









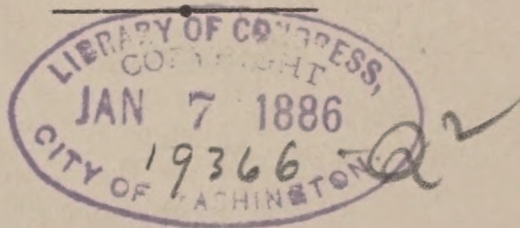


The Girls and Grandma Grey.



THE  
PROFESSOR'S GIRLS.

BY  
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"OUT OF THE WAY," "TARRYPORT SCHOOLGIRLS," ETC.



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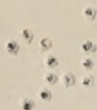
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# THE PROFESSOR'S GIRLS.

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## CHAPTER I.

### *A HOUSEFUL OF PEOPLE.*

“God, who sees each separate soul,  
Out of commonplace lives makes his beautiful whole.”

ONE afternoon in midwinter two young girls were going home from school through the quiet village streets. No one meeting them would have supposed Madge and Ruth Preston to have been sisters. Madge, the elder, was sixteen, a merry, independent little body with big black eyes, curls of chestnut hair, a brunette skin and rose-red cheeks. Before she opened her lips one was sure her language would be largely made up of adjectives—that she was the sort of girl to find life *very* bright or *very* dull, according to her mood. To-day she was vigorously swinging her school-

books by their strap and grumbling to herself with an earnestness which might be aimless, but for the time was energetic. She would have made her grievances audible if she had supposed Ruth was listening, but half the time Ruth did not listen, particularly to complaints. This younger sister was taller, more fragile and mature in appearance; her complexion was as delicate as the tint of a pearl-shell, her hair a silky, pale yellow, but there was nothing insipid in her clear-cut features, for the small chin was very firm in outline. Her blue-gray eyes could gleam with spirit, and, while she rarely spoke with half Madge's decision, her words always carried more force. This night she was watching the sunset. A flood of yellow light filled the sky, tinted the snow, and, as the girls began to ascend a hill, Ruth, seeing half the spires and house-tops of the village outlined on the golden background, suddenly exclaimed,

"It is like the sunset last Wednesday, only then there was a flush of crimson over it all."

"Do you remember last week's sunset,

Ruth Preston?" cried Madge. "Well, you *are* queer! Why, I should as soon think of reflecting on some apple-dumpling that I ate a year ago yesterday. Such things, with me, are the accidents of the moment, as Professor Parks said of something to-day."

"If a sunset did not mean anything more to me than a dumpling, I should not remember it; but I can't help remembering it as if it were a beautiful picture. The way with you is you don't take the trouble to look at it," returned Ruth, in a quiet voice, without the least air of superiority.

"Yes, I suppose so; but it does not seem to concern me, and it will be gone in a minute, while my present trouble will remain with me."

"What is your 'present trouble'?"

"It is yours too, or I should suppose it would be: I am tired of being poor. I want a beautiful new plaid cashmere school-dress, and a sealskin muff and boa, and a new piano, and a house like Judge Hodge's, and sloping shoulders like Belle Gates's, and a mother who approves of sending me to

dancing-school, and a dancing-school to send me to if—”

“If you only had a mother who would send you to one if there was one,” laughed Ruth, adding mischievously, “Upon my word, I think you might just as profitably be thinking about the last year’s apple-dumpling.”

“Now, don’t you go to talking about what is profitable, Ruth. I hate *profitable* work and study, and all that. I want something extravagant and extraordinary. If only something astonishing would happen! Everything is so monotonous! Ever since I can remember, the family flour-barrel has been getting empty and mother has been dreading to tell father of it. Every time father has been told he has sighed. I declare, when you picture to yourself a whole world full of empty flour-barrels and sighing people, life does not seem very desirable;” and Madge’s face grew very long.

Ruth did not give her sister’s state of mind one thought; she knew that an hour or two later Madge would be consuming unlimited bread and butter, and probably



laughing uproariously. The fancy, however, of a world wherein was so much poverty did impress Ruth in a certain way, and after a moment she suddenly exclaimed,

“Yes, Madge, I get discontented often, and I wish for all sorts of things that we can't have; and I suppose we *are* in a sense poor, but then, again, when you think of the *real* poverty there is even in this village, you know we are wonderfully well off.”

“Well, I suppose we are, when you come down to hard common sense,” returned Madge, brightening a little, and adding, after a moment, “There cannot be a better father or mother than ours in the whole world.”

To this Ruth gave an emphatic assent as they swung open a wooden gate and went up a plank walk to the door of an old-fashioned yellow wooden house. They opened the unlocked door, entering a very wide and singularly cozy hall. One would hardly think to call it a hall at all, for it was evidently a room in which the family sat to read or to sew or to receive callers. On the wall was a cheerful yellow-tinted paper, and here and there hung some old family por-

traits. At the lower end, filling all the space except that taken by the door into the dining-room, were shelves of books. None of these books had fine bindings, none were in "sets," but there seemed to be an endless variety of them. To the girls each one had an individuality of its own, from the theological works that had come down from their mother's great-grandfather to the well-thumbed Rollo books and Hans Andersen's fairy-tales. On one side the hall was a long, deep haircloth lounge with great, soft, red-covered cushions, and opposite this was an open fireplace where always glowed a beautiful fire. On the mantelpiece above it stood a quaint Chinese jug and two tall bronze and crystal "girandoles," or big branched candlesticks, while each side of the fireplace was a comfortable great arm-chair with rockers. The carpet was worn and dull, but Grandma Grey, as the children always called Mrs. Preston's mother, a dear old lady who lived with them, had braided of gay woolen some mats that were as pretty as they were useful in covering the worn places.

When the girls opened the door, the old lady sat by the fire in the warm twilight. She had been knitting, but the sleek old tabby-cat had bounced into her lap, and now persisted in rubbing her head on the knitting-needles.

“Is it cold out, children?”

“Yes, it is very cold,” replied Ruth, shivering and kneeling down close to the bright fire.

Madge fluttered about, hung her outer garment in a little closet one side the front door, found a big apple somewhere, and soon was eating and chatting and rocking all at once. When she had learned that her mother was out, her father not home, and that nothing had happened since she left the house at noon, she began to ask questions of which she already knew the answers; but then she must talk of something.

“You were rich when you were my age, were you not, grandma?” she asked.

“Well, my parents were in very good circumstances.”

“You had an old family tea-set, didn’t you—pure silver? and colored servants, and

our great-grandfather's coach had a coat-of-arms on it? Oh dear! I wish we had an old family tea-set."

The dining-room door had suddenly opened to let in a boy of ten, a short, sturdy chap with a big head and a face so full of quizzical good-humor one forgot to call him homely.

"We have," he remarked, coolly—"three old family teapots all in a row on the top shelf in the buttery. One was not meant to stand on the stove, so, of course, you put it there, and the bottom melted off; one lost its nose a night when I helped get supper, and one was honorably discharged with a hole in its side."

"Oh, nonsense, Johnny! What I would like is real splendor," said Madge, dolorously, while Johnny pulled the cat down for not unkind but very unceremonious treatment.

Now, Grandma Grey was a rather stately old gentlewoman, and at all times was pleased to tell the children of a kind of life that seemed to them rare and delightful; but she was an earnest Christian, a sweet,

contented soul, so to-night she replied to Madge's girlish words in a different strain :

“My dear child, thank the Lord every day for your countless blessings. You have a home full of love and good cheer, a mother who is the very heart of it all, and a father wise enough to teach you anything. At your age I had no mother, my home was sad if it was fine, and I was often very lonely. Splendor is nothing to be compared with contentment, and one can learn to be contented anywhere God puts him or her.”

Madge was about to speak, when Ruth, who had not changed her position since she had entered and knelt before the fire, suddenly swayed back and dropped for a second on Johnny's shoulder, then slipped off and fell to the floor. He thought her in play at first, but, seeing her face in the firelight, he cried,

“What ails her, grandma? Look how white she is!”

They discovered at once that she had fainted, and Madge stretched her out on the rug, while grandma worked over her and Johnny ran for water. She recovered

consciousness in a moment or two, and was able to be helped to the lounge.

“You need not be frightened,” she said, laughing a little hysterically. “I was tired and very cold; when I began to get warm, I felt myself floating off and dissolving into nothing.”

“You had not dissolved when you struck me: you came like a hundred pounder,” put in Johnny.

“Hush, little boy! I am afraid your sister is sick.—Do you feel better now, dear? You are as white as a sheet of paper,” said the old lady, rubbing Ruth’s hands in her own withered ones.

Before Ruth could reply the door opened and in came their mother. Her sweet, bright face lengthened in a second as she espied the little group about Ruth, and Madge had to exclaim hastily,

“It is nothing, mother; it is all over now. Ruthie’s fainted away. I declare, I wish, now, it had been my experience. Nothing interesting ever does happen to me—even fainting away.”

Of course the mother had to ask all sorts

of anxious, tender questions, and it came out that Ruth was not very well. She had constant headache and a little cough, the walk to school gave her a pain in the side, and altogether she needed the petting and the nursing that she was now sure to get in this warm home-nest.

“I shall have Dr. Hickox examine you right away, and you must not go to school another day until you are stronger.”

“Oh! and stop my literature lessons, mother, and all the rest?” cried the little girl among the red cushions.

Ruth was very ambitious and exceedingly studious. For a few moments it seemed to her that she could not stay away from school; but when Mrs. Preston had talked to her a while after this, the whole affair took a different aspect. She saw that the history and the literature could go on at home, with her mother to make these lessons delightful. Now she could have time to finish the remarkable scrap-book long ago begun; and so, weak and tired as Ruth felt to-night, it was soothing to hear the kind old grandmother telling how “the poor child must

have a rest and get more sleep, with some change and diversion. She doesn't eat enough, either; we must tempt her appetite."

"Now, Johnny, just see how things go in this world," Madge was saying. "Here Ruth wants to go to school, and I would just as lief as not be delicate this term if I could shirk those horrible examples of partial payment."

"Yes, 'tis too bad. But say: now you have seen how it is done, couldn't you faint away when it comes your turn to go to the blackboard?"

"Yes, for once, maybe; but I couldn't faint every day at every example, could I?"

"No, and you couldn't turn white to save your life; so that's no go."

Madge's troubles were soon past, and in a few moments she was planning for Ruth many pleasant ways of passing the time, so that the home-staying sister should not get lonely. By this time a certain savory odor came from some unseen region, and Johnny exclaimed,

"Abbey's making waffles for supper; that



is why she has not been in to look at Ruth. She doesn't know she fainted."

"Father is late to-night," said Mrs. Preston, putting away her bonnet and shawl.

A little later he came, very glad to get into the genial warmth, and reporting that it was very dark and cold out of doors. He was a tall, thin, scholarly-looking man with gray hair, clear, kindly-gleaming eyes and a grave voice. Ill-health had forced him years ago to leave the ministry, and at this date he was principal of a boys' and girls' academy. He listened quietly to the various versions of the late episode; then, softly stroking Ruth's hair, he remarked,

"Your mother is quite right: no more hard study and confinement in school for you until you are stronger."

"Supper is ready," announced Johnny, after an exploring-expedition; and, throwing open the door into the dining-room, he dashed at his grandmother with an absurd flourish and begged to escort her to the table. Johnny was, as his father frequently remarked, "somewhat of a monkey." They persuaded Ruth to lie still on the lounge

and let Abbey bring her supper to her. She consented, and watched them as they sat pleasantly chatting around the table. The dining-room was another unconventional, cheerful place, full of old-fashioned furniture, with bright chintz curtains and a south window full of flowering shrubs.

When Abbey came with Ruth's supper, Ruth sat among her cushions, and, laughing at her own "laziness," replied to the girl's minute questions as to what "a real faint was like, any way."

Now, as Abbey is not an unimportant inmate of this house, we may as well speak of her in passing. Mrs. Preston had taken Abbey from an orphan asylum when the latter was a child of seven. She took her out of pity. The Prestons were then living next to the asylum, and Abbey used to come and confide her troubles to the lady through a hole in the fence—how she longed to "live in a little house, and eat at a little table," and own "a doll, and wear cloth clothes." She used pathetically to tell that there seemed to be so many of her she was sick of seeing herself. By this she meant that

every child in the asylum wore a dingy, nondescript uniform and looked like every other one. Mrs. Preston took her, treated her very kindly, and in return Abbey gave to her most unbounded gratitude and affection. When the children came, she was their devoted slave. As time ran on she developed striking qualities. At twenty-two she was "one of the family for life," as she declared; but no member could be less exacting and more useful. In person Abbey was short, almost a dwarf. She had a round, good-natured face, prominent greenish eyes and brown hair which she would keep short enough to stand erect all over her large head. She was skilled in all kinds of housework, and was a good seamstress. Anything which must be learned from a book she had always detested. It was only after pangs, tears and mighty rebellions that she had ever learned to read. She counted on her fingers like a savage and spelled (when forced to spell) phonetically, but after no system ever devised by man. When she was of an age to earn wages, Mrs. Preston began to pay her what she thought

was right. At first Abbey resented it with grief and wrath, as if she were being degraded in rank. When persuaded to look at the matter more calmly, only one argument had moved her—namely, that people would call the Prestons stingy and unjust if they took her services for nothing but her board and clothes. Once, when finances were at a very low ebb, Mrs. Preston begged her to go away where she could earn more money; but Abbey pleaded in a hurt way: “You might just as well turn off Ruth or Madge, and it is awful cruel to make me feel like a hired girl and nothing more.” After that it was settled that Abbey should share their fortunes, good or ill. It was necessary, however, to put her wages for her in the savings-bank, experience having proved that when they were paid to her she spent them in marbles, taffy or jointed dolls, according to the latest whim of the children. We have given considerable space to Abbey, but she deserves all the honor due to unselfishness.

When she had served Ruth and heard about her late attack, she looked her curi-

ously over, as if expecting to find visible marks left on her somewhere; then she said,

“It is books—just nothing else, Miss Ruthie. I don’t believe books was ever meant to be studied. If I’d been kept at ’em as your mother begun with me, I’d have been pilfering around some lunatic asylum this minute. I’m thankful she see what I was good for and let me do it.”

Ruth gave a little laugh at thought of honest Abbey “pilfering around” anywhere; but, as she hardly knew what word Abbey wanted to use, she only laughed. It was of no use to set Abbey right on such trifles. Her waffles were delicious, so Ruth praised them and sent her away happy.

When supper was over, Madge and Johnny stayed in the dining-room to study; for during the process of taking in learning the latter always swung his heels and buzzed as if a great deal of inside machinery were sadly in need of oil. Madge kept him company because where the rest of the family were she would talk instead of studying. The elder members of the household

returned to the hall and sat about the fire to enjoy the evening in comfort after the labors of the day. Mrs. Preston, who had made a few calls that afternoon, told grandma a funny incident she had heard, together with some innocent bits of gossip. The "Professor," as every one called Mr. Preston, read his paper for a while, when, happening to put his hand in his pocket, he drew out a letter and exclaimed,

"Well, well! I forgot to tell you some news that will astonish you, Mary. Here is a letter I received this noon from John Raynor. He is going to Europe in May on business for the firm, and at first he meant to return as soon as his business was done; but he needs a play-spell, and his wife—Cousin Jane—wants to travel a little. In view of these facts, he says, he shall stay abroad six or seven months."

"Will they take Bert with them?" asked Mrs. Preston.

"No, I think not. John says he wants very much to go, but for many reasons he does not think it wise. Bert has been interrupted in his studies and is backward for

his age ; so his father says he must apply himself and waste no time for a few years. The reason of John's letter, however, was not so much to say they were going to Europe as to tell us that they were coming to make us a brief visit as soon as he could leave his business."

"We will enjoy their visit," said Mrs. Preston, "but it seems a little odd to come just before their trip, especially as they were here in the fall."

"John says he does want to see us for some particular purpose. I cannot imagine what it may be."

"I devoutly hope," exclaimed grandma, dropping her knitting in her lap, "that he does not want to leave that *awful* boy in your care."

Mrs. Preston looked grave, while the Professor laughed. Grandma had put into words the thought that had suddenly entered both their minds.

"Such a little pest as he was that time they brought him last! In fact, he always has been a dreadful child. Before he was out of dresses he put the parlor copy of

Shakespeare in the tea-kettle and boiled it to rags," sighed the old lady.

It was singular that, while Grandma Grey considered boys in general terrible things, she never could be brought to own that her favorite Johnny was anything but a model child. Even when he dyed her cat indigo blue, she chose to consider it merely a sort of harmless experiment in chemistry.

"Oh, he is not our boy," returned the Professor, "or else we would find him endurable; but we won't worry over anything so vague as this possibility."

Mrs. Preston's face brightened. She turned to speak to Ruth; then, seeing her eyes shut, she thought her asleep. But Ruth was very wide awake: she was fancying how it would seem to travel—to wander, for instance, over some half-ruined castle where lords and ladies had lived in former ages, to look down from high walls, to peer into dark dungeons. Her waking dreams at last began to lose distinctness, and she was certainly dozing when some one lifted the old-fashioned knocker left on the front



door and dropped it heavily. Before the Professor could rise from his easy-chair the door opened, and in walked a tall, thin, elderly man, who coolly remarked, "How do you all do?" as he came toward the fire.

Everybody had conquered the first surprise in a moment. The Professor had said, "Why, it is *you*, is it, Henry?" and Mrs. Preston had given him a chair. He merely nodded in recognition of her action, and then, as an after-thought, held out his hand to Grandma Grey, but even to her said nothing.

"Traveled far?" asked the head of the house, with a twinkle in his eye.

"From Kansas City."

"Are you well?"

"Yes."

"Have you had your supper?" asked Mrs. Preston.

"All I want," was the quiet reply.

Ruth, who had risen from her reclining position at the new-comer's entrance, but who had received no recognition whatever, now sank back to hide her smiles. This

was her father's own brother, whom she had not seen in two years, but whose ways she well understood. Ever since she could remember, at intervals of from one to three years Uncle Henry had appeared thus among them. From whence he came, what he had been doing or where he went when he left them was known to the Professor if his guest saw fit to tell, not otherwise. His own peculiarity was simply this: he hated talk—or, rather, he hated to talk. He was a single man, of some means (how well off no one knew); he had no disagreeable traits. He dropped into the family circle, asking nothing but to be there and to be let alone. Sometimes he stayed a month, sometimes six months. When he left, he always put in Mrs. Preston's hand a sum of money equal to an ordinary board-bill, and departed with never a word of farewell. Naturally enough, the children were not enthusiastic in their affection for him, but they could not dislike him, as he in no way interfered with them. He spent his time in long walks or over a book. No one, after the first civilities, ever spoke to him unneces-

sarily, and he himself made always the briefest response possible. Even this evening, when he had gotten himself into a warm corner, the flow of conversation went on as if he were not there. At intervals the Professor read paragraphs from the evening paper, and between-times Mrs. Preston planned how to remake the girls' last-year merino dresses.

A little later Ruth found herself rubbing her eyes, while her mother's laughing voice sounded in her ears:

"I declare, I shall have to shake you and unbutton your dress for you, as I used to when you were five years old and had this same trick of going sound asleep on this old lounge."

"I say, Ruth," whispered Johnny, "Uncle Henry is here. Same good boy he always was, you know; 'seen-and-not-heard' sort. How they must have drilled that into him when he was young!"

"Go right to bed," said Mother Preston, sternly, but with a little pucker about her lips, which Johnny kissed as he departed.

And that day ended—the last of Ruth's

school-days for that term, as she said to herself half regretfully, half gladly; for she was convinced her mother knew best in saying she needed a rest.

## CHAPTER II.

### *A MORNING WITH GRANDMA.*

“The creed of the true saint is to make the best of life, and make the most of it.”—CHAPIN.

THE expected arrival of guests at the Prestons' always made a certain stir of preparation which the children found delightful. The house was not large enough for “spare-rooms,” so that Madge must help her mother change about the sleeping-arrangements. If Abbey was a little busier than usual in the kitchen, Grandma Grey was always glad of an excuse to help in that department. Accordingly, a week or so after the evening last mentioned, everybody was somewhat excited to learn from a telegram that the Raynors would be in town that night. It happened, fortunately, to be Saturday, when Madge was home to help or hinder as the case might be. She tied a

little red handkerchief over her glossy curls and at once attacked the pretty parlor, which was always her favorite field of action. She thought the big-figured Brussels carpet there, with its gay roses, the height of elegance; she admired the linen window-shades, on which were painted tropical landscapes; she found no fault with the ancient mahogany furniture when she had polished it until it shone like a mirror. The room was always in order, but Madge liked to rearrange the shells, the books of engravings, her grandmother's screens of painted velvet and some Indian curiosities. Johnny's share of the work was to make a fire in the wood-burning stove—for they did not afford a fire here every day—and as he piled in the "chunks," to keep all day "if the damper was shut," he asked Madge what Bert Raynor was "like."

"I have not seen him since I was eight years old and he was eleven," she replied. "Then he was a great deal better-looking than you are, Johnny, but not half as good-natured. I never was in so much mischief in my life as during the week he

was here. But I remember he was very generous, and was always buying candy."

Johnny mused as he lighted the fire; then he remarked,

"He's a big-feeling chap by this time. About eighteen years old, isn't he?"

Madge was about to add some further information to that already given him, when grandma called her to stone raisins for a kind of spice-cake no one ever made quite as nice as the old lady. The kitchen was full of agreeable odors, for Abbey was making mince-pies and roasting fowls. Ruth had ensconced herself in a quiet corner with her work-basket. Madge went to work at the raisins after a warning from her grandmother not to drop more into her mouth than she put into the bowl.

"What under the sun are you doing, Ruth?" laughed Madge soon. "I never saw you busy over such embroidery before."

Ruth joined the laugh as she displayed a lapful of woolen socks in all stages of dilapidation, some toeless, some heelless, some almost soleless.

"These are Uncle Henry's," she explained.

“Mamma found them in his room, and was going to mend them herself; but, with all papa’s, Johnny’s and the rest, I think she has too many. Now I am out of school I mean to mend my own stockings and Uncle Henry’s.”

“I am glad I go to school,” said Madge.—  
“Grandma, did you have to darn stockings when you were young?”

“I not only darned them, but in the long evenings I had my task in knitting,” replied the old lady. “No young lady was thought ready to be married until she had knit herself a pillow-case full of stockings; so one had to begin early.”

“I should never have been anybody’s grandmother, then, if I had been born seventy-seven years ago.”

“Oh yes, dear; you would have done as I did. I was taught needlework, and I embroidered a cambric vandyke. I made patchwork at six years old, and at seven I made a beautiful sampler. I can remember it perfectly—half a yard square of yellow canvas with the alphabet in capital letters at the top, then numbers from one to ten, then the



date; next small black silk italics over a trailing green vine with pretty little pink roses, and the motto: 'Beauty and wit will die, learning will vanish away, and all the arts of life be soon forgotten; but virtue will remain for ever.' When I pricked my little tender fingers over those grave words, I didn't suppose I should, three-quarters of a century after, be repeating them and remembering the beauty and the wit—the dear, youthful faces I have seen vanish in all these years," said the old lady, gazing thoughtfully over the young girls' heads at the sky beyond the neighboring roofs.

Abbey, who regarded grandma as nothing less than a saint, exclaimed, as she rolled out pie-crust,

"And you didn't think, either, I suppose, that you were going to show in your own self how pure goodness just outlasted all the rest?—though, as to that, you're handsome yet."

Grandma blushed like a girl, and went right on describing her sampler:

"You might laugh at the things I worked next, but I think they were as sensible as the

fashionable sunflowers nowadays. Any way, I embroidered two white silk worsted roosters with long black tails, two big blue-and-red roses, some trees, some baskets of fruit, a few yellow birds and a couple of grass-green silk dogs, then a red, yellow and green border around the whole. How I would like to see that new bright sampler and be put back for a few minutes with the friends I showed it to that day it was finished in the years so far away!"

"Did you go to school in those days?" asked Madge, popping a raisin into her mouth.

"I had a governess first—a Miss Nancy Smith—whom I ungratefully considered a cross old maid because she was of sterling old Puritan stock and strictly enforced my Bible lessons and catechism; I have lived to prove to myself the value of her instructions. Later I studied Latin with Dr. Strong, the village clergyman; I used to go to his study tugging a big dictionary with brass clasps which had been my great-grandfather's. Dr. Strong was very learned, but very lazy; he used to sit during the les-

son with his heels out of the window and smoking a pipe. I was as fond of reading as Ruth, and had my little library of Mrs. Chapone's works, Miss Edgeworth's, Hannah More's, and others."

"I wish I had known you in those days," said Ruth, threading her darning-needle, while Madge irrelevantly inquired,

"Did you have pretty dresses, grandma?"

"Well, I never had rich ones or any jewels when I was a child; such a display would have been thought vulgar. I remember my first visit to Boston was made in winter. My father took me the hundred miles in an open sleigh. We went to the Marboro' House—an excellent hotel then—and after dinner, which was served in our room, the maid dressed me in a silk and worsted cloth called 'Caroline plaid' after the queen of England, who was then in great trouble and much talked of. That same afternoon my father bought me a seal-skin cap of a golden color, with a gold-lace band and a tassel to match."

"Well, I am sure that was 'gorgeous,' as girls say nowadays," commented Madge.

“When I was a young lady,” continued the old lady, getting, as the girls mischievously called it, “a little worldly” in consequence of the interest shown in her reminiscences, “I had made over for me my mother’s wedding-dress of rose-colored silk with pointed-toed slippers to match.”

“And you liked it, didn’t you?” urged Madge. “I know that girls are always the same.”

Grandma paused in her cake-making and looked at the gay speaker with a beautiful, tender light in her old face:

“Yes, dear; they are always a little apt to want the glitter and pleasant things of the present, and to forget the days that may come when these will be only foolish little memories, so that they need old friends to tell them how all they can bring out of their youth-time of any value is the grace that the heart gains, the characters that they build up by the help of God’s Holy Spirit.”

“I don’t think I’ll ever want to be old,” began Ruth; then, lest in some way she might pain the old lady, she interpolated: “I might if I were sure to become as good

and useful and lovely as you are, grandma ; but it must be so sad to outlive so much and so many.”

“It is only your love, children, that makes you see anything remarkable in your worn-out grandmother ; but I thank God for your love, if it *is* partial. Yes, I get lonely sometimes, but I like to say over to myself a poem I learned a few years ago. When I put this cake in the oven, I will tell you two or three verses.”

The girls were quite sure they had heard it before, but they liked to hear the old lady’s sweet, quavering voice ; while Abbey, who could no more have repeated a verse of poetry than she could have composed one, always listened with arms akimbo and mouth half open.

The cake in the oven, the old lady sat in an easy-chair to rest and began :

““Old perfumes wander back from fields of clover,  
Seen in the light of suns which long have set ;  
Beloved ones whose earthly toil is over  
Draw near, as if they lived among us yet.

““Old voices call me ; through the dusk returning,  
I hear the echo of departed feet ;

And then I ask, with vain and troubled yearning,  
What is the charm which makes old things so sweet.

“Must the old joys be evermore withholden?  
Even their memory keeps me pure and true;  
And yet from out Jerusalem the golden  
God speaketh, saying, “I make all things new.”

“He giveth life—ay, life in all its sweetness:  
Old loves, old sunny scenes, will he restore;  
Only the curse of sin and incompleteness  
Shall taint thy work and vex thy heart no more.

“Love him in daily work and earnest living,  
And faith shall lift thee to his sunlit heights;  
Then shall a psalm of gladness and thanksgiving  
Fill the calm hour that comes between the lights.’”

There was a little silence after that before  
Ruth said,

“Common, every-day lives of mere school-girls like Madge and me seem so— Well, just commonplace: nothing more.”

“The best things always are commonplace,” replied grandma; “nothing is more commonplace than sunshine, or better. It is a good deal so with people. I knew a young woman once who was just wonderful in great emergencies, but the rest of the time she was not any more desirable than an emergency.”

“But it must be fine to be something very remarkable,” said Madge.

“Yes, to be remarkably faithful, like Abbey here,” said grandma, placidly. (It was always the old lady’s way to drop a word of deserved praise in some obscure life where it would remain like a sweet perfume long after.) “Like Abbey, who does her duty so well every day that we forget to think how she cares for all our comfort; but her heavenly Father takes note of such conscientious work.”

Abbey spluttered out, “Why, now, grandma, you stop puffin’ me up,” but there was a suspicious shining in her eyes as she plied her rolling-pin with renewed vigor.

“Well, I hope I am being faithful in seeding these raisins; they are sticky and disagreeable enough,” said Madge, who was now on a second supply, for another cake.

“And you have rewarded your own virtue so steadily as you went along that you don’t want to eat any more, do you?” laughed Ruth; and after that they chatted about all sorts of subjects, but chiefly of the expected guests.

Now, for some reason best known to themselves, the children had decided that Bert Raynor would very likely come with his parents. Madge and Johnny sincerely hoped this would be the case. Ruth was not so desirous to see the youth; she remembered too many of his old pranks. Up stairs was a drawing-book which she had once proudly displayed as full of her "drawings from nature." Could she forget how Bert made over one perfect cob of corn into just as perfect an alligator by one stroke that added a tail and a few touches for a head, how he pretended he had read her diary, how he gave her candy full of red pepper? No; Ruth shared her grandmother's aversion to Bert, although in a much milder form.

In the afternoon there came a severe storm of wind, rain and sleet. The tempest howled about the old yellow house, making the hospitable preparations within seem doubly cheerful. Mr. Preston went to the station to meet the guests about four o'clock, but the train was delayed, and it was almost dark before Johnny, watching at the parlor-



window, cried out that he saw the old hack from the station coming slowly up the hill.

“Bert did not come,” he added, a few minutes later, when only three people alighted at the gate and hurried toward the door the girls held open.

“Cousin Jane” was the first to get under shelter in the warm, bright hall, and the girls busied themselves getting her out of her numerous wraps; while Mrs. Preston, after a hearty greeting, hurried to welcome Cousin John as cordially.

Mrs. Raynor was a short, plump, fair woman of middle age with many amiable qualities and some amusing peculiarities. She imagined that her sagacity and knowledge of human nature were potent in controlling her husband’s thoughts and conduct, and that she was a person singularly free from whims and prejudices. He never contradicted her; he carried an umbrella whenever she declared it was going to rain; he frequently answered her very original propositions with an appreciative smile, which showed, of course, that he agreed with her. He was a very different type of man from

the tall, grave Professor, being a large, ruddy, broad-shouldered gentleman with a loud, jovial voice and an air of good-comradeship which the Preston young people found very attractive. Soon after their arrival Abbey had supper ready, and it was a meal so appetizing, or else enlivened by such pleasant conversation, that they lingered long over it.

“So you are going to Europe, are you, John? and Cousin Jane does not mean to be left behind,” said Mrs. Preston.

“No, indeed!” said Mrs. Raynor, promptly. “John could never get himself around safely; he speaks no foreign language, and he is very absent-minded.”

John gallantly remarked that he should be absent-hearted if he were to leave his wife at home, and then the talk ran on about their proposed trip, until there came a loud rap of the great brass knocker on the front door.

“Who can be calling such a wild evening as this?” exclaimed Mrs. Preston.

“I would not wonder if it were old Dr. Hickox,” returned the Professor; “I met him to-day in the post-office, and told him

John Raynor would be in town to-night.— He always keeps a lively interest in you because of your kindness to that wild boy of his.”

Sure enough, it was the doctor. Abbey led him into the parlor, where the others immediately followed—that is, all but Uncle Henry. For him Abbey always lighted the student-lamp and made bright the dining-room fire. Here at the table he would read until bedtime.

Dr. Hickox took off his overcoat and visited for an hour or more before he rose to go.

Now, no one of the cheerful group in the cozy old parlor had any idea that the doctor's call had not been purely a social one—that is, no one but the Professor. In the last few days, while Mrs. Preston had been nursing, petting and worrying a little over Ruth, he had been as sympathetic and thoughtful as ever, but he had betrayed no unusual anxiety about his daughter's health; it would have alarmed his wife had she known how troubled he really felt. Years ago he had seen two young and

lovely sisters about the age of his Ruth fade away with consumption ; he resolved to know at once if his child were in the least danger from any disease of this sort. Dr. Hickox, who had received orders to be cautious, apparently finished his call before he began to banter Madge about spoiling her eyes with over-study—a favorite joke of his.

Mrs. Preston took an opportunity to whisper to her husband,

“ Ask his advice about Ruth ; now we have him here, it is just the time.”

So Ruth was led into the hall and taken in hand by the old doctor, who amused her with many comical speeches while he possessed himself of much information. Finally, he dismissed her as “ good for seventy years yet if she took care of herself.” When she had returned to the parlor, he said to the Professor,

“ That girl has your brain, and she would be an intelligent, cultured woman if she never again saw the inside of a schoolroom. Stop all hard study ; just let her ‘ browse around ’ among books, as somebody said, and the education will come.”

“Do you see any indications of consumption, doctor?” interrupted Mr. Preston.

“No; but if you overwork and tire her, exhaust her vitality, let her take a hard cold and neglect it, you would find out the difference between her constitution and Madge’s. Ruth wants to be well fed, kept out of doors, put to bed early; and if next summer you could send her to the seaside or the mountains, that might do her a world of good. In the mean time, I assure you she is not ill, but she is very weak—‘run down,’ as the old women say.”

Much relieved to hear this last assertion, the Professor saw the doctor depart and went himself back to the family and guests. He fancied, as he joined them, that something a little unusual was under consideration. Grandma Grey was knitting as if some great issue depended on the activity of her needles, Mrs. Preston looked uncomfortable, and Madge and Johnny were radiant with suppressed fun whose source he began to suspect a little later

“Yes, the moment John said that Bert must stay behind us I thought, ‘There is no

one to whom I would trust him so soon as to Professor Preston.' You see, he could come right here for his vacation, which must be spent out of the city, and we, knowing him to be in your family, would feel perfectly easy in our minds about him. Then, when the school-year began, he could commence here right under the Professor, and I have no doubt he would make better progress than he ever made in his life before. Bert is a little backward; he has such an active mind that he can't seem to concentrate his attention on any one thing long enough to master it."

Mrs. Raynor was speaking; and when she paused just there for breath, Grandma Grey innocently commented:

"He used to be very active in *body* too."

"Yes, he is; you will find him very lively. No house can be dull with our Bert in it. Now, of course, I don't say you *must* fall into this arrangement, but I want you to consider it while we are here; and I do hope you will give us a favorable decision."

Mrs. Preston was never speechless unless

it was necessary to say something disagreeable. Now, she did not want Bert Raynor in her family, but to tell this to his mother was not easy. Her husband, who understood her well, relieved her embarrassment by calmly questioning the parents about Bert and ignoring the point urged by his mother.

Johnny repaired to the dining-room and announced to Abbey that Bert was surely coming to stay a year, if not longer. Uncle Henry, glancing up from his book, listened unnoticed. Abbey, who was darning a big hole in Johnny's jacket, clasped the garment to her bosom with a gesture of dismay :

“If they are goin' travelin', they just better take along that son o' theirs and leave him in some heathen country. The natives couldn't teach him anything more outrageous than he always knew, and he might get into office among them.—Say, now, Johnny, will your mar stand *that*?”

“I don't believe they are going to let her have any choice. Besides, Abbey, if he is worse than a heathen, we ought to be mis-

sionaries. Living with a good little boy like me might do wonders for him," returned Johnny, rolling up the whites of his eyes.

"See here!" said Abbey; "I would not set up for a missionary until I had quit tearin' my clothes all to pieces slidin' down hill."

"Who is Bert Raynor, and what is he coming here for?" suddenly asked Uncle Henry.

It was so remarkable for him to show any curiosity that Johnny promptly told him all he knew of the matter. The gentleman listened, made no remark, and soon resumed his reading.

When Ruth left the old doctor, she returned to her low seat by the fire, and no one noticed her preoccupied air. She did not even arouse herself to a sense of what was going on regarding Bert Raynor, for her mind was suddenly full of new, strange thoughts. Johnny used to say that Madge would run straight toward a stone wall and never know it until she bumped her head; with Ruth it was different. The moment



Dr. Hickox summoned her, she knew with lightning-like intuition that her father had asked him to call; she read the anxiety in the Professor's face as he pretended to be examining the barometer while he awaited the doctor's judgment. She even remembered those sisters of whom her father had often spoken—the one just seventeen, who was never ill enough to remain in bed, but one summer morning, sitting in her easy-chair, leaned back and softly breathed out her life. Ruth had thought that a strangely beautiful way to die—that is, for some one else to die. To-night a fancy crept into her mind that filled her with a mysterious awe. What if she were some day to slip out of this warm, bright home, if there should be an evening—months, years, hence—when the cheerful group would be complete *without* her? Glancing about at the familiar faces, with something rising in her throat and eyes dimming a little, she saw Grandma Grey smiling serenely over her knitting. Like a gleam of comfort came the thought, “*She* says she does not fear what is coming soon to

her—that ‘death is the portico of her Father’s house;’ that she will be only a minute out of life’s sunshine as she passes under the shadow. I would have her with me.”

“I would not sit up late, dear,” whispered her mother to her; and, glad to be excused, Ruth went soberly to her own room.

One could have told in a second which of the two front chambers was Ruth’s and which Madge’s. In Ruth’s everything was orderly, spotless and, as far as she could make it, tasteful. To-night, as she looked about the place, it seemed so cozy, so home-like, her eyes filled with tears. She did not actually fear to die, for Ruth was a true Christian and knew whom she had believed, but life was so fair, so sweet, to her.

An hour later, when Mrs. Preston had seen her guests made comfortable for the night, she stopped to see if all was right with Ruth, and found her very wide awake.

“This will never do,” said her mother; “I shall have to send you to bed ‘with the chickens’ if you need so much preparation for sleep.”

“What did Dr. Hickox think ailed me, mother?” asked Ruth, with a tremor in her voice that suggested much of the truth to the loving listener.

“He said what delighted us,” returned her mother, brightly. “Your father was more worried about you than I knew; he confessed this after he found his fears were groundless. The doctor says you have no disease whatever, and only need good care and proper precautions to be as well as you ever were, or better.”

“I am glad. I—I thought perhaps I was going to die,” confessed Ruth, a little hysterically.

“And were you afraid?”

Ruth waited, and her mother sat in silence by the bed for a moment or more; then the young girl replied:

“I am not afraid of anything when I remember all the promises of the Bible and think what heaven must be, but I am so happy with you on earth.”

“And I hope that the good God will leave us together for many years. Now go to sleep. Here is a lovely verse of a

German hymn on your calendar for this day; take it as a good-night message, Ruth;" and, rising, her mother read from the tablets on the door:

“Why shouldst thou feel with sorrow  
About to-morrow,  
My heart?  
One watches all with care most true;  
Doubt not that He will give thee, too,  
Thy part.’”

## CHAPTER III.

### ABBEY'S "VERSATION."

"The Spaniard of whom Southey tells that he put on magnifying-glasses when he ate cherries to make them larger had the true philosophy of happiness."

A FEW days after the evening mentioned, Mrs. Preston found her husband for a half hour alone, and exclaimed,

"This is just the chance to talk with you that I have been looking for. What are we going to do about this Raynor boy?"

"What do you want to do about him?"

"Just to let him alone with half a State between us. But what reason can we give for refusing him a home?"

