The Young Man From Middlefield

By Jessie Brown Pounds.

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BY

MRS. JESSIE BROWN POUNDS

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PREFATORY NOTE.

THE YOUNG MAN FROM MIDDLEFIELD was a serial written by Mrs. Jessie Brown Pounds for, and which appeared in, the columns of OUR YOUNG FOLKS during the year 1900, and was followed with absorbing and ever-increasing interest by the great multitude of readers of that weekly journal. The story is now presented in this more convenient and enduring form, in the confident expectation that it will be heartily welcomed by young people everywhere, and that the example of the modest young man whose career it briefly chronicles, may have a wholesome influence on the lives of many.

W. W. D.

ST. LOUIS, March, 1901.

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CHAPTER I.

TOM'S DEPARTURE FROM HOME.

"IT'S a good chance for him," said Andrew Floyd, reflectively. "I would have thought such a chance the making of me when I was a young man. And Tom's got the right kind of stuff in him, if his father's any judge."

"He's a good boy now." There was more than the ordinary pride of motherhood in Mrs. Floyd's tone. "I hope city life won't spoil him. Somehow, sure as I feel of Tom, I tremble when I think of the temptations."

"They must be met some time," was her husband's trite word of consolation. "A boy must learn to be a man, and we

can't live our children's lives for them. They must know the world and be able to fight its battles." Nevertheless, even the philosophical father sighed as he spoke. It is easier to administer philosophy to other hearts than to accept it as the cure for our own anxieties.

Dolly, the spirited little sorrel mare, tramped the gravel of the driveway impatiently and neighed pleadingly as a reminder that it was quite time to start. Mrs. Floyd, having hurriedly dried her eyes on her apron, looked wistfully at the little brass-nailed trunk already bestowed in the light spring wagon.

The door opened and Tom came out of the house, buttoning his coat as he walked. He was a tall, broad-chested young man, with large features, a sunburned skin and fine brown eyes. His mother and sister thought him very handsome, though neither would have said so for the world. The rest of the Middlefield people considered him a well-built young fellow, who would probably be better-looking when he was

older. Thus widely do the judgments of mothers and sisters differ from those of ordinary humanity.

"All ready, mother," he said cheerfully. "Hester can ride down with father. Teddy and I are going to walk to the station."

Hester, his pretty eighteen-year-old sister, clambered into the wagon quickly that the keen vision of the mother might not detect the redness of her eyelids. Teddy, sixteen, awkward and unspeakably miserable, kicked the gravel with more frenzied impatience than even Dolly, and wished he were a girl, so he could cry.

"You won't forget to wear your rubbers in wet weather," admonished his mother, gently. It is blessed to find relief in trivialities when our hearts are weighed down by real burdens.

"Yes, mother, I hate 'em, but I'll wear 'em cheerfully for your sake. Good-bye."

He kissed her, not gingerly, after the fashion of a perfunctorily dutiful son,

but heartily, as if he were used to the process and liked it.

His mother threw her arms about his neck for one sweet, agonizing embrace. It was blessed to have him; it was heartache to give him up.

But she said no word. She was a reserved woman, not from choice, but because her narrow opportunities had never given her means for the expression of her deep nature. She felt much that the commonplaces of speech did not tell, and few even of those nearest her knew the depth of her feeling.

"It won't be long, mother. I'm coming home at Christmas, you know, and that's only three months away."

He kissed her again, and then he was off with Teddy. His father drove through the gateway at the end of the lane, and Mrs. Floyd went into the house and took up the baby.

She could not have borne it, she was sure, if it had not been for the baby. He was such a dear, chubby, happy fellow, and Tom loved him so much! He

had come into the home on the very day that the eldest son came of age, and Tom had laughingly declared him his heir. How her heart ached for Baby Walter! Just to think that he was not to know the presence of the elder brother in the home! What a dreary thought it was—that the breaking up of her household had come, and that, to her eldest born, the old farmhouse might never be a settled home again!

With Baby Walter cooing on her arm, she went slowly over the house—the house to which she had come twenty-three years ago as a girl-bride of seventeen. The whole of her uneventful life-story was written here. This bureau and high bedstead she had brought "from home." The marble-topped stand Andrew had given her as a surprise, a month after the wedding. It had been a piece of reckless extravagance on his part, and she had told him so; but her delicate cheeks flushed with pleasure now at the recollection. There had never been a marble-topped stand

in Middlefield before, and she remembered the social convulsion which her acquisition had caused. In this wide-armed chair she had rocked all of her children—five of them, for one blue-eyed girl had been laid away in the old graveyard on the hill. It was almost ten years ago, but the mother could hear the fall of the hard clods on the casket, and the whistle of the November wind through the dead leaves, even now.

Slowly she climbed the stairs, absently patting the cheek of the baby with her disengaged hand. "The boys' room" had always been a little republic. Teddy's old shoes stood at the foot of the bed, still covered with the black earth of the bottom-lands. The tidy little mother sighed when she saw them; then she remembered that Tom was gone, and relented. Tom had always been neat, to be sure, but she could be patient with Teddy, knowing that she would be glad it had been so when he, too, should come to leave her.

Here was Tom's home-made book-

shelf. He had not taken his books to the city with him. "I may not stay, you know," he had said; but his mother had fancied that he was thinking of her, and trying to make the separation as little of a breaking up as possible. Here were "Tom Brown's School Days," and "Ivanhoe," and "David Copperfield," and a dozen volumes of history, and "Emerson's Essays," cheaply bound, shabby-looking books, all of them, bought with the stray earnings which had come so seldom to the home-keeping farm-boy. There were three or four religious books, too, and a few well-thumbed volumes of poetry. The little shelf told plainly the story of intellectual hunger, and of the eager appropriation of a limited supply.

Mrs. Floyd sighed again. "I wish Tom could have had more books," she said. "I remember how I always longed for them, and how I hoped my children would have a chance. He can have books from the city library now, if he has time to read them. After all,

his going away may be the making of Tom."

There was a bit of cardboard on the table, and the baby reached out and clamored for it. Mechanically Mrs. Floyd picked it up. It was a Christian Endeavor pledge-card, signed in a bold, boyish hand, "TOM FLOYD."

"I suppose it dropped out of his Bible," she said to herself. "I'm glad he didn't forget to take *that*."

She chanced to turn the card over, and saw written, in the same boyish hand, these words:

"*God helping me, I will try to put Christ first in everything I do.*"

"I wonder if he knows what that pledge means," she asked herself, "or how hard it will be to keep it?"

She heard the distant whistle of a train. It was the east-bound accommodation, and it was to bear her boy away. She bit her lips and clasped her baby more closely. The convulsive movement was a voiceless prayer to God for the safety of her son.

The Floyds were not poor people, rated by the standards to which they had always been accustomed. Andrew Floyd had inherited fifty acres of good land from his father, and had been able, through his own hard work and his wife's careful management, to add another fifty acres to the original tract.

People saw that his wife had the brains of the couple, but she did not think so, and, to be perfectly frank about the matter, I do not think that he did, either. He was an honest man, who saw no visions, but who lived faithfully according to his lights.

Being entirely destitute of imagination, he regarded conspicuous worldly success as a species of mystery, and never tired of puzzling over the problem of how his brother Peter, who was his twin in body, but quite unrelated to him in mind and disposition, had ever managed to "get on."

That Peter *had* got on, no one could doubt. In his childhood he had traded slate-pencils at the district school with

distinct profit to himself and distinct mortification to his playmates. Later on he had resuscitated dying lambs, and converted them first into personable and proper sheep, and in time into profitable mutton. He had juggled his way through school, no one knew just how; had sold encyclopedias and mowing-machines until he found his way to the city and to more congenial employment, and was now a comfortable lumber dealer, with an income of ten thousand a year. He was not dishonest, but he had "got on," and in the eyes of his brother Andrew nothing short of hypnotism could account for the fact.

It was this same brother Peter who was taking Tom away from the farm. "Send the boy to me," he had said, on his last visit. "I like him, and I can be of use to him. If I am not mistaken, he can be of use to me. Send him to me, and I will see what can be done for him."

Somehow, Tom fancied this shrewd

uncle, with his terse speech and his habit of success. Besides, Peter Floyd belonged to that great world of life, activity and achievement for which every young heart vaguely longs. At once Tom had been anxious to go. He loved the farm, the meadows and woodlands, the sniff of clover and the familiar notes of the birds he knew. But he was active, and perhaps a little restless, and his heart cried out for the bustle of the town.

"I am afraid," his mother said, more than once. But he was not afraid. What young man is?

The family discussed Tom's prospects as they sat about the fire that night. The evening meal had been a dreary one. Poor Teddy had refused the fifth biscuit, something which had not happened before since he came down with the measles. Mrs. Floyd had been on the verge of tears, and could scarcely have managed to get along at all had not the baby cried and given her an excuse for leaving the room.

The baby was in bed now, and Teddy sat behind the stove nursing his overgrown foot and his misery.

"Tom'll see a lot," he said, gloomily.

"I suppose Middlefield will seem very stupid to him when he comes back," Hester reflected.

"It will be hard to get along without him when the spring work comes on, if he should take a notion to stay that long," was his father's observation.

But his mother said nothing. That is the way with mothers.

CHAPTER II.

TOM'S RECEPTION AT HIS UNCLE'S.

TOM had been to his uncle's before, and knew his way about the city, so he did not feel sure there would be anyone at the train to meet him. His cousin Nora was there, however, and Tom was glad, for of all his city relatives he feared Nora least.

"Papa told Gerald to come to the train, and he didn't want to," Nora said, with that unnecessary frankness for which she was famed. It was because of this frankness that Tom was not afraid of her. It is a comfort to feel sure that you know the worst.

"Let Dolph have your grip," the girl went on. "You may just as well be comfortable while you can."

The colored coachman took Tom's valise with a rather ungracious air. It was quite bad enough to be obliged to take orders from all the members of the

Peter Floyd family, without having to extend his attentions to any of their country relations.

Tom followed Nora into the carriage, and sat down beside her. He had no accurate standard of measurement in such matters, but he mentally decided that she was very pretty, and, furthermore, that she was not nearly as pretty as his sister.

She had a round dark face, stubborn brown locks, which rebelled at imprisonment, and big eyes which seemed afraid of nothing in the world. Nora's father was a diplomat, and her mother was a society woman, so her open nature must have come to her by accident, or through a long line of inheritance.

"Aren't you glad to be here?" she demanded. "The country must be stupid, except in summer. Nature is good enough, but human nature is a great deal humaner. I don't see why one need make such a fuss over pigs and chickens, when there are folks. You have come here to work, though, haven't you?"

"Yes, that's what I want to do, if I get a chance," said Tom, somewhat startled, but glad to get his word in somehow.

"Oh, you'll have chance enough. Never you be afraid about that. I suppose you are used to hard work, and maybe you won't mind it. It isn't papa's fault that we're not industrious. Gerald doesn't like to do anything but paint pictures and play the piano. He does both beautifully, but then!" She made a little grimace. "I should have been the boy of the family. I like stocks and figures, and my hands aren't a bit pretty on the piano." She held out her hands, which were by no means shapely. "I'm a dreadful disappointment. A girl is only fit for society, and I haven't either beauty or style with which to shine."

"It seems to me you have pretty much everything," said Tom, in such an honest tone that his cousin laughed outright.

"Oh, the gold spoon is altogether a

fiction, I assure you. Maybe it seems to you that I have a pretty generous slice of things, but it won't seem that way after you learn that everything in this world is comparative. My father has a little bit of money, but I have friends whose fathers each have five times as much. Those girls regard me as on the very verge of pauperism, and would give me their old clothes if they dared. A girl who has even a little money is sometimes at an advantage in the matter of dress, but I was born without the genius for clothes, and even the dressmakers regard me as hopeless. The designing creatures do their best for me, but I'm sure to look, in the end, as if my gowns had been made for somebody else. If I were a man, I could be a tin-peddler, or an organ-grinder, or something useful. As it is, I don't know what is to become of me."

Tom felt uncomfortable. Under his cousin's girlish gaiety there was a shrewd worldly wisdom which seemed to him ungirlish and unnatural. What

would he think if he should hear Hester talking in this way? He had often wished that his sister might have prettier gowns and more pleasures. Now he wondered if she were not to be envied.

The carriage stopped before a handsome modern home in a fashionable street. Tom sprang out and helped his cousin to alight.

"That wasn't so bad," she said, laughing. "You'll do it a great deal better, though, when you have practiced more."

Tom's comfort was not materially increased by this speech, and yet he thought the tone had a ring of kindness. Nora was whimsical enough, but she was true, and he liked her.

Tom was shown at once to his room, for which he was disposed to be thankful. "Mamma always takes a nap at this time," Nora had said, "and papa isn't home from the office yet. You'll have just time enough to make a proper toilette before dinner."

Tom unpacked his trunk with some

trepidation, wondering what a "proper toilette" would be. Fortunately, however, there was no choice in the matter. He had two suits, an old one and a new one. The old one he wore. To make a toilette, then, must mean to put on the new one. The room to which he had been brought was in the back part of the house, and in the third story. However, it seemed to Tom a very fine apartment, and he touched the simple belongings of the dressing-table carefully, having the impression that they were quite too dainty for every-day use.

It did not take him long to carry out his cousin's instructions as he understood them, and having done this he decided to go down into the parlor and wait for his uncle. As he passed his aunt's sitting-room, which was on the second floor, he heard voices, and caught his own name.

"He is my twin brother's child," his uncle was saying, with some spirit. "He must be treated kindly, Lucinda, as long as he stays in this house."

"It was a mistake to bring him to our own house," his aunt made answer. "It would have been simpler for us and more comfortable for him if he had gone to a boarding-house. But you would have him here, and I have only to insist upon a perfect understanding of things. One really does not know just how to treat him, you see. He is your nephew, as you say, but of course we cannot take him into things, as if he were one of us. I think it would be much less complicated if we were to treat him as an employee, and much more suitable in every way."

Tom's cheeks reddened, and he turned and walked quickly back to his own room. It should not be his fault if the relations between himself and his uncle's family became complicated. Somehow, life in the city no longer seemed as enticing as it had seemed an hour ago.

The dinner-bell rang before he reached the staircase, and he had no time to readjust his thinking. His uncle met him in the hall, and shook hands with him

cordially. He was a stout, short man, very like Tom's father in general appearance, but with keener eyes, and an expression of alertness which was quite his own.

"Glad you're here, my boy," he said. "Glad to see you, sir. Folks well? Yes? Ah! here's your aunt."

Mrs. Peter Floyd was a large, blonde woman, with a great deal of coiffure and complexion. Tom considered her by far the most impressive-looking woman he had ever known. She extended her hand with a fashionable dip of the fingers, and majestically indicated that he might follow her to the dining-room.

Dinner had been served before Gerald entered. He was a handsome fellow of two or three and twenty, with a figure rather slightly built, but active and alert, and brown eyes which now and then flashed out of their dreaminess and shone with almost unearthly brilliancy. He had been away at college on the occasion of Tom's former visit, and the two boys had not met since they were at

the knickerbocker age. For some reason, Gerald's career at college had not been satisfactory, and he left without having graduated. Tom looked at him now in surprise, and wondered how such a fine-looking fellow could have failed to make his way anywhere.

Gerald nodded to Tom pleasantly enough, and went to his place at the table beside his sister.

"You're awfully late," Nora informed him. "I went to the train in your place, for I knew Tom would wander all over the city, if he were to depend upon you for a guide."

"Indeed, I would have done nothing of the sort," said Tom, laughing. "I am quite sure I could have found my way."

"No thanks to Gerald for that," grumbled Nora.

Her mother frowned. "I do not like to hear you find fault with your brother," she said.

"I'm not meaning to find fault," said Nora, quite unabashed. Certainly Nora

was not afraid of her mother. Tom decided that she was even braver than he had thought.

Gerald looked bored, and ate his dinner in silence. Mrs. Floyd looked inquiringly at her husband. "You remember that we go to the Kirtland tonight?" she said.

"Ah, I had forgotten it." Mr. Floyd turned to Tom. "Never marry a popular woman," he said. "If you do, you'll never get another peaceful evening at your own fireside."

"Tom will excuse us, I am sure," said his aunt, turning to the young man with more of consideration than she had hitherto shown. "I presume he is tired, and will wish to retire early."

"If he doesn't, he can come downstairs and amuse himself in the library," his uncle suggested. "You are fond of books, Tom? I think your father said you were."

"Yes, sir."

"All right. Help yourself to anything

you find. To-morrow we will have a talk about business.''

Tom was glad to avail himself of this liberty, and after he heard the carriage roll away he slipped down to the library. He was surprised to find Nora curled up on a divan, a paper-covered novel in her hand.

''Oh, you are not gone?'' he said, interrogatively.

''I don't go. I'm only a bread-and-butter girl, supposed to be learning my lessons for to-morrow. I'm not yet in the swim, you see. So there is nothing for me to do but mope here and read my novel in the corner, and pretend I care whether or not Madaline married Bertram. I *don't* care, of course, except that they're both so stupid that I wish they would get married and punish each other. I wanted Gerald to take me to the Columbia Theater, to see Lady Macbeth murder sleep. A real tragic tragedy is about the only kind of fun I really care for. But Gerald has gone off with-

out me, so I'm bound to be as miserable as I can."

"Don't be miserable," urged Tom. "Keep me from getting homesick. That will be far more sensible."

"Homesickness is a great luxury," said Nora, reflectively. "I'm not sure but one ought to grudge it to you."

CHAPTER III.

NORA TAKES TOM INTO HER CONFIDENCE

"SO YOU are ready for business, eh?" queried Mr. Peter Floyd next morning, as he and his nephew left the breakfast-table.

"Yes, sir. I don't want to bother you, but I'd like very much to know what I'm expected to do."

"That's right, Tom. That's right. Now, then, I'm going to be right out about the matter. I shall expect you to work."

"That's what I came for."

"Yes, I understand that. But there are different kinds of work, you know. Keeping books, for instance, is one thing, and loading lumber is another. You understand?"

"I think so," said Tom, wondering what there could be so mysterious in the distinction.

"There are different kinds of work,

you see, but they can't be learned backward. If you want to be useful you'll have to begin at the bottom round."

Tom was a little disappointed, for he had fancied that he was a favorite with his uncle, and that he was to be treated with some distinction. After all, though, it did not matter so much, if he could fill a decent place and earn a decent living.

"I wanted Gerald in the business," his uncle went on, with a little sigh. "He isn't inclined for it, though. Takes after your Aunt Lucinda's folks. Well, shall we go?"

Tom easily covered two of his uncle's short steps with one of his long ones, and managed to keep his breath, which was more than could be said for his companion. Mr. Floyd puffed like a steam-tug, and laughed heartily at his own difficulty of locomotion.

"I haven't walked with such a rusher lately," he said. "I realize that I'm getting up in years when I try to take a boy's pace."

To Tom's unsophisticated eyes it seemed that his uncle's business was very imposing. It did not take him long to observe that Mr. Peter Floyd in his fine home on Bay Front Avenue and Mr. Peter Floyd in his office on Market Street were two very different men. The head of the Floyd Company was an autocrat when on his own ground, and expected that his orders would be scrupulously obeyed. Tom was set to work in the yard with a crowd of rough men, and in spite of his ideas about the dignity of labor, he found that his pride was likely to suffer somewhat in his new position.

He had learned that he would not be expected at his uncle's for luncheon, so he made his way with several others of the men to a little German restaurant, where the odor of fried onions and boiled cabbage reminded him by a sickening sense of contrast of his own neatly-kept home and his mother's wholesome cooking.

At dinner he and Nora had the table

quite to themselves. Mr. and Mrs. Floyd were out of town, and would not return until the following evening at the earliest.

"I don't know where Gerald is," said Nora, who seemed at all times to feel herself responsible for her brother.

Tom did not answer. Somehow he felt singularly embarrassed by Nora's frank allusions to family affairs.

He was tired, and went to sleep early, having first written to his mother all about his first day in the city. Sleeping heavily, he had no idea of the time, when he heard heavy footfalls in the room just below his.

There were muffled voices, too, he fancied, and, remembering his aunt's silver, which, judged by his standards of calculation, must be of priceless value, he crept very cautiously into the hall to listen.

Some one was just closing the front door. "Nonsense!" he told himself.

"What a dunce I am! A burglar doesn't make that much clatter if he

expects to succeed in his business."

However, the mysterious sounds were to be accounted for, and he listened for a few moments trying to decide whether anything could possibly be expected of him. Presently he heard a door open and close, and then he was quite sure there were smothered sobs.

But his eyes were still heavy with sleep, and the sounds had not been so distinct to his ear as they would have been had his head been clearer. He went back to bed directly, and slept the dreamless sleep of youth and weariness.

He had almost forgotten the occurrences of the night, when they were recalled to him by Nora's appearance as she came to breakfast. Her eyes were swollen and had dark lines beneath them, and her hands trembled so that she could scarcely pour the coffee.

If it had been Hester Tom would have found some way to comfort her. But he did not feel that he knew Nora well enough to assume this privilege. He was, however, full of curiosity to know

the meaning of her distress, and to know whether it had any connection with what had transpired last night.

To his surprise she followed him into the hall.

"Go into the library," she said.

She entered the room after him, closed the door carefully, and stood facing him, the picture of girlish misery.

"I don't know how I can tell you," she said. "I'm ashamed that I have to tell. But I've been awake all night, and I can think of nothing else."

The tears came to her eyes, but she brushed them away impatiently. "It's about Gerald," she added.

"Oh!" Tom started, not knowing what to fear. "Is he sick or hurt? Is there anything I can do?"

"It is too dreadful to tell of, but there is no one in the world I dare speak to except you. Tom, did you hear any one in the house at about two o'clock this morning?"

"I didn't know what time it was."

"But you heard some one?"

"Yes, I thought I did. Then I concluded I had been confused and mistaken, for, really, I hadn't made anything out clearly."

"They brought Gerald home. I suppose you've read about such things in books, but you didn't expect to find them here in *our house!*" She brought out the last words with bitter emphasis.

