the ethics of morality as they have good reason to believe you have done and continue to do. Unless public announcement of your marriage with Mignon Dermot is made not later than the afternoon preceding election day, a considerable portion of your constituency will be, by the interests of common decency, compelled to cast their votes for and use their influence in supporting your political opponent."

This entirely unprecedented document was signed by authority of ten of the twelve woman's clubs of the city, and some of these clubs had a large and influential membership.

"The deuce! The deuce! the deuce!" he exclaimed.

"Nice kettle of fish, this, to be in on the eve of election," and he reinforced his remark with expressions not intended for the ears of ladies or the reading public.

"Looks like suffrage was planned to prevent my proposed marriage—*this* does, and there are enough of them to send me up salt creek to its hidden source. As for money—I'll quit before I try to buy a woman's vote," and again he punctuated his opinion by his previous unwritable remarks.

After some time of deep study, the scowl left his face, and he rather smiled.

“Don’t wear your heels out kicking fate, my boy,” he advised himself, “she’ll make a senator’s wife all right, and with her I’m dead sure of a walkover. Good-by, Upper Terrace—good-by.”

\* \* \* \* \*

The information that Doctor Hernando had heard from Mother Shephard had had a depressing effect on him, and he wondered how so good a woman as the matron of the Haven could for an instant tolerate the thought of Mignon marrying Mansfield.

But one thing he decided to do, and that was to tell Mignon what he had for many days deferred telling her, namely, that the child could not get well. He did not believe that Mignon would marry Mansfield under any considerations, but if she should, it would be on the child’s account, and he thought that if she knew the child was going to leave her, it might shape her decision in rejecting or accepting Mansfield.

Also he deemed it wise to advise Dariah Plunkett

of the child's condition, and ask him to watch Mignon, so as to be near if she should need help.

Both of these decisions Doctor Hernando carried out.

\* \* \* \* \*

Mignon had just bathed little Telsa, and taken her seat by the bedside, the night after Doctor Hernando had told her the child could not live much longer, when a gentle tap was heard on the barred door.

Stepping across the room, Mignon said, softly, "Who is it?"

"It's me, Mignon. It's me," and she recognized the voice of Cornelius Mansfield.

"You cannot come in," she said.

"But I am on important business, I must."

"Little Telsa is ill."

"Who is little Telsa?"

"Your daughter."

"Then let me in. I have a right to see the child. I have a marriage license in my hand."

Mignon gave a slight start, then smiled at her simplicity.

“Don’t you believe it?” he questioned, against the edge of the door.

“No.”

“Here,” he said, “look under the door. Let me in.”

Sure enough, something white slid under the door, and Mignon taking it to the lamp, examined it carefully.

It was a marriage license, issued to Cornelius Mansfield and Mignon Dermot.

For a moment she stood with the paper unfolded in her hand, too amazed to speak. Then she returned to the door.

“Let me in,” he insisted. “I must see you.”

Slowly she slid the bar, and Cornelius Mansfield quickly entered the room.

He did not remove his coat. He lifted his hat, but after a glance around the room, seeing no suitable place to put it, he dropped it again on his head.

“I have come at last to make good my promises, Mignon, and I should have done it long before, but circumstances over which I——”

“You must speak softly, and be in a hurry,” she interrupted, glancing toward the bed.

“All right. Let by-gones be by-gones. You know now that I mean business. We will be married to-morrow, and I will get you out of this hole, get you some clothes fit for a senator’s wife, and get the gypsy baby the finest cloak and the biggest doll in Border City. What ails her?” and he stopped long enough to glance at the bed.

“She is very ill,” Mignon answered, quietly, “and if you have finished your important business, you had better go.”

“I am saying——” he began again, gazing at her in some surprise, “that I have come to *marry* you.”

“You have come too late.”

“What do you mean?” he demanded, nervously.

“I mean that you have come too late.”

“You do not. You mean that you will marry me,” and he spoke rapidly, and smiled, but the smile did not hide his apprehension.

“Marry you?” and lifting her eyebrows, she looked at him, quietly. “Why should I marry you?”

A life of legal misery, after all these years, would be no better than a life of illegal misery."

Mansfield stood aghast.

"But you love me," he said.

"No," she answered, quietly.

"You swore you did, and always would."

"I did love, once. The man I loved was a man I trusted; he was a man who loved me; he was a man who promised to stand between me and the world, of which I was afraid; but you are not that man. You betrayed me to the world, you pushed me into a life of worse misery than you ever swore to shield me from. The man I loved had honor—you have none. The man I loved knew the value of a woman's virtue—you do not. The man I loved, loved me—you never did."

"But I swear I *do* love you; I will revive your old love."

"Dead things cannot be revived."

"I will grow a fresh love."

"There is no place for it to grow."

"Then the place has been supplanted by another's love."

Mignon made no answer to his last remark, and he tried new tactics.

“But Mignon, deary, for the sake of the child, your child and mine, we must be married. My goodness, when I think of it, when I think of the dear little child, I want the words said this night that shall make us one. That child must have her father’s name to-morrow.”

“The child will be in heaven perhaps to-morrow—where she will not need her father’s name to make her honorable, nor her father’s love to make her happy.”

“Who says the child will die?”

Mignon frowned at him, for he spoke in a loud voice.

“Doctor Hernando is my physician.”

“Doctor Hernando is a hound. Doctor Hernando would let my child die, because it is mine. I will get a physician who will cure the child. We will have her well and merry as a lark in two weeks.”

“Doctor Hernando has my utmost confidence,” Mignon returned, coldly.

“And perhaps your love,” he sneered.



