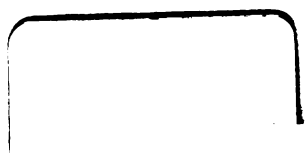
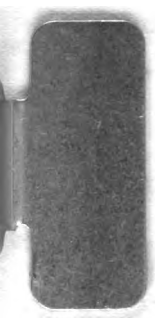


KE 4045

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Mr. & Mrs. Taggart  
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West Roxbury Mass

# FOOL'S GOLD

A STUDY IN VALUES

A  
NOVEL

BY  
ANNIE  
RAYMOND  
STILLMAN

○ ○ ○



CHICAGO, NEW YORK, TORONTO  
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# Fool's Gold

## CHAPTER I

### BROTHER AND SISTER

It was the close of a bleak spring day in a ravine at the foot of the Blue Ridge hills. The sun had set, but the after-glow, like the memory of a good life, kept the darkness back, and through a rent in the western wall a light, glorious as though it streamed through some cathedral window, was pouring in upon the gorge. The dark pines that clothed the mountain sides, the bare shoulders of the uplands, the river that cut the valley far below, the sunburnt cabins that showed here and there in the clearings, were all touched with the strange, crimson glow. Even the face of the horseman coming up the slope reddened as if with the reflection of a great furnace fire.

It was a handsome face after the rare Greek type with intellect written on the broad brow and sensibility and refinement delicately chiseled in the other features. But the expression was somber, and the eyes that turned from the sunset glory to dart quick,

suspicious glances into the thickets beside the road were full of trouble and unrest. Now and then the rider looked back over his shoulder as if the echo of his horse's hoofs in the narrow defile had deceived him into thinking that there was some one behind him upon the road. Once he stopped and listened until the silence grew so profound that he heard a pine drop its burr in the wood, and a spring tinkle like a bell far up among the rocks. After that he rode on more swiftly and soon left the road for a bridle-path, which climbed the mountain more steeply through the heart of the balsams. In less than ten minutes he had reached the next terrace of the hills. There the forest fell away suddenly, revealing a log farm-house in the center of a little clearing with a "worm fence" skirting the woods. At a place where the rails had been let down, the rider dismounted and secured his horse to a tree. As he did so, a girl came up the slope at the back of the house—a slender, fair-haired girl, with a bucket on her shoulder. At sight of the figure, she put down the vessel, and ran forward with a glad cry.

"Oh, Philip! I have been so anxious. You have never been so late before."

"I waited for the mail, and the train was behind time. Una, why will you persist in doing work like that? Where is Maggie?"

"I let her go tonight. Her cousin was to be married, and she was afraid she would be late."

"I don't care if her cousin is not married for a

year. Never do it again. I would have been miserable if I had known you were here alone."

"It was only an hour ago, dear, and her father is down at the lot waiting to put up your horse." She slipped her hand through his arm and looked up pleadingly into his face.

But the brother shook his head as he motioned her to precede him into the house.

It was what is known in some sections as "a double-pen house,"—a four-roomed cottage divided by a passage open at either end. The construction was of the rudest. The walls were unceiled. No effort had been made to hide the native ugliness with paint or whitewash. Above the bare beams loomed the dark comb of the roof. But from the room on the left cheery firelight was streaming, and Philip Arnold stopped on the threshold with a cry of astonishment.

"Una, you witch! what have you been doing?" he cried. For the rough walls were clothed with crimson; the gaunt chimney had become a bower of cedar and pine, and over the black rafters had been thrown a veil of fruit-blossoms, fine and fair as a bride's lace. There were flowers, too, on the table which was laid for the evening meal. Snowy sheepskins were on the bare floor, and beside the hearth, a couch, piled high with cushions of the same ruddy hue as the walls.

"Do you like it?" asked the girl, with a happy laugh.



"Like it?" He drew her to him, his eyes starry with feeling, but could say no more.

She led him down to a lounge beside the fire, and pushing him gently down on the cushions sank on a fleece at his feet.

"I planned it all out one night while you were sick, Philip. I saw just how it could be done, though of course, it has taken time to work it out, and I have waited till you should be gone all day that I might do it for you all at once. Maggie has been so interested, and so helpful. That was why I didn't have the heart to keep her tonight, though it was against orders to let her go. Her father made the lounge you are sitting on out of wild grape-vines—do you see? And the shelf yonder for your books, and the little closet, with the red curtains, where I have put my bits of china. And her mother gave me the dye that I might have everything of the warm color that you love. My darling!" The playful tone changed suddenly to one of passionate tenderness. "Do you suppose I do not know what the life in this mining camp is to you? Ugliness is positive pain to a nature like yours—a beauty-loving, artist-nature. And you have borne it all without a murmur—for me!"

He was still gazing at her speechlessly, but tears had started to his eyes. She caught the gleam, and sprang lightly to her feet.

"I forget I am cook as well as house-keeper tonight, and that we are to have a 'party,'—as we used to say

when we were children,—in honor of your birthday. Did you remember it was your birthday, Philip? Twenty-three today! And you are to be king of the feast. Now lie there, like a Turk, on your divan, and watch the female of your establishment broil your fish and boil your eggs. Only you must talk to me. There is a meaning in what I have been doing to-day. Can you read it?"

"How love conceals defects and makes ugliness beautiful?"

"No sir! It is how much beauty there is in the commonest things about us if we would only take the pains to bring it out. Where do you think I found the drapery for your walls? Do you remember that piece of mildewed domestic in the office for which you said you had no use? And the dye—"

He put up his hand.

"Don't, Una. It takes all the poetry out of it. Let me think the fairies wove it out of crimson leaves, or dipped it in the heart of the sunset."

The sister laughed—a sweet, contagious girl's laugh—in which he could not help joining. Then they grew serious again, and she shook her head as she bent over her work.

"That is just the difference between us, Philip. I can never find any pleasure in thinking things that are not true. I suppose it is because I have so little imagination."

"You have a great deal too much imagination where your faulty brother is concerned. Una, I do

not deserve what you have been doing for me today. It makes me feel like a hypocrite."

She held up her finger.

"Not another word until you have had supper! You will take a kinder view of the world, yourself included, when you have had your coffee. Come, it is ready. Why, Philip, how pale you are!" For, as the brother responded wearily to the summons, the lamplight revealed a strange pallor on his cheek. "Does your head ache?"

"Horribly. That was the reason I was so cross about Maggie when I came in. I have had nothing to eat since I left here this morning, except the lunch you gave me, and that I shared with a beggar by the way."

"And you thought the water in that bucket had to boil before you had your coffee, I knew it, Philip. I saw it in your face. I can always read your thoughts.

"Can you?" He gave her a quick look. "Then you have sorry reading sometimes, little one. But we are even. I can read yours, too. I knew you had a surprise for me by the way your eyes shone. You are spoiling me for a bachelor life, Una. I will not know how to go back to it when you leave me."

"I am not going anywhere, Philip." She opened her eyes in innocent surprise, but there was a treacherous dimple in her cheek.

"You are going back to Pine Hurst next week. You would have gone ere this if I had not been hor-

ribly selfish. I saw it tonight. This is no fit home for you."

Una put down her teacup and folded her hands upon the cloth. There was something she had to tell him and this was as good a time as any.

"You may turn me out of house and home but you cannot send me back to Pine Hurst," she said demurely. "Uncle Leigh will not have me."

"Not have you!"

"He gave me my choice when I came up here to nurse you. It did not accord with his ideas of propriety for a young lady to come to a mining camp among a lot of rough men. He said if I set my affection for you above my duty and reverence for him, I could never come back to his house—there was an end of any relation between us. Now, sir, am I to be turned adrift?"

She threw back her head and flashed him a look of loving, saucy defiance.

But Philip did not smile. An expression of keen distress, of actual dismay, had overspread his face.

"You made such a sacrifice as that for me!" he said hoarsely. "Una, I was not worth it. I would never have permitted it if I had known."

"You would have died if I had not come. The doctor says so, and you have said so yourself, a hundred times."

"Small loss that would have been to you or to any one. Una, I cannot bear it. There you had comfort, luxury, society. While here—"

"I have you!" She rose, and coming quickly around the table, put her arms about his neck. "Philip! you cannot look me in the face and repeat that speech. What happiness would there have been in the world for me if you had died? What comfort could I take in that luxurious home while you were toiling and struggling up here? I was sorry to wound Uncle Leigh, he has been very good to me. But it was foolish of him to think he could come between us. We are not two people, but one. Do not make any more pretense about a sacrifice. I have always wanted to be here, you know I have. And I have been a thousand times happier here than at Pine Hurst."

But still Philip would not smile. Unlocking the pleading arms, he rose abruptly, and going to the fireside, bowed his head upon the mantle-shelf.

"It was bad enough to have brought myself down to this, but to drag you down, too!" he muttered. "Una, you do not know what this means to me."

She watched him for a moment with shining eyes. Then she followed and laid her hand upon his shoulder.

"Am I really a care to you?" she asked. "Does my being here make things harder for you? If it does, I know where I can get a place to teach—"

He interrupted her with an imperious gesture.

"Don't talk that way, Una. If I can't earn enough to keep my only sister from going out to fight the world I may as well pull down my flag and give up the fight. It is of you I am thinking, what a miser-

able home I give you! What will become of me when you leave me, God only knows—God and the devil.”

Then you cannot make me sorry I am here, nor drive me away—say what you will.” She smiled once more into his cloudy face but he would not look at her. After a moment she turned away, with a sigh, and began to clear the table.

She had known there would be some such scene as this when the announcement was made, but she felt sure she had only to be patient and the cloud would pass, and he would eventually be as happy as she, in the thought that there was no danger of separation. Now and then she stole a glance at the silent figure. Philip had thrown himself upon the couch, and was gazing moodily into the fire. At last the dishes were put away, the white cloth replaced by a crimson one, and, the reading-lamp lighted. Una studied his face for a moment earnestly, then she left the room. When she came back she had a large portfolio in her hand. Coming quietly to the hearth, she held it up before him but just beyond his reach.

“I found it behind a beam in the other room,” she explained, as her brother came out of his reverie with a startled cry. “It belongs to an architect, at least to a man who had studied to be one, but gave it up because he had a sister to think of, and money could be made in a quicker way by taking charge of a mine.”

Philip was on his feet by this time, blushing like a girl who sees her love-letter in another hand.

"Give it to me! Who told you that you could look at it?" he demanded.

But Una only retreated farther, holding the book to her breast, while her eyes danced.

"He pretended he did not care, that he had forgotten all about it, but the old love was still there, and sometimes at night, when the sister was asleep, he would study and draw. And she? she knew there was something wrong, some discord in his life that she could not see, and she waited and watched until one day—" she broke off suddenly and running to him threw herself and the portfolio into his arms. "There, take it," she cried, "and show it to me yourself. O Philip! it is the best work you ever did. There is the strength of the hills in it as well as the grace of the forest. What are you going to do with it?"

"Nothing." But there was a thrill in the brother's voice as he opened the case and with a caressing hand began to turn over the sheets.

It needed little art now to win him to talk of them, and as he did so his bearing changed. The cloud vanished from his brow. A faint smile touched his lips. Una's heart leaped as she saw and listened. But, all at once, Philip closed the envelope and gave it back to her.

"There, lock the door!" he said sharply. "It may be prettier work than digging rock out of the earth, but it is not as profitable, and money is the axle on

which this practical world turns. Put it up and do not think about it again."

But with a firm hand, Una reopened the portfolio.

"If you could make a living this way would you like it better, Philip?"

"I cannot make a living that way, so there is no use to ask the question. I thought you were an advocate of people liking their duties, Una."

"A man's duty is to do the thing for which God made him," she answered, but she resealed the portfolio, and laying it down between them drew a paper from under one of the cushions.

"It is an old Herald which came wrapped around a bundle from town, but there are some items of interest in it. Do you care to glance over it?"

"Not to-night. My eyes still ache."

"Then I will read to you, or tell you what is in it if you would like that better. Here is one thing that interested me. A wealthy man in New York has bought a plantation in South Carolina and wants to put a house on it which will in some way combine the stateliness of an old southern mansion with a rustic beauty in keeping with the place. He is rich enough to spend any amount of money on his whim, and he has offered a handsome premium to the architect who will send him a design most nearly carrying out his idea. I wish we had seen the advertisement sooner. I believe you could have done it. No outsider can catch the spirit of our woods and reproduce it in our architecture as one to the



manner born. But it lacks only a month to the closing of the offer."

Philip had caught the paper, and was devouring the article with eager eyes.

"There is always time for what a man wants to do. I could sit up all night to do that, Una. If I were to succeed, I would make a reputation and would have no trouble in getting orders. Then we could leave this miserable place and find a quiet home somewhere. And I will succeed! 'He conquers who thinks he can.' I will show this Nebuchadnezzar his dream as he has never seen it himself. I see the house already. Your fruit-blossoms shall not die, little sister. They shall live on that rich man's ceiling. And your cedar and pine shall be carved in the stone above his hearth." He sprang up and began to pace the floor. The passion of his art was on him. His eyes glowed like coals.

Una, frightened at the fire she had kindled, drew him down again to the seat beside her and laid her cool hand upon his brow.

"You must not sit up all night, but you shall begin at once," she said gently, "and I will bring my violin, and the walls of your house shall go up, like those of Troy, to music."

"Una! I believe you would make the veins in a block of marble tingle," he exclaimed. But his thought was already far away, and she saw that for awhile her love must be content to be the handmaid of his genius. She smiled and slipped away.

## CHAPTER II.

### ONE OF THE PROPHETS

It was not written in the book of fate that the plan for the forest-palace should be begun that night. Philip was still gazing dreamily into the fire and Una had just opened her violin-case when a step on the porch made them both start. With an impatient frown the master of the house went to the door and opened it. By the dim light he could just discern the figure of a man in the passage.

“Why, Barnes, is that you?” he exclaimed.

“I’d like to speak with ye, sir, if ye can spare a minute.”

“Minutes are about the last thing I have to throw away, but if you have anything to say, come in and be quick about it.”

Philip moved aside, and the new comer, flushing a little at the scantiness of the welcome, stepped inside the door.

He was a tall, broad-shouldered young fellow in the ordinary dress of a miner, but Una was at once impressed by something unusual in his bearing and by the earnest, sorrowful regard of the black eyes. Her brother had closed the door.

"Is anything wrong in the camp?" he demanded, and her ear, trained to every vibration of his voice, caught a note of anxiety.

"No, sir." The flush deepened in the swarthy cheek. Apparently the visitor felt embarrassed by the bright home picture. He fumbled with his cap while his eyes traveled slowly from one object to another. "It's about a leetle matter of my own I wish to speak to ye," he stammered. "Or to be more correct,"—his mien changed, he stretched out his hand and indicated the picture of a thorn-crowned face above the bookshelf, "it's on business of His'n. I've met with a great change since I went down to Thornton last month, Mr. Arnold."

"So you told me when you came back and asked for your place again. And I told you then, I believe, as I tell you now, that actions will convince me of it more than words."

"Have you seen anything since to make ye doubt it, sir?"

"No. For the matter of that, I could wish you had taken a few of your boon companions with you and had them put through the same process. Una! look after those papers, please. They will be in the fire in a moment."

The visitor did not appear to heed the interruption.

"If ye feel that way, sir, ye'll not find it hard to grant the favor I've come to ask," he said earnestly.

"What is it?"

"That ye'll let me hold a service in the mine next Sunday night. As I take it, Mr. Arnold, religion hain't jest gittin' saved yerself, and I can't rest till I tell the lads of the sword I see a-comin'—"

"O that's what you are after, is it?" There was a slight softening in the speaker's face. A student of human nature might have inferred that Mr. Arnold had feared some other denouement. "Well, really, Barnes, I must congratulate you on the progress you have made in the religious life. Not only to have turned over a new leaf yourself but to be ready to undertake the conversion of others! And the mine must be the theater for the interesting picture, must it?"

"If ye'd be so kind as to let me have the north gallery, the one as we hain't workin' now, sir, and would do what ye could to git the men to turn out, I'd be more than indebted to ye; and I believe ye'd be doing them a good turn."

"I am very much afraid I would be helping you to make a fool of yourself. No, Una, I am not too hard on him." Philip shook his head as a little hand touched his arm. "You do not know Barnes as I do, nor as he knows himself. A month ago he could outswear any man in the camp, he was drunk half his time, and fighting the other half, if I could judge by what I heard. It is too much to believe he has learned to preach as well as to pray in that time. Why, man, educated people think they have to study for years before they can do that."

But Una was not to be repressed. "Not all, Philip," she said gently, and then she looked at the man who had colored painfully at the description of his past life. "Do you think you could do it?" she asked. "Are you sure of yourself?"

He turned to her eagerly. "I know what's been done for me, ma'am. It don't take education for a man to git up in a court room and tell what he's seen and heard." And then, as if the light in her eyes had unlocked his heart and loosened his tongue, he drew a little book from his breast and showed it to her. "I learned to read when I was a boy in a night school in Pennsylvania," he explained. "They give it to me there. I don't know why I've kept it all this time, 'ceptin' 'cause it was a book, but now, it opens by itself to one place. It's whar the Lord casts the devils out of the man as nobody else could tame. Fust time I read that I says to myself: 'That's ye, Gideon Barnes! That temper of yer'n was wuss than a hull legion of devils, and thar warn't no hand as could break it but that as had chained Satan himself.' And then I read on a little farther whar the man wanted to go with the Lord in the boat, and the Lord wouldn't let him but told him to go home and show his friends and kin-folks what he'd done for him. And I says to myself agin': 'That's ye, Gideon Barnes! It's mighty pleasant sittin' down here in a meetin', at the Lord's feet, as it were, but 'tain't what he convarted ye for. There's men down in Rupert mine as never takes his name

but to swear and blaspheme. Their souls would go down to hell-fire tonight if they was called for. Yet the Lord's able to do for them what he's done for ye.' I come back to the camp that night, Miss Arnold. The minister thought I was makin' a mistake. He said if I'd wait he'd get me a place whar I'd be out of reach of the old temptations and could give my testimony, too, if I wanted to, but I told him I hadn't no call 'cept to the men in Rupert mine. It stood to reason it was only them as I used to drink and gamble with as would see what had been done."

"And have you met with any success?"

"I reckon I hain't had it no harder, ma'am, than him as had to preach to those as had turned the Lord himself out of their country, but I hain't had easy times, I must confess, and thar hain't one as will cross the sill of my cabin to light a pipe, much less to hear a prayer. That's how I came to ask for the gallery, sir." The miner turned back once more to his employer. "I happened to recollect a service I went to once in a mine, in that same place in Pennsylvania, and how the toughest chaps in the camp turned out just because it was their mine and they wanted the thing to go off decent, they said. I thought maybe the same thing would work here."

Philip had reseated himself at the table and was turning over his papers. After a moment's pause, without looking up, he answered:

"I will consent to the experiment on one condition."

"What is that, sir?"

"I think I ought to have longer proof of your ability to lead a good life. If at the end of a month you keep to your new resolutions, Barnes, and still want the gallery, you may have it."

"A month is a long time, sir, some of the men might die in that time."

"You are at liberty to speak to them in private as much as you like. If you stand firm, you will have twice as much power with them as you would have now. If you fail—I do not want to discourage you, but you wouldn't be the first man that failed after starting on a better life—you will hurt no one but yourself. What do you say?"

"I hain't no choice but to accept your terms, sir; and I can't blame ye that ye've no more confidence in me, though I'm sorry enough at the delay." Gideon turned to the door, hesitated, and then turned back. "There was something I had to say to ye, Miss Arnold. There ain't no hurry about it now, but maybe I'd as well speak of it while I'm here."

"If there is any way in which I can help, I will be very glad."

"D'ye remember sittin' at the window yonder and singin' one Sunday night four weeks ago?"

"I do not remember any special night. I sit there and sing very often."

"And ye hain't no call to recollect that night above all others, as I do. Well, Miss Arnold, it was the fust night of the big meetin'." I had gone down

to make trouble, but I'd come back with the arrows of the Lord in my soul. And I was out there in the woods, lyin' on my face with a hull mountain of sin on top of me and no courage to look up to Him as could alone take it away. All at once, I heard singin'. I didn't know it was ye then. I thought it was an angel the Lord had sent to comfort me in my trouble. I kind of feel still he did send the message.

'Jest as I am without one plea  
But that thy blood was shed for me,'

That was it, Miss Arnold.

'Jest as I am, and waiting not  
To rid my soul of one dark blot,  
O, Lamb of God, I come.'

Ye knew it well enough. And I can't tell more about it. But by the time ye had got to the end of that song I was inside the kingdom, and all the angels in heaven seemed singin', as I walked back over the mountain that night to tell the minister." Gideon paused. The strong, toil-lined face was quivering with emotion.

"Would you like me to sing at your service?" asked Una, her eyes shining through happy tears.

His face flashed: "That's what I wanted to ask ye, ma'am. Many's the time I have sat out there in the woods and listened since, and every time I've said to myself, if the lads could hear the gospel told



that a-way they couldn't shut their hearts agin it. We be a rough set along side sech as ye, but the boys know how to treat a lady, the worst of 'em, and ye don't know the good you might do just to show that much interest in them."

"Then I will sing for them with pleasure, just as many hymns as you like. May I not promise, Philip?"

Philip looked up absently from his drawings.

"Yes, I suppose so, if Gideon has his service," he answered.

"And I am sure he will have his service." Una turned to the miner with a smile.

And with the light of that look in his heart the prophet of the Rupert mine went out into the night.

## CHAPTER III

### AN UNWELCOMED VISITOR

The moon had risen, and by the light that bleached the stones and silvered bush and tree, Gideon made his way quickly through the wood, across the hollow at the back of the house. There he was in sight of the twinkling lamps of the camp. Something in the thicket through which he was passing caught his sleeve. He turned, and confronted a young woman with a shawl over her head.

"Becky!" he exclaimed. But there was no pleasure in the recognition. He would have passed on, but she held him.

"Ye ben't goin' to leave me that a-way, Gideon; ye ben't mad with me still?" pleaded a soft drawling voice.

"I hain't no hard thoughts agin ye," he answered. But he only half turned as he spoke, keeping his eyes resolutely on the road before him.

The girl studied the averted face for a moment, and then with a whimper hid her eyes upon her sleeve.

"Taint that-a-way ye used to speak to me, Gideon. Ye're like all the rest. Ye never meant what ye said when ye promised to marry me."

The man started.

"Ye've no call to say that," he answered in a low voice. "Ye've took up with Jess Stubbs since then."

She stole a look at him, and, as if encouraged by what she read in the cloudy face, lifted her head with a laugh.

"Jess can't hold a candle to ye, and I allers knowed it, Gideon. I war only tryin' to make ye jealous. The gals all do that." The shawl had fallen upon her shoulders. The moonlight shone upon a face of the strange flower-like beauty which sometimes blossoms out of the mud and mire of her class, a face faultless in form and color, but with no soul in the violet eyes, no refinement in the curves of the ripe red lips.

Gideon surveyed the picture with unrelenting glance.

"Ye've quarreled with Jess," he said bluntly.

The pretty face darkened with a vixenish scowl.

"Jess is a brute, I hate him!" snapped the girl.

But, seeing no response in the stern face above her, she fell back once more into her plaintive whine. "He wa'n't far wrong about one thing, though. I seed he knowed ye better'n I did, Gideon Barnes. I wish I'd never laid eyes on ye! I wish I had never been born." She threw her shawl over her head and would have fled past him but he caught her.

"Wait a minute, Becky," he said in a troubled voice. As she turned, softly yielding to his touch, he laid his large hand, shaking like a leaf, upon her shoulder. "I hain't forgot what's passed atween

us, lass, but that was afore Christmas, and I ben't the same man as I was then."

Becky nodded, her eyes still upon her sleeve. "Dad and Jess throwed it up to me tonight. They said as how you thought a heap too much of yerself now to take up with the likes of me. Dad were in one of his tantrums, he were. Look thar! That's what I got for spillin' a pint of beer." She drew up her sleeve and showed a black mark on the soft white flesh. "And Jess stood by and seen it done, the coward! I'll throw myself in the river afore I'll go back to be jeered at by him, nor picked up by him neither."

Gideon's face changed. He knew there was no danger of the fulfillment of the threat, but he knew also that there was no exaggeration in the picture. Even in his worst days he had felt compassion for the life which the motherless girl lived in her father's store, behind his bar. Now a strange thought had come to him. He had asked God for the souls of these people. He had travailed for them many a night when they were all asleep. Was this an opportunity to save one?

The question a worse man would never have asked himself—which a wiser man might have answered differently—found in his simple soul but one reply. For a moment, there was a terrible struggle. Too well he knew the coarseness, the fickleness, the untruth, with which he would have to deal. Then his grasp tightened on the slender shoulder.

"Becky," he said, and the girl started at the tremor in his voice, "there's no call for ye to throw yerself in the river, nor to go back to Jess neither, if ye're still willin' to take me for a husband. I'll not go back on the word I spoke to you. But there's one thing ye must understand afore we strike a bargain. I ben't the man I was when ye knowed me fust, the one as ye could lead about with a look, lass. 'Tain't only that I don't drink, and swear, and gamble, as I used to. Religion means more'n not doin' things, it means more'n goin' to meetin' and likin' to sing and pray and be whar good folks is. It means a-puttin' Him fust, and a-listenin' to Him afore any earthly creature. Ye must make that clear to yer mind, at the start, Becky. I'll bring home my wages regular, and never lift my hand to ye, nor give ye a cross word, God helpin' me!—but the Lord's bought me body and soul, and when He says 'go,' I've got to git up and speak, no matter who says to the contrary. Can ye take me on those terms, lass?" He took his hand from her shoulder and held it out to her, and after a moment, Becky let her brown, work-hardened fingers steal into his.

"I hain't no fault to find with ye thar," she simpered. She had really understood as little of what he had said as if he had spoken in an unknown tongue, and the man beside her knew it. But he only smiled as he clasped the hand closer.

"Then we'll go to Thornton in the mornin' and be made man and wife. I've money enough in the

bank, Becky, to get ye what ye want, without yer bein behold'n to that as is red with the blood of souls. There's one thing more," Gideon added, as they moved on hand in hand, "it's a big mistake the way the lads talk, that I think myself better'n the rest. This religion I've got is as much for ye as for me, Becky. Ye'll let me read the Bible to ye and tell ye about it, won't ye?"

"I don't mind," murmured Becky. "I reckon ye're a heap too good for me," she said a moment later in a hard dry voice. But once again, Gideon only smiled.

The store at the cross-roads was still open, sending forth a baleful glare and the sound of rude merriment into the night. Becky said "Good-bye" to Gideon on the edge of the wood, and crept around to the back of the shop hoping to steal in unnoticed. She was half way up the ladder that led to the sleeping-loft above when her father heard her.

"Come back," he called, sharply. "Where have ye been all this time? The lads want a song to go with their last pint of beer."

"I've got the headache, I don't feel like singin'," returned the girl. But she retraced her steps and stood sullenly in the shadows at the back of the store.

"Then do it because ye're bid." Dick Bailey laid a rough hand on his daughter's shoulder and pushed her forward. "A bird as can sing and won't, ought to be made to sing, eh, Jess?"

"Pull its feathers if it don't," hiccupped a thick-

set, low-browed young fellow, who was just putting down a glass. "Hain't ye got over yer temper yet, Becky? Guess ye didn't find it so easy to whistle back Gideon as ye thought. But cheer up. Here's a gentleman as takes folk's pictures. Maybe he'd take yours if ye'd give him a tune he likes."

Then for the first time Becky noticed that a stranger sat among the ordinary frequenters of her father's bar; "a light-haired, handsome young gentleman," she told a miner's wife the next day—evidently too much of a gentleman to bandy words with a rustic beauty, for he rose at once, and taking no notice of the girl, addressed her father:

"I have already stayed too long unless I can get a night's lodging."

Becky thought there was a question in the tone. She noticed, too, that there was a bill in the till which could have come from no miner's pocket, and that the men had been drinking more heavily than usual. The stranger had evidently been free with his money, and for some reason which she could not yet penetrate, had failed to buy favor with it. There was a shed room at the back of the shop, and a box-bed which had more than once accommodated travelers. But her father's face was stolid.

"Sorry not to be able to oblige ye," he drawled, "but we don't look for visitors in these parts and hain't prepared for 'em."

"Maybe ye could git a bed at the sheriff's," suggested a man near the door.

The young man turned to the speaker.

"How far is that?" he demanded.

"Wall, I can't say as I ever measured the distance, but it moight be a mile on the tother side of the river. Maybe more, maybe less."

"Ye can't miss it, It's the fust house arter ye cross the bridge," appended Jess.

The stranger drew his grip-sack from under the counter with a sigh. "Your country miles are apt to be of generous length," he remarked. "But if I have to tramp it the sooner I start the better." He stood for a moment in the doorway, looking out on the moonlit road. "You are sure there is no chance of being allowed to take any photographs of the mine if I come back this way?" he asked carelessly. But Becky was aware of a sudden keenness in his look as he glanced back over his shoulder. She was aware, too, of a quiet settling of the faces around the bar. The oldest miner present knocked the ashes from his pipe before he spoke.

"Wall, stranger, to be quite frank with ye, I don't think there is. As I telled ye a while back, the master's given it pretty clearly to be understood that when he wants visitors he'll ask for 'em. And he hain't asked for 'em yet. Can't see why ye're so sot upon it, anyhow. There haint' nothin' in a mine to make a picter of."

"That's according to a man's way of thinking. Well, good-night to you all. But don't be surprised



if you see me again some day. I don't often give up a thing after I take hold of it."

There was a grim silence until the sound of footsteps died away. Then a slow smile went round the circle.

"Think he'll git there in time for breakfast?" asked the man who had recommended the sheriff's.

"Maybe by the time they're washin' up their dinner things," chuckled a neighbor.

"If he don't fall into a hole and break his neck; and I for one won't be sorry if he does," said a third. That was Jess.

"Come, lads, it's time ye was all movin'," interposed the storekeeper. "Ye've had about as much liquor as ye can get home on."

"I ben't agoin' home jest yet." Jess staggered to his feet. "I be agoin, to keep my eye on that chap, I be. He hain't goin' no further to-night than he can help. And if he sleeps anywhar this side of the river I means to know it."

"If ye keeps the road for yerself to-night ye'll do well," retorted a mate. "Don't be a fool, lad. If he did chaff ye about yer nugget 'tain't worth breakin' yer neck about."

But the young miner's only answer was a scowl as he pulled his cap over his eyes and stumbled out into the night.

The next morning he was found asleep under a tree not twenty yards from the store, and could give only a confused account of himself. It was

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evident he had been overtaken by the stupor of the drunkard before he had gone far upon his search. After that it became a joke in the camp to ask Jess where the strange gentleman had lodged that night.

But if the miner ever found out, he kept his own counsel, and nothing more was heard of the stranger in the hills.

## CHAPTER IV.

### A TRIAL BY FIRE

That spring was long remembered in the mountains as one of strange and premature warmth. The storm with which it culminated on the first day of May left its record in many a blanched oak and splintered pine, and the flood that followed swept away bridges and obliterated fords.

On the last day of the heated term, when men were fainting under the brazen sky and dumb creatures panting in the shade, Philip Arnold drove at full speed into the little railway town of Thornton. Of the first acquaintance he met he inquired anxiously whether the northbound train had yet passed, and on being told that it was behind time, he hurried on to the express office, and handed in a package. When he came out a group had gathered about his drooping horse, one of whom rallied him on his imprudence in driving at such speed on such a day. He explained that he had been obliged to send off some important papers on that train and, had come thirty miles since sunrise to do so. At the hotel where he was accustomed to stop he made arrangements for the care of his exhausted animal, and then,

after an hour's rest, deaf to the remonstrances of "mine host"—who detected stormy portents in the stillness of the air and in the peculiar yellow glare of the sky—he ordered a fresh horse and started for home.

The first ten miles of the journey lay through the open country, between level fields, on which the sun beat down with unbearable splendor. Presently the road began to ascend, the forests closed about them, and the cooler air of the uplands revived both man and beast. Absorbed in thought and shut in by the woods, Philip failed to notice the disappearance of the sun and the darkening of the sky. Not until he had reached a plateau of the hills, and had stopped to water his horse at a creek, did he catch the first rumble of thunder. When he looked back he saw that the west had grown livid and felt a dash of rain on his face.

From that moment it was a race between him and the tempest. The woods darkened rapidly as if with the approach of night. The wind that had been only a sigh grew into a menacing bellow. Nearer each second, came the bay upon his track—louder the peals of thunder: quivers of blue light began to run across the blackened sky. The young man's heart beat faster, for a storm in the dense woods through which he had yet to travel was not a pleasant thing to think of. With whip and voice, he urged his horse to her utmost speed. A sense of dread swept with them through the wood. The oaks shivered at the token,

and shrank as if they would fain have hidden from the fury that was coming. The giant pines tossed their arms in wild defiance. Ferns and flowers bent before the breath. With cries of distress the wild birds sought their nests. The dumb creature that Philip drove no longer needed to be urged to put forth all her strength. Faster and faster, they flew—up the slopes, shaken with thunder—and through the woods, lit now by vivid, violet flashes.

But the wind that followed traveled swifter, and at last, with a shriek as if every element in heaven had been let loose, the storm burst on them. After that it was only a blind fight with wind, rain and darkness. The thunder was appalling and the echoes did not suffer one reverberation to die away before another shook the hills. The lightning came no longer in flashes, but in sheets of flame that illuminated the heights above and the depths below. By the ghastly glare Philip could see trees in the valley he had left going down like grain before the sickle. Any moment, he knew, might bring down one of the mighty monarchs that towered above his path. He had never before been so close to death. To make matters worse his horse was becoming unmanageable and threatened at every clap of thunder to break from all restraint. They were also nearing the narrowest part of the road where careful driving even in daylight was necessary. He began to cast about in his mind to recall if there was any cave in

the vicinity where he could find refuge until the severity of the storm was over.

But even as he did so, with a crash that seemed to split the solid rock and a glare as if hell had opened her mouth, a bolt struck a pine not ten yards in front of him. For a second the terrified animal crouched, trembling, upon the earth. Then, with the cry that is only wrung from dumb creatures in their extremity, she sprang toward the side of the cliff. With all the strength that was in him, Philip pulled her back upon her haunches. Passionately he shouted to her in the darkness. But brute force, mastered by fear, was no longer amenable to the voice of the feebler master, man. Once again the creature plunged. Once again he pulled her back. But now he could hear the buggy-wheels grating on the rocks that lined the face of the precipice, he could feel in his face the bushes that alone arrested their fall. Another moment and it would be all over with them for the mare was gathering herself for a last leap.

"Help! Help!" he shouted, not knowing on whom he called; nor if any ear but One would hear his last appeal. But a voice answered out of the darkness:

"Coming. Hold on a minute, if you can."

Some one had risen as it seemed out of the ground at his feet. Some one had caught his horse by the bridle and clung to it as she raised herself in air. There was a brief struggle; then between them she was brought down, and led, conquered and trembling, back into the road.

Philip was already out of the vehicle.

"I am very much indebted to you," he said to the figure he could just discern at his horse's head. "Another instant and it would have been all over with us."

"With the poor mare, perhaps, she seemed determined to make an end of herself. But you could have caught on a tree or rock."

"Hardly. There is but one chance in a thousand in such a fall. But your voice tells me, sir, you are not a native of the hills. May I ask if, like myself, you are so unfortunate as to be a traveler in this storm?"

"More unfortunate than yourself, sir, a traveler who has lost both his horse and his way. But let me help you unharness, and I can show you a place close by where your mare, as well as yourself, can find shelter until the worst of this storm is over."

"With all my heart."

At another time Philip might have been less prompt to accept such an invitation. It was a lawless community, and he knew he was supposed to carry with him the precious product of his mine, as well as the money to pay off his hands. But the crisis through which they had just passed made other dangers seem trivial. And there was something prepossessing in the stranger's appearance. By the light, which began now faintly to return, he could distinguish a fair, beardless face, and found his inquiring glance met by one as frank and friendly

as a boy's. They were soon in the proposed shelter, one of those natural chambers in the rock which are often to be met with in these hills. It was as large as an ordinary-sized room, semicircular in shape, and protected by the opposite cliff from the incursions of the weather.

The stranger, who gave his name as John Carson, had evidently been there long enough to make himself at home.

A fire of dead branches had been kindled in the center, and at the side farthest from the opening freshly-gathered pine straw had been spread for a couch. Philip nodded at the pallet as he warmed himself by the welcome blaze.

"You seem to intend to spend the night here, and the pine is dry. Did you lose your horse before the storm?"

"Yes, it is a case of 'man's inhumanity to man'. I left the nag tied at the door of a mill where I stopped to get dinner. When I came out he was gone. In the effort to find him I lost the road. But for the latter calamity, and the storm, I should have reached my destination anyway. I am a good walker."

"If it is not an intrusive question, to what point in the mountains are you tending?"

Mr. Carson hesitated. The hesitation told against him afterwards.

"I had letters to mail in Thornton this evening. I am a newspaper man, Mr. Arnold, and have ob-



tained some items of interest in your hills, though I have been singularly unsuccessful in my real errand which was to get a peep into the ways of the moon-shiners."

"You may get more of a glimpse than you care for if you carry out your intention of spending the night here. Unless I am much mistaken, Mr. Carson, it was in this very cave a nest of them was discovered a year ago, and they made a desperate fight for it. They have a habit of returning to their old haunts, I am told, and a summary method as we all know of sealing the lips of those who pry into their secrets. Was the mill where you took dinner the one at the cross roads, the one at the foot of the mountain?"

"At the foot of the mountain, certainly. And now that you speak of it, I believe several roads did converge just there."

"Another wild-cat still, if rumor is to be believed. You seem to have followed the scent pretty well without knowing it. Were you so confiding as to impart to the miller the reason for your being in the hills?"

Mr. Carson laughed a gay, boyish laugh. "Perhaps I did show too much anxiety as to where I could obtain a little mountain dew. Poor old fellow! So the disappearance of my horse was an act of self-preservation, was it? Well, I suppose I can't blame him. There is something to be said on the side of these law-breakers. But it will go hard with me to replace the horse. Like the son of the prophets, I

am constrained to cry out, 'Alas, for it was borrowed!'"

"You need give yourself little anxiety on that point, I fancy. He may have thought it prudent to limit your investigations, but he will scarcely care to call attention to himself by detaining your horse. The nag is doubtless eating hay at this moment in his own stable—unless it was too far off."

Philip turned an inquiring glance upon his companion. It was a good place for Mr. Carson to mention what had been his starting-point in the hills, if he cared to do so. But the attache of the press did not appear to notice the opportunity. He was smiling into the fire.

"There's a good story in that," he said musingly. "The white-haired miller, the hidden still, the unsuspecting visitor, the loosened bridle: I can make two columns out of it! Ah, sir!" he flushed slightly, as he looked up and met his companion's eye, "we men who live by our wits have to turn everything to account, you see. Each experience is worth so much in dollars and cents. Even our heart's blood goes into our inkstands at times."

"You hold with Goethe, then, that 'genius is the power to paint what we suffer'?"

"Or see, or hear. Mine is a very practical calling, sir. But see! It is growing light outside. The storm spent itself, I believe, in that last bolt."

"And I will be wise to resume my journey while there is still light enough by which to drive." Philip

went to the opening and looked out. "What do you say to going home with me?" he asked, coming back. "I do not like to leave you in this hole in the earth and we can at least give you a dry bed, and something better to eat than mountain-berries. And in the morning if the roads are passable, I will drive you to any point in the hills that you indicate."

Mr. Carson was evidently only too glad to accept the invitation, and they were soon on their way.

There was little opportunity for conversation upon the road. The light faded fast. The road was slippery. With difficulty the horse could be induced to ford the streams, swollen and roaring; more than once the young men were compelled to alight to lift the vehicle over a tree fallen in their path. Acquaintanceship ripens fast under such circumstances, and although Philip obtained little further information about his guest, he found his first favorable impression deepened into actual liking, by the time they came in sight of the lights of the cottage, and he felt as if he was introducing an old friend to Una, when at last he led his new acquaintance across the threshold and into the cozy supper-room.

How little we know when we open the door to Fate and bid Sorrow in to sup with us! With what unconscious feet we cross the circles that divide the zones of joy and pain! No premonitory shadow touched Una's heart as she welcomed her brother's guest and made haste to lay another plate upon the table. With a brighter look than he had worn

for many a day Philip did the honors of his board. And little dreaming that destiny stood behind his chair and that the hand of death was on the cloth, John Carson took his seat between the two, happy to break his fast. Only Maggie, coming in to set a hot dish upon the table, took a curious look at the visitor and went out with a strange expression on her face. But no one noticed her.

There was no lack of conversation during the meal.

Mr. Carson had been something of a traveler, and after the adventure of the afternoon had been discussed, talked freely and wittily of the places he had seen. It was not long, however, before Una, like her brother, became impressed with the sense of something hidden, a touch of caution when his antecedents were alluded to, a subtle reserve that made itself felt now and then through all his gayety like secret armor under a robe of silk. She noticed, too, that there were hard lines in his face when he was not talking nor smiling, and that he had a restless, shifting glance, like a man who was always on the watch for something. She felt sure that there was some shadow on his past, some reason for him to fear or distrust his fellow men, and her woman's heart went out to him. Philip alone seemed perfectly at ease.

"You have seen a good deal of the world for one of your age," he remarked at the end of one of his guest's stories.

"We Ariels of the press fly east and west as our

Prosperos bid us, Mr. Arnold. But I haven't found many corners of the world as bright and homelike as this, I can tell you."

