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THEO  
YADDINGTON

A Novel

By  
Julian Wyndham

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# THEO WADDINGTON

A NOVEL

BY  
JULIAN WYNDHAM

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# PART I

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To you your father should be as a god;  
One that composed your beauties; yea, and one  
To whom you are but as form in wax,  
By him imprinted, and within his power  
To leave the figure, or disfigure it.

—SHAKESPEARE: *Mid. N. Dream.*



# THEO WADDINGTON

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## CHAPTER I

MY father, who even in the prime of life was not very modern in his views, held to the old-fashioned belief, that in the household, "discipline should be maintained", and that children should in all things unquestioningly obey their parents—especially their father. There was no dogma of his Presbyterian creed which he believed more firmly; and, naturally, we were all made to feel it, from my mother down to my youngest brother Ambrose, aged eleven. Indeed, I think the latter often felt it very deeply. But none of us ever demurred. We never thought of doing such a monstrous thing. The government, although perhaps not absolutely severe, was very strict and quite unfailing.

We were a very prim family, externally we were all moulded after one model—that model being my father's ideal of a dutiful child. We all walked the same chalk-mark. Woe to him who stepped aside from the prescribed track! He was speedily and with small ceremony brought back into the way he should have trod.

My father was a large man—quite ponderous, in fact, and he had very big, strong white hands which to my

childish imagination bore an expression as unmistakable as that of his face; for those hands had been instrumental in guiding my rebellious infant steps into the proper, well-worn path which was being dutifully followed by the four elder brothers and sisters who had preceded me therein; and they were still often employed in maintaining discipline. Then, what caresses they often bestowed upon my hair and cheek and upon those of my sisters and brothers and mother! And should I ever forget how those cool, firm fingers had soothed away the pain in my fevered head, once when I had been ill? So they bore to my imagination not only an expression of strength and decision and even of possible severity, but also of love and gentleness. The strength and decision I honored. The love and gentleness I almost worshipped. The severity, I—well, I shall not say how I felt about that—my father's children were yoked creatures in those days and were not at all supposed to have any private opinions.

“You're the most sot-down-on children I ever seen,” a new housemaid once confidentially asserted to me. “You ain't got no minds of your own. You seem like you was all made of putty. There's not one of you that seems to have the spirit of your papa. You all seem to take after your mamma—especially you three girls. Why, there's six of you children, all together, and you never make no noise through the house.”

“Papa can't stand a noisy house, Jane,” I had replied in my very grave, little manner. “He can't write his sermons unless everything is quiet. Noise excites him.”

“Well, he himself is blustery and lively and noisy enough when he comes out of his study. He seems a



awful kind-hearted, jolly man, and I can't see why you'ns all seem so sorter sot-down-on."

But Jane had not been with us long before she, too, had come under the inevitable, but indefinable influence which so certainly controlled every member of our household; she grew, in a short time, to stand in awe of the very knob on the door of my father's study.

This peculiar domination was not confined within the narrow limits of our family circle. It extended over the entire congregation of which my father was pastor. He would brook no opposition to his will. He would not be foiled in any of his wishes. His people and even his church officers, knew it, and meekly submitted to his way; for they loved and respected him. He had a great warm heart, a tenderness and a sympathy which would force itself through his sternest moods, which colored even his most eloquent discourses on doom eternal, and which endeared him alike to young and old. He acted in his office of pastor very like a strict schoolmaster; but his congregation never resented his exercise of authority. They liked it. Delinquents were flattered by his interest in them. The faithful were rewarded by his warm approval. Vigor, sincerity and decision marked his every act and word. Every one honored him because every one knew that he preached nothing which he did not with all his heart and soul endeavor to practise; and which, I must add, he did not endeavor to make everybody else practise — especially those of his own household — regardless of the fact that to some are given one talent, to some five, and to some ten.

Another secret of his popularity with his flock was his ability to be entertaining in company. His power of

mimicry, his sense of humor and his drollery, made it difficult at times for him to remain entirely serious even while conducting the services of the church. Did any of his children inherit his witty faculty, they never presumed to display it in his presence. If they had ever done so, I think it would have surprised him very much.

Here are a few pages from a note-book or diary which I began to keep when I was a mere child—a little girl of thirteen years:

“We have all just come up stairs from family worship, and have each gone to his or her own bedroom. That is our custom. We always do go straight to our bedrooms after evening prayers. Ours is a very orderly household—oh, very! It is even systematic. Papa wishes it to be so, and whatever papa wishes is always done. He said in his sermon, last Sunday morning, that in these modern days there is ‘a lamentable falling off in family government’, and that in most homes the father is no longer ‘the head of the house’. I felt rather self-conscious and uncomfortable while papa was saying that, and I turned my eyes just a little to see if anyone was looking toward our pew. And yes, there was that young law student (who came to our city only a few months ago, and who boards across the street from our house) staring straight at us, with a twinkle in his eyes, as though he wanted to smile. He is a very daring young man. He made papa angry, one day, by telling him that he did not think he would join the Presbyterian Church until a few things in the creed had been changed. He must have a great deal of courage to have been able to say that to papa. I can’t help admiring courage, even though it is misdirected.

“Just now, instead of sitting here writing in my notebook, I ought to be getting ready for bed. That is what papa supposes I am doing. I usually do just what is expected of me, but this evening I feel so very wide awake and restless—I know I could not sleep if I were in bed. So I mean to sit up and write for a while. I am so glad I have a room to myself. Amy, my elder sister, who is fifteen years old, used to room with me. But I begged mamma one day at the breakfast table to let her occupy another room, as I wanted to enjoy a little privacy, sometimes. When I said that, they all smiled—every one in the family except papa, and he laughed outright and declared I was ‘a quaint, old-fashioned little woman’.

“‘And what do you want with a little privacy?’ he asked. ‘What do you propose to do with it?’

“‘One can think better when one is alone, papa,’ I answered.

“‘And what weighty thinking do you have to do?’

“‘I think about many things,’ I said, hesitatingly, for I was guiltily conscious that some of my secret thoughts would not have met his approval; ‘chiefly about the things that I read.’

“‘Theo is only thirteen,’ remarked mamma. ‘But she reads more books than Amy or even than Lila. And she does use such old language (so many long words, you know), for a child of her years!’

“‘Yes, she is our precocious child, I suspect,’ papa said, ‘although she is by no means the best looking.’

“‘No, she is such a brown little thing,’ mamma agreed. ‘Her eyes and her forehead are her only redeeming features. She doesn’t take with strangers as Amy and

Lila do. She is so serious and quiet and demure. In some respects she is old beyond her years. In others she will always be a baby.'

“‘Let her have a room to herself, mamma, if she wants it,’ was papa’s final comment; and I left the breakfast table elated at the success of my proposal. My pleasure was not, however, expressed by any noisy demonstrations. No one in our house is ever noisy, except papa.

“And so now I have a room to myself. The happiest hours I spend are those in which I am shut up alone in this cosy sanctum. I and my note-book and my little bedroom have many a secret confidence. Amy and Lila and Joe and Ambrose, and even my big brother Harold, who is twenty-one and is studying for the ministry, and who Jane once said was ‘the most sot-down-on of all of us’ (herself included), have begun to be a little curious to know what I do when I am shut up alone in my room for hours together.

“I have placed my little writing table near the window and directly under the gas burner. I keep my note-book locked up in the drawer of it. If any member of our family should ever discover that I keep a note-book, I should—well, I should, as Joe says, ‘go off and die’. That’s slang. Joe never uses slang before papa; but he whispers it to me, sometimes, and I am very sorry to say I rather like it. Good behavior is so monotonous when you keep it up all the time. I can think of nothing that is more monotonous. That is why I like my note-book. I just talk right out in this little book, as though I were not at all ‘sot-down-on’, as Jane very vulgarly says. Indeed, if it were not for my note-book, I think I should suffocate sometimes. There are some days when I feel

as though I should stifle; and the only thing that relieves me is to lock myself in my room, and tell everything that I feel and think, to my little book. It is very sly of me to keep this note-book. Papa has no idea that I have secret thoughts. My father is very clever, I know; all his large congregation think him so. And yet I believe he sometimes makes mistakes. He seems to think that the eternal life is the whole life. Now if Joe should hear me say that, he would laugh and call me 'an old-fashioned little kid'. Joe and Amy are twins. I think I love Joe better than any of my brothers and sisters, although I am pretty sure papa thinks he is the least dutiful of all of us. But Joe and I are really very congenial — only he doesn't love to read so much as I do. But, as I was saying, papa supposes that because we are all in the habit of doing exactly as he wishes us to do, that we are the very best children in the world. But I am quite sure that I live two lives — one before my father's eye, and another entirely shut up in myself which nobody knows anything about — not even Joe, though I talk to him more than to any of the others. My father has no idea that I have private opinions about things, I am so quiet and unobtrusive.

“I do not believe that my brothers and sisters live two lives as I do. Joe, of course, does to a certain extent, but not so much as I do. As I grow older I think I become more and more double. Where it will end I cannot foretell. But my brothers and sisters are quite contented; they are used to doing just what is expected of them, and they don't seem to find it irksome at all. I don't think one of them keeps a note-book. They can get along quite well without one. They all think me a little queer.

I don't enjoy the things that interest them. I just hate to study catechism, although, of course, I never tell anyone so. I don't like to embroider and mend and dust and all those things. I dislike above all things to have to go into the parlor when church-members call. I am afraid Joe and I are a little misanthropic, for we have confided to each other, that we think many people, and especially the ladies who call at our house, are very tiresome. But Lila, who is quite tall and pretty and stylish, is always very glad to see company; and Amy loves to study catechism and do her duty; and Harold, who, as I have said, is studying for the ministry, likes nothing better than to read large books by Jonathan Edwards."

\* \* \* \* \*

I wrote no more in my precious note-book that night. Looking back now from a distance of many years I can clearly recall the incidents of the remainder of that evening.

My writing fever was suddenly interrupted by a knock at my door—a quick, decided knock that was unmistakable; there was but one hand in the family that would knock with such firmness and decision as that. It was a very great shock to me. My poor little heart leaped into my throat and beat so violently, that for a moment I could scarcely breathe; and as I lifted my eyes from my note-book, I was horrified to discover by the small clock which stood on my bureau, that it was nearly midnight! I was supposed to have been in bed at half-past nine.

"Who is it?" I faintly called, knowing perfectly well who it was, but wishing to gain a little time. I dashed the note-book into the table drawer, locked it and put the key into my pocket.

"Theo! What are you doing?" called a voice without, in a tone as startling as the decided knock.

"I'm — I'm sleeping, papa!"

"Open your door!"

I was very philosophical even at that age. Be-thinking me that the very worst he could do would be to slay me, and that we must all die some time, I gulped down my heart into the place where it belonged, and calmly opened the door.

There stood my father, tall and ponderous, clad in a long, black dressing-gown.

"Theo!" he exclaimed, not sternly, but in a tone of vigorous decision; he was not angry, only very determined; and he never spoke in an angry or loud tone even in his greatest impatience. "What! You are not even undressed? What does this mean?"

I could think of no suitable answer, so I only stood still and looked up at him gravely, not feeling very much alarmed, since I had, before opening the door, resigned myself even to death itself.

"Answer me, Theo. What have you been doing?"

"I've been — thinking. I was just about to go to bed."

"Well, I should hope so!" he exclaimed, biting his lip to conceal a smile — at which I felt encouraged.

"If you indulge in meditation at this rate, Theo, you can't be allowed to room alone. Are you sure you have not been reading?" he asked, looking at me keenly.

"No, papa, I've not been reading."

"Well, then, get to bed just as quickly as you can! I am very much displeased to find you up so late. Remember, if this thing occurs again, you will have to room with

one of your sisters. Now don't cry, don't cry," he added hastily, as he observed the tears swell up into my eyes. For I was extremely sensitive. I loved my father passionately, and the slightest censure from him hurt my feelings very much. He rarely reproved me; indeed he did not often have occasion to do so.

"Don't cry, my little girl," he said, tenderly, as he laid his hand on my shoulder; for he seldom could withstand feminine tears. "Good-night, and get to bed at once."

"Yes, papa," I dutifully replied. And then he went away. When he had gone, I sat down on the side of my bed and began to undo my black hair, which I wore in a long plait down my back; and while thus engaged I meditated earnestly upon the horrible possibility of some time having my note-book discovered by my father.

"Suppose I had forgotten to lock my door this evening, and he had walked in and found me writing!" I suggested to myself. "Or suppose I had not had presence of mind enough to put my book out of sight before answering his knock! He would certainly have insisted upon seeing what it was that I had been writing. And then — then I should have been lost! For I could never bear to have any one see it, least of all papa. And I am sure if he ever found it, I should not be able to prevent his reading it. I should be covered with shame if he did read it. I wonder why?"

I could not understand why then, but I know, now. I had learned to hide before my family everything that I felt and thought, and so it had come to seem like a shame and a disgrace to have anyone look upon my inner life — my real, true life; for I had begun to realize that the other — the eternal — was largely a form and a sham.



## CHAPTER II

A FEW more leaves from my note-book. "It is a dreary, drizzling afternoon. Amy and I have said all our lessons to brother Harold and are now free to do as we please until tea-time. So I have shut myself up alone in my own dear little room, to write in my note-book. How I love to be alone! Solitude is very precious.

"I see that Mr. Rushmore, the young law student who boards across the street, is sitting at the front window of his second floor room. I notice that he stares over here a great deal. Every day he sits at his front window and writes and reads almost as much as I do. I wonder if he keeps a note-book. I often meet his eye when I happen to glance up from my writing.

"This morning at the breakfast table, papa remarked, 'Mr. Rushmore is a fine young fellow, but he has fallen into sad errors — despite the fact that his parents and all his family are the strictest sort of Presbyterians. On account of his family, whom I know very well, I feel that I must take some interest in him; and also, because he often comes to our church with his uncle, Judge Canfield.'

"I think Mr. Rushmore provokes papa very much sometimes, and puzzles him, too. Often, when I see him come out of the house and walk down the street, I think

he looks almost as strong and manly as my father does. How odd it would be if my eldest brother Harold were like that! If he were, papa and he would not get along very well. I remember one day when Harold ventured to offer some objection to one of the stories in the Bible, papa said to him, very sternly —

“‘You must no more question the authority of the Bible, than you question my authority in this house!’

“Mr. Rushmore has very black eyes, and he has an expression in them which makes me suspect that he thinks things out for himself. I wish I were wise enough to do that. So many things puzzle me, especially about religion. It seems so stupid to try to believe whatever you're told without ever trying to understand it. It really does not seem honest to yourself. Lately so many new thoughts have come into my mind that I feel quite bewildered about some things. I think I shall tell a few of them to Harold. He is studying theology and may be able to explain them to me. I should not like to ask papa about them. He might get excited — as Joe says he always does when he talks to Mr. Rushmore.”

Here is another page written the next day.

“A very interesting thing happened to me to-day. Interesting things don't often happen in our house, for we are a very quiet, orderly family — all of us except papa, who is always energetic and lively.

“Just before luncheon, I went over to Miss Appell's to borrow a book from her library. I chose 'Jane Eyre'. I've read it twice, but I never tire of it, and mean to read it again. If I could know the author of that book, I should love her. I feel that I should be able to talk to

her quite freely. I have never known anyone to whom I can talk, as I talk to you, my little note-book.

“Well, after luncheon, I sat down by my bedroom window and read in ‘Jane Eyre’, until Harold rang the bell in the library to summon Amy and me to our lessons, which we recite to him every day (for he goes to the Theological Seminary only in the morning). As I was leaving my room to go down stairs to him, I saw a letter lying on the floor, near the door. I picked it up. The envelope bore no address. I did not stop to examine it further, but put it in my pocket and hurried away to my lessons.

“When Harold was through with us and I had come up stairs to my room again, I took out the envelope, and drew from it a very fat letter.

“‘Can it be intended for me?’ I wondered; ‘and who can have thrown it on the floor of my room?’

“‘Dear Damon,’ it began; and it was signed, ‘As ever, your Pythias.’

“‘I’m afraid it isn’t meant for me; but I can’t tell, until I’ve read it,’ I said to myself.

“I found some things in that letter which made quite an impression on me. I shall copy parts of it into this note-book, before returning it to the one who I’m sure must have written it.

“I have decided that I myself must have carried it into my room, between the pages of ‘Jane Eyre’, for Miss Appell is very generous and neighborly, and lends her books to other people, besides me.

“‘DEAR DAMON: Tuesday afternoon, after adjournment of court. Weather, ‘fair to middling’, as the old

women say around here. Place, my own room in my boarding-house. Monotony broken only by the whirl of a pen and an occasional glance at a brown little face at a window opposite — a quaint, prim child with very large, dark eyes whom I have lately taken to watching with interest and curiosity — the youngest daughter of that Rev. Dr. Waddington I have several times mentioned in my letters to you. She is just about the age of my little sister Edith, for whom I often become abominably homesick. Among the many tiresome things of my life in this prosy town, is the fact that I've not made the acquaintance of a single child, and I sometimes get quite hungry for some little one to pet. Before you write again go over to see how my small nephew is getting on, will you?

“I am invited out a great deal, here — tennis parties, dances, etc. Young men are scarce in these parts, and so I'm in a fair way to be spoiled by the dear, fond girls. Damon, my chum, what wouldn't I give for some sensible, congenial girl friend, who would make me forget, at least somewhat, how I miss the home folks. But in society, one never can get at the real mind and heart of a girl, even assuming the large supposition that she has a mind and heart to get at.

“Wish you could hear some of the absurd provincialisms around here. There are glaring errors in the converse of men and women in York, that are inexcusable except in people of the lowest sort. My physician gave me some medicine, one day, with this verbal direction: “To be taken every two hours without you're sleeping”. I was annoyed, for he is by no means an illiterate fellow. You remember that mole on my chin? It has taken to

developing of late, at a great rate—according to the Darwinism law of “the survival of the fittest”, I presume.

“While I was sitting at this window, a while ago, a Presbyterian Elder and his little son drove up to Dr. Waddington’s door; he alighted and rang, but no one came out; he banged, he thumped, he pounded on the door with his riding-whip; but no response. At last he handed his son out of the carriage, gave him a pot of flowers and a parcel containing, I suppose, “strawberry-butter-r-r”, as these Pennsylvanians would say, and sent him in to the side entrance. The boy delivered his wares and came back to the carriage, unaccompanied by any of the Waddington family. I wonder what they were all doing. Am I not a connoisseur in the art of gossiping? I think Pa Waddington was probably whipping Joe. Ma was crying. Harold was teaching Amy and Theo. Lila was embroidering, and Ambrose was studying his Sunday School lesson. Of course I don’t know. “It’s not for me to say as shouldn’t, not being on the grounds” (to use the York style of phraseology). But things pointed that way. For Pa came out shortly after, cane in hand, looking like Pompey when he flogged the Hottentots. Mamma didn’t appear, (doth a woman flaunt her tears?) Joe came out looking volumes—at least I think so, for if my story be authentic he ought to have *felt* volumes. Theo appeared at her window looking like a good girl who had said her lessons to brother Harold, and was at peace with papa, and didn’t pity Joe because he ought to have known that he should not have done it. Elder brother Harold sat down by the library window, with a volume of Jonathan Edwards, most likely, thinking as he turned the pages, “Nice girl, that little Theo. I’m glad

I insisted upon obedience from her from the first — it's so much better than if she wouldn't listen."

"I fear I bore you, my Damon; but just now there is nothing in York which interests me so much as this very clerical family across the street. They all have such a squelched aspect, as though they had every one been flattened into the same mould. Dr. Waddington is, however, an odd, interesting character. He preaches and believes the orthodoxy of thirty years ago, and backs it up with so much Scripture and so much real eloquence, that his congregation are always quite convinced. His reading is entirely confined to Presbyterian works of theology and "*The Presbyterian Monthly*". He called on me when I first came to this town and asked me to take a catechism class in the Sunday School. "Not until the creed is considerably revised," I replied; and then we "had it" at a great rate. He was scandalized at hearing some of my views in reference to his blessed Jonathan Edwards. With a deep sigh and look averted, he exclaimed from the depths of his bigoted soul, "Poor young man! I hope you may be forgiven!" I got myself into difficulties by trying to persuade him that if I had naught but that to be forgiven, I should be a happy spirit. I was told once for all and most decidedly, that "unless we believe all that is between the lids of the Book, it is hard for us to be forgiven; and as for Jews, Catholics, Heathens and others, it is a pity for them, poor souls, but they can't enter the kingdom".

"So I found it useless to argue with him, especially as I became excited and forgot occasionally the respect due to my seniors.

"Before he took his leave, he prayed for me, with

great earnestness, as one who had "followed cunningly devised fables and the sophistries of men".

"I would not take the trouble to mention all this, only I do think the man has some good parts. He is a man, you know, and commands one's respect; and he is a perfect gentleman. He is very eloquent, and has some natural gifts — a sympathetic heart which attracts like a magnet; an enthusiastic, imaginative nature which makes him quite fascinating at times; a splendid physique, which one can't help admiring; a sense of humor and a most original drollery which are quite irresistible. I must own I like him — I can't help it; and I believe, in my heart, that he likes and respects me, too. You see he is quite unused to being opposed or contradicted. He can't get over it that I am not afraid of him. It's the best thing in the world for him, that I have crossed his path; he needs to be defied by some one; he needs to learn that there are other minds and other wills in the world besides his own.

"The primmest and most correct of all his children is the youngest daughter, Theo. She appears to be a perfect pattern of dutifulness. Never a sign of mischief or fun on that serious, dark little face. I often see her sitting for hours by her window, before what appears to be a writing-table. Nearly every night, the gas in her room burns long after all the rest of the house is dark. You know I have a little habit of reading late into the night, but frequently I have given up and gone to bed before that little thing leaves her table. I wonder what she does. I see her sitting by her window reading a great deal, too. Miss Appell tells me she is a little book-worm. I mean to find out what sort of books she borrows from

Miss Appell's library. Pious ones, I suppose. I should like to take a piece of unsophisticatedness like this and show her something of the world—a New York theatre, some scenes at Delmonico's, etc. I know not why, but I have a desire to talk to this little pink of propriety, to amaze her inexperienced ears by some rash and daring remarks, just to see what she would do and say. I'd like to quiz her and draw her out. Miss Lila Waddington is deucedly pretty, but she doesn't divert me as that little pattern of correctness does—to shock her I should enjoy above all things.'

"The remainder of Mr. Rushmore's letter I find relates to his own private affairs and so I shall read no more.

"Now I think he is a very curious young man. I should like to show this letter to papa, only I haven't the courage. Then, too, he has written about my sitting up late, so I can't show it. I wonder how I shall return it to him? It was very careless of him to forget to take it out of 'Jane Eyre' before returning the book to Miss Appell. Oh, I remember, now, we are all invited to Mrs. Judge Canfield's to a tennis party to-morrow, and if he is there I can take that opportunity to return it to him, and apologize for having read some of it.

"This letter has given me some new ideas to think about. I believe that after this, whenever I see Mr. Rushmore, I shall regard him with a great deal of interest."



## CHAPTER III

SEATED on a bench, under a shady tree, apart from the rest of the party, I watched with interest the game of tennis which was going on, upon the lawn of Judge Canfield's fine "place", or, to speak more accurately, I watched the players rather than the game, for I cared little for the sport. On festive occasions of this sort, which were very rare in my life, I always tried to steal off alone, for I was a shy, awkward girl in those days, and the antics of our hostess, the lively Miss Canfield, and her friends (all older than myself), rather bewildered me. So I was quite content and happy to be left solitary and unmolested under the big, shady tree where I could silently watch the faces, and hear the conversation of the others, for people always interested me.

There was the organist of our church, a most stylish young man with his hair parted in the middle, a moustache which Alice Canfield pronounced to be "perfectly killing", and manners which can be compared only to those of a Brazilian monkey. There was my pale, clerical brother Harold actually flirting with Isabel Kensington, a pretty, rollicsome creature, whose conversation abounded in adjectives and adverbs. There was Mabel Harris, who giggled incessantly while she fanned herself languidly and listened indulgently to the jokes of a devoted young man whom Alice Canfield had declared to be "perfectly dear".

There were my sisters, Amy and Lila, who differed very much from the other girls, I thought. They were dressed more simply; they were not so forward and demonstrative; their language was never extravagant, nor their manner gushing; they were sensible and modest; yet Lila was just now not without animation and gayety; for she was, as Alice Canfield expressed it, "perfectly devoted to tennis", and she was a very good player. Amy, however, was always too severely virtuous to take well with young people. Then there was Mr. Rushmore, who played well, and apparently with little effort, though he did seem to be somewhat bored. His appearance was different from that of the other young men. There was nothing of the dude or fop about him. He was not stylish at all. His black clothes were of very fine quality, but entirely plain, and rather unconventional. But his evident indifference to dress made him, I think, look all the more interesting in the eyes of the sentimental maidens whom Miss Canfield was entertaining. He was young—not more than twenty-four years of age—yet his face was thoughtful and his bearing manly. I looked at him with curiosity as I thought of his letter in the pocket of my dress. There was something of obstinacy in the set of his lower jaw, but this expression was relieved somewhat by the tender and rather delicate curve of his thin lips. The keenness of his black eyes was also modified, I thought, by the dreamy softness in them. I felt myself oddly attracted to him. I wondered if I should have an opportunity to talk to him during the evening and to return his letter.

"I look to be such a child," I said to myself, "compared with other girls, and really am so much younger, that I doubt if he will take the trouble to come and

speak to me. But he said he 'would like to talk to that little pink of propriety'—'to quiz her and draw her out'—'to shock and amaze her inexperienced ears'. Well, I do hope he will come and talk to me, for I'm very curious to hear what 'rash' things he will say in order to 'shock' me. I wonder if he will use slang. The first time papa ever heard Joe use slang, I remember he whipped him. Joe always whispers it now."

Even while I sat thinking in this strain, Mr. Rushmore's tall figure, which loomed quite above the other young men, suddenly separated from the group near the tennis court and began to stroll across the lawn, alone.

"He is coming toward this tree," thought I, nervously; "I wonder if he has seen me here, and is coming to me now, 'to quiz me and draw me out'. But I've not been introduced to him."

Strolling very leisurely and keeping his eyes fixed steadily on the tree beneath which I sat, he came nearer and nearer; at length he reached my side and stood before me.

"Shall I be intruding if I sit down here on the bench?"

He did not wait for my answer, but at once seated himself at my side, leaned his elbow on his knee, and coolly looked at me.

"I have never been introduced to you," I said, primly, as with curiosity in my own eyes, I met the keen ones bent upon me. "But I suppose that doesn't matter. I don't mind."

He frowned to conceal an unmistakable look of amusement, which came into his face in spite of him.

"I am always forgetting ceremonies and conventional-

ities. But we don't need to be introduced, do we, little neighbor? You know my name?"

"Yes; you are Mr. Rushmore," I replied, realizing with some surprise that I felt not in the least awkward or embarrassed before this great, tall young man with his manner of assurance and self-possession, and his tone of quiet strength. "Joe has talked to me about you, several times. I have heard papa speak of you to mamma, too. And I often see you sitting at your window, writing or reading. Do you keep a note-book — a sort of diary, you know?"

"No. Do you?" he asked, cautious to conceal anything he may have felt at the oddity of my question.

"Yes. But please don't ever speak of it before papa."

"Why not?"

"He might want to read it."

"Well! Why would you wish him not to?"

"It would embarrass me. I write in it all my secret thoughts."

"Do you have 'secret thoughts'?"

"Oh, yes!"

"Can't you repeat a few of them to me? I'll never tell."

"I would rather not. Please excuse me," I said gravely.

"Does no one ever see your note-book?"

"No."

"Then why do you take the trouble to write it?"

"It relieves me when I feel restless."

"Poor child!" he said, involuntarily. "I suppose you never have a chance to let forth your real self in any

other way." But he looked provoked with himself, the moment the words had passed his lips.

"That is just it," I responded eagerly, surprised and strangely delighted at this rare divination of, and sympathy with, one of my "secret" feelings.

"I suppose at home you don't dare call your nose your own?" he said, looking as though he knew he was venturing on improper ground. But I had no idea of what he meant by this odd remark.

"That is slang, I suppose?" I inquired, puckering my brow into a puzzled frown.

"Well, yes, so to speak. I mean — your father's will is your conscience — you know no other. You don't belong to yourself; you belong body and soul to your father."

"Yes," I said simply. "That is the way it is." He looked at me keenly. There was a curiosity and a surprise in his face which perplexed me.

"You love your father?"

"Yes," I replied with a sudden glow. "I love papa better than anyone else living. He is a good father. There is nothing which he cares for so much as that his children may grow up to be good men and women. You did not think, did you, that he was not a good father?" I asked anxiously.

"From his stand-point, he is a good father."

"I know what you mean. It is what I've felt many times lately, and I've often tried to write it in my notebook. You think, that if my father's children grow up to be good men and women, the goodness will not be really theirs, but only a copy of their father's ideal; that it will be only external; that we will have no strength of our own, and that our individuality is being crushed out."

“Why, child, how old are you?” he inquired in astonishment.

“Oh, dear me!” I said, a little impatiently; “are you going to tell me, as Joe often does, that I talk like a little grandmother? Well, I am thirteen.”

“Is that all? You are tall for that age. You will be a rather large woman.”

“Yes. Papa says I’m overgrown.”

“In mind, as well as body, I think. What sort of books do you borrow from Miss Appell?”

“Novels and stories, generally — sometimes poetry and essays and biographies.”

“What are you reading, just now? I saw you come out of Miss Appell’s yesterday with two books.”

“They were ‘Jane Eyre’ and ‘The Autocrat of the Breakfast Table’.”

“You will imbibe some heterodoxy from Dr. Holmes,” he said, smiling.

“Shall I?” I asked, rather eagerly. “I hope I shall get some new ideas from him — I love to get new ideas.”

“I want to lend you a book I got for my little sister to-day. When you have read it we must talk it over together. It is a child’s story, but I read it with interest; a good story for children can be enjoyed by anyone. I confess this little book I speak of brought tears to my eyes.”

“I like to hear you say that,” I said, earnestly.

“Why?”

“It shows that you have sympathy. Only generous people are like that. I don’t think you are at all like other young men.”

“Thank you, Miss Theo; I like your praise.”

"When will you give me the book you bought for your sister Edith, Mr. Rushmore?" I asked, for I wanted much to read the story which had "brought tears to his eyes".

He looked at me in quick surprise.

"How did you know my sister's name was Edith?"

"From this," I said; I put my hand in my pocket, drew out the letter and laid it on his knee. "You left it in 'Jane Eyre'. Please pardon me — I read it. I had to, to find out whose it was. But I read only what you had written about our family," I added by way of consolation.

Mr Rushmore's pale face flushed crimson as he hastily opened the sheet and recognized the penmanship.

"Just like my carelessness! Well, what have I written here. I don't remember."

"Perhaps you had better read it over and see," I suggested.

"Did you show it to anyone?" he asked, as his quick eye ran over the pages.

"No. You wrote of my sitting up late at night, and I don't want that to be discovered by my family."

He looked at me and smiled.

"What on earth did you think of all this stuff, little neighbor?" he asked, tapping the paper with his finger.

"I found it very interesting," I responded seriously.

"You ought to be highly offended with me."

"It isn't worth while."

"That doesn't sound very flattering."

"I hope not. Flattery is a poor thing."

"I beg your pardon, humbly, for anything offensive herein, Miss Theo."

"What is the use of saying that, Mr. Rushmore? You

meant it all and probably mean it still. You may as well send the letter to your friend."

"Never! I did mean it all when I wrote it, but I don't 'mean it still'. Nearly all that I say of you in this, must come out. You are not at all the sort of child I thought you."

"But I suppose I do seem to be just as you describe me. You and Joe are the only people who know that I am different from what I seem. I don't know how I have made you know that, but I feel that I have done so. I have never talked so freely to any stranger as I have done to you this evening. What has made me, I wonder?"

"You intuitively feel my sympathy and it draws you out."

"I believe that is just it," I said with a satisfied smile.

"Even before I spoke to you this evening, I knew that I had been somewhat mistaken in my idea of you. Child, there is a restless look in those beautiful eyes of yours, which shows me how you must chafe under restraint. Your father thinks you perfectly submissive. He will have trouble with you one of these days. That brow," he added, touching my forehead with the tips of his fingers, "will not long contain his cherished creed. He will have trouble with you."

Something like fear came into my heart as he spoke, for his words sounded to me like a true prophecy.

"Do you really think so?" I asked, anxiously. "I hope not — oh, I do hope not!"

"I have been a fool to speak to you so," he said, abruptly. "I ought to have known better; but I am never judicious — always impulsive."



Thus we talked together until the lawn began to grow dark, and a bell from the house finally summoned us in to luncheon.

Once I asked Mr. Rushmore not to let me keep him from the rest of the company. "I don't mind being alone—I rather like it," was my unintentionally uncomplimentary remark.

"Do you want me to go?" he asked.

"Not if you wish to stay. I thought you might prefer to be with the older girls."

"By no means, I am very well satisfied here. I would rather talk to a transparent little soul like you, than to the most charming young lady in all the society of York."

"You are very kind," I gravely replied.

When the tennis party was finally over, Mr. Rushmore escorted Amy and me home, while Lila walked with the organist of our church.

I thought I had never before spent so pleasant a time at a party.

That night after family prayers, when papa kissed me good-night, before dismissing me to my room, his observant eyes did not fail to notice something unusual in the expression of my face.

"Why, my little girl, you look rather excited this evening. Your eyes are shining like stars. What have they been doing to you at Judge Canfield's?"

The rest of the family had passed on, and we two were left alone together in the library.

"What did you do at Mrs. Canfield's, to-day, Theo."

"I spent the time in watching the others, papa, and"—

"Did you not play tennis yourself? Lila tells me that

you nearly always steal away alone, when you are at a party."

"I did not play tennis, papa."

"Why not? That is what you went for, isn't it?"

"No, papa; I suppose I went just because I was invited."

"Well, what happened, that has made you look so flushed and excited, my dear?"

"I — I had a long talk with Mr. Rushmore. I suppose it was that."

"Oh, you had!" he said, looking rather unpleasantly surprised. "What had he to say to my little girl?"

"He talked about a number of things, papa."

"Suppose you tell me a few of them."

He sat down in an arm-chair, drew me to his side and passed his arm around my waist. His manner toward his children was usually very carressing; but this could never break down the reserve and the sense of awe we all felt before him always.

"Now then?" he said, looking down into my serious face.

"He told me about his sister Edith, and his little nephew," I added cautiously; "and about a number of things in New York City — Trinity Church, the Metropolitan Museum, the College Settlement, and — oh, papa, he was very interesting!" I concluded, with a sudden burst of enthusiasm.

"He was certainly kind to take the trouble to be entertaining to a little girl like you when there were others there, nearer his own age," papa admitted, a little unwillingly. I knew he felt a resentment toward the young man which he found it impossible to overcome.

"He said he liked to talk to me, papa, because I was a good listener."

"Oh, that was it, was it? He likes to hear himself talk, and doesn't care to be interrupted? Then you were a good companion for him, my dear, for you are never very talkative."

"But I did talk to him, too, papa," I hastened to say. "I became quite confidential with him."

"You did? What did you tell him?" he inquired, looking at me curiously.

"Well," I began in some confusion, "I told him about some of the books that I'm fond of. And I told him how Harold teaches Amy and me. And he said he should like to have me for a pupil."

"He seems to have taken a fancy to Theo, does he?" papa said, smoothing my hair with his large, white hand.

"Yes, papa. He is coming over to-morrow, to give me a book."

"The young man is well enough in some respects, but I don't want any of my children to become too intimate with him."

"Why, papa?"

"Theo!" he quickly said, in a tone of rebuke. "It is never necessary for you to know my reasons for forbidding you anything."

A sudden resolve came into my mind. My conscience had often troubled me of late for the deception which I felt I practiced with my father. I longed to be more candid with him and more true to myself. I did want very much to shake off my cowardice. The rare delight of my unrestrained confidences with Mr. Rushmore that evening, opened a new bud in my awakening soul. The

womanhood within me just struggling into life, broke forth that night with an unexpected strength.

"Papa, dear," I said abruptly, in a voice that was a little unsteady, while I felt my face grow warm.

"Well?" he inquired gently.

"I wish you would let me develop my individuality."

He looked at me for an instant, surprised and puzzled; then he smiled, and his keen eyes twinkled with amusement.

Oftentimes that look of amusement had been a propitious sign and had saved me from rebuke; but just now it irritated me to be regarded only as "a quaint, old-fashioned child". I did wish my father would recognize the growing woman in me.

"Well, of all odd, little people!" he exclaimed. "Tell me what you mean, Theo."

"Papa, do you think blind obedience is any advantage?" I said, groping for a fitting expression of the idea which troubled me. "Do you think it is profitable? How can one's individuality grow when one has no reason for what one does?"

"Ah, I begin to see what you mean," he said, a little startled. "Theo, who has been putting such notions into your head?"

"No one. I evolved them myself."

"You did, did you?" he said, elevating his eyebrows in a vain endeavor to conceal another smile. "Well, don't evolve any more. I don't approve of it."

"But notions come into my mind involuntarily, papa. I can't keep myself from thinking."

"And you think your father should explain to you his reasons for all the commands he lays upon you?"

“I do not like to act blindly, papa. I am getting too old for that. I am thirteen, you know, and I shall soon be a woman.”

“Your elder brothers and sisters never ask ‘why’.”

“Well, papa,” I answered, my face growing very warm; “I don’t want to grow up as they are doing. They never assert themselves. They are like automatons. Oh, papa, I want to be myself—not a plaster of paris model!”

I could see the astonishment in his eyes as he replied to me—“But, Theo, the Bible enjoins unreasoning obedience. Remember how Abraham blindly obeyed God and was willing even to slay his dear son at God’s command.”

“I have always felt, papa, that Abraham was a great coward to have thought of doing such a thing as killing his little boy.”

“But, my foolish child, he was doing it in obedience to God.”

“I should like him better if he had refused to obey such a command. The sin of disobedience is not so bad as that of murdering one’s own helpless child. I guess Abraham was afraid to disobey God, and preferred to save himself at the expense of his child. You preached a sermon once, papa, denouncing the blind obedience of the Roman Catholics to their priests. You said some things in that sermon which I have never forgotten.”

In the bottom of his heart, I believe my father was proud of my independent daring, in speaking to him so candidly. He thought it his duty, however, to peremptorily check such insurrections against parental teaching and discipline.

“Now, Theo,” he said, with a vigorous motion of his

white, large hand, as he suddenly rose from his chair and stood beside me, "I intend to cut short this kind of thing, right in the bud! The very next time I hear anything more of this sort, I shall punish you! Do you understand me — I shall punish you!"

I did not tremble before this threat, as I should have done a few weeks before. I was possessed of a new-born strength that night. It hurt my feelings that my father should speak to me so, but I knew that it pained his heart more than it did me; and my own wounded sensitiveness was converted into a remorseful sympathy for the feeling of annoyance I knew I was causing him.

I looked up at him with large, sorrowful eyes.

"Don't you want me to be honest with you, papa?" I asked, sadly.

"Yes, of course I do. But I don't want you to be irreverent and impertinent. I don't want you to tell your father what is his duty. I mean you to yield implicit and unquestioning obedience to all my wishes. I know what is best for you. You are not on any account to 'assert' yourself, as you call it. Young people in these days are entirely too forward. As for your 'individuality', I think it is developing entirely too rapidly, judging from the things you have been saying to me this evening. It rather needs a good setting-back. No, Theo, you cannot start out on your own responsibility yet. You must trust yourself to your father for a long time to come. But there! It is half-past nine. You ought to be in bed. I've kept you up too long. Good-night, dear child," he added, bending to kiss me. "Good-night, and God bless you."

## CHAPTER IV

MR. RUSHMORE came over to our house the next morning with the book he had promised me. I had been studying my lessons in my own room when the maid knocked at my door and announced my visitor. My first feeling on being informed that Mr. Rushmore was in the library waiting to see me, was a very flattered one, that he should have asked especially and only for me. But it was speedily followed by a sense of embarrassment at the prospect of being compelled to entertain him alone and unaided.

As I was going slowly down stairs, however, the door of papa's study beside the first landing, suddenly opened, and my father stepped out before me. I stopped instinctively at sight of him, as though discovered in some guilt.

"Where are you going, Theo?"

"To the library, papa."

"What for, my dear?"

"Mr. — Mr. Rushmore has — has called to see me."

"Go back to your room, my dear."

"But, papa, he" —

A slight, decided motion of my father's hand, toward my room, interrupted me at once, and I turned about and obeyed, without another word. At the same time, papa moved on down the stair-way, to go, I felt sure, to the library, and himself receive my visitor.

Seated once more in my own little room by the window, my elbows leaning on the sill, and my cheeks resting against my palms, I let my fancy follow the scene which I surmised would take place between them.

“Papa will be very cold and haughty to Mr. Rushmore,” I told myself; but the thought did not trouble me, for I felt certain that the young man could hold his own right well.

“Papa will, without insulting him, treat him in such a way that he will know his visits are not wanted here. I know just how papa will do it. He can be so cold and proud to people when he wants to. And he does disapprove of Mr. Rushmore so much. I have never yet seen anyone who could stand up against papa’s disapproval — but I am sure Mr. Rushmore will be able to.”

My visitor must have been dispatched in very short order. Only a few moments after I had gone to my room, my door was again opened and papa came in. I observed at once that he had a small book in his hand.

He walked over to where I sat by the window and laid it in my lap.

“Mr. Rushmore has left this for you, Theo. I have glanced at it, and find it an innocent little story, so of course I have no objections to your reading it. When you have finished it, give it to me, and I’ll return it to the young man.”

“But, papa, he said he wanted to talk it over with me when I had finished it.”

“I am afraid you will have to forego that pleasure, as I have decided that it is best for you to have nothing whatever to do with Mr. Rushmore. If he offers you any more books, refuse to take them.”



“Papa, must I be rude to him.”

“If politeness interferes with your obedience to me, yes,” he responded, laying his large hand on my head and looking down into my eyes.