To this remark, Mignon paid no attention.

“Mignon! Mignon!” he exclaimed, suddenly, “think what it means to me, a lonely man, to be thus treated by the only woman I ever really loved. You don’t mean it. I swear, I will die by my own hand, if you say you do.”

Mignon looked at him, and smiled.

It was a smile that said much more than could have been spoken in the length of time, but Mansfield ignored it.

“You are only joking,” he continued, “I shall go now—*now*, and get a minister. It is not late,” and he glanced at the clock.

“Your trouble will be useless. I shall never marry you, though you bring all the licenses and all the preachers in Border City. Please consider this final, and leave me alone with my child, who cannot stay with me much longer,” and in spite of her effort, the too-willing tears filled her eyes.

“You have a heart, deary,” he said, in the old tender way. “A woman’s heart. You have trouble which I must help you bear, and I have trouble such as I cannot bear without you, for I love you. Not a

minute, not one minute of my life, but that I have yearned for you. You know me, darling—I am proud, but because I love you, because you are my queen, I get on my knees before you. For God's sake, love me a little as you used to," and his voice grew beautifully tremulous and husky.

It was the last grand play, and no knight ever knelt more knightly than he knelt before the astonished Mignon.

For a long minute, she stood contemplating him, a look of contempt, mingled with pity, resting on her face.

"Cornelius Mansfield," she said, softly, "you are on your knees, begging me to marry you."

"And you will do it," he exclaimed, quickly.

"Never," and her tone, more than the one short word, conveyed its meaning.

Cornelius Mansfield sprang to his feet, purple with anger, and trembling with humiliation.

"And is this your long-planned retribution?" he cried, wrathfully.

"I have planned no retribution. My own bitter retribution for my own sin of trusting you, these

years had crushed me to the earth. I have had no time to think of yours. If I had, do you forget a Christian leaves retribution in the hands of the Father?"

Mansfield stood absolutely motionless for a short time, then he stepped to the table, and twisting the license into a roll, thrust it into the lamp chimney, and stepped back to see it burn.

When the smoke was puffing out the chimney in long, black whirls, he cast one last glance at Mignon, and left the room, and before his feet had left the threshold half a dozen steps behind, he heard the bolt dropped back in place.

After leaving the narrow staircase, with a last look up its blackness, Cornelius Mansfield walked rapidly, with one gloved hand in one overcoat pocket, and it was the peculiarly lonesome feeling of this hand that first brought him to a full realization of his predicament.

On the way to the interview with Mignon, he had held this hand in this pocket this same way, and it had pressed against a paper, and on this paper hung a fate—a pleasant fate, for while it meant that he

must lose the rather uncertain chances of trapping a middle-aged heiress, he considered that it also meant the surety of his election, and he argued satisfactorily that a small certainty is more to be desired than a big uncertainty.

Besides this, he felt that he was doing a manly act, and the largeness of his generosity in going to the woman, whose heart he had so entirely won, almost overcame him every dozen steps or so.

He felt that he was conferring on her an honor worthy a knight; that he was about to lift her to a level that would make her head giddy, and he anticipated much actual pleasure in holding her head, figuratively speaking, until such time as she should become accustomed to her exalted position as senator's wife. In this connection, it afforded him some pleasure to dwell on her beauty, and the fact that she had lived like a Christian through the long, hard years.

Now when his hand spread itself feebly in his empty pocket, defeat in all its meaning, seemed to be impressing itself upon his shocked brain.

He slowed up, and finally stopped.

Generally, it was no trouble to walk and think at the same time, but on this night his thoughts were too great to be borne, or too twisted around to insure a graceful carriage, and his sudden stop was for the purpose of taking a closer and steadier view of himself in the sudden turn of his fortune.

He did not reason aloud, but held an interesting mental conversation with himself.

It was short and decisive.

“You are beat, Mansfield.”

“Yes.”

“And by women.”

“Yes.”

“And you have thought the sole end of their creation the amusement of man.”

“Yes.”

“What are you going to do?”

This question was important, and Mr. Mansfield thought rapidly.

Then he jerked out his watch, looked at it, and smiled.

Immediately after this, he changed his direction and set out afresh.

“Better get a move on yourself,” his sub-conscious being advised.

Accordingly, he got a move on himself, and walked rapidly toward Upper Terrace, where some moments later he turned into a side street.

In about twenty minutes, Mrs. Hadley heard the bell ring, and caught Mr. Mansfield’s well-modulated voice in the lower hallway. She was consulting an almanac, and as she was not dressed for company, a description of her costume would be unkind, but even before the girl had brought his card to the door, Mrs. Hadley was in the contortions of adjusting her tightest and most graceful tea-gown.

Her hair was loosened and punched up becomingly. Her face was treated to a swift dash of powder, and a drop of crab-apple blossom extract was sprayed over her yellow pompadour, after which she sailed away as gracefully as her weight would allow.

“What a delightful surprise!” she exclaimed, with a smile done in most artistic and fetching manner.

“I hope I am not an intruder. Have I broken your rest, or called you from an engagement?”

“No, indeed. I had just settled myself to spend a pleasant hour with Browning; but this is better. I do so like to be surprised when——”

“When?”

“By——”

Mrs. Hadley was supposed to blush slightly now, and perhaps did, though the natural condition of her complexion was not favorable to any only the most violent efforts.

Mansfield crossed the room, and sat on the sofa by his hostess.

There was just room enough for two of them.

“And so you are surprised,” he said, in the old, insinuating way, that Mignon would have understood.