"Have you been in the mountains before?"

"Once."

"In this neighborhood?"

"I could answer that question better if I knew what the neighborhood is. You remember I have trusted myself blindly to your charioteership. Are you anywhere near the Rupert camp?"

"This is the camp, practically. I am in charge of the mine."

"You!" There was such unmistakable astonishment in the speaker's tone and look that Philip colored. "Well, sir," he said with a short laugh, "did you think I had sought these mountain wilds out of sheer love of solitude or hatred of my kind?"

"Not at all. I beg your pardon, Mr. Arnold. I was only marvelling at my stupidity and at my good fortune. I haven't had many streaks of luck in this world. The Rupert camp is the place of all others in these hills I am glad to have fallen into. I suppose you allow visitors in the mine?"

"Not in the present stage of the work, sir. There is danger of accident, the owners do not care to take the risk."

"But if a visitor is willing to take the risk for himself?" Mr. Carson's voice and face had become eager. "I hope you will be able to make an exception in my case. A mine has always had a fascination for

me—like a grave. And I have heard wonderful tales of this one.”

“I am sorry, but I have no discretionary power.” Philip passed his cup to his sister for more coffee and looked bored. “There is little that would interest you,” he added, seeing that his guest’s eyes were still fixed on him expectantly. “The rock looks like any other rock to the uninitiated. It has to be split up and melted before the gold comes to light, and that is not done here. Let me give you some of the squirrel-stew, Mr. Carson.”

Mr. Carson took the stew, but not the hint.

“Yet you have made some finds of a solid character, I believe,” he persisted. “The country was ringing with the news of a ‘nugget’ as I came through.”

“We have made some discoveries of late, sir, but we do not care to blow our trumpets yet.” Philip’s manner had become frigid. “May I ask if you have any personal interest in the matter, Mr. Carson?”

“None whatever.” For the first time the guest appeared to notice that the subject was distasteful to his host. The light faded from his face. He turned his attention to his plate and for several minutes there was an uncomfortable silence.

It was Philip who broke it, returning, strangely enough, to the topic they had left.

“We had a serious cave-in just before Christmas, Mr. Carson. It was at night, fortunately, when no one was in the mine, but it has left a good deal of treacherous ground in the neighborhood. You would

do well to look to your footing if you tramp about the hills much. To tell the truth, it is not safe walking for any but those familiar with the place. None of the hill people will come near us."

"I generally notice where I am going." John Carson turned suddenly to his hostess. "Miss Arnold, do you ever feel when you are here alone as if some one might be watching you through the chinks in that door?"

"I am never here alone at night," answered Una.

"I ought not to have suggested the thought to you, perhaps. I confess it is not an unusual feeling with me. But the whole time I have been here at table I have felt as if an eye was on me through that crack. What is it, do you suppose, that gives darkness eyes and silence ears?"

"A guilty conscience is the traditional explanation for that sensation." It was Philip who spoke. His guest glanced at him and then turned back to Una.

"I have sometimes wondered if it might not be the result of the truth, impressed upon us in childhood, of the Presence from which we cannot flee, the eye that is ever on us, the ear that is never closed. Mr. Arnold! There is some one at the door."

Philip, who had been steadily regarding the spot, was already on his feet. Going swiftly to the door, he opened it. A heavy figure, which had been evidently leaning against it, tumbled in.

"Jess!" exclaimed the superintendent of the mine

sternly. "What does this mean? What are you doing here?"

The miner gathered himself up, and pulling a letter from his pocket handed it to his chief.

"It come arter ye left. Allan said ye ought to git it tonight." His glance went past his employer and settled darkly on the stranger at the table.

"Well, my man, you see I did not fall into the river, nor break my neck," said Mr. Carson, with a short laugh. "And I am back again, too, as I told you I would be."

Philip glanced up from the letter he was reading.

"You have discharged your errand. You can go," he said in a low voice to his workman.

But Jess stood his ground, pointing at the visitor.

"He war down at Bailey's last month," he burst out savagely. "He wanted to git inside the mine to take picters, he said, and when Allan tolt him it war agin rules he laughed, he did. He said there must be some good reason for keepin' folks out. He guessed it took particalar kind of spectacles to see the gold down thar."

"We are obliged to Mr. Carson for his good opinion of us." Philip looked keenly at his guest, and John Carson colored. Jess drew something tied up in a blue cotton handkerchief out of his shirt.

"Look here, stranger! Ye said ye'd like to hev hed a squint at that thar nugget afore we sent it off. Wall, here's another jest like it, though it ben't so big. I hain't breakin' rules, Mr. Arnold. This didn't



come from inside the mine, but from a little diggin' of my own in Deer's cave—Allan can tell ye—and I want this gentleman to hev a look at it. Thar, sir! D'ye need spectacles now?"

He had been untying the handkerchief while he spoke, and now placed on the table before his master's guest a lump of dark yellowish ore which glistened in the lamplight.

Mr. Carson caught it up and held it to the light. A curious smile crept around his lips. He glanced over his shoulder at his host.

"Are you anything of a geologist, Mr. Arnold?"

"Not at all." The words dropped cold as ice.

"But you have heard of iron pyrites?"

"I have heard of it."

"Unless my training goes for nothing, you see it, too. Jess— is that your name, my man?—I am sorry to disappoint you, but this nugget of yours is only a lump of iron mixed with sulphur—'fool's gold,' as we call it sometimes. I could prove it to you if I had a crucible. Stay! There is a shovel. I can improvise one on that bed of coals if you will let me. What do you say, Mr. Arnold?"

Philip had reseated himself at the table.

"It is Jess' affair. I have nothing to do with it," he said coldly.

Mr. Carson glanced at Jess. "Well, what do you say?" he asked. "Shall we try it? If I am wrong your gold will not be injured and you can have the satisfaction of laughing at me."

The miner's face had grown as black as night.

"Try it," he said in a low voice; "try it."

There was a menace in the tone, but John Carson did not notice it. He had already placed the lump on the shovel and the shovel on the coals. His face had kindled with a keen, strange light. His eyes shone like sun-touched steel.

The fire was hot. It was not long before the mass ignited, and the heat, like a seeking hand, separated the ingredients disclosing the secret. A strong smell of sulphur filled the room.

"Well, what do you say now?" demanded the experimenter, with a triumphant little laugh.

No one answered him. Philip, at the table, sat as still as if he had fallen asleep. His sister's eyes were on his face. Jess stared blankly down at the shovel. Something that looked like iron-rust was all that was left of his treasure.

"Come! which one of us needs the spectacles?" demanded Mr. Carson, his voice and face still exultant.

Without answering, the miner turned and stumbled toward the door. His chagrin was pitiful.

"Wait a minute! I will give you a dollar for letting me make the experiment," said the visitor.

But, as if he had not heard, Jess opened the door and went out. Mr. Carson turned to his host. For the first time he appeared to notice, what Una had seen all the while, that Philip was deadly pale.

"I hope I have not given offense," he said, rising.

"Of course, I understand, Mr. Arnold, that this is entirely outside."

Philip rose wearily from the table, as if he had been sitting there a year.

"The smell of sulphur makes me sick," he said hoarsely, and going to the door he looked out. In a few seconds, as if the outer air had revived him, he added in a more natural voice:

"I always see that my horse is fed and groomed. I will have to ask you to excuse me for a moment, Mr. Carson. Perhaps you can amuse yourself with the books upon the table."

But the moment the door closed after him, John Carson turned his back upon the books and looked in dismay at Una.

"Why didn't you stop me when you saw I was going too far?" he asked. "I suppose I ought not to have insisted upon the experiment, but the work has a fascination for me."

Una, with difficulty, was holding back her tears.

"My brother's work is not congenial to him," she faltered. "He dislikes to have it brought into his home life." But she felt, and she saw that their guest felt, the excuse was inadequate.

## CHAPTER V

### WHERE TWO WAYS MEET

It was some time before Philip returned. When he did so his brow had cleared, his manner was self-possessed and courteous, and he appeared anxious to atone to his guest for any irritation into which he had been betrayed. Mr. Carson, on his part, responded eagerly to the overtures of peace and the remainder of the evening passed pleasantly in talk of the outside world and the topics of the day. Una fancied she detected an effort in her brother's cordiality, and less frankness in their visitor's gayety than there had been in the earlier part of the evening. But of this she could not be quite sure. A little before ten Mr. Carson acknowledged himself weary, and Philip, taking a candle, showed him to his room. Then he came back to the living room where he himself was to pass the night on the couch by the hearth. Una was making up her bread at a side table and looked up anxiously as he came in. It was as she had feared. The mask had fallen. His features were working painfully.

“What did that man talk about while I was out of

the room? Did he say anything more about the mine?" he asked, coming close to her and speaking in a tone she had never heard before.

"No, Philip. He only said he was sorry to have annoyed you."

"Did he tell you anything more about himself—where he came from, where he is going when he leaves here, what paper he is connected with?"

"No, Philip."

"I thought not. Una, he was a traveling photographer when Jess met him a month ago. He told me this afternoon that he was a reporter. If he does not know more about chemistry than either, I am much mistaken. It is all a blind. He is a spy, a miserable spy."

"Philip!"—

"That letter I received to-night was from the secretary of the company. It was to warn me that a man, answering exactly to this one's description, had been sent out by the geological bureau to spy into the mine. If I had only received it sooner!"

"What could you have done?"

"I would not have brought him home, at any rate. You cannot understand these things, Una. A woman never can. But there is any amount of jealousy and hatred and stabbing in the dark in this kind of business. The bureau has had a prejudice against us from the first. O, I am sick of it all! I would give my right hand to be loose from it. But as long as I am in the pay of the company I must look after their

interests." He raised his voice as if some one had disputed his position.

"But, Philip, I cannot believe it. Mr. Carson seems such a gentleman."

"Is it gentlemanly to creep into a man's house on purpose to steal his good name? That was all a trick, Una, his pretending that he did not know where he was. I believe he suspected it when he stopped me in the road. Did you notice his face when he began to talk about the mine? A fascination for him, indeed! Jess says he offered Allan five dollars to break rules and let him go down."

Una wiped the flour from her hands and sat down. She was trembling.

"What are you going to do about it?" she asked.

"There is nothing to do now but try to keep him here until I can wire the company for instructions. It may be they will think it better to let him in than to send him away with unfavorable impressions. You can help me in that, Una." Philip spoke more calmly when he saw his sister's agitation. "Make things as pleasant for him as you can so that we can induce him to prolong his stay. The elements fight for us, too. If it keeps on raining like this all night the roads will be impassable by tomorrow."

"Tomorrow is Sunday."

"Sunday!"

The superintendent of the mine turned away his face. "And I told Gideon this morning that he could have his service." There was a pause.

"Well, offer that to him as an inducement, Una. The gallery is an abandoned one and cannot hurt us, and he may be attracted by the novelty of the situation. Tell him it will make a good article for his paper. His paper, indeed! By Monday the river will be up, and he cannot get away. And by Tuesday I may hear from the company."

"Or from your designs." She slipped her arm around his neck. "O Philip, I am so glad you caught that mail! Promise me, if you succeed—and I know you will—that you will leave this place at once. This work is killing you."

"I can safely make the promise. I am not as sanguine as you, Una. I know better than you the men with whom I will have to compete. Yet pray as you never prayed before. God may hear you."

All that night the floods fell, and when the hueless morning broke above the mist-clad peaks, the river had risen and the roads, as Philip had predicted, were impassable. Mr. Carson accepted the situation good humoredly, and appeared to pass the day pleasantly enough over a volume of Shakespeare which he found on Philip's shelves. But to the surprise of both brother and sister, it was only after considerable persuasion that he was induced to attend Gideon's service that evening.

"Church-going is not much in my line," he explained frankly. "I can never feel as the preacher expects me to, and he seems to take it so to heart that I do not, to be so sure that it is because I will

not, that I always come out in a bad humor and find it does me more harm than good.”

“But this will be a different service from any that you have ever attended, and Gideon a different preacher from any that you have ever heard,” Una pleaded. “He did not go to church, himself, two months ago.”

“And you think he might give me a few points? Well, Miss Arnold, I dare say the prodigal son could teach me something if I could meet with him. Since you wish it, I will go and hear what this reformed pigtender has to say, how he accounts for it that he has not gone back to the swine-trough. Your singing will compensate me, any way.”

Gideon had elected to have what is called “a candlelight service,” one between daylight and dark. The clouds had broken during the afternoon and the sun was setting once more in splendor as they made their way down the wet road. Philip, who had been unceasing in his attentions all day, pointed out to his visitor the view as they went along, and Mr. Carson was easy and genial in response. But once or twice Una had caught him looking keenly at her brother as if he suspected some change in their relations. She surprised the look again now as they reached the mine and Philip led the way into the gallery. It was an upper one, easily reached by a few steps in the rock, and a narrow passage, and it was already well filled with an audience which would not have done discredit to a nobler place of worship.



As Gideon had hoped, the novelty of the situation and the promise of Miss Arnold's singing had proved too strong for the prejudices of the camp. The report of the meeting had even gone out into the woods and drawn in some of the natives of the soil. Una saw John Carson look curiously about him as they made their way through the throng to the chairs placed for them at the upper end. The remainder of the company were seated on planks laid across logs which the preacher's own hands had hewn from the felled timber in the woods. A row of miners' lanterns had been hung along the sides of the rock, and at the farther end, a couple of pine torches threw a brighter light upon the stone that was to serve as the speaker's table. They had just taken their seats when Gideon entered. Instantly every eye was fastened upon him.

His face was pale, but it shone as Moses' face may have shone when he came down from the mount—as any man's face will shine who has spent hours, as the miner had that day, in lonely converse with God. Any misgivings Una had felt as to his ability to carry through the service vanished after that first look. She knew then that it was impossible for their presence to embarrass, or for that of his mates to intimidate. Earth had become a shadow. God and heaven were the great realities. He took his stand at the stone table and made a motion to her to sing. She started a familiar air, in which, after a

little hesitation, a portion of the audience joined. Then Gideon began to talk.

I am not going to give his words. I would not if I could. Put down on paper they would read like the utterances of any rude unlettered preacher. It was the spirit in the man, his intense conviction of the truths that he proclaimed and the changed life behind him, which made them arrows in the hand of the mighty. He did not talk to his mates as he had done to Una. In words such as they could understand he pointed to his former life and challenged any of them to say that there had not been a difference. He told them of his struggle with his hot temper, his thirst for liquor, his profane tongue, and asked the wisest of them to explain why he had come off conqueror. Then, when he saw that he had caught their ear, he began to speak to them of Christ and about themselves. He told them why he had come back to the camp, of the pit that he saw opening at their feet, of the Saviour who stood with outstretched arms, able and willing to save. With all the strength of his nature he threw himself against the stony calm of his listeners."

"Flee from the wrath to come. He came into the world to save sinners. He saved me. He can save you." That was the burden of his message repeated again and again, it must be admitted, with little change of words. But his voice grew hoarse and impassioned, his words came hot and fast, like the blows of iron upon steel.

Slowly the mass ignited. The hearts of his hearers began to melt and move. Men drew their sleeves across their eyes. Women hid their faces in their hands and wept. Gideon turned to Una.

"Give 'em 'Jest as I am' now," he whispered.

And Una sang, alone this time, and as she had never sung before—every word distinct but tender and low as if breathed into each listening ear. There was a movement in the crowd. The people began to flow toward Gideon, mostly women, but some men and boys. Among the former was Gideon's young wife. One auditor alone remained unmoved. It was Jess. He had come in late and stood just inside the chamber, his arms folded on his breast, his eyes fixed on some object behind Una. She glanced round and saw John Carson, unconscious of everything else, watching Gideon. She looked at her brother to see if he had noticed the strange regard, but he sat with his face shaded by his hand, apparently lost in thought.

"Give us another hymn, Miss Una," pleaded Gideon. "Thar be mournin' souls here as hain't found the light, drownin' souls as hain't got hold of the rope." And with a start, Una turned back to her work singing, "There is a Fountain Filled with Blood" and "Rock of Ages," until a great calm fell upon the sobbing throng, and the light of another world dawned on the dull, hardened faces.

Then Gideon prayed as if he saw Christ face to face and had power with his Lord.

"You are right, Miss Arnold," John Carson said that night as they walked home in the moonlight. "That is different preaching from any that I ever heard. That man does not only believe what he says, he knows."

"We cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard," quoted Una softly.

"That is just it. He has seen and heard. But I haven't. And I cannot build my house on another man's foundation. Is there any help nowadays for the material Thomases who must put their fingers into the nail-prints before they can believe?"

He spoke lightly, but as they stopped in the porch to wait for Philip she saw that there were tears in his eyes, and that his face was pale and quivering. Her heart stood still. Oh, to say something that would turn the trembling balance!

"There is the promise that if we do His will—if we want to do His will—we shall know of the doctrine whether it is of God," she said at last.

"And you think if I do not know, it is because I have not wanted to? Well Miss Arnold, perhaps you are right. But—to-night I feel differently. Will you pray for me before you sleep? I do not know that there is any one who does, and I have forgotten how to do it for myself."

Una had just time to give the promise when Philip joined them and they went into the house. Mr. Carson asked at once for his candle, and wished them good night. The moment the door closed after him

Philip threw himself upon the couch as if weary. Una watched him sadly for a moment. She carried more than one burden on her heart that day and she had taken her resolve. It is better to go out and meet trouble than to sit still and let it come upon one in the house. She put away her hat and cape and came and sat down beside him.

“Philip, there is something troubling you. What is it?”

He made no answer.

“This afternoon when I went down to the spring-box to get the butter I heard two of the miners talking in the cave. They did not know I could hear. They were talking about the mine. They seemed to be afraid there was something wrong. Philip! What does ‘salting’ mean?”

Philip’s answer was to bow his head upon his hands and groan. And then she knew that the crisis of their lives had come, and that she must be strong for them both. Was it not to her that their dying mother had committed the care of the frail artist nature? Was it not for her that he had done this thing?

“Philip, whatever it is, we will bear it together. Only tell me the truth! Look at me.”

“I cannot!” With a swift, passionate gesture the unhappy man turned away and hid his face in the cushions. “Una, I hoped you might have been spared this. I have even prayed—fool that I was to think God would hear such prayers as mine—that you might never know. But it is too late.” He raised

his face and looked at her with fierce, bloodshot eyes. "Una, if that fellow in yonder goes away with the information he has gained, I am a ruined man. It is all true—what he suspects. The mine is a swindle. There is not a grain of gold in the rock."

"Philip!" She could not help that one cry; that protest against the blow. Philip put up his hand to shield his face, and the gesture brought her to herself. She rose and put her arms about his neck and pressed one long deep kiss upon his brow—a kiss into which she put all the love she bore him. Then she reseated herself and took his hand.

"Now, tell me everything from the beginning," she said quietly. "Whatever comes we cannot drink different cups. Did you know this when you came here?"

"No, Una; as God is my witness! I was as innocent as you."

"Thank God for so much! When did you find it out?"

"Just before I was taken sick. It was that that made me ill—the shame, and the misery, and the struggle. But I will keep nothing back. I had begun to suspect before. I had not been here very long when I saw there was something wrong. There was so much secrecy, the work was pressed so indifferently and no effort was made to remove the rock which they claimed was so valuable. But what is the use of talking about it? It is all a lie to get honest people's money and put it into rogues' pockets.

And I, Philip Arnold, who had thought myself above temptation, have lent a hand to it." —

"Why did you not break off from it as soon as you knew? It was then your responsibility began."

"I did mean to, Una. God knows, the day the certainty forced itself upon me I did not expect to keep the place a week longer. But my sickness came and you, and Uncle Leigh cast you off, and I couldn't throw up the only home I had to offer you."

Una let go of his hand suddenly. He could not have given her a keener stab. But Philip went on talking as if speech was a relief to him; and her hand closed again as a woman's hand always will.

"Jess' nugget did deceive me at first and gave me the only happy moments I had known for weeks. But the company laughed when they saw it. O, Una, they are such unprincipled men! I feel as if I was touching the coin of hell when I take their pay."

"You are, and we must never touch another penny, Philip, though we have to starve, we will leave this place at once."

"If my designs are accepted, we will leave this very week. Una! you know now why that advertisement meant so much to me; why I have worked day and night to seize the chance. Do not think I have resigned myself tamely to my position. Pray, pray, that my work may be successful."

"I cannot until we cut loose from the sin. We must wait for nothing, Philip. Whether your designs are accepted or not, we must leave this place

at once. I have still the money which Uncle Leigh gave me when I came away, and which you would not let me use to make you more comfortable here. That will keep us for a couple of months, by that time you can find something to do or I can get a place to teach."

"Have you forgotten how long I had to wait for this situation? How much of what I have earned here has had to go to pay the debts incurred during that weary waiting?"

Alas! she had not. And for a moment Una's heart failed her. But there is always one star shining in the darkest sky—the polar star of duty.

"God will help us, Philip, if we do what is right, At the worst we can appeal to Uncle Leigh."

"Or starve! I would rather a hundred times, Una, and I think you have a little pride."

Pride! What had they to do with pride? He read the thought in her eyes and shrank. "I do not need that suggestion from you," he said bitterly.

"Do you suppose I do not know how low I have fallen, Una, that in the eyes of every honest man I would be a thief, deserving of the penitentiary? And that is where I may land if that contemptible fellow in yonder leaves this house before I have time to extricate myself." Philip faced his sister once more with a world of hopeless rage and pain in his eye. "Una! if he had not come you might never have known, and I might have left this place without discovery. But he is in the pay of men who have sus-



pected us from the first and they will show no mercy. The sneak! The coward! I wish I had let him try to cross that ford this morning."

"Philip!"

He controlled himself when he saw the pallor of her face.

"I cannot help it, Una. There seem to be a hundred devils in my soul. Pray for me, if you have the heart to pray! I have lost the power. Hark! did you not hear something at that door?"

"It is the wind," answered Una faintly. But her brother rose, went to the door and looked out. He came back with a shamed look in his eyes.

"See what I have come to!" he said gloomily. "To tremble at the shaking of a latch." I thought he might have stolen from his bed and be listening to our conversation. Ha! that is the very thing he was talking about last night. 'The wicked flee when no man pursueth.' I wonder what kind of a conscience he has."

Una did not answer. She was trying to think what they ought to do, asking God to teach her. If she could only be sure of the path she would tread it though it was over red-hot ploughshares—ay, and make him tread it too! For already she divined that without her aid the weak feet beside her would falter in the hard road of return and restitution. But love, as well as courage, "mounts with occasion." She rose at last and put writing materials before him.

"What am I to do?" he asked pitifully.

"You are to write to the company—now! Tell them that you will connive at the fraud no longer, that you feel that your silence has been criminal, and that we leave here tomorrow if the roads are passable. Tell them, too, that if they do not abandon the mine at once you will publish them, that if you do not hear from them before the end of the week, you will send a specimen of the rock to the state chemist."

"They will only laugh at me. I know them better than you do."

"Then keep your word. O Philip, how can you hesitate? You owe it to yourself, to God, to the hard-working people who have put their money into this swindle."

"It is those hard-working people who will suffer most, Una. The stock is already on the market. The exposure will ruin them."

"At least it will keep more from being ruined. Philip! Until that letter is sent I shall feel as if the bread I eat was stolen."

Philip flushed a dark angry red. He drew the paper to him, and began to write. But in a minute he stopped and looked up.

"Carson—what are we to do about him? If the disclosure is made, it is of the utmost importance that it should come from us. But he will anticipate us if he can."

"You will have to speak to Mr. Carson, Philip. You will have to tell him the truth, how sorely you have been tempted, and how resolved you are now

to expose the fraud. I believe he will be generous and give you the opportunity to do so."

But Una had struck granite. Philip threw down his pen with a blaze of anger in his face.

"Confess myself a scoundrel to him? Appeal to his compassion, who already suspects and despises me? I will do nothing of the kind, Una! I will run the risk of the penitentiary first. He is too keen on the scent, too eager to divide the spoils. You forget he is to receive a handsome reward for hounding us down. I should like to tell him what I think of him—to stab a man while he eats his bread."

"You forget that he feels he is doing his duty in exposing a fraud. I believe he will be merciful, that he has a kind heart."

"Men do not carry their hearts into business, like women. Say no more, Una. If there was no other reason, I have no right to betray the secrets of my employers until I have given them the opportunity to save themselves by an open confession. As yet this man only suspects. He has no positive proof, not a grain of the rock to support his accusations. There is that door again! We must have it fixed tomorrow. It makes me nervous."

"The wind is rising," answered Una, but she knew it was not the door that made him nervous. She picked up the pen and placed it once more in his hand. There were tears in her eyes, but her heart had girded itself up, anew, ready, if need were, to go down to

the very gates of hell and wrest the spoil from the strong.

“There is no faith to be kept with wicked men, Philip. It can never be right to shield a wrong. That is Satan tempting you. Resist him. Write the letter. This is a critical moment in your life. If you fail now you will have harder battles to fight.”

But Philip had suddenly grown as white as the collar at his throat. He put up a shaking hand to his eyes.

“I cannot see,” he said faintly. “It is one of my blind headaches, Una. I must lie down.”

There was nothing to do but assist him to the couch, administer the anodyne he was accustomed to take at such times, and then in response to his repeated entreaties to leave him.

“We cannot talk any more tonight, Una. Go to bed and to sleep, if you can. Tomorrow, I will be better able to think.”

Tomorrow! That is what we say to our good angels, our better selves, as if the present was a tide that waited our will, and the future a sea with no reefs and currents of its own.

## CHAPTER VI.

### AT THE PIT'S MOUTH

The cocks crowed that night before Una fell asleep. When she woke the sun was shining in through the comb of the unceiled roof, and the brightness of the light without told her that the world had been long astir. She dressed hastily and went into the outer room. Maggie, alone, was standing over the fire.

"Mr. Arnold said ye was up late, and I wasn't to call ye," she explained, in answer to a gentle reproach. "Eh, Miss Una, but ye look like a ghost. And the master didn't look much better when he went off."

"Has my brother gone out?"

"He said he had to go to town to git his horse and mail a letter, but ye wasn't to worry about him, Miss Una. He was feelin' better and would git back as soon as he could. He and the strange gentleman took breakfast together soon arter sun-up. I think the strange gentleman's going today, Miss. I hearn him tell Mr. Arnold he'd got to git across the river if he had to swim over, and Mr. Arnold telt him to wait until he got back and he'd see how the roads

was, if he could he would take him down in the buggy. There's yer breakfast now. I've kept it nice and hot for ye."

But Una could make little pretense of touching the food. Her heart had sunk strangely at the tidings. Was it only consideration for her that had made Philip forbear to break her rest, or had he wished to escape further importunities? Was the letter he had gone to mail the one she had begged him to write?

"Where is Mr. Carson?" she asked without looking up.

Maggie indicated the room across the passage. "In thar. He's been writin' ever sence he finished eating. Lord knows what he writes so much about! But I think he wants to see ye, Miss Una. He's axed oncet or twice if ye was up yet. Shall I tell him?"

"Yes. Ask if there is anything I can do for him." But Una sat with her face buried in her hands while her servant did the errand. She shrank from meeting the eyes of her brother's guest. What did he want to see her about? Was he going to question her about the mine? She could not tell a falsehood, but she had no right to betray Philip's secret. Surely Mr. Carson was too much of a gentleman to try to wring the truth from her. With a start she remembered that there had been angels of light, as well as spirits of darkness, hovering over their roof during the night. Perhaps the answer had come already to the petition which, even in her own misery, she

had not forgotten to offer? The sound of a step made her look up. Maggie was standing in the doorway with a startled face.

"He hain't thar. He's gone," she announced.

"Gone?"

"Thar hain't nobody in thar, and thar hain't no papers on the table. I hain't seed nobody go through the passage nother. But I reckon he moight hev done it while I was taking up yer breakfast."

"It is a fine day. He has probably gone for a walk." But once again Una was conscious of a strange sinking at her heart. Was it only the reaction from the trying scene of the night before; or was it the fine shadow with which the spirit warns the sense of the approach of danger? She went to the door and looked out.

It was a glorious morning. The air, purified by the recent rains, was fine as an elixir. The sky, the woods, the hills, had been limned afresh by the brush that paints the world. The leaves danced like hearts that could not be still for joy. But up and down the slopes, as far as her eyes could reach, no form was visible. He must have been gone some time. Una turned back to the room. As if the day were like any other in her life and not already separated from the past and future by a sea she could not sound, she set about her morning's work and gave directions for the midday meal. Then she shut herself in her room and began packing her own and Philip's trunk. Their duty was clear, now,

as the morning light. They must leave the mine before another sun had set.

It was noon when she heard the sound of hoofs upon the rocky road. She came out just in time to see Philip riding in. His hair and dress were disordered, and there were flecks of foam upon his horse's neck.

"You have had a hard ride," she said as he came up.

But he did not seem to hear, nor did he meet her eyes as he dismounted. The shame of last night's confession was still on him she thought.

"Has Mr. Carson come in?" he asked.

It did not occur to her until afterward to wonder how he knew that their guest was out.

"Not yet," she answered.

"That is strange. I promised to be here by eleven, and he was anxious to hear the report I should bring of the roads. Halloo, there!" He raised his voice to attract the attention of two of his workmen who chanced to be passing on their way home to dinner. "Have either of you seen this morning the gentleman who has been stopping at my house for a day or two?"

The men looked at each other, and then at him.

"If ye mean that thar stranger as was with ye at the meetin' last night, I seed him about two hours ago. He war standing outside the mine when I come up in the car." It was Allan, the gray-haired foreman, who spoke.



"Said he wanted to see Gideon; Jess said he'd show him the way," added his companion.

"Jess! What was he doing in leaving his work at that hour?"

"He'd asked to be excused, said he was sick. Hain't the young gentleman come in yit, sir?"

"No, and I begin to feel uneasy. He may have wandered from the road and gotten on dangerous ground. I must see Jess. Come with me, Allan. Jake, take my horse and ride down to Bailey's. I saw Sheriff Holmes there as I came by. If Mr. Carson is not found soon we will have to get out a search-party. And the sheriff ought to be notified. Tell him I say so, and ask him, if he has time, to ride up here."

"Philip, what do you mean? What makes you talk like that?" Una caught her brother's sleeve as he was turning away. "Surely, Mr. Carson has only lost sight of time and will be in presently. At least let me give you something to eat before you go out again."

But Philip shook off the hand he loved as if it had been a serpent.

"Eat! Do you suppose I could eat now?" he exclaimed, and strode away. He had never spoken to her in that tone before.

Una caught up her sunbonnet, and hurried after him. He was leading the way down the hollow with long nervous strides and did not seem to know when she joined them. It was the old miner who helped her down the steep descent and over the rough places.

In five minutes they had reached the camp—the “quarters” of the old farm—and were hastening down the path in front of the row of cabins. Dirty children scrambled out of their way and slatternly women stared at them from the doorways. But Philip took no notice, nor paused, until he reached the last hut where Jess sat smoking on the doorstep.

He took his pipe from his mouth and touched his cap in acknowledgment of his employer's presence, but made no movement to rise. “Jess,” said Philip, panting slightly after his rapid walk, “I am told that Mr. Carson left the mine at ten o'clock in your company. He has not come in yet and I begin to feel anxious. Where did you part with him?”

The miner's eyes turned on the wooded hollow below.

“Down thar,” he said laconically. “He didn't come my way.”

“Which way did he go? Did you notice?”

Jess indicated the western shoulder of the mountain.

“That-a-way. Said he wanted to see Gideon.”

“I sent Barnes to cut wood on the other side of the cave-in,” explained the foreman.

Philip turned on his heel without further interrogation.

“We must find Gideon,” he said in a hollow voice. Allan pressed close to him as they climbed the slope.

“Ye don't think he could have gone too close to the cave-in, d'ye?” he asked in frightened whisper.

"Hit's pretty well grown over by now and a stranger moight come on it afore he noticed."

"If he has it is his own fault. I warned him against the place the first night he was in our house. Hark! that is Gideon's ax. Call to him, Allan. See if you can make him hear."

The old man's shout brought Gideon running to them. He looked dismayed when he heard why he was wanted.

"I hain't laid eyes on him since I seen him with you at the meetin' last night," he declared. "Who said he wanted to see me?"

"Jess. He told Jake so, too."

"Hit's strange. I hain't seed nothin' of him, and I've been cuttin' up here all day. Ye don't think anything's happened to him, d'ye?" Gideon seemed all at once struck with the expression on the three faces.

"I fear—the worst!" answered his employer; and without further parley, he led the way to the spot in the direction of which it was evident his fear had all along tended. The others followed, in silence, for a few paces. Then Allan, who had been closely scanning the ground, stopped short with a startled cry.

"Here's the print of a boot," he said.

"And here's another," echoed Gideon, who was a step or two in front.

The impression was as distinct as a seal, the small well-shaped boot having sunk deep into the clay,

soft from the recent rain. Philip sat down suddenly on a fallen tree.

"Go on. Do not mind me," he said impatiently as his men hesitated and looked at him. They obeyed but Una sat down beside him and laid her warm, open hand on his cold, clenched one. They had not long to wait. In a few moments, in place of the murmur of voices just ahead there came a sudden awful silence. Philip sprang up.

"What is it?" he called.

There was no answer and he hurried forward. The first break in the trees brought them in sight of the place beneath which the roof of the mine had given way—a wide deep chasm, partially filled with brushwood and fallen timber; the edge, as Allan had suggested, already obscured by the new growth of the spring. On the side nearest to them, near a clump of dogwood, the ground had been newly broken and a pit opened its black mouth to the sky. The shattered blossoms on the brink looked as if the tree might have been caught at in a frantic clutch for life. Allan held in his hand the cap which Mr. Carson had worn during his stay in the hills.

"Hit war lyin' on the edge," he whispered. "He must hev dropped hit when he found hissself fallin'."

And then they were all silent, staring down into the awful blackness, while the sweet spring air blew all about them, and a building-bird lit on a blossoming bough overhead and burst into a rapture of song.

Philip was the first to rouse. "He may be clinging

to a ledge, or the root of a tree," he gasped. "Call to him, one of you. I have no breath."

It was Gideon who responded, trying the ground inch by inch as he advanced, laying hold of a tree as he bent over the opening and put his hand to his mouth. "Hallo, down thar! Mr. Carson, d'ye hear? Give us one word, sir, and we'll try to git ye out."

There was no answer but the hollow echo with which the depth gave back his voice. Once again the miner called with all the strength of his mighty lungs, but with the same result. Then he turned and looked sadly at his employer. "'Tain't no use, sir! Thar's but one voice as'll reach him now and that's the one as wakes the dead."

"But he may be stunned, unconscious, unable to answer," exclaimed Philip. "The place must be searched. Allan, go down and bring up the men. Twenty dollars to the first who will go down! Thirty!

The miners exchanged glances. Gideon took a piece of candle from his pocket, secured it to a ball of twine, lit it and lowered it carefully down the opening. After a few seconds he drew it up again. The flame had gone out. The miner returned the candle to his pocket and came back sadly to the safer ground where the others stood.

"Hit's as I feared, sir. The place is full of death-damp. If that poor young gentleman warn't dead when he reached the bottom he's met his God afore this, and so will any man who goes down arter him."

Then Philip's fortitude gave way. He turned

and leaned heavily on the slight shoulder of the girl beside him.

"My God, my punishment is greater than I can bear!" she heard him murmur. Una looked pitifully at Gideon.

"Is there no way to reach him through the mine?" she asked.

"Only by cuttin' our way through that." He pointed to the gulf of earth, rock and timber, below.

Philip had looked up at the word.

"It shall be done," he cried. "If it takes years, it shall be done. The men shall work day and night. I will move heaven and earth but that his body shall be given decent burial. Living or dead, he shall be taken out. The sheriff must see to it."

"There be the sheriff and Jake now, comin' up the clove," said Allan.

"Wave your cap to them. Tell them to come up here. Mr. Holmes must see the place."

The sheriff was a stout middle-aged man and arrived panting.

"I came up in search of a wild cat still, but I seem to have found quarry of another sort," he commented when he had heard the story and examined the spot. "It's useless to talk about rescuing him, Arnold. The man that stepped over that brink will never see God Almighty's daylight again and he's got a sepulcher deep enough to satisfy any ghost—though, of course, we will make an effort to recover the body and give it burial. But there's another side to this affair."

The officer of the law turned his back upon the pit and drew the superintendent of the mine aside. "It's mighty strange, after being warned about it, that that young man should have stumbled into this place the first time he went out. Who was he last seen with?"

"Jess Stubbs."

"A bad branch of a bad tree." The sheriff wheeled round on Jess' mates. "Was there any bad blood between Stubbs and the stranger?"

"Not as I knows of," said Gideon.

"Nor I," said Allan.

"They had some words about the mine a while back," said Jake, "but they seemed pleasant enough this mornin'."

"All the same it will do no harm to call on Stubbs and ask him a few questions. And the sooner I make my visit the better. Lead the way, my men, to the camp."

"Holmes, this suspicion is unwarranted." Philip laid his hand on his friend's sleeve. "Everything goes to show that the death was an accident. Why, you might as well accuse me because he was staying at my house, or Gideon, because he had asked to see him. Jess was not with him more than five minutes."

"Then it can do no harm to interrogate him. Let me alone, Arnold. I understand these things better than you do. Hallo, are you going to faint?" For Philip had tottered, as if he was about to fall.

Una slipped her hand through his arm.

"My brother is tired," she said. "He has just come in from a long ride and has had nothing to eat since breakfast."

"You look very much in need of dinner or something else yourself, young lady. This is rough work for you. You had better take your brother home and let me finish it up."

But Philip would not listen to this. "I will see it through," he said doggedly. And once again on the way back to the camp he made an effort to intercede for Jess; but the sheriff cut him short.

"You are all knocked up, Arnold, or you would see that you are the last one to put any difficulties in my way. Why, man, the young fellow was staying in your house, and you owe it to yourself as well as the public and the poor fellow's relatives—if he has any—to see that the matter is thoroughly investigated."

After that Philip held his peace. But as they neared the camp Una drew her brother back.

"Have you forgotten Saturday night?" she faltered "Jess was very angry. Could that have had anything to do with this?"

Philip turned upon her a face of absolute dismay.

"Una—for God's sake do not let a whisper of that pass your lips—unless you want to put a halter about an innocent man's neck. Jess knows no more about Carson's death than you do."

"Then thank God!" she whispered. They quickened their steps and overtook the others just as the



sheriff came out of Jess' cabin with a blank face.

"I was a bit too slow, the bird has flown," he announced. "But this confirms my suspicions. I will issue a warrant for his arrest at once, and if he cannot answer my questions satisfactorily he will have to wait the meeting of the grand jury, in a place he will not like."

"This is as hasty as your first conclusion." Philip spoke with more dignity and self-control than he had previously shown. "The man may only have stepped out for a few moments. Cannot some of these women tell you something about him?"

"No, sir! They have all been conveniently deaf and blind for the last half hour. Strange, the suddenness with which afflictions come upon people sometimes. Stay! Here is one, coming up from the spring, that I haven't seen. Let us try her."

It was Becky Barnes on her way home from the creek where she had been washing. She put down her basket and placed her arms akimbo when she heard why she was wanted.

"Yaas, I knows him," she drawled in answer to the first interrogation.

"Seen anything of him in the last quarter of an hour?"

"Didn't take no count of time. It moight hev been a quarter or it moight hev been more."

"Where did you see him?"

She pointed to the spring.

"O, he was down there, was he?"

"No. I seen him when I was down thar."

"Well, where was he when you were down there and saw him?" The sheriff was beginning to lose his temper. "Come, girl, you know what I'm after well enough. Tell me where you saw that fellow last, unless you want to go into the lock-up with him and have your wits brightened with the clink of steel bracelets."

Becky opened her blue eyes in innocent surprise. "Thar," she said pointing to the road. "He said he had the toothache and war goin' to town."

"O, and you heard him say that while you were down at the springs? Pretty good lungs he must have, or pretty keen ears you've got." Mr. Holmes began to recover his good-humor and Becky to flush angrily. "Look here woman! You know more about this matter than you care to let on. You'll be called for at the inquest, and if you are not a little more free with your tongue you may get into trouble. And let me give you a message for that friend of yours the next time you see him. Tell him, if he knows what is good for himself, he won't wait to have a warrant served on him. An honest man has got nothing to fear from the law, and a man is mighty foolish to run away unless he's done something he is ashamed of."

"And who says he's runned away?" Becky suddenly blazed out. "Who say he's done something he's ashamed of? I know. Ye needn't be hidin' back thar, Gideon Barnes. It's easy to see who's at

the bottom of this. It's all a piece of the jealousy with which ye makes my life miserable. If the sheriff knowed ye as I do he'd not heed anything ye say about Jess Stubbs."

"Silence, woman!" roared the officer. But the attack had been so violent, so unexpected, that the whole group turned and looked at Gideon. He had flushed to the roots of his hair but answered quietly:

"Ye're wrong there, lass. It's the sheriff's own thought, 'cause Jess was the last un in the company with the poor young gentleman."

"And who's to say he was the last?" Becky retorted viciously. I seen 'em part at the spring with my own eyes. Who's to say the stranger didn't meet no one else on the mountain? I take it there's only two as knows, him as can't speak, and him as won't. Better look to yerself, Gideon Barnes, or folks'll be askin' ye questions which mebbe ye'll like to answer and mebbe ye won't—if ye be pious. Prayin' and preachin' is all very well afore folks, but what's behind? Hit's well they don't know. If ye was cuttin' wood up thar, why didn't I hear yer ax for an hour and more? And if the stranger was lookin' for ye, why didn't he find ye? Who's to say he didn't? Better look to yerself, I tell ye. One man's word is as good as another's."