"What *is* your reason?"

"Not one pleasant to tell his parents. He made himself a nuisance when he visited us before. The neighbors detested him; grandma winces even now when his name is spoken."

“He was a mere cub at that time; now he is too old for such capers as he then indulged in.”

“Perhaps. But, aside from the fact that they wish it and I would like to oblige his father and mother, why should we take him in? Our family is not very small as it is,” said Mrs. Preston.

Her husband looked thoughtfully into space a while before he replied:

“We might do the boy good if he is a rattle-brained fellow, as I imagine he may be.”

“Yes, and he might do our boy great harm.”

“Very true; and I must confess the chief motive that would influence me is a more selfish one.”

“What do you mean?” asked his wife.

“John Raynor is a very prosperous business-man, you know, and he remarked yesterday that if we took Bert into our family he should expect to pay a very liberal sum for his board and teaching. He made me understand delicately that he did not think money could pay for such a home and Chris-

tian influences as the boy would have in coming here. Now, you know, my salary gets us comforts, but not many luxuries; and when, last night, Dr. Hickox said Ruth ought to go next summer to the seaside or the mountains, I did not see how that could be accomplished. Bert's board-money might make such a trip feasible."

"Let him come, then, by all means," cried Mrs. Preston; "for I racked my brains until after midnight last night wondering how we ever could spare money to send Ruth away. She could not go anywhere alone, and that increased the difficulty. Now we may be able to save enough to have you go with her."

"No, indeed! You would be the one to go," returned the Professor."

"Well, we won't pack our trunks to-day," laughed his wife as she hurried to the kitchen to help Abbey with the dinner.

Meanwhile, up in Madge's room there was a sewing-society in progress. It consisted of three members, who sewed fast and talked faster. In the middle of the floor sat Madge diving into a big "piece-bag" full of odds

and ends of woolen and silk. Cousin Jane had expressed a wish for a nice little pin-cushion to carry in her trunk to Europe, and they had discovered that she ought to have a button-bag, a case for toilet-articles, a pair of soft slippers to wear in her steamer-berth, and half a dozen other articles such as girls delight to make, and which they value more than costlier ones that they might purchase.

“Now, Cousin Jane, I am going to make you a charming little pin-roll to carry in your pocket,” said Madge. “Only think! some day you may tear your dress on Shakespeare’s tomb, and out will come my handiwork there in Westminster Abbey, and—

“Why, Madge Preston!” exclaimed Ruth. “Shakespeare is not buried in Westminster, and nobody could tear a dress on his tomb in Avon if she tried. A *flat* stone marks it.”

“Well, all the same, I wish I could put myself into this ball like a pin and go to Europe too. Oh dear! how dreadfully monotonous life is to some people! Can



you believe that I never yet have been more than a hundred miles from home?"

"I never traveled much when I was a girl," said Cousin Jane, holding some wool for Ruth to wind.

"Tell us about your trip, please. Where are you going first?"

"Oh, zigzagging about England and Scotland for a while; then on to the Continent. Yes, I wish you two girls could go with me; it would give you enough to think of all your life, and it would be so pleasant for me to have some one besides a man. John is an excellent traveling companion, but he does not enjoy everything that we would like."

"Oh dear!" sighed Madge again. "Only to imagine the fun of it, and then to contrast it with trudging through the mud every day down to hours of dry mathematics!—I don't suppose, Ruth, that we can ever travel anywhere, do you? When the last year ended and father's salary was paid and spent, he had just seventeen dollars left, he said."

"Seventeen dollars, no debts and innu-

merable blessings; that was what he said, I remember," added Ruth.

"There! this crimson flannel will line the slippers and be soft to your feet, Cousin Jane," exclaimed Madge, putting her head way into the bag and coming out with her curls in disorder while she rattled on. "Sometimes it seems just mean to think we are held in so tight—all of us. Here is father, an awfully learned man—"

"Oh, Madge!"

"Well, *very* learned, then.—And mother good as any Catholic saint, or better. I think they ought to be beyond the necessity of fussing to make sixpences buy shillings' worth."

Now, Ruth did not like to have their domestic affairs talked about in this free fashion, and she began herself to talk more than usual of other things.

"I feel as if I had traveled," she remarked, "for last winter we took a trip. That is, mother and I took it: Madge never was on time. We first studied atlases, you know, and marked out a route to every fascinating place we would like to visit, and then we

started. We landed at Liverpool, and went to Chester. One lovely morning we walked around the old Roman walls and took lunch in the Yacht Inn, where Dean Swift once asked the clergy of Chester to supper, and when they refused to come he wrote a satire on the parlor-window pane with his diamond ring. You look, Cousin Jane, and see if it is legible. We took a day in the cathedral, and then went on to Warwick Castle. We never were tired, we had no fees to pay, and did not bother about railroads."

"Yes, you would be surprised to know how much history and literature I failed to learn by coasting on the hill with Johnny. I ought to be ashamed, and I am," remarked Madge, humming a lively air in spite of her humiliation.

"Well, I am free to confess that I do not know much about the places or the things I am to see. I must learn as I go," was Mrs. Raynor's calm statement.

At that moment the dinner-bell rang, and the society adjourned.

That evening Mr. Raynor said to his wife,

“You will be glad to know, Jane, that the Professor has given me his decision at last in regard to Bert.”

“They won't take him, I presume?” interrupted his wife, a little sharply.

“Why do you presume that?”

“Oh, I began to feel it in the air, even while I talked, that the idea did not strike them favorably.”

“I believe you are right as far as that goes—they are too honest not to be a little transparent—but they *have* consented to take Bert for the entire time of our absence.”

“Oh, I am so glad! But why did they hesitate, and why consent?”

“They demurred because Bert acted like a wild Indian when he was here before; they take him now, I imagine, because the Professor's salary is small and his expenses are not.”

“Yes, that agrees with some speeches which Madge made this morning. She is a wide-awake little creature.”

And now it may be as well to report what

passed between Uncle Henry and Abbey as they sat together that same evening in the dining-room. A great deal of quiet amusement was afforded the young people by what Abbey called her *conversations* with Uncle Henry. No one else ever ventured to tell him anything and everything pertaining to the family interests, because the rest feared to bore him; but Abbey, from the first day that he entered their house, as Madge said, "marked him for her own" in the sense of some one to do for. She cooked him just what he liked just as he liked it, and she found out preferences that the others did not discover. She insisted that there were times when he liked to "converse," and that she knew when to hold her peace and when to talk. Accordingly, she put him into possession of many facts and frequent original reflections on these facts. Sometimes he said, "Humph!" once or twice, at long intervals, asked, "Who?" or "What?" not seldom he went to bed just as Abbey was coming to the climax of a story; but the oddest part of the performance was that Abbey would serenely inter-

pret Uncle Henry's sentiments to the family after one of these interviews, telling them what he thought, liked, approved and disapproved of, and, while she frankly admitted that he did not "talk much," she always professed to understand him without words. When Johnny expounded to her the theory that it took *two* persons, at least, to *converse*, she said they had 'versations, then; and ever after Abbey's "'versations" were the children's fun.

Uncle Henry had paused in reading a mining report, and was gazing into the open front of the coal-stove, when Abbey spoke.

"I didn't s'pose that Johnny knew what he was talking about when he said the Raynor fellow was coming, but he *is* as sure as tribulation and disaster. I'd got all ready to beg and beseech grandma to pray him off on somebody else—for it seems as if that old lady's prayers always some way were answered—when I saw it couldn't be done; for, you see, there is such a good reason *why* he had better come."

Uncle Henry was the picture of indifference as Abbey continued:

"You see, Ruth must have a change when the weather gets warmer; the doctor told Mr. Preston she must, for her father was mightily stirred up for fear she might be going into a decline. Now, unless something like good pay for this pestiferous boy's keeping allowed them a margin for extras, I don't s'pose they could afford summer trips."

"What is 'pestiferous'?"

A question of three words from Uncle Henry, even if it showed inattention to all that had gone before, was like an inspiration to Abbey.

"Bert is pestiferous. Why, you were here yourself once when he spoiled all my nice kitchen wall-paper—yellow, it was, with pink thistles all over it. I papered that room myself. I had gone to prayer-meeting that night, and so had all the older ones but grandma. She was in her own room and Ruth with her. Madge and Bert, who had been to the woods, got home late, and found their supper left on a side-table in the kitchen. While they were eating it they got to discussing about churches, and

Madge happened to say the folks had gone to church that night. Bert said they hadn't, they had only gone to 'meetin'-house;' that Presbyterians couldn't say they had a church, only Episcopalians could. (The Raynors are Episcopalians.) My! didn't that fire up Madge! She said Episcopalians were most like Roman Catholics and never made any prayers for themselves, because they weren't taught how; and Bert he said everybody knew Presbyterians had 'blue skins.' Now, you'd have supposed Madge would have pointed him right to her whole family's complexions and been satisfied; but no, sir: them little nine-and ten-year-old creatures went at it fightin' like little roosters over theology and whose church was best. Madge, who never would tell a lie, confessed afterward that she scratched him, and bit too; and Bert— Well, I'll say *that* for him: he wouldn't fight a small girl, but he was just as mad! and so he seized the teapot, that I had left on the back of the stove: sometimes the Professor liked a little tea in the evening. Bert seized that, poured out the whole contents and went to firing the soaked tea-grounds at her. If



you had seen the walls and the ceiling, you would have thought that little copper-bottomed teapot must have held a gallon and all grounds. Right in the middle of the discussion Grandma Grey came to see what could be the matter; and when she found out, she set them down in two of my kitchen-chairs—pretty-looking bipeds they were too—and she talked. I got home just in time to hear her, and I never'll forget to the day of my death what she said. You couldn't have told, if you had not known before, whether she was herself a Presbyterian or a 'Piscopal, but you would have found out what a *Christian* was. She told about the great army of men, women and children lovin' their Saviour and tryin' to serve him, some in one division, some in another. She said if they were in earnest they loved every honest member of every part of the true Christian army, and loved our Lord so that they grew gentle and Christlike. If they were ignorant and out of place in his army, they quarreled and fought and hated one another. I myself was taken all aback first by those nasty dabs of tea-grounds splashed all

over walls and window-panes, and I was only waiting to settle matters with that Bert myself; but before grandma got done and was quotin', 'My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue, but in deed and in truth,' I was ready to forgive these scamps, especially as Bert was swallowing lumps in his throat and Madge cried right out that she was sorry and went to cleaning off the spots she had made on the little Episcopal's clothes when she flung the fistfuls of tea-grounds back. Oh dear! where did I start?"

Probably Uncle Henry had not the least idea. He went on reading for a while, then he put down his book, saying,

"Ruth is too white."

Started on that line, Abbey waxed eloquent. She loved every one of the family as if each had been her own flesh and blood, but her regard for Ruth was unique. If Grandma Grey was in Abbey's eyes the best woman on earth, Ruth was to her a little rarer and finer than any other young girl. She could perceive that merry Madge had faults—could even, under much provocation, tell her of them; but the younger

sister's opinions were laws to Abbey, who considered her good and learned and beautiful. She might not have been able to give a better reason for her judgment than her declaration to Uncle Henry that "Ruth never came down to breakfast in her life that she did not say 'Good-morning' to me." To-night she told of the young girl having to leave school and all details that no one had thought it wise to weary Uncle Henry in narrating. While the tide of her talk was running rapidly on, he all at once aroused himself and asked,

"Where did you come from?"

"Why, I have been here all the evening, sir," she exclaimed, her great eyes more prominent than usual in her surprise.

"I know. But you are not related to the family?"

"Oh no! I was a nankeen orphan." Then, seeing her companion stare, she explained: "We all wore nankeen uniforms in the asylum. I was too homely to be chosen for adoption, so I crawled through a hole in the fence and gave myself away. I believe now the Lord meant me to get

just where I am, and that makes me thankful. When people don't feel that way, I suppose they are unhappy."

"You are a good, industrious girl," said Uncle Henry, starting for his room; and Abbey felt as if some one had made her a handsome present.

In a few days the Raynors went home, having arranged that their son should come to Hempstead about the first of June, a week or two after they had sailed.

## CHAPTER IV.

### *SPRING.*

“So fair the sky was, and so soft the air !  
The happy birds were hurrying here and there  
As something soon would happen. Reddened now  
The hedges, and in gardens many a bough  
Was over-bold of buds. Sweet days indeed !”

IT was now about two months since Ruth Preston ceased going to school and set herself to the task of regaining her full strength. She had faithfully obeyed her mother and her grandmother, had eaten and slept, walked, rode or rested, as they thought best; yet the fact was evident that Ruth was not better. She could not go up stairs without sighing from weariness, she ate as daintily as a bird, stayed awake nights, and began to be a source of great uneasiness to the rest of the family.

One beautiful morning, as Madge was rushing about her disordered little room in

spasmodic attempts to dress herself for school, to put the room to rights, to commit to memory a rule of algebra and to find a *Rhetoric* which she had mislaid, Ruth appeared and discovered this last under the bed.

“Oh dear, Ruth! I wish you would get well; things are just dreadful in school without you. Miss Elder liked you, and treated me better when you were there; now she is as cross as a bear and as unreasonable as— Oh, beyond comparison.”

“I wish I could be there.”

“Oh, how can you? I would change with you in a minute. Just see! Here you are in that pretty easy wrapper after coming down to a nice late breakfast, and you can read or play all day long. You are to be envied, Ruth Preston.”

“Didn't you jump up singing this very morning, Madge, with your head clear and feeling rested enough for anything?”

“Of course; that goes without saying.”

“Not with me nowadays, for my head feels just as the head of that old doll *Arabella Sophonisba* used to look. It loped

this way and that on her flabby old cotton neck, you remember.”

Madge laughed, then groaned at the sight of a hole torn in her upper skirt, then exclaimed,

“Well, I dread to-day. Miss Elder is getting exasperated at me, and she is unjust and partial. I do not have my lessons as well as when we studied together, and so many ridiculous things occur to make me laugh. Besides, if any of the other girls disturb her, she always glances at me as if I must be the ‘instigation of it,’ as Abbey says.”

“Madge, you will be late to school,” called her mother. “Your father went five minutes ago.”

Madge rushed about a little more excitedly, and, seizing her gloves and hat, hurried away chattering and grumbling. Ruth went softly around her room when she had gone, picking up ribbons, shoes, handkerchiefs and papers, making everything tidy. Wearied even by this light work, she had seated herself in a little rocking-chair when her mother entered.

“Madge is not getting on well in school, is she, Ruth?”

“Well, she does not seem to enjoy it.”

“Your father had a long talk with me about her last night,” said Mrs. Preston, who often gave Ruth her confidence, as if she had been a sister instead of her youngest daughter. “He says she is continually in trouble with Miss Elder.”

“I did not think that Madge was always as much to blame as Miss Elder used to suppose she was; they dislike one another, and that began the trouble. Miss Elder does have favorites, and she shows great partiality; and, while she herself knows what she teaches, I don't think she is a good teacher.”

“Your father is very far from satisfied with her, but he cannot bear to make the least effort to remove her, for he pities her. Her salary is not large, and she has nothing besides it to depend on; she is not healthy, and is irritable. If his department of boys were not so entirely distinct from her charge, he might make matters go smoother; as it is, he cannot. But I am satisfied that Madge is not learning as she ought to learn.”



“There are things that discourage her that father does not know of—I mean in the way that the school-recitations are conducted. He never lets us tell tales, and I do not want to do it; but the standard of honor is higher in his department than it is among the girls.”

“No; he says no one must say that he keeps his children in the school for spies—that they must do right and reflect credit on him. I fear Madge is not doing this last.”

“The term is half gone; perhaps things will be better after vacation,” said Ruth.

Now, it happened that this day was a peculiarly trying one to Madge. The Hempstead Academy, of which Professor Preston was the principal, was an old institution, rather poor and in many ways behind the age. The power of the Professor was limited in a manner exceedingly vexatious to a man of his ability and high ideas of excellence, but the trustees were men of a different stamp. Every day he became more and more dissatisfied with affairs in Miss Elder's department, but that lady had the favor of

the trustees. She wanted fewer improvements, was satisfied with the old text-books, the ancient apparatus for experiments, and had no theories about education.

Professor Preston had invariably treated Miss Elder with the utmost courtesy, upholding her authority on all occasions, and, saving her from overwork, had just as frequently striven to cover up grave failures on her part. Perhaps because she felt her obligations to him and had not magnanimity enough to be grateful, she was instead only jealous, suspicious and constantly on the lookout for offences. Now, Madge Preston gave her continual cause for complaint, and she was far from patient toward Madge.

This day was Monday. Madge had not studied very diligently on Saturday, and so she went to school very poorly prepared for its duties. In mathematics she was, as usual, rather stupid; then came the recitation in rhetoric, which she sometimes enjoyed.

Miss Elder sat on the raised platform at one end of the plain old schoolroom. Just below her was a row of benches where the younger scholars sat when they recited; be-

hind these was a piano, then a bench on which the young ladies of the school preferred to sit while reciting. It is not unlikely that Miss Elder saw fit to be ignorant of the use that piano served. Her classes were not at all well drilled, and her pupils felt no enthusiasm in their studies; but repeatedly, when visitors or trustees had been seated with her on the "rostrum," as her platform was called, these same pupils, *behind* the piano, had given exceedingly fluent recitations. This day the ten young ladies of the class gathered as usual, smiling and prepared, with thumbs in the books in their laps—that is, six of them were thus *prepared*.

The lesson began. Mary Parker, who always sat in plain view of her teacher and without a book, recited, as usual, well. Next to her came little Belle Hughes, equally honest, but not as thorough a student, then the screened pupils. These last answered every question put to them glibly and in the precise words of the text; then out from shelter of the piano at the other end of the class came Madge Preston, whose wits seemed all

wool-gathering. She could not tell what a "metonymy" was, could not give an example of one, calmly insisted, when questioned the next time, that she was not able to define "synecdoche," although Sarah Locke, with her eyes downcast, was whispering, "Figure—where—name of part denotes—whole or the other way."

So eager was Sarah to serve her that Miss Elder must have seen the whole or heard it, but, only angry at Madge, she insisted on knowing why she had not learned her lesson. Madge's honesty in saying that she had not studied it enough sounded a little impertinent, and Miss Elder gave her a lecture more severe than she had ever before bestowed on her. Conscious that she deserved it, Madge might have taken it all meekly if, angry beyond control, Miss Elder had not insinuated that because she had "friends in authority" she dared to "defy law and order in *this* department" of the school. The reference to her father enraged Madge beyond bounds, and she retorted that "law and authority were founded on justice and honesty in the other department."

Miss Elder's face was livid with wrath as she exclaimed,

"Miss Preston, you can be excused at once from another hour's attendance in any class of mine. I shall report your insulting remarks to your father, and he may deal with you as he sees fit."

Madge, with her head very high, walked to her desk, took out a pile of books, and, with just a trifle too much coolness not to be aggravating, sauntered down and out of the schoolroom feeling quite heroic. When she was really out in the quiet street, with her flushed face turned homeward, she began to ask herself what she had to feel heroic over, and what effect her statement of affairs might have on her family. Halfway between the academy and her home there was an old park where a few children played under the trees, and where one could sit undisturbed by outsiders. Here, under a great maple tree, Madge flung down her books and stopped to think the matter over coolly. She must go home and report that she had gone to her classes with lessons not even half learned, because she had spent all her time Saturday in

visiting school-friends, in making herself a red merino sacque, in boiling molasses-candy with Johnny and wishing she could go to Europe as Cousin Jane was going. She had no better reasons for neglecting her duty, and so could give no excuse to her teacher. Miss Elder had reprimanded her severely; her mother would say she deserved reproof, and she admitted to herself that this was true; but the insinuation that she could neglect her duty with impunity because her father was the principal—that Madge assured herself was outrageous; but she did dare to waste her time and provoke her teacher, and, this being true, Miss Elder may have believed what she said. By this time Madge's retort began to look a little less commendable in her own eyes. When asked by her father, or by any one else, what she had meant, she must tell tales of her schoolmates—of how they looked in their books—and she must either accuse Miss Elder of conniving at their deceit or she must be silent and seem to have meant nothing but purest impertinence. She hated to be a telltale. The girls were not really so very deceitful; they said they only "peeped

for fun ” or to “ refresh their memories,” and that Miss Elder “ knew it and did not care.” Again Madge reflected that her father would be very sorry to have trouble made for the teacher by one of his own family. Oh dear! what a miserable affair! It all came because she had failed to do her own duty and to mind her own business. Until she herself was freer from faults, how much better it would have been to have left the failings of her teacher and her schoolmates alone! Looking at it all from Miss Elder’s point of view, she had insulted that lady.

“ Oh dear !” she exclaimed, in self-disgust ; “ I wish there was no horrid old academy. I wish Ruth had kept well and I had been the one to be ill. Ruth never gets into such awful muddles, and I would be perfectly happy to stay around and amuse myself at home. I *am* so sick of this stupid life! Cousin Jane says I seem ‘ like a little girl ’ to her ; that is because I have no style. Girls of my age in cities go in society and have a chance to see the world ; we never go anywhere unless it is to a tea-party with mother or a visit with the schoolgirls and their

brothers. I do not see how Ruth can say she likes it all and thinks it is just as it ought to be. But I must stand it, and now, to cap all, here is this fuss at the academy."

Yes, no discontent over life in general could keep out of Madge's mind the thought that she had made possible trouble for her father. Miss Elder would believe that he had reflected on her management—that he had previously censured her.

The April sun shone warm out of a blue and cloudless sky. The trees above Madge were covered with tender green buds, the grass was like velvet under her feet, and at any other time she would have heard the bird-songs all about her, and would have been as gay as the children who raced up and down the broad central walk. As it was, she finally picked up her books and walked on, "blue," cross, wishing in her thoughtless fashion that "this year was past and done with."

She entered the dining-room by a side-door, and there found Ruth and Abbey. Ruth was making a white-lace cap for Grandma Grey and singing as she worked, while Abbey was cleaning the "silver-clos-



et," as she chose to call the place where very little silver and more well-worn china were kept. Madge dropped her books heavily on the table, and, confronting Ruth, said,

"I went to school without my lessons. Miss Elder scolded. I did not care, and she knew it. She said I dared to defy law and order in her department because I had 'friends in authority.' She meant father. I would not stand that. I told her 'that law and order were founded on justice and honesty in the *other* department.' Then she would not endure that from *me*. She told me to take my books and go; so here I am." Seeing Ruth's astonishment, she added, "She will make her statement to father before he comes home. I make this as mine;" then, suddenly bursting into tears, she fled up stairs and locked herself in her room.

"Well, now, if that isn't just *inhuman!*" ejaculated Abbey, as usual instantly assuming that a *Preston* could do no harm. "Yes, and it is an insult to your par."

"But I am afraid Madge was angry and insulted the teacher."

"Well, it all comes from her being forced

to learn such unnatural sciences as trigonometry and algometry and physics. Now, what on earth does she study anything like that for if she isn't going to be a woman-doctor? She could learn enough about medicine just by reading every other page of the *Household Almanac*, as I do. I declare for it, old Dr. Hickox he went away up in my estimation when he said education was just a-killin' you."

Abbey finished her diatribe merely for the comfort of expression, as Ruth had put down her work and gone to find her mother. Ruth was the right person to report a matter like this; she would tell the absolute truth about all parties just as far as it came within her knowledge. From her Mrs. Preston learned everything necessary to an understanding of the case.

When school was out that noon, Miss Elder, whose anger had waxed hotter and hotter, started to find Professor Preston before he should go home. In passing from one part of the building to the other she had to traverse a short hall connecting with a "clothes-room" where the girls hung their

outer garments. Approaching this to-day, she heard earnest talking.

“I tell you what it is, girls,” Belle Hughes was saying: “this thing has come to a pass when something ought to be done if there is any honor left among us.”

“Oh, pshaw, Belle!” exclaimed Sarah Locke. “Miss Elder is not deceived one bit; so what is the harm? She must know we look in the book, and to-day I told Madge Preston her answer, and I was so excited that I whispered very loud. I know Miss Elder heard me, but I had brought her a lovely bouquet of the earliest flowers out, and she couldn’t be ungracious enough to catch me in a caper like that.”

“She ought to have done it,” remarked Mary Parker. “The whole thing *is* unjust, and I am not sorry, on the whole, that Madge dared to throw in her firebrand. You know, Kate Howard—and you, Alice, and you, Helen Wells—that you read every correct answer that you gave this morning out of the books in your hands. Alice told me that she did not even know where the lesson was until I told her as the class-bell

rang. Now, Madge had studied it, and yet she had to suffer for her refusal to cheat, while—”

“*Cheat* is an ugly word,” cried Helen Wells.

“It is the word for us if we pretend to have a perfect lesson when we have none.”

“It is not the word for you,” said Helen Wells, frankly.

“Well, I am the daughter of a trustee, and for the same reason that Madge, who is the principal’s daughter, tells no tales out of school, I have held my peace; but my mind is made up, girls, and I want your co-operation. I don’t think that piano looks well where it is now; I am going to ask to have it removed to the south end of the room.”

A titter ran around the group of girls, and was followed by a faint groan.

“If that is not enough, I shall propose to Miss Elder that all text-books be left in our desks during recitation,” added Mary, with perfect good-nature, but firmly.

Alice Miller, who had considerable humor, dryly remarked,

“I was reading yesterday of a certain warrior who gave his victims the choice between having their heads chopped off or being baptized: they were all converted to his opinions in the next quarter of an hour. Young ladies, I think that your conduct has been *very* reprehensible;” and Alice turned on her comrades with a solemn grimace which was received with laughter.

Only Kate Howard remained sulky. She said,

“After all, it is as much Miss Elder’s partiality as it is our deceit; she does not care so we only appear to know.”

“I do not uphold Miss Elder,” replied the trustee’s daughter; “but, leaving her out of the question, Kate, I can’t bear to see you cheat yourself so out of the education that your mother is so anxious to give you.”

Mary was speaking in a low voice now, and to Kate alone; but they were nearing the passage-way where Miss Elder had paused, and she hastily escaped. A little of her eagerness to see Professor Preston

disappeared under the influence of the conversation which she had just overheard, and she came to the conclusion not to be precipitate. Returning to her desk, she wrote a note to Madge, sending it to her later by a little girl who lived near the Prestons. It was a very calm epistle and quite creditable to its author, who wrote in a dignified but kindly way to the wrong-doer, offering a restoration to favor under certain conditions. She told Madge that her own good sense must tell her that she had been guilty of great rudeness. She added that it pained her to take the matter to Madge's father, and therefore, if she would make some suitable apology for her offence, it should be passed over.

From her knowledge of schoolgirls in general, Miss Elder argued that Madge would gladly keep her school-affairs from her parents.

So it came to pass that the Professor arrived home as serene as the spring sunshine, and it was Mrs. Preston who unfolded the situation to him after he had eaten his dinner.

During their talk little Nelly Lenox came with the teacher's note, and Professor Preston himself carried it up to Madge. She received him with red eyes, curls in wild confusion and the air of one weary of existence. When she had told her story—a very brief one—he said gravely,

“I wish you to return to school to-morrow morning; you cannot go back without making the apology Miss Elder has a right to demand. Was she unjust in expecting you to have good lessons?”

“No, sir.”

“Have you studied as you ought to study since Ruth left the school?”

“No, sir.”

“Have you any good excuse for your idleness?”

“No, father; I don't suppose I have, only— Well, Ruth is good and studious, yet she knows how dull and uninteresting the classes are, and how—some—things go all wrong.”

“And I know much more than I talk of to any one, and certainly more than you know; but that is not the point. The man-

agement of the school is not in your hands, nor is it by any means wholly in mine. This is the question: Have *you* been doing *your* duty this term?"

"No, I do not suppose I have," confessed Madge.

"Very well, then; nothing else concerns you until you *have* done it," said her father, going down stairs.

Madge had fancied that her father would be very angry and quite out of patience with her, and she had worked herself into the belief that she was misunderstood, almost abused, and more than anything else a kind of martyr suffering on account of her superior integrity of character. After her father had gone down stairs she began to realize that she was not exactly suffering in "well-doing;" so this time she cried half an hour from another cause.

"Madge," said her mother, looking in at the door, "I want you to get off the bed, wash your face and come down stairs and eat your dinner."

Madge obeyed, feeling more like a child of twelve than the young person who was



longing for "society" a few hours previous. After her dinner she spent the afternoon with Ruth, who never lectured her in any circumstances, and never made her feel that she herself was better than Madge; but, all the same, Ruth did have a great influence over her sister. They chatted together about the school, their girl-friends, the plans for vacation, and gradually Madge, as she talked, began to make a few good resolutions about her lessons and her conduct.

Next morning Madge went back to the academy with the disposition of one who is about to swallow bitter medicine, and who is aware that it is needful to take it. She intended that her apology should be public, as her offensive remark had been; but Miss Elder met her as she entered the hall, and, as it afterward seemed to Madge, that lady drew from her an apology then and there, doing away with all occasion for it later. Really grateful for what looked like Miss Elder's forbearance, Madge was herself too straightforward to think of any reason more unselfish for this sudden amiability, and it was well. Her good intentions were strengthened.

That same morning, just before the day's exercises opened, Mary Parker asked if the piano might not be moved to the end of the room, and gave no reason whatever for her request. Miss Elder assured her that the change might be made at once if the older pupils wished it. The greater part were acquiescent, if not eager; so the piano went. More studying was done that day in school than had been done for weeks before. The rhetoric class appeared to have some idea of what was being taught, although the words of the book were not used as fluently as usual.

A few days later Professor Preston said to his wife that Miss Elder had never mentioned the affair to him, but, instead, had taken pains to make several changes in her department which he had often advised her to make, hitherto without avail.

"I would not send Madge to your school another day," laughed Mrs. Preston, "if I had any choice of ways and means."

"Neither would I," assented her husband, "but I do not know what I would do with her."

“Then I have the advantage of you. I would send Madge to a very dear friend of mine—Mrs. Allen, of whom you have often heard me speak. She keeps a little private school in Millbridge, and I know her to be a devoted Christian, a perfect lady and finely educated. I would not like to let Madge go away from home, but I would trust her to my friend. Still, this is all talk; she must do her duty where she is. Miss Elder may be faulty as a teacher, but that is no reason why Madge should neglect her lessons and waste her time.”

## CHAPTER V.

### *HAPPENINGS.*

“Oh, why and whither? God knows all:

I only know that he is good,

And that, whatever may befall,

Or here or there, must be the best that could.”

IN the middle of April came a week so cold, so rainy and dismal that it seemed to have been a sort of misplaced winter-week. In ordinary circumstances, Madge would have grumbled a good deal over her long walks to school, but, as she happened to have a severe cold, it was thought best that she should stay at home, and the necessity was very agreeable to her. She learned her lessons and recited them to Ruth; then she found time to enjoy everything cheerful that went on in the family.

One day she sat in the hall reading a new book by Miss Alcott. Ruth was nestled among the red sofa-cushions, also with a

book, but she was not reading: she was wondering why she did not get stronger after these weeks of quiet and rest. Suddenly, Madge put down her story and exclaimed,

“What do you suppose is the matter?”

“The matter? Where?”

“Why, it was not quite ten o'clock when I heard Uncle Henry tell mother that he wanted to speak to her. She followed him into the parlor, where Johnny had just made a fire—because Mary Parker and Belle Hughes are coming this afternoon to see us, you know—and pretty soon she called father, and they have talked low and fast every moment since. Here it is almost noon. Oddest of all, Uncle Henry has talked. There, now! don't you hear his low, heavy voice every once in a while? What *can* it mean?”

“Why, it is queer,” replied Ruth, with almost equal curiosity. “But mother will tell us if it is anything we ought to know.”

“Well, I hope she will.”

Ruth took up the book her sister had laid down, and, finding it interesting, soon forgot everything beyond it. Madge not long after

heard her father, who was speaking rather loud, arise from his chair to walk up and down the next room. Then she heard the Raynors' name and the word "Europe," but, as that family and the proposed trip were getting to be an old story, she paid no attention until she was startled by hearing her own name distinctly uttered by Uncle Henry. Then the voices were low again until her father spoke:

"It would be . . . to let the child go so far from us, but . . . a wonderful opportunity. . . . Cousin Jane is very desirous . . ."

Like a burst of light and joy it flashed on Madge that Cousin Jane had invited her to go to Europe. In her excitement she sprang to her feet and was about to cry out to Ruth, when she saw that the book had slipped from her sister's hand and she herself was fast asleep with her soft hair falling all about her sweet face.

Why could not Ruth go too? It would not be so pleasant without her. Was it because she was not well enough to travel that they had not asked her, or because it would cost so much to take two? To go to

Europe! Madge's head fairly grew dizzy with delight at the realization of what that phrase might mean of excitement, pleasure and novelty.

It was at that moment evident that the council in the parlor was about to break up, and Madge, afraid of betraying her agitation, turned and fled to her own room. Locking the door, she dropped into the nearest chair, and, clasping her hands in ecstasy, she fell to building gorgeous castles in Spain. What wonders she would see! What letters she would write the schoolgirls! Poor creatures! they would be prosing along in that stupid old academy while she was climbing the Alps or floating about among the palaces of Venice. Crazy with joy, Madge next danced on tip-toe about her narrow chamber, upsetting her work-box and tripping on "Webster's Unabridged," that she had yesterday used for a footstool, but she was heedless of everything except present excitement. When the dinner-bell rang, she spent some time trying to compose her mind and calm her manner, in case she should be regarded with any close scrutiny. She was

relieved to find that no one even looked at her. Grandma Grey and Ruth were the only ones who talked very much. Professor Preston was lost in thought, and Mrs. Preston seemed to be nervous and preoccupied.

After dinner Ruth expected that Madge would begin to catechise their mother, but, to her surprise, she did nothing but romp with Johnny and evince the highest spirits.

Later in the afternoon Mrs. Preston opened the door of the room where they sat, and announced :

“A little boy has just been here to say that your school-friends cannot come to spend the afternoon, as they expected to do. Mary Parker's mother is ill, and Belle Hughes has company from out of town.”

“I do not care very much,” said Madge ;  
“I am not in the mood for them to-day.”

“You are certainly not in a very melancholy mood,” remarked her mother, looking at both girls in a serious way that each noticed and one thought she understood.

“Mother,” asked Ruth, playfully, “what did you run away from us for this morning?”



You ought not to have secrets from your big daughters."

"Well, if my big daughters will forgive me, I will not do so any more and I will confess all my naughtiness; but I will take you one at a time, and will begin with Madge, because a superabundance of curiosity might injure her. I think Ruthie can control hers within bounds."

"Yes, I can wait," laughed Ruth, "for I am getting so lazy lately that it is no effort to be passively good. I have not energy enough to get into mischief."

Mrs. Preston smoothed her soft hair with a lingering, affectionate touch, then, turning gravely to Madge, said,

"I want you in the parlor for a little while."

With her heart throbbing very fast, Madge hastened to the warm, quiet parlor. The rain was beating on the window-panes, but all within-doors was cozy. Mrs. Preston was silent after seating herself in the great haircloth easy-chair; she seemed watching the glow of the firelight on grandma's old velvet screens, and it sobered Madge to no-

tice how sad her eyes were. At last she said,

“I have something to tell you, Madge, that will surprise you very much. I tell you first because you are strong and able to bear anything which you are unprepared for, and you must remember that if you excite Ruth too much from any cause you will be very likely to weaken her.”

“Yes, mother,” said Madge, eagerly.

“You know, when Cousin Jane was here, she repeatedly said that she wished that one or both of you girls could go abroad with her; but of course we paid no attention, for in the state of our finances the thing was as impracticable as a trip to the moon. It was just about that time, you remember, that Ruth began to get so weak, and since then it has troubled your father and me greatly that she does not get better. Ten days ago old Dr. Hickox said that she would improve if she could only get a start, but nothing we can do seems to give her that start. Uncle Henry has from the first been very anxious about Ruth, although she has not seen it. He remembers, as does your father, the

beautiful sisters whom they lost in their early days."

"Why, mother, they died of consumption," exclaimed Madge. "You don't even think for a moment that our Ruth has that?"

"No, dear; I am so thankful to believe she has not any real disease. But weakness like hers is the condition in which disease develops itself, and she must get back her strength."

Madge's whole mind then was on her sister, and she saw no relevancy in her mother's next remark:

"Now, Madge, you know how odd and reserved your uncle is, and, that being so, neither your father nor I have ever ventured to ask him many personal questions. We have always supposed that he had an income sufficient to keep him very comfortable in a small way, and not much more. It seems, however, that in the last few years some property of his in the far West has become valuable, and he has made more money. He is not at all what would be called, even here in Hempstead, a rich man,

but he is able to do what he has proposed to us, and what will astonish you very much."

"What is that?" cried Madge, quickly.

"He has offered to send Ruth to Europe with the Raynors."

The effect of her words was greater than Mrs. Preston had fancied it would be: Madge gasped in breathless surprise.

"Yes, he says that an ocean-voyage and an entire change might do wonders for her. Entirely on his own responsibility he wrote asking them about it, and the Raynors are very kind. They reply that they would gladly take her in any circumstances, but that now, in view of our promise to have Bert here, they feel that they cannot agree to do too much for Ruth's comfort. They will give her every care and attention that they could give a daughter of their own."

"Oh, mother, couldn't I go too? Have I got to stay home?" burst from Madge as there rushed over her a sickening sense of disappointment.

"My dear child, do you think your father and I could see you both sail away from us?"

"I think Uncle Henry is mean and par-

tial," Madge exclaimed, angrily. "I don't begrudge his money to Ruth—that is not it—but why can't he let me go also?"

"Now, don't be unjust. Remember, Madge, that this is not purely for a pleasure-trip, although I hope it will be a real pleasure to Ruth. It is for her good that he does it, and this morning your uncle said to me, 'I shall spend an equal sum on Madge and Johnny hereafter. I may leave nothing behind me, but I hope to have enough to give Madge a better education than she seems to be getting, and perhaps give Johnny some help later.'"

"More education!" groaned Madge, in such genuine dismay and disgust that her mother was tempted to laugh, but only endeavored to soothe her. She knew how beautiful this trip in foreign lands must seem to the young girl—how dull might appear her life at home by contrast; yet she also knew how warm and loving was Madge's heart, and how unselfish her better nature. She begged her not to let Ruth see her disappointment; for if she saw it, all pleasure would be gone for the sensitive sis-

ter. The mother appealed to her generous instincts; she told her how hard it was for her and for the father to trust their delicate young daughter so far away from their care. She talked until Madge's reason was convinced that all was for the best; and if she felt very *low*, and very sorry for herself, she was at the same time sincerely glad for Ruth's sake. When she promised to show this gladness only and to keep back her own disappointment, her mother knew that she could be trusted.

“Now I will go and tell Ruth all about it. I want to have her interested in all her preparations, as she naturally will be, but I do not want her to be over-tired or excited. She is not so venturesome as you are, and she will shrink a little from everything new, no matter how delightful it may prove.”

Madge made no reply as her mother went out and left her to think about this sudden development of family matters. She was sitting on the rug before the fire, buried in thought, when, half an hour later, Grandma Grey came in to rest a while; or perhaps she came for another purpose. As she stood



Disappointed Madge.





a moment warming her withered hands she patted Madge's head, saying,

“It will be very lonesome for you without Ruth, but you will be constantly thinking of the time when she will come back well and strong with wonderful stories of what she has seen and learned, and with pretty gifts for you. A voyage may do for her what nothing else could do. It is far better to miss the dear child for a few months than to have her slip away from us for ever; and sometimes I have feared she might be going in this last way.”