“If you knew what an effort it has been for me to keep from your side, you would be surprised that I have not come long ago. A man at my age knows well how to control his feelings, unless, perchance, they grow uncontrollable. Then he must move at their direction, or forever suffer, and suffer I have, trying to stifle my love for you. I have been on the point of telling you, of praying you to understand

me, for months, but your diffident way, your coldness of manner, your apparent disregard of even my slightest advances to win your affections, have held me back until, I swear to you, I had to come to-night," and Mansfield took her hand.

Mrs. Hadley was silent. Perhaps she was trying to call to mind some one attempt he had made to win her affection.

But while she was silent, she did not make any great effort to keep him from capturing her hand, which he spread on his knee covering it with his own, this being an easier task than trying to hold it, owing to the size and puffy condition of the joints of both her hands and his.

"This is so sudden!" she gasped.

"Not at all—not at all——" he whispered. "I have thought of it for months."

"But you do not say you love me!" and she made an effort to loosen her hand.

He bore down with tender and manly force, the bare possibility of losing her giving him fresh strength.



“Love you? How can you doubt it? I never set eyes on a woman who has so entirely bewitched me, and I have seen many a beauty in my day.”

“But I am not worthy the honor of being a senator’s wife,” and the joy of the honor caused her breath to tremble.

This remark also caused Mansfield to shudder, for it reminded him that if he did not secure his wife before election he would not afterwards, and with the loss of her his last hope disappeared.

He threw his arm around her—as far as it would reach—and kissed her on the forehead.

“Honor?” he exclaimed, with as good a show of passionate feeling as was possible, “The honor will all be on my side. Society will recognize a peerless leader, and the fact that that leader is my wife will more than fill my cup with pleasure.”

Mrs Richard Hadley picked a lace handkerchief from her bosom, and held it to her eyes.

“And now,” said Mansfield, bending near her, and raising the handkerchief, “another surprise. I am going to bring a minister out here to-morrow

night, and we will have a quiet ceremony, and have it over."

Mrs. Hadley straightened up.

"And give me no time to prepare?" she inquired, aghast.

Mansfield laughed a beautiful, rippling laugh.

"Prepare? You prepare? You are fit to be a bride right now. No, I will not wait. I have waited already past the limit of all endurance."

Mrs. Hadley pressed her hand to her bosom.

"How sudden!" she again murmured. "But have your own way. I am too much overcome to object, and as luck will have it, my second mourning outfit is brand new, and with a few retouches, will be just the thing."

"How ready women are for emergencies, and a senator's wife should always be," and Mansfield patted her approvingly on the shoulder.

Mrs. Hadley sank against his arm, almost overcome with the magnitude of the social position that she was about to step into.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

### DEATH OF LITTLE TELSA.

Dariah Plunkett, true to his promise to Doctor Hernando, watched Mignon, though not as Doctor Hernando had supposed, for he would hardly have approved of the hole in the wall process, as adopted by Dariah Plunkett.

But this suited Dariah, and puffed to a feeling of wonderful importance by some unusual news, he hastened to call upon Doctor Hernando.

When Doctor Hernando found him waiting on the steps, early in the morning, he knew even before Dariah had opened his jumping mouth, that something unusual had brought him out.

“Is the child worse?” he inquired, anxiously.

“I-It’s the v-veery,” Dariah stammered, in answer to the question.

“What trouble is she in now?” and there was apprehension in Doctor Hernando’s voice, for her life seemed to be one long trouble, with here and there a more serious outbreak to punctuate it.

"S-s-she's c-crazy," Dariah explained.

"Crazy? She was sane enough last night."

"S-s-she's crazy."

"What is she doing?"

Then Dariah Plunkett began, in his slow way, to tell how Cornelius Mansfield had visited Mignon the night before.

As he talked, Doctor Hernando twisted his glasses around his thumb, and once or twice moved from his chair to the window and back.

Dariah Plunkett stopped and stuttered and stammered, and at points most interesting made such exasperating pauses that the Doctor was tempted to grasp him by the coatcollar and shake the halting words out.

"You mean to say," he exclaimed, when the last of the tale had been told, "that he came there last night with a license, prepared to marry her, and she refused him?"

"S-s-sure."

"What reason did she give him?" and Doctor Hernando adjusted his glasses, and looked at Dariah.

The old man shook his head, slowly.

“I-I’m beat,” he said, as slowly as he shook his head. “S-s-she s-s-said s-s-something about not loving him no m-more,” and the old man’s long, stubborn nose, showed a disposition to turn up, “and he s-s-said he’d make her love him, and she s-s-said he couldn’t.”

“What did he say to that?”

“He s-s-said she loved s-s-somebody else.”

“What did she say?” and Doctor Hernando leaned forward, impatiently.

“S-s-she, she didn’t s-s-say nothing.”

“Then did he burn the license?”

“N-not yet. He s-s-said he loved the child, like he was its own father. He s-s-said you was killing it, c-cause it was his.”

“He said that, did he?”

“And more.”

“Tell on. What did she say to this?”

“S-s-she said you had her c-confidence.”

Doctor Hernando settled back comfortably in his chair.

“You are sure of that?” he inquired.

“ S-s-sure.”

“ And what did he say to that? ”

“ His m-moustache curled l-like a leaf in a f-fire, and he s-s-said, ‘ Maybe y-you love him, too.’ ”

“ And she said? ”

“ S-s-she didn’t s-s-say nothing.”

“ Then was it he burned the license? ”

“ Not y-yet. Then it was he f-fell onto his k-knees and besought her. It was p-pitiful to s-s-see a s-strong man s-s-so undone.”

“ Did he appear heart-broken? ”

“ Heart-b-broken.”