I said nothing in reply to this. I knew there was no appeal from his decision. And he, seeing me apparently quite submissive, lingered no longer, but turned away and left the room.

For many days after that morning, I felt that my father's eyes were watching me more closely than they had ever done before; but he failed to observe me in any practical expression of the independent views I had put forth on the evening of Miss Canfield's tennis party. However, our little talk on that occasion was not lost upon him. It remained with him for a long time.

One day I overheard him make a remark to my mother which troubled me not a little. They were sitting in papa's study, while I was dusting the furniture in the adjoining bedroom.

“Mamma dear,” he said (he invariably called her “mamma”, and she never addressed him by any other term than “papa”. It seemed to me that they must have called each other thus, while they did their courting.) “Mamma dear, do you know that our little Theo is not exactly the mild, dutiful child she seems to be?”

“Why, what has she been doing, papa?” mamma inquired, looking up anxiously from the fine sewing she held in her soft hands.

“Oh, she has not been doing anything wrong. She is generally very obedient; but she has taken to thinking for herself in a most independent fashion of late. She is an unusual child, I think — quite different from our other

children. She will have to be kept down, or she will be giving us some trouble. She is inclined to weigh and ponder things in a manner which, if she be not carefully guided, will lead her, as she grows older, into some such errors as our young neighbor, Rushmore, has become a victim."

"Why, what makes you think such dreadful things of Theo, papa? She is a very affectionate, dear child."

"I know she is, mamma. And she is a very interesting little girl, too. I must say I am proud of Theo for some things; but—often while I'm preaching, she fixes those clear eyes of hers upon my face in a way that makes me feel I am being judged and measured, and that, too, by my own child."

"I am sure papa is a little mistaken," I told myself. "I do not sit in judgment on his preaching. His sermons are always so interesting that I am usually lost in listening to them, and never stop to judge them. But—often I can't help wondering when he tells me so many things about God and His actions and His plans, how he can be so familiar with God's mind. It sounds sometimes as though he and God were even partners. I often wonder if he doesn't make up some of it, just as I make up stories to myself, when I can't go to sleep at night. But can papa really tell, by looking at me while he is preaching, that I am having such thoughts about him?" I asked myself with uneasiness, as I sat perched on my high seat, in the wide window, looking dreamily out into the street. "Very inconvenient indeed, to have an expressive face," I decided. I remembered having once read in Swedenborg's "Heaven and Hell" how that the angels' souls are perfectly transparent, and that they can-

not conceal from each other any thoughts which happen to pass through their minds ; and I recalled how unpleasant I had felt this must be ; for during all my little life, I had been learning to conceal my own real thoughts, feelings and wishes, to bury them out of sight as one would hide a deformity or a shame.

“I must get my face under better control,” I told myself—learning in that moment another lesson in the art of self-concealment ; taking in that decision another step in the formation of a character which in maturity would be full of proud reserve and utter lack of spontaneousness ; hardening myself, externally at least, into the mould of my father’s ideal.

I could not bear to displease him. I was morbidly sensitive to praise or blame, and I could not have borne to live under his disapproval. An atmosphere of affection and approbation seemed necessary to my very existence.

My profoundly serious meditation in the window sill was suddenly interrupted by the sound of a ring at our front door-bell, a very unwelcome sound to me ; for this was Saturday afternoon, the time when some church members were sure to call—and I disliked above all things to be compelled to sit up in the parlor and try to entertain our visitors.

So, immediately upon hearing the bell, I slid down from my perch on the window sill, and hurried from the room. And yet I well knew that if the person at the bell were a caller I should be very soon summoned back again.

Great, then, was my relief, as I was hurrying up stairs, to hear, just below me in the hall, the gay voice of our

friend, Alice Canfield. She had spied my retreating figure the moment the servant had admitted her at the door, and immediately had called to me—

“Theo! Don’t run away, please! It’s neither Deacon Andrews nor Sister Benade—only Alice the benighted!”

I turned at once and ran down stairs again. I did not object to being entertained by Alice. My sisters and I always eagerly welcomed her bright visits to us, as a glimpse at a phase of life quite different from that of our orderly, well-regulated household. For Alice was a young lady of high spirit, of fashionable habits and of an independence, which seemed to my mild, modest sisters and myself to be most extraordinary. She was the indulged child of very fond parents whose means of gratifying her every fancy were almost unlimited; for Judge Canfield was the wealthiest man in the prosperous city of York, and his daughter was the flattered pet of the gayest society of our town.

“I’m glad you’ve come, Alice,” I said, as I joined her in the hall.

“Then I know you are glad, for you never tell fibs—not even conventional ones, do you, Theo? Where are the girls?” she added, without waiting for a reply.

“Up stairs in the sitting-room. Come right up. They’ll be glad to see you. It’s been so quiet and dull here to-day. You will rouse us, won’t you?”

“Of course I shall,” she responded, slipping her arm through mine, as together we went up the steps; she was not much taller than I, although four years my senior. “Is your papa home?”

She was always sure to ask that question very early in the course of a visit to us, for she liked nothing better

than a bold encounter with him. Our perfect submission to "the head of the family" was a constant source of wonder and amusement to her, even as her entire ease and boldness with him were a puzzle and an astonishment to us. She had never known what it was to be controlled by anyone.

"Yes, papa is here. Why do you want to know?" I inquired abruptly. "Did you come to see him?"

"I came to see you all," she declared emphatically; "and if your papa puts in an appearance, I sha'n't run away."

We found my sisters seated in the bay-window of the sitting-room. Amy was studying her Sunday School lesson and Lila embroidering. They were both looking rather dull when we walked in upon them, but the sight of Alice aroused them perceptibly.

"What a perfectly cosey room this seems, coming in out of that detestably horrid rain!" exclaimed our visitor, throwing herself into a low chair, before a bright, open-grate fire, flinging her muff into a corner and proceeding to unbutton her seal-skin jacket. "It is so perfectly home-like here."

I well understood how it was that Alice should be so impressed with the home-like cosiness of our house. Our church and home-life were our whole life, and every room in the parsonage was a living room upon which was impressed the characteristics of our family, as a whole; whereas Alice's home had always seemed to me like a great, elegant, gay hotel, of which I should in time grow inexpressibly weary.

Seating ourselves in comfortable easy-chairs about the bright open grate, we prepared to have a snug, pleasant

hour with our chatty, lively guest; the pelting of the chill rain against the deep bay-window seemed only to enhance our delightful sense of the warmth and comfort within doors.

My sister Amy had taken care, before seating herself, to pick up Alice's carelessly discarded muff and lay it on the table.

"How characteristic of you to do that!" observed Alice with a laugh. "Don't you ever fling your things around?" she added, with genuine curiosity in her voice and eyes.

"No, indeed," said Amy; "I've been too well brought up for that. I don't know what papa would say to me if he should ever see me come into a room and fling my things on the floor!"

Lila and I could not repress a smile at the unheard-of picture which these words brought up.

"Lock you up and feed you on bread and water for a week, I suppose," Alice suggested. "But really," she added seriously, "why don't you try it some time? It would be so interesting to see what he would do. Why, if I were in your place I should be experimenting with him all the time."

"I think you would not," Lila remarked, with a quiet smile.

"I just should then, Lila Waddington. It would be more fun than six parties to defy Papa Waddington. I do love to watch the workings of that man's mind when he is being defied in Sunday School by disorderly boys. Last Sunday, for instance, he tapped the bell for order, but no order came. He tapped again and yet again—same result—derisive mirth from some future citizens.

He looked as though he thought it couldn't be, as who should say — 'What! Am I awake or dream I? Did that boy really disobey me while I looked at him? Must I resort to the vulgar expedient of speaking twice?' Oh," she added, "shouldn't I love to be your papa's daughter for about one week!"

In my secret heart, I half shared her wish. It would be an interesting spectacle, I thought, to see my ponderous papa being defied by a mere girl. As a matter of speculation I felt tempted to try the experiment myself. But a moment's meditation made me realize that this would not be advisable.

"I should think you would find it awfully monotonous to be obedient all the time," Alice declared.

"Please, Alice, don't speak so loud," Amy anxiously said. "Papa is in his study just across the hall."

"Well, what of that? I'm not afraid of him. I think he is just too perfectly nice for anything! I just adore a masterful, domineering man if he is also real clever, like your father is. But I should think you would find it monotonous to mind him all the time."

"Tell us what you've been doing lately, Alice," Lila said, a wistfulness coming into her eyes as she spoke, which made me, as I observed it, suddenly wish very earnestly that my sister might enjoy some of the pleasures for which she envied our friend.

"You know I got back from my Boston trip just a week ago," Alice responded. "Since then I've been literally stagnating in this pokey town, and this afternoon when it began to rain, I just declared to mamma that I was going to tear over to the Waddington's — for I always do enjoy myself here — you're all so droll."

“Don’t you have any lessons to study since you’ve come home from Lake Hall Seminary?” Lila asked, enviously; for her school-tasks were the torment of her life.

“I should think not,” exclaimed Alice. “Mamma wants me to take up a course of historical reading and offers to engage some frightfully intelligent companion for me; but I tell her I’ve already imbibed all the historical erudition I ever mean to imbibe. Who wants to know a lot of facts and dates about a lot of old dead fellows? I’m sure I don’t; I’m so glad I’m through school. Boarding schools are perfectly vile! Now if I were ever to get one up, it would be the right kind of one. It should be on a grand, magnificent scale. No girl should be admitted who brought with her less than forty gowns and fifty gold stick-pins. Tuition should cost thirty-five hundred dollars a year — music, twenty-five hundred extra. There should be only one hour a day devoted to lessons. The bedrooms should be fixed off with embroidered India silk hangings and Turkish rugs. The class-rooms should be provided with beautifully cushioned ottomans. Every girl should be required to bring a waiting-maid. Worth, from Paris, and Huyler, the confectioner, should live right in the school.”

“I should set up a hospital next door to you, Alice,” said Lila. “You would need one at the end of the first year.”

“Don’t interrupt! I’d have lots of butlers standing around everywhere. An orchestra for dancing should be in the house all the time. We should have two full dress parties every week, to which lots of lovely young fellows should be invited. The school should be situated at West Point. The teacher of music should receive a



salary of thirty thousand dollars. The Greek teacher should get twenty-five thousand dollars. Every summer the whole school should take a trip to Europe. Every girl should be obliged to study Mental Philosophy—the vilest study, girls, in the world, but so improving—in which you learn that you've got an 'instinctive spontaneity'. Did you know it? Did you ever experience any 'complemental co-efficiencies'? And then those awful 'objective cognitions' and 'subjective conceptions'—oh, they are just horrid! Every pupil in this school of mine should be required to study Mental Philosophy. The name of the school must be 'Cræsus Hall.' But there! Don't let's talk school. I never mean to study another line of anything as long as I live! I mean to have a perfectly gorgeous time always!"

Alice always enjoyed herself thoroughly whenever she came to see us, for she was very fond of hearing herself talk, and she certainly found in us an appreciative little audience. She was a sort of curiosity to us, with her knowledge of the fashionable world, her perfect freedom from all restraint, her utter lack of reverence and fear. We were quite content to listen to her entertaining chat in silence and with an attention that to her was most gratifying.

"You must have a great deal of leisure, Alice," Lila said again, wistfully; "don't you?"

"Oh, my, yes. I don't know what to do with myself half the time. The only amusement to be had at present is from the huge, gay-colored, theatrical advertisements on Orange street. This time it's a confiding, nestling young thing who clingeth coyly to the arm of a man who eyes the door with a pair of very round, aggres-

sive eyes which seem to say, 'One of us will have to die!' Oh, dear," she added, "I wish the gay season would hurry along. There is to be a german at Mrs. Kalrock's as the opening party for the winter."

Lila sighed deeply.

"Poor Lila!" Alice impulsively said. "I am so sorry your papa won't allow you to go to dances. I think he is just too perfectly mean for anything!"

Amy got up hastily to see that the door was securely closed. Lila smiled faintly at her friend's audacity, and I felt somewhat shocked at her flagrant irreverence.

"Are there to be many dances and parties this winter?" Lila asked.

"Yes, lots, I think."

"You will see your cousin, Mr. Rushmore, very often then, won't you?" I said. "He goes into society a great deal, doesn't he?"

"Yes, he's the Great Mogul of the town, just now. He will be asked to every party which is given this winter."

"Do you like him?" I persisted.

"I think he is perfectly lovely!" she declared; "only he is such an intellectuality! He carries Emerson about with him for light reading, and sports gaily among John Stuart Mill, Kant, Hegel, etc. Yesterday he took luncheon with us."

"I envy you your opportunity of seeing him so often. He's so very interesting," I remarked.

"Listen to little Theo!" cried Alice, laughing. "Why, what a joke! I must tell him about it."

"And please tell him," I said, in a low voice, "that I'm sorry I couldn't see him that day when he brought me a book to read. But papa wouldn't let me."

"What an idea! But I know your papa doesn't like my cousin one bit. He disapproves of his views. I disapprove of them, myself," she added, with comical severity. "Cousin Horace Rushmore is entirely too pessimistic."

"So am I," I said, promptly. "I am very pessimistic."

"Well," laughed Alice, "I should be so, too, if I were kept down as you are."

"It isn't that," I replied. "It isn't that alone."

"What is it then, childie?" she asked, curiously, putting out her hand and laying it on my two which were clasped in my lap.

"I believe there comes, in nearly all young lives," I said with profound gravity, "a time when nothing seems worth living for. I, for my part, have been quite sure for some time past, that it was a great mistake for me ever to have been born."

"Isn't Theo the queerest little thing that ever lived?" demanded Alice. "For my part, I'm not at all sorry that I was hatched!"

"Theo," said Amy gravely, "I think you had better not say anything like that before papa; he might not like it. Because, you know, it seems irreverent to be sorry you were born, when God made you."

Alice laughed gayly. "You girls are always so killing!" she exclaimed. "Anyone would know that your father was a minister to hear you talk ten minutes."

My sister Amy's virtue, by the way, was always of a somewhat severe order. Lila, on the other hand, was like mamma, mild and perfectly amiable. Our individual traits, however, seldom appeared very prominently on the surface.

"Here comes papa, now," I observed suddenly, as I detected the unmistakable foot-steps in the hall outside the sitting-room door.

"I hope he will come in here," Alice said; "I like nothing better than an encounter with 'Pa Waddington', as my cousin, Horace Rushmore, calls him."

Even while she spoke the door opened and papa's large form, in black, clerical garb, came quietly into the room. Silence at once fell upon all of us, except Alice, as he approached the open-grate fire, around which we were grouped.

"Dr. Waddington, how do you do?" Alice promptly said, rising and holding out her hand.

"How do you do?" said papa, a little coldly, yet shaking her hand very cordially and looking at her keenly. I think that Alice always interested him; I had noticed that he seldom failed to appear in our midst when she came to pay us a visit.

"Well, how about the trip to Boston?" he said, as she stood before him. "Did you have a pleasant time?"

"Yes, indeed — a perfectly dear time! Among other things, we went to hear Phillips Brooks; we were woe-fully disappointed, but swore we were not — only to learn later that the preacher's name was Smith, and that disappointment would have been the proper feeling to have exhibited!"

Papa bit his lips to conceal a smile, for he did not like to encourage this young lady. But quite undaunted by his rather chilling manner, she continued to chatter to him, while we all sat still and gazed in amused wonder at her display of courage.

"We visited every place of interest in the city," she

said. "We 'ohed' and 'ahed' at the Public Gardens; thrilled at the Common, gazed with awe upon the Back Bay, etc., voraciously, and gadded about in the most approved Cook's tourist style. We took a steamboat ride on the bay and Cousin Gertrude became frightfully sea-sick. You should have seen her, Dr. Waddington, when, utterly disgusted with life, she threw herself on her birth, drew a buffalo-robe over her, so that nothing could be seen of her except one foot sticking out below—and a more discouraged, disappointed, dejected looking foot, I never saw!"

Alice evidently expected papa to be much amused at her vivacity; but he remained quite grave, despite her utmost efforts.

"I am glad you had a pleasant trip," he said, abruptly. "Are your father and mother well?" (the usual clerical inquiry.)

"I didn't ask them before I came. I'll do so as soon as I get home, and telephone to you—shall I?"

Amy almost held her breath at this playful audacity, while I half expected to see papa box Alice's ears. But he only drew his snowy handkerchief across his mouth, and then said—

"You need not trouble to telephone. I expect to see your papa this evening at prayer-meeting. And now I must ask you to excuse me," he added; "I am just going out. Shall I see you when I come back, Miss Alice?"

"I think not, Dr. Waddington. But before you tear yourself away, I have a request to make."

Papa drew his watch from his pocket, glanced at it, put it back and then looked all attention into Alice's bright, pretty face.

“Promise me you will say yes,” she said, coaxingly.

“What is the request?”

“I’m going to have a theatre-party next Tuesday night; Fanny Davenport is coming, you know, and I want you to let Lila and Amy and Theo come to it, won’t you please, Dr. Waddington? Now don’t say no. Can’t they come?”

“A theatre-party!” said papa. “Then your father allows you to go to theatres?”

“Why, of course he does! I’d make the greatest sort of a fuss if he tried to keep me from going to theatres; I perfectly adore the theatre. And Dr. Waddington, Fanny Davenport is going to play *Fedora* on Tuesday night, and it is such a sweetly pretty thing, so you really must let the girls come with me. Then we are to have a supper afterward at our house—and oh, it’s going to be perfectly lovely. We’ll have a dear time. Mayn’t they come?”

“No child of mine shall ever see the inside of a theatre. And I’m very sorry—very sorry indeed, Miss Alice—to hear that you go to such places.”

“Can’t you just let Lila go, then, if you think Amy and Theo are too young?”

“I have told you, my dear child, that none of them can go. We will say nothing more about it. And now I must be off. Good-afternoon.”

He shook her hand, turned away and left the room.

Alice, with a disappointed pout on her lips, threw herself back in her chair, and gave vent to an utterance which quite astounded us—

“I think he is a horrid, mean pig!”

Lila smiled, I looked shocked, Amy flushed slightly,

and said hastily, "Alice, I won't hear you speak so disrespectfully of my father in my presence."

Alice laughed merrily. "Listen to Amy!" she cried, patting her on the shoulder. "But really, childie," she said earnestly, "of course I didn't mean to be disrespectful. I suppose you all think me very perfectly awful, but you know I really do like your papa immensely, and when he called me 'my dear child' a moment ago, I thought him just perfect. I don't wonder that you girls are all so fond of him. But now tell me, which one of you will have the courage to run off on Tuesday evening and go to the theatre with us. Will you, Lila?"

"I shouldn't dare do such a thing," Lila answered breathlessly.

"Amy, will you?" demanded Alice.

"I have been taught to disapprove of theatres," was my sister's virtuous reply.

"Theo, will you?"

"I should love to see a theatre, Alice, but I should be afraid to run off and disobey papa."

"But the fun will be worth all the scolding you will get," persuaded Alice. "Don't be a coward, Theo. Come, promise you will go!"

"I would not hurt papa's feelings by deliberately disregarding his wishes."

Even as I spoke, however, I remembered my secret note-book and the clandestine good times I was accustomed to have with it nearly every night when I was supposed to be in bed. But this mild disobedience did not seem to me so outrageous as "running off to the theatre". The word "theatre" had to me a most hollow, wicked sound; yet I fear it was for this very reason

that my depraved little heart longed very much to see one.

“I suppose there is no use coaxing you,” Alice finally remarked, with a deep, discouraged sigh; “so I think I must begin to prepare to commence to go,” she abruptly added, beginning to button her seal-skin cloak. “Come to see me real soon, girls, all of you—don’t forget. I’ll make you have a perfectly gorgeous time!”

“I can’t bear to have you go,” said Lila, sadly, as she walked with her lively friend to the door. “You cheer us up so much.”

“Take my advice, don’t be so weak and you’ll have a much better time!” were the parting words of our guest.



## CHAPTER V

WHAT are you sighing about, Theo?" Joe asked me, as he joined me one evening after dinner, while I sat alone in the library, on the rug before the open-grate fire. "You are going from bad to worse, Solomon. Lately I notice you've taken to sitting alone in the dark a great deal. Why do you?"

"It is so lovely to just sit and look into the fire and think; for I love to think. Sometimes it makes me perfectly happy."

Joe sat down on the floor beside me, resting his elbow on the carpet and leaning his head on his hand.

"Well, what were you thinking about just as I came in? You were sighing over it."

"I was thinking over my experiences of this afternoon. Mamma and Amy and I were out calling," and here I heaved another sigh from the depths of my unsocial soul.

"Give us an account of it, and make it right funny, I want to be entertained," and he settled himself into a more comfortable position, preparatory to giving me close attention.

"I can't be funny, Joe, as Alice Canfield is sometimes, if that's what you mean."

"You're always more or less funny, Solomon, although of course you don't mean to be. You're a comical little thing, naturally, whereas Alice tries to be funny, and

often I just feel like saying to her, "Oh, come off the band-wagon!"

"Was she on a band-wagon?" I asked, scandalized.

"Slang!" explained Joe, briefly, and with a chuckle of amusement at my ignorance.

"Joe!" I said abruptly, in a low, startled whisper.

"What?" he asked calmly.

"I thought I heard some one laugh, just now, at the other end of the room," I whispered nervously. "Listen — do you hear anything?"

"Nonsense!" he said, trying to peer around him in the dim room. "Now don't be having fancies. I'm with you, and I'll take care of you."

"But, Joe, I'm sure I heard some one laugh just when you laughed."

"Echo," he suggested. "Now do go ahead and tell me about your calls, and don't forget to make it funny."

"I'll try," I said humbly. "But it isn't a very funny subject. It is a great trial to go visiting."

"What are some of the objections?"

"Well, one has to tell untruths, Joe, when one is making calls. To-day, I told Mrs. Allison I was glad to see her, but I was not at all, and had been so disappointed to find she was at home. She treated us to cakes, and asked me if I did not think they were very nice, and said she had made them herself. Now, Joe, they were hard, sour and underdone. So what was I to say? I hesitated and blushed and stammered, and then finally said I didn't like them. I know Mrs. Allison will never forgive me for that, but I can't tell a lie; it sticks in my throat."

"You have no tact, Solomon. You should have said, 'Well, Mrs. Allison, tastes differ about cakes, as about all

other things. Now I like cakes to be soft, sweet and well done. I like ’’ —

“Joe,” I said, deprecatingly, “you are incorrigible.”

“Perhaps I am — whatever that may mean. Well, go on with your complaints; whom else did you visit?”

“Mrs. Brabant. She was at home,” I added, sadly. “It is such a relief to find them out, Joe.”

“Solomon, I’m afraid you’re a misanthrope — isn’t that the right word?”

“Yes; and I fear I am losing my faith in human nature,” I said, seriously.

“Is that what misanthropes do?”

“Certainly, Joe. Now, this afternoon, Mrs. Brabant talked to us for fully fifteen minutes about how fond her daughter was of teaching in the primary public schools, and how devotedly she loved the little children; she said her daughter taught from pure love of pedagogy and not at all for the sake of a salary. But, Joe, when we had left her house and were walking along the street toward home, we happened to meet her daughter, who was just coming from the school in which she teaches. She stopped to speak with us for a minute, and what do you think she said?”

“Something which has made you look very mournful. What was it?”

“She told us she was half dead with fatigue, and that she just hated to teach children, and she was perfectly sure she should murder some of them, some day.”

“Mrs. Brabant and her daughter should have consulted together before talking to strangers,” was Joe’s comment.

“Whom else did you visit?”

“We went to Miss Starling’s. She lives all alone, you

know — does not keep any servant. She was arranging her supper-table when we arrived, as neatly and carefully as though she were going to have a party. That made me fall to wondering if I could ever possibly take so much care merely for myself. I think it would seem like such a waste of time, don't you, Joe, to spread a cloth and set a table just for yourself? I think if I lived alone, I should, whenever I felt hungry, just go to the closet, seize some cake and bread and retire with them and a book to a comfortable couch, and there devour both. I couldn't be formal with myself, could you, Joe?"

"No; I feel too intimate with myself for that. Why, I've known myself for fifteen years, and I feel entitled to all the privileges of so long an acquaintance. But what did she have for supper?" was his unexpected question.

"Why do you want to know that?"

"I'm hungry; papa would not let me have any dinner to-night, you know, because I went to the creek instead of going to the 'Young Folks' Service' at the church this afternoon."

"I'm so sorry, Joe," I said, sympathetically. "Perhaps," I added, lowering my voice, "perhaps I can find some cold chicken in the pantry for you."

"Good for you, Solomon. You're a trump! But don't let papa catch you. He would be awfully rattled! And then we would both be in the soup! But tell me, Solomon, what parts of the chickens were left? Was there a gizzard or a heart or any other of the works? I like the works better than legs and wings."

"I'll try to find you some then. But I had better not go to the pantry until papa and Mr. Udell and the rest of them have gone to the Synod."

"All right. And then we will skirmish together."

"Joe," I said, sorrowfully, "I wish we did not have to be deceitful."

"Oh, don't go and get saintly like Lila and Amy. You are my only comfort in this house, Solomon; so don't go back on me. I can't ever find any congenial society here, except you."

I felt this to be very high praise; I loved Joe with my whole heart. Unlike as we were in many respects, there was yet a stronger bond of sympathy between him and me than between any other two dispositions in our household."

"I hope they will soon get off to church, for I'm blasted hungry," he said, with a deep sigh. "I wish I had gone to their confounded old 'Young Folks' Service' this afternoon. Frank Marks said it was fun. The boys in papa's Bible class were all there, and they gave papa a present, you know; and young Tom Drayton made the presentation before the whole congregation, and fired a speech at papa. You know Tom Drayton's about the softest mess that ever lived! Well, Frank said his speech was a dandy. 'Dear pastor,' he began. Imagine, Solomon — 'Dear pastor!' And Joe suddenly rolled over the floor with such a peal of laughter that I was quite startled. But his mirth was checked as abruptly as it had burst forth. "If papa should hear me, he would think I wasn't sorry for having gone to the creek instead of attending the 'Young Folks' Service'," he said, suddenly sobering and sitting upright again; "but I am penitent — very — for having lost my dinner."

"Joe, you may not like to hear me say it, but if I were a boy, I think I should be a clergyman when I grew up."

“Say it as much as you please; since you are not a boy it can’t make any difference. But you are a goose, Solomon,” he said, with a yawn. “Preachers have got to be so all-fired good. Look at Harold,” he added, with some contempt in his tone. “What fun does he ever have? Why, he might as well be one of you girls. If I were one of you girls,” he exclaimed with sudden desperation, “I should commit suicide!”

“I don’t care very much about fun,” I said, doubtfully, “and I admire ministers very much. It is odd, the feeling I have toward them — a different feeling from that which I have toward any other people. There seems to be a sanctity about a minister, Joe.”

“What’s that?” he inquired, sceptically.

“Something not easily defined,” I said, rather evasively, not feeling equal to a clear explanation of my remark.

“Did you go to see any other people besides Mrs. Allison and Mrs. Brabant and Miss Starling?” he asked, returning to our former topic.

“Yes; we went to Mrs. Deighton’s. She is so peculiar. Her” —

“Oh, I know,” he interrupted; “she is the old woman who is afraid of draughts, isn’t she? Stuffs her keyholes with cotton and won’t sit on a cane-seat chair.”

“She told us this afternoon,” I said, “that she often wonders why people have to go on living when they have passed the time of their usefulness. ‘Why can’t we die, instead of hanging on so long after we are helpless?’ she said. And then she added with a sigh, ‘Well, well, I sometimes think we are spared just to be a trial to other folks’.”

“Well,” said Joe, stretching himself more comfortably on the rug, “I half believe there would be a little fun in making calls, as you girls have to do.”

“It isn’t the acme of happiness, Joe,” I said with unwonted sarcasm. “My great trial in making calls is, that I can never think of anything to talk about to people. Now, for instance, when we had all gotten seated at Mrs. Brabant’s this afternoon, she started out by asking me if I was well, and I said yes, and thanked her and asked her if she were enjoying her usual good health, and she said yes, and thanked me; and then she asked me if it wasn’t a lovely day, and I said it was just like spring, and she said she had never seen a November day more like spring, and I said it was almost as warm as summer, and she said she wouldn’t know it from a day in August; so we went on; and I just hate making calls!”

It was just at this interesting point of our conversation that we were suddenly interrupted by the sound of papa’s voice in the hall, calling to Joe.

“Blast it!” Joe exclaimed, as he heard it; “papa’s going to make me go to church with him, I’m afraid—and on an empty stomach! How shall I ever sit it out?”

“I’ll put a dish of food in your closet while you are gone,” I hastily whispered. “Look for it when you come home.”

“You’re a regular brick, Solomon!” he responded, as he drew himself up from the floor. “Good-by, you jolly little cove! I’ll say a prayer for you.”

With that, he was gone; and once more I found myself alone in the dim library.

## CHAPTER VI

I WATCHED them from the library window as they all started for church. There were papa, mamma, Joe, Harold, Ambrose, Amy and Mr. Dorrick, one of our clerical guests. Mr. Udell was not with them. I decided he must have gone on ahead of the party. Lila and I had been excused from joining them, as we both had slight colds which prevented our going out in the night air. My father was not less careful of our physical health than he was of our moral well-being. His children were very precious to him.

When they had all gone, I continued to linger by the window, curled up in a huge arm-chair, my elbows leaning against the broad, low sill, and my cheeks resting in my two hands — an attitude I involuntarily assumed, whenever I fell into a meditative mood. How many hours, in both childhood and maturity, have I thus dreamed away in idleness!

I wondered, as I gazed listlessly out of the window into the dimly-lighted street, whether Mr. Rushmore had gone over to my father's church this evening; for I saw no light in his windows.

"Joe says Mr. Rushmore doesn't believe in God," thought I. "What a comfort that must be to him!"

In the bottom of my young heart, I had a feeling (unacknowledged even to myself) of dislike toward my



father's God. I really thought him an extremely unpleasant personage. I had a secret sense of indignation and contempt for the cowardly advantage I understood that He in His superior strength and power, took of His weak and erring children, when in anger He condemned the unconverted to everlasting pain. Of course I had been taught of God's love as well as of His "justice"; but it had always seemed to me that His disagreeable traits quite overshadowed His good ones. Such was the effect upon my childhood's mind of the dogmas of Presbyterianism. It was while some such impressions as these were lurking in my heart that suddenly I heard a foot-step behind me in the dark room. It startled me with a strange sense of fear, and I had not the courage to turn and see what it might be. It approached my chair. It paused at my side. And then a low voice spoke my name.

"Miss Theo?"

I recognized the voice, but I did not answer. It was the great revulsion of feeling from fear to relief which now robbed me of speech.

"Miss Theo? Your maiden meditation seems to be very interesting and absorbing," he said.

Then I slowly turned my head and looked up at him, without, however, removing my elbows from the window-sill, or my cheeks from my palms. The street-lamp shone full upon him, revealing to me the Rev. John Udell, one of our clerical guests. He was a rather fine-looking young minister, with a pale, intellectual face and a very grave countenance. All during the week I had noticed how exceedingly observant of us all he had been. Nothing seemed to escape his scrutiny. It probably had

not taken him very long to discover what was the power which dominated our remarkably well-regulated household.

He himself was at the same time being watched by a pair of big eyes scarcely less observant than his own. The man fascinated me rather unpleasantly. There was at times a hard, steely expression in his face which made one feel that under some circumstances he might be capable of absolute cruelty. The set of his lower jaw suggested a cold-blooded determination from which I imagined a victim at his mercy would have found no appeal. When he spoke there was a quiet decision in his manner which at once commanded respectful attention.

One day he addressed the Synod both morning and evening, and his speeches were praised on all sides as showing remarkable ability in so young a man.

"I thought you had gone to church with the rest, Mr. Udell," I remarked.

He leaned against the window-frame and folded his arms across his chest.

"Why did you not go to church?" he asked.

In everything which this man did, in every tone of his voice and expression of his face, the great contrast of his nature to that of my father was suggested to me. Papa was warm-hearted, impulsive, emotional; Mr. Udell was cold, quiet, obstinate. There was something about him which aroused in me a feeling of antagonism and rebellion—a feeling which, of course, politeness forbade my displaying.

"Papa would not allow me to go out this evening because I have a cold," I replied to his question. "Mr. Udell," I abruptly added; "how long have you been in this room?"

"For quite a while."

"Did you — were you — did you hear Joe and me talking together before he went to church?" I anxiously asked.

"Yes."

This intelligence was by no means agreeable to me. I turned my face to the window again and thoughtfully contemplated the street lamp. After a moment, I said —

"I told Joe I heard some one in the room; but he thought it was only one of my fancies. I'm afraid," I added, with a deep sigh, "I shall have to give up sitting and talking in the dark — it's something of a risk."

"I suppose I ought to express regret at having intruded upon you, my little friend; but I can't do so, truthfully. I'm very glad to have heard some of your remarks this evening."

"And do you think me odd?" I asked, very gravely. "Nearly every one does."

"You are different from most little girls of your age; that may be, however, because you have been brought up differently."

"But no one calls Amy and Lila odd, except, perhaps, Alice Canfield."

"Do you dislike being considered peculiar?" he asked.

"It is rather trying, sometimes."

"Some people think it a sign of originality," he said.

"Do they? I never thought of that," I answered, rather hopefully. "Originality means cleverness, doesn't it?"

"Well — yes," a little hesitatingly.

"I am very anxious to be clever," I said, candidly.

“What constitutes a clever person?” he inquired.

“I am sure you know, Mr. Udell, without being told,” I replied, not liking to be quizzed.

“But people’s ideas about it differ so much, Miss Theo. I should like to hear what yours are.”

“Every one must know that a clever person is one who has read a great many books and knows a great deal, and can think things out.”

“Think things out?” he repeated, questioningly.

“Yes; I do so wish I could think things out. Are you clever?”

“Do you think I am?”

“Yes,” I said, a little doubtfully.

“But you think I quite need all the cleverness I’ve got, eh?”

“Yes, indeed you do,” I answered gravely. “I should think a minister would require a great deal of brains.”

“Why? That is not the conventional idea about them.”

“There are so many strange things in the Bible; and of course a minister must be able to understand and explain them all.”

“For instance?”

I looked thoughtfully out into the street for a few moments before I ventured to offer an instance. Then finally, I said, speaking very deliberately —

“The Bible says that light was created the first day, and the sun, moon and stars on the fourth day. Then we must have had light and evenings and mornings before we had any sun, moon and stars. I think it would take a great deal of cleverness to be able to explain how that could be, don’t you?”

“Yes,” he acquiesced.

"Do you know how we could have had light on the earth without any sun?"

"No; I do not."

"Perhaps," said I, in a low tone, moving a little nearer to him and speaking confidentially; "Perhaps" — I hesitated and looked at him earnestly — "Promise me, first, that you won't tell papa what I'm going to tell you."

"I shall not repeat it."

"Perhaps the Bible isn't true."

I leaned my cheeks on my hands again, to wait until he should have recovered somewhat from the shock of this suggestion. To my surprise, however, he did not become at all excited.

"What are some more of the puzzling problems you find in the Bible?" he asked.

Quite relieved to find him so easy to get on with, I at once replied —

"It tells us that fishes and birds were created on one day, and on the next day, reptiles and creeping things. But I read in a little book about Nature which Miss Appel loaned me, that reptiles preceded birds on the earth. And I learned from that book that men who study about Nature do not believe that the Bible is true. Please don't tell papa I said so," I added hastily.

"Why do you wish him not to know it?"

"Those are some of my secret thoughts."

"Your secret thoughts?" he repeated, inquiringly.

"Yes; I dare not let papa know everything I think. He might not let me borrow any more books from Miss Appel. He would think they influenced me."

"So you, my little friend, are going to be a woman

with opinions of your own, are you? Don't do it. A woman with opinions is a dangerous person."

"I'm sorry," I said, a little sadly; "but I'm afraid I can't help it."

He laughed a short, quiet laugh that had not the least mirth in it. Then he drew out his watch and held it up toward the street-lamp, near the window.

"I wish I could stay here and talk with you," he said; "but I have an engagement which I am compelled to keep, and I must go at once."

"Are you going to church?" I inquired, a little disappointed to have our interesting conversation come to an end.

"No, I'm going across the street to see my friend Mr. Rushmore."

"Is Mr. Rushmore your friend?" I quickly asked.

"Yes. And now good-by, Miss Theo. I enjoy talking with you and hope you will let me see more of you before I go away."

"The pleasure is mutual," I responded with grave politeness; and I did not see why he should smile at so simple a remark as he turned away and walked out of the room.

## CHAPTER VII

THE Synod was over. The ministers had gone to their homes. Once more we had settled down into the dull monotony which had been temporarily relieved by their presence in our town.

It was a damp, cold evening in November, and I was sitting at the library table, trying to study my Latin, but feeling stupid and depressed from the reaction of the excitement of our week of irregularity. For even so slight a diversion as the convention of a ministerial body in our midst had not been without its harrowing effects upon us. At any rate I was too much of a dreamer to be very fond at any time of applying my energies to my text-books. If I had not been trained from infancy to curb my tendencies to self-indulgence, I should probably all my life have remained ignorant of many a school-book fact with which the conventional standard requires one to become acquainted.

Finally I abandoned the vain attempt to fix my mind on my lessons, and leaning my elbow on the table, I threw my head back upon my hand, and gazing at nothing in particular, I gave myself up to the fancies which would keep intruding themselves between myself and my books.

I do not know how long I had been sitting in this way, when at length the library door opened and my father came into the room.

He drew near to me and stood beside my chair, and I lifted my eyes and looked up into his face earnestly.

“Well,” he said, as he laid his hand on my head and smoothed my hair, “what radical thoughts are disturbing this young brain now?”

“Papa!” I impulsively answered, without stopping to consider how my words might displease him, “I have been thinking what a blessing it would be to human beings if it could be proven that the Bible is not to be relied on. Oh, papa! I wish it were not true! I wish” —

But I stopped short and suddenly grew confused as I became conscious of the grave disapproval in his face.

He abruptly drew a chair to the table and seated himself before me, leaning one arm on my pile of school-books, while with the other hand he clasped the lapel of his coat, a little habit he had whenever he was very specially determined. He crossed his knees and bent his eyes upon me with a look which seemed to pin me to the spot where I sat.

“Now what do you mean by this nonsense, foolish child? Why do you wish the Bible were not true?”

“Papa, I am sorry I said so,” I replied, timidly; “I won’t talk so again. I did not mean it—yes, I—I did mean it,” I hastily added, feeling my face grow very warm, but unable to tell a falsehood. “But I won’t say what I mean any more, papa.”

His eyes twinkled a little as he heard this questionably virtuous promise, but he only said, very gravely —

“Answer my question, Theo. Why do you wish the Bible could be proven to be unreliable—a most extraordinary wish to fall from the lips of a child of mine!”



He could not be resisted; I knew I must answer him at once. "Because, papa," I said, in a low voice, "it would be such a comfort to know that those terrible words would never be spoken to any human being—'Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire'. It was my thinking of that poor drunkard who was taken past our house by a policeman this afternoon, that made me wish our Bible were no more to be depended upon than the Koran. And oh, papa," I added, suddenly waxing bolder, "I sometimes think that it isn't."

"How so?" he demanded, seeming to repress with an effort his feeling of displeasure toward me. And now with my usual philosophic acceptance of a case, I decided that as I was, without doubt, already destined to receive a sharp reprimand, I might as well proceed and speak forth my mind. There was also a hope in my heart that papa would aid me to solve the difficulty which I was about to propound to him.

"Many things in it seem so improbable, papa. For instance, my Geography says that the land in Mesopotamia slopes directly to the sea. Then how could there have been a great flood there? Water seeks its lowest level and can't be piled up like sand. There couldn't have been a flood in Mesopotamia. And as for the Flood having been over the whole earth, even many ministers say that that could not possibly have happened. Won't you please tell me, papa, how you think it was?"

"I do not know how it was," he said with decision. "I only know it was! For the Bible says so, and that's enough for me. I take God at his word. I am willing to trust Him implicitly. To Him, all things are possible.

Our funny intellects cannot, of course, comprehend Infinity. The mysteries of our religion only prove it to be of a superhuman origin."

In this strain (perfectly familiar to most of us) he talked to me for a long time that night. The expected reproof was not administered; but instead of it, he spoke to me gently and patiently of the beauty of child-like trust, unselfish labor for the Master, Christian purity of heart and integrity of soul. He held up to me the Divine side of Christ's character, the loving, pitying Saviour, the great and wise Teacher, the Infinite Martyr for human transgression; until upon the black back-ground of the world's dark past, that mysterious, luminous spot seemed to shine forth with a celestial glory. Ah, my father could be eloquent! He spoke of the Christian work which was civilizing the world, of the homeless orphans who were cherished, of the poverty which was fed and clothed, of the sickness which was tenderly cared for in Christian hospitals and asylums, of the heathens who were taught, and of the schools and colleges which were established in the name and through the influence of the religion of Jesus.

He had never spoken more forcibly from the pulpit than he spoke that evening to his erring daughter. He was terribly in earnest, for he felt that I was in danger—in the most fearful of all dangers—and he was determined to save me in time. I was deeply impressed by all that he said to me. His earnestness and eloquence carried me along with them so completely that I quite failed to note the illogical and inconsistent points by the way. A new revelation of the power and beauty of Christianity seemed to be made to me in his words. I

saw new and wonderful meaning in much that hitherto had seemed dark and inexplicable.

That night marked an epoch in my life. I can date from that time the gradual schooling of my mind against all forms of doubting, and the adjustment of my whole nature to the unquestioning acceptance of my father's creed.

An adverse influence to this result was probably removed in the departure of Mr. Rushmore from our town. His young ambition disgusted with the narrow resources of York, he threw up the advantages of his uncle's patronage and returned to the more difficult but wider arena of New York City.

When many years afterward I saw him again, I was a woman grown, and he a man of sober maturity. And he had almost forgotten then, the prim little neighbor who had interested him in his student days in York.

Perhaps it was well for me that he did go away at that time. The affections of an imaginative young girl are very susceptible at that age when she is just budding into womanhood, with all its rich possibilities, its hungry restlessness, its longing after unattainable ideals, its new-born wonder at the meaning of life.

