# CHARLES WADDELL CHESNUTT

## THE HOUSE BEHIND THE CEDARS

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**Chesnutt C.**

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# Содержание

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## I
## A STRANGER FROM SOUTH CAROLINA

Time touches all things with destroying hand; and if he seem now and then to bestow the bloom of youth, the sap of spring, it is but a brief mockery, to be surely and swiftly followed by the wrinkles of old age, the dry leaves and bare branches of winter. And yet there are places where Time seems to linger lovingly long after youth has departed, and to which he seems loath to bring the evil day. Who has not known some even-tempered old man or woman who seemed to have drunk of the fountain of youth? Who has not seen somewhere an old town that, having long since ceased to grow, yet held its own without perceptible decline?

Some such trite reflection—as apposite to the subject as most random reflections are—passed through the mind of a young man who came out of the front door of the Patesville Hotel about nine o'clock one fine morning in spring, a few years after the Civil War, and started down Front Street toward the market-house. Arriving at the town late the previous evening, he had been driven up from the steamboat in a carriage, from which he had been able to distinguish only the shadowy outlines of the houses along the street; so that this morning walk was his first opportunity to see the town by daylight. He was dressed in a suit of linen duck—the day was warm—a panama straw hat, and patent leather shoes. In appearance he was tall, dark, with straight, black, lustrous hair, and very clean-cut, high-bred features. When he paused by the clerk's desk on his way out, to light his cigar, the day clerk, who had just come on duty, glanced at the register and read the last entry:—

**"'JOHN WARWICK, CLARENCE, SOUTH CAROLINA.'**

"One of the South Ca'lina bigbugs, I reckon—probably in cotton, or turpentine." The gentleman from South Carolina, walking down the street, glanced about him with an eager look, in which curiosity and affection were mingled with a touch of bitterness. He saw little that was not familiar, or that he had not seen in his dreams a hundred times during the past ten years. There had been some changes, it is true, some melancholy changes, but scarcely anything by way of addition or improvement to counterbalance them. Here and there blackened and dismantled walls marked the place where handsome buildings once had stood, for Sherman's march to the sea had left its mark upon the town. The stores were mostly of brick, two stories high, joining one another after the manner of cities. Some of the names on the signs were familiar; others, including a number of Jewish names, were quite unknown to him.

A two minutes' walk brought Warwick—the name he had registered under, and as we shall call him—to the market-house, the central feature of Patesville, from both the commercial and the picturesque points of view. Standing foursquare in the heart of the town, at the intersection of the two main streets, a "jog" at each street corner left around the market-house a little public square, which at this hour was well occupied by carts and wagons from the country and empty drays awaiting hire. Warwick was unable to perceive much change in the market-house. Perhaps the surface of the red brick, long unpainted, had scaled off a little more here and there. There might have been a slight accretion of the moss and lichen on the shingled roof. But the tall tower, with its four-faced clock, rose as majestically and uncompromisingly as though the land had never been subjugated. Was it so irreconcilable, Warwick wondered, as still to peal out the curfew bell, which at nine o'clock at

night had clamorously warned all negroes, slave or free, that it was unlawful for them to be abroad after that hour, under penalty of imprisonment or whipping? Was the old constable, whose chief business it had been to ring the bell, still alive and exercising the functions of his office, and had age lessened or increased the number of times that obliging citizens performed this duty for him during his temporary absences in the company of convivial spirits? A few moments later, Warwick saw a colored policeman in the old constable's place—a stronger reminder than even the burned buildings that war had left its mark upon the old town, with which Time had dealt so tenderly.