“ What did she say to this? ”

“ S-s-she looked at him l-like this,” and Dariah rose proudly to his full height, and assumed as haughty a mien as possible with his jumping chin. “ And s-s-she says, ‘ *N-never.*’ Would you have t-thought it of her? ”

“ And she is crazy? ” Doctor Hernando mused.

Dariah Plunkett looked at the Doctor severely, before further expressing himself, then said, “ Would a w-woman in s-s-sense refuse a man with money in his p-pocket and more in the b-bank, when s-s-she’s

grinding out her life to get b-bread?—and more so when he's daddy to the little one? Would she, a woman like h-er, s-s-smash a man's heart, and him a s-s-swearing to take his own life for l-love of her?"

"He will not take his life. Don't let that worry you."

"But h-he will."

"Have the spirits so informed you?"

"S-s-sure."

"Let us watch and see."

Dariah Plunkett looked graver than Doctor Hernando had ever seen him.

"T-two lives b-blasted!" he mournfully exclaimed. "Him to d-drown his s-s-sorrow in the river, and her c-crazy."

"And you really call her crazy?"

"C-crazy."

"For which sort of craziness, let us thank the good Lord," and Doctor Hernando smiled, actually laughed, for he well knew, by the expression on the old man's face, that Dariah Plunkett had now added a crazy doctor to his list of troubled ones.

"How is the child?" the physician presently inquired, changing the subject.

Dariah shook his head, dubiously.

“S-s-she don’t look none too w-well this morning.”

“I will be going out there presently. If you choose to wait, I shall consider it an honor to have the pleasure of your company.”

It was now Dariah’s turn to smile. He even forgot that Doctor Hernando was going crazy.

\* \* \* \* \*

Most of the time that little Telsa had been sick, though Doctor Hernando had protested, Mignon had sewed, sitting beside the bed, with her work in her lap and her medicine and clock close by, for the child seemed never to suffer now, only to grow weaker and weaker, as each morning stretched into afternoon and each evening lengthened into another night.

It afforded the child great pleasure to hear Mignon sing, especially that old song, “On the Other Side of Jordan,” and while she sang softly, as if to some one very far away, Telsa watched her mother’s face as closely as if divining the mysteries that had brought the sadness into its beauty.



Sometimes, suddenly looking up, Mignon would catch the intense look on the child's face, and then her eyes would fill with tears, and when the child noticed them the expression would melt away, and she would reach out her thin little hand and feel for her mother's.

Sometimes, though not often, the little girl would talk, but her efforts became less frequent as she grew weaker, and many times, when she had begun some little speech, she would end it when but half-finished with a sigh, and turn her head on her pillow, only feeling for her mother's hand, which she pressed as if by the pressure she could speak.

After Doctor Hernando told Mignon that little Telsa was surely slipping away to her last rest, she rarely left the child's bedside, only when the little one slept.

When she was sure the eyes would not open, to follow her reproachfully, she would release the thin fingers gently, place them on the coverlet, and stand looking on the fading child until through her tears nothing but a blur lay against the white sheet and pillow.

It was while Telsa slept that she did her work, and always these days with an air of expectancy.

She was waiting for a Guest.

She did not expect to hear his footfalls.

She knew she should not hear his breathing, neither would his shadow mark a line against the wall.

Still he was coming, and the child was getting ready to depart with him. Her little one—unknown by its father—unwelcome in the world, was to go out of it with the silent, shapeless, soulless Guest.

Quite early in the morning after Mansfield had made his last visit, Mignon, who had toward daylight fallen asleep, was aroused by the child's trembling hand feeling for hers.

“What, dearest?” she said, folding the little hand in hers.

“Am I on the water?” Telsa questioned, clearly.

Mignon was surprised at the strength in the child voice. A great hope came to her that she was better—much better.

“What water, little one?”

“Jordan,” and then Mignon understood.

“What makes you think of Jordan?”

“I feel the waves—the little waves. They are singing strange, quiet songs.”

Mignon pressed the small hand closer in hers, but made no reply.

“Sing it,” little Telsa said, after a few minutes’ rest.

“On the other side of Jordan,  
In the sweet fields of Eden,  
Where the tree of life is blooming,  
There is rest for me.”

Mignon sang softly.

“You’re sure of it?”

“Sure of what, dear?”

“Sure the tree of life is on the other side?”

“Yes.”

“With orange blossoms on it?”

“Yes.”

“And rest?”

“Sweet rest.”

“Then I don’t mind going. The waves rock easy. Their little song makes me sleepy,” and she closed her eyes.

But her rest was broken. After a time she sud-

denly opened her eyes, and rested them on her mother's face.

For a moment she looked eagerly, but hesitated to speak, then she whispered, "Will I have a father on the other side of Jordan?"

Mignon bent over her, to hide the rush of bitter tears.

"Yes, dearest, you will have a Father, who loves you very much."

Little Telsa smiled, and with the smile still on her face, her eyes dropped half-shut, and again she slept, and as Mignon stood over her a great fear came into her heart, for it seemed the Guest was standing on the threshold.

When Doctor Hernando came in, later, he stood beside the bed some moments.

He took the little wrist, and pressed his fingers around it, holding it in his hand long after he had released his pressure.

When he placed the little hand tenderly on the coverlet, he turned away from the bed, and by his action Mignon knew that the Guest had already crossed the threshold.

Doctor Hernando left the room to speak to Dariah Plunkett, and when he came back, he had come to stay until the Guest had gone, although he did not say so to Mignon, but he put his coat and bags aside, and took his place near the child.

Little Telsa's breathing was very weak, and her eyelids quivered at times as if caught in a passing breeze.