"Gerald! Brought him home?" repeated Tom, not yet quite understanding and not daring to guess.

"It is the very first time. I suppose he has taken too much before, but no one has ever found it out. He has had times lately of being lively and high-spirited, and then at other times he is very melancholy. I suppose that tells the story. Mamma humors him, and won't hear a word against him. Papa is severe with him—too severe, maybe. But they don't know a thing of this. That is what worries me. I went to Gerald's room this morning. I had felt quite sure before, before they brought him home, even, for I had been watch-

ing for him to come in. It is a shameful thing to tell. It is a shameful thing to have happen. I suppose you will despise us, but we couldn't keep things from you always, and I need you so much now!"

Somehow, Tom had never liked Nora as well as he did now, when for the first time she invited his pity.

"I am so sorry," he began, awkwardly. "If I can help you in any way—"

"I don't suppose you can. Nobody can ever do anything with Gerald. And yet you've no idea how lovely he can be! He is a great deal more affectionate than I am, and oh, so much brighter and cleverer at everything!"

It was like her that, having found fault with Gerald when all others praised him, she should become his champion now.

"Everybody has always expected so much from him, you see," she pleaded. "You needn't think I'm excusing him, for I'm not. It's just as dreadful as it

can be, and the world will never, never be the same again."

She flung herself upon a sofa and cried passionately. Tom was helpless, and sat in silence until the storm passed over.

"I'm ashamed that you should see me cry," she said at last. "I don't do it once a year. But nothing so dreadful as this has ever happened to us before. There is just one thing to be done. Papa must be told, and told in such a way that he won't cast Gerald off altogether. And—I can't tell him."

Tom was stricken dumb. There was no mistaking the meaning of her words. She wished him to go to his uncle with the dreadful story. How could he? His uncle would be very angry, either with Gerald or with him, according to whether he believed or disbelieved the story. But this was not the worst. To interfere in the affairs of his uncle's family seemed to him a course lacking both in wisdom and in delicacy. If he had been the only member of the house-

hold who knew of Gerald's condition, the case would, of course, have been altogether different. But Nora knew.

"It seems to me that it would be a great deal better for you to tell your father," he said.

Nora shook her head. "I dare not," she said. "I'm too quick-tempered, and I would be sure to say something that would stir papa up. I don't dare trust myself, for if Gerald is let go now he will go to the very bottom. And we can't let him do that."

Was she right?

"Can I see Gerald?" Tom asked.

"It wouldn't do you a bit of good. He is still asleep. You won't disappoint me, will you, Tom?"

"I'll try not to," he said, and he went away feeling that he must do the best he could, not only for Gerald, but also for Nora.

The day did not go as well as the one before had gone. Tom, with his mind on Gerald, was absent and awkward, and once the foreman spoke to him

sharply, recalling his wandering wits. He had never before worked under a stranger, and he had all the boyish independence that belongs to two and twenty. He did not like to be "bossed," he told himself. Then he reflected that perhaps no one else likes it especially well, and that he might as well submit along with the rest of humanity.

He returned to his uncle's home that night more thoroughly homesick than he had been before. His uncle and aunt had not yet returned, the maid told him, and of this he could not help being glad. He went at once to his room, and found there a letter from his mother.

He had not hoped to have it before Saturday, and his eyes glowed at the sight! It was a hasty note, written in pencil, and inclosing a sample of goods which she wished to have matched. He did not know then that the errand was only an excuse for writing to him in the first days of his homesickness, but he

guessed it long afterward, and blessed her for her tact and love.

Womanlike, she had put the letter into the postscript, which was this:

"We miss you more than I have the heart to tell, and talk about nothing but your coming home at Christmas. You have been a good boy to your folks, and I am sure you will always do what is right. I send you your Christian Endeavor pledge-card. I think you must have left it by mistake."

Tom took the card from the envelope, and read on the reverse side these words:

"I promise that, God helping me, I will try to put Christ first in everything I do."

Ah, what a hard pledge it was that he had made!

CHAPTER IV.

TOM'S INTERVIEW WITH GERALD.

TOM made a hasty toilet, and then went to Gerald's room. He felt that much depended upon having a talk with his cousin before his uncle's return. If he must go to his uncle, he must; but there was a better way, and he would find it if he could.

He knocked, and, receiving no response, he boldly opened the door and walked in. Gerald was dressed, and lying on a couch between the windows. He looked up with a slight movement of the eyebrows, which might have been intended for a nod, as Tom entered. Then he turned his face to the wall.

Tom was surprised to see that the room was the most luxurious in the house. Soft-colored Oriental rugs were spread upon the floor, and another of these covered the couch on which Gerald lay. The walls were lined with pict-

ures, and delicate bric-a-brac crowded the mantel. Tom knew nothing of the value of these things, but their beauty impressed him, and he recalled what Nora had said about Gerald's being humored by his mother. Evidently, spending-money had been plentiful with the only son of the house.

Now that he was here, Tom felt decidedly ill at ease. Gerald showed no disposition to notice his presence further, and he wondered whether he had been wise in coming. And yet he felt sure that there was a way!

"You are not well?" he blundered at last, feeling that he must begin somewhere.

"I'm not sick." The tone was sharp —sharper, perhaps, than the speaker had intended, for he immediately added, in a milder tone, "I've got a beastly headache—that's all."

What could be done? Tom knew not. But unconsciously to himself he was being helped by that longing for confes-

sion which comes with a sinner's first real agony of shame and remorse.

Gerald suddenly turned his head. "I've made a fool of myself," he muttered, more to himself than to Tom.

"Don't feel that way," Tom stammered. He did not mean just this. Indeed, he felt that it was probably a very wholesome way for Gerald to feel, under the circumstances. But the thought uppermost in his mind was that the prodigal must be kept from despair and encouraged to repentance.

"You don't know anything about it."

There was a long silence, and Tom was beginning to be afraid he must begin again, when Gerald broke out: "A fellow of your sort can't understand. You are so phlegmatic and matter-of-fact, you know. You can't imagine how one of the sensitive, emotional kind is swept off his feet."

Tom tried to regard this argument as conclusive, but the attempt was not successful. He remembered that some of the great literary characters of the world

have been excused in similar sins on the ground of their sensitiveness and emotions, but, being phlegmatic and matter-of-fact, the excuse did not present itself to his mind as altogether satisfactory. He thought, indeed, that the great literary characters ought to have been ashamed of themselves. His instinct told him that the less he talked just now, the more Gerald would be likely to talk. So he waited.

"Other fellows take twice as much and keep their equilibrium," his cousin broke out again. "They are the worse for it in the end, I suppose, but they don't make such spectacles of themselves. Oh, I might better be dead and done with it!"

"Don't say that."

"I tell you, you don't know a thing about it. You don't know what it is to loathe yourself and to have others loathe you. See here, Tom, there's just one thing you can do for me—keep all this from father's ears."

Tom was silent. He had expected

this request. He had not expected that it would be so hard to refuse it.

"He has no patience with me," Gerald went on, tossing the hair back from his forehead in a fashion he had when disturbed. "He is disappointed in me because I hate business and won't tie myself down to anything. He detests what he calls 'daubing and banging'—by which he means painting pictures and playing the piano. I had trouble at college. No matter what it was, only that it was nothing of this sort. It was simply a piece of boyish insubordination and bravado. But I was sent about my business, and father was very hot. He said that if I wouldn't study and behave myself at school, I must earn my living. I did try sitting around the office for a few mornings, but what was the use? I wasn't made for that sort of thing, and so I got back to the daubing and banging."

There was a long silence, then—"It has never been like this before!" Gerald cried out, fiercely. "I don't deny that

I've tasted the stuff before, but I never was like this before. On my honor, I never was."

"So Nora says," agreed Tom, cautiously.

"So you've been talking it over with Nora! She's always down on me."

"She's not down on you now, but she's very miserable."

"Miserable! I tell you I'm the one that's miserable. You and Nora don't know anything about it. But you won't tell father, Tom?"

Tom set his lips firmly. "I must," he said.

Gerald gave something between a snap and a groan. "I hate 'must,'" he said. "It's an ugly word. I suppose you think you'll set father against me, and have things all your own way."

Tom's cheeks reddened. Nora was mistaken in thinking she had all the quick temper of the family. But he controlled himself, and said, quietly:

"The only chance for you is for your father to know. Nora and I would be

cowards to keep it from him if there were not a better way for him to learn it. But there is. You must tell him yourself."

"Never!" cried Gerald, sitting bolt upright and flinging his pillows left and right. "What do you think I am made of? I would put a hot coal to my lips before I would tell my father what I have done."

"It is the best way," said Tom, a little more firmly than he had spoken before. "You need him, and he needs to know everything. It is your place to tell him, but if you don't, I shall."

"Tell him, then," said Gerald, sullenly.

The dinner-bell rang, but Tom waited.

"Must I?" he said.

"If you want to be so mean."

Tom rose.

"Don't go," Gerald said, in an altered tone. "Don't turn your back on a poor wretch that way—don't! It's the last thing I'll ever ask of you, Tom. I'll be a man; indeed, I will! And I'll show

you that I remember. Don't turn your back on me now."

The tremulous voice with the suggestion of tears in it had a singular effect on Tom. Hester's voice sometimes trembled in this way, and when it did Tom always gave in to her, even against his better judgment. But now he dared not yield an inch.

"This is your chance, Gerald," he said, with an earnestness which surprised himself. "You can quit now, and be a man, as you say. But you can't begin being a man by deceiving your father. I'll do anything that's honest to help you, but I won't help you to do that. Tell him the story straight out, and begin all over again."

Gerald had lapsed into sullenness, and did not answer.

Tom paused, with his hand upon the door. "I'll come in the morning, and find out whether I need to tell," he said.

Gerald smiled grimly to himself as he turned his face to the wall. "I'll throw

him off the track, and make him believe I've told," he said.

But the very next moment the agony of remorse returned. He hated the being he had made himself through his sin. He wanted—yes, he meant—to start over and be a man. And Tom's words came back, "You can't begin by deceiving your father."

He hoped his father would not come until to-morrow. His head would be clearer then, and perhaps it would be easier to speak. Certainly, he could not tell him to-night.

Before dinner was over, however, his father came, and when he left the table Nora sent him to Gerald's room. Gerald, who heard her voice in the hall, decided that this was pure maliciousness on Nora's part. In truth, the girl meant to prepare the way for what Tom should say to her father on the morrow. He would be more likely to believe the story, and, at the same time, to deal gently with Gerald, if he could see him now.

"Headache again?" inquired Mr. Peter Floyd, rather severely. Nature had not blessed him with a gift for the sick-room, and he had habitually cultivated severity in the presence of his son.

"Yes."

"You need more exercise. Stooping over paints and such stuff is enough to give anybody headaches."

This was not a promising beginning. Gerald vowed he would never tell, and then the loathing of himself came back, and he longed to make a clean breast of it all.

He was silent for a moment, then he said, almost defiantly, "This is worse than a headache. I was out with the boys last night, and I drank too much."

Peter Floyd rose, his face red, and his voice choked with anger.

"That settles it," he said. "I've done the last thing for you that I will ever do."

CHAPTER V.

PETER FLOYD'S STRANGE PROPOSITION.

"I HOPE you are satisfied now," Gerald told Tom the next morning. "You've got father to order me out of doors, and I suppose you feel better." Gerald was quite able to make himself believe, for the moment, that Tom was more to blame for the present state of affairs than was he himself.

"I'm very sorry matters have come out so," Tom agreed, "but I can't see why the right way isn't always the best way."

"And I can't see why the best way isn't always the right way," responded Gerald, irritably. "Father has kicked me out of the house on account of your precious 'right way,' and now I've nothing for it but to go to the dogs as fast as possible."

Tom felt the injustice of this, yet he

feared that, with all his good intentions, he had blundered, and made matters worse for his cousin. Perhaps it would have been best if he had first gone himself to his uncle, and prepared the way for Gerald's confession—if such it could be called.

"I'll have a talk with uncle," Tom said, at length. He did not relish the prospect, but he could see no other way.

"Much good it will do you. He's at white heat now, and your head will come off along with mine. Not but what you deserve *that*," Gerald added, savagely.

Tom did go to his uncle that very night. "I've come to talk to you about Gerald," he said.

"Then you may as well go away again," Peter Floyd answered, promptly. He had been pacing the floor in the library, but now he stopped in his march, turned about suddenly, and faced Tom. "Did Gerald send you here?"

"No, sir."

"Because he needn't. I'll have no

go-betweens in my family. I will deal with my son as I think best, and I will have no interference from anyone."

Mr. Peter Floyd was not in reality quite as fiery as he seemed at this moment. The truth was, he had just come from an interview with his wife, in the course of which he had set forth their son's conduct in severe terms. He had ended by announcing his intention concerning the culprit, and by driving Mrs. Floyd to the verge of hysterics. Naturally, in justification of his own course, he expressed himself strongly to his next interviewer.

Tom started toward the door, but he could not quite make up his mind to leave the room. His uncle saw his hesitation, and called him back. Perhaps, after all, he was glad to talk of Gerald to some one who had no inclination to hysterics.

"He has never settled down to anything," he declared, gloomily, dropping suddenly into a seat and motioning Tom to do likewise. "He has fooled with

his paints and brushes, and all that paper-doll business, until I have lost all patience with him. But, Tom, I never dreamed that he would disgrace himself and all the rest of us in this fashion—never, sir, never!''

''He seems very sorry,'' Tom faltered.

''Sorry! A dog is sorry to be found carrying off sheep, I suppose!'' Mr. Floyd sniffed, contemptuously, as if he had little faith in that particular species of sorrow.

''I wish—I wish there were something to be done.'' Tom began to realize that he really had nothing to say, and to wish that he could think of some effective way to say it.

''You seem to have espoused his cause very warmly.'' Mr. Floyd scanned his nephew's face with some curiosity. ''See here, Tom, will you be responsible for him?''

''I don't know what you mean, sir.''

''I mean this: I will pay no more of Gerald's fancy tailoring bills, and I will buy him no more paints. But I will

allow him to sleep and eat in the house for three months, if he behaves himself. But he must live directly under your oversight and protection. You are to know when he goes out in the morning, and you are to see that he stays in at night. If he repeats the last performance, he goes at once, you understand. You think that he is sorry; very well, let him be sorry to some purpose."

Tom was amazed at this proposition, and knew not how to account for it. But his uncle, brave as a lion in the presence of other difficulties, was an arrant coward before his wife's hysterics. He felt that sooner or later he would succumb in this instance, as he had in all others, and he wished to prepare the way by making some provision which would enable him to retreat with dignity. "Will you do it, sir?" he asked, sharply, of Tom.

"Of course, if there is nothing else to be done."

"Very well; hereafter I shall reckon with you instead of with him, and I

shall see that you send him away on the first repetition of this shameful experience. You understand, Tom, that Gerald must get something to do, and I won't help him. I won't help him, I say, and you can't, for you don't know anybody. For once he must be thrown on his own resources. And he mustn't be given money. I will attend to that." Tom easily guessed that it was his Aunt Lucinda who was to receive his uncle's attention at this point. "I can have no further responsibility for him. I transfer it all to you."

There was nothing more to be said, so Tom took himself off, more puzzled as to his future course than he had ever been before in all his two and twenty years.

One resolution, privately formed on the very night of his arrival, must certainly be broken now. Having heard his Aunt Lucinda speak of the complication arising from his presence in the household, he had made up his mind that he would, at the earliest possible

moment, beg to be allowed to go to a boarding-house. He had meant to mention the matter in the presence of his aunt, and to gain from her such ready sanction for his plan that his uncle would be quite helpless. It was evident enough that, so far as she was concerned, he was altogether unwelcome here. She had no special dislike of him; she simply regarded him as in the way. The servants, taking their cue from her, looked upon him as one of themselves trying to play at being a member of the family. He was sure that his uncle and Nora were really glad to have him here, but on the whole his situation was extremely unpleasant. The wages he received would be just sufficient to pay his expenses in some decent, quiet place. "I can wear my old clothes," he told himself. "I can do anything else better than I can stay where I am not wanted."

But now the whole matter presented itself to him in a new light. He might not be wanted, but was he needed? Could Gerald, through his intervention,

be held a little longer—possibly, even, saved at last?

His pledge seemed to command him to stay. To put Christ first would be to cheerfully take up this strange burden, and to bear it as he might.

He went to Nora and told her what he had undertaken. "I'm afraid I've blundered dreadfully, and made it harder for poor Gerald," he said.

"I suppose you have," admitted Nora, with her terrible frankness. "But if Gerald doesn't deserve to have things made harder for him, I don't know who does. It's what ought to be, and maybe it will do him good. He needs to stand straight up and face the truth, and know there isn't any easy way of wriggling out of things. You've been ever so good about the whole thing, Tom, and I'll never forget it. I meant just what I said that dreadful, dreadful morning when I vowed to myself I would never forget how willing you were to help. And I'll tell you what, I haven't any tact, and I always do the wrong thing,

and pick up edged tools by their blades, so I don't suppose I can do anything. But just as long as you'll stand up for Gerald, and try to help him, why, I'll stand up, too."

Her flushed face had a look of unusual earnestness. Tom did not know what to say, but he put out his hand in an impulsive, boyish fashion, and she took it with a gesture almost as boyish as his own.

As delicately as he could, Tom told Gerald the outcome of his interview with his uncle. Gerald's lip curled, but he said nothing. Tom could not tell whether he was relieved or angry.

"It will be both within the hour," he told himself. "That's the thing about Gerald that goes hardest with me—he's so many kinds of a fellow every day!"

CHAPTER VI.

TOM ATTENDS A FASHIONABLE CHURCH.

THE next day was Sunday. Tom was worn out with the week's hard work at a kind of employment altogether new to him, and with the unusual excitement of the past few days. The breakfast-bell was ringing when he awoke, and he dressed hurriedly, with the confused feeling of one who is aroused at midnight.

"Going to church?" asked Nora, carelessly, as she toyed with her napkin-ring.

"Why"—Tom stopped short, ashamed to say no, and so sleepy and so indisposed for strangers that he was scarcely ready to say yes. He rallied immediately, however. How could he face himself, in the quiet of his own room, if he should dodge out of church-going merely because he was among strangers and a little tired? "Yes," he decided; "I am going. Are you?"

"No." Nora beat a tattoo on the napkin-ring with her spoon, and looked at Tom with curious eyes. "We're not what you call every-day church-goers. Mother goes at Easter when the bonnets are in bloom"—

"Nora!" Her mother spoke with unusual severity. "Have you forgotten how to be respectful? And stop playing with your napkin-ring in that babyish fashion. One would think you were seven, instead of seventeen."

"I wish I were," said Nora, good-naturedly. It always amazed Tom to see how little she feared her mother. "I wish I were little enough to have a good time without any 'manners' about it, or else that I were twenty-seven, with all the fuss about society and marrying over. I think I shall begin to have a good time again, just about then."

"Nora!" Her mother laid down her fork, and frowned over the coffee-urn. "I really blush to hear you talk in such an unwomanly fashion. For a girl to

speak of marriage in that light way''—

''Oh, I wasn't speaking of marriage,'' explained the unabashed Nora, ''only of the fuss about it.''

Gerald came in just then, and Tom recalled his strange promise of the night before. Dare he leave Gerald to shift for himself through an entire Sunday?

''Are you going to St. Jude's?'' queried Nora, returning to Tom and to the subject of church-going.

''No, I think not,'' Tom decided; ''that is, unless Gerald wishes to go there.''

''Gerald!'' Nora sent up one of her unmusical shrieks of laughter. ''If the rest of us are heathen, Gerald is certainly a—a cannibal! I don't think he has been to church since he was in knickerbockers!''

''Yes, I have,'' said Gerald; ''I didn't suppose I was obliged to tell *you* every time I went anywhere.''

''I think it would have been a great deal better for you if you had,'' the girl retorted. But it did not need her moth-

er's rebuking "Nora!" to recall her promise to Tom and to make her ashamed of what she had said. She wondered how she could be agreeable enough to Gerald to compensate for this speech, and so caught at the first straw. "If you'll go to church, Gerald, I'll go, too."

"Precious inducement that is!" grumbled Gerald. "You'd wear that hideous red hat, I suppose?"

"It's all I've got," Nora answered, turning the color of the article under discussion. "There's got to be economy somewhere in the family."

Of this speech, too, Nora became ashamed immediately, but, unfortunately, her best thoughts were always after-thoughts.

Gerald got up and left the room presently. He had eaten little, and he seemed nervous and out of sorts.

His mother sighed heavily. "I fear Gerald is on the verge of a serious illness," she said. "He has not seemed like himself for a week. Nora, I must

say it is very unkind of you to cross him and contradict him continually, when he is in this state of mind."

To Tom's surprise, instead of flashing an angry reply, Nora said quite humbly:

"I am sorry, mamma. But somehow Gerald always does stir me up disagreeably, especially when I wish to be particularly nice to him."

Mrs. Floyd shook her majestic head. Tom never got tired of wondering whether, if she wore a crown—as it assuredly seemed that she ought—it would drop off at each of these head-shakes. "It is time you were learning consideration," she said. "If you can not appreciate Gerald's genius, you can at least treat him with civility."

Tom was weary enough of these discussions, and he was glad when breakfast was over and he was free to go and look up Gerald.

He found his cousin on the Oriental couch in his own room, smoking a cigar. "Come, go to church with me," urged

Tom, rather faint-heartedly, it must be confessed.

"Not I. It's bad enough to be a prisoner here at home, without having to go out with a ball and chain." Then his irritability seemed to leave him all at once, and he laughed so winsomely that Tom felt sure no one in the world could have withstood him then. "I'm not blaming you, Tommy. You're a good fellow, and you've been a better friend to me than I had any right to expect. Go to church, Tommy boy"—the ridiculous nickname was sweet as he spoke it. "Go to church and be good, and this poor pagan will stay at home and be as good as he can. Honestly, Tommy, I'll stay here and behave myself while you are gone."