"Not when one man is Jess Stubbs and the other is Gideon Barnes." The sheriff had been taken by surprise, but now he turned away haughtily. "Gideon, you may be summoned on the inquest, but you

have nothing to fear if you can tell as straight a story as you have told to me. Curb the tongue of that young wife of yours though or it may get you into trouble. Arnold! I am losing time here. It seems to me the best thing I can do is to communicate with the young man's relatives and see if they think the circumstances as suspicious as I do."

Philip caught his friend's arm with a grasp of steel.

"Holmes, for God's sake! Do not carry this unjust suspicion any further. Listen to me."

But there speech failed him. His grasp relaxed. He put out his arm in the noontday sun as if groping in the night, staggered, and would have fallen had not Gideon caught him. Jake came to his mate's assistance, and together they laid the stricken form down upon the ground. The last ray of consciousness had vanished from the pallid face.

## CHAPTER VII.

### IN EXTREMIS

Before sunset it was known to all the camp that Mr. Arnold had brain fever and that the doctor, who had come up from the valley, said he would have a fight for his life. It was known also that Miss Arnold had refused to have any one share the nursing, and that she had been quite calm and collected from the first. She had even, it was whispered, written out for the sheriff a description of the dead man to be sent to the papers; had had an interview with Allan and given orders that all work in the mine should be suspended until a search had been made for the body.

Gideon, alone, received private instructions from the doctor to linger near the house in case the young lady should at any time be unable to control her brother's paroxysms; and Becky, who had mysteriously recovered her good humor and took great glory to herself from this mark of confidence in her husband, went down at twilight to discuss the situation with the loungers in her father's store. She was in a full tide of talk, relating, very much to the credit of her own shrewdness, her interview with the sheriff, when

a boy rushed in with the news that he had seen the body of a man floating in the creek and that he and the lad who was with him would take their oath it was Jess Stubbs. Gideon's wife went into hysterics, and a party of men at once set out to investigate. The report proved only too well founded. In a couple of hours the corpse of the young miner, swollen and bruised well-nigh beyond recognition, was borne into camp, and carried across the sill where he had sat smoking that afternoon. It was evident that finding the bridge swept away he had tried to swim the stream and been carried down by the current. But whether in a flight from justice, or only "goin' to town" as Becky had averred, was a secret the dead lips kept well. With the charity with which we soften our verdicts when they can no longer pain, even Mr. Holmes was inclined to take the kindest view of the matter.

"If he had anything to do with that young stranger's death it didn't take long for justice to overtake him," he said grimly when he came, the next morning to hold the inquest. "But I rather think now I was hasty in my judgment."

Gideon voiced the sentiment of the camp when he answered:

"He's gone up to a higher bar, sir. It don't make no difference to him now what any of us thinks." And that day, beside the open grave, the prophet of Rupert camp preached a sermon his hearers never forgot.

"Prepare to meet your God. Be ready!" was the message with which he now thundered at their hearts, and shook the rusty bolts of more than one. The men and women who listened thought not only of the man lying in the sod at their feet, but of that other who had stepped, so suddenly, out of the sunshine into his grave and lay buried, God only knew where. For although the camp, to a man, at once set to work to recover the body, the effort proved fruitless.

At the close of the second day Allan waited upon Una. The mine and its chambers had been thoroughly searched without the least trace being discovered. Further exploration would imperil the lives of the men and they had refused to go on.

Philip's sister listened, standing pale and straight, and dry-eyed, in the little porch where she and John Carson had stood that Sunday night. "Then we must give it up. There has been enough tragedy," she said in a low voice and turned to go in.

But the foreman with a deprecating gesture and an embarrassed cough intimated that he had something further to communicate. It came out at last. The men had become superstitious about a place where a man lay unburied; and there had been an agent from a mine on the other side of the mountain, in the camp that day, offering them higher wages. They would all leave in the morning, and, begging her pardon for deserting Mr. Arnold at such a time, he would have to go too. He could not run the mine by himself, and he had a family to think of.

“I felt plum mean to tell her, with him a-lyin’ in thar, sick,” the old man acknowledged afterwards to Jake. “But, Lord bless ye, man! she didn’t seem to care a cent. She jest said it was all right, she was glad the men had got honest work, and she hoped Mr. Arnold’d leave too, when he got well. And then her face got the quivers and I was glad to git away.”

The next morning at sunrise, as she sat watching beside her brother’s bed, Una heard the bustle of preparations across the hollow and knew that the camp was breaking up, and they were to be left alone. But all trouble outside those four walls seemed but lightning in a distant cloud. All other fears merged into the one black dread which lay like a pall upon her heart. Maggie had promised to remain and her family would be within call. The doctor had said he would take Philip down to his own home in the valley as soon as he was able to be moved. But when would that be? Would it ever be? With the light of the new day the shadows lay blacker under his eyes, his nostrils looked whiter and more pinched.

How trifling now seemed the verdicts of earth, face to face with the decisions of eternity! She did not deal untruly with herself. She did not say his sin was less than she had thought it at the first, nor that he had repented of it before he had been stricken down at her feet.

With the strength that comes to one only at such



crises, and which is born "not of the flesh but of the spirit," she had guarded his secret, and permitted no ear but her own to hear his delirious ravings. But those restless cries echoed only too clearly the struggle of Sunday night.

Not once since he had been brought home on the shoulders of his workmen had he uttered a conscious word, or seemed to be aware of anything that was going on around him.

Was he to go from her thus—into the land where opportunity could not come, and where change might not follow?

With love that would not be denied she clung to the skirts of God's mercy, and cried to the helper, who yet "answered her not a word."

That day brought the first mail that had come up the mountain since the storm. There were two letters for Philip. The first was from the secretary of the company. Owing to lowness of funds, he wrote, the owners of the mine felt compelled to abandon the work for the present. Mr. Arnold was requested to shut down the mine, and look out for another situation.

The second envelope bore the address to which Philip had sent his designs. Una held it in her hand for a full minute before opening it. Then, as she unfolded the sheet with trembling fingers, a check fell into her lap, and through a mist of tears she read warm words of praise for her brother's work, upon which it was said the committee had decided unani-

mously the moment it was laid before them. Mr. Vanburgh, was anxious to meet the architect who had so fully realized his dream and to consult with him on minor details. He would gladly pay Mr. Arnold's expenses to New York if he could find it convenient to meet him there before his departure for Europe. He hoped they might make some arrangement, if consistent with other engagements, by which Mr. Arnold could live near the plantation during the summer and oversee the building.

Una struggled with herself for a moment, and then let the tears which had lain congealed in her heart have their way. If it could only have come sooner! Now it seemed like putting meat and drink beside a man in the death-agonies from starvation. But, surely, God would not mock men so! He was a father "full of compassion" and did not "deal with us after our sin." No; she would take it as a "token for good," a pledge that his hand was outstretched to save. As a soul in the ark may have clung to the first green blade, she could not let go her hold of the letter, and with it still in her hand she went back to the sick-room where the low, delirious mutterings had never ceased.

Maggie was standing by the bed.

"He's been tryin' to git up," she said, excitedly. "He thinks he sees that stranger agoin' into the pit, and he's tryin to save him. Look thar now!"

With the swift, stealthy movement of insanity, Philip had made a spring and was nearly out of his couch

before they could reach him. Desperately he struggled with the arms that drew him back. Gazing with horror, his eyes fastened themselves on the farther corner of the room.

"Let me go," he panted. "He is on the brink. He will be gone in a moment. Carson! Carson! Good God! He does not hear. It is too late." He fell back, shuddering, and hid his face in his bed-clothes as if to shut out some terrible vision.

Maggie's rosy face had blanched. "He makes my hair fair stand on end," she faltered. "If he do that much more, Miss Una, I'll begin to see the dead man myself."

Una motioned her away. "Go back to the kitchen," she said, gently. "I am not afraid, Maggie. I have seen him this way before." She bent over the trembling figure and tried to uncover the hidden face that she might replace the cold bandages upon his brow. The sick man fiercely resisted her effort and cowered down yet deeper, still shuddering and muttering. Then, all at once, the sister heard a step behind her, and looking up saw Gideon.

"Maggie called me. She was afeared ye couldn't manage him," he explained humbly, and for the moment Una lacked the strength to send him away.

"I want to bathe his head," she whispered.

Gideon stooped, and with no ungentle touch, removed the sheet, enabling her to perform her tender ministry. For a few moments nothing more was said.

At last, when the feverish brain had been soothed into temporary quiet, she glanced up.

"I thought you went with the rest," she said.

"I couldn't leave ye with him like that," he answered. The pity in his eyes said more than the words. Una's full cup ran over. All at once, she was no longer the self-controlled, self-contained woman, but a stricken girl, reaching out to a nature stronger than her own.

"O Gideon, I am afraid he is going to leave me!" she cried. "Sleep is the only thing that can save him, and nothing the doctor can give him will keep him quiet for more than a few minutes. Pray for him—for us both."

"I don't need to begin to do that now, Miss Una." But the miner bowed his head as he spoke, and in the hush that followed Una felt that he was interceding for them both. She seemed to see the audience chamber of the king and the outstretched sceptre.

Then Gideon asked gently:

"Have ye tried singin' to him, Miss Una?"

It was such a simple thing, such a natural thing, she could never understand why she had not thought of it before. Perhaps, because it was so simple, and she had felt she must do some great thing. Now she found the key had been in her own hand all the while.

Softly at first, like a voice that came from far away, she crooned an old-time lullaby, one that their moth-

er had sung to them both. Then as Philip ceased his muttering and turned to her, she gathered courage and sang louder, until the melody filled the room and floated out into the sweet outer sunshine. By that time she was on her knees beside him, her head on his pillow. His face drew closer and closer to hers. His eyes rested on her as if fascinated. His hands had ceased their weary plucking at the bedclothes. His lips grew still. The lids quivered once over the bloodshot eyes—twice—then stirred no more. In ten minutes he was asleep, his breath coming softly and evenly as a child's. But afraid to stop, Una sang on and on until at last Gideon touched her sleeve imploringly:

“He's sound now, Miss Una. And he'll need ye more when he wakes. Let me watch him for ye while ye go and take some rest. I'll call ye if he stirs.”

He was still asleep when she came back two hours later.

Not until the last rays of sunlight were slanting into the room did he waken; and then it was only to take a little nourishment, to smile upon her for a moment and go to sleep once more. When the doctor came the next morning he pronounced his patient free of fever and the crisis passed. All they had to do now, he said, was to feed him and help him up the slope.

But it was slow climbing. For the first twenty-four hours the sick man was like a babe; sleeping, eating, and taking as a matter of course all that went

on around him. Then his eyes began to follow Una about with a troubled look, as if he was trying to remember something. His face saddened inexpressibly. Suddenly, on the second night, as she sat watching beside him, he asked about Jess. The next morning, he inquired whether Mr. Carson's body had been found, and if anything had been heard from his people. When he was told that the dead man's antecedents seemed as such wrapped in mystery as his burial-place, he looked at her strangely.

"The geological bureau! Did you forget that, Una?"

"No, Philip. But they told the reporter who called on them that they had no agent in the hills, and knew no one by that name. Mr. Carson was not the man you took him for."

"Not the man I took him for!" Philip repeated the words in a slow, horror-struck tone. Then he covered his face. "My God, my punishment is greater than I can bear!" he cried, as he had done upon the mountain side.

Una was beside him in a moment, tenderly drawing down the shielding hands. She had had time to think of many things in those long days and nights while she watched.

"I know what you mean, Philip. I saw it in your face the other morning when we stood at the mouth of that pit. No, do not turn away from me. Whatever comes, you know, we will bear it together. And it is better to look things in the face than to hide from

them. It is because you were angry with Mr. Carson, because in your misery and despair you even felt that you hated him, that his death would be relief to you. When you found that he had been taken out of the way, it seemed an answer to that terrible wish—as if you had done it.”

But Philip pushed her away and turned his face to the wall.

“You cannot understand,” he said hoarsely. “In the sight of God, I am guilty of his death.”

“No, you are not! You shall not say harsher things of yourself than are true, Philip. I know the Bible says, ‘Whoso hateth his brother is a murderer.’ But you did not hate Mr. Carson in that way. Even when you believed it was in his power to ruin you, you would not let him cross the bridge that was not safe. You would risk disgrace, now—you know you would—to bring him back.”

“I would give my right hand—the best years of my life, to see him stand there before me! But what is the use of talking, Una? I cannot undo the past.” Philip raised himself on his elbow. His lips blanched. He seemed about to make some revelation. But at that moment Maggie appeared in the doorway. “Mr. Arnold’s broth is ready, will Miss Una please come and see to the seasoning?”

Upon such small hinges do the great events of life sometimes turn!

When Una re-entered the sick-room her brother’s purpose, if purpose there had been, had

changed. He took no notice of her presence, and lay with eyes closed, as if asleep. For a while she hoped that he was. But presently she became aware that the eyes had opened again, and that he was watching her, when he thought she did not see, with an expression of hopeless, speechless misery. What there was in the look to chill the blood in her, heart, she could not tell; but, all at once, an awful fear laid hold upon her—a fear she dared not name—into whose face she could not look. What was worse—she knew now that it had been there all the time; it had stood beside them on the brink of that pit in the sweet May sunshine, it had watched with her in that very room through the long days and nights. What was it he had been about to tell her? Unbidden, there rushed back upon her memory stories of men—overcome by sudden passion or terrible temptation—who, in a moment of moral insanity, had committed deeds they would never have been capable of in their cooler moods and which they would have given all their after-lives to recall. Was it possible that Philip had known what they were going to find on that mountain side? Was the grave, which remained such a secret to every one else, no secret to him? One by one, the damaging circumstances closed about her, and beat with hammers of iron upon her brain—her brother's excited manner on his return that day, his abrupt inquiry for their guest, his strange behavior during the search, his passionate defense of Jess.



For an instant, she shrank from the figure upon the bed; the next moment, with the love that is deeper than life and "strong as death," she turned back to him. If indeed, there rested upon his soul a shadow darker than that of the mine—a shadow he feared to name even to her—he needed her more than ever. But he should name it! "Whatever comes we will bear it together." How often she had said it! He should see now that she had not kept back any part of the price. He should not sit in darkness and she walk in sunshine. If the door did not open to her of its own accord, she would force an entrance; she would question him. But, even as she made the resolve, the sister knew that it might not be. If Philip was innocent, if this horrible thought was only the nightmare of her disordered nerves, she would inflict upon his sensitive nature a wound which he might forgive, but would always carry. If he was not innocent! With a swift pang she realized the loneliness to which he had doomed himself. Even she, his nearest and dearest, had no right to extort from him a secret he must guard as jealously as life itself. Neither dared she draw down upon herself the awful question of duty which would be involved. No, with that grave, a gulf had opened between them—a gulf which she might not pass—on either side of which, each heart must bear its own burden.

At this point in her sad thoughts a slight sound from the bed made her turn. The first glimpse of

the face upon the pillow produced a revulsion of feeling. Philip was asleep; the soft hand of slumber had effaced the sad lines and restored the perfect curves to the face—always delicate in its beauty, and now refined by sickness into a rare spirituality of expression. This was not the face of a man who had thoughts that would refuse to bear the light. This was not the slumber of one whose dreams were full of dread. It was she who had been the guilty one—to let such a thought darken for a moment the sunlit share of her love and peace. Like a tide called back to the sea, the fear slipped away. Una knelt down beside the bed and touched the thin hand upon the coverlet with penitent lips.

When Philip awoke, later in the afternoon, she was still beside him, and near his hand lay a letter—the one which until now she had feared to show. He glanced at it indifferently.

“What is it?” he asked.

“It is the answer to your designs.”

“What do they say?”

She told him and put the check in his hands.

“O Philip, now you will get well to do the work that you love! And you will get other orders. We will be very economical, and save all we can, and next year you shall go across the water and study, as you have always wanted to do, in the great cathedrals.”

But the brother's face was as still as a sea when the winds are calm.

"When did Vanburgh say that he would sail?" he asked.

"The second week in June."

"And how soon does the doctor say I can travel?"

"If the weather is good, he thinks we may move you tomorrow to his house in the valley. And then, if you keep on improving, by the middle of next week we may make the journey."

"Then write and say so. Say I have no engagement for the summer, and will be glad to make the arrangement he speaks of."

Una turned to the table and took up a pen. But this quiet acceptance of the joy, that would once have been so much to him, had gone through her like a sword. Was it only weakness which had taken the glow out of success? The black fear was showing its head again, like a snake out of its hole. Philip watched her sadly. Presently he saw a tear steal down her cheek. He reached out and taking her hand held it up between him and the light.

"I thought so! I can almost see through it, and you look five years older, Una, than when you came up here. You have given life for me, life out of your youth. Yet what would have become of me if you had not been here?"

Ah, they trade, these fond women, in a coin of which the markets know nothing. What gifts they will give—and count them nothing, too—for a word like that! In a moment she was bending over him, laughing and crying in a breath.

"There is nothing the matter with me, Philip. I am only weak and nervous."

"Weak! Who has helped you nurse me? Ah, I see, and I know, too, why it was done. Una, did I say anything while I was delirious that you would not have wished any one else to hear?"

"No, Philip. You said little about the mine. You were always trying to save Mr. Carson, or to defend Jess."

"Ah! Well, Una, write the letter. And when that is finished, you shall write another, at my dictation, to the state chemist. I cannot rest satisfied with the mere abandonment of the mine. The public must know what will prevent it ever being opened again."

When both letters were written and despatched by Maggie to the cross-roads to catch the mail-rider, he began to talk about their journey and their plans for the summer.

She saw that it was for her sake, for the suffering look in his eyes never changed, but she realized also that it was good for him and encouraged the conversation. It was noticeable that from that time he tried to rouse himself. He noticed the flowers she had put on the table beside his bed; he asked for his sketch book and looked over the drawings with her; he sent her down to the spring to see if the violets were still there and to bring him some. And, finally, when Gideon called at twilight to say he was

going to the new camp in the morning, and to ask if there was anything he could do for them, Philip proposed that the miner should sleep on a pallet in his room and let his sister go to her chamber and take a whole night's rest.

It was in the small hours that Una woke and heard them talking. She knew at once by the tones that Philip had become excited, and that Gideon was trying to soothe him. She dressed quickly, and went to the door. It would annoy her brother to know that her rest had been broken; she would not go in unless there was actual need. She leaned her head against the panel and listened. Philip was still talking, but now in low steady tones as if narrating something. She could not distinguish the words, but once or twice, she caught an interjection of surprise from the listener.

What was he telling? Was it something he did not want her to hear? Her brain began to reel, her heart to beat painfully. For a moment she knew nothing of what was going on about her. Then, as she grew calm again, she became aware that Philip had ceased to speak and that Gideon had begun to talk. In a minute, she knew of whom. He was telling her soul-sick brother, as he had told his sinful mates, of Him whose mission it is to "bind up the broken-hearted" and "to set at liberty them that are bruised." With a burst of light the old truth came back upon her. Whatever Philip's sin

might be, yes, though it was "red as crimson," it could be made "as white as snow." The sister slipped to her knees on the hard floor of the passage. If he would only let God blot it out!

How long she knelt there she never knew. At last there was a cry from within the room, the birth-cry of a new spirit, and she knew that "while they were yet speaking," He had heard, that before the petition had left their lips, the mandate of salvation had gone forth.

When Gideon came to say good-bye the next morning, Una thought there was a shadow upon his joy, but Maggie whispered to her that he was having trouble with his wife, that Becky had refused to go with him, and that seemed a sufficient explanation.

In Philip there was a great change. "A broken and a contrite heart"—but no longer a despairing one—looked from his eyes; and when Una read to him from his morning chapter: "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered," he laid his hand on hers and said gently: "I believe He has covered everything, Una! But I have sinned very deeply. I will never be anything but a sad and humble man the rest of my life."

"You will be a stronger and a happier one when you have left the past behind you with those hills," she answered cheerily. But she saw that it would be many a day before he entered into the joy of pardon and forgot what God had canceled.

She could not know that, closer than the shadow of the mountain followed them across the valley that afternoon, the shadows of the mining home would follow them into their new life. She had yet to learn that it is in the power of no man to leave his past behind him, though, by God's help, he may put it under his feet.

## CHAPTER VIII

### THE LODGE

Far away upon the southern coast, in the heart of the tall turpentine pines, the same May sunshine was glinting on the windows of a closed cottage. It was a picturesque little place, built of brick in Queen Anne style with red gables peering through the green and latticed casements, set deep in honeysuckle and ivy. At one period in its history—as its name indicated—the Lodge had been but an appendage to the larger mansion a quarter of a mile back at the head of the oak avenue; but such state had long since passed away with the fortunes of the house. The owners had lived in town since the war, making only occasional visits to their country home, and now that Mr. Cartaret's increasing years had enforced a retirement from business and return to a quiet life, it had been found necessary to make every portion of the estate contribute to the family income. The avenue had been closed, a shorter road had been cut to the village, and the Lodge, set apart as a place by itself, was let out to strangers.

The situation was a lonely one, standing as it did at the entrance of the forest, with a dense swamp



between it and the village, and no nearer neighbor than the Cartaret house, which could be reached only by a circuitous path through the woods, and never seen except when the oaks shed their leaves. The turnpike that passed the gate was little traveled, save by people going to mill, or coming in from one of the plantations.

Even the lease of the place for the last few years by a Northern gentleman had done little to link it with the ordinary life of the village. Mr. Vanburgh brought his own servants, held little intercourse with the townspeople, and never stayed longer than the shooting season. For nine months out of the twelve, the house stood closed and vacant. Gradually a sense of mystery had crept about it, with the ivy around its windows, and the moss upon its stones. It was well known that the tenant had been more than once called from his couch during the first winter of his occupancy by a mysterious tapping at his casement. The sound was afterwards traced to the too luxuriant bough of a crepe-myrtle which grew outside the window; but it was rumored that Mr. Cartaret had changed color when the story was repeated to him, and that there were other phenomena about the place which could not be so easily explained, a light had been seen to glimmer in the deserted rooms at night, and a step had been heard in the vacant corridor. The superstitious who had to pass the gate after nightfall, did so at full speed with head averted; and even the more intelligent

portion of the community were conscious of a shadow as they passed the place in the sunshine.

After all, people said, it would be surprising if a house so old had not seen some strange things; and could not tell some dark stories. The Mansion-house, as the family residence was popularly called in the village, had been twice burned down and rebuilt in the course of its history. But the Lodge was the original structure, for which the sod had been broken in the wilderness by the English gentleman, whose crest could still be seen in the stone medallion above the door. The blue and white tiles in the little hall, and the cherry that paneled the parlor, had been brought from across the sea. Who could tell what heritage of sorrow or shame might not have come over with them, what interest in woe and dread they might not have gathered in the century and a half that had followed? It was certain the owners had contracted a dislike to the place. They avoided passing it whenever it was possible to do so, and it was a matter of common gossip that Mr. Cartaret—though generally very punctilious in matters of etiquette—had never once called upon Mr. Vanburgh during his occupancy. That gentleman had been obliged to go up to the house whenever he had wished to see his landlord upon business. And though the more charitable were inclined to attribute the avoidance to an old man's natural reluctance to see any portion of his ancestral estate in the hands of a stranger, there were others who shook their

heads and spoke behind their hands of a family skeleton, and a painful association with the place. Mr. Cartaret's only son had left home suddenly a few years before, it was said, after a quarrel with his father in the little cherry-lined parlor. He had never come back. At the end of six months, the family had gone into mourning, and the young man's name had been added, without explanation, to the marble tablet which commemorated the virtues of his young mother, on the wall of the village church. A text had been appended, also, "His blood will I require at thy hand."

It sent a shudder through the respectable congregation the first Sabbath after its appearance, though the people had grown used to it in time.

But whether Robert Cartaret had died a violent death, or why his body had not been brought back to sleep with that of his mother, under the violets in the churchyard, no one ventured to inquire. For it was at that time the stoop had come into Mr. Cartaret's shoulders, which told his neighbors that his grief, like Job's, was "very great," and would not bear the touch of words.

And it was then, also, that Stephen Yonge had come to live with his uncle and take charge of his plantations. He was a young man who soon became highly thought of in the community, but one of whom, it was instinctively felt, it would not be wise to ask questions.

When it was learned that the Lodge would be

occupied for the next six months by the architect who was to superintend the building of the Vanburgh forest-palace, there was a fresh outbreak of gossip, and many were the discussions on piazzas and around supper tables as to whether the Cartarets would maintain the same reserve to the new neighbors that they had done to the old. The omission would be more significant than ever, it was maintained, since Mr. Arnold was to bring his sister with him, and Mr. Cartaret's only daughter then would be home from school.

The subject was being handled with some spirit in the village store, one afternoon, when Mr. Yonge came in. He was naturally so cold and impassive in his manner that it was impossible for his neighbors to decide whether he had caught anything of their conversation. Only the woman who was standing at the counter and moved aside to let him make his purchases, noticed the slight whitening of his lips. When he went out, she followed. She was an elderly woman, and wore a shabby black cotton gown, with a homespun sunbonnet drawn low over a care-lined yellow face. By the time she reached the sidewalk Mr. Yonge had stepped into his buggy and driven off. With an activity of which few would have thought the withered frame capable, she quickened her steps, and overtook the vehicle at the corner, where the young man stopped to speak to an acquaintance. When he turned she turned also, keeping always far enough behind to escape the range of his vision.

This went on until they were out of town and in the deep sand of the highway. There the driver slackened his rein and let his mare take her time while his thoughts seemed to wander far away from the dazzling road and the green pines on either side. Once the woman, following like a shadow, gained upon him sufficiently to catch a glimpse of the face under the cover. It was what people call a "good face." There were no weak nor sinister lines. But it was far from handsome. The cheek-bones were high, the brow overhung the pale, deep-set eyes, and there was a touch of severity about the mouth.

At last, as he reached the foot of the hill and the mare was leisurely turning into "the new road," as people called it, Stephen Yonge came out of his abstraction with a start and pulled her back with a sharp hand into the old road which led past the Lodge. The setter, trotting along at his side, looked up in surprise, but seeing that his master knew what he was about, followed obediently. In five minutes they had reached the gate. A carpenter with a box of tools on his shoulder was just coming out.

"I think you'll find everything all right," he said, touching his cap respectfully: "But if you do not, you can leave word at the shop."

"Very well," Mr. Yonge had alighted and was tying his horse to the old hitching-post. The workman, who was a newcomer in the village, saw

nothing unusual in the incident, and went down the road whistling.

There was certainly nothing uncanny in the appearance of the little house as it stood now, bathed in the glory of the afternoon sunshine, with every door and window opened to admit the air, and birds flying in and out of the curtain of roses which veiled the porch. Nor was there anything in the young man's manner as he entered the stone-paved hall to indicate that he was doing anything out of the common.

The house was furnished as Mr. Cartaret had leased it to Charles Vanburgh, the latter gentleman having had the good taste to add little that was modern to the quaint-shaped, elaborately-carved mahogany which so well suited the place. The rooms looked very much as they might have done, ten, twenty years before—with one exception. They were in readiness for strangers.

It is not a pleasant thing to see fires built for others on hearths where we have once gathered with our own, nor tables laid for strangers, where we have once feasted, but will feast no more. The lines sank deeper in the strong face, already more marked than is common for a man under thirty. But there was no falter in the firm tread as the visitor went the round, examining locks and windows, until he came to the chamber at the end of the hall. It had evidently been formed by boarding in a portion of the porch, and was only large enough to accommo-

date a bed, chair, and table. The one window opened to the west, the room was full of sunshine to its farthest corner and sweet with the breath of the honeysuckle which clung about the casement. But Stephen Yonge drew back as if he had come upon a grave, and for a moment it seemed as if he would have turned away without entering. Then he lifted his head—as if bidding defiance to the feeling which had made him hesitate—and crossed the threshold.

As he did so, a footfall sounded like an echo in the room he had just left, not the heavy tramp of a workman returning for a tool, nor the trip of a domestic performing some belated task, but a slow, shuffling, uncertain step which might have chilled the blood in a fainter cheek. Whatever ghostly terrors the place might hold for some it was evident that it had none for the present visitor. Stephen turned and met the gaze of the intruder—a woman, who was just coming out into the hall, the same woman who had followed him out of the store. She had pushed back her bonnet; and the thin gray hair and wrinkled face were plainly visible.

For a moment the two eyed each other in silence. Then the new comer spoke:

“Looks pretty much as it did when he went away, don't it?”

There was no answer. Not a line in Stephen's face moved. But his eyes began to glow.

She came a step nearer.

“Seems like ye didn't hear me! I said as how

things look pretty much as they did when Mr. Robert runned away."

Still no answer. A close observer might have seen that the man was holding himself in with a strong hand. But the visitor misunderstood the silence.

"Stiles don't look as he did afore that night, though, I kin tell ye. He's gittin' wuss and wuss. The doctor says it's softenin' of the brain, and that it was that lick on the head what did it. A log-house in a cotton-patch is mighty small pay to a woman for trouble like that."

She had struck fire from the flint at last. Stephen's eyes lighted.

"It is more than you should have had if I had been here. If blackmail is the object of this visit, Mrs. Stiles, you might have saved yourself the trouble of following me."

"Blackmail or no blackmail, I know what I want, and whar I've got a right to look for it, too. Look a-here, Stephen Yonge. The taxes is due on our house, and hit'll be sold over our heads, and we'll all go to the poorhouse if I don't git help. You know as well as I do whar I've a right to look for it."

"I know where you will not get it. You have had the last penny you will have from us."

She stared at him, incredulously, for a moment. Then her wrinkled face flamed with fury.

"You tell me that! You dare to tell me that! I am not askin' charity, remember."



"I do. And I tell you, once for all, that I am not afraid of you. You can hurt no one."

"Not them as are in their graves, perhaps!" She was nearly choking with rage. "But how about them living here at home, Stephen Yonge? Ha, I thought that would bring down your feathers! The squire don't look as peart as he did a year ago. You know as well as me how he'd like to have me go down the street, and tell who I saw that night gittin' over the fence, and whose whip I found in the bushes!"

But Stephen had turned to the window. "Do that," he said, without looking round, "and I will have you arrested, as I have always wanted to do, for libel. And once the case gets into the court, I warn you, Mrs. Stiles, I will show no mercy."

"Libel! Who's to say I didn't see what I say I saw—that I didn't find what I say I found?" But even as she raved the hag's glance went down beneath the stern eyes fixed upon her. She turned away with a sob in her throat. "You're a hard man, Stephen Yonge, a cruel man," she hissed. "If 'twarn't Mr. Robert as hit my old man I'd like ye to tell me who 'twas. Hit's all the same to him. He's as good as dead and wuss, and my gell's sick in bed; and there hain't a bite in the house and Mr. Brown's refused to let me git any more on credit. But poor folks' troubles are nothing to you. You've a heart as hard as a nether millstone."

"You will find it so if you ever dare to put that

threat into execution. I think we understand each other now, Mrs. Stiles. You had better go."

And she went, but muttering, and with a fiery eye. From his post at the window, Stephen watched her down the walk and out of the gate. Once a look of doubt crossed his face. He leaned out as if to call her back, then he shook his head.

"Better so," he murmured, and resting his head against the casement, he watched her out of sight. Then he went out to his buggy, jumped in, and turned his horse's head toward town.

At the foot of the hill, he met another buggy, coming out. It was that of Mr. Scott, the young minister. Stephen stopped.

"I was just going to see you," he said.

They had a few low-toned words, then the minister turned back to town and Stephen took the new road which led directly to the Cartaret homestead.

Whether their conversation had anything to do with the one that had preceded it can only be inferred; but it is certain that within the next twenty-four hours Mrs. Stiles received an intimation from the grocer that he had reconsidered the matter and would trust her a while longer. And when sales-day came she heard nothing of the taxes that were due upon her place. When she insisted upon knowing the name of her benefactor, she was told that the minister had interposed. The minister—whose church she never darkened—who did not even know her when

he met her upon the road! Mrs. Stiles was too shrewd a woman to be deceived in this way. She was an honest woman also, according to her lights, and made no effort to fulfill the threat she had hurled at Stephen Yonge.

## CHAPTER IX.

### AN OLD MAN'S WILL

The Cartaret library was a pleasant, book-lined room with French windows opening upon a broad piazza, overlooking an old-fashioned garden, a field of green with roses rampant. Through the turned Venetian shutters the south wind, heavy with sweet odors, came softly in that afternoon, as Stephen Yonge sat with his uncle, after dinner. Mr. Cartaret was a stately-looking old gentleman with aquiline features, and a ruddy complexion that contrasted well with his snowy locks and dark eyes. He was seated in a leather arm chair by one of the windows. He held a book in his hand, but he was not reading. His eyes were fixed wistfully on the emerald crown of the pines, visible through the window beyond the rose-garden. Once or twice he glanced inquiringly at his companion. At last, as if the silence had lasted longer than he could brook, he spoke:

"I saw the doctor today, Stephen."

The younger man, who was busy with a book of accounts at a side table, looked up quickly from his papers.

"I hope Bates was able to inform you that your fears were groundless," he remarked quietly.

"On the contrary, I find I have made a very good diagnosis. I will go as my father and grandfather have done. Tut! There is no need to change color at the announcement. We must all 'shuffle off this mortal coil,' some time."

"And you may live to write the epitaphs of younger men."

"Or I may go tonight. There is just the contingency which a prudent man, can not afford to ignore. I made my will at once."

"That is a matter it is well to have attended to under any circumstances."

"So you have suggested once or twice. But you can understand why I shrank from it. Now it was my duty to see that Molly was provided for. Thanks to those mining shares, I can leave her a richer woman than I would have done two years ago."

"Then you did not take my advice and change that investment?"

"Indeed I did not. I put the money Vanburgh gave me for the plantation into it also. Do not shake your head, Stephen. It may look like putting all my eggs into one basket, I own, but you may be sure I took care to see that it was all right before I risked my little girl's all. The place, of course, goes to you by the entail."

"It will be none the less Molly's home, sir, and I trust it will be many years before it calls me master."

"Thank you: I believe you mean that. But it will be none the worse for passing into younger hands—steady hands like yours, Stephen, which will build up and not destroy. I hope you will not change much about the old place."

"There shall be nothing altered in or out of the house, sir."

"Do not be too quick to promise. You will marry some day—O yes, you will, do not look so skeptical! And your wife will want things her own way, and have a right to have them so, too. But it is a comfort to know that you will not be in haste to introduce novelties. Now it only remains to speak of Molly." Mr. Cartaret paused, and, taking up a miniature from the table, looked at it long and tenderly. "My pretty girl! I wish she had felt like coming home this summer. But young people must have their way, and old folks must not be selfish. Stephen, have you ever noticed the resemblance to her mother's portrait? Yes, I know you must have done so: the same fine poise of the head, the perfect oval of the face, the eyes like a deer's. I want you to watch over her when I am gone. I have left you her guardian."

The nephew started and a tide of painful color suffused his face creeping even to the line of sandy hair upon the forehead.

"I hope you will reconsider that decision," he said abruptly, even harshly.

The old man looked at him in surprise.

"Why! what's the matter?" he asked. "I took it for granted you would be willing to oblige me in this. You were always willing to do so, Stephen."

"I am now, sir, in everything but this. But though I appreciate the confidence you place in me, I cannot accept the charge. Could you not ask Dr. Bates—or Mr. Scott?"

"If I had wanted Bates or Scott I would have asked them. It would be a reflection on the family to go outside for such a service, and I am surprised you do not see it, Stephen. What possible reason can you have for refusing? Out with it."

But it did not seem easy for Stephen to state his objection. He played with the leaves of the book before him, mended his pen, and, finally, as his uncle waited rigidly expectant, he answered without looking up.

"You forget Gerald. It might not be pleasant for Molly to have a guardian whom her husband does not like."

"Gerald! Is it possible the old feud is coming up again? I am astonished at you, Stephen. Gerald never speaks of you except in the kindest way."

"He is not likely to do otherwise—to you, sir."

"He is not likely to do otherwise to any one. He has not a memory of adamant on which injuries are written with a pen of iron—whatever his faults may

be. Come, Stephen! I own he served you badly in that affair at college, but he has turned over a new leaf since then. His love for Molly has made another man of him."

Stephen did not answer.

"If that is your only objection I refuse to consider it for a moment, and you may as well promise me, living, what I know you will not refuse me dead. There is no reason whatever why you and Gerald should clash. I have reiterated my condition that Molly shall not marry before she is twenty-one, that even then her property shall remain in her own hands. All I want is a man who will execute my wishes without fear or favor, and I know of no one I can trust to do that better than you, sir."

"Very well, sir. Make your wishes plain, so there can be no dispute about them, and I will see that they are carried out."

"Thank you. I am as sure of that, Stephen, as if I left her with her own brother."

There was a sudden break in the brave old voice. A sudden dimness crept over the keen dark eyes. The face of the younger man hardened as if in anticipation of a blow. They had evidently reached a brink in the conversation, which both had foreseen but from which both shrank. For a full minute there was silence broken only by the hum of the bees in the rose-garden under the window, and the soft dirge-like music of the pines beyond. Then the old man leaned forward in his chair, his withered



fingers trembling slightly as they grasped the carved tiger-claws of the arms.

"Stephen," he said, and his voice seemed to deprecate any resentment from his companion, "do you feel absolutely certain of Robert's death?"

The nephew did not raise his eyes from the book before him, nor did his face change from its expression of iron endurance.

"What would you have?" he said in a muffled voice. "He was seen in the theater just before the fire broke out: he was never seen afterwards. It was not possible to identify the ashes of the dead."

"I know." The father fell back in his chair with a heavy sigh. "I thought I had accepted the fact long ago, but today, when I came to draw up that paper, my heart misgave me. I said to myself: 'What if he should have escaped after all—we read of such things—and be only hiding away from us still; what if he should come back after I am gone, and find I had left him nothing and think I had never forgiven him?'"

Once more Mr. Cartaret paused, but this time Stephen made no answer. The old man studied the averted face for a moment. Then, rising, crossed the space between them and laid a trembling hand on the younger's shoulder.

"I know you do not like to talk about it, Stephen. I know that you asked that we should never mention his name to you. But you must bear this once with me—his father! If the iron has entered into your

soul think you it has not pierced mine through? Do not the eyes of every fair-haired lad go through me like a knife? Do I not sit here, day after day, eating out my heart with vain regret, wishing something had been different, that I had been less stern or that you had been at home? You were always my boy's good angel, Stephen. He never got into trouble when he was with you. He would never have been guilty of that worst act of all—"

"One moment, sir! Not even Robert Cartaret's father shall accuse him to me of that cowardly deed."

"But, Stephen, the circumstantial evidence was complete, and against it I had only his word."

"The word of a son, who, whatever his faults, had never told you a lie in his life."

The father turned away and began with nervous, uncertain feet to pace the floor.

"I wish you had been here, Stephen, I wish to God you had been here! I did not mean to be unjust to my own flesh and blood. But I was a magistrate. How could I ignore the proof I would have considered conclusive against a stranger? And Robert was so high-handed, refusing to give an account of his time or to explain any of the damaging circumstances. We needed some one to stand between us, Stephen. The boy and his father were too much alike. I never meant what I said about his breaking his mother's heart. I never thought he was in earnest when he said he would go away and never let me see his face again. You don't

think he could have escaped from that fire, and be only carrying out his threat?"

Mr. Cartaret paused beside his nephew's chair, and once more Stephen answered without lifting his eyes from the page.

"I have appealed to him since then, through the papers of every state, in a way he must have answered—if he had been alive."

The old man sank suddenly into his chair, and bowed his head upon his hand.

"Would God I had died for him, my son, my son!" he moaned. After that there was silence, a heavy, pall-like silence. At last an old negro opened the door.

"Carriage is ready, sah," he announced.

Mr. Cartaret rose feebly, as if something had been added in the last half hour to his age.

"I thought I would ride out to 'The Pines' and take a look at the old place before they begin to build. I suppose you are too busy to come, Stephen?"

"Yes, sir. I must finish my books before dark."

It was an hour later: the ledger was closed and pushed away, and Mr. Cartaret's nephew sat with his head resting thoughtfully on his hand. All at once in the hall without there came a sound that was not the rustle of the evening wind. A laugh, sweet as a strain of sudden music, rippled in at the window. A voice through which the laugh was still rippling spoke to the dog who lay always outside the door.

With a flash in his eyes, Stephen sprang to the door and opened it. Upon the threshold, with a traveling satchel in her hand and vainly endeavoring to restrain the caresses of the animal who leaped, with joyous cries and barks, upon her, stood the original of the miniature.

"Down, Don, down! Yes I know you are glad to see me, but you needn't eat me up. Have I struck you dumb, Stephen? It's me. And I didn't come on a broomstick nor drop from the clouds, but on the slowest train that ever crawled across a country. I thought we would never get here. How is papa? Hector says he is out at 'The Pines.'"

"He is about as usual, Molly. Did my letter bring you? I did not mean to frighten you."

"What letter, Stephen?" She was in the room now, looking about her with sparkling eyes.

"I wrote you last week that he was not very well and that he seemed disappointed at your decision to spend the summer away."

"I did not get it, Stephen. It was a letter from Gerald which brought me. He has changed his plans and is coming home at once. He will be here the first week in June, and of course he wanted me here and I wanted to be here, too."

"Of course."