Suddenly they lifted.

Her bright blue eyes looked dazed for a moment, while she reached her hand for her mother.

Then her eyes grew clearer, and she seemed trying to speak.

"What is it?" Mignon inquired, tenderly.

"I wish my—father was not on—the other side."

"Tell mother—mother will get anything for you."

"I want—to see the lake. My father could hold me—in his arms."

"Your mother can hold you—you shall see the lake," and Mignon looked at Doctor Hernando for permission to lift the child to a window close by, from which the lake could be distinctly seen.

It was at this window little Telsa had most often stood.

“I will hold you,” Doctor Hernando said. “Your mother is tired.”

Little Telsa smiled.

Mignon placed a pillow on his arm, and then lifted the child, and Doctor Hernando held her to the window.

The morning sun was bright, the day was clear, and the lake stretched long and brave and blue, with white caps dancing like ruffles on its surface.

“Where—is the—lake?” the child feebly inquired, trying to follow the motion of her mother’s hand as she pointed. But the mist that came with the Guest blurred her vision.

“The waves rock me—I hear them—but where’s—the lake?” and she held out her hand, blindly groping.

Doctor Hernando closely watched her face, then replaced her on the bed.

After arranging her head on the pillow, he glanced at Mignon, and before she had raised her eyes from the child’s face to his, he saw the mask of

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petrified sorrow that had been on her when the little one had been born, slipping back.

The motion of the child's hand drew her attention, and kneeling by the bedside, she raised the wee thin hand to her lips.

It was cold now, and damp, for the Guest had taken the little one in his arms, but Mignon hung on to it, and for a moment the finger-tips brushed her lips softly, as if caressing them.

Then the damp fingers fell back into the mother's hand, and though she shaped them, and pressed them to her lips, there was no more answering pressure.

The Guest had borne the child away.

For some moments after Telsa was dead, Doctor Hernando stood by the bedside, looking at the fragile clay form the Guest had left.

The child's soft black hair lay out against the pillow in disordered ringlets, and from this he turned his eyes to the other head, with its wealth of fine dark hair, bowed over the child's hand.

Doctor Hernando was at a loss what to say.

How could he say to the mother that her child was dead?

Whom would she turn to in her sorrow?

He almost feared to have her raise her face, lest over it he should see again the pall of stony sorrow that had marred it once before, and as he stood looking at her an insane notion to kneel beside her, or to raise her beside him so that he could comfort her without words, came to him.

While the notion was passing, she gently raised herself.

“Doctor Hernando,” she said, “Is——”

She could not frame the question, but Doctor Hernando understood, and bowed his head.

Mignon was very pale, but she did not scream, she did not faint, neither had the dreaded, steel-cast sorrow-mask fitted itself over her face.

Doctor Hernando was the first to break the short pause that followed, and his voice was a bit unsteady as he said: “I have had occasion to doubt the wisdom that Christians claim for their God, but in this case even *I* can see this has been wise. If the little one had lived, she would have suffered much physical pain, and could never have been well.”



“God makes no mistakes,” Mignon answered him, in trembling words.

“You are very brave,” he answered, almost reverently, “very brave.”

“No, no; I am not brave,” she cried with pain, and the tears that she could no longer hold back, trickled down her cheeks.

Doctor Hernando turned suddenly away, and walking to the window, looked out over the lake.

For a moment the soft sobs of the mother, as she hung over the child's body, broke the stillness of the death chamber, and seemed to Doctor Hernando to beat against his heart, each repeated sound adding to the keen pain he felt.

Very soon the room was quiet again, but he did not look around.

He still stood, with his eyes on the distant lake which, though the motion was lost in the distance, he knew was rocking back and forth and back and forth, in its great bed and restlessly lapping the sandy shore, and the words of the child repeated themselves in his ear.

From the little one, his thoughts returned again to the mother, and once more the old query presented itself, as to why his life and hers had been wrecked each on a separate strand of isolation.

From the dim past, the yellow-haired woman, like a siren, whispered, "Say Myone," and the thought intruded itself as to the consequences if the woman with the dark hair should suddenly come to him with the same words on her lips.

Doctor Hernando smiled.

After standing, absorbed in his own thoughts, some minutes, he became conscious that Mignon had been moving around the room, and he turned from the window.

He did not know how long he had stood, but in the length of time Mignon had changed the child's clothes.

One side of the bed was smoothed, and on this the waxlike remains of little Telsa lay, while Mignon bent over her, preparing to curl her hair.

"What are you doing?" Doctor Hernando exclaimed.

“I am dressing my baby for her coffin.”

“But you need not do this—it is unusual; it is too much for you.”

Mignon looked at him, and smiled.

“Let me do it, Doctor Hernando. It is the last time I shall ever hold her little hand. I shall never, never brush her soft hair again. I can never, never button her dress or tie her shoe. Let me do it now. She was afraid of strangers—I am her mother.”

Doctor Hernando stood by and watched her twist the soft hair around her trembling white finger, and slip the finger out, leaving the smooth, shining curl.

When Mignon had finished, she folded the thin little hands across the still breast, and after she had stepped aside, as if his task must always be unpleasant, Doctor Hernando closed the lids over the blue eyes and pinned a napkin around the sharp little chin, being careful not to rumple the curls.

It was all over in a short time.

There was nothing left to do but to register a death certificate and arrange for the funeral.

When he spoke of the funeral to Mignon, his words gave her a shock, for after the Guest comes the expense, and she had forgotten this.

“It must be very plain—the plainest,” she said, and Doctor Hernando bowed.