The lower story of the market-house was open on all four of its sides to the public square. Warwick passed through one of the wide brick arches and traversed the building with a leisurely step. He looked in vain into the stalls for the butcher who had sold fresh meat twice a week, on market days, and he felt a genuine thrill of pleasure when he recognized the red bandana turban of old Aunt Lyddy, the ancient negro woman who had sold him gingerbread and fried fish, and told him weird tales of witchcraft and conjuration, in the old days when, as an idle boy, he had loafed about the market-house. He did not speak to her, however, or give her any sign of recognition. He threw a glance toward a certain corner where steps led to the town hall above. On this stairway he had once seen a manacled free negro shot while being taken upstairs for examination under a criminal charge. Warwick recalled vividly how the shot had rung out. He could see again the livid look of terror on the victim's face, the gathering crowd, the resulting confusion. The murderer, he recalled, had been tried and sentenced to imprisonment for life, but was pardoned by a merciful governor after serving a year of his sentence. As Warwick was neither a prophet nor the son of a prophet, he could not foresee that, thirty years later, even this would seem an excessive punishment for so slight a misdemeanor.

Leaving the market-house, Warwick turned to the left, and kept on his course until he reached the next corner. After another turn to the right, a dozen paces brought him in front of a small weather-beaten frame building, from which projected a wooden sign-board bearing the inscription:—

**ARCHIBALD STRAIGHT,**

**LAWYER**

He turned the knob, but the door was locked. Retracing his steps past a vacant lot, the young man entered a shop where a colored man was employed in varnishing a coffin, which stood on two trestles in the middle of the floor. Not at all impressed by the melancholy suggestiveness of his task, he was whistling a lively air with great gusto. Upon Warwick's entrance this effusion came to a sudden end, and the coffin-maker assumed an air of professional gravity.

"Good-mawnin', suh," he said, lifting his cap politely.

"Good-morning," answered Warwick. "Can you tell me anything about Judge Straight's office hours?"

"De ole jedge has be'n a little onreg'lar sence de wah, suh; but he gin'ally gits roun' 'bout ten o'clock er so. He's be'n kin' er feeble fer de las' few yeahs. An' I reckon," continued the undertaker solemnly, his glance unconsciously seeking a row of fine caskets standing against the wall,—"I reckon he'll soon be goin' de way er all de earth. 'Man dat is bawn er 'oman hath but a sho't time ter lib, an' is full er mis'ry. He cometh up an' is cut down lack as a flower.' 'De days er his life is three-sco' an' ten'—an' de ole jedge is libbed mo' d'n dat, suh, by five yeahs, ter say de leas'."

"'Death,'" quoted Warwick, with whose mood the undertaker's remarks were in tune, "'is the penalty that all must pay for the crime of living.'"

"Dat 's a fac', suh, dat 's a fac'; so dey mus'—so dey mus'. An' den all de dead has ter be buried. An' we does ou' sheer of it, suh, we does ou' sheer. We conduc's de obs'quies er all de bes' w'ite folks er de town, suh."

Warwick left the undertaker's shop and retraced his steps until he had passed the lawyer's office, toward which he threw an affectionate glance. A few rods farther led him past the old black Presbyterian church, with its square tower, embowered in a stately grove; past the Catholic church, with its many crosses, and a painted wooden figure of St. James in a recess beneath the gable; and past the old Jefferson House, once the leading hotel of the town, in front of which political meetings had been held, and political speeches made, and political hard cider drunk, in the days of "Tippecanoe and Tyler too."

The street down which Warwick had come intersected Front Street at a sharp angle in front of the old hotel, forming a sort of flatiron block at the junction, known as Liberty Point,—perhaps because slave auctions were sometimes held there in the good old days. Just before Warwick reached Liberty Point, a young woman came down Front Street from the direction of the market-house. When their paths converged, Warwick kept on down Front Street behind her, it having been already his intention to walk in this direction.

Warwick's first glance had revealed the fact that the young woman was strikingly handsome, with a stately beauty seldom encountered. As he walked along behind her at a measured distance, he could not help noting the details that made up this pleasing impression, for his mind was singularly alive to beauty, in whatever embodiment. The girl's figure, he perceived, was admirably proportioned; she was evidently at the period when the angles of childhood were rounding into the promising curves of adolescence. Her abundant hair, of a dark and glossy brown, was neatly plaited and coiled above an ivory column that rose straight from a pair of gently sloping shoulders, clearly outlined beneath the light muslin frock that covered them. He could see that she was tastefully, though not richly, dressed, and that she walked with an elastic step that revealed a light heart and the vigor of perfect health. Her face, of course, he could not analyze, since he had caught only the one brief but convincing glimpse of it.