"Don't be sarcastic, sir! You'll know all about it when your time comes. Stephen, I have a surprise for you. Don't you detect signs of great wisdom in my face? Haven't I grown several inches

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taller? I took first honor! Think of that! At a college, too! I wouldn't write it because I wanted to see your face when I told you. I don't wonder you can't believe it. And it is all due to you, to those long letters you have been writing me about improving my gifts and fulfilling the hopes set upon me. But it is all over now, sir, I warn you! I do not mean to look into a book or do anything that I don't want to do for a year at least."

And once more a peal of sweet girlish laughter woke the echoes in the still old house.

## CHAPTER X.

### "AN EXPLODED BUBBLE"

"I beg your pardon. I knocked, but you did not hear."

It was the second day after the Arnolds' arrival in their new home. Philip had driven out into the country to see about the purchase of some lumber and Una was unpacking a box of books in the little hall, when the blithe voice fell upon her ear. She looked up to see that a slender, dark-eyed girl stood beside her.

With a frank smile the new comer held out her hand.

"This is Una Arnold, isn't it? I am Mary Cartaret. I live in the white house back yonder in the woods with my father and my cousin, Stephen Yonge. I am very glad you have come to live here. I took a fancy to you yesterday when I saw you at church. We have no near neighbors, and I have been so long away at school I have no girl friends in the village. I hope we will like each other."

"I am sure we shall." Una opened the door into her little parlor where she had already hung snowy

curtains across the windows, and placed bowls of roses on the deep window seats.

The visitor looked round her with interest, but made no motion to take the proffered seat.

"How pretty you have made everything look! You know we used to live here, at least, we used to spend the holidays here after we moved to town. Such happy times as we have had in this room! Some sad times, too! Mayn't I go back into the hall and help you with your books? I know you want to put them in their places, and we will get so much better acquainted than if we sit here looking at each other and asking each other questions the answers to which we do not care for at all. I hate formal calls, don't you? They are like a preface, and I always skip a preface when I can."

Una laughed. She thought it would not be very hard to become acquainted with her new friend under any circumstances. But she said if Miss Cartaret wished they would go back to the hall and look over the books.

"I am not Miss Cartaret. I am 'Molly.' Everybody calls me that. And I want to call you 'Una,' may I? I am sure we must be about the same age."

"I was twenty last summer."

"And I was nineteen in January. What a lot of books you have, and what a lovely copy of Tennyson. I love Tennyson, don't you? I meant to take the Idylls with me to the springs this summer—I expected to go with some friends from school—but something

changed my plans, and I am glad of it now for they tell me papa is so much brighter since I came home. Only he cannot walk far. We want you and your brother to take dinner with us tomorrow, Una. That is what I came over to say. Papa is very anxious to meet you both. He has found out that your uncle, Mr. Leigh Vane, was an old college mate of his, and that he knew your mother when she was a girl. And he has heard a great deal about Mr. Arnold's work from Mr. Vanburgh. That rich young nabob thinks your brother has a brilliant future before him, do you know that? Ah, I see you do, and believe it too! Well, we take a special interest in the work of course. 'The Pines' was my mother's girlhood home. I confess I had a good cry when I heard that papa had sold it. It always makes me angry when these rich strangers come down here and think they can buy with dollars and cents what we feel and sec in an old place like that. Still, for the sake of the place, I want the house to be a fine one, and I feel grateful to Mr. Arnold for making such a beautiful design. I am crazy to see it. Do you think your brother would show it to me?"

"I am sure he will, with pleasure." Una smiled up at the tall figure which just then appeared in the doorway. "Here is my brother now, Molly. Philip, this is our neighbor, Miss Cartaret." But, to her surprise, the introduction seemed unnecessary.

Philip came forward, gravely smiling, and the visitor sprang up with a gay laugh.



"I kept my word, didn't I? I got here before you, and I have been helping fix your books. Look at your sister. She doesn't know what to make of me. She thinks I never had any bringing up."

"I met Miss Cartaret this morning," explained Philip.

"Another skipped preface, Una! Your brother chanced to come by when I was trying to make my horse take a ditch, and he said I couldn't, and, of course, after that nothing in the world could have kept me from trying. And I did it, too!"

"And came within an ace of breaking your mare's leg."

"But didn't, and a miss is as good as a mile. Still, if you want to be generous, Mr. Arnold, you will not mention the little circumstance at dinner tomorrow. You are coming to take dinner with us, you know. Whew! Is that striking five? I must go. I have an engagement to go driving with Stephen, and he looks like a martyr when I keep him waiting. Una! don't forget to tell Mr. Arnold what I said about seeing his designs. Make him bring them with him tomorrow. Good-bye. I know I have deafened you with my chatter. Stephen says I make as much noise as the sparrows under the window. But I can't help it any more than they."

She was gone like a flash. Philip stood gazing after her like a man who had seen a vision.

"Isn't she like a sea-breeze, or a spring-song?" Una asked, smiling.

“Like nothing that I have ever met,” he answered, and walked away, but not before she had seen a look in his eyes which made her heart leap.

He made no allusion to their visitor when they met again and the old shadow was on his brow when they went through the pines, the next day, to keep their appointment.

“If it were not for you I would refuse all such invitations,” he said gloomily as they came in sight of the pillars of Cartaret House. “All the time I am with people I am saying to myself—‘if they knew?’”

It was the first allusion he had made to the past since they left the hills, but there was no time to answer. They had reached the foot of the steps and Molly was smiling down at them. She looked lovelier and less like a school-girl than she had the day before—in flowing white robes with her hair piled high on her head like a crown, and a crimson rose in her belt.

“Papa is in the library. I will take you to him,” she said, and led the way with a deepening of the rose-tint in her cheek. Una wondered if she had seen, as she had, the light that flashed into Philip’s eyes as he looked up.

There was one other guest, the young minister, who had already called upon the Arnolds, and Una found herself at dinner seated between him and her host, opposite Mr. Yonge, who came in late, just as they were about to sit down. He seemed pre-occupied. He was evidently not a “ladies’ man,” and the

breadth of table between them did not lessen the formality of the few remarks he felt called upon to utter.

But Mr. Cartaret at once put his guests at ease with his perfect, old-school manner—that beautiful combination of fatherly kindness and gentle deference, which is the blossom of an old man's courtesy. He had evidently heard something of the estrangement between her and her uncle, for he did not press her much upon that point though he mentioned that Mr. Vane had had a stroke of paralysis in March, and, by order of his physician, had gone abroad. But he talked to her much of her mother, whose beauty, he said, had been the marvel of the state when he was young, and of her brother's work, of which, he told her, they were all proud. And he said how glad he was that she and Molly should be friends, and that he had given orders that morning to have a gate cut in the fence, at the end of the avenue, that they might reach each other with ease.

Mr. Scott also made himself very agreeable. He had heard that Miss Arnold sang, and was anxious to secure her voice for his choir, and not less to interest her in a Sunday-school for convicts which he was about to start on the outskirts of town. It was the latter proposition which involved him in a discussion with Mr. Yonge and gave Una an opportunity to steal a glance at the couple at the other end of the table.

A discussion was in progress there also. Molly

had made a disparaging remark on Philip's idol, Ruskin, and was holding to her point with girlish obstinacy, not unmixed with a spice of childish mischief. Her eyes danced with silent laughter. Her mouth was set in a circle of roguish dimples.

Philip was leaning forward and speaking in a low, persuasive tone. His face was aglow, as Una had never seen it, even when his beloved pencil was in his hand. The smile that hovered about his lips told that he, too, realized that the tilt was only play. For a moment the room swam around Una. The possibility that had flashed upon her the day before looked like a certainty now. The sister's heart contracted with the first selfish pang it had ever felt. She had always known that it must come—the time when some other woman would be more to him than she could be, when some other hand, perhaps a hand that would not care, would have the power, withheld from hers, to banish the shadows and call up the sunshine. Was it to be this merry-eyed, merry-hearted girl, who knew no more of the sad depths of the soul beside her than a child does of the secrets of the sea upon whose shore it gathers shells? Yes! Because she did not know; because she had not watched with him through that terrible night, because, looking into her eyes, he would never see the shadow of his own pain, it would be easier for her to make him forget.

Una's jealousy was short-lived, a bubble that quickly melted and was lost in the depths of her great love.

With a new tenderness in her heart she watched the two, forgetful of all else, until, suddenly, she was brought back to her surroundings by the consciousness that Mr. Yonge had addressed a remark to her which she had not heard. Flushing to her temples, she turned and apologized. Mr. Yonge seemed scarcely less embarrassed.

"I only asked if you found all in order at the Lodge: Vanburgh asked me to see about it," he explained awkwardly. She saw that his glance had followed hers, and that, unmindful of her reply, he noticed, as she had, the expression of Philip's face. Was it fancy that his brow contracted—or accident, that a moment later he contrived to attract her brother's attention and draw him into the argument still pending between himself and the minister? It was certainly not imagination that the light faded from Philip's eyes and the suffering look came back, when he heard what was the point under discussion.

Mr. Yonge, it seemed, was very doubtful of the wisdom of his friend's experiment, and inclined to characterize as "romantic" the charity which sought out such unpromising objects for its efforts. He expressed his doubts very candidly as to the genuineness of one or two cases of reformation which Mr. Scott quoted, and was especially severe on the recent action of the governor in pardoning, on the plea of years of good behavior, a man who had been convicted of manslaughter and been sentenced to life-imprisonment.

“It puts a premium on conversion, and tempts those poor wretches to the last gulf of all—hypocrisy,” he said. “I predict we will have a good many more reformations now.”

“But, granting for the sake of argument that this conversion was genuine, do you think it was wrong to show mercy, and give the man a chance to lead a better life? The blow, you remember, was struck in the heat of passion, and when the man was little more than a lad.”

“All the same it left a woman a widow and children fatherless. We may repent of our misdeeds, Scott, and heaven may blot them out of the great book of accounts; but ‘action is eternal,’ and the injury to other lives goes on and on like circles when one drops a stone into the sea, no one can tell how far.

“Nor all your piety, nor wit,  
Can lure it back to cancel half a line,  
Nor all your tears wash out a word of it,”

quoted the minister sadly. “You are right, Yonge. And yet, just because, however deep his remorse, the man cannot undo or forget—because, from the very nature of sin, he cannot wholly escape punishment—we should be pitiful. What do you say, Mr. Arnold?”

“I agree with you, sir, that crime never goes unpunished even when the law relaxes its hold.”

Only Una heard the note of torture in the voice—and, perhaps, the young hostess.

"I think we have grown far too serious for a dinner table," she said rising. "Shall we not go into the library, papa? It is cooler there. I for one am glad the poor man is free, though perhaps if I was the widow of the man he killed I might feel differently."

Una found herself still between Mr. Cartaret and Mr. Scott when they reached the other room.

"My dear," said the old gentleman, "Do you know you haven't told me yet where you have been living since you left your uncle's. I know you came on the steamer, but from where?"

It was the question she had dreaded, and which, strangely enough, no one had asked before.

"I was with Philip in North Carolina, in the mountains." Una wondered if they heard her voice tremble.

"Indeed! I had no idea you had been so close to us. I took it for granted as you came from New York that you had been living at the North. What part of the mountains, my dear? Anywhere near the mining section, near a place called Thornton?"

"We were about thirty miles from Thornton."

"Indeed! That is very interesting. Do you hear, Stephen? I should not be surprised if Mr. Arnold could tell me something of the mine in which I am interested."

Mr. Carteret turned to his guest, but fortunately, as it seemed to Una's sinking heart, Philip had just opened his portfolio and was beginning to explain his plans to Molly.

Too polite to interpose any interest of his own, Mr. Cartaret, after waiting a moment, waived the matter and proposed that they should join the group. Molly was in ecstasies.

“And Mr. Arnold has been telling me about your part of it,” she said to her friend as she came up. “O, you needn’t deny it. I know all about it, and I think it is just beautiful. I mean to tell every one I meet. I only wish you were going to live in the house yourself instead of that old Mr. Vanburgh.”

Una noticed for the next half hour of their stay that Mr. Yonge kept close beside his uncle, and that, whenever it seemed to occur to the old gentleman that he had something special to say to her brother, the nephew interfered, and, with a tact of which she had not thought him capable, turned the current of conversation.

To her surprise, when they took their leave, Mr. Yonge offered to accompany them, and show them the way through the avenue, which, he said, would shorten their walk. He seemed more at his ease out of doors, and talked freely as they sauntered down the shady aisle where the arching boughs made a twilight even in the golden afternoon. He chatted with Philip of the new house, and of the timber that was to be used, and he offered to drive him out to a plantation where some fine oak could be secured. Then he turned to Una, and spoke of his cousin. Molly had a great deal that was noble and sweet in her character, he said, and if Miss Arnold could



make allowance for a few crudities, and the willfulness inevitable to an only child, he felt sure she would learn to love her. He was glad that Molly should have her for a friend, and that if Mr. Arnold carried out his intentions of settling in Brookwood, they would probably be neighbors for a long while, for Mr. Cartaret was still firm in his decision that his daughter should not marry until she was twenty-one, though she had been engaged for several years to her cousin, a young physician who was studying in Europe and would be home now in a few weeks. Even after her marriage it was not likely that the intercourse would be interrupted, as the doctor talked of practicing in Brookwood.

Mr. Yonge made these statements deliberately, looking straight before him down the green vista. It seemed to Una as if he was reciting a speech he had composed beforehand. She could not doubt that it had been to drop this hint that he had offered to accompany them, and her cheek burned at the suspicion implied. What right had he to think he had read Philip's heart because, for a moment, her brother had been spellbound by a perfect face and a merry voice? Who had delegated to him the part of guardian and mentor? He was certainly in great haste to save his cousin from the risk of a careless flirtation, and Philip from the disappointment of setting his heart on a prize already in the possession of another. If the engaged cousin was coming home so soon, why could he not have waited and allowed the situation

to reveal itself naturally? She was glad that Philip bore himself proudly and betrayed neither by look nor word that the information had any interest for him. If the news had fallen cruel as a spring-frost on a budding hope, at least Mr. Yonge should not know.

But there was another arrow in Stephen's quiver, and it was discharged as they reached the lodge, as Philip stooped to pick up the evening paper.

“Your sister tells me, Mr. Arnold, that you have been living for some time near Thornton. Can you tell me if the gold mine in that locality, called the Rupert mine, is all that it claims to be?”

Philip's answer was to hand him the sheet he had just unfolded. In large letters at the head of the first column the announcement was made of “an exploded bubble.”

Private information having reached the state chemist that all was not right with the Rupert mine, he had obtained, as soon as possible, a specimen of the rock, and made an examination. The result showed that instead of yielding, as was claimed, a large amount of gold to the ton, it did not contain a grain of the precious metal. The whole thing was a gigantic swindle, and the men who had perpetrated it upon a too-trusting public had found it convenient to leave the country.

The paper fluttered like a dead leaf to the ground.

“I must go back to my uncle,” said Stephen Yonge.  
“He must not see this. He is not in a condition to

stand a shock." He was gone before they could answer him, and they could hear his quick feet crushing the dry leaves in the path as he went.

Without speaking the brother and sister sat down on the bench in the porch. Una's heart was heavy with a sense of evil yet to come. Philip was very still, like a man for whom torture has done its worst, and who can suffer no more.

At last they heard Stephen coming back. Something in his step told Una the truth before she saw his face.

"He is dead," he said quietly, as they rose to meet him. "He fell asleep in his chair just after we left and will never wake again." For a moment the strong face quivered pitifully.

Philip pointed to the paper on the seat.

"Was it that?" he asked.

"No, thank God! It had never been brought to him. The good man is taken from the evil to come." And then Stephen turned to Una.

"Can you come to Molly?" he asked. "It is her first great sorrow, and I do not know how to comfort her."

## CHAPTER XI.

### A HARD DUTY

The last rites were over. David Cartaret slept with his fathers, and into the house where he had gone in and out for seventy years, the sunshine was streaming once more, and Stephen Yonge reigned in his stead.

Molly sat on a low chair at her bedroom window, her cheek dropped pensively in her hand. She was pale, but lovelier than ever, her exquisite face shining out like a cameo from the background of heavy mourning and her dark eyes all the larger and darker for shadows beneath them. Una was folding up a crepe veil upon the bed. They had just come in from a visit to the graveyard. They had been seldom apart since that first night when the heart-broken girl had sobbed herself to sleep in the arms of the one to whom sorrow was a familiar lesson. "Do all that you can for her; be all to her that you can, do not think of me," had been Philip's passionate whisper when she told him "Good-bye," and hard as it had been to come away and leave him alone to eat the bitter fruit of the past, the duty had been so plain that Una could not hesitate. Even if it had not been for

his injunction, Molly had clung to her so pitifully it would have been difficult to tear herself away. But now, as both knew, the time had come for her to go back to her old duties. The first tempest of grief had spent itself. Molly was able to take up her altered life, and would be the better for having duties of her own to perform. But her eyes were full of tears at the prospect of the separation. All at once she bowed her head upon the window-sill.

"O, Una, if I had only known! If it had not been so sudden! There was so much I would like to have done for him, so many things I would like to have asked him."

"My darling!" Una had gathered her up in her arms like a child. "You have still your Heavenly Father."

"I know, Una. I do not forget what you said to me that first terrible night. But, somehow, God seems so far away, and he cannot answer me as papa could. Una! when your father died you had your mother and Mr. Arnold. If my brother had lived, I would not feel so desolate. I just begin to realize what I lost when he died."

"But you have Mr. Yonge—and Dr. Carew."

Una uttered the last name shyly, for, though Molly had told her all about her engagement, a true woman never approaches the unlifted veil of the holy of holies without reverence.

But there was no dawn of color on Molly's cheek.

"Yes, Stephen has been very good; I did not know

he could be so gentle. He has not let me worry about business, nor anything. And of course, when Gerald comes, I will not be so lonely. Yet it is just because of them that I need papa so much. I do not know that I ought to talk—even to you—Una, about my own people. It seems disloyal, but somehow you seem different from anyone else, and I feel as if I must have someone to advise me. Stephen does not like Gerald. He never has. You know they are not related to each other, though they are both first cousins to me. Stephen is papa's sister's son, and Gerald is related to me on my mother's side. They have such different natures. Somehow, without meaning to, they always seem to irritate each other. Stephen is very strict, and inclined to be severe in his judgment—as perhaps you have noticed—on those who do not come up to his standard. I do not say Gerald has not faults, too, and may not sometimes have been to blame. But I think we ought to forget such differences, don't you? Especially at a time like this. Stephen does not say anything, of course, and Gerald will stay here when he comes, just as if papa was alive, and Stephen will treat him politely. But there is a set to his lips, when I talk of Gerald, which makes me afraid there will be trouble when they meet. There always has been. Gerald has naturally the sunniest temper in the world. If he sees that you like him, and that he can please you, there is nothing that he will not do. But he does not like any more than anybody else to be misjudged.

And that is just where I am going to miss papa so much. He could always keep the peace between them. They were both so fond of him, they would bear a good deal rather than vex him by falling out. Una! Do you think it right for a Christian to be as unforgiving as Stephen is?"

"I do not like to pass judgment on Mr. Yonge like that, Molly. I understand too little of the circumstances. I do not even know that he is unforgiving."

"Well, tell me this then. Do you think a Christian ought to cherish a grudge against any one?"

"I do not see how he can, Molly. Our sins against each other are so small, compared with the great debt God has forgiven us, and the command is so plain."

"I knew you would say that, Una. I felt sure of it when I asked you. I don't believe you were ever angry with anyone. Now, I want you to do something for me. I want you to say that to Stephen, some time. Not directly, of course—it would not do to let him know that you meant it for him; but you might bring the conversation around to it and let him know what you think. He has so much respect for your judgment. He says you have more sense for your age than any girl he ever met. I don't know when I have heard him pay a compliment before."

Una had risen, coloring and shaking her head. "I could not do that, Molly. You do not realize what you ask me. It would be untrue to speak carelessly to Mr. Yonge about something I meant him

to take in earnest. Besides, he knows it all as well as I do." And soon after, she said good-bye and came away.

At the foot of the stairs, she looked into the dining room for a moment to tell Mrs. Ferguson, the house-keeper, that she had left Molly alone, and to ask her to send up a lamp. Then she went on tip-toe past the library door. Mr. Yonge had come out the night before, as she was passing, and insisted on walking home with her, and she did not wish to place him in such a position that he would feel called upon to repeat the courtesy. The friendship of a man who judged so harshly any deviation from the path of rectitude was not coveted by Philip's sister. She had reached the outer door, and was stepping out into the porch, when she brushed against a young man who was about to lay his hand upon the knocker. Both drew back, apologizing. His face was in shadow, but her's caught the reflection of the crimson west. The newcomer started forward with a glad cry.

"Una—Miss Arnold! What happy cloud has dropped you here?"

A light that was not altogether the reflection of the sunset irradiated Una's face as their hands met.

"Philip is here at work, and I am with him. I certainly did not expect to see you here, Mr. Lawton."

"Not Lawton, now. I have taken the name of my step-father, Carew, since then. But you will find me the old Gerald. Una, you are prettier than



ever—though I don't know that I dare take the liberty of calling you that now that you have grown into such a dignified little lady."

Before Una could answer, a shadow fell between them.

"Gerald!" It was Stephen's cold voice. "You have taken us by surprise. We did not know that you could reach New York before to-day."

"We made better time than usual. I found your telegram waiting for me at my hotel, and caught the night train."

Despite the frankness of the speaker's tone, Una thought she detected an effort to appear at ease. Stephen, all at once, seemed to become conscious of her presence.

"Miss Arnold! I beg your pardon. This is Dr. Carew, Molly's cousin. What, you have met before?"

The friends exchanged smiling glances.

"I have known Miss Arnold for a long time," said Gerald.

"Dr. Carew and I met some years ago at the seaside," explained Una. "He was Mr. Lawton then, and, naturally, I never connected him with Molly's cousin, Dr. Carew."

"Naturally." Stephen's face had hardened into its most repellant expression. He turned once more to the new comer.

"My telegram must have taken you by surprise, Gerald."

"Yes, of course, and I was awfully cut up not to

get here in time for the funeral. How does Molly stand it, poor girl?"

"You can judge for yourself." The master of the house made a motion to the door as if bidding his guest welcome. "I suppose you have not forgotten the way in, Gerald. Mrs. Ferguson will let Molly know that you are here. Miss Arnold, if you will permit me, I will see you home. We old-fashioned people do not like a lady to be out alone so near dark."

Under the circumstances Una had no choice but to acquiesce. She suspected that Mr. Yonge was anxious to avoid witnessing the lovers' meeting, and, after what Molly had told her, she felt bound to do anything in her power to prevent friction. She thought Gerald looked uneasily after them, as they moved off, and she told herself a little proudly, that he ought to have more confidence in her friendship than to fear she might be prejudiced by anything Mr. Yonge might say. The walk was a silent one. If Mr. Yonge could not say anything good of Dr. Carew, it was evident he was resolved not to speak evil. The expression of his mouth was stern and determined. His brow was clouded.

Una had enough to occupy her thoughts. Unconsciously, an impression, unfavorable to the absent lover, had been made on her mind by the conversation of the afternoon. She had reached a secret conclusion during her stay in the Cartaret home, as she watched Mr. Yonge's gentleness with his cousin,

and she was inclined to be charitable to a hardness which might cover a wound. Respect for his judgment, too, had led her to accept his estimate of the young doctor's character. But now that Molly's betrothed proved to be the friend who had done so much to make that summer by the sea a happy one, her feelings naturally underwent a change. Gerald might have outstripped the elder cousin in the race for Molly's hand, but he could not have done more. Mr. Yonge would not be the first good man who had permitted his heart to warp his judgment. Neither did he look like one who would change his judgment after he had once formed it, and Molly had said there had always been misunderstanding between them. Yet, neither did he look like a man who could be consciously unjust. Her heart balanced uneasily between loyalty to her friend and pity for the man whose carefully guarded secret she felt guilty to have discovered.

Stephen looked up suddenly and found her eyes fixed earnestly upon him. He roused himself.

"I fear you find me poor company, Miss Arnold. When a man has lived alone as much as I have he falls into some very bad habits. How long ago was it that you met Dr. Carew?"

"Three years. I had just finished school and was spending the summer with some friends, and Mr. Lawton—Dr. Carew, I should say—was staying at a cottage near by. It was a very happy summer, and Gerald did a great deal to make it so." Una

was resolved to be loyal to her friend whether Mr. Yonge liked it or not, and her resolve was more audible than she realized. Stephen smiled.

"It will be a pleasure to Molly to find that you know and like each other," he said. "By the way, you have told her nothing, I suppose, about her father's interest in the Rupert mine?"

"You asked me not to, Mr. Yonge." Once again Una's feelings were more audible than she knew, and once more her companion smiled. It was wonderful how even the slight unbending of the lines about the stern mouth changed the expression of the face.

"I beg your pardon," he said. "I thought she might have questioned you."

"She has never talked about business."

"That is well. Dr. Carew must know, of course. He will wish to see his uncle's will, but there is no reason why Molly should be troubled about it, and I prefer that she should not hear."

Then Una found courage for the question she had not dared to ask before, but which she knew was burning like fire in Philip's heart.

"Then Mr. Cartaret's loss was not a heavy one—Molly will not suffer by it?"

"I hope not." Not till long afterward did Una realize that Mr. Yonge only answered the latter half of her question. "Here we are at your gate, Miss Arnold. No, I cannot come in. It is late." But for a moment he held her hand and looked down at her with strangely-gentle eyes. "I can never thank

you sufficiently for what you have done this week for Molly—for us all," he said, and before she could answer, he had turned away.

Una could not shake off the impression as she looked after him that the words were a farewell. There was a formality in the expression of gratitude, as if one of them was going away. Had they come to a parting of the ways? Was it possible that she could not be Gerald's friend and his? Did he carry his prejudice so far?

She noticed that half way up the avenue he quitted it, and, turning his back upon the Cartaret house, took a path that led deep into the heart of the twilight woods.

Una sat awhile at her bedroom window that night looking down on the dim, dewy garden. The sky above was spangled with stars, and through the pines she watched the glint of a nearer star, the light in Molly's window. Had Gerald been engaged to his cousin while he was still Mr. Lawton? If so, why had he never mentioned her? The question troubled her. It was true, young men did not always tell such things. She could not imagine Mr. Yonge making such a communication to a mere acquaintance. But Gerald had been so frank, so confidential, and there had been nothing in their intercourse to make him shrink from the revelation. They had been thrown very closely together in a crowd of light-hearted young people. He had brought her flowers and books, and they had sung and walked together.

He had told her of his trials and aspirations, and she had comforted and encouraged, but that was all. There had not been the shadow of a romance, and it seemed strange that in all his talk of the future there had been no allusion to the one who was to share it with him. Surely he could not have been engaged to her then. "Several years," Mr. Yonge had said. That was indefinite enough to leave room for the conclusion; and forcing herself at last to be satisfied with this solution, Una fell asleep to dream that Molly was engaged to Stephen, and that it was with Gerald she was asked to make the plea for forgiveness.

The next day was Sunday. She saw nothing of the Cartaret household until she met them at church. Then the lovers were alone. Molly gave them a bright smile through her black veil as she passed, and Gerald stopped to shake hands. He looked tired, Una thought, and less care-free than he had done the day before. Philip's eyes followed him with a strange look and then turned upon his sister with a startled question. Una knew he had noticed, as she had done, the resemblance of Molly's cousin to the man whose name was never mentioned between them, whose grave in the far-off hills remained so sad a secret. It was very slight and so intangible that she could not decide whether it lay in the expression of the features or in the color of the hair and eyes. But it came back to her every time she looked at Gerald, and she felt sorry that anything in Philip's

new life should recall the painful past. From her place in the choir she watched the faces beneath her with observant eyes. She saw Gerald start and knit his brows as he read his cousin's strange epitaph, and she concluded that it was the first time he had seen it. She saw Mr. Yonge come in late, and take a seat at the back of the church.

Strangely enough, Mr. Scott's text for the day was the one on the Cartaret tablet. The sermon was a solemn warning to those who, aware of the doom of the impenitent, failed to warn them of their danger; and the minister made special application of it to the convict camp and the Sunday-school he was about to start. Una thought of Gideon and listened with a full heart. In the midst of the sermon her attention was suddenly arrested by the expression of her brother's face. Philip was deadly pale. He leaned forward, his eyes fixed upon the speaker, as if he waited the sentence of life or death. As he caught his sister's eye he started and fell back, passing his hand over his brow. During the remainder of the service he sat with his face shaded, apparently unconscious of what was passing around him,—even of the incident which toward the close of the service sent a quiver through the whole congregation. At the height of the minister's impassioned appeal—when he was depicting the feelings of the unfaithful watchman when the awful inquiry for blood should be made—Stephen Yonge rose in his seat, and looked about him. For a moment it

seemed to Una that he was about to speak. She knew from the falter in Mr. Scott's voice that he feared it also. The next second Stephen turned, and with bowed head passed out. But whether in resentment of the home thrust or in remorse for past omissions, none could tell.

No one from the Cartarets was out in the afternoon. At the close of the sermon, Mr. Scott made a call for workers in the Stockade Sunday-school. Philip was the first to respond, and it was agreed that he and the minister should go out at once to make arrangements for beginning the next Sabbath. Una was walking home—alone, but very happy—when she saw Dr. Carew leaning over the bridge at the foot of the hill. As soon as he saw that he was observed he came forward whistling: "Should auld acquaintance be forgot."

"I was coming to meet you," he exclaimed, capturing her hymn-book as a matter of course. "I have actually been so forgetful and so remiss as to call on you Sunday afternoon. Of course I knew where you were as soon as I found the house shut up. Una! You can't guess what a boon it is to me to find you here—what it means to me just now. It is to be Una and Gerald still; is it not? Molly says so, and she always has her way. Poor child! In spite of the deep waters she has passed through she is full of thought for others. She has been singing your praises all day; and she has told me about your brother's phenomenal success. Una! Whom do you



suppose I met while I was abroad?—by chance, of course, though you used to tell me nothing happened by chance—your uncle! He was very sick at the hotel where I was stopping, and I was able to be of service to him. What a grand old Roman he is! He told me all about your leaving him to go and nurse your brother, and how angry he was. He said he had made a will in your favor, but he put it in the fire the night you left. Do you think you were quite wise in that step, little woman—worldly-wise, I mean? Don't you think it would have been better to have kept in with him and sent some one to take care of your brother? He said he offered to pay for a nurse."

"I am sure I did right, Gerald. Money could not have bought the nursing Philip needed. Do not let us talk about it any more. Tell me about yourself. I am so glad your future is so bright. Molly tells me her father made arrangements a year ago, for you to go into partnership with Dr. Bates, so you will not have to wait, as so many do, for practice. It will be so nice, too, for Molly not to have to leave her old home."

"Yes." But there was a touch of constraint in the doctor's manner, and he cut nervously with his cane at the daisies in the grass. "To tell you the truth, Una, my future is not quite as cloudless as you think. That is what I meant just now when I said it was such a boon to find you here. You have always helped me, whether you knew it or not. You live so close

to the other world, you seem to carry some of its atmosphere about with you."

"You know I do not like speeches like that, Gerald."

"It is the truth, though, and I have to say it for once. I am not in a laughing mood this afternoon, I am in a strait. I have got something very hard to do, and I feel like a raw recruit, brought face to face with the guns. I'd like to break and run. If you don't say something to help me, I may." He gave her a look half whimsical, half pathetic.

"If it is a duty, Gerald, you ought not to hesitate, even if it is hard."

"I know, Una. I haven't forgotten the impulse to a higher life received in your society years ago. But there are some things that cannot be decided in the abstract. I wish I could speak more plainly, but I cannot. It would not be loyal to others. I may say, though, as much as this. It is a duty, but it is one which seems to involve the contempt of other duties and is likely—I may say certain—to be misjudged. We live in a censorious world, where even the noblest actions are open to attack and suspicion. Look at the storm Stephen drew down upon himself by the abandonment of the ministry. What! You have never heard of that? I thought of course some one had mentioned it to you. He was in his last year at the seminary, when all of a sudden, without a word of explanation to any one, he threw up his studies and went back into business. I tell you there were tongues in plenty—some of them

ministers' tongues, too,—to connect his strange behaviour with the fortune left him just about that time by his aunt, Miss Judith Cartaret."

Una's cheek flushed. "No one who really knows Mr. Yonge would suspect him of such an unworthy motive," she said warmly.

Her companion gave her a quick look; puckered up his lips for a whistle; then controlled himself and looked across the fields with a peculiar smile.

"That is your sweet charity, Una. If there were more people in the world like you, I would feel less afraid of the verdict upon my action. But I assure you, Stephen has found that slander is hard to live down, and I am not likely to meet with kinder judges. It is hard when one is really trying to do right—even sacrificing oneself—to be suspected of unworthy motives."

"It may be a hard road, Gerald, but it is certainly a straight one if you are sure the thing is your duty. The opinion of people cannot make any difference."

"Now, you have put your finger on the very core of my trouble, Una. Is the thing my duty, or not? Am I really impelled by a higher power? Or am I only the victim of a morbid conscience? One moment I think it is one; the next I think it is the other. I am torn in pieces between the conflicting claims. Most people would say that the duty I feel urged to ignore is the stronger of the two. If I did not gain everything, and lose nothing, by falling in with their opinion, I might listen to their reasoning. But

I dare not trust my own heart. How am I to decide?"

"You can ask God to show you."

Dr. Carew made a gesture of impatience. "God does not answer in intelligible voices nowadays. I tell you my conscience is in doubt. I must have an outside hand to turn the scale. Tell me what you think about a broken promise. If you had pledged your word to something you found out afterwards to be a mistake, even a wrong, would you feel bound to keep your word? Or would you feel under stronger obligations to do right—even though it involved suffering for others as well as yourself?"

Una had drawn back, turning pale. "I cannot answer a question like that, Gerald. I am not wise enough. I know too little of the circumstances. You must ask some one else."

"There is no one whose opinion would go so far with me, Una. You are so unworldly; you look at things in such a different light from most people; I would rather trust your instinct than the judgment of a theologian. I do not ask you to tell me what to do. I have no right to ask that when I leave you so completely in the dark. All I want to know is what would you do in such a case as I have set before you. Would you keep a wrong promise, or would you break it?"

Una was growing more and more distressed.

"It is a terrible thing to break one's word, Gerald. It is like trampling on what is most like God within us. I would have to think over it a long time, and

to be absolutely certain there was no other way."

"And then—if you found yourself shut up to the two issues, Una—if you were obliged to choose between them?"

"It can never be right to do wrong, Gerald. If it comes to that, we are bound by the most solemn promise of all, to Him with whom we dare not break covenant." But Una was trembling. A sudden suspicion, a swift fear as to what this might portend, had darted through her. Neither of them spoke again until they reached the Lodge gate. Then Gerald held out his hand with a smile. "I must go home now and think a little. You have given me my answer, Una. Do not look so frightened. I have not asked you to decide on the concrete case, and I will not hold you responsible for the issue. Only promise me that when, with the rest of the world, you come to sit in judgment on my action, you will think of this talk; you will remember that I was trying to do right. Promise me that even if you feel I have made a mistake you will still be my friend."

"I will; but, Gerald, I wish you would consult some one else before acting. I know by your manner it is something serious. Could you not ask—Mr. Yonge?" Una uttered the name in sheer desperation. She had been about to say "Molly," but something restrained her.

Gerald laughed, a trifle bitterly.

"Unfortunately I am only too well aware of the justice I will meet with in that quarter," he said, curtly, and went away.

## CHAPTER XII.

### STEPHEN IN A PASSION

There were shadows under Una's eyes the next morning. Philip noticed them.

"You take other people's troubles too much to heart," he said tenderly. "Pack a lunch-basket, Una, and come out and spend the day with me at The Pines. Miss Cartaret will not need you, and I want you to see the place. It is lovely."

Una was only too glad to accept the invitation. Like one who had lighted a slow-burning fuse and awaited the explosion, she felt as if at any moment she might see Molly coming to her with a new sorrow in her eyes. But she could not leave her forebodings behind her. All that day as she wandered with Philip through the dim resinous woods, or sat on the couch of fragrant pine-needles that he made for her, and listened while he read, her thoughts were busy with her friends, and she saw Molly's face as it looked at church, beautiful with love's young happiness, and she heard Gerald say, as he turned from her at the gate, the night before, "You have given me my answer, Una." And, for the first time in his life,

Philip found his sister absent-minded when he read to her, and pre-occupied when he spoke about his work.

It was the middle of the afternoon before they reached home. A note from Molly lay on Una's table. "Come to me. I need you." This was the only message it contained, but Una knew that the blow, whatever it was, had fallen, and that she had no choice but to hasten to her friend. The woods were full of slant sunshine which filled her with a sense of pathos impossible to explain. The old house sat serene and still amid its gardens. There was no one visible on the porch. Only the old dog, who had come to recognize Una as a friend, rose and licked her hand as she went in. Unannounced, as had been her wont, she would have passed up to Molly's room—but Hector was on duty at the foot of the stairs.

"Mr. Steve say nobody was to see Miss Molly this arternoon," he explained. "But I guess he didn't mean you, Miss Uny. Lemme go and see. Miss Molly neber too sick to see you, I tek it."

With her heart sinking more and more, Una sat down on the carved bench in the hall to wait. In a moment she became conscious of voices in the room behind her. At first it was only a confused murmur, hardly more distinct than the insect-drone without, but it quickly sharpened into clear stinging tones that brought her trembling to her feet.

"That will do, sir! You may save yourself the

trouble of lying to me. If I did not know that my cousin was well rid of you, I would compel you to keep your word."

It was Stephen's voice, terrible in its concentrated passion. The listener shrank as if from the breath of a tornado. Too well she anticipated the cool silvery tones that made reply.

"It goes without saying that you misjudge me, you have done nothing else all your life. But, fortunately for me, you cannot inject your prejudice into all you meet, and it might be well for you to remember, 'with what measure you meet, it shall be measured to you again.'"

Una covered her ears with her quivering fingers. She could not—she would not—listen. She ought to fly. But where? Her limbs refused their office. At the same instant the door behind her was thrown open, and Stephen, white with anger, showed Gerald out into the hall.

"Leave the house while I have still enough self-control to keep my hands off of you!" he cried. "And beware how you quote the words of the Searcher of all hearts. Though you may play the hypocrite before men you cannot deceive Him."

In his excitement, he failed to notice the slight figure, shrinking against the wall, but Gerald did not, and he gave Una a significant smile, as, without any reply to the scorching accusation, he passed out. Stephen, still breathing hard, and still not noticing Una, watched him down the steps with unrelenting



eyes, then turned back into the library and shut the door. The old butler was at Una's side.

"Miss Molly'll be glad to see you, ma'am," he whispered; and Una, no longer doubtful of the ordeal before her, crept up stairs.

Molly met her, her eyes swollen with weeping. The moment the door was closed upon them she threw herself into her friend's arms with an abandonment of grief which shook them both.

"O, Una, I am so miserable! I did not know life could be so hard. It was bad enough when papa was taken from me, but he is better off, it was not like this. Why does God let people love each other if it is only to break their hearts? Do you know what has happened? I have broken off my engagement with Gerald. It seems too terrible to be true, and the awful part of it is that I had to do it myself. He could not. As a gentleman, he said, he was bound to keep his word to me. But he put things before me in such a light I saw what I had to do. It is because we are cousins, Una, first cousins. It is not right for people so nearly related to marry. I never thought of such a thing. We have been sweethearts ever since we were children. Gerald says he never thought of it either, except as a silly prejudice, until he began to study medicine. Then he found out that a great deal of the suffering and trouble in the world comes from it—suffering and trouble that keeps going on and on long after the people themselves are dead. O, Una! is it not terrible? Why did God let us ever

care for each other? Gerald says he fought against it as long as he could, knowing what it meant to us. But now he cannot shut his eyes. And he thought I ought to know. If we were selfish people, thinking only of ourselves, he said, it would not matter, but he knew I wanted the world to be a better and brighter place for my being in it. O, Una, I do! But I did not know it would cost so much."

Una's own cheek was wet with tears as it pressed the quivering head.

"It always costs to be a blessing, Molly."

"Does it, Una? Have you had to suffer to be such a comfort to me? What would I have done if God had not sent you here! But I must tell you the rest. Gerald has acted so honorably; I have never admired him so much. He left it for me to say whether we should go on, or not, and he would not let me decide hastily, either. He told me last night, when we were sitting on the porch after supper, and he would not let me give him his answer until today after dinner. Una, it is dreadful to be so young. Life looks so long."

"Don't cry so, Molly. I cannot bear it. Surely there must be some way to get around it. What does Mr. Yonge say?"

"That is the worst of all, Una. Gerald told me to talk to Stephen before I gave him my answer. He said Stephen had brought up this very thing when we first wanted to be engaged. Papa had laughed at it and he—Gerald, I mean—had been very angry with

Stephen for what he felt to be his interference. But now, he said, Stephen could advise us better than any one. Stephen couldn't deny it, when I asked, but, oh! he was so angry. You don't know how terrible his anger is, Una. You have never seen him anything but quiet and self-controlled. Even I have never seen him in such a passion but once before in my life. He said such terrible things about Gerald. He said he had refused to listen at the proper time, and that it was dishonorable for him to bring it up now. He called him a coward for putting me in such a position that I felt I ought to break the engagement, and said, that if it were not for making my name common talk, he would publish him from one end of the state to the other, and make it impossible for him to get practice. He would not stop until he saw he made me cry, and then he was so good, even papa could not have been kinder. He smoothed my hair, and held my hand, and tried to make me believe it would not be so hard after awhile. He said he was going to Canada next week on business, and if I liked I could go with him, and not have to meet Gerald again right away. He told me, too, that I was doing right, and that God would help me, and he talked to me about the picture over his library table. You remember the one I showed you the other day—'Delivered over to the secular arm?' Where the girl—such a pretty frail young creature—has just received her sentence from the Inquisition, and the soldiers are taking hold of her to lead her away to a cruel death. He said love and life were as sweet to her as to us, and yet

she had not hesitated to let both go when the call came. And he said I had some of the same blood in my veins—you know my mother was a Huguenot—and he asked me if I would not try to show myself worthy of my ancestors. And I promised him, Una. But I am very weak, and very selfish. I cannot help wishing God had chosen some one else to suffer.”