Tom had never before seen Gerald at his best, and the change from his worst was so delightful that he might have been in danger of promising anything, for the sake of keeping him in this agreeable mood. He started for church, relieved in mind, and feeling that his

burden was not altogether unbearable.

Late flowers were blooming in the park, and the birds caroled in the trees above his head. The October sunshine seemed to flood his very soul. For the first time since coming to the city he was in harmony with his surroundings, and happy.

A week ago this morning he and Teddy had trudged to Sunday-school together, across the hills of Middlefield. A week ago! That life now seemed as far away as if it had been in another world. He had been very homesick during the past few days, and yet he was not sure that he wished to go home. The spell of the great world was upon him, and he was held by it. Something new was sure to happen every day. There was constant excitement, and the expectation of the unexpected. No, he was not sure he wished to go home.

He had picked out the church he meant to attend when on his way home from work last night. It was a rather imposing structure and Tom,

seeing the line of handsome carriages drawn up before it, now decided that he would feel more at home in some little mission chapel. But he had chanced to hear of Doctor Jonathan Edwards Cushing and his fame, and he knew the location of no other church of his own faith. So he went bravely in, and, in response to the inquiries of a dapper little usher, he said yes he *was* a stranger in the city, and he *did* desire to be accommodated with a pew.

He did not need a whole one, and so, no doubt, the usher judged, for he gave him the end of a seat the greater part of which was already occupied by two young girls and their toilettes. One of the girls was pretty; the other, to Tom's unspoiled eyes, seemed rarely beautiful. She had soft, demure brown eyes, and wavy chestnut hair, brushed away from a low, white forehead. Her little hands, hidden in brown gloves, were folded upon her lap. She looked like a little Puritan maiden, Tom thought, only lovelier, of course.

The other girl was pretty, as has been intimated, but she looked as if, on occasion, she could giggle. Tom could see no charm in a girl who giggled.

He had just become aware, in a dim fashion, of all this, when the first notes of the voluntary sounded. The music stirred him strangely. He did not then know that the hand of a master touched the keys, but he knew that his heart was uplifted. He thought of his mother, of her love and prayers, of her hopes for him, of all his own dreams and longings, of the pledge he had made to put Christ first in his life.

The singing was by a quartette choir, and was as bad as the playing was good. Tom did not know this, but he thought the soprano's upward flights must be extremely difficult, and wondered that the basso was not engulfed in the depths which he ventured to explore. Of course Miss MacCormick and Mr. Schneider would not have been disconcerted by the criticisms of a raw farm-boy, but criticism is—and justly so—

the special province of those who have no power to disconcert.

Doctor Jonathan Edwards Cushing was a revelation. He was referred to by the public and the newspapers as being exceedingly "broad," with a strong tendency toward Unitarianism. Tom, having heard no hint of heresy, took him to be rather flat than broad; but, then, more accomplished judges often become confused in their use of these two terms.

Doctor Cushing stormed, he soliloquized, he apostrophized. He made quotations of such length as to give assurance that both memory and breath were inexhaustible. He laughed, he wept; he called upon the stars to come down and bear witness to certain things—no one could have told exactly what. He invited the sun to stand still, and bade the moon hide herself in shame—though no one knew exactly why. And people smiled or cried, as he would have them, so it must be great.

Tom was utterly bewildered. In the

little old-fashioned church at home preaching had been preaching, nothing more or less. There had been little about Goethe and Shakespeare and Matthew Arnold and Herbert Spencer, but a great deal about Christ and his authority and the Gospel he committed to men.

The change from this kind of preaching to that of Doctor Jonathan Edwards Cushing affected him somewhat as had the change from the simple home-life of the farm to the artificiality of his uncle's house.

No one spoke to him after the service, except the dapper little usher, who gave him a brisk invitation to "Come in again, please." Perhaps he was a dry-goods clerk. At all events, Tom had heard the same words and tone at the counter where he matched his mother's dress goods.

"I won't give it up," he told himself, as he walked slowly toward his uncle's. "I'll come to Christian Endeavor to-night. I'll feel at home there, at any rate."

CHAPTER VII.

MARJORIE DEANE.

"DID you see Marjorie Deane at church?" asked Nora, as she and Tom lingered in the parlor for a moment after dinner.

"How do I know?" demanded Tom, laughing. "Unfortunately, people do not wear placards with their names attached to them."

"She does. She is pretty. Isn't that placard enough."

"Then there were two of her," asserted Tom. "One of her is tall, and the other is little and—and very nice-looking."

Nora laughed immoderately and not very kindly.

"What a society editor you would make with your graphic descriptions! Now listen to me: Did she have a lovely complexion, and wear her hair in

a pompadour, and have on a brown suit and turban?''

''How should I know?'' groaned Tom. ''You girls talk the worst jargon! One would suppose you were describing a dry-goods counter instead of a woman. There were fifty girls at church, and they all had on brown suits and turbans, I think—at least they may have been brown for aught I know. There was one girl''—

''She was the one,'' interrupted Nora, with decision. ''There isn't any other when Marjorie is in sight. Now, Tom, just the least bit of a solemn warning: Don't say anything to Gerald about Marjorie Deane.''

''Oh!''

Tom was a good deal surprised, for he had not expected to find Gerald's acquaintances at church.

''They have been friends ever since they were little children,'' said Nora, with a little sigh. ''They were both fond of music, and they played together a great deal. But she says she can't be

friends with him any more, and he takes it very much to heart, of course."

Tom did not blame Gerald's former friend. Certainly he would not expect a refined young lady to be especially friendly with a fellow of his cousin's proclivities. He had enough consideration for Nora's feelings to keep him from saying so. But he thought of Hester and shuddered.

"Gerald played on the piano all the morning," Nora went on to say. "It's the first time for a week."

"I thought your father didn't like to hear it."

"He was at the office. He always goes down on Sunday to open his mail and go over the books. Does that shock you? I suppose you will get terribly shocked a great many times if you stay with us very long. Poor old papa! I don't know what he would do if he hadn't his business. It's meat and drink to him, and he has no other way to spend his time."

Tom felt a sudden courage leaping in

his veins. He was full of pity for this whole family, with their good impulses and their utter blindness to the higher things of life. To Nora, at least, he would speak.

"It's too bad, Nora," he said, bluntly. "I wish you would go to church, even if the others don't. Then you would have something worth spending your time on."

"Thank you for advising me, Master Pious," retorted Nora, whose quick temper was up in earnest. "You won't find the lecture bureau profitable in this family."

Tom was grieved, for he had felt that he and Nora were very good friends, and that her friendship was all of good fellowship permitted him in his new surroundings. Now, even this seemed gone. Yet he could not quite wish the words unsaid. Her very sensitiveness showed that they were needed, though he was ashamed enough that they had been so bunglingly spoken. He went up to Gerald, who was lounging on his

couch, reading a novel and smoking a cigarette.

"Glad to see you," he said, to Tom's infinite surprise. "It's dull here Sundays, isn't it? Have a comfortable chair."

It was the first time Tom had been sure that he was welcome in Gerald's room, and he was almost afraid to breathe lest the spell should be broken. He drew up a chair and sat down, waiting for what might come next.

"I suppose I must go out to-morrow and hunt up something to do," Gerald said, throwing down his book and tossing away his cigarette with a vigor which led Tom to hope he was leaving his old life behind him. "And I don't know what it will be. That's the inconvenience of knowing a little of everything except the things that are useful."

In sober truth, Gerald knew little enough of anything, useful or otherwise; but he supposed he knew a great deal, and in this supposition Tom, in his ignorance of the world, naturally shared.

"I have thought of a newspaper office," Gerald said, presently. "I have written a few little things—society verses, mostly."

"Were they printed?" asked Tom, in great awe.

"Some of them—in our college paper. I drew the cartoons, too, though I like serious art better. I might get a position as an illustrator, I suppose, but I don't take much to the idea."

"Couldn't you teach music?" asked Tom, who was limited by his inexperience, and who imagined that the career of a successful music teacher would look to Gerald, in his present condition, like a shining one.

"Teach music! Pshaw! I can't count time, even. My music is in me. It could never have been put into me in the routine way. I know nothing at all about processes. The result comes, and I don't know how. I can compose a little, but I haven't the technical training necessary for that. I do things in

my own way, and it isn't anybody else's way."

Tom had never before thought to be particularly thankful for his training on the farm, and his habit of doing what came to hand without regard to liking. Now it seemed to him that this simple habit was better than a fortune. He felt extremely sorry for Gerald, without knowing exactly why. And Gerald sorely needed this pity, though not on the grounds on which he asked for it.

"I'm a bad piece, am I not?" he queried, smiling in his most winsome fashion. It was this smile which had won forgiveness for Gerald Floyd at every turn of his erratic career.

"I wish I were like you," he went on, "comfortable and steady and satisfied with as much of life as comes in my way. But I'm not. I've always been a dreamer, and my dreams haven't always been selfish ones, either. Truly, Tommy boy,"—the gentle, caressing tone of the morning came back—"truly, Tommy boy, I used to dream of great and noble

things that I meant to do. If I had lived in the days of chivalry, I wouldn't have made such a bad knight, I think. Knighthood is rather in my line, you see. Doing noble things isn't so very hard—it's the doing them over and over that kills. I think the glue must have been left out of my composition. I don't stick to anything."

He laughed, and less bitterly than usual.

"I'm talking nonsense, Tommy boy, and you don't understand a thing I say. If you wanted to do something high and good, you'd keep at it until it was done. You don't understand how dead tired of it a fellow of my style would get the second or third day. But it's true that I've had my aspirations, and those of the finest sort. I didn't live up to them, but they answered to talk about for awhile. You didn't know I could preach so well, did you? But preaching is exactly my kind. It's practicing that knocks me out."

Tom was afraid to talk. He could

not keep up with his cousin's moods, and he had a fear of checking some utterance that Gerald would be the better for having made.

"But the age of chivalry has passed," Gerald began again. "I had a friend—a girl I had played with as a child. O, don't be alarmed—she was only a friend, and I'm not sure I should have cared ever to have her for anything else. But I invested her in my own mind with all manner of graces and virtues. I wasn't sentimental about her, in the way we usually take sentiment, but I liked to think there was one girl in the world who meant what she said and was all she pretended to be. It made the story books more real, and it put soul into the pictures I tried to paint. But when the time came that things went hard with me, she turned her back on me like all the rest. Then all the knighthood died out of me, I think. There was nothing left to keep it alive."

"But I don't see why knighthood isn't just the same thing, whether some girl

is friendly or not," expostulated Tom. He was quite sure that Gerald was speaking of Marjorie Deane, but he remembered Nora's warning. "Doing right needn't depend upon anybody's friendliness."

"With you, maybe not. I suppose you are religious and all that. How did you like Doctor Jonathan Edwards Cushing?"

Tom was startled by this practical question. He was still thinking of knighthood, and of what Gerald had told him concerning Marjorie Deane.

"I hardly know yet," he said in answer to Gerald's question. "Have you ever heard him?"

"Yes, I have heard him often, though Nora says that I never go to church."

"Are you going with me to-night?"

"No, thank you. I am a pagan, you know. You mustn't expect to turn me into anything else."

He picked up his book and looked so likely to become bored that Tom thought it wise to take himself off.

CHAPTER VIII.

TOM BECOMES DISCOURAGED.

TOM did go to the Endeavor meeting that night, though he would not have been quite sure, if he had not heard it announced, what kind of meeting it was. There were not more than twenty-five persons present, and only three or four of these were young men. There were a few young girls, but most of the persons in attendance were nearing middle age.

One of the deacons of the church was leading — "presiding" was what he called it. He read a short passage, called on Dr. Cushing to offer prayer, and then announced that the first item on the program would be a piano solo by Miss Marjorie Deane.

Tom easily guessed that Miss Marjorie's playing was exquisite. He supposed that the composition was something religious—as it assuredly was—

but he was not used to piano solos in an Endeavor meeting, and he could not at once adjust himself to anything so unfamiliar.

"Miss Bessie Langdon will now kindly favor us with a recitation," the presiding officer announced, and the blonde young lady who had sat with Miss Marjorie in the morning went forward and rendered "The Maiden Martyr" with much apparent self-consciousness and with many elocutionary flourishes.

Next there was a vocal quartette, and then Dr. Cushing was called upon for remarks.

He remarked at great length, quoting much poetry, and ended by describing a sunset in Italy. By this time Tom had quite abandoned the hope of hearing anything that would suggest an Endeavor meeting, but the leader said, courteously, at the close of Dr. Cushing's address, "If there is any one present who will volunteer to take some part, we shall be glad to listen to him now."

There was perfect silence. Tom was not unused to prayer-meeting pauses, but he was altogether unaccustomed to such equanimity as was shown by these well-bred Endeavorers, who seemed to feel that there was nothing at all expected of them, and that the invitation to participate was a mere formality, as necessary as the benediction.

Tom could not take part, he felt sure, with all these elegant strangers to look on in polite surprise. It would have been hard in any case, for he was not fluent, and the "I promise to take some part," had always been to him the burdening clause of the pledge. If he were gifted, it would be different.

"I promise that I will always put Christ first." These words seemed all at once to take possession of him. Did they mean that he was to take part for the sake of Christ, and not for those who sat by? He had wished to keep his pledge, but he had not thought that putting Christ first would ever mean just this.

"I am a stranger here, but I am an Endeavorer." He was on his feet and in the midst of this little speech almost before he knew it. "I am glad to be with you, and want to say that I am trying to lead a Christian life."

There was the slightest possible rustle of surprise. "We are glad the visitor has spoken to us," the leader said. "We have no pledge in our Society, but it is certainly commendable that one who has taken such a pledge should keep it wherever he is. We will now stand and sing the doxology."

An Endeavor Society without a pledge was a new idea to Tom, and his first experience had not conclusively proven to him that such an invertebrate organism was desirable.

After the meeting, the deacon who had presided shook hands with him. "I am sure you enjoyed the meeting," he said. "We always aim to have a program which is worth coming out to hear."

Tom, who had been prepared to hear

an apology, was quite overcome, and could think of nothing to say but "Indeed!" Afterward he decided that this was the stupidest thing he could have said, but perhaps it did not matter.

The evening church service was a song and organ recital, with a short lecture from Dr. Cushing on "Church Architecture in the Middle Ages." The lecture was one of a series, and Tom could make but little out of it. He went to his room little comforted by the services of the day, and reasoned over the situation for a long time before he succeeded in convincing himself that he was not in the least homesick.

Things went badly with him next day. After a day of rest, the roughness and profanity of the men were especially irritating. Tom was quick and apt about his work, but he was not used to working under direction, and he could not remember to wait for orders. To-day he moved a quantity of stock, thinking only of the advantage of the change, and not at all of whether or not it was his

business to make it. For this he was sharply reprimanded by Kieffer, the foreman. "You needn't think," Kieffer told him, "that because you're the old gentleman's relation, you're expected to take any liberties around here. He's expressly said you're to be counted as one of the men and nothing more."

This bit of information was quite gratuitous, and took much of the spirit from Tom's apology. He did apologize, after a fashion, but he saw that the foreman was not satisfied.

"You've got too much pepper in you for this kind of business," said Ben Harris, a good-natured young fellow who worked with Tom. "Better make the best of things now, and wait until you get to be superintendent, to set us fellows to rights."

"I don't think I'll ever be superintendent."

"I don't think so, either, the way things are going. Kieffer don't like you any too well, and, just between good

chums, you're not putting him in the way to like you any better."

Tom's temper was already irritated, and he was inclined to resent such familiarity from a new acquaintance. But why should he? Ben's open face told the kindness of his intentions.

"I'm not looking out for the superintendent's job," he managed to say, pleasantly, "but I'll try to be more careful after this. You must make some allowance for a fellow who has always worked on a farm, and has had nobody but his father for a boss."

Ben looked at him interestedly for a moment, and then smiled. "I guess you'll do," he said. "I've kind of took to you all along. I like a fellow who ain't afraid of an honest day's work. These here dudes that slack up about 'leven o'clock, hopin' the whistle'll blow for noon—them ain't my kind. Some folks get their enjoyment in singin' hymns, and some get it in playin' cards. I get mine in a clean, honest day's work; an', though I ain't nobody

in partic'lar, I do lay out that I know a day's work when I see it. An' I ruther guess you'll do."

However, Tom had not heard the last of the matter. That evening his uncle proposed to walk home with him. This was unusual and suggestive. It proved to be as Tom had suspected—Kieffer had reported him.

"He says you are inclined to be officious," said Peter Floyd, eyeing his nephew sharply. "That will never do. Nothing could be more demoralizing to the men than to see that I gave privileges to my nephew I did not give to them. I have put you among the men as one of them. That position you will have to maintain."

Again the irritation returned, but in dealing with his uncle it was more easily conquered. Tom had a strong sense of justice, and he could not but see that, as his employer, his uncle had a right to demand anything which was reasonable and not in itself wrong.

"I am very sorry I took so much upon

myself," he said. "The change seemed to me such an improvement that it didn't occur to me it wasn't my business, until afterward."

"Very well. Hereafter do your thinking beforehand."

Tom was keenly hurt, for he had not been able to give up his original opinion that he was in some sense a favorite.

Nothing more was said to Tom, but to Nora, the only one of the family who was in his counsel, her father said: "Tom is too forward. He is only a boy, and must learn to keep his place."

"I wish he would!" Nora said, tartly. "He lectured me yesterday for not going to church."

"Um! He must learn!"

"I'm sure"—Nora had never been noted for the consistency of her opinions —"I'm sure he knows a great deal more than some people who make more show in the world."

"So he does; and I like the boy. There's a manly ring about him that isn't common, and I like him."

This bit of conversation would have been very consoling to Tom if he had heard it, but he did not, and he felt that he was in disgrace.

Gerald came in presently and announced that he was working in a newspaper office.

"How did you get the position?" asked Tom, marveling greatly.

"Get the position! It never has taken any trouble for me to get anything I wanted. The trouble is to keep it after I've got it. Didn't I tell you the glue was left out of my composition?"

CHAPTER IX.

NORA'S COMING OUT PARTY.

"DO YOU know what is going to happen in a little more than two weeks?" demanded Nora of Tom one morning. "I'm going to take my first lesson."

"In what?"

"In society. I'm not to be 'introduced'—we're not rich enough for that—but I am to have a short and easy lesson in the rudiments."

"I don't believe I understand."

"No; I didn't expect you would. You don't know the language. Well, I'm going to begin to be in 'society'—just a little. I won't be through school until June, but mamma thinks I ought to begin to get my bearings in the meantime. Getting 'into the swim' is a great affair, when people are rich and the *debutante* is pretty, but in this case neither of these desirable conditions ex-

ists, so I must slip in as quietly as possible."

Tom was surprised daily to hear the several members of his uncle's family discuss the subject of their limited means. To him it seemed that their money must be burdensome; but they talked as if they were sadly scrimped, and as if they were debarred from the most desirable society for the lack of an income sufficient to meet its demands. He was quite sure that in his father's home there had never been such a painful consciousness of the want of money. This was true enough; but Tom was just beginning to learn that wealth and its standards are all comparative.

"How are you going to slip in?" he questioned, interestedly.

"Mamma is going to give a very light entertainment, light as to expenses and refreshments, I mean. The company will be heavy enough, no doubt. My name is to be on the cards, and I am to stand up beside mamma and try to look as if I were used to it. It will be stupid,

but I must go through it sometime, and, then, I'm to have a new gown, which will be something of a consolation. Being 'in' is, on the whole, better than being out, so long as there is bound to be an in and an out side, especially with all the holiday fun coming on."

From this time the house was astir with preparations. Nora told Tom from time to time of the progress of affairs, and seemed to be weighted down with an unusual sense of responsibility.

"If I could fit a gown as Marjorie Deane does!" she sighed heavily, knotting her big brow into a frown. "She looks as if she were made for her clothes, instead of her clothes for her."

"Is that a compliment?"

"I'm not sure. I certainly meant it to be. My new dress is a poem until I put it on. Then it is a lesson in fractions and the nines of the multiplication table, all in one. And the fit of it isn't the worst thing. That dressmaker of the oily lips actually said my complexion would be 'be-yutiful' with that

pink against it, under the gaslight. And the thing makes me look like a sage-bush—honestly! She has put that compliment into her bill, you may be certain. I know her tricks and her manners."

At another time she confided to him her anxiety on the subject of the invitations. "Everybody is coming, of course," she said. "That is quite inevitable. One can't discriminate in an affair of this kind. But, honestly, Tom, it goes against the grain with me to have all those fellows that Gerald used to go with—the very ones that led him into all the trouble, and that brought him home that dreadful night."

"I *wouldn't* have them," insisted Tom, quickly, quite forgetting that he had resolved not to be "officious." "It isn't right."

"What if it isn't? You always talk as if it were simply a matter of our own pleasure whether we do things or not. If mamma were to leave out George Graves and Burt Hadley there would

be no end of a stir. We are not people who can settle such things. We have to leave them as they are settled for us. The Hadleys could leave us out, but for us to leave them out—that would simply be to commit social suicide in the most inelegant possible way."

"I think it's moral suicide to have such fellows here, when you have Gerald to think of."

"Don't I think of Gerald?" He could not doubt it, as he saw the pained, anxious look on her face. "But what can I do? I couldn't raise a protest loud enough to keep him from being invited. And I know no one would understand."

Tom was sorely troubled, and, perhaps, if he had not been so recently rebuked, he would have gained courage to go to his uncle. As it was he was simply troubled and powerless.

He wondered if he would be expected to be of the company, and soon he decided that Nora certainly intended him to be. "Marjorie Deane will be here,"

she said. "Of course, she must come, for our families are the very closest of friends. I'm going to trust you to keep Gerald out of her way."

So Nora was expecting he would be in the parlors that evening, and his aunt was reconciled to the prospect. But one thing was quite certain, he could not appear on such an occasion without an addition to his wardrobe. He had not seen much of the world, but he had seen enough to know that his best suit would not pass muster at his aunt's party. He might be comfortable enough in it, but Aunt Lucinda could not endure the ordeal. Of another thing he was quite as certain: He could not afford the money to buy a new suit. So the solution of the question seemed simple enough. He would excuse himself and stay either in his room or at his uncle's office.