The young woman kept on down Front Street, Warwick maintaining his distance a few rods behind her. They passed a factory, a warehouse or two, and then, leaving the brick pavement, walked along on mother earth, under a leafy arcade of spreading oaks and elms. Their way led now through a residential portion of the town, which, as they advanced, gradually declined from staid respectability to poverty, open and unabashed. Warwick observed, as they passed through the respectable quarter, that few people who met the girl greeted her, and that some others whom she passed at gates or doorways gave her no sign of recognition; from which he inferred that she was possibly a visitor in the town and not well acquainted.

Their walk had continued not more than ten minutes when they crossed a creek by a wooden bridge and came to a row of mean houses standing flush with the street. At the door of one, an old black woman had stooped to lift a large basket, piled high with laundered clothes. The girl, as she passed, seized one end of the basket and helped the old woman to raise it to her head, where it rested solidly on the cushion of her head-kerchief. During this interlude, Warwick, though he had slackened his pace measurably, had so nearly closed the gap between himself and them as to hear the old woman say, with the dulcet negro intonation:—

"T'anky', honey; de Lawd gwine bless you sho'. You wuz alluz a good gal, and de Lawd love eve'ybody w'at he'p de po' ole nigger. You gwine ter hab good luck all yo' bawn days."

"I hope you're a true prophet, Aunt Zilphy," laughed the girl in response.

The sound of her voice gave Warwick a thrill. It was soft and sweet and clear—quite in harmony with her appearance. That it had a faint suggestiveness of the old woman's accent he hardly noticed, for the current Southern speech, including his own, was rarely without a touch of it. The corruption of the white people's speech was one element—only one—of the negro's unconscious revenge for his own debasement.

The houses they passed now grew scattering, and the quarter of the town more neglected. Warwick felt himself wondering where the girl might be going in a neighborhood so uninviting. When

she stopped to pull a half-naked negro child out of a mudhole and set him upon his feet, he thought she might be some young lady from the upper part of the town, bound on some errand of mercy, or going, perhaps, to visit an old servant or look for a new one. Once she threw a backward glance at Warwick, thus enabling him to catch a second glimpse of a singularly pretty face. Perhaps the young woman found his presence in the neighborhood as unaccountable as he had deemed hers; for, finding his glance fixed upon her, she quickened her pace with an air of startled timidity.

"A woman with such a figure," thought Warwick, "ought to be able to face the world with the confidence of Phryne confronting her judges."

By this time Warwick was conscious that something more than mere grace or beauty had attracted him with increasing force toward this young woman. A suggestion, at first faint and elusive, of something familiar, had grown stronger when he heard her voice, and became more and more pronounced with each rod of their advance; and when she stopped finally before a gate, and, opening it, went into a yard shut off from the street by a row of dwarf cedars, Warwick had already discounted in some measure the surprise he would have felt at seeing her enter there had he not walked down Front Street behind her. There was still sufficient unexpectedness about the act, however, to give him a decided thrill of pleasure.

"It must be Rena," he murmured. "Who could have dreamed that she would blossom out like that? It must surely be Rena!"

He walked slowly past the gate and peered through a narrow gap in the cedar hedge. The girl was moving along a sanded walk, toward a gray, unpainted house, with a steep roof, broken by dormer windows. The trace of timidity he had observed in her had given place to the more assured bearing of one who is upon his own ground. The garden walks were bordered by long rows of jonquils, pinks, and carnations, inclosing clumps of fragrant shrubs, lilies, and roses already in bloom. Toward the middle of the garden stood two fine magnolia-trees, with heavy, dark green, glistening leaves, while nearer the house two mighty elms shaded a wide piazza, at one end of which a honeysuckle vine, and at the other a Virginia creeper, running over a wooden lattice, furnished additional shade and seclusion. On dark or wintry days, the aspect of this garden must have been extremely sombre and depressing, and it might well have seemed a fit place to hide some guilty or disgraceful secret. But on the bright morning when Warwick stood looking through the cedars, it seemed, with its green frame and canopy and its bright carpet of flowers, an ideal retreat from the fierce sunshine and the sultry heat of the approaching summer.