“Yes, I am very glad for Ruth's sake, and I mean to show her that I am; but I wish something good would come to me. It seems as if I could not endure such a stupid, humdrum life another month. It is so queer that things happen as they do! Ruth loved to go to school; she likes everything that comes; she never is tired or bored; and yet the new, strange happenings all are for her.”

“Poor child!” said the old lady, tenderly; “I know how it all looks to you, but I wish you could know how it seems to me.”

“How, grandma?”

“One day last summer, you remember, your father hired a carriage and took us for a ride along that beautiful high Bayridge road where you can see miles of country below you to the south. Well, the sky was as blue as blue could be right over us, and the sunshine very clear, butterflies dancing in it and birds singing. Now, while that was all so with me, I looked to the south, and there, over a pretty little hamlet miles away, hung a dark rain-cloud, shading everything under it and soon letting down a brisk shower. Your life, with its interests now, is like that little settlement, but I can see plenty of brightness above and around you.”

“Yes, but while the shower lasted everything was dark and disagreeable, and in some places it rains very often,” said Madge, dolefully.

“Yes; some lives are constantly under a cloud. When I was your age, I thought as you think—that life was very dull; but something good did come to me.”

“Tell me about it,” said Madge, with more interest.

“I had no mother, no sister—no one to make my father’s great gloomy mansion homelike. My father was a very quiet, stern man who never expressed any affection for me. I had an aunt in Boston whose home was like yours—bright and cheerful. This aunt had almost gained my father’s consent to my spending with her the time after I was fifteen until I was of age, when suddenly he decided that I was to remain at home. I was terribly disappointed until I learned that I was to have a new mother who would bring two children of her own into our gloomy house. I had no prejudices against stepmothers, and I was simply delighted. I tried to arrange the rooms to suit the new-comers, and I fancied that we would have a *home* at last. Before my stepmother had been in the house a week I learned that the solemn quietness of the house in past times was preferable to the clamor and strife that came in with her and her children. She was jealous of me; my father, who had never understood me, was easily made to believe that I was sullen when I was sad, or was obstinate when I made the least resistance

to her will. Perhaps I think of this to-day because I too was disappointed in a trip to Europe. My mother's relations were English—an old family of Warwickshire. Now, when I was just about your age, my father, who was a shipowner, had business in Liverpool, and he would have taken me for a summer's visit to these friends, whose home was very beautiful. Until a week before the ship sailed my stepmother let me think that I could go; then, on some pretext which I do not now remember, she convinced my father that I had better not go. I have not now forgotten, and never can forget, my bitter grief and my anger at her. You have been disappointed, Madge, but you have never had your sense of justice outraged."

"I would not have endured it; I would have rebelled and fought for my rights in my own father's house," exclaimed Madge, hotly.

"I did that, and it made more discord and more ill-feeling. At last I began to pray for help. I begged the Lord to send me a friend or to send me to friends, but none came, and nothing happened. Then

I tried to be more gentle. Perhaps I failed; at any rate, my stepmother wrote my father a long, full account of what she called all my evil deeds. I did not know this, and I looked forward to his return with great anticipations of welcoming him, and of the gifts he would be sure to bring us; for in that way he had always been very indulgent to me. Well, he came at last, and with him a big leather trunk. We gathered about it the morning after his arrival, and out came beautiful presents—dresses, fans, laces, jewels, for his wife; then all sorts of trinkets for her two children, who were in raptures over them. I was almost as happy and excited, and I waited, thinking that mine were all together with those which my relations might have sent me. I had not a thought of the truth, even when my father had emptied that trunk, until he turned to me and said that after reading the accounts of my conduct in his absence he had concluded that he could not more forcibly mark his disapproval than to ignore me in the way he had done. He added that my English relatives had sent me a few gifts that would be

given me when I better deserved them : I never saw any of these last. I can feel now, after more than half a century, something of the grief and rage and disappointment of that hour when I turned away from that room without a word and went up two long flights of stairs to a little chamber where no one ever sought me out. There I threw myself on the floor and wept and prayed God to let me die and go to my own mother. I think that I have never suffered so hopelessly in all the years since then. At last I fell asleep, worn out with crying. When I awakened, I felt so weary, so empty, that it seemed to me I could never go back to the miserable strife of every day. There was a pile of old battered books in a corner near me, and I reached out and opened one. Your father has a copy like it—this book of Archbishop Leighton, written two hundred years ago. At the place where I opened, it told how one must conquer the troubles of every day or be conquered by them ; ‘ for a man may drown in a little brook as well as in a great river if his head be under water.’ I believed that, for was I not almost

overwhelmed? I read on where it told how one could take his weary, burdened heart to God, and with the heart the every-day life in 'shop, field, house or journey,' and could say, 'Lord, even this mean work I do for thee, complying with thy will, which has put me in this station and given me this task. Thy will be done.' When I read this, I thought, Why should I say this? What better will I be for saying it, or how happier? I found out by reading on down the quaint old page, for the holy man wrote: 'This will keep the heart in a sweet temper all the day long, and have an excellent influence on all our ordinary actions. This were to walk with God indeed, to go all day long as in our Father's hand. This makes all estates sweet. This would refresh us in the hardest labor, as they that carry the spices from Arabia are refreshed with the smell of them in their journey; and some observe that it keeps their strength and frees them from fainting.' I turned back and read it all over until I saw just how simple, yet how grand and wonderful, it was to give one's self to God—to take what comes

to us, not as 'happenings,' but as his will; to pray for his Holy Spirit, which he will always give to those who ask. I prayed then not to die, not for any one thing that I fancied would make my troubles lighter, but that I might learn his will and let mine go. He answered me, and, although my home never was like yours, Madge, my 'estate was sweeter.'"

It never occurred to Madge that the old lady who was now rocking so peacefully in the twilight had been preaching at her, but it did come to the young girl suddenly that there were life-lots darker than hers. Indeed, after admitting so much, she went farther, and confessed that she had a warm, sunny home, the kindest, most helpful friends that a girl could have, and, after all, the chief trouble was with Madge Preston herself—this Madge who had not come just where she could give up her will and learn the lesson which grandma learned long years ago when she too was young. But the talk had done her good. She sprang up with a brighter face and gave the old lady a hug, exclaiming, "You are always bringing spices from



Arabia and giving everybody near you something sweet and pleasant; that is just your mission ;” then, while grandma straightened her cap, she went to find Ruth.

It was not Ruth’s way to dance or to show great excitement over a surprise of this kind. Indeed, her first emotion had been something not unlike dread. It seemed not very pleasant to think of putting an ocean between herself and those she loved best, and, kind as Cousin Jane might prove, she was a very different person from Ruth’s own mother. Madge would be perfectly satisfied with an older companion who liked sightseeing and was good-natured, but Ruth liked people who always understood her when she felt ill or sad or lonesome. At home she had such a friend in father, mother, Grandma Grey—even in Abbey after a curious fashion.

This night Madge asked Abbey, who was setting the supper-table, where Ruth was.

“I don’t know—somewheres about, for your ma and she just went out of here.”

“Do you know she is going to Europe, Abbey, with the Raynors?”

“Well, I didn’t till your ma told her all

about it half an hour ago, right before me here as I was a-darnin' that hole in the carpet."

"What did she say and do, Abbey?"

"She was stupefied, as you might say, first off, then she laughed a little, then she kind of slid down nose first into the lounge-cushion and come up looking teary around the eyes, and wanted to know why you couldn't go too, and did wish dreadfully that you could."

"We are of one mind there, Abbey."

"How can you be so deluded!" exclaimed Abbey, pausing with a plate of cold ham in one hand while she gesticulated with a carving-knife in the other. "I can't see how anybody, unless 'tis Satan or a peddler, can want to go roaming over the earth. Think of crossing that great stomach-sickening waste of water! I heard Mrs. Raynor tellin' how the houses over there hadn't half of 'em any carpets on the floors and folks ate their breakfast in bed—well folks, too; how, outside of England, you couldn't talk your own native tongue. Deliver me from such goings on until I've breathed up

all the air on this side and seen things nearer my own front door!"

Laughing at Abbey's vehemence, Madge left her and joined the family, whom she now found together, all talking Europe; and they talked of almost nothing else for several weeks after.

## CHAPTER VI.

### *RUTH SAILS AWAY.*

“Sweet are your eyes, O little ones that look with smiling  
grace,  
Without a shade of doubt or fear, into the future’s face;  
Sing, sing in happy chorus: with joyful voices tell  
That death is life, and God is good, and all things shall be  
well.”

THE only person in the family who, judging from appearances, seemed to take no interest in the excitement about Ruth’s going away was Uncle Henry. He asked no questions, he lingered to hear no talk, but he daily read, walked or shut himself up to solitude in his own room. Only once he surprised Ruth by showing a most satisfactory understanding of present affairs. Mrs. Preston and the girls had been examining Ruth’s simple wardrobe, and they had found it very simple indeed. Outspoken Madge had exclaimed,

“You ought to have no end of new clothes, Ruth. What are you going to do?”

“I have heard that people do not need so very much in traveling; besides, Ruth is not a young lady yet, and no one will expect her to wear fine things,” said Mrs. Preston, adding cheerfully, “We must, of course, get everything necessary for her comfort.”

“I only want to look well enough, so that Cousin Jane will not think me shabby.”

“I don’t see how you can help being shabby,” continued Madge, not to make any one uncomfortable, but because she had a cold-blooded way of looking at their old garments and seeing them exactly as they were.

Ruth was always so sorry for her mother’s difficulty in getting them better things that she was more merciful toward her old clothes. This day she shook her head warningly at Madge and remarked brightly,

“One thing I do insist on, Mother Preston: if you go to pinching yourself and going without this and that in order to fit me out, I will not go. I do not ‘tear and

rend' as Abbey says Madge does, and my clothes last."

"I am sure I never complained that mine did not last," groaned her sister.

Mrs. Preston sighed as she surveyed the neat, well-patched and somewhat faded apparel. Madge caught up a dark-brown flannel, Ruth's last "best dress," and exclaimed,

"I always liked this, and it really is more becoming to me than to Ruth. Now, mother, let me have this, and Ruth can have the new dress that I was to have. If she has one other besides the new one that she is to have any way, she can get along better. This brown flannel is *real* becoming to me."

"Oh, you precious old hypocrite!" cried Ruth; "pretending to like that old flannel, so that you can make me take your new one! I will not do it; there, now!"

"Madge is so generous that you will make her happy if you take her offer, Ruthie, and perhaps we can get her a new white dress for warm weather."

But Ruth could not be reconciled to this, and the mother was greatly puzzled over

ways and means. Not one word was said before any other member of the family, however; so it seemed rather remarkable that Uncle Henry should put a paper in Madge's hand when they rose from the dinner-table. He said, as he gave it to her,

“Tell your mother to get Ruth's outfit with it.”

When Madge saw that the check was for one hundred and fifty dollars, she danced with glee. It seemed to her a perfectly immense amount, and the satisfaction of the economical mother was almost as great. Only one who can plan, can buy to good advantage and can cut, fit and sew neat garments at home will understand how rich the mother and daughters now were. Every day there were interesting consultations, and everybody's advice was asked. Grandma's old fingers fashioned a quantity of pretty neck-ruffles out of the delicate lace that she liked to work with. Even Abbey flattered herself that her expressed opinion decided Ruth in buying a very dark-green traveling-dress instead of one of some other color. Madge thought nothing could be

more delightful than this privilege of "going right into a store and buying pretty handkerchiefs and cuffs by the dozen, just as other girls do it." But, much as she liked pretty things herself, she did not dream of envying Ruth; while, as for Ruth, she was comically troubled over her treasures. and she more than once declared, "I am going to be just as careful as I can be of these things; then, the minute I get home, Madge, we will divide. Besides, I shall bring you everything pretty that I can get without stealing."

In work like this the time went swiftly by. After the daylight faded every afternoon Ruth and her mother had long quiet talks. No one could understand what a trial it was going to be to Mrs. Preston to let this delicate, tenderly-guarded child of hers go so far away from her care and her love; but she felt that it was also a trouble to Ruth to take her first flight from the family-nest, and she devoted herself to strengthening the young daughter's courage.

The days grew longer and warmer, the trees blossomed, and all the spring flowers



returned; so almost before the proposed voyage had come to seem much more than a dream to Ruth the day of departure drew near. It was arranged that her father and mother should go with her to L——, where the Raynors lived, and that they should stay there until the party left for New York. Madge would gladly have gone too, and her mother not only gave her the opportunity, but she urged her to go in her stead; but this time Madge's perceptions were very keen, and she divined that Ruth would naturally cling closest to her mother and wish to have her longest with her if she must choose among the dear ones.

At last there came a lovely May morning when the apple trees were masses of pink-and-white bloom and everything without the house seemed radiant in sunlight. In the hall were gathered those who were to go and those who were to stay. Johnny, rushing from the gate to the door and back again, watched for the old hack from the station, while Ruth, seated on her trunk, tried to button her glove as coolly as if going to sail the seas over were nothing to be ex-

cited about. There was, however, a very pink spot on each of her cheeks; and when she had to speak, her voice was not under her control. Grandma Grey kept bringing forward little papers of cough-drops, tiny bottles of smelling-salts, camphor or cologne, and asking, as she had asked scores of times, if "the child had everything in case" of this or that malady. Abbey was not visible. She had put severe control on herself long enough to hug Ruth frantically, but without tears; then she had fled, and now, seated on the cellar stairs, she was sobbing as if her heart were broken.

"Hack coming!" shouted Johnny; and when it arrived at the gate, Mrs. Preston and the Professor hastened out. Uncle Henry and Johnny started away on foot for the station, while Madge, who could not trust herself there, stayed at home with grandma.

"God bless and keep you!" faltered the old lady. "Into his care I trust you, my precious lamb."

Madge could not say one word because of the choking in her throat and the blind-

ing tears, but Ruth, kissing her again and again, sobbed,

“You are the best sister in the world now, Madge, but you will be a double comfort after this, won't you? Since I have been getting ready to leave this home I realize what a blessed place it is.”

“Come!” called the party in the hack; and Ruth, who turned for a long look at the familiar hall, cried out as she ran down the steps, “Say ‘Good-bye’ to Abbey. She is hiding, and I know why;” then the slender figure and the fair young face vanished inside the weatherbeaten hack.

“Oh what a horrible long, lonesome day we shall have in this quiet house!” groaned Madge a few minutes later.

“Yes, it must be dreary for you, dear,” said her grandmother, cheerily; “but you can make it more endurable by a little effort. Things are confused and out of place. Abbey and I are going to work, and I think if you were to do the same you would feel better. Your mother proposed that you should take Ruth's room while she is away; she says if she saw it occupied and looking as

usual it would not make her feel so sad as to find it always empty. Then Bert Raynor can have your room."

"Well, I don't want any rough boy in that neat, dainty place that Ruth took such comfort in making pretty," said Madge, adding frankly, "Though, as to that, I shall have to be a great deal more particular myself if I keep things there looking as they did when Ruth was home. But it might be well for me to try."

Grandma smiled faintly, and it occurred to Madge that her mother had thought of this same thing; but in her softened mood she was very humble, so she only remarked,

"Yes, that is a good idea; I will move into Ruth's room this very day."

She went listlessly up stairs, and approached her bureau reflecting, "I might as well begin where the confusion is always the worst—at my bureau-drawers."

She opened the deepest drawer and stared into it with surprise. Everything there was in the most exquisite order, but nothing was familiar. Her first thought was that Ruth had left a part of her outfit, but these were

not the new things that she had seen among her sister's purchases. Still, here were pretty new collars, new handkerchiefs, fresh gloves, ribbons, a dainty white dress—a whole big drawer full of just such articles as young girls desire and need. At the very bottom was a letter from Ruth that explained the matter. Did Madge think she would be such a “dreadful pig” as to use a hundred and fifty dollars all on herself? So a generous amount remained after Ruth had, as she declared, “everything that she could possibly require or wish for,” and it was so “nice” to be able to leave this drawer full for her “poor Madge, who must stay home and see her money wasted on a sister with a good-for-nothing constitution.” One half of the letter was full of affectionate nonsense, as if the writer were trying to keep up her own spirits, but the last half was in a different strain.

“Now, Madge,” she wrote, “there is something I want to say; but whenever I begin to ‘preach,’ as you call it, you say something funny and stop me, or you run away, and I never like to *make* you listen to me, because

you may fancy that I think I am very good myself. I have felt cross and hateful some days since my head has ached so much" ("She did not show it, if she felt it," commented Madge); "and when I thought I might not live, I was very, very gloomy" ("Well you might be! I think I should have been scared out of my wits"). "I am enough of a Christian not to be afraid to die, but I want to live. I want to be a better Christian, too, and then I can understand what grandma means when she says, 'For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain' ("Oh dear! I wish she would not talk about her dying. It is nonsense, for nothing ails her but weakness"). "But I don't write to talk about myself; I want to ask you again, Madge, why you can't make up your mind that you will become a Christian if you are not sure you are one already? If you hope that you are one, why will you not say so to the family and let the schoolgirls know it? You are braver than I am, and more outspoken; I believe that you are only waiting to be better. Don't wait any longer. I was not good that Sunday a year ago when I

joined the church, and I am not good now; but I love good things and good people, and I know that I love the Saviour and that he is *my* Saviour. I hope and expect to come back to live years and years with you; but if I never do— You will think of this, won't you? You ought to know, after living with father, mother, Grandma Grey and Abbey, who are all Christians, 'that there is nothing dismal,' or nothing to make you disagreeable or unhappy, in such a life. I think it just means asking God to teach us his will, and then doing it; asking him to mark out a way for us, and then going in it; and loving him all the time, because we can't help it if we only begin to think and to pray. Now, Madge, some day when I am away off and the ocean rolls between us, won't you write me a letter and tell me you have made up your mind once for all? I shall pray for it and wait for it, and I believe I shall get it."

The tears were dropping steadily into the drawerful of pretty gifts as Madge folded up Ruth's letter and resolved to keep it very sacredly. She did not want to resolve

anything more than, or to have thoughts of anything disconnected with Ruth herself. Of course she meant to be good—that is, to be a Christian—sooner or later. Then she thought of Ruth and what pleasure and profit she would get out of this trip: “It is all right that she should go, much as I would like to have been the one. Ruth will appreciate fine pictures and enjoy places that have historical associations; she knows much more of such things than I. I should have wanted most to see the cities like Paris, and the gay foreign life, the shops, and all that.”

Madge sat day-dreaming a while; then she fell to looking over her treasures with keen pleasure in their possession. The letter she dropped into her “jewel-box,” as she called a modest casket containing an equally modest collection of gifts and trinkets; the gloves she tried on, the ribbons she knotted into bows and ornaments, and by dinner-time she had decided how to have her white dress trimmed.

At dinner the conversation turned at once to the absent, and Madge said,



“Grandma, did I tell you what Ruth and I agreed to do?”

“I do not know, dear; you tell me of so many plans.”

“Well, our last was this: we are each going to keep a journal and write in it all sorts of things that happen, or what we think—just as we would talk if we were together, you know. She says in that way she will know things that I would forget to put in a letter or that I would think were of no importance. If we have secrets—girls have, you know—why, we will make a star at such paragraphs, and that will be strictly confidential. This is my idea. Ruth says she never could be writing anything that you all must not know, but I think she might. Suppose a Russian duke or an Abyssinian earl should want to marry her? She could tell me how he was persecuting her without worrying father and mother on her account,” laughed Madge.

“Your father and mother wouldn’t worry the least bit in the world,” returned Grandma Grey, sipping her tea. “Ruth is only a little girl, but she is not a simpleton.”

“And Mr. Raynor is big enough to box the duke’s ears,” added Johnny.

“Well, that is about what Ruth said herself; but, any way, I insisted on the stars. If she never uses any, why then there never will be anything confidential in our correspondence; that is all. For my part, I like to have a secret, for it keeps me so excited all the time for fear I shall tell it.”

“And you almost always do tell it,” said Johnny—so truthfully that they all laughed; for Madge’s secrets were as transparent usually as they were innocent.

## CHAPTER VII.

### *EVERY DAY.*

“The rays of happiness, like those of light, are colorless when unbroken.”

ONE pleasant afternoon Abbey sat enjoying the mild air in a little portico at a side-door opening into the dining-room. The supper-table was set, but Professor Preston had not yet returned from the academy, and Mrs. Preston had gone to call on a neighbor. Abbey was picturing to herself a great ship tossing in mid-ocean, was wondering what Ruth was doing and if she were well or ill, when the gate just below clicked. Looking up quickly, Abbey saw a pale, thin young man who respectfully lifted his hat and asked for the Professor; then, learning he was not at home, he wished to see his wife. At Abbey's suggestion he said he would wait to see the Professor, with

whom he had business, but he declined to enter the house and seated himself in a chair which Johnny had left there. Abbey, not "exactly wanting to seem scared away, but meaning to go in," as she explained later, arose, and, picking up some leaves that were scattered about, she turned toward the dining-room.

"I beg your pardon," began the young man, politely, "but perhaps you can tell me what I want to know."

"Perhaps I might," returned Abbey.

"Does Professor Preston ever hire any one to sweep the academy, to make fires, ring bells or do any work of that kind?"

"Yes; I believe there is a sort of an underwitted fellow there who has done such things goin' on five years now."

"Indeed! Well, I should despise myself if I were to attempt to displace any worthy youth, especially if he were one of limited intelligence, like the individual you mention; but I myself am in very indigent circumstances, and I am seeking work, no matter how menial, in order to fit myself for the ministry. I thought I might possibly earn

my education by services rendered in that institution of which the Professor is the honored head."

Abbey was very much impressed by the young man; he was very solemn and spoke like a minister already.

"I don't know what he might do, but I am afraid he'll be more willin' than able," she remarked, adding, by way of suggestion, perhaps, "There used to be a one-legged fellow who sold sewing-silk; he said he was a-taking himself through college. He came regularly for seven years."

"His course was probably prolonged, if he was obliged to make it on one leg."

"Yes, naturally. I believe he was going to study medicine."

"Many are the obstacles I have encountered already, and many yet rise before me," were the young man's next words, uttered in such a melancholy tone that Abbey was really touched. She asked kindly,

"Do your folks live around here?"

"I am a waif on the ocean of human life."

"A *what?*" asked Abbey, curiously.

“I have no home, no kindred. I was born to affluence, but my father's property was lost in the Chicago fire; my mother died in a lunatic asylum. A philanthropist bought me a peanut-roaster and started me in business; a month after, I was carried to the small-pox hospital and—”

“What for?”

“For the small-pox, madam.”

“Had peanuts anything to do with it?”

“Not the least. But I lost business. On my recovery I hid on board a ship to China and went around the world. Oh, I have seen life under harrowing aspects.”

“You are not pock-marked the least bit in the world,” said Abbey.

“No; but if all the vicissitudes through which I have passed had left their sign-manual, as it were, upon me, I should be a veritable tattooed man, an autograph-album, a crazy pattern-piece of fancy patchwork, a—”

“What sort of a minister are you going to study for?” inquired Abbey.

“An eclectic.”

“There isn't any church of that sort around here anywhere.”

“Is it possible! Well, one could easily be started, no doubt,” said the young man, solemnly studying Abbey from the shock of drab-brown hair all on end to her feet, encased in orange-and-red carpet-cloth slippers.

Abbey in her turn was musing on the fact that the sombre young person wore very fine broadcloth, that his cuff-buttons were curiously-carved stones.

“Yes, my attire *is* inappropriate,” he remarked, “but it was a gift. A week ago I was walking the streets of Albany conjugating a Hebrew verb for the improving of my mind and the forgetting, if possible, of my gnawing hunger, when the fiery horses of a State senator came dashing down the street. The senator’s paralyzed wife was in the carriage, about to be overturned. I saved her life, and these clothes are a token of her husband’s gratitude.”

“Why didn’t you get him to find you some honest work to do instead? Those clothes are altogether too fine for your circumstances,” said Abbey, coolly.

“I could do nothing with him, for this

reason: He overheard me warbling a few wild notes to myself one night, and he insisted that I should be trained for an opera-singer."

"Can you sing too?"

"Oh, inimitably! There are times when, as Shakespeare—I think it is he—remarks, feeling rises upon feeling and emotion urges forth emotion until it breaks over the short, sharply-articulated sounds of common utterance and swells forward in the prolonged, increasing and diminishing diapasons of harmony which subside and thrill upon the rolling waves of melody. In times like these I sing."

Abbey was credulous, but there were limits even to her simplicity. She turned away, and, crossing the next room, appeared to Madge, who was alone in the hall. To her she briefly reported the interview, with the comment,

"He isn't any common beggar, nor an agent either, as I can see. I can't say anything about his moral character; but if *talk* was all a preacher required, he would earn a salary, I can assure you."



“I will go and tell him when father will probably be home,” exclaimed Madge, who was always ready for diversion.

When she appeared in the door the young man stood, and, holding his cap, repeated his first questions. He looked a trifle less solemn and seemed more boyish. A gleam of fun shot into Madge’s black eyes, but she was very grave as she said,

“Yes, I have no doubt that Professor Preston will be glad of your services. To be sure, the school-term ends in a few days, but you might take charge of it for the summer—the building, I mean. You could be sheltered, could spend your days studying the tattered old books left there in quantities, and the place abounds in rats. Living as you have in China, you may have learned to eat what the natives eat. But one thing I do advise you not to attempt, and that is singing, if your voice is as hideous as it was when *we* used to give concerts in the garret.”

“Good for you, Madge!” cried Bert Raynor, shaking her hand; while Abbey, open-mouthed, could not be at once made

to believe that the short, round, red-faced little Bert of past days could have grown so tall, so thin and dark; above all, that he could look so solemn when he wished to impose upon her. At that moment, however, Mrs. Preston entered the gate, and Bert sprang forward to greet her. He dropped all nonsense at once, and behaved like a bright, sensible young fellow. When grandma came out to tea after the Professor had arrived, she could hardly persuade herself that the dreaded Bert could have appeared in the form of such a "civil lad," as she called him later. Her first greeting had been severely dignified, but as she studied him over her spectacles and heard his respectful and affectionate allusions to his parents her features relaxed into their usual kindness.

In the course of a few days Bert had made himself entirely at home. As he was not very strong, his father wished him to live much out-doors, and this desire accorded well with his inclinations. He had brought everything necessary for fishing, hunting, and various other pursuits. He owned a

bicycle, and he hired a rowboat for use on the nearest river. Almost every day he vanished just after breakfast, and was seen no more until dark. Johnny was allowed to accompany him on some of his shorter excursions, and more than once Madge wished she were a boy as she saw them start off for a tramp over hill and dale with a lunch-basket packed by Abbey.

Madge was doing well in these first weeks after Ruth went away; she studied more faithfully than she had done for a long time: Ruth's letter had stirred her to take some sort of new action. She was not ready to attend to the "*one thing needful*," but she quieted her conscience by assuring herself that she would "do her duty as she saw it daily. Surely no one could expect more" of her? At home she turned over a new leaf, and her mother often smiled at her well-meant but spasmodic attempts to do things that Ruth had done. It was like a brisk breeze following a noiseless ray of sunshine.

Madge's first question every night as she hurried in from school was,

“Is there any news? Have no letters come? Isn't it time yet, mother?”

At last, one day a special messenger from the village post-office came up to bring them the letter they had so anxiously awaited, and Madge received the first installment of the “journal.” Perhaps we cannot do better than to let the young girls have from this time on some part in telling their own story.

*From Ruth's Journal.*

“MAY 30, 18—.

“To-day we are in mid-ocean, and it seems to me that I have not thought or seen anything but *ocean*. I am not at all ill now. Still, Mr. Raynor says that I have so much inertia he always knows where to find me; for if he leaves me in a chair on deck looking at the waves, he finds me when he comes there next time. This is just as well, because Cousin Jane does not stay anywhere. We laugh at her, for in her state-room she is gasping after air and must get up on deck; then, when she is there, rolled up like a mummy, in her steamer-chair, the sun comes out or the wind rises, and she totters down

again. I came up here after breakfast, and I have been swinging in a giant's swing. A strong wind has made the boat ride up and down on tremendous waves, but I like it; and I wish you were here, Madge, just as we used to crowd together in the apple-tree swing in the garden. All day behind me have been first mountains of white foam like crumbling snow, then deep-green furrows full of what seemed like that snow turned to ice.

“There are a number of interesting-looking people on board the ship, and I have wondered who they are, but I do not expect to find out, although I have made one acquaintance who is rather entertaining. She is a young girl about eighteen who is going abroad with her mother and father. He is a big, red-faced, blustering man, who gives loud orders to servants and jokes with the captain. His wife is pleasant, but I never knew a *real* lady before who asked strangers such personal questions as she asks me, for instance. The daughter—Mabel Merritt—sat here by me a while to-day and talked about everything. I had

brought from the library in the cabin *The Vicar of Wakefield* to read; she began conversation by asking me if it was exciting and by saying that it did not look very 'lively.' She then offered me her book, which was *Sir Somebody's Revenge*, fine print, paper cover, and all full of the things that mother will not let us read, and which I do not want to read, any way. She asked if I ever read stories, and I told her of *our* library of Mrs. Stowe's, Mrs. Whitney's, Miss Mulock's, and the others we like so much. She said those were all Sunday-school books, she thought, and then we concluded that I never had read what she calls stories. She advised me to do it in such a wise old way that I wanted to laugh; she said I would learn about 'life,' and then she described the plot of the novel in her lap. There was a wicked, hypocritical woman in it, and a murderer; a rich and fascinating gambler, and a heroine who ought to have been in a lunatic asylum. I could not help thinking that if there were such lives (and I have no doubt that there may be) I never wanted mine to touch theirs, and so I said,

“ ‘Why, if there were here in the ship a woman so bad as this one in the book, you would not get an introduction to her and make friends with her just to study her way of thinking and living, would you?’ ”

“ She seemed indignant at me, until I asked her what the difference was in studying the real person or studying all the talk, the thoughts and the life of a similar character in a story. That puzzled her a moment; then she said that was a ‘weak way of talking that strait-laced people’ had, but that it was very ‘inconsistent,’ because Shakespeare’s finest plays were all about villains, and the Bible itself told of very wicked people. I do not know but that she may have had the best of the argument, and I told her so, although I said I thought there was a difference in the purpose of the Bible histories, and that Shakespeare’s villains repelled one just as they would if they were living. She could talk much faster than I, and perhaps better; but when I said that I liked good, honest people whom I could trust and admire, in books and out, she laughed and hoped I would like her. She

began next to talk about theatres ; and when I said I never saw a play in my life, you should have seen her astonishment. She went away after asking me if I had been educated in a convent. Think of that ! This afternoon I was sitting here again, when she came back and began another long chat. She is older and has seen a great deal more of 'life,' as she calls it, than I have, but she does not look as if she were enjoying herself. She has dark rings under her eyes and looks listless. I think she talks to me, perhaps, because I amuse her with my ignorance. She asked if I had been 'out' long ; and when I told her since breakfast-time, I found out she meant 'in society.' She laughed about as heartily when I said that I had been out ever since I could remember as much as I ever expected to be, for I lived in a little village where daughters went with their mothers to church sociables, Sunday-school picnics and quiet tea-parties. She thought it must be 'dreadfully stiff and tedious,' but I told her of our girls' reading club, and before I knew it she was making me talk at a great rate about you all. She



said a grandmother like mine must be worth having, and some way, as I have been looking at *her* father and mother, I am better suited than ever with two parents I might mention if I chose.

“SUNDAY, 31st.

“I have been to the morning service. I could almost say I have been to two services, for half of the time I sat in imagination in *our* seat, hearing *our* minister, seeing through the near open window the willows swaying over the parsonage gate. The other half of the time I was swaying with the motion of the ship and seeing through a port-hole the ocean and the sky, both intensely blue in the full sunshine. The long dining-saloon was filled with chairs, and a curious congregation gathered. There were the ship's officers, part of an opera-troupe, an English nobleman and his wife returning from Canada, and a group of men and women from the steerage. The services were conducted by an old white-haired clergyman, who made them very impressive as he talked of our being here together for a few days, then parting never to meet until each life-voy-

age was ended. Tell grandma we sang 'Rock of Ages.' Cousin Jane did not feel well enough to attend service, so I found Mabel Merritt and asked her to come with me. She only stayed a little while; then the room was too close, she said, and she went away.

"Tell Johnny I have made one intimate friend who says he wishes I were his sister. He is a sort of little under-waiter who runs on errands for the passengers and the stewardess, a pale, pretty boy only eleven years old. He seems to eat and sleep any time he gets a chance, and I do not think he can ever get many chances; but he tells me he is the eldest of four children, and that he earns enough to pay his mother's rent. He hates the sea, but he is very brave. He told me how seasick he was at first for a whole month, and how the sailors laughed at him for it; so that he used to go behind the wheel-house and pray, as his mother had told him to when he was in any 'distress.' He said he was not 'distressed' that way now any more. He came a few times to bring me chicken-broth when I was a little

sick myself, and he begs me to have every variety of desserts. He gets so animated and happy when he tells of his home that I draw him out, and I know all about the children. If they all drop their 'h's,' as Charley does, they must be a funny set of Englishmen. He wants to be a gardener when he grows up, and he wished that he knew how to pray to be made one. We talked about it when he had time, and finally I printed a little prayer for him to learn, very like one grandma taught me a few years ago. I think it is better not to pray that he may be this particular thing or that, but that he may be kept from sins and from mistakes, and so try to be the kind of a man that God sees he could best make. Now, Madge, you will be saying that I fill my journal with things you do not care to know, but you said I must put in everything just as it came.

"Mr. Raynor says that Mr. Merritt is a very rich man who has made his money within a few years. They don't seem to anticipate much pleasure in traveling or seem to know or care where they will go.

Mr. Merritt copied out Mr. Raynor's route the other day, saying he 'guessed that they might as well follow that line as any other;' so we shall probably often meet them. They are going to get off at Queenstown in order to 'do' Ireland.

“JUNE 3.

“Early this beautiful morning I was out to see the Irish coast. It was very near, barren in spots, green and marked off in little sown places in parts, few trees, light-houses, and every little way a cluster of cabins; sometimes a queer square tower. When we came near the Cove of Cork, the sea was covered with fishing-boats having butternut-brown-colored sails. The tug-boat that came out to the steamer rocked frightfully on the water, which looked greener than the green shore. Mr. Merritt seemed to think it came steaming out especially for his benefit, and he was disgusted that it was not bigger; but after much ado he got his trunks, his wife and himself on board. Mabel is as cool and indifferent as her father is boisterous and her mother nervous. I saw them on the little boat, and

thought that she was with them, when she appeared at my side, saying,

“‘I hope I will see you often, you are such a queer creature.’

“I suppose I looked particularly queer as I heard that, for she laughed, saying,

“‘You know too much for a little girl, and you are not one bit like any young lady I know. I don’t see where you grew up to be so innocent.’

“Then she went down to her mother, who was entreating her to hurry or she would certainly be left. When I remember how Mrs. O’Flarity, our washerwoman, always used to call idiotic people ‘innocent,’ I am uncertain whether or not to feel complimented.

“EVENING.

“I suppose this is our last night on the steamer. And what a beautiful hour this is! just a quarter to nine and a magnificent sunset-light left over the sea, and the full moon well up. My little cabin-boy and I have been having another talk; he is very desirous that we should return on this same boat. Mr. Raynor teases me about making

such strange friends. The stewardess is a good woman who has seen a great deal of trouble with a drunken son and a bed-ridden daughter. She is a quiet, silent sort of person, but, some way, she has talked to me a great deal; she is very kind to me.

“JUNE 10.

“I have written you such a long letter already that I hardly think you will want to read more, but, Madge, I have wanted you so much this rare day, and yesterday—and every day. Here I am in Stratford-on-Avon, in the queerest old inn—‘The Red Horse Inn,’ which Washington Irving tells about in the *Sketch-Book*. You must read the description if you have not done so. I have just finished my supper, and am sitting in the parlor—yes, in the very chair he wrote about, if the red-cheeked servant-girl tells me the truth. All day the sun has shone in a soft mellow way, and Cousin Jane and I have wandered around these old streets, past cottages with dark walls and stone floors, peeping in here and there. I am not going to tell you any more about our

visit to Shakespeare's house or Anne Hathaway's cottage; but when I ended my letter, I had not been to the church. Cousin Jane does not see things in the order I should think she would, but has a funny way of her own. She always wants her dinner just when we arrive in a new spot, and I know she is wise, though at first it seemed dreadful to sit coolly down to eat rare roast beef when something I had read of all my life was just around the corner waiting; but Cousin Jane always says, 'It won't run away.' Well, after dinner we see the nearest wonder, and then she likes to take a ride or go shopping for curiosities. Last night we ended the day by buying small bound books of photographs in a little shop. The woman in charge must have made a mistake, for one among them was worth much more than we paid, if the others were sold at the right price. Cousin Jane said never mind; that they were all too expensive and the woman made a good enough profit, but I told her I would take a morning walk and see about it. I had a fancy that I would like to take my first peep at the old church

alone. I am not so sensible as people like the Raynors are; they don't wait to imagine any past or care for the histories of the people who once lived in certain places.

“It was a lovely morning, and after I had returned the book the woman told me the way to the church. I found it easily, and, entering the gate, turned into a long, broad avenue over which ancient long-limbed yew trees meet. The sky was faint blue above them, and across the churchyard I could see the sunshine playing on the water of the Avon. Each side of me were the graves, some very old, and everywhere the grass was short and thick like velvet. I thought the church itself would surely be closed at that hour in the morning, but I went slowly up the avenue, thinking that the *child* Shakespeare used to come this way sometimes. When I reached the front door, I found it open, and, happening to look back down the avenue, I saw coming two clergymen in white robes, then a woman carrying a tiny casket of oak, then three children with their father. They entered the church; but when only a little way in, they put down





SNYGER.

Avenue to Stratford-on-Avon Church door. Page 150.



the small casket on a bier more than six feet long, and the first clergyman read the burial-service. It was very solemn and strange to me. Behind me was the deep church, dim and empty; over the place where I thought Shakespeare's grave must be was his bust, which I knew from pictures of it; close by me was the lifeless body of some little child who could have lived but a day or two; and just beyond was all the outdoor sunlight on the grass, so fresh and shining with dew. When the service was ended, the nurse (I thought she must be that) took up again the little casket, and I followed them out, down near the bank of the Avon, where an old sexton dug a grave almost under the shadow of the church. Over our head the rooks wheeled in and out, the little birds twittered, and one of the children threw in the first earth that fell on the baby's coffin. I do not know why I did not go back to the church after that; instead, I sat on a flat tombstone watching the river and the lights and shadows quivering over the graves. I wondered how much that child who never learned anything here had come to know

when it awoke in heaven. Maybe, after only a few hours there (as we count time), it knew more than the great Shakespeare in life, with all his wonderful genius.

“I like this place. It is sweet and quiet; in a morning like this there is no gloom about it.”

With the journal came full letters telling of each day's doings, and rejoicing the family with the knowledge that Ruth was better already and enjoying every moment.