“My darling, you have been braver than most girls would be, and I wish I could bear the pain for you.”

“That makes me feel mean, Una, but indeed it is not my own suffering I think most about. Gerald is very miserable. He tried to be brave when he said good-bye, because he thought it would make it easier for me, but I saw the heartache in his eyes. Una, I want you and Mr. Arnold to do something for me after I am gone. You may tell your brother what I have told you, so he will understand. People generally did not know of our engagement, so there will be no talk; but you and Mr. Arnold do not seem like common friends. I want you both to be kind to Gerald for my sake. He will be very lonely. Stephen thinks I ought not even to write to him, and he will miss having a home like ours to come to. It will be a comfort to me to know he has a welcome to yours.

“He shall always have it, Molly.” Even if she had not been already bound to Gerald, Una felt she could not have promised less. But her brother’s face, when the story was told to him that night, augured little for Dr. Carew’s welcome.

"After their long engagement—so soon after her great sorrow—it was unmanly! it was cowardly!" he cried.

"But Philip! if he thought it his duty—"

"He would never have thought it his duty if he had not wanted his freedom. A man is not so clear-sighted when he loves." Philip turned back with a cloudy brow to his work. But by a sure token, more clearly revealed to her heart than to her sense, Una knew that the one service Mary Cartaret had asked at his hands would not be refused.

The cousins had been gone a week, and Philip and Una were returning one afternoon from a drive to The Pines when they were overtaken by a shower at some distance from home. The only shelter within sight was a loghouse, set a little back from the road in a field of young cotton. Philip drove to it as rapidly as possible, for the drops were large and the thunder rolling through the woods promised that the storm would be of some violence. The appearance of the place, as they drew near, was singularly forlorn and unattractive. The fence was down in several places, the gate was off its hinges, the steps looked as if they would fall if a foot touched them, while a lean dog and a couple of pigs were quarreling over some garbage that had been thrown out beside the door. At the farther end of the yard, a spare woman with iron-gray hair and a hard face was hurrying to take some clothes from a line. Philip called to her.

"Will you let the lady come in until the rain is over?"

She darted him a keen look over her shoulder, and then, without answering, went on with her work until the request was repeated. Then she said:

"She can come in if she likes." The tone was even less cordial than the words, but it was not a time to stand on ceremony. Philip helped his sister to alight, and while she ran in, he hastened to secure what shelter he might for his horse beneath a tree.

Una, meanwhile, had been met upon the threshold by a toddling child of two, who stared at her with blue, unwinking eyes. He was well-grown for his age, and chubby, but had the unhealthy, clay-like complexion so common to his class—a shade deeper than his tumbled, flaxen hair. Una spoke to him, he put his finger in his mouth and backed away.

"He's shy," called a faint voice from within. "He don't never see nobody. Come in mem."

The disorder inside was even more apparent than the lack of thrift without. As Una's eyes became accustomed to the light, she saw pots and pans scattered about, and discovered that the voice came from the farther end of the room, where a woman, or girl—she could not decide which—lay stretched upon a pallet. The face was painfully emaciated; the eyes had an expression of hopeless, ceaseless suffering.

"Are you his sister?" asked Una, making another effort to win the child.

"No mem." There was the echo of a laugh in the

thin voice. "I'm his mother, poor little chap. Robbie, why don't ye act pretty and speak to the lady?"

The child trotted, babbling, to her across the floor, and Una followed, making her way as best she could through the dirt and debris. On the way she stumbled over something she had not before seen, the grovelling figure of a man—an old man—who was playing with some pennies upon the floor, chuckling as he played.

"Its only pa. Don't mind him. He don't never take no notice," came from the bed once more, and shuddering at the blank face, upturned to hers for a moment, Una came on until she reached the speaker.

The face upon the pillow had the same sickly sallow hue as the child's, but it had evidently once been pretty, and suffering, and perhaps a chastened spirit, had now refined the expression. The hands on the dark patchwork quilt were twisted with rheumatism. The eyes fastened upon Una with something like a smile. So much of a boon it is for even a strange sail to cross the horizon of these shipwrecked lives! Una heard her brother's voice behind her, and knew that the mistress of the house had also come in and was watching them with sullen, suspicious eyes, but she could think of nothing but the pitiful picture before her.

"Have you been sick long?" she asked.

"Sence Robbie was a baby." A crooked hand

touched tenderly the little tow head. "The house leaked, and I took cold, and last winter, in the snow, ma took sick, and thar was nobody to bring in wood, and I got wuss." There was no complaint in the voice, only the calm statement of facts by one to whom trouble was the natural lot.

"Do you suffer much?"

With a look more expressive than words, the invalid pulled down the sheet, and showed her frame, drawn and distorted like her hands.

"But 'tain't the pain I mind so much," she whispered, and her lips quivered for the first time. "Hit's hev'in' to lie here so helpless and be a burden on ma. She's got her hands full with pa, and Robbie, and me."

"And that good-for-nothin' husband of yern work-in' for nothin' on the county road," put in the harsh voice of the mother. "A nice mess of it ye made, Patty Stiles, when ye married French Prentice! Little he cares how his wife and child gets on."

The invalid's face flushed, but she was evidently too much used to the taunt to resent it. She looked up deprecatingly at Una.

"My husband got into trouble last year when he wasn't himself. He's out at the 'stockade," she explained.

Una began to wonder if there was any bottom to this pool of trouble.

"My brother goes out every Sunday to the stockade," she said gently. "I will get him to ask about



your husband. But, meantime, cannot something be done for you?"

"Not as I knows of, mem."

"Poor folks ain't got no money to spend on doctors," put in the mistress of the house once more. "It takes all they can git to keep soul and body together."

Una took no notice of the interruption. "It is worth finding out," she said, laying her hand softly on the thin one. I have a friend—Dr. Carew—perhaps you have heard of him? He has just come back from across the water, and he has learned a great many new ways of helping people. If you will let me, I will bring him to see you."

Patty glanced at her mother, a mute question in her eyes. Una thought there was something sinister in the older woman's expression as she answered:

"Dr. Carew ain't goin' to bother his head about the likes of us."

"Thank ye kindly, mem, but I don't know as anything can be done for me," said the daughter.

"We will try anyway, and you will not have to pay Dr. Carew anything, Patty, so do not worry about that. Now it has stopped raining, and we will have to go. But I am coming back to see you soon. Robbie, if you will shake hands with me, I will give you a stick of candy out of my bag."

Robbie, who had not taken his eyes off the sweet face from the moment of Una's entrance, took the proposition into consideration for a full minute. Then,

as if convinced that the prize was greater than the risk, he held out a dimpled, but very dirty, little paw. His mother laughed with delight, and with the pitiful music in her ears, Una turned away, shuddering once more as she passed the crouching, muttering heap of humanity on the floor. The old woman followed her to the door, pointing back over her shoulder, with her thumb, at the imbecile.

"Did ye ever see anything like that afore?" she demanded.

Una shook her head.

"Three years ago he was as likely a man for his years as ye'd hev found anywhere. Now, he's like that. It was a blow on his head as did it; and it was a gentleman as fetched the lick. I hain't got much call to be merry, I can tell you, an old woman like me, with them three to look arter and find victuals for."

Philip slipped a piece of money into the hard palm. "We are very much obliged to you for your hospitality," he said. But Una saw, as he hurried her out of the house, that he was disgusted with the mingled greed and coarseness.

Mrs. Stiles followed them to the gate.

"And what may yer names be?" she asked Una while Philip was untying his horse.

Una told her. "We are strangers here," she explained, "but we live in the little brick cottage near Mr. Cartaret's."

Mrs. Stiles nodded. "I hearn the old gentleman

was took off powerful sudden, and the darter and Stephen Yonge's gone off on a long trip. Must have plenty of money to travel on."

"I don't know," answered Una. She looked back as they were driving away and saw Mrs. Stiles, with her elbows on the fence, looking after them, and she thought she had never seen on any face a more cruel or crafty look.

## CHAPTER XIII.

### A NEW MOLLY

Autumn had come, "glorious in apparel," with dyed banners in the wood, sweeping the pines at night with deeper harptones, dreaming on the hill-sides in the still noons—everywhere, like an alchemist, making gold. And Una was in her garden, picking roses—such roses as only the suns of November blow—many-petalled, deep-hearted and sweet. As she passed down the fragrant alleys she glanced up now and then at the house whose pillars began to show through the thinning trees. The windows were still closed. Mr. Yonge's trip to Canada had lengthened into one across the water, and his cousin had gone with him. Molly wrote regularly, but always of the places she had visited, little of herself, and neither of them seemed in any haste to return.

"Molly is still suffering, and Mr. Yonge will not bring her back where she will have to meet Gerald," Una had said to her brother as she folded up the last foreign letter. "It would have been better perhaps for Gerald to have gone somewhere else."

"It would have been manlier." But there Philip had checked himself, as he always did, when he had been betrayed into a criticism of Dr. Carew. "There

is no reason why they should not stay," he had added a little later. "Yonge has a good substitute at the bank, and an excellent overseer on the plantation. What is there to call them home if they have the wish and means to travel?"

What indeed? But Una thought there was a note of pain in the voice that put the question. The long months of work and study, in healing companionship with nature, had not failed to bring the strength and calm for which she prayed. Philip was no longer the nervous wreck that he had been when they came to Brookwood. He had ceased to mention the past; and when the suffering look in his eyes told her that old memories had been stirred, he always shut himself up in his study, and fought the battle out alone. After his work, his principal thought seemed to be to recall the sunshine to her life, and to uplift the fallen and erring round him. In every work of charity, he was the minister's right hand, and with his fellowmen he mingled freely, winning esteem and regard from all. In one respect, only, did he show any trace of the morbid pain with which he had at first shrunk from forming new ties. From what is called "society" he still kept aloof, and in his demeanor to his sister's friends was so reserved and distant as not to have escaped comment. Gradually the impression had become current that Mr. Arnold was a bookworm and a woman-hater, one whom some sad or bitter experience had taught to dread the gentler sex, and thrown back upon his art for comfort. When

Mr. Scott had ventured, laughingly, to repeat the gossip to him, Philip had answered:

"They are so far right as that I shall never marry." And to Una, afterwards, when she ventured lovingly to protest, he had added;

"A man ought never to ask a woman to marry him unless he can tell her his whole past, and I will never darken any girl's soul with the recital of mine. It is enough to have shadowed your life." And then he had gone for one of the long, solitary walks in the woods, from which he always came back calm and chastened.

Una was thinking of the incident now as she cut a rose, red as blood, and thorny and sweet, just such a rose as Molly had worn the day they dined at the Cartarets. She had never again seen that look in her brother's eyes which she had noticed when Mr. Yonge interrupted them, but she could not doubt that she had read it truly, and now that Molly was free, she had begun to hope that she might see it again when they met. Was it not possible that Philip might be brought to a different conclusion by love's sweet, irresistible logic, and that from the ashes of Molly's early happiness, a later growth—of deeper root and lovelier bloom—might spring? Since Mr. Yonge had always believed that it was not right for cousins to marry, there could never have been any hope in his heart, and Una felt she could nurse her tender little romance without doing wrong to the one who had loved Molly so much longer. Yet the

thought would sometimes cross her mind—would Mr. Yonge have seen that barrier so clearly, if it had been he and not Gerald who was the favored lover? Could it be that any of his animosity to Gerald sprang from the fact that his rival had been blind, had won the prize, while he had sternly withheld himself even from striving? If so, why had he been so angry with Gerald when at last the latter had seen what he was doing and had drawn back? Una had just relinquished the problem, as she had done often before, finding it too hard for her to solve, when the gate clicked and she saw Mr. Scott coming up the walk.

Somehow, although The Lodge was out of town, and off the common road of travel, the young minister found it convenient to consult very often with his new parishioners on matters of church interest, or details connected with the charities in which they were mutually interested.

“Good news!” he called, as Una came to meet him. “Whom do you suppose I saw in the Cartaret piazza as I passed just now? Mrs. Ferguson. And the runaways will be here tomorrow night. She has come on to put the house in order for them. No! I am not going to let you run over there. I want you to help us decide on the plans for the mission chapel which your brother was to have ready this evening. Will we find him in?”

Philip was at his desk, and he put away his work with a smile, when he saw his sister coming in with the minister. He liked Mr. Scott, and apparently,

Mr. Scott liked him, for he lingered some time after the plans had been discussed and the estimates given. For a while the talk was of ways and means. Then the conversation drifted to the home-comers. Mr. Scott was warm in his expressions of pleasure at the return of the absentees, and enthusiastic in his praise of Mr. Yonge.

"He is a fine fellow, even if he doesn't believe in convict Sunday-schools," he said, laughing. "I was afraid he would prejudice you against them that day, Miss Una. The truth is, he is one of the most benevolent men in my church, though nobody would suspect it, to hear him talk. He has a heart of pure gold. But it has been hardened, as gold always is, in the furnace. No one who sees him now for the first time can have any idea of what he was before his cousin Robert died. I was in the seminary with him at the time, and I never saw grief change a man as it changed him. There was a kind of David and Jonathan love between them, though Yonge was so much older. I always believed it had something to do with his abandonment of the ministry, though he never said so."

"I never heard of grief driving a man out of the pulpit, though I have heard of its sending a good many men into it," said Una.

"It was my mother's death sent me, I know. But we are not all constituted alike. Yonge is certainly different from most men. I wish I had a dozen like him in my church."

That night as the brother and sister sat together



in their little parlor after tea, with the first fire of the season crackling cheerily upon the hearth, Una suggested a different explanation. "Philip, did it never occur to you that Mr. Yonge's dislike of Gerald might have something to do with his retirement from the ministry? I have often wondered how, as a Christian, he could cherish the feeling so long. He could certainly never have preached to others about forgiveness."

"That sounds like an explanation of Carew's," said Philip, and, as the convicted color dyed her cheek, "Come, Una! I think we can safely leave that matter to Yonge's own conscience. Secret things belong to God, and he will straighten out all that is crooked, be sure of that."

The words had scarcely left his lips when the door-bell rang, and the maid ushered in the subject of their conversation, Stephen Yonge—but Stephen Yonge with a brightness in his glance and a vigor and cheerfulness in his manner which made him seem like another man. The rest and holiday had evidently done much for him, whatever they had done or had not done for his cousin.

"Molly preferred to come right home, instead of resting a day in New York as I intended," he explained, laughing at their expressions of surprise. "Why Arnold, how well you look! I can scarcely believe you are the shadow that came here last June. And Miss Arnold, our pine air seems to agree with you, too. Molly will be delighted. She was too tired

to come over tonight, but she sent oceans of love and will see you the first thing in the morning.

There was no resisting the frankness and cordiality of his manner. He had learned to talk, too. Philip had many questions to ask about the journey and the news across the water, and Mr. Yonge answered fluently, still with that new light in his eyes, that new ring in his voice, which Una had noticed the moment of his entrance. They had just risen to go into the study to look at an etching, which Philip had lately bought, and of which Stephen had seen the original across the sea, when a footstep was heard on the porch. This time the bell did not ring. With the freedom of a frequent visitor, and one assured of his welcome—the haste also, of one to whom time is precious—Gerald opened the door.

“Can’t stop! Just looked in for a minute to tell you I had a call out into the country, and cannot practice our song tonight. A nuisance, isn’t it? And I don’t suppose the poor wretch is in as great agony as he thinks he is. But doctors cannot take those things for granted.” He stopped abruptly. Stephen had turned slowly round. For the first time since they had parted with such bitter words—as Una chanced to know—the two stood face to face. Stephen was like a statue. Gerald flushed and looked appealingly at Una. And Una, on her part, turned beseeching eyes on Stephen.

“It is Dr. Carew, Mr. Yonge,” she said, and she could herself hear the deprecation in her voice.

Stephen bowed silently, and took no notice of the hand which Gerald half extended. The doctor crimsoned and turned on his heel.

"I had better go," he said, with a significant smile at Una. "What time tomorrow can we go over that duet?"

"I will be at leisure any time," she answered, and without again glancing at Stephen, she followed Gerald out.

"Just as I told you," laughed the latter in answer to her troubled look. "He would not even have spoken to me if you had not compelled him. You will have to choose between us, Una."

"I shall certainly not choose a man who is rude to a guest in my house," answered the girl warmly, and she waited on the porch, in the chill dark of the autumn night, until she had heard him drive away, and her hot cheeks had had time to cool. Then, when she re-entered the parlor, she found that her brother and Mr. Yonge had gone into the study to look at the picture. She did not follow them. When at length they returned, there was nothing in Stephen's manner to indicate that he had been ruffled by the encounter, but he was taking his leave. As he touched her hand, he said:

"I regret what happened just now. It could not be helped, but I shall take care that it does not occur again."

The tone and look were kind, but she saw that he did not mean the treatment of Gerald, but the collision

itself. He would save her the unpleasantness of making the choice. The home where Dr. Carew was a frequent visitor was not one whose threshold he would often cross.

Una had just cleared away her breakfast table the next morning, and was hastening with her work that she might go over and welcome her friend, when a tall, graceful figure, dressed in black, appeared in the doorway. The next moment, Molly had her in her arms.

"I couldn't wait—you dear little tortoise! Una, did you never get in a flutter and want to see somebody so much that you did not care whether the house was kept or not? I have been in a fever the whole time Stephen has been drinking his coffee. Let me look at you. Why you dear little woman, how you have blossomed out! There are actually roses in your cheeks—delicate tinted roses, though."

"And you, dear?" Una took the beautiful, sparkling face between her hands, and looked searchingly into the luminous eyes. There was something she did not remember in the light, mocking tone.

"I? Oh, I have quite grown up, dear. I have been to Paris and seen Rome. I can mumble a little German, scold my maid in French, and use my eyes over my fan, like an Andalusian. Stephen does not think as much of the latter accomplishment as he might, considering how much it costs to acquire it, but then he is so terribly behind the age. By the way, what did you and Mr. Arnold do to him last night, to

send him home in such a bad humor? He did not know anything when he came in, how you looked, or what you said, or when you were coming over. That will not do, Una. I don't allow anybody to put Stephen out but myself."

Una turned away her head. There was a hollowness in the mirth, a hardness under the smile, that hurt her. Molly peeped around into the tell-tale face.

"What is it? Have I shocked you? Am I very giddy? Well, Una, trouble doesn't make everybody good and tender and sweet as it does you. Fire melts gold, you know, but it bakes clay. I have ceased to believe that there is a man in the moon and a pot of gold at the foot of the rainbow, and that everybody means what he says—as I used to do when I was a child. But I still say my prayers and swear by two or three people, and you are one of them." Molly's flashing smile had vanished for the moment. Her voice was hoarse in its earnestness. "Now, let us talk about something else, yourself and Mr. Arnold. Stephen says your brother looks like a new man. I caught a glimpse of him this morning as he drove by, and I waved my hand to him but he did not stop."

There was no answer. Una had caught sight of Gerald's buggy at the gate, and her heart sank at the prospect of the impending interview. Molly followed her glance.

"Why, it is Gerald," she said coolly. "Is he coming in? Yes, I see he is, and he has brought you some

roses. And what a handsome bay he drives. I wonder if he will be surprised to see me."

Dr. Carew looked not only surprised but embarrassed.

"Ah! This is an unexpected pleasure, Molly," he said, holding out his hand.

Molly gave him the tips of her fingers with a silvery laugh. "One wouldn't think so to judge by your expression, Gerald. But appearances are deceitful, sometimes. What is the matter with your flowers? Do the thorns prick you?"

Gerald turned and placed the bouquet, with which he had been nervously toying, in Una's hand.

"I heard you say the other day that you had no Cloth of Gold roses, and that you liked them," he said, softly. "Will four o'clock this afternoon suit you for our duet?"

"Perfectly."

Molly was still surveying her cousin with amused eyes.

"I hear you are to give a recitation from Tennyson, at the sociable, Gerald, as well as sing; what is your selection? Sir Galahad?"

'My strength is as the strength of ten,  
Because my heart is pure?'

Or is it:

'Ring out the old, ring in the new,  
Ring out the false, ring in the true?'

"Neither," said the doctor shortly.

Una interposed. "Gerald is to give a selection from the 'Northern Farmer,' she said."

Molly's eyes danced.

"What! 'Proputty, proputty, proputty. Don't ye marry for money; but ye go where money is!' Why, that is better yet, Gerald. And you always did do that Lancashire dialect well. I will make Stephen bring me to hear you."

But Gerald could bear no more. He picked up the hat he had laid upon the table:

"My horse is growing restless," he said in a constrained voice; and to Una as he turned away, "I will see you this afternoon, then."

Molly looked after him, as he went down the walk with quick, angry strides.

"He looks well, doesn't he?" she asked carelessly "Gerald always did carry himself like a gentleman. By the way, Una, did I tell you that we met your Mr. Vanburgh while we were gone,—at Florence? And a very agreeable, intelligent young gentleman he proved himself to be, instead of the brainless dude, or gouty old Cræsus, one might have expected. He came home in the steamer with us too, and will be down here very soon he says, to look at his new house. But he won't disturb you at the Lodge. He has had his instructions on that point and will not dare to disobey."

"But, Molly, it is his own house."

"I do not care if it is. I want you here, and he is delighted to have you stay. He would break his neck

to get me a monkey from the Cape or a rose from Cashmere, if I expressed a wish for either. What are you looking so serious about? Did you never hear of a man who would 'waste his whole soul' for something about as foolish? But talking of rich people, I forgot I had a Cræsus right beside me. I have not congratulated you yet, Una, on your uncle's will. So the dear old man forgave you and left you his money after all, though he would not own it while he lived. And I don't suppose you think a bit more of yourself than you did before—you are such an unworldly creature, Una! But a bank account like that is not a thing to be made light of, I can tell you. Did he leave it all to you, or something to Mr. Arnold?

"All to me, Molly. But that is just the same."  
"Indeed it is not. If it had been left to Mr. Arnold you would have enjoyed a good share of it. But now what you do not spend on him will be squandered on the paupers and prodigals about town. They will have cake, and ride around in carriages, and buy new clothes, while you go tripping about in the same print gown. How do I know? Oh, dear me! You have not been our only correspondent while we have been gone. Mr. Scott has written regularly, and his letters are 'Miss Una and the church poor,' and 'Miss Una and the convicts' and 'Sunday-schools,' and 'mission chapels,' and 'Miss Una' to the end! Una, are you flirting with that poor young man?" Molly turned upon her friend suddenly with a smile that was not without a touch of keenness.



But Una drew back with such a leap of crimson to her cheek, such a rush of indignant tears to her eyes, that Molly at once retracted and apologized.

"There, I didn't mean to hurt you. I was only jesting. Of course, being so much interested in the same kind of work, you would naturally be thrown a good deal together. Do you see much of Gerald, too?"

"I have done as you asked me, Molly."

Una longed to inquire if her friend was still of the same mind as when she made the request, but something in the cold bright eyes restrained her. Molly patted her hand.

"Of course, dear. And you must not mind when I tease Gerald as I did just now. We understand each other, and it is good for him, whether he thinks so or not. Now, I must run home, and unpack. We want you and Mr. Arnold to come and take tea with us this evening. I have heaps of pretty things to show you, and I want to hear your brother tell about his services at the jail and at the poorhouse. Oh, you thought I didn't know about that either, did you? Mr. Scott, again, my dear! He has been very communicative, and I have been a little ashamed of myself sometimes when I heard all that you two were doing—just the least bit you know." Molly stooped down, kissed her friend's cheek, and before Una could see her face, ran away.

Una thought Gerald a little preoccupied when he came that afternoon. When their practice was over

and they stood together for a moment in the porch, looking over at the Cartaret house, he said suddenly:

"My handsome cousin means to make me suffer, I see, for whatever pain I may have given her. Well, I don't begrudge her her revenge. It is a woman's prerogative, I suppose. But it is easy to see under whose tutelage she has been the last few months."

"I cannot think that Mr. Yonge would try to prejudice her," Una said slowly.

"There are more ways of prejudicing people than by direct accusation. Some day you will turn against me, too, Una. What! You think not? Well, it will be a sorry day for me, if it ever comes. Your friendship is a tower of strength to me, spiritually."

Was there ever a woman—a good woman—who was not made a faster friend by such a plea?

Gerald paused at the foot of the steps and looked up.

"Didn't I see old Mrs. Stiles coming out of here this morning with a bundle?" he demanded.

"Yes. I had some things that I thought would be a comfort to Patty, now that the cold weather is beginning."

The doctor's face darkened. "She's a good-for-nothing old beggar," he said harshly. "You are deceived in those people, Una, as I told you at the start. They are not worth the notice you take of them."

"We will not quarrel about the Stileses, Gerald. I intend to believe in them until I find them out,

and then I will tell you, though I don't say I will give them up even then."

She smiled at him from above, such a sweet, winning smile, that he could not refuse to respond, and Stephen Yonge, passing at the moment, saw the look on both faces.

Una turned back into the house, softly humming the air of the song she had been practicing. She had seen too much of Gerald's kindness to the suffering Patty, had heard too much of his gratuitous work among the poor, to be deceived by this show of hard-heartedness. And then she forgot everything else in wondering what her brother would say to the change in Molly.

But Philip was very silent when they walked home that evening under the splendid autumn stars.

"Molly has changed," Una ventured to say at last, when she had vainly waited for him to speak.

"She is changing," he corrected. "She will be a noble woman when God has finished her."

But, though his demeanor to the young mistress of Cartaret house was always gentle and kind, Philip did not again spend an evening with his neighbors, did not cross their threshold except by special invitation.

## CHAPTER XIV

### ROBERT'S STORY

The year "drew nigh the birth of Christ." The holly-berries were red in the swamp. In the gardens, the pale narcissus and sweet-breathed violets alone ventured to bloom. Mary Cartaret had just come in from a long solitary walk in the woods, and was closing the gate behind her, when she heard her name called cautiously in the gathering dusk.

"Molly—one moment! I must speak with you."

It was Gerald; and there was a ring of authority under the silken tone.

For a moment the girl hesitated. Often as they had crossed each other's paths since her return they had never met alone before, and she shrank more than she could express from a private encounter. Yet he might think her afraid if she refused. With a rush of fine scorn at the thought, Molly turned and waited—her slender figure drawn to its full height, her hand on the gate—the old gate where she had waited for him so often.

Gerald did not seem to remember. He was breathing quickly and his eyes had an excited gleam as he came close to her.

"I have been trying for weeks to get a word with

you," he began fretfully. "If you had not been determined to ignore my efforts, Molly, you must have seen."

Molly's hand trembled slightly. Harsh words never cut so deep as when they fall from lips that have spoken to us softly.

"I can think of nothing that we could have to say to each other, Gerald." She spoke coldly. But Gerald had seen the flutter of the little hand and came closer. In such encounters, the harder nature has always the advantage.

"Let us have it out, once for all," he said harshly. "We must understand each other, Molly. What do you mean by your treatment of me since your return—your ceaseless persecution—your covert sneers, whenever we meet? It is becoming more than flesh and blood can stand. I saw Una look at you again and again last night. If you have no consideration for me I should think you would have more pride than to make your disappointment so obvious. Have you forgotten the promise you made me when we parted?"

"I have forgotten nothing, Gerald." Molly was quite herself again. Her voice was steady but low—so low that Gerald misunderstood and all at once laid his hand on the one on the gate.

"It was your own doing, Molly. You know I did not ask to be released," he said in a softer tone. "It is hardly fair to reproach me for what you did yourself, for what has cost me far more suffering than it

has cost you. Do you think, because I am a man, and have had to go about my work with a smiling face, that there has never been any heartache beneath? A girl is entitled to some revenge, I grant you. You will bear me witness that I have not refused you yours, that I have not resented your behavior by word or look. But there are limits to everything. I owe something to my own self-respect. Molly! When we parted you promised me that you would always be my friend—my sister—”

With a sudden movement, Molly freed herself from the entreating touch, and like lightning her wrath leaped forth.

“Because I believed in you then, Gerald! Because I had not lost faith in honor, and truth, and love! Because I did not know it was possible for a man so to defy God, and despise himself, and love money—”

“Ha!” Gerald interrupted her with a haughty gesture. “Has Stephen contrived to inject that base suspicion into your soul? Then your treatment of me is sufficiently explained, Molly. But I would have thought you had too much nobility of soul to listen to him.”

His cousin's answer was a smile as bright and keen as sunlight upon ice. Gerald turned away and tapped the toe of his boot impatiently with the buggy-whip he still held.

“I am at a loss how to convince you of my innocence,” he said peevishly. “If you can believe me

capable of such perfidy, you can have no confidence in my word."

"No confidence," answered Molly. Her eyes did not move from his face. The gleam of scorn was still on her lips.

As they stood thus, the sound of light wheels upon the road made them both start and glance around. Gerald drew back into the shadow of the low-boughed cedars. Molly, with her hand on the gate, called a gay good evening to Una and her brother as they drove past. Then she glanced at her cousin, and the swift scornful light played across her face again as she said:

"You are playing for high stakes, Gerald, but I warn you once for all you will not win."

He cast a look of mingled fear and anger over his shoulder, and, coming near her, caught her savagely by the wrist.

"Do you mean to threaten me?" he hissed. "Would you dare to poison that sweet, pure soul?"

"A pure soul is its own defense, Gerald. I see no need for me to interfere. There are natures of such 'celestial temper' that they detect falsehood as certainly as the angel's spear unmasked the fiend. Now I think we understand each other, and you had better let me go. Stephen might come out, or somebody might take you for a highwayman."

With a short sarcastic laugh, in which her ear was quick enough to detect a note of relief, Gerald released her.

"Criticisms on my behavior come with an ill grace from a young lady whose flirtations are the talk of the town," he retorted.

Molly had already turned away, but she heard; and her cheek burned as she sped up under the cedars to the house. That last shot had gone home. In more ways than one, as she knew well, she had shocked the good people of Brookwood since her return. French novels and fast driving had been bad enough, but defiance of conventionalities and reckless flirtation had been worse. Charles Vanburgh was not the only young man who had followed her home, and hovered about her as a moth about a candle. It was common talk that she might be the mistress of the forest palace if she wished—or of one or two other handsome homes in the state if she preferred. With the consciousness of her beauty and with a sense of her power, there had come a delight in the use of it which was at once an intoxicant and an anodyne to her wounded pride. The temptation to beat out her own problem on the anvil of other hearts, to forget her pain in the glitter and play of edged tools, was too strong. The spice of danger in the pastime only gave it zest; and if sometimes a qualm of conscience made itself felt, she quieted the rising pang with the assurance that there was too little faith and sincerity in the world for there to be risk of her inflicting actual pain. Her admirers probably meant as little of what they said as she did when she



dropped her eyes and answered softly. But Gerald's taunt had suggested a new thought.

She realized that she was testing Stephen's love and patience to the uttermost, that staid mothers, though they could not control their sons, had begun to warn their daughters to have less to do with Miss Cartaret. But for the first time it occurred to her that her friends at the Lodge might be estranged, too. Was that the reason they came so seldom to see her now, why there was a cloud of tender trouble in Una's eyes when they met, why Mr. Arnold's face had looked so white and stern last Sunday evening when he had chanced to pass her and Herbert Barnes loitering home from church? He was on his way home from the Stockade Sunday-school, and she could guess how frivolous and wicked her life must look to him. But they should not give her up. She stopped suddenly under the cedars and stamped her little heel in the gravel-walk.

"They shall be my friends," she said imperiously. "I can do without the rest of the world, but not without them, and Stephen."

Mrs. Ferguson met her at the door. She was a sweet-faced, low-voiced Scotchwoman, a distant connection of Stephen Yonge, and she exercised the only thing like motherly oversight that came in contact with the wilful girl.

"Eh, my lassie, but ye're a bit late, and a bit forgetful, too. Mr. Vanburgh called ten minutes after you left this afternoon, and said he had an engage-

ment to take ye driving. He seemed awfully put out about it, and said to tell ye he'd call again this evening."

"He will not find me in." Molly stopped short in the hall and knitted her pretty brows in a frown. For such an intelligent young man, Mr. Vanburgh was very slow to take a hint, or else he was more determined than the other admirers with whom she had to deal, and was going to be troublesome. "I am going over to Una's to help make candy-bags for the convict Christmas-tree," she answered. "You can tell him so if he comes, Auntie; and if he says anything about tomorrow, say I will be busy then too."

"But Stephen's at the plantation the night, and ye'll have no one to bring ye home."

"I will ask Mr. Arnold. It will not hurt him to perform a neighborly courtesy. It seems to me that our friends at the Lodge are rather chary with their visits nowadays, especially Mr. Arnold."

"I take it ye've only your ain reckless tongue to thank for that, my dear. Ye canna sow thorns, and expect to gather roses. Ye canna tell a man to his face that ye have no faith in honor, nor truth, nor human nature, and expect to have him come often to hear such talk. Mr. Arnold's not to know ye don't mean all ye say, as we do."

"Some of them seem to like it well enough, Auntie. There! Don't look shocked. And don't you worry about Mr. Vanburgh. Men don't take these things

as much to heart as they make out, and they get over them very quickly.”

“I fash mysel’ a heap mair about ye, my bairn.” Mrs. Ferguson laid a withered hand, that shook a little, on the girl’s shoulder. “Molly, listen to an old woman, as has known what true love is and has tasted the sweets as well as the bitter of it. Ye’re rubbing off a bloom, in this kind of play, ye can never win back. It is like taking the cup and plate set apart for the sacrament to eat common food out of; and the time will come—mark my words!—when ye’ll be sorry for it and begrudge every soft word ye spoke to any mon—but ane.”

“Why, Auntie, you dear, romantic old thing.” But Molly kissed the wrinkled cheek; and Mrs. Ferguson caught a glint on her long lashes as she turned away.

Una had forgotten to draw the curtains, and the cheery glow from the little parlor met Molly half way down the avenue. She heard voices as she passed under the windows. She thought she recognized one of them, and she rose on tiptoe and looked in. Yes, Gerald was there, leaning back in the great, cushioned chair beside the hearth, very much at home, and evidently prepared to spend the evening. Una was sewing at the table in a cloud of pink and white gauze, her sweet face all the sweeter for the pleasure of its unselfish employ. Philip was nowhere to be seen. For a moment Molly felt tempted to turn back. But the difficulty of explaining her

retreat to Mrs. Ferguson, and above all, the desire of avoiding the impending interview with Charles Vanburgh, made her put down the impulse.

It was cowardly, and she would not yield to it. There was no reason why she should shrink from meeting Gerald. How dared he sit there, so serene and comfortable, on this night of all others! Her eyes darkened dangerously. Her heart hardened with a swift determination. The next moment she had tapped at the parlor door, and walked in, her usual, gay, defiant self.

Una greeted her affectionately, as she never failed to do, but with the slight tinge of constraint which Molly had noticed more than once of late in Gerald's presence. Gerald himself looked flushed and annoyed. He had not had his cousin's advantage of being prepared for the interview. Molly was mistress of the situation.

"Did you think I was going to fail you, Una? I hadn't forgotten, but I was detained later than I meant to be. There's my thimble, and I will work like a galley-slave, after supper, but not a stitch before. Keep your seat, Gerald. I am going to sit on this cricket, and see pictures in the fire. What is your part in the program—to fill the bags, or eat the candy?"

"I have not applied for either situation that I know of."

"Gerald is tired tonight." Una always acted as peacemaker. "He was up all last night with Mrs.

Stiles. You knew the poor old woman was dead, did you not, Molly?"

"No, though, now that you speak of it, I remember hearing a few days ago that she had a stroke of paralysis and was speechless. But I had not thought of it since. Was that where you and Mr. Arnold had been this afternoon?"

"Yes, I stayed with Patty while Philip went with Gerald to the funeral. Poor Patty! It was such a comfort to her that her mother was not buried by the county. Gerald raised the money on the street to buy her a decent coffin, and give her what they call a good funeral. These poor creatures cling so to these little rags of respectability."

Molly was not listening. She was looking fixedly at her cousin.

"It is strange she should have died today, isn't it?" she asked.

"I see nothing peculiar in the circumstance, Molly."

"Well, I do. Una, do put up your work and come and sit by me. We can easily finish those bags after tea, and I feel blue to-night. I always feel blue on Christmas-eve, don't you, Gerald?"

"Not more than on any other day, Molly."

"We are constituted differently, then. I agree with Dante that the 'crown of sorrow' is to 'remember happier things.' Such merry Christmases as we have had in this old house! Do you remember, Gerald, when you boys used to be home from college and we

would go into the swamps for holly and cedar, and dress the house, and have so many gay surprises and plots? I can see Robert, now, as he looked that year he dressed up as Santa Claus to amuse the negroes. Una, did anybody ever tell you that this house was haunted? No? Well, it's a wonder. People are always in such haste to tell disagreeable things. But they do say so. The negroes, especially, firmly believe that my dead brother comes back here every Christmas, and shakes the doors and windows trying to get in. Listen, now! Doesn't that sound like some one tapping?"

"Molly, for shame! You will make Una afraid to stay here by herself."

"Una isn't afraid of anything, are you, Una? I am sure you would not be afraid of poor Robert if he should come back. Gerald, you are looking behind you. I believe I am frightening you. You will not want to go through the swamp tonight. They say that is haunted, too."

"All houses wherein men have lived and died are haunted houses." Once more Una's gentle voice poured oil on the troubled waters. "I think people must always see things in an old home, and hear things, too, that are not visible nor audible to strangers."

"In that sense, the Lodge is certainly haunted for me." Molly bent closer over the fire as she spoke. "I never come here that I do not see papa's face as it looked that night, and hear Robert's step, pacing his

room, the long night through. What are you shaking your head at me for, Gerald? Don't you think I ought to speak of it? I cannot see any reason for silence, now that papa, and Robert, and Mrs. Stiles are all gone. And I have always wanted Una to know. I would like to hear what she thinks about it."

"You will do as you please, Molly. I see too much tragedy in my daily life to care to dig up one of the past; but if you want to unveil the family skeleton—"

"But I never thought, any more than Stephen, that Robert did it, so there is no disgrace about it to me. And Una is so near to us. I feel as if she ought to know everything that concerns us. Has any one ever spoken to you about my brother, Una?"

"I know only that he had a difference with your father, Molly, and left home, and that he died without ever coming back."

"And did old Mrs. Stiles never give you a hint that she thought it was Robert who made an imbecile of her husband?"

"No, indeed."

"Well, she was honest in that, then. 'Give the devil his due.' What is the matter, Gerald? Are you shocked at my irreverent mention of his dark majesty, or would you rather tell the story yourself? You know it better than I do."

Gerald, who had risen from his chair, reseated himself, and controlled his nervousness with an effort.

"You have undertaken to tell the story yourself," he said coldly. "I will have nothing to do with it."

"It is a sad story to tell on Christmas-eve, Una, and I am selfish to do it, perhaps. Yet it was on Christmas-eve that it happened, and in this very parlor, too, so there seems a fitness in it. We had come up here for the holidays. Robert had brought some friends home from college for the hunting. Gerald was here, too. Stephen was north. The day before Christmas the boys were up at dawn and off on a fox hunt. Gerald, you ought really to tell this part of the story. You saw it and I did not."

"I will have nothing to do with it, Molly."

"Well, then, Una—as the story was told afterwards to me—this is what happened. They had started their game, and the hounds were in full cry—excuse my hunting slang—when Master Reynard darted across a field of cabbages, belonging to old Mr. Stiles. He had been an overseer for papa, and rented a few acres from him, but he was a churlish, cross-grained old creature. As the boys were letting down the rails, he came out with his gun and threatened to shoot the first dog or man that entered his field. Robert was very impatient—we heard afterward that he had had some difficulty with Mr. Stiles the day before—but he offered to pay for any damage that they might do. Mr. Stiles would not listen, and while the dispute was going on, and things getting pretty warm, the hounds, who had been fretting and whining, found a hole in the fence and dashed in.



Mr. Stiles thought Robert had let them in, and raising his gun fired at the pack, and Robert's favorite, Zeno, who was leading, leaped into the air with a cry and fell dead. I can guess what Robert's face looked like, though I wasn't there to see. He never loved anything, dog or friend, by halves. If he had shot Mr. Stiles then and there, I do not think any one would have been surprised, but they say he controlled himself with wonderful self-command, for him. All he said to Mr. Stiles as he got back on his horse, was: 'You'll repent this before you are twenty-four hours older.' It was that speech which told so against him afterwards. Of course there was no more heart for the hunt, even if they had not lost the fox by the delay. In a little while, they all came trooping home, dogs and hunters, out of humor. Robert did not come to the house, but, leaving Gerald to look after the visitors, got a servant and a shovel and went back to bury poor Zeno. No one saw him again until dinner, and then he was moody and silent even with papa, and as soon as the meal was over, he disappeared again. How or where he spent that afternoon, no one will ever know. At supper-time he had not come in. Papa was just asking for him, a little displeased, for he never liked any of us to be late for meals, when Gerald burst in—you had been for the mail, hadn't you, Gerald.'

"Yes, Molly."