As it was, my awakening nature bent every newly-developed energy and emotion to the satisfying of my father's expectations for me, and to the crushing out from my mind and heart, every heretical tendency.



## PART II

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### “VANITY OF VANITIES”

“She walks in beauty, like the night  
Of cloudless climes and starry skies ;  
And all that’s best of dark and bright  
Meet in her aspect and her eyes ;  
Thus mellowed to that tender light  
Which heaven to gaudy day denies.”

— BYRON.



## CHAPTER I

IN the dimly-lighted reception room of a palatial residence on Fifth Avenue in New York City, a young man was slowly pacing back and forth across the rich, Turkish rug which covered the floor, his eyes looking downward, one hand thrust between the buttons of his coat and the other clenched behind his back. His movements, although measured and slow, had in them a peculiar, nervous strength; and the mere attitudes of his hands, as well as the stern expression of his thoughtful face, revealed an energy and a force of character which involuntarily commanded a certain sort of respect.

He wore his hair in a style which gave him rather an eccentric appearance. It was longer than the conventional mode allowed, and was combed straight back from a strikingly high, broad forehead. His face was clean-shaven and his features were sharp-cut and refined. The eyes that shown out from under the prominent brow were large and remarkably luminous.

His black silk tie was joined by a knot at his throat, the ends flying loose over his broad chest. Although his clothes were of the finest quality and immaculately clean, they had about them an air of *negligé* which showed but little thought had been given to them by their wearer.

There was an expression of cynicism about his mouth and occasionally when his face was not sternly thoughtful,

a mournfulness in his black eyes which suggested that the heart of this man had learned some of life's lessons through deep experiences.

He was not handsome, but his finely proportioned figure quite compensated for his faulty features. In the eyes of most women, the ambitious young lawyer, Horace Rushmore, was more than interesting—he was fascinating. Strength of will, of intellect and of body, combined with a slight imperiousness of manner, a sarcastic style of speech, and an utter disregard of conventionalities when it did not suit his purpose to observe them, made him, on the whole, a formidable but most interesting and charming object to those favored ladies whose fashionable, social festivities he occasionally condescended to honor.

No one who came in contact with this young man ever escaped his penetrating scrutiny; and his feminine acquaintances seldom wished to escape it even though the result of his examination of them might be the utterance of some of those keen, sharp remarks upon the foibles and weaknesses of human nature for which he was famed and feared, not only among the oldest and ablest of his fellow attorneys at the bar, but in his social circle as well. There was something about him which made the generality of people who encountered him (especially the women) eager to win his approbation, a thing which he very seldom yielded. The difficulty of obtaining it, however, was probably one of the chief reasons for its being so eagerly sought. The room in which the young man paced back and forth displayed in all of its appointments the fabulous wealth and luxury of this Fifth Avenue mansion. The walls and ceilings were elaborately frescoed. The windows were richly curtained with



maroon silk and real lace hangings. The chairs and divans about the room were of rare and varied patterns. The huge open grate was built of the costliest panels. The paintings, etchings and engravings on the walls were valuable gems of art, while the ornaments of bronze, the statuary and basins of marble about the room lent to the whole apartment an appearance of almost regal magnificence.

Horace Rushmore's pacing to and fro was suddenly arrested by the rustle of a silk gown. He stopped abruptly as he heard it and threw himself into an arm-chair.

In a moment a woman entered the room. She was about thirty years of age, and would have been very fine-looking had she been a little less corpulent. She was beautifully dressed in a rich tea gown of black surah silk, *en train*. She looked to be just what she was—a woman surfeited with the so-called good things of life, a true daughter of the world of vanities.

Very gracefully she stepped across the room to greet her visitor, extending to him a plump, white, bejewelled hand, as he rose to meet her.

“This is such a pleasure, Mr. Rushmore! To what am I indebted for the honor?”

He placed a chair for her and they both sat down before he replied.

“I saw by the papers that you had returned,” he said in the quick, abrupt manner habitual to him. “And as I was compelled to come here this afternoon to bring a document for your husband, I thought I would ask for you and welcome you back. I am tired, and I thought a chat with you might rest me.”

“Ah, I can see by looking at you that you are in sad need of rest. During my absence I have constantly read of your brilliant speeches in the Willey trial. You are making yourself famous, Mr. Rushmore. You are” —

“Talk of something interesting, do,” he interrupted, a trifle coldly; “something restful and diverting. Where have you been all this time? You look brighter than when you left.”

“That is because I have brought something back with me which actually interests me as I have not been interested in many years,” she replied.

“I did not know there was anything left in the world to interest you. I thought you had exhausted every means of sincere enjoyment. Pray, tell me what it is you have discovered.”

“A country cousin. And I have brought it home with me.”

“Is it male or female?”

“Female. I have been to one of the smaller cities in South-eastern Pennsylvania, about one hundred miles from Philadelphia. Here I discovered some relatives of mine whom I had not heard from for several years. One’s uncles, cousins and aunts are always popping in upon one unawares. This discovery was a fortunate accident, I thought, for I found them to be very diverting and amusing people — so unworldly and unsophisticated — utterly different from any one I have ever known. The South-eastern Pennsylvanians are so amusing in many respects.”

“Yes, I know it. Eight years ago I went to a town in that country, to study law in the office of my uncle, Judge Canfield. But a few months of the place were all

I could endure. My life was absolutely so monotonous that in a short time I grew quite morbid, and in want of other diversion I came very near falling in love with a little Presbyterian maiden about thirteen years of age. Before that catastrophe, however, had befallen me, I had fortunately grown disgusted with the town and had come back to New York. I have never been in Pennsylvania since that time."

"You must make the acquaintance of my Pennsylvanian. She is a novel specimen. A young lady twenty-two years of age, possessed of views on religion, a stiff-necked Presbyterian of the old school."

Rushmore looked surprised as he asked with some curiosity, "What possessed you to bring that sort of a person here?"

"Oh, she is vastly interesting to me! She is so absolutely unsophisticated that I thought I should enjoy letting her innocent eyes behold a little New York worldliness. She has always lived in the one town, and has never seen any society except her father's church. He is a Presbyterian minister and has reared his family in a strictly Orthodox manner. She is his youngest daughter, and oh, so odd!"

"The prudish daughter of a Presbyterian minister in a small Pennsylvania city?" he repeated, with a little sarcastic laugh. "I don't enjoy specimens of that sort. Pray spare me an introduction, Mrs. Graybill."

"How impolitely candid you are," she said reproachfully; "but then you are always that. Remember, however, the 'specimen' is my cousin, and she is not uninteresting. I thoroughly enjoy her, because she is not conventional; and then she is so absurdly earnest and

honest. It is positively refreshing, Mr. Rushmore, to meet an unconventional, sincere young woman. Of course, she has not the least style; she possesses not a single gown that I will allow her to wear; but then she is a very fine-looking girl, and I can easily give her some style. Only she is so extremely puritanical that she thinks very fine clothing is almost wicked. You would have been so amused last night," she added, with a gay little laugh, "if you could have overheard a little conversation which passed between us. It showed me that she is, already, after only two days in my house, deeply impressed with the worldly vanity of my life, just as I intended she should be," and again Mrs. Graybill threw back her pretty head and laughed the quiet, mirthless ripple peculiar to *blasé* women of society.

"As we were sitting alone in my dressing-room," she went on, "she turned to me suddenly and asked, in a low, grave voice, and with a most profoundly serious face, 'Have you ever given your heart to Christ?' I burst out laughing and laughed so immoderately that I think my mirth was infectious even to that serious creature. 'I did not mean to be amusing when I asked the question,' she said, very quietly. She rarely smiles, she is too puritanical for that. She will be so shocked when she has become initiated in some of the goings-on here."

"I should think so," Rushmore said, indifferently.

"How I shall enjoy the first dinner-party she witnesses in this house. She is, you know, one of those Presbyterians who never speak of Sunday, but always of the 'Sabbath'. You will come to our dinner-party next Sunday?" she asked. "I know how very busy you are now

that you have become such a famous lawyer ; but you don't have to work on Sunday, do you ?”

“Yes, frequently. But I rather like your dinner-parties ; I am sure I don't know why I do, they are very absurd affairs. But they are less intolerable than any others that I find time to attend. So I'll come next Sunday on one condition.”

“What is that, rude man ?”

“You must promise to keep off the country cousin. Don't let her fix herself on me.”

“You conceited wretch !” and she laughed again. “Indeed, I shall promise nothing of the sort. She must know you ; you are one of New York's special interests just now, and I have brought her here to see the sights and to educate her unsophisticated mind. She has seen your name in the papers, in connection with the Willey case and also as proposed for governor. In fact, I count on your aid in getting the girl entirely over her religious bigotry. We must make an agnostic of her. It is quite the thing to be an agnostic just now ; even more correct, I believe, than to be an Episcopalian. She is a clever girl. You must argue her out of her Presbyterianism. I am sure with your persuasive genius, you could accomplish almost anything.”

“Easier to do that, I can assure you, than to upset the faith of a bigoted Calvinist,” he said, carelessly. “Only broad-minded people can ever overcome the religious training of their childhood, and few women are broad-minded. I really think I shan't come around here often,” he suddenly added, “while you have this new plaything with you. You will soon tire of her and send her home.”

“No, I shall keep her as long as she will stay. And you will come on Sunday, won’t you, now, Mr. Rushmore? Listen to what I tell you—Mr. Graybill’s politics are very uncertain and I promise he will use his influence for you in the convention if you will come next Sunday. There, now, do you accept the bribe?”

“I usually, on general principles, disapprove of bribes, but this does seem to be rather an exceptional case.”

“I may expect you, then, next Sunday?” she asked.

“I suppose so.”

“Will you bring Isabel with you?”

“If she will come,” he said curtly and a little coldly.

“How is she?” Mrs. Graybill inquired, politely concealing the curiosity aroused in her mind by the slight change in his manner.

“About as usual, thank you.”

“And Lucy?”

The coldness melted from his countenance and an unexpected softness played about the stern lips and in his black eyes.

“Lucy is growing stronger, although she is still quite weak,” he said.

“A very interesting child,” Mrs. Graybill remarked, drawing a rose from her bosom and holding it to her nose.

“Yes, and a very precious one,” he added, with a rare tenderness in his voice. Few persons ever heard him speak in that tone.

“Did Isabel go out while I was away?”

“Constantly,” he briefly replied.

“And yourself?”

“Occasionally—with Isabel. I haven’t time to frequent Vanity Fair very much. When I do go, it is only

to indulge Isabel. I mean soon to forswear entirely the abominable farce of pretending to enjoy myself when I really do not."

"I never saw you pretend to enjoy yourself," she gaily protested. "At every gathering at which I have seen you, you have passed through the entire evening with the most impolitely candid expression of countenance imaginable—cynical, bored, misanthropical—adjectives fail me! It is a pity you can't think better of your fellow-men, Mr. Rushmore."

"Mrs. Graybill," he said, suddenly speaking with earnestness, "why do you keep up the sham? You know you despise it all. I look about me sometimes when I am at an evening party, and sincerely wonder what is the compensation which people think they get for laboring so hard to try to make an utterly artificial state of things appear real and natural. Can you tell me the secret of it?"

Mrs. Graybill answered him cheerfully.

"The whole of life is a sham, for that matter, Mr. Rushmore. We must be occupied with something, then why with one thing more than another? It is all a farce."

"True," he said, lapsing into his usual manner of careless indifference. He leaned his head back against the cushion of his chair and thrust his hands between the buttons of his coat. "We plunge into labor—it may be politics, studies, social gayeties, business—we work very hard and coax ourselves thereby into the delusion that we are living; that we are traveling on toward some desirable goal. We have only occasional moments when we realize the falsity, the pretense of it all; when we see

that we and our lives are shams, and know that our daily walk and conversation are altogether artificial."

"Oh, well," she said playfully, "of course we know that everything is wrong and ought to be fixed; but pray, Mr. Rushmore, don't lament that the 'insight' of which you speak is only occasional. Better far if it never came to us, since we can't very well mend the matter. We all know that there is nothing in life really worth living for, but what can we do about it?"

"Is there nothing at all crushing to you in the conviction that life has in it nothing really great?" he asked.

"The noblest, truest thing I know just at present," she said, with a show of gravity, "is Theo. Really that girl's mind and character are quite staggering to some of my amiable, cynical theories."

"Whom do you mean by Theo?"

"It. The country cousin."

"Oh!"

Mrs. Graybill laughed again.

"I wonder what Theo will think of you when she gets to know you. I want you to be very rash and very unusual when she is present!"

"She won't get to know me at all, Mrs. Graybill. I shall strenuously avoid a very close acquaintance with your bigoted puritanical young relative. She is not to my taste."



## CHAPTER II

IT was Sunday afternoon and Theo Waddington was standing before the long mirror in her luxuriously-furnished bed-chamber, putting the finishing touches to her toilet before going down into the drawing-room to meet her cousin's guests. Upon first being told of the proposed dinner-party she had resolutely refused to violate "the Sabbath" by being present; but Mrs. Graybill had succeeded in overcoming her scruples by assuring her that the term "dinner-party" as applied to the customary informal Sunday gathering at the house of a few of her intimate friends was really a misnomer.

"And then too, my dear," she had said, "you must not expect that in a great city like New York you will find things just as they are in a small and conservative town like York. You must be prepared for surprises. Do not be so narrow-minded as to decide that whatever is new to you must necessarily be wicked. Nothing so broadening, dear, as to travel about the world a little, and see how other people live. And nothing so narrowing as to refuse to step out of your own small world and contemplate the world at large."

Theo had looked thoughtful over her cousin's words and had finally yielded up her objections to countenancing the Sabbath-day breaking festivities and had promised to join the company. When the hour of preparation

arrived, however, Mrs. Graybill encountered another and more unconquerable prejudice in her young relative. Theo had refused with a quiet decision, from which there was no appeal, to wear the light, gay gown which her cousin had provided for her.

"I shall come down into the parlor and meet your guests and contemplate your mode of life, as you advise me to," she had said. "But I refuse to deck myself out on the Sabbath, as though I were going to a ball. I shall wear the plain, black dress which I wore to church this morning."

Mrs. Graybill's protestations had been all in vain. Theo would not even consent to have the neck of her plain gown turned low, or to wear a bunch of flowers in her bosom.

So now, as she stood alone in her room, before the long mirror, taking a last hasty glance at herself before going down stairs, she smiled slightly at the thought of the contrast which her appearance would be to that of her handsomely dressed cousin Violet and of the other ladies present. Then, all at once, a faint color came to her cheek. A long forgotten memory had come suddenly into her thoughts. Within the past few days a certain name frequently on her cousin's lips had been resurrecting many such memories in her mind.

"Mr. Rushmore once told me," she said to herself, "that I should grow up to be a large woman. He was right — I am big."

She looked at herself with a new interest. The picture she saw would have made a weaker character quite silly with vanity. She was as unconscious of her beauty as she was innocent of the power which that gift of

nature gives to every woman. However, as in imagination she contrasted the finely-developed figure before her with the prim little girl he once knew, she smiled again as she thought of the surprise he would feel when he should see her.

Then she turned away from the mirror, and sinking back lazily into a chair at her side, she leaned her elbows on the window-sill near which she had been standing. Recollections whose fascinations could not be resisted crowded upon her mind, demanding attention. So, in the old childish attitude, she rested her cheek on her palm while her drowsy brown eyes looked dreamily out into the street as she let her fancies have unbridled sway.

She recalled as distinctly as though she had read it yesterday that letter she had found years before between the pages of "Jane Eyre". She laughed softly as she thought of its descriptions of herself and other members of the Waddington family. Then she wondered what strange instinct had restrained her, every time her cousin had mentioned Mr. Rushmore's name, from telling of their acquaintance eight years ago. How astonished her Cousin Violet would be to-day, she thought, to find that her hero of ambition, talent, energy and rising fame was an old friend of her unsophisticated *protégé*. (For Theo had a truer conception of the light in which Mrs. Graybill regarded her than that wise woman of the world had ever dreamed of.) She asked herself, would Mr. Rushmore seem as much changed to her as she must necessarily appear to him. His image was so clear in her mind. Her life had not been so full of events that the little episode of her acquaintance with the young law student

should have been displaced by other and more absorbing incidents.

But was it not quite possible, she thought, that he in his busy life, so full of labor, study and realized ambitions, should have entirely forgotten the child who, eight years ago, had for a short time been an object of some interest to him?

Meanwhile, as she sat dreaming in the window, the guests were fast gathering in the rooms below, and Mrs. Graybill was beginning to wonder if her odd young cousin had reconsidered her promise to be present at the Sabbath-breaking dinner-party, and had decided, after all, that duty required her to remain up stairs.

The company was scattered in groups about the room, some of them discussing a pile of etchings on a table in a corner, some examining the music spread open on the piano, a few of them talking over the periodicals lying on a small book-rack, and yet others drawing out the card-tables to get ready for a game of whist. There were more gentlemen than ladies present; all were handsomely dressed, and their appearance and manners stamped them at once as having been educated well in the school of fashionable society. Conversation did not flag. Everyone was animated, apparently being thoroughly interested in their own and others' chat.

"I am in despair," Mrs. Graybill said to Rushmore, who had come to her side after extricating himself from a group of effusive women. "I am afraid, after all, that Theo has decided not to come down."

"Theo? What's that? Oh, yes, I remember. The cousin."

"I can't leave the room or I should try to bring her."

“Don't send me on any such commission for you.”

“Rude, horrid creature! Of course I shall not. I left her in her room dressing, and she should have finished before this. Do you know she absolutely refused to put on the dinner-gown I bought for her, but insisted that if she came down to the drawing-room at all, she would wear her plain, black street-gown which she wore to church this morning.”

Rushmore looked profoundly indifferent.

“I don't believe you are in a good humor to-day,” Mrs. Graybill declared; “are you?”

“I never am in a good humor except” — he turned his black eyes full upon her face — “except when I am alone with Lucy.”

He spoke so earnestly that Mrs. Graybill, who was rarely ever in earnest and never very serious, felt and appeared slightly uncomfortable.

“It is perfectly lovely of you to be so fond of that child. I think your love for her is the one thing that keeps you from becoming quite embittered. Here comes Mr. Colwell,” she suddenly exclaimed. “Excuse me, please, while I go and speak to him.”

She moved away and Rushmore left to himself, amused his cynical fancy by lazily watching the sensation which the arrival of Mr. Colwell caused to spread through the drawing-room. The reception accorded to this new arrival by Mrs. Graybill and all her guests would have appeared to an uninitiated observer a matter of some wonder.

Mr. Archibald Colwell was the son of one of the wealthiest men in New York. He paid seven dollars per pound for his tea. He ate new potatoes and fresh hot-

house vegetables all winter long. He spent his entire mornings in polishing and pointing his finger-nails. He sang tenor, painted in water colors, read the *Ladies' Home Journal* and the *New York Fashion Bazaar*; he patronized art and artists, danced most gracefully, dressed exquisitely, brushed his hair in an incomparable fashion, and embroidered with rare imported floss. He led all the most fashionable germans, and was in great demand in the gay circles of New York. He traveled abroad every summer, and spoke with a marked London accent. He had, in his wanderings, picked up much stray information which he used to advantage. His wealth was fabulous, and there was not a society woman in New York who would have been so mad as to have refused his hand had it been offered her. Thus far in his career, however, he had remained entirely heart-whole. His ambition in life seemed to be to have nice finger-nails, and his chief occupation was the care of his hands.

Every woman in Mrs. Graybill's parlors became intensely self-conscious upon the entrance of this exquisite young man. He was greeted with effusion by every lady who could get access to him, and he was met with the most marked respect by all the gentlemen, with the exception, perhaps, of Horace Rushmore, who was regarded, even by his admirers, as eccentric and cynical.

So in the midst of the elaborate greeting extended to the young nabob, Rushmore, standing alone and a little apart, suddenly saw what Mrs. Graybill and most others in the room failed to notice—the entrance of a young woman—one whom he had never seen before; or at least, so he thought, in the first moment his eyes rested upon her. He had a habit of searching every new face

which he met, perhaps with the same vague wish with which one looks into the work of a new author—the half-unconscious hope of finding here the solution of the eternal problem, the ever-present question in every aspiring soul; or of discovering in the spirit revealed to one's own, that complement which one's imperfect nature restlessly craves forever.

The young lady entered the door-way, paused a moment, and then walked slowly into the room. She was tall and so beautifully formed, that Rushmore's eyes rested fascinated upon her figure for a moment before they glanced at her face. There was an unconscious majesty in her movements, and when presently he looked at her face, its cold, serious expression seemed almost at variance with the seductive womanliness of her form. The charm of her face consisted not so much in its shape or coloring as in its delicacy and refinement, for she was very pale. She had no dimples, her hair just escaped being quite straight, and she wore no bang. Her attractiveness was more spiritual than physical.

Could this creature be the puritanical cousin? he wondered. Yes, it must be so; for there was the plain, old-fashioned, black gown, of which Mrs. Graybill had spoken, the ungloved hands, the plainly-dressed hair and the profoundly serious countenance, all of which could not possibly belong to anyone else. What a queenly woman she was! And what a striking face she had! There was something positively *éerie* in the spirituality of that countenance. Yet it did not take a very keen eye, he thought, to detect the puritanical character in her cold, reserved expression. While these thoughts passed quickly through his mind Theo had walked some little

distance into the room, without having attracted the attention of anyone else; and now she paused again beside a large bronze vase which stood against the wall, and let her eyes rove about the room in search of her cousin. Almost immediately they were caught and held by a tall, dark man at the opposite end of the parlor. His commanding figure made nearly all of the other occupants of the room appear insignificant. He was standing in his favorite attitude, one foot a little in front of him, his head slightly thrown back and his right arm behind him.

Only for an instant did she meet his eye. He was coolly staring at her in a way that made the color come to her cheeks, as she hastily looked away from him, for she saw there was no sign of recognition in his face.

Rushmore noticed, with a passing curiosity, the start and flush with which she seemed to recognize him; and in that moment it suddenly struck him that there was something familiar in her face. He searched his memory to find out where he had ever seen her before; but he could find no clew whatever to explain the impression.

He idly watched her, as Mrs. Graybill, catching sight of her, went to her side and led her forward to be introduced. They made the circuit of the room, pausing for a moment to chat with each group or pair which they approached, the hostess covering with her fine tact her *protégé's* absolute lack of graceful, conventional chit-chat. Every one was looking at the stranger now—the ladies with politely concealed curiosity and astonishment on account of the inconsistency of such an unsuitable gown on so handsome a woman; the gentlemen with undisguised interest and admiration. She was creating just



the sort of a sensation her cousin had intended she should create. In fact, Mrs. Graybill was now rather pleased, than otherwise, that Theo had kept on her plain gown. If it was not becoming to her, its oddity only made her the more interesting. As for the unconventional silence which she maintained, when introduced to people, it had not at all the appearance of awkward embarrassment, but seemed like the eccentricity of superiority.

Rushmore continued to stare at her coldly as they approached the corner where he stood.

“Why will you withdraw yourself in this unsocial fashion?” Mrs. Graybill demanded of him in playful admonition as she reached his side. “Let me introduce you to my cousin, Miss Waddington. Theo, this is Mr. Rushmore of whom I have been telling you.”

Theo, who thought he must surely recognize her, now that he had heard her name, frankly put out her hand as she raised her eyes to his face. But though he was looking at her keenly, his cold glance had still no sign of recognition in it as he pressed the offered hand for an instant, in his strong grasp.

The little pang of disappointment which she experienced was not occasioned alone by his failure to recall their former slight acquaintance which to her had meant so much; but something in the expression of his face revealed to her at once that this dark, stern countenance, with its cynical mouth, its cool, almost impudent stare, was not the generous, genial face, full of hope and tenderness to which her childhood's soul had been so strongly drawn. Her old friend had changed. She felt that he was almost as much a stranger to her as she was to him.

"You have not told me, Mr. Rushmore, why Isabel did not come with you this afternoon," Mrs. Graybill said.

"No, I have not told you, because I don't know."

"How very odd! Well, then, at least, she is not ill, is she?"

"I don't know."

"Why, how heartless of you. Poor Isabel, I pity her."

"You and Isabel would agree beautifully. She pities herself, very much."

"You are perfectly inexplicable, Mr. Rushmore. Isn't he, Theo?"

"How can I say, Cousin Violet," Theo said, seriously, "when I don't know what you are talking of?"

"As I have told you before, my dear, it is not necessary that you should mean everything you say. In reply to my question you should say enthusiastically, 'Oh, perfectly!' or 'Quite shockingly!' or something of that sort. You must learn, dear, not to take one's remarks so seriously; must she not, Mr. Rushmore?"

"It is too late to begin her education now, Mrs. Graybill. Your cousin has been well trained to consider twice before she speaks, and the lessons of youth are not easily forgotten. Will you be my partner?" he abruptly added, motioning toward a table.

"Oh, of course, you and I must play together. Theo, you must take a hand with Mr. Graybill. Do you play whist well?"

"Cards, Cousin Violet!" Theo repeated in a low, startled voice, her brown eyes opening wide with horror, "and on the Sabbath day?"

Mrs. Graybill turned to Rushmore and said laughingly, "What did I tell you? Isn't she diverting?"

"You seem to find her so?" he remarked, listlessly.

"In New York, my dear, it isn't regarded sinful to play cards on Sunday, so you need have no scruples at all. Come, Mr. Graybill has the tables all ready for us."

"You expect me to play with gambling cards?" Theo coldly asked. "And on the Sabbath day?"

"Nonsense, dear! Now don't be prudish; if you don't understand the game, your Cousin Graybill will show you. I have told him he must play with you this afternoon, and you know how obedient he always is. The most exemplary husband!" she declared, by way of explanation to Rushmore.

"Cousin Graybill will have to find another partner," Theo said.

"But, Theo, you will break up a whole set if you persist in your obstinacy, my dear. There are just exactly five sets of us. Mr. Rushmore, do use your persuasive powers upon my cousin. You can convince juries by your eloquence, surely you ought to be able to convince Miss Waddington."

"I may be able to persuade juries, but to convince a woman against her will the eloquence of Mercury himself would not avail. And a woman, too, possessed of opinions about the observance of the Sabbath! My most persuasive words would, I am sure, be wasted on your cousin."

"I was under the impression that women's views usually melted under your convincing eloquence like snow in the sun," Mrs. Graybill said. "Do you never argue Isabel into changing her mind?"

"When I want to convince Isabel that two and two make four, I usually contend with all my powers of argu-

ment that they make five. She is always sure to be convinced of that against which I argue. Well, let me see what I can do with Miss Waddington. What are your objections, Miss Waddington, to a game of cards on Sunday?"

The simplicity of Theo's heart prevented her from seeing that he was chaffing her.

"Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy," she replied, gravely.

"Do you interpret that command literally?"

"I prefer not to speak of these things with you, Mr. Rushmore. I know that Cousin Violet and her friends do not feel and think as I do, and discussion would be worse than useless."

"How am I to obey my hostess and convince you if you will not listen to me? No doubt you interpret the 'days' of the Genesis story of the creation to mean geologic periods, do you not? Well, if the day of rest was a geologic period you are compelled, if you would obey the command literally, to rest thousands of years as the Lord must have done, after the six days (geologic periods) of creation. This would be quite impracticable. It would slightly retard progress. It would" —

Theo began to see that he was trifling. All at once she remembered how his "loose views" about religion had excited the indignation of her father. She interrupted him.

"I cannot hear you ridicule what is sacred to me. I beg you to say no more."

He bowed in mock humility. "I crave your pardon." Then turning to Mrs. Graybill he said, "I have lost my case, you see, as I predicted."

“Not through the fault of your logic, however!” she replied. “Ah, Mr. Colwell, are you impatient to begin the game?” she exclaimed to the young man as he approached her.

“If Miss Waddington will be my partner,” stepping to Theo’s side and smiling upon her patronizingly. Mr. Colwell patronized everybody. “If Miss Waddington will be my partner I am very anxious to begin. If not, I shall not play to-day.”

“Miss Waddington is not going to play,” Mrs. Graybill said.

“Ah, how fortunate! Then she and I can have a dear little *tete-a-tete*, while you all have your attention turned from us to your cards. Can’t we, Miss Waddington? They are all taking their places at the tables now—will you let me lead you to that charming divan in the bay-window where we may have some ‘flow of soul’, don’t you know, as the poet says, without disturbing the players?”

“I am not in this room this afternoon for the purpose of enjoying myself, Mr. Colwell. I shall stay only a little while to look on and see what is the New York fashionable method of keeping the fourth commandment, and then I shall ask Cousin Violet to excuse me.”

Mr. Colwell was too well bred to look all the astonishment he felt at this unexpected reply. He was not accustomed to having his favors thus coolly rejected.

“Well, at least, Miss Waddington, you will let me sit beside you, while you are looking on, won’t you? I may be able to help you to a conclusion about the matter by giving you a few points.”

Theo accepted his proffered arm and allowed herself to

be led to a chair near one of the card tables. This table happened to be the one at which, a moment later, Mr. Rushmore and Mrs. Graybill seated themselves with their opponents to open the game of whist.

"Mrs. Graybill tells me you are probably going to spend the remainder of the winter here?" Mr. Colwell said, as he drew his chair a little closer to Theo's side, and smiled upon her.

The statement was made in the tone of an inquiry; but Theo neither confirmed nor denied it. She was not in the habit of talking unless she really had something to say.

"I hope you will stay with us," he continued, effusively. "It will be so lovely of you to let us have the pleasure of your society."

She looked at him in surprise. "Why, what makes you say that, when you don't know me at all? My society can't possibly give any of you much pleasure. I am very dull."

Mr. Colwell thought he had never in his life met so extraordinary a young lady.

"We have perfectly charming times in New York during the season," he said, rather irrelevantly. "I am sure you will enjoy yourself. There are to be quite a number of germans and some weddings and parties this winter. I am going to have several nice things myself. New York is such a dear place, except during Lent. Oh, won't you help me to decide what I shall abstain from during Lent, Miss Waddington? It is so hard to come to a conclusion about such a matter. What are you going to give up?"

"I never fast in Lent."

“Oh! Why, how shocking! But I really imagined you did, don't you know. I imagined you were one of those persons who really enjoy giving up things in Lent. Now I don't enjoy it at all; but I do it from a sense of duty because it's the thing, don't you know, and everyone does it, and it's sort of expected of one. And then, of course, I think it's a perfectly lovely idea and all that sort of thing. You're not a Church-woman, I suppose?”

“An Episcopalian? No; I am a Presbyterian.”

“Oh, how perfectly horrid! Really you must pardon me, but, do you know, I can't imagine myself being anything else than a Church-man. Won't you let me take you to Holy Trinity next Sunday?”

“Thank you, but my father dislikes elaborate ritual, and I promised him before I came away from home, that I would attend Dr. Hall's Presbyterian Church every Sabbath.”

“Oh, don't you find it very tiresome? If I get to church once a month I think I do well, very well, indeed. But I send flowers for the altar every Sunday. Don't you perfectly adore flowers? They speak to you so beautifully, don't they?”

She was looking at him now with genuine interest, and he was gratified at having gained her difficult attention. She was, in fact, thinking what a very unusual sort of man he was. She had never before met anyone like him. His inane remarks, his effeminate gushing manners, his odd accent and his exquisite appearance, were each and all remarkable in her eyes. She wondered what her sisters, Lila and Amy, would have thought of him.

Rushmore, who was observing her while he played out his cards, felt somewhat amused at her unsophisticated

surprise at Colwell's peculiarities. The young nabob was not at all an unusual type in New York society.

"Colwell's gotten his foot in it," thought he. "What a tough time he will have entertaining that personification of Calvinistic bigotry, all the while we play. She is not properly impressed with the honor he is conferring upon her," he told himself, with an inward sneer. "Wait until she is invited to his great mansion and realizes something of his importance, then we shall see how she will take his attentions."

Meantime, Theo's eyes were often upon Rushmore. He observed this, and wondered at it somewhat; for in the earnest, direct glance which every now and then sought his face there was none of the vain self-consciousness with which women usually met his eye.

When at last the game of whist came to an end, the grand piano was opened, and while the company rested from the mental labor of the game they listened languidly to the music rendered by the different members of the party.

If Theo had been shocked at the "gambling cards", she was by no means mollified by the style of music played and sang by her cousin's guests. In her father's house the piano was never opened on Sunday, and the sound of it now fell upon her solemn sense of the sacredness of the day with a harsh discordance. The music selected, although choice and more brilliant than any she had ever heard, had no charm for her. It was all secular, and it pained her heart to hear it.

"You really can't imagine how passionately I love music, Miss Waddington," remarked Mr. Colwell, who continued to hover over her, somewhat to Rushmore's



surprise. That cynical individual had expected to see the poor victim of Miss Waddington's scruples and coldness take immediate advantage of the breaking up of the game, to escape from her side; but, strange to say, he showed not the slightest inclination to leave her when convenient opportunities offered themselves.

"Aren't you devoted to music, Miss Waddington?" he demanded, as she made no reply to his first remark.

"I don't devote more than an hour a day to it," for she interpreted him quite literally.

"Oh, I mean aren't you very, very fond of it, don't you know?"

"Yes."

"Oh, so am I. Do tell me who are your favorite composers? Don't you adore Chopin?"

"I'm fond of him, yes."

"So am I," he said, enthusiastically. "Oh, that man Chopin, I couldn't live without him! I couldn't live without him! Could you?"

"I am afraid I could."

"Your nature is very unimpassioned, I see," he said, looking at her somewhat compassionately. Now, I am so unfortunate as to possess one of those highly nervous, sensitive, musical organisms, don't you know?"

Again he looked at her inquiringly, but she did not venture any comment.

"Now last night," he continued, "I went to a musical and heard for the first time a beautiful new sonata. And I was so excited—you can't imagine how excited I was. Oh! what it is to discover a new beauty! You play and sing, don't you?" he asked abruptly.

"Yes," said Theo. "I do sing and play a little."

"How charming! Would you be so kind as to give us something? I am so anxious to hear you. Do let me lead you to the piano. Mrs. Graybill," he added, turning to the hostess, "your cousin is going to favor us. I think it is so perfectly lovely of her, isn't it?"

"Why, Theo, dear, I had no idea you sang and played. You never told me so."

Theo made no reply. She was sitting pale and silent, her eyes bent down upon the hands clasped in her lap. She was having a struggle with herself. Should she sing? Only one thing made her falter; the cold, sarcastic face of Mr. Horace Rushmore, for she had been conscious of his keen examination of herself ever since she had entered his presence. Only a short time, however, did she hesitate. In a moment she looked up, rose from her chair, and ignoring Mr. Colwell's proffered arm, walked slowly to the piano.

Mr. Colwell was astonished. However, he gracefully covered his chagrin by seating himself near the instrument, and in such a position that he should have a full view of her face while she sang.

"She is going to do something horribly unconventional, I'm sure," Mrs. Graybill whispered to Rushmore, who was seated by her side on an India silk ottoman.

"You speak very calmly; you don't seem disturbed by the prospect."

"No. It is her unconventionality that makes her interesting to me. She is such a pleasant change after the people I've been accustomed to all my life. One never knows what queer thing she will do next. There is a delightful uncertainty about her. It is really a comfort to me to have her with me."

“Listen!” said Rushmore, for she had begun to play. She struck a few chords with a firm, but soft touch, which made the cumbrous instrument seem a toy in her skilled hands. Then, to the astonishment of everyone in the room, she began to sing in a low, but remarkably expressive voice, the words of the familiar hymn —

“O Jesus, Thou Art Standing.”

She sang in the simplest manner and without the least effort. Her grave spiritual countenance bespoke the earnestness with which she uttered every word of the beautiful hymn, and revealed the passionate longing of her heart that its admonitions might be felt by those who heard it from her lips just now —

“O Jesus, Thou art standing  
Outside the fast-closed door,  
In lowly patience waiting  
To pass the threshold o'er;  
We bear the name of Christians,  
His name and sign we bear;  
O Shame, thrice shame upon us,  
To keep Him standing there.

“O Jesus, Thou art knocking;  
And lo! that hand is scarr'd,  
And thorns Thy brow encircle,  
And tears Thy face have marr'd;  
O love that passeth knowledge  
So patiently to wait!  
O sin that hath no equal,  
So fast to bar the gate.

“O Jesus, Thou art pleading  
In accents meek and low,  
‘I died for you, my children,  
And will ye treat me so?’

O Lord, with shame and sorrow  
We open now the door;  
Dear Saviour, enter, enter,  
And leave us nevermore."

For a moment after she had finished, the room was perfectly silent. When she had first begun to sing the surprise, occasioned by the oddity of her selection, had been mixed with a carefully concealed inclination to smile or even titter. But now, no such tendency was felt by anyone in the parlors. When she rose from the piano-stool, her cheeks were flushed and her eyes were very bright as involuntarily her earnest gaze sought, for an instant, Rushmore's face.

Then the usual hackneyed compliments from the company drew her attention away from him again, and she silently listened as they pronounced her voice "divine", her expression "eloquent", and her touch "really artistic".

When finally there was a lull in this flow of words, Theo raised her eyes and looked about upon them all as she said, in a low, distinct voice —

"My friends, I wish you would think of the words I have sung to you, and not of my voice and my playing."

She took a step to Mrs. Graybill's side, spoke to her for an instant, and then, with a slight bow to the company, turned and left the room.

Mrs. Graybill's tact, never at a loss, at once broke the awkward silence which followed this unusual episode by a remark which immediately started conversation and set every one at ease again.

In the general animation which followed the momentary seriousness caused by Miss Waddington's eccentric

conduct, Rushmore was able unnoticed to withdraw from Mrs. Graybill's side into the retired recess of a heavily-curtained, deep bay-window.

Scarcely acknowledged to himself had been the involuntary regret he had experienced as he had seen Miss Waddington disappear through the door. Strange to say, her going had seemed to him like the taking away of the one and only pure breath from a stifling atmosphere of frivolity and artificiality. When the door had closed upon her, he had found himself suddenly feeling unaccountably oppressed. He had wanted to get away from them all and be alone.

And now, as he leaned heavily against the glass of the bay-window and dreamily contemplated the huge brick wall which loomed up outside, his sense of oppression did not diminish. It was not often that his busy, energetic disposition allowed him to indulge himself in fits of melancholy. Hard work was usually his antidote for a spell of more than usual depression.

He was rather relieved than otherwise, when, after a while, Mrs. Graybill, drawing aside the pale, canary-colored silk curtains behind which he had retired, stepped into the bay-window and stood beside him.

Neither spoke for a moment after she had joined him. But presently she said —

“Well, what do you think of her?”

“Of whom?”

She looked at him keenly — “I had really thought you were impressed with her, Mr. Rushmore.”

“Again may I ask of whom you are speaking?”

“Of Miss Waddington, of course. Come, tell me, isn't she diverting? What is your opinion of her?”

He laughed contemptuously. "Mentally cloudy," was his brief comment.

"Indeed your usually keen insight is at fault here, Mr. Rushmore. But at least you must acknowledge that she is handsome?"

"Yes. But I am never attracted by beauty which is not the expression of its possessor's mind."

"There you have exactly described Theo's beauty. Its charm consists in its being an expression of her mind and character, rather than its physical perfection. At least, I think so. Now really, isn't that your opinion, too?"

"I have already told you, my impression, from the little I've seen of her this afternoon, is that she is mentally cloudy."

"Do you think Isabel's beauty an expression of her mind?" she asked, amiably.

He looked at her coolly, showing no sign of annoyance at the sarcasm in her question.

"Isabel is a clever woman," he said, "as you would know if you were to hear us in one of our little daily discussions. She always gets the better of me in an argument."

"You are fond of intellectual women, are you not?"

"I never knew but a few in all my life, and they were not madly captivating, being Yankee school-mistresses, I think, without a drop of sap left in them."

Meanwhile Theo, sitting lonely and sad in her great, gloomy, beautiful bed-chamber, was fighting out with herself her first severe attack of homesickness.

## CHAPTER III

NOW, Theo, don't forget what I advised you."  
"You have given me so much advice, Cousin Violet—to what particular item do you refer just now?"

They were standing together in one of the spacious dressing-rooms of Mr. Colwell's home. They had gone a little apart from the other ladies, who were laying off their party wraps and resurrecting from dainty silk bags various fascinating articles such as fans, lace handkerchiefs and gloves several yards long.

Mrs. Graybill stood in front of her cousin and talked to her while they both drew on their gloves.

"Remember, Theo, you must not be silent. Be especially talkative with gentlemen. Don't on any account let conversation flag."

"But when I really haven't anything to say?"

"You must make talk. It is absolutely essential."

"When I say things for the mere sake of saying something, I feel like a—a liar."

"My dear, it is positively vulgar to be so outspoken and—and honest. No, it isn't vulgar in you," she hastily corrected herself; "but it would be in most people."

"I wish 'most people' were 'positively vulgar', then. I could well dispense with some of the polish for a little refreshing candor and truth. The elaborate manners of people in society completely mock their real thought and

feelings. They would be so much more interesting if they were more simple and direct."

"You must grant, Theo, that some few of our society people are plain-spoken persons — Mr. Rushmore, for instance."

"You forget that I have met him but once. He has not been to any of the parties which we have attended during the past few weeks."

"He is too busy to go out much. I think, however, that he will be here to-night."

"Do you?" Theo said, with a touch of interest in her tone which her cousin was quick to see.

"Do you like him, Theo? Do you think that he is interesting?"

"I pity him," she briefly replied, suddenly turning aside and picking up her fan from a table behind her. "I am ready, Cousin Violet, if you are."

"You look positively queenly to-night, Theo. Black velvet is so becoming to you. I wish your father could see you just now; he would be more proud than ever of his handsome daughter."

"I am afraid he would not approve of these bare arms and this exposed neck," she said, looking down on her white flesh with such a dubious, half-distressed expression in her face, that Mrs. Graybill laughed delightedly.

"You are so amusing, Theo. Well, come, we will go down now."

They made their way through the crowded rooms, Mrs. Graybill bowing and smiling on all sides as they passed on to the door. Mr. Graybill met them there, and they moved on down the wide, wonderfully carved stairway toward the reception rooms below.