“To be sure, though, she is enjoying it in the odd way that she does everything else,” remarked Madge. “It never in the world would have seemed pleasant to me to attend a strange funeral early in the morning and then sit down on a tombstone to think about it. I would have been much more interested in those effigies of lords and ladies she writes about as stretched on their magnificent tombs. What is it she says of them?”

Mrs. Preston replied:

“She says they are in a church near Warwick Castle, and ‘are made of colored marble, having their ruffs, rings, chains and

state robes curiously wrought out. Over them hang rusty armor and tattered banners; beneath are endless titles and inscriptions."

"I don't wonder, though," said grandma, "that she liked better to think of the innocent little one buried in the sunshine. Those old monuments belong to the dark days of blood and crimes."

"I am glad she puts everything into her letters," added Johnny. "I like to hear how they stopped at that little shop for lunch and had 'weal and 'am pies,' and paid 'tuppence ha'penny' for them."

"Yes," returned his mother, "everything she can write to us will be sure to interest us, and the dear child knows it."

## CHAPTER VIII.

### *MADGE'S SILENCE.*

“‘This morn I will weave my web,’ she said  
As she stood by her loom in the rosy light,  
And her young eyes, hopefully glad and clear,  
Followed afar the swallows’ flight.”

ONE warm afternoon in midsummer Madge Preston was standing in the open hall door wondering what she should do to amuse herself. It was a little too warm for a walk, and just then she seemed to have exhausted her home-resources.

“You don’t know what to do with yourself, do you?” asked Bert Raynor, appearing in the hall behind her.

“How do you know but that I have so many things to do that I am just stopping to plan how to get them all done?”

“Because your face is vacant, and your mind is the same, judging from— There! don’t shut the door. I am going to say

something very pleasant, Madge. Don't you want to take a ride?"

"In the wheelbarrow?"

"No; a genuine ride in good style," replied Bert. "I have worn my old clothes and tramped over 'bogs and fens' until I am satisfied for the time being. If you will accompany me, I will wash my face."

"Can't you do it alone?"

"I mean after that process I will put on 'citizen's clothing' instead of my 'field-uniform;' then I will hire a good horse and carriage, and we will drive to Blodgett's Creek."

Madge was at once all animation, and ran to consult her mother. Mrs. Preston could think of no reasonable objection, for the day was beautiful, Bert was accustomed to horses and Madge wished to go. At the same time, she hoped that Bert would not begin to alter his way of living. Since coming among them he had been excellent friends with Madge, but he had not depended on her in the least for companionship. Both Mrs. Preston and her husband had watched Bert closely, but neither had seen anything in his conduct of which to disap-

prove. They felt, however, as Mrs. Preston said this day to Grandma Grey :

“If Madge’s companions do not do her positive good, I have noticed that they invariably get her into mischief—or she draws them in: I am never quite sure which way it works. Of course there is no harm in a pleasant drive through the country, but I would rather, as a rule, that these two should amuse themselves separately so long as Ruth is not here to keep them within bounds.”

Grandma nodded her head in full agreement, remarking,

“It has seemed as if Madge were several years younger since Ruth went away; she told me herself that she had lost her ‘thinker.’”

“It may be as well for her in the end. She used to let Ruth decide what was right and wrong, what wise and what foolish, as if she had little personal responsibility,” said Mrs. Preston.

Madge, meanwhile, had hurried to her room to get ready. Her first impulse had been to wear the simple gingham frock that she happened to have on; then, remember-



ing something, she said to herself, "There is a new hotel at Blodgett's Creek lately opened for summer guests and excursion-parties; we might like to stop there for a few minutes." I think I will wear my pink lawn."

Just as her toilet was completed she heard the sound of a horse at the gate, and then Bert's voice calling, "Don't hurry, Madge, for I must change my coat;" so she lingered to take a bunch of white roses from the vase on the table and thrust them into her belt. Then, for lack of other employment, she fell to looking at herself in the mirror.

Madge had not been a very pretty child. As Abbey said, she had always "romped the flesh all off her bones;" her skin was very dark and her eyes had been "too big for her." Ruth, with her exquisite complexion and fair silky hair, had been regarded as the one best entitled to be called a beauty. But within a year or two Madge had undergone a transformation. Others outside the family had remarked it. Madge herself had scarcely begun to realize it, but to-day the reflection of her own face in the mirror impressed

her with actual surprise and a really new pleasure. She was lean no longer, and nobody could call her sallow, for a beautiful color glowed under the clear dark skin; her eyes were very soft, yet brilliant, and the simple pink dress became her well.

Bert was only about five minutes getting himself ready, but in that time Madge learned her first lesson in vanity. The roses that she had thrust into her belt because they were sweet she now pulled out, and one was put at her throat with studied carelessness, and one in the mass of her shining hair, because she had discovered that she was beautiful as well as they. Indeed, as she turned to go down stairs, the thought occurred to her, "It cannot have detracted any from my good looks in the past that I have not been one bit self-conscious. I believe I am as bright and attractive this minute as Emma Nelson, who attitudinizes all the time as if she were sitting for her photograph."

Bert's boyish greeting was not calculated to do away with her new impressions, for as he helped her into the carriage he remarked,

“I used to think you were a precious homely little girl, as brown as a squaw, but you have gotten bravely over it. I wish you would teach a fellow the secret. My fond parents tell me that I was good-looking once, and then they sigh. However, honesty is the best policy. I see you wear pink cheeks with a pink dress to-day; I suppose to-morrow blue or green would be the thing.”

“Don't try so hard to be foolish,” said Madge, calmly. “If you can't be handsome, you need not be a goose.”

“That is an excellent sentiment, and one does not expect such wisdom from you; your sister Ruth is the girl for good advice.”

“She is the girl for everything good,” said Madge, warmly.

“Well, I believe she is. I only saw her for a few hours those few days before she sailed, but I thought she was cut on a new pattern. I never can understand that she is younger than you are. You and I, now, chatter like two infants together—”

“Thank you!”

“—But Ruth, who looks quite soft and

innocent and harmless, is the most quietly independent, sensible creature I ever encountered. I grew old every time I talked with her. You need not laugh, now; I did. She has a way of putting calm, reasonable questions that one is surprised into answering honestly and then wondering over afterward. The last night she was at our house we talked of my coming here. She never preached a bit, but she gave me to understand that I was expected to behave myself and not to corrupt Johnny's youthful morals. (I think she warned me against your frivolous influence, or maybe it was mine over you.) She did not say in plain English, 'Go to Hempstead and begin to make a man of yourself,' but it amounted to that. I half agreed that I would try it, for variety. I even told her that I did sometimes spend five or ten minutes in reflection as to my future career—whether I would study medicine or start a dime museum. Doesn't she hate tobacco, though!"

"I don't know; no one smokes at our house."

"I am aware of that fact," said Bert, with

a queer smile, adding, "That is the odd thing about Ruth."

"What is? That she does not use tobacco?" said Madge, flippantly.

"Why, she is good and conscientious, and all that, yet along with it she is as unconventional and as full of fun as any girl not half so straight up and down."

"Oh, Ruth was born sweet-tempered and unselfish and truthful," returned Madge, really believing what she said.

"I saw Dick Nelson this morning, and he told me that he and his sister Emma were going to drive over to Blodgett's Creek this afternoon; that was what put it into my head to go. He says the new hotel is very well managed and quite filled up with boarders."

"Yes, I have always wanted to see it," said Madge.

"If Emma and her brother should be there, do you suppose your people would object to our staying there for supper and then just long enough for a row on the water about sunset?" asked Bert.

"Wouldn't that be delightful! I don't

know; I should not think mother would care," exclaimed Madge.

"Dick says the village people who keep horses drive there every day and stay for one meal and a row on the creek."

Madge was silent, trying to reason away a vague impression that it was just as well for Bert and herself not to join the Nelsons. She assured herself that they belonged to a perfectly respectable family, one of the wealthiest in the place, and— Well, how nonsensical to hesitate about spending a pleasant half hour in their society! If Dick had the name of being very "wild," he was a year or two older than Bert and not at all likely to follow up his acquaintance. Emma was not the kind of a girl that Madge admired, but she was rather popular among her associates.

At that moment Madge, attracted by the picturesque ruins of an old mill, suddenly exclaimed,

"Why, we are not on the right road!"

"I know it, but this is a far prettier one, and we have time enough."

Banishing every other thought, Madge

then gave herself up to the present and greatly enjoyed the beauty of the country. Reaching the old mill, they fastened the horse to a fence and strolled over the ruins. A rapid stream fell over the rocks behind the mill, and lower down great willows shaded the banks; they borrowed some fishing-rods and fished with no success. They lingered about the pretty place until Bert found, to his surprise, that it was six o'clock. When they were again on the road, he said,

“If we go on to Blodgett's now, we must get supper there or go without it until considerably later. If you say so, we will turn back and go home. We have actually ridden as far as we would have done had we gone there directly.”

“Which do you want to do?”

“I want you to decide,” replied Bert.

“If you would enjoy going on,” said Madge, slowly, “let us go; I do not think mother would object. There can't be any impropriety in getting one's supper at a little country hotel like that.”

“Of course not,” said Bert, adding, “The

Nelsons said something about an excursion-party being there to-day."

"Then there will be all the more to see," returned Madge, carelessly.

In a half hour they reached the hotel, which was a rustic building with numerous piazzas. It was surrounded by a park with swings, croquet-grounds and accommodations for out-door picnics. Not far off was a wide, beautiful creek, its banks shaded, its water clear and deep. In certain parts of it lilies were plentiful and easily obtained.

As Bert drove up to the nearest piazza a young girl rushed forward to greet Madge with lively demonstrations of pleasure. She was very pretty and very fashionably attired, and might have been attractive if her voice had not been on too high a key and all her movements of a sort to make people aware that she had moved.

"Oh, I was so afraid that you would not come!" she exclaimed, seizing Madge's hand and then waiting for an introduction to Bert.— "Dick told me he talked with you about the ride this morning," she added, transferring her attention adroitly to Bert.



Madge was a little puzzled at Emma Nelson's sudden interest in her, as they had little to do with each other in school, but it was not disagreeable to be all at once taken most heartily into the latter's good graces. Dick soon appeared, and Madge's prejudices against him waned in the course of the next half hour; he was very polite and could talk in an entertaining way.

Madge was highly pleased in sauntering around the verandas and in watching the people who thronged them. It was almost like taking a journey, she declared, to see everything new and so many strangers. Fortunately, she did not detect the sneer with which Emma glanced at her brother after this speech. Dick had been told that the Preston girls were "just as strait-laced and old-fashioned" as they could be, but he was evidently not at all inclined to find the description applicable to Madge. If Emma's words had any effect, it was to make him very careful to carry himself with great propriety. Some of Emma's friends he teased, joked or in the silliest fashion conducted with them what the shal-

low-pated creatures called a "flirtation." On this occasion he contented himself with showing the party all the sights of the place and then making arrangements for a row on the water.

Madge thought nothing could be more charming than that half hour which they spent gliding down the creek in the beautiful summer sunset. They sang as they rowed; they dabbled their hands in the motionless water and plucked quantities of spotless lilies. When they turned the boat toward the starting-point, something suggested to Madge that she would do well now to go home; but when they reached the hotel again, she put away the thought. The place looked very pretty; through the forest-trees gleamed numbers of Japanese lanterns hung around the piazzas, a band was playing lively airs, and a loud gong announced that supper was ready. The dining-room was crowded with people gathered around small tables when at last Bert and Dick secured a table for the girls. Half the persons present were quiet summer boarders or families in parties from towns near by. The rest consisted of

a mixed company of all grades, some persons among them being very noisy and very ill-bred, some so "awfully countrified," to quote Emma Nelson, that they caused much merriment by their appearance.

Bert Raynor was an excellent mimic, and Dick Nelson had command of a small kind of wit that usually served to set off Emma's girl-friends into hysterical laughter; and so to-night, as they ate their supper, they indulged in much fun-making at the expense of their neighbors. They did it so covertly it is not probable that the innocent victims knew what was going on, but Madge, who was intensely amused, was none the less conscious that many people were watching them, because they certainly were making themselves conspicuous. She was secretly ashamed every time Emma Nelson, clasping her hands, on which glistened too many rings, would give an affected sort of cackle, ending often in something which narrowly escaped being a squeal rather than a "peal" of laughter. Emma's cheeks were like blush-roses, her features very pretty, but Madge could not help wondering what Mrs.

Preston would have said had she been there to see her conduct.

After supper she was less critical. She had been betrayed into talking considerable nonsense herself, and she was a little excited by the applause with which it had been received. Soon Bert said to her,

“Madge, we will not be able to get home before eight o'clock now, no matter how fast we drive; so Dick proposes that we stay a while and see the dance that they are going to have up in the ball-room. It will be no end of fun to see these country bumpkins and their sweethearts bouncing around on the floor.”

“Mother will not like it,” she replied.

“Oh, she can't care. We won't go into the ball-room if you object; we can see the whole performance by staying out here on the balcony,” said Bert.

“Oh yes, do stay just a little while,” exclaimed Emma, coming nearer. “We will drive along the road together then. Dick wants our horse to rest a little longer, for he has driven it hard to-day.”

Dick added his plea to the effect that now

it was neither daylight nor dark, but later there would be fine moonlight.

Just then the band struck up a stirring strain, and Madge's companions seemed to consider the matter decided. She wanted to stay; she knew she would enjoy it. What was the use of bothering now to find out if it were best, so long as there was nothing actually wrong or forbidden?

"By the way, Bert, we had better go and see if they have fed your horse; there is such a crowd here they may neglect him," suggested Dick, drawing Bert away and advising the girls to wait in some quiet place for their return.

"Oh, go see to the horses, by all means," laughed Emma, with a peculiar tone puzzling to Madge.—"Don't you like to go off on little excursions like this?" she asked when the boys had left them.

"I never have been here before, or away at any place like this in the evening."

"Our set have very nice times. I mean the girls that I go with, and their brothers—the Mathers, the Blakes, the Graveses and so on. We are so much livelier than your set.

Mary Parker is as 'poky' as if she were fitting herself to be a school-teacher, and all the others that your sister Ruth went with are so *proper*. I hate proper girls. There is Molly Ashburn, who has a fortune in her own right; and if she would tease her guardian, she could go to a city boarding-school or dress splendidly. Molly does not own one single silk dress, and will not wear handsome jewelry because she is 'only a schoolgirl,' she told me, and her mother used to say silk dresses were unsuitable for young girls. I would not be so fussy for anything. Molly is not the sort of person, either, who can wear plain dresses and look as elegant as some people can. Now, you, Madge Preston, are perfectly bewitching in that pink lawn."

Emma Nelson was not addicted to compliments of this stamp. Madge was recovering from her surprise and flutter of tickled vanity when Emma went on:

"Mr. Raynor is a very entertaining young man, isn't he?"

"Bert? Do you call *him* a young man?" laughed Madge, excessively amused; then,

recovering her gravity, she remarked, "He is a first-rate boy. We get along very nicely nowadays. When he was at our house years ago, we used to quarrel half the time, and the other half disturb the public peace in every way imaginable."

"I shall come to see you very soon, Madge; I never felt well acquainted with you until to-night. I should have tried to know you before, but, some way, I fancied your sister Ruth did not like me."

Fortunately, the band played just then with deafening loudness; and when Madge spoke, it was to propose a turn in the now deserted balcony. They walked around to the other side of the house and came face to face with Dick and Bert, meeting them by an open window of what seemed a bar-room.

"There! we've caught you," laughed Dick, carelessly. "Going to get a drink on the sly?"

"Is that a bar-room? I thought I smelt brandy or beer," said Madge as they turned back all together.

"Brandy *or* beer? Can't you tell the difference?" asked Bert, in Dick's tone.

“I don't know but I might if I tried, but one odor is as disagreeable as the other,” returned Madge.

When Dick laughed, the thought crossed her mind that he had been beguiling Bert into that very bar-room, but she dismissed it as wholly improbable. They went around to where they could see the ball-room and several sets of dancers all merrily engaged in this amusement, which had always had for Madge Preston a great fascination.

Now, Madge had never in her life been forbidden to dance in a place like this, for the simple reason that her parents had never supposed such a prohibition necessary. She had often longed to go to dancing-school, but her one request had been answered by her father thus: “Nature has taught you to do all the dancing that I ever care to have you undertake.” For all this, Madge could dance very well. She had learned it of the schoolgirls because she loved the graceful motions and the exercise. She had never danced except for play, and never expected to do so until this spirited music made her feet keep time almost in spite of herself.



"See here!" exclaimed Emma. "Madge is so excited or so chilly that she is hopping around out here in the dark. Let us go inside and stand near the door. I am afraid of taking cold here; my dress is very thin."

They entered the bright room and stood as spectators among many others who were looking on. A lady standing not far away from Madge whispered,

"There is the prettiest face I have seen here, or anywhere else lately."

"Where? Oh, that is a Nelson girl, from Hempstead," was her companion's reply.

"I know *her*. Handsome enough, but too loud. I mean that little beauty in a pink lawn—the girl next to Emma Nelson."

Where is the young girl who can hear herself for the first time pointed out as a "little beauty" and not feel as did Madge—that this world is a very pleasant place, and that people are very appreciative? Emma began to think her companion was not so unlike her "set" as she supposed, for Madge's spirits rose perceptibly.

Suddenly, Dick caught his sister by the arm, saying,

“Come, Emma! They can't find enough dancers for this last set that they are making up; let us take one turn.”

Emma agreed with alacrity, and soon Madge saw her dancing very gracefully.

“I know that; we girls used to dance it together at recess,” said Madge, longingly. “Oh, doesn't it look fun? and isn't that music enough to take you off your feet?”

“If you can keep on yours, we will strike out ourselves,” returned Bert.

“Let us try it, then; now we are here we might as well have all the fun there is,” replied Madge, eagerly; and they followed the example of Dick and Emma.

“Madge Preston,” said Bert considerably later, “if you know what is wise, you will come right off the floor. We can only just reach home by ten o'clock, and what, in the mean time, will they think has become of us?”

Madge gave a little cry of dismay, and quickly made ready to go home. Emma and her brother started from the hotel at the same time, and drove at their side all the way of the return. Madge was almost

glad not to have time to think of anything beyond their nonsense and how she should reply to it in the same strain.

They drove into the long main street of the town just as the old town-clock struck ten. The Nelsons turned off toward their showy residence, in the most aristocratic part of the village, while Bert drove up the hill to the Prestons'. Madge jumped out of the carriage at the gate, saying,

“I don't know what mother will say to me.”

“You can lay as much blame on me as you like,” returned Bert, good-naturedly, as he drove away toward the livery-stable.

As Madge went through the hall she heard rapid steps and earnest talking in the dining-room, toward which she went. On the threshold she met Abbey, who told her hurriedly that Grandma Grey had been having one of her “attacks.” The old lady was sometimes taken very suddenly with severe pain and great difficulty of breathing. At such times the whole family was much exercised, because Dr. Hickox had said that the trouble came from a form of heart-dis-

ease which might prove fatal. On this occasion, however, the worst pain had passed; the old lady was growing comfortable, and Abbey assured Madge that Dr. Hickox had said there was no danger that she would not soon be as well as before this attack.

“I declare, we have flew around here for an hour or two. I’ve no idea what time it is, and I had forgotten that you were not in the house all the while,” said Abbey.

At that moment Mrs. Preston appeared, looking very warm and tired.

“Why, Madge!” she exclaimed. “Is it not late? Where have you been? I should have worried about you if I had not been so busy and excited for fear your grandmother was going to be worse than usual. Have you had an accident?”

“No, mother, but we did not go directly to the creek; we stopped at a place on the south road where there is an old mill, and the first thing we knew the afternoon was almost gone.”

“Abbey, don’t let the kitchen fire go out,” said Mrs. Preston, her mind full of care for the old lady; “you know we may want more

hot water.—But where did you go then, Madge? and have you had your supper?”

“Then we thought we would drive to the creek and have just one row for water-lilies before it was very late. When we arrived, we found one of my schoolmates and her brother, who went rowing with us. I suppose I ought to have come home after that, but there were a great many people at the new summer hotel there, and we did want to stay for supper, for it seemed so gay and pleasant. Then we— It— There were—”

Abbey, who had disappeared, suddenly returned to say that grandma would like a glass of lemonade or something sour, and Mrs. Preston, who did not wait for more from Madge, only said,

“I hope you have had a nice time, but you must not stay away again anywhere in the evening when I do not know where you are.”

“I can tell you to-morrow everything we did,” returned Madge; and behind her words was a thought like this: “I can, and will—if she *asks* anything more about it; but as likely as not she will forget or think that

I told her all there was to tell." She was ashamed of the thought when it came first. She put it aside, saying, "Let me make that lemonade; you are both very tired."

"Very well; I wish you would do it.— Why, Johnny, you up yet? Go right to bed. It must be almost ten o'clock," said Madge's mother; and Madge, hurrying away, did not say just what the correct time was.

No one went to bed very early that night, but Madge was certainly the last one asleep. She was elated, excited, troubled. How often she had admired Emma Nelson's face, and how many compliments she had heard people bestow on Emma! It was very pleasant to lie there in the darkness reflecting that her own eyes were larger and darker than Emma's, her hair curled naturally where Emma's was evidently crimped by pins, while, best of all, she knew how to act, how to speak, like a well-bred young girl. She might not be able to dress as richly as Emma could dress, but she resolved to cultivate exquisite taste in colors and dress-fitting; then she would "look as well as Emma looked." If her mother did

not refer to the matter the next day, she concluded that she would wait until she did speak of it before going into particulars about the dancing and all that. No one at the hotel had recognized her; she was glad of that. Some way, it would surely seem worse—much worse—than it really was, if her father or her mother, or any of the family, even Abbey, knew she had been dancing in such a public way and place. On the whole, she wished that no one of them ever need know it. Why need they? She would write it to Ruth in her journal. No; all written out on paper, it would appear less— Well, less pleasant and proper than if she were to explain how it came about. At this point it occurred to her that Bert might betray her unless warned that she preferred to keep silence for a while; so she resolved to arise early and confer with him.

Now, Madge Preston was too outspoken by nature and too truthful by principle to plan deliberately a course of continued deception, but she was a little giddy and unbalanced after her late excitement. In

this mood there seemed to her no particular harm in not telling *all* the truth to her mother, if she told her no untruths.

Mrs. Preston did not allude to the affair next day or in the days that followed. If she thought of it, she supposed she knew everything; for Madge's habit was to talk about her exploits as long as she could secure a listener.



## CHAPTER IX.

### MADGE'S JOURNAL.

JULY 15.

I CAN easily see, Ruth, how your new acquaintance, Mabel Merritt, finds you queer: we have not seen enough of the world to know how other girls talk and act. I presume traveling will improve you very much; of course *we* couldn't ask to have you any nicer, but you know what I mean: you and I are not one bit "stylish." We might just as well as not be "stylish;" it is not wicked, I'm sure, and people treat one with more consideration if, as Emma Nelson says, "one has an *air*."

Perhaps you think Emma has a great many airs; but the more I know her, the better I like her. She has been to see me several times, and came once to ask me to ride with her in her pony-phaeton. Grand-ma has a prejudice against her because she

talks so fast and a little extravagantly, and because she never thinks to speak or bow to grandma when she comes into or goes out of the room. You know mother and Mrs. Nelson have no calling-acquaintance with each other, but I do not see why for that reason mother need object to my visiting Emma, as Emma wants to have me do, and to my being rather intimate with her. Other girls have friends who are perfect strangers to their parents.

I told grandma this last night, and she said when mother was young she felt as I feel now. There was a girl in her school whom she greatly desired to visit, and because grandma would not let her she secretly condemned her motives and fancied that grandma was proud of her "good blood," and all that. She said to herself if this girl's father had not been a "poor tailor" she would have been allowed to visit her. One day mother ran away and took supper with her friend (think of our mother doing such a *humanly* naughty trick as that!); then, young as she was, she saw enough to show her that the people were vulgar and com-

mon: they flattered her grossly and asked her very impertinent questions about her family affairs. Mother did not confess what she had done until years after, although she dropped her new acquaintance; but the time came when she would have blushed to have had her name mentioned with the girl's, and she saw grandma had been very wise. But, after all, this does not apply to me. Emma is a great deal richer than I am, and I do not believe her people are exactly vulgar, if they are not at all religious or well educated.

Bert likes Dick Nelson very much. I wish they were not together so often as they are. They met and got very well acquainted one evening at Blodgett's Creek, and ever since that time they are inseparable.

Ruth, I wish you would write all sorts of little common observations in your journal—tell me how girls of my age put up their hair, for instance. I am tired of curls in my neck, just as if I were six years old instead of sixteen, and almost seventeen. I did mine up in a knot and wore a tall comb and frizzed it on my forehead exactly like a

picture in Harper's *Bazar*, but the family scorn subdued my spirit; even Uncle Henry scowled at it.

If you go to Germany, Ruth, do bring me an amber necklace and cross. Emma says they are not so very expensive in Berlin, and I think they are exquisite. Somebody sent her a whole set—bracelets and earrings. I tried them on, and found them very becoming to a dark complexion.

You ask if I have done as I said and studied an hour a day this vacation in order to advance faster next year. Well, no; I have so many interruptions.

I do not see Mary Parker very often. She came one day and asked to hear one of your letters; mother had invited her to come for that purpose. It happened to be an afternoon when Emma Nelson called, and heard the letter too. Mary enjoyed it greatly, but Emma *is* rather ignorant. She asked absurd questions—did not know where Versailles is, or what, whether a city or a building.

Ruth, I do wish you were home! Some way, when we are together, our two heads are better than one, if the one happens to

be mine. I never in my life was so perplexed over endless trifles as I am this summer, because these trifles continually raise questions which I must decide. I suppose, perhaps, you would settle them in a minute by doing as we have always done, but I can't. Of course I want to do what is right, but it is not natural for me to be so very conscientious at my age as the older ones of the family are. Then—there is no doubt about it, Ruth—we *are* behind the age in everything that regards fashion, and I don't like it. Mother only laughs when I tell her so, and Abbey says ridiculous things. There is Abbey herself, now; nobody values her more than I do, but it is awkward to have a person in the family who does a servant's work and yet is so interested in all the family matters that she feels free to give advice.

We had a Sunday-school picnic last week; it was a beautiful day, and we went to "The Grove," as they now call that pretty patch of woods just west of the old factory. Every one in the congregation went, I think—old and young. I never enjoyed a morning

more in my life. Mary Parker and some of her set—or our old set, as Emma Nelson calls them—were there, and we roamed the woods together until dinner was ready. Mary and I found the prettiest little basin in the deepest woods! It was fringed all around with fine ferns, and it looked like a meeting-place for fairies. We sat there and talked an hour or more.

Mary is a fine girl, Ruth, just as you have always said she was; it makes me ashamed that I am not more ambitious when I hear her talk. She means to go to Wellesley College. Her father is rich, and I do not think she intends to be a teacher, but she says that in this age of the world a young girl makes a great mistake if she fails to get the very best education that she can possibly acquire, for every year the standard grows higher.

This reminds me of a lovely thing father told me about Mary Parker. You know Jenny Hayes, the daughter of that pale little dressmaker who lives in that bandbox of a house next the town-hall? Jenny has been the best scholar in the West End

school since she entered. She learned all they could teach her there the year before last, but she could not afford to pay for her books and tuition at the academy. Mary found it out, and made her father arrange it so that Jenny had last year in all our classes; you remember how she learned. Now, Mr. Parker told father that he wanted Mary to go to a very expensive school in New York City, but that Mary had plead with him to send instead both Jenny Hayes and herself to Wellesley College. He said that Mary told him that Jenny would make a noble woman and a fine teacher with that help. None of the girls know this; they say Jenny is "smart," but "only Jenny Hayes," and they call Mary "odd;" they say it respectfully, though, for I have noticed that to be "odd" and *rich* is to inspire more respect than to be "odd" and *poor*.

While I sat there with Mary I made up my mind to be more in earnest. I don't think a bit about being a woman, but I suppose I shall be one if I live. She is not dull, if she *is* what Emma calls "so very high-toned." She can be very witty, and

mother says she is the best-read girl in the town ; but you know all that.

After dinner who should appear but Emma Nelson and her brother and some of those "behind-the-piano girls"? They did not belong to the school, but they came after dinner, and remarked that the grove was free. I enjoyed them, for they always make fun, or, as Emma says, "they carry on so." We roamed off again, and Bert discovered that very same pretty hollow that we had found in the morning; and Dick proposed a game of cards. Now, Ruth, I know you will think that is dreadfully wrong, but really I can't see why. Nobody makes a fuss over checkers or dominoes, and people could gamble with them or with straws, I suppose; Bert says they might. Any way, one thing is certain: almost every young person in what people call "society" nowadays plays cards. I don't see any harm in it, and I have learned how this summer. Mary Parker does not play, and a few of her friends do not; but even Mary could not prove to me that it was wrong. All she did say was, "I do not play cards



for this reason: Not one of the very best men and women whom I know ever plays cards, and every one of the worst persons I can think of does play them." I told her that was not any sort of argument, because it left out all the immense middle class of good-enough people who see no harm in card-playing. She said I did not ask her for an argument, but for a reason, and her reason was that she wanted to model her character after the best patterns, not the half-and-half sort. But I am half and half; so, after all, I am acting consistently. Mother said a few weeks ago that I must learn to think for myself on moral questions, and not to follow you or any one else blindly. I have thought and decided that several things are not wrong for me as I now am, but I am afraid I could not make mother understand. Any way, I have not taken time to tell her.

Do you ever think, Ruth, what you would do if you were the daughter of a rich man? I would like to be that for a few years. I would not do just either as Emma Nelson does or as Mary Parker, even. I would

dress very elegantly, be very select in the choice of my friends; I would travel and copy the manners of the most refined people, so that everything I wore or did or said would be beyond criticism and every one who met me would admire me. In short, I would be like the young ladies we read about in nice novels. Of course such novels as you speak of are miserable things, but I have read lately some very fascinating ones. The heroines are so lovely in person, they have such "rare smiles" and such "statuesque attitudes," and all that; they seem to fulfill their purpose in life by just being. It satisfies other people merely to gaze at and admire them. Of course they are always rich. There is a romance about living like that which one can't get up in the line of an existence like mine, for instance. I can't fancy myself so beautiful that mother would not expect me to sweep my room every Saturday, to charge my mind with darning my own stockings, often wiping dishes for Abbey and studying my Sunday-school lesson. If we were rich, we would hire all that done—except the lessons. But this is nonsense;

only I think of such things, not having you to talk to, as always before.

Speaking of Sunday-school, I wish that I were in the new Bible-class. Mrs. Young, the bride who came to town lately, is the teacher. Oh, she does wear the most exquisite suits! Last week her dress was pale lavender silk, with a white lace hat and white gloves. She makes her class a sort of conversation-class. I think they might study the lesson a little more, judging from accounts, but they talk about it most of the time. Once or twice they spent the hour getting up the programme for the entertainment at the next church sociable, but the superintendent stopped that. Mother will not hear to my leaving Miss Floyd's class. She is a good teacher, I do suppose, for one can never ask her a question about the lesson that she cannot answer, but she has *such* a way of leaving things to our consciences. I never could endure that. She quotes what the Bible says in the way of general principles if we ask her if this or that thing is wicked; then she tells us what it is to be a Christian and leaves us to measure ourselves by that stan-

dard. Ever since I was five years old I have hated principles. I used to want mother to say, "Madge, that is naughty; and if you do it, I will whip you," instead of saying, "Good little girls never do this thing." Besides, Miss Floyd assumes things. Last Sunday she said she had reason to fear that some of her scholars were trying to lead a divided life—that they knew what they ought to do, but they were not ready or willing to do it, and meanwhile they might seem gay, but they were not really happy or satisfied. How does she know that? I suppose young girls always are restless and excitable. Such personal talk makes scholars uncomfortable, even if it does not apply to them. I don't think it is in good taste.

Mary Parker's class of children has been divided, and, as she is going away in the fall, she has not taken another, but has joined ours. She thinks Miss Floyd is remarkably interesting.

Mrs. Young must be doing good, too, for Emma Nelson has joined her class, and she never liked to come to Sunday-school before.

Mrs. Young had two thousand dollars' worth of diamonds for her bridal present. Last week's lesson was about the Exodus, and she happened to tell that—in connection with the borrowing of the Egyptians' jewels, you know, by the children of Israel.

You will be astonished to hear that Emma Nelson is going away to a boarding-school, although she has not yet decided to what school. Bert says he is the one who gave her the start and she will live to thank him for it. Bert thinks she is very pretty, but he is always laughing at her ignorance. One day—as I think, out of pure mischief—he told her that no young lady nowadays was considered to have been properly brought up unless she had been to boarding-school; that city girls always talked of their exploits there, and showed their elegant diplomas. Emma believed every word, and now declares she will go one year and graduate. She is in fractions yet, and always spells Tuesday *Tewsday*.

## CHAPTER X.

### *RUTH'S JOURNAL.*

JULY 10.

I THINK Cousin Jane is very amiable, for she has a great deal of patience with what I am sure she considers peculiar notions of mine. Every day I find some one who seems to have entirely different ideas of right and wrong from those that we have been taught. If I were very intellectual and knew how to discuss such matters fluently, I might get bewildered; but, being only a humdrum little girl who has always found that she came out best satisfied when she went along in the good old way, I get on quite easily.

Only it does make me very sorry when I do not want to do what Cousin Jane would do if she were alone. For instance, yesterday Mr. Raynor and she made all their arrangements to go to Versailles to-day

(Sunday) in order to see the magnificent fountains, which play only on Sundays. A large party of Americans were going from the boarding-house where we are. They intended to start after breakfast and go on the cars, spending the day and getting back to Paris about dark. While I heard them talk in the *salon* (as they call the parlor) that night I began to wonder if I were *queer*, as you say; for not one of the party made the least objection to going, because, as they said, it was the "*only* day they could see the display and everybody did it." When I heard the Raynors agree to join them, I came up to my room to think it all over; and I soon made up my mind that I would just quietly stay at home. You see, Madge, we do not believe that traveling for mere pleasure and laughing and running about to see sights with a crowd of gay people is any kind of a way to "remember the Sabbath-day to keep it *holy*." That granted, what difference does it make that the fountains play only on that day? If it is wrong to break any one of the commandments, the mere fact that it would not be possible to

break it except on special occasions would not be any reason why we should avail ourselves of that one chance, would it? The French do not observe the day as we do, but what of that in our case? I often hear that the French all tell lies, but no Americans have said to me they meant to tell untruths here because it was the custom of the country. I wanted to see the fountains, and I disliked very much to seem to set my judgment up against the Raynors; but I hoped to have them go if they wished, without any reference to me. In the morning they refused to stir a step without me; then I was bewildered, for I saw they were annoyed and very much disappointed, and I never before felt that I was spoiling my friends' pleasure by insisting on having my own way. It was *awfully* hard, Madge! I wanted to be obliging and unselfish, but I kept thinking, "It never can be right to do wrong, and it never can be wrong to do right;" so I said I could not go, and I told Cousin Jane just why. Perhaps she saw how sorry I was for her; any way, she was just as lovely about it as she could be.



MONDAY, 11th.

Sometimes I think that if I had no belief that Sunday sightseeing and work for pleasure were not right I would do nothing of that sort on that day, because after the rest one enjoys so much more on the Monday. I certainly found the great park here at Versailles beautiful enough, with the flowers, the statuary and the countless interesting objects. I never even thought of the fountains. We saw the great palace, with its exquisitely-painted ceilings, with walls of pink and gray marbles, with floors so polished that we slipped on them in felt overshoes. I think I was most pleased with the pretty little palaces near by the grand one, for in one of these I was reminded of poor Queen Marie Antoinette, whom, you know, I always pitied so much. I saw rooms where things had remained as she left them. In her gilded ebony piano—or shut in its cover, rather—was a not very much faded sheet of music belonging to her, and where she carelessly left it. In her bedroom was a beautiful picture of her poor little son. Both these small palaces must

have been charming places when filled with the court-ladies.

In the afternoon I wandered under the trees past a pretty stream where, on a little island, was a small empty temple, and then I came to the Swiss village that, you remember, the queen built for her amusement. It is a group of curious little thatched *chalets*, or Swiss cottages, with porches, quaint gables and odd windows, but I could not see a human being in or near the cottages; the only sound to be heard was the birds singing in the grove or the ripple of the water. When I peeped in a cot-window, the place seemed more lonesome than any of the grand palaces, for in these one could easily fancy the great people still living in state; but the little Swiss village was as mournful to me as a child's plaything after the death of the child whose delight it perhaps may have been.

I was standing there thinking—or, as Mr. Raynor says when he wants to tease me, “cheating the guides;” for he says I see a great deal more than they are paid for showing, but I like to remember the little I know

of a place when I am in it—when suddenly somebody right behind me said,

“Here I am, Sister Ruth!”

“It was not you, dear Madge—if it only had been!—but it was Mabel Merritt, whom I had not seen since she left me on the steamer. She was more animated when she greeted me than I supposed she could be. She acts always half tired and wholly bored. She has not enjoyed herself much—or, I should say, she has not enjoyed other people or many things—since she landed. *Herself*, she says, she never enjoys; and you would wonder how this could be, Madge, if you were to hear her talk. You and I have so often discussed what would make us happy, and Mabel has, I think, everything that you have ever mentioned as desirable. Her father and mother had found the Raynors, and they were visiting together; so Mabel and I sat down under the trees for the same purpose.

Cousin Jane has no patience with Mabel Merritt; she says that her indifference is all pretence and affectation, but I cannot think this. I think she feels no interest.

She began :

“I called you ‘sister,’ for you are a little like a nun and a little like a Quakeress ; and not much like either, on the whole, for to-day your eyes are bright and your cheeks red, and you look provokingly contented.” (Tell mother that when she worries about me.)

I told her that she happened to catch me just in a minute when I was so happy that all the birds might have been singing in my heart as well as over my head. It was a silly speech, for she insisted on knowing exactly what made me happy that particular minute, and I could hardly tell her. I was thinking of the great ladies who had lived here in all this magnificence, some so unhappy, some so wicked and unwomanly. I was thinking of the horrible mobs and cruel wars, of what an unreal thing the old splendor seems now it is over for ever. I was rejoicing that everything in my life seemed so sweet and good ; I mean all that has been, and is—my own cozy home, that always seems to me flooded with sunshine, as it looked that morning I came away ; my

own people, so exactly as I would have them—father, mother, grandma, even Abbey. I was counting her in as a treasure there in the shadow of a palace, but I will venture to say she is better than most of the queens who have departed. I was glad I was young and life looked so beautiful—that I had been given this wonderful journey. Then the sky that day was one of those blue, blue skies that put thoughts into me of heaven, but thoughts I cannot tell, because they are better than I am; and if I told them, people would think I was as good as my thoughts and be disappointed later. I don't want to tell them, either, but you must know, Madge, how they come and you want to sing, to thank God because you are alive and he is so good. I tried to put a little of this happy feeling into Mabel without talking much about myself.