"But you mustn't stay away from *my* party," Nora said, when he began his explanations. "It wouldn't be respectable. The idea of your running out the

back door as if you were afraid of people. And you know how you're always talking about what is right and what isn't. This wouldn't be right; I know it wouldn't."

"I don't see why. None of your friends know me, and no one but yourselves would know there was an absentee."

"Don't you know what you promised me about Gerald?"

"Don't you know that you promised to help? Is it keeping your promise to have those fellows here—the very ones you are most afraid of?"

"I told you how helpless I was in that matter. But it isn't so in this. You *can* help. You can keep an eye on Gerald all the while. And I know what is behind all your excuses. It's something about clothes."

"Yes," Tom said, "I was honest in telling you I wouldn't feel at home in a house full of strangers, but the matter of clothes has something to do with it. Your friends don't wear gray sack coats

at an evening party, and you wouldn't feel comfortable to see me in one. It's just for your sake, and—and your mother's, but I'm sure you know how I feel."

"Ye—es," assented Nora. "I've thought it all out. You won't like it, and I'm sorry for that, but it's got to be, and perhaps you'll feel better about it when it's over. You must wear one of Gerald's suits. It won't fit half badly, and he has a closet full of them."

Tom felt the hot blood fly to his face. He was nothing if not independent. In this independence he had delighted, and he had been, perhaps, more proud of it than became a modest youth. To appear in fine society wearing some one else's fine clothes! The idea was so obnoxious to him that he had to shut his lips to keep from saying something unkind.

"Now you're angry," said Nora. "And I'm not sorry I made you so, for if you're that proud you're sinful, and you ought to be made to realize it."

It seems absurd to say it, but Tom had never been more conscious of a sacrifice than when he answered humbly, "If I am too proud to appreciate such kindness, I ought to be ashamed of myself. I'll do it, Nora, provided Gerald doesn't object."

Gerald did not object. On the contrary, he seemed to take some pleasure in finding the coat a very good fit, and in picking out a perfectly correct necktie for Tom's use. "You might as well go in for the whole thing while you're about it," he said. "You'll not find it exhilarating at the best."

This was quite true. Tom did not find it exhilarating, for he knew none of the guests, and the few perfunctory introductions he received did not lead to anything particularly interesting in the way of conversation.

The young people had card-tables in the library, and this troubled Tom, for he knew that Gerald had been almost insanely fond of cards. Burt Hadley and Bessie Langdon came toward one of

these tables, and seemed about to sit down, when Marjorie Deane crossed the room and stood close to Bessie, pretending to sniff the rose she wore.

"Don't, dear!" she whispered, softly.

Soft as had been the whisper, Tom was standing close enough to hear it. And he thought he would be glad to remember the words for Gerald's sake.

CHAPTER X.

TOM LEADS AN ENDEAVOR MEETING.

TOM went to church regularly and always spoke in the Endeavor meeting. This last required an effort each time, but his conscience had taken hold at this point and would not let go. He argued that these well-bred young people probably smiled in secret at his crude speeches, and that it could do no good to excite their ridicule; but his argument was altogether in vain. The more he thought upon the matter, the more his obligation asserted itself. He could not disregard it and be true.

"I heard something about you to-day," Nora said, one evening when the two were alone together. "I was at Bessie Langdon's and Marjorie Deane came in. They were talking about their young people's society, and they—no, Marjorie said that she admired your independence in doing what you believed

was right. She said she had always thought their society ought to have a pledge, and now she thought so more than ever. Bessie is a snob, though, and she said she didn't believe in their society having things just as they do in little churches where there isn't any talent. 'Talent' is Bessie's pet word. She thinks it means that you have pretty blonde hair and slim waists and can do poses just as your Delsarte teacher tells you to. I wouldn't fancy a church society run on that plan myself, but I suppose it's all a matter of taste.''

Tom could not help thinking of Marjorie's words for many days after this, and wondering how much sincerity there was behind them. He had been introduced to her at his uncle's home on the evening of the party which had been such a burden to Nora. Since then she had never failed to speak to him pleasantly after each Endeavor meeting. Perhaps she was heartless, as Gerald insisted on believing, but naturally her courtesy to the untrained country boy

led him to think of her with the utmost possible charity.

One Sunday evening Tom made his way to the church through a driving rain, only to find the door of the lecture-room locked and the house dark. Evidently the sexton had not thought it worth while to open the building, with the weather so uninviting.

"This is a fine commentary on the lack of a pledge," thought Tom, as he shook the door. "If we had promised to 'attend every meeting unless hindered by some reason—' "

His mental quotation was cut short by the sound of voices in the other doorway.

"Now, Marjorie, I hope you know how perfectly silly it was of you to want to come," a girl's petulant treble was saying. "You might have known that no one ever came to the young people's meeting on a night like this."

"Now, Bessie!" It was Marjorie Deane who expostulated thus gently. "I don't think this weather is a bit dread-

ful. You know we went to the water-color exhibition yesterday, when it was raining quite as hard. And it isn't the rain's fault, but ours, that old Zekel hasn't seen fit to light up the church."

"Ours! I should like to know how?"

"Don't you remember that the last rainy Sunday night he said he 'done sot yere and sot yere, and you all neber set foot in'? No wonder he was discouraged and didn't think it worth while to come to-night."

"Well, I think it was very sensible of him. If we had been as sensible, we would have stayed at home, too. And what shall we do now? We can't wait here until church time, and I did so want to hear Dr. Cushing's lecture on 'Mediæval Poetry.' I know it will be lovely. If we had stayed in until then, perhaps the rain would have been over."

"That's just like girls!" A third voice took up the lament at this point. This last voice was unmistakably boyish, and Tom recognized it as belonging to Richie Langdon, Bessie's younger broth-

er. "Girls are always wanting you to go somewhere, and then wishing they hadn't gone." After which succinct and philosophical statement he relapsed into silence.

The two doorways were so close together that it was quite impossible not to hear the conversation, and Tom decided that the most sensible thing he could do was to make himself known to his neighbors, who had evidently not noticed his approach. So he crossed to the other flight of steps and said, awkwardly enough, "We seem to be locked out."

"Isn't it too bad?" It was Marjorie who spoke. "But we richly deserve it, for we haven't been coming on rainy nights."

"Can't I go for the key?" Tom questioned. "Here come three others. It would be a pity not to have a meeting."

True enough, here were the Fannings —the twin sisters and their tall, shy brother. They had come to the city only a little while before, and had been

at the Endeavor meeting only two or three times.

"Does any one know where the sexton lives?" persisted Tom.

"I do," said Marjorie, quickly; and gave explicit directions. He wondered how she had come to know. There was no mystery about it, however, for the large family of old Zekel had many almoners, and Marjorie Deane was among the most liberal.

Tom was back directly with old Zekel, panting and apologetic, at his heels. Fortunately the house was warm, and in a moment the lecture-room was aglow with light.

"What shall we do, now that we are in?" asked Bessie, who was still out of sorts. She must be forgiven, for dampness often disagrees with blonde hair. "It would be ridiculous to try to have a meeting. We have no program arranged, and no leader."

"This is better than being outside, at all events," said Marjorie. "We can sing something, at least, or—why, Mr.

Floyd, can you not lead a little meeting —a real Christian Endeavor meeting?"

Tom had never faced the cannon's mouth, but he fancied at the moment that this would be an enviable position. He, with his scanty education and gifts, to lead the meeting in Dr. Jonathan Edwards Cushing's church! Then, "I promised that I will always put Christ first," he said to himself, and walked straight to the leader's chair.

Several others had come in by this time, and the circle continued to widen as the meeting went on. The weather was clearing, and many of the young people who wished to be present at Dr. Cushing's lecture dropped into the lecture-room and heard and wondered.

For it was a wonderful meeting, one of those experiences which come once in a lifetime, one of those experiences which, when they do come, we are compelled, in spite of our philosophy, to admit are not of earth but of God. Before the hour was over, every member of the little circle had spoken, or offered

prayer. None could tell how it came, least of all Tom, whose head grew dizzy as he tried to realize it all. All he could remember was that he had tried to tell them, in a simple way, what he thought it meant to put Christ first in our lives; and that, after he had finished, Marjorie Deane had risen, with tears in her beautiful eyes, and had said, "Let us pray." After that the fountains of the deep were broken up. Shy young Mr. Fanning spoke with much feeling, saying that he had been superintendent of a Sunday-school in a distant city, but that here he had been a stranger, and very lonely, until to-night. Then the rest followed almost eagerly. Even Bessie Langdon tremblingly asked that the others would pray for her. For, after all, the world is better than we are likely to think, and goodness, as well as evil, is contagious.

Perhaps Dr. Jonathan Edwards Cushing never knew why such rapt young faces were upturned to him as he delivered his highly-wrought lecture on

"Mediæval Poetry." No one had told him of that earlier meeting, and if he had been told, perhaps he would not have understood.

CHAPTER XI.

GERALD IN BAD COMPANY.

QUITE against Tom's expectations, Gerald had continued to go to the newspaper office regularly. Fortunately, he had an assignment for day-duty, and so, perhaps, was less tempted than he might otherwise have been. He was quick and active mentally, and, if he was somewhat superficial, this fault was in a measure compensated for by his versatility. He seldom spoke of his work, except to relate some amusing or exciting adventure connected with it, but he must be successful to some degree, it would seem, or he would not keep his place and draw his salary. Tom was still uneasy, but he hoped much from the discipline of regular hours and hard work, and was, on the whole, more comfortable than he had been before.

Gerald seldom played the piano now,

and never touched a brush. Tom supposed that this was a good sign, but in reality it was no sign at all. His cousin tired of everything—even of the two occupations that he really loved—and just now a new occupation, if it did not absorb him, at least served to pass the time.

On the Sunday night which had witnessed such an unusual scene in the lecture-room of Dr. Cushing's church, Tom came home in an exalted state of mind which was quite unusual with him. He had experienced much, and all victories looked easy. He had forgotten, as we all forget, how near is the valley of need to the mountain of vision.

He had almost forgotten about Gerald even, for the time, but as he passed his cousin's room he heard voices, and wondered. Gerald seldom had company nowadays, for he had dropped out of his old circle, and had not seemed to care for a place in any other.

One of the voices was certainly Burt

Hadley's. Tom was on the alert at once, and rapped vigorously.

"Come in!" called Gerald, in his most ungracious tone. Two of Burt's friends were with him, and the four were playing cards.

They greeted Tom good-naturedly enough, and did not seem in the least embarrassed. Why should they be? They had played cards by special invitation in this same home not a month ago.

Gerald looked a trifle uneasy. Then he said, with a sudden change of manner, "Don't be shocked, Tommy boy. This is very innocent sort of business. I suppose there isn't any use in asking you to take a hand, but at least you can sit down and let us convince you that it isn't dangerous."

Tom sat down on the couch. In truth, he did not know what he ought to do—whether it was wrong for him to look on and witness that of which he disapproved, or whether it would be still worse to go away and leave Gerald in such company.

So he stayed, and grew more indignant with every breath he drew. The boys were coarse and ill-bred, and he had never before had the same sense of being degraded that he felt in their society. They spoke irreverently of religion and slightingly of women. Nothing seemed sacred to them. Two or three times Gerald quieted them when they grew uproarious, and this caution seemed to amuse them very much.

"Maybe we'd better go home," said Burt Hadley, at last. "We might wake up the governor, and then there'd be a sensation."

"He isn't asleep, that's the worst of it," said Gerald. He did not urge them to remain, and at the end of the game they took their departure.

"You've a lively way of making a fellow uncomfortable," Gerald said, when the cousins were alone together. "I never saw a chap who could look such unutterable things."

"I didn't know I looked anything but disgust, and I could have uttered that

fast enough, if I had thought it would do any good."

"Sensible Tommy, to keep your opinions to yourself, or save them to ventilate in prayer-meeting where they will harm nobody! We're not born just alike, you know, and we don't all act just alike after we are born. For instance, there is Burt Hadley, and then again there is Tommy boy. Psalm-singing wouldn't be the very nectar and ambrosia of existence for Burt, and I dare say you would find some of his recreations as little to your taste."

"I should hope so. He isn't a gentleman, and I hope I'll never have to hear a word from him again."

"I wouldn't tell him my opinion, if I were in your place, or you might hear two words. Tommy, you're awfully good, but did it ever occur to you that you're not exactly exhilarating company for a person of my tastes?"

The mixture of graciousness and insolence in this speech was intolerable. Tom was more indignant than ever, and

this time he was not quite sure that his indignation was righteous. "I didn't suppose I was very agreeable company," he said, "but I hope I'm decent."

"Careful, Tommy, careful. Don't lose your temper, for I like you. And I'll tell you another little secret which you may find soothing—I don't like Hadley."

"I'm glad to hear it. I wish you didn't like his company."

"I'm not sure that I do. But company of some sort a fellow must have. I feed on excitement, and when life gets tame it is intolerable. I've told you over and over that you don't understand a word about it. A fellow of Hadley's style diverts me—that is all."

"See here, Gerald," Tom broke out, suddenly, "what would you do if Hadley should court your sister?"

"I'd thrash him," said Gerald, languidly.

"And yet he's good enough company for you?"

"Goodness! How you moral fellows

bore me! A man can look out for himself, and a girl can't. She doesn't know what a fellow does, or is, and she wouldn't know how to discriminate, if she did."

Tom thought that, of his two cousins, Nora was the better able to take care of herself, but he decided that it was discreet not to say so. "I confess I can't see the difference," was what he did say. "Maybe girls *are* more particular about their company than boys are, but there isn't any reason why they should be. Your father and mother wouldn't like to have Nora choose such company, and I don't see why they shouldn't object just as much when it's you."

"Oh, as far as ordinary acquaintance is concerned, Hadley is all right. He goes in good society, you know. He isn't a Chesterfield of elegance, but you can't expect everything. And he has a mighty good heart."

"What kind of heart is that?" questioned Tom, innocently.

"Oh, he's no sneak. He'll stick by

you, if he pretends to. And he'll lend you ten dollars now and then without making a howl about it. He's free and generous, and all that sort of thing, you know."

Tom laughed. "I should think he might have been tolerably free with his money, and still have several things the matter with his heart," he said. "It is a very bad heart, as far as I can see. Honestly, Gerald, I haven't any patience with these fellows, and I can't bear to see them around here. You are making a splendid fight, but you need all the help you can get. And I think I ought to tell your father what I think."

"Tell him, then!" said Gerald, in the same savage tone in which he had once before spoken the words. "Those fellows are regular visitors at the house. He can't invite them to the parlor, and then object when they come to this room on my invitation."

This was quite true, and Tom made no answer. In a moment Gerald spoke again, but more mildly.

"I'll tell you what, Tommy boy," he said, "I think that, with the best intentions possible, you've got into the habit of paying entirely too much attention to other people's business. A fellow who starts out in this world to be a reformer, needs an umbrella and rubber boots. It isn't a comfortable sort of life. One is likely to encounter a great deal of weather, you know. And if I were you, I'd take the regulation road, and let other people do the same. You're just a little officious, and people notice it."

A touch of indignation always quickened Tom's tongue. "I've heard of some fellows who did that," he said. "They took the safe, easy side of the road, and weren't so officious as to interfere with the affairs of the poor wretch who had fallen among thieves. But I'd rather have been the good Samaritan, just the same."

"Don't fire Bible at me. That's taking an unfair advantage. And say, Tommy boy, you're an officious sort of chap, but I like you."

CHAPTER XII.

TOM'S VISIT TO HIS HOME.

TOM went home for Christmas, and what a home-going it was! The little village seemed to have shrunken strangely, and the two small stores no longer seemed to him like the center of vast commercial enterprises. But the love and cheer of the home-circle seemed greater than before. He noticed, with a quickened sense of appreciation, his mother's instinctive refinement and Hester's modest beauty. Even Teddy's awkward loyalty and laborious imitation of his revered big brother touched him.

"Say, Tom," was Ted's anxious query on the second morning, "how do you tie that necktie so's the ends come out on different sides of the bow? If I've got to fix up, I've got to. You've turned so stylish, it wears a fellow all out to keep up with you."

Tom laughed as he adjusted the gorgeous red and yellow necktie with which his brother had been wrestling. "So this is what you made the trip to town for last night," he said. "Well, it is a cheerful affair, and no mistake. So I've grown stylish?"

"Sure! You wear the same clothes you used to, but you brush them oftener. I s'pose that makes the difference."

"Brushing one's clothes is very good exercise, Teddy. I recommend it to you."

"It's an awful bother—worse'n brushing your hair, and that's bad enough, with mother always poking you up to it. She says you brushed yours without having to be told."

"I think she must be mistaken. She will make mistakes about you, too, after you have gone away."

"She'll never make that one," asserted Teddy, with a dismal shake of the head. "She knows the other thing too well."

The neighbors came trooping in,

bringing good things to eat, and the news of the community besides.

"Ma thought you might relish some of our sausage," said 'Bial Griggs, looking into the cheerful kitchen. "She sent over a few pounds, an' said she'd take it real hard if you'd got above eatin' country sausage. And she put in a can of cherries off that tree in the yard. She said she guessed you'd remember that there time you fell out of it."

"Remember! I should think I did! It seems to me I can feel the crack the doctor gave my arm when he set it, even yet. That comes of your wife's generosity. She was just as free-hearted then as she is now, and she had told me to go into the tree and eat as many cherries as I possibly could."

"Like enough she did. Ma was always free around the house. 'Land!' she says, 'I'd just as leave go to the poorhouse as to set a skinny table.' Wal, I see you remember, an' I hope you won't slight that sausage."

'Bial went home and told his wife that Tom Floyd was just the same as ever. "He stands up straighter," he said, "an' at first I thought he was a little stiff an' set up. But he's just as interested in old times as ever—remembered about you giving him cherries, an' all."

"Of course he did!" was the triumphant response. "I always told you Tom Floyd was all right," and this soon became the verdict of the neighborhood.

Of course it became necessary to pay visits to his old friends, who loaded him with kindnesses, and joyfully and systematically set to work to ruin his digestion. At 'Bial Griggs' he sat down to a table which looked like an oasis in the desert, with tall dishes of preserves rising here and there like palm-trees, and lesser growths of jelly and marmalade between, too numerous to receive serious attention.

"After all, I haven't had much time at home," he said to his mother, regretfully, the night after Christmas. He

was to go back to the city on the morrow, and it might be long before the coming of another holiday. "I've been all about the neighborhood, and saved only this one evening to spend alone with you."

"I know, Tom. I thought we would have more time, and I'm sorry, for I'm a poor hand to put my thoughts on paper, and there are a great many things I wanted to talk to you about. But I won't complain, for it's been a comfort to see you, and to see you don't lose your love of home and home folks."

"Why should I? I've been away from home just long enough to realize that home folks are better than any other kind."

"But are you happy and contented?"

Tom thought for a moment. "Yes," he said, "I am happy and contented, I believe. I have learned how to do my work, and I like it well enough. Uncle is good to me—very good, on the whole, considering that I try him in some particulars." And he told, with

good-natured laughter, the story of his own "officiousness."

"There is one thing I want to ask you," his mother ventured. "You were brought up in a very simple way, and you never have been among rich people or stylish people before. Do you ever feel any temptation to do as they do, or wish you were able to?"

Tom's eyes met hers frankly. "Yes," he said. "And I don't know why I should be tempted in that way, for I've learned that they're not nearly as happy as we are, and that they are continually wishing to change places with those they think above them. Aunt Lucinda mourns over her poverty every day, and Nora, who has the least snobbishness of any one in the family, parades the household economies as you or Hester never would in the world. And yet, mother, to be just as honest as I know how to be, I do fall into the way of looking at things with their eyes, and making too much out of things that are not really important. For instance, I be-

lieve I am beginning to be a little cowardly over the prospect of being a poor man all my life. I see inconveniences where I never saw them before. I think, sometimes, I am losing a little of my wholesome independence."

"I hope not. I'd be sorry to think my boy was ashamed of hard work and plain living."

"I don't think I am quite ashamed of hard work, but I think sometimes I'm inclined to want too much for my work. I believe I'd be quite satisfied to go on working hard all my life, if there were a substantial return for it."

"Your father and I have been very happy." It was a great deal for the reticent mother to say, and the words were spoken tremulously. "I don't believe money could have made us any happier. Sometimes I've wished that I had time for reading, and for seeing something of the world, but those things are not of so much account, it seems to me, if you can take comfort in your own home, and feel you've got everything to

live for there. It seems to me I'd be sorry and anxious if I thought you had set your heart on being happy in some other way."

"I haven't set my heart, mother. Indeed, I am more sure than I've ever been that the way we have always lived is the best and safest. I'm merely making a clean breast of everything, even to telling you that I've come, without knowing it, to like electric lights better than coal-oil lamps." He laughed and smoothed her hair as he said this, and she was reassured. He was the only person who caressed her. Her husband did not know how, and Hester partook of her mother's reserved nature.

"And how about your pledge, Tom? Is it hard to keep that, with so many things to take up your attention?"

"Not as hard, in some ways, as I thought it would be." He told of the young people of Dr. Cushing's church, and of the rainy night which had brought such a blessing. "The worst trouble isn't with other people, mother.

It's with myself. I find that the more I associate with my cousins and with the other young people I have met in the city, the less I like to be thought 'queer.' The more friendly they are with me, the more I am tempted to keep my religious notions to myself.''

''I wouldn't do that. If their friendship is worth having, they will respect you all the more for standing by what you believe.''

''I know it, mother, and I mean to try. Pray for me as hard as you can, and love me as much as you know how, and, somehow or other, I'll try to pull through.''

He kissed her in the old, hearty fashion, and something told her that she had not lost her boy.

CHAPTER XIII.

NORA'S AMBITION.

WHEN Tom returned to his uncle's, he saw from Nora's face that something was wrong.

"Gerald has been out every night," she confided to him. "Papa hasn't found it out yet, for he slips away very quietly, and comes in when all in the house are asleep. But I haven't once forgotten my promise to help, and I've watched for him every night. I've talked with him twice, but he only laughs at me."