Theo had seen a great deal of magnificence since she had come to New York, but anything so recklessly lavish as the wealth displayed in the home of the millionaire, young Colwell, had never even entered her imagination. The beauty and luxury which she saw in this New York palace had a sensuous charm for her such as she had not experienced since her childhood's delight in the enchanted palace of Aladdin.

Colwell welcomed her with marked condescension and with the most evident pleasure.

"So good of you to come, Miss Waddington, when you don't really care about dancing! I am sure it is just too lovely of you for anything. Did you get the flowers I sent you yesterday morning?"

"Yes, thank you."

"Oh, don't mention it; such a trifle, you know. Are you not going to dance one bit to-night? I do so want the pleasure of a little turn with you."

"I have never learned to dance."

"I wish for your sake that this was a musical instead of a dance," he said. "This is the first thing I've had for about a fortnight. The last thing I had was an afternoon tea, you know, and you were unable to come. I was so awfully sorry, but this is going to be nicer than that, at any rate."

Rushmore, who from the opposite side of the room had seen the Graybills enter with Miss Waddington, was not a little astonished to observe the transformation in the appearance of the plainly dressed young lady, whose acquaintance he had made a few weeks before. Miss Waddington's fashionable party costume seemed to have changed a unique and unsophisticated character into a

thorough woman of the world. The change was startling and not at first pleasing. He involuntarily experienced a slight regret as he saw it.

He had watched with interest her manner of greeting the host of the evening.

"Now that she has seen his house and has a faint glimpse of his fabulous wealth, how will she treat him?" was the question which he asked of his cynical mind. "Colwell's wealth makes most people blind to his absurdities."

But his keen eyes could detect in her countenance, as she stood in her queenly beauty and talked with the exquisitely-dressed young host, not the slightest modification of the dignified reserve with which he had been impressed in his former observation of her.

He was just a trifle astonished to see her, after a very few moments, excuse herself and leave Colwell standing alone a few yards from his sister, who was helping him to receive. Miss Waddington then joined Mrs. Graybill, who had moved to the other side of the room, and who looked not at all pleased at her young cousin's seeming coldness toward the host. But her approbation of Theo was soon restored, for in a short time the place where they stood was surrounded by some of the most interesting gentlemen in the parlors. Yet Theo's face did not flush nor her eyes grow bright under the ardent admiration she excited. Rushmore noticed that she actually seemed quite unconscious of it. Once or twice he saw her eyes wander away from the group surrounding her and rove about the room as though in search of some one.

But soon his own attention was taken up by some

ladies who called him to them, and during the next hour he did not again have a glimpse of her. Indeed she quite escaped his mind amid the crowds and the excitement and the bustle of the dance. When again reminded of her existence it was in a rather singular manner.

Meanwhile, Theo, despite her ignorance of the art of dancing, was having by no means an uninteresting time. She never did have a gay, jovial time at the many parties to which her cousin took her; she had not yet learned the secret and the meaning of gayety and brilliant pleasure. But the new scenes into which she found herself introduced, the new people whom she met, the entirely new phase of life she was called upon to study and to share, all had a profound interest for her; and when one is profoundly interested in anything, one is not unhappy. It was only in occasional, rare moments that she realized how out of harmony she really was with the brilliant life in the midst of which she moved.

If she had been less handsome than she was, she would have been a failure in society, since she could neither dance nor indulge in small talk with the least degree of grace. For only when she was thoroughly in earnest was she natural and at ease. But her interesting, beautiful face and her noble figure quite made up for her other deficiencies, and Miss Waddington was not a wall-flower. Indeed, she often rather wearied of the attentions lavished upon her, and occasionally would endeavor to steal off alone to some secluded corner where she could look on and meditate, and indulge that ever-active fancy of hers without the interruption of having every little while to reply to some inane remark addressed to her.

A combination of fortuitous circumstances had enabled

her to do this on this evening at Mr. Colwell's when she had grown tired of talking to people. She had retreated to a small divan which stood behind a large marble statue; this statue represented a beautiful young captive, tied hand and foot, ready to be carried to a Roman slave market, and the misery in the marble face seemed in Theo's imagination to reproach the levity and brightness in the parlors beyond.

It was a fine work of art, and Theo was just about losing herself in the contemplation of it, and becoming utterly oblivious of the little world around her, as in fancy she was traveling swiftly back to the days of Rome's shameful glory, when suddenly something made her look up, and to her chagrin, she perceived that her retreat had been observed. A gentleman had separated himself from one of the groups at the other end of the dancing-hall, and was evidently coming to find her. As he drew nearer she studiously avoided seeing him, and persistently gazed upon the face of the captive, until he paused directly in front of her, and she could no longer with propriety ignore him.

When she did look up at him she was surprised to find from his garb that he was unmistakably a Presbyterian minister—a young man about thirty-five years of age. She was not so sorry, then, that he had come to her. She could feel at home with clergymen as with no other sort of men. She had been brought up on them.

He stood before her for an instant without speaking, looking at her earnestly. The moment Theo's eyes fell upon his face she knew she had seen him somewhere before.

“Miss Waddington,” he said, holding out his hand.

She gave him her own as she replied, "You have the advantage of me, although both your face and your voice seem very familiar."

"I recognized you as soon as I saw you," he said. "You ought to recognize me before you hear my name, for I have not changed since last we met as you have changed. You were only a little girl when I knew you."

"Please tell me who you are?" she said, seriously. "I can't recall you at all."

He drew a chair to the divan where she was sitting and seated himself beside her. "Now look at me, and see if you cannot remember."

She obeyed and as she studied his face long and earnestly, the quiet, obstinate countenance before her seemed to grow more and more familiar, until his name fell involuntarily from her lips.

"Mr. Udell! You once stayed at our house during the convention of a Synod—I remember you now, very well, indeed!"

"Somehow I thought you would," he said, in a cool, quiet tone which Theo remembered so clearly and which in her childhood had aroused in her heart a vague instinct of antagonism toward him. Even now she felt herself at once repelled and fascinated by the peculiar and almost cruel stubbornness in the set of his lower jaw and in the curve of his lips.

"I am surprised, Mr. Udell," she said, "that you should have recognized me after all these years."

"I never forget a face I have once seen; you have changed, of course. But there is the same unmistakable look in the eyes and about the mouth which I should have known anywhere and at any time."

“And yet it is eight years since you last saw me, Mr. Udell. Some people could not possibly have remembered my face so long as that, especially, since it is so changed.”

“Yes. None but an eye like my own would recognize in the woman before me the rather homely little ‘Theo’, who had, I recollect, secret thoughts from her father.”

“Ah, I remember,” she said, gravely. “What a naughty little girl I was.”

“Do you really mean that?” he inquired, looking at her searchingly as he leaned back in his chair and folded his arms across his chest. “Do you now never have ‘secret thoughts’ from papa?”

“No,” she said, a little coldly. “My mind is an open book to my father now — almost.”

“What does that ‘almost’ signify?”

“I suppose in every life,” she slowly replied, “there is a current that must always move in secret solitude, that can never be revealed even to one’s nearest and dearest.”

He made no reply to this, and for a moment they were silent. Then presently Theo said —

“Please tell me how you happen to be here to-night. I am so surprised to find you here. It is a strange place for a Presbyterian minister to be.”

“Colwell is my cousin. I just happened in this evening accidentally. He insisted upon my remaining — said he wanted me to meet a charming new friend of his — and when he mentioned your name I consented at once to remain. Won’t you tell me, now, all about your interesting family? I remember every one of you. How is Joe? Is he studying theology?”

“No,” said Theo, not smiling. “Joe is just finishing his studies at a school of pharmacy. He is a very dear

boy, although not so earnest and serious as we should like to have him."

"And Harold?"

"Harold is pastor of a small church in a town eight miles from New York. He is in delicate health."

"Ambrose?"

Theo's face flushed slightly and she looked down as she replied —

"Dear little Ambrose died when he was twelve years old. It was such a great blow to Father. He had never lost a child before. And no doubt you remember what a very fond father he was."

"Yes," he acquiesced, with an old look in his eyes which annoyed Theo.

"Your sisters Amy and Lila?" he continued. "What has become of them? I remember how pretty Lila was."

"She is married to one of our elders, Dr. Brockton, and lives next door to us. She has a baby boy of whom we are all absurdly proud. I received an enthusiastic letter from her yesterday, telling me that the darling's first tooth was safely through. Amy will be married in the spring to a Presbyterian minister of Philadelphia, Dr. Howe."

"What a family of preachers you will be — your father, your brother and your brother-in-law all in the ministry. I know Dr. Howe well," he continued. "He stands very high in the church. Amy was the sister who had the stern sense of duty, quite severely virtuous, wasn't she?"

"I think Amy has fewer weaknesses than any of us. But, Mr. Udell," she said, "it seems quite remarkable to me that you should remember us all so well, when you

were with us for only one week and that so long ago. Some persons would not recall even our family name under similar circumstances," she added, thinking of Rushmore's failure to recognize her.

"I think I rarely forget or overlook anything," he said, very quietly.

The subtle strength which Theo felt in that quiet manner he had of speaking, made her almost fear him, in a vague, unreasoning sort of a way.

"There is something rather uncanny about a memory like yours," she said, half uneasily, half smilingly.

"I believe some of my pupils find it to be so," he replied, looking as though he felt a calm satisfaction in his peculiarity.

"Your pupils? Are you a pedagogue? It is my turn to catechise now."

"But you have not yet finished giving me an account of your family," he objected. "I shall tell you about myself when I have heard the conclusion of your account."

"I think I did tell you about all of us — Harold, Joe, Lila and Amy — of whom else shall I speak?"

"Yourself."

"There is nothing of interest to tell about myself."

"Nothing?" he asked, half suspiciously.

She looked at him in surprise. "Absolutely nothing," she replied.

"I think I can predict something."

"What?"

"You will be the next one to leave the home-nest, after your sister Amy."

She shook her head.



“I shall always stay with father and mother. I can never love any man as I love father. My parents will need one daughter at home.”

“Your large family is gradually growing smaller, is it not?”

“Yes. We all look forward with dread to Amy’s marriage. We are such a united family that any break wrenches a very vital part of our life. But Joe and I will still be at home, and you know we have Lila and her husband and little boy next door to us. Our two households are just like one. Harold, too, comes up to see us every week. I wish you could know Harold,” she added, leaning back on her divan and giving herself up to the pleasure of talking about these treasures of her life. “He is a very fine young man. He is completely consecrated. Father is so proud of him. He has turned out to be just as my father wanted to have him.”

“Not many fathers’ wishes are so realized.”

“I suppose not,” she said, gravely. “But you know what a careful father mine was. You could not have been in our house a whole week without having noticed that.”

“I noticed it — yes.”

“Do you know,” she went on, “this little talk with you is making me very homesick?”

“You are very fond of your home. Your tastes are domestic?” he questioned, keeping his keen eyes upon her face. Somehow it made her uneasy to meet his almost impertinently close scrutiny. She looked down at the hands in her lap, as she replied —

“That depends upon what you mean by domestic. I dislike all sorts of housework, although I love a cosy,

beautifully kept home, and cannot abide disorder. My own home is, of course, the dearest place in the world to me."

"After this taste of New York which you are having, you will, I imagine, find your life in York very dull, when you go back."

"I think not, Mr. Udell. No society is so pleasant to me as that of my parents and brothers and sisters."

"I did not think you would grow up such a simple-hearted maiden, Miss Waddington. I have thought of you often in these eight years. You were a child whom one would naturally recall. I had imagined you would turn out a rather strong-minded, free-thinking woman. But home influence seems to have completely overcome your natural tendencies."

"You think I should have developed into something very extraordinary and you find me quite commonplace."

"Not commonplace. No one could look at you and call you that. But describe to me, please, that home life with which you are so absolutely contented."

She raised her eyes to his face.

"Contented? I did not say I was contented. At home, I am always busy and sometimes happy; but rarely ever really contented. I am a restless, hungry creature!"

A shadow crept into her dark eyes as she spoke, which revealed to him more than did her words the deep-seated unrest of her strong nature.

"All Teutonic peoples," he said, "are inclined to melancholy more or less. There is a shade of it in the nature of all of us. If you will examine the faces of people whom you meet on the street, in the cars, everywhere you will observe a sadness in every countenance which is

in repose. Try it yourself, sometimes, and see if it is not the case."

She made no reply, and he watched her for a moment in silence, until he saw her grow uneasy again under his gaze. Then he said —

"You say you are always busy at home. What do you do?"

"Do?" she repeated; and a little weary smile played about her mouth as she added, "I make calls, study, read, write, go to church, teach a class in a Mission Sabbath School, and visit the poor and the sick of father's congregation. You see my life is quite commonplace and aimless."

"What do you study and what do you write?"

"I study a variety of things — languages, history, Scriptural subjects, music. I write — letters to Harold, and occasionally, some pages in my journal."

"Even as a child you were a thoughtful little student. Do you remember what a little skeptic you used to be? Are you never troubled by doubts?"

"I do not allow myself to be. I avoid all reading which could possibly disturb my faith. I refuse to cherish a single unfaithful thought which may come to me. I will not even talk with people who are skeptical."

To Theo's astonishment a voice just behind her divan suddenly replied to her —

"That attitude of mind which refuses to face unpalatable truths is contemptible and unworthy."

She looked up startled and surprised. But Udell did not turn, and his cold, quiet countenance remained quite unmoved. There stood Rushmore, just behind her divan, his arms folded across his broad chest, his brilliant eyes

looking down upon her with an expression half curious, half cynical.

The color rushed into her face as she instantly turned away from him again. He coolly stepped around in front of her and leaned against the side of Udell's chair in the favorite, characteristic attitude which made him look so strong and manly — his head slightly thrown back, one foot moved a little forward, one hand thrust between the buttons of his coat and the other thrown behind him.

"Has my eccentric friend Rushmore ever been presented to you, Miss Waddington?" Udell inquired.

"I have had that honor," Rushmore interrupted. "But I believe I have not yet spoken to Miss Waddington this evening. How do you do?"

He held out his hand, but Theo made no move to give him her own.

"You offer to shake hands with one whom you have just called contemptible and unworthy?" she asked, without, however, the least resentment in her manner.

He withdrew his hand and thrust his fingers back again into the space between the buttons of his waistcoat.

"No doubt I was abrupt. I beg your pardon. I might have framed that remark of mine in polite, inoffensive terms."

"I do not see how, possibly," Theo replied, quietly.

"I wish," he said, with some degree of earnestness, "that everyone could be brought to feel the truth of it. What a revolution would be made in our method of thought and of conduct!"

"When you have disturbed another's faith what good have you done? None! Only a very great harm. If religion makes people contented why disturb them in it?"

Apart from the wickedness of the act, how foolish it is!"

"Contented?" he repeated. "Who is contented? Animals are, I suppose, and very stupid human beings. Don't mistake me. I have long since outgrown that state of which Robert Browning speaks —

"Making proselytes as madmen thirst to do;  
How can he give another the real ground, his own conviction."

"I am too much of a pessimist to think it worth my while to take the trouble to disturb anyone's stupid contentment. But, if I had not such a contempt for human nature, I should consider happiness, at the expense of cherishing error, a doubtful blessing. We need to be roused from our contented lethargy. Hegel says, 'The happiest age of a nation is not its most productive age'; and I think the same is true of the individual. Few real blessings come to us except through a previous season of struggling and suffering. It is through mental throes and spiritual revolutions that we painfully and slowly climb upward. Luther disturbed the 'contentment' of all Europe. Jesus' teachings, in the fullness of time, shook the nations! Growth and progress mean struggle, revolution!"

He wondered at the change which came over her face as she listened to his words. Slowly the color died out of her cheeks and she grew pale, even to her lips. When he had ceased, she lifted her eyes to his face and there was the look of some hunted thing in them.

A movement of pity came over him as he recognized in that look, the unmistakable evidences of the long struggle in this nature between the intellect and the

heart, her intellectual promptings drawing her toward freedom and independence of thought; her heart binding her to the creed of her father and her home; the creed which had become a part of herself through years of love and peace, and which made holy the tenderest ties of her life.

"She can never shake it off," he thought. And close upon this conclusion followed the involuntary judgment: "Her mind is too narrow and inferior to sustain such a struggle—although I suspect she is not without some mental parts."

"To the Christian, life is full of beautiful meaning," Theo protested in reply to his speech; but she did not now speak with confidence and decision. "To the agnostic, it must be utterly barren and meaningless."

"To the agnostic, man's destiny 'consists in resignation and activity', as Comte says. "Men are like children playing by the seashore who build their little forts and castles of sand, and the great waves come with the rising tide and sweep and level the long beach, the world around. Then the children go on with the play again, as though their forts would stand forever. Men build with sand of gold and silver. Some sturdy grovellers scratch big piles together, and all the world wonders. The work of a Cræsus or a Vanderbilt rises for a time above the destroying waves; but a few centuries slip by, and Cræsus or Vanderbilt, or our friend Colwell, where are they?"

"But meanwhile," said Theo, with flushed cheeks and very bright eyes, "in some safe, strong place, where currents meet, a wise and thoughtful man, with earnest toil, places a single stubborn rock. The waters wash around it. The waves that level the sand cannot move it. The

currents leave upon it wreckage and drift. Even 'all-destroying time' is baffled. A strong-hold is formed, currents are given new directions, vessels find safe harbor. Through years, generations and long stormy centuries, the little work of the earnest, thoughtful Christian grows in value."

For a moment after she had spoken there was silence. Then Rushmore, ignoring Udell's reverend presence, said —

"Agnosticism has in it nothing which can supply the comfort of the Christian faith. Nevertheless, I am always sorry for a young man whom I see entering the ministry. It is as if he were deliberately putting his intellect into a monastery. Any system which confines Truth within certain prescribed limits carries Death on its face. And the average young theologian comes out of the seminary with this Death stamped on his mind. He has thoroughly learned his system of dogmatism and thinks he has reached the end of Truth. Consequently he does not try to satisfy that eternal craving of the growing mind and soul, that hunger after Truth in all of its forms, and wherever it exists. To live is to strive. He rests. He has learned it all. There is nothing beyond the ingenious theological structure which he has studied. Life in all its forms and relations is looked at through the system, as through a glass, darkly. There is nothing left to search for. His intellect is indolent. It grows lazy and stagnates. It is entombed alive."

When he had finished, Theo rose from her divan and said in a slightly unsteady voice —

"Pardon me, if I leave you now. When I tell you that my father and brother are both Christian ministers

you will understand how very unpleasant this conversation has become to me."

She walked slowly away, leaving them standing alone together. They watched the majestic figure as it moved across the floor, finally disappearing amid the throngs in the room beyond.

Then Rushmore turned his head and looked at Udell.

"Such bigotry as that is quite phenomenal in these times, isn't it?"

"I quite understand it in her case."

"I dare say," said Rushmore with supreme indifference.

He turned away and walked toward a door leading to a conservatory of flowers. He wanted to be alone.

An hour later, when the evening's festivities were on the wane, Theo, in weariness of spirit, had again separated herself from the company and had sought a solitary corner where she was able to think uninterruptedly. She had just become absorbed in a problem which had been more or less occupying her busy brain all through the evening, a speculation upon the possession of the great wealth so lavishly displayed all around her in this home of the young millionaire Colwell. She had overheard some one say that the floral decorations for this little party had cost over \$2,000. The dishes from which they had eaten were of gold, silver, cut glass and the most costly imported china. The furniture throughout the house was extravagant in the extreme. "Is it right? Should I like to be so rich? Would it make me more contented or happy? Are these really the good things of life? These people think them so, I know. They appear to enjoy themselves thoroughly. Life is sweet to them. They don't know what it is to struggle and strive."



The answer came to her readily. "It is unworthy to consider the good things of life. Christ would not have done so. His was the most blessed life of all, and it was entirely devoid of these so-called 'good things', which are really the heavy burden and the heavy yoke. 'His yoke is easy and His burden is light,' because it brings with it that peace which the world cannot give." And a prayer went up from her heart that she might always bear that easier yoke and that lighter burden of self-sacrificing love and devotion to Truth and Duty.

She was well aware how the world bowed down to this young Croesus, Colwell. She must have been blindly stupid not to have observed it in all these weeks. It was a matter of wonder to her why people should so honor and kneel before a man who had nothing whatever to recommend him except a colossal fortune. There is nothing which will so effectually shatter one's exalted conceptions of humanity as the observation of its servile, grovelling worship of the rich; nothing which is so sure to arouse in an honest, self-poised mind that spirit of cynicism which denies the existence of anything really great and good in human nature.

Presently her meditation was disturbed. There were so few people in the part of the room where she sat, that any movement among them could not fail to be noticed. Theo's eye was suddenly caught by a tall figure, stepping rather heavily across the floor. It was Rushmore. She saw him edge his way between isolated groups of chattering and various pieces of furniture and draw near to the corner where she sat. Was he coming to speak with her? Her heart leapt in her bosom, and then as suddenly became still and calm again.

But in a moment she perceived it was not she whom his eyes sought. It was that pretty, fragile-looking creature on the sofa near by whom he was approaching, that lovely young thing in pale pink *tulle* whose appearance Theo could compare to nothing else than a cloud at sunset.

She had been chatting gaily with a handsome young lieutenant who sat beside her, and she looked decidedly annoyed at the approach of Rushmore. Theo had noticed during the evening that most of the men were inclined to be extremely affable and agreeable in addressing this dainty beauty. But as Rushmore's large figure bent down over the small creature, Theo saw that his face was cold, and never more unsmiling; when he spoke he was very grave. She was near enough to hear what he said.

"Do you feel ready to go home now, Isabel?"

She answered him pettishly, with the fretfulness of a pampered, spoiled child —

"I shall let you know when I am ready to go, Horace. Do go away and leave me in peace!"

He lifted his head and stood erect again. There was no perceptible change in the expression of his face. He turned and walked away, presently disappearing behind a heavy silk portiere which opened into a room beyond.

Another half-hour passed by. Theo continued to sit in her obscure corner, which seemed to have been designed for solitary meditation. Nearly all the guests had departed and the few remaining ones were taking leave of Mr. Colwell and his married sister, but Theo could see from her post of observation that Mr. and Mrs. Graybill were as yet making no move to go. Mr. Rush-

more, too, still lingered; and the fairy little woman in pink still sat on her sofa near Theo's corner. The dainty, small creature was alone now, the handsome young lieutenant having left her a few moments before. Theo noticed that she looked very tired, and that every now and then she glanced around the room as though in search of some one to come and take her away.

Theo, herself, was in no hurry to be gone. Somehow, this evening, she had not felt her usual impatience to get away early from the gay pleasures which were so foreign to her nature. She scarcely understood why it was she was so content to remain to-night quite as long as her Cousin Violet chose to stay. She accounted for it, in part, by the interest which had sprung up in her mind concerning the pretty woman in pink *tulle*. Once, Theo distinctly saw this small woman's eyes meet Rushmore's as he stood at the other end of the room talking to Colwell. Rushmore's glance toward her had been keen and direct. Hers had been a pouting, injured look which should have made its victim feel himself a criminal indeed. But it did not appear to affect him in the slightest, for he took no further notice of her for some time.

At last, however, the rooms were almost entirely emptied. No one remained except the Graybills, Rushmore, mine host and hostess. They approached in a group the end of the room where the young lady in pink sat alone. Colwell at once espied Theo in her corner and hastened to seat himself at her side. His sister, Mrs. Arthurs, together with Rushmore and the Graybills, paused before the sofa on which was seated the cloud-like apparition in whom Theo was far more interested than in the exquisite Colwell. She replied very absently to his devoted atten-

tions, while she watched the little scene around the sofa.

"You look so tired, Isabel," Mrs. Graybill said, sympathetically. "I think you are scarcely strong enough for the exertion of evening parties."

"How observant you are, dear Mrs. Graybill. There are some eyes which never notice how weak I grow," she languidly responded, casting a reproachful glance upon Rushmore. She leaned back on the sofa and half-closed her blue eyes. Her face looked almost transparent now in its whiteness, but it was very beautiful. Theo sought Rushmore's face to see him express some concern for this pale, weary little woman, worn out with the evening's labor of making herself fascinating; but he seemed to avoid looking at her, and kept his eyes resolutely turned the other way.

"My dear," Mrs. Graybill continued, "you really ought not to go to so many evening parties. Why do you?"

"To drown care, dear Mrs. Graybill. I go out into society to drown care."

"Why, you poor, dear child!" laughed Mrs. Arthurs, "what cares do you have?"

"I have nothing but cares, dear Mrs. Arthurs, as you would discover if you lived with me for one week!"

"Why, how perfectful dreadful! You must employ Dr. Southdown. I found him excellent when I had nervous prostration."

"I do not refer to my physical sufferings, dear Mrs. Arthurs. They are bad enough, I own. But my mental sufferings are far worse."

"Why, how odd, dear! Is Mr. Rushmore a perfect ogre?"

Rushmore turned slowly and fixed his eyes upon the pale face on the sofa as he said carelessly, "Tell your friends, Isabel, what a Bluebeard I am. They will be entertained. And Graybill will have an article for his daily to-morrow."

A rather unpleasant silence followed this little outbreak. Isabel pouted and looked injured. Rushmore's countenance remained cold and quite indifferent. Mrs. Arthurs' bright eyes sparkled with curiosity.

But awkward pauses were never of long duration where Mrs. Graybill was. She gracefully broke the embarrassing stillness by saying to Rushmore —

"You ought not to allow this delicate little creature to go out so much on these cold winter evenings. You men are so stupid and unobservant; can't you see that it is too much for her?"

"Isabel is not in the habit of asking my permission to go out of an evening," he said, with a little ironical laugh.

"Well, do you really mean to say that you can't manage that tiny thing — you great, strong man?" demanded Mrs. Arthurs. "You, whom my husband tells me can manage the most implacable of men?"

"I fear I must confess my weakness in this case."

"Come, Isabel," interrupted Mrs. Graybill, fearing another embarrassing turn of the conversation. "You are worn out. We are going now. Are not you coming, too?"

"I can't go until Horace is ready," she said pettishly. "I am waiting his pleasure."

"Isabel," Rushmore said, quietly, "you told me some time ago that you would let me know when you were

ready to go home. I've been waiting patiently for your signal ever since. I didn't want to annoy you again by proposing to leave before you were quite ready."

He stepped to a table at the side of the room whereon were decanters and wine-glasses, and pouring out a glass of champagne, he picked it up and carried it to the sofa.

Mr. and Mrs. Graybill and Mrs. Arthurs had walked away, but Theo still remained close by with Mr. Colwell.

Rushmore bent toward Isabel and offered her the glass. He spoke to her now with a courtesy and a gentleness that had been lacking in his manner while others were listening to him.

"Take it. You do look tired. Drink it, and you will feel stronger."

The fact was, if it had not been for Mrs. Rushmore's open publication of their conjugal infelicity, the world would never have known of it through her husband. He would proudly have resented any imputation even from his closest friends, that they were not perfectly happy, and that he loved his wife. But it was quite in keeping with the perversity of his nature to meet her unreserved revelation of their uncongeniality by abandoning, on his part, all attempt at concealment.

Just now, instead of accepting his conciliatory offer of the wine, she pushed it away with a pout. "You need not try to reconcile me. You have treated me cruelly this evening and I shall not forgive you."

He turned from her without speaking and carried the glass back to the table. Then returning to her side, he bent over her again and said, gravely. "You must let me help you up-stairs now. Take my arm and lean on me."

"Oh, you are really ready at last, are you, to take me home?" she said, mockingly.

He turned his black eyes full upon her face.

"Come, Isabel," he said, in the same quiet, grave voice. Something in that look and tone controlled her. Without further demur she laid her small hand on his big, black sleeve, and allowed him to assist her out of the room.

As they disappeared through the door, Colwell said, "Rushmore is remarkably patient with that sickly little wife of his."

Theo started. "Wife?" she repeated. "Is that woman Mr. Horace Rushmore's wife?"

"Yes; and she leads him a torment of a life, as anyone may see. Rushmore's so awfully clever and intellectual and all that sort of thing, don't you know—and Mrs. Rushmore must, of course, be a trial to him, for she isn't any too strong-minded—a little silly, don't you know. At least, that is what people say. I always find her very congenial."

"I've no doubt," Theo could not resist saying; and then, abruptly excusing herself, she left him and followed Mrs. Graybill up-stairs to the dressing-room.

A little later they all came down again, enveloped in their long, fur-trimmed evening wraps and dainty head-gear, carrying their silk bags on their arms and holding up their elaborate trains.

What a change it seemed to Theo to step from that hot, brilliantly-lighted house with the noise of music still in her ears, the dazzling sparkle of jewels still in her eyes, the odor of champagne yet in her nostrils—out into the clear, cold, starlit night! She looked up into the calm

heavens, as she stood on the wide marble steps in front of the mansion, and she thought they seemed to look reproachfully upon her. How hideous seemed the selfishness, pride and artificiality of the scene she had left, before that pure and silent judgment which looked down upon her from the stars. Nature's holiness rebuked fashion's vanity. She shivered and drew her cloak closer about her, as she withdrew her eyes from the blue expanse above her.

Just as she was about to step into Mrs. Graybill's carriage, she saw walking across the pavement, a large, broad-shouldered man. She paused with her foot on the step and her heart leapt up in her bosom; for the man looked like her father, and for a moment she was startled into a sort of terror of him — the old, childish fear which she used to feel when detected by him in any wrongdoing. She discovered her mistake almost immediately, but the shock of this momentary delusion did not soon leave her. During many days it remained with her as food for thought.

When she had seated herself in the carriage at Mrs. Graybill's side and just as Mr. Graybill was about to get in, he was detained a moment by Rushmore, who had hastened from the house to speak to him.

As the young lawyer stood on the snow-covered pavement, clad in his long, black overcoat, with one gloved hand thrust as usual between the buttons, Theo, leaning back in her softly-cushioned seat, watched the pale, stern face, unsoftened by the cold starlight, and felt a pang of pity for that frail little woman whom he held at his mercy.

"To be married to a man of such strength and have him hate his bondage — how dreadful!" she thought.



"But he is tender and patient with her," added her just judgment, "and, perhaps, he is more to be pitied than she. Oh, I seem to pity everybody in this strange, new life!"

And again she shivered and drew her cloak closer around her.

In a moment Graybill thrust his head into the carriage and spoke to his wife.

"Rushmore's carriage has not arrived, Violet. We can make room for him and Mrs. Rushmore in ours, can't we?"

"We shall be delighted," Mrs. Graybill responded, leaning out of the carriage door and speaking to Rushmore. "Bring Isabel right out, Mr. Rushmore, and we shall drop you both at your own house."

"Thank you." Rushmore rapidly mounted the steps again and disappeared within the great doorway.

A moment later he came out with the frail burden leaning on his strong arm. He moved slowly now, and cautiously picked his way over the snow-covered pavement. Arrived at the carriage door he lifted her in and carefully tucked the robes about her lap and feet. Then getting into the carriage beside her, he closed the door, and Mr. Graybill gave the order to the driver. The carriage was a wide, commodious affair and the seat opposite Mr. and Mrs. Rushmore was not at all crowded with Theo and Mr. and Mrs. Graybill in it.

"Haven't you had a beautiful time, Isabel?" Mrs. Graybill asked, brightly. Her spirits seemed never to flag — not even after a long evening at a dancing-party.

"Perfectly beautiful!" Isabel languidly responded. "Mr. Colwell does give such pretty parties."

"What did you think of it, Theo?" Mrs. Graybill asked, turning to her cousin, who leaned far back among the luxurious cushions of the carriage, pale and silent.

"I was interested."

"Interested? In whom? Our host?" Mrs. Graybill playfully asked.

"No. He is very uninteresting to me."

It was no slight novelty to Rushmore to observe how Miss Waddington's opinion of the young heir was entirely unbiased by his wealth. He looked at her curiously. She was very beautiful and graceful now, as she leaned back among the crimson cushions, her long, fur-trimmed robe sweeping the floor of the carriage, her gloved hands clasped in her lap, and her dark eyes shining with a warm, drowsy light, from out her pale face.

"But tell me, Theo," Mrs. Graybill persisted, "didn't you like the party very much?"

"You know, Cousin Violet, social roles are not very much to my taste."

"Why, how very much like Horace that sounds!" chirped little Mrs. Rushmore. "He doesn't like society, either, and never would go to a single party in this world if I didn't make him take me. I couldn't live without parties! Why, how should I fill in the time? Horace, you ought to be married to a girl like Miss Waddington, instead of to a society butterfly like me. Come now, ought you not?"

"She would make me go to church. You make me go parties. I don't know which of the two pastimes is more intolerable. But, I am afraid if I found myself married to a religious person, the divorce courts would soon have another case to try. I couldn't stand it."

"You don't imagine, Mr. Rushmore, that any religious devoteé would marry such a heathen as you, do you?" inquired Mrs. Graybill.

"People never know what they are marrying. Didn't you and your husband learn to know each other only after you had been married six months or more? And were you each not astonished to find the other so very different from the creature you thought you had married? Marriage is always a leap in the dark."

"What an original remark, Mr. Rushmore! Of course, all we old married people know that marriage is not in reality what it appears to be to those outside the circle. Now how does it strike you, Theo?"

Theo roused herself to reply.

"The married life of my parents has been one long romance, but I can't help thinking there are few such perfect marriages as theirs. It is because people marry from the wrong motives."

"What is the right motive, pray?" Rushmore quickly asked.

"Unless two persons feel an inward necessity for union I think it is sinful for them to marry."

"True. The only proper reason for marriage is intellectual congeniality."

A strange remark, Theo thought, for a man to make in the presence of a wife anyone might see was not only intellectually inferior to the brilliant husband by her side, but who was not even blessed with the usual amount of mother-wit necessary to pass well in respectable society. Perhaps, however, it was this very lack in her which made him feel so keenly their conjugal infelicity. This conversation had hardly passed when they drew

up before Rushmore's home — a handsome, brown-stone residence.

Every window was darkened save one; a bright light burned in a room of the second story. Rushmore's quick eye noticed it at once.

"Lucy must be awake," he said hastily, as he pushed open the carriage door.

"How tiresome!" murmured Mrs. Rushmore. "I do hope she won't be crying when I go up-stairs; for I'm too tired and nervous to-night to bear it. Children are so trying, are they not, dear Mrs. Graybill?"

Mrs. Graybill was spared the necessity of replying, as Rushmore had now stepped upon the pavement, and was extending his hand to his wife to assist her from the carriage. His face had suddenly grown white and stern, and his lips were compressed as though the light burden which his strong arms lifted from the carriage were all too heavy for his endurance.

Mrs. Graybill leaned forward and spoke to him. "I hope Lucy is not ill?"

"She was ailing when we left the house this evening," he said, shortly; and as he spoke, Theo, whose eyes were fastened upon that one bright window of the great, dark house, suddenly saw a tiny, white-robed figure appear before it. The little one pressed her forehead against the glass and peered down into the street.

Mr. and Mrs. Rushmore bade the Graybills and Miss Waddington good-night; then the carriage door was closed again and the heavy equipage rolled away.

An hour later, when the midnight was waning into the wee, small morning hours, Theo sat in a great easy-chair before the glowing fire in her bed-chamber. Her

maid had put away her evening's finery, and she was now comfortably robed in a long, loose bedroom-gown of white surah silk, a gift of her Cousin Violet. Her brown hair was hanging over her shoulders in a thick plait, the end lying curled in her lap. Her head rested against the back of her chair; her hands were clasped in her lap; her slippered feet pressed the fender of the fire.

In her mind she was comparing the Mr. Rushmore she had known in her childhood with the cold, proud, cynical man she had again so unpleasantly encountered.

"Was it his disappointment in his marriage that made him become so?" she wondered. "Could not so strong a mind as his rise above that one mistake of his life? Was he not brave enough to rally his powers anew after his one defeat? He had in him the making of a noble man. Why has he turned out such a failure? I have not much respect for a character which has not force enough to rise above mere external circumstances. I have in me too much of the stoicism of Marcus Aurelius (heathen though he was) to feel much toleration for such weakness."

She could not help feeling that perhaps down deep in his heart, he still remained unspoiled, and that his cynicism, his mockery, his hardness were, after all, only surface irritations.

"If he could but become a Christian!" she said to herself. But in her heart she realized the absolute impossibility of the submission of that free intellect to the guidance of the Christian teachings. Only half acknowledged to herself was her own constant repression of the suggestions and convictions which she dared not honestly face.

## CHAPTER IV

TWO weeks passed by — two weeks which seemed to Theo like as many days, so fast they flew, and so filled they were with social festivities of all sorts. Her life at her cousin's was one continual round of gayety.

During this time she was constantly meeting the all-popular and omnipresent Colwell, without whom no party seemed complete. He was most assiduous in his attentions to her whenever they met — much to her own weariness and the jealousy of many marriageable young ladies in the market. At a musical which he gave at his home, it was remarked that he never once left her side during the whole evening. The newspapers, which kept the public constantly informed of his movements, hinted at the awful possibility of his infatuation with the handsome young lady who was visiting Mrs. Graybill.

One evening he succeeded in persuading her to go to a theatre with him — a thing which Mrs. Graybill had, for a long time, failed to make her do. Theo said that her only reason for going was that she might see for herself what wickedness there really was in this worldly pleasure which she had all her life heard denounced so severely. But when, upon her return, she impulsively declared, in a burst of enthusiasm, that she should love to be an actress, or at least a writer of plays, her cousin felt quite encouraged to hope that perhaps in time she

would be quite converted from her inconvenient Puritan ideas.

"To-night, for the first time in a long while," Theo said as, after the theatre, she and Mrs. Graybill sat together in the former's dressing-room, talking it over, "I have been perfectly happy."

"And you don't think it wicked?"

"No. I don't know. I can't help being fascinated by it. I am hungry for more of it."

Her eyes were very bright as she spoke and her face was unusually flushed.

"Is this enthusiasm all for the play?" Mrs. Graybill asked, looking at her suggestively; "and none for your fascinating young escort?"

"The only thing which marred my perfect pleasure was that Mr. Colwell would insist upon talking to me while the play was going on—until I requested him not to."

"Theo, don't you like him at all?"

"I have tried to," she said, a little anxiously, "because he seems to have taken an odd fancy to me. But, Cousin Violet, if only he were a little sensible! And if only he would not take the trouble to be affected!"

The look in Theo's eyes was almost piteous as she said this, and Mrs. Graybill laughed at her merrily.

"Why, Theo, even under the most trying circumstances he does not throw off those manners of his. I saw him once when he was very sea-sick, and even then he 'took the trouble to be affected', as you express it."

"I suppose," said Theo, gravely, and with a touch of compassion, "poor Mr. Colwell can't help being a—a fool."

This remark Mrs. Graybill seemed to find convulsively amusing. She swayed to and fro and wiped her eyes in the excess of her emotion.

“You are so unsophisticated!” she murmured when she could finally find breath to speak. “Although you are only a poor, country damsel, yet you are absolutely unmoved by that man’s great wealth and influential position. I believe you are not in the least tempted by these things.”

“Tempted by them!” She could not understand her cousin.

Mrs. Graybill looked at her strangely. “Can it be,” she thought, “that she really has no idea that Colwell is very much smitten with her? Has she actually never thought of such a thing? Has the girl no worldly ambition whatever?”

But she was too politic to suggest to Theo her own ideas as to the “odd fancy” which the young nabob seemed to have taken to her. She thought her wiser course would be to leave that for future developments to reveal.

One afternoon Theo was sitting alone in a quaintly-furnished sitting-room which was used by Mrs. Graybill for the reception of informal or morning callers. In comparison with most of the other rooms of the house, this sitting-room was rather small and plain; but in itself it was both spacious and luxurious.

Theo had been, for the past half hour, receiving a few stray visitors alone, as her cousin had been occupied and had been unable to come down-stairs.

The interval between the departure and arrival of callers, on this afternoon, had been extremely short—all too



short, in Theo's estimation. She had been alone but a few moments and now another visitor was ushered in.

She was surprised at herself for the start she experienced upon discovering this new comer to be none other than Mr. Rushmore, whom she had not seen since the night of Mr. Colwell's dancing-party. But her momentary agitation was quickly put down. She rose to greet him as he stepped toward her across the room, and her manner was cold and self-possessed as she gave him her hand. She had heard him inquire for Mrs. Graybill and she knew he had neither expected nor desired to see her. She determined that she would not inflict herself upon him. When she seated herself again, she chose a chair beside a rather distant window, just as far removed from him as politeness would allow, and at once bent her eyes upon some fancy work with which she had been occupied before he came in. She told herself that she did not like him, and she knew in her heart that she dreaded him — dreaded those fearful doubts which his mockery of the religion she loved aroused in her mind.

"I am sorry Cousin Violet is detained up-stairs," she said, without looking up. "But if you have time to wait, she will be able to come down in about ten minutes, I think."

"I am anxious to see her — I shall wait."

He settled himself comfortably in his easy-chair and picked up a magazine from a table, close by. He saw that Miss Waddington evidently wished to avoid talking with him. Her feelings in this respect quite coincided with his own. A *tête-à-tête* with the fair Puritan would not have been at all to his taste. As has before been stated in this narrative, Horace Rushmore usually ignored

conventionalities when it did not suit his convenience to observe them. So now he made not the least effort to perform the well-bred formality of keeping up a conversation with Mrs. Graybill's cousin. So long as she showed no special inclination to talk with him, he would not trouble himself. At any rate what could they possibly talk about? They had probably not a single idea in common. To be sure, he had many a time before held very diverting chats with women with whom he had had no ideas in common; but they had been of the light and frivolous sort and not of the funereal solemnity which characterized Miss Waddington. If there was one thing above another which he disliked, it was a bigoted, opinionated woman.

So he carelessly ignored her presence, as he sat turning over the leaves of the magazine, and idly glancing at the topics which headed the pages.

Yet he was surprised to find what a vivid consciousness he had of that quiet presence beside yonder window. His eyes kept persistently wandering from the magazine on his knee to the corner where she sat bending over her embroidery.