We found a pretty little nook, and sat in it for an hour. Mabel, in questioning me, told me at the same time much about herself. Sometimes she seems to me years older and like a fashionable young lady who amuses herself with an ignorant school-

girl; then, again, she will make me feel old and she will seem strangely ignorant. Her childhood has been such a different one from ours! She lived in an elegant house, but scarcely saw her mother from one week's end to another. She said that all she remembers clearly was a never-ending succession of servants and nurse-girls. Some petted her and told lies to save her and them from blame; some neglected and scared her with threats. She had so many toys she enjoyed none, so much candy that she ruined her teeth, and so much spending-money that she wasted it or hired the maids to let her do just as she liked. When she was twelve years old, she was sent to a convent to learn music and languages. She was taught there that the nuns were very pious, and yet she saw enough of their life and conduct to conclude that religion is hypocrisy with some people, with others it is stupidly acting according to a set of dull rules. From the convent she went to a fashionable boarding-school. I wish you could have heard her describe the performances there. The pupils seemed to do every-

thing except to look inside of a book. They regarded their teachers as a kind of upper servants who, because they depended on their salaries for support, could be treated with insolence or calmly ignored. Girls like you and me had pearls and diamonds, wore silks and satins, and they even gave grand parties, for which they ordered most expensive suppers. Mabel graduated at this school, and had a degree conferred upon her. She herself laughed at the absurdity of the thing, and said she did not know enough to teach a district school if her bread and butter depended on it—that she had paid for a five-thousand-dollar education, but she would part with it for almost nothing if she could sell it at second-hand. After school ended she had a season in society. You are quite right: we *are* very old-fashioned; but I am so glad! One party, one play, one beautiful gown, seems very fine, but Mabel says go to fifty parties, all more or less alike, have every night and day all amusement and excitement, and by and by all the pleasure—yes, even all the excitement—is done for. As for beautiful

dresses— Well, Mabel has some things fine enough for a princess, or so they seem to me ; but she is never pleased with them after the first. Her mother and father are displeased that she so indifferently takes whatever comes. Maybe I ought not to say it, but Mrs. Merritt (or so I think) wants Mabel to make a great display. They are very, very rich, but Mrs. Merritt tells Cousin Jane that she does not know for what to spend her money, and Mabel will not help her. She wants fine pictures and statuary and bric-a-brac, but she does not know what is fine and what is not. She says Mabel, with all her education, must know, if she would only think about it.

“And that is not true,” said Mabel as she sat under the trees ; “I do not know anything that is worth knowing—or worth doing, either, as to that.”

I did not know what to say, for every day seems full of interest to me.

“The difference between us,” she went on, “is that you have had some one to teach you how to enjoy yourself, while I have not been able to find amusement for myself. I want



excitement—to be doing or seeing something novel all the time—or I am bored.”

I said I never heard of being taught how to enjoy myself—that mother always said any girl with a healthy body and a good conscience could always be happy if she did her duty, helped her neighbors and trusted in God. Mabel said she had no duties, she let her neighbors take care of themselves, and she was not “naturally religious;” then she suddenly asked,

“Don't you think religion is all a matter of education? For instance, if you had been born here in some little Catholic village of France, do you not know that you would not have been a Protestant?”

I said I had thought of that, and it seemed to me that, loving my mother, I should have believed first what she believed; that, growing older and finding back of all the mummery and superstition the Saviour himself, I should love him as now I, a Protestant, love him; and beyond that I could not imagine how wise or how ignorant I should be.

Then she said could I not fancy myself

of the Jewish race and so rejecting our Lord Jesus Christ? Now, that I never could imagine, Madge, for I always think that an intelligent Jew must begin to ask, "Who could this wonderful man called Jesus have been, that millions should become his followers?" When he saw churches erected in his name, the story of his life wrought into all literature since he came, I should think curiosity alone would send him to the New Testament, and, reading that, how could he fail to find Christ to be the Saviour?"

"Yet see what numbers of scholarly men are Jews: they surely do not remain so because they are ignorant," said Mabel. "And see, too," she added, "the thousands of people who are called Christians, but for what reason it would be hard to tell: they have never given the thing a consideration."

"I thought you were talking of *being* a Christian, not just of names?" I said.

"Tell me the difference," asked Mabel, "between Christians in name and what you call Christians?"

"There is an academy in Hempstead called 'The Willis Academy.' It was start-

ed forty years ago by a rich man who built the house and left a fund for the institution. Pupils are called 'the Willis scholars' often, to distinguish them, but nobody cares anything for the founder or gives him a thought. Madge and I are scholars, but our father is the principal. We love and honor him as the very best teacher in the world; we are scholars in the sense that our whole heart is given to the one who represents the school to us. What honors him honors us; what hurts him hurts us. Apply this to your question, and you will be answered," I said.

Then Mabel went on asking very peculiar questions that I would not have supposed could have occurred to her. She made strange remarks. For instance, she said that the martyrs who endured death rather than deny their faith were Christians of one stamp, but that many who did not thus suffer were equally honest, she supposed, although they were not enthusiasts; and while I was trying to understand her she suddenly asked if there would be any harm in becoming a Jew in belief if one had no reality about his Christianity.

“Why, Mabel Merritt! What would you say to a person who, in walking along with his eyes almost shut, should conclude it was as well to turn aside and jump off a precipice into space as to open his eyes and look for a safe path?”

“I presume I should think he was crazy,” she said; then, with another of her queer abrupt turns which make me think she is not so indifferent as she is discontented, she asked, “Why am I not a Christian?”

“I do not know. Do you think you are not one?”

“I am as good as the greater part of the people I know. I do not wrong any one; I tell the truth unless politeness forbids; I go to church. What ails me?”

It is very hard and puzzling to have one ask you such questions. In the first place, I felt as if she were putting me in the position of somebody wise and good. Grandmother could have made everything plain to her, while I, a girl younger than she, had nothing to fall back on except just the little I have been able to find out for myself. I said,

“When I begin to look in, I find everything ‘ails me,’ or it would be so if I did not keep on asking forgiveness for the sins I have committed, and for help to do better and be better every new day. If you have told God that you want to be a Christian if you can, and have asked to be taught how, if you have read thoughtfully all the beautiful story of the Saviour’s life—what he did and said, how the people loved him, how he died—and after that you do not love him, why I do not know.”

“Perhaps what ails me is I have not done anything of that sort—not the first thing,” she said, as honestly as a child.

We sat there together for a while without talking; the sunshine fairly flooded the grove, the deserted Swiss cottages and the little mill-stream, near which a number of young girls were chattering French. By and by Mabel said,

“It would be more sensible for the man to open his eyes and look for the right way before he leaped over the precipice, but suppose he wanted to try the experiment of jumping—just for excitement, say?”

Now, Mabel's talk sounds very aimless; but when she said this, her eyes were so sharp they frightened me. I wondered what she could be thinking of as I answered:

“Who would want to do such a thing if he were not insane? What were we talking of? Oh! a person who would go over to the Jewish faith without trying to find out about the truth of Christianity. Can you think of anything more dreadful?”

Mabel then began to talk of the Jews, and astonished me by showing that she could remember what she read if she cared to give it a thought. But what an odd subject this is to interest a girl brought up as she has been! She proceeded to show me that very many great artists and celebrated musicians of this day and of former times are or have been Jews. Her mother and Cousin Jane came then to find us, and she stopped very suddenly what she was telling me in a most animated way.

JULY 20.

Yesterday at noon we went from Cologne. I was sorry to leave the cathedral. Mr.

Raynor likes castles with dungeons; Cousin Jane never tires of palaces, especially if she can see the dishes used by former sovereigns, or portraits of them in court-dresses, or gilded satin bedspreads which they once used on their beds. She makes us laugh by asking if they actually slept under them, and I fancy she has taken the pattern (mentally, at least) of several. I think I like cathedrals best. There in Cologne I used to lie awake at night to hear the bells ring away up over my head (we lodged very near the cathedral), and they were grand coming in the silence and darkness—not in chimes, but with one long musical roar of sound. As we went up the Rhine yesterday we could see the beautiful tower for a long, long time outlined on the sky.

Late in the afternoon we stopped at a little place called Königswinter, just on the water's edge, and under the ruins of the old castle of the Drachenfels, where once lived the lady of Schiller's ballad of 'Knight Toggenburg.' His castle is, or was, not far away, and near by is the island where stood

the convent in which she died; so you see how romantic were our surroundings. We watched the sunset on the river, and ate our supper of strawberries and cream in a balcony with a veritable minstrel playing a zither for our entertainment—at least, he did it, and we were entertained.

COBLENZ.

I am getting stronger. Last night I climbed halfway up the Drachenfels; this afternoon I have been to the "Queen's Garden," a pretty park. We walked along the river under linden trees, past arbors and flower-beds, and attended in the open air a concert given by the fine band from the great fortress of Ehrenbreitstein, which is just across the Rhine. We saw a part of the emperor's household, and a great Prussian officer in whose honor the concert was given. The music was enchanting, and everybody enjoyed it in such a simple, charming way! Young children danced about on the grass; family-parties listened as they sat about little tables with refreshments, the mothers with their knitting-work.



Oh, mother, father, every one of you, if all were only here! All this day we have moved up the river, the scenery growing more exquisite every hour, passing castle after castle high up against the sky, and beneath the vine-covered hills. It has been some special holiday, and often we passed a procession winding down the hills with banners gleaming in the sunshine.

I am thinking of Mabel Merritt; we expected to meet her again here at Heidelberg. I do not enjoy being with her as I should enjoy being with Mary Parker or Belle Hughes, but I feel drawn toward her because she is not contented or happy, when she might be; or so it seems to me. After our talk at Versailles she returned with us to Paris, and seemed another person when we met again. Something about me must have displeased her, for she became very cool and haughty, talking to me as if I were years younger and knew nothing of the world. I do not know the world which she lives in, so I could not resent anything she said, and there was no merit in my keeping good-humored. When I saw her

last, she was almost rude until the very moment in which I bade her "Good-bye;" then she kissed me suddenly and said,

"I wish I had been born in a little quiet village and some one had taught me how to think sensibly—and what not to do."

I laughed at her, so she stopped with her hand on the door, saying,

"Give me the first answer that comes into your mind to this question: If I were Mabel Merritt, what would I do?"

Now, when she insisted, I had to say,

"I would be the best daughter I could be to my father and mother."

I had, if I told the truth, to say just that, because I had noticed a few little things that suggested it to me. She blushed and looked angry; then she looked pale, and, muttering something, hurriedly went away.

Mrs. Merritt is fussy and very illiterate, but she would like to be more to Mabel and to have Mabel be more to her than is now the case. Mr. Merritt thinks that Mabel's education has made her feel superior to them, and he is pained. They never told me so in plain words, but I have found it out, for

all that. One night I asked Mr. Merritt if he had visited the Louvre (a place which Cousin Jane says I could visit for a year), and he sighed with weariness as he answered,

“Yes, I did it this afternoon, and by looking neither to the right nor the left I accomplished it pretty thoroughly.”

That was so ridiculous I wanted to rush off and laugh over it with somebody; then I thought, “How mean I am! The poor man does not pretend to know anything about pictures or statuary, but he must know some other things well.” He did, and I learned a great deal about the present city of Paris, its institutions and its government. When I went to bed, he patted my head as if I were a little girl; and ever since he talks to me, because, as he says, “I have not got much education, he supposes, but I am no goose.” Mr. Raynor reported this compliment to me. When Mr. Merritt speaks of Mabel, his face does not brighten any, and it makes me, some way, sorry.

## CHAPTER XI.

### *WHAT MADGE WANTED.*

“Without thy presence wealth is bags of cares,  
Friendship is treason, and delights are snares ;  
Without thee, Lord, things be not what they be,  
Nor have they being when compared with thee.”

FRANCIS QUARLES.

EMMA NELSON was going to give a party, and Madge Preston was, as she declared to her girl-friends, “just crazy” to attend this party. As the season had progressed the intimacy between Emma and Madge had increased. Each girl had influenced the other. Emma was quick-witted enough to see that Madge was not less bright and vivacious for being more deferential to her parents and far quieter in public than was she herself; accordingly, a decided improvement was seen in Emma’s manners. Now, when she came to see Madge, she greeted Grandma Grey politely and appeared to greater advantage. In the pres-

ence of the family she talked less, and of sensible matters; so that Mrs. Preston, after many entreaties, allowed Madge to return a few of Emma's many visits. A little against her better judgment, the mother had yielded a number of points, reflecting that Emma was soon to leave the town, that Madge was lonely without Ruth, and that there might be no permanent results from so short an association. Madge was careful to have her new friend appear in the best light, and, indeed, she insisted on passing over Emma's too obvious delinquencies in order to justify to herself her own liking for her society.

Now, parties, as the Hempstead school-girls understood them, were by no means rare. Madge and Ruth gave one almost every year. Sometimes early in a winter afternoon the parlor was full of their young mates, for whom Abbey would be spreading her nicest cookery in the dining-room; or if it were in midsummer, it would be a garden-party in the shady old yard big enough for half a dozen croquet-grounds. But a party such as Emma Nelson meant to give was to be an affair hitherto unparalleled.

Emma, not without a hint from Madge what to say or what *not* to say, came in one evening and gave the invitation. She called it "my little farewell visit, as I want to see all the girls together, you know, before I go away."

"You will be delighted to have me visible there, won't you, mother?" exclaimed Madge, in great excitement; and Mrs. Preston, forgetting in her innocence that there are parties *and* parties, said slowly,

"I suppose you would be very unhappy if I said 'No;' so I will think about it. Probably you can go."

Madge hurried Emma into the garden and listened with mingled delight and apprehension to Emma's confidences. Madge, for some reason which they did not dwell on, had been invited for five o'clock in the afternoon, but this was to be no "juvenile tea-party," as Emma contemptuously remarked.

"You can be there early, you know, to help me dress and to see the preparations," she rattled on. "Caterers are going to provide the supper, bringing it from L——,

with regular-made flower-pieces and decorations. Father was bound that I should let our cook get up the refreshments, and he said our garden-flowers were as good as any the florists could supply; but I teased mother until she was almost distracted. I want to tell of this party after I go to boarding-school. The girls there, knowing I came from this little town, won't have much of an opinion of me unless I impress them in some such way. Dick has engaged splendid music for dancing, and I do hope everything will go off well. He has invited a dozen or more real stylish young folks from L——. I presume some of my acquaintances will be provoked, but what is the use of inviting girls who have not got a party-dress to wear, who can't dance, and who feel and act like little girls?"

"We are not young ladies, certainly," put in Madge.

"Well, not exactly; but we will be soon."

"Maybe my new white dress is not good enough, but it is all I have."

"Oh, it will *do*; white always passes.

You will be all right with handsome long gloves and pretty slippers," returned Emma.

A shade passed over Madge's face; she said thoughtfully,

"Possibly I may not go, after all."

"Oh, you must! Your mother never will find out—or not in time to keep you home," said Emma, bluntly, as she opened the gate and said, "Good-bye. Come early."

Had she left Madge then, all would have been well, for the latter, in a revulsion of feeling, was prompted to go immediately to her mother and explain about the party; but Emma remembered a bit of town-gossip, and lingered to tell it. Then she repeated to Madge a speech that had its influence: "Mrs. Young is coming over late in the evening to look on. She says that she does enjoy seeing young girls have all the fun they can. By the way, Madge, she says you are just too handsome for anything in that pink dress that you wear so much. She declared she watched you all one Sunday. But don't be vain: she is given to saying such things. Isn't it a pity all Sunday-



school teachers couldn't be as stylish and fascinating as she is? But I must go now."

Madge, left alone, strolled away under the trees thinking how she might dress herself most becomingly in case she should attend Emma's party. The more she imagined the festivities as her friend had pictured them, the more she desired to see and enjoy all.

"What possible harm can there be in such a thing?" she queried. "Yet, if mother knew all about it, she would say I was 'too young' to be out to evening-entertainments of that sort, and she would not like the thing from beginning to end; but I know there is nothing wrong in music and fun. Ten o'clock is no wickeder an hour than four. Dear me! I haven't fit gloves or slippers. Emma said nobody wore anything but fancy slippers to a party, and those long light gloves are expensive."

"You have stood gazing at that currant-bush for three minutes by my watch," exclaimed Bert, close by her side. "Are you composing a sonnet?"

“Bert,” said Madge, slowly, “Emma invited me to come to her house at *five* o’clock the day of the party.”

“Five in the morning?”

“Of course not! And I shall have to be home by ten, at the very latest. If I go, will you promise to come with me then?”

“Yes; but Emma expects the fun to keep up later than that,” returned Bert, good-naturedly.

“I think likely that mother supposes it is a regular old-fashioned visit such as we schoolgirls always have—supper at dark and all of us home before ten. I—I want to go to this party just this once; I—”

“You couldn’t go twice to it very well, Madge: it is for one night only.”

She was too much in earnest to be teased, and went on:

“So I believe I will not tell mother all about it—until afterward—because— Well, in plain English, she might not let me go if I should tell her.”

“Would she say such parties are wrong?”

“Well, she can’t think them wicked, or

else I would not go; but she would think such extravagance was folly. Things seem so to quiet people in a dull village like this," explained Madge, as if she had lived in some grander town where folly and fashion ruled.

"That sounded exactly like Emma Nelson," was Bert's comment after a pause. He stood still, whistling softly, as if her words had made no impression on him, but Madge would have been startled at his thoughts.

Bert was a careless, rather self-indulgent fellow, but not yet a wild or a bad one. He was very easily influenced; and when he came to Hempstead, it was with many good resolutions to study, to keep out of "scrapes," as he called boys' foolish capers, and to profit by the good influences in the Preston family. He had never met a young girl who seemed to him of so lovely a character as Ruth, whose words he had thought much of before seeing Madge. He knew Madge was gayer and more full of spirit and daring, but he supposed her moved by the same principles. When, that morning after the drive, Madge asked him not to speak of their doings the

evening previous, he was surprised and in a vague sort sorry. He saw not the least thing out of the way in their expedition; but if Madge did not approve of it on afterthought, he would have respected her more if she had confessed it to the family. This afternoon he was wondering if Ruth was like Madge—if all girls were so tricky. Perhaps Ruth's gentle talk was only *talk*, after all, and she would cover up paltry little deceptions just as Madge was doing. He had not thought it of Madge; she used to be uncomfortably honest, always getting into mischief, but always truthful to the last degree. He remembered with secret amusement his promise to Ruth not to aid or abet Madge in any naughtiness and to lead her into none. Surely he had not taken the first steps? A half-defined feeling of loyalty to Ruth made him say,

“I don't see myself what fun girls find in performances like this one that Emma is planning—that is, until they are older. Why do not schoolgirls let fashion and nonsense go, and enjoy themselves without all this fuss?”

“They do, here in Hempstead; so, you see, it is pure novelty that attracts me this time,” returned Madge.

Bert broke a twig from a tree and began whittling it; Madge wished that he would say something either encouraging, or discouraging in regard to her purpose, but he did not. She soon turned toward the house, and was going to her room to think over this weighty question of a proper toilet, when her grandmother said,

“Are you going to the prayer-meeting, dear? Your mother has gone already; she had a call to make first.”

“I had forgotten that it is Wednesday evening,” said Madge.

When Ruth was home, Madge always went with her to the weekly meeting; lately she had let various matters keep her home.

“I feel so well to-day, and the evening is so beautiful, that I think I might venture to walk as far as the church,” said the old lady, adding, “I did not tell your mother, lest I should hinder her, but I really am tempted to go. I enjoy these meetings so much!”

“Well, grandma, I will take the best kind of care of you if you are able to walk so far,” answered Madge, heartily; and Abbey, who overheard the conversation, appeared to say,

“Deacon Wilder is always there with his horse and buggy; he’d be delighted to bring you home if you got over-tired.”

“Then I will venture,” said grandma; and forthwith Abbey took charge of her. She brought her thick shoes, her “second-best” lace cap, her soft crêpe shawl, and waited on the old lady as if she had been a queen about to appear in court. When she was quite ready, she sat a while to rest before starting. Bert, entering the hall, thought how sweet and attractive she looked with her placid face framed in the lace border of her quaint silk bonnet. When he found where she was going, he laughingly brought from his pocket some lemon-drops and gave them to her, saying that he well remembered she had given him candy years before when he was starting for church. She smiled in Bert’s mischievous eyes, and said,

“I am pleased to have them, for I might

get coughing. This reminds me of something: that little boy Bert used to walk along to church with me and sit by me, keeping pretty quiet; now he is older, and I hope he thinks more about good things than little Bert could be expected to think. Suppose he comes with the old lady once more?"

Madge came as she spoke, and, somewhat to the young girl's surprise, Bert accepted grandmother's invitation with half-playful politeness, and ran away to get gloves and handkerchief.

"The lad has a kind heart and seems easily led; you may be able to influence him to walk in the Christian way, Madge, during his stay with us. We never know how our companions may follow if only we lead aright," said the gentle old lady.

Her words were making Madge uncomfortable, when Bert returned, and they started. He plucked grandmother a tiny bouquet before they passed out into the broad, shaded, quiet street.

It was a perfect evening—warm, still, the twilight falling from a tender violet-tinted

sky and the last of a brilliant orange sunset lingering in the west. When the church-bells began to ring, not unmusically, the old lady remarked,

“You children can’t, I suppose, realize that the sound of a church-bell is one of the sweetest sounds now on earth to me, and one reason is because it is the ringing that has echoed right along through my life for three-quarters of a century, always meaning the same unchanging truth through years and years of ceaseless change, always singing the same song of ‘Good news! Good news of the precious gospel of the Son of God!’”

Bert glanced up reverently into the beautiful old face with the thought, “Well, religion must be a comfort to the *old*”—with the sudden second thought, “But if it had not been something to her in her youth, it would not be this to her now. It has run all through her life in order to make her what she is—a rare old lady.”

Madge? Well, Madge was also thinking, but after this fashion: “My black-kid slippers are new, and mother would say I must not afford a high-heeled fancy pair



like Emma's. Oh dear! how horrid to be poor! Emma's taste in dress is not half as good as mine, if mine could be cultivated. I would not be stingy, either. I think Emma Nelson is not very generous; she boasts how she gets her dresses made cheap by underpaying—as mother would think it—her seamstress. I would give liberally to church-work if I were rich: a rich Christian might set such an inspiring example!"

They were at the door then of the Hempstead First church, a picturesque old stone building covered with creeping vines. The prayer-meeting was held in a pleasant lecture-room, and was attended by about forty or fifty persons, mostly of middle age. Mr. Edgecomb, the pastor, was a man past sixty and one unknown outside his little world, but a preacher whose plain words fell into heedless hearers' hearts with a weight that often kept them there—a pastor whose worth was best known by those who most needed help, light or sympathy.

Madge thought the services uncommonly dull. She paid attention at intervals to the remarks of the pastor on the unprofitable

servant. She heard him assert that the servant was not charged with great wickedness: he simply did nothing. He was punished for doing nothing because it was his duty to do something. Then Madge's mind wandered to "long gloves."

Bert, who had not attended a prayer-meeting since he was a little boy, listened with an undivided attention. He received an idea new to him: The service of God was obligatory, not optional. He was made for that service; if he were "unprofitable," he defeated the ends of his being.

Grandma enjoyed every word, every hymn, every prayer, and never dreamed that many of her fellow-Christians were touched and cheered by her beaming old countenance. It was not the custom for women to take part in the weekly meetings, but the pastor was not bound by rule to more formality than he thought needful. When there came a longer pause than usual, he said to Grandmother Grey, as simply as if they had been in her parlor, that her face was so seldom seen among them they would feel it a pleasure to hear any good

word she might have in her heart to say for them.

Bert glanced at her, but she looked not at all startled; the withered hand that held his flowers lay quietly on the other hand as she spoke, her voice was clear and only a little tremulous—from age, not from any fear of man.

“I have been thinking,” she said, “that God’s judgment of the servant who tries with his whole heart to please him will, after all, be according to grace, and not to law, else were we all condemned; then, from thinking of God as my Master—as he, in truth, is—I fell to realizing that he is our heavenly Father and his Son our Elder Brother. Sometimes, when we talk of our ‘service’ to him, the word seems strangely inappropriate; for we do nothing for him: he does infinitely out of his loving-kindness for us. Now that I am an old person, my mind weakens; I do not hold well to connected trains of reasoning, but scenes out of my past life return to me like pictures. I have seen, as I sat here to-night, something I saw fifty years ago. I was on a

stage-coach which was going through the mountains. On our way we came behind a flock of sheep being driven quietly along the road. Our coming did not much frighten them, for they knew their shepherd and hastened near him. There were two or three lambs, however, that would not follow with the flock, and so the faithful dogs were sent after them. They fled over stone walls; they ran here and there; they were pursued and harassed by the shepherd-dogs in their faithful efforts to get them back to the road and to the shepherd's care. I thought, 'How like that is to mortals who grow willful or careless in the way! The troubles whose infliction often seems so cruel to us are the faithful messengers sent to call us back.' There was one lamb, I remember, who ran farther away and seemed frantic; it slipped on the steep mountain-side. It would not return, until I feared it could not; then I saw the shepherd himself step over the wall, and it fled no farther; so he took it up in his arms and carried it back to safety. Is not that like our Good Shepherd? I have traveled a long way since

the morning of life, and I have wandered many a time according to my own foolish will; but his love has saved me. Now I can say out of a full heart,

“I bless thy wise and wondrous love,  
Which bids us to be free,  
Which makes us leave our earthly snares  
That we may come to thee.

“I come, I wait, I hear, I pray;  
Thy footsteps, Lord, I trace;  
I sing to think this is the way  
Unto my Saviour's face.”

Soon after this the meeting ended, and a number of friends gathered around Grandma Grey to have a few words of neighborly interest. Bert and Madge, seeing that Mrs. Preston and the Professor were there, did not wait for the old lady, but went on, and just outside the door were joined by Abbey.

“I would like to have known grandmother when she was young,” said Bert; “she must have been a remarkable woman.”

“I have been told that I look as she did,” said Madge, lightly.

“She is a remarkable woman now,” said Abbey, earnestly.

“Yes, she is that.—No, you can’t be at all like her,” added Bert to Madge, who merely laughed.

“Maybe Madge has a look like her,” continued Abbey, “but, for my part, I believe Ruth will be just such another old—angel.” She brought out the last word so energetically that both young people were greatly amused; then Bert said,

“You are philosophical, Abbey. Human angels are generally old, I have noticed, while at their best girls like Ruth will be tricky and—”

“Tricky!” exclaimed Abbey, rather hotly. “Ruth Preston tricky!”

Madge said sharply,

“Don’t speak so loud, Abbey. What will people think we are discussing?”

Bert smiled in the dark; he was rather glad that Madge was stirred by Abbey’s scorn, and glad that Abbey had so high an idea of Ruth. “A fellow likes to have confidence in people who pretend to be conscientious,” he assured himself as they entered the house.

The next morning Madge hurried through

her domestic duties, and then, shutting herself in her room, began to consider ways and means. The new white dress was well enough, but other accessories which were absolutely necessary must be obtained. It can easily be seen that with a salary of less than a thousand dollars a year the Professor was not able to give his children much pocket-money after providing for his family. When food, fire and clothing were obtained, the parents were content; but Madge often sighed secretly for the knickknacks that other girls procured so easily. This summer she had felt rich, for in her purse was a crisp five-dollar bill that her mother and Ruth had "spared" for her. In fancy she had spent it over and over—so much for a scrap-book with a handsome cover; so much for wool to knit a hood for winter use; something for the Indian girl whom her Sunday-school class was educating; something for a silk handkerchief for grandmother; the rest for a Roman scarf, or a bar-pin, or— Oh, fifty other things! This morning all those coveted articles were relinquished for ever, and Madge was soon hur-

rying down town with her purse in her hand. Usually, when about to go "shopping," she took the whole family into her confidence, but on this occasion she chose to be self-reliant.

"My little black slippers were only one dollar and a half; I do hope bronze ones will not be much dearer. Emma would say, 'Buy pink ones,' but I could never wear them to any other place, as I might wear a bronze pair," she reasoned as she entered a shoe-shop.

But bronze slippers were not at all cheap: the prettiest were five dollars; the very plainest were two and a half—"reduced," as the clerk declared, because of a tiny discolored spot which "would not show in the least." Madge bought these, and went on to the best of the few dry-goods stores in town. She was appalled at the price of long gloves. The pale-pink-tinted soft kids which she had resolved to have were out of the question, but how beautiful they were! It made her cross to remember that Emma "always bought them by the half dozen." At last she found a pair of inferior make, but very



pretty and within her means. She bought them, and turned toward home with mingled satisfaction and regret. With the lace neck-ruffles that Ruth had left her she could now contrive to look presentable, but how mean it was to have to be pinched down to just so many cents or to go without nice things at the age one wanted them most! Years from now she might have money, but French slippers and fancy kid gloves would then have lost all their charms.

The morning was rarely beautiful, and Madge's homeward road led her by old-fashioned front-yards full of flowers, under trees that arched over the wide sidewalk, and past charming country-houses with wide piazzas, made more attractive by gay awnings, hammocks and bright rustic chairs. From one of the finest of these houses ran out a young girl who called to Madge as she passed the gate:

"Wait a minute, Madge! I was just going to send a message to you."

"Well, here I am to take it myself," returned Madge, watching Mary Parker tripping lightly toward her. She was a

graceful girl with a delicate, clear-cut face full of expression and intelligence.

“I want you, Madge, to come here to tea to-morrow. Come very early in the afternoon. I have asked ten or a dozen of the girls to come—Belle Hughes and the rest. You can imagine who.”

“I would like to come, Mary—we have such grand times at your tea-parties!—but Emma Nelson’s party is to-morrow, and I have accepted her invitation.”

“Oh! have you?” exclaimed Mary, a shade of surprise crossing her face. “But that is later; you might come here first.”

“I could hardly endure so much dissipation,” laughed Madge, not quite at ease.

“Perhaps not. Belle Hughes decided she could not, but she favored me instead of Emma. The others whom I asked were not invited to the Nelsons’, so our interests will not conflict much.”

“You were invited, of course?”

“Yes, but I had already arranged for my own company,” replied Mary; and Madge knew that only Mary’s politeness prevented her from saying that she would

not have accepted the invitation in any circumstances. They chatted a moment of other matters, and then separated.

It was nearly noon; the sun was uncomfortably warm. Madge felt cross. Mary Parker's parties were undeniably very delightful; Madge well remembered games on the lawn, rows on the pretty pond, hours in the house which was as fine as the Nelson mansion and full of rare pictures, books and curiosities. Mary's mother was an estimable lady, and Mary's friendship was not to be despised. The unpleasant thought would keep crossing Madge's mind that she was "refusing gold and taking pinchback," as Abbey would have said—Abbey, whose remarks irritated Madge unaccountably nowadays. As she entered the house, for instance, this very noon, Abbey began to ask her questions about the party and what she would wear in a familiar way which Madge chose to think impertinent, and which she answered very curtly.

"Why, daughter," said Mrs. Preston when Abbey went to the kitchen, "I am surprised at you!"

“But, mother, it really is none of her business, and she ought to know that. I am not always to remain a little girl wanting to talk over all my affairs with her.”

“Abbey is never obtrusive in what she thinks you wish to keep to yourself, but she *is* much interested in your pleasures. It ‘really is none of her business’ that your new white muslin was very much wrinkled, but she has spent an hour or more pressing it beautifully smooth for you,” returned Mrs. Preston, very sternly.

Madge’s eyes filled with tears as she hastened up stairs to thrust the new finery into her bureau-drawer. She pitied herself; she was not faultless, to be sure, but what tribulations she did have! To be so poor that she could not have proper clothes for a party, so strictly brought up that she could not do as other girls did without her conscience troubling her! Yes, Mary Parker did not play cards or go to dances, but then Mary had an elegant home. Ruth was good, but she did not like excitement; a humdrum time suited her. Here was a grievance again: the girl who would have been happy

at home was enjoying no end of sightseeing, and the restless, eager one was "tied down." Then the dinner-bell rang.

In some circumstances, Madge might have been very cross for the rest of the day, but she reflected that she had better make great efforts at self-control, in view of the party. She might not, after all, be allowed to attend it; but the time passed, and it seemed to be taken for granted that she was to go.

The next afternoon, at five o'clock precisely, she arrived at the Nelsons'. The house was in confusion; servants were tacking linen covers over the rich carpets, others were busy with the dining-tables. Mrs. Nelson, in most untidy attire and with a soiled handkerchief about her head, was scolding a maid in so loud a voice that Madge was ashamed for her. In passing the Parker house, five minutes before this, Madge had seen Mary's mother in the yard telling her gardener how to train a broken vine. With Mrs. Nelson's sharp voice in her ears, she recalled the other lady's gentle manner and her dainty afternoon-dress.

“Go right up to Emma’s room,” said Mrs. Nelson, petulantly, “and tell her that I wish she had let the parlor furniture be as I fixed it, for ’tain’t half as good her fashion.”

“Oh, now you’ve come, *do* tell me what to wear!” was Emma’s greeting. “Mother’s taste isn’t worth a sixpence.”

With a glance about the beautiful room, Madge turned to the bed, which was covered with enough finery to supply a dozen girls and have each overdressed. She advised and selected until Emma was satisfied; then the latter scrutinized Madge.

“That white dress is as plain as a pike-staff, but you look well in it,” she remarked, adding, as Madge unrolled a little bundle, “Oh, your slippers are bronze! I haven’t seen any in an age; but if they *are* a little out of date, they are pretty. And so are those gloves—that is, I like the color, but I would have had them longer.”

“I could not afford any better ones,” said Madge, coolly.

“Have you a fan?”

“No; mine isn’t good enough, so I left it home.”

Emma hesitated, then opened a drawer and drew out a pretty pink silk-and-ivory one, saying,

“I paid four dollars for that only last week. If you will be awfully careful, I’ll lend it to you. It does not match my dress, and it adds color to yours.”

When Madge looked in the long mirror, she saw in a moment that the pink fan brightened her whole attire and was just the shade suiting her complexion. She accepted it gratefully.

In the time between her arrival and the party Madge tried to be helpful, and Mrs. Nelson was too busy to let the presence of an outsider be any restraint on her own words or conduct. The young girl could not but hear the scolding, the loud ungrammatical talk of a sort never known in her own home. She remembered her grandmother’s story, and was almost convinced that her mother was wiser than she herself even in the present case.

Evening came, although the guests were so late in arriving that Madge feared she would have to go home before the gayety

had fairly begun; but about nine o'clock the great parlors were full and the merriment was at its height. Madge knew by instinct—or by peeps in the great mirrors—that she was looking exceedingly well. The young people from out of town were very polite to her, and her spirits rose to their highest level. Bert, in passing her once, whispered, “You are coming on famously for one who does not call herself a young lady;” and about that time Madge was ready to declare that her enjoyment was worth more than it had cost of vexation and management. An hour later she began to doubt this point. She was in a crowd, returning from the refreshment-room, when some one hit her elbow—not roughly, but so as to cause her to drop the pink fan, which in the next instant was stepped on and broken in half a dozen fragments. By whom it was done was not apparent. Indeed, she could not recover the broken and torn bits until the crowd thinned. In dismay she then wrapped her handkerchief around them and stood apart by herself in the hall, where Bert found her.



“Come, Madge! You must start at once if you mean to get home by ten. It is almost that now.”

She was glad to go without another thought of the music and dancing, and, once in the street, she walked so fast that Bert could scarcely keep pace with her. He thought that she was troubled because she had to meet her mother's inquiries, and so he said nothing of her evident disquiet and brief replies to his talk of the evening's entertainment. At the gate he left her, saying,

“I promised Dick I would come back; he wants me to know those friends of his from L——.”

Madge went quietly into the hall, which she was glad to find deserted by the family. She ran softly up stairs, and as soon as she gained her own room she hurriedly took off her dress, that she might seem to have been home a longer time than in reality she had been. It was simply surprising how rapidly Madge was taking up one little “trick” after another, as Bert would have called her petty deceptions. But her moth-

er merely paused a moment at the foot of the stairs, and, seeing a light in Madge's room, said, "Don't sit up late, dear. Did you have a pleasant time?" Then she waited only long enough to hear the sound of Madge's voice in reply before she went to lock the front door for the night.

Poor Madge! On the bureau lay the ruins of Emma's fan, a pair of gloves soiled and slit, as cheap gloves will slit, and a pair of bronze slippers turned purple and utterly ruined by the wet grass that she had walked through on her way home. But of her own money spent for nothing Madge thought little; what kept her awake until long after midnight was the fan. If Emma would be generous enough to make light of the accident! Madge had too much self-respect not to feel that she must make good what she had destroyed, if this were possible. But Emma was not at all generous; she would not fail to remind her immediately that the fan was new and cost four dollars. Oh how angry Madge was at her lot in life that night! Why should she be so tormented over such things? She ought to have

plenty of money. She tossed and tumbled on her bed. She remembered that her mother wanted so many things which she was going without patiently, while Madge had already thrown away five dollars, and must now throw away four more. How could she ever ask for it? She racked her brains to think of some article of value she possessed that she might offer Emma in exchange; she had nothing that Emma would not despise. Even in the dark she winced to imagine Mrs. Nelson's comments if she failed to give full satisfaction.

Next morning, when Abbey called her, she awoke to wonder what gloomy thing had happened, and she remembered only too soon. As she dressed slowly, conscious of a dull pain in her head, she would have liked to scold Abbey somewhat in Mrs. Nelson's own fashion for daring to sing a hymn in a voice as joyous as it was unmelodious, but as she pinned her collar an idea came to her that changed all her mood. Her face almost regained its usual expression, and nobody noticed her silence at the breakfast-table. Seizing the first chance

when she had Abbey alone with her, she told her of Emma's fan and how she had broken it. She did not tell her anything about the party—or, rather, what kind of an affair it was—or that she had spent her own money, for Abbey had not known that she had any. But Abbey understood it all the moment she saw the pink satin-and-ivory bits; then how good and sympathizing she was! Madge could have hugged her, and, in fact, did just that when she exclaimed,

“Now, don't you ever bother your mother with one word of that—never. I have money rusting in the bank in a way that is positively wicked and unscriptural, and up stairs this very minute is seven dollars that I haven't any earthly use for. I declare, it is shameful, the way your mother insists on my taking wages, telling me I will be old some day. She believes in trusting the Lord; yet when I ask her why I can't do it in the same way, she only laughs and says it is a different thing—that the laborer is worthy of his hire, or something else. Now, you just take four dollars to Emma Nelson

and tell her to buy herself a fan or a nose-ring, just as her heathenish taste suggests. You will make me real happy by using this, and you just keep still about ever paying me. I'm as much interested in you as I could be in my own sister, for your folks are *my* folks; I never had any other."

In quick compunction for her late thoughts of Abbey, Madge cried, "You are the best creature that ever helped another out of a tight place;" and for emphasis she gave her a kiss on her fat, rosy cheek.

A few hours later Emma had been seen and pacified; she had received the four dollars quite graciously, inasmuch as she had repented buying the fan and now proposed to get a silver bangle instead, although she kept that decision to herself. Madge had put the other relics out of sight for ever, and resolved to banish all thoughts of the affair. It had not "paid" in any sense. She was glad Emma was going away; she did not desire to keep up their intimacy. Emma was stupid; everything was stupid. In a few weeks school would begin, and that was stupidest of all.

