

BOLTON SARAH KNOWLES

A COUNTRY IDYL AND
OTHER STORIES

Sarah Bolton

A Country Idyl and Other Stories

«Public Domain»

Bolton S.

A Country Idyl and Other Stories / S. Bolton — «Public Domain»,

© Bolton S.
© Public Domain

Содержание

A COUNTRY IDYL	5
THE SECOND TIME	8
FIFTEEN THOUSAND DOLLARS	11
THE RING OF GOLD	13
FOUR LETTERS	16
REWARDED	20
THREE COLLEGE STUDENTS	24
Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.	27

A Country Idyl and Other Stories

A COUNTRY IDYL

IN THE midst of New England mountains, covered with pine and cedar, lies the quiet town of Nineveh, looking towards the sea. Years ago it had mills where lumber was sawed and grain was ground; but now the old wheels alone are left, the dams are broken, and the water falls over the scattered rocks, making music in harmony with the winds among the pines. The houses have gone to decay; the roofs have fallen in, leaving the great, rough chimneys standing like the Druid towers of Ireland.

In one of these old houses, before the young men of New England had gone West to seek their fortunes, lived a miller and his wife. The Crandall family were happy, save that no children had come into the home. Finally a sister of the wife died, bequeathing her little girl to the Nineveh household.

Nellie Crandall grew from babyhood the picture of health, an innocent, cheerful girl, in sweet accord with the daisies of the fields and the old-fashioned flowers she cared for in her foster-mother's garden.

In the house across the way lived John Harding, a tall, awkward boy, the pride of the country school for his good scholarship, and in principle as strong as the New England hills he lived among.

John and Nellie had played together from childhood. He had made chains for her neck of the pine needles; she had fastened golden coreopsis in his homespun coat; and, while no word had been spoken, the neighboring people expected that a new house would sometime be built in Nineveh, and a young couple begin anew the beautiful commonplaces of life.

There was considerable excitement one morning in the quiet town. Byron Marshall, a city youth, had come to Nineveh to visit the Monroe family, cousins of the Hardings. Byron was a handsome, slender lad, well-mannered, just leaving college and ready for a profession. He met Nellie Crandall, and was pleased with the natural country girl.

"No good'll come of it," said one of the old ladies of Nineveh. "I never believed in mismating. John Harding would give his life for that girl, while the city youth, I know, is a selfish fellow."

The summer wore away with rides and picnics, and if John's heart was pained at the attentions given to Nellie, and accepted by her, he said nothing.

After Byron's return to the city a correspondence was begun by him.

One Sunday evening, when John came as usual to see Nellie, and they were sitting in the moonlight beside the old mill at the bridge, he said abruptly, "I'm going away from home, Nellie. I have begun to think you wouldn't mind since Byron came."

"But I do mind," said the girl. "I like Bryon, and he seems fond of me; but, John, I don't want you to go, we've been such good friends."

"Yes, but we must be all in all to each other or I can't stay. I've loved you all these years with never a thought of another. I've loved every flower in your garden because you have tended it. This old mill seems precious because you have sat here. All Nineveh is sacred to me because it is your home, but I cannot stay here now."

Nellie was young; she had seen little of the world, did not know the true from the false, and, half captivated with the college youth, she dare not give her promise to John.

They parted in the moonlight, he heavy of heart at going and she regretting that two loved her. John went to a distant State and found employment. No word came from him, and Nellie, who missed him sadly, depended more than ever on the letters which came from Byron.

The next summer Byron spent at Nineveh, and it was talked about the little town that Nellie was engaged, and would soon be a city lady, living in comfort and prominence.

Two years later there was a wedding at the Crandall home, and the pretty bride said good-by to the old mill and the great pines, and left the miller and his wife desolate. Two years afterwards, when she brought back a little son, named Samuel, after the miller, they were in a measure comforted, though they never liked Byron as well as John, “who was of their kind.”

When John Harding knew that Nellie was really lost to him and married to another, he, longing for companionship, married a worthy girl, prospered in business, and was as happy as a man can be who does not possess the power to forget. He had learned what most of us learn sooner or later – that life does not pass according to our plan, plan we ever so wisely; that, broken and marred, we have to take up the years and make the mosaic as perfect as we can.

As time passed some of the Nineveh families died, and some moved away to other and busier scenes. Samuel Crandall had been laid in the little cemetery, and Mrs. Crandall was more lonely than ever.

One night there came a wagon to the door, and Nellie Marshall, her face stained with tears, alighted, with her three children. “We have come to stay, mother,” said the broken-hearted woman. “Byron has gone, nobody knows where. He has used the money of others, and we are penniless.”

Mrs. Crandall wept on her daughter’s neck, as she told somewhat of the hardships of her life with her unfaithful and dishonest husband.

Other years passed, and another grave was made beside that of Samuel Crandall, and Mrs. Marshall, now grown white-haired, lived for her three children, and reared them as best she could in their poverty.

One day there was a rumor in the town that John Harding was coming to Nineveh on a visit. He was well-to-do now, and would come in a style befitting his position. Mrs. Marshall wondered if he would call upon her, and if he would bring Mrs. Harding to see the woman so changed from her girlhood in looks, but nobler and sweeter in character.

Mr. Harding had been in Nineveh for a week. Nellie Marshall had heard of it, and her heart beat more quickly at any footstep on the threshold. One moonlight night she could not resist putting just one spray of golden coreopsis in the buttonhole of her black dress, for if he should come that night he would like to see it, perhaps; for, after all, women do not forget any more than men.

About eight o’clock there was a knock at the door; she was agitated. “Why should I be? He is married,” she assured herself.

She opened the door, and John, grown stouter in form and more attractive in face than ever, stood before her. He met her cordially, talked with the children, and seemed more joyous than when a boy.

“And where is Mrs. Harding?” Nellie finally found the courage to ask.

“She is not with me,” was the answer.

The call, really a long one, seemed short.

“When do you leave for the West, Mr. Harding?” She had almost said “John,” for she had thought of him all these years by the old familiar name.

“Not for two or three weeks, and I shall see you again.”

Day after day passed, and he did not come. And now she realized, as she had never before, that this was the only man she had ever loved; that his presence made day, his absence night; that she had loved him from childhood. And now all was too late.

The time came for him to return to the West, and once more he stood by the flower-beds along the walk to the Nineveh house, this time just as the sun was setting over the cedars. He kissed the children. “I have none of my own,” he said, and took Nellie’s hand, holding it a little longer than he had held it before. Her lips trembled, and her eyes must have told all her heart.

“I have felt so deeply for you,” he said; and his own voice grew tremulous. “And will you let me leave this little remembrance for the children?” He slipped a roll of bills into her hand, and was gone in a moment.