Her appearance this afternoon was not so startling as it had been on that night of Colwell's party. She looked not at all like a fashionable worldling now, for she was dressed very simply in a plain, close-fitting gown of pale-gray cashmere, without trimmings or ornament. She seemed to-day more as she had on that Sunday afternoon when he had first seen her, a unique and unsophisticated creature, very much out of her element in the midst of the frivolous, worldly life of Mrs. Graybill's household.

He found himself, after awhile, anxiously interested in

watching the movements of her strong, supple fingers, as she plied her needle. The hands were not small, but they were white and beautifully shaped, and there was a suggestion of latent strength in their graceful action.

As he watched them a strange feeling came over him, a conviction that there was in those firm, substantial hands an odd familiarity to his eyes. He thought the idea rather absurd, but he could not put it from him. Where had he seen hands like those before? Why did they seem so familiar to him?

He looked up at her face, for he remembered that that, too, had struck him as being familiar the first time he had seen it, although the impression had quickly worn away. He was startled now as he caught an expression about the sensitive mouth which seemed as well known to him as the face of his own little daughter, or of his wife. What could it mean? He bent forward slightly and looked at her more closely. She glanced up, and as she met his eye she blushed a little and quickly turned her attention again to her work.

It was then, at this moment, that, like a flash, he realized who she was.

Little Theo, his prim little neighbor in York! The daughter of that bigoted, Calvinistic preacher, Dr. Waddington, whom he remembered perfectly! How strange that he had not thought of it before. But who would have dreamed of that sallow little girl turning out to be such a fine-looking woman as this? Did she remember him? No, that was scarcely possible. He, however, could clearly recall her as she had been eight years ago—a quaint, interesting child, very precocious and amusingly honest. She should have grown to be as fine a woman,

mentally and morally, as she was physically. But no doubt she had been cramped and dwarfed and frozen out by Calvinistic teachings and strict parental discipline. He felt an inclination to smile at the recollection of his ponderous, clerical neighbor who had been wont to carry about with him an air of Head-of-His-House as well as of ministerial benediction. He understood now why Miss Waddington's hands looked so familiar to him—they were the exact counterpart of her father's; and many a time had Rushmore in observing the fine gestures of the eloquent Dr. Waddington, admired the strong, substantial hands which he effectively wielded in emphasizing the doctrine he taught. And as he continued to watch Theo's needle moving in and out of her embroidery he felt sure that he saw in her firm, well-shaped fingers, something of her father's relentless decision. He wondered if her disposition were really anything like his.

"She is like him," he told himself, "in some respects. She has his determination and his devotion to duty; but she lacks the tenderness of his nature. She is an icicle."

Just here, Theo again raised her eyes, for she felt his scrutiny.

How changed appeared the expression of her marble, statue-like face, when her eyes were uplifted. Those warm, drowsy eyes seemed to hold under control all the minor features of her face, and entirely to transform her countenance. It no longer looked cold and chilling, but full of sensibility and tenderness.

He felt a sudden desire to speak to her. His discovery that she was his one-time little friend and neighbor of York invested her with a new and peculiar interest in his eyes. He rose abruptly and strode to her side. A

large red-leather chair stood in front of her. He pushed it a trifle nearer and seated himself in it. Leaning his elbows upon the arm of it and resting his cheek against his fingers, he watched her as she continued to bend over her embroidery, coolly ignoring his now closer proximity.

“Do you enjoy doing that?”

She let her hands fall into her lap and looked up at him.

“No.”

“Most women are very fond of it.”

“I know it,” she said, slowly.

“If you are not, why do you do it?”

She looked down into her lap and again took into her hands the dainty silk and floss. He felt half sorry to have those clear eyes turned away from him. It was not an uninteresting study to contemplate in them, the odd and rather charming combination of the child and the woman which he thought he recognized in their innocence and seriousness.

“Shall I really tell you why I do it?” she asked, as she carefully pushed her needle through the silk pansy she was forming.

“I admit I have some curiosity to know.”

“Cousin Violet thinks my awkwardness and silence in company can be somewhat covered by my being occupied with fancy work. That is why I do it—she wishes me to,” she added, simply, and without the slightest change in the grave expression of her face.

“Well,” thought Mr. Rushmore, “such absolute unsophisticatedness it has never been my lot to encounter before.”

“I think,” she continued, “of Mrs. Browning’s verses in ‘Aurora Leigh’, whenever I take up this foolish labor —

“‘The works of women are symbolical;  
 We sew, sew, prick our fingers, dull our sight,  
 Producing what? A pair of slippers, sir,  
 To put on when you’re weary — or a stool  
 To tumble over and vex you — ‘curse that stool!’  
 Or else, at best, a cushion where you lean  
 And sleep, and dream of something we are not,  
 But would be for your sake. Alas, alas!  
 This hurts most, this — that after all, we are paid  
 The worth of our work, perhaps.’”

“You and Mrs. Browning are traitors to your sex thus to denounce this essentially feminine occupation,” he said, touching with his fingers the work in her hands. “Do you have as great a contempt for your sex in other matters, as in this matter of fancy work?”

“It is not contempt that I feel — it is pity.”

“Contempt is often the outgrowth of pity. If you remain in New York much longer, you will become a cynic.”

“I hope not,” she said, quickly. “Cynicism is usually the off-spring of bad digestion or some other deformity. The cynic sees but a small arc in the great circumference of truth.”

He felt she was giving him a sly thrust in this well-turned remark. It astonished him to be called narrow-minded by a bigoted young Presbyterian. But the directness and candor of her manner and speech, so absolutely free from studied and self-conscious affectation, he really found very refreshing.

“The cynic sees,” he replied, “what slaves men are of

convention and of the past. Why can't we shake it all off," he earnestly added, "and stand forth free and alone, boldly living out a true manhood, absolutely untouched by lying custom. Few men," he continued, gloomily, "are so broad-minded as to pay homage to nothing save truth. Everywhere, in all men, even in the most learned, I find some leaning of courtesy, and I cannot trust them. The free spirits of the world—how many have they been? You may count them on your fingers."

She glanced up at him and he was struck by the look on her face. There was in her eyes a glow of sympathy for the thought he had uttered, and an expression as of the secret hunger for liberty in the heart of a captive.

"The life you are leading here," he went on, watching her curiously, "is a great change from that to which you have been accustomed in your home, is it not?"

"Very."

"Do you find it pleasant or otherwise?"

"I find it most interesting. Much of it is very delightful. But," she said, a slight color coming into her cheeks, "I see much that pains me."

"For instance?"

She hesitated a moment, letting her hands rest idly in her lap. Then looking at him gravely, she said, "I am a Christian. These people among whom I am now living are not Christians."

"Neither are you a Christian," he replied. "Christ's teachings are nowhere followed in our day. If they were we should have no civilization. 'Sell all thou hast and give it to the poor.' 'Take no thought for the morrow,' and so forth. If these commands were carried out, where would be our civilization?"

"That is idle. You have become a victim of 'cunningly devised fables and the sophistries of men'," she said in a tone so exactly like that which Rushmore well remembered her father once to have used when praying for him as a misguided dupe of fables and sophistries, that he could not help smiling. He felt a sudden curiosity to know if she had any recollection of those days when he had been her opposite neighbor in York. He thought he would test her.

"Do you know, Miss Waddington, there is something strangely familiar to me in your face? Did I ever meet you anywhere before?"

"You expect my memory of such an event to be better than your own? That is not flattering."

"Miss Waddington, you are learning to use small talk," he said, thinking within himself that she evidently had long since forgotten her former acquaintance with him. The question which she the next moment asked of him confirmed this opinion.

"How did you know, Mr. Rushmore, that my life at home was so different from this? Has Cousin Violet spoken of my family to you?"

"Yes. She told me you had always lived in a very quiet way."

Theo smiled, as she responded, "You who live here in the noise and bustle and excitement of New York, can have no idea how quiet my life at home is."

"You will miss the gayety and excitement when you go home, won't you?"

"I don't know—I often feel very homesick to see mother and father and all the rest. They are all the society I have at home. I have not even a single inti-



mate friend outside of my home. I never did make any bosom friendships as my sisters did, although once I almost made one, and" —

She stopped short and blushed quite red, much to Rushmore's mystification. Theo herself scarcely understood the instinct which checked her from recalling to his mind his former little friend.

"You ought to have a bosom friend," he said, abruptly. "Bacon says truly, in his quaint, old-fashioned English, 'A principal fruit of friendships is the ease and discharge of the fullness and swellings of the heart which passions of all kinds do cause and induce. We know diseases of stoppings and suffocations are the most dangerous in the body and it is not much otherwise in the mind.' Have you read any of Bacon?"

"Yes."

"Most young ladies in answering that, or any similar question, would immediately and gratuitously favor me with their opinion of the author in question; they would say, 'Oh, yes, I've read him; and isn't he just too perfectly dear for anything? So much like our own dear Emerson!' and so forth. Miss Waddington, your lack of enthusiasm is positively callous."

Theo was spared the necessity of replying to this remark, for at this moment Mr. Colwell was shown into the room and she was compelled to put down her work and rise to meet him.

"So pleased to find you in, Miss Waddington!" exclaimed that ardent young man in a manner so like that which Mr. Rushmore had just been affecting in imitation of the typical society young lady, that Theo could with difficulty maintain her gravity. "Perfectly charmed

really, to find that you have not gone out to ride or anything of that sort, don't you know. How perfectly sweet and cosy you look in this dear, pretty room. Why, Rushmore, I had no idea of finding you here! How could you manage to spare the time? Doesn't that Maybrook case come up in court to-morrow?"

Mrs. Graybill now entered the room, and after a few moments' chat with her, Rushmore took his leave.

## CHAPTER V

YOU will be at home in time to help me receive to-night, will you not, Horace?"

Mrs. Rushmore, from her morning-room, had overheard her husband enter the adjoining nursery to bid his little daughter good-by before going down to his office; and she had just made the unusual exertion of rising unaided from her easy-chair to follow him in order to put to him the above question.

He had seated himself before the open-grate fire and had taken his little girl on his knee. She was a slight, pale child with large, dark eyes, a very prominent forehead, and an abundance of light, wavy hair falling about her shoulders. She was only five years of age, but her face was prematurely old. There was a look of suffering about the small, delicate mouth and the little hands were very thin and white. Rushmore was holding one of them in his own large, strong ones and the child's head rested against his breast very confidently.

"No, I shall not be home in time to help you receive to-night," he replied, as his wife sat down near him.

She was as dainty and pretty this morning, in her soft, white dressing-gown trimmed with swan's-down, and with her light, curly hair twisted in a large, loose coil low on her neck, as she had looked on that evening of Mr. Col-

well's party when Theo had mentally compared her delicate beauty to a pink cloud at sunset.

"But, Horace, I can't receive alone," she objected; "you know perfectly well that I can't. The invitations were sent in both our names. You will have to come back in time."

He made no reply, but continued to smooth the head which leaned against him, as he looked down into the little one's face.

"You will have to be back in time, Horace," Mrs. Rushmore persisted.

"I can't do it, Isabel."

"But I tell you, Horace, I can't receive alone. I shall faint! I shall die! You are perfectly heartless! You don't care what happens to me! You know you don't, Horace."

There were tears in her voice; but he took no notice of the fact and gravely replied, as before—

"I told you very distinctly that if you would persist in having your party during the week of the Maybrook trial, I could not receive with you. You must now take the consequence of your obstinacy."

"Obstinacy? If this is the way I am to be treated—to be called obstinate by my own husband! And when I am so ill, too, that I am not fit to be out of bed!" And Mrs. Rushmore bent her pretty face down into her hands and burst into tears.

"Then why are you out of bed, Isabel? I'm sure I don't require you to stay up."

"To think that you could be so brutal as to taunt your sick wife!" she sobbed.

Rushmore looked anxiously at little Lucy. The child's

wide-open, dark eyes were filled with a distressed wonder, as she watched her weeping mamma. He put her from his knee hastily and rose from his chair.

"Papa must go now, Lucy. My darling, good-by." He put his arm around her, bent down and pressed her lips against his own in a long kiss.

"Will you be long away, papa?" she asked, wistfully.

"Until late, to-night, dear one. Don't try to stay awake for me."

Then he turned to his wife. "Come, Isabel, let me lead you to your room. You must rest to-day or you will be unable to get through this evening."

"You will not care if it kills me!" she said, with a hysterical sob. "If you were not so selfish and cruel you would make a little exertion to get home to help me."

"If I should come away from my office before eleven o'clock to-night, Isabel, I should lose my case. I told you beforehand how it would be if you persisted in sending out your invitations for to-night instead of waiting, but you would not heed me. Now you must abide by the consequences. I am sorry not to oblige you," he added, more gently, "but it is impossible."

"You are not sorry—you know you are not! You only want to punish me for not obeying you as though I were your slave—your galley-slave!"

"Isabel, you would make a good lawyer, you are so absolutely unreasonable. And now," he added, glancing at his watch, "I must be off. Good-morning."

He picked up his hat and gloves from a chair and quickly left the room, glancing back, as he reached the door, for a last look at his little daughter who had moved away to the most distant corner of the room, where,

seated on a low stool and leaning her cheek on her tiny hand, she watched her sobbing mother.

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Mrs. Rushmore's party was at its height. The stifling heat of the drawing-rooms was oppressive. The glare of the lights and the moving to and fro of the dancers caused Theo to feel very dizzy as she watched them. The music of the orchestra made a loud din in her ears, and the heavy fragrance of the flowers with which the apartment was elaborately decorated made her sick and faint. She felt a sudden necessity to get away from the noise and heat and crowd and go out into the fresh, cool air.

A propitious moment came, and opportunity was given her to steal away unobserved. She hurried up-stairs to the dressing-room. She always felt it a relief to be alone and quiet after the bustle and excitement of a crowded dancing-party.

It was an especial relief just now, for Mr. Colwell had been most assiduous in his attentions to her all the evening, and she was weary from the effort she had been making to be civil to him.

After she had refreshed herself with a glass of iced-water and a breath of pure air, she did not feel at all inclined to go down-stairs again. She had, during the past week, rather looked forward to this party at the Rushmores, but now, somehow she found it disappointing. Like most anticipated pleasures, it had not met her expectations. She did not definitely state to herself just in what particulars it had failed to please her. She scarcely knew.

She discovered in Rushmore's home no sign of the

strong character of its master, which she had expected to find stamped upon his household. It was so with nearly all the houses which she visited in New York City; they were not real homes, but were mere dwelling-places and entertainment-halls. They were all more or less alike, in a general way, and the individuality of their inmates was not at all felt in their equipments. Of all the wide, beautifully furnished apartments of this house, only one (a glimpse of which she had caught in passing), held any real attraction for her—and that was the stately library adjoining the dressing-room. It had looked more like a living-room than any other in the house.

Just now, she felt a strong temptation to go into this library, and spend a long, quiet hour alone with the books. She much preferred this to returning to that stifling dancing-room. She had a curiosity to see what books Mr. Rushmore possessed and read. She had an idea that in this room she would see and feel more of her old friend, the law student of York, who had been wont to burn the midnight oil in poring over his books, than she had yet seen or felt in the cold, cynical young lawyer whom she had met just three times since she had come to New York.

She stepped to the library door and looked in. The room was empty; but a bright, crackling fire burned in the open grate, and a tempting arm-chair was drawn up before it.

Theo knew she was performing an unheard-of and scandalous act in abandoning the dancing-room and stealing off alone to this precious seclusion; but that troubled her very little.

She walked across the room to the arm-chair which

stood in front of the fire. A volume was lying upon the small table which held the lamp. She picked it up and looked at it. It was Herbert Spencer's "Progress; its Law and Cause, and Other Essays". The "other essays" were all by Thomas Huxley. She supposed Mr. Rushmore had been reading it. She would sit down in this easy-chair before the fire and see what it was like.

She settled herself cosily, turned the lamp a trifle higher, and fixed the volume comfortably on her knee. Then, for a moment before turning her attention to it, she leaned her dark head against the crimson cushioned back of her chair and let her thoughts revel in this situation of ideal ease and luxury. "This is comfort. This is real enjoyment. How glad I am that I am not down in that dancing-room! Oh, why do not these people make homes for themselves with their great wealth? They seem to know nothing of the luxury and happiness of a home."

And now she gave her attention to her book. She found it interesting from the first; and as she read on and on, her interest increased, and so absorbed her mind that she became oblivious of everything around her. Page after page was read and turned. She was utterly unconscious of how the time was flying. She knew and felt nothing save the strange, new thoughts which she was learning from the great scientist and philosopher.

Six weeks before she would have considered it sacrilegious to read such a book. But her horizon had, in the past month, been steadily widening. Her mind, at first recoiling almost in horror from the worldly life into which her cousin had brought her had, after the first shock, gradually been adjusting itself to its new impressions.



Constantly meeting people whose ways of viewing all things were so directly contrary to her own, she had naturally been led to question the truth of some of her firmly established convictions. And to some minds the admission of a single doubt makes easy and rapid the road to the complete revolution of its preconceived notions. In Theo's case the seeds had fallen on fertile ground and her intellect was receiving a strange awakening.

She did not know how long she had been poring over her book, when at last her attention was attracted by a sound falling upon the quiet of the room. It broke in upon the thoughts that were filling her brain with startling effect. Yet it was a very faint sound—only a slight movement on the floor a few feet away, and a gentle, soft sigh. But Theo sat upright and glanced hastily around her, as though she had been discovered in some guilt. Then, to her astonishment, she saw what before had quite escaped her notice. A little girl lay curled up on a rug in an angle of the wall, just a few feet from the fire. Small wonder that she had not noticed her before, for the child's white night-gown was just the color of the white animal skin on which she lay, and her golden hair was the exact tint of the panel in the wall. The little one was fast asleep with one hand under her flushed cheek and the other hanging loosely at her side.

The face was very like Rushmore's. Theo gazed at it long and earnestly. It was such a wistful little countenance that it almost made her eyes fill with tears to look at it.

"Poor child!" she murmured, involuntarily. "Poor darling!"

If there is any tenderness in one it must be aroused

by the sight of a little sleeping child; for there is nothing so innocent, so appealing. Theo rose, and stepping across the floor to the rug in the corner, cautiously knelt down at the little one's side.

"I wonder how she came here. She will take cold—she is so exposed. I must cover her."

She drew from her shoulders the white silk wrap which she had put on when she had come up from the dancing-room. She laid it over the little girl's bare feet, and turned the cape of it up over her shoulders. Then a sudden temptation came to her. "I should like to hold her in my arms," she told herself, as she looked with a hungry yearning at the child's heaving bosom and flushed face. It was necessary to Theo's nature to pour out love upon something, and this little thing seemed the first really lovable object she had seen since she had come away from her home. She longed to fold it to her bosom.

"I wonder if I can pick her up without waking her. I think I shall try."

Her young arms were strong and her hands were very gentle. She carefully lifted the tiny burden, and pillowed its head upon her breast. It nestled against her confidingly, and Theo felt a strange delight swell up in her heart, as her bare arms clasped the small figure.

She rose from her knees and slowly walked back to her chair before the open grate.

An interesting picture they made as they sat there—the beautiful woman in her party costume of rich white silk, with the golden head of the slumbering child resting just below her white chest, and her fair arms clasped about the soft, warm bundle. She bent her dark head

low over the little one's face and softly kissed its warm lips and its curls.

"I wonder if her father is fond of her?" she said to herself. The mental impulse which followed the question was immediate. "Poor little one," was the compassionate utterance of her heart. "Poor little one, to be brought up in a home like this!" For Theo felt that its atmosphere must necessarily be dreary and loveless.

As in her absorbing interest in her book, she had been unconscious of the flight of time, so in her pleasure over this child, she was oblivious of all else. It made her perfectly happy to lean back in her comfortable easy-chair before the grateful blaze, and look down upon the baby-face resting on her heart.

But her pleasant revery was at last broken. An uneasy feeling suddenly caused her to raise her eyes, involuntarily, from the little girl's face, and look toward the door of the room, which was at right angles with the fire.

Her cheeks flushed crimson as her eye met that of Mr. Rushmore who, with folded arms, stood upon the threshold coolly contemplating her. "How long had he been there," she wondered, feeling her face tingle. "And what would he think of her for having explored his private library, uninvited?"

Rushmore, seeing that he was discovered, unfolded his arms, clasped them behind him, and walked slowly into the room.

He was in his ordinary office dress. He looked weary and harassed. He had not appeared at the party that evening. Unacknowledged to herself had been Theo's slight disappointment at that fact.

He paused beside her chair and looked down upon her and the child in her arms. She had composed herself by this time, and had decided not to apologize for her presence in the room unless he demanded an explanation.

Overlooking the formality of bidding her good-evening, he asked in a low voice that he might not disturb the child —

“How did you come here?”

“I grew tired of the party and came here to rest and read,” she said, looking up at him.

“‘Grew tired of the party’,” he repeated. “No woman could possibly prefer the solitude of this room to that gay assemblage down-stairs. Why did you grow tired of the party? Has Mr. Colwell become cold to you?”

“No. If he only would!” she said, so earnestly that he could scarcely doubt her sincerity.

“You did not like the party to-night?” he asked.

“I have said I grew tired of it. And so I came here to read.”

“And you found Lucy here?”

“Yes; lying fast asleep on that rug in the corner.”

“You two make a very interesting picture.”

“So it would seem; how long were you watching us?”

“I arrived at that door just about the time you discovered Lucy on the floor. You appear to be fond of children?” he asked, looking at her keenly.

“Yes.”

“Usually when I ask a woman that question, she tells me she ‘perfectly dotes on them’, or something to that effect. But your simple ‘yes’ is eloquent with meaning. Most women mean far less than they say. I know you mean more. I find your straight-forward, simple manner

of expression as refreshing as a stream of cold water in a desert."

"Are you fond of children?" she asked him.

"Of this little one, yes," he said, touching the child's hair gently. "My love for this little daughter is the only thing which vitally holds me to life. It is only when I bend over her that I can see any blessedness, any meaning in my life. And even then, thoughts come into my heart which mingle a bitterness with the sweetness. Why did I bring into the world a little being who can only struggle, suffer, err—and then die. Why—unless selfishly to purchase a drop of pure happiness for myself, in her existence."

"God must feel so sometimes about the works he has created," she said, with a child-like simplicity that made him smile.

He had no reply to make to this. He picked up the book which she had laid aside, when she had risen from her chair to go to Lucy.

"Is this what you were reading, just before I came in?"

"Yes. May I take it home with me?"

"Certainly. But it is full of heresy. Beware, beware, Miss Waddington. The preachers, you know, are fond of calling Herbert Spencer and Thomas Huxley very severe names—such as 'infidel', 'atheist', and the like—epithets which Dr. Holmes says are fast going out of use except by the intellectual half-breeds who sometimes find their way into the pulpit, or into religious periodicals."

"I am very much interested in the book," she said, her face flushing painfully. "It hurts me to read it, but—I must finish it. How can it be wrong to—to—examine

both sides of a question?" she concluded, looking at him half-appealingly.

"I am afraid you are in a dangerous way, Miss Waddington. You ought not to tamper with Herbert Spencer if you want to remain a good Presbyterian. Ignorance cannot be severed from its twin sister Faith, without the destruction of the latter."

"I don't believe that—I can't believe that! I shall read everything and prove to myself that my faith is true."

"Oh, of course, if you go at it with that idea, you may find in the writings of Tom Paine himself, nothing but proofs of the correctness of your dogmas," he said, with a sarcastic laugh.

The sound made the little girl stir in Theo's arms. They both became quiet and watched her, expecting that she would settle down again in a moment. But she opened her eyes and suddenly sat up in Theo's lap. Rushmore almost at the same instant, stepped back of the large arm-chair in which they were sitting; for he instinctively felt a desire to see what the little child would do when she discovered herself in the stranger's arms.

The big blue eyes glanced around expectantly for an instant; then an expression of disappointment gathered in them and they slowly turned upon Theo. The little girl looked at her for a moment, the disappointment changing into a great surprise. Theo remained quiet and watched her with interest. The result of Lucy's examination of the strange lady's kind face, seemed to be entirely satisfactory; she was evidently neither timid nor afraid in her unexpected situation. She laid her small

hand on Theo's bare shoulder and said, as she looked at her earnestly —

“You are very pretty. But I can't think how you happen to be here with me. Are you a fairy? No,” she hastily added, “I know you are not, because fairies are little and you are big. Did you come up from mamma's party to see me?”

“Yes, dear. I found you on the floor asleep.”

“I was waiting for papa to come home. He always comes in here to read before he goes to bed, and I was waiting for him to tell him good-night. I thought,” looking around her again, “that I heard papa talk and laugh. I guess I only dreamed it.”

Rushmore had seated himself on a stool behind Theo's chair and was consequently out of sight.

“Do you think he will soon come home?” Lucy asked, looking wistfully at Theo.

“I should think so, dear.”

“Will you stay with me until he comes?”

“If he is not too long away.”

“May be he won't come all night. Sometimes he stays away all night,” she said, sadly. “When you were a little girl, did you ever wait up for your papa?”

“No, I can't say that I did. Do you often do it?”

“Yes. Jane puts me to bed, and when she goes away, I get up and come in here. Don't tell mamma. You won't tell mamma you found me in here, will you?”

“I'm afraid you are naughty,” Theo said, looking down into the child's face with a smile, as she passed her white hand over her curls.

“Yes, I am,” she replied, confidentially. “Mamma says I am, and so does Jane.”

“And what does papa say?”

“Mamma says papa spoils me. Papa is the only person who likes me,” she added, her eyes growing very big, and her lips taking on the sensitive curve they had worn in her sleep.

Rushmore suddenly rose and came around to the front of the chair. Lucy's face lighted up but she did not cry out, as most other children would have done. He bent down over her so that his hair almost brushed Miss Waddington's white shoulder. The little girl put her arms around his neck and he lifted her from Theo's lap with the party cloak still around her.

It seemed odd to Theo to see this stern, cynical man of the world in the character of the fond and tender father. He seated himself with his child on his knee and pressed her head against his broad chest. She heaved a deep sigh of relief and contentment as she nestled close to him, keeping her eyes fixed upon the face above her, as though she feared it would vanish should she look away for an instant.

“Shut your eyes and go to sleep, dear one,” he said, gently pressing down her eyelids. “It is very late for my little girl to be up and awake. She will make herself ill, if she does so.”

Lucy obediently kept her eyes closed, even through all the conversation which followed between her papa and the strange, lovely lady. Soon the sound of their voices became a monotonous hum, distant and faint, and the drowsy eyelids ceased to quiver, but lay as still as wax over the pretty, wistful blue eyes.

“Miss Waddington,” Rushmore said, in a tone that was half-mocking, “you are a judicious young woman,



I believe. Will you tell me how I shall teach this little daughter of mine to break herself of the habit she has formed of getting out of bed when she is put there, and waiting up half the night for her papa's return home? I have told her not to do it; but when I come home and find her here, her poor little body weary with waiting for me, what can I do but kiss and forgive her? But you are your father's own daughter, and no doubt are a firm believer in the doctrine that 'family discipline should be maintained at all hazards,'" he added, in comical imitation of Dr. Waddington's emphatic manner. "So tell me what course you would advise."

Theo looked at him in astonishment.

"Then you remember my father?" she exclaimed.

It was now his turn to feel surprised. "Remember him? So you are acquainted with the fact that I once knew him? You remember my having lived in your town for a few months, eight years ago?"

"Yes, I remember you."

"Why did you never speak of it?"

"Why did *you* never speak of it?" she asked.

"I recognized you only a few weeks ago. Did you know me from the first?"

"Yes; but I never thought it worth while to try to recall myself to you, for I didn't believe you would be able to recollect our family at all."

"Oh, yes, I remember you all very well. You were an odd child. I was very much interested in you. Do you remember you once told me about the little diary you kept, in which you wrote all your 'secret thoughts' whenever you grew restless?"

"Yes, I remember," Theo said, smiling.

"I think you are like your father in many ways. You have some of his decision. You would bring up a family, not perhaps with severity, but with discipline."

"I believe the disobedience is the best thing in Lucy's life, and if I were in your place I should never treat it other than tenderly. I should certainly encourage and indulge it. Have a sofa-bedstead in this room, and let her be put to bed in it, instead of in her nursery. Don't thwart and crush but cherish everything which is sweet and good in her nature. Childhood is sad enough, God knows," she added, mournfully.

"That is not the usual theory about it," he replied, gravely, as he looked down into his child's pale, wistful face. "Lucy is not a joyous little one, but I have always thought with regret that she was an exceptional child in this respect."

"Childhood is not life's happiest time," Theo replied. "We are stronger to fight our more mature sorrows. From childhood's suffering there is no appeal, but we can have some outlook from our later troubles."

"Were you an unhappy child?"

"I had the kindest of parents, but little did they dream of the struggles which often went on in my heart. We can't be too tender with children."

"You are only half a Puritan," he said. "The woman in you almost triumphs."

Before she could reply to this they suddenly heard footsteps and voices in the hall outside the library door. Theo started and looked at Rushmore inquiringly. "Surely the party is not over already?"

"I suppose so," he said, drawing out his watch and glancing at it. "It was so late when I came in

that I rather expected to find the house empty even then."

"And were disappointed to discover that even your own private sanctum, here, was occupied by some of the company you had tried to avoid by staying out late?"

"Since you ask me — yes; I was disappointed to find that Mrs. Rushmore's party had penetrated even to these quarters."

The color came to Theo's face as she rose hastily.

"I am very sorry indeed," she said, in some confusion. "I will go away at once. I beg your pardon for this intrusion. Can you give me my cloak without waking Lucy?"

He looked up at her with something very like a twinkle of amusement in his eyes, but he made no movement toward giving her the cloak.

"Do please sit down. I feel very ungallant to be keeping my seat while you stand, but I fear I shall rouse Lucy if I get up."

"But I must go. I am an intruder here, and the people are all coming up-stairs. I must go down and speak to Mrs. Rushmore, or she will think me very remiss, and Cousin Violet will wonder what has become of me. Will you please give me my cloak?"

"You misunderstood me," he said, looking at her directly. "Although I felt chagrined to find my chair occupied and my book appropriated when I came in all tired out to-night, yet — I am glad now, to have had this chat with you. I am not now sorry you were here. Do sit down again."

"You are condescending. Will you give me my cloak, please?"

“You are offended with me?”

“Honesty never offends me. As you are not going to give me my cloak I shall have to go home without it. Good-night.”

“Stop, please, one moment. You have a spice of your father’s determination in you. As I can’t persuade you to stay, here it is. Women always have their own way with me. So do children and other weak things.”

He held out the garment, which he had so deftly removed that the child had not moved or stirred during the operation.

“‘Other weak things’,” Theo repeated, as she received it from him. “I notice you usually speak very disparagingly of women.”

“And you disapprove of me for that?”

She looked at him gravely. “I pity you. I can’t help wondering, when I hear you sneer at women, what sort of a mother you had.”

His pale face flushed as he replied —

“Now you have paid me back for having called you an intruder. Women are always vengeful.”

“I did not mean to be. Good-night.”

She glanced at Lucy, but she did not bend to kiss her, as he half-expected she would do.

“The child will take cold if you do not put something around her,” she said; and then she left him.

The cosy library looked almost dreary as there vanished from it the bright picture of the tall woman standing before the hearth, with her long skirts sweeping the dark carpet.

Rushmore rose, walked slowly and carefully across the floor and left the room. After a few moments he

returned without his little girl. He went back to the hearth and seated himself in his arm-chair. He threw his head back upon the cushion, and closed his eyes wearily. He had done a hard day's work, so hard that it had almost exhausted even his indomitable energy; for he was able to endure more than most men. His nervous and mental force, his persistency and power of endurance were the constant wonder of all his fellow-lawyers. But to-night he was tired. Not so tired, however, but that he was able to meditate a little on his encounter with Miss Waddington.

“And that is the little Theo I once knew — that! Well! I wonder if she will marry Colwell. If she does she will not be happy” — and here he frowned, as he opened his eyes and raised his head. “The man she marries must be intellectually congenial to her. And yet, I can't imagine a woman's refusing to marry Colwell. Such a thing is absolutely unthinkable. What a despicable thing human nature is!” he said, with a short, sarcastic laugh. “But,” he reluctantly admitted, looking thoughtfully into the fire, “Miss Waddington does seem honest; as much so now as I recollect her to have been when she was a little girl of thirteen,” he added, smiling. “She is not so cold, either, as I thought her; she was very gentle to Lucy when she did not know she was being observed. But perhaps, after all, she did see me appear in that doorway. If so she did the tender part to Lucy very naturally. Women are excellent at acting a part. She looked lovely as she knelt on the floor and bent over that sleeping little girl. But it is more than likely that she knew I was watching at the door.”

Then suddenly the color mounted to his face; he rose

abruptly, kicked a footstool out of his way, and strode to the other end of the room. He knew these thoughts were utterly unworthy, and he felt ashamed of himself the moment after they had crossed his mind.

“Well, well, we shall see,” he muttered, as he paced back and forth across the floor. “If she marries Colwell I shall utterly despise her. And if she is fool enough to refuse him, I shall — I shall laugh at her stupidity! For what is our life but a short, foolish farce, and if we can make our little sojourn in this absurd world easy, luxurious and enviable, by selling ourselves, why, it is a mistaken, bigoted superstition which would lead us to choose obscurity, comparative poverty, and the lack of much that makes life beautiful and desirable to the generality of mankind. And Colwell would not make a bad husband at all. She could easily persuade herself to be very fond of him.”

He stopped short and sat down once more in the arm-chair, leaning his head on his hand and again gazing thoughtfully into the fire. “Eight years ago she was a dear little child, as interesting as my own little Lucy. ‘Theo’,” he said, repeating the name as though experimenting with it. “‘Theo, Theo’ — I like the name. Somehow it suits the character of that pale, spirituelle face. What a pity it is that she has been brought up in such a narrow-minded sphere as that of Dr. Waddington’s household. She will be improved somewhat by her visit here in New York, but she will never get entirely over her Puritan primness, and her careful considering of her actions and speech. A little rash impulse would be more to my taste. I never hated Puritanism in any one as I hate it in her!”

His meditation was suddenly interrupted by the entrance of his wife. He rose as he saw her appear on the threshold. He was always punctiliously polite to her when they were alone. He was startled as he observed how pale she was, and how unsteadily she walked across the floor. She was dressed in pale, lavender silk, which was exceedingly well suited to her delicate, blond beauty. She was very dainty and lovely to look upon. Unlike most husbands, Rushmore had never grown insensible to his young wife's beauty. His artistic eye was always conscious of every detail of it, and it never failed to appeal to the natural tenderness of his disposition. Indeed he was not without a lingering love for this little tyrannical lady who had opened his eyes, as he thought, to the folly and selfishness of the female sex, shaken his faith in human nature, clouded his home with her petty temper and embittered a heart which was by nature warm and affectionate.

He hastened to her side when he saw how weak was her step and how pale and weary she was.

He put his strong arm around her small waist to support her to a seat. There was nothing caressing in the act, but there was great gentleness in the strength he lent her. He placed her in the huge chair before the hearth which a short time before had been occupied by Theo. As he looked down upon her white face resting on the cushion, he involuntarily contrasted its weak, frivolous features with the grave, earnest expression of Miss Waddington's face as it had looked a quarter of an hour before.

"This, Horace, is the result of your neglect of me. I am half dead," Mrs. Rushmore faintly said, turning her

head wearily upon the cushion. "I had to do the honors to-night entirely alone and unaided."

Rushmore made no reply as he continued to stand by her chair and look down upon her.

"I suppose you have been enjoying yourself up here with Lucy. Was that naughty child out of her bed when you came home? And what time did you get home?"

"Too late to be of any assistance to you, Isabel."

"Did you find Lucy waiting for you here?"

"Yes. Why?"

"Naughty girl! She shall be punished for that," Mrs. Rushmore cried, fretfully. "If you had any proper regard for me, Horace, you would punish her for disobeying her mother's commands. I distinctly forbade her to get out of her bed to-night."

"To-morrow I shall send up a sofa-bedstead from down town which must be put up in this room, and hereafter Lucy must be put to bed in it, instead of in the nursery."

"I shall allow nothing of the sort!" cried Isabel. "Sofa-bedsteads are horrible things, and I won't have one in my library!"

"Lucy must not be allowed to expose herself by getting out of bed and coming through the cold halls every night."

"Of course she must not. Neither must she be allowed to disobey her mother. But the way to cure her is certainly not to humor her. She needs a taste of the birch. If you do not give it to her, I shall. And as for a sofa-bedstead, if you send one up I shall send it directly back."

A little dangerous spark came into his black eyes; his



face turned a trifle paler; he frowned and compressed his lips, but he made no answer.

“Horace,” she continued, complainingly, “you are constantly revealing how much more you care for Lucy than for me. You would move heaven and earth to gratify that child’s slightest wish, and whenever I ask you to do anything, you always flatly refuse.”

Rushmore made no defense.

“You never grant a single request I make of you,” she insisted, determined to draw a reply from him.

But he continued silent.

“If I should die you would be glad of it. You have not the least sympathy with my sufferings and weakness.”

“Come,” he said, gravely, “you are very much worn out; let me help you to your dressing-room and ring for your maid.”

“Not a step shall I go until you’ve promised me that you will say no more about a sofa-bed, and that you will either punish Lucy yourself to-morrow morning, or at least not take her part if I punish her.”

“If you dare to touch a hair of her head” — but he checked himself abruptly, turned away from her and strode to the other end of the room. When after an instant he came back again to her side, his face was still pale, but he was cool and calm.

“Will you take my arm?” he said, offering it to her.

“Not until you have promised me,” she repeated, obstinately.

“You will think better of it in the morning. Come.”

“You need not imagine for a moment that you are going to persuade me to have a sofa-bedstead put up in

this library. I don't believe in humoring children to that extent."

"We shall discuss the sofa-bedstead in the morning. You are too tired now, to wrangle about it. So am I. I have worked hard to-day, and I am tired."

She had almost never before heard him say he was tired. She glanced up at him and saw how pale and weary he looked, and for a moment she felt a little mollified. But a certain expression which she caught about the curve of his lips, an expression of which years of experience had taught her the meaning, excited her to continued resistance.

"Now, Horace, I just know you are going to be hateful about that sofa-bed. You are going to be obstinate, I can see it in your face. You don't care what I suffer, you care only to please Lucy, you know you do. And you will let her disobey me to any extent without ever raising a finger to interfere, you know you will."

"If Lucy ever behaved half as badly as you are behaving just now, Isabel, I should certainly not hesitate to be quite as severe with her as you would have me."

Isabel burst into tears.

"You are perfectly brutal to me—and I am so weak and ill!" she sobbed. "I just know you are going to be perfectly obstinate about that sofa-bed—and you are going to insist upon having it, if it breaks my heart."

"I don't often oppose you. Never, when I can avoid it. But when I do come to a decision you know how futile your tears are. So now if you won't let me help you to bed, I must leave you here."

He spoke with the quiet firmness which she knew it

was useless to oppose. She dried her tears at once, rose, and allowed him to assist her out of the room.

The next day the sofa-bed was put up in the library.

Lucy was not whipped for her disobedience. Mrs. Rushmore, despite her tyrannies and her tempers, knew how far she dared try her husband's patience. But the little girl was punished in a dozen ways of which her father knew nothing. During all the long hours of the following day she was thwarted, checked, scolded and harassed almost beyond her childish power of endurance. Mrs. Rushmore was so thoroughly selfish that she had very little real love for any one besides herself.

## CHAPTER VI

NOW this is what I call real enjoyment."

Theo was sitting by Mr. Colwell's side in a low phaeton, speeding along a smooth country road at a very rapid rate. The glossy black ponies which the young man drove were of the finest breed. The phaeton was comfortably cushioned with dark green cloth. The day was bright and warm. The roads were almost perfect. The country was beautiful in its early spring dress. Theo drank in with delight this first taste of nature which she had had in many weeks. She would have preferred to ride on in silence, for the loveliness of the day was more conducive to reverie than to idle chatting. But she knew she dared not commit the social crime of allowing the conversation to flag. Her life in New York had taught her many new things; she was learning to be conventional.

A few days previous, she had happened to express in Mr. Colwell's presence a desire to breathe a breath of fresh country air, now that the long winter was drawing to an end, and spring was coming on. Mr. Colwell had immediately invited her to drive with him to one of his estates in the suburbs of the city. She had seen fit to decline this invitation for some reason inexplicable to the young man. But he was not to be foiled in his generous

purpose to please her. He forthwith got up a driving party. Ten of his handsomest carriages and twenty of his finest horses were brought into service, and a merry company set off for Mt. Vernon, Theo riding with the host.

"This is what I call real enjoyment," she had said, leaning luxuriously against the soft cushions of the phaeton, as she dreamily watched the few specks of cloud floating in the blue sky.

"I'm so glad you like it. It is a nice thing. I never thought of having this sort of a thing before. It's such a new sort of thing, don't you know. I've had almost everything one could think of, but this sort of thing never occurred to me. Now I've a riddle for you."

"Well?" she inquired, lazily. She did not object to his companionship as she would have to some other of the party; for he rattled on at such a rate that he gave her a great deal of leisure to dream and meditate between the pauses in which she was compelled to think up some remark. And it took so little to start him going again when he did stop for a moment, that she really found him very easy to get on with.

"Why are you like this — this thing?" he asked.

"What thing?" she inquired, slightly astonished, for she had not been following him very closely.

"This driving-party."

"Why am I like this driving-party?" she repeated, rousing herself and collecting her wandering wits. "I was never known to guess a conundrum. You will have to tell me."

"Because you are odd — and so is this thing."

He seemed so delighted with this intellectual feat that

Theo, in the kindness of her heart, laughed a little to gratify him.

“How am I odd?”

“Oh, you are such a new sort of thing, don't you know—that is, I mean—I don't mean thing in this case—but you are quite unusual. Now I'm just perfectly sure that you like this driving-party better than a ball. Other young ladies wouldn't. I've no doubt you just dote on scenery and views and new-mown cows and fresh-laid hens, and—oh, what am I saying? I'm all mixed up; but you know what I mean! Now, am I not correct?”

“Yes, I suppose so,” she acquiesced, not thinking it worth while to enter into a close analysis of his vague remarks.