The girl stooped to pluck a rose, and as she bent over it, her profile was clearly outlined. She held the flower to her face with a long-drawn inhalation, then went up the steps, crossed the piazza, opened the door without knocking, and entered the house with the air of one thoroughly at home.

"Yes," said the young man to himself, "it's Rena, sure enough."

The house stood on a corner, around which the cedar hedge turned, continuing along the side of the garden until it reached the line of the front of the house. The piazza to a rear wing, at right angles to the front of the house, was open to inspection from the side street, which, to judge from its deserted look, seemed to be but little used. Turning into this street and walking leisurely past the back yard, which was only slightly screened from the street by a china-tree, Warwick perceived the young woman standing on the piazza, facing an elderly woman, who sat in a large rocking-chair, plying a pair of knitting-needles on a half-finished stocking. Warwick's walk led him within three feet of the side gate, which he felt an almost irresistible impulse to enter. Every detail of the house and garden was familiar; a thousand cords of memory and affection drew him thither; but a stronger counter-motive prevailed. With a great effort he restrained himself, and after a momentary pause, walked slowly on past the house, with a backward glance, which he turned away when he saw that it was observed.

Warwick's attention had been so fully absorbed by the house behind the cedars and the women there, that he had scarcely noticed, on the other side of the neglected by-street, two men working by a large open window, in a low, rude building with a clapboarded roof, directly opposite the back

piazza occupied by the two women. Both the men were busily engaged in shaping barrel-staves, each wielding a sharp-edged drawing-knife on a piece of seasoned oak clasped tightly in a wooden vise.

"I jes' wonder who dat man is, an' w'at he 's doin' on dis street," observed the younger of the two, with a suspicious air. He had noticed the gentleman's involuntary pause and his interest in the opposite house, and had stopped work for a moment to watch the stranger as he went on down the street.

"Nev' min' 'bout dat man," said the elder one. "You 'ten' ter yo' wuk an' finish dat bairl-stave. You spen's enti'ely too much er yo' time stretchin' yo' neck atter other people. An' you need n' 'sturb yo'se'f 'bout dem folks 'cross de street, fer dey ain't yo' kin', an' you're wastin' yo' time both'in' yo' min' wid 'em, er wid folks w'at comes on de street on account of 'em. Look sha'p now, boy, er you'll git dat stave trim' too much."

The younger man resumed his work, but still found time to throw a slanting glance out of the window. The gentleman, he perceived, stood for a moment on the rotting bridge across the old canal, and then walked slowly ahead until he turned to the right into Back Street, a few rods farther on.

# II
# AN EVENING VISIT

Toward evening of the same day, Warwick took his way down Front Street in the gathering dusk. By the time night had spread its mantle over the earth, he had reached the gate by which he had seen the girl of his morning walk enter the cedar-bordered garden. He stopped at the gate and glanced toward the house, which seemed dark and silent and deserted.

"It's more than likely," he thought, "that they are in the kitchen. I reckon I'd better try the back door."

But as he drew cautiously near the corner, he saw a man's figure outlined in the yellow light streaming from the open door of a small house between Front Street and the cooper shop. Wishing, for reasons of his own, to avoid observation, Warwick did not turn the corner, but walked on down Front Street until he reached a point from which he could see, at a long angle, a ray of light proceeding from the kitchen window of the house behind the cedars.

"They are there," he muttered with a sigh of relief, for he had feared they might be away. "I suspect I'll have to go to the front door, after all. No one can see me through the trees."