Madge's mother never asked her about the party, and never heard anything that led her to think Madge had deceived her. Everything went on as usual from that day. Or was there a difference? Mrs. Preston used to wonder if Ruth had been the one who had done three-quarters of the little helpful deeds about the house; certainly few of them were done nowadays. Somebody used to read all the interesting items of news to Grandma Grey, used to see that every vase was full of fresh flowers, that the Professor's black neckties were renewed, that the mother's simple toilet had tasteful touches given it when she went to church societies. Madge never refused to help if she were on the spot and the need of help were pointed out, but she made a great many calls on her schoolmates and was indifferent to trifles when at home. Gradually, Abbey did everything previously left undone, and she did it all so cheerfully that no one but Madge took note of her dreadful blunders in the literary services.

One day, about ten days after Emma's party, Belle Hughes called on Madge.

“Why were you not at Mary Parker’s the other afternoon?” she asked; then, not waiting for an answer, she went on: “We had a delightful time; mother says I have talked of nothing else since. We had *such* a merry time on the lawn! Then at tea we were so surprised! We knew it was Mary’s birthday, so we had planned to give her an album with all our photographs, and she was very much pleased. Well, Mrs. Parker may have found out our secret, or she may not; any way, at each of our plates was a little gift because it was *not* our birthday. Mine was a dainty little work-basket. There was a lady there who had been a missionary in China fifteen years; she was visiting Mrs. Parker, having been her friend years ago at Mount Holyoke. I wish you could have heard her stories; she was very entertaining. We laughed, and cried too, before she had finished. Oh, that reminds me! Mary Parker wants to know if Emma Nelson has decided to what boarding-school she will go?”

“No; she had not found out when I saw her last. Her father will let her go where she chooses,” replied Madge.

“Well, in that case, Mary is going to set an innocent little trap for Emma, and she wants our help.”

“What do you mean?” asked Madge, her curiosity becoming aroused.

Belle, who was as warm-hearted as she was vivacious, replied:

“Mary, you know, is so unselfish she is always trying to help somebody. Well, she was saying to me that Emma was young and bright, able to give herself any advantage, and she—Mary—did wish that she could get into a small school where there was an atmosphere of true Christian refinement, where Emma would really learn and would become what she might be, but is not. Now, your mother told Mary once of a very small private school kept by one of her former acquaintances, and she praised it highly. Will you find out all about it and speak of it to Emma? Meanwhile, Mary will invite Emma to tea with her and do her best to influence her toward that one.”

“Why, Mary— She— They have very little acquaintance—they are not alike,” stammered Madge.



“Mary has a great deal of tact,” said Belle, simply.

Madge, musing a moment, understood it all. Emma laughed at Mary, but secretly she admired her; she would accept the invitation, would heed what Mary said. Mary from the purest motives would strive to win Emma to her views, and very likely, instead of a year of nonsense in some fashionable boarding-house called a “school,” Emma would have two or three years of help and real culture of heart and brain.

“Mary will accomplish it easily,” she said, with a lack of enthusiasm that disappointed Belle. “I will tell Emma everything that mother knows in favor of the place.”

After Belle had gone she sat lost in thought. She had rather plumed herself lately on the secret consciousness that by reason of her mental superiority she had weighed Emma Nelson in the balance and found her wanting; in other words, Emma had failed her. Was there another side to the thing? She had been Emma’s friend all summer; she was wiser, more refined, a member of a Christian family: had she

failed Emma in any way? Here was Mary Parker, upon whom Emma had no claim; Mary, who was all that Madge was, and far more,—Mary Parker was eager to give Emma the very best help that one human being can give another, help for mind and heart.

“Madge,” said Johnny, suddenly appearing, “what is champagne?”

“Why, a kind of wine.”

“Did you ever see any?”

“No.”

“Tommy North says it looks like cider. He says Dick Nelson had a party at his house lately, and they had champagne in the library—at Dick’s house, and not Tom’s—and that Dick and some fellows from out of town got ‘high.’ Tom said that his sister said she heard Bert was there, and Bert says, ‘Nonsense!’ I don’t believe he was there, do you? Oh, say, Madge! can I have that ball of twine in your work-box?”

“Yes, and don’t repeat such things as that nonsense, Johnny, unless you want to make trouble for Bert.”

“Oh, I shall not speak of it,” said Johnny, going after the cord.

It was an impossibility for a girl like Madge to go on in her present thoughtlessness for any great length of time without some qualms of conscience. After Belle's visit and Johnny's report, she was troubled lest she might have been blameworthy in not trying to keep Bert away from Dick Nelson's influence; as a first move toward better things she resolved to warn Bert against temptation. Now, had her own conduct of late been entirely above reproach, such an interference as this would have come with a little better grace. Not reflecting on that fact, she acted on her first impulse, and, seeking Bert, began to catechise him in a way he at first found rather amusing. Perceiving that he failed to take the matter as seriously as she wished, Madge took very high moral ground, and began to lecture him as only a perfectly faultless individual could with propriety have done. He asked her if she had ever heard of a certain useful kitchen-utensil which called another vessel of a similar sort dark-complexioned. Provoked by this, Madge, who could not bring one definite charge against

Bert, insinuated that she had reason to believe that he was not careful enough in the choice of his associates. To this he made no answer, but, smiling in a most exasperating way, he said,

“There is a minstrel show coming to town next week, Madge. If you are very anxious to attend it, I will put a ladder under your window; and when all is over, I will see you safely home at midnight. It is no matter about me; I am not prejudiced myself against such amusements.”

Had Abbey heard the sharp dialogue that then ensued, she would certainly have recalled the time when these same young persons pelted each other with tea-grounds. Unfortunately, grandma was not at hand to bring the two into a better mood on this last occasion.

## CHAPTER XII.

### *RUTH'S JOURNAL.*

CHAMOUNI, August 6.

AS I write I have only to lift my eyes and see Mont Blanc, its top a spotless mass of ice and snow. I look, but I may not tell you what I feel, for I remember you warned me, Madge, that you would certainly skip "emotions" if I put any in this journal. Next I look down into the near street, swarming with tourists and alpenstocks. A group of Englishmen with white veils around their hats have just been having their photographs taken in the road; one is on a mule with a mountain-guide by his side. I wish I could see the result, for every time that the glass was uncovered the mule lifted his hind-leg and kicked. Yesterday morning we were at Martigny, from whence we started at seven o'clock to

go over the Tête Noir pass. We had a Swiss driver, Pierre Frossard, who talked anything better than English, an open carriage for four, a decent red horse and the leanest old white one imaginable. First came rather wild but beautiful scenery for a few hours. The rocks were covered with bluebells, small violets and fern; goats with bells climbed up and down; but after a while there seemed to me much too small a space between our wheels and the slope into gorges beneath. The road would go up so gradually that we would not realize how high we were until we began to descend and the carriage seemed to push on the old white nag's legs, making them tremble suspiciously. I heard a guide belonging to another party inform Pierre as he passed us that something was broken about the under-part of our carriage, and Pierre hushed him with the remark that the "ladies need not know it." After that we naturally preferred to walk much of the way, and there came a part of the road where I, at least, would not have cared to ride with the surest horses or the strongest carriage. The air

was bracing, and the day one of clear sunshine. One side of the mountain rose up in gigantic walls, shutting out the sun, and the road was just wide enough for the carriage, and a few inches more, while down, down, far below, a torrent was rushing over great boulders. Before we went down and around two sudden curves the white horse had to be taken off the front, tied behind, and cogs put on the wheels lest the whole concern should plunge into the abyss. About four we reached a region of little vegetation; enormous stones were scattered everywhere, and everything was silent and solemn. In full view was the Mont Blanc range, and away above us bare gray rocks looking like vast cathedrals with their towers in the sky. Toward sunset the snow-covered mountains were tinted most exquisitely pink and pale violet. We came into the village about six; and when mother reflects that I had been walking almost all day, she will see that I am not growing weaker. My headaches are gone; when I awake now in the morning, I feel as if I were just made and every part of me were fresh and in working-order.

Cousin Jane has ceased to look at me as if I were about to drop to pieces in her presence if I sustain the least shock. She is too good to me, however.

We did not meet the Merritts at Heidelberg, and heard nothing of them after leaving Paris. To-day I went out to take a little walk about this village, which interests me much; and when I began to get tired, I stopped in a queer old shop full of every variety of Swiss clocks. I had seen there a very cunning one small enough to put in my trunk without crowding out other things, and cheap enough to buy for your room (cheap enough for *me* to buy, I mean). So I went to get it, and while the man was making sure that it was in order I went looking among his dusty curiosities. A lady and a gentleman were standing at one end of a kind of aisle of the old rambling shop. I took no notice of them as I approached until I heard her speak in a voice that startled me. It was so exactly like Mabel Merritt's voice that I went nearer. The gentleman, who was talking very low and rapidly, as if urging some matter on his



companion's attention, turned, and, seeing me, I imagine that he suggested to the lady that they move on. When they started, I saw plainly that it was Mabel. I did not like the man. He had a very dark, foreign face; he was well dressed, and his manner was, I noticed, rather elegant; but when he drew Mabel away, he laid his hand on her arm as if he had some claim. She did not see me, and I wish I had not seen her.

GENEVA, 9th.

The evening of the day I saw Mabel in the shop she called at our hotel with her mother and father; she was very absent-minded and cool toward me. Mrs. Merritt said they had not met any one they knew since they left us in France. I had not said anything to any one of that dark man, but I wondered what it meant.

11th.

I understand it all now, and I am sorry for Mabel's parents, and sorry in one way for Mabel herself, although she does now seem a great deal older and farther away from me than ever before. The day she

came to Geneva she shut herself in her room, saying that she was tired and wanted to rest. Mrs. Merritt seemed very lonely, and so Cousin Jane and I tried to amuse her. Last evening we were sitting together in our pleasant little balcony, which overlooks the water, and Mrs. Merritt, turning to me quite abruptly, said that she did wish that I could "help" her to "bring Mabel to her senses." I must have looked as surprised as did Cousin Jane, who noticed the tears filling Mrs. Merritt's eyes; for, drawing her chair close to the bench where we sat, Mrs. Merritt told us what she meant.

When Mabel was a pupil in that fashionable boarding-school of which I told you, she cared more for her music lessons than for any other study, and made better progress in music than in anything else taught there. Her teacher was a man of fine musical talents, polished in manner, ten or fifteen years older than she, a Frenchman and a Jew. Mabel was his favorite pupil, and he gained a great influence over her. When she left school, he prevailed on her to keep up her music lessons; he accom-

panied her often to concerts, and at last her parents began to fear that he was becoming more friendly than they thought desirable. Mabel ceased her music lessons at their request, and the young Jew did not come any more to the house, but Mabel used to go to services at the synagogue and visited at the house of friends where she met him frequently. Up to a certain time she did not act deceitfully toward her father and mother, but she simply put them out of the account in that strange way she has of doing, and she acted exactly as she saw fit. When they began to be alarmed and to look into the matter, they were shocked to find that she wanted to marry this musician, and was actually considering whether or not she would renounce Christianity and declare herself a believer in Judaism. Of course they were greatly troubled, for, in the first place, they disliked the man personally. Mrs. Merritt believes that he cares far more for Mabel's fortune than for Mabel herself. He has tried by every means in his power to proselyte her, and the poor girl, who does not believe anything intelligently because

she is almost entirely ignorant of what Christians think or know, is so infatuated that her mother says it seems to her very heroic and romantic to give up what she calls 'popular traditions' and return to a 'grand old system of law.' She never has talked to me as her mother says she can talk—very fluently, with a repetition of what this man has taught her. Well, when they could not argue with her, they forbade her having any communication with him, and in order to divert her mind they planned this European trip. She is taking no interest in it, and her mother says she has reason to fear that Mabel is disobeying them and secretly corresponding with him or with his friends.

As Mrs. Merritt talked I remembered suddenly our conversation that day at Versailles and how odd I then thought Mabel's allusions to the Jews. I was touched as her mother told how she loved Mabel, and how she now wished she had kept her more with her and not tried to "get into society." At heart Mrs. Merritt is a tender, heavily-burdened woman who has neglected her daughter while she was really sacrificing

herself for her in a mistaken way. She says that she used to long to stay quietly at home and be just a good housekeeper, wife and mother like women who were not rich, but people said she *must get into society*. It would have been comical, if it had not been really pathetic, to hear her tell how hard she had tried to be "stylish" and to "cultivate herself and pa," as she calls Mr. Merritt, and how nothing had come of it.

She had talked a long time before the recollection of that moment in the shop at Chamouni flashed across my mind. Who was that dark man? He did look like a Jew. I asked if Mabel's friend were in Europe, and Mrs. Merritt said, "No, indeed, he is not, or we would not be here."

They are going to-morrow for a different Swiss trip from ours, and I shall not see Mabel for a while. Perhaps it is just as well, for, whatever her mother thinks, I am the last one to "bring her to her senses;" I could far more easily feel with and understand her mother now than I could put myself in sympathy with Mabel—at least, it seems that way to me at present. Still,

even when her mother talks, I wonder at the fact that one thing troubles her so deeply, and not another. She believes the man is a fortune-hunter, and it distresses her that she cannot make Mabel believe that if she were poor he would not care for her. The fact that Mabel would deliberately turn her back on the Lord Jesus Christ, who died to redeem her—the Saviour who himself said, “Whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven,”—this does not seem to fill her with horror, as I should think it would. Not to be a Christian is with her not the awful thing, but the belonging to a race whose people keep pawnshops, have long noses and are not tolerated in the finest hotels. Oh, Madge, I feel like a little chicken that has just cracked its shell, and who finds the world a very queer place.

VERONA, Sept. 6.

I have written you such full letters I had to neglect my journal, but I will begin it in this curious old place. I have walked Cousin Jane around the city until she is

secretly longing, I fear, to get me away; but I am fascinated with the narrow, winding streets, the queer architecture, the Roman gateways, the bits of ancient wall in the new one, the forum, or market-place, with its fountain six hundred years old in the centre. Of course I went looking for the places with Shakespearean associations; and oh, the dirt and the odors around the Capulet mansion were fearful! I fancied you remarking that if Romeo often serenaded Juliet in such an atmosphere it was no wonder that he longed to be cut up into little stars and scattered around promiscuously. I wish Abbey could see the mansion where we dwell; I would delight to hear the report she would give of it. Its outer walls are of pink-and-white marble, in the pattern of bedquilts that I have seen. The rooms open on galleries around a courtyard paved with cobblestones, and through curtains hung before our doors we watch comers and goers or the children playing at a fountain where the water spouts from the mouths of grotesque animals into stone troughs. The floors of our rooms are of

cement which looks exactly like petrified hash, but hash with a great deal of fat meat in it.

Yesterday we were in the coliseum, which some historians say is older than the Roman amphitheatre, and which is very wonderful to me, not having seen the latter. This seated over twenty-two thousand people in those fearful days of the martyrs. We roamed the long galleries under the seats, saw the doors where the gladiators came out, the dens where the Christians were kept, and the equally comfortable ones for the wild beasts. Then Cousin Jane met a party of Boston people with whom she became acquainted in Paris, and they seated themselves for a chat. I slipped away and climbed up above them into the emperor's seat. I sat there thinking of so many things—of the strange changes that had been going on for ages and ages while these old stones had been here, of the countless lovely days like this when the sky over it had been as blue and beautiful; I thought of a country undiscovered when this building was already an ancient ruin—of one lit-



tle corner of that country which I remember everywhere and at all times. Then I discovered that more people had joined the group about the Raynors, and at that moment Mabel Merritt appeared by my side as unexpectedly as she has done once or twice before. She was dressed very elegantly, with rather too much silk and lace for these miserable thoroughfares (but I forget: she usually rides), and she wore such brilliant diamonds at her neck and ears that I told her, as they flashed in the sunshine, that she did much more honor to the emperor's seat than I in my plain dark flannel. She laughed and greeted me with more warmth than usual.

"I am ever so glad to find you here. I have not seen you since I saw you in that shop at Chamouni," she said, sitting down close beside me.

"Then you saw me? I did not suppose you knew I was there."

"Of course; and you are a wise little girl that you kept your own counsel."

I did not know what to say until I resolved to ask,

“Was there any reason why you wished me not to speak of your being there?”

“Yes.”

“Then perhaps I would have done better to have told of it.”

“You did just right. What a queer old place this is! I suppose you know all about it. What were those dens down there for? The places where they kept the wild beasts which made sport for the emperors in the days of the gladiators: is not that what the guide-books say?”

“Yes, and sometimes young girls like you and me were thrust into those dens because they would not give up their faith in Christ. Just fancy that! Every seat in these long circling rows filled with cool and laughing sightseers; an emperor where we sit; from that low portal over there one of us walking out alone, across the amphitheatre; then another opening made, and a lion creeping forth.”

“Could you ever have done it,” she asked; for I think we had both turned pale at our fancy.

“I think we could; for, of course, if we

were not Christians we never would have been brought to this peril. But you, being one, would realize what your faith meant, and—”

“What would *your* faith mean to you if you were compelled to make such an enforced choice?” she asked.

“It would mean that this Jesus Christ whom I called my Saviour loved me—a poor defenceless girl—just as if I were the only creature for whom he came to the earth to live and suffer, that he had died to redeem me from a death worse than any brief agony could be. It would mean my love to him—weak, but still a love as strong as the very best I had in me. Some great writer says, ‘We only believe as deep as we live’—*really* believe, he means; well, really believing what I have spoken of, our life could not be separated from our belief, and we *must* die for our faith. But over and above everything else, Mabel, when we came to that last step out of the dungeon, I know we would have left our conscious, fearful selves behind us for ever. In such times, the Bible declares, Christ’s strength is sufficient for us; the

emperors, the lions and the earth would not be so real as the heaven opening for us."

I was thinking out loud rather than talking to Mabel; and when she suddenly burst into tears, for a moment I could not understand, until she said,

"My life is a miserable affair, and, as you say, that is the reason my life amounts to nothing."

"No, it is not; for in another sense we only live as deep as we believe, or, to be plainer, we can't live strong, sweet, satisfactory lives unless we believe in something stronger, sweeter and better than we are; and that something is the gospel that our Saviour gave us."

Now, Mabel could not think I was preaching—as you may think, Madge—because I was very sorry for her. She seemed helpless and miserable as she sat there in the sunset twirling a diamond on her finger until it flashed like a coal of fire in the red light. I wondered that Cousin Jane did not go home, for she never stays out at this most beautiful hour of the whole day for fear of malaria; but last night she was too much

interested to care, so we were alone a while longer.

“After all,” said Mabel, “one might die for a principle, and yet in living not find any inspiration or comfort in it—the principle, I mean.”

I told her that grandmother was always saying that not a principle, but a personal Saviour, was the Christian's real inspiration, and that she liked to quote the verse: “Whatsoever ye do, do it heartily as to the Lord, and not unto men; knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for ye serve the Lord Christ.”

“If ever you get home, you tell that grandmother of yours that she makes me perfectly wretched. You are bad enough, but she must be just dreadful—or a saint,” said Mabel, getting up impatiently.

I pulled her down and coaxed her to tell me what made her so unhappy. She half tried to repulse me; she laughed and cried hysterically, and then she told me everything. I am very glad—not because I was curious to know her story, but because she may “come to her senses,” as her mother says.

Now, Madge, I shall never send you this part of my journal unless I have Mabel's consent; so I can write here what I see fit. You said one day last spring, after reading a new novel, that you wished "some other girl would have a love-affair and tell you all about it, for it must be very interesting." It is not so; it seems a little silly—yes, a good deal silly—and a trifle tedious to hear about in detail. Mabel looks at that dark man in a very romantic light, but I do not think it is at all romantic for him to be showing her how to deceive her parents; and I have told her just what I thought. He may be a very wonderful musician with a grand career before him, but he does not act like a gentleman if he skulks around after Mabel when her people suppose that he is across the ocean.

Before Mabel got very far in her story I told her I would not engage to keep any secrets of which I could not approve. She had concluded to let her mother know he was in Europe, or she did conclude to do it as we talked. The trouble is Mabel is all confused in her ideas of right. She has

read so many novels that she seems to imagine that if some line of conduct is very startling and unheard of, the fact that it is romantic is its justification. She has looked at what she calls this man's "genius" and "struggles," her own perplexity and the "obstacles" to their engagement, until she has lost sight of the fact that she is tormenting her father and mother, getting very deceitful herself and making the very discontent she feels. She says I don't sympathize with her perplexities as a girl older and of more experience would do, but I am old enough to know that what she needs first is to see things as they are.

I am sorry for her, and I like her more and more. She says this Jewish musician came to Geneva, where his sister is living; and when he found Mabel, he was trying to persuade her to leave her parents to go to his sister, then declare her determination to adopt the Jewish religion and persist in remaining with his people until they were married. He was very sure that her parents would forgive her for the step when it was too late to prevent it. When she let him

think this was not probable, he ceased to urge her to leave them. She imagines this is noble-minded of him; I am uncharitable enough to believe that he feared she would be disinherited. A man who would keep showing her how to cheat her father and mother would not be so careful of their feelings. I told her that too, and she was almost angry.

Mr. Raynor suddenly appeared and asked us if we were anxious to see the coliseum by moonlight, or if we would have our dinner and wait until we were in Rome for the moonlight. Cousin Jane arrived to say we must hurry back to our dinner, and she looked at me and muttered something about quinine and malaria.



## CHAPTER XIII.

### *MADGE'S CHOICE.*

“Every-day religion is the foundation of thoroughness.”

ONE day not long after Belle Hughes's call Mary Parker came to hear the news from Ruth, and to ask Mrs. Preston various questions about Mrs. Allen's school, in Millbridge. She learned from Mrs. Preston that it was an unpretending school kept by the widow of a clergyman. Only about fifteen—or, at the most, twenty—pupils were taken, and these were very faithfully taught and carefully watched over. They boarded in a roomy old mansion which was exceedingly homelike and cheerful, the school being in one wing of the building. The town of Millbridge was not unlike Hempstead, only older and rather more aristocratic. When Mary heard Mrs. Preston say that it was the summer home of the governor, and that both his daughters were in the

school, she treasured up the item. A trifle like that would influence Emma Nelson when the character of the school itself would weigh nothing in her balance.

As Madge listened she began to wish that Uncle Henry would propose to send her to Millbridge; it would be something new and mildly exciting. She was tired of Hempstead, of the academy and the routine of daily life; in a new place she would make herself happy and admired. Uncle Henry would probably give her a nice outfit like Ruth's and she could turn over a new leaf.

Much to her satisfaction, Uncle Henry came into the room just then, and sat in his own peculiar corner with his newspaper. He did not read, however, but quietly listened to the conversation. Madge at once began to ask interested questions, and Mrs. Preston gave a detailed account of a week's visit which she once made to Mrs. Allen's school.

"Oh, I wish I could go there," exclaimed Madge, all the time secretly hoping that her enthusiasm would move Uncle Henry; but,

much to her disappointment, he did not, when Mary went away, refer to the matter.

A week later Emma Nelson announced that she had decided to enter "Madame" Allen's school on account of its being select and taking only the daughters of wealthy or distinguished families. Madge was thoroughly discontented after a few conversations with Emma. She did not think of the profit which Emma might derive from her new associations; she could not get beyond an envious wonder why her friend should have every whim gratified, while she herself had nothing to her mind.

"I never have a choice of anything," she said to herself one afternoon as she sat rocking restlessly in her grandmother's great chair in the pleasant hall. "Other girls do as they like once in a while; my life is all along a dull, monotonous line, and I am tired to death of it."

That very day Madge had a "choice" to make. She was still rocking away with a cloud on her pretty face when her mother entered the room and, sitting beside her, said,

"Sometimes, Madge, the very thing one is wishing for comes."

"I never found it true; my wishes just stay wishes," said Madge, gloomily.

Her mother smiled a little sadly as she replied:

"And now your wish is to run away from your home and your mother. Perhaps it is to be granted, after all."

"What? Uncle Henry will—" began Madge, excitedly.

"Uncle Henry will *not*—at least, this year."

"Then what do you mean, mother?"

"This morning," said Mrs. Preston, "I was surprised to receive a letter from Mrs. Allen, for she has so little time in which to write that she seldom or never writes unnecessarily. I think I have told you of Mrs. Allen's early life?" asked Mrs. Preston, somewhat irrelevantly, or so it seemed to Madge. "She was a poor girl, left an orphan when very young. She was a nurse-girl, then a seamstress. When about sixteen, she was sewing for a lady who, remarking her intelligence and good sense, offered to

get her a place in a seminary where she might work for an education. She accepted the offer gladly, and became the most thorough pupil in the institution. She is a lady, but she has no false pride or foolish notions of anything connected with a young girl's training for her life-work. Because I knew her when she swept a schoolroom, she trusts me to understand the letter that she wrote me this week."

"What did she say in her letter?" asked Madge, much puzzled.

"She told me of her school and of its prosperity, but by this last she does not mean financial prosperity. She pays too high salaries to her excellent teachers to make money, but then her object is not money-making. Now, every year, as Mrs. Allen tells me, she has among her pupils some one young girl who is striving as she herself once strove to get the best instruction within her power. She gives her all the privileges enjoyed by the wealthiest girl of her whole number, and she plans so this chosen pupil shall not feel herself an object of charity. Mrs. Allen earned her own tuition

by sweeping and dish-washing, but she has now competent servants for such duties. What she does expect of her pupil is certain clearly-defined services. She acts as her assistant in writing business-letters, she does her errands in the town, she receives callers whom Mrs. Allen does not wish to see, she carries out her wishes and plans, and is always interested in the welfare of the school. All the time she needs for herself is ensured to her; beyond that she serves Mrs. Allen. Now, the purpose of this lady's letter was to say that if I knew of any young girl who wished to join her school under these conditions she would gladly receive her and feel it a privilege to help her make a true woman of herself. She did not make a direct proposal, but she gave me delicately to understand that a daughter of mine would be made very welcome."

Mrs. Preston added not another word, but sat with a very thoughtful look on her motherly countenance.

Madge's face was like a mirror, reflecting each emotion—first surprise, then faint disappointment, and even contempt, then ques-

tioning thought. She did not speak for several minutes:

“I would very much rather go as a regular pupil.”

“You would be a regular pupil.”

“Yes, but one without any responsibility—as Uncle Henry might send me, for instance.”

“Well, dear, you have full liberty to decide the matter; the choice rests with you. Your uncle Henry has read this letter, and the opinion that he gives strikes both your father and me as very wise. He says that if, after full reflection, you decide to go to Millbridge in the way here proposed, you have his approval, because you will be thrown on your own resources and must learn much self-control. He says—and, unpleasant as it may sound to you, his words are true—that you seem to him singularly undisciplined and immature. He says, also, that if you prefer to remain at home and make the most of yourself in the time to come, in a year or two—just how soon depends on you—he will send you there as what you call a ‘regular scholar;’

he would not think it wise to send you in that way at present. Now, Madge, don't decide hastily; count the cost. I myself would not send you away from home in any other way or to any other place, but I am perfectly content to have you stay in the home-nest. If you go, don't go because Emma Nelson is going or because it strikes you as a novel step; if you stay, be sure it is from no silly pride. If you go earning your way, your position will honor you in proportion as you honor it. By all means stay at home if you cannot go with the resolution to do your best; otherwise, you would defraud Mrs. Allen, bring discredit on your parents and keep some other young girl from enjoying privileges which you fail to improve. Take several days to think, for I cannot let you reconsider a decision once made."

With a gravity that her mother was glad to see Madge began to ask a great many questions; then, her mother being called away, she went up stairs to meditate. What her reflections were in the days that followed can best be learned from her journal:



AUGUST 25.

How I wish, Ruth, that you were here to help me decide! Mother will not say one word to influence me, and I do not know what I want myself. Grandma Grey is so artless I know her mind; she thinks there is no place like home. She says life slips away so fast that some day a happy young girl awakes to the knowledge that her childhood's home has vanished off the face of the earth. Of course an old person looking back takes such doleful views as these; and in the same way Abbey, who has no family of her own, naturally enough fancies that I ought to be perfectly satisfied. For my part, I am restless and feel the need of a change. I have not been like myself since you went away. I have done some things that were rather foolish, but there is no use in my dwelling on them. If I go to Mill-bridge, I mean to do great things. I shall study and take a higher place than ever before in my school-life. I mean to do just exactly right, too, and be a power among the girls. I have about concluded to go.

Uncle Henry says he will give me the

wherewith to get my outfit; but, oh dear! there are so many horrid useful articles—flannels, overshoes and all that—I am afraid my dresses will have to be very plain.

I do not agree with my mother on one point at all: I do not see that there is the least use in my telling Emma Nelson just how I am entering Mrs. Allen's school. Mother says that a simple explanation now may save me annoyance hereafter—that my time will not be my own out of school-hours, and that Emma and others will make demands on it if they do not understand. I tell mother I can explain when occasion requires, but if I tell Emma now she may not understand; later she will. The fact is, Ruth, I do not mean to tell Emma or any of the others. Mrs. Allen is mother's friend, and it will be easy enough for me to seem to help her out of affection. I know I shall like her. Girls are so queer and proud sometimes; I will not be looked down on as a sort of a charity-scholar, or even as one paying her own way. I am not ashamed that sensible people should know it, but schoolgirls are not sensible.

I do not believe I shall be missed here at home half as much as you. After you went away there seemed to be so many things for others to do—little things.

For a time after Madge's inopportune reproof Bert treated her with marked coolness, but this could not be of long duration: each was too fun-loving to dwell under the same roof and not enjoy the other's society; but Madge never again undertook to influence Bert, and Bert once for all lost faith in Madge as a girl of any unusual uprightness and truthfulness. He thought her clever, agreeable, warm-hearted and not any more deceitful than he himself was, perhaps, but certainly "she need not," as he assured himself, "attempt any missionary work" on him as a subject.

As the weeks went by Bert stood in great need of a friend able to influence him aright, for Dick Nelson attached himself to the younger boy with a persistent attention which was both flattering and fascinating. Dick had plenty of money, command of horses and a knowledge of all varieties

of amusement which the village and country could supply ; Bert was witty, ready for any adventure, and had an air of city breeding particularly pleasing to Dick, who rather despised the Hempstead fellows as "countrified." Still, there was a difference between the two which was marked. Dick was already a fast young man ; he could toss off his social glass, knew how to bet at races, to gamble for gain, to talk fluently of theatrical matters, and how to tell stories of a sort never heard in Hempstead parlors. Bert was only a wide-awake boy—not awake to any realization of the earnestness of life, but alert for fun, eager for new ideas, ready to follow where the most alluring guide should lead.

Dick Nelson never came to visit the Prestons, and Bert never talked of him. The Professor frequently said to his wife that the boy was doing remarkably well, and that when school began he would undoubtedly acquit himself with honor. The Professor knew nothing of boys outside of the school-room. If they were intelligent, respectful, always prompt at the table, at prayers and

in at bedtime, he supposed all must be well. If Bert had any mad escapades that summer, the Professor never knew it. That he must have done something which came to Abbey's knowledge may be inferred from an interview between them which was occasioned by somewhat peculiar circumstances.

No one had laid down any rules for Bert's conduct, because he fell at once into all the family ways. For instance, the house was generally closed at ten or at half-past ten, and Bert was always ready to retire with the rest of the family. How was any one to know that after he had cordially bade them all "Good-night" he frequently waited until the house was still, then pushed up his window, swung himself lightly out on the roof of a veranda, thence to a tree, down, and off for an hour or two more of fun? He had indulged in this feat a good many times, when one beautiful moonlight evening he dropped out of the tree almost into Abbey's lap—or, rather, into a pan of potatoes which she calmly sat paring.

"Beautiful out here, ain't it?" she remarked. "I thought I'd get this much

ahead on my breakfast while I was waiting for you."

"For me?"

"Yes. I don't get time to talk to you much daytimes, and I thought you could spare me a few minutes this time o' day, considering you don't mind loss of sleep."

Bert was silent with surprise.

"Why don't you go out at the front door or stay out until you get ready to come in?" she continued, mildly, holding up a potato in the moonlight to see if it were nicely pared.

"Oh, ten o'clock is too abominably early for a fellow to turn in such nights as these."

"Why don't you say so, then? You never used to be such a sneak?"

"Oh, come, now, Abbey! Don't be unpleasant."

"A body would think that a boy who had nothing to do from daylight until dark but to amuse himself might be satisfied without fooling away half the night. Maybe if I was another boy I would think you were pretty smart, but, being a stupid woman-creature, I declare I can't. You don't honor

the Professor, who trusts you; you leave out of the question your folks, who sent you here to learn something worth knowing; and you cheat yourself."

"What are you talking about, Abbey?"

"About your riding round the country nights with Dick Nelson. There ain't a first-class man in the town who does not turn up his nose at Dick. From the day he put off roundabouts and began puffing at a cigar to this time, when he spends his father's money in treating the town-rowdies, Dick has been and is a fool. You never have amounted to much yourself in the past, but you ought to have sense enough to know that you may in the next few years keep your father from being ashamed of you. When you begin school in the fall, you want to study, I take it. Dick will be no help to you. He was discharged for disgraceful conduct when he was only fourteen years old, and he never has been inside the school since."

"I declare, Abbey, you would be a grand one to lecture on morals in the winter course at the academy," said Bert, who was leaning

against the trunk of the tree with his hands in his pockets.

It was not possible to get angry at Abbey, she looked so comical sitting erect in a kitchen chair, the moonlight playing over her stout figure, the knife which she flourished oratorically and the potatoes which she was neglecting in her earnestness.

“Oh, you may laugh, but some day you will find out this: every creature here below can make a little or a big effort and better himself, or he can do nothing and worsen—”

“*Worsen!* What’s that, Abbey?”

“*You* know, if it ain’t in the dictionary. You’re in the first stages of the process, I reckon.”

“Abbey, I am surprised at you! Here you have lived all your life in the family of a teacher; you might have been a highly-educated lady to-day. You must have neglected your mind and let it *worsen*.”

Abbey gazed off in the moonlight a while; then she replied:

“No, I don’t believe I was made for that; I’ve got sense, but nothing more. I didn’t



fetch any intellect into this family, and I can't take none out of it. I do try every year to make better bread and cake, to sew nicer seams and to make folks around me comfortable; I pray for grace to do my kitchen work, to nurse Grandma Grey and to help Mrs. Preston as if each day was going to end my work. No, I was cut on a rough pattern, and can't be made into anything very fine; but you can be a man. In your place I would make one, and the way to do it isn't to sneak off nights after a puppy like Dick Nelson."

"Suppose I go back to bed," argued Bert; lazily. He had come out that night almost against his inclination, but drawn by a half promise to Dick.

"Then I shall take in my potatoes and go to bed myself. I shall say nothing to any one if you mend your ways, and Mr. Preston will go on thinking as he said yesterday—that 'young Raynor is an honest fellow, and will be a credit to his father.'"

"Well, now, see here, you excellent old girl," returned Bert: "if I saw fit to go on a lark to-night, I should go, for all your

threats to tell tales; but I think myself that I had better slack up a little in my gay career. I don't admit, however, that I was about to do anything of the sort that you accuse me of premeditating. I have always been deeply interested in—ah!—ornithology; and for all you know I came down here in the cool of the day to capture a potato-bug in the interests of science."

"Then science will have to wait until the season for 'em comes around again, and in the mean time you can take considerable sleep."

"Abbey," whispered Bert, with great dignity, "I will retire, but a word of admonition in your ear first: It may not be the season for potato-bugs, *but* neither is it the hour for paring raw potatoes. I fear for you, Abbey; no well-regulated young woman would seek a moonlit retreat in this way if she were not in love. Promise to bring your potato-pan out here no more in the hope of meeting the widower Simpkins, and I will not reveal your secret to Mrs. Professor;" then Bert darted up the tree, leaving poor Abbey choking with indignation and act-

ually fearful that Bert believed the charge he had brought against her, for Mr. Simpkins was the one person in the world whom Abbey was ever tempted to despise.

Bert stayed awake until very late, and he gave more thought to his ways than he had given for many weeks. Abbey's words had made clear to him certain admonitions of his own conscience. He had not been entirely thoughtless during the summer. Soon after he entered the family Johnny had innocently revealed to him the terror which Grandma Grey felt when she first heard of his coming. Now, Bert had been at once attracted by the lovely old lady, and it pleased him to see how soon he had won her heart. He waited on her in the merriest but most gallant manner possible, and she liked to talk to him just as she talked to the girls. He never was irreverent when she talked of sacred things in the tender, quaint manner natural to her, and much that she said he remembered. He would have been astonished to have been told that a feeble old lady and a servant were the two persons who were having a strong influence for good

on his character, but so it was. Before morning he had made a very sensible resolution: If he broke at all with Dick Nelson, he must be outspoken. He made up his mind to see Dick the next day, and when the latter would ask the reason of his non-appearance the previous evening to tell him that he had come to Hempstead to study when vacation should end. Vacation, for him, had ended; he proposed now to turn over, as Madge had expressed it, a "new leaf."

The morrow came, and Bert was true to himself. He made the whole matter perfectly plain; no excuses, no subterfuges. In entire good-nature he announced that he could not afford to act like a fool any more weeks in that year. Dick could have ridiculed a timid fellow, recaptured one who had made meek or feeble efforts to shake him off, but the sudden bold common sense which Bert showed abashed him. He made a futile attempt to prove to Bert that he could study and yet have time for being as "jolly" as they had been in the past, but Bert assured him that he "had not the brain

to grapple with two questions at once." He expected to be jolly, but it must be along the line of the business that brought him to Hempstead. They parted without ill-feeling, and the intimacy was never resumed.

AUGUST 31.

I think, Ruth, that my journal will be more interesting when I have something to put in it, and that will be in about ten days if I depart for Millbridge. I am as enthusiastic now about going as I was cool at the outset. Emma Nelson has found out a great deal in various ways about the school, and I am sure we will like it. We mean to room together if possible. Did I ever tell you, Ruth, that Bert Raynor and Dick Nelson were rather intimate? I was to blame, perhaps, at first for not telling Bert what a reputation Dick had in town; however, when I learned how far the intimacy had gone, I talked to Bert about it. He was quite indignant at my interference, as he seemed to think it, but I know it really did him good, for he seems to have dropped Dick now entirely, and is getting ready for

the beginning of school with an eagerness that delights father.

SEPTEMBER 7.

We have had a domestic thunder-clap: Abbey is going to leave us. Everybody in the house seems stupefied, and Abbey goes about crying and talking in the most hysterical manner. Last night a plain-looking man called here and asked for mother; he said he was a farmer from Michigan who had come East on business, and that he came to us at the request of a poor woman, a neighbor of his. He went on to state that fifteen years before this woman, then a widow with three little children, was supporting herself by sewing in Wickham, twenty miles from here; she was attacked with small-pox and taken to the poorhouse. In the mean time, one child had died with croup. She could not get work again, people being foolishly afraid of contagion. At last a respectable man and wife offered to adopt Abbey, and her mother resolved to take the other child and go to relatives West. She did not give Abbey away, and meant, when able, to get her back. Her relatives

could not help her, she was ill again three years in a public hospital, her little boy died; so things went with her from bad to worse, until she got well enough to sew again. In the mean time, she had lost all track of Abbey, for the man who took her died, and his wife, who was left poor, put Abbey into the asylum in Hampton. A few months ago this woman heard that Abbey's mother was living West, and that she had made efforts to find her. She wrote telling all she knew, and then inquiries at the asylum led to the discovery that Abbey was with us. This farmer, who was about coming East and must pass through Hempstead, agreed to come and see Abbey. Her mother is sixty years old, broken down and hardly able to earn her bread. She makes no claim on Abbey, but she wants her to know that she never meant to desert her, and of course she does hope that Abbey will do something for her. Abbey was only four or five when she saw her last, and she had been told later that she had no mother; so the recollection of her had almost faded out of her mind. This man brought with him

some notes that her mother had given him—simple records of things which she fancied Abbey would remember; and she does remember: she says everything is undoubtedly just as the man says. Now she does not hesitate a minute; she says her duty is to start for the West as soon as she can make her plans, and from this time on she expects to support her mother. When our mother asks her if she does not wish she had worked for nothing or given away her wages in popcorn-balls instead of having it in a snug little bank-account, she throws her apron over her head, laughs a little, and cries a great deal more. Uncle Henry says he considers her one of this family, and when any of us take a new start he fits us out; so without any ado he has bought her a new trunk and has ordered mother to get her everything else she needs.