Weeks passed, and finally a letter came. She knew the handwriting. What could John wish of her? Perhaps he was inclined to adopt one of her children, and, if so, which could she spare?

Not the oldest boy, for he was her pride; not the second, a girl, who was her comfort and companion; not the youngest, for somehow he looked like John, and he was dearer to her than all beside. When Byron was unkind her heart always turned to John, and perchance stamped her thoughts upon the open, frank face of her youngest child.

She put the letter in her pocket; she must be calm before she read it. She would go out and sit by the mill where he and she sat together. She opened it there and read:

My dear old-time Friend: I am alone in the world. I told you my wife was not with me. She died some years ago. I wanted to see if you loved me, as I believed you did. I hope and believe you do still. You know me better than any one else, and you know whether I should care tenderly for your children. If you are willing to come and brighten my home, say so. How I longed to fold you in my arms as I left you, but restrained myself! Telegraph me if I shall come to take you.

A message was sent from Nineveh: “Come.”

The Crandall home has fallen like the others. The flower-beds have vanished, save here and there a self-sown golden coreopsis grows among the weeds. The moon shines silently upon the mill as of old. The few remaining aged people of Nineveh still tell of the faithful love of John Harding for the miller’s adopted daughter.

THE SECOND TIME

THE HON. John Crawford had become a prominent man in his community. He had begun life in poverty, had learned economy early, and fortunately had married a girl with tastes and habits similar to his own. Both desired to rise in the world, and she, forgetting herself, bent all her energies toward his progress and success. She did her own housework for years, made her own clothes and those of her children, and in every way saved, that John might be rich and influential. Her history was like that of thousands of other New England women – she wore herself out for her family. She never had time for social life, and not a very great amount of time for reading, though she kept up as well as possible with the thought of the day; but her one aim was to have her husband honored.

John Crawford was a good husband, though not always considerate. He thought nobody quite so good and helpful as Betsey, nobody cooked so well, nobody was more saving, and he was proud to rise by her help. He failed sometimes to consider how large a matter that help had been in his life. If he had been asked who made his money he would have replied without hesitation, “I made it.” That Betsey was entitled to half, or even a third, would never have occurred to him. He provided for her and the children all they seemed to need. He was the head of the family, and that headship had made him somewhat selfish and domineering.

As the children grew older, and Mrs. Crawford looked out into the future and realized the possibility of leaving the world before her husband, she thought much of their condition under a changed home. Mr. Crawford would marry again, probably, and her children might have little or none of the property which they together had struggled to earn.

One evening she said, as they sat before the open fire, the children having gone to bed: “John, it seems to me things are unequal in the world. You and I have worked hard, and I have been proud to have you succeed. We both love the children, and want everything done for them. What if I should die, and you should marry again and have other children?”

“Why, Betsey! You don’t think I could forget our own precious children? No second wife could or would influence me against my children. You and I have worked together, and I should feel dishonorable to leave them helpless and care for others. You must think me a villain.”

“Oh, no, John! But I have seen cases like that. Only the other day the Rev. Cornelius Jones married a young wife, and gave her all his property, leaving nothing to his three daughters. Now, if a minister would do that, what should we expect of others?”

“There must have been peculiar circumstances. He could not have been in his right mind.”

“You know, John, if you were to die I should receive a third of what I have helped you earn, and the rest would go to the children; while if I were to die nothing would go to the children. I should like to have at least the third which the law considers mine go to them at my death, as it does in some countries of the Old World, where a man cannot marry a second time till he has settled a portion on his first children.”

“But that would be a great inconvenience,” replied Mr. Crawford. “A man has money in business, and to take out a third if his wife dies might sadly embarrass him. Or even the use of a third, set apart for them, might cripple him.”

“Better that there be a little inconvenience than a wrong done to children,” said Mrs. Crawford. “The husband may lose every cent of what the wife has struggled and saved all her life to help him accumulate. Marriage is a partnership, and, like other partnerships, must suffer some change and inconvenience, it may be, if one of the partners dies. There must, necessarily, be a new adjustment of interests.”

“But the law allows you to make a will and give away your property, my dear, just as it does me.”

“Yes, what I have inherited before or since my marriage; but I have inherited none, and you have not. We have made ours together, and you have often said that you owe as much to my skill and economy as to your foresight and ability.”

“And so I do, it is true; but the law makes no provision about our common property.”

“But make it yourself then, John, if the law does not. Make a will so that in case of my death my two daughters shall have at least a third of all you are worth at that time, or, if you prefer, put a third – I might feel that it ought to be half – in my name, or perhaps the home, and let that go to our daughters.”

“But if I put the home in your name, so that in case of losses something would be saved from creditors, I should want it willed back to me at your death, so that I could still have a home and do as I liked with it.”

“And then nothing would go to the children at my death? That is not fair, John, and I have worked too hard and long to be willing.”

“Well, Betsey, you can trust me to do the right thing. I will think it over,” and he kissed her as they closed the not altogether satisfactory conversation.

As was to be expected, Betsey Crawford broke down from the wear and tear of life, and died, leaving her two daughters to the care of a fond and not ungenerous father. The loss was a great one to John Crawford. She had been his competent adviser, with tact and good sense to keep matters right. She had guided more than he ever suspected. He mourned her sincerely, as did her two devoted daughters.

He was lonely, and in time married again, a woman considerably younger than himself, a member of the same church, an ambitious and not over-scrupulous woman. When her son was born she became desirous that every advantage should be placed before him, that he might attain to wealth and honor. She convinced Mr. Crawford in a thousand nameless ways that the boy would need most of the property for business, to marry well, and to carry down the family name. The girls would doubtless marry and be well provided for by their husbands. She talked with Mr. Crawford about the uncertainty of life, and, with tact, urged that other things besides a spiritual preparation for death were necessary. A man should think of the younger members of his family who would be left comparatively helpless.

People said that the strong-willed John Crawford had become very much under the sway of his younger wife; that he had grown less dominant, more appreciative, and more thoughtful of her needs and wishes. He idolized his son, but he seemed no dearer than the daughters of Betsey. He was a more expensive child, for he needed all sorts of playthings, the best schooling, the best clothes, and a somewhat large amount of spending money. It was evident that John Crawford, Jr., would require more money than his half-sisters.

In course of time, Mr. Crawford, having served a term in Congress through good ability and the discreet use of money in organizing his forces, and having done well for his constituency, followed Betsey to the other world. To the surprise of all save the second Mrs. Crawford the property was left to her and her son, with the merest remembrance to the unmarried daughters of hard-working Betsey Crawford.