He suggested that she take the corpse to the Haven, or that she have a neighbor or nurse come in so that she could rest, knowing as he made his suggestions that they would not be acted upon, for Mignon insisted on staying by the child’s side.

The next day there was a funeral.

The procession consisted of a plain white hearse and three carriages.

In the first of these was the chapel minister. In the second, Mignon and Mother Shephard, and in the third, Doctor Hernando and Dariah Plunkett.

Owing to the charity and thoughtfulness of the benevolent old man who had endowed the Working Woman’s Fund, there were flowers on the small, fresh grave.

Thus was laid to rest little Telsa, daughter of Cornelius Mansfield, the same day that he and Mrs. Hadley were married.

## CHAPTER XIX.

### IN WHICH RETRIBUTION APPEARS.

The day after little Telsa was buried, which was the day before election, Doctor Hernando saw, somewhat to his surprise, that Mignon was in the waiting-room, among the usual number of office patients.

Her presence seemed to have some sort of a depressing effect on him.

He did not reason why; but she had come into his life when the child had come into the world, and he felt, now that the child had gone, she, too, would entirely disappear. More than this, he felt that she meant this to be so.

Her manner and speech, when she had entered the private room, convinced him that he had judged aright.

Mignon was not sadder than usual, indeed, she looked much rested and fresher, and she smiled brightly when he bade her good morning, for she thought Doctor Hernando seemed unusually fa-

tigued, and that she owed him at least a pleasant look for his kindness to her and the child.

“ Doctor Hernando, I have come to get my bill.”

He pointed to a chair, and when she had been seated, he sat down at his desk.

“ I have made it my policy during my practice to gauge my charges according to the ability of the patient to pay,” he said slowly, and Mignon noted a weariness in his manner that seemed unnatural.

“ And according to that rule, I suppose, you think I should not see a bill, but it must not be that way. I am free now, and will pay you.”

“ Very well,” he said, “ I will fix up your bill, and hand it to you in the course of a few days.”

“ Doctor Hernando,” and Mignon hesitated, “ now that I am free, I do not intend to stay in the old room—I cannot. I should be always seeing the form of a child standing in the window at twilight. I should always be listening for her footstep. I should be thinking of what has been, and I intend to bury it. God knows I did the worst I could for the child, but He also knows I did the best. If she had stayed with me, I should have lived the same always—for

her; but now that she has gone, I should like to be of service to some one else."

"And what do you think of doing?—if I may ask."

"I should like to be a nurse. Could I, do you think?"

Doctor Hernando reflected, meantime twisting his glasses carefully.

"Yes," he said, presently. "You have a firm, careful, and very tender hand—rather small, but large enough, I suppose. You can control yourself admirably; you are careful to follow directions. You would make a nurse—a good one, but nursing is hard work, and you are not of the strongest."

"Is nursing any harder than sewing from morning to night?"

"It could not possibly be."

Mignon smiled.

"I must be strong enough then," she said.

"This being the case, you will make a nurse."

Mignon was silent, and for a few seconds seemed hesitating.

"I am under many obligations to you, Doctor

Hernando, and I dislike to worry you with my troubles, but I am acquainted with no other doctor. Could I train with you—under your care?”

Doctor Hernando stopped twisting his glasses, and dropped his eyes.

If he were squinting now, it was not discernible. Mignon did not understand him.

“Such an arrangement would put me in a very embarrassing position,” he said, after a moment of silent thought, without looking at Mignon.

Instantly a pink flush mounted her cheeks, but it was not so much this, as the look of disappointment and grief that came into her eyes with it, that cut Doctor Hernando to the heart when he glanced at her.

“I should have thought,” she said, with an unsteady voice. “I should have remembered; but the years have been so long, I hoped—it would not matter now.”

Doctor Hernando looked blank for a moment, not understanding her.

Then he sprang up, and stepped before her.

“For God’s sake tell me! Do you suppose that I



am a man having so little manhood, or knowing so little of chivalry, as to stab a woman's heart—your heart, in the way you intimate? Pity me for being so clumsy of speech, but I cannot ask you to forgive me for the injustice your words imply. Your life is the most redeeming life of womankind that I have ever known. I meant no reference to your life. I could not.”

Mignon had never seen Doctor Hernando look so pained as he did now. She had never heard him speak as he now spoke.

“What did you mean, then?” she asked, quietly, and with her usually low and steady voice.

Doctor Hernando regarded her seriously a moment, then sat down.

“Will you listen while I tell you what I meant? I did not intend to speak of it, but now I must. When I was young I met a woman, and she enchanted me, as a brilliant light draws a half-blind moth into its flame. In a flash, her brilliancy burst upon me, and I was more than ever blinded. I fluttered wildly into the glare, and for a brief time hovered there, blindly delighted. Then the light sud-

denly went out. I found myself burned forever. I also found the brilliant light had been but a candle dip. It was brilliant only because I had been blind. The woman I met saw nothing in an awkward, homely boy to love, and to his dying day he will be thankful that she did not, but the light he saw made him wary of better lights, so he forever foreswore the light of a woman's love, and as he lived—as I lived and learned, the first woman passed into a dim and unpleasant memory.

“Then, when years had gone, I caught the glimmer of another light. It was not brilliant, and at first was very far away, but as I came nearer and nearer it, by a path not of my own choosing, the light grew steadily clearer and brighter, as a home-light glows in the window for a man who has long cast his lot with strangers, and lonesome and homesick, returns for light and warmth and love. And my way led nearer, always nearer this light, and remembering the other, I tried to turn away, but still I kept getting nearer, and when I had come quite to it, I found it to be such a light as never fails, but I was on the outside.