What are we going to do without her, Ruth? I thought Abbey was a fixed fact. I expected she would always go on making biscuit light as feathers, mending everybody's clothes and keeping us laughing with her oddities. I have had a few of



her duties to attend to this morning, as she is naturally greatly excited, and I really am aghast to think of the multiplicity of stupid little tasks there are to be done in a family like this. I positively never realized that lamps must be cleaned and filled, that rugs had to be shaken, everybody's bed made every morning, and every single miserable little dish washed after every meal. But Abbey liked work; so, after all, she may have done more than is necessary.

Yes, Abbey was going from the only home she had ever known—from friends who loved and appreciated her and to whom she clung to with all the ardor of an intensely affectionate nature. At noon the 5th of September she was to leave them. There was not a corner of the sunny old house which she did not visit in the time between her decision and her starting—visit to work or to weep in. It was Mrs. Preston who packed her trunk and made her ready for going. Abbey herself *would* hem new dish-cloths and make new kitchen curtains, *would* sort out dried herbs for grandma

and clear-starch every white cap and lace handkerchief that the old lady possessed. She insisted on putting the last touches to Madge's things, and every few moments she would drop everything and flee. In the warm gloom of the garret, her face hidden in some cast-off garment, she would think of the pleasant past and picture the future.

In the first excitement Madge had said, "Abbey, you might send your mother all your savings, and not go yourself. Your money would keep her very comfortably, and you know she can't miss your companionship, when she has never had it in the past."

Abbey sat a moment in thought before she replied:

"I'd be ashamed to pray and say 'Our Father in heaven' if I had somewhere a poor mother that I was offering money to, and so saying, 'Take this instead of love.' If she hasn't been much to me, she has wanted to be, and could not; if I could now be something to her, and would not, I should despise myself. No, it would not be any giving or any loving if I did not

just give myself, all I am and have and all I can do. I could not be a Christian if I just pleased myself that way."

So the last day came; and if anything could have comforted Abbey, it would have been to see how one and all showed their affection by words, tears, gifts and warm praises. When she was actually gone, Johnny said he felt as if he "knew now what a funeral was like," and he mournfully inquired of Madge if she intended to go away herself now just the same.

"Why, of course, Johnny! What difference can Abbey's going make with my plans?"

"I thought it might make a difference about the work, you know; mother can't do it all, and the doctor has forbidden Grandma Grey to do anything that will overtire her. Uncle Henry told Abbey he guessed you would stay home now."

"Why, we will hire a servant, Johnny, of course. She won't be Abbey, but she can do the work."

"I suppose we could; I never thought of that."

It struck Madge as supremely absurd in Uncle Henry to advance the idea that she should stay at home. Should she neglect her education to do kitchen-work? But as she reflected more she grew nervous, wondering what her mother would have to say upon the subject. That evening she opened the matter by saying,

“I suppose now, mother, we shall have to get along with a disagreeable Irish girl in the kitchen. Will you try at once to find one?”

“No. I have been thinking of this ever since Abbey planned to leave us. For more than double the pay that Abbey received I could not get a person capable of doing half the amount that Abbey did in the house. She was one of us, and worked with and for us out of love, not for money. Everybody assures me that for the wages we can give I can find only an ignorant Irish girl; if she did not steal, such a girl would probably waste and destroy, help little and vex me constantly. We must live economically; our means are so limited that we can allow no margin for broken

dishes, spoiled food, wasted fuel and continual leaks in the kitchen."

"But what will you do, mamma?"

"A great deal more than I have done in the past; but if my health is spared, I hope to accomplish it;" then she added, "The family will be smaller. Johnny will fetch wood, coal and water; grandma has always wanted to do more mending than Abbey would let her do."

"Yes, the family will be smaller," repeated Madge, a little eagerly. She was glad to think that her absence would be a help, for so it seemed less incumbent on her to consider what her presence might effect. However, she gave her mother abundant opportunity to ask her to remain at home; and if she were asked, she resolved to sacrifice herself. She even tried to draw from her mother some opinion as to her going from home under the changed circumstances, but Mrs. Preston was absolutely silent on this point.

When Madge went to her room, she was worried. She assured herself that she wished to do right; but if she could go to

boarding-school, she did wish she could forget the "horrid" dusting, lamp-cleaning and knife-scouring left behind her. How "mean" for a lady like her mother to be so bothered! "Why on earth did not that poor useless mother of Abbey's die and leave them in peace?" If only they had money to hire plenty of servants! How "horrid" to think of doing housework for the first time in her life, just when she saw the way open for her to improve herself, to get the higher education it was every young girl's duty nowadays to obtain if she could find the means to educate herself! Certainly, if it were right for her to remain at home, her mother would advise her, and not leave to her the responsibility of choosing. It was a duty to improve one's talents when young. She had been heedless in the past; she could not neglect her studies hereafter. If Abbey, now, had only been anxious for an education, she might have been able to earn a large salary as a teacher, whereas she could only—only, out of love, give herself. That seemed to Abbey to be the one thing she must do, and Abbey said she

must if she were a Christian. Abbey and Ruth had a way of settling things that she did not find to be one habitually occurring to her. In that note, for instance, which Ruth left in the drawer, she wrote that a Christian life "just means asking God to teach us his will, and then doing it; asking him to mark out a way for us, and then going in it; and loving him all the time because—"

Madge thoughts ran off into reflections that if she had not prayed about her affairs the matter of the boarding-school had seemed to her mother providential, and— Oh dear! how tiresome it was to have to be everlastingly settling moral questions instead of having a grand time without any fuss or hindrance! How queer that Grandma Grey did not utter one word either for or against her leaving home, but only gazed at her with a wistful sort of tenderness on her sweet old face! Perhaps she had been asked not to influence Madge in any way; then, forgetting how lately she had longed for a "choice," Madge fell asleep wishing that such decisions never had to be made.

## CHAPTER XIV.

*RUTH'S JOURNAL.*

PISA, September 25.

**M**Y journal will get to be a journal all about the Merritts instead of about myself, but I am sure this will not matter to you, Madge, for you always like to hear about other people's lives. Then I write everything that I do in the letters to the whole family.

From Verona we went to Venice, you know, then to Florence, where again we met the Merritts and again Mabel avoided me. In fact, she not only shunned me herself, but she so managed matters that I was never left a moment alone with her mother. One day it occurred to me that she did this because she herself had not told her mother, as she promised to tell her, about that young Jew and how he was in Geneva. I made



an opportunity, and asked Mabel if this were true. She was very cool and haughty, while she admitted that she had not yet been open with her mother. She fully intended that her parents "should know the whole thing," she said, "from the beginning to the end," in a few days, and I need not give myself the least uneasiness on her account. As she talked to me in a hard, dry tone with her head high and a way as if she were trying to get rid of a meddlesome child, I could not believe that not three weeks before she had been with me searching through the book-stores for a New Testament, telling me she meant to know what she was tempted to give up before she gave up anything. When we found the book, she was as simple as a child in her desire to read it.

Now, I cannot endure the thought of interfering with any one's private affairs, but I did feel an unaccountable dread of something all that day. Mabel was one moment so excited and talkative, then her face would grow dark and sullen. Once or twice she looked up almost in terror when I spoke to her. In the afternoon I asked her to go

with us to the *casine*, or park; she refused, saying her head ached, but she urged her mother and father to go in such a vehement way that they seemed surprised. While we were discussing the park a servant brought Mr. Merritt several letters and two telegraphic despatches. He opened one, and made a loud exclamation. I started to go from the room, but before getting out of the door I had to know that some business trouble had befallen him. Before long he called Mr. Raynor, and made no secret of it to him. A great stock speculation in which he was engaged had gone contrary to his calculation, and a man whom he trusted to act in his interests during his absence had betrayed him—at least, so he believed. At any rate, Mr. Merritt had lost an immense amount of money and the other man had become rich. The letters and messages which Mr. Merritt received were so puzzling and contradictory in details that he was almost beside himself. He is a large, full-blooded man, and after the news came his face seemed purple. He strode up and down the rooms and talked incessantly. One moment he declared he

must start for home immediately; the next he said he could form no plan until he received other letters. Mr. Raynor told us that even if he had lost all that money he was not then a poor man as we would estimate poverty, but he was no longer rich.

Mrs. Merritt was terribly worried at her husband's excitement and rage, but Mabel was very calm and womanly. She tried to soothe her father and suggest anything and everything to quiet him. The loss of the money did not seem to trouble her; in fact, I had not seen her appear so natural in several days. One would have supposed some excitement had been taken from her instead of so great a change having come upon their prospects.

Mr. Raynor stayed with Mr. Merritt the rest of the day, trying to be of use to him—or, at least, of comfort by showing his sympathy; and Mrs. Merritt, like any sensible woman, cheered him as well as she could. He did not sleep that night, and in the morning more letters excited him afresh. About an hour after these came we heard a strange disturbance in the rooms occupied by the

Merritts, which were near ours—a heavy fall, and then loud screams. We rushed across the hall, and found that Mr. Merritt had fallen in a kind of apoplectic fit, brought on, of course, by the worry and thought of the last twenty-four hours. There was an excellent English doctor in the hotel, and everything possible was done for him. In a day or two he looked quite well, and, as his wife insisted, *was* well. We can see a difference: he is weak and almost childish. The letters that continued to come irritated him while he read them; then he seemed to drop them out of his mind. The doctor told Mr. Raynor he would have him better physically and perfectly competent soon to attend to his business affairs, but that he must make his will and quickly do whatever he had to do, for he was a doomed man.

I begged Mr. Raynor to tell this plainly to Mabel, for I had an idea it might be best; but I had no thought of the effect it actually did have. Every bit of her sullenness and indifference disappeared, and she now devotes herself to her father in a way that

seems to delight him. He was not a man with what Miss Elder used to call a "large range of ideas;" he always liked to know about other Americans and little bits of harmless gossip of every-day things. Mabel used to be sarcastic about his "spread-eagle notions," but after his trouble she would chat to him by the hour of little amusing matters. She never failed to read *Galignani's Messenger*, a paper full of these items. She declares that the loss of all that money is not of very great consequence. She tells her father that, with his influence and knowledge of the stock-market, he can make another fortune easily enough; this cheers him. Then she tells her mother that they have plenty of property to live in some quiet, pretty village at home. She says they can live now like other people, without the bother of a houseful of servants and the trying to be stylish in the latest fashion. Mrs. Merritt, I really believe, finds a relief in that idea.

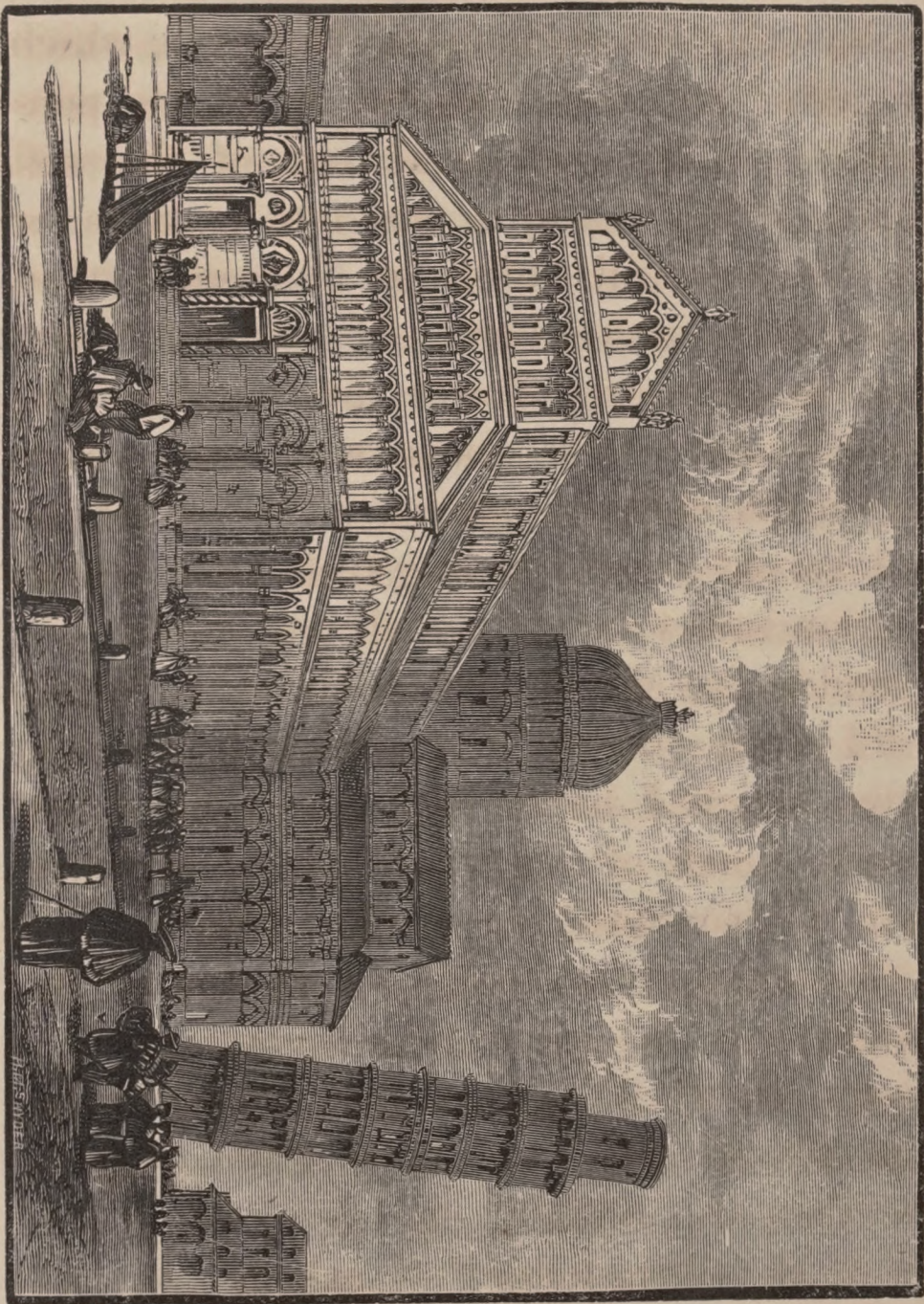
Yesterday we all came to Pisa together. After having dinner Mabel and I went to roam about the beautiful cathedral, full

of rare paintings, old mosaics and no end of curious things that I will tell you about, such as the bronze lamp, in the nave, which suggested to Galileo the theory of the pendulum. When we came out of the soft gloom of the place, it was late enough for all the beautiful buildings to seem bathed in a golden atmosphere. If you could have seen the Leaning Tower then against that background! The place was very quiet; only a few children played in the sunshine, and an old woman selling fruit teased us at regular intervals to buy all her stock.

Suddenly, Mabel said, coloring very red, "I want you to give your opinion on a letter which I have received. I have told you so much of my affairs that I might as well tell you the conclusion. I think that it is a very perfect letter—of its kind," she added, with a queer expression, almost a sneer; then she said, "Read every word, and, if you can, read it, as the saying is, 'between the lines.'"

"Is it a love-letter?" I asked.

"It is from the person I told you of," she answered.



Cathedral and Leaning Tower of Pisa.





Now, I supposed a love-letter would be "awfully sentimental," as a matter of course; but for a while I did not exactly understand the sense of this one. It was full of foreign high-flown complimentary nonsense. As I read I saw that Mabel had informed the writer of her father's trouble and losses, and that he was under the impression that Mr. Merritt's whole property had been swept away. He made it very plain that he now agreed with Mabel that "filial obedience and affection required her to sacrifice her happiness to theirs;" he renounced "all claims on her attention, or her thoughts even;" he must return to his duties and engagements in America, and he wished her "a future of uninterrupted happiness."

"Well?" she said when I gave the letter back.

"The first part is very poetical, and the last part very—practical," I said.

"If ever a girl was a fool—if ever one was about to make a most terrible mistake—I was that girl the day that father was taken ill in the hotel. I had agreed to meet that man and his sister that afternoon

at the banker's, and to go back with them to Geneva. From his sister's home I was to write that I had firmly resolved to adopt the Jewish faith, and as soon as the necessary formalities could be gotten through with I should marry that Jew. He had communicated with me in various ways, and he declared that if I would only be bold I could easily enough make my father and mother forgive me when I had gotten out from their influence. I was like a person acting in a dream. Father's trouble brought me to my senses—to a great deal of common sense. I all at once saw a way to test this man; for, though I never would admit it, I have always had a faint suspicion that he loved my money just a little too well. I wrote him all about the apoplectic fit, and nothing more; not a word of the losses. He sent his sister to the hotel the next day: you remember a lady who was with me for an hour or more. Both brother and sister were full of sympathy for me—little for father. They were sure he would soon recover, and they urged that I postpone my flight only a week or two. They were heartless. I

need not have reserved my final test; I knew before I applied it what the result would be. I waited a day, and wrote them of the fortune that had dissolved into air: I received this letter."

"Are you not glad to know before it is too late?" I asked.

"I am so glad," she answered, "that for the first time in my life I have really prayed. I have told the Lord over and over that when I was so wicked and plotting such wickedness I can scarcely understand how he could be so merciful as to save me from myself."

I never heard Mabel speak like that before; and when she went on in such a womanly way to tell how ashamed she was of her past, and how glad she was to hope in a better future, I could not keep the tears out of my eyes; hers were full of tears. She said that I had been a perfect torment to her from the day we met on the steamer, but that now she must return good for evil by always being my friend. She has shown her mother the letter and told her the whole truth, and Mrs. Merritt says let the mon-

ey go if that man goes with it and a good daughter is left to her. I am as happy as if some good-fortune had befallen me. I don't believe Mabel will ever forget this experience.

## CHAPTER XV.

### *LORAINÉ FAYE.*

“He who waits to do a great deal of good at once will never do anything.”

IT was a beautiful afternoon about the middle of September when Madge Preston sprang lightly out of the lumbering old omnibus which had brought her, with a half dozen other young girls, from the station to Mrs. Allen's seminary. By a common impulse, each girl stopped and looked about her a moment before she entered the gate. From this gate a broad tree-bordered walk led to a roomy old house with a deep front porch having great pillars, around which grew woodbine luxuriantly. The open door showed a wide hall dividing the house, and as they entered this hall they could see through an opposite door a great sunny garden whose walks

were bordered by the tallest box-hedge they had ever seen, whose flower-beds were gorgeous with brilliant autumnal blossoms, and whose pretty arbors were thronged with merry girls.

“The first afternoon is always so pleasant!” exclaimed an attractive girl whom Madge had noticed in the stage. “Mrs. Allen leaves us at liberty to get acquainted with the place and with one another. Here she comes now. This is my second year here.”

Before Madge could reply Mrs. Allen was taking her hand, and on learning her name had drawn her into a little reception-room to ask her the kindest questions of herself and of her mother. Meanwhile, Madge had received an impression that Mrs. Allen was the most gently-dignified, the most winning woman in a certain large way whom she had ever met; it was years before she discovered that she was not handsome, but simply lovely. She was a tall woman with large expressive features, soft brown eyes and a beautiful smile. Her clear, deep voice was sweet, and her tall figure almost

grand in the drapery of her black unornamented dress. She listened attentively to Madge's responses, and quietly gave her permission to room with Emma Nelson for the present.

"That is," she remarked, "you will share a little sitting-room with her and with Miss Faye; off this room are three bedrooms, one for each of you. I think every one likes to be alone sometimes."

She then discussed Madge's studies, and said in passing that her duties would be laid upon her gradually, not at once in any way to bewilder her; and before she ended, giving Madge a soft handstroke on the curls, the latter assured herself, "I shall 'perfectly worship' Mrs. Allen, as Emma says; I know I will suit her. She can be very grave and stern, perhaps, but she is everything that Miss Elder is not. I believe my coming here will be a grand success."

Emma Nelson, who had arrived several hours previously, then came to lead Madge to her room, which she found pretty and homelike. Miss Loraine Faye, who sat

reading by the sitting-room window, was a senior, a refined, self-possessed young lady, who, greeting Madge politely, went on reading. Emma hurried Madge into her bedroom and shut the door rather too abruptly for good manners. She had been unpacking her trunk and depositing the contents on her bed, but she scooped out a place, in which she sat, while Madge occupied the one chair.

“Don't you think we shall like it here? I do. The place is old-fashioned, but there is a sort of style about it. One of the girls said that some old aristocrat built it more than one hundred years ago. Ain't you sorry that superior person out there is our third room-mate? She has brought a small library of her own—books on art and dry essays. My Saratoga trunk was too big for the quarters here, so it had to be carried to the attic; but first I emptied it out there and pitched things in here, as you see. She offered, when I began, to help me fill the bureau here, but I preferred to heave all out and settle afterward; so she pursued her high-toned way, and I saw



contempt in her eyes. She even had the coolness to call my light silks 'ball-dresses,' and she suggested that they would keep more fresh if I stored them away, folded, in my trunk, in the attic. I snubbed her on the spot."

"But what will you do with them?" asked Madge, laughing. "You have only one closet and one bureau."

"Oh, when she doesn't see me, I shall travel up to the attic with them. I suppose I could have saved myself that trouble, but I wouldn't take her advice. I do hate girls with lofty intellects."

"Oh, they don't bother me a bit; I admire them," returned Madge, adding, "Moreover, I will profit by your experience and take my things out in order."

"Well, we ought to be at work, I suppose," said Emma. "Let us hurry, and then go down into the garden."

Madge entered her own little room, and in less than an hour her closet and drawers were in good order. The rest of the day was pleasant and exciting. Her schoolmates seemed to be bright, agreeable girls, the

teachers were not more formidable than teachers in general, and the rules of the house were few and simple. Mrs. Allen always gave large liberty to each scholar until she found that liberty abused; she assumed that each possessed a keen sense of honor, and to that she constantly appealed—usually, with the happiest results.

At the end of one week Madge was most enthusiastic in regard to her surroundings. Her charming face and gay humor attracted the girls; her past home-training made her seem remarkably well bred, and this secured her the favor of the class whom Emma called “superior.” The demands which Mrs. Allen made on her time were as yet only pleasant diversions. She was told that responsibilities awaited her in the future, but meanwhile it was easy to write a few notes, to go about a new town on simple errands and to show callers around the building. Her study-hours were undisturbed, and her recitations gave entire satisfaction.

Mrs. Allen, whose way it was to say the pleasant things which others were content merely to think, had frequently in these

first days spoken to Madge in the warmest terms of her mother, and that in the presence of her schoolmates. This would have been a fact of no importance in itself, but a later impression gaining among the girls gave it a certain significance. It was a rule of the school that pupils were not allowed to go "shopping" except on certain days, and then with seniors or teachers. Mrs. Allen, supposing that Madge, if questioned, would, of course, explain why she was an exception to this rule, had frequently sent her to the drug-store or to the stationer's, giving her leave at such times to purchase any little article she desired for her own use. Now, the girls soon began to take note of these privileges accorded Madge, and, naturally enough, they misinterpreted them. The prevailing opinion came to be that Mrs. Allen was showing favoritism, but nobody felt aggrieved, for Mrs. Allen was always just and kind, while Madge seemed either unconscious of her good-fortune or singularly modest about having it recognized.

One pleasant day, after school-hours, a

group of the girls sitting on a rustic seat in the yard saw Madge come out of the front door dressed for a walk.

"Where are you going?" asked Blanche Willis, a pretty little blonde.

"To the post-office," returned Madge, coloring, and adding hastily, with fun a little forced, "Girls, you must get ready to talk your best this noon; Professor Scribner, the geologist, is to dine with us. I am coming home soon to prepare myself on one whole period."

"A period!" laughed Loraine Faye. "Well, I might get along with an interrogation-mark. I have often noticed that the safest way when one is expected to be literary or scientific is to ask a question. It immediately starts the more learned off telling what they know, and the ignorant can sit still in peace and learn."

In the laugh that followed Madge fancied she was going to escape nicely, but Emma Nelson exclaimed,

"It is a lovely afternoon for a walk; I am going to run in and ask Mrs. Allen if I can't go with you."

"You can't see her, Emma," returned Madge, hastily; "she is in the parlor with the professor and his wife. I heard her tell the maid to excuse her if any one wished her; she said to send the girls to Miss Crockett."

"'Miss Crockett,' indeed! She never would let me go," grumbled Emma, sinking back into her seat, but arousing herself an instant after to exclaim, "I think Mrs. Allen shows a great deal of partiality to *you*, Madge Preston."

"I am going to take a letter for her," returned Madge, amiably, "and to do another errand; she would not let me go just for my own amusement."

So much was truth, and as Madge said it Loraine Faye looked up with a pleased expression which puzzled her.

"She never breaks over her rules for any of us," pouted little Blanche; "I would go to the post-office for her gladly enough."

"She used to let Marcia Mahler go that way last year," said a dull-looking young girl.

"Oh, you goosie!" retorted Blanche.

“Marcia was here to help Mrs. Allen; she paid for her schooling in that way.”

“Marcie was a noble girl; I miss her,” put in Loraine Faye. “She would have been here this year, only her mother died and her father could not spare her.”

There was a little pause after that. Madge's color was always so brilliant no one remarked that her cheeks were redder than usual, or that Loraine Faye looked for an instant expectant and then with an air half disappointed—or, as Emma Nelson declared later, “superior, as usual”—said,

“I never find Mrs. Allen partial. She has reasons for whatever she does, and she is not under the least obligation to explain them to us. We are in honor bound to be loyal to her, I think.”

“Bring us each a stick of candy,” called one of the girls after her as Madge turned toward the gate; and Madge made a laughing reply about there being but two kinds in the town—“one flavored with peppermint, and one with catnip.”

Outside the gate she wondered if it would not have been better to have been a little

more honest that moment before, there under the elm trees. She had the chance; Loraine Faye had so innocently given her the opportunity to say frankly, "It is not, as you think, that I am favored by Mrs. Allen because my mother is her friend, but I am her assistant."

"I suppose they would not have asked me any more personal questions," she said to herself, "for they do not seem to be rude girls, and Loraine spoke of that other girl who earned her way as somebody not looked down on at all. But it is none of their business, after all; they will not complain to Mrs. Allen, and if they ask me anything more I will tell the truth. Emma Nelson would turn her nose up and tell the girls at home if she knew. After I have been here a while I shall have an assured position, and then I will not care so much."

After that trifling episode all went well in Madge's outer life.

A few weeks after school began, when the pupils had settled into regular hours of study and the evenings had grown longer, Madge learned that the "Wednesday-evening meet-

ings" would begin. These were held weekly in the library, and were led by Mrs. Allen. They were informal Bible-readings, with prayer and familiar talk on practical religion. Every pupil was invited; church-members were expected: no one was absolutely required to be present. Many who stayed away or came irregularly the first half the school-year were found always present the last half, and, with but one or two exceptions, "second-year girls" esteemed these meetings as truly a means of education as were their daily classes.

One evening, when the girls arose from the table, they were invited to attend the first meeting of the year, to be held an hour later.

"Must I go?" asked Emma Nelson, turning to Loraine as the three entered their common room.

"Why, you will not be punished if you stay away," returned Loraine, coolly, walking to the window, then adding grimly, "And you will not be injured in the least by going."

"I presume not, but I may be bored.



I never went to a prayer-meeting, though I have known people who have gone; only their accounts differ.—You go in Hempstead, don't you, Madge?"

"Yes. That is, I always used to go when Ruth was home; lately I have not gone so regularly."

"Are you a church-member?" asked Loraine, turning to Madge.

"No."

"A Christian?"

Madge, with a nervous laugh, replied,

"I know a woman who, when the minister called because she was sick and asked her that, answered, 'I suppose I'm a sort of a wicked Christian.' I might borrow her words."

Loraine's only comment as she looked moodily out of the window again was this:

"I don't think you need ever be lonesome, then, as you go through life."

Neither girl understood her.

In a moment Emma returned to the subject by asking,

"Well, are you going to-night, Madge?"

"Yes, certainly; Mrs. Allen expects it."

"I can go too, then; and if I do not enjoy it, I need not go again," said Emma as they sat around the centre-table for a silent study-hour.

When the time for the meeting arrived, they smoothed their hair, gave a freshening touch or two to their attire and started.

"Shall we turn the light down, or shall we put it out?" asked Madge.

"Neither, if you please," replied Loraine. "I cannot read so well in the dark."

"Are you not going?"

"No."

"Are *you* not a church-member?" asked Emma.

"No."

"Nor a Christian?" she continued, bluntly.

"No."

"Well, I *am* astonished!" remarked Emma when she and Madge were the other side of the door. "I took her to be a model of everything good; I rebelled against her by instinct for that very reason."

"I am surprised too," said Madge, "but

I have rather admired Loraine from the first. She reminds me of Ruth, although she is as haughty as Ruth is sweet. Not haughty, either, but she makes me vaguely uncomfortable. If I ever did anything bad and was with Ruth, she seemed to me too good herself to find me out, and then I was ashamed; with Loraine I feel as if I would be seen through, and get justice without mercy if I were guilty."

"They put her in our room to keep us steady, no doubt."

"Well, I am willing; we will bear watching," laughed Madge.

"I would rather be watched by her than by Crockett," whispered Emma, catching a glimpse of a tall woman gliding through the hall. "Loraine might disapprove, but she never would carry tales as that knitting-needle yonder might do."

"I detest Crockett," was Madge's hearty assent as they entered the library.

Madge enjoyed the meeting. Mrs. Allen opened it with a prayer; then they sang a new and beautiful hymn, led by a young girl whose voice was peculiarly touching;

after that they talked about, studied into and enjoyed as never before a parable that they had known all their lives. Madge had "known the holy scriptures from a child," and her prompt replies and often original comments pleased Mrs. Allen and interested her mates.

Emma Nelson, on returning to her room, exclaimed,

"Miss Faye, you ought to have gone. It was perfectly splendid."

"That was what you said about the pudding-sauce at dinner," said Loraine; but in a moment she added, in a different tone, "I advise you to go every week. Mrs. Allen is just as good and just as noble and true as the best words she speaks, and that is saying a great deal."

"Why don't you go yourself?"

"I don't know."

This was no answer, but Loraine's room-mates never took liberties with her. She was only a year older than Madge, yet she was far beyond or away from her. Madge could not herself tell whether it was a difference or a superiority.

Miss Crockett was the matron of the institution, and a woman whose worth no one knew so well as Mrs. Allen. She was tall, large-boned, gray-eyed and gray-haired. She chose to dress in gray flannel and to wear silver spectacles. She considered girls as nonsensical creatures, "sure to take cold and die of consumption if not told every single time when to put on overshoes and wraps;" so she watched like a mother (a very relentless one) over the pupils' health. She saw to it that their rooms were kept in the daintiest order, she made sure the food was always excellent, but, above all, she let no one fail in duty toward Mrs. Allen. A dozen times a day Madge dodged Miss Crockett, for through that outspoken person she feared all would be made plain in regard to her own standing.

So gradual had been the demoralization in Madge's finer perceptions of the true and the false during the year past that she herself would have been aghast could it suddenly have been revealed to her that she was becoming a finished little hypocrite. Having begun to act a part, she had to carry it

out, or so she reasoned. She doubled her arts as the necessity for them increased. Mrs. Allen requested her to see that the books were, after certain hours, all put neatly back on the library-shelves; she always did this while she studied up some topic from the excellent books of reference. The girls who went in and out did not see any method in her proceedings; and if, when her own lesson was faultlessly learned, the bookcases were left in nice order, so much the better. Mrs. Allen praised her diligence in looking up points in the encyclopædias; Miss Crockett was satisfied; and Madge? She never reflected that she would have suffered torture before she would have confessed her mean-spiritedness to her parents, to Grandma Grey, to Ruth or to Mrs. Allen. There was a pretty little reception-room, which was also put in her care; she was to see that it was properly heated and lighted, and that a bouquet of fresh flowers was kept on the table. Considerable manœuvring was necessary to accomplish this without seeming to have any duty in the matter, but Madge manœuvred. She even took pains to do works

of supererogation—that is, in a merry off-hand way she did helpful little things for the girls, and gave them the impression that she was a bright, obliging creature of the kind who is sure to be popular.

Madge never had been ill-natured; still, at home, no sufficient motive had prompted her to similar action. She was conscious every day that she was winning favor and that never before in her life had she been so studious, so ladylike, so careful of her reputation—and so reluctant to analyze her motives in solitude or if by chance she awoke in the quiet night-hours.

Emma Nelson remained perfectly friendly, but gradually allied herself to a younger girl, a harmless sort of companion, and Madge was not at all sorry. She did not care for an intimate friend in these days. Loraine Faye had regarded her at first as very like Emma, but little by little she seemed to find Madge worth her attention. She liked particularly to hear her tell of her home-life, and was much interested in some of Ruth's letters. Madge, if she were not equally well read, knew about the books

and the writers that Loraine liked. Then neither girl could wholly understand the other, and that attracted them mutually. It seemed to Madge that Loraine was too perverse to appear as good as she really was, and Loraine could not make up her mind whether or not Madge was as artless as she acted. Each was keen-eyed; each studied and baffled the other's study.

One Wednesday evening, Madge, not without a hint from Mrs. Allen to prompt her, persuaded Loraine to come to the meeting. The topic dwelt on was truth and falsehood in speech and conduct. In the opening exercise Mrs. Allen read as their text the verse: "Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, . . . think on these things."

A great many questions were asked, and the girls talked very freely about temptations to exaggerate or to understate matters. They discussed the morality of telling a part of the truth, providing one told nothing but the truth, and how far they were responsible for a wrong impression given by truth pecu-



liarly stated, and many of the old questions always new to earnest thinkers. But the three girls on whom that meeting made the deepest impression were the three who listened almost in silence.

Lorraine Faye sat apart from the rest, her air, as usual, unconcerned, but she lost not a word that Mrs. Allen uttered, especially when she quoted Pilate's question, "What is truth?" and Christ's previously-spoken words, "I am the Truth." Lorraine Faye, short as her life had been, had grown bitter in her unbelief that the truth existed. She thought it only another name for expediency or for the best policy. To-night there awoke in her heart the old-time cry of those who "would see Jesus"—if, indeed, he were the Truth.

Emma Nelson listened, first curiously, then getting more and more in sympathy with her teacher. She was not a hard nor a deliberately bad girl; she was, above all, ignorant. No such mother as Madge had known ever had taught Emma what things were "true," "just," "lovely" and of "good report." There stirred in her this night

the first genuine *thought*—the very thought by the text enjoined.

Madge heard nothing actually new to her, but as she listened she was conscious of a strange repressed excitement, although outwardly she was paler and quieter than usual. Years after, she could recall the scene like a picture. Was it because she tried to keep out a spiritual light that her bodily eyes received such keen impressions of the shadows on the crimson curtain behind Loraine, the missing bow off Emma's slipper, the tremor in Mrs. Allen's voice as she pleaded with them to beware of that most awful form of all deception, self-deception, the calling of evil good until one came to believe it so? She saw the girls, she heard Mrs. Allen, yet all the time another self seemed busy in some depth of her inner consciousness. She was sitting in her room at home, the wind of the summer morning rustling the pages of Ruth's farewell note; she was assuring herself that she would make herself better, would begin to act like a Christian—as she understood it, of course. She was living over now one day, now another—

not sweet, restful days, but times of discontent with their "poverty," with her homely dresses; busy with day-dreams of a home and wealth like Emma's, fleeting visions of grandma sitting with tired eyes, the paper in her lap or the open book waiting for somebody to read to her; of Abbey, or even blundering Johnny, doing it; of sudden headaches when the church-bell rang or of prayer-times spent in planning new finery. What had all these things to do with the truth? The Madge sitting here in the bright library tried to silence that inner Madge with the question, and quickly came the answer: "Whose life all summer was a covering up of little follies? Whose life is now a sort of petty cheating?"

It was a relief to hear the clock strike nine, and to know that for the half hour coming there would be visiting, jesting, laughing, planning for the morrow, in the girls' rooms and their social resorts.

Madge was hastening from the room, when Mrs. Allen asked her to remain a little while with her. When they were alone together, she said,

“For the first time I have seen to-night that you faintly resemble your mother; you have more color and less repose than she had when she was your age. I wonder if you are like her?”

“Father says that Ruth is more like her,” replied Madge, puzzled to see any purpose in Mrs. Allen’s remark or in the long pleasant talk that followed between them about Ruth and her travels.

But when Mrs. Allen had a purpose, she made it plain. After a while she said,

“I put you and Loraine Faye together to help each other: are you doing it?”

“In what way, Mrs. Allen?”

“Loraine as a companion in study ought to be a constant inspiration; there is no girl of finer intellect in the school. She thinks for herself, she has read excellent books understandingly, she is witty and original. If she were quite happy, she would make sunshine all about her. She is not happy; she distrusts people, and is growing cynical. I put her with you to help you mentally; I put you with her in the hope that you could help her morally. Your mother was

the most strongly, transparently truthful person I knew among my girl-friends; I hope her daughter is like her, for Loraine needs to love somebody whom she can trust."

There was a sudden gravity in Madge's face that encouraged Mrs. Allen to continue:

"I am going to tell you a little more of Loraine than is known here, and you will respect my confidence, I am sure. She was the daughter of a very able and wealthy man prominent in public affairs. Her mother died when she was very young, and her father was for years her companion and teacher. She saw him admired, and her love amounted to adoration. When she was fourteen, he married a brilliant woman of society who ruled him artfully and disliked Loraine heartily. I know this, and have not taken it from rumor. She was a person whose conduct was always irreproachable in public, but in private she was selfish, untruthful, and even cruel. I assure you, Madge, that there is not a race of women created especially depraved just in order to be made into step-

mothers, whatever schoolgirls may tell you to the contrary. I had a stepmother—one of the best women that ever lived on earth; but Loraine's was, and is, heartless. When Loraine was sixteen, her father incurred great political disgrace: he was accused of betraying his party and of selling his honor. The newspapers were full of denunciations, and his wife, whose social position was affected, upbraided and tormented him. He went abroad, and died among strangers. I knew the family, and I prevailed on Loraine's guardian to send her to me. Last year this man, who held in trust a large property for Loraine, embezzled trust funds to a great amount, lost all in speculation and committed suicide. She is not poor, for her mother had left her a small amount that was safely invested, but in her life she has had such bitter experiences that she has little faith left in any one. I wish, Madge, you could make her like and believe in you. If she could visit you at home, could know your mother and Ruth, such a home-life would be a blessed revelation to her. Now, won't you remember her needs

in your future intercourse with her? and, above all, don't forget that, being a Christian, one ought to be, as some one says, 'a little gospel;' and Loraine needs a gospel."