“I wouldn’t have thought it,” said a prominent lady in the church. “Why, John Crawford was a deacon, and professed to live according to right and justice! There must have been undue influence. His first wife worked like a slave to help earn that money. I never supposed a man would be unfair to his children.”

“You never can tell what folks will do,” said another church member. “Youth and tact are great forces in the world. John Crawford never meant to be unjust, but he couldn’t help it. A third of that property ought to have gone to those daughters. Why didn’t his wife make him fix it before she died?”

“Maybe she tried, who knows?” said the person addressed. “If the law didn’t make him do his duty, how could you expect his conscience to do it? We need some new laws about the property which men and women earn together.”

Mr. Crawford's injustice resulted in the early death of one daughter, and left bitter memories of her father in the heart of the other.

FIFTEEN THOUSAND DOLLARS

JASON and Eunice Kimball had always longed for money. They had spent their fifteen years of married life on a New England farm, with all its cares and hardships, its early rising, long hours of labor, and little compensation.

The white house, with its green blinds, roof sloping to the rear, and great fir-trees in the front yard, had grown dingy with dust and rain, and there had been no money to repair it.

The children, Susie, James, and little Jason, fourteen, twelve, and ten years old, had worked like their thrifty parents, gaining the somewhat meagre schooling of a half-deserted New England town.

Now a great change had come to the Kimball family. A relative had died and had left to Mrs. Kimball fifteen thousand dollars. It seemed an enormous amount in one way, but not enormous in another. The children must be better dressed and prepared for college, the father must give up the slow gains of the farm and go into business, and Mrs. Kimball must make herself ready in garb and manner for the new life. It was evident that they must move to some village where schools were good and business would be prosperous. What town and what business? These were the exciting topics that were discussed by night and by day. Jason knew how to till the soil, to harvest grain, to be an industrious and good citizen and a kind husband, but he knew little about the great world of trade.

“I might buy out a small grocery, Eunice,” said the husband one evening. “People must eat, whether they have decent clothes or books or schools.”

“Ah, if you once looked at Mr. Jones’s books and saw the uncollectible bills, even from so-called ‘good families,’ you would not undertake that business!”

“I might buy a tract of land in a growing town and sell lots.”

“But what if a panic came, and you lost all?” said the conservative wife.

As soon as it became known that the Kimballs had fallen heir to fifteen thousand dollars, Mr. Kimball was besought on all sides to enter one kind of business or another. One applicant had invented a unique coffee-pot, which would make good coffee out of even a poor berry, and a fortune could certainly be made, if only capital were provided. Another person had a new style of wash-boiler, and experimented with it on Mrs. Kimball’s kitchen stove, breaking every lid in the operation. Fortunes seemed lying about at every corner of the street, and the only wonder was that everybody did not get rich. Mr. Kimball was besought to take out life insurance, to buy acres of land in the far West, unseen by buyer or seller, to give to every charity within the State, where-ever the knowledge of the fifteen-thousand-dollar inheritance had permeated.

Finally the town for a home was decided upon, and the business – that of selling coal.

A pretty house was purchased, his children placed in school, a seat in church rented, and a shop for the sale of hard and soft coal.

Mr. Kimball knew nothing of the coal business; but he formed a partnership with a man who knew everything about it – in fact, too much, for at the end of a year the firm failed, the five thousand dollars that Mrs. Kimball gave to her husband having melted away like snow in spring.

Mrs. Kimball’s patience had not increased with her gift of money. She blamed her husband for losing, blamed herself for giving the money to him, blamed the world in general.

Mr. Kimball tried other matters, and failed. It was difficult to find a situation in which to work for others, as he was of middle age and young men were preferred. He tried life insurance, and either lacked the courage to visit people in season and out of season, or he lacked volume of speech or multiplicity of argument.

It became evident to the neighbors and to the minister of the parish that matters were going wrong in the Kimball home. The husband wished to go into business again; the wife felt sure that he would lose, and nothing would be left for the children. They reasoned, they quarrelled, and Mrs. Kimball became ill from anxiety.

At last it was noised about that a separation might come in the divided family. Friends interposed, but nothing satisfactory was accomplished. The few thousands that remained were safe in the bank; and this amount Mrs. Kimball had decided should not be touched.

One morning the little village was thrown into consternation. The bank had lost all its funds through the speculation of one of its officers. Save for the little home, the Kimballs were penniless.

Sorrow is sometimes a great strengthener. Mrs. Kimball rose from her illness to face the problems of life. Both parents loved their children, and they were too young to be thrown upon the world.

“Let us sell our home,” said Mrs. Kimball, “buy back the old farm, and live together till the end.”

And Jason said, “Yes, wife, we shall be happier in the old place without the fifteen thousand dollars.”

THE RING OF GOLD

MARTIN DALY had become discouraged. Like many another miner in the far West, he had made money and lost it, had prospected for mines, found ore, and been cheated out of his rights, had grown poor and ill, and had thrown himself under a tree, careless whether he lived or died.

The great snowy mountain-peaks and the rich verdure had lost their attraction for him. He had hoped and been disappointed so many times that he had come to believe himself unlucky; that he should never possess a dollar; that there was neither happiness nor home for him.

He had seen more prosperous days. His large dark eyes, his broad brow, his well-shaped mouth and chin, bespoke refinement in the years that were gone. He had been well educated, had tried many things and failed in them, not from lack of energy nor from lack of judgment, but his fate seemed to be an adverse one.

He had done many good acts, had always helped his brother miners, had tried to look on the bright side of life, had fought manfully, and been defeated in the battle. He had imagined sometimes that the clouds had a silver lining, but the storms always came sooner or later. He meditated thus as he lay under the tree, and finally, more dead than alive from want and exhaustion, fell asleep.

Two men passed along under the brow of the mountain, by the tree. They were tall and straight, and from their dark hair and skin it was easy to perceive their Indian blood.

“The white man is dead,” said one of the men, as he bent on his knee beside the sleeper.

“No, there is a twitching of the eyelids,” said the other. “He is pale and sick. I will take him home, and Mimosa will care for him.”

The conversation, carried on in a low tone, awakened the miner.

“Come with us, and you shall have food and shelter,” said the friendly Indian.

Scarcely able to bear his weight, Martin leaned upon the arms of the two men, and soon found himself in the humble Indian cabin.

“Mimosa, here is a stranger. Take care of him. Red Cloud never left a human being to die. He will get well, and then we will send him back to his people.”

A shy, pale Indian girl came forward and did as she was bidden. She did not speak, but looked very pityingly out of her fawn-like dark eyes. When Martin had been placed in the simple bed she prepared food for him, and fed him as though he were a child. Day by day she came and went, speaking little, but doing gently the things which only a woman’s hands can do.