"When Gerald burst in with the news that old Mr. Stiles had been set upon in his field and beaten

nearly to death; and that his wife, who ran out at the sound of his cries, had recognized his assailant as Robert. She had seen him, she said, as he was getting over the fence. And the whip, lying beside the old man, with blood on the handle, had Robert's name on it. She said, too, that it had been a message that young Mr. Cartaret wanted to see him that had taken him out of the house.

“O Una! If a cannon ball had exploded in our midst, there could not have been greater consternation. Robert was inclined to be wild, but he had never done anything really bad or cruel before. Papa looked five years older by the time the story was told. Gerald chanced to be passing when they found Mr. Stiles, and had been one of those who had helped to carry him in, and he was too much excited to keep back anything. Papa sat with his head bowed upon his hands for a moment. Then he rose and standing straight and still, as if he were facing the guns again, looked round upon us all.

“All he said was: ‘I will not condemn my son unheard. But if he has been guilty of this cowardly assault, he shall suffer the full penalty of the law.’ Papa was a magistrate then, Una. Then he told Gerald to go back to the Stileses, and see what he could do for them, and to tell them that they might trust to him to see that the perpetrator of the deed did not go unpunished. Then he would have left the room. But there were two there whose faith in Robert stood firm, even when papa's was shaken. I

believe that is the reason Stephen has always thought so much of Hector—I know I have always loved him for it. He stood right in papa's path. 'Mas Robert neber do dat, sah!' he said. 'He neber strike no man in de dark, least ob all, an ole man what warn't as strong as he.'

"And Cato, the cook, who had come in, stood by him, and said so too. The negroes all worshipped Robert and had done so ever since he was a baby. But papa waved them both aside. 'I condemn no man unheard,' he said. 'When Robert returns, let him come to me.' And then he went into his own room and shut the door.

"It was nine o'clock before Robert came in. By that time a note had come from Gerald to say that the doctors could not say before morning whether Mr. Stiles would recover or not, and he had offered to stay all night and help nurse him. Robert went at once to papa's room. I think Hector had been on the watch outside, and had given him a hint. For a few minutes we heard their voices in hot, angry debate. Then they grew louder, and all at once papa's door was thrown open and we heard him say: 'Go to your room, sir, until you are able to substantiate your statements or give some account of yourself!' Robert had a spirit as high as papa's. I caught one glimpse of his face. His eyes were ablaze, and there were red spots on his cheeks. 'You will get no further explanation from me,' we heard him say. 'If it has come to this, that only my father's

servants will believe me without an oath, the sooner I leave this house the better. As for that old scoundrel, Stiles, he has only received what he deserves, and I am glad of it.' Then he marched off to his own room—that little room at the end of the hall, Una—and locked himself in, and we found that he had refused to give papa any account of the afternoon, or to explain about his whip, or even to swear to his innocence, as papa had at last proposed. No one ever saw him again—at least no one who ever told. I have sometimes suspected that Hector helped him off, but if he did he has never owned it. I went once to the door and knocked, and so did one of his friends, but neither of us received any answer, and when morning came he was gone. At first we thought only for a while, but by the time Stephen reached home we knew better. Stephen was at the North, as I said, but he came right on when he heard, and I never again want to see any one so angry. Even papa quailed before him. He reproached us all for ever doubting Robert's word for a second, and I will never forget the storm that burst upon your head, Gerald, when he found that you had persuaded papa to hush it up and to pay Mrs. Stiles to say she had not recognized her husband's assailant. He said he would move heaven and earth but that he would bring Robert back, and set him face to face with his accuser, and he swore, if it took a lifetime, he would find out the real perpetrator of the deed and expose him not only to the punishment of the law but the

scorn of every honest man. I believe that is the reason he gave up the ministry, because such a purpose was out of keeping with that mild and holy calling. But he has never said so. All I can be sure of is that he has never altered his determination. Stephen does not change like other men, and I would not like to be in the place of that guilty man, whoever he is. For Stephen will find him out though it takes a lifetime, as he says, and he will show no mercy when he does. Gerald, why don't you use the screen if the fire is too hot for you?"

"I have not said that it is, Molly." Gerald's tone was still one of offense, and this time not without occasion, for he had indeed made no movement to indicate that he had found the blaze of the hickory-logs too fervent. He was intently watching Una who had turned pale at the story of Stephen Yonge's cherished revenge.

"That is all, Una." Molly had dropped her cheek in her hand and was looking into the coals. "After a long while, the detective that Stephen had sent out to look for him, wrote us that a young man, answering to Robert's description, though calling himself by another name, was a reporter on one of the St. Louis papers. Stephen went on at once, but before he reached there the reporter had perished, with hundreds of other people, in a terrible theater fire. There could be no doubt that it was Robert. The officer had his picture, and there were papers, too, which Stephen found in his room which settled it

beyond dispute. Now, Una! You have heard the story. What do you think?"

"I believe that your brother was innocent."

"After such special pleading I do not see how Una could think anything else."

"Don't you, Gerald? Have you changed your mind since you persuaded papa to pay Mrs. Stiles to keep quiet?"

Before Gerald could answer, Philip came in. He had just been with Mr. Scott to make the last arrangements for the tree which was to bear its kindly fruit upon the morrow, and in the interest of hearing his report, Molly seemed to forget that her question remained unanswered. Una did not, but she saw that the subject was painful to Gerald and she shrank from reopening a topic, so out of keeping with that night of joy, and so at variance with the blessed season of peace and good-will.

## CHAPTER XV.

### CHARITY, SWEET CHARITY

Molly was in her gayest, most audacious mood at supper. It appeared to Una that she was anxious to banish from her own and Gerald's mind the memories she had evoked. She commented mischievously on the fact that the minister did not call as often at the Lodge as he had done during the summer, and when the tell-tale color flew to Una's cheek she turned her batteries on the gentlemen, rallied Philip on his unneighborliness and told Gerald, in an audible whisper, that she had heard that day that he was engaged to a widow of ample means and ampler proportions. Then, when she had reduced them all to a state of apprehension as to what she might say next, she changed her mood as swiftly as an April day, and became winning, telling with infinite drollery and sweet contagious laughter, tales of childish escapade, and boarding school adventure, until no one could resist her. Even Gerald laughed; and Philip's smile, rare and welcome as a flower in winter, gladdened Una's eyes.

But Miss Cartaret's spirits had a sudden check soon after supper when the door opened to admit

Charles Vanburgh. It was not an uncommon thing for him to spend an hour with his friends, on his way to or from the Cartaret house, but Molly's conscience told her that she had more to do with this visit than the Arnolds; and she caught a quick reproachful look as they shook hands, which did not tend to make her more comfortable. And, though the young man was no more able to resist the smile with which she answered him, than a fly to escape the web in which it has become entangled, Molly saw, too, a look of determination about his mouth, which told her that the hour of reckoning was at hand. A sudden feeling of terror, a desperate desire to put off the evil day, if only for a few hours, took possession of her. If he saw her home as he had evidently come to do, there would be no escape. She must avoid the issue, and there was no one who could help her do this but Mr. Arnold. Hitherto her relations with him had been as free from coquetry as her intercourse with Stephen, but now, for once, he must serve her as a shield.

"You have promised to fill my bags faster than I can make them," she said to him gaily, and Philip, who had said nothing of the kind and knew perfectly well that he was being used as a scourge to torture his friend, had no choice but to accept the challenge. Molly, having once drawn him to a seat at her side, held him there with the fascination she knew so well how to exert. She questioned him about his work, and the school at the Stockade. She



talked to him about the places she had visited across the sea, and talked well. She made him tell her of the books he was reading, and listened better than she had talked. Now and then she ventured to extend the circle and draw the others into the conversation; but Una was absorbed by Gerald, and Mr. Vanburgh, who was watching her with white face and suffering eyes, responded slowly to the overtures. Twice Philip attempted to change his seat and make an opening for his friend, but she was quicker than he and prevented him each time with a grace and resolution that were simply unassailable. At last, when she changed her tactics, and began audaciously to rally Charles Vanburgh on his silence, the tortured lover rose and giving her a look of deeply-wounded feeling took his leave.

The moment the door closed after him, Molly's gayety vanished. She dropped her needle, and leaning back in her chair, looked up at Philip with her deer-like eyes full of weariness and pain.

"Will you take me home? I am very tired," she said.

The strain of the evening had indeed been greater than she knew. Philip felt her tremble, as they went out into the night.

"Are you cold?" he asked.

"No, except at heart. O Mr. Arnold, you do not know how lonely and tired I feel sometimes, how selfish, cold and untrue the world seems! I know people think me a heartless coquette, with no con-

sideration for others and no purpose in life. They cannot see behind the mask. They do not know how often I cry myself to sleep, longing for my mother—wishing I had died when I was a child, and believed in things, and had never loved anybody but her.” Her voice broke. There was a shimmer of tears on the perfect face, in the dim moonlight, as it was lifted to the winter sky.

Philip made no answer, but Molly thought she felt a slight pressure from the arm on which her hand rested, and went on recklessly:

“I know I shock you and Una. Your lives are so full of kindness and labor for others—I feel ashamed of mine oftener than you dream. I know I do wrong to encourage Mr. Vanburgh—and the others—and let them think I care for them when it wouldn’t matter a straw to me, if I never saw one of them again. But if you knew how much falsehood I have seen in the world—how much hypocrisy I have to deal with,—you would have a little charity for me I know. You would not wonder that my heart is seared, though I am so young, and that I cannot believe in people.”

Once more Molly paused. They had reached the gate, where the avenue joined the Cartaret garden. Philip’s face was in shadow, and still he did not speak.

“Sometimes I am afraid you and Una will be worn out with me, and that you will give me up like the rest.” Molly’s voice had begun to falter now. “But don’t do it as long as you can help it. You don’t

know what it is, even now, for me to come in contact with unselfish lives like yours,—to see people really care for each other as you and Una do. It keeps a little faith in goodness alive in me yet. I do not know what would become of me if that was taken from me, if either of you failed me or disappointed me.”

But Molly went no further in her appeal. With a sudden, passionate cry, that had no words in it, the silent man beside her caught her hands in his, and held them for one mad moment against his breast.

“Child, child! Do you know how you torture me?” he cried. Molly, looking up, frightened, saw shining down upon her from his eyes a love such as she had never dreamed of.

The next moment Philip had flung her hands from him wildly.

“Forgive me. I am mad!” he cried, and without another look turned and fled into the silent night.

For a second Molly stood looking after him. Then, with a low cry, she also turned and fled—up the walk into the house, through the broad hall, up the old oaken staircase into her own room. There she locked the door and fell upon her bed in an agony of weeping. He loved her! That grave good man whose life had been a perpetual reproach to her, who had seemed as much above her petty coquetries as the clouds are above the earth. He loved her! He had given her the fine gold of his heart, while she—blind, foolish, wicked girl that she was!—she had been

squandering the wealth of hers in reckless gambling for forgetfulness. A sense of unutterable unworthiness came over her—a strange, sweet sense—through which she looked out with opened eyes upon a new world.

Philip did not come with his sister, next morning, to the Christmas-tree at the Stockade.

“My brother went to New York last night on business,” she explained to the minister, and to Mr. Yonge who unexpectedly made his appearance on the scene. It seemed a little strange to both gentlemen, that any business should have been important enough to cause Philip to leave his sister alone at such a season, but neither of them interrogated her farther. And Molly, when Stephen mentioned the circumstance to her at dinner, only expressed her regret that she had not known it in time to invite Una to come over and take her Christmas cheer with them.

Molly had been very gentle and subdued all day, and her cousin had given more than one earnest look at the traces of tears in the dark eyes. But it was the first Christmas she had spent without her father—that would account for her sadness, to say nothing of a long interview that morning with Mr. Vanburgh. That young gentleman had come to Stephen afterwards in the library to tell him, in a husky voice, that he would leave for Cuba the next day, that he could not say when he would be back, but that he would always cherish his friendship with

Miss Cartaret as one of the purest, and most ennobling influences of his life—a speech which had been a great comfort to Molly's cousin for what he had felt to be very bad treatment of her northern lover. Stephen was not a little surprised and pleased, also, when Molly proposed after dinner that Mrs. Ferguson should pack them a hamper, and that they should go out and take some cheer into homes that had less than their own.

“Una and her brother are always doing things like that. I begin to feel as if it was time I profited a little by their example,” she said playfully, but Stephen read a sweeter purpose in her eyes than her lips would admit.

On their way home they overtook Una, who had been to see Patty Prentice. Patty's husband had just been discharged and Una had found him sitting over the fire, shamefaced, out of heart and of course out of work. She had promised to find him employment.

“It ought not to be hard to do it.” she said in answer to Stephen's cynical shake of the head. “It was drink brought him into trouble, and he has reformed, he says.”

“They all have when they first come out, Miss Arnold. Give him a week, and you will see how deep the reformation is.”

“And if he fails in that time, without anybody having held out a helping hand to him, whose fault will it be, Mr. Yonge? It seems to me we ought

to be guided in such things by the way God deals with us. While the prodigal son was 'yet a great way off,' the father not only saw him but went out to meet him and 'fell on his neck and kissed him.' What right have we to stand stiffly in the doorway, watching our brother's difficult approach and demanding that he shall prove his sincerity by reaching the very threshold, before we hold out a finger of welcome? If I cannot find any other place for French Prentice, I will take him as my gardener, though I don't know that he can tell a rose from a turnip."

"You will be making a very dangerous experiment—for more than your garden."

"I will run the risk. Mr. Yonge! have you ever been inside of that home? Do you know how that wife and mother lies there day after day, tortured with ceaseless pain and unable to lift a finger? Can you guess what it is for a man to sit there and see her suffer, to hear his child cry for bread and not be able to find work that he may help them? Would it be strange if he lost heart, grew desperate, and sought oblivion in the cup that ruins him?"

"Una, Stephen is only teasing you to make you talk," interposed Molly. "Don't you see the corners of his mouth trembling? He will go the first thing tomorrow and give that man work—if he doesn't go tonight."

"If I do it will be because I have learned some things from Miss Arnold and her brother."

Stephen answered. His look and tone were very gentle. Una had never felt so near to him before. But at that moment, the door of the house they were passing opened, and Gerald, calling a gay good evening to the patient he was leaving, came out. He did not stop, but silently touching his hat, jumped into his buggy and drove off. Una looked after him, and then glanced up wistfully at Stephen, whose face had grown all at once cold and stern.

"I wish I could teach you something else," she said shyly. "It is Christmas day, Mr. Yonge. Ought we not to be at peace with all?"

But Stephen had set his face like a rock, and looked straight before him without answering.

"Please do not think me presumptuous. I would not speak, if it did not matter so much to me. But why cannot you forgive Dr. Carew any wrong he has done, and help him to a nobler life, as you will French?"

"The cases are quite different, Miss Arnold." The voice was forbidding, and Molly gave her friend a warning look.

The remainder of the walk was silent and constrained. Una was glad when their ways separated and she could leave them. Gerald came that night to take her to choir practice as usual. On their way home afterward he referred to the incident of the afternoon.

"Your society does not seem to shed any of its sunshine upon your friends, to judge by the look I

received this afternoon," he said bitterly. "I wonder it does not disturb Stephen's devotions to hear my voice in the hymns. Perhaps, to save him the sin of improper feelings in church, I ought to resign."

Una did not like the tone, but she had been thinking very seriously over the events of the afternoon, and she felt more impelled than ever to act the part of peacemaker. It was possible she might be more successful with Gerald than with Stephen.

"I know it is asking a good deal of you not to resent Mr. Yonge's manner," she said gently. "But we must give as well as expect charity, Gerald. It is very much more our concern, whether we are just in our estimate of others than whether they are just to us. Mr. Yonge has so many noble qualities, I cannot but feel there must be more excuse for him than we know. Perhaps, when any one has had such a sorrow as he had in his cousin's trouble and death, it is only natural that he should be a little hard and suspicious. Molly says he has never been the same since."

If they had not been in the dark Una might have seen a change pass over the fair, handsome face beside her. She did feel Gerald's arm tremble.

"A girl's romance, Una! Stephen has been what he is now ever since I have known him, and that is ever since we were both boys. Did he speak to you of Robert?"

"I have never heard him mention his name. Molly



says he does not even to her. O Gerald, what a sad story!"

"Very sad, and it might have all been avoided if Robert had not behaved like such a schoolboy. If he had waited a day or two the whole thing would have blown over, or been hushed up—as it was. But to come back to Stephen. Don't you let them blind you with any stories of how sorrow has hardened him. People like Stephen do not change—as Molly said herself the other night. You might as well try to alter the expression of a marble statue as his opinion of anything or any person after it is once formed. And he has been my enemy all my life. Do you remember the scene you witnessed that day at the library door? He has noble qualities, he does not lie, nor steal, nor cheat—but it would be as impossible for him to do me justice, as for that pine yonder to bear acorns."

"It seems as impossible to alter your opinion of him as his of you," sighed Una. But she spoke with a smile that took away any edge from the words.

"Una!" Gerald stopped suddenly in the moonlight and looked searchingly down into the sweet face. "Has it ever occurred to you that Stephen's hatred of me might have its root in his love for Molly?"

Una started. She had never heard her suspicion put into words before. "I am not sure that I understand you," she said.

“He has wanted her all his life. You must have seen that there was more than cousinly attachment in his behavior to her. He did everything that he could to prevent our engagement, and I suppose it was asking too much of human nature, not to expect him to feel it very keenly when he was defeated. Last summer, when he saw it was our duty to give each other up, he was furious with me for giving the real reason, although, mark you, it was the one he had himself urged at the first—because—don’t you see—it cut her off from him as surely as from me, I don’t believe he ever will forgive that.”

Una went to bed that night with a heavy heart. Philip had given her no explanation of his sudden journey, but she felt sure that it was connected with that walk home with Molly, and there had been a sweetness and a softness in her friend’s manner that evening, and a careful avoidance of her brother’s name, which led her to a conclusion not far from the truth. But she was not prepared for the announcement with which Molly walked in the next morning soon after breakfast.

“I am going away, Una. I have an invalid friend in Georgetown who wants someone to keep house for her, and to look after the children. And I telegraphed her yesterday and asked if she would have me, and she said, Yes. I am going tonight. You will not miss me very much, dear. You will have your poor people, and our lives have run in such different

channels of late. I know I must have tried your patience very often."

Una put her arm around her. Her heart was very full. She could not speak. Molly saw the tears, and laid her head on her friend's shoulder, where her face could not be seen.

"I ought to have gone long ago, Una. I would have done so if I had not been such a selfish girl. You will think less of me, I know, when I tell you, but I must. I want you to know the worst of me, Una, and then love me if you can. I am not a rich woman, as everybody thinks. I have hardly a penny in the world. Papa's money that he left me was all invested in a mine that proved to be a big swindle. Stephen tried to keep it from me; I did not find it out till the night before we went away, after I had told you all good-bye. I insisted on seeing the will, and then it all came out. Stephen was so good and generous, Una. He said the money that came to him from Aunt Judith would have been Robert's if he had lived, and was the same as mine. He never expected to touch a cent of it. And I was so bewildered and desperate with trouble, I yielded. But I have known for a long while that I was doing wrong, that I had no right to be so extravagant with money which was not my own, and now I am going to turn over a new leaf with the new year, and be a self-respecting, independent woman. My friend will give me a salary, and I feel richer, thinking about it, than I have ever felt before."

Molly lifted her head and smiled into her friend's troubled eyes. She little knew the stab there had been in every word, for Philip's sister. Like one overtaken by a flood, from which it is too late to flee, Una sat cold and still.

"What does Mr. Yonge say?" she asked at last.

"Well, Stephen doesn't like it very much, to tell you the truth. He argued and argued, and even pretended to be angry; but when he saw I was determined, he gave in, and has been as nice as possible. I know he thinks I will get tired in a little while; but he'll see. Now, Una, I want you to come over and spend the whole of this last day with me. That's the worst part of my going away—leaving you. But we can write to each other, and I have promised Stephen to come home for a visit in the summer. By the way," Molly turned around, with a bright face, in the doorway, "I was right in what I told you yesterday. Stephen went to the Prentice's before breakfast this morning—and gave French work."

## CHAPTER XVI

### GERALD'S FALSE MOVE

Molly had been gone a month and Philip was at home again, hard at work, when one bleak afternoon as Dr. Carew was leaving his office a negro lad handed him a note. It was from Una. Robbie Prentice was sick with fever and sore throat, and she thought Gerald ought to see him, she would wait until he came.

"Tell Miss Arnold I will be there in half an hour, as soon as I have seen a very sick patient."

But Dr. Carew frowned as he stepped into his buggy when the messenger had departed

"Those wretched people! Will she never have done with them?" he muttered. "They seem to have a fascination for her."

His temper was not improved when, a little after the time indicated, he reached the house, and found Una, with her hat off and apron on, seated beside the bed, apparently prepared to spend the evening.

More than one sorrow had visited the little home since the June afternoon when Philip and his sister had first crossed the threshold. Mr. Stiles had followed his wife to the grave in less than a week,

and the effort to help the convict husband to a better life had proved a miserable failure. French had soon tired of the situation secured for him by Stephen, and exchanged it for a place as watchman on the road, where he had soon fallen into bad company, and taken to drink again. A fortnight before that February afternoon, he had been crushed by an incoming train; and after an hour of unutterable agony, without ever seeing his wife again, had breathed his last. Through all those days of sorrow and trial Una had been the ministering angel of the home. Food and fuel were, indeed, supplied by the minister—or the unknown friend who bestowed his benefactions through him—but it was Una's money that paid for the strong negress, who came every day to do chores and wait on mother and child. It was Una's hand that provided the warm clothing which protected both from the cold, and smoothed Patty's pillow, and dried her tears. And it was her influence, as she knew well, which secured for the invalid the young doctor's constant and skilful attention. Gerald could not but contrast the appearance of the place this afternoon, with the look it had worn on his first visit. The floor was scrupulously clean, the walls had been whitewashed and made bright with gay pictures. Everything was in order, and the sick woman's bed was as white and soft as loving hands could make it. Patty was suffering from an acute attack of her old complaint, but Robbie was sick for the first time in his sturdy,

little existence. Mother and visitor watched Gerald anxiously as he made his professional examination and asked a few questions. The young doctor looked very serious as he rose from his seat at the cot, and beckoned Una out of the room.

"This is no place for you," he said, excitedly. "It is a bad case of diphtheria. You must let me take you home at once."

"I cannot go. I have promised to stay all night. Is Robbie very ill?"

"We will discuss his chances as we go home. I am in earnest, Una. Get your things. You take in poison with every breath in that sick-room. You torture me while you hesitate."

"I do not hesitate." Una spoke gently but firmly. "I'm not going home tonight, Gerald. It would be cruel to leave that helpless mother with that sick child."

"Then let them call in some of the neighbors, or the colored woman who does their work. You are not the one to run the risk."

"The neighbors have children; Sally was frightened when she left here this afternoon and I am sure will not come back when she knows. Besides she is ignorant and would not understand how to nurse a disease like this. Robbie might die if left to her."

"He is likely to die anyway. What is his life in comparison with yours? Good heavens, Una! With your voice, your prospects, it is madness to discuss

the matter. Why, if you should live through a disease like that you might never sing another note."

"I will take the risk, for tonight, Gerald. Tomorrow, if you can find a competent nurse—"

"Tomorrow will be too late, Una! This is insanity and must be treated as such. If you refuse to listen to reason, I will speak to your brother."

"Philip is out at The Pines, tonight." Una smiled, but the color had begun to glow in her cheek. Gerald was too excited to heed the token.

"Then as the friend of both it is my duty to see that you do not endanger yourself; and as the attending physician I have a right to say who shall nurse my patient. I refuse to have you do so. Unless you leave the house I will do nothing for the child, and Dr. Bates is away."

Una looked at him intently.

"You do not mean that," she said in a low voice.

He thought she was weakening, and that he had only to press his advantage.

"Yes, I do. I can be obstinate as well as you, Una. Until you leave this house, I refuse to enter that room again."

A wise man might have been warned by the darkening of the gray eyes.

"You do not mean that," Una repeated in the same low voice.

"Yes, I do." Blinded by the certainty of triumph, Gerald marched on to the precipice he did not see. "Come, Una, my buggy is at the door." He held



out his hand, with a smile half playful, half triumphant.

"Una stood quite still for a moment, looking down. Then without a word she turned and went into the inner room. When she came out, she had on her hat and cloak.

"Ah! now you are going to be sensible," Gerald said, gayly, as he stepped forward. But in silence, and without even a look, she would have passed him and gone out. He stopped her.

"Una! you are not angry with me, surely? You will let me take you home?"

Still she did not look at him, and she was trembling.

"Let me pass, Gerald. Dr. Bates is out of town and I am in your power, but I am yielding under compulsion."

"Una, this is childish, ungrateful. I am acting for your good. You will thank me when you are cooler. Philip will, at any rate. Come! make friends. I will do all I can for Robbie, I promise you; and in the morning, I will search the town for a nurse. Una! I cannot afford to have you angry with me." Gerald's voice changed to one of soft entreaty. He extended his hand with his brightest, most winning smile. To do him justice he could not see how cruel his behavior looked to her, nor how completely his consideration for her was outweighed by his indifference to the child. Then, for the first time, Una looked at him, and he saw that he had roused the slow wrath of a gentle nature, which, like the rare

storms of some climates, seems to concentrate in its few outbursts, the fervor that others expend in daily flashes. The gray eyes were flashing.

"You are making me break my word," Una said, in a quivering voice. "You are standing between me and my duty, and you have exercised over my actions a control no one but my brother has a right to assert—which he has never used. I am going, Gerald, but I go alone, and if anything happens to that child, I do not know that I can forgive you." Her voice broke suddenly. And then, too late, Gerald saw the mistake he had made, and that in his effort to preserve the life that was so much to him, he had lost the favor which was more. There was but one way of recovering the lost ground. He did not hesitate a second. With a mien as indignant as her own, he bowed, and reopened the bedroom door.

"If you take it that way, I withdraw my interdict," he said coldly. "I have no right to control you, as you say."

She hesitated, looking at him searchingly.

"Will you do all you can for Robbie?"

"Certainly." The tone was as frigid as if he had been speaking to an entire stranger. Una's eyes filled with tears, but she put away her wraps and followed him in. Patty had heard enough and looked anxiously into the two flushed faces.

"O Doctor, is Robbie so very ill?" she asked. "Miss Una, I do not want you to run any risk for us. If the doctor doesn't think it safe, you mustn't stay."

We'll manage somehow, Robbie and me. The Lord will take care of us."

"He will take care of you tonight through me." Una patted the mother's hand soothingly. "There is nothing to worry about, Patty. I am not afraid; and Dr. Carew, I am sure, can help Robbie."

She glanced appealingly at Gerald, but he was measuring out some medicine at the table and chose to take no notice. It was asking a little too much of him, he thought, to expect him to smile down his own defeat. She had conquered, but she had resisted his kindly intentions in a way that was, to say the least, ungrateful; and though he did not propose to imperil his cause with her, nor jeopardize his reputation as a physician by any neglect of his patient, it might be as well to let her see that he too had something to forgive. He had some difficulty, presently, in persuading the timid child to submit to the necessary treatment and Una had to come to his assistance. It did not allay his irritation to see her take the suffering child in her arms and hold the hot head against her shoulder. Very coldly he gave his professional directions and took his leave. Nor did he offer to shake hands again, a tacit reproach which he hoped would smite deeper than words. It did not escape her notice, but he would have been dismayed if he had known what was the real spring of the tears that flowed down Una's cheeks as she sang the sick child to rest. It was not distress at having angered him. In that brief moment when they had measured

wills, there had been revealed to her something in the light, sunny nature which appalled her. Like hidden writing, put to the test of a powerful chemical, the latent selfishness and hardness of the man had leaped forth. She had always realized that he lacked the granite steadfastness of Stephen, the lofty ideal of other men she had known, but she never suspected such indifference to higher issues, such defiance of duty, such cruelty to the helpless when his own wishes were involved. She could never have the old feeling for him, any more than she could gather up water that had been spilled upon the ground, any more than she could forget the tiger-light that had flashed for a moment into the blue eyes or the ring of command that had transformed the soft voice. She must forgive him, of course, and be his friend—he needed a friend more than ever if he had such a nature to struggle with—and yet it might be as well not to be in too great haste to extend the olive-branch. There had been a hint of proprietorship in his attempt to control her actions which made her heart take alarm and close its doors, as the miamosa closes its leaves. It would be many a day before she could meet him with the old frankness and confidence.

Her heart was busy with these thoughts as she moved to and fro preparing supper for herself and Patty, when some one tapped at the outer door. Before she could reach it Stephen Yonge had entered.

“Can I see Mrs. Prentice?” he asked. Then recog-

nizing her: "Miss Arnold, I beg your pardon. I did not know that you were here. Is anything wrong?"

"Robbie and his mother are both sick, and I am going to sit up tonight. You ought not to come in, Mr. Yonge. Dr. Carew thinks Robbie has diphtheria."

"Diphtheria! And he has left you to nurse him. Are you aware of the danger? Do you think your brother would approve?"

Una put down the pitcher of milk she was carrying and leaned against the table. She was trembling.

"Philip always lets me do what I think my duty," she said faintly. "No one else is willing to come, and I am not afraid."

"That may be. But your being willing to run the risk, and your being at liberty to do it, Miss Arnold, seem to me two very different things. You belong to your brother; you are too much to each other for either of you to feel free to sacrifice yourselves."

"I haven't forgotten Philip, Mr. Yonge. But my duty seems so plain I feel I have no choice but to trust God and do right. Tomorrow I will try to find a nurse, but tonight I cannot leave Patty alone with that sick child."

"I could not ask you to do that." Stephen's voice was very kind. "But suppose I could bring you a good nurse in half an hour—one who is trained to such work, and can do a great deal more for Robbie than you can—would it not be your duty to give place to her?"

"Can you get such a nurse this evening?"

"Yes, I saw Miss Peterson get off the train an hour ago; I know she is anxious for work and that it will be a kindness to her to give her the place."

Then, all at once, Una's resolution wavered.

"Will you let me pay for her?" she asked.

Stephen smiled. "If you make that a condition, yes."

"And let me stay here until she comes?"

"Certainly, I could not ask you to leave before."

"Then I will go and tell Patty. My life does belong to Philip, as you say; and if they do not need me here I ought not to stay."

Yet Una marveled at herself that night as she walked home quietly under Stephen Yonge's escort, that the point which she had so bitterly contested with Gerald had been yielded so easily. And Gerald's wrath burned with tenfold heat the next day when the circumstances became known to him. He had now a just cause of complaint he felt, and for the next week bore himself to Una, when they met, with an air of deeply-injured pride. But if he expected Una to take the initiative in the proposals for peace, he was mistaken. It soon became apparent that she avoided him quite as sedulously as he kept aloof from her; and that if any effort was to be made to bridge the chasm, it must come from him. For a week after the conclusion had forced itself upon him, and his pride had bowed to the inevitable, Gerald could make no opportunity to speak with her alone. Then, one evening, when she was coming from Patty's cottage—

where Robbie was now running about convalescent—he was able to overtake her.

“Una, I must speak with you. Are you still angry with me? Cannot you forgive a moment’s forgetfulness?”

She had quickened her steps to escape, but, finding it impossible, turned and looked at him with sad, unrelenting eyes.

“I cannot pretend to feel as I did before, Gerald. I did not know you could be so cruel, that you could have so little consideration for a sick child.” Her voice broke.

“Una! You do not understand. How can I make you? It was not lack of consideration for the child but alarm for you. Candid reflection ought to have shown you that. If I had not been driven nearly mad at the thought of your danger, I would not have spoken as I did. Be merciful. If you knew what your life is to me you would judge more kindly. A man is seldom patient when he loves.”

Una drew back, her very throat crimson. “You forget yourself, Gerald,” she said quickly.

“No, I don’t. I have never been so truly myself as since I have begun to hope that some day—months hence perhaps—but still some day, you might give me love for love. Don’t turn away. I know you were not prepared to hear this now. I don’t ask you for an answer yet. I only claim a hearing. When a woman has inspired such a passion in a man, as you have in me, she owes him that at least. How else can

I make you understand my feelings the other evening? I adore you, Una. I could kneel and kiss the very ground on which you stand. I have done so ever since we met, though I did not myself know it at first. My affection for Molly—”

But here, Una put her hands over her ears. She had made one or two ineffectual attempts to stop him before.

“I cannot—I will not—listen to you,” she cried. “Molly is my friend. You pretended to part with her reluctantly, to ask nothing of me but friendship. You have betrayed my trust. You have been false to us both.” She burst into tears and Gerald seized the opportunity to pour into her ears his passionate protests and excuses.

“You misunderstand me, indeed you do,” he declared. “I am not good, Una—not half worthy of you—I know that only too well—but I am not a rascal. I did not intend to say anything of Molly that was not honorable and true. She is a noble girl. I never knew what my feelings were for you until I was free. I would never have found them out if duty had not separated me from Molly. But then, when in my loneliness and misery, I was thrown on you for sympathy, when I saw your beautiful soul shine out in every word and act of your life, how could I help it if the hidden blossoms in my heart reopened to the sun? I have not betrayed your trust. I have known perfectly all the time that you gave me nothing but friendship; and I have been careful to ask nothing



more, but you do not know what even your friendship has been to me, Una. I don't pretend to deserve you. I have sown my wild oats, like others. But since I have known you I have become a different man—you can't know how different. Evil has become hateful to me. Virtue has become beautiful. Again and again, the thought of you has stayed my hand, has ruled my tongue."

"Please stop, Gerald."

"I can't. And I insist I am not disloyal to Molly in what I am saying. No one knows better than I do what a treasure she will prove to the man who wins her. But was I to stand all my days sighing at the gate of my lost paradise? You didn't expect Molly to do it. If she had cared for Vanburgh, you would have thought it no injustice to me. Be just, Una. You have a stronger sense of justice than most women. You couldn't expect us to waste our lives, mourning over that early mistake. Was I to be blind and deaf and cold to all goodness and beauty thereafter? You must confess yourself it was not reasonable to ask it. Molly did not. She told me, when we parted, that if ever I learned to care for some one else she would be glad, that she wanted to see me happy. I did not think it was possible, then, of course. But men are mortal. Let the poets say what they like, sorrow does not last forever. I turned to you for sympathy, and you gave it, 'sweet as the droppings of heaven's own dew,' and as free. God is my witness that I did not ask for anything more at first. But the heart has its springs as well as the earth. Storm-stripped

boughs will bud and blossom when the snow melts. You do not think it strange that a seed stirs in the sod and leaps toward the light. Was it strange that my buried heart should stir and beat once more and break into a bloom its first spring had never known? You must hear me. I have suffered. It is the ploughshare that breaks up the fallow ground. It is the cold winters that enrich. It is only natural that my second love should be a nobler and stronger passion than my first. You women little know how you melt and mould us. I am a better man for having known you. I cannot keep anger and pride in my heart with the thought of you. I cannot stain with fraud and double-dealing the hand that touches yours. Una! Una! If the bare thought of you—the faint far-off hope of winning you—has done so much for me, what will the reality do? One word—one gleam of hope—and there are no heights to which I will not climb; no difficulties that I will not surmount. My life is in your hands.”

“Our lives are in our own hands—and God’s, Gerald.” Una was herself at last. “You must never speak to me this way again. It has been a great shock. I feel as if I had been in some way to blame; as if I ought to have seen and saved us both this ordeal. But since I could not, I must at least be quite true with you now. I can never, never give you what you ask. You must put the thought of it forever out of your mind. It will not be as hard to do as you think. You cannot possibly care for me so much.”

He interrupted her with a bitter laugh.

"A patient under the knife is seldom satisfied with the surgeon's assurance that he does not suffer as much as he thinks he does. I see I have cast my die and lost, Una. It is my own fault for being so precipitate, for not using more self-control the other afternoon. I will trouble you no farther. Try to forget what I have said. Your friendship is more to me than the love of any other woman. You will not withdraw that, surely?" for she hesitated.

"I am sure it would be better, Gerald. I do not want to seem ungrateful, but it would be pleasanter for you if we did not meet so often.

"I am the best judge of that. It will add a very bitter pang to my disappointment to feel I have forfeited your friendship, too. As I said before, you do not know what it has been to me—what an anchor, what a safeguard, what an inspiration. God only knows what will become of me if you take it from me. I don't profess to be as strong and self-sufficient as some men. If you cannot give what I ask, at least do not refuse me the comfort of seeing your face sometimes and of hearing your voice. I will keep away until I have schooled myself into a calmness that will not trouble you. Surely, this is not much to ask where I have given all?"

And Una was not wiser than many a woman before her and many a woman since. She gave the promise, and Gerald left her at the Lodge gate, not wholly cast down, nor hopeless of success.

## CHAPTER XVII.

### THE LIFTED VEIL

Upon reflection Una decided not to tell Philip what had happened. He had never been able to overcome his dislike of Gerald; and since he had heard of Molly's loss of property, he had been inclined to attribute to Gerald the most mercenary motives for breaking off his engagement.

"I suspected it last summer, when I told Yonge of my connection with the mine," he said. "I never told you of that talk, Una. You were busy with Miss Carteret at the time, and I did not care to recall those dark days to your mind. But I could not remain their friend, sitting at their table, and touching their hands, without telling them; and Yonge was kinder than I deserved. Never call him a hard man again. He made excuses for me I would never make for myself, and said the confession had only made him more my friend than ever. But when I told him that it was the purpose of my life to atone as far as possible for any suffering I might have caused, and asked what his cousin's loss had been, he refused to tell me and said she would never want for anything. So far as concerned cases of actual

need, I was right, he said, but for her I must not think of it. He even went so far as to say, that for reasons he could not give, he believed it would prove to be a blessing in disguise to her, and I could take that comfort to myself. I have thought ever since, that he knew Gerald was marrying her for her money, and that she was well rid of him."

But Una had repelled the accusation with desperate energy.

"It was because the loss was so much greater than you could make up," she pleaded. "Mr. Yonge knew that you were only a struggling man. Now that we have the money—Uncle Leigh's money—"

"Your money, Una! Do you suppose I would let you spend a cent of it in atoning for my crime? No! If I live, Mary Cartaret shall be repaid every dollar, but not by you. Neither she nor Yonge would listen to such a proposition, even if I were so base."

And there she had been obliged to let the matter rest, seeing that his mind was set, and nursing a sweet unuttered hope that one day his and Molly's future would be one, and the restitution would be very simple. One night, as they were walking home from church, she asked:

"Philip, did it ever occur to you that Mr. Yonge's feeling for Molly might be more than a cousinly one?"

Philip was speechless for a moment. "No," he said. "I have never thought of such a thing."

"Well, I have. It flashed on me the first time I ever saw them together. Of course she could not

marry him any more than she could Gerald. But I cannot help feeling that she had begun to see it and that that was why she went away."

But this time Philip made no answer. He, too, had kept his secret; and if deep down in his heart there was a fear—terrible as it was sweet—that it had been to avoid some one else, he gave no sign.

Meanwhile Gerald made the most of the permission he had wrung from Una. He was as constant as ever in his visits at the Lodge. Careful not to violate the interdict by speech, he contrived in the hundred ways every lover knows well, to assure her that his heart was still at her feet.

"Your illustration of Ithuriel's spear is going to fail," Stephen wrote to Molly. "It seems to be an accepted fact that Gerald and Miss Arnold are engaged. He has told several that he expects to have an establishment of his own this fall; and as he confines his attentions to her there can be no doubt as to whom he expects to preside. She colors and looks conscious when I meet them together. And Arnold, I fancy, is anxious. I see a good deal of him now that we are both so much alone. He is a fine fellow, and has as many orders as he can fill. By the way, he tells me that Vanburgh has discovered that the climate of Cuba agrees with him better than Carolina and has offered The Pines for sale. What a pity he did not make that discovery before he invested so much money." And Molly wrote word back:

“What a pity, indeed! But then Mr. Arnold would never have made the designs, and Una would not have come to Brookwood, and the world would be a very different place—for some of us! Do not worry about Una, Stephen. She will not marry Gerald as long as purity is dear to heaven, and liveried angels wait on innocence. If the worst comes to worst, I will be home before fall, and you know I have not your scruples for holding my tongue. I am glad you console Mr. Arnold.”

Una's good angel had, indeed, not forgotten her. She had been standing on the brink of a precipice, but the mists were soon to lift, and the gulf below to be laid bare. One by one, rumors began to reach her that Gerald was not as generous in his relations to the poor, as he would have had her to believe. Incidentally, she heard of heavy exactions where he had told her his services were gratuitously bestowed, and of neglect where payment had been tardy. And one day, passing under the windows of Patty's cottage, she had heard his voice in scathing reproach of an uncanceled bill. She gave Patty the money to pay the account and instructed her to say nothing about it, but she took pains not long afterward to arrange that Dr. Bates should attend the invalid, now in a rapid decline. It was while watching at Patty's bedside, a few days after, that she learned that it was Gerald who had persuaded French to give up the situation secured for him by Stephen. She could not blame him for the result, but she did

resent the interference which had removed him from the softening influences of home, and thrown him once more into a place of temptation. And her heart stood in doubt of the secrecy with which the change had been made. She had never been able to forget the revelation of character made to her at the time of Robbie's sickness; and if anything was needed to bring the selfishness of Gerald's nature into clearer relief, it was the quiet goodness of Stephen's, which now began to dawn upon her everywhere she went, every day she lived. It was he, Mr. Scott told her, who had cared for the Stilese, who was the nurse of the sick negroes on his plantation, who lent money without usury, found work for the unemployed, whose word, man, woman and child trusted as they did the promises of the blessed Book, "who would swear to his own hurt and change not, and speak the truth even to his hurt"—the young minister concluded his eulogy enthusiastically one afternoon. Una went home afterward, very sad, for that very day, in a book Philip had brought home from the Cartaret's, she had found Gerald's name signed as "Carew," though he had given it to Molly three years before she had met him at the seaside. What motive could he have had for the deception? It was idle to inquire, but the insincerity made her shudder.