Tom sighed. "I'm afraid I oughtn't to have gone away," he said. "You've been carrying double burden, and that isn't fair."

"Yes, it is. It's absurd to suppose you can't spend Christmas with your mother. If Gerald hasn't enough backbone to last him a week, how is he going to get along through life? I'll tell

you what I do wish, though: I wish we had never let Burt Hadley's crowd into the house."

"So do I."

"It wasn't all my fault, and yet I believe now I could have stopped it, if I had gone to papa. Ah, well, there's nothing we can do, so far as I can see, but to brace in, and make the best fight possible. Say, Tom!" There was a look of something like shyness on her honest, almost boyish, face.

"What is it, Nora?" he asked, gently. The thought came to him, as it had often come lately, of what a mother like his own would be to this warm-hearted girl.

"There's no one else to talk to about my dream, and I must talk to you. Just look at me!" She fell into one of her favorite poses, with both hands behind her, and her head thrown back. At that moment she looked quite capable of exploring a new continent or leading a forlorn hope. "Do I look like a society person?"

"Not exactly. Let's be devoutly thankful for it."

"I'm not sure that I am. I'm merely facing the facts as they are. A daughter who is only average-looking, and has no style, is an expensive luxury—especially"—a lovely warm color overswept her face as she hesitated—"especially when she has determined that she will never—that she will not be married off for a consideration, as calico and gingham are sold over the counter. Now, don't you believe that you and I can, between us, persuade papa that it will be cheaper and more sensible for him to save the money from evening gowns and carriage-hire, and send me through the medical college?"

"The medical college!" stammered Tom, in some dismay. The truth is, he was rather old-fashioned in his ideas of women. He liked them to be like his mother—gentle and home-loving, strong in intelligence and conviction, but using both modestly and within certain quite clearly-defined limits. The spectacle of

a girl like Nora, born with all the restless desire for activity and achievement that the most adventurous boy can know, was quite new to him. Poor Nora! This time she had found a rather unsympathetic counselor. "Isn't doctoring too hard for a woman?" he asked, dubiously.

"Hard? I hope so," was the scornful response. "I've been longing all my life to try something hard, and I've never found it yet—nothing, that is, except sitting still and looking pretty. That wears me out completely, but the other things"—she snapped her fingers to show how uttterly insignificant she considered the "other things." "They told me when I was little that playing ball was too hard for me to play, and fences too high for me to climb, but I could wear Gerald out in ten minutes at either employment. When I grew up they told me rowing was 'too hard,' and Greek and the higher mathematics 'too exacting' —which was a polite way of saying the same thing. But I'd rather

row than to eat, and I'm not ashamed of my grades, though I'm not saying this to boast of them. Ever since I can remember, I've wanted to be a doctor. I'm not a bit chicken-hearted, and I've a stock of nerves that I will warrant to stand any strain. I'm not quite so sorry for sick people, maybe, as a doctor ought to be, but I think that's principally because I know it will be such fun to cure them. The long and short of it is, Tom, that my heart's in the business, and it isn't anywhere else."

Her face lighted and flashed and glowed. Tom felt almost as if he had never known her before. He had often thought her lacking in earnestness and feeling. Certainly he could not think this now. He was quite carried away with her mood, and ready to promise his aid to any extent.

"Surely I'll help you in any way I can, if you wish it so much," he said. "I don't know what I could do, though."

"You can help me with papa. It's

quite too much to hope for mamma, but she will get used to it. I don't ask you to say anything to anybody, unless it should come in your way; but if it does, do, please, speak of my hobby a little bit tolerantly—as if it were something more than a girlish whim."

"I'll gladly do that," he said, but thought it scarcely likely that such an opportunity would come. But it did, and in the way he least expected.

When he came home in the evening, all the members of the household were out, except his aunt, who was nursing a headache, and did not appear. He had not seen her in the morning, but as he passed her door she called him, and he went in.

"I am glad to see you back," she said—not warmly, indeed, but with something like sincerity in her tone. "I think Gerald must be lonesome without you. I have hardly seen him since you went away."

All her thoughts centered on Gerald. Perhaps she was, in truth, more anxious

about him than she had ever been willing to admit.

"I have seen him for only a minute," Tom said. "He is out somewhere to-night, I believe."

"He is often out now. He has so many friends, and such unusual gifts."

"Indeed he has!" assented Tom, with such heartiness that his aunt looked at him with more interest than she had ever shown before.

"He plays beautifully, you know. I don't suppose you understand music, but those who do, think him a prodigy. Sit down, won't you, Thomas?"

Tom thought he could like his aunt better if she would not persist in calling him "Thomas," which was not his name, and which he most cordially hated. He sat down, gingerly enough, in the midst of pillows and air-cushions.

"It's very lonely here, when I am ill so much," his aunt resumed. "Nora is, I must say, an excellent nurse, but she is very thoughtless, and often leaves me for hours at a time."

"She has a talent for that sort of thing," Tom said, nervously, anxious to get his word in. "What a splendid physician she would make!"

"Oh, I dare say," Mrs. Floyd agreed, rather languidly.

"She would enjoy it, too."

"No doubt. Nora enjoys everything but what other young girls consider pleasures."

"There are different tastes about such things. Gerald, for instance, couldn't be happy if he were cut off from the things he enjoys most." Tom considered this an exceptionally happy thought, but it did not strike his aunt as he hoped it might.

"That is quite a different matter," she said, coldly. "Gerald is a genius, and geniuses must have freedom. I wish he were understood and rightly estimated. I am the only one who recognizes his gifts—poor boy!"

She was quite overcome. Tom could not bear to leave her in this condition, and he felt quite helpless. However, he

chanced upon the happy expedient of offering to read the daily paper to her, and this proposition seemed entirely satisfactory.

"The society column first, please," she said, and Tom cheerfully read on and on through accounts of pink teas and rosebud luncheons, until Mrs. Floyd fell into a comfortable doze. Then he stole away and left her.

It was past midnight when Gerald returned, and when Tom went to breakfast next morning he tapped on the door of his cousin's room, only to receive a sleepy "What?" from within.

"I'm coming in," Tom called. "It's seven o'clock."

"What do I care?" Gerald demanded. "Oh, it's you, is it?"

"Isn't it getting toward working hours?"

"I'm not working any more."

"Not working!" cried Tom, in consternation.

"No. That brute of a city editor called me up and complained that I was

irregular in my hours. I told him what I thought of him, and he told me what he thought of me. I've quit, or I've been discharged, and I'm not in the least particular as to which you call it."

CHAPTER XIV.

GERALD IN TROUBLE.

IF Gerald had been depressed and humiliated, Tom might, perhaps, have been sorry for him. But he was quite determined to regard himself as a hero, and to glory in his own independence.

"I can get a position with *The People* any day," he said. "They would be only too glad to take a crack reporter from *The Call*."

"But surely you wouldn't work on *The People*," said Tom, in horror.

"Why not?"

"I'd sooner say, 'Why?' There isn't a reason, so far as I can see, why any decent fellow should have anything to do with such a sheet."

"It seems you have had something to do with it, or you would not have such a decided opinion on the subject."

"I read one number, and I've been ashamed of myself ever since."

"I believe you were born in the objective case. A newspaper is a newspaper, and news is news. Your discriminations wear the life out of me. What the people are bound to have is news, and I don't see why they shouldn't get it as well from me as from some one else."

"I don't call coarse gossip 'news.' I call it coarse gossip, provided it isn't anything worse—and generally it is. To dish up real or imaginary foulness for the breakfast-tables of low-minded people isn't decent business, and I'd be ashamed to do it."

"So I'm not decent!" There leaped into Gerald's eyes a dangerous fire.

"Yes, you are. That's why I'm so sure you won't do it." Tom's eyes met his unflinchingly. For the first time Gerald wavered before that steady gaze.

"I suppose you want me turned out of doors," he said. When other avenues were closed, he always took to martyrdom.

"No, I don't. But, Gerald, what are your fine feelings good for, if they don't keep you out of such places?"

"You talk as if I were a candidate for the penitentiary. I tell you a fellow must do what he can. If the people want to read, why shouldn't I write what they will read?"

"That sort of argument will do for a saloon-keeper, but it isn't worthy of a fellow with your brain in his head. I don't need to do dirty work just to keep somebody else from doing it. It's my business to let it alone, and to use all the influence I have to make the other fellow do the same."

"No doubt about your using your 'influence' fast enough," growled Gerald.

"In other words," said Tom, good-naturedly, "there isn't the slightest doubt in the world about my 'officiousness.' I suppose that's so. But when I think of your working on a paper that refined people won't handle except with tongs, I confess it makes me hot all over. Don't do it, Gerald."

"I'm not going to do it," answered Gerald, carelessly. "I haven't any high-falutin moral objections, but the salary is contemptible, and the office is nothing but a hole. I wouldn't live an hour in such a place."

"What are you going to do?"

"Paint a picture. I've slaved like a dog for two months, and now I'm going to take time for a breath."

Tom sighed, but said nothing. He was beginning to realize that his compact with regard to Gerald was an extremely exacting one.

Since his return, Tom had noticed a change in his aunt's manner toward him. She always spoke to him politely when he came in, and even interested herself so far, on one occasion, as to give some languid advice with regard to the way of parting his hair. Once he overheard her in conversation with her husband:

"Tom is really not so bad as he might be, considering," was her vague characterization. "I think he has learned a

great deal from Gerald—the dear boy has been so kind to notice him."

Whereat Tom smiled, remembering his own "officiousness" in forcing his society upon his cousin.

He felt the danger of Gerald's position so keenly that it seemed to him he must have help. He had learned that Nora, willing as she was, had very little influence where her brother was concerned. Tom felt that there was only one person of whose tactfulness and right feeling he could be sure; so he gathered up all his slender stock of courage and went to Marjorie Deane.

It was not his first visit to the Deane home, for the committee of the Endeavor Society met here often, and he had come to feel quite comfortable in the stately old hall, on whose hearth a great log-fire burned, and in whose chimney-corner were the arm-chairs which had belonged to Marjorie's great-grandparents. He sat in one of these arm-chairs to-night, and the lovely girl who sat in the

other knotted her brow over the problem he presented.

"I don't feel sure that I can do a thing," she said. "If I am kind to Gerald, he presumes that I approve his conduct. If I am cool to him—and that I must be when he chooses his friends in the Burt Hadley set—he feels like a martyr. I have seen what you are trying to do for him, and I know what it means. But I am not at all sure that I can help you."

"Young ladies have so much influence," he pleaded, awkwardly. He was not often shy, but to-night the grace and ease of her manner made him just a little afraid of her. He almost wished she was as blunt as his cousin Nora. No, on second thought, he did not wish anything of the kind.

"Sometimes they have, and I have tried to have with Gerald, but—I think he is quite determined to misunderstand. He was my little playmate, you know, and I could not bear to give him up. I could not bear to believe that his gifts

would not come to the best. I told him I would be his friend, and so would many others who could help him more, but that he must give up, for his own sake, those who were doing him harm through their pretended friendship. I meant to be kind, but"—she smiled slightly—"I don't enjoy spectacular repentance. Gerald had a habit of coming with a picturesque confession and asking me to forgive him and help him to take up life again and try to endure it. I tried to throw him upon his own manhood and sense of honor. When everything else failed, I told him he must choose, that, while I would never cease being anxious about him and interested in him, he must give up that set of young men, or else give up coming here in the brotherly way of the past. He takes this hard, at times, and I think it will be quite impossible ever to convince him that I meant it kindly."

That she had indeed meant it kindly the tears in her earnest eyes showed. "If I can do anything," she resumed, in

a moment, "anything that will be truly helpful, I will be glad to do it. But one *must* try to be true, you know."

"Yes," said Tom, "and that's often very hard—just how to be true and charitable at the same time, you know—that's the hardest of all." He looked at her closely to make sure she caught his meaning, for words did not come to him easily to-night.

"I know," she answered, sympathetically.

"I'm sure you have a great deal more real influence over Gerald than you would have if you gave in to all his erratic notions. I only ask you to use it."

"And I will, if there is a way."

"Thank you—thank you very much, Miss Deane. I'm afraid I've stayed a long, long time."

"Indeed you have not. You will come again?" She walked with him to the door, and he could not help thinking how much more attractive she was at home than in a crowd.

"Thank you very much, Miss Deane. Yes, I shall be glad to come again."

He hastened back, and on the threshold of his uncle's house he met Gerald. His cousin wore a hard, set face.

"What's the matter?" asked Tom.

"Matter enough," answered Gerald, grimly. "Father and I have quarreled, and I'm going to leave home."

CHAPTER XV.

CONCERNING GERALD AND NORA.

TOM had always feared a rupture between Gerald and his father, and it now seemed that the worst had come. Gerald was so weak that there could not be a moment's safety for him away from his home. Tom felt as he might if he had already seen his cousin irretrievably lost. He went to his uncle, but it did no good.

"You saw how it was before," said Peter Floyd, irritably. "You have a great confidence in your ability to set the world right, but you'll find there is more of this world than a fence-corner on your father's farm. I can't have any more interference between me and my family, and what's more, I won't!"

Tom went away discouraged. He found nothing in the book of experience harder to learn than the simple fact that, in most natures, the good and bad are

mingled. He had been wont to suppose that people were either good or bad, and to classify them promptly according to this supposition. It was puzzling to find that the good and bad were to be found in every one, and especially in himself. Not only so, but in many cases it was exceedingly difficult to tell which predominated. Here was his uncle, for instance, for whom Tom felt the sincerest respect and affection. How could one be blind to the fact that this uncle had an irascible temper, and was peculiarly hot-headed and inconsiderate in dealing with his own son?

Ah, well, we need not judge. That is almost as great a comfort as the thought that we are not to be judged with man's superficial judgment.

Gerald went away, refusing to tell Tom where he was going. His refusal was not unkind. Indeed, he was peculiarly tender at the parting.

"I've liked you, Tommy boy," he said. "Good people usually bore me, and I won't say I have never been bored

by you, but you are the best of the lot. I'm going my own way, but I'm not going to forget you. When you can be proud of me, I will come back."

He must have given his address to his mother, but Nora did not know what it was, as Tom ascertained at once. The girl was in bitter sorrow.

"It's what I've always been afraid of," she said. "It needs a cooler nature than papa's or mine to manage Gerald. I wonder why things go so badly with some people, anyhow!"

Tom might have been at some other time officious enough to give an opinion, but he had no temptation in this direction to-day. This new anxiety was the heaviest he had ever known.

It was only a week later that Tom saw Gerald coming from the office of *The People*. He had guessed that his cousin would, in an emergency, seek work there, and he had, therefore, haunted the place for several days. At sight of him Gerald scowled, and then

smiled. Evidently, he meant to make the best of the encounter.

"No use to ask you to go with me to the Halcyon, I suppose?" he queried, gayly. "I've got an assignment there."

The Halcyon was a place of so-called "entertainment" of a grade between the cheap theater and the concert saloon.

"Not in the least. Any use in asking you to go with me to call on Miss Deane?"

Gerald's face changed instantly. It was as if there had come a vision of the world from which he had fallen.

As a matter of fact, Tom was not on his way to Marjorie's home. He had simply obtained her permission to come at any time when he could persuade Gerald to come with him.

For a moment his cousin seemed to waver. "Miss Deane doesn't want to see me," he objected.

"Yes, she does. She said we would both be welcome."

"I'm not dressed for a call." He laughed as he glanced himself over.

Already the influence of his new associations seemed to have asserted itself, for his dress was untidy and his face unshaven.

"I'll wait for you."

"No use; I won't go. No, Tommy boy, I said I'd go my way, and I will. Since you won't bear me company, good-bye."

He hurried away, as if afraid of Tom's persuasions. It was very discouraging, and Tom walked on with a heavy heart. He went at once to his aunt, told her that he had seen Gerald, and that he was well. She was not a wise mother, and, no doubt, she was more to blame for Gerald's misdeeds than was anyone else, except himself. But Tom had read the heart-sickness in her eyes, and was sorry for her.

"Did he send any message to me?" she asked, eagerly.

"There wasn't time. He was hurrying on before I realized it."

"He is so very busy. Oh, well, I'll hear from him."

"So I supposed."

"I can talk to you, Thomas, and I cannot talk to the others. You admire the dear boy, and have some appreciation of his gifts. The others wish to deal with him as they would with a common nature, which is clearly impossible. An unusual talent should be cultivated, you know."

"That is the way I feel about Nora," said Tom. This was awkward enough, but Tom had judged that his aunt's heart was unusually tender to-day, as indeed it was.

"Nora is very different," she said again, but her tone was softer than when she had mentioned the matter before. "Still, I do think she has rather marked ability. I have sometimes thought that she would shine more in a professional life than in society. Socially—I don't mind saying, for I know you will never breathe it to her—Nora has been, and will, I fear, continue to be, a disappointment."

As Tom had heard his aunt say the

same thing to Nora herself at least a hundred times, he was not overborne by this secret.

"I am sure she would be a great success as a physician," he said, determined to follow up his advantage.

"Oh, I have no doubt. And there are very praiseworthy women in that profession. But one's own daughter—that is quite different, you see."

Tom did not see, inasmuch as the praiseworthy women were, no doubt, own daughters also. But he did not mention his dullness of vision.

"It would certainly make Nora very happy," he said, which was an unfortunate remark.

"It is not a question of happiness, but of duty," she said, rather severely. "Nora owes a duty to her family and to society. It is not as if she were obliged to choose a means of livelihood. Some women must do this, of course, and it is right for them to make the best of things. But Nora has been brought up in a certain circle, and certain things

are expected of her. In these things she is, as I have said, disappointing. I must be frank enough to admit that she is not just what her family and her social circle have a right to expect. This notion of hers is, I fear, a part of it all. She wishes to escape the duties which naturally belong to her, and so she rushes off into something that is new and odd. Still, I agree with you that Nora has ability. And if her idea should prove to be lasting, I shall—I cannot say encourage it—no, I cannot feel that it would be right to encourage it, but—I will consider it."

Tom told this to Nora, and was greatly surprised at the way she took it. He had expected her to be in raptures. Instead of this, she stood quite still, and did not answer him for a moment.

"It is too good," she said, quietly, "a great deal too good and beautiful for me."

The tears forced their way, and in a moment flooded her cheeks. It is only a rarely beautiful woman to whom tears

are becoming, and Nora was merely bright and vivacious-looking—not beautiful. Yet she had never seemed to Tom so lovely and womanlike as she did at this moment.

"I am not good enough," she said. "But I will try to be better; oh, I will try so hard to be better!"

CHAPTER XVI.

TOM PRESIDENT OF THE Y. P. S. C. E.

"WHERE are you going?" Nora asked of Tom, one evening, as he came down stairs prepared to go out.

"You are just as curious as other women, aren't you? What a genius you will be at finding out people's symptoms! Well, I'm not in the least unwilling to have you know that I'm going to a Christian Endeavor business meeting at the church."

"So I guessed. It's a good thing you have your new suit on. You'll need to look your best."

"Why?"

"Oh, never you mind why. You'll find out," and with this mysterious speech Nora whisked out of the room.

Tom could not help wondering what she meant, but Nora was often enigmatical, and it was quite impossible to keep

up with her when she was in one of these moods.

Matters had changed somewhat in the Christian Endeavor Society of Dr. Cushing's church since Tom's arrival in the city six months before. The prayer-meeting hour was no longer filled with an elocutionary and musical entertainment. There were many who took part voluntarily every week, and all of those who attended regularly gave evidence of a far deeper interest than they had shown before.

Of course this change had not come about without the display of some opposition. There were those who thought a simple prayer-meeting service "so stupid and old-fashioned, you know," and who predicted that no one would come if the "attractions" were given up. But all continued to come except the objectors themselves, and even they were obliged to look in once in a while to see how the new plan worked.

Doctor Jonathan Edwards Cushing was among those who failed to fall in

with the new order. "Such methods may work very well in the rural districts," he admitted, "but they are, in the very nature of things, unsuited to the cultured youth of a large city. The young man who seems to be leading this movement is from the country, and, though singularly open-hearted and well-intentioned, he is manifestly unfitted to be the guide of those whose advantages have been so far superior to his own."

The "young man" referred to in this carefully elaborated sentence was, of course, Tom Floyd, who was quite innocent of the fact that he was leading a movement of any sort. Tom had his ignorance to thank for a great many things in those days.

Marjorie Deane heard this speech of Dr. Cushing's, and something in the thoughtful look which blended with her smile made the great man ill at ease.

"There are different kinds of advantages, are there not?" she asked, in the tone of one who seriously seeks informa-

tion. But the Doctor did not condescend to answer her.

The attendance at the meeting tonight was unusually good, for the committee had judiciously ordained that a social and refreshments should follow the business hour.

It was not until the report of the nominating committee was read that Tom guessed the meaning of Nora's mysterious manner. Then all became clear to him, for the committee heartily recommended the election of Mr. Tom Floyd to the presidency of the society.

Who could ever have thought of such a thing? It was preposterous—clearly so. Why, here were half a dozen young men, and as many more young women, who were college graduates, and who knew how to do everything. And he,—why, he had no gifts at all, except what he was sometimes tempted to call a talent for minding other people's business.

He tried to say something of all this to the society now, but he was not especially fortunate in the attempt. He did,

indeed, manage to dwell at some length on his lack of speaking ability, but when he had taken his seat, the chairman of the committee—who was that same deacon who had led the very first meeting that Tom attended — remarked, smilingly, "After the excellent speech Mr. Floyd has made concerning his inability to make a speech, I am sure we shall be justified in not believing a word he says on the subject."

This so unnerved him that he was afraid to make a sound, and he was voted in without an opposing voice.

He had never been so embarrassed in his life as he was when the young people crowded about him to shake hands and offer their congratulations. "I might as well be the President of the United States and all the cabinet," he said, helplessly, to Marjorie Deane. Usually, he was as little burdened with self-consciousness as with self-conceit; but to-night he felt his deficiencies and his limitations as he had never felt them before.