After a time the miner, still a young man, gained in strength, and began once more to hope for a successful future.

“Mimosa,” he said one day, “I owe my life to you, and if I am ever rich I will come back and reward you.”

“I shall miss you,” said the girl shyly. “But I want no money. I shall be happy because you are well again and happy.”

“I shall yet find gold, Mimosa. I used to think I should be rich, and then I became poor and sick and lost heart. You wear a ring on your finger and sometimes a chain about your neck, both of beaten gold. Did the metal come from mines near here?”

“My father gave them to me,” she replied, and nothing more could be learned from her on the subject.

“Would you care, Mimosa, if I wore the ring until I went away? Perhaps I can find the place where the gold came from.”

“You may wear it till you come back rich,” she said, smiling.

Days grew into weeks, and the time drew near for the miner to say good-by to the girl who had become his comrade as well as deliverer. Tears filled her eyes as they parted. “You will forget Mimosa,” she said.

“No, I will bring back the ring, and you shall give it to the man who makes you his bride. I shall never forget Red Cloud nor his daughter.”

Strong and hopeful again, Martin took up life, obtained work, and believed once more that he should find gold.

But he missed the Indian girl. The pines on the snowy mountain-peaks whispered of her. The evenings seemed longer than formerly; the conversation of the miners less interesting. He was lonely. He was earning a fair living, but of what use was money to him if he was to feel desolate in heart? Mimosa was not of his race, but she had a lovable nature. He remembered that she looked sad at his going away. He wondered if she ever thought about him. If she had some Indian suitor, would she not wish for the ring again? He would like at least to see the man and his daughter who had saved his life. He would carry back the ring. Ah! if he knew where the gold in it came from, perhaps he would indeed become rich, and then who could make him so happy as Mimosa?

Months only increased the loneliness in Martin’s heart. He was becoming discouraged again. He even began to fear that Mimosa was married, and his soul awakened to a sense of loss. He would go back just once and see her, and on his journey back he would sit for a half-hour under the tree where Red Cloud had found him.

“What ails Martin?” said one miner to another. “He must be in love – no fun in him as in the old days. Going to quit camp, he says.”

After Martin had decided to go to see Red Cloud his heart seemed lighter. If Mimosa were married he could at least show her his gratitude. And if she were not? Well, it would be very restful to see her once more!

He started on his journey. The full moon was rising as he neared the old tree where Red Cloud had found him. As he approached he was startled by a white figure. He turned aside for a moment, and then went cautiously up to the great trunk. Two dark eyes full of tears gazed up into his eyes, at first with a startled look and then with a gleam of joy and trust.

“Mimosa!” he exclaimed, and clasped the Indian girl in his arms. “Why are you here, child, at this time of night?”

“I came here to think of you, Martin, and the moonlight is so sweet and comforting. The green trees and the mountains tell me of you.”

“I have brought you back the ring, Mimosa.”

“And are you rich yet? You were to keep it till you were rich.”

“No, but I would be rich, perhaps, if you would tell me where the gold in the ring was found.”

“My father gave it to me,” she replied quietly.

“Mimosa, would you love me if I were rich?”

“Perhaps I should be afraid of you if you were.”

“Would you love me if I remained poor as I am now?”

“Yes, always.”

“And if I became sick and could not care for you, what then?”

“I would care for *you*, Martin.”

“I have brought back the ring, Mimosa, that you may give it to the man who shall make you his bride.”

“And would you like to keep the ring yourself, Martin?”

“Yes, dearest.”

They went back to the home of Red Cloud, happy because promised to each other in marriage.

After a quiet wedding Mimosa said one day: “Come with me, Martin, and I will show you where the gold in the ring and the necklace were found.”

Not very far from the tree where the miner had lain down discouraged Mimosa pointed out the shining ore, the spot known only to the few Indians.

“Mimosa, there is a mine here! This gold is the outcropping of the veins. I shall yet be rich, my darling.”

“Would you surely love me as much, Martin, if you were rich?”

“I would give you everything your heart desired.”

“And not go to an Eastern country, and be great, and forget Mimosa?”

“Never!”

With a happy heart Martin Daly took his pick to the mountains. The golden ore opened under his touch. His claim each day showed more value. He had, indeed, become rich through the ring of Mimosa.

Times have changed. The children of the Indian girl, educated, gentle as their mother and energetic as their father, are in a handsome house. Love in the home has kept as bright as the gold in the mountain.

FOUR LETTERS

DEAR ERNEST: I am sitting under a great oak this summer afternoon, just as the sun is setting. The western sky is crossed with bands of brilliant red and yellow, while overhead, and to the east, pink fleecy clouds are floating like phantom ships of coral. The green forest of beech and oak at my right mellows in the deepening gray of the twilight, and the white mansion at my left, with its red roof, looks like some castle in a story. The grand blue lake in the distance seems closer to me in the subdued light, and I almost question if this be a picture or reality.

How I wish you were here to sit beside me, and talk as we used to do in college days! Then we wondered where each would be, what experiences would fill each heart, and what the future had for us in its shadowy keeping.

You have been a wanderer, and seen much of the world. I have had, for the most part, a quiet life of study, have finished a book, have had anxieties, as who has not, but, best of all, I have found my ideal.

You will perhaps smile at this, and recall to me my love of athletic sports, my disregard of the affections, my entire ability to live without the gentler sex. Not that you and I both did not admire a brilliant eye, or a rosy lip, or a perfect hand, but life was so full without all this that we looked at women as one does at rare pictures – expensive luxuries, to be admired rather than possessed.

But all has changed with me. I have met one who will, I think, fill my vision for life. She is not strictly beautiful. Her blue eyes are calm and clear. Her manner is not responsive, and she would seem to a stranger like one to be worshipped from afar. She has depth of affection, but it is not on the surface.

Edith Graham is to most persons a mystery. She loves nature, sits with me often to enjoy these wonderful sunsets, makes me feel that I am in the presence of a goddess, and goes her way, while I continue to worship her.

Yes, I think I have used the right word – “worship.” I walk a thousand times past the house where she lives because she is there. I linger in the pathways where she daily walks, with the feeling that her footsteps have given them a special sacredness. I know well the seat in the forest near here where she comes to read and look upon the distant lake. Every friend of hers is nearer to me because her friend. The graves, even, of her dear ones are precious to me. Every tree or flower she has admired is fairer to me. The golden-rod of the fields I keep ever in my study because she loves and gathers it. I have planted red carnations in my garden because she delights to wear them. The autumn leaves are exquisite to me because she paints them, and I recall the sound of her feet among the rustling leaves with the same joy which I feel in remembering the music of the priests of Notre Dame, or the voices of the nuns of the Sacré Cœur in Rome, at sunset.