Like one sitting beside the fire, who feels the cold from without creeping in, she began to feel what awaited her. The next day she went to the city for



a day's shopping. On her way home on the cars, in the afternoon, she heard two young men in the seat in front of her talking.

"Smart fellow, Carew! He's going to marry that girl, and she's worth thirty thousand, in her own right, and never suspects that he knew anything about the will."

"Some people are born lucky."

"Yes. He happened to be at the same hotel in Lausanne with the old man, when he was taken sick, and was called in to stimulate him while the lawyer made the will. He heard everything, but was too smart—don't you see?—to affix his name as a witness, made them call in some of the visitors. He says it was nothing but good luck. He was engaged to his cousin then, and had no idea that her money was going to take to itself wings, or disappear—in a hole in the ground, to be more exact—and that it would ever matter to him. But when he got home he found her dot gone, and the heiress here; and all he had to do was to off with the old love and on with the new, in a way not to excite suspicion. You heard how he managed that, didn't you? That was the sharpest part of all."

The rumble of the train, as it darted through a tunnel, drowned the imprudent narrator's voice. When the conversation again became audible, it was the other young man who asked:

"And doesn't the girl suspect he's after her money—even if she cannot see the whole plot?"

"Not she. Women are too vain. He's made her think he's mad about her." The speaker rose and lounged toward the smoking car. His companion followed. Neither of them noticed the slight white-faced girl, cowering in the seat that they passed.

Philip was at the station to meet his sister and uttered an exclamation of dismay at her pallid face. But to his anxious inquiries, she answered:

"No, I am not sick—only tired."

Just then Mr. Scott hurried up to say that he, too, had been watching for her, that Patty Stiles would probably not live through the night and was anxious to see her. Una insisted that they should drive out to the log house before going home.

"The drive in the fresh air will do me good," she pleaded; and under the circumstances her brother felt he had no choice but to yield.

It was evident, as soon as they entered the little cottage, that the end of sorrow had indeed come for Patty, and that the next sun would rise for her upon the happy shore where the inhabitants never say "I am sick." Una made a bed for her brother in the outer room, for he would not leave her, but she herself watched beside the dying woman and held her hand, as the long night wore away. Patty had asked for Stephen and seemed sorely disappointed when she was told that he had gone to Georgetown to see his cousin.

"I had something to say to him Miss Una. I ought to have said it long ago. It's been on my

tongue many and many a time since he's been so good to us, and now I cannot die and leave it unsaid. Will ye promise to tell him all that I say, Miss Una?"

"I will, Patty, every word."

The dying woman fixed her eyes, with an intent look, on the face bent over her. Dying eyes see clearer than others through the mists and veils of earth.

"Mebbe I oughtn't to let ye promise until I've asked ye somethin'. The doctor tellt me onct that you and him was goin' to marry. Is that true, Miss?"

"No, Patty. There never has been the least possibility of that."

"That's a cup of comfort to me on my dyin' bed, Miss Una. Now tell me one thing more. Did anybody up to the house ever tell ye about pa—and how he got hurt?"

With a shudder Una felt what was coming.

"Yes, Patty, I have heard the story. How your mother accused Mr. Robert Cartaret, and was paid to keep quiet."

Patty's fingers tightened on her friend's wrists. With the strange strength of the dying she drew Una's ear down to her lips.

"It warn't Mr. Robert," she gasped. "It was the doctor—Dr. Carew."

And then, bit by bit, as her failing strength would permit, the story was told.

"Me and French had been keepin' company a good while, Miss Una, but pa had forbid him the house,

and I was out at the fence talkin' to him, just afore dark that night, when I seed a man runnin' across lots to us. He didn't see us till he was gittin' over the fence. I seen him plain, though I didn't know his name, and when I asked French he only said: 'One of the young gentlemen from the house.' I never thought no more about it then, till I went back to the house and heard about pa bein' beat, and I didn't know no better when ma said it was Mr. Robert, the Squire's son, that she seen' him as she ran out to help pa, and that she'd found the whip with his name on it. We had both of us been worried about the dog, and remembered what Mr. Robert said. I didn't know no better till Mr. Gerald come, he warn't the doctor then. I knowed him the moment I clapped eyes on him, and when he began talkin' about his cousin, I callt ma out of the room, and says, 'He's the man hisself. I seen him.' But ma wouldn't listen. She'd made up her mind at the fust it was Mr. Robert, and she warn't goin' to be jostled out of it. She said as how the cousins favored each other a good deal and that was the way I come to make the mistake, and when French come in, he said the same—it was Mr. Robert, and we'd better all hold our tongues and see what was agoin' to come out of it. Mr. Gerald stayed all night and had a long talk with ma. He telled her how bad his uncle felt, and how he was willing to do all he could to make amends if she'd settle the matter quietly. Of course if she insisted on prosecution,

he would have to defend his son, and Mr. Gerald showed ma how there wouldn't be no chance for her, cause she was poor, and Mr. Cartaret had money to get the best lawyers. Ma hesitated a good while—she was powerful worked up—but at last, when Mr. Gerald told her the Squire'd send her the deed for the place, if she'd agree to say she didn't see who it was got over the fence, she guv in. We'd been tryin' for years to buy this place, Miss Una, and of course she knowed with pa laid up thar was less chance than ever. Sometimes, Miss Una, I think ma suspicioned a little. She never liked Mr. Gerald, though she always spoke him soft, and was a bit afraid of him. But she was sharp. She knowed he hadn't nothin'; and arter a while I think she'd tellt the story so often she come to believe it herself. I didn't feel good though, I can tell ye. In spite of Mr. Gerald's easy talk, every time I seed him I says to myself: 'He's the man!' And I thought French was mighty partickalar to impress on me that it was Mr. Robert we seed that evenim'. At last, one day I seen him and Mr. Gerald talkin' together, and Mr. Gerald give him some money, and it flashed on me and I taxed French with it, and he owned up but said Mr. Gerald had found out something he'd done and would tell on him if we opened our lips. I loved French, Miss Una. I haint no other excuse to make for myself than that. And Mr. Robert was dead and it couldn't help him. Soon arter that we got married, but I don't think either of us felt

comfortable in our minds, and I have always thought it was one thing which made my poor husband take to drink. And arter he got into trouble, and I had to come back here with Robbie and be a burden on ma, I often felt as if it was a judgment. You don't know how it hurt me to have the doctor come here. It were plum pitiful, too, to see pa, how he used to run and hide when he heard his step. I think that made ma feel queer, but she'd gone so far she didn't know how to go back, and she always seemed a little afeerd of the doctor, as I said. He never suspicioned that I knew anything. French had tellt it at the fust that he'd tellt me it was Mr. Robert, and I didn't know no difference. But I always thought he looked uneasy when I was alookin' at him. And last Christmas when Mr. Yonge was so good to us and helped my man to make a new start, I felt I couldn't bear no more, and when I talked to French he said he felt so too. The next day he went to the doctor and begged him to tell Mr. Yonge or let him do it. At first the doctor was very angry, and when he found that wouldn't do, he changed his tone and told French how sorry he was for it all now. He said if he could bring Mr. Robert back, he'd tell in a minute, though it would ruin his prospects. But that it was too late now, and for French to tell would only be to draw down sorrow on one as had been good to me and was as innocent as an angel. And then he talked about you, Miss Una. He said you and him was to be married some

day and it would break your heart for such a thing to come out, that you thought him a good man. French said he begged like a dog that he wouldn't tell. He told French, too, as how he had turned over a new leaf, and he ought to feel for him. That was too much for my poor man, but he asked the doctor at least to let him tell Mr. Yonge, he couldn't bear to be so beholden to him and hold his peace. But Mr. Gerald said it would never do; that Mr. Yonge hated him and would like nothing better than to publish the story and ruin him. That was why my husband gave up his place, Miss Una, and took the one the doctor got for him, and I believe it was worryin' about it that made him go back to liquor again. Eh, but Dr. Carew has got a heap more than his own sins to answer for."

"But French has been dead two months, Patty. Why have you not spoken since then?"

Patty's answer was a pathetic smile which Una in a moment understood.

"He said he was to be your husband one day, Miss Una. I did not know it was a lie. He said it would break your heart for it to come out. Was it for me, as ye had soothed and comforted and given a hope of heaven to, to strike ye such a blow at the last?"

"Truth is always best, Patty, no matter how much it hurts. Suppose I had been going to marry Dr. Carew, thinking him a good man, would it not have been better to find out before it was too late?"

"I seen that last night, Miss Una. I think things git clearer to us when we come to die. I seen it was but a trick of the evil one to make me feel I ought to keep it from you—that it was you, fust of all, who ought to know."

Patty died at dawn, with her crooked hand on the head of the child asleep beside her; and in the red glow of the sunrise Philip drove his sister home, with Robbie in the buggy between them. Una had promised to befriend the child and see that he was trained into an honest Christian manhood.

Gerald did not hear of Patty's death until the next afternoon, on his return from a long trip into the country. He had no suspicion that his secret had not died with French, but it was a relief to him to know that the last of the Stiles household had been laid to rest. It is not pleasant to be confronted constantly with people that one has injured; nor when one has turned over a new leaf, to come ever and anon on traces of the blots upon the other side. He had gathered some flowers for Una on the drive home, and with a lighter heart than usual, he turned aside to leave them at the Lodge.

Una had just come in from the funeral and met him at the door with her wraps still on. There had been time to recover from her first shock of horror and indignation. And that afternoon, as she stood by Patty's grave, she had remembered that Sunday night in the far-off mining camp, when the brother she loved had struggled in despair in



the tangled web of his own weaving. How often since then, had she heard Philip's very words on the lips of the fallen men they had struggled to uplift—how often, as she had reason to suspect, had he whispered the story of his own fall and restoration into the ears of those whom no one else could reach! Surely it did not become them, to whom God had been so merciful, to be hard upon any who had strayed out of the way. And it was possible that Gerald, as he had told French, had indeed repented of the past, though he had lacked the courage to speak out like a man. If so, how unhappy he must have been all these years, in spite of his bright face and ready laugh! In what terror of discovery he must have lived every hour! Of his sin against herself the girl as yet hardly thought. There had been so little danger of his winning her heart that the plot to do so seemed but a small matter in comparison with the silence that had involved so much actual suffering. She had taken her resolve. Stephen Yonge should hear every word that had fallen from Patty's dying lips, but, if possible, not from her. She would give Gerald the opportunity, even at the eleventh hour, to redeem himself, and make the confession, instead of having the story told upon him like a detected criminal.

## CHAPTER XVIII

### GERALD'S OPPORTUNITY

Little dreaming of what awaited him, Gerald came smiling, up the steps. With a graceful gesture of homage, he placed a basket of snowy wood-lillies at Una's feet.

"I thought of you when I saw them in the wood," he said softly. "To me they seem the fairest and purest among flowers."

His glance said more than his tone and words. But Una did not rebuke the compliment as she generally did. Silently she led the way into the shady parlor. Then as they took their seats:

"I am glad you came, Gerald," she said. "I was about to write you a note."

For the first time he noticed the strange stillness of her manner.

"Is anything wrong?" he asked quickly. "Have you been ill? Una! I heard you sat up all night with Patty Prentice. Will you never think of yourself?"

"It was not sitting up with Patty, Gerald—it was the story she told me which has made me heartsick."

"What story?" But his eyes began to waver under her steady look.

"The story you would not let French tell Mr. Yonge—which I must tell him, if you do not."

Gerald drew himself up haughtily. "Have you permitted those low-born people to slander me to you?" he demanded. But her face told him that the battle was lost. He turned away and bowed his head on his hand. "You have done that much for me Una. I cannot look you in the eyes and lie—even when a lie is the only thing that will save me."

"It could not save you. It has been your misfortune all along, Gerald, that you could not realize that every one you told added a link to the chain that dragged you down."

"Una!" He lifted his face. "How much did that woman tell you?"

"Everything."

They looked into each other's eyes for a moment, then the man's face darkened.

"The canting, whining hypocrite!" he hissed between his set teeth. "So that is the return she made for all my kindness, is it? She took good care to wait until she was beyond my reach. But I can scarcely congratulate you, Una, on your brand snatched from the burning.' "

Una was silent and the silence hurt him more than a spoken rebuke. His face changed. He sprang up and began to toy nervously with the ornaments on the mantel-shelf.

"I don't excuse myself, Una, but I was not the only one to blame I can tell you. I have heard my uncle say a hundred times that he was too severe, and Robert acted like a ridiculous boy. If he had stood his ground and fought it out, the whole affair would have blown over. I give you my word, that when I flogged that old churl, I never contemplated the extent to which things would go. He deserved all he got, but if I had known what it was going to cost me he might have gone scot-free. Talk about repentance! I have wished a thousand times that I had never laid eyes on the man. I had no grudge against Robert. I thought I was doing him a service—it was his dog, not mine, that was killed—and he was always getting into scrapes. I thought he would make his way out of that one as he had done out of others. After things turned out as they did, I wished I had spoken out at first. But it was too late then, Robert was gone, and it would have ruined my prospects for life. My uncle would never have forgiven me."

He was watching her narrowly, as he spoke, trying to detect which one of his pleas moved her most. But there was no relenting in the girlish face.

"You lost far more by your silence than you could ever have done by confession," Una answered. He had not known until then how stern the sweet voice could be. He put up his hand.

"Don't be too hard on me, Una! I have loved you as a man loves but once in his life. You know—

you must know it! Reproaches from you have an edge I cannot bear. Do you suppose I do not know what a mistake I made? I would give my right hand to have it all to do over again. But it is too late. The 'tangled web' is already spun."

For the first time Una's face softened. She had scarcely heard what he said about herself. But that last plea was one Philip's sister could never hear unmoved.

"It is never too late to do right," she said gently. "Gerald, I cannot help feeling that that is the reason God allowed me to be the one to hear Patty's story—that you might have the opportunity even now to do right. You cannot, it is true, undo the past, or recall the dead. But it is in your power to clear your cousin's memory from suspicion, and lift the weight from Mr. Yonge's heart."

Gerald started.

"Stephen?" he exclaimed. "Lay bare my shame to him? Never!"

"If you do not, I must. I have promised." Once more their eyes met. He saw it was vain to measure his will against her purpose and turned away with a groan.

"You do not know what you ask," he said. "You do not know how terrible Stephen can be in his anger, how merciless in his revenge. I would rather throw myself in the path of an engine than go to him with such a confession."

"Then I must. Do not force me to that extremity

Gerald." Una's voice began to tremble. "It will not be an easy task—I have so long defended you to him." She broke down and turned away her face.

Gerald misunderstood her emotion. He started up and made an effort to take her hand.

"Is it possible that you care?" he cried. "Does my disgrace really matter to you? My darling! If you will stand by me, I will do anything you ask. I will see Stephen this afternoon—as soon as he comes home. I will tell him everything. His scorn cannot touch me if I have your love."

Una had been unable to stay the eager flow of words before, but now she made herself heard.

"You misunderstand me, Gerald. I did not ask you to do it to please me, but because it was right. I could not respect a man who could only do his duty for the sake of reward."

But Gerald had caught a glimpse of paradise, and was not to be so easily repulsed.

"Forgive me!" he entreated. "I am nearly mad with trouble. You don't know how this secret has weighed upon me, especially since I have known you. I would rather anybody had found it out than you. It is hard to have that old sin come up now, when I am trying to lead a better life. Una, I will make a full confession. When I broke off my engagement with Molly and turned to you it was for mercenary reasons. Despise me as much as you will for the admission. At least, you shall know the worst that is in me from my own lips. I had always liked you—

you soothed me and put me in harmony with myself, as no one else ever did. But it was not for that I first set out to win your hand. In a little while, however, love came. It is no more possible for a man to be thrown with you and not love you, than to look upon a flower and not know that it is fair, than to see the stars and not think of God. And then how I was punished! In what terror I have lived of my guilty secret coming to your knowledge! How afraid I have been, that because I was false at first you would never believe me true, that because I had thought more of the golden setting than the jewel itself, the fates might withhold you from me! Una! you may believe me or not as you like. But at least for once in my life I speak truth. You little know your power over me. If I have you, I have everything, heart, hope, reputation! My love for you has made me another man. Your love for me can save me even now. Do not answer too hastily. I am at the turning-point of my life. If you will help me I will do what is right. I will tell Stephen all—I will bear anything he may say—if I can come back to you when all is over. This sounds selfish, but I do not mean it so. It is not that I will not do right without you, but that I cannot. You are my good angel. Be careful. It is an awful thing to hold a man's soul in the balance as you hold mine."

Gerald paused, his eyes on her face, his fingers trembling as much as the slender ones they imprisoned. And for a moment Una was silent. That

frank confession had touched her more than she could have believed possible. There could be no doubt that he was in earnest now. Surely there was good enough in the man to develop yet into nobility, if he had the proper help. Was she the only one who could give it? She had prayed that she might save his soul from death. Ought she to weigh her earthly happiness against his eternal welfare? "God, guide me!" she cried, in the depths of her heart, and then the mists lifted and she saw her way clearly.

"I do not hold your soul in my hands," she said sadly. "No human being can do that for another, Gerald, even if they love. And I do not love you—in the way you wish. I could not if I lived a thousand years. It is better to tell you so frankly. I ought to have made you see it long ago. You think I could help you to do right, but you are mistaken. If you cannot do your duty for its own sake you could not for mine. It is only God's love that can make us strong at such times as these, and if we have Him we have no need of any other helper."

Gerald had not heard the last words. He was regarding her intently.

"You could not love me if you lived a thousand years," he repeated. "How do you know that, Una?"

"I cannot tell, but I do know it. Please do not talk any more about it, Gerald."

But Gerald's eyes had begun to sparkle with jealous fire.



"You could not know it unless you cared for some one else," he said slowly.

The indignant color rushed to Una's face.

"You have no right to say that," she cried. "I do not expect to marry. But, if I ever should, it will be a man I can look up to, one who will help me more than I can help him."

"Shall I draw you his picture?" Gerald spoke with a curl of his lip. "A man hard to please and dangerous to displease, terrible in anger, merciless in judgment—ha! You recognize the portrait, I see. Mr. Yonge is to be congratulated on the easiness of his conquest."

"Silence! or Philip shall know how you have insulted me." Una had started to her feet with crimson cheeks and flashing eyes.

"You will scarcely care to call the matter to your brother's attention, I fancy. How have I insulted you, Miss Arnold? Is there any gentleman whom you admire more than Mr. Yonge, for whose faults you make more excuse, in whose sorrows you take more interest?" But here the insolent voice stopped suddenly, for Una had turned away and leaning against the mantel hid her face.

"You are cruel," she sobbed. "I did not know that a man could be so cruel to a woman."

Gerald was in despair. He had hurled the shaft in sheer spite, hardly believing what he said, but now he could regard her manners nothing less than a tacit admission of the charge. Enraged with

himself for having forced the truth upon her consciousness and destroyed his last hope, there was no longer any rein to his jealousy and rage.

"A man can be very cruel when he sees the prize for which he has risked all in the reach of his enemy. Beware, Una! I refuse to make the confession to Stephen Yonge, and if you do, I will speak a word that will not only open a gulf between you and him, but blight the life of the brother you love better than yourself. Remember the mining camp! I know more about those things than you think."

"Do you dare to threaten me?" Una lifted her head proudly, but she had turned deadly pale.

Gerald laughed. Jealousy is, indeed, "cruel as the grave."

"I have only to lift my finger, and the mine explodes beneath your feet. Remember, Una! Revenge is all I have left. If I cannot have you, no one else shall—least of all, the man I hate."

"And this is love!" she cried.

"It is revenge," he answered, and left the room.

Una sat quite still, until the sound of wheels had died away, then like a wounded thing, trampled by some cruel heel, she crept slowly to her room. She was too stunned to weep. What had he meant by that threat? Was it in his power to blight Philip's life? What did he know of those sad, dark days at the mine? The fleeting resemblance to John Carson, which had troubled her now and then, came back upon her, and froze her heart with an

unformed dread. It was true he had told Philip that he knew no one by that name, but he had proved so false in other particulars that she could no longer stay her heart on the assurance. Like one walking in the night, who hears suddenly close beside him the flow of water whose course he cannot trace, she felt that she stood on the brink of a hidden rushing danger, into whose depths an unwary step might plunge her. One thing alone was clear. The promise to Patty must be kept, cost what it might. There was no evading the plain duty; and it was she who must speak the word that might loosen the avalanche. For a moment, after Gerald's cowardly insinuation, the thought had occurred to her that she could ask her brother to make the revelation for her, but now she put it aside. She could not permit Philip, unwittingly, to draw down suffering upon himself. The task had been assigned to her and she must perform it. Mr. Yonge was too good and sensible a man to think such a thing as Gerald had intimated, and she had womanly pride enough to carry her safely through such an interview.

When it was all over she would ask Philip to take her away. He had been talking of studying across the water for a year. She would go with him, together they would make a new home, and forget. But her courage melted more and more like a child's sandhouse in the sea.

Philip had heard the doctor's voice in excited conversation in the parlor in the afternoon and did

not wonder that Una's face looked pale and troubled. Very gently he patted her cheek, when, early in the evening, she made a plea of being tired, and wished him goodnight.

"Don't worry, little sister!" he whispered. "We men say hard things sometimes when we are disappointed, but love for a good woman never hurt a man yet."

He did not dream that it was care for him, not another that kept her awake through the long night watches; nor did he suspect the battle that had been fought and won, when she asked quietly the next morning, as she poured his coffee, when Mr. Yonge would be back. He did notice that the color came into her cheek when he told her that Stephen had returned the night before and would be over soon after breakfast to see him on some business.

"I would like to see him a few moments before he leaves," she said, quietly.

He thought that it was only natural that she should wish to hear the news from Molly, and talk with Stephen about the dead woman in whom they had both been interested, and the future of the orphan child.

Apparently Mr. Yonge thought so too, for when at last he came into the dim, rose-scented parlor where Una sat sewing, he began at once to speak of his cousin, whom, he said, he had found looking thin and pale. He had insisted that she should come home

on a visit and he would have brought her with him, but that she thought it right to wait until her friend could find some one to take her place. Then he asked about Patty. Una had nerved herself to seize the first opportunity.

"Patty left a message for you, Mr. Yonge. She had something to tell you—something for which to ask your forgiveness. As you were not here, I promised her to do it for her." And then in a low voice, as briefly as she could, and without looking at him, she told the story of that night-watch.

Without comment, question, or interjection, Stephen heard her through. At the end he asked quietly:

"Did Gerald know that you were going to tell me this?"

"Yes. I wanted him to do it himself, but he would not." Una colored, remembering how warmly she had resented Stephen's estimate of Gerald in the past.

Stephen misinterpreted the flush. He smiled sadly.

"I suspected it from the first," he said. "I have known it for some time."

"You have known it! And yet said nothing. Why Mr. Yonge, I thought—"

"A good many things of me that were not true, I dare say. But that could not be helped."

"But it was Molly who said it was the purpose of your life to discover and punish—that it was for that you gave up the ministry."

This time Stephen did not smile.

"There were reasons for that step which Molly could not know," he said gravely. "As to my purpose in life, I have learned a good many things in the last year, Miss Arnold. I could not treat Gerald as if the thing had never happened, but I had discovered that it was not my part to punish."

"But had you the right to hold your peace? Did you not owe it to your cousin's memory to speak out?"

"The story had never gone beyond our own household, and there were others besides Robert to be considered. To have spoken out, at this late day, could not have helped him and might have ruined the living—even brought sorrow on innocent heads. If my uncle had lived he might have decided differently, but Molly felt as I did."

"Then Molly knows too?"

"It was my duty to tell her."

There was a pause. Una shaded her face.

"Would you mind telling me how long you have known," she asked, "and how you found out?"

"Not at all. I have known it ever since French died. I was on the spot when he met with the accident, and he had just time to tell me, before he became unconscious."

"Did he tell you that it was Gerald who made him give up his place, and that Patty knew too?"

"Yes."

"And you have been just as kind to Patty since!

O, Mr. Yonge, how I have misjudged you! I knew you would be just, that you would not take an ignoble revenge—I told Gerald so this afternoon when I begged him to come to you and make a full confession—but I—but I never dreamed of generosity like this. What can you have thought of me when I talked to you about forgiveness?”

Una had meant to be very calm and self-controlled, but before she knew it she was holding out her hand. Stephen smiled a little sadly as he took it. He could see nothing in her eager words but gratitude for his forbearance to Gerald. Very gravely he answered: “I thought you a very good and happy woman, Miss Arnold, who judged of others by what she found in her own heart. I deserve no praise for my silence. If I have learned charity it is from you, and you may be quite sure that I will not use the information you have given me in any way against Gerald.”

“I?” Una drew back with a rush of rose-color to her brow. “Gerald’s future is no more to me than to any other of his friends,” she said proudly.

Their glances met. Stephen’s eyes scintillated with a light she could not understand.

“Gerald told Scott months ago that you had promised to marry him,” he said bluntly.

“It was not true—it could never have been true. Molly at least ought to have known. How could she think me so disloyal to her?”

“Molly never did believe it.”

"I think you ought to have known better, too, Mr. Yonge. Is it not possible for a woman to hold out a helping hand to a man without having such motives imputed to her? Must everything be set down to the score of self-interest—even by good people?"

Stephen looked a little dismayed at the storm that had burst upon him.

"What we fear is always easier to believe than what we hope," he said slowly. "I beg your pardon for my stupidity, for what may look like unwarrantable intrusion into your private affairs. In justice to myself I ought to state that the information was not of my seeking, and that I did not credit it until circumstances seemed to force the proof upon me."

Una blushed again. She could guess what those circumstances had been and her conscience did not acquit her as fully as she would have liked. But she was still angry.

"Yet, knowing what you did, Mr. Yonge—how false, how cruel he was—you would have let me go on, and walk blindfold into a life of misery," she said reproachfully. "Was that right? If it was generous to save Gerald a public exposure, was it friendly not to give me or my brother a word of warning?"

"A woman is not quick to believe evil of the man in whom she has placed her trust," was the quiet answer. "My behavior showed you what I thought



of Gerald, Miss Arnold. If I had gone farther you would have been an exception to the rest of your sex if you had not resented my interference and rejected my testimony."

"I could not have doubted your word, Mr. Yonge."

"You forget how carefully you had been instructed in my life-long prejudice and injustice—how natural it would have been to set down any charge to an outbreak of the old fire. No! I do not blame you," as she put up her hand with an entreating cry. "The charity that thinketh no evil, is one of the most attractive things to me in your character, because it is so unlike anything I find in my own. It is a thousand times to be preferred to the pitiless vision from which no flaw is safe. There were other reasons too. Gerald had injured me as no other man had. To have laid bare his past to you would have savored too much of revenge. 'The heart is deceitful above all things,' and there lives not the soul that can assure itself of its deepest motives. How could I be sure that no desire to punish my enemy mingled with my wish to clear Robert and save you? No, if Gerald was to be punished, it could not be by my hand. If he had started on a better life, it was not I who should put a stumbling-block in his path."

"The first step in a better life would have been confession of the wrong." Una's face was still stern. "I still think I ought to have been told, Mr. Yonge. Molly was not bound, if you were, and it was letting me run a terrible risk for a possible good to Gerald."

Stephen's eyes had begun to shine. There was something in this unreasonable anger that was very sweet to him, and made the blood flow faster in his veins.

"You said just now there had never been any danger of your making the mistake," he said smiling, and then, as the rose deepened in her cheek, "I think Molly was prepared to forbid the bans if the worst came to the worst. But she has always maintained there was no danger. Do not think it has been an easy question to settle," he added, growing serious suddenly, as he saw the tears in her eyes. "I have had to fight the battle over and over again, but I did what seemed to me right—and what was hardest."

Una held out her hand. "I have no right to reproach you," she said tremulously. "I ought instead to ask your forgiveness for my long injustice, for what must have looked like willful blindness."

"You have nothing to regret," was the gentle answer. "But I am glad we will understand each other after this."

They were on dangerous ground and Una felt it. She was relieved when the door opened and Robbie toddled in with "A f'ower for woo." Stephen smiled as she lifted the child to her lap and asked what she was going to do with him. She told him that the farmer who rented her uncle's place, Pinehurst, had been there the night they brought him home and had begged for the boy to take back to his wife. They were plain, but good, people, with no children,

and had been looking for some time for one to adopt. It seemed in every way the best home for Robbie, and she and Philip would see that he had an education when the time came. In fact, if they left Brookwood and went to live at Pinehurst, as they sometimes talked of doing, they would see more of the child than if they had placed him in a home at Brookwood.

"Do you think of leaving Brookwood?" asked Stephen.

"We talk about it sometimes, as I said. Pinehurst is the family home, and it seems a pity to keep it closed, or let it out to strangers."

"Yes—a pity," but Stephen spoke mechanically, as if his thoughts had nothing to do with the words.

They were standing on the porch now in the shade of the "Seven Sisters," now a mantle of bloom from gable to ground. Stephen held out his hand. As their fingers touched, a buggy passed the gate. It was Gerald's. He leaned forward and looked at them, and the glance was so full of deep, unrelenting hatred that Una shrank back shuddering.

## CHAPTER XIX.

### NEMESIS

Molly came home the next week, a little thinner and paler, than when she went away, but with a starlight in her eyes and a gentleness in her voice and manner which gave her a new charm for Una.

"The children have done me good," was her own explanation of the change. "One hasn't time to brood when one has to 'tell tories,' and dress dolls, and organize 'billow-bights,' as dear little John calls them. And one cannot say there is no love and purity in the world with little arms about one's neck, and curly heads on one's shoulder. Those baby lips have taken the sting out of my heart, Una."

But although Molly was so sweet and gentle, Una noticed that she came less often to the Lodge than in the old days, and never when Philip was at home. She noticed too that her brother seemed more absorbed in his work than usual, and that after one formal call on Miss Cartaret, in her company, he appeared to consider his neighborly duty done. When they met by accident, in the road, or at church or some other house, the two drifted together invariably,

though they appeared to have nothing to say, and avoided meeting each other's eyes. Una thought she knew the signs, and stole more than one glance during those waiting days at Stephen Yonge to see whether he was prepared for the issue. But the calm brow and firm mouth revealed nothing. If there was any pain to bear, any selfishness to trample under foot, it was evident the strong nature was sufficient for its battle and needed no sympathy.

Gerald, Una had not met since the evening he had left her with that cruel threat. The glimpse she caught of his face at church, told her that he was still miserable and defiant. People had begun to say that the doctor was less attentive to his duties than formerly. One afternoon she saw him coming out of a saloon with a flushed face, and she went home with tears smarting under her downcast eyelids. Stephen overtook her on the way, and detained her as she was about to enter the forest.

"They're cutting down a pine over yonder," he said, "and one can never be certain where these forest-giants will fall. Let us wait a moment."

She could hear the woodsman's ax, and, following the indication of his hand, noticed where, amid the other crests, one lofty plume had begun to tremble and toss. It was fine to see how the kingly thing, with almost human feeling, resisted its fate and endeavored to preserve its equilibrium. But the pitiless ax at the root went on, and at last, with a crash that sent a shudder through the wood, the

monarch of the forest came hurtling down. There was a moment's silence, then a murmur of dismay, and as they passed on Stephen showed Una the stump, on which the woodsman was gazing with a blank face.

"They are cutting for timber," he explained, "and have felled what is called a heart-shaken pine. Years ago, it is said, a cyclone passed through these woods, and the trees that were too deeply rooted to give way before its fury had their hearts twisted and wrung like that: do you see? The wood is worthless for lumber; fit only, as the good Book says, to be "cast into the fire and burned." And yet all these years the tree has stood here green and stately among its mates, and blossomed and borne with the rest, and nobody guessed its secret."

"That is like life," said Una. She was thinking of Philip and the scars he would carry under his quiet exterior till death. Stephen gave her a quick look.

"I would have thought your life had been too short and shielded to have found that out," he said. "But you are right. There are heart-storms to which the breath of hurricane is but as a passing zephyr—when the hand of the Creator seems to put forth its strength against the creature He has made. Those who live—for some do live and keep their reason, such is the penalty the strong pay for their strength—may look and speak and move like other men, but deep down in their hearts they carry the

traces of that struggle. But look! There is your brother coming to us, and he walks hastily, as if something was wrong."

Philip was indeed very pale, and he breathed hard as he came up with them. But his story was told with his customary quietness and self-command. There had been an accident. He had met Miss Cartaret on the other side of the railroad and offered her a seat in his buggy. His horse had become frightened by an incoming train and had run away. For a few moments they had been in imminent peril and had both been thrown out. Miss Cartaret was a little bruised and shaken, but otherwise uninjured. Dr. Bates had come along just at the time and taken her home in his buggy, and made Mrs. Ferguson put her to bed, but he assured them she would be quite herself in the morning.

"But you, yourself, Arnold—you are hurt." Stephen pointed to his friend's wrist, which was bandaged.

"Only a slight sprain, nothing to speak of," answered Philip. But he turned so white they saw that he was suffering, and Stephen insisted on helping Una take him home before he went to see about Molly.

The next morning, contrary to expectations, Molly was still very nervous, and Dr. Bates insisted that she should keep her room and couch, avoiding as far as possible any excitement.

Una went over once to ask about her, but finding

her asleep would not let Mrs. Ferguson disturb her. She returned to her brother, whose sprain had not proved serious, but who also seemed unhinged and nervous. He was pacing the parlor when she entered, and at once demanded:

“How is she?”

When he heard he threw himself into a chair and covered his face. Una stole to his side and laid her hand softly on his head. His eyes had already told her what his lips hesitated to utter.

“Philip! You have told her that you love her.”

He answered without looking up.

“I cannot talk about it yet, Una. When she is well enough to see me I will tell her everything.”

“And then?”

In response to the sweet, thrilling whisper, the brother lifted his head. With one radiant look he flashed into her heart the hope he could not utter. Then a quiver of pain ran across his face.

“God only knows, Una!” he said; and then he rose and went away.

She saw that the thought of the story he had to tell was like a sword in his heart. But Una smiled through her tears, as she sat alone that morning looking out on her little garden. Molly, she believed, had a balm for that hurt and all others, and would pour it out unstintingly.

At last the long day wore to its evening. The sun had set. Brother and sister were in the porch watching the red gold fading behind the pines, when



Una heard Stephen's step coming out of the avenue and around the house. How she knew that it was his step she did not explain to herself. Nor could she afterwards tell why a sense of doom fell upon her with the sound. But the moment she saw his face, she knew that something had happened. The calm, steadfast nature was in a state of upheaval. The firm mouth twitched, the quiet eyes shone with excitement. In silence he accepted the proffered seat, and for a minute seemed absorbed in thought, answering absently their inquiries after Molly. Then he turned to Philip.

"I received a strange letter to-day—one which looked as if it might have been years upon its way, and was indeed written nearly a year ago. It came to me like a message from another world."

Philip made no answer; but his attitude all at once became one of rigid attention.

"Do you remember a young man, by the name of John Carson, who stopped at your house in the mining camp, a short time before you left it?"

"Perfectly." There was no hesitation in the reply. Only Una noticed the pipe-stem between Philip's fingers part in twain.

"What became of him?"

"He was killed by falling into a pit near an old cave-in."

"You are sure of his death?"

"His body was found six months after, and lies buried in a grove near by."

Stephen covered his face. "I feared as much," he said.

Neither Una nor her brother ever forgot the tone. Like figures carved in stone, they sat motionless and gazed at him. At last Stephen lifted his head. There were tears on his face, but his eyes were luminous.

"This is no new sorrow to me," he said. "It is the joy that has come with it that unmans me. That young man was my cousin, Robert Cartaret, whom I believed to have perished in a theatre fire a year before and to have gone to the presence of his Maker without a moment of preparation or warning. Unshaken in his purpose of concealing his whereabouts from us, he had contrived to hide the fact of his escape, and under another name, in another state, was leading a Bohemian life, now as a reporter, now as a photographer." Stephen paused and looked at his listeners. They were both strangely still. Philip's attitude was one of acute attention. Una's eyes were on her brother.

"The letter I received today was written in your house on the third day of May, after hearing a sermon preached by a converted miner. The man's earnestness, he said, aroused his conscience, but something you said to him, Miss Arnold, helped him more. He hoped he had come back to his Heavenly Father. And if we wanted him, and would forgive him, he would come back to us." Stephen turned his shining eyes on Una. "Miss Arnold, if you knew the

darkness in which I have walked since he died you would understand what I want to say to you and cannot." He took her hand; and before she could divine his purpose he had raised it reverently to his lips. "God bless you! I can only acknowledge my debt."

But the mingled pangs of joy and fear had been too much for Una. Her work slipped to the floor, and, with a face as white as the gown she wore, but without a cry, she fell forward in her chair. Philip sprang to her assistance.

"Leave her to me. I can carry her," he cried fiercely as Stephen started forward, and, lifting the slight figure in his arms, he bore her into the house.

It was ten minutes before he returned, and Stephen had had leisure for many anxious thoughts.

"How is she?" he asked before the brother could speak.

"Better; and much distressed at having interrupted us. But I have insisted that she must not come out again this evening. Your cousin's death was a great shock to her and the discovery of his identity only makes it worse."

Stephen was still deeply moved. "She has given me back more than his life," he said. "You know the circumstances under which he left home. A young man does not mount under such conditions. He tells me in this letter how far he had strayed. Your home was the first to which he had been wel-

came in all his wanderings, your sister, the first woman who had held out a kindly hand. Nothing can ever repay my debt to you both. Now tell me, please, the story of the end. He has himself given me an account of the first days in your house."

From the falling of the blow, Philip had known that this must come, and he had nerved himself to meet it, as a man nerves himself to lie still beneath the operating knife. Without looking at his friend, but without hesitation, in a low, clear voice, he told the story of that last morning—the early breakfast at which Una had not been present—his return at noon—the search and the awful discovery of the opened pit. At the close, he went into the house and returned with the letter he had received from Sheriff Holmes the last fall, stating that in some recent excavations the body had been found, identified by the marks on the clothing, and given decent burial. He mentioned also the effort that had been made at the time to discover the young man's relatives, and to inform them of his fate.

Stephen listened silently to the end. Then he asked: "Was there no suspicion of foul play?"

Philip related briefly the inquiry for Jess and the result. "The suspicion was not warranted by the circumstances," he concluded. "Everything went to show that your cousin's death was an accident."

"Then how do you account for this letter? There is a mystery here which ought to be cleared up.

Where has it been all this time? Why does it come to me now? Who mailed it?"

Philip shook his head. "I cannot tell. If there had been any papers with the body Sheriff Holmes would have mentioned them, and either have sent them to me or seen that they had reached their destination. He was as much interested in finding Carson's friends as we were."

"You say Robert wrote letters that morning. If he did not leave them in his room he must have taken them out with him; and, since none were found with the body, we are shut up to one of two theories—he either gave them to some one to mail, or they were taken from him."

"Might he not have dropped it, and some breeze have blown it into a sheltered spot under the rocks where it has lain hidden until now? A stranger finding it would be most likely to put it into the mail as the surest way of its reaching its destination."

"It bears no trace of exposure to the weather. Look at it."

Stephen drew the letter from his breast. Philip's hand trembled slightly as he took it and walked to the end of the porch where the light was brightest. The envelope was yellow and the ink faded as though it had been years upon its way. But the paper, as Stephen had said, was in a state of perfect preservation, and the writing was quite legible. It had been mailed two days before in a little village in the upper

part of the state. Philip came back and returned the letter.

"I can offer no solution," he said. "Are you sure it is not a forgery?"

"I would take my oath to Robert's writing, even if the internal evidence, and the correspondence with what you tell me, were not conclusive. Besides, what possible motive could there be for fraud? No, my resolution is taken. I will see a lawyer tomorrow. The first thing we must do is to send a detective to the place where the letter was mailed. That is another mysterious fact about it. Why is it sent from a place a hundred miles from the spot where Robert died? We must find out who mailed the letter."

Stephen rose as he spoke, and Philip rose also, making no effort to detain him.

"You will do as you think best, of course," he said. "But I am certain you will agree with me in the end that the death was an accident."

He waited, erect and still, until his friend was out of sight. Then his head dropped, and like a man upon whom had been laid a burden beyond his strength, he turned slowly and staggered into the house. Una's door was open and she came out to meet him. At sight of his face she uttered a cry.

"O, Philip, what is it? Tell me. There ought never to have been silence between us. There can be no longer."

She drew him into the room and the door was shut.

It was not an uncommon thing for Mr. Arnold to be summoned away on sudden business, and it awakened no surprise at the railway station when, in the early gray of the next morning, Philip came in and asked for a ticket for New York. Nor did Stephen see anything noteworthy in the fact when, on his return from the city at a late hour that evening, he was told that his friend had left town. But he was distressed to find Molly, who had seemed quite her old self that morning, looking pale and tired, and he felt anxious when he heard that she had seen nothing of Una all day.

“Miss Arnold had something like a faint while I was there last evening,” he said. “If you feel well enough tomorrow, Molly, I think, you had better go over and look after her—especially as she is alone.”

“I mean to,” said Molly.