He retraced his steps to the front gate, which he essayed to open. There was apparently some defect in the latch, for it refused to work. Warwick remembered the trick, and with a slight sense of amusement, pushed his foot under the gate and gave it a hitch to the left, after which it opened readily enough. He walked softly up the sanded path, tiptoed up the steps and across the piazza, and rapped at the front door, not too loudly, lest this too might attract the attention of the man across the street. There was no response to his rap. He put his ear to the door and heard voices within, and the muffled sound of footsteps. After a moment he rapped again, a little louder than before.

There was an instant cessation of the sounds within. He rapped a third time, to satisfy any lingering doubt in the minds of those who he felt sure were listening in some trepidation. A moment later a ray of light streamed through the keyhole.

"Who's there?" a woman's voice inquired somewhat sharply.

"A gentleman," answered Warwick, not holding it yet time to reveal himself. "Does Mis' Molly Walden live here?"

"Yes," was the guarded answer. "I'm Mis' Walden. What's yo'r business?"

"I have a message to you from your son John."

A key clicked in the lock. The door opened, and the elder of the two women Warwick had seen upon the piazza stood in the doorway, peering curiously and with signs of great excitement into the face of the stranger.

"You 've got a message from my son, you say?" she asked with tremulous agitation. "Is he sick, or in trouble?"

"No. He's well and doing well, and sends his love to you, and hopes you've not forgotten him."

"Fergot him? No, God knows I ain't fergot him! But come in, sir, an' tell me somethin' mo' about him."

Warwick went in, and as the woman closed the door after him, he threw a glance round the room. On the wall, over the mantelpiece, hung a steel engraving of General Jackson at the battle of New Orleans, and, on the opposite wall, a framed fashion-plate from "Godey's Lady's Book." In the middle of the room an octagonal centre-table with a single leg, terminating in three sprawling feet, held a collection of curiously shaped sea-shells. There was a great haircloth sofa, somewhat the worse for wear, and a well-filled bookcase. The screen standing before the fireplace was covered with Confederate bank-notes of various denominations and designs, in which the heads of Jefferson Davis and other Confederate leaders were conspicuous.

"Imperious Caesar, dead, and turned to clay,
Might stop a hole to keep the wind away,"

murmured the young man, as his eye fell upon this specimen of decorative art.

The woman showed her visitor to a seat. She then sat down facing him and looked at him closely. "When did you last see my son?" she asked.

"I've never met your son," he replied.

Her face fell. "Then the message comes through you from somebody else?"

"No, directly from your son."

She scanned his face with a puzzled look. This bearded young gentleman, who spoke so politely and was dressed so well, surely—no, it could not be! and yet—

Warwick was smiling at her through a mist of tears. An electric spark of sympathy flashed between them. They rose as if moved by one impulse, and were clasped in each other's arms.

"John, my John! It IS John!"

"Mother—my dear old mother!"

"I didn't think," she sobbed, "that I'd ever see you again."

He smoothed her hair and kissed her. "And are you glad to see me, mother?"

"Am I glad to see you? It's like the dead comin' to life. I thought I'd lost you forever, John, my son, my darlin' boy!" she answered, hugging him strenuously.

"I couldn't live without seeing you, mother," he said. He meant it, too, or thought he did, although he had not seen her for ten years.

"You've grown so tall, John, and are such a fine gentleman! And you ARE a gentleman now, John, ain't you—sure enough? Nobody knows the old story?"

"Well, mother, I've taken a man's chance in life, and have tried to make the most of it; and I haven't felt under any obligation to spoil it by raking up old stories that are best forgotten. There are the dear old books: have they been read since I went away?"

"No, honey, there's be'n nobody to read 'em, excep' Rena, an' she don't take to books quite like you did. But I've kep' 'em dusted clean, an' kep' the moths an' the bugs out; for I hoped you'd come back some day, an' knowed you'd like to find 'em all in their places, jus' like you left 'em."

"That's mighty nice of you, mother. You could have done no more if you had loved them for themselves. But where is Rena? I saw her on the street to-day, but she didn't know me from Adam; nor did I guess it was she until she opened the gate and came into the yard."

"I've be'n so glad to see you that I'd fergot about her," answered the mother. "Rena, oh, Rena!"