"I—I don't believe I am a Christian," stammered Madge.

Mrs. Allen was silent a moment before she said,

"Then you know what you need."

"I don't know—I don't," she repeated to herself going up stairs; "and I wish I were out of it all—were in Europe, and Ruth here. She would help Loraine; I can't. I know enough about truth and the gospel, and all that, only—"

"Only you don't really care, and you never have cared, for the reality of it all," whispered her conscience.

Emma and Loraine were sitting together by the table, the latter without her customary book.

"Do all Christians believe the— Well, the kind of things Mrs. Allen talked of to-night?" asked Emma, playing with a jingling bangle on her arm, but looking thoughtful.

"I don't know; ask Madge," said Loraine.

It irritated Madge most inconsistently to have Emma reply,

“Oh, Madge hasn't stopped to find out, I guess; the rest of her family are religious, but she is different.”

Until that moment Madge had supposed that Emma had always found her rather rigid in her precepts and practices. She was so startled that she stayed awake thinking the matter over until late that night.



## CHAPTER XVI.

### *MADGE'S AWAKENING.*

“So long as we have nothing to say to God, nothing to do with him, we are poor creatures—flowering reeds, it may be, and pleasant to behold, but only reeds blown about by the wind.”

“OH, oh, girls! what do you think is before us?” cried Emma Nelson, breaking suddenly into the sitting-room one day just after school.

“A lecture on temperance or on etiquette, or from Crockett on the proper mending of our stockings?” suggested Madge.

“All that, and more too, is comprehended in the catastrophe hanging over us.”

“Don't be rhetorical, Emma, be definite,” said Loraine, not even looking from her book.

Emma was too easily excited by trifles to have her moods taken very seriously.

“Oh, you won't be so loftily indifferent, Miss Faye, when you know; for my part,

I think this school will seem like a howling wilderness."

"What are you talking about?" asked Madge, impatiently.

"Just this: Mrs. Allen has been summoned to her mother-in-law—an old lady—who is very ill in Hartford. She is going on the six-o'clock train and does not know how long she may be gone—perhaps a week, perhaps a month. In the mean time, Crockett's authority is doubled; she will be here, there and everywhere. You will see if she doesn't go the rounds of this house at midnight regularly to see if we are all asleep on our right sides, as is healthy, and not on our backs, as is unhealthy, according to Crockett. Now, how can I know I am not asleep flat on my back unless I stay awake to see, and—"

"Do be still with that nonsense and tell us truly," cried Madge, in dismay. "Is Mrs. Allen going away?"

"Yes; it is exactly as I say."

Lorraine had dropped her book, and looked more disturbed than they had ever seen her.

“How we shall miss her!” she said. “The other teachers are well enough, but there is no one who can begin to take her place.”

Madge loved Mrs. Allen, yet the uppermost thought in her mind just then was a dread of Crockett, and for reasons less vague than the groundless aversion which Emma felt toward the matron. She was silently pondering the situation when a maid knocked at the door and said that Mrs. Allen would like to see her.

Madge was gone from her room-mates only a short time. Mrs. Allen asked her to sit down in her cozy dressing-room long enough to mend a little rent in her gloves while she packed her trunk and gave Madge a few kind words of encouragement and counsel. She wanted her to know that Miss Crockett was the one with whom Madge would now have to do.

“And remember, dear, that you cannot take the new scholars' impressions of Miss Crockett's character as correct. She is a kind, true woman, but she always calls 'a spade a spade,' and she is never unjust,

although sometimes she may be abrupt. I trust her implicitly, and leave her in authority."

Then, sending a kind message to her mother, Mrs. Allen kissed Madge and let her go.

"I might as well make a virtue of necessity and take high ground at once," muttered Madge as she went up stairs. Accordingly, on entering her own room she exclaimed,

"It is true, and now I suppose we must make the best of it."

"How is there any *best* to it?" asked Emma.

"Mrs Allen wants us to show Miss Crockett great respect, to—to do our best to please her; and I intend to try."

Emma looked at Madge, thinking, "That does not sound like you;" then she said aloud,

"I suppose Mrs. Allen has been talking good to you, and you have made good resolutions in consequence. I do not wonder; I want to be all made over after she talks to me."

Madge blushed. Not that Emma had understood her, for she had not. In this case Emma was the more single-minded, and Madge realized that her own motive was not so pure as Emma supposed.

That evening, and for many days to come, they missed Mrs. Allen's gracious presence at the table and at the weekly meeting. In the morning Madge's troubles began. A nice tact had kept Mrs. Allen from things that Miss Crockett did as unconcernedly as she winked or breathed. Rising from the table, the latter said,

"Madge, the wind blew hard last night; you had better dust—"

That last phrase was lost, for Madge laughed out quickly,

"Oh how it blew! I dreamed Loraine was firing revolvers out of our window, but I found it was only a loose blind banging."

So twenty times a day her wits must keep her ahead of Miss Crockett.

One morning Loraine and Madge were reading Spenser's "Faerie Queene" together, when, tapping first, Miss Crockett came in.

Madge sprang up, insisted that she should sit down, then asked for news of Mrs. Allen, and would not give her a chance to more than reply.

“I came, Madge, to say that I would like you to—”

“Oh, Miss Crockett, I know! I promised to arrange those foreign photographs I was looking at in the library all over nicely. I—”

“No, not that at all. I want you—”

Madge began another nervous remark, but, much to her relief, she saw that Lorraine had entered her bedroom and closed the door. This time Miss Crockett had a chance to speak:

“I want you to come down and help me hem some muslin curtains that I am trying to get done to-day; it is easy work, and we will soon have it out of the way.”

Madge prepared to go instantly. Miss Crockett never could get used to the girl: sometimes she performed her duties like lightning; sometimes she did them in the queerest ways and times.

They hemmed the curtains in a little room

near the lower hall. Madge constantly shivered in the "draught" from the open door, so it was closed until they were altogether too warm. Miss Crockett then had her change her seat, and all went well until two of the pupils came to speak to the matron. It was perfectly natural for Madge to take that moment to rest and to look out of the window, and quite as natural for her mates to suppose that she was only there as they were—on an errand to Miss Crockett. Besides, they were the "governor's daughters."

"Where have you been all the morning?" asked Emma. "I thought you were going to stay with Loraine and be literary, as you said."

They were at the table then, and Madge made a long, rambling excuse to Loraine for running away and not coming back.

"It was not of the least consequence," replied Loraine, coldly.

This was a holiday, and in the afternoon the girls brought their fancy-work, books or games into the back-parlor, where they could be as social and merry as they liked to be. Out of doors a heavy storm of wind

and rain was beating against the old mansion, but within were young life and laughter. Madge had come from the table cross and half homesick. She had always taken things carelessly and as they came, and this having to be for ever on the alert, for ever ready on demand, made her feel like a slave. She was in a false position. In keeping it she could not respect herself; if she did not keep it, she argued that others would not respect her. For the first time she asked herself if she were in the right place, any way, all question of how she filled that place aside. Would not she be happier at home? A vision of the sunny old rooms, of her unselfish mother, of the dear old grandmother, made her heart ache. But here she was, and here she must stay. She brushed the tears out of her eyes and rushed off to the parlor, where soon she was the moving spirit of all the hilarity.

That evening Madge received from home a bulky letter made up of a few pages from each of the family. Her father wrote of her studies; he was glad to hear of her enthusiasm, and told her how well Bert was



doing at the academy. Her mother wrote as all such mothers write—messages of love, cautions about her health and hopes for her happiness. From the other pages we will copy a few paragraphs.

Johnny, in a boyish scrawl tightly sealed with wax—because, as he informed Madge, “mucilage is now vulgar”—wrote thus:

“We miss somebody awfully, and can't just tell whether it is you or Abbey. We don't have any more 'versations; not a soul of us knows any more what Uncle Henry is thinking of. He sits like the Sphinx and eats his buckwheat cakes, and then reads the Congressional reports—silent, I mean, of course, not sitting like the Sphinx. And I never supposed those reports were made to be read. Mother must miss Abbey most; she looks tired nowadays. She let me iron for her the other morning. I scorched a pillow-case seal-brown and fetched the iron right through on the other side, but, in the main, I helped. She does more in order to keep grandma from doing it. One day father was sick and had to stay home, and people kept ringing the door-bell to ask if

he were very sick; then each one would insist on seeing him and detained mother. Grandma tried to help, and overdid; so her heart troubled her all night. It was ironing- and baking-day that day, and Bert said you ought to have been at home; but I wished Ruth were here. You don't like housework. Maybe Ruth does not, but she would fit in easier, I guess. What I miss you for most is nonsense.

“Ruth is going to start for home the last week in October—only ten days from now—and in about twenty days we shall see her. Grandmother's face fairly shines when we talk about Ruth, and mother looks as if she could sing, no matter how tired. I pommelled Bert in the ribs and knocked him out of a kitchen chair the other day for saying that girls were frauds. He said they would sell out their relatives for a new breastpin—that they fibbed and cheated and were full of variegated tricks. After I had sat on his head a few minutes he said he did not mean Hempstead girls and he did not know Ruth.”

Ruth's last letter was sent with the others.

In it she told of more delightful days of Italian life, but what seemed quite to fill her thoughts now was the coming home:

“I am very happy, and am very well; but when I think of Hempstead, I seem to have wings, only they don't carry me an inch toward you. Every morning I awake thinking, ‘Soon I will be in the parlor, seeing mother on the sofa, grandmother with her knitting in the big chair.’ I tell you my adventures; I ask no end of questions. Supper is ready, and we have delicious home-food. Oh, I want to see every one of you. I think no girl on earth ever had such a home—certainly, not a better one.”

“Ruth is right; she always sees things as they are, and I see something else and go blundering into mischief and trouble.”

“What do you say?” asked Loraine.

“I am homesick.”

“I wish I might be; it is worse to be homeless,” returned Loraine, bitterly; and Madge knew nothing to say to comfort her: she was miserable herself.

Miss Crockett awoke next morning with a project in her brain. She was an inde-

fatigable worker, only restrained by Mrs. Allen from wearing herself out in service. It now occurred to her that in that lady's absence she might achieve a great feat. The library carpet was reversible. The side now uppermost was dingy and threadbare; if it were taken up, shaken and turned before replacing, the room would be much improved.

“If I worked as hard as ever I could and had one of the servants to help,” she said to herself, “I believe we could have all settled by night. Of course I had better do it, and I know Mrs. Allen will be pleased.”

Full of enthusiasm, Miss Crockett arose, discharged all her regular morning duties and opened the campaign. By ten o'clock the carpet was up, cleaned and ready to be put down; the furniture stood at every angle, inside the room or out according to size and movability. Miss Crockett saw her way clear before her, for Bridget, her assistant, was as strong to lift, push or pull as Miss Crockett was to plan. She had no thought of asking other help, and certainly none of any hindrance.

Madge had just finished her morning recitations, and was going to her room when a messenger summoned her to the library. There she found Miss Crockett, who, seeing her astonishment at the dismantled room, rapidly explained her proceedings.

“The carpet,” she went on, “is put down; I’m thankful for that. Doesn’t it look bright on this fresh green side? Well, what I asked you to come down for is this: right here in the middle of my day’s work what do you think has happened? Little Blanche Willis just came crying to me with pain in her head and bones; and if I am any judge of such things, I believe the child is going to have a run of fever: she has been ailing for a week or more. Now, she is an only child, and her mother insisted that she should be sent home at once in any circumstances. My duty is clear; I must start with her on the very next train and see her cared for every minute until I deliver her to her parents. They live about an hour and a half from here by rail, but I can’t get a train back until night.”

“No?” returned Madge, bewildered.

“You see what a state of things we have here. Now, if you will be brain to Bridget’s muscle for the rest of the day, you can bring all out in order. I don’t want you to lift one single heavy article—I forbid that; but just run and put on some old dress that won’t get dusty or torn, and come back here and show Bridget where every table and chair goes. When she has put back such things, there are a number of matters which I expected to do that you will now have to see to. Bridget would ruin the bric-a-brac; you must dust carefully and put back those bronze heads and the marble statues and arrange those shells. I will show you how to polish the mirror in the door of that cabinet;” and, carried away by her zeal, Miss Crockett ran on: “If you could darn that red woolen rug where the hole was burnt, I would let you try; it is a nice job. Now, these are things that a lady would do in her own house, and—”

To Miss Crockett’s astonishment, Madge muttered,

“Things such as Mrs. Allen never asked me to do!”

The matron glanced at her face, flushed with vexation, and resolved on heroic treatment. When she spoke next, Madge had reason to know that she could "call a spade a spade:"

"Did Mrs. Allen free you from all responsibility before she left?"

"She let me suppose—that is, I supposed—things would go on about the same," stammered Madge, suddenly ashamed.

"And so they will. When you came, was there not an understanding that you were to make a return, after a sort, for what you received?"

Madge assented, her face growing scarlet. Miss Crockett's tone was not at all hateful as she remarked,

"It costs a young girl about four hundred dollars for the school-year here: do you think the services you render are worth that? This is a question Mrs. Allen would never ask you, or even ask herself. The place you hold is a sinecure; she has you here for your good; she loves your mother and likes you. I like you myself, but you ought to see things in the right light. I

do not know that she would have asked you to do these things to-day, but I supposed that you would willingly help me. You need not, however, now."

Thoroughly humbled, Madge insisted that she could, and would, do all; whereupon Miss Crockett seemed to bear her no ill-will, but gave her prompt instructions what to do; and half an hour later the matron was miles away from the school.

Madge did not change her dress; she did not carry out her programme literally. She went up to her room and took her work, a little wool shawl which she was knitting for her grandmother's Christmas present.

"Where are you going with that?" asked Emma.

Madge stopped to tell her room-mates how and why Miss Crockett had gone away:

"I promised her that I would go down to the library and oversee Bridget while she settles things there."

"Nonsense! I would not bother. I want you to help me with my algebra."

"I will this evening."



"You are wonderfully obliging lately. Are you trying to be unusually good, or what is it?" demanded Emma, bluntly. "You do things for Crockett that I never should dream of doing."

Lorraine was listening, so Madge replied, "Oh, I do nothing to amount to anything."

"But you are not under the least obligation to do anything for her, are you?"

"Certainly I'm not," exclaimed Madge, testily; then, conscience-smitten, she added something about "helping, out of kindness," anybody who was "so annoyed as Crockett was to-day."

"Lorraine is scowling," laughed Emma; "she doesn't think Crockett is even an object of pity."

"I was not thinking of Miss Crockett," returned Lorraine, rising as the dinner-bell rang.

Madge, who had begun to desire Lorraine's friendship more than that of any one else in the school, lingered behind Emma to walk down the hall with the older girl; but Lorraine was in one of her most unapproachable moods.

After dinner Madge slipped away to the library. She hurried Bridget as that ponderous creature had seldom been hurried before. She darned the rug while sitting by it with her own woolen work near as a substitute if surprised.

About three o'clock Loraine came in.

"I must stay a few minutes, Bridget," she said, "but I will not get in your way. I want to see a few books."

Madge was reading at another bookcase.

"There, Miss Preston! I've done everything Miss Crockett bid me do, and there's naught more but the settlin' of the laytle things. Oh, shall I fetch ye the soft cloths for the polishin' of that cabinet-glass she mintioned?" asked Bridget, at last.

"Oh yes," said Madge, quickly; "bring them, and I will tell you how to do it nicely."

Bridget, who concluded that she was mistaken in thinking Madge was to attend to the glass, did it as ordered; then, sure that she was told not to meddle with the ornamental objects, she departed. The clock struck four; Madge must go to work, if

Lorraine *was* there. She sprang up as if with a sudden impulse, exclaiming,

“I am going to put up all these shells and busts and fancy things. Miss Crockett will come back tired, and it will seem nice to her to find the room all settled.”

“Let me help you,” said Lorraine, shutting her book quickly.

Madge assented in delight; if any one came now, she did not care. She laughed and chatted merrily as Lorraine, deftly pinning back her handsome dress, dusted and replaced marbles, not talking very freely.

“You are tall and straight and white and cold enough yourself, Lorraine Faye, for a statue of Silence,” cried Madge at last. “Don’t you think anything? Don’t you love or want to love anybody—*me*, for instance?”

Madge’s beauty, as she stood there in the library, might easily have softened a hard heart. The afternoon sunshine sparkled in her great dark eyes, and the masses of soft curls contrasted with her white forehead and her cheeks, pink as the tinted shell she held in one hand.

Lorraine's heart was not hard; she felt that she might have loved Madge, but she spoke truly when said vehemently,

"Yes, Madge Preston, I think a great deal, and I am angry at you."

"At me? And what for, pray?"

"You are hypocritical!"

"What do you mean by that?" asked Madge, hotly; she had not a thought what charge Lorraine would make.

"What are you doing this work here to-day for? Are you doing it for any such reason as you have given to Emma and me? You are not bound to explain anything of your private affairs; but if you do make explanations, why do you tell half lies and stoop to silly little tricks and evasions? I despise it in you. I knew the day that you entered school that you were coming to fill Marcia Mahler's place. You may have done in secret what Marcia did, but you do not fill her place. She was a noble girl—a homely, bashful girl, but we all liked and respected her."

Madge's face was as red as Lorraine's was pale, but in a voice that trembled with ex-

citement the latter talked on faster and faster :

“ You fancied that you would be looked down upon ; perhaps there may be a girl or two here who might have slighted you, but Mary Staunton, the governor's older daughter, whom you admire, was Marcia's best friend ; they correspond now. If you had not had a home and a mother and a sister such as you have described—if you had been Emma, for instance—I could have been patient with you. She knows nothing better ; she never claimed to be a Christian. I gave you chances to be honest, and you seized on them to be more deceitful. There ! you know it all. Hate me if you must, but you shall not think you can make me think that black is white and white black. I have told no one your secret, nor shall I tell it.”

Like the wind Loraine went past her then, and the library door shut loudly behind her.

Madge sank on a chair as if the earth had opened under her feet. She vaguely wondered why she was not furiously angry with Loraine. She dimly realized that later

she was going to be exceedingly ashamed of herself; even now bewilderment began to yield to self-disgust, but still she could not rid herself of the idea that there was some mistake or some excuse. Nobody on earth had ever before despised her. While she had not meant to be boldly wicked, had she instead been all the time pitiably mean-spirited? It was well that Loraine had waited until things were in order before she broke out on Madge in this way, for the library was forgotten in the half hour of humiliation that followed.

"Letter for you, miss," said a maid, opening the door and coming in to light the gas.

"For me? To-day? Why, mine came yesterday."

"It is so much clear gain for you, then, miss," remarked the girl, pleasantly.

With less curiosity than usual, and no apprehension, Madge opened her letter and found it a brief one from her father:

"MY DEAR CHILD: We write to you in a time of terrible anxiety. A message came to us by cable this morning that Ruth lies

very seriously ill in London; letters are on the way with full particulars. John Raynor would never have sent this message to reach us *before* their letters if he had dared to leave it unsend, so our hearts are heavy with fears that before any letters can arrive we shall learn that our precious Ruth is not coming again to us from across the sea, or only— But we are praying while we wait in suspense. If any message comes, you shall know it by telegraph, and then at once come home, for your mother will need you; I fear that she has needed you in the past. But do not start until I send you word.

“Your loving

“FATHER.”

Lorraine was standing by the window gazing moodily out on the leafless trees when Madge opened the door in a clumsy way. Her face was colorless; she gasped as if she would have spoken; then, seeming to remember something, she gave a passionate cry, and, flinging herself on her bed, sobbed until Lorraine was greatly distressed. She came to Madge at once, exclaiming,

“I did not want to be cruel, Madge; I only—”

“There! there! Read that!” wailed Madge, pushing the crumpled letter into Loraine’s hands.

In the moment after she read it Loraine was back, and all the pent-up tenderness of a strong nature came out in the warmth with which she took Madge in her arms and tried to comfort her. Love is better than consistency, and neither girl then recalled the hour just passed. Loraine had loved Madge in spite of her failings: she knew it now as she grieved with her; while Madge felt intuitively that one so honest in truth-telling would not pretend a sympathy which she did not feel.

Loraine taxed herself to make comforting conjectures, but Madge could only wail:

“Ruth will die—I know she will! She was all ready long ago. You can’t judge of her by me. Oh how I remember the day she went away as she turned back at the gate to look again at grandma! Her hair was bright golden in the sunshine, and her hands were full of apple-blossoms. I



never was so wicked until she went away. She always went ahead in a sweet, simple way, doing the right thing. And I supposed I was good too. She must have known I was not, though she loved me all the same, for she wrote me a beautiful note and left it with—with—”

But Madge could not tell, for sobbing, of Ruth's pretty gifts that filled the old bureau-drawer.

“She begged me to answer that note and tell her I had made up my mind to be a Christian, but I never wrote. She said in it, ‘I shall pray for it and wait for it, and I believe I shall get it.’ But maybe it is too late now for me to give it to her. I have wanted to write it ever so many times, but I was proud and too eager to do something more exciting than just to think. Oh, they took her away so pretty and fair and full of life across that ocean; now to think they may bring back just—a coffin! Oh dear! how can I endure it? Do you think, Loraine, if she should be dead and I should put a little note in her hand, that even then she could ever know it? I shall

be always remembering that she waited and wished and never really touched an answer of mine."

Lorraine was crying too, and could not answer. It was Lorraine who let Madge talk or who soothed her as seemed best, Lorraine who persuaded her to swallow a cup of tea and who told Miss Crockett when she returned. Everybody was full of sympathy, but only Emma was allowed to see Madge, and she, poor girl! was speechless.

No message came that evening. Lorraine stayed with Madge, and neither slept. It was a night that Madge never forgot, and one that left a deep impression on her companion. All there was true, earnest and womanly in Madge came out with open confession of the follies and shams which all at once she was clear-eyed enough to see in herself. She said sterner things of herself than Lorraine had uttered. But that which impressed Lorraine most deeply was the perfect faith Madge expressed and strongly felt in religion—not in her own, but in the love of God and the hope of heaven that her mother, her grandmother

and this young sister possessed. They were genuine Christians, and Madge, knowing it, made Loraine also know it by her unconscious eloquence.

“If your sister Ruth lives,” she exclaimed once, impetuously, “I want to know her; she will do me good.”

Toward morning Madge fell asleep, and, wearied with excitement, she did not awake until after the breakfast-hour. When she opened her eyes, Miss Crockett stood by her bedside with a little tray of dainty food. She urged Madge to lie still an hour or two longer, for she could not study with her aching head, and she needed rest if she might be sent for later in the day. Madge yielded willingly to Miss Crockett, wondering at her motherly way, so different from her usual dry manner. Miss Crockett said a few hopeful words, drew down the window-shade and went out, leaving Madge alone with her own thoughts.

Madge did not sleep any more. She heard the girls go softly past her door to their classes; bells rang faintly in the distance; the school-life, so interesting to her

yesterday, went on the same to-day. What made all so different to her? Just the realization that the sun would go on shining as brightly into her window if, away in England, Ruth was struggling in her death-agony far from all she loved the best. The girls in this merry old house would be full of life and vigor if her sister—sweeter and fairer than any of them—were lying white and still, done with this life for ever. Only to think that Ruth's life and hers, always the same hitherto, had suddenly separated! Ruth's? Where and how would it now go on? Something it must become infinitely higher and purer than she could imagine. And Madge's own? But had they, after all, lived alike? In the silence there alone Madge reviewed their past school-days, their home-pleasures and duties, and for the first time she fully understood that Ruth had been trying to find out what was true, while she had only cared to know what was enjoyable. Ruth had been loving God and "others" as herself; Madge had begun and ended at herself. Ruth had been anxious to be; Madge had been satisfied to seem.

Ruth was a Christian, and Madge was not: this comprehended all.

“Thank the Lord,” she said to herself when she reached this point of candid confession, “I can at least begin! And I am heartily sick and ashamed of myself. If there is a better way—and Ruth found it—I will find it for myself.”

Before the hour when she might receive a letter she dressed herself and went down stairs. A number of the girls were in the hall, and all gathered around her sympathetically, hoping that the next mail would bring her better news and expressing great regret at the prospect of her returning home.

“Oh, if she goes home, she must come back to us. Good news may cheer her family, and they will not need her so much,” said Loraine, joining the group.

“Perhaps,” said Madge, sadly; then an expression of some sudden purpose crossed her face, and she said, “There is one reason why I am peculiarly sorry to leave. Perhaps you may not know that I am Mrs. Allen’s assistant; I help her in little things in return

for my tuition and board. If I have to drop out of the term now, I have kept some other young girl from having my place for the year, perhaps."

A few of the girls looked a little surprised. Loraine's eyes sparkled through tears. The girl whom Emma Nelson declared the "most stylish" girl in the school was the one to say, with her hand on Madge's shoulder, "Why, I would not worry one bit about that; you could not help it, and we don't want anybody but you. We *must* have you back again;" and the governor's daughter added, "I will confess now that when I knew you were coming here in Marcia Mahler's stead I felt so sorry, but now I should be very sorry to see your successor."

They were very kind, but what sank deepest in Madge's heart then was the knowledge that all her petty subterfuges, all the false shame she had endured, had been utterly unnecessary. Those whom she most cared to deceive had known the truth from the first. She might just as well have been perfectly open and honest; then she

might have deserved the respect which the girls had not thought of withholding. Not that all Mrs. Allen's scholars were exceptionally noble by nature—far from it; but, as Madge learned later, another girl, braver than she, had gone before and trodden down all the thorns in the way. Marcia Mahler had borne sneers and slights, had heard allusions to charity-scholars and presumption, but she had lived it all down, had ennobled her position and won love and esteem. Madge had merely to accept what Marcia had won.

At noon Madge had another letter from her father. He wrote that they had just received a letter written from London in the beginning of Ruth's illness. She had been well up to their arrival there, when she was taken with typhoid fever. At the time when Mrs. Raynor wrote, she was not alarmingly ill, and she assured them that she was receiving the best care and they should be informed of every change in her condition. That was all, and of course the later telegram proved Ruth worse. Mrs. Preston then advised Madge to come home

for the present. Her mother hesitated to take her from school, but now it would be impossible for her to attend to her duties with an undivided mind; and, besides, she was needed at home.

Lorraine put back Madge's simple wardrobe in her trunk and cared for her like an elder sister. Miss Crockett provided every comfort for her journey, and a few hours later Madge turned her face homeward.

Johnny met her just at dark when she stepped out of the close car, and as they walked up the hill together he poured into her ears the story of the past months.

"I have been needed here; I ought not to have gone away," was the echo his words awoke.

The moment the gate clicked the hall door opened, and Madge saw her mother standing in the warmth and the light to welcome her. Grandma was just behind with both trembling hands outstretched, and it seemed to Madge that each one welcomed her with a certain intensity, remembering the child whom only their prayers could reach. It was very sweet to get into the



home atmosphere once more, but after a night's rest Madge saw how much there was for some one to do if her mother was not to be broken down by work and worry. Work was just what Madge needed in order to carry her new purposes into action.

The first Sunday after her return she told her mother the whole tale of her mistakes and folly, from the day that Ruth went away to the hour when Loraine told the plain truth which so startled her. That Sunday, with many tears, Madge wrote her note of promise to Ruth, wondering if Ruth would ever read it.

Every day they watched for letters or telegrams. The Professor went through his school-duties with aching head and heavy heart; Mrs. Preston grew paler, and grandma would sit for hours with closed eyes and folded hands, not knitting now.

One morning, when the first great storm of the season was filling the air with hail, sleet and wind, a telegram came: "The doctors pronounce Ruth out of danger." Who knew that the sun was not shining then? No day wherein birds sang and flowers

bloomed could be more beautiful to the faint hearts that sang for joy after that message. Grandma began to count the weeks before it would be safe for Ruth to cross the ocean. Mrs. Preston, with bright eyes and color coming back to her face, returned to the kitchen to make something "tempting for your poor father, who has eaten nothing lately," as she said to Madge. Madge, like her old laughing self again, told her that she might be tolerated there, but not encouraged.

Lorraine wrote a long letter so affectionate that Madge wrote back to her:

"I am going to make you like me hereafter, Lorraine, by deserving your good opinion, and some day I am going to give you a grand present. Perhaps you may think I can't give away my sister Ruth, but I mean to do it—after a fashion. Uncle Henry (he is a member of the family who says little and decides much) thinks that after Ruth gets home and is strong again she may want to go to Millbridge, and in that case we may both be at Mrs. Allen's another year."

## CHAPTER XVII.

### *REUNION.*

THE last week in November was a very busy and a very happy season under the Preston roof. The day before Thanksgiving the Raynors and Ruth were to arrive.

Tuesday evening came the first snow-storm of the season. Johnny, standing at the window, exclaimed,

“Mrs. Parker’s boarder has come.”

“What do you mean?” asked his grandmother.

“Why, Madge and I have been interested in Mrs. Parker’s boarder for a week or more,” replied Johnny. “She said she was going to have a boarder; and when I asked who it was, she said, ‘Time will reveal.’”

At that moment there came a shout from Bert and a cry of surprise from Madge. Then the door flew open, and in they came, one on each side of Abbey, whose face

shone with delight. In a moment all the family arrived, and Abbey's welcome was of a kind to satisfy the most exacting nature.

"Have you come to stay?" cried Johnny.

"Well, that depends on you. Mother was proper glad to see me, and she needed me to cheer her up. She did not care a straw about staying there; so I wrote to Mrs. Parker and proposed that she should let mother have the wing to her little house and live with her. You see, I thought, if you wanted me back, that I would have mother where I could speak to her by just opening the kitchen door. If she wanted me, I could stay every night with her. I told Mrs. Parker to keep the thing secret. I got into town with mother last night, after dark, and she is over there visiting with Mrs. Parker as if she had known her all her life. And now am I coming back to you or not?"

"You *am*," cried Johnny, and by the chorus of "Yeses" that followed Abbey's mind was set at rest if she had been in any doubt as to the result of her proposal.

"Grandmother," exclaimed Madge, later,

as she lighted the lamps in the parlor, "I feel as if I had just waked up."

The old lady was about to speak, when voices were heard outside. The Professor called from the hall, "They are here at the door," and everybody rushed to his side.

How they all talked at once! How they caught at Ruth and hugged her! not minding, as Johnny said, whether they kissed her face or hair or thick dark veil.

Was there not a whole Thanksgiving day on the morrow? and never was one more truly kept.

After dinner the two girls ensconced themselves in a cozy corner and talked of their friends. Madge went over her brief experience at Mrs. Allen's, and was glad to hear Ruth say,

"Oh, Madge, when I am strong, perhaps we will both go there and do our best to learn. I will like your friend Loraine, and, as for Mrs. Allen, I like her now. Only think! it is not a year since that night I was taken ill and fainted—that night you wished something would happen, you remember," said Ruth.

“Enough has happened,” exclaimed Madge. “You have crossed the ocean and come back to say home is the most beautiful place you have found, and I—I have got ready at last to promise what you asked for in the letter you left behind.”

“I knew you would, for—”

Bert Raynor and Johnny came then to join their company, and so with light hearts they chatted until the day was done.

“We will sleep together now,” said Madge, “for Bert has the room I had when you were home before.” She had tried to make the little chamber look as it looked when Ruth kept it in such dainty order; she had even remembered to replace the little calendar. “You will have to get a new one soon, Ruth,” she said, stopping before it to read the verse for the day; “the leaves for this year are almost gone. I like this verse for to-day:

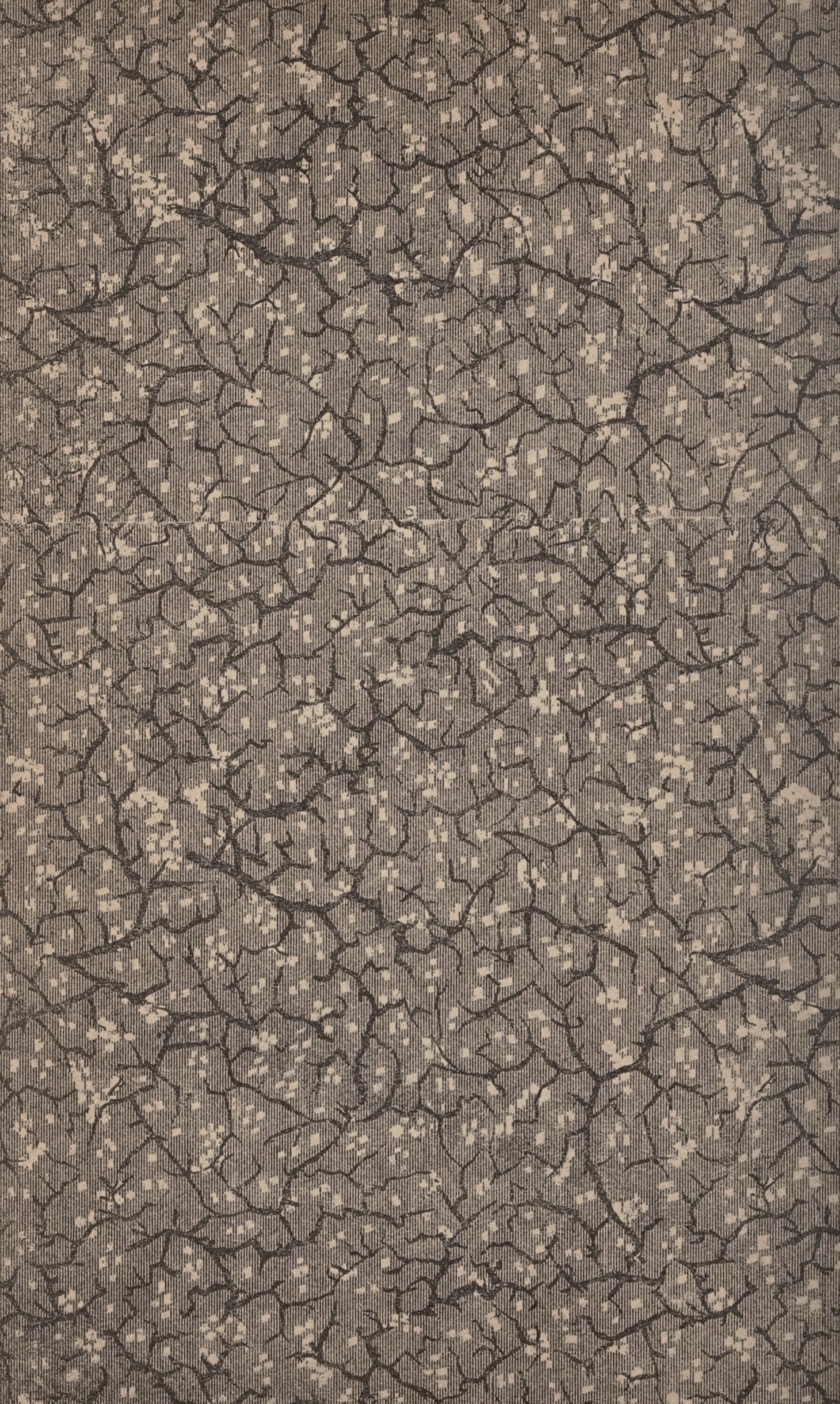
“‘Lord, for the erring thought  
Not into evil wrought;  
Lord, for the wicked will  
Betrayed and baffled still;  
For the heart from itself kept,—  
Our thanksgiving accept.’”

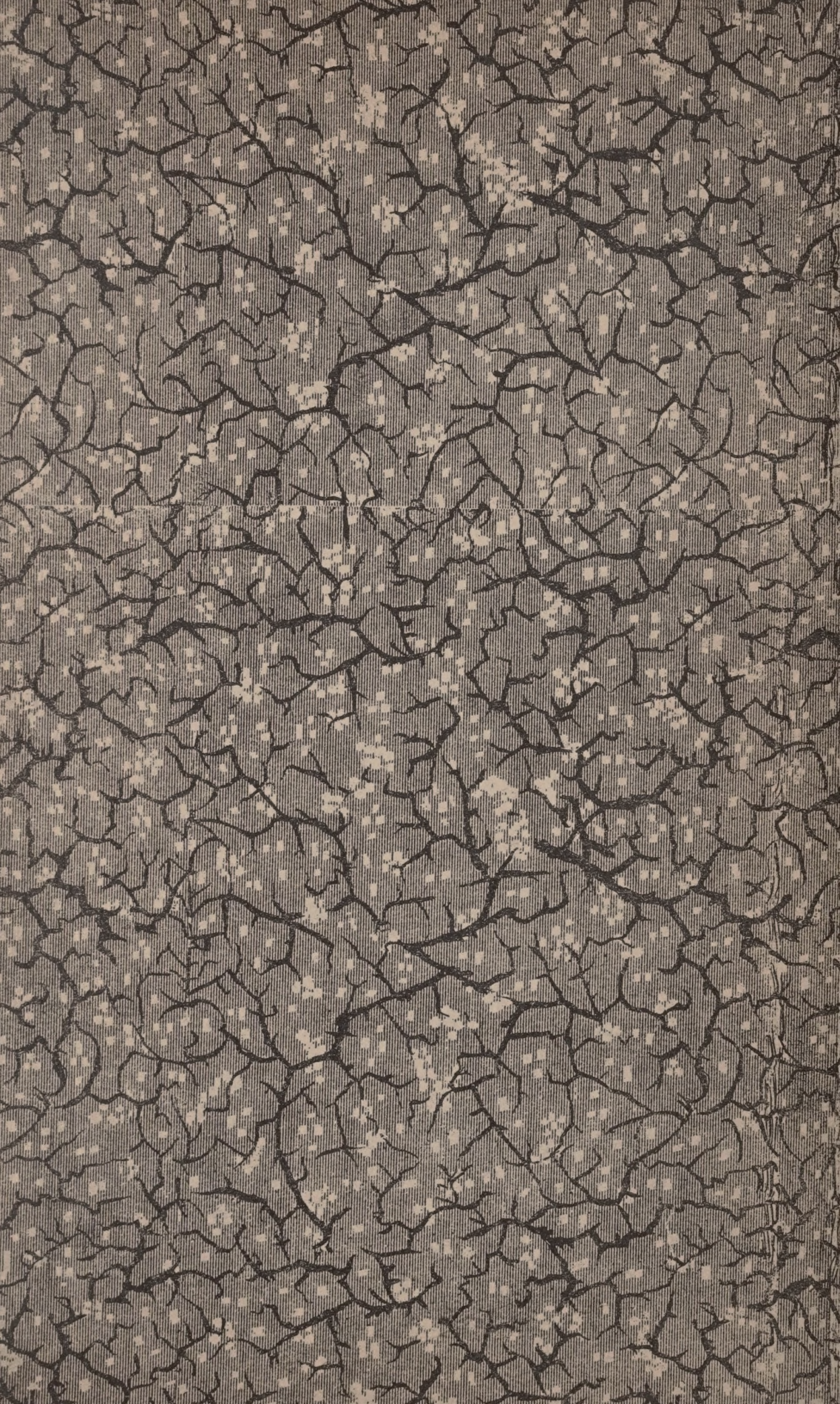




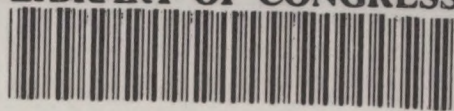








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