She kept her word the next morning, before the dew-spangles had melted from the grass, or the birds had finished their matin songs. The Lodge looked strangely quiet as she drew near it. There was no glimpse of the young housekeeper flitting to and fro at her work. No sweet voice floating out on the dewy air startled the birds into a passion of tender rivalry. In the garden the roses drooped ungathered. Molly hesitated a moment at the outer door. The place was as still as a heart that had ceased to beat. On tiptoe she stole to the parlor. Yes, Una was there, in her favorite seat by the window. But her face was drawn and white. Her eyes gazed out

blankly on the gay spring world. Her usually busy hands were clasped upon her lap. She did, indeed, look as if she had been ill.

"Una!" cried Molly. And then, as her friend made no movement to rise, she ran to her and took her in her arms.

"Una! what is the matter? Why do you look like that? What has happened?"

A quiver ran through Una's frame, but still she did not speak. Molly drew back a step and with her hands on her friend's shoulders looked into the gray eyes.

"Where is Mr. Arnold?" she asked. "Tell me. I have a right to know."

"He has gone away."

"Where? I have a right, I say, to ask."

Philip's sister turned away her head. The tears began to steal down her cheek—not the quick passionate rain of the heart still in conflict with its fate, but the slow, pitiful dropping of one that has ceased to struggle.

"I cannot, Molly."

"But you must, Una. I am the same as his promised wife. He loves me—he told me so the other day when we were face to face with death. He had as good as told me last Christmas, before I went away. I read it in his eyes and it made a woman of me. It gave me a soul, like the girl in the German story. I have tried to be worthy of him ever since. I have felt crowned and throned—whether he ever told



me more or not. But he has said more. The other afternoon he thought I was dead when he first took me up. O Una! if I had been dead, it seems to me his words would have brought me to life. I don't think he realized how much he said, until I opened my eyes. Then—then he saw what I felt, too, but he said there was something I ought to know before he asked me to be his wife, that he would come and tell me as soon as I was well enough to listen. O Una! I was so happy—too happy to feel afraid. What could come between us if we loved each other? My heart sang with the birds as I dressed yesterday morning. I felt so sure he would come before the day was old. I was listening for his step when they brought me his letter—the one you sent over to me, Una. Do you know what was in it? It was a cruel letter. He said he had made a great mistake in speaking to me, that he could never tell me what he had promised, that there was a gulf between us that could not be bridged. He had been mad to dream that it could be, and selfish to let me think so. He was going away where I would never see him again, and I must try to forget him and forgive him if I could. Una! What does it mean? Why has Philip treated me so? It was not a brave thing—to go away like that after what he had said to me—and your brother is a brave man and a gentleman. Why did he not tell me what he promised? Why did he break his word? Was he afraid to trust me? Did he think, because I was a girl, that my love could bear no strain? I

know I have not done much to make him think well of me, but, if he only knew, his love has given me a new nature. There is nothing—nothing! that I would have let come between us if he had asked me.”

Una put her arms around her friend's neck, and kissed her.

“Philip is doing what he thinks right,” she said in a broken voice. “Try to believe that, Molly. He suffers more than you.”

Molly released herself gently, but not without dignity, from the embrace.

“Do you suppose I do not know that, Una? Do you think it is for my own sake I have come to you? If I had been the only one—to suffer—I could have borne myself as proudly as other women have done; I could have smiled, and played my part, and not one of you should have suspected a heartache. But it is Philip of whom I am thinking. He cannot make me doubt him. No silence can make me believe he was mocking me. Una! You must know what the trouble is. There are no secrets between you two. I see you do. You cannot hide it. Tell me. I have a right, as well as Philip, to decide whether the gulf can be bridged. It is not kind to leave me in the dark. It may be some scruple of honor—some trifle—which I would brush aside like a cobweb. Or has he misunderstood one of my foolish girlish speeches, about what I did not like, or would not pardon? I speak so thoughtlessly, sometimes. And men look at things so differently from women.

They take things so seriously. Tell me, Una. You need not be afraid to speak."

"I cannot, Molly. Do not ask me. It is not my secret."

Molly gave her a long troubled look.

"Then I will write and ask him myself," she said. "There can be nothing unmaidenly in that after what he has said. I have a right to know and he is bound to tell me. He will not be afraid to do it when he knows how much I love him. I did not say anything the other day, Una—though I am sure he saw it in my face—but I will speak now. I will tell him that nothing, nothing, can make me love him less."

"You must not, Molly. You cannot. You do not know how to address a letter to him, and I will not tell you. I am your friend, as well as his sister. I cannot let you write such a letter to a man who can never ask you to be his wife."

"Oh! I shock your sense of propriety, do I?" Molly threw back her head with a bitter laugh that recalled the Molly of old days. "You think I lack pride, do you? Well, Una, you are hardly the one to tell me that, but I can bear it for his sake. His life shall not be blighted to save my foolish pride."

But Una sat quite still, her hands clasped, her lips closed.

"Una, put yourself in my place. Do as you would be done by. If you cannot tell me where he is, promise to forward a letter to him."

But Una was firm. "I cannot, Molly. I will tell

him how noble you are; that you do not blame him as a selfish woman would have done; but that is all. If I did more, you would reproach me for it some day, and justly. And Philip would blame me, too, for letting you humble yourself needlessly. Yes, it would be humbling yourself, Molly. Do not be angry with me. And it would be in vain. If there had been any help, any hope, Philip would not have gone away. You must believe that, if you have any faith in him. Try to forget him, as he says. The trouble is not one that words, or love, or time, can help."

Molly lifted her face from the cushions in which she had buried it for a moment. There were violet shadows under the beautiful eyes, but no tears in the dusky depths.

"Una, if you loved any one as I love Philip and knew that he loved you, and there was such a gulf between you as you say there is between us, would you still say that it could not be crossed?"

"I would have to, Molly." Una's interlaced fingers trembled slightly and her voice was low. "We can fight the present, we can hope for the future, but no one can undo the past."

"Then it is something in the past. Is it something Philip has done, or some one else?"

"You must not ask me that, Molly. I have already said more than I ought."

Molly was thinking hard and fast. "I will ask one thing more, Una, and you are bound to answer

me. If I knew all, would I feel that I must crush this love out of my heart? Is it wrong for me to go on caring?"

"He has never loved any one else, Molly—never given any other woman the shadow of a claim upon him. Yet, because it is useless, it is wrong to go on caring. You ought to forget."

"Could you, Una, if you were in my place?"

Una hesitated a moment, tried to speak—and could not.

Molly's eyes dilated with a sudden flash.

"Thank you, Una. Neither can I forget. I could not if I tried, and I do not mean to try. But I see that I must wait."

## CHAPTER XX.

### THE MAN WHO MAILED THE LETTER

Spring had come to the colder heart of the North, and Nature knew it even amid the stones and bricks of New York. The trees in the parks were tipped with gold. The courtyards had begun to clothe themselves with grass. Here and there as one passed down the street he was met by a breath of perfume, astray from some garden, and on the corners the children were crying: "Violets." Philip Arnold had passed a restless night, in the cheap lodging-house where he rented a room, and had come down, pale and weary, to his breakfast in the restaurant below. His trip North had not been without a genuine business basis, but he had finished his work—a conference with Mr. Vanburgh on some new whim—and was drifting about the great metropolis, unable to turn his face homeward and with no heart or purpose to seek a resting-place elsewhere. While he waited for his coffee, he picked up the paper dropped on the table, by some previous occupant of the seat. A paragraph caught his eye. It was a dispatch, dated the day before, from a village in

the state he had left—the same village from which Stephen had received his strange letter.

MURDER WILL OUT.

A striking fulfilment of the old proverb has just been enacted here. Gideon Barnes, an ignorant, but apparently sincere, evangelist, who has been holding meetings in this neighborhood and winning many converts, was last night arrested, at the close of his service, on the charge of being implicated in the murder of Robert Cartaret, a young man who disappeared mysteriously some time ago. Mr. Cartaret belonged to one of our best families, and was supposed to have met his death by an accident. Last week his relatives were startled by receiving a letter, written by him on the day of his death, but not mailed until now. Naturally, suspicion was aroused. A detective was put on the track, and, after a little clever work, the mailing of the letter has been traced to Barnes, and a warrant was taken out for his arrest. He stoutly maintains his innocence, though he does not deny having sent the letter, and declines to say how he came by it. It is probable that a few days under the sheriff's protecting care may refresh his memory and enable him to be more communicative."

The sheet fell from Philip's hand.

"When does the next train leave for the South?" he asked of the waiter who had just brought him his breakfast.

The man told him. He had just time to make

a hasty meal, pack his valise and reach the station. In three hours he had passed through Philadelphia. In four more he had reached Washington. At Wilmington he missed connection, and there was a miserable loss of some hours the next day, while he waited for the accommodation train which alone could enable him to reach his destination—the village from which the dispatch had been sent. But by sunset of the second day he was there, and, going at once to the hotel, he inquired for Stephen. He was told that Mr. Yonge was at the jail, but would be in before long, and he sat down to wait. In ten minutes Stephen came in. At sight of his friend he uttered an exclamation of surprise and pleasure.

“Arnold! I thought you were hundreds of miles away. But you are the man of all others, that I wanted to see. We have found the man who mailed the letter, but the mystery grows deeper at every step.”

“Gideon Barnes is an innocent man.”

“I cannot doubt it. I have just left him. There is an air of sorrowful honesty about him, and such tokens of genuine piety that I cannot but believe that he is speaking the truth. Yet, what am I to think? He certainly knows something that he will not tell.”

“Take me to your room and see that we are not disturbed for a quarter of an hour, and I will tell you.”

“You? Arnold, have you not dealt truly with me?”

“I have told you nothing that is not true; but I



have kept back something. Take me to your room, or some place where we can be alone, and I will tell you all."

Without a word, Stephen led the way to his own apartment. When the door was shut, he placed a chair for Philip on one side of the table, and himself took one upon the other. He seemed to have lost the power of speech. Philip was calm, with the calmness that comes when hope is dead.

"I, and I only, am responsible for your cousin's death," he said.

"You!"

"I have told you of my connection with the mine. I believed that he had discovered my guilty secret. That it was as a spy he had come to the camp. My errand to Thornton that morning was to telegraph the company and ask for instructions. The river was swollen and I could not cross. Baffled and desperate, I was on my way home, two hours sooner than I had expected, when I caught sight of him on the other side of the ravine. He did not see me. He was walking very fast and had his mountain-stick in his hand. Now and then he glanced up curiously at the wall of rock above him. Once, just as he reached the road that led to the cave-in, he stooped and picked up something. The thought flashed on me that he had seen through my efforts to detain him, and was stealing away in my absence, taking specimens of the rock with him as proof. The devil entered into me with the thought. I knew by his careless

gait he did not realize he was approaching dangerous ground. I knew the spot was so covered with brushwood that he might stumble on it unawares. And I knew I ought to call to him and repeat my warning, but I did not. That is all. I do not know that I could have made him hear, but I think I could. He was just across the gorge and the air was very clear."

Philip paused a moment and bowed his face on his hand. But, like one turned into stone, Stephen gazed at him across the table and waited.

"It was only for a moment. In a second he was out of sight, hidden among the trees, and beyond reach of my voice. Then I knew what I had done. Unless I could have leaped the chasm, it was impossible to overtake him before he reached the spot. I put spurs to my horse and rode I knew not where. But, as clearly as if I had been standing at the mouth of that pit, I saw what happened. I saw him stumble and slip. I heard his dying cry. I have heard it ever since. It will ring in my ears when I also come to the end of life." Philip rose suddenly and stood before his friend. "Say what you will to me," he cried. "Do what you will. My crime is not one of which the law will take cognizance, but I put myself in your hands. If you wish it, I will confess my sin before the world. No punishment that you can inflict can compare with that with which conscience has tortured me—with the remorse that eats like rust into my soul. I believe God has forgiven me—

I must believe that He has, in answer to my prayer; but nowhere has He promised to change the fruit of a man's evil sowing. And now, in the midst of my better life, I must reap my bitter harvest. It is not enough that that dying cry must sound in my ears, John Carson must stand forever between me and the best friend I ever had—the only woman I have ever loved. To my own misery must be added the pang of having brought sorrow on the head I would shield from every grief." Philip walked to the window. The dusk had deepened so that he could not see his friend's face. At last Stephen spoke, but without looking around.

"It would have been better if you had told me this at first."

"I see that now. Una wanted me to do it, but I was a coward. I could not bear the look I knew must come into your eyes."

Stephen rose and lit the lamp on the table. By its light he looked searchingly into his companion's face.

"Then she knows, too?" he asked.

"She knows now. I had kept it from her till the other night." Philip stopped abruptly. Something in the strong face revealed what until now he had never suspected.

"My God! What a selfish wretch I have been," he cried. Stephen put out his hand.

"I have no reason to believe that she cares," he said hoarsely. "I had begun to hope a little, since

her discovery of Gerald's character, but her manner has changed since that night."

Philip had sunk into a chair. "This is more than I can bear," he groaned. "My brave unselfish darling! I see it all, now. Yet never to utter a word of reproach, never to betray that I was inflicting pain upon her, to be concerned only for me! Yonge, you don't know what she has been to me all my life."

"I can guess." A tremor smote Stephen's strong voice. "Do not misunderstand me, Arnold, and do not torture yourself needlessly. Her manner in rejecting my addresses was not such as to kindle any hope."

There was another painful pause. Philip staggered to his feet.

"You know it all, now," he said. "You will let Gideon go. And I will take her away where we will not shadow your path."

Stephen rose too.

"You think this—that you have told me—is what Gideon is keeping back?" he asked.

"I know it is. I told him the story at the time. He is the only man to whom I ever breathed it, and he has been too generous to betray me."

"I do not agree with you. Gideon knows something else."

"He cannot. He told me at the time that he had seen nothing of Mr. Carson since the service of that Sunday night. I feel sure, if he had known anything else, he would have told it to me to relieve my distress."

“He must have learned something since. I still hold to my theory of foul play. I cannot believe that Robert was as careless as you think. Besides, there is this letter. Where did he get that? Why does he refuse to tell?”

“That is more than I can answer. But I dare not hope for an explanation that will lift the weight from my soul.”

“Wait and see. I cannot reconcile it with my conscience to detain Barnes longer than tomorrow, but I must try another interview. And you shall go with me, Arnold. It may be—when he sees what a relief it would be to you—he will be induced to speak.”

Philip shook his head.

“If he had thought it right to speak he would have done so at first. Persuasions will not move him.”

“Was he a friend of the man you spoke of the other night; Jess, you called him?”

“On the contrary there was no love lost between them. Don't raise suspicion against the poor dead wretch again, Yonge, unless you want to make me utterly miserable. I am the guilty man. It is vain for you to try to escape that thought. Whatever happened after I lost sight of him, there was hate in my heart at the moment, and you must not shut your eyes to it.”

“I do not—nor to the equally indisputable fact that it was in your home that he received the great-

est blessing that it is in the power of one soul to bestow upon another. Do you think I can weigh that moment's sin, so bitterly repented of, against that priceless gift? Do you think I can refuse to forgive?"

"You say that now because you do not believe that it was my neglect that was the occasion of his death. You will feel differently when you realize that I deliberately permitted him to walk into his grave. It is bound to come to you sooner or later, and you cannot but shrink from me when it does."

"Not more than I have shrunk from myself these last few years. Arnold, there is another pit to which men are hurrying, unknowing, another death from which they need to be warned. I was studying for the ministry, about to take on myself the cure of souls, but I had never spoken to my cousin of his. I talked to him of everything else, but on that subject I was silent. Not until he had passed beyond my reach did I know what I had done. Do you remember Scott's sermon on the unfaithful watchman? Do you recollect the text I had carved beneath Robert's name? It was his soul's blood that cried to heaven against me. Your suffering can have been nothing in comparison with mine. And now that God has had mercy on me, and I know that my cousin did not die in his sins, do you think I can be hard on you?"

"You can say that to me, Yonge, when you loved him as your own soul—you can pardon——"

"As I hope God has pardoned me. Take heart, Arnold. I believe that your burden is to be lifted as mine has been. God's goodness is not measured by our deserts, nor by our expectations."

It was too late to obtain admission to the jail that night, but Stephen comforted Philip for the delay by assuring him that Gideon was comfortably lodged and received every attention. But, as the still hours of the night wore towards the morning, there was a cry heard, that cry of terror in the night, running from lip to lip, and gathering volume as it went: "Fire! Fire!"

It was the jail. The sky was already red with flames when Philip sprang from his couch and drew aside the curtains. He and Stephen were soon on the spot, with every other man in the little town. The jailer's first care had been to remove his prisoners to the town hall and place them under a strong guard, while the townspeople did what they could to save the building. It was of stone, but the fire had begun within and gained considerable headway before the discovery. The demon-like element was already glaring through the roof and shooting out red mocking tongues at them.

It had to be fought with buckets of water, brought from a well a hundred feet distant and passed from hand to hand. It soon became apparent that the battle was a losing one. The busy hands began to tire in their hard employ. Stephen and Philip, working with the rest, had just paused a moment

for breath when a man came shouting through the crowd.

It was the jailer.

"The preacher," he shrieked. "I can't find him. He is in the front room upstairs. Who will go for him?"

He held up a key. Without a word, Philip, who was nearest to him, snatched the key, threw his coat over his head, and dashed in. A cry went up from the crowd. Then a terrible silence followed, broken only by the hiss and roar of the conquering flames. Stephen did not move his eyes from the burning building. All at once another cry went up—a cry that swelled into wild, ringing cheer. A figure had appeared at the upper window, a man with the body of another man in his arms. Both could be distinctly seen, enveloped in flames. With one impulse the crowd surged towards them. A hundred arms were uplifted.

"Drop him and jump for your life!" called a voice. It was Stephen's. He stood directly beneath the window. Philip caught his eye and obeyed—not a moment too soon! The next instant the roof fell in.

When dawn broke upon the little town, four black and smoking walls were all that remained of the jail, and the people stood about in knots in the street, talking in hushed voices and looking up wistfully at the windows of the hotel, where the hero of the night lay fighting for his life, and the man he had so vainly striven to save was dying.



Mr. Arnold's sister, it was whispered, had been telegraphed for, and would be there that evening. About noon, a young woman, flashily dressed and calling herself Mrs. Barnes, called at the hotel and asked to see her husband. She was taken upstairs and shown into a private room. Immediately after, a gentleman came in and closed the door.

"Keep your seat," he said, as she started up. "I have something to say to you."

"I want to see Gideon," answered the woman. There was a note of mingled fear and anger in her tone.

"You shall before you go, but he will not know you. And meantime there is something you must tell me. We have found out that it was you who gave him that letter. Where did you get it?"

"Has he blabbed on me — the mean-spirited scamp?"

"He kept your secret faithfully as long as he retained his reason. Even now, in his delirium, he has revealed nothing more than that one fact. But it is enough to prove two things; that he is innocent, and that you know about the letter."

"I ain't agoin' to say nothin'. You gentlefolks is jest setting a trap for me, cos ye thinks I hain't done right by ye. I don't know nothin' about it."

"You must know where you got the letter, and from whom."

"I ain't agoin' to say nothin'. Nobody can't make me if I don't want to."

"The sheriff can arrest you and put you in jail, and he will, if I speak the word. But I do not want to do that for your husband's sake. If you will tell me what you know, I promise you that no harm shall come to you. You shall go free, whatever you have done."

Becky had hidden her eyes on her sleeve and begun to cry.

"It's a hard case for a poor girl like me. As if I hadn't trouble enough with Gideon a preachin' and a prayin', when he ought to have been workin' for me and my baby. I wish I'd never seen the letter, nor him nother."

"Your husband will soon be where he will not trouble you any more. If you have any affection for him, any desire not to be the cause of his death, you will speak out and clear his name—the name your child bears—from the shadow that rests upon it. Do not be afraid. If there has been any dark work, and you have had a hand in it, I promise you, as I said just now, that you shall not be prosecuted."

"I hain't had nothin' to do with it. Who says I hed?"

"Your refusal to speak naturally gives rise to such a suspicion. If you are innocent you ought to speak out—for your own sake."

For the first time Becky began to waver.

"Ye promise ye won't do nothin' to me—that ye won't let 'em put me in the lock-up for keepin' it back so long?"

"I give you my word as a gentleman and a Christian. Speak out. Where did you get the letter?"

"Jess guv it to me. He was one of Mr. Arnold's men and me and him was keepin' company afore I married Gideon."

"When did he give it to you?"

"Arter it happened. I'll tell ye all about it if ye'll guv me time. That mornin'—the mornin' it happened—he come to my house."

"Who came?"

"The strange gentleman. He said he wanted to see Gideon about the sermon he preached the night afore. Gideon warn't to home and I tellt him so; and he went away. I dunno what made me follow him, but I did. He went straight up the mountain till he come to the road that goes to the cave-in; thar he turned off. He seemed mighty keerful, trying the ground with his stick every little while and plum cur'ous, pickin' up stones and puttin' 'em in his pocket, and peekin' down into the hole when he come to it. I was squattin' down in the bushes and seen everything. He didn't see me. He was whistlin' softly to hisself and didn't look as if anything was goin' to happen to him, when all of a sudden I see Jess creepin' up behind him. He had his shoes off and a big stick in his hand. His face was as white as the spots in my dress. He didn't see me. He come up behind the young gentleman, still as a snake, and quick as a streak of lightning, and struck him on the back of his head. He—the gentleman, I mean—

never give no cry. He jest dropped his stick and fell forward on the edge of the pit; the ground giv way and he went down. Jess listened a minute or two. Then he turned and come runnin' through the woods. That was how he come to see me. He seen in a minute that I knowed, and I thought he war agoin' to kill me then and thar. But he changed his mind and begged me to help him get away. We women be strange creatures, sir. The moment a man gets in trouble we gets soft-hearted toward him, no matter how mean he's been to us. Jess seen I was sorry for him. He said as how he had to kill the gentleman cos he was agoin' to make some trouble about the mine, and he made me promise on my knees that I'd never tell nobody, least of all Gideon. And I hain't broke my word till now."

"Was it then he gave you the letter?"

"No, sir. It was after Mr. Arnold and the sheriff began a-lookin' for him. He come creepin' to me when I was washin' down at the spring, and said they'd found out he was the last un as had seen Mr. Carson, and he'd got to skip. I loant him one of my dresses and a sunbonnet—that was how he got away. He giv me the letter, cos he said if they caught him and found it on him it ud make things go harder with him. He said the gentleman had given it to him to take to the mail, but he warn't agoin' to do it cos he thought there was something in it about the mine, and he tolt me to hide it till he come back. He said he'd come back arter a while."

"Didn't it ever occur to you that if the letter was found in your possession it might tell against you?"

Becky looked suspiciously at her interlocutor, but, reading nothing threatening in the keen eyes, smoothed her apron complacently.

"Nobody warn't goin' to ask me. I guess if Jess thought about it at all he thought they'd suspicion Gideon, he war in a big hurry, too, and never come back to change his mind."

"No, Heaven's vengeance overtook him very soon. But, Becky, when you knew he was dead and out of reach of anybody, why didn't you show the letter? It would have helped them to find Mr. Carson's friends."

"I was afeared."

"Afraid people would not believe you?"

"Afeard Jess 'ud harnt me. Dead folks do strange things sometimes when ye don't do what they tell ye. Now I've telled ye. Let me go, sir. Ye promised."

"I will keep my word—never fear. But there are some things you haven't told me yet. Where has the letter been all this time?"

Becky laid her hand on the bosom of her dress.

"Here," she said simply.

"And you never told your husband?"

"Not much. He'd never hev let me keep it a day, if he had to take it from me by force."

"Why did you mail the letter at last?"

"I seen Jess in a dream. He said: 'Becky, put

the letter in the office, it can't do no harm now.' And I war plum glad to do it. I'd got tired carryin' it about and being afeard Gideon'd find out."

"Why did you give it to your husband to mail? Why didn't you put it in the office yourself?"

Becky laughed slyly.

"Something tellt me to guv it to Gideon," she said. "I guv it to him at night when I knowed he couldn't see the old look of it and had his head full of his sermon. He thought it was for dad—he's living out in Kansas now—and all he said was: "Who wrote it for ye, Becky?" And I says: 'The lady as lives in the next house—she's been a school-teacher'—and he never asked no more. It war just like him, he allers believes what folks say to him, no matter how ridiculous it be. I didn't mean to git him into trouble, sir. We hain't been happy together—he's a heap too pious for me. But I didn't have no spite agin him. I never knowed how it would turn out."

"But when you did know, why didn't you tell like a brave and honest woman?"

Becky looked sullen again and began to pull up her shawl around her. "A body's got to look out for theirselves," she muttered; and Stephen saw it was idle to press her farther.

"Your husband is dying," he said gravely. "The doctors do not think he will live through the night. If you would like to be near him and help nurse him, I will make arrangements for you to stay here."

Becky started up suspiciously, at the suggestion.

"Ye promised to let me go if I'd tell," she said angrily. "Ye hain't no gentleman if ye tries to keep me."

"I will not keep you, if you want to go." Stephen rose as he spoke. "But come in and see him. He will not be here when you come again." He opened the door into the inner room. A faint hope had kindled in his mind of yet waking a little remorse in this shallow nature.

But Becky looked down with hard dry eyes on the face upon the pillow—scarred almost beyond recognition.

"He do look awful," she whispered. "And he hain't been a hard man to me, nother. But he war allers a-talkin' and preachin' about heaven, and I guess he's glad to go. And there's a young man down our way as 'll make up to me, now I'm a widow, and take care of me and baby."

And so she went; and Stephen thanked God that the husband was too near the vision of the greatest love of all to feel what he had missed of the earthly.

Gideon was still living when Una arrived that evening; and, at her brother's request, she went to his bedside and watched until the end. What subtle intimation of her presence was conveyed to the spirit, in spite of the locked senses, or if the words were but the quivering of some loosened chord of memory—they could not tell, but all at once a smile crept over

the fire-scorched face, and Gideon whispered, as he had done in the mining gallery, long ago:

“Sing, Miss Una. There be mournin’ souls here as hain’t found the light.”

And Una sang—forgetting all but him—“Just as I am, without one plea;” and on the wings of that hymn, which had first lifted him out of the Darkness, Gideon came, smiling, into the City where they “need no candle neither the light of the sun.”



## CHAPTER XXI.

“SOME SIXTY, SOME AN HUNDRED ”

Becky came to the funeral the next afternoon attired in deep mourning—which she had purchased with the money Gideon sent her from the jail—attended by an admiring concourse of friends and neighbors, and with every evidence of genuine and inconsolable grief. For the sake of the dead, Stephen had decided not to make her selfishness public, but he asked permission to speak at the church, and in a few strong words bore testimony to Gideon’s innocence; told the story of his earnest life, and expressed his deep regret for what had occurred. As the clods fell on the plain pine coffin, Una sang

“When that delightful day shall come,”

and thought of the face that would “shine as the stars forever and ever,” and of the many, turned to righteousness, who had met him on the other side.

Meantime, Philip wakened, in his darkened room at the hotel, from the first natural sleep he had had since the accident. The doctors had pronounced him out of danger that morning; but they were still

uncertain about his sight, seriously impaired by the smoke and heat of that terrible night.

He knew as well as the others that it would be many a day before his hand would regain its cunning, and the scars of that fiery ordeal would fade from his brow. But his soul was full of a peace nothing outward could take away.

“Una!” he whispered, and putting out his hand he groped in the darkness for the one that was never far from his pillow.

But it was not Una’s that fell, cool and soft as a rose-leaf, in reply.

“Will I do?” asked a voice that trembled between laughter and tears.

“Mary!”

She had thought her name a homely one until that tone translated it into undying music. She stooped and touched her cheek to the bandage that covered the sightless eyes.

“I came with Una yesterday. Did you think I could stay behind? Philip! did you think I would let anything come between us?”

“Has Stephen told you——”

“Everything. I am glad the shadow is lifted from your heart. But it would have made no difference even had it been as you thought.”

“Do you know what the doctors say about my eyes—that I may never be able to draw again?”

“I do not believe they know. But if they do, I can see for us both.”

He shook his head and released her hand.

"No, Molly, that cannot be. Do not tempt me. I cannot say to you what I would have done if this had not happened."

"You will let Una do it."

"Una? Ah, that is different!"

"Then I am less to you than Una." She rose and moved away. She had been warned not to excite him, and she could see but one way, albeit a daring one, to shorten the ordeal for them both.

"Molly!" he called; but she made no answer.

"Mary! Come back to me. I cannot bear this."

And then she came back swiftly and laid her hand on his. This time it was not the shy bird's wing touch of the moment before, but the firm, warm clasp of the woman his love had wakened in her.

"Philip," said Molly gravely, "there is but one issue between you and me. If you still love me——"

"If! O Molly. Love is a little word to hold all that I feel for you."

"And it is too small for what my heart gives back," she answered. "Now lie still and let me bathe your eyes so that Una will not say I have not made a good nurse. You as good as asked me to marry you two weeks ago, Philip, and I the same as said yes; so there is no need for us to go over that part of it again. I always did hate a preface, you know."

When Una came in a little later she saw that they had no need of her, and stole away unnoticed into the outer room.

In spite of her deep, unselfish joy she could not help but feel a little lonely as she thought of the future, and her hands seemed very empty with the work passed on to another.

But at the sound of Stephen's step, she looked up with a smile. Mr. Yonge, at least, must not suspect that her heart had faltered.

Stephen expressed no surprise at her quick return from the sick-room, nor did he seem to notice his cousin's non-appearance. He was full of business.

“I am afraid I will have to go back tonight,” he said. “I left home unexpectedly, as you know, and there are matters requiring my attention. Do you think you can get on alone?”

“I am quite sure of it. The people are so kind.”

“I am sorry to have to leave, but it seems unavoidable, and the doctors think it would be too much of a risk for your brother to be moved yet. Would you like to have Molly stay?”

“Yes. It would be a comfort.”

“When you are ready to come home, if you will let me know, I will secure a private car, so that Philip can make the journey with as little fatigue as possible.”

“Thank you. We will come, as soon as it is safe—to consult an oculist.”

Then there fell a silence, a painful silence during which Una looked down at the children playing in the street, but did not see them, and Stephen studied her averted face with sad, uncertain eyes.

"Miss Arnold," he said at last, and there was a tremor in the usually steady voice, "you told me last week that it was impossible that you should ever give me what I asked, and I promised if you would permit me to remain your friend, not again to obtrude my wishes upon you. I do not often break my word. But circumstances have developed since then which have raised a faint hope—pardon me if it is a presumptuous one—that the barrier, which your brother believed existed between him and Molly, was one which you felt must also separate us. I think if this was so you ought to tell me."

Stephen paused; but Una, after one quick, startled look had turned back to the window and did not speak.

"Pardon me if I annoy you. But if this is so, I feel that I have a right to know. At least I claim the right to tell you that, even if things had been as Philip feared, the barrier would have been no barrier, but a mist that would have melted in a moment of sunny confidence. Do you suppose I could have weighed his neglect against your priceless service to Robert?"

"You must have shrunk from Philip, sometime, Mr. Yonge, and I could not cut myself off from him nor leave him alone in his misery."

"But now that you need not be cut off from him—that you do not leave him alone, nor in pain—do you still say the same, Una? As I told you the other day, I am a man of few words.

I do not know how to dress up in flowery sentences the simple statement that I love you—that I loved you the day I first saw you; that I have loved you ever since, though without a ray of hope, until lately. Whatever the result of this interview may be, I will love you while life lasts, and, unless death changes us utterly, I will but love you better in another world, though I only see your face afar, shining like a star, in the ranks above me. Do not weep. Do not feel that you have given me pain. To your tender heart, I know what that would mean. You have touched my life only to bless. The gifts you have given me will be mine when time and pain are past. You have taught me charity, and gentleness and forgiveness, to lift up the hands that hang down, to make the paths straight for feeble feet; to hope for all. You have comforted me for the great sorrow of my life. You are sending me back to the work of my youth with an inspiration my early manhood never knew. I shall always thank God that our ways crossed for even this little while. If you could have cared for me—if we could have walked with God, and worked for God, in company—only He who made me knows——”

The pleading voice stopped suddenly. Una had turned slowly round. Her eyes were full of light. “Am I as much as that to you?” she asked.

“Far more than I can put into feeble words,” he answered, and held out his hand.

And she came to him, as a dove to its window,

and for them there was "a new heaven and a new earth."

Philip went to Europe that summer, but not with Una nor yet to draw in the old cathedrals. There are still people in the quaint old city of Heidelberg who remember the handsome American with the dark glasses who came to consult the great oculist, and the beautiful young wife who guided him through the crowded streets and made him see, in her blithe, eager voice, everything upon which her own eyes rested. And there is still pointed out, in the fir forest beyond the grim fortress, the old schloss, where they made their home, when the weeks of the painful treatment were over, and passed the year of rest and abstinence which was considered necessary to perfect the cure. Stephen's wedding present to his cousin had been a little roll of parchment which conveyed to her the money that would have been her brother's if he had lived, so there was no shadow of care on the time of waiting—and no more talk of restitution, when, at last, patience had her crown of joy and they came back to their native land, and Philip was able to take up his work once more. And it was in her girlhood's home that Molly reigned as happy wife and mother. For, although Stephen married, as Mr. Cartaret had predicted that he would, and although his wife had her way—as every good wife should have—it was not in the line of introducing innovations into the old house, nor was it across the threshold of his ancestral home that the young minister led his bride.

In a crowded quarter of the sea-girt city, in the shadow of the great mill, where even children toil, shaken daily by the roar of its busy spindles there stands an old house, once a comely country-mansion, but long since overtaken by the growing city and the tide of progress, deserted by its owners, and surrendered to its fate. Its gardens have been cut up into alleys; the ware-rooms of the great mill cover its old orchard; and in place of sweet-breathed fields, a maelstrom of sin and shame and woe eddies ever about its doors. But there are always plants in bloom upon the window-sills, the marble steps are kept white as the driven snow and from its upper casements there is a glimpse of the sea. Within, the loving hands that transformed the loghouse in the mining camp long ago, have made all things beautiful. And the minister, when he comes in tired from his chapel around the corner, thinks there is no fairer spot in the world, and no sweeter face than the one which smiles at him across the hearth. And the people, who are born and die, and toil and sin and suffer, in the congested lanes around, know it is a refuge and a gate of heaven, a place where they can carry their sins and leave their burdens, and find for their sorrows the balm which is possessed only by those who have themselves suffered.

Not of necessity did Stephen and Una choose the field. On the day of his ordination Mr. Yonge preached a sermon which delighted his friends, swept



away the last remnant of prejudice, and brought him an invitation to supply the pulpit of the richest and most cultured church in the city.

When the husband and wife talked over the matter that night, with the other call which had come to take charge of the struggling, up-town mission, Stephen said:

"The great need of the world is not money, but Christ, and all sin and heartache does not go in tatters, Una. Let us think well before we decide."

But the answer had already leaped to Una's eyes, and her lips whispered softly:

"He had compassion on the multitude because they were as sheep having no shepherd."

And then a great light shone in her husband's face, as he said:

"I will take the mission—with you to help me."

Although they have seen many a dark day since then, and through many a dark night have toiled and taken nothing; although they have been often disappointed, and sometimes discouraged, neither of them has regretted their choice. Nor have they missed their reward, though it has not been paid in the coin of this world. No one knows better than Stephen that the gospel, which he proclaims from the sacred desk, is the more easily understood by his people because of the gospel that his wife carries from house to house and tells in quiet kindness and silent charities, and common ways.

Occasionally Molly swoops down on the mission-manse and says that Una looks tired, and carries

her off to find her lost roses in the old rose-garden, and to sing the “sweet story of old” to the little men in her nursery. And Philip comes often to consult with Stephen about his work among the convicts, or to ask his sister to visit with him the heavy-hearted wife or mother of some man he is trying to save.

Once a year, Una goes back to the Lodge, and takes with her some tired mothers and their sick babies, or a troop of hollow-eyed, pale-faced mill children, who see for the first time what the country is like, and breathe unpolluted air. At all seasons she and Stephen have permission from Mr. Vanburgh to send convalescents and consumptives out to the villa among the pines, where they can breathe the healing air and be fed on literal “milk and honey” by Mrs. Ferguson, who has charge of the establishment.

The millionaire has changed his mind once more about the climate of Carolina; and, having found a pretty Creole who agrees with him, spends a few weeks every winter with his wife in the forest-palace, enjoying his friends and spoiling Molly’s boys, who think him only less great and good than their father.

Mr. Scott has also married, and still keeps his charge at Brookwood, and has a row of curly-headed “olive-plants” springing up around his table—one of them a fair-haired little girl named Una. Sometimes, he exchanges pulpits with Stephen, and always returns enthusiastic about the mission, with new impulse for his own work.

For several years Una saw Gerald only at a distance. He moved to town soon after his quarrel with her, married a plain girl with a large dot, and prospered in this world's ways, and looked comfortable and well-fed, as he dashed about in his handsome sulky. But Una did not envy his wife, who looked discontented, as she rolled past her in her luxurious carriage and patronized sparingly the charities which she and Stephen started for the toiling masses.

One day, Una spoke to her husband of the threat which she had long since ceased to regard as anything more than angry breath. But Stephen smiled sadly as he took a letter from his desk and handed it to her. It had reached him the week after Patty Prentice was laid to rest, and was a warning that the Arnolds were not what he thought them, that Philip had been a party to the fraud by which Molly had lost her property, and had profited by the ill-gotten gains. There was no signature to the communication; but it was not hard to recognize the malice which had hurled the shaft, even if there had not been traces of Gerald's familiar writing here and there.

"He thought you had never told me, and that I would be so prejudiced by the concealment as to believe anything," Stephen said. "Thank God, Philip had had the courage to speak out. How can people doubt that the right way is always the safest?"

"They cannot, unless they believe that the devil,

and not God, is managing the world,” she answered. “O, if I could only make poor Martha Bowles see it!” And Una’s thoughts wandered off, as they generally did, from her own cares and sorrows to one of the many troubled lives into which her own opened.

The next week, when a terrible epidemic broke out in the city and Gerald’s home was the first invaded, and no nurse could be found to face the contagion, Una asked:

“May I go, Stephen?”

And Stephen answered:

“Yes, and God’s blessing go with you.”

For ten long days and nights she watched with Gerald and his wife by the bedside of their only child, a golden-haired boy, their pride and darling; and, when at last the death angel relaxed his hold, she had the joy of seeing a gentler soul born in father and mother as they came up with their treasure from the Valley of the Shadow.

“Our home will be a different place after this,” Gerald said, as she left them. “One would have to be a fiend, Una, not to be touched by such goodness as yours and Stephen’s, and I am not that—quite.”

After that, though there was never any formal atonement, he had a friendly greeting for them when they met, and was ever prompt to respond with his professional services when they had need for their sick poor. One day, in the next winter, he

came to Una with the word that a woman in the charity-hospital, where he was consulting physician, had asked to see her.

It was Becky, but so disfigured by the ravages of small-pox, so broken with suffering—so cowed with years of ill-usage from the boy-husband, who had turned against her when her beauty fled—so pitiful, so patient that it was hard to recognize her.

Gideon's recompense had tarried long, but it had come at last. Perhaps from the battlements of the city where "there is no night," and they do not count the days, he had already seen and entered into it. He had certainly now not long to wait. Becky's days were numbered, and were being told off by a disease whose paroxysms of pain Una trembled to witness. It was no longer hard to lift the shallow heart to a thought of the home where she would once more be with the only man who had ever been gentle with her, or to win her to listen to the words of Him who was Gideon's Saviour as well as hers.

"D'ye think they'll let me in, Miss Una? I been't good like him. I've been a very wicked girl. D'ye think Gideon'll ask 'em to let me in?" she would whisper; and Una would tell, for the hundredth time, of the love that was deeper than Gideon's, of the blood that could make her blotted page as "white as snow." And then a smile would creep over the poor, scarred face, and Becky would murmur:

“I don’t deserve it, Miss Una. But if they’ll let me in I’ll try. I won’t say a word if they pray and sing all day long, if they’ll only let me get near Gideon and have my baby—Gideon’s baby—what Pete used to beat until I was glad when she died. Is it a place where ye can make a fresh start, Miss Una? I wouldn’t let Gideon larn me here, but, if they’ll let me in, I’ll try hard now.”

For a while Una was afraid that her conception of the other life was too material, and that her thoughts centered too much on Gideon, but one day she heard her praying:

“Dear Lord! That’s yer name. I hearn Gideon call ye that. Gideon’s my husband. He’s in thar with you. I been’t good like him. But if ye’ll forgive me and let me in, I’ll try, and Gideon’ll help me.”

One doubt alone darkened the sunset sky.

“D’ye think he’s tellt the Lord how mean I was to him, Miss Una—what I did about the letter?”

“God will forgive you, if he has, Becky. But Gideon will be as good to you up yonder as he was down here. And he didn’t tell here. ”

“No, he didn’t;” said Becky. And when the end came, and the shadows were falling over her eyes, she looked up suddenly, and smiling, cried: “Gideon!”

And they could not doubt that he who had tried to lead the weak feet through the wilderness had

been sent to bring them safely across the river into the land where there "shall be no more death, neither shadow nor crying, nor any more pain."

And Stephen and Una turned back with strengthened faith to sow the blessed seed in the highways and the hedges, by the wayside and on the stony ground—often, it is true, to see it caught up by the beak of evil or withered for lack of root, but sometimes gathering precious grain, and ever hoping that in the final ingathering there may be found some sheaves, known only to the Lord of the Harvest, which have sprung from the seed that seemed to perish.

And still they sow, and wait, and hope.