The moon, from new to full, has an added beauty because when Edith and I are separated she speaks to us both the eternal language of love. When I watch the clouds break over her majestic face I know that Edith too enjoys the beauty of the scene.

The song of the robins among our trees is sweeter because Edith hears it. The little stream that wanders near us and glides over the stones at the foot of the hill in a white sheet of spray is a bond between us, for we have both looked upon it. Edith’s name seems as musical to me as the waterfall. I can fancy that it is graven upon my heart.

I know every change of her features, – she is almost always quiet, – and her every word and act I have gone over and over in my mind ten thousand times. We have read together, and I hope she loves me. This companionship is so blessed that I dread to speak to her of love – though my face must always tell it – lest, possibly, the dream be dispelled, and I wake to the dreadful knowledge that she cannot be mine.

Do you know all these feelings, Ernest? Whatever you may think of me, I have grown a nobler man through them. All womanhood is more sacred to me. I can do work I never thought myself capable of before. It would be a pleasure to work for Edith as long as I live. I am going to Europe soon, and I must settle this matter. I will write you then.

*Yours,
John.*

Dear Ernest: The scene has changed since I wrote you months ago. I am at the foot of the Jungfrau, whose snowy top, gilded by the sun, is ever a thing of beauty.

The day I dreaded has come and gone. I have told Edith all my heart, and, alas! she is not mine. She was already half plighted to a young naval officer, whom she met when she was away at school. I believe she was fond of me, for our tastes are similar, but she has been the true woman through it all.

I blame her? Never! I would not allow my heart to cherish such a thought for a moment.

Do I love her less? No. Shall I think a flower less beautiful and fragrant because another owns it and enjoys it? Edith will be to me ever the same lovely picture of youthful womanhood – the same blessing, though to me unattainable. Do not imagine that I shall forget her. A man loves as deeply as a woman, often more deeply, and not seldom remembers as long as she does. Other faces may interest me; other women be companionable; but they will not be Edith.

I shall go back to our old home beside the lake, because she will sometime come there, and it will always be a comfort and pleasure to see her, even if she does not see me. Perhaps it is a foolish wish, but I shall hope sometime to rest in the same cemetery where she rests.

I love to think of her the last thing as I sleep, for then oftentimes in my dreams she talks and walks with me, and I awake refreshed by the memory.

Some one has said, “Happiness is not possession. It is giving and growing;” and I know that I am growing more fit for her companionship, even though it come only in another life.

The seas she sails upon, the harbors she enters, will all be nearer and dearer to me. The world will grow larger instead of smaller to my vision. I shall be lonely; yes, almost unbearably lonely. But, after all, what a blessing to have known her – to have loved her – to have offered her the best thing a man can offer a woman, the consecration of his life to her! What if I had gone through these years and not have seen such an ideal? How poor would be my heart! Now I can say with Shelley, “Love’s very pain is sweet.”

Of course I can but think of what I have missed. To have seen her in a pleasant home and to come to her after the day’s work was done would have been bliss indeed. To have seen the sun set and the moon rise; to have walked over the hills and meadows together; to have read by our open fire; to have laughed and wept and prayed and grown gray-haired together – all this would have made life complete. Even silence together would have made earth seem heaven.

Life is indeed a mystery. It brings us development, if not happiness. For a time after I left home I seemed unable to put myself to any labor, but I have come to be grateful that for me there is so beautiful an ideal – one that sheds a halo about even the saddest day. But there come times of anguish, when I long to hold Edith’s hand in mine; to press her to my heart with all the rapture of a perfect love. Then I go out under the blue sky and walk, if I can, always towards the sunset, getting out of the rich color all the balm possible for an unsatisfied soul.

I sometimes wonder if she realizes how I worship her – if she knows all the bliss of loving, and the eternal sorrow of losing. Ah! I know it all.

*Yours always,
John.*

Dear Ernest: How the years have come and gone since I wrote you from Switzerland! I have just seen Edith home from a voyage to Japan. And she has brought her little girl of three, with her own blue eyes and the same reserved, quiet ways. The child came across the hill with her nurse to

our grove, and I made friends with her and held her on my knee and kissed her. She could not know how very dear she is to me, and why. She could not guess that the golden hair which I fondled took me back to other days, and quickened the flow of blood in my veins. Her smooth, fair skin is like her mother's. I could not help wishing that she might stay with me forever, and look out upon the lake and the sunsets.

It will be a dreadful wrench to my heart when they go back. Japan is so far away. Edith looks paler than formerly, and smiles less frequently. I have heard it hinted that she is not happy. Can it be possible that her husband does not appreciate the treasure which he has won?

If I could only speak a word of comfort to her – but that cannot be. She is very pleasant, but calm, with me, and seems glad to have me love her little daughter. I thought I saw tears in her eyes as we sat with the child between us under the oak last night at sunset, but she rose hastily, and said she should take cold in the falling dew.

She is more beautiful to me than when a girl. Her face has more of thought and feeling in it, and a trace of suffering as well, and that heightens her beauty to me, and to men generally, I think. We love to care for others, especially if they need our care, if there is any manhood in us.

Ah, there is nothing on earth so interesting as a woman, with her tenderness, her solicitude for our welfare, her quiet reserve, her gentle listening, her brightness, her nobleness, her grace!

After Edith left me, taking her little girl by the hand, I confess I was desolate, overwhelmingly desolate. Why is it that one person can make night seem day to us; can bring perfect rest and content? I should not have cared if years could have passed while we sat there together. She will go away soon, and I shall have to fight the old battle with self over again, and conquer, and go back to daily duties.

Come and see me here at this lovely outlook. I will show you her child's picture – so like the mother. What will the end be? I suppose you ask. The same as now, probably. I do not look for anything different. I try to be happy and thankful that I live in the same world and now and then in the same city with Edith.

*Faithfully,
John.*

Dear Ernest: You and I are growing older, but we have kept the same true friendship through all the years. Your life has been full of love and sunshine, and mine so desolate, except for one ennobling affection.

But a great change has come into my life. Edith has come back with her daughter, and both are in mourning. They have been here for months, but I have seen little of them.

A few evenings ago I sat with them among the trees surrounding their lovely home, and as I left I dared to tell Edith that I had not buried all hope for the future. She looked at me gravely, I thought with an appealing expression in her blue eyes, as though she longed for a place where her heart might rest. You know how the eyes can speak volumes. I had never seen her look thus before. Every woman loves to be worshipped. "She must at least be gratified that I love her," I said to myself.