"When will your public installation occur?" asked Nora, when he had told her all about it.

Tom laughed. "I think I've had quite enough of that already," he said. "I mean, now all is done and can't be undone, to slip into the work as quietly as I can."

"But you will be president from now on?"

"Yes, I suppose so. How did you know I was to be president at all?"

"Marjorie told me. She got it from Bessie, who was a member of the committee. I suppose she thought the family would feel honored, so she let me into the secret. But say, Tom, I'm going to Endeavor next Sunday night, to see how you do it."

"Are you, really?" He meant the words to be cordial, but perhaps they did not sound so. In truth, it seemed that if anything would make his duties harder, it would be to have the keen-eyed and sharp-tongued Nora sitting by as critic. But how could he say so, how

could he even think anything so ungracious, when he had so often begged her to go to the meetings with him, and begged in vain? So in a moment he added, warmly, "I wish you would go."

"Wish I would go! What do you say that for? I *am* going. There are some things about me that aren't nice, but saying what I don't mean isn't one of them." Which was certainly true. If Nora erred in speech, it was not through the lack of sincerity so much as through the injudicious use of it.

She did go to the meeting, and, to Tom's surprise, she did not criticise. "It does seem a little like the real thing," she said, on the way home.

"Why, did you think we were all hypocrites?" Tom asked in reply to her remark.

"Oh, not just hypocrites. Some, I know, take to religion naturally, and go that way as a matter of course. But there are a great many who seem to be as sincere in that as they are in other things—and not a bit more so. It's like

a department store, you know—so much religion, so much business, so much society. You can get your bill and your exchange check anywhere, and have your goods transferred; but you'd die of surprise if you should find shoes with the dress-goods, or china with the canned goods."

"Now, Nora," expostulated Tom, "you criticise the church-members you meet in society because they don't talk to you about religion, and yet, whenever I've tried to say a word on the subject, you have been so impatient that I couldn't have gone on if I tried ever so hard."

"Maybe I have. I'm not complaining of you and Marjorie and the others of your kind. I'm only talking about those who run their lives on the department-store plan. Didn't I tell you that the meeting to-night sounded like the real thing?"

Nora seemed to have changed in many ways during these last few weeks. She was more seriously attentive to her

studies than she had ever been before.

"I'm going to surprise you all with one set of grades before I graduate," she said. "I can do some things if I try. I've discovered lately that I've never half tried."

She was, on the whole, more respectful to her mother, though her manner at this point was by no means above criticism.

"When you've been 'that Nora Floyd' for nearly eighteen years," she confided to Tom, "you can't metamorphose yourself and be 'Miss Floyd, M. D.,' all at once. But you can keep on experimenting upon yourself, and experiments are interesting, too, when you really come to think about it."

CHAPTER XVII.

GERALD AT HOOLIGAN'S HALL.

TOM did not give up the effort to find Gerald, though he felt he could do but little, at the best. Gerald now had a night assignment, and was busy at the only hours when Tom had leisure. He stubbornly refused to tell where he was boarding, evidently through the determination that Tom should not visit him. He met his cousin pleasantly enough, when they chanced upon each other in the street, but when Tom proposed that they spend an hour together Gerald immediately pleaded an engagement or pressing duties.

One day, as Tom was coming from his work, he yielded, as he had often done before, to his impulse to turn out of his way and pass the office of *The People*. He still felt that in some sense he was his cousin's keeper, and that he

was responsible for the use of his slight influence over Gerald.

He did not need to go to the office. As he passed a low saloon and "music" hall, he saw Gerald lounging carelessly against the counter, with a glass of beer in his hand. Burt Hadley was with him, and the two were laughing over some joke which had just passed between them. Tom went home, and straight to his aunt's sitting-room.

"Aunt Lucinda," he said, "I wish you would tell me where Gerald lives. He is in danger, and it may be I can help him."

"In danger! My precious boy! O tell me what, Tom! I shall die if you don't tell me. Is some one plotting against him? Why don't you tell me?"

"Please be calm, aunt. Yes, there are those who plot against Gerald, but not in the way you seem to think. What I mean is that he is in bad company, and strongly tempted to do wrong, and that we must do all we can to save him."

"You are against him, too, and you have pretended to be his friend! That is the way—everyone is against him. Nobody understands him." And she broke into tears and buried her face among the pillows.

The contrast between Mrs. Floyd in her customary dignity and Mrs. Floyd in tears was a peculiarly striking one. I do not like to reveal his uncharitableness, but I am bound to confess that in this trying moment Tom vowed within him never to marry an hysterical woman.

"He needs us all," he persisted. "We must do our best for him. Burt Hadley is with him—"

"I'm sure the Hadleys are among the finest people in the city," Mrs. Floyd chokingly asserted. "Burt has been a little wild, perhaps—"

"Can you not let me know where Gerald lives, Aunt Lucinda? I am sure he is in danger, and I should like to be able to go to him at any moment."

"I promised not to tell his father.

His father is very determined, and he does not understand the dear boy at all. But perhaps it will do no harm for you to know. Here is the address."

Tom took the card she gave him. The address indicated that Gerald was staying at a hotel near the office where he worked. Tom knew the place well. It was by no means a cheap one, but, perhaps, it was too much to expect that Gerald, with his luxurious tastes, should adapt his expenses to his income.

Tom knew it would be useless to try to reach Gerald as long as he was in Burt Hadley's company. Nora was out at a meeting of her class, and there was no one to whom he could go for counsel. So he waited.

The next morning he went to the hotel, and found his cousin in his room asleep. He wakened him, but could get no satisfaction. It was quite evident that Gerald had been drinking heavily the night before, and that he was still under the influence of liquor. Tom was heartsick at the sight. It seemed to

him that he would give life itself to see Gerald a man among men.

The day was a busy one, and he went home later than usual. The evening was already settling down as he started out again, but he was restless, and felt that he must find Gerald before he slept.

Gerald had left the hotel, but he followed him to the newspaper office. It was not the first time he had been here, and the night editor recognized him at once.

"Gone to his assignment,"—that dignitary condescended to say to Gerald—"Meeting of the Liberal Club in Hooligan's Hall. Back again at eleven—possibly not till midnight."

Tom hurried out, glad to escape from the stuffy room, with its odor of tobacco and whisky. He remembered what Gerald had once said about this "hole." How could his fastidious cousin endure the place? He was not fastidious himself, but he felt sure that this would be more than he could bear.

He had not, at first, any definite in-

tention of going to Hooligan's Hall. The "Liberal Club" was notorious in the city—a socialistic organization closely watched by the police, and much courted by the politicians. Every now and then there was an outbreak among its members, and a meeting closed with three or four arrests. Still, it did not occur to Tom that the place was an especially unsafe one for Gerald in his present condition, until he passed the building. Then, hearing excited voices, he turned back, climbed the rickety stairs and entered the hall.

To this day he grows sick and faint with the memory of that scene. The room was nearly filled with excited men, representing a dozen nationalities. Some were drinking, some were smoking, many were talking and gesticulating wildly. There was a small platform at one end of the room, and on this platform stood Gerald, making a speech.

Even though he saw all this, Tom did not for a moment take in the situa-

tion. Then, as he noted the untidy dress and the disordered hair, and caught half a dozen disjointed sentences, he realized the horror of it all. Gerald was drunk.

"Down wi' the kid," someone shouted: "He's dhrunk, the fool! Doesn't he know betther than insult dacint people wi' his fool spachemakin'?"

"Take off his toggins," cried another. "What for does he come around us poor workin'-men wi' his di'mon's an' gold watch-chain? Down wi' him!"

"Shut up, youngster," said a stalwart fellow who seemed to be the president of the club. He addressed his remarks directly to Gerald, and seemed to be under the impression that he was soothing the excited orator. "You're off, don't you know. Shut up, now, an' get out of this as quick and quiet as you can, if you don't want the boys to get after you."

"Have I no liberty?" declared Gerald, with extended arms. "Am I not—free man and brother? Am I not—

'Merican citizen? Am I not — under glorious—Stars and Stripes? Hail Columbia! Hail Columbia, I say!"

"All right," agreed the president. "You get right out. You're drunk, you know. You better not say another word."

"Will, too," Gerald retorted. "Free country, I say. Free man and brother. Say what I please. Came here to say what I please, I tell you."

"Haul him down!" "Put him out!" came from all sides. But Tom had reached the platform.

"Come with me, Gerald," he said, firmly.

"Won't. Who says come along? Tommy boy, Tommy boy, you're a fool. All fools. World's full of 'em."

The president of the club had come to Tom's assistance, and between them they dragged him from the room. The delighted club-members followed, and enlivened their progress with a variety of comments. But Tom was prepared for them. At his first recognition of

the situation he had dispatched a man for a carriage.

They had but a moment to wait. The limp figure was pushed inside, and was taken to the hotel.

He seemed to have passed the excited stage, and sank back upon the cushions without a word. At the hotel he made no resistance, but allowed Tom to take him to his room and put him into bed.

As soon as Gerald was thus disposed of, Tom went to the telephone, and asked his uncle to come to the hotel at once.

CHAPTER XVIII.

PETER FLOYD HUMBLED.

TOM had sent for his uncle in desperation rather than in hope. He was literally at the end of his resources. He had tried all the expedients he could think of, and could see no good results. He felt that his uncle should know the worst and share the responsibility.

He was quite prepared for anything. His uncle would probably condemn him, and advise him to let other people's business alone. But Tom felt that he could not be a party to a concealment from which nothing good could come.

His uncle came almost immediately. Tom had asked that he be sent at once to Gerald's room. His cousin was quite unconscious now, and Tom could not risk a scene in the corridor. There was no guessing what Peter Floyd would

say when his son's condition became fully known to him.

To-night, however, he did not lose his temper. He seemed to comprehend the situation at the first glance, and he sank down into a chair as if crushed. For the first time in his life Tom felt the inconvenience of being a man. If he were a woman, he thought, he would have known some tender trick of comfort, reserved for such an hour as this. There would be some delicate way by which he could tell his sympathy, other than to say bluntly, "I am sorry for you."

But he was not a woman. Besides, he was sufficiently just to know that his uncle, in a measure, deserved his sorrow, and might possibly profit by it.

But he was not prepared to see that shrewd old face hide itself, as it did presently, behind two half-clenched hands, or to hear the piteous cry that came from his uncle's lips.

"God have mercy on me!" he groaned. "God have mercy on me!"

He had not himself shown mercy many times in all the years of his long and busy life, yet mercy was his only hope. If our God were a God of justice only, there would be few indeed to claim his love and care.

"I've been a fool, Tom," his uncle said, presently, raising his head. "I've tried to put off my burden, but it comes back—it comes back."

"It seemed best to send for you," Tom said, taking refuge on the practical side of the situation. "I didn't know what else to do."

Peter Floyd nodded, as if comprehending. "Where was he?" he asked.

Tom told the story as clearly as he could, omitting some humiliating particulars which did not seem essential to his uncle's understanding of the case. There was silence for a moment. Then the older man broke out suddenly:

"Tom, I'd give every dollar I've got in the world if Gerald were like you."

"He couldn't be made like me, Uncle Peter, and in some ways it would be a

great pity if he could. He has very marked gifts, you know, and I have none at all."

"Gifts! Pooh! I'm tired of hearing about his gifts. I wish he had a little sense and a little conscience. That's what I wish. But he is as he is, and I suppose some of the blame is mine."

There was another long silence. Then there came a confession which gave Tom the shock of a great surprise.

"I haven't lived as I ought, in some respects, Tom. I haven't been altogether a good father. I've thought too much of getting along in the world and making a success of my business and all that. I'm not ashamed of the way I've succeeded. I'm not ashamed to have any man know how my money came, for there isn't a dishonorable dollar in the whole pile. But there are some things I have left out, and it would have been better for Gerald if I had put them in. I've blamed his mother for his faults, but some of the blame is mine, too. I haven't been very patient with

him. I haven't always set the right things up before him. I wanted him to go my way, and I couldn't be satisfied that he wouldn't. I wanted a chance when I was a boy, and it seemed to me that a boy who had that sort of chance might make something out of it. But I'm over all that now. I'm over asking ever to be proud of him, or anything of that sort. Tom, I believe I'd be willing to see that boy a respectable hod-carrier, or—or piano-player."

These last words were spoken with such evident distaste that Tom smiled in spite of himself. His uncle had been humbled indeed.

"Stay with him," his uncle went on, "Stay with him all night, and as much longer as you need to. I'll give you a day's vacation and fix matters all right with Kieffer. Don't let him be seen if you can help it. And when he is himself, bring him home."

Tom's heart leaped for joy at these last words. He had little hope now of saving Gerald, but surely home was the

safest place for one so weak and so easily misled.

His uncle went away abruptly, and Tom sat for a long time before the window, looking down into the brightly-lighted street, with its crowd of careless loungers—the evening procession of a gay city.

How life had changed for him in these last few months! Only a little while ago he had felt like a stranger and an alien in this great city. Now, the burden of other lives was almost greater than he could bear, and he realized that he was a part of all he felt and saw. And the realization made him both glad and anxious.

He had no idea of sleeping. He could not lie down beside Gerald,—Gerald who slept the disgraceful sleep of the drunkard! And of course he could not leave him. He must wait and watch until the morning.

But he was a sturdy young fellow, wearied with a hard day's work. He thought, then he mused, then he dozed.

It was broad daylight when he awoke. Gerald was sitting up in bed, haggard and bewildered.

"Tommy boy!" he said, faintly. "You, Tommy boy!"

"Yes, I'm here, Gerald."

"Drunk!" cried Gerald, with sudden recollection. "Crazy drunk, wasn't I?"

"Yes."

"Made a fool of myself at Hooligan's?"

"Yes."

Tom was not at all inclined to soften matters down.

"Was it you who got me out?"

"Yes."

"Don't sit there and say 'yes' to everything. It's enough to drive a fellow mad. Say I'm clean gone this time, and you know it. Say I might better be dead and done with it. I told you that a long time ago. I hope you know it now."

"I don't know anything of the kind," said Tom, pugnaciously. Somehow, Gerald never irritated him quite so much

at any other time as when he took this willfully despairing tone. "You ought to be glad to be alive, and to make other people glad, too. It's a shame and disgrace that you don't."

"I don't think you're very glad," growled Gerald.

"We're going home together after a little," Tom told him, thinking it time to change the subject. "Your father has been here, and he wants you to go home."

"Go home! Does he think I'll sneak home, after being sent away? I haven't much independence left, but I hope I have too much for that. No, sir! Not one step of the way home will I go. I've managed to get along so far without any help from father, and if I need to starve I can do that. But no going home for me."

He was at the stubborn stage, but behind the stubbornness of his present condition there was the resentment of a proud nature, long indulged in all the caprices of its pride. Tom's only hope

was to take him now, while he was humbled, but just now he would not be taken.

Tom went downstairs and ordered breakfast for two. Then he went to the telephone and called up Nora.

"Bring Dolph and the carriage, and come at once," he said. "Tell your father that you are coming, but don't tell anybody else. I will wait here for you."

CHAPTER XIX.

MR. FLOYD QUARRELS WITH KIEFFER.

THE promptness with which Nora took command of the situation immediately upon her arrival at the hotel left Tom opportunity for nothing but to indulge his surprise at her energy.

"I shall pretend to myself that he is ill," she whispered to Tom, as he met her in the hall and told her why he had sent for her. "That will make it easy for me to be good to him, and, besides, sick people are the only ones I know how to get on with. He really *is* a little ill, isn't he?"

"Indeed he is. He looked quite miserable enough to be under a doctor's care, even before this."

"I've come to bring you home," she announced, sweeping down upon her brother with irresistible determination. "The idea of your staying in this horri-

ble old hotel, with enough disease-germs in the wall-paper to give you a dozen different kinds of fever!"

"I'm not going home," muttered Gerald. "Tom needn't play that kind of trick on me. Or was it father who told you to come?"

"It was both of them. But I should have found out you were ill, and have come any way, before long. And you must go, you know. Dolph is here with the carriage."

"You are ashamed of me," said Gerald. "You know you are."

"Yes, I suppose I am," agreed the painfully truthful girl. "But I want you, just the same. I'm not much account among well people, but I truly do have a talent for sick ones. Come, now, let Tom and Dolph help you to bundle into the carriage as soon as ever you can."

His will, always weak, was surprised and overmastered by her determined tone. He had never appreciated Nora, but to-day her resolution and decision

wrung from him a kind of tardy admiration.

He did not say that he would go home, but he allowed Tom and Nora to bundle him up — a proceeding upon which his sister insisted, perhaps for the sake of keeping his invalidism uppermost in her own mind.

"Have you forgotten that it is the first of June?" he asked, as he pulled up his coat collar.

"The air is raw this morning," she said. Her face was close to his, and he was surprised to see a tear on her lashes. He was breaking her heart, in spite of her spirit and independence.

There was no special scene over Gerald's home-coming. His mother was out shopping, and his father had wisely betaken himself to the office. Peter Floyd knew well enough that he was not likely to carry himself admirably under such circumstances, and that a quarrel just now between himself and Gerald would be fatal.

Gerald threw himself down upon the

luxurious couch in his own room with the air of one whose power of resistance is at an end. He was not at all repentant, but he was very much more comfortable here than elsewhere.

It was nearly night when Tom appeared at his uncle's office. Fortunately, he found the head of the house alone.

"Did you take him home?" was the anxious query with which he was greeted. No need to ask whether Peter Floyd still loved and yearned over his wayward son. The quaver of eagerness in his voice told the story.

"Yes. He is very weak—quite shattered, it seems to me, but otherwise he is himself."

"I hope he is ashamed of himself."

Tom sighed. He would have been glad to indulge such a hope on his own part, but he could not. But, perhaps, in his way, Gerald *was* ashamed. There are different kinds of shame; for instance, the shame of repentance and the shame of humiliation.

"I trust," said Tom, hesitating, yet

determined to speak out, "I trust he will not go back to the newspaper office."

"What office is that?"

"He has been reporting for *The People*. I supposed you knew."

"Knew! I should think not! Did you suppose I would allow a son of mine to be connected with that scurrilous sheet? I would not touch it with the toe of my shoe. I wouldn't condescend to light a fire with it. Why didn't you tell me?"

Tom was perplexed and weary, and could only repeat that he supposed his uncle knew.

"Knew! How should I know? I know nothing except what you tell me. Gerald has not spoken to me for months, and his mother"—

He stopped short. Tom felt that he had lost a great part of the ground gained the night before, but a bold course seemed the only safe one to pursue, so he gathered courage to say:

"You agree with me, then, that he should leave the paper?"

"Leave the paper? Of course he must leave it. I shall turn him out of doors if he doesn't leave it. You may tell him I said so—that is, if you think best," he added, hastily. Of this addition Tom took note promptly. "I should never have brought him home if I had known this," he added.

In this last assertion he was quite mistaken, being one of the many men who mistake their moods for their convictions.

"I tell you, Tom," he went on, presently, "I don't know what is to become of him. I don't, indeed. It's a bitter pill, and I suppose there's nothing in the world to do but to swallow it."

Tom saw that nothing could be gained by further conversation, and he went away. It was nearly time to quit work, but he went and reported himself to Kieffer, who was out of sorts and not inclined to excuse his absence.

"I thought my uncle explained," Tom said.

"So he did. But when you want

leave you ought to speak to me. This is my job, here in this yard, and your uncle has said, over and over, that you were to be treated like any other employee."

Peter Floyd came up in time to hear these last words. "Do you mean to intimate," he thundered, "that I can't give any man about this establishment leave whenever I'm disposed? Do you mean to intimate that this isn't *my* establishment, and that I haven't a right to run it to please myself?"

"Certainly I didn't mean that," said Kieffer, in a voice which was meant to be apologetic, but which had a slight undertone of sulkiness. "But you have said that Mr. Tom wasn't to take liberties."

"*Take* liberties! That is another matter altogether. The question is whether or not I have a right to *give* liberties in my own establishment. I wish you to understand, Mr. Kieffer, that I don't take dictation from my employees."

"Excuse me, uncle," said Tom.

"Perhaps I should explain that I didn't know it would be necessary for me to be absent, and so had no chance to tell Mr. Kieffer beforehand."

"Explain!" Peter Floyd repeated the word as if he were firing it back to his nephew from the mouth of a cannon. "I desire no explanation made of *my* conduct."

Kieffer was of the slow, sullen sort, and his anger was steadily rising. "If I don't suit you," he added, "maybe you'd better get a man that does."

"Maybe I had," agreed Mr. Floyd. He was plainly startled by the suggestion, but he was not the man to back down from any position.

"Very well, Mr. Floyd. This isn't the first time I've been found fault with, but it will be the last time here. There is plenty of work ready for me in other places, and you may consider my place vacant." And Kieffer walked away without another word.

Mr. Floyd looked after him in ill-concealed annoyance. "I didn't suppose

he'd take me so seriously," he said. "He's a rather surly fellow, but he knows his business, and I don't know how I shall get along without him. But I've never yet eaten humble pie before an employee, and I never will. See here, Tom"—a thought seemed to strike him—"you're a great fellow to meddle with what don't belong to you, and I suppose you must have found out a great deal about the business by this time. Can you run things here until I get a new superintendent?"

"Can I?" said Tom, in such surprise that a more sensible question was quite impossible to him.

"That's what I asked *you*," returned his uncle, snappily. "Kieffer was always complaining that you bothered yourself with other people's work in addition to your own. Very well; we'll have a chance now to find out how much good it has done you. It won't be for long, and I'll help you out. If you get into a corner, don't ask questions of the men. Come to me. You'd better be

ready to take charge to-morrow morning, for I think Kieffer is too mad to come back and finish out his week. I'd have hopes of his repenting, only that sort of a fellow rages worse the longer he thinks of a thing. So you'd better be ready."

Tom went away with many strong feelings warring within him. He felt that Kieffer had been unkindly treated, and he was, in a sense, the cause of this. His uncle was unjust, and he did not like to profit by his injustice.

On the other hand, Tom, like every stirring, ambitious boy, had always dreamed of his "chance." His chance had come, and he wondered what he would do with it.