“I knew it!” he cried, delightedly. “I've probed you to the depths. You are very poetical. At the same time you are very cold. You have no sentiment. A charming combination of traits, I think. Such an entirely new sort of thing, don't you know. A beautiful counterbalance to my too enthusiastic temperament. I am very enthusiastic. You are calm. Our natures just fit like lock and key, don't they?”

“I suppose so,” Theo said, vaguely, as she watched a squirrel skim along a hedge.

“I'm so awfully glad you think so!” he cried.

“Don't frighten it!” she whispered, leaning forward with her eyes fixed upon the hedge. “Ah, there, it is gone!” she added, in a tone of disappointment.

Mr. Colwell looked confounded. He had been leading up with remarkably delicate tact and fine effect to a very thrilling point. And to be thus ruthlessly thrust back,

as it were, by a mere squirrel, was — well, it was only another example of Miss Waddington's extraordinary combination of coldness and poeticism. No doubt she perfectly doted on squirrels. Here was an idea! He would try once more.

"I wish I were a squirrel!" he sighed.

Now if only she had inquired why he wished he was a squirrel his road would have been smooth. But she made no comment.

"She has no idea of what is in store for her," thought Colwell complacently, "or she would help me along quickly enough."

"Squirrels are so picturesque?" he said aloud, hoping still to arrive at his point by means of this small animal.

He looked at her inquiringly, but she continued silent, gazing listlessly at the road ahead of them.

"Don't you think they are frisky?"

"What? Riding-parties?" she said, shaking off her abstraction with an effort.

"No; squirrels," he replied, in a tone of despair.

"Squirrels frisky? Oh, yes," and she again relapsed into indolent inattention.

Colwell saw that squirrels could not be made to lead up to the point. He must try something else. His resources were many and varied.

"Miss Waddington, to be perfectly candid with you, are you rich?"

Theo started and looked at him in surprise. Then she smiled as she replied —

"You would call me very poor — poverty-stricken — a pauper."

"Should you like to be rich?"

"I have never suffered for anything. Consequently I have never thought much about money-matters."

"Same here," he said, pointing at himself with his forefinger. "I've always had everything I wanted, and so I've never given a thought to money, and I don't care if you are poor. It does not affect my regard for you in the slightest degree!"

"You are very gracious," she quietly replied, with a queer little twitch about the corners of her mouth which he interpreted to be her emotion at the prospect of what she must by this time have discerned was the point to which he was leading.

"Oh, don't mention it! I think not a whit the less of you for being poor!" he repeated, in thorough enjoyment of his own magnanimous condescension. "Now tell me, Miss Waddington, how you should like to spend your life?"

"In company with those I love, with plenty of leisure for dreaming and reading, and money enough to enable me to relieve distress wherever I see it."

"Why, that just suits me," he exclaimed, delightedly. "Do you know I was awfully afraid you would want to go in for foreign missions and all that sort of thing?"

"Why should you be so pleased?" she asked, looking at him wonderingly. "What difference can it make to you?"

He laughed gleefully. He felt sure she was only feigning this seeming ignorance of his purpose. "How piquant you are! So awfully unique and all that sort of thing, don't you know? Now whom do you like best in the world?" he asked in a very insinuating tone, bending toward her and trying to look into her eyes.



"You ask very silly questions," she remarked, drawing away.

"No, but do tell me," he persisted, smiling persuasively, "whom do you like best in the world?"

"My father. And my mother," she added.

"How charmingly coquettish!" thought Colwell.

"But you know," he added aloud, "the Bible says a woman should leave father and mother and cleave unto her husband."

"What is the relevancy of that remark?" she abruptly demanded.

The point was reached. Colwell thrilled all over at the realization of that stupendous fact.

He laid his hand on hers and softly said —

"Miss Waddington — Theo — I mean to make you my wife!"

"Indeed!" Theo exclaimed, looking at him with wide-open eyes as she drew away her hand.

"Nay, do not look so surprised. I really mean it. I am not joking."

"You really intend to make me your wife? You have quite decided that you mean to do that?"

"Yes, I have thought it all out and I am quite decided, Theo! And I hope you will consent to name an early date. Say, when shall it be?"

He attempted to put his arm around her, but she repulsed him.

"What have I ever said or done," she coldly asked, "that could possibly have led you to suppose I wanted to marry you?"

"Nothing, Miss Waddington, nothing," he said, amiably. "I really don't think you ever had any designs

upon me. I do not at all feel that I have been taken in. Don't distress yourself on that point. My decision to marry you has been entirely voluntary. Many a young lady has tried to take me in, but I quite exonerate you from any such intentions. I don't think you ever had any idea of marrying me. I quite understand your present surprise. I could see all along that you had no idea until this afternoon of my real intentions with regard to you. Now aren't you pleasantly surprised?" he asked, with the most naïve delight and eagerness.

"What makes you imagine that this is a pleasant surprise to me, Mr. Colwell? I have not the least desire in the world to marry you."

Mr. Colwell thought his ears must be deceiving him.

"Oh, but you can't mean that, don't you know, you can't possibly. Of course I know you're odd—you're not like other young ladies, you know—you're an entirely new sort of thing—but you're not so awfully queer as—as"—

"As not to want to marry you? But indeed I am, Mr. Colwell. Nothing could induce me to become your wife. You see I am quite as candid with you as you are with me."

"But why not?" he asked, in amazement. "Why, I thought you would be so glad!"

"What could possibly make you think that?"

"Well, I'm just perfectly sure that most other young ladies would be."

"But why should they be?"

"I declare, Miss Waddington, you're the newest sort of thing out!" he exclaimed, scarcely knowing whether to be more chagrined or astonished.

“Did you suppose, Mr. Colwell,” she said, gravely, “that I would jump at the chance of selling myself to you?”

“Oh!” he exclaimed. “That is such an awfully horrid way to put it, Miss Waddington! But I’m just sure you are only joking. Well, I’m quite willing to wait till you come round.”

“I shall never ‘come round’, Mr. Colwell. Can’t you understand me? I absolutely refuse your—your—I can’t say your offer. I absolutely deny your statement that you are going to marry me. I say it is false. You are not.”

It now began to dawn upon Mr. Colwell that his offer of marriage was being refused. His face grew red and a very naughty temper began to sparkle in his mild blue eyes.

“Well, if this isn’t the most unheard-of thing!” he exclaimed, wrathfully.

“I have a curiosity to know why you want to marry me,” Theo said, again leaning back lazily in the soft seat of the phaeton. “Do you really think it would make you happy to have me tied to your side all your life long?”

“Yes,” he declared emphatically, “that is just what I want. I want to have you round all the time.”

“For myself,” said Theo, “I can imagine nothing that would be more unbearable to me.”

“And you mean to say that you prefer to go back to that humble home of yours in that country town and live there all the rest of your life in obscurity rather than be Mrs. Archibald Colwell?”

“Yes.”

The sparkle in Mr. Colwell’s eyes grew dangerous.

"I never was so angry in my life!" he exclaimed, bringing his hand down upon his knee with a wrathful blow. "I'm sorry I asked you!"

His impotent rage was so like that of a naughty, passionate child that Theo found it impossible to remain grave. She could not repress the little rippling laugh that rose to her lips.

This was too much. Mr. Colwell's head swam. Oh, how he longed to box her ears! He made a sudden resolution. He stopped the horses and jumped from the phaeton. He was quite beside himself with his petty fury.

"Come, get out!" he exclaimed, holding out his hand to Theo.

"What for?" she asked, still laughing. She could not help it; his wrath was so utterly absurd.

"I will not drive with you another minute! Come, get out of my carriage!"

Ignoring his outstretched hand she jumped to the ground at once. The other carriages of the party were all far ahead.

"Now!" exclaimed Colwell, leaping to his seat again and taking up the reins, "there you are! Get home as best you can! You shan't ride another inch in any of my carriages! I never was so mad with any one in all my life!"

He cracked his whip and the ponies sped away, and Theo was left alone in the unfamiliar country road miles away from any house. Astonishment at his conduct had momentarily checked her laughter. For an instant her eyes followed the rapidly retreating phaeton in bewilderment. Then she sank down upon the green bank beside

which she found herself, and began to laugh again. Never in all her serious young life had she laughed so heartily. She swayed back and forth and almost shrieked in the excess of her amusement as she wiped away the tears which her uncontrollable mirth forced from her eyes.

Finally this hysterical paroxysm spent itself and she rose again to look about her and discover if possible some escape from the awkward predicament in which her ungallant lover's conduct had placed her. She finally secured the conveyance of a friendly farmer to take her to the city.

## CHAPTER VII

THAT night, when Mrs. Graybill and her cousin sat together in the latter's dressing-room, they talked long and earnestly over a point which lay very near to the heart of one of them.

Mrs. Graybill found it impossible to express in words her horror and chagrin at Theo's unheard-of rashness in refusing the millionaire, Colwell. However, as argument and ridicule proved alike unavailing in changing her cousin's mind, she finally decided to find this absolute unworldliness of Theo's to be vastly amusing and an occasion for the most extravagant laughter.

But her amusement was quickly dissipated by another communication which Theo made to her that evening.

"I have had a letter from father, Cousin Violet."

"Do read it to me, dear. His letters to you are always so droll."

"I'm afraid you won't like what he says this time. He wants me to come home."

"You're not going home, dear! I shall not part with you. I shall write and tell him so. I can't let you go!"

"But he bids me come, and you know all I have to do in that case is to go."

"You great, big creature—can't you assert your independence?"

Theo smiled. "My dear cousin, you don't know my father, or you would not suggest such a thing."

"Yes, I do know him, and I think it absurd of you to be so childishly obedient to him."

"Perhaps it would be," Theo said, looking at her cousin gravely, "if I did not love him so much. And, Cousin Violet," she added, earnestly, "the whole habit of my life has made it become a second nature to me to seek his approbation in everything that I do—almost in everything that I think. And oh, it will be so hard—so hard to break away from this habit."

There was a tone of real suffering in her voice, as she spoke. She leaned her elbow on the arm of her chair and shaded her eyes with her hand.

"Why, my dear," Mrs. Graybill said, in some curiosity, "what do you mean? Do you intend, after all, to rebel against parental authority? Are you going to let me persuade you to stay with me?"

"No," said Theo, without raising her eyes from her hand; "I am going home. But"—and here she looked up—"I have changed very much since I first came to you, Cousin Violet. I feel sometimes, like a new creature. And father cannot fail to discover the change."

"Well, you have not changed for the worse."

"He will think so."

"Why, what outrageous things do you propose doing when you get home? In that small town of York there is no opportunity to be very wickedly worldly."

"No. Nevertheless, father will soon find out that I have changed. And I am afraid that we shall clash. Oh, Cousin Violet," she added, leaning forward and laying her hand in Mrs. Graybill's lap, "I am very grateful to

you for all your kindness to me — but I sometimes wish I had never come here!”

Mrs. Graybill looked into the dark eyes raised to her face and wondered at the excitement which shone in them.

“Theo, what is the matter with you?”

“I don’t know. I feel as if I were standing on the edge of a perilous precipice. All my past life is a dream, and I am only just now beginning really to live. Existence, which before seemed to me a comparatively simple matter, quite explainable by my petty system of theological philosophy, now appears full of unexpected complications. I have lost faith in much that I used to accept without question. I am in that state which Emerson describes as ‘questioning custom at all points’. My doubts have been aroused and I can never rest until they are either banished, or confirmed into a decided skepticism. I am unsettled and have quite lost my bearings. It is terrible to me to think that only a few months ago I was an innocent — absurdly, stupidly innocent — child; and now I feel like a *blasé* woman of forty. I see men look at me and say with their eyes what they would not dare speak, and I smile and do not care, and, oh, I have no self-respect!”

“Theo, dear,” Mrs. Graybill said, smoothing the hand which lay in her lap, “you are morbidly sensitive; you are abnormally conscientious. Life would be a perfect burden to me if I took it so seriously as you do. Come now, my love, don’t indulge those uncanny ideas any longer, but read me your father’s letter, and let me see just how positive he is about your returning home, so that I may know if there is any hope at all of my being able to keep you longer.”



Theo drew the envelope from the pocket of her dressing-gown. She turned the lamp at her elbow, a trifle higher, then opened the letter and read:

“PRESBYTERIAN PARSONAGE, April 10th.

“MY VERY DEAR CHILD:

“This morning I received your birthday gift. The handkerchiefs are beautiful and your mother tells me the embroidery on them is wonderfully well done; so I commend your thoughtful industry. They are of added value because of the dear fingers which have been at work upon them.

“Amy is sitting near me, just now, writing you, I doubt not, a lengthy and minute account of all our household doings, so I shall not transgress upon her field—especially as I hope to see you before the week is out. I wish you to come home next Thursday. When you left us, we had no idea of being without our girl so long, or I think we could not have found it in our hearts to let her go. I find I must speak very definitely to get you back at all. So next Thursday, dear child, Joe and I shall meet you at the 6 p. m. train.

“Thank your cousin, for me, for her kindness to you, and tell her how glad we shall be to have her visit us, whenever she can.

“Your mother is quietly happy at the prospect of having you with her once more. I told her at the breakfast table, this morning, that I should expect you back next Thursday, and she has been going about the house all day with a very bright light shining in her eyes, and a pre-occupied expression on her face, of which I know the meaning, well.

“All join me in love to you and Cousin Violet.

“Affectionately, your father,

“H. R. WADDINGTON.”

“One of father’s strongest points,” Theo said, as she

folded the letter and slipped it into its envelope, "is his utter faith in mother. He thinks her the most perfect of women. Well," she added, with a deep sigh, turning toward Mrs. Graybill, "I shall feel very sorry to leave you, dear!"

"I am glad to hear you say so," Mrs. Graybill replied, with an unusual gravity in her voice and countenance. "You have worked yourself into my heart, Theo, and I find it hard to part with you. You will come to me soon again, won't you?"

"I hope so, Cousin Violet."

"You must come, I need you. I shall be utterly forlorn when you go. You have really made me a little dissatisfied with my selfish, pleasure-loving life. You are so strong and earnest, Theo, you have led me to long for something better than my worldly life has ever known. We have done each other good, I think."

"How can I have done you any good? I feel myself so weak."

"No, you are strong. As I told Mr. Rushmore this afternoon, you are rich in intelligence, without the least pretension; you are quivering with sensibility, yet so quiet and grave in your manners that one is almost inclined, sometimes, to think you cold and hard."

A slight color came into Theo's face. She did not answer at once. But presently she looked up and said, slowly —

"And what did Mr. Rushmore say to that?"

"Not a word, my dear. He met the remark with an absolute silence. I don't think he believes in you at all. He has an idea that any one who sets up to be very religious is necessarily either a fool or a hypocrite."

The flush in Theo's face deepened, and she looked away from Mrs. Graybill to the glowing logs in the open grate.

"Dearest," Mrs. Graybill continued, "if you dread going home to your father's house, you have a very easy way out of the difficulty. Marry Mr. Colwell."

"I can never do that!"

She rose abruptly, and stepped away from the fire.

She walked to a window, drew aside the heavy silk curtains and looked out. She felt, just then, that a renewal of their discussion on the subject of Colwell's proposal would be unbearably distasteful to her.

So, when at this moment Mr. Graybill's voice from the next apartment suddenly summoned his wife away, and she was left alone, she could not help feeling greatly relieved.

For a long, long while, she remained standing by the window, looking out into the night; and mingled with the many painful thoughts which visited her brain, was an occasional flash of light and joy giving her a momentary glimpse into a strange new world of love and beauty, which bewildered while it fascinated her.

Before she went to bed that night she took out the volume of essays which Mr. Rushmore had loaned her and read in it far into the morning.

Once in the course of her reading, the book dropped into her lap and she covered her face with her hands. A little shiver convulsed her, and a passionate prayer went up from her heart. "Oh, let me die before my faith goes from me!"

There stared her in the face a horrible vision of the long years before her—prayerless, hopeless, faithless;

the Strong Arm removed from her weak and helpless soul; the solace of the Church and of the Bible gone from her life, forever!

“How can I bear it? It is black, black! O God, let me die before it becomes impossible for me to pray! I am becoming an unbeliever, I feel it, I know it! I cannot resist it! Take me to Thyself before I am quite lost!”

But she read on. And as she read she grew calmer. And before she rested that night, a light had broken in upon her soul, a brighter, holier light than that which had shone into her heart from behind the illusions of the dogmatism which she had passionately prayed to keep. These illusions had now faded from her vision and the higher truth behind them, illumined her whole horizon. Essential Christianity she had not lost nor ever could lose. The influence that has come down through the centuries from that mysterious luminous spot on the black background of the dark past, never can die while the world stands.

## CHAPTER VIII

WELL, dear, how does it feel to be at home again?" asked Mrs. Waddington of her daughter, as on the evening of Theo's arrival at home, the Waddington family was gathered around the tea-table. They were a re-united household to-night. There was no vacant seat at the table except the one made years before when the youngest child, little Ambrose, had died.

The Rev. Dr. Waddington occupied his usual place at the foot of the table. He had changed but little in the eight years which had elapsed since his first introduction to the reader. He was now fifty-five years old and seemed still in the prime of his powers, physically and mentally. His eyes still flashed with keenness or determination and glowed with fervor or enthusiasm. His ponderous, broad-shouldered frame was still vigorous and energetic, and his hand still firm in emphasizing his opinions and his wishes.

The Rev. Harold R. Waddington, Jr., was there, having that day come down from Columbia, where he was pastor of the First Presbyterian Church, to welcome his sister home after her long absence. He was, as of old, a pale, thin, neat young man, bearing the stamp of his profession in his clerical white cravat and in the cut of his coat, but also in the unmistakable lines of benediction on his face.

Lila, now Mrs. Dr. Brockton, was also present, wearing on her mild, sweet countenance the evidences of her happy wifehood and motherhood. Joe, now a young gentleman with a beard, and his twin sister, the grave and decorous Amy, together with the gentle, serious mother, completed the family circle whose attentions were bent upon the loved sister and daughter who had just returned to them.

“It feels very precious to be at home again, mother,” Theo replied, in answer to her mother’s question as she looked with radiant eyes upon the dear faces around her.

The joy of seeing them again had caused an unwonted excitement to shine in her dark eyes and to flush her usually pale face. Her last few months’ experience in the social life of New York had somewhat softened the hard reserve to which she had been bred, and taught her to be more spontaneous; so she did not repress the happiness that swelled her heart as she once would have done. The Waddington family had never before seen any member of its circle, save the lawful head of the house, in so talkative and animated a state as was Theo this evening. Ever since they had gathered about the table she had been entertaining them with a flow of bright narrative and description, such as they had never before heard from their usually grave sister. They were secretly a little astonished at the unembarrassed manner in which she led the conversation at the family board they were accustomed to having monopolized almost entirely by their father. But they were wonderfully well entertained by her humorous or thoughtful descriptions of people and events and her wise or witty comments by the way. They saw her this evening in a new light. The

Rev. Harold R. Waddington, Jr. felt, as he listened to her, that he had heretofore only half-known his sister.

Dr. Waddington's eyes scarcely left his daughter's face while she talked. He recognized a change in her of which he scarcely approved. He did not know just how to feel about the new spirit of independent thought she unwittingly revealed in her keen little judgments of persons she had met and practices she had observed in the great metropolis. He had a vague feeling, as he watched her glowing face and beautiful bright eyes, that she had broken loose from him in some way; that she had spread her own wings and found them strong, and did not now so much need to lean upon his superior strength and wisdom.

Once in the course of the meal when Mrs. Waddington rang for the maid to take out the tea-urn and refill it, Theo glanced across the table and said with a smile —

“It does seem amusingly odd to have only one domestic in the house. I've grown so accustomed to seeing dozens of them standing around doing nothing.”

“Well, my dear,” said her mother, “I fear you will find our home very poor and simple after your grand style of living at Cousin Violet's.”

“It feels very cosy, mother, and will continue to feel so for a while, I know. And then” —

She paused, picked up her cup and slowly sipped her tea.

“And then?” abruptly questioned her father, looking at her keenly.

Theo blushed and hesitated.

“And then, Theo?” he repeated.

As though suddenly resolved to speak to him honestly

and unreservedly, she raised her eyes and frankly met his own as she replied —

“And then, father, after a time I suppose I shall begin to grow restless and discontented.”

“Restlessness and discontent are not feelings which a Christian woman allows herself to cherish, daughter.”

“I do so dislike routine, father, though I see that society rests on that and other falsehoods. The more I tie myself down to fixed tasks and hours, the more I weary of life, and long to ‘move upon the wing’.”

“I fear your visit to New York did you no good, Theo.”

“I am sure, father, that it did me much good,” she gently corrected. “It has given me a knowledge and a discipline I needed. Perhaps,” she gravely added, “I am less happy than I was before I went; but I am less ignorant. I have learned. I have grown.”

She paused again, but no one answered her. She had deliberately differed from an opinion of her father’s, and the family was considering the fact in silence.

Suddenly she looked up again and asked, “Do you remember Mr. Rushmore, father?”

“Do you mean Horace Rushmore, who is figuring so prominently just now in New York politics, and who used to board across the street years ago?”

“Yes.”

“I remember him well. Did you meet him at your cousin’s?”

“Yes, father, several times.”

“You never mentioned it in your letters. Did you see much of him? I remember he had something of a *penchant* for you when you were a child.”



"I had several long talks with him this winter."

Her father again looked at her keenly.

"Is he still so skeptically inclined as he used to be?"

"He is an agnostic, father."

"H'm — absurd!" sneered Dr. Waddington, with a frown. "Mamma, dear, will you pour me a cup of tea?"

"I remember that fellow," remarked Joe. "He and father used to have hot arguments together about evolution and the Bible; and is he really the fellow whom they are talking of electing as next governor of New York?"

"Yes, Joe," said Theo.

"Did you like him, Solomon? From what I read of him in the newspapers I should think he was a regular brick."

"I think he has some noble traits," Theo replied; "but he is unhappily married, and it has made him bitter and cynical. He has a very fine mind."

"Which he has miserably misused," interrupted Dr. Waddington. "I am sorry, Theo, to have had you breathe the same air with a man who dares call himself an agnostic. However, I think you are too firmly grounded in your faith to be influenced by the sophistries of a skeptic."

Theo made no reply; she kept her eyes on her plate as she gently stirred her tea.

"Father, don't you think," Harold ventured to suggest, "that skepticism may sometimes be prompted by a very honest doubting and that it is not always necessarily the outcome of an evil heart?"

"Of course I think nothing of the sort," emphatically and somewhat sternly replied Dr. Waddington. "Don't let me hear you suggest such a thing, my son. A good

man can no more doubt the Christian faith than he can doubt the virtue of his mother. I want to hear no more such absurdity from you, Harold."

"I beg your pardon, sir, you are right, of course," respectfully acquiesced the son. Harold always deferred to his father most reverently in everything and never ventured to oppose or contradict him in the least. Strangers who saw them together were always impressed with the filial dutifulness of the Rev. Waddington, Junior.

But somehow, as Theo observed it on this evening, it impressed her unpleasantly, almost painfully. She was seeing her father's household with new eyes to-night. It was refreshing indeed, to breathe its atmosphere of simplicity and earnestness after the artificial, selfish worldliness in which for weeks she had been living; but there was another spirit in that home which oppressed and stifled her; and as she saw her eldest brother meekly bow to the will of her father, denying, thereby, his own manhood, something stirred her to oppose the domination that crushed him and to uphold him in the suggestion his father had so emphatically set aside.

"Honest skepticism," she said, speaking with an effort and blushing deeply, "is far above blind unthinking acquiescence. One who is never visited by doubts must be either very stupid or very lukewarm. And if God sends people to Hell for being honest to the nature He Himself has given them, then I hope He will send me there! For I want to get away as far as possible from such a God."

Dr. Waddington laid down his knife and fork and looked at her. The rest of the family awaited in awe-struck silence the result of this audacity.

But with a tact learned somewhat from her intimacy with her Cousin Violet, Theo averted the impending rebuke by suddenly remarking:

"Oh, by the way, father, the Rev. Mr. Udell said I should be sure to remember him to you. He would like so much to see you again. He suggests, too, that you exchange pulpits with him some Sunday."

Dr. Waddington's frown vanished and a look of pleasure came into his face; for Mr. Udell was a brother minister whom he held in very high esteem.

"Cousin Violet invited him to dine with us the day before I came away," Theo added.

Her father was completely mollified. Question after question he asked concerning his old friend, until he had obtained all the information his daughter could give him.

When the meal was over the family repaired to the library and talked and read until it was time for evening prayers. Then, how strange it seemed to Theo to take up the old threads again and join in the worship to which in the past few months she had become a stranger. After the prayer had been offered, her father, as was his custom, stood by the library door and allowed the members of his family to pass before him to go to their bedrooms, each one pausing for an instant to receive the paternal good-night kiss and blessing, a ceremony which had been performed in that household with formal precision every night of Theo's life.

"Solomon," said Joe, as they walked up-stairs together, "you're changed."

"How, Joe, dear?"

"You're not so prim, Solomon. And—and you've gotten pretty spunky."

"I didn't mean to be, Joe, but" —

"Oh, I understand your case," Joe said, with a knowing nod. "You've been away from all restraint for so long that you can't get yourself back into it at once. It will take a little time. But you will soon be broken in again."

"Not entirely, Joe. I shall never again be just as I was."

Joe looked at her sharply. "You can't resist father, you know, Solomon. You may as well come around at once, for you will have to do it in the end, at any rate. And now, good-night. It's awfully jolly to have you home again."

They kissed each other and separated at the head of the stairs, Joe going into his own room and Theo following her mother into her chamber for a last word before leaving her for the night.

"How good it is, dear, to have you home again," said Mrs. Waddington, as she allowed herself to be held in her daughter's strong arms.

"And how lovely it is to be able once more to receive my mother's good-night kiss," Theo said, pressing her lips to her mother's. "Oh, mother, it is so good to feel that you all love me. There is nothing in all this great world so sweet and precious as love and home."

"If your visit to New York has taught you that, Theo, I cannot agree with papa that it has done you harm."

The chamber door opened and Dr. Waddington stepped into the room. At sight of Theo, he drew out his watch and held it toward her.

"Bed-time, my dear. Don't linger; and," he added, as she walked toward the door, "don't sit up in your room to read."

A look of amusement came into Theo's eyes as she heard these childish directions. A few months before she would have accepted them as a matter of course, and would have implicitly obeyed them.

That night before she went to bed, she sat down in her dressing-gown before the window of her little bedroom and, in her favorite attitude with her cheek resting on her hand and her elbow on the sill, she looked out into the quiet, moon-lit street and thought of those nights years before in her childhood, when she had been wont to watch, every evening, the young law-student's lamp in the boarding-house across the way.

## CHAPTER IX

THEO knew that the conflict with her father must, in the course of time, come to pass, however cautious and judicious she might be in trying to avoid it. Untrue to herself she could not be, and consequently, he must of necessity, soon discover her alienation from the traditions in which she had been bred so strictly. Dr. Waddington's sharp eyes had not failed to notice ever since his daughter's return home, innumerable nameless little evidences of the insubordination which lived in her heart. The open rupture occurred one Sunday morning after church.

The Waddington family always went to church in a body. The Head-of-the-House so ordained it. On this particular Sunday morning of which I write, it was found, when the household had assembled in the library to start out *en masse* for the church, that Theo was not among them. Papa's scintillating glance having passed over them all, he turned to his daughter Amy, who looked very sweet and pure, as she stood in her snowy dress of white muslin, her Bible in her neatly-gloved hands, and her prim, dainty hat set very straight on her smooth, shining hair, waiting dutifully for her father's signal to start out for the church. Amy was always perfectly dutiful.

"Amy, what is detaining your sister?" asked her father.

"I don't know, father. Shall I go and see?"

"Joe will go. Joe, go up and knock at your sister's door and tell her to make haste."

"Solomon is not going to church this morning, sir," Joe replied. "She asked me to tell you all not to wait for her."

"But we are going to wait for her. Go and tell her to get on her bonnet at once."

"I think she has a headache, sir," Joe ventured.

"I heard her laughing and talking with you, ten minutes ago. Go, Joe, and tell her I bid her come with us, immediately."

Joe departed, and in a few moments Theo came down arrayed in hat and gloves.

"You have detained us, Theo," her father gravely said, as he moved toward the door with Mrs. Waddington on his arm. "I fear we shall be late. Let us hasten and make up for lost time."

"I wish you would excuse me, father."

Her father paused with his hand on the door-knob and looked at her.

"I think every one in my household understands that I expect him or her to go to church on Sunday morning, except in case of illness," was his brief reply.

Theo made no further objection; and they all started off.

The fact was, this was Communion Sunday; and as Dr. Waddington recalled that on the last occasion of the celebration of the Holy Supper, Theo had pleaded a headache as excuse for remaining at home, the repetition of this plea on the recurrence of the time for the sacred rite aroused his suspicions.

Indeed Theo knew that her attendance that morning upon a service in which she could not possibly take part, would inevitably occasion the outbreak between her father and herself which had been impending for so long.

That was a painful morning to her. In her conscientious struggle to be true to herself, she suffered a double pain in her forced disloyalty to her father, and the denial of that God-man to whom from infancy she had bowed in worship and love.

When the Communion bread was handed along the family pew, she did not take it. With her hands clasped in her lap, her eyes downcast, and her face pale and agitated, she sat with beating heart while the plate was passed on to Amy, who sat beyond her. She felt her father's eyes gazing upon her from the pulpit. But she did not waver.

Only those who have some conception of what it is to be under a domination such as that which ruled the Waddington household, can appreciate the strength and courage exercised by Theo in thus compelling herself to obey her higher, rather than her weaker nature. It is resolution like this which is exemplified in the legend of Abraham and his son, and of Jesus and Satan in the mountain.

On the way home from church, Theo and Joe, who walked together, were very quiet. They made no reference to the episode of the morning service. Dr. Waddington, too, as he walked by his wife's side, was sternly silent. He never once glanced at Theo, until they had all arrived at the parsonage and had stepped into the hall. Then, as he turned and faced her, there was a dangerous sparkle in his eyes, and when he spoke, his tone was abrupt and cold.



“Come with me, to my study.”

She felt as though she had suddenly gone back to her childhood, so like old times did it seem to be led into that revered and dreaded sanctum for judgment.

When they had entered and he had closed and locked the door, he placed a chair for her and motioned her to be seated. The decision and abruptness of his movements in these little actions, indicated to her unmistakably, the extent of his displeasure with her, and she paled and trembled before her stern judge. Her servility to him—the habit of her lifetime—could not be overcome without a great struggle. Then, too, she loved him, and love, in a nature like hers, is a stronger master than fear. Gladly would she have sacrificed the dearest wish she had ever known, rather than oppose him; but a higher law than a sense of loyalty and devotion to him, compelled her to resistance.

“Now, Theo, you and I must come to an understanding,” he said, seating himself before her and throwing one strong arm over the back of a chair at his side, while the other large, white hand clasped the lapel of his black, clerical coat. His attitude and the expression of his face made her recall that letter of the young law-student written many years before, in which he had said of her father, “He looked like Pompey when he flogged the Hottentots.”

“This morning,” he continued, “you did not take the Communion. Now what does this mean? What absurd notions have you been imbibing in New York this last winter?”

“Father,” Theo slowly replied, “I don’t want to grieve you by telling you how I feel about these things. As

long as you do not see me in any wrong doing, why not let me think in my own way?"

"It is my duty before God to root heresy from out my family. You will be influencing your brothers and sisters."

"I promise not to, father."

"You will be unable to help it, if I do not check this thing right in the start. Understand me, Theo, I shall tolerate nothing of this sort in my house."

"I am no longer a child, father, to accept without question whatever is given to me. You must let me think for myself."

"Let me help you to think, then, in the right channel. Come, tell me what is the matter with your father's creed that you think you cannot accept it."

"Father, where is the good of discussing the matter? You cannot understand me. And I know, beforehand, all the arguments you will advance against my objections to your faith."

"I insist, Theo," he sternly replied, "upon knowing what it is you do not believe, that you feel bound to refuse the Holy Communion."

Theo looked at the hands in her lap for a moment, before she replied. Then she said, speaking slowly —

"It is impossible for any honest person who reads anything of recent biblical criticism to believe in the divine inspiration of the Bible. I can no more accept the miracles of the Gospels than I can those of contemporary writings, or of the writings of the following centuries. You do not believe that Swedenborg was lifted up into Heaven — why do you believe that John was? Swedenborg's account is the more rational of the two."

“If you deny miracles, what proof have you,” he demanded, flashing his bright eyes upon her, “of our Lord’s divinity?”

“The divinity of a being could not for me rest upon such material manifestations of power. I could not worship a mere miracle worker.”

“What!” exclaimed Dr. Waddington, his face growing very red, “you do not believe in Christ’s divinity? You deny your Saviour? A child of mine deny the Saviour?”

“Dear father, don’t get excited and angry. It isn’t anything that I can help.”

There was such a quiet dignity in her manner as she said this that it did subdue him slightly. In his secret heart he really admired his daughter’s courage. He was so unaccustomed to being contradicted or opposed that the novelty of the experience almost surprised his passion away. The independence and decision of her character he knew she had derived from himself, and his fond pride in that fact, tempered somewhat the anger he felt at her rank opposition to him, and her wicked presumption in doubting the Word of God. Yet his manner was by no means calm as he asserted with emphasis :

“But, Theo, I know the Bible is true! I know that Christ is my Saviour! What do I care for biblical criticism? I know these things—for they are part of myself.”

“But I do not know them, father—and I must be true to myself. You, nor any one else cannot think for me. If I am a child of the devil, I must live as such. Some one has said : ‘There is a time in every man’s education when he arrives at the conviction that imitation is suicide; that he must take himself for better, for worse, as

his fortune ; that though the wide universe is full of good, no kernel of nourishing corn can come to him but through his toil bestowed upon that plot of ground which is given to him to till.' ”

“That is all very well, my dear child—all very well indeed. But you have been sadly misled. I shall put you through a course of reading that will speedily convince you of your errors. I cannot endure the thought of my dearest daughter going astray in this manner. It wounds my pride and hurts my feelings. Theo, you are the only one of my children who has ever given me a moment of serious anxiety.”

“I am indeed sorry, father,” Theo humbly replied. “But” — and her face flushed as she added, “are you entirely satisfied with all your other children?”

“Entirely,” he promptly replied, rubbing his palms together complacently. “They are perfect children. They have been well brought up,” bringing one hand down upon the other with an emphatic and suggestive sound. “And you, Theo, were my proudest possession until this recent unfortunate visit to New York.”

“Do you never realize, father, that your children’s minds are not at all self-poised, and that they are almost entirely without self-reliance?”

“One of my children has entirely too much of what she is pleased to call ‘self-reliance’. And she must learn at once that her father will never tolerate it. The next time we have Communion, I shall insist upon your taking it. I cannot for a moment believe that you will openly defy my commands.”

Theo’s face grew a trifle paler, as she again looked down into her lap ; but she answered nothing.

"Theo, are you going to obey me in this matter?"

She raised her sad eyes to his face, and bravely answered:

"I wish I could, father; but it is impossible. You would not have me violate my conscience?"

He rose abruptly and strode across the room. "Would to God I had never allowed you to go away from me for a day. I shall have trouble with you, Theo—I see it, I shall have trouble with you!"

"Father, dear," she said, as her wide-open eyes followed his restless figure while it paced to and fro across the room, "if only you would not take this matter so to heart. If only you would realize that these external things have no value in themselves."

"Do not argue the matter with me," he abruptly retorted. "If you were ten years younger, Theo, I should secure your submission by very summary measures. As it is"—he paused, laid his hand upon his writing-table and looked at her keenly, "you may go to your room and remain there until I send you permission to leave it."

Theo's handkerchief went to her lips to conceal the involuntary smile which covered her face as she heard this childish penalty. But she instantly controlled her temptation to laugh, and as she rose to obey him, her face was perfectly serious. Her father stood in silence by his table and watched her walk across the room to the door.

When she had left him alone, he re-commenced his pacing to and fro; and one might have judged from the rapidity and firmness of his step, from the frown on his brow and from the decision with which he clasped the

lapel of his coat, how intense were his feelings. Theo herself, extremely sensitive and affectionate, as she was, did not feel more grief than he, at the alienation which had sprung up between them. Yet neither of them could yield to the other.

## CHAPTER X

IN the weeks that ensued, every one in the Waddington family felt the difference that had sprung up between its two members. In Dr. Waddington's mind there was a constant warfare between the conflicting feelings of his heart toward his daughter. At one time chagrin at being unable to control her, would triumph over his natural affection and the respect he instinctively felt for her firmness and strength; and then his treatment of her would be cruelly harsh and cold. At another time, a genuine admiration of her bright intellect and strong character would exceed even his love of ruling, and would mould his manner toward her into a deference which he paid to almost no one else. Yet again, the great love he bore this dearest of all his children would triumph over the anger which he felt against her, and remorse at having treated her with severity would change his conduct to the utmost gentleness and tenderness.

Thus was Theo kept in a constant state of uncertainty as to what the treatment would be which she should from day to day receive from her father. His fitful moods succeeded each other without law or order.

Under these conditions, it is scarcely needful to mention, she was not happy in her home. Month after month passed by without any change in her relation to her father. He would not abandon his efforts to bend

her to his will and bring her again into perfect obedience to the Christian creed. And she, however tried and harassed, would not and could not waver in her loyalty to what she believed to be the truth. So in the course of time she became weary and worn with the conflict. Her robust figure lost some of its perfect symmetry; her face became even paler than was its wont; her eyes grew bigger and their drowsy light became a dark, mournful shadow. She grew nervous, and started at the sound of her father's foot-steps, and was easily moved to tears by his coldness.

So watchful an eye as Dr. Waddington's could not fail to observe these changes in her. He was, therefore, not very much surprised when one evening she came to him in his study and told him of a resolution which had for some time past, been forming in her mind.

He had been busily writing at a very profound discourse on "Belief in the Miraculous", which he meant to deliver to his congregation on the following Sunday morning—when he was interrupted by Theo's knock and entrance into his room. As she stepped across the floor to his table, he noticed, with a pang, how pale and sad she looked. The dark gown which she wore enhanced the pallor of her fine face, making it look almost unearthly in its serious thoughtfulness.

"May I interrupt you, father, for a few moments?"

For answer, he rose, wheeled a comfortable chair to the table, and motioned her to be seated. He resumed his own seat, leaned his elbow on the table and his forehead on his fingers, and looked at her inquiringly.

"Father, I want to go away from home."

"Where?"



“To New York — to teach in a young ladies’ seminary. Cousin Violet has secured a position for me in the Rev. Mr. Udell’s boarding-school. You remember the Rev. Mr. Udell?”

“Certainly. A very fine man. His seminary is a good church school and its influence might give the benefit which I have striven in vain to give you; I can’t say that I object to your going.”

Theo’s face brightened. She had expected some opposition.

“Then may I really go, father?”

“I shall not oppose you, Theo.”

“And may I go as soon as I please!”

“Yes. What shall you teach?”

“Latin and English Literature, and I shall receive seven hundred dollars a year and my home in the school. Cousin Violet is very much opposed to my ‘working for a living’, as she expresses it, but, nevertheless, she aided me in getting the position.”

“Why do you wish to go, my daughter?”

“Can you wonder that I wish to go away, father? I am very unhappy at home.”

“It is all the fault of your own obstinacy, Theo.”

“Father,” she remonstrated, “I am sure you know I have never been obstinate in this trouble between us. I am sure you know that my motives have been sincere and upright.”

He did not answer. He could not deny it, neither could he bring himself to acknowledge it. All his life long he had been accustomed to thinking of unbelievers as abandoned sinners, and the living contradiction of this idea in his pure and noble daughter, whose very “infidel-

ity" could not fail to appear, to even the most obtuse mind, as prompted by the highest principles of conduct — even this proof before his eyes of the absurdity of his notion respecting "skeptics" could not quite disarm him of his deep-rooted prejudices.

He rose and began to pace back and forth across the room. Theo watched in silence the strong, broad-shouldered figure as it moved about before her. Her heart ached for the pain she knew she caused him. What useless suffering he gave himself! How very much of our suffering in this life, when we look back upon it, from a distance, seems trivial and causeless, and even absurd. And yet, however unreal may be the occasion for our pain, our agony itself is a reality which our stern philosophy cannot drive away.

And so, as Theo sadly watched her father, her heart swelled with the strong love which she bore to this great, ponderous, domineering master of his family. How she did love him! Every hair of his proud head was dear and sacred to her. How she longed to yield to him the dutiful submission which he demanded!

He paused suddenly in his walk about the room and met the earnest look with which she was regarding him. Something in its strangely-mingled melancholy and affection caused him to step to her side and lay his strong, tender hand, upon her head.

"My darling, I don't like to part with you."

She took his other hand in both her own and laid it against her cheek as she looked up into his face.

"It will be better for us to be apart for a time, father."

"Promise me that you will not stay long."

Theo was silent.

"You will come back soon, won't you, my child?"

"Whenever you bid me, father."

"And promise me, too, that you will not work too hard. Teaching is very wearing work. I once taught a country school for a month, when I was a young man—and I won't venture to say how many boys I flogged in the first week. There is nothing more wearing than school-teaching."

"I shall not be likely to exhaust myself by flogging the young ladies, father."

"Probably not. Of one more thing let me warn you. Never feel that you are dependent upon your salary. I shall always supply you with all that you need. You do not realize how much more independent you will feel in your work knowing that you can throw up your position whenever you are so inclined. One who teaches for a salary is a slave. And now," he added in conclusion, "I am inclined to feel that this experience is going to do you good. Udell is a fine fellow, a very fine fellow. And a successful fellow."

Dr. Waddington had small respect for anyone who was not successful.

"He is young and good-looking," he added; "and he is not married, is he, Theo?"

"No," she answered, quite unsuspecting of the matrimonial plot which was brewing in her father's mind.

That night before he slept, Dr. Waddington pondered long over his daughter's possible prospects in going into Mr. Udell's school.

"She is very attractive. He will fall in love with her. He is a man of strong character and she will return his love. His influence will bring her back into the true

faith. A man can always make the woman who loves him, agree with him. She will forget all about these absurd notions which during the past year have annoyed me so much."