“ This light was also born of my love for a woman. This second woman was truly womanly, and truly true, but she could see nothing in an awkward man to inspire her confidence, nothing in a homely man to admire, nothing in the clumsy speech of the man to win for him the light, and this second woman was——” and he turned his eyes steadily on her face, “ you.”

He hesitated a moment, then continued:

“ And now the end is come. Though this woman may not come into my life, I shall go on always loving her, and thinking of the light that might have been, for my memory of this second woman will not fade with time, and will grow sweeter as the years pass. To have her under orders by my side in the capacity of nurse, I could not. Do you understand now why? ”

Mignon shaded her eyes with her hand, and made no answer.

It was very quiet in the room.

The voices of those waiting in the parlor reached them indistinctly, and the measured ticking of a small mantel-clock sounded heavy on the air.

Presently Doctor Hernando arose.

“ Yet there remains one thing for you to say. The first woman was untrue; she said as often as I wished to hear it, ‘ I love you, I love you,’ and she lied. You will not say this. I do not expect it. You will say, ‘ I do not love you,’ truthfully, and this you must say, for men are fools. Even though a man knows the light is not for him, he must hover around until the door is securely bolted in his face. The words I ask you for will be the final closing of the door; perhaps when they have been spoken I can turn from the light—not forget it. Say it now—you owe it me—say, ‘ Doctor Hernando, I do not love you.’ ”

Mignon was silent.

“ Have I asked a favor of you before, that you now refuse?” he questioned, warmly. “ For my peace of mind, say the words.”

Still Mignon was silent.

“ Will you? ” he again demanded.

“ If you will remember always that you forced the words from me.”

“I will remember,” he answered. “Say the words.”

“Well then—I will not.”

“You must.”

“I cannot.”

“Why?”

“Doctor Hernando,” she exclaimed, impatiently, “would you make me a liar, too? I cannot say the words. They would not be true!”

Before Doctor Hernando had fully grasped the meaning of her speech, there came a sudden and imperative rapping at the door, which Doctor Hernando answered.

It was a bit of important business, and he stepped out.

When he returned, Mignon was standing as if ready to depart.

Her face was natural, and was very beautiful.

As soon as he entered the door, she spoke in a businesslike manner that effectually stayed the words on his lips.

“Doctor Hernando, my acquaintance with phy-

sicians is very limited. I know no one in the city but you. Will you direct me to some one who may be able to help me get into some hospital or training school?"

Doctor Hernando adjusted his glasses, and through them viewed Mignon in his own peculiar, careful way.

In fact, he had so far recovered from the shock of her answer to his last request as to smile.

"How would you like to train with the kind old gentleman who endowed the Working Woman's Fund?"

"Is he a physician?" and there was real pleasure in Mignon's voice.

Doctor Hernando bowed.

"I might have guessed it."

"You might have."

"And will he take me?"

"He will only be too glad to have you with him. He has been somewhat interested in you for several years, and the change you contemplate making will give him pleasure."

"And where shall I find him?"

“I will give you his address,” and seating himself at his desk, Doctor Hernando drew a prescription pad toward him, and hurriedly wrote.

Mignon looking across the room at him wondered, he seemed to have changed so in his mood since she came into the office.

After a few scratches with his pen he threw it aside, blotted the paper, and carefully folded it.

Then he swung his chair around.

“Before going to see him, I had better prepare you somewhat, for you will find the doctor a bit peculiar, though well-meaning. In the first place, do not thank him for what small service he has done you. He has helped others. He expected before he helped you that you would be thankful, and he has not lost confidence in his expectation. Then again, it is barely possible he will think you are more fitted for some other position than that of nursing. Physicians sometimes have need of women in other capacities, and such positions are generally more responsible, better-paying and in every way more to be desired. And lastly, you will find him impatient, I am afraid; he will rather measure your confidence in him

and your appreciation of him, by the readiness you show in undertaking at once whatever task he assigns you. I should advise you to say to him, 'Doctor, what will you have me do first?' This will please him, being a peculiar man, and will make the rest easy."

"I thank you so much," and Mignon arose and held out her hand for the paper.

Doctor Hernando lifted it from the desk, and held it a moment.

"What are you to say?"

"I am to say, 'Doctor, what will you have me do first?'" and Mignon smiled.

"You will not forget to say that?"

"No, indeed."

"It is important."

"Yes, Doctor Hernando."

"Here is his name, then," and he handed the paper to her.

She moved a step toward the door, then stopped.

She had opened the paper, and the name that met her eye was, "Benj. Hernando, M. D."

She turned half toward the Doctor.



The paper slipped from her fingers. She caught at it, but it sailed across the room.

Doctor Hernando sat quite still, watching her.

“Have you forgotten your question?” he presently inquired.

Then she turned squarely toward him.

“Doctor,” she said, “what will you have me do first?”

“Sit down, and I will tell you,” and when she had taken a chair, he crossed the room and leaned against the wall at her side, as he had once leaned in the square bay-window at the Haven.

His position was leisurely, almost carelessly, taken, and yet it suggested strength running deep, and long endurance.

For a moment he squinted at her through his glasses. Then he removed them, and speaking deliberately, said:

“You may get ready, first thing, to take the principal part in a wedding, which will take place to-night. I will stand by you, for the Doctor needs a wife—not a nurse.”

Mignon, neither spoke nor moved, and Doctor

Hernando could not see her face, but a slight motion of her head prompted him to speak.

“Your dress is all right,” he said, reassuringly. “My bride must be her natural self. My wife may have a sealskin coat and a pink silk house-gown, or anything else she wants.”