I have been to see Edith this evening at sunset. She and I have walked in the ravines, and I have pushed away the underbrush from her lovely head, and told her that I longed to care for her always, and she has laid her white hand on my arm and said, "I love you."

I scarcely know what I am writing. To have her and her child in my home forever! To have the peace and satisfaction and rest of a reciprocal affection! To have her mine to kiss and be proud of, and to live for! To gather golden-rod and carnations for her as when she was a girl! To see the curling smoke of ships on the blue lake, and the golden sunsets, and the rich autumn coloring together, and

to know that we shall live side by side till death parts us, and then shall rest together under the same myrtles and red berries of the mountain ash in the cemetery!

Life has begun anew. I seem almost a boy again, while Edith is sweet and grave and happy. I sometimes half fear that it is a dream, it is all so beautiful. The world never seemed half so attractive as now. Come and see us in our home.

*Ever yours,
John.*

REWARDED

THE SNOW was falling on Christmas eve in the little village of West Beverly. A good many young people were disappointed as they watched the feathery crystals come floating down from a sky that seemed full of snowbanks. They wished to go to a party, or concert, or home gathering, and who could tell whether Christmas would be stormy and disagreeable?

Widow Wadsworth sat in her plain home with her four children, whose faces were pressed against the window pane, guessing what the coming day would bring. Not presents, no; the Wadsworths were too poor for those. But if the day were sunny the sleigh bells would ring, and the poor could slide and make merry as well as the rich.

Hugh, a bright boy of sixteen, had finished his education. By hard work his mother had helped him through the High School, and now he was ready to do his part in the world's work. Not that he did not long for college. Other boys had gone out from West Beverly across the hills to Amherst and to Harvard, but they had fathers to assist them, or kind friends who had furnished the money. Hugh must now aid in the support of his two sisters and little brother.

He had earned something by working Saturdays, so that when Christmas morning dawned Kate Wadsworth found some plaid for a new dress outside her door, Jenny a doll, and Willie a sled.

Mrs. Wadsworth's eyes filled with tears as she kissed Hugh. "It will all come right in the end," she said. "I wish you could go to college, but many a man succeeds without it, and educates himself. It is blessed that we are alive and well, and are able to work. There is as much room in the world for my children as for anybody's. You have been a noble son, and we all love you. I wanted to buy you something, but the money had to go for rent."

"Oh, never mind, mother! I don't need anything. I'm going over to Mr. Carter's to see if they want the snow shovelled from their walks. Tell Willie to come over with his new sled and see me work." And Hugh's big blue eyes brightened as he stepped out into the frosty air. Blessed hope of youth, that carries us into the realities of middle life stronger and happier for the burdens that must be borne!

The Carter mansion away on the hills belonged to the Hon. William Carter, owner of the woollen mills. A man of kind heart, good to his employees, he had always felt an interest in Hugh because the father had worked in his mills. This Christmas morning the Carters wished several walks cleared. The hired man could have done it, but Mr. Carter preferred that Hugh should have the work.

The owner of the woollen mills watched the boy from the window as he shovelled. "A very promising lad," he said to his wife, a little lady much younger than himself. "I wonder what he intends to do in the world," and putting his hands in his pockets he walked up and down the floor. "Jerome Wadsworth was a good workman in the mills. I guess the widow has had a hard time of it since he died."

Mr. Carter walked towards the dining-room, where the breakfast dishes were being removed from the table.

"Margaret, when the boy has finished clearing the walks, send him to me."

"Yes, sir," responded the maid.

An hour later, his cheeks aglow from labor, Hugh stood in the doorway.

"Come in, Hugh, and sit down. What are you going to do?"

"I am ready for any honest work, Mr. Carter. I wanted to go to college, but that is out of the question."

"How much would it cost you?"

"From five to six hundred dollars a year, I suppose."

"Would your mother like to have you go?"

“Very much indeed. She has always wanted it, but I think she really needs my wages now to help her.”

“But you can help her better after you have an education. You could earn more, and you would be an honor to her.”

“Yes, I know of nothing that would make her so happy.”

“Well, my son is young yet, and something may happen which will prevent my sending James to college, so I will send you while I can.”

Hugh’s blue eyes grew moist. He was indeed to have a Christmas present: a four years’ course at college.

“I will come over and talk with your mother about it,” said Mr. Carter.

Hugh hurried home, and entered the cottage quite out of breath. Calling his mother aside, he whispered, “Mother, I have a secret to tell you. Mr. Carter is going to send me to college, and then I can better help you and the rest. Just think of it – to have it happen on Christmas Day! And I never expected it.”

Mrs. Wadsworth could not speak as she folded her boy in her arms and kissed him. What did it matter to her self-sacrificing heart whether she worked early and late, if Hugh could only be educated! True, he would no longer share her humble cottage, and she would miss his help and companionship, but her life was nothing – his was all. If anything in humanity touches divinity, it is motherhood, that loves and sacrifices without hope of reward.

Busy days followed, when the little trunk was packed, prayers offered, the good-bys said, and her boy Hugh went out into the world.

Four years passed – four years with their new friendships, eager plans, broader outlook, and development of character.

Meantime Widow Wadsworth struggled on, Mr. Carter helping the family somewhat, so that the sisters eventually could fit themselves for teaching. When college days were over another time of anxiety came. Should Hugh have a profession or go into business? He loved books, and finally, after much consideration, he decided to enter the law, working his way as best he could by teaching and writing. Steadily he won success, and before thirty was on the road to fame and fortune.

The years had whitened Widow Wadsworth’s hair. All her family were now earning, and life had become easier. The years, too, had brought changes in the Carter family. The woollen mills had failed to bring money to their owner, and the large home had passed into other hands. Pretty Isabel Carter, whom it was whispered Hugh had desired to marry, had thrown herself away on a showy youth, who married her with the expectation of securing a fortune. James Carter, the only son, was working his way through college.

As is often the case, a woman was longing and praying for James’s success. Jenny Wadsworth was teaching a village school. She and James Carter had been friends. She knew his many good qualities, and whether he ever cared for her or not she determined that his father’s failure should not spoil his life if she could help it. Kate could assist the family, and unbeknown to any one Jenny was saving money for James Carter’s education. One morning a letter was sent to Hugh, saying: “James Carter is trying to work his way through college, and we must help him. Here is one hundred dollars which I have saved, and I will send more soon. Do not tell anybody living, but use it for him. Mr. Carter helped you, and I know you will be only too glad to help James. I see him rarely, but he is a noble fellow, and I long to have him succeed. In a little while he can be in the office with you. Your loving sister, Jenny.”