But in the bottom of his heart he was not so sure of all these pleasant anticipations. Theo's clear mind and stoical conscientiousness could not be depended upon to submit to influences which he knew would easily subdue the average feminine mind and heart. However, Udell stood so high in his esteem that he could not help hoping for good results from his daughter's association with that divine.

## CHAPTER XI

IN answer to Theo's knock at the office-door, Mr. Udell admitted her, and not being quite ready for his interview with her, he bade her sit down and wait until he should have concluded his conversation with the other member of the Faculty with whom he had been closeted during the past fifteen minutes. As Theo listened to the discussion between these two, she was able to form some notion of the Principal's manner of dealing with his teachers, and also of the teachers' obsequiousness toward the Principal.

"Before you go, Miss Greenleaf, there is one more point of which I wish to speak. Yesterday afternoon the house was too noisy between the hours of four and five."

He leaned back in his revolving chair and stared at Miss Greenleaf with the cold, steady look from which Theo remembered to have shrunk in her childhood.

"It was your hour on guard, I believe?" he added.

"Yes, Mr. Udell, it was my hour on guard. But I was ill yesterday afternoon and had to resign my duties to the Matron, and of course the girls won't mind her. I am exceedingly sorry if the house was noisy."

"Yes. We don't expect our teachers to become ill. We are not in the habit of employing invalids to perform the work of this house," he said, in his peculiarly cool, deliberate, obstinate manner.

"I am really very sorry, Mr. Udell. I trust it won't occur soon again. But really, I had such a throbbing headache that" —

"Yes, spare us, if you please, a recitation of your ailments. When the time for your guard duties comes around again, please see that the house is quiet."

"I shall try to do so, Mr. Udell. But really," she added, with a smile that was meant to be a mixture of playfulness and coaxingness, "it is something in my favor, that my being off duty made a perceptible change in the order of the house. When the cat's away the mice will play, you know."

Theo thought the quotation not inappropriate in the case of the stealthy, suspicious, watchful Miss Greenleaf, who was proud of her cat-like qualities.

"It shows, too," added the poor flatterer, "how necessary for the order of the house are all the rules which you require us to enforce. I have been in many schools, Mr. Udell, but never in one so well managed as this one. Your ideas of discipline coincide entirely with mine. This thing of putting girls on their honor" —

"A thing of which the feminine character is entirely devoid," inserted Mr. Udell with a malicious smile.

"I almost agree with you in that opinion," said Miss Greenleaf, with a sad shake of her head. "If it is your firm conviction I *do* agree with you; for you do not come to conclusions without due consideration, and" —

"A due consideration of your feelings, Miss Greenleaf," he interrupted, "might lead me to indulge you in this conversation for half an hour longer. But a due consideration of my own, compels me to request you to leave the field, now, to your fellow-worker, Miss

Waddington. Good-evening, Miss Greenleaf. Remember next guard-day, no illness and a quiet house."

He lazily rose, pushed the door open for her, and allowed her to pass out. Then re-seating himself in his chair, he slowly revolved it, until he faced Miss Waddington. She was seated before him on a reclining chair, her hands clasped in her lap, and her dark eyes shining out from her pale face with a look which Mr. Udell could not quite fathom, but which made him feel a little less complacent in the prospect of dealing with her than he had been in snubbing poor Miss Greenleaf. But he promptly shook off this feeling. Miss Waddington needed to be subdued.

He fixed his unpleasant eyes upon her and said in a slow, measured tone :

"This evening in study-hour, Miss Waddington, you were reading a book of poetry."

"Yes; Matthew Arnold's poetry. Are you familiar with it, and do you like it?"

"Matthew Arnold's poetry is very well in its place. But its place is not in the school-room during study-hour."

"Why?" she asked, calmly meeting his eye.

"You were not attending to your duty this evening while you were reading."

"Did you find the school-room in disorder when you came in?"

"The room was quiet. But you were not watching the girls, so how do you know that notes were not being passed, signs made, letters written, and novels read? You should be on the watch every minute."

"It is insulting to young ladies to watch them like that. I can't do it."

“I require the teachers in my school to do it,” he said, with a slight, lingering emphasis on the word “require.”

Theo made no reply.

“Do you attend me, Miss Waddington? I say I require my teachers to so narrowly watch the pupils of the school, that the slightest violation of the rules will be impossible.”

“And you do not think such treatment injurious to these young girls?”

“That is for me to decide, Miss Waddington. My order to you is, do not trust a single girl—and I expect you to obey it.”

“I can’t obey it, Mr. Udell,” she replied, with a quiet dignity; “because I do feel confidence in the girls. I know that the majority of them are trustworthy. I can’t consent to injure myself and them by distrusting them.”

Mr. Udell had probably never before been thus spoken to by any teacher in his employ. The novelty of the thing he found rather entertaining. He liked nothing better than to overcome an obstacle; and so, with no little interest he bent his energies upon the subduing of this strong, self-respecting young lady by whom he found himself opposed. The quiet, cool persistency with which he always went about the conquering of difficulties, usually won for him complete success. He rarely failed in anything he attempted to do. Theo’s father generally won his way through his impulsive, hot-blooded enthusiasm; Mr. Udell, through his passionless obstinacy. The latter usually felt the most profound contempt for the teachers in his school; but in the case of Miss Waddington there was mixed with the interest he had in her a spark of genuine admiration for the spirit she showed.

“You are faulty in disciplining, Miss Waddington,”



he said, "very faulty. There is not a single girl in the school who is not fond of you."

"You think that in order to be a successful disciplinarian one must make one's self obnoxious to one's pupils? I am very glad, then, that in your estimation I am a failure."

"In order to be a successful disciplinarian one must, as I have said, distrust every girl."

"I despise a teacher who cannot place confidence in her pupils. I believe it is more her fault than that of the pupils. It is better for me and for the girls that I should occasionally be deceived than that our relation should be that of a policeman and a thief. Why, the teachers in this school actually enjoy discovering a girl in some wrong-doing. They gloat over a culprit as a lion over its prey. The girls all feel that. They find nothing in the teachers which is in sympathy with their young life. They are fond of me, because I am not as yet, a professional, but am still a woman. I am natural with them and they feel me to be akin to them. They realize that I am full of sympathy with them in their fun as well as in their work, and I am human enough to feel a little sympathy even with some of their naughtiness, especially when it is directed against those teachers who are so very fond of making them unhappy."

"This, Miss Waddington, is absolute treason."

"Now that I think about it," Theo calmly replied, "my methods (which I have learned from no profound pedagogical work, but which are the outcome of my natural impulse) are more successful than those followed by the other teachers in this house. Annabel Harrington, whom no one else can manage, is implicitly obedient to

me. When I am on guard the house is always quieter than at other times. None of the pupils are ever disrespectful to me as they are to the other teachers."

"I am curious to learn how you managed to conquer Annabel Harrington," Mr. Udell condescended to ask.

Theo smiled as she looked down in her lap and toyed with a cord which hung from her waist. "I must have something of my father's nature in me," she said, "to have been able to bring that wild girl so completely under my control."

Mr. Udell regarded her curiously. "How did you go about it?"

"Well, when she failed to prepare her lessons, I doubled the amount and compelled her to recite to me in recreation hour. She now prepares all her lessons perfectly. When I read to my class and she disturbed me by making the girls laugh at some of her comical tricks, I gave her the book and let her do the reading. When she 'cut' her practice periods, I had her make up double the amount of time in recreation period."

"I didn't think you could be so relentless. I wonder she is so fond of you."

"She is comparatively subdued now—but we have been the best of friends through it all. I avoid an unpleasant manner even in dealing with culprits. Don't imagine," she added, gravely, "that I am very self-satisfied with my methods of dealing with the girls. I am painfully conscious of my own short-comings in view of my grave responsibilities."

"There is one duty of which you are especially neglectful," he said, fixing his eyes upon her with that look which usually made his victim afraid to oppose him. "I

am told that when you inspect the young ladies' rooms you never open their drawers and closets."

Theo's face flushed as she promptly answered:

"Don't ever ask me to do that, Mr. Udell."

"I require every teacher in this school in examining the order of the rooms, to search the drawers and closets of the pupils. This not only prevents untidiness, but also the concealment of forbidden sweets and prohibited literature."

"I can't do it. The pupils of this school are too old to be treated with such ignominy."

"Will you please leave that to my judgment? I require you to do it. There is nothing more to be said on the subject."

Theo rose from her chair. Her comment on his requirement astonished him.

"I think you will have to accept my resignation, Mr. Udell. I see that you and I can never work together."

Never before had a teacher presented her resignation unless asked to do so by himself. The very idea of one of his employees offering to leave because she was displeased with his management, instead of *visa versa*! It was like having a luscious plum snatched from his lips. And yet, she had never looked handsomer to him, than she did at this moment, as she stood before him tall and queenly in her pale, spiritual beauty. He had no idea of allowing her to go. He wanted her to stay. But how should he let himself gracefully out of his difficulty?

"Miss Waddington," he said, speaking more courteously than he had been doing hitherto in their interview, "please be seated again—I have something to say to you."

He paused, and after an instant's hesitation, she sat down.

"I do not want to lose you. I am willing to give you another trial."

"I do not think we can possibly work together, Mr. Udell, I am so entirely out of sympathy with your manner of dealing with the girls."

His concessions were being rejected! He tried once more.

"You are a good teacher, a very good teacher; I grant that readily, and I really wish to retain you in my school."

Theo was thoughtfully silent for a moment. Then she said:

"There is one condition upon which I will remain."

"Well?"

"Relieve me from all work that is not strictly scholastic."

"I intended myself to suggest that," he answered; "not only because I think you have too much to do" —

"I have no more than the other teachers," she interrupted, pinning him down to the truth.

"But because," he stolidly continued, "to an artistic temperament such as I surmise yours to be, the guard duties are necessarily more fretting and distasteful than to a more phlegmatic disposition. Consider yourself exempt, now, from all work that is not strictly scholastic."

Theo inclined her head in acknowledgment and again rose to go.

"Sit still for a few moments," he urged. "It is not yet late."

"But I must write home before I go to bed," she objected. "Now I want to ask you," she added, "about a matter that has troubled me this evening. Little Lucy Rushmore pleaded for permission to have a light in her room until she should fall asleep, because she was homesick and afraid of the dark, and I allowed her to keep it. Of course you think I did wrong?"

"Yes. But you will hereafter have no opportunity to commit such errors, since the pupils will no longer apply to you for any permissions whatever, your duties, in the future, being entirely scholastic. I suppose," he suddenly added, "you remember seeing little Lucy when you were in New York over a year ago?"

"Yes."

"She is very young to be sent away to school. As we have no other small children here, the little thing will have no companions. But her father tells me she will scarcely miss that, as she never has had any playmate except himself. He makes a great pet of her. She is to go home every Saturday and Sunday."

"She seems such a melancholy little one," Theo said. "She will be lonely and frightened among all our great girls. I shall do all I can to make the poor child contented."

"I believe you did not like Rushmore when you met him here, did you?" he asked, looking at her narrowly.

"In common with every one else, I admired his talents," Theo replied, evasively.

"He was very unhappily married," remarked Udell, who, among some other of his unpleasant characteristics, revealed, occasionally, a not unclerical love of

gossip. "It embittered him. He plunged into the severest labor to drown his trouble, and into excessive dissipations as well," he added, significantly. "Rushmore has tried every sort of pleasure—inno- cent, and otherwise."

## CHAPTER XII

THE announcement was made, a short time after this incident, that Mr. Rushmore was to visit his daughter at the school. The day previous to the one he was expected Theo undertook guard duty for Miss Ross, who was called away by the sickness of her sister.

It was with a sense of relief that she rang the last retiring bells that night. Her next and final duty was to promenade the halls and see that in every room the lights had been extinguished. She walked rather absently down the darkened halls, glancing at the transom of each door as she went. In number sixteen she observed a bright light. The rule of the school required her to impose a penalty upon tardiness in turning off the gas.

"I'm sure," thought she, "I heard Lucy say at dinner this evening, that she was going to sleep in Marion Davis' room to-night."

She paused an instant before knocking at the door. She thought she perceived the odor of a cigar. But she at once put that notion from her as a mere imagination. A suggestion of the true explanation of the case never dawned upon her.

"Lucy!" she called, as she rapped and shook the knob.

There was no response; and the light still burned.

“Lucy! The last bells have rung. Put out your light, my dear, at once, whether you are undressed or not.”

She waited then, for an instant; but the light still burned and no one answered.

“She has gone to Marion Davis’ room,” thought Theo, “and has forgotten to put out her light. I suppose I shall have to give her an order-mark for that. But I must turn off her gas for her.”

She opened the door and stepped into the room. She walked slowly across the floor, and had actually reached the middle of the apartment before she discovered suddenly that there was someone in the room. There, in front of the hearth, in a large leather chair, sat a man with an open book lying on his knee. But he was not reading it. His eyes were fixed upon the intruder. One hand was thrust between the buttons of his coat, while the other hung loosely over the arm of his chair with a cigar clasped between two fingers.

Theo’s look of consternation upon discovering him was too much for his gravity, and he burst out laughing. There was a genuine ring in his mirth which fell upon her ear with an odd sound. She had been wont to hear him laugh scornfully, sarcastically, cynically, but mirthfully — never.

His amusement was very transitory, however; he became grave again, almost instantly, as he rose and held out his hand.

“How do you happen to be here?” she asked, still looking distressed, as she gave him her hand. “I thought you were coming to-morrow.”

“That sounds cordial, Miss Waddington. The guest



chamber was not ready for me, so Lucy gave me her room. She has gone to Miss Marion Davis' room for the night."

"Oh!" breathed Theo, sinking into the chair which he placed for her. The shock of encountering Mr. Rushmore in this unexpected fashion quite robbed her of her strength, and she felt almost too weak to stand. But she rose again instantly, and said, abruptly, as she turned away from him:

"Pardon this intrusion, I must go."

"No, you must not," he said, peremptorily, and in a tone which compelled her to turn again and meet his eye.

"Now don't be conventional, but sit down and talk with me. I want to hear what you've been doing during the past year, that is, with your intellect."

She hesitated an instant, and glanced down uneasily at her loose, long-trained bed-room gown which, however becoming it might be, was not the sort of costume in which young ladies usually appeared before gentlemen. But the arbitrary look in his black eyes controlled her, and she once more sat down.

He, too, reseated himself, rested his elbows on the arms of his chair and fitted together the tips of his fingers with a look and manner which betrayed the satisfaction and interest he felt in the present state of affairs.

"Have you been letting it stagnate — your intellect, I mean? No," he added, looking at her intently, "that would be impossible for you. If there were no books left in the world, your intellect would still go on growing. It is of that nature that it cannot rest, but must forever be moving on to new points of view. Few women are like that. Even the brightest of them wall themselves in

behind a set of ideas and never come out from their bulwark, no matter how fierce the assault from without."

Something in his appearance and in the tone of his voice revealed to her that a change had come over him since last she had talked with him. His eyes were still sharp and penetrating, but there was a deeper melancholy in them than there had been before; and although his voice was yet firm and commanding, there was a subdued gravity in it which puzzled her. She wondered what had wrought this change. She remembered Mr. Udell had told her that Rushmore had "tried every sort of pleasure—innocent and otherwise," and she wondered if he were very dissipated. She thought he did not look like a dissipated man. "At any rate," she concluded, as she looked at his high brow, over which his long locks of black hair fell in confusion, and into his honest, brilliant eyes; "at any rate, there is nothing mean in his nature, and if he sins he does it on a large and magnanimous scale, in so Napoleonic a manner, that criticism is lost in astonishment at his daring."

"I have tried," she replied to his question, "not to 'stagnate', but I'm afraid I don't realize much growth."

"I was rather disgusted with you," he said, candidly, "when I heard you had come into this Presbyterian school to teach. The life of a school-mistress is a very staid, colorless existence. You who love and appreciate beauty so much (despite your Puritanical rearing), how can you endure to settle down into this monotonous routine, among a set of raspy spinsters?"

"Most of them are very intellectual women," she gravely replied, "and know a great deal more than I do."

"No doubt. But how much soul do they have?"

"Not much," she agreed with a sigh. "But I am constantly reproaching myself that I cannot be content with a purely intellectual life. I must needs have color and warmth to make me happy. The student's life will suffice me for a time, just as in art, gray and white tones are deliciously restful to the eye for a while, but one must now and then have a bit of brightness."

"That discontent for which you reproach yourself, is the divinest thing in human nature. Without it there would be no progress. We ought to be discontented."

"Is there, then, no satisfaction, no perfect happiness?"

"Has anyone ever found it?" he asked.

"It must exist somewhere," she said, "else its shadow would not be constantly haunting us."

"Somewhere," he repeated. "But where? That is the great mystery."

"There are rare moments when we do really catch it," she said with a sudden glow; "there are times when a sense of the beauty of the universe drives from my soul every bitterness. At such times I rejoice in the spirit of life that is in me, and am glad to be alive. But alas! more often I am unable to escape from the conviction that my own and many other lives are rather worthless."

"The majority of men," he said, throwing back his head and tossing the long locks of hair out of his eyes, "live only to wear out their boots. When they die they have not left a scratch on the surface of the earth. In view of all that we see around us in the world, how can we delude ourselves, as do the worshippers of humanity, into thinking that human life is always a blessed boon? Well," he added, abruptly changing the subject, and suddenly throwing into his voice his old-time, mocking sar-

casm, "I suppose this Presbyterian household quite suits your taste in some respects, doesn't it?"

"In what respects?"

"The principal is a pious fellow. No doubt you admire and like him very much, don't you? You have a *penchant* for the cloth, I think. And then the religious atmosphere of the house, the Bible reading, long prayers, etc., just suit you exactly, I should think."

There was a scarcely perceptible ridicule in his tone which she resented, not on her own account, but because if she had countenanced it, it would have seemed to her that she was dishonoring her father. She could never feel anything but reverence for the faith upon which she had been reared, however impossible it might now be for her to accept its dogmas.

"It seems odd to me," she said, ignoring his questions, "that you should send Lucy here to have her mind 'perverted with Calvinism'."

"I had my reasons for sending her here," he replied, looking at her very directly. "What have you done to the child?" he abruptly added. "What witchcraft have you cast upon her? She talks of you incessantly, whenever she comes home to me. I am almost jealous."

Theo looked gratified. "I am delighted to know she is so fond of me. I love Lucy."

A look suddenly came into his eyes when he heard her say that, which deepened the color in Theo's cheeks. It was the old soft look of tenderness and kindness which had characterized his face years before in his student days in York, and which the experiences of later years had transformed to the cold, stern cynicism which hurt while it fascinated her.

He leaned slightly toward her, as he bent this unwonted look upon her, and said in a grave, gentle tone which set her nerves to tingling :

“Thank you for saying that, Miss Waddington. I know you mean it. You have been very kind to my little girl. I am grateful to you.”

It was rare to hear him speak like that. She felt no little regret when immediately changing his tone, he added, with his former light mockery, “But I want a reply to my questions. Do you find this school-life congenial? And what do you think of his reverence, the Cloth?”

“I don’t find the school-life very congenial, and yet, I am comparatively interested and happy here.”

“And Mr. Udell?—come, tell me, do you like him? Lucy says the teachers and the girls all call you the ‘Prime Favorite of the Faculty’.”

“I scarcely know whether I like him or not. Yes, I think I do. Of course he has some objectionable traits of character, but who has not?”

“I suppose you would not at all agree with your German professor, who told me this evening that he would like this school very much, but for one thing. ‘Too much pray’, he said, in his broken English, dolefully shaking his head, ‘too much pray, too much pray’.”

“Professor is funny,” observed Theo, smiling. “This morning I overheard him in one of his German violent tempers, exclaiming to a poor victim in one of his classes, ‘Meez Arnold, if you zay dat again I vill project you out of ze window! You drive nails into my coffin! You make my hair to turn vite!’ And our teacher of elocution,” she added, with a laugh, “have you met him?”

"No. Tell me about him," he replied, letting his eyes rest upon her with a twinkle of amusement in them. It was as delicious as it was unusual to hear her laugh merrily.

"He is an oddity," she continued. "He has aspirations toward the stage; plays parts of Hamlet and King Lear to the admiration of some otherwise respectable people. He has his photograph taken as Hamlet with a very much Hamlet look in his eyes, and goes about town with a 'to-be-or-not-to-be' intensity of manner that is comical. Even his most ordinary conversation has a dramatic twang to it, and he talks always as if he were making a speech. He belongs to a Browning Society which the teachers have instituted, and his exposition of Robert's poems are more startling than some of the poems themselves. Whenever I have the requisite amount of energy, I dislike him intensely, for I do hate pretense of any kind."

"I observe a change in you," was his comment upon this account, as he looked at her keenly. "I used to think you entirely without any sense of humor. Life was an intensely serious matter with you a year and a half ago—inevitable effect of your Presbyterianism. Are your natural tendencies getting the better of the influence of that pernicious system?"

A knock at the door prevented her from answering him. She instinctively called "come in", forgetting that she was not the possessor of the room. The door opened, and to the surprise of both of them, Mr. Udell appeared on the threshold.

The Rev. John Udell rarely showed astonishment at anything. But the unusual sight of a young lady in a

loose dressing-gown, closeted with young Rushmore in his bedroom, did betray him into emitting a sparkle from his cold, quiet eyes, which, if Theo had seen it, would have made her face turn hot with embarrassment. As it was, however, her interest in the conversation which had been going on, had quite driven from her mind the fact that she was *dishabille*, and that propriety would naturally frown upon her being in Mr. Rushmore's room. So without the slightest evidence of feeling conscious of any indiscretion, she met Udell's glance, as he came into the room, with a very frank smile. Rushmore, who had observed the minister's cold look of surprise and disapproval, watched with amusement the effect upon him of Theo's unembarrassed manner. She rose, however, as he reached her side, and said, glancing at Rushmore —

“I must go now, and leave you with Mr. Udell; I have staid here too long, already. The girls may possibly be taking advantage of my forgetfulness.”

“Pray don't let me drive you off,” Udell said in a tone of irony, which, however, did not disturb Theo, for in her innocence and unconsciousness of wrong she did not even perceive it.

“I must really go,” she replied, as she moved toward the door, her long, loose gown giving to her figure the grace and dignity of a Grecian goddess. Udell's eyes followed the gown in stern disapprobation. Rushmore was glad to conceal his amusement at the little scene, in springing up to open the door for the Grecian goddess to pass out.

## CHAPTER XIII

IT was one evening about two weeks later that a feeling of homesickness came upon Theo. At least, so it was she interpreted the restless mood which made it impossible for her to settle herself, after twilight prayers in the school-room, to her school-tasks in her own little study. Like an uneasy spirit she had wandered through the dim halls, down the wide, front stairway, through the long, stiffly-arranged public parlors, and had finally found her way to the library, the cosiest room in the house, after her own study. The few girls who had encountered her in these wanderings, had at once upon joining their companions, excitedly reported the fact; for her influence upon them all was of that mysterious character which made everything which Miss Waddington said and did of the most vital interest. Every article of dress which she wore, her every little peculiarity of manner and speech, and every thought of hers which she gave to them, was studied over, discussed, repeated and pronounced charming."

"You should have seen her just now!" one enthusiastic young girl confided to her room-mate, in an awe-struck whisper. "She had such a strange look in her eyes. They sparkled so, that as I came toward her in the dark hall it seemed as though two bright stars were advancing to meet one. And her face was so white and



quiet — it would have seemed like marble but for those dark, bright eyes. She really looked, Sue, like a poet, or a genius, or something of that sort, don't you know."

"Do you know," Sue responded, also speaking in a confidential whisper (they generally reverently lowered their voices in talking of their divinity); "do you know, I heard that she came away from her home to teach because she had trouble with" —

"Oh, do tell me quickly! A lover? Quick, Sue!" she rapturously cried. "I'm perfectly dying to know."

"I'd have had it told, Kate, by this time if you hadn't interrupted. She had trouble with her father."

"Oh, that isn't nearly so romantic!" Kate said, in a tone of disappointment. "But still I'm crazy to hear about it. Do go on, Kate. You tell things so slowly. What sort of trouble did she have with her father?"

"Miss Waddington wanted to go into a convent and take the veil, but her father wouldn't let her, and so she left home. At least, so I heard."

"I don't think that's very logical," Kate said, critically. "How would it help her case to leave home and come to a strict Presbyterian school like this? And another thing," very mysteriously; "my suspicion is, that Miss Waddington holds loose views. And I know her father is a minister, and perhaps that's why she left her home."

A stern voice at their door interrupted them, "Girls! Five marks each for talking in study-hour. And if I hear it again I shall report you to the principal."

"The old pig!" muttered Kate.

"Hush — sh! she's probably listening."

"I hope she is, the old pig!" obstinately repeated Kate.

Meanwhile Theo was sitting in the library by a window, listlessly looking out into the dim grounds which surrounded the building. In imagination, she was seeing them all at home, as they were gathered together in the library—her father reading the evening paper or the *Presbyterian Monthly*; her mother peacefully knitting; Joe, with rumpled hair and contracted brows plunging into some huge volume on chemistry; Amy looking extremely tidy, studying her Sunday School lesson from the *Augsburg Teacher*, or perhaps sewing; Harold, if he were home, reading a volume of Jonathan Edwards' powerful discourses. So monotonous was their life at home and so regular and systematic the household routine, that she could at any hour in the day have told almost to the letter what each member of her family was doing. Her heart yearned over the picture which her fancy just now conjured up. Were any of them thinking of her, as she was thinking of them? Did they miss her? Her father wrote to her but seldom, and his letters were usually short and almost cold. He had not yet forgiven her. Her mother wrote nearly every day, begging her "to give up the foolish ideas which displeased papa so much, and come home." Amy wrote at stated intervals, telling all the home and church news and gravely expressing her grief at her dear sister's continued unbelief. Harold preached to her in his weekly lengthy epistles, and sadly lamented her "fall from grace". Joe's frequent letters were jolly and refreshing, and he never referred to the cloud which had darkened for her, the peaceful, happy home life.

Her meditation was interrupted by a voice at her side. She started violently at the sound of it, for she had heard

no footstep approaching. Mr. Udell, as before remarked, had an odd little habit of suddenly appearing at one's side like a spectre.

"Pardon me. Did I startle you?" he asked, in his cold, quiet voice.

"Yes," she said, resuming the comfortable position from which he had roused her, her elbow resting upon the window-sill, and her head thrown back upon her palm in the old, childish attitude which he so distinctly remembered.

"You were sitting just so," he said, looking at her closely, "one evening, many years ago, in the parsonage parlor in York, when I came upon you and startled you, as I startled you just now. You remember?"

"Yes," she replied, again. "But what makes you do so? Why don't you give me a little warning of your coming? It is a very uncanny habit of yours, Mr. Udell, this suddenly turning up, when one isn't expecting you."

"And interrupting little *tête-à-têtes* in gentlemen's private apartments," he said, significantly. "It is well for the Principal of a school to have 'uncanny' habits, when his teachers are prone to such indiscretions."

Theo slowly lifted her eyes to his face. She scorned to answer his imputation by explaining to him how she had happened to go into Rushmore's room. But the clear glance which for an instant rested upon him, and was then turned away, without a word, made him, somehow, feel exceedingly small and uncomfortable. This girl (for to him she seemed nothing more than a girl) could affect him, as no other person whom he had ever known could do. He hastened to speak of something else.

"You have heard, of course, Miss Waddington, of

Rushmore's having come into an immense fortune—gratitude of a dying client—several millions.”

“I heard of it,” said Theo, recalling a remark made by one of the teachers to that effect.”

“He lives at the Windsor now—twenty-five dollars a day, you know—and has a stable full of the finest horses in the city. He is going it rather rapidly. But he is as devoted to his profession as ever. The women are breaking their necks in their wild race after the prize.”

Theo neither enjoyed nor approved of this style of conversation. “Don't you think, Mr. Udell,” she said, “that that savors a little of gossip?”

One of his teachers deliberately reproving him! This was certainly a very novel thing. He again found it necessary hastily to change the subject.

“What do you think of our library?” waving his hand toward the well-filled shelves.

She hesitated an instant, and then she said—

“I am sorry not to find Emerson here, and Carlyle and Dr. Holmes and Huxley and Spencer. And I regret to see the shelves loaded down with Calvinism.”

Udell almost looked surprised. “I thought you would like our assortment. It is very like your father's collection, at your home.”

“Yes,” she said, smiling, “I've always found it necessary to go to our neighbor, Miss Appell, whenever I've wanted anything to read.”

Udell slowly folded his arms across his broad chest. “So you read Huxley and Spencer, do you? And you a daughter of my friend, Dr. Waddington! What does your father think of your reading such books?”

“He seldom notices what I read. But I have seen

you read Huxley, Mr. Udell, and Darwin, too, and David Hume. You have a philosophical mind, and I know you are a thinker. You are naturally incredulous, too. It is a constant mystery to me that you can remain in the ministry."

"Where do you stand, Miss Waddington?"

"I think I must call myself an Agnostic."

He smiled a cold, quiet smile, and took a step nearer to her. "Perhaps you and I are not so very far apart, in our views. Of course, this is between ourselves."

Theo's honest eyes were again raised to his face with that look which always made him so uncomfortable.

"Why do you make a secret of it?" she asked.

"My influence would be destroyed, if I gave forth my real convictions. I can do much good, if I keep silence, in ministering to those whose minds are not ready for the higher truth and who would only be deeply offended by it."

"I cannot sympathize with that attitude. There is a rashness and a candor in me which hates policy. I cannot understand how your influence for good could be injured by your honestly stating what you feel to be the truth."

"I should offend those to whom I am at present of much use," he repeated.

"But by keeping silent and thereby assuming a false position, you retard the prayers of freedom, and offend others to whom you might be doing good were you to come forth more courageously and honestly."

"Do I offend you by my silence?"

"Yes. Your principle seems to me very like the Jesuit motto: 'The end sanctifies the means.' Your

position is that of a vast number of modern divines, and I can't help thinking that the influence of their cautious silence is harmful, perhaps more harmful to themselves than to others."

He looked down into her white, pure face, gleaming from out the dimness of the evening light, and his broad chest heaved deeply. The nobility of this woman inspired a feeling almost of worship, in a soul not altogether mean; and a half-formed desire stirred his heart, that he might raise himself to the high standard which he felt that she innocently looked for in others. In the weeks that followed, he found in his frequent contact with Miss Waddington, that this desire grew upon him steadily. It became almost a mania with him. It was not, however, unmixed with the selfish wish to win her approval and favor—to which end, with a persistent, quiet strength, he tried to overcome obstacle after obstacle.

But there was one phase of her character which he never learned to know. An unerring instinct led her never to betray to the calculating, mathematical mind of Udell, the warmer, and more passionate side of her nature. It was the same instinct which in her childhood had led her to keep her note-book a profound secret from her practical-minded family.

Udell's mind was of that nature which must needs reduce everything to definite quantities, and bring it within prescribed, geometrical dimensions. The fancies and emotions of an artistic nature always seemed to him to be nothing more than disgusting affectation. Theo felt this intuitively, and it sealed her lips upon her best thoughts whenever she conversed with him.

## CHAPTER XIV

IT was a chill, December afternoon, and the sky was gray and gloomy. It was such a day as invited to a comfortable arm-chair before a warm fire in a well-stocked library, rather than to a stroll in the streets or through the Park. Yet Theo's restless spirit had found no satisfaction in books that day, and she had wandered forth for a long walk in the chilly air. Nothing so surely quieted that fever of uneasiness which sometimes seized her, as a brisk walk through the crowded streets, or a leisurely stroll under the great, old trees of the Park. There was something in the calm majesty of those venerable trees, which through many a decade had withstood wind and tempest, that calmed her ruffled spirits, strengthened her wavering courage, and inspired fresh hope in her tired heart.

Not a few pairs of eyes turned to glance after the strong, youthful figure which swung along with such an unconscious grace, with such decision in its step and yet such dignity in its bearing that it might have belonged to a young queen. Theo's walk, like most other things about her, was not conventional, but characteristic. Unconventionality sets well only on those whose individuality is strong enough to form a pleasing substitution for the usages which polite society demands.

One cannot walk far in the streets of New York city

without seeing many painful sights. Indeed, one cannot live long in the great metropolis without becoming not only rather callous to suffering, but also indifferent to splendor. Theo had not yet reached this state, and in the course of her customary daily walks, not a single poor suffering wretch who passed her, ever escaped her pitying glance. There was one form of suffering, however, which always moved her to something more than a glance of pity. No little child with pinched and hungry face, or small cripple with wares to sell, ever missed her interest or aid.

This afternoon, she had been walking along the bustling, crowded streets rather aimlessly, with no distinct intention of going anywhere in particular. But gradually the wish formed itself in her mind, to get away from

“Midst the crowd, the hum, the shock of men”,

and to go to the Park and there wander about under the restful, grand old trees. She spoke to a small boy and asked him if he could tell her the shortest cut to Central Park. The boy shook his head and ran away; he had other fish to fry. But instantly, a little ragged, barefoot girl who had been standing near by, holding a heavy baby in her arms, and who had overheard Theo's request, stepped closer to her side and offered her services. She was a very forlorn little child — pale and thin, and with scarcely rags enough to decently cover her miserable little body.

“Lady!” she said, eagerly, raising her hollow, wistful eyes to Theo's face, “let I show you the way to the Park, please! I'll do it for a penny, and it are more'n a half a mile away.”



“But the baby, my dear little girl—it would make you too tired to carry the baby so far.”

Accustomed as this little street-beggar was to rebuffs, the gentleness in the voice and the kindness in the eyes of this lady who spoke to her as no one had ever before spoken to her in all her little life, filled her with a strange wonder. She looked up at Theo, and slowly her big eyes filled with tears.

“Oh, ma’am,” she said, with a sad little smile, which went to Theo’s heart, “I couldn’t get more tireder than I are.”

“Poor little one!” and Theo’s hand went out instinctively to the child’s wan face in a gentle caress which made the big eyes open wider than ever in puzzled wonder.

What a spectacle Miss Waddington was making of herself! So thought Udell as he looked at her from a slowly passing street-car—and so thought many another man and woman who carelessly observed, as they walked by, the striking, well-appearing young lady wrapped in handsome furs, stopping on the side-walk to caress the cheek of a forlorn little beggar-child. “An eccentric young woman!” they said to themselves, and hurried on.

“You may show me the way to the Park,” Theo replied to the child; “and I shall pay you well. But let me carry the baby.”

She had satisfied herself that the infant was actually quite clean, before she made this astonishing proposal. But the little girl now looked absolutely alarmed at such an unheard-of proposition. “Be you right in your head?” she anxiously inquired.

“Quite right, I think,” Theo said, smiling, as she took

the passive, heavy baby in her strong arms. "You are tired and I am not. Why should I not bear the burden for a few minutes which you, my little fellow-creature, have to carry all the time?"

Perhaps the little girl did not understand the question, but the smile which accompanied it reassured her as to the strange lady's sanity and trustworthiness.

So together they walked along the crowded street, Theo carrying the baby, and the barefoot little girl trudging at her side, and still keeping her wondering eyes fixed upon the lady's face.

As they went on, Theo became unpleasantly conscious of the fact that she was the object of a great deal of staring, and it dawned upon her, after a few moments, that she must have done a rather unusual thing, in following the natural impulse of her heart, and relieving the overburdened child of the heavy baby. But not for an instant did she regret the act, or think of giving up the infant again to its tired little nurse. She was absolutely indifferent to the impression which she might be making upon the passers-by.

"Be you a fine lady?" the little girl inquired in puzzled doubt, when they had gone on for several moments.

"Not too fine to relieve a tired little girl, for a while, my dear. Is this baby your brother?"

"He are my step-mam's baby."

"Is your step-mother kind to you?" Theo asked, as her eye fell upon a bruise on the child's bare, bony arm, which looked like the effect of a heavy blow.

The little girl's wide eyes opened a little wider, as she replied with a sad shake of her head, "No one were

ever kind to I, but you. What makes you be kind to I?" she asked, half suspiciously.

"Because I love little children, and it hurts me to see them suffer."

It was just at this instant that Theo suddenly stopped short in the middle of the pavement and almost dropped the heavy infant, as something tall and dark loomed up before her eyes, stopping directly in her way—and glancing up, startled, she met the astonished gaze of Mr. Horace Rushmore, who had been coming rapidly along the street and had been suddenly and sharply arrested by the startling sight of Miss Theo Waddington walking toward him with a shabbily-clad infant in her arms and a street-beggar at her side.

"What on earth!" he exclaimed, lifting his hat and at the same time gingerly touching with his gloved hand the unattractive baby in Theo's arms. "Where did you get it? And this," glancing at the ragged little girl. "In the name of conscience what are you doing with them and where did you pick them up?"

Rushmore's appearance, this afternoon, was rather more striking than usual. The seal-skin collar of his long overcoat enhanced the pallor of his face, making his luminous eyes shine out of it with an unwonted brilliancy. He wore a seal-skin cap and brown kid gloves and carried a gold-handled silk umbrella. He looked the New York millionaire from head to foot.

"I didn't think I was doing anything so very much out of place," Theo said, a little anxiously. "The little girl is showing me a short cut to the Park and I'm relieving her of this heavy baby on the way."

Rushmore's eyes twinkled and he bit his lip, as Theo

remembered to have seen him do, years ago in her childhood, when she had talked to him at Alice Caufield's tennis-party about her "secret thoughts".

"Miss Waddington, you are positively unique! How far have you been carrying this infant through these public streets?"

"About three squares."

"Three squares! Have you met any one whom you know?"

"I didn't look around much — but I think not."

"If only Mrs. Graybill could have seen you — or Udell!" he added, with a broad smile.

"Why?" Theo demanded.

He made no reply, but deliberately tucking his umbrella under his elbow, he put out his hands and abruptly lifted the baby from her arms.

"I shall go with you to the Park, and I shall carry the child!" he said, turning to face the direction in which she had been walking.

"But," said Theo, hesitatingly, "I'm afraid you don't know how to handle a baby. Men are so awkward."

"I've had experience. I have a baby of my own, you know. Now come, let us jog along — a happy and united family."

He started forward and she was compelled to walk beside him.

"But it is six years since Lucy was this size," she said, watching his management of the infant rather doubtfully, as they made their way through the street.

"She was as helpless as a baby until she was four years old. Oh, don't be afraid to trust me. I know just how to handle an infant."

"Very well, then, it is a relief to my arms," she replied simply, as she willingly walked at his side with the little beggar-girl's hand clasped in her own.

Rushmore burst into a laugh, as he glanced from her to the baby and back again at her.

"Is the situation so very amusing?" she asked, curiously and without smiling.

"I'm thinking what a ludicrous sight I'm presenting to the public," he said; "this thing will be in the newspapers to-morrow. I wonder what construction they will put upon it. A scandal will grow out of it, no doubt. Don't you observe how we are being stared at?"

"Why need we care?" she asked, indifferently.

"I really believe you never stop to think of appearances," he said, looking at her curiously.

"Not often," she admitted. "I am too busy for that—and life is too short to trouble one's self about so unimportant a thing as how one may appear to others. It really is not worth while—indeed, it is so very not-worth-while!" she added, with a smile.

"You are the most independent young person it has ever been my good fortune to know."

"Why? Because I offered to carry this child's burden for her through this street? Think, Mr. Rushmore, what it must be to this little girl to have to trudge the streets all day long with that heavy baby in her puny arms. Why, my strong arms ached after walking a square and a half, and I can see that even your man's strength is a little taxed in holding it."

Rushmore's face grew grave, as he glanced from Theo to the forlorn little girl whose hand she held, and who

still gazed up into her face as though she could never draw her eyes away from it.

“You have put a ray of brightness into this little one’s dark life by your small kindness to her, to-day” he said, “which she can never, never lose. She will never forget this afternoon.”

“Such a life as this,” Theo said, indicating the child, “seems to me so pitiful, so pitiful.”

“Will it surprise you to learn that to many people of my acquaintance, your life of teaching and pleasureless routine, would seem quite as pitiful as this child’s life of beggary seems to you? Poverty and wealth are after all merely relative conditions.”

“Mr. Rushmore,” she asked, “are you proud?”

He looked at her inquiringly.

“Now just what do you mean by that question? What are you driving at?”

“I have heard you sneer at the shams of fashionable life. Perhaps you could discover the sincerity which you think so rare, in people of simple lives and lower social status. Have you ever tried it?”

“I don’t fancy the society of ill-bred people — however sincere they may be.”

“Then you think the great majority of those who, by their limited wealth or other circumstances, are cut off from your ‘Four Hundred’ *elite*, are necessarily ill-bred? I, for instance?”

“You are an exception,” he said, briefly. “The unsophisticatedness which in another I should find awkward and disagreeable, and which would often excite in me a sense of the ludicrous, in you I find quite charming — your chief attraction, in fact. Refinement and absolute

ignorance of the ways of fashionable life rarely go hand in hand. I have been brought up in a certain charmed circle and I know I am full of its prejudices—at least my heart is, however much my head may disapprove.”

Theo was silent for a moment. Then again with suddenness she put an unexpected question. “So you think me awkward, disagreeable and unsophisticated?”

“That is exactly what I said you were not,” he replied, looking at her narrowly. He thought he detected a little expression of satisfaction about her mouth, as she heard his emphatic negative, to her perverse query.

“I have a curiosity to know what value you place in my opinion of you?” he said.

“Not much,” she replied, with a blush; “because you are a cynic and your judgment is perverted.

They had now reached the side street which formed the “short cut” to the Park. The little girl stopped, knowing that her guidance was no longer necessary.

“The Park gates be right down there,” she said, pointing with her finger. “I’ll take the baby, now, please, sir, and thank you.”

Rushmore put his hand into his pocket, and drew forth a bill and gave it to the child. “That will prevent your begging any more to-day. Now, where do you live?”

The child had probably never before held a note in her hands, but she knew what it was, and the wonder which had never left her face since Theo had first spoken kindly to her, now increased almost to bewilderment.

“I don’t live nowheres,” she said; “but me and Sal and him,” pointing to the baby in Rushmore’s arms, “sleeps in Jones’ lodgin’s, whenever we’ve got the money to pay fur ’em.”