“I do not want them,” said Mignon, almost under her breath. “I only want——” and she stopped.

“What?”

“You,” she answered, softly.

For an instant, Doctor Hernando gazed at her, too transfixed with joy to move a muscle, then he took a quick step toward her and caught up her hand in a grasp strictly non-professional, being neither cool nor steady.

“Look at me,” he whispered, bending over her, and when she turned her face to his, radiant with the love that glorifies, he did not attempt to speak for a few seconds.

When he did, he said in words that trembled with intense feeling, “My own! My own!”

A flush of pink crossed Mignon’s face, Doctor Hernando was so very near to her.

“I will be,” she said, in a voice almost as unsteady as his own, “when——”

“When what?”

“When I am your wife.”

With the pressure of his fingers tightening around her hand, Doctor Hernando looked into her face, until it suddenly became blurred, then he dropped her hand softly in her lap and said as he turned away: “To-night.”

\* \* \* \* \*

The day before election, the hotel rotunda was filled with men, swarming like important bees, and buzzing.

Betting was light, for the rumor had gotten out that the women were going to take a hand in politics the next day, and while the report was not taken seriously, still cautious men kept their hands on their purse strings.

Among the men, Cornelius Mansfield was circulating freely, receiving a double share of congratulations; first on the wife that he had already ensnared by his manly charms, and secondly, on the

political office that he was expected to ensnare with his political charms on the day following.

Mr. and Mrs. Mansfield had more than enjoyed each other's society during the twenty-four hours that they had been wed. She had talked to him, thinking of the sensation she would cause in society, and he had talked to her, planning meantime to get at least twenty thousand to invest in a new zinc mine that was about to be opened.

He found her table service good, and her easy chairs comfortable, and she found him quite senatorlike.

He bought six boxes of choice new cigars, and she put some extra touches to her new second-mourning outfit.

Meantime, they were both interested in election.

While the men were congratulating Mansfield, a carriage drove up to the main entrance of the hotel.

This was no uncommon happening, still the men turned to see Doctor Hernando alighting, and to the surprise of all, assisting a lady from the carriage.

There was a strangeness about this proceeding that made the men curious, so they watched.

With the lady, Doctor Hernando entered the main hall that ran lengthwise of the rotunda, and when they came to the foot of the stairs, he left her, and crossing the rotunda, went to the clerk's desk, twisted the register around, and wrote.

Then he returned to the lady, and the watching men saw the two disappear up the stairway.

After they had gone, several of the men went to the desk.

The register lay as he had left it, and on the open page, in bold relief, was written, "Benj. Hernando, M. D., and wife."

These few words created another topic of conversation.

"Where did he get her?" "Who is she?" "How did the old boy muster enough courage to ask her?" "Slow on women, but has a good account." These, and similar remarks, were passed around, but none of the men knew who the woman was.

The ripple caused by the appearance of Doctor Hernando and his wife soon passed, however, owing to the weightier matter of the impending election, and the crowd talked on, prophesying victory for the

usually victorious ticket, but well Mansfield knew that he was a Philistine, and that the women were all but upon him, each armed with her jawbone of a ballot, for the fact of his marriage with Mrs. Hadley having been made known, was as oil poured into the Vesuvius that was ready to pour out its eruption.

\* \* \* \* \*

The trying scenes that took place when Cora Hadley Mansfield became assured that she was not a senator's wife, are too harrowing to chronicle, and the rather heartless way her husband looked on when she had the accompanying hysterics, would not do justice to the tender affections of a husband of two days; but when she recovered from the hysterics, she went in quest of the new husband, her steady and determined strides jarring the house.

Mansfield knew she was coming.

"How shall I get into society?" she said, hopelessly, when the subject was well under headway.

He blew smoke carelessly, without looking at her.

"You'll have to figure that out for yourself," he replied, heartlessly.

Mrs. Mansfield turned red with anger, but it was no use. He did not see her.

Then she began a hysterical sobbing.

He winced, but it was still too early to wince aloud; he had not yet discovered the fifty thousand that he counted on as his half.

“Don’t take it to heart,” he said, with an enforced touch of pity. “We can be happy yet. Let’s take a trip to Europe.”

This speech was not as good as an election, but it was perhaps next best, for Cora Hadley had wanted all her life to visit Europe.

Her sobs died into snubs, and then stopped altogether.

“How lovely of you,” she purred. “When will we go? How long will we stay?”

“That depends,” he said, thoughtfully, for he did not want to cripple his zinc mine project. “How is your bank account?”

“My bank account?” she inquired, blankly. “I have no bank account.”

“No bank account!” and his cigar tumbled from

his open mouth. "What do you mean? Where is your property?—your money?"

"I have no property—no money."

"Good Lord!" Mansfield gasped, actually turning pale. "What do you suppose I married you for?" he exclaimed, in a high key.

"What did I marry you for?" she retorted, in a key pitched fully as impressive.

"You have no bank account?" he charged, with yet more stress and volume.

"You are no senator," and the stress and volume of her voice was a match for his.

At this juncture, a carriage drove past, and Mr. and Mrs. Cornelius Mansfield, on looking out, saw each of them an old acquaintance, for the occupants of the carriage were Doctor Hernando and his wife.

Mrs. Mansfield still towered over her husband, and he picked up a paper.

The first lines that caught his eye bore the news that, "Benj. Hernando, M. D., and wife," would at an early date, sail for Europe.

With one such glance as would forever have



chilled the heart of a less timid man, Cornelius Mansfield's wife left him, and as the door slammed behind her, she heard him darkly muttering from behind the paper something about

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