Hugh smiled as he read the letter, and blessed woman for her sweet self-sacrifice; but a shadow came over his face in a moment. Perhaps he thought of Isabel, and of his own disappointment.

A letter was sent to James the next morning with a check from Hugh and a hundred dollars from “a friend.” “Come to me,” wrote Hugh, “as soon as you are through college, and let me help to repay a little of the debt I shall always owe your father.”

When his course was finished James Carter, manly in physique and refined in face, stood in the doorway of a New York office. He was warmly welcomed by Hugh, who had not seen him for years.

“The debt is more than paid to my father,” said James. “I have had your example always before me to surmount obstacles and make a man of myself, and now in turn I hope to help you by faithful labor. I have been curious to learn of the ‘friend’ who has sent me money. I have thought over all my father’s acquaintances and cannot decide who it can be.”

“Oh, never mind, James; you will learn sometime perhaps, and it is of no consequence if you do not! The act of giving is what broadens hearts, whether the giver ever be known or not. I promised to keep it a secret.”

The two young men went to live in quiet bachelor quarters together. Work, earnest and absorbing, filled the days and often the evenings.

“I have asked mother and Jenny to spend a few days with us,” said Hugh one evening. “Jenny teaches in a town not far from here, and my good mother has been visiting her, and will stay here a little on her way to West Beverly.”

“That will do us good. I have had so little time to see ladies that it will seem quite a home touch to our bachelor life,” responded James.

Mrs. Wadsworth and her daughter came, and a week passed happily. Jenny was intelligent and charming – how could she be other than lovely with such a mother? The four walked in the evenings, Jenny seeming naturally to be left in the care of James, while Hugh delighted in showing attention to his mother. When mother and daughter had gone home the quiet room seemed desolate. Hugh missed them, but James was absolutely homesick. New York, great and fascinating, had lost its attraction. With the departure of one face the sun seemed to fade out of the sky.

“You seem sad, James,” said Hugh, as they sat together one evening, – he wondered if Jenny’s visit did not have something to do with it, – “and perhaps you better take a few days’ vacation and go home.”

“I am restless and unhappy; I scarcely know why. I think a change would do me good.”

James started the next day for West Beverly, but easily persuaded himself that a call on Jenny Wadsworth at the place where she was teaching, if only for a few hours, would make the journey pleasanter. As he surmised, he felt lighter-hearted after his visit with her, especially as he obtained from her a promise that she would correspond with him.

Mrs. Carter, who idolized her son, was made very happy by his coming. When he returned to the city, work seemed less irksome, letters grew singularly interesting and comforting, till one day James said:

“Hugh, there’s no use in trying to hide from you the fact that I love your sister Jenny, and wish to marry her as soon as I can support her.”

“She loved you long ago, James, but I was not allowed to tell you of it. Are you engaged?”

“Yes.”

“Well, you’ve found out who the ‘friend’ is, then?”

James Carter turned pale.

“You don’t mean that Jenny earned money to help take me through college?”

“Yes.”

“Then I will pay her back compound interest, the noble girl.”

Years have passed. Hugh, now very wealthy, has never married, but finds a happy home with James and Jenny Carter and their little son Hugh. The Hon. William Carter learned that it pays a thousand-fold to help a boy on in the world, and Jenny rejoices that she, too, helped a young man to success.

THE UNOPENED LETTER.

THERE was a carriage waiting at the door, and the servant had just announced to Miss Hamilton that a gentleman had called to see her.

“I will be down in a moment,” answered a cheery, blue-eyed girl, as she slipped an unopened letter into her pocket. She had recognized the handwriting as the postman handed it to her. The letter was from a young college senior in the quiet New England town, at home for his summer vacation, – Arthur Ellsworth, a manly fellow, whom she had known and admired from childhood. And now Arthur’s brother, Elmer Ellsworth, was waiting to take her for a drive. The latter was the handsomer of the two possibly, with his fine form and dark eyes. He, also, was in the last year of college life.

After pleasant greetings the young people started, in the bright September morning, for the proposed ride. Who that has driven through Lexington and Woburn, past Mystic pond, will ever forget the quiet country roads, the historic associations, the variety of wooded hills and pretty valleys? Now the two schoolfriends talked of the present with its joy and the future with its hopes, of the books they had studied and the plans they had made. Now they gathered golden-rod, and listened to the song of the birds in the bracing air. It was a fitting time to say what had long been in Elmer’s heart – that sometime, when his profession had been entered upon, she would be the woman whom he wished to make his wife.

It was a hard matter for her to decide. Both brothers had been dear to her, perhaps Arthur especially, – and both were noble and worthy. Arthur had never spoken to her of marriage; and now Elmer had told her his love, and that she could make him happy. Had Arthur spoken first, perhaps her heart would have more warmly responded; but in the beauty of that autumn morning, with the hopeful, earnest young man by her side, she gave her promise to be his wife.

As soon as she reached her home she ran upstairs, hastily threw off her wraps, and remembered the letter from Arthur, in her pocket. Opening it, she read:

“How many times I have wanted to tell you that I loved you! How often have the words died on my lips! But now, before I go back to college, I must ask you if you can return that love, and sometime be mine.”

Alas, that she had not opened the letter sooner! She could not tell Arthur that she had preferred him to Elmer; that were disloyalty to the man whom she had promised to wed. She could only say that she was already betrothed to his brother. She married him whom she had promised. Both men became prominent in the history of New England – this little story is true. One went through life unmarried. His letter was opened too late.

THREE COLLEGE STUDENTS

“WHAT’S the work for vacation, boys?”

The speaker was a tall, dark-haired, open-faced young man, who sat with his two companions on the sloping ground of Amherst College, looking away to silent Mount Tom and the fertile meadows of the Connecticut-river valley.

“It’s something downright earnest for me,” said James Wellman, a broad-shouldered, big-hearted youth from the neighboring county, who in spite of poverty and many obstacles had fought his way by the hardest work. “I’m in debt for board, books unpaid for; but I’ve seen worse times than these. I’m used to standing alone, so I’m ready for the battle. I shall take an agency – books, or maybe clothes-wringers, to sell.”

“That will be fun, I’ll warrant,” said the first speaker, Grant Reynolds, whose father, a rich manufacturer, had spared no pains to make his son’s life a bed of roses, altogether different from what his own had been.

“Not much fun,” said James. “You wouldn’t like contemptuous looks from women who know less than you, and whose hearts had become hardened because their husbands, once poor, very likely, had become the possessors of houses on aristocratic streets. Why, a woman – I will not call her a lady – whose husband used to be a stable boy, but who has become a rich government official, ordered me out of the house when I was selling chromos. She said ‘agents were tramps and a nuisance;’ and when I explained that I was working my way through college, she answered, remembering the former occupation of her lord, perhaps, ‘Be somebody’s coachman, then, and earn an honorable living.’ I wanted to add, ‘And run away with your pretty daughter;’ but I only replied politely, ‘Nobody would hire an inexperienced man for two months, which is as long as our vacation lasts.’”