"Where shall you go when you leave us?"

The child looked down at the note in her hand.

"I be goin' straight to Carter's pie-shop, and then to Jones' lodgin's."

"How far away are those places?"

"A mile and more."

"Come with me." He held out his hand, and the child placed her tiny palm in his big gloved one, and looked up at him with wide, curious eyes. Theo, too, watched him with scarcely less curiosity.

He led the little girl to the curb-stone, glanced up and down the street for an instant, and then, as an empty hack came rumbling toward them, he dropped her hand and lifted his umbrella. The hackman drew up to the pavement, jumped down from his perch, and touched his hat, as he held open the door of his carriage.

"Get in, little one," Rushmore said, laying his hand on the child's shoulder. "This shall be a red-letter day for you." He helped her to a seat, and then leaned forward and laid the baby in her arms.

"On what street is the pie-shop?" he asked.

"The upper end of Perkiomen street," the child replied.

"Driver, take this little girl to the upper end of Perkiomen street, and be careful of her. Now, little one," he added, looking into the carriage again, "good-by."

"Good-by, sir. You be jus' like God, what the Sunday School man told me about. And the fine lady," she added, looking at Theo, who had stepped to the curb-stone, "the fine lady be like the music in the big Cathedral which I creeps in and hears it on Sundays."

Then the driver closed the door, mounted his perch



once more, and the little girl was whirled away on her fine drive.

As Rushmore and Theo turned to enter the Park gates, the former said, in a grave, low tone, "That little girl is just about the age of Lucy. A mere chance of birth places my child in a palace and that forlorn little one on the wretched streets of this great city."

Theo looked thoughtful, but made no reply, as together they walked slowly through a long avenue of tall trees.

"By the way, what an idea that was for the child to conceive — comparing you with the music of the Cathedral."

"Her material from which to draw comparisons is so limited," Theo said, smiling.

"It instantly recalled to me," he said, looking at her, "that Sunday afternoon, almost two years ago, on which I heard you sing a hymn. Do you remember?"

Her face grew red as she told him she could never forget that afternoon.

"Neither can I," he replied, in a significant tone.

And then after an instant, he added, "I have never heard you sing since that day, and I should be almost afraid to."

"You are not fond of having hymns sung to you — and in an evangelizing spirit?"

"Your voice affected me oddly," he said, ignoring her question. "I had never heard one just like it. It is a very unusual voice. As I listened to you that afternoon I felt as though something had gotten a grip on my heart, and were crushing the life out of it."

Theo's face grew warm again, as she asked him, "Are

you a lover of music — and do you know anything about it?"

His reply rather surprised her.

"There is a maudlin, emotional sentimentality," he said, "that passes for fine appreciation of musical art; but it has in fact no proper conception of what true art really is. The popular sensational style of playing (so offensive to the cultivated taste of those who have deeply felt the truer, subtle power of music), appeals easily and strongly to this sentimental temperament, arousing a false emotion and sometimes an unhealthy and morbid excitement which to the more profound appreciation of music is repulsive and ever disgusting. The New York popular taste in music, I heartily despise; beware, Miss Theo, or you will fall into it. It is contagious — and not only in New York city — it is an American failing. Now," he said, abruptly and unexpectedly changing the subject, "by this time, what do you think of Udell?"

"It would not be good taste, to say the least of it, for me to be discussing with strangers the Principal of the school in which I teach."

"He and I went to school together, when we were small boys," he said, coolly accepting her rebuke. "He always managed to keep ahead of me in everything. I was a perverse little wretch — couldn't be forced to dig at a thing in which I was not interested. Udell was a plodder, and usually eclipsed me. When I was given a subject I liked, I would sit up all night and read my textbook through at one clip — and then I thought I knew the whole subject — more than my teacher, and more than the man who had written the book. Udell never broke the rules. I think he is a little ashamed of that

fact, now. I'll tell you to what conclusion I've come about those youths who neither smoked nor blotted their copy-books, but dearly loved their teacher — they were canting little hypocrites. But then," he added, throwing back his head and abruptly readjusting his umbrella under his arm, "the majority of people are insincere."

To this Theo objected. "I know there are some hypocrites," she naïvely conceded; "but human nature is by no means altogether despicable. It is sometimes great and good. Can you read Emerson and Marcus Aurelius without thinking so?"

He made no reply, and they walked on for a few paces in silence. Then Theo said:

"I have never inquired about Mrs. Rushmore, since I came here, two months ago. I have always meant to ask Cousin Violet about her, but have constantly forgotten it. I have met so few of your 'charmed circle' since I've been in New York this time. None of them have called on me — Cousin Violet says I can't possibly expect it, in my present position. I have not been to any of my cousin's parties, and so I've not seen your wife in all this time. How is she?"

She waited for his reply, but he offered none, and when she glanced up, in surprise at his silence, she was puzzled to see that his face had grown very pale and that his lips were compressed as though he were in pain. She saw at once that she had touched on a sore and sensitive subject, so she hastened to speak of something else.

"And Mr. Colwell," she added, "how is he? Is he married yet?"

He turned and looked at her almost fiercely.

"Silence!" he exclaimed, in a low voice, full of sup-

pressed passion, which shook her very heart. "Never speak that name to me!" Then instantly recovering himself, he hastily added, in his usual off-hand manner, "Oh, by the way, do you ever read my speeches as they are reported in the newspapers?"

"Not often — I don't do much newspaper reading."

She thought the sternness of his expression relaxed a little as he heard this reply, and she imagined she saw a look of relief come into his face.

"There is another thing of which you never do much — and that is, gossip!"

He fairly ground out the word between his teeth, and Theo saw that the gloved hand which rested on the gold handle of his umbrella tremblingly clutched it as though he would crush it.

For several moments, then, they once more walked on in silence — a breathless silence in which Theo almost heard herself breathe while the sound of her footsteps seemed painfully loud.

But she could not long endure this, and abruptly throwing off the intolerable gloom that had fallen upon them, she suddenly bent back her head and looked up at the great trees under which they were walking; then she spoke, and her grave, low voice fell like soothing music upon his embittered spirit.

"To a lover of trees," she said, "there is a beauty in them even when they are stripped of their leaves, and are standing bare and bleak to brave the winter wind. And I love a gray, December sky, like this."

"'Each moment of the year has its own beauty,' Emerson says," he replied.

They walked on, then, and talked, for an hour longer,

until the gray, December sky growing darker, Theo was warned of the approach of the hour at which she must be back at the school. And then they retraced their steps, left the Park and walked back through the streets, toward home. They walked slowly, and it took them a long while to reach their destination. But Rushmore said, when they did finally arrive at the seminary, that he was sorry the walk had not been longer.

He stopped for an hour at the school, to see his little daughter, who was wild with delight at the unexpected visit.

When Theo, that night, lay down upon her bed, she told herself that she had spent an unusually happy day. But she did not stop to ask herself why.

She lay awake a long while, pondering upon Mr. Rushmore's strange reception of her queries concerning the well-being of his wife and of Mr. Colwell.

"Thereby hangs a tale," she told herself. And then she thought she would ask her Cousin Violet about it, the very next time she saw her. But something at once came into her memory, which made her falter in this purpose. Rushmore had said to her that afternoon, "There is another thing of which you never do much—and that is, gossip!" Evidently the newspapers and "polite society" had gossiped a great deal about some scandalous affair between Colwell and Mrs. Rushmore. How unfortunate she had been in mentioning them both in one breath! She blushed with embarrassment at the recollection of it. Then she fell to wondering if Mr. and Mrs. Rushmore were divorced. Her heart turned cold at the thought of such a thing—it seemed to her so terrible.

“He has an affectionate nature, I know. How can he feel so coldly toward the wife of his bosom, the mother of his child, the beautiful woman to whom he once gave his heart’s best love. And to think of their living apart! This must be the case, else I think he would not send Lucy to school. And Mr. Udell says he lives at the Windsor Hotel, so of course his house is closed.”

It dawned upon her that perhaps there had been some impropriety in her walking with Mr. Rushmore so long in the Park that afternoon.

“But why trouble one’s self about appearances,” she thought, after a moment’s consideration of the case; “so long as in reality there was nothing wrong about it.”

It was the habit of her honest mind to look at things as they were, and not from any false criticism set up by the world.

## CHAPTER XV

THEO stood apart in the conservatory and watched the dancers. For the first time since she had come to New York to teach school, Mrs. Graybill had succeeded in persuading her to attend one of her parties.

Mr. Udell, too, had been invited, and he had requested Miss Waddington very particularly, to go with him. Unacknowledged to himself was the ascendancy which this man had been slowly gaining over her during the weeks in which she had been living under his roof. Few persons could come in daily contact with him without gradually submitting to the subtle influence of his stubborn will. He had gained this ascendancy over Theo by a process which was very unusual with him. He had been compelled, in her case, to modify his customary habit of dealing with his teachers, and to accommodate himself to that self-respect of hers which would never tolerate from him, those little tyrannies that it had always been his good pleasure to impose upon those in his employ.

They had become very close friends by this time—as close, at least, as it was possible for two such opposite natures to become. They saw each other constantly, and Theo had begun to feel very intimate with the Principal. She had almost entirely overcome her first instinctive and indefinable repugnance to him, and had learned to

enjoy his society very much. More than that, he was strong, and she had come to feel his strength and to admire it; and she could not be indifferent to the admiration which she in turn inspired in him, and which he revealed in a thousand little nameless attentions. She felt it in every look of his quick, subtle, penetrating eye, in the peculiar tones of his voice, in the very touch of his cold, strong fingers when he would help her in and out of a carriage, or shake hands with her, when bidding her good-night.

But to-night, for the first time, as she stood apart, in her cousin's conservatory of flowers, and watched the dancers, she acknowledged to herself that this regard which Mr. Udell evidently felt for her, had a deeper root than she had hitherto dreamed of. As they had driven to Mrs. Graybill's together that evening, he had pushed his flattering attentions to a point at which she could no longer doubt his intentions. And now, as she idly leaned against the glass doors of the conservatory and followed with her eyes the clerical figure in the room beyond, as it moved about among the guests, she wondered what she should say to him in answer to the question which she knew would be put to her that night—probably during their drive home.

“I like him very much. Why do I? Well, he is strong.”

She looked at him thoughtfully. “Then, too, he is a clergyman, and I can't get over my imbued reverence and love for the Cloth, as Mr. Rushmore says. Mr. Udell knows just how I feel about the Church, now, but it doesn't arouse any antagonism in him at all. He is what they call ‘broad’,” she added, with a faint smile at the



absurdity of the idea of a "broad" Presbyterian — the two terms seemed so utterly incompatible.

"Yes," she went on, meditatively, "I like Mr. Udell very much." And then her face grew warm, as she added, "Father would be so pleased if I married him. He would be quite reconciled to me, I'm sure, if I should marry so to his taste."

A great wistfulness came into her eyes as she thought of this. She longed so much to be completely reconciled to her idolized parent.

"Mr. Udell does care for me very much," she told herself; "I am sure of that. He had been so kind to me. He would be a good husband to me. And how happy it would make father. He would forgive me—he would forgive me, completely."

The temptation was strong upon her; for the dearest wish of her heart was to be restored to the favor of her father. The withdrawal of that tenderness which had been the spiritual food of her whole life, left a blank in her soul which nothing could fill. The curt, cold letters which he at long intervals wrote to her, wounded her so deeply that she felt sometimes as though she could never, never go home again. She knew that the rebellion of his most beloved child was a humiliation to him which he found it almost impossible to forgive.

Like most young people, she had no real conception of the close and intimate relation between husband and wife. So, in her ignorance, she seriously thought of marriage with the Rev. John Udell as a means to the great happiness of reconciliation with her father.

So absorbed and delighted was her contemplation of this prospect, that she scarcely noticed a certain fact

which later in the evening was unmistakably forced upon her, namely that she was being severely let alone. Attentions were not lavished upon the young school-teacher as they had been upon the honored guest of Mrs. Graybill nearly two years previous. It was universally known that Mrs. Graybill's fair cousin, whose debut had created such a sensation, winter before last, and who had come so very near to being the wife of the millionaire Colwell, was now an employed instructor in the Rev. Mr. Udell's Seminary for Young Ladies; and even Mrs. Graybill's influence was not sufficient to overcome the prejudices of her "set" against the admission into their charmed circle of one who manifestly had no sort of right there—for "New York's Four Hundred" is, as every one knows, an aristocracy of nothing else than money.

As the evening's entertainment wore on, Theo could of course not fail to notice this change on the part of her cousin's guests in their treatment of her. No one was rude to her; no one was cold or distant; no one snubbed the poor school-teacher; but they simply let her alone. It is true that one or two young gentlemen, remembering their former acquaintance with her, did ask her for the pleasure of a dance; but as she was compelled to tell them she never danced they did not stay to talk with her long. A few other young men, seeing the tall, handsome young lady in her becoming gown of black silk and lace, standing alone near the conservatory, had solicited from Mr. Udell or Mrs. Graybill, an introduction to her; but they, too, did not remain with her long; for she made it so unpleasantly evident that their air of condescension was ludicrous in her eyes, that they found her society rather uninteresting. But Theo had too much

to see and to think about, to very much mind being a wallflower.

In striking contrast to the neglect with which she was treated, was the honorable reception accorded to the most celebrated guest of the evening — Mr. Horace Rushmore. He had always been popular; but now, as the possessor of many millions, he was lionized; he was bowed down to; he was fawned upon; he was flattered; he was almost worshipped. Theo looked on and observed it all with interest. What did they hope to get out of him, she wondered? And how did he bear the devoted attentions and enthusiastic admiration of his friends and acquaintances? Was he large enough, she asked herself, to remain unspoiled through all this adulation? She watched his reception of it, and tried to judge of its effect upon him. He seemed to meet it, for the most part, she thought, with a cold, stolid indifference, although occasionally there was a sudden suggestion of supercilious scorn in the curl of his lips; or of cynical amusement in the sparkle of his eyes.

The hours of the long evening moved on, but he did not once come near her. This did not at all surprise her; what reason had she to expect that he would treat her with more consideration than did the rest of these nabobs? Had not he himself told her that he was full of the prejudices of his class? Then, too, they had never liked each other — at least he had never liked her.

A deep blush covered her face, as this thought passed through her mind; for it was just at this instant that she met his eye, as he happened to catch sight of her in her secluded corner near the conservatory. But he looked away again, at once, and during the remainder of the

evening, for a long while he took no further notice of her. Indeed, even if he had felt inclined to do so, he would scarcely have had any opportunity, for he was constantly surrounded by effusive women and ardent admirers of the sterner sex.

Mrs. Horace Rushmore, Theo noticed, was not among the guests. Before the evening was over, she learned something which increased in her mind the mystery that now enveloped that woman's history. She was standing alone near a door which opened from the dancing-room into a small apartment where the punch was served, when she happened to overhear a conversation between two persons who had retired to this small room, to escape for a few moments the heat of the dancing-hall. She could not see them, but she recognized both their voices. The one was Mr. Rushmore's, the other was that of a fashionable young gentleman, Mr. William Clarkson, who had that evening been more attentive to her than had anyone else in the rooms, except, perhaps, Mr. Udell.

"I saw you with her, Rushmore, one day last week — walking in the Park," Mr. Clarkson was saying, when Theo's attention was caught by the familiar voices. "She's a nice girl — why don't you marry her?"

"Why don't you marry her yourself, if you think she is so desirable?"

"I can't afford it, Rushmore. If I were a capitalist like you, I should go in for her without delay. You can afford to marry a poor girl. But my wife will have to have a dowry large enough to enable me to support her in style. Now, you might marry this charming miss."

"She wouldn't have me, Clarkson," Rushmore interrupted, with a careless laugh. "She's a stiff-necked

Presbyterian of the old school—so you may know with what horror she regards me.”

“Pshaw!” Clarkson said. “One would think you didn’t know much about women! Imagine any woman in this city refusing to marry you. And a penniless school-mistress, at that!”

“She’s not an ordinary woman. She loves her church better than she could ever love any man. I’m sure she wouldn’t marry a lost soul like me.”

“Well, then, why don’t you join her d—d church?”

“There would be no hope for me, even if I did,” Rushmore said, with another mocking laugh. “She will marry the Rev. John Udell, I think.”

Theo heard no more. She walked rapidly away from the open door, and went out into her former retreat in the cool and solitary conservatory. Her cheeks were flushed and her eyes were very bright.

She let herself lean heavily against the glass walls, as she looked out into the winter night. She tried to quiet the strange fluttering of her heart, and to think quietly about what she had just heard.

“Were they talking of me?”

There was a bewildered look in her wide-open eyes, as she asked herself the question.

“What can it mean? Is Mrs. Rushmore dead? If not—would he marry again?” she wondered, with a little shudder. “Would he marry another woman while she—the mother of his little daughter, lives? I’m sure he would not!” she decided. “He could not do that. She is dead.”

She wondered how and when she had died, and what Mr. Archibald Colwell had had to do with her death.

“Yes, she must be dead — or he would not even speak about marrying again,” she once more said to herself.

She put up her gloved hand to her face, and pushed a damp, thick curl from her hot temple.

“Mr. Rushmore is sure that I shall marry Mr. Udell.”

She looked away from the cold, winter night, and her eyes drooped. The mocking tone in which he had said those words rang in her ears unpleasantly. She repeated them to herself slowly: “There would be no hope for me,” he had said; “even if I did join her church. She will marry the Rev. John Udell, I think.”

The color in her cheeks deepened, and suddenly, she scarcely knew why, she felt a sickening pain at her heart—a tumult of conflicting emotions which bewildered and distressed her.

But no opportunity was afforded her for analyzing these strange feelings. A step, just behind her in the conservatory, made her turn with a start, to see who it was that was so inconsiderate as to molest her solitude. The place was dimly lighted, but she recognized, almost intuitively, the broad-shouldered, dark figure which stood at her side. It was Horace Rushmore himself.

He held out his hand to her without speaking. She laid her palm in his and he pressed it in his strong grasp and then dropped it, as he leaned against the glass wall and looked down into her face searchingly.

“You have been having a very dull time this evening,” he said, emphatically, as though making an assertion which he expected her to dispute. But she neither confirmed nor denied it.

“Why did you come off here, alone?”

“Because — I wanted to.”

"I did not suppose that anyone had made you do it. Do you remember that night, long ago, on which I found you in my library, while my wi—, while a dancing-party was going on in my parlors down stairs?" he hastily corrected himself.

"Yes, I remember," she replied; "it was on that night that I became acquainted with Lucy."

"How did you leave Lucy this evening?" he asked.

"Very well and happy."

"She tells me that whenever she gets afraid and lonely at night, you always take her into your bed with you."

"Yes — I must have something to cherish — I am so alone in this great city — cut off, as I am from my family. Lucy is a great comfort to me. There is a superfluity of enthusiasm in my nature," she added; "and in the absence of an object upon which to vent itself, it smothers and hurts me! I am afraid mine is not a serene and well-balanced temperament. When I'm not feverishly pursuing some purpose I'm in despair, and feel out of harmony with the world."

"An artistic mind like yours," he answered, "has always something rash in it — a capacity to love freely and generously, without reservation or qualification. I think it is this peculiarity of yours which makes your pupils so fond of you. They feel it when they are in your presence — and they see it in your — your wonderful eyes. Yes," he added, in a low, passionate tone, as she raised those eyes to his face, with a start of surprise; "lift them up and let me look far into them and tell you what I see there. Way down deep, there is a warm light which speaks strange things to me. It is but a melancholy pleasure I take in their beauty — for like the

beauty of Nature on a bright spring day, it makes me long for impossible things and to feel utterly discontented with my sordid existence. But I feel like telling to those eyes the secrets of my heart. It will surprise you, no doubt, to know that many a time during the past two years, when you were scarcely remembering my existence, the strange, wonderful Ideal which I had once or twice read in your clear, honest eyes, came to me at times when my cup was very bitter, when my days were dark, and life seemed worthless and vain—came to me and brought a ray of faith and hope into my heart and sent me boldly to my tasks again.”

He drew his eyes away from hers and looked out of the window. She thought he must surely hear the loud beating of her heart in the breathless stillness which fell between them. With a strange yearning in her soul she watched the gloomy expression of his dark eyes and the stern set of his lips, until suddenly he once more turned upon her and delivered, with his customary abruptness, another of his unexpected and astonishing remarks.

“I am sorry for you—very.”

“Why?”

“You are going to marry Udell.” Then in a stern, grave tone, he added, “You are making a very great mistake!”

He ran his fingers through the long, lank locks which covered his forehead.

“You think me impertinent. But I would save your youth and ignorance from a misstep which will ruin your life! You don’t know what marriage means. And you don’t know that cold-blooded snake who loves only your beauty. You, he does not love, for he doesn’t know



you—nor could a mind like his ever know a soul like yours!” He paused an instant, then added in a low, strong tone, “I would save you from the bitter experiences which I have gone through in my married life!”

She made no response. Presently he spoke again.

“You are offended with me, now. Probably you will never forgive me. But at least be just. You must know that my motive in speaking to you has been an honest wish to serve you—although I know full well that I am only a fool for my trouble.”

“I am not offended with you.”

He started and took a step nearer to her. The low, sad voice in which she spoke had neither coldness nor resentment in it.

“And you do not regard my interference an intolerable impertinence?”

“In anyone else it would be so. But—somehow, I never expect anything else from you.”

She could not forbear a smile at her simple candor.

“You don’t look for even a common sense of propriety from an abandoned wretch who ‘follows cunningly-devised fables and the sophistries of men’—do you?”

She stepped back from him a little and drew a deep breath. A ray of light from the parlor fell on her face, and revealed two bright spots on either cheek.

“I have given up my faith. I am no longer a Christian—in the common acceptation of that term.”

His heart leaped up in his breast as he heard her, and looked into her burning face. He had supposed her faith to be of that invincible sort which defies the fiercest assaults. He had believed her to be too entirely under the influence of her father ever to come out with such a

complete and daring freedom as that implied in her quietly spoken words, "I have given up my faith. I am no longer a Christian." What a struggle it must have cost her! He felt an intense pity for her as he thought of that. Probably this was why she had left her home and had come to New York to teach school.

"You surprise me very much," he said, in a gentle voice. "But — your father?"

Theo sighed and laid her hot forehead against the cold glass.

"I have made father very unhappy. He is deeply offended with me."

As Rushmore looked at her, an almost irresistible impulse seized him to put his strong arm about her and declare to her that he would shield her from that father's stern displeasure. But he did not yield to it.

"What led you to change your views so completely?" he asked.

"You, Mr. Rushmore, started me to thinking in a way I had never done before."

"I? Then I have been an influence in your life — as you have been in mine!"

"Perhaps," said she, looking at him with a smile; "you have influenced me in a way you never intended to do. The new sense of freedom one feels after first shaking off the shackles of a dogmatic creed is likely to plunge one rashly into extremes, and into the madman's passion for proselyting. The overthrow of all that one relied on, is a shock calculated to leave one in a combative, cynical state which is almost as narrow-minded as that of the credulous acceptance of systems of theological belief. Now if you will excuse my saying so, Mr. Rush-

more," she said, hesitatingly, "I think I was spared from falling into this cynical and combative state by—well, by observing its evil effects in you. It seems to me to be so much wiser to realize one's weakness and ignorance, also the impossibility of all intellects coming to a common understanding of anything. This realization makes me respectful of others' opinions, and patient with those who seem to me over-credulous. Having lost faith in a few things, Mr. Rushmore," she added, earnestly, "you think you must needs throw up faith in all things."

"There are indeed not many things in this mysterious life in which I have a real and living faith," he acknowledged. "But," he took a step nearer to her, "there is one thing in which I do have an absolute trust." He picked up her gloved hand and pressed it hard as he looked into her eyes. "An absolute trust," he added; "and this trust changes for me the whole face of the universe."

It was at this interesting instant, as they stood looking into each other's faces, that a voice behind them spoke to Theo. As they had not been warned by any approaching steps, the voice fell upon their ears with a startling effect.

"Pardon the interruption, Miss Waddington."

Theo was not surprised upon turning around to discover Mr. Udell standing before them. She had at this stage of their acquaintance, grown quite accustomed to his frequent sudden appearances at her side on unexpected occasions.

"Ah, Rushmore," Udell added. "You here? How do you do? I've not had an opportunity of speaking to

you this evening—until now—until now,” he repeated with an odd little emphasis on these two words, as he glanced beyond Rushmore and met Theo’s eyes with the quiet, steely stare which she had learned to know so well, and to almost fear in an unreasoning, instinctive sort of way.

“Please excuse me!” was Mr. Rushmore’s decidedly spoken response as, with an abrupt bow to Theo, he at once turned away, and strode out of the conservatory; and then Udell and Theo were left alone together.

## CHAPTER XVI

WHEN Rushmore's footsteps had died away and his large figure had disappeared among the crowds in the dancing-hall, Udell turned again and met Theo's eyes. She tried to read in his face the meaning of his quiet, penetrating look, but his countenance was always inscrutable to her. Those strange, powerful little glances of his always seemed to say so much, and yet to conceal so very much more.

"It seems to be my ill fortune," he said, folding his arms across his chest and leaning against a large marble vase which stood five feet from the floor, "to interrupt you and Rushmore at very inopportune times."

Theo made no reply. She was watching him closely. Indeed, she had never before regarded him with such close scrutiny, such an intense interest, as that with which she now looked at him.

"I am always sorry to see you talking with that man," he said; and there was something positively icy in the deep, quiet tone in which he spoke to her.

"Why?" she asked.

"He is a bitter, disappointed man. He is rash and reckless. He stops at nothing. He has tried every sort of pleasure — every sort."

"You told me that once before. What do you mean? You speak in riddles, Mr. Udell."

“I mean — that he is unscrupulous.”

“That is still very vague.”

“I cannot specify!”

“If you mean to insinuate that he is a man without honor and without heart,” she said, in a low, grave voice, “I do not believe it.”

“He has a champion in you, I perceive.”

She blushed deeply, as she turned her face away from him, and looked out of the window.

“Yes,” she said, “I do admire him. And I believe in him.”

Udell unfolded his arms and clasped his hands behind him.

“His wife was driven to her death through jealousy.”

“When did she die?” Theo asked, without turning her eyes from the window.

“A month after you left us, winter before last. Did you read nothing of it in the newspapers?”

“No. — It escaped me.”

“She eloped with Colwell. They sailed for Europe. She died on the voyage and was buried at sea.”

Theo looked at him now with wide-eyed horror.

“No wonder,” she said, in a low, trembling voice. “No wonder that he is bitter! Poor Mr. Rushmore!”

“Yes,” said Udell, with a quiet smile; “all the ladies pity him.”

Theo took no notice of the insinuation in the manner of this remark.

“But,” he continued, speaking deliberately, “report says he drove his wife to it. She was jealous.”

“Report!” Theo repeated, with a little scornful smile.

“Report is constantly very active with Rushmore’s

affairs. The whole city is just now talking of that walk he took through the streets with you, one day last week, carrying a young baby in his arms."

Theo suddenly laughed and her eyes danced. "It was a predicament for him. But he would do it."

"It was an inexcusable indiscretion on his part."

"Why, Mr. Udell!" she said, in surprise, "I carried the baby myself, for quite a distance. Was that 'an inexcusable indiscretion'?"

"It was an unladylike defying of public opinion which," he slowly said, looking at her steadily, "I must beg you not to repeat, while you are a teacher in my school."

"It is not," she said, throwing off with an effort the spell which that little, tyrannous manner of his always cast upon her; "it is not a daily habit with me, to promenade public streets carrying strange babies. I shall not be likely to defy public opinion in just that way very soon again. But as public opinion is a thing I never take into consideration in planning any course of action, I can't vouchsafe, Mr. Udell, not to defy it in some equally unladylike manner, even while I am yet a teacher in your respectable establishment. So, to secure your school from disgrace, I would advise you to dispense with me without delay."

"Why will you persist in threatening to leave me?"

"I'm not threatening. I'm merely advising you not to endanger the reputation of your school by indiscreetly retaining in your service so dangerous a young person as I. Think of my influence upon those unprotected young minds for whom you are responsible," she went on, wondering even while she spoke, what unwonted spirit of sar-

casm possessed her tongue, but vaguely feeling that it saved her from falling under the subtle power of his cold, quiet eyes.

“I would rather,” he said, without any change in his customary even tone, “have my school break up altogether, than have you go away.”

“It is very reckless of you to say that.”

“There is an unusual levity about you to-night, Miss Waddington. Will you be serious for a moment?” He paused an instant, and then added, “I have something to say to you.”

She waited in silence. Her face did not flush nor her heart beat more quickly, but her fingers, which rested against the window sash, closed around it more firmly.

“I think you know what I am about to say. As we drove here together, this evening, I think I gave you reason to expect that this night I should offer you my hand—and heart,” he added, as though this last were an after thought. “Did I not?”

“You did, Mr. Udell—unmistakably—and greatly to my surprise,” she replied, with a grave, gentle dignity.

“To your surprise,” he repeated, with a complacent smile, “of course. I knew you would be surprised. You had not expected anything of the kind. Neither had I. A few months ago, if anyone had told me that I should shortly be making a proposal of marriage to one of our teachers, I should have smiled. As a general thing, I have never been on terms of intimacy with my teachers. But you,” he said, slowly stroking his chin, “are an exception.”

Theo was silent. Mr. Udell regarded her calmly for a moment, and then proceeded:



"I should like the marriage to take place soon—the sooner the better."

The language of this school-catalogue was not more unimpassioned than his calm, confident manner of offering to the woman of his choice, his hand—and his heart!

Theo was still silent, and Udell continued: "You are yet under your father's authority, and his consent to our union will have to be obtained. Is this not so?"

"I should be sorry to marry against my father's will," came her answer, in a low voice.

"Will he favor my suit, think you?"

"My father would be happy to have me marry a minister of the Church, and one whose standing and success is such as yours."

He picked up her hand and pressed it in both his own. "One thing more then, Theo. If you would please me, never again speak with young Rushmore."

She released her hand and took a step away from him.

"I don't know that I have any special desire to please you."

Mr. Udell was betrayed into an expression of surprise. It was only momentary, however. He knew he had not an easy subject to deal with, in the sweet, dangerous creature who moved his cold pulse to a warmer beat than had anything ever done in all his life.

"I see I offend you by speaking of Rushmore in this way," he quietly said. "We will defer that matter then, until another time."

"No. We shall never speak of it again! Never."

He looked at her narrowly. "You are slightly excited this evening, I observe."

"You are not," she said, with a little ironical smile.

“Were you ever excited in your life, Mr. Udell? Were you ever angry? Did you ever have an emotion of any description? Did you ever love anyone?”

“I don’t exactly see the relevancy of these inquiries. However, I suppose it is scarcely necessary for me to say in answer to that last question, that I love you.”

“No, it is scarcely necessary to say it; for I know that it is not true.”

“What do you mean by that?” he asked, with a little added iciness in his tone. “Have I not been ardent enough in the presentation of my suit? You know it is scarcely my habit to make demonstrations of any sort. But I love you, Theo—as I have never loved any woman.”

He paused again. But Theo did not speak.

“Will you be my wife?”

“You had not deemed it necessary to ask me that question before,” she said, with a faint smile.

“As I have said,” he repeated, “it is scarcely my habit to make demonstrations of any sort.”

“Under the circumstances, I should not have considered the question a very violent demonstration, but quite pardonable—in fact, rather necessary.”

Udell had always considered Theo a rather unusual young woman—somewhat unique and original; but that she would presume—that she would dare to deliberately make sport of his offer of marriage (a great condescension on his part, in view of the fact that she was a teacher in his employ)—that she would make sport of it, to his very face, was a contingency that he had not prepared himself to meet. What a charmingly troublesome wife she would be, to be sure—until she had been crushed

into complete submission. He anticipated that process with a pleasurable satisfaction. Meanwhile, he recognized the necessity of caution.

He once more picked up her hand, and pressed it very hard. "Theo, I love you. What more can a man say than that? Can he pay a woman a higher compliment? I love you so well, that I want you for my life's companion. Will you trust yourself to me?"

He spoke with more real earnestness than she had ever before heard from him. She could no longer treat his words lightly. She was in no doubt as to what answer she should make him. In the course of that evening, her feelings toward him had undergone a great revolution. A veil seemed to have been lifted from her eyes, and she now saw this man as he really was—saw him stripped of the illusions which his strong personality and her own lively imagination and charitable judgment had thrown around him. The idea of assuming for life the close relation of wife, to him, made her heart turn sick.

"I can't marry you—I can't!" she said, in a low voice, while her eyes grew large and sad. It would please father so much—I wish I could do it. But—oh, I would rather die than be tied to you for life—for life!"

A vague horror possessed her at the very thought of it, and she shivered and turned her eyes away from him.

"I am sorry to say this to you—I am indeed. But can't you see how utterly unsuited we are to each other? We should be very unhappy together."

He saw the distress in her eyes as she spoke, but he did not answer her. He was dumb from the strangely conflicting feelings which stirred his usually calm breast

—astonishment, chagrin and deep disappointment. He had felt so sure of her. But now, as he looked into her honest eyes, he wondered why he had been so confident. What motive could a creature like this have for marrying him? Her only regret in refusing him seemed to be that thereby she missed the chance of pleasing her father. She was so absolutely true and single-hearted. Worldly ambition seemed to have no place at all, in her mind. Perhaps she was right in thinking they would be unhappy together—that is, that he would not be quite comfortable with a wife whose standards of conduct were so ideal—so utterly impracticable. And yet—he wanted her very much. Her refusal mortified, chagrined and disappointed him, as he had never been mortified, chagrined and disappointed before in all his life.

He was wise enough to see that there was no hope of his leading her to change her mind. The look of horror and the shudder with which she had repeated those words “for life” he could never forget. The fact that the coveted possession was beyond his reach, however, made it only the more desirable in his eyes. Perhaps he was a wiser, though a sadder man, after the experience of that night.

Yet the strangely imperturbable temper of the man was shown in the speech which closed the interview with her.

“Will you now accept my resignation?” Theo had anxiously asked, after a long silence between them. “It will not be agreeable to you, will it, to have me around after this?”

He smiled a little at the oddity of her expression, “have me around”; and then he said, deliberately:

“I wish you would stay. For if you should leave, I should lose my best paying pupil. Rushmore sends his child to my school because he wants to have her under your influence.”

The blood mounted to Theo's face, and she turned from him quickly.

“It is growing late — I think I should like to go home now — will you take me?”

He bowed without speaking and offered her his arm. They went together to take leave of their host and hostess.

“I'm afraid you've had a horribly dull time, Theo darling,” Mrs. Graybill whispered affectionately, as she pressed her cousin's hand. “If you would only leave off that detestable old teaching, you absurd child! Now come around to see me, very soon, won't you, dear?”

## CHAPTER XVII

IT was nearly two o'clock in the morning, but the light in Horace Rushmore's dressing-room still burned. He was seated before a blazing log fire, in a huge arm-chair which, however, was none too large for his ample size. He was comfortably clad in dressing-gown and slippers and was meditatively puffing at a delicious cigar.

There was an open door at either end of the dressing-room, revealing on one side a bed-room and on the other a library.

The furniture of all three apartments was luxurious in the extreme. A looker-on might have supposed that big, lazy-looking figure in the arm-chair surrounded, as it was, by everything conducive to ease and comfort, to be absolutely incapable of enduring the hardship of labor, either physical or mental. For over-luxurious surroundings are as detrimental to vigor of mind as to that of body.

But those who knew him best, could testify that young Rushmore's sudden access of great wealth had not one whit abated his enormous energy, and that although he loved his comforts—as what civilized man does not?—he did not allow them to make of him an idle, useless, selfish vagabond.

What are his thoughts, to-night, as he sits revelling in the pleasures of his warm, bright, elegant room, his fine cigar, his comfortable India dressing-gown and soft, easy

slippers? Is he really enjoying these external conditions, or is his mind soaring above such sordid things?

He lifts one large, white hand to his head, and pushes the long, disorderly locks of hair from his forehead, and looks down into the blazing fire with a thoughtful frown.

“She doesn’t love Udell, that’s evident,” he was saying to himself. “I had thought, of course, that he had an immense advantage in being one of the Cloth. But to think of a daughter of that bigoted Head-of-his-House, Dr. Waddington, actually coming out in open denial of her father’s faith! It’s a very unusual circumstance, I think. Poor child! I know what it must have cost her to oppose him — for she loves him very much. But I can imagine just how bravely and honestly she would do it — while it broke her heart! There never was a woman like her!” he added, with a glow in his cheeks which was not caused alone by the warm fire-light.

He leaned back against the cushions of his chair, raised his left arm and let it rest on the crown of his head.

“This weary old world isn’t half-bad, after all. Every now and then, in the midst of the rush and hurry of my days, it comes across me suddenly like the recollection of some precious happiness in store for me, that this world, in which I live, contains Theo — Theo!”

He looked complacently thoughtful for a few moments as he puffed away at his cigar. But then slowly there crept into his face an expression half-stern, half-sad, and presently he laid the cigar on a small table at his elbow and clasped both his hands behind his head.

“Can I hope to win her? Will she love me — *me*? She is so infinitely purer and better — how can she? My love for her is never for an instant separated in my

mind, from my interest in her character and my admiration of her intellect. It is a love such as few women ever receive. I want her to love me in the same way — with a passion such as I know her nature to be capable of. I should not ever have dreamed of trying to win her while I thought her still an earnest Presbyterian. But now — is there not some hope for me?"

He reached across the small table at his side and took from a silver case another cigar. The first rays of the new day's sun came peeping in at his windows, as he put the weed to his lips and lighted it. He felt he could not sleep; he could not lie in his bed; he was feverishly restless. A great happiness hung over him, almost within his reach, yet so dangerously inaccessible, that at moments he felt like abandoning all efforts to obtain it.

For hours he smoked and meditated, and meditated and smoked — and the final result of his long communion with himself was a determination to go to her the very next day and learn his fate.



## CHAPTER XVIII

ON the whole, what do you think of me?"

Rushmore asked the question as he and Theo sat together on a sofa in the reception-room of Mr. Udell's seminary. A very earnest studying of his face on Theo's part, for the past two minutes, had provoked the inquiry.

"You are a rather reckless person," she said, regarding him critically. "You are impulsive, and although you have plenty of self-control, a temperament like yours is always capable of making mistakes and doing foolish things. Now our friend, Mr. Udell, almost never makes mistakes, and certainly never does anything foolish. You, on the other hand, rashly endanger your reputation by carrying a pauper baby through the streets to relieve a tired little girl."

"I like to hear you analyze me," he said, regarding her with a complacency which showed plainly enough how he relished her study of himself. "But as to my carrying that baby — I did it to relieve you. There was no charity in the act. I wanted to walk with you, and was willing to carry the infant, rather than forego the felicity of a stroll with you. But," he abruptly added, "you think Mr. Udell and me about as opposite in character as two people could well be, don't you?"

"Yes."

"Thank you. I consider that a high compliment."

“I can't say that I meant it as such.”

“Did Udell ever propose to you?”

“Mr. Rushmore, you are simply impertinent.”

“But I made you answer a similar question once before, when we were not so intimate as we are now. You know you were determined not to answer me then, but I made you. I thought you had learned at that time that it is needless ever to try to avoid the inquisitiveness of a lawyer. But I see you must be taught the lesson over again. Now come, tell me — Udell proposed to you and you refused him. Is it not so?”

“Why do you want to know?”

“I have a curiosity. And why do you hesitate to tell me? There is scarcely a thought in my heart that I would not have you know. And I am selfish, I don't like to give more confidence than I receive.”

“I can't say I object to your knowing,” she said, again blushing, “that Mr. Udell did ask me to marry him.”

“Of course you refused?”

“Why ‘of course’?”

“Well,” he said, “I have reason to believe that the present conversation would not be taking place if you were at this moment engaged to the Cloth.”

“But I came very nearly accepting him — I did indeed. I know it would please my father beyond anything I could do.”

Rushmore looked at her quickly. Here was a new idea! He felt suddenly as though something had tightly clutched him at the throat. He waited a moment before he ventured to speak. Then very quietly he asked her:

“Would you marry against your father's will?”

She was silent.

"Would you?" he persisted, watching the conscious color creep into her face.

"It would make me very unhappy to do that. My father is alienated from me now," she added, with a slight unsteadiness in her voice and a great sadness in her eyes; "and it makes me more unhappy than I can tell you. It seems so dreadful to me to think that I am deliberately acting against his wishes. It has been the habit of my life to bend my will to his."

"A habit which you would do well to outgrow," he said, with decision.

"Don't you make Lucy obey you?"

"I encourage her to follow her own mind as much as possible. I only interfere when she would do herself harm. I want her to grow up a strong, self-reliant woman."

"You think my training has left me without decision or self-reliance."

"Far from it. Your character was too strong to be crushed even by the discipline of a household like Dr. Waddington's. And yet," he added, slowly lifting his eyes, and letting them look straight into hers; "and yet you would never be willing to marry against your father's will?"

"I did not say that," she replied, the color in her cheeks deepening.

"Theo, will you marry me, even if your father does not give his consent?"

"Yes."

He put his arm around her and pressed her head down upon his shoulder. He held her close to himself and each felt the strong, heavy heart-throbs against the

breast of the other. Each knew in that instant the inmost thoughts in the soul of the other. Their natures seemed to flow together and sweep away every barrier of reserve.

“I would rather die than live apart from you!” she said, while his palm pressed her cheek and his fingers rested among the locks of her hair.

Something of heaven shone in Horace Rushmore's face when he heard her say those words. All in an instant he felt his fresh and innocent youth returning to him and the world seemed full of music and beauty. A faith, too, in the existence of goodness and truth came back to him with such a rush of fervent happiness, that whereas a few months before, he would have been glad to lay down the weary and heavy burden of his bitter, disappointed life, he now, in this moment, felt that man's allotted time on earth was all too short to contain his great joy.

FINIS.





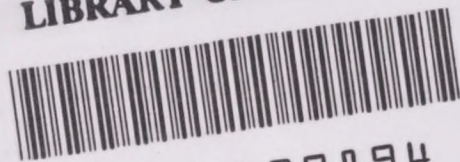








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