CHAPTER XX.

TOM IN KIEFFER'S PLACE.

TOM had not been in his new position long before he found that it was very much more difficult than he had supposed. The men sympathized entirely with Kieffer, and laid the blame of his departure upon Tom. To them, it was quite plain that Mr. Floyd had picked a quarrel with his superintendent merely for the sake of giving the place to his nephew. The head of the house had not taken the trouble to explain that Tom was in authority only temporarily. He had simply told them that they were to report to his new officer, the youngest man in the yard and one who had come into the place later than all but two or three. What explanation could there be, save that this was planned from the beginning, and that Kieffer had been pushed out of the way to make room for

one whom their employer naturally felt inclined to favor?

This feeling on the part of the men was natural enough, and Tom could have borne with it well enough, perhaps, if he had understood it. But he heard only now and then a suspicious whisper, and knew that the men were antagonistic to him without knowing the reason why. He was therefore in the uncomfortable position of a doctor who seeks to cure a disease without having an idea of its cause.

"The men are dissatisfied," he told Nora, who was his special confidante nowadays. "I can't find out where the trouble is, but I suppose they think I'm an interloper."

"Of course they do," agreed Nora, heartily. "They think that you're officious, and that you're running things because you're papa's nephew. But it isn't worth while to mind them. Nothing is worth minding if you are doing what you know is right, and are keeping faith with your own conscience."

Her spirited face glowed as she spoke. What a noble-looking creature Nora was growing into! It was only nine months since he had come here, and had shuddered at her bitterness and her dissatisfaction with the world.

How wonderfully had she fallen into harmony with life and its duties in these short months!

"I wish you would keep me reminded of that," Tom said. "I try to remember, but somehow my desire to straighten out the world does get the better of my patience."

"Yes," said Nora, musingly, "that's your worst fault—and your finest virtue. I suppose people's faults and virtues are likely to get mixed up, when they are as close together as yours are. You are willing to take endless trouble for people, and to do any number of things for them, but you haven't much idea that anything will be done unless you do it. You are even a little in doubt as to whether the stars would keep to their proper courses, if you shouldn't lie

awake at night to attend to them. And yet, Tom, I have a notion that the world would go very badly if there were not a few like you."

These last words, and the smile that accompanied them, took all the sting out of those that had gone before, and Tom tried to put away the worry and to live in the hope of a clearer understanding of the situation.

Nora had taken full possession of Gerald. The last days of her college life were busy ones, yet she gave him a surprising share of her time. He avoided his father as far as possible, and especially disliked to take his meals with the family. So Nora carried them up to him, on the pretext that he was still an invalid. She could not help showing her consciousness of his wrongdoing, but on the whole she was very kind.

"Tom," she said, wistfully, one Saturday evening when he had come in late and very tired, "I want to talk to you just a minute."

He stopped, leaning upon the stair-

case, but, seeing the earnestness in her face, he followed her into the library.

"Commencement day will come next week, you know," she said. The shy sweetness in her manner was new and charming.

"Indeed I haven't forgotten that," Tom said, wondering that she should choose this way to tell him what he had known for months. "That will be a great day for all of us."

"I ought to have made a better showing at school. I'm ashamed of myself, but you know I never tried until the last few months. Since then I have been second, though that isn't much to say."

"You are going to be first all the way through the Medical College."

"Perhaps not," answered Nora, very seriously, "I'm going to try, though. You see, I'm just finding out how much good there is in trying."

"There's no doubt that most of the good we get comes in that way," answered Tom, wondering whither all this self-accusatory talk was to lead.

"I suppose it's a rather fanciful notion," she began again, "but I've been thinking that I'd like to have another kind of Commencement Day before Thursday. If I can—indeed, if I live—I want to join the church to-morrow."

"Nora!" Tom's hands joined hers in such another boyish clasp as that with which they had once entered into compact, long ago. "It's too good—just too good to be believed! I can't take it in. O Nora, I am so glad!"

Nora was deeply touched "I didn't know but you'd remember all the hateful things I said about the church, when you first came," she said. "I *did* like to be hateful then, I think. But it is different now. Life is too complicated for me to try to make it out. First it was you who showed me how to get help, and then it was you and Marjorie, and now it is all the people I know who are trying to live for something outside of self. I can see now that is the only way." There was a wistful sweetness in her voice.

"I told mother this morning," she continued, with an odd little smile. "She is herself a member of Trinity Church, you know, but she said there was no denying that some of the finest people in the city attended Dr. Cushing's. As for my joining any church, she didn't know as it made any difference, as I had practically given up society, anyhow. I wish she could be a little bit glad, but maybe she doesn't know how. I haven't been a very dutiful daughter, Tom, though I have really been trying, lately, to do better."

"I know you have," agreed Tom.

"Mamma and I haven't understood each other. I'm not elegant, and correct socially, and I haven't pleased her in little things, as well as I might. I can see clearly enough now that those things mamma likes and has tried to teach me to like are not to be despised. They're real things, although they're not the greatest things. It isn't nice to be rude, and careless of people's feelings, as I have often seemed to be. I've

deserved mamma's disapproval, and I'm sure I've had it. It will take a great deal of patience to get back the ground I've lost, and patience always comes hard with me. But if you see me forgetting to try, I want you to pay me back in some of my own coin of free speech, and remind me of my duty."

"I'll be quite sure to do that. For you know I meddle with other people's business—"

"This won't be other people's business. I intend to make it your own, from this time on. But, Tom, I've just told papa what I mean to do to-morrow. And what do you think he said? Papa and I have been friends always, you know. He scolds me a great deal, but I always understand. I suppose it is because we are so much alike. I get my temper and my energy from him, and he knows how to make allowances for both. Well, when I told papa I meant to join the church, he kissed me, and tousled my hair all over, and couldn't think of any words for a minute. Then he said,

'That's right, daughter, that's exactly right. It's heathenish for a woman not to have a faith and live up to it. Men have their own way of living, but I want my daughter to be religious.' "

"I think he is mistaken about the difference between men and women."

"Of course he is. I have been very unhappy about papa ever since I began to go to Endeavor, and to think about these things for myself. He goes off to the office every Sunday, and seems to have no enjoyment in the day except to go on with the business of the week. He is such a dear old father, in spite of his storminess and stubbornness, and I do wish he knew how to be happy."

"Perhaps he will learn," suggested Tom, who was himself so happy to-night that all difficult things looked easy.

Nora shook her head. "Life doesn't tend that way," she said. "I'm not twenty yet, and I find I have habits that hold me like shackles. How must it be at fifty, do you think?"

CHAPTER XXI.

TOM MAKES A FRIEND.

NORA had the fulfillment of her wish, and her two "commencement days" were full of happiness.

"There is to be a dancing party for the graduates," she told Tom, "but I can be counted out of that. You know what I said about 'department store Christians.' It won't do for me to be one of that kind."

This was an anxious week for Tom. The men were in a state of inward rebellion, and he knew it, but he could not lay his finger upon the cause, much less find the remedy. It seemed to him that he had never found it quite so hard to put Christ first. A sense of the injustice of his position burned within him, and he found it hard to keep from using his power unwisely and dealing unjustly in return. His uncle held him

to a strict account, but seemed to have quite forgotten his promise of his help.

"Don't truckle to the men," he said once. "There must be a head here, and for a week or two you are to be that head. Let 'em understand it."

But this was a finer trick in the saying than in the doing. Tom was only a boy, and had not a commanding manner. The men regarded him, not as their natural head, but as his uncle's nephew.

Sam Larkin was late one morning. Tom looked up inquiringly as he came in.

"Baby sick," growled Sam. "Wife worn out waiting on him. Sat up all night. Couldn't get here any earlier."

"You shouldn't have come at all," said Tom, to whom kindness to those in sickness or trouble was as instinctive as breathing. "Go right back home and get some sleep."

Sam paused irresolutely.

"I'll explain to my uncle," Tom told him.

"Thought them two big orders had to be got out to-day," Sam muttered, wishing it were easier to hate this good-natured youngster who had been put over him.

"So they have," agreed Tom. "But I'll do my part toward getting them out, and I am sure the others will. See here, boys!" he spoke excitedly and, unconsciously to himself, with a freedom from restraint which was unusual. He had quite forgotten himself. "Sam's baby is sick, and he got no sleep last night. He ought to be at home to get a rest and be prepared for another turn at nursing. Who will put in an extra hour, if it is needed, so we can get the orders off without him? I will, for one."

"I will, for one!"

"I will!"

"I will!"

There was no lack of help.

"I'm sorry you need to go, Sam," Tom told the astonished employee, "but you see we shall get on famously without you. So it's all right."

Sam walked out slowly, and without a word. Tom *was* a good-natured youngster, there was no denying it. Maybe it was only a trick to get on the right side of the men, but it didn't seem just like that. There was a ring in his voice that sounded friendly and interested, "as if he really s'posed we rough fellows care whether our babies live or die," was Sam's characteristic comment.

Sam was needed at home that day. When Tom came in the evening to inquire about the baby, he found a bit of white crape on the door. He thought of Baby Walter, and tears came to his eyes. Sam, when he opened the door, was surprised to see Tom there.

"He was an awful knowin' little feller for his age," Sam told him; "so kind of old like, as if he was thinkin' more'n he'd ever learnt how to say. An' his ma, he was the only one, you see, an' it seemed as if she couldn't let go of him." Sam had always been considered the most uncommunicative man about the

yard, but grief had loosened his tongue, and he poured out his heart.

"I can't make things seem right without the little chap," he insisted. "When he come to stay with us, he kind of set the pace for everything. We'd always been in the habit of spendin' what we earnt, but we begun to put a few dollars by now and then, thinkin' we must give him clothes an' schoolin' an' a little start in the world. I never was a bad smoker, but after the little chap come, Jennie—that's my wife—would say, whenever I lit my pipe, 'Sam, baby'll want his pipe, one of these days, if you have yours,' and then she'd coax so good-natured and laughin' like, that I as good as give up smokin' altogether, for the baby's sake. Yes, Mister Tom, he'd come to set the pace for everything we said an' did, an' I can't make things seem right without him."

Tom wished, as he had often wished before, that he was gifted in speech and could give words of comfort. Perhaps

it was fortunate that he had no such gift, for he was spared the knowledge of what poor things the best chosen words may be.

"Come an' take a look at him, won't you?" Sam pleaded, and led the way to the tiny form, still lying in its little crib.

The baby looked so like Walter that Tom started at the first view of the exquisite little face. "I almost thought it must be my baby brother," he said, as he reverently passed his hand over the soft, fair curls. "Walter is just the same age, you see, and the forehead and hair are so wonderfully alike."

The words seemed to establish a kinship between the two men. Henceforth, to Sam, Tom was not his uncle's nephew, but the brother of a baby boy who looked like his own.

"I always thought Mister Tom was good-natured," he told his wife that night. Hitherto he had always spoken of the new head of the department as "the youngster," or as "that kid of a

boss." "He's got a meddlesome sort of a way with him, but after all it ain't him that I object to. It's his bein' put where he don't belong. Mister Tom is all right, an' I never said he wasn't."

"And he said Baby looked like his little brother?" his wife asked, chokingly. Her husband had already repeated Tom's words to her three times, but they were music to her and she wished to hear them again.

"'Just the same age,' was what he said, 'an' the forehead an' hair wonderful alike.'"

And the bruised and grief-stricken mother of the dead child laid up the words in her heart.

The next day Tom came back to offer his help in arranging for the funeral. "The men are all coming," he said. "My uncle has given them the time."

The abrupt pause in his sentence was due to Tom's sudden recollection of his uncle's reluctance to grant the favor.

"This establishment can't be shut down every time somebody's sixteenth

cousin dies," he had said. "Didn't I tell you not to truckle to the men? They are a discontented lot, and the more you give 'em the more they'll ask for. They'll take all the favors you'll give them, and then they'll despise you for granting 'em."

"But this isn't a sixteenth cousin—it's Sam's own little boy," Tom reminded him.

"Yes, yes, I know, and I suppose the men'll have to go to the funeral, for all of me. I've given you the management of things in there, for the present, and you'll have to run 'em your way."

Thus ungraciously was the permission given. But Sam was grateful, and felt that the sight of his comrades would help him to bear his sorrow when the hardest hour should come.

"Can I do anything?" Tom asked; "see a minister, or anything of that sort?"

Sam was silent for a moment, partly through embarrassment, and partly

through a sense of the importance of what he was about to say.

"Mister Tom," he began at length, "Jennie and I ain't infidels. We've got our little Bible, an' she reads it regular; an' sometimes she gets me set down to it of a Sunday afternoon when it was still-like, an' I hain't nothin' else to do. Jennie was fetched up to go to Sunday-school, but I wasn't fetched up to nothin', and sence we was married we hain't been church folks of no kind. We've often talked about it, an' said it wasn't the right way to bring up the little chap, but talk is talk an' habits is habits. Now, it would seem natural to have no preacher, for we don't know none, but if you'd jest come and read out of the little Bible, and maybe say a prayer—"

Tom's eyes grew big with astonishment. "Why, Sam," he cried, "how could I?"

Sam's face fell. "They all said you was religious," he said, in a disappointed tone.

Tom blushed. "I ought to be ashamed of myself," he said; "I do profess to be a Christian, and any Christian should be willing to read the Bible and pray when he is called upon."

Still, he hesitated. The men would be there, and the men did not like him. But whom had he promised to put first in his life?

"I'll try, Sam, if you really wish it," he said.

CHAPTER XXII.

AFTER THE FUNERAL.

VERY strange and shy Tom felt, as he stood beside the tiny casket, with the "little Bible" in his hand. But a sympathetic heart does not lead one far astray, and his voice was full of comfort as he read of the many mansions of the Father's house, of the city which has no need of the sun nor yet of the moon to lighten it, and of the river of the water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb.

What tells a man's heart as truly as his prayers? He who lives afar from God may preach eloquently, but the stumbling steps by which he comes to the throne of grace will tell of the infrequency of his approaches. Tom was neither of the temper nor of the habit which makes one what is called "gifted in prayer," when by "gifted" is meant

fluent and ready. But his simplicity and reverence touched all hearts that day, as he asked God to "take care of the dear little boy in heaven," and help the father and mother to bear their sorrow and be prepared to meet him.

"It made me feel as if baby was *alive*," Sam's wife said, as they sat together that night in the lonely house.

"I guess Mister Tom thinks he is," Sam said, awkwardly. He was not used to conversing on spiritual themes, and new words and phrases did not come to him readily. "I never see anybody before that seemed to kind of take heaven for granted the way he does. It ain't as if he'd ever seen any trouble himself, though. Some folks can be awful resigned until the hard part comes their own way, and then it ain't so easy."

"I hope he won't never have to bear such a trouble as ours, Sam. He's got an awful loving heart. Do you mind the way he spoke about his baby brother?"

Sam had certainly not forgotten. Nor

could he answer "no" when his wife asked him if he had ever seen a man put himself out more for them in trouble that wasn't noways related to him than Mister Tom had done. He had even brought Miss Deane and her friend to sing; and, for her part, she could never forget how like angels they seemed, and how they sang about how we would understand all these hard things some day.

Sam was silent on this point. In truth, his gratitude was quite equal to his wife's, and he was wondering how, when he should return to work upon the morrow, he could bear to hear the men speak light of "the youngster."

He was not compelled to suffer in this way. It was evident that the men had sympathized so fully with Sam as to be sharers in his gratitude, and Tom was treated with a degree of respect which surprised him. Once, during the noon hour, as Peter Floyd and his nephew were observed leaving the office together, one of the men observed, "Well, boys, I've heard a mighty sight about scooping

blood out of a turnip, but that's the first chap ever I see that would really do it. Mister Tom is only a youngster, and he don't know business, and it was no fair to turn Kieffer out to make room for him; but I've been treated the whitest by the old gentleman for the last fortnight that I've been in all the four years I've been here. The kid ain't the equal of Kieffer, but he beats all creation managing his uncle."

"That's so!" agreed another.

"Mister Tom has been mighty good to me," Sam Larkin ventured to say.

"That's so," agreed the first speaker. "And there wasn't no put-on about it, neither. I ain't particular smart, but I hain't worked here and there, off and on, for twenty years, without knowing whether a boss is trying to smooth you down and get you to like him, or whether he senses that you're flesh and blood, and means to treat you accordingly. As I say, I ain't particular smart, but if Mister Tom didn't feel for you folks

about the little chap"—the speaker lapsed into respectful silence.

"I thought that was an awful good prayer he made," Sam ventured. "It seemed like I was right there." Perhaps the poor fellow felt that this vague allusion to the next world was quite familiar enough for such unaccustomed lips as his. This time the silence was painful. At last the man who had spoken first broke out:

"Say, boys, I see Kieffer last night."

"Did you?" they chorused. "What did he say? What is he about?"

"He's got a real slick job over at Lamb & Doty's—wages five dollars a week better than he had here."

"You don't say!" The tone was not enthusiastic. It had been convenient to look upon Kieffer as a martyr, and such a view would clearly be out of the question in the future.

"In some ways Kieffer was a good boss," the same speaker went on. "He knew his business, and he 'tended to it that we knew ours. But he was a bit

surly, and the trouble was part his making when he went away. The old gentleman didn't treat him white, but he's gone now, and better off, it seems, than ever he was. So what do you say, boys, to giving the young man a chance?"

The response was general and hearty. Tom was surprised next morning to have his greetings to the men returned, and to have them answer "Yes, sir," when directed in their work.

They were still sensitive over the fact that a mere boy, and an inexperienced one at that, had been put over them, but the personal feeling had for the most part died out, and they looked upon Tom as a good-natured and inoffensive fellow, who was doing his best in a place for which he was not fitted.

Peter Floyd observed all this with not a little interest. The work did not always go as fast as he could have wished, and on this point he expressed himself with a truly autocratic freedom both to Tom and to the men. But there was less friction than there had been before,

favors were asked as favors, not demanded as rights, and Tom's good temper was proving quite as contagious as his predecessor's surliness.

As the busy season advanced, Tom realized that he needed to be on his metal to keep up with the orders. He often went back at night in order to make his calculations and have everything ready to have the work tell next morning. Of this extra work his uncle, who was himself the most industrious of men, highly approved, sometimes remarking to Nora, "There's some good red blood in that fellow—there is, indeed. A trifle impulsive, but he's got good red blood, and he isn't ashamed of hard work."

One night, as Tom came down stairs, hat in hand, his uncle said, "Wait a minute, Tom, I'll walk along with you, if you're going back to the office."

"I'm sorry to miss your company," Tom said, "but I'm not going to the office to-night. I'm going to prayer-meeting."

His uncle frowned. "The orders are piling up pretty fast," he said.

"I know; but I don't like to give up prayer-meeting. I've worked every night this week until now, and I've a notion I feel better to get the cobwebs out of my head and think of something besides lumber now and then. I'm sure I work with more spirit the rest of the time."

"Humph!" grunted Mr. Floyd. It was such a perfectly non-committal grunt that Tom could not even guess whether or not his uncle was offended. But he was quite encouraged when the latter brought his hat and said that he would at least walk as far as the church.

Mr. Floyd did not stay long at the office, and on his return he sought out Nora.

"See here," he said, "I want to know what this means: Tom said he was going to prayer-meeting, but when we got as far as the Deanes, he politely told me good-night, and went in there."

"Means!" said Nora, catching him by the lapels of the coat, and waltzing him

about the room, to the peril of the china and bric-a-brac, "it means that you are quite as blind as a bat and far less imaginative. Tom always goes to prayer-meeting by way of the Deanes!"

CHAPTER XXIII.

TOM BECOMES SUPERINTENDENT.

DOCTOR Jonathan Edwards Cushing had resigned his pastorate. He wished to go to Europe, he said, "to gather materials." After his return he would seek a broader field. Perhaps he would spend several years on the lecture platform. Ultimately, he would write a book. He had in mind, even now, a work on "The Esthetics of Christianity."

The resignation of Doctor Cushing caused much surprise among the members of the church, but their chief surprise was that they were surprised so little. For months a new spirit had been developing, a spirit which Doctor Cushing had scarcely welcomed, much less shared. In the beginning, the young people had been awakened, and had made their influence felt. Gradually the new life had extended through

the church. The prayer-meetings had changed their character, and the social life of the church had come to be a power.

"The truth is," Doctor Cushing told his wife, "this pulpit no longer demands a cultured ministry. The unction of a backwoods exhorter is what the people think they want. They profess no dissatisfaction with me, but how can I spend my life among a people who are growing indifferent to Browning, and who prefer revivalistic enthusiasm to pure oratory? I have noticed a change ever since that young man from Middlefield took hold of affairs. His intentions are entirely proper and worthy, but he is quite unconscious of his limitations and so, it would seem, are those who push him forward. There are inevitable dangers attendant upon the social equality permitted in church circles, and I often wonder whether such equality is necessary or desirable. At the present rate, this church will lose her intellectual and social prestige alto-

gether, and become a mere Gospel Dispensary, giving out soul-cures to whomsoever may happen along. My idea of a church is rather that of a picture-gallery, where rare souls may linger and dream over the good, the beautiful and the true."

So, evidently in self-defense, Doctor Cushing took himself away from a church so evidently doomed; and his members saw him no more.

In his place there came a bright, energetic man, of simple manners and convincing speech. The people learned to love him for his goodness, and to follow him because of the strong personality which made him a natural leader.

Bruce Wynne certainly had no prejudice against the young man from Middlefield. He and Tom were friends from the beginning, and to no one, not even to his mother, had Tom found it so easy to open his heart. Once, when both were early at prayer-meeting, Mr. Wynne reached over and took Tom's

Bible. "I'm going to see how you mark it," he said.

Tom's Christian Endeavor Pledge lay in his Bible, and Mr. Wynne opened at once to the reverse side. One glance at the round, boyish writing gave him the short sentence: "I promise that, God helping me, I will try to put Christ first in everything I do."

Mr. Wynne's hand closed over Tom's. "That is a great pledge," he said.