“But these must be rare cases,” said Grant. “Most well-to-do ladies are very courteous.”

“Yes, when you meet them on an equality in drawing-rooms; but not always when you are a workingman.”

“Well, I’ll try it for once. It’ll be a fine lark anyway, and I shall learn something of human nature.”

“That you will,” answered Wellman. “I’ll take the country round that aristocratic town down the river, and you may take the stylish avenues. You’ll find blue blood in plenty – blue because the fathers owned land there a little before the present generation. Of course, you’ll find many well-bred people who are proud of their heads rather than of their purses; but even these are often very ‘select.’ We profess equality, and are probably more democratic than any other country; but a little extra amount of front lawn, or the fact that our great-grandfather was a governor, or that one woman has ‘William Morris’ chintz in her chambers, of which, perhaps, her neighbor never heard, – these make various degrees of rank. If our ancestor came over in the ‘Mayflower,’ or was even a sutler in the Revolutionary war, our fame is unalterably fixed.”

“I should like to sell books in so high-toned a town,” said Grant. “Maybe I might fall in love with some dainty daughter of a lineal descendant of a governor, or of a stable-boy!”

“Precious little good it would do a book-agent, for you would be classed among poor people if you worked, no matter how rich your father might be.”

The conversation had been listened to by a light-haired, blue-eyed student, a poet in temperament and by heredity. He was the only child of a devoted minister of the Gospel, now dead, and of a refined and intellectual mother. She would have shielded him from every rough wind had it been possible, but at best she could only pray for him, and send him now and then a little box of comforts, with her fond and beautiful letters. He worked late at night over his books, and his delicately curved mouth had come to bear an expression of sadness as he looked out upon the struggle before

him. Heretofore the little money of the household had sufficed; but now he must earn his bread like James Wellman.

“Cheer up!” said the latter, who had noticed the tell-tale face of the minister’s son, Kent Raymond. “Blue eyes and polished manners will win kindness. We all have to get a trifle mellowed. We, who know how to earn our support, get a little extra schooling more than the other boys, that’s all. Life is good or bad, just as you look out upon it. It’s full of sunshine to me, for I won’t look at the shadows.”

Vacation days came. Kent and Grant took the book-agency, and James the clothes-wringer, among the country folk, who usually have a kindly interest in a boy who means to be somebody in the world.



One bright day soon after, satchels in hand, the two college boys started out along one of the broad avenues of the staid old city.

“Don’t get discouraged!” said Grant to his boyish companion, who shrank from his task. “Remember you’re doing missionary work every time you get a book into a house. We’ll report three hours from now at the end of the street.”

The first house was of gray stone, set back in the grounds; not belonging to one of the old families, who prefer an old mansion, lest they be counted among the *nouveaux riche*. Great bunches of varied-colored coleus and red geranium mingled with the greensward like a piece of mosaic. Vines were beginning to grow over the stone porch, and the whole bespoke comfort, even luxury. Kent pulled the bell with a sinking at heart, as he wondered who would appear and what she would say. A servant, not cleanly in apparel, opened the door after long waiting. The true position of a family can generally be seen through its domestics.

“Are the ladies of the house in?” asked the college boy.

“What do you want of ’em?”

“I am selling a valuable book about the ‘Home.’”

“No, the missus don’t want it. She told me as how she niver let a book-agent inside the door, and she’d scold me if I called her. She niver reads nothin’ but a novel – niver,” volunteered the loquacious, but kind-hearted girl, despite her torn apron and soiled hands.

At the next mansion Kent was told that the “missus” had gone to the seashore; but the knowing look in the servant’s face showed that she had been instructed to make this reply to all callers. It sounded aristocratic to be at Narragansett Pier or on the Atlantic coast, even though finances would not permit of this refreshing journey.

At the next house a kind-faced woman, who really belonged to one of the old families, and felt none too proud to open her own door, bade the young man a pleasant “Good-morning,” and though she did not wish to purchase the book, which, though tastefully made, was commonplace in subject, she thanked him for seeing it, and hoped he would sell elsewhere. His heart was a trifle lighter after this kindly greeting, though his purse grew no heavier. At the next house, and the next, he met with the same refusals. Finally, near the end of the street, the colored man who opened the door was also striving to earn money for a college course. He had been two years in Harvard University already. Both father and mother were dead, but from love for a girl who taught a colored school he had become ambitious, and determined to work his way through some institution. The subject of the book touched his heart. Katie, his school-teacher, would like it; the suggestions about husbands and wives, and the words about neatness, culture, and tenderness, would do both good.

“How much is it?” said the colored youth.

“Two dollars.”

A disappointed look came into the face of the would-be purchaser.

“I receive seventy-five cents commission,” said Kent, “and I will let you have the book for one dollar and a half; that will leave twenty-five cents for my dinner.”

“I hate to ask you to take less, sir, but I can’t pay two dollars, because I haven’t so much. But here’s the one-fifty;” and he added, as he held the book tenderly, “Katie will so like it!” When a man is really in love he can’t help telling somebody, even though it be a book-agent.

Meanwhile Grant Reynolds had been learning his first experience of work in the broad world, which has too little care for and sympathy with toilers. He soon found that selling books from house to house was no “lark,” as he had anticipated. His lips curled in disdain as he was several times addressed rudely by servants, or by women whom he knew were far below him in social position. Did so many fashionable people, then, have two methods of action – one for the rich and the other for the poor?

As he was thus musing, he opened a gate and walked up to a beautiful mansion, Elizabethan in style, that one would imagine to have been just transported from England, with its ivies and great beds of roses. He stopped suddenly, for just before him a fair-haired girl, in simple blue, with broad sun-hat wreathed with daisies, was clipping a bunch of deep-red roses. She looked up half inquiringly, as the young man approached and lifted his hat. He was not abashed – he had seen attractive girls too often for that; but her kind look had an unusual effect after the sharp refusals of the morning.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

Текст предоставлен ООО «ЛитРес».

Прочитайте эту книгу целиком, [купив полную легальную версию](#) на ЛитРес.

Безопасно оплатить книгу можно банковской картой Visa, MasterCard, Maestro, со счета мобильного телефона, с платежного терминала, в салоне МТС или Связной, через PayPal, WebMoney, Яндекс.Деньги, QIWI Кошелек, бонусными картами или другим удобным Вам способом.