Tom was blushing painfully. He did not like to be thought better than he was.

"I don't believe I knew all that it meant when I wrote it down," he said. "It was on a quiet Sunday afternoon in my room at the old home. I wanted to do right, and I thought out that little pledge as a means of deciding what is right. To put Christ first—that seemed to mean everything. If I did that I thought I would be on the safe side of every question. So I put down the pledge and signed it. I didn't know it would be so hard to keep. I have not

kept it fully. I have sometimes fallen a long way short, I know. But I have kept on trying. I couldn't bear to give up, now."

Bruce Wynne was one of those rare beings who know when not to talk. He sat in sympathetic silence now, his strong, brown hand still resting on Tom's arm.

"The people I had spent my life among were religious as a matter of course," Tom began again. "I hadn't known about anything else. When I came here, and got a glimpse of city life, it was all so different. My pledge seemed out of place. It was my fault, of course, that it seemed so. I hadn't taken hold of it with my whole heart, though I thought I had. But it has grown a little easier to try to keep it, and—it has done me a great deal of good, I think."

"It has done others good for you to try to keep it. Just now it has set a sermon to stirring in me. Perhaps oth-

ers will take your motto, if the opportunity is given to them."

It was time for the prayer-meeting, and nothing further was said then. But on the next Sunday evening Mr. Wynne preached a ringing sermon from the text, "This one thing I do."

"Perhaps," he said, "these words of Paul might be more definitely rendered, 'This one mark I set upon everything I do.' To Paul, the service of Christ was life, not a mere incident of life. Literally, for him to live was Christ.

"Dare we say that the life of the average church-member of our day is even an heroic struggle toward the realization of this ideal? The world does not want a Cologne-water Christianity. There must be a self-forgetful effort for the supremacy of Christ in the individual life before he can be supreme in society and among the nations of men.

"I do not suppose that the average of church-membership is lower here than elsewhere, and I scarcely dare to hope that it is notably higher. But this I

know: With one hundred men and women who would put this mark upon everything they do, who would put Christ, and his will and work, first in all their words and deeds, we could take this city for him, though Satan should call all his legions to oppose and overthrow."

The simple message found a warm response. A corps of the young people was organized for personal work, and a great ingathering of souls followed.

Sam Larkin and his wife were among the first to be reached, and none received a more cordial welcome from the members.

"Yes, boys," Sam announced to his companions at the noon-hour, "I've turned pious. That's what you want to say, an' I'd just as lieve say it for you. I may as well tell you first hand, that I ain't ashamed on't. I've joined Mister Tom's church, too, which I would have said couldn't be under no sort o' circumstances. I went there once to hear the Reverend Doctor What's-his-name,

but he wasn't onto his job, an' I knew it 'fore I'd listened to him ten minutes. You see, I wanted to know more about the place where the Little Chap has gone, an' how my wife an' me orto carry ourselves, so's he won't be ashamed to own his pa an' ma up There. Maybe that was a sort o' selfish way to look at it, but some of you that are here have lost little 'uns of your own, an' I guess you know about what I mean. But what do you think Doctor What's-his-name talked about? Why, I vow, he talked about a sunrise he seen one mornin', lookin' out of his east winder! Just as if we didn't all know what sunrises was like, except them that's too fool lazy to git up an' see! If the Doctor had to work as many hours as we do, he'd git to know a sunrise when he seen one, an' not git so excited preachin' about it. But the new parson is clear grit, and Mister Tom — I say, boys, what's the matter with Mister Tom?"

And there was no mistaking the heartiness of the voices which chorused

in answer, "Mister Tom's all right!"

Peter Floyd, coming out of the office at this moment, heard the chorus, and did not look ill-pleased.

"And what's the matter with Mister Tom's old uncle?" he remarked, jocosely.

The men were so surprised that at first no one made a sound. Then, cheerily and simultaneously, they cried, "Mr. Floyd's all right!" And the head of the establishment went away smiling.

It chanced that, the same afternoon, Tom came into the office and said:

"Uncle, when do you think you will be able to find a new superintendent?"

"I've found one."

"Oh! When will he be here, then?"

"He's here now."

And it was evident from Peter Floyd's face that he felt he had perpetrated the best joke of his life.

CHAPTER XXIV.

HONEST CONFESSION.

GERALD FLOYD, in the months since his return home, had devoted himself to art with something so like seriousness of purpose that it would have deceived one not accustomed to his changes of mood. Indeed, in a sense it *was* seriousness of purpose while it lasted. The trouble was that no one of his moods had ever been known to last.

His mother exulted in "the dear boy," invited her friends in to see the pictures he painted, and spoke of his brilliant career as an established fact. His father sniffed, but tried not to express his skepticism in a more open fashion. Tom alternated between hope and fear, and wished that, if Gerald really were a genius, his gifts would manifest themselves in a more rational and practical way.

One thing seemed encouraging: Gerald had renewed his old-time friendship with Marjorie Deane. "You know the price," Marjorie had told him, gravely. "I cannot be friendly with Burt Hadley's friend."

"I suppose you want me to stick close to my immaculate cousin," he answered, with something unpleasantly like a sneer.

A flush slowly overspread Marjorie's face. "I do not think you could do better," she said.

The blush and the tone were a revelation.

"Marjorie!" Gerald cried, quickly. "You don't mean it, do you? Forgive me! I wasn't making fun of my cousin, though I had no idea it would hurt you so if I should. See here, Marjorie—listen to me. If I doubted all creation beside, if I believed that all other men were hypocrites and liars, if I felt that art were a cheat and life a farce, I would still swear that Tom Floyd is true, and

I would still avow it with my dying breath!"

"Thank you," she said simply. And her lovely face had the look of an angel's.

No wonder they were friends after that. Gerald's tone had in it the old witchery that never failed to charm, and yet it had seemed to Marjorie that there was a new note beneath, which she had never recognized before.

Again they practiced duets together, and again they discussed matters belonging to the two great worlds of art and music. Tom, sitting beside them in the twilight, felt ashamed of his own ignorance, and—O yes, for he was a very human Tom, after all—a trifle jealous of Gerald's ability to make the most of what he knew. He need not have disturbed himself, for a beautiful girl is sometimes quite able to make correct discriminations, in spite of her shell-pink cheeks and our conception of her helplessness.

One evening Tom and Gerald had

spent the evening together at Marjorie's home, and were returning, when Gerald broke out in one of those strange bursts of confidence which had, of late, been very infrequent.

"Tom, I've been an awful fool," he said.

"We all have times of being that."

"Nonsense! Everybody makes mistakes, but most mistakes can be undone. Mine can never be."

"Don't say that Gerald. There is always the chance, if one has the mind to try."

"A chance! What kind of chance? A chance to be pointed at as a fellow who has failed at every good thing he ever touched? What kind of chance is there for a fellow who has humored himself in every whim until he is twenty-four? Work? The kind of work that men do, the kind of work that takes trained brain and nerve and muscle—I hate. Home? You shrink away when I speak the word. You know you do, and you know you ought. You know

I ought to die rather than take a woman's happiness into my hands. Society? Society petted me once, it kicks me and scoffs at me now. I heard Burt Hadley telling some fellows the other day the story of my escapade in Hooligan's Hall — Burt Hadley, who gave me the drink that maddened me. I'm not saying that he or anyone else but myself is to blame. I'm only saying that from henceforth I'm to those fellows only the best possible joke—a poor Punch, playing on the street-corners to afford them a few minutes' amusement. What kind of chance is left for me?"

The tone was fierce and hard. Tom slipped his hand through his cousin's arm.

"The chance to be a man," he said, firmly. "A chance to win back a great deal that you've lost in the past, and save yourself from worse losses in the future."

"Win back! Much you understand, when you talk about my winning back

what I've lost in the past. I've heard your preachers tell about it. They tell about a new life, and being born again, and all that sort of thing. It can't be. It's only a new life from the beginning—a new life without recollection or the consequences of the old, that could give one a chance to win back the past. They tell about repentance and restitution. Can any amount of repentance blot out the memories that are burned into my very soul? Can it make me able to look myself in the face again, and feel that I am a man? Restitution! Can I restore time and opportunity, and the happiness of those I've made miserable? Tom, it can't be!"

"I don't believe memory can be blotted out, or that it ought to be. I believe every awful experience of the past ought to stay in your mind, to warn you every day that you live. I don't suppose Paul ever lost sight of the face of Stephen, and I can imagine that the memory spurred him in his work until he felt he couldn't rest. I don't say you can be

what you might have been. You can't get the years back, or undo the harm you have done to others. But that those wrongs be can't righted is rather an argument against going on in wrong. Why should you have all the to-morrows added to the yesterdays? You can be a man again, and have a clean life and a good conscience—that I know. I'd have to give up all I hold sacred in order to doubt that."

"That's because you have never felt what I feel, and have never been where I have been. I'm glad you haven't—that's one thing I've got to be proud of. At my worst, I never tried to make you like myself. But you can't understand."

"I think I can. At any rate, I can understand that going on isn't going to make things better."

"Make things better? No, it won't do that. Tommy boy, if I could be for just one hour a little child again, with a clean white soul and a faith in everything good, I would willingly lie down

and die at the end of such an hour. You don't know how I feel, and I can't tell you. But you are a good fellow, Tommy boy. It is a comfort to think there is one such in the world."

Tom felt his cousin's soft, girlish hand against his cheek. He was moved by the caress, and still more by the earnest tone. He feared to speak lest he should blunder, and, indeed, it would have been hard for him to speak at all.

But Gerald's next words were light enough, and Tom thought he had been mistaken in his supposition that his cousin was growing serious. After all, Gerald was a creature of moods, and there was no telling which would be the next to sway him.

CHAPTER XXV.

MRS. FLOYD MAKES A DISCOVERY.

ONE evening Mrs. Floyd prevailed upon her husband to go with her and Nora to hear a prima donna of world-wide fame. Mr. Floyd was not fond of music, but he had a sense of obligation to the wishes of his family, and some desire to carry a brave front before society, and so he meekly submitted. It must be admitted that his wife's appreciation of the music was not much stronger than his own; nevertheless, she found much to enjoy that did not appeal to him especially. Her opera glasses were invaluable, and if they were turned toward the first gallery oftener than toward the stage, certainly that was her own affair and not the prima donna's.

"Marjorie is in the second row," she announced, between numbers. "She is looking remarkably well to-night.

Really, I never saw any other brown-haired person to whom violet was particularly becoming. Her escort has his head turned toward the singer, and I cannot make out who he is. One of her cousins most likely. She is very fastidious."

The orchestra started up again, and Mrs. Floyd did not then pursue her investigation further. Later in the evening, however, between the two parts of the concert, she raised her glass again, and fell back into her seat in sheer amazement.

"Nora!" she gasped, "it's Thomas!"

"Leading the orchestra?" questioned Nora, innocently. "*I see.* Of course it is. I supposed everybody in the hall knew that!"

And Mr. Peter Floyd so far forgot himself, the occasion, and the dignity of his family, as to chuckle audibly.

"No, no! with Marjorie. It is our—it is your cousin Thomas!"

"Well, here are your smelling-salts," Nora reminded her, sweetly.

"I never was so surprised in my life."

"I have been, often."

"But it is very unusual for her to appear in public with a—a gentleman."

"I don't know what you call 'public.' She goes to prayer-meeting with Tom every week, and to church on Sunday nights. I don't know what could be more in the usual way than for her to be seen with him."

"Nora!" It was the old reproving tone. "And you never mentioned it to me! I think you should have remembered that your cousin is staying in our house, and that we are in a certain sense responsible for him."

"Why, mamma, I didn't mean to be secretive, but Tom is such a particular darling that I don't like to seem to know more about his affairs than he chooses to tell me."

"You were always short-sighted, though I have no doubt in this case you meant well. You seem to fail altogether to see that this—ah—notice on Marjorie's part may lead to some very unpleasant

complications. Tom is quite unsophisticated, and will be likely to think she is serious.''

''I don't know what he thinks, as I have said. I would certainly think her so, from what I have seen. Indeed, I can't imagine Marjorie's being anything but serious about a serious matter. But then, you know, I'm almost as unsophisticated as Tom himself.''

Mrs. Floyd gasped. ''You do not believe she would consider the question of *marrying* Tom?''

''I certainly believe she would if she should still need to. But I rather think she has given the subject full consideration already.''

''Nora! You cannot think that they are engaged?''

''I'm not thinking anything for sure until I am told. But it certainly looks that way.''

''After the opportunities she has had, and the way she has treated our Gerald!''

''I think she treats Gerald very nicely. He goes there with Tom, and seems to

approve mightily of the whole situation."

This time it really seemed that the smelling-salts would be in demand. But presently Mrs. Floyd rallied and began again.

"You seem to quite fail to see," she said, "that if what you say is true—I cannot fully believe it as yet—it will certainly bring about very painful results. Mrs. Deane is very exclusive and particular. She will not tolerate such a thought for a moment."

"I don't know how that is," remarked Nora, nonchalantly, "but she seems to have no difficulty at all in Tom. *She* doesn't call him Thomas, I assure you. She is a great deal too well acquainted with him for that. Last night, when I ran in, he was threading dozens of needles with her embroidery silk, and she remarked, in the most matter of course way, that it was Tom's regular business to keep her supplied with threaded needles, so she might not be hindered in her work."

While his wife was recovering her breath, Peter Floyd struck in. "I don't see why you make such a fuss about the matter," he said. "Tom is good enough for any girl, if he is my nephew. He hasn't got the society strut, but he's got sense about him, and that counts for a good deal more in the long run, according to my notion."

"I have nothing against Thomas. Considering his opportunities, he certainly makes a very creditable appearance. But he is poor, and it is certainly the merest childish folly for him to think of marrying."

"You married me when I was poor."

"You were certain not to stay poor. Any one could have seen that."

She did not say that she would not have married him had she not seen it herself, and certainly it would have been unfair to draw this inference from her words.

"O mamma," broke in Nora, "it would be a shame to keep Tom from marrying just because he's poor. Why,

he's just the darlingest home-boy that ever lived. I suppose his mother has taught him how to be that. Can't you just imagine him putting up curtains, and manufacturing box-couches, and doing wonders in flower-gardening in a back yard four feet square? He was just made for that sort of thing. And Marjorie has been to cooking-school, and she knows how to sew beautifully. She can make her own gowns, and even trim her hats, if it is necessary. I think it would be a great pity to spoil such fun by having them stupidly rich, with nothing to do but to take the things that were made for them, and find fault with them afterward."

"What a nonsensical mood you are in to-night," was her mother's only answer.

But she watched Tom and Marjorie narrowly for the remainder of the evening, and though she did not express herself again, her mind seemed to be busy with a new idea.

The truth was, Mrs. Floyd, awe-in-

spiring as she herself seemed, had always stood the least bit in awe of Mrs. Deane. Now, if what Nora guessed was true, there must be equality between them.

So it came that when a friend asked if she might congratulate her upon an engagement between her nephew and Miss Deane, she drew herself up just a little more loftily than usual, as she answered, "It is quite too early for congratulations. But my nephew is a most exemplary young man, and I must say that any woman whom he chooses may feel herself honored."

CHAPTER XXVI.

A HAPPY HOME-COMING.

T was a perfect day in June, and the scent of roses was everywhere. The old farmhouse in Middlefield was in festival array, for Tom was to bring home his bride.

There had been a modest wedding at the Deane home, when the Floyds had had one brief vision of Tom's lovely wife, and of his radiant happiness. Marjorie had charmed Baby Walter, who still chattered about her, and fastidious Mrs. Deane had pronounced Mrs. Floyd "an exquisitely womanly woman—just the kind of mother you would expect our Tom to have."

"But that isn't knowing Marjorie," Tom had told his father and mother. "She is such a home-body that one must know her at home to appreciate her. After we get our little house in order, I'll bring her to the farm for

a glorious outing, and let you see what kind of a daughter you've got."

Most people would have made some allowance for a young husband's enthusiasm, but Mrs. Floyd did not. It never occurred to her that Tom's wife could be other than exceptional.

Nora had come to the farm two days before. She had taken a great fancy to her cousin Hester, and had volunteered her services "on the reception committee," as she expressed it.

"You'll never know how lovely Tom and Marjorie are unless I come and tell you," she explained. "They are so modest that they never speak of it, and other people are so busy imposing on them that they have no time. I'm the only person who makes a business of sounding their praises."

Mrs. Floyd, who had heretofore seen Nora only now and then, was surprised that she had never liked her better. Heretofore she had thought her bitter and sarcastic. Now she seemed gener-

ous and full of interest in those about her.

"She's regularly jolly," asserted Teddy, who had groaned over the prospect of a visit from his city cousin, and complained that there wouldn't be room to have her airs and his feet in the house at the same time. "I never saw a woman before that it was any fun to go fishing with. I wouldn't refuse to go when she asked me, but I supposed she would giggle all the time, like the rest of 'em, and spoil everything. She didn't, though. She went right to business, as if she knew how, and her catch was *almost* as good as mine. I tell you, she's the kind. She's got the grit to saw off an arm, if it's got to be done. I wouldn't be a bit afraid to trust her."

Tom and Marjorie came on Saturday night. Mr. Floyd drove them over from the station, and Nora and Teddy followed in the light wagon with their trunk. It was a fine procession, and the town came out to see it pass.

A delicious supper was waiting, with

some of the fish caught by Nora and Teddy as a prominent attraction. Mrs. Floyd had walked around the table a dozen times to make sure that all was in order, and, for the first time in her life, had wished for fine napery.

"Not that I think it will make any real difference to Marjorie," she told herself. "It's only for Tom's sake."

Certainly Marjorie seemed to miss nothing. Tom was quite right in saying she was at her best in the home. Her girlish dignity was very charming in society, but by no means so charming as the refined mirthfulness and sense of humor which found full play at the fireside.

"She's ever so pretty," admitted Teddy, a trifle reluctantly, "and she does know how to say just exactly what ought to be said. But Nora's got the grit about her, and I still stick up for Nora."

On Sunday they all went to the little church at the village, the church where Tom had made the confession of his

faith and had been baptized, and where he had made his first trembling efforts to speak to others of his Master. It was a sweet moment to him when he sat with his wife beside him at the communion table, and thought of the unexpected joys and opportunities which had fallen to his lot. Never before had his heart been so humble. Never before had it held such high and adventurous resolves.

That afternoon, for the first time, he told Marjorie of his pledge, and of what it had meant to him.

"Somehow, I couldn't tell you before," he said. "It seemed like saying I was good, and I knew I wasn't. But here, where I took it first, I thought you would understand."

She put her hand into his. "It is a beautiful pledge," she said, "and we will try to keep it together. That shall be the ideal of the home we make—to keep it always a home where Christ is first."

As the evening settled down they all sat on the porch together, Marjorie with

Walter on her lap, Tom at his mother's feet, and Nora beside the loyal Teddy. Presently Marjorie started the noble old hymn,

"Sun of my soul, thou Savior dear,"

and the others joined her, Hester's firm, beautiful soprano rising above the rest.

"Hester ought to have music lessons," Tom said. "I wish she could come and stay with us next winter, and see what a good teacher could do for her voice."

There was a moment's silence. Even a good son does not know what it means to a mother to be parted from her child.

"If we can spare her," she said, at length, "I am sure it would be a good thing for her to go."

Tom clasped her hand impulsively. "It's too bad to take her away," he said. "I wasn't thinking, for the moment, that she is your only girl."

"Except the baby whose body has lain these twelve years on the hillside," she answered softly. "Little Alice is the one of our children who will never leave us."

The others were talking among themselves, and could not hear these words. But to Tom they meant much, remembering, as he did, how reticent his mother had always been concerning the things of her inner life.

"Dear mother," he said, tenderly, "was it so hard for you when I went away?"

"It seemed like taking my very life. I know now that I was selfish, but I didn't realize it then. I thought it was only because I feared temptations for you."

"I think it *was* for the most part that. You were wiser than I, and saw the danger I didn't and couldn't see."

"But I should have had more faith. I should have believed that God was stronger than any of us. It was surely right for you to go. If you had not gone, what would have become of Gerald?"

"I'm not sure that Gerald is safe, even yet. To be sure, I believe he is honestly trying to live a new life. He

has taken hold of work in earnest, and though Marjorie, who knows a great deal more about it than I do, says he will never paint a great picture, yet it is something for him to have anything to do that he is willing to stick to and give his best to. He may get tired of it all, but he hasn't so far, and that is encouraging. He is as happy over an order as if his bread and butter depended upon it, and I think his father is secretly as well pleased as he. The truth is, uncle has been trying for years to stop loving Gerald, and nature has all the time been too strong for him. Now, when he feels that he is safe in loving him a little, nature of course takes delight in asserting herself. I cannot say that I feel safe about Gerald. One cannot willfully go through fire and come out unscathed. I fancy that his life will be an alternation of inspirations and lapses. But his face is set toward the right now, and while it is we must never give up. He has Nora beside him, and she will never let go."

"What a fine woman Nora is making, his mother said, looking admiringly at the vivacious face opposite.

Her look of admiration was reflected in Tom's face.

"Isn't she, though?" he said, with enthusiasm. "I used to think Nora wasn't enough like you, or—" he laughed merrily—"like Marjorie. But the woman is all there, and, if she lives very long in this world, thousands will thank God because of her."

Nora had heard nothing of the words, but she caught the laugh, and her own rang out gaily.

"What a model couple Tom and Marjorie are!" she said. "Here they are, in the very middle of their honeymoon, and Tom is assiduously courting his mother, while Marjorie, here, has eyes and ears for no one but Walter. They deserve to have their statues on a monument, as a reward to them and an incentive to other young people to behave themselves like rational beings, rather

than like candidates for the idiotic asylum."

"I hope you have observed them, and will know how to conduct yourself under similar circumstances," said Mr. Floyd, with a clumsy attempt at humor.

"I? Oh, I am going to be an M. D., you know. I don't suppose I shall ever marry, unless—" a fit of repentance seemed suddenly to overtake her—"unless I should encounter a young man from Middlefield, with a heart as big as a hemisphere, and a perfect genius for other people's business."