The girl was not far away; she had been standing in the next room, listening intently to every word of the conversation, and only kept from coming in by a certain constraint that made a brother whom she had not met for so many years seem almost as much a stranger as if he had not been connected with her by any tie.

"Yes, mamma," she answered, coming forward.

"Rena, child, here's yo'r brother John, who's come back to see us. Tell 'im howdy."

As she came forward, Warwick rose, put his arm around her waist, drew her toward him, and kissed her affectionately, to her evident embarrassment. She was a tall girl, but he towered above her in quite a protecting fashion; and she thought with a thrill how fine it would be to have such a brother as this in the town all the time. How proud she would be, if she could but walk up the street with such a brother by her side! She could then hold up her head before all the world, oblivious to the glance of pity or contempt. She felt a very pronounced respect for this tall gentleman who held her blushing face between his hands and looked steadily into her eyes.

"You're the little sister I used to read stories to, and whom I promised to come and see some day. Do you remember how you cried when I went away?"

"It seems but yesterday," she answered. "I've still got the dime you gave me."

He kissed her again, and then drew her down beside him on the sofa, where he sat enthroned between the two loving and excited women. No king could have received more sincere or delighted homage. He was a man, come into a household of women,—a man of whom they were proud, and to whom they looked up with fond reverence. For he was not only a son,—a brother—but he represented to them the world from which circumstances had shut them out, and to which distance lent even more than its usual enchantment; and they felt nearer to this far-off world because of the glory which Warwick reflected from it.

"You're a very pretty girl," said Warwick, regarding his sister thoughtfully. "I followed you down Front Street this morning, and scarcely took my eyes off you all the way; and yet I didn't know you, and scarcely saw your face. You improve on acquaintance; to-night, I find you handsomer still."

"Now, John," said his mother, expostulating mildly, "you'll spile her, if you don't min'."

The girl was beaming with gratified vanity. What woman would not find such praise sweet from almost any source, and how much more so from this great man, who, from his exalted station in the world, must surely know the things whereof he spoke! She believed every word of it; she knew it very well indeed, but wished to hear it repeated and itemized and emphasized.

"No, he won't, mamma," she asserted, "for he's flattering me. He talks as if I was some rich young lady, who lives on the Hill,"—the Hill was the aristocratic portion of the town,—"instead of a poor."

"Instead of a poor young girl, who has the hill to climb," replied her brother, smoothing her hair with his hand. Her hair was long and smooth and glossy, with a wave like the ripple of a summer breeze upon the surface of still water. It was the girl's great pride, and had been sedulously cared for. "What lovely hair! It has just the wave that yours lacks, mother."

"Yes," was the regretful reply, "I've never be'n able to git that wave out. But her hair's be'n took good care of, an' there ain't nary gal in town that's got any finer."

"Don't worry about the wave, mother. It's just the fashionable ripple, and becomes her immensely. I think my little Albert favors his Aunt Rena somewhat."

"Your little Albert!" they cried. "You've got a child?"

"Oh, yes," he replied calmly, "a very fine baby boy."

They began to purr in proud contentment at this information, and made minute inquiries about the age and weight and eyes and nose and other important details of this precious infant. They inquired more coldly about the child's mother, of whom they spoke with greater warmth when they learned that she was dead. They hung breathless on Warwick's words as he related briefly the story of his life since he had left, years before, the house behind the cedars—how with a stout heart and an abounding hope he had gone out into a seemingly hostile world, and made fortune stand and deliver. His story had for the women the charm of an escape from captivity, with all the thrill of a pirate's tale. With the whole world before him, he had remained in the South, the land of his fathers, where, he conceived, he had an inalienable birthright. By some good chance he had escaped military service in the Confederate army, and, in default of older and more experienced men, had undertaken, during the rebellion, the management of a large estate, which had been left in the hands of women and slaves. He had filled the place so acceptably, and employed his leisure to such advantage, that at the close of the war he found himself—he was modest enough to think, too, in default of a better man—the husband of the orphan daughter of the gentleman who had owned the plantation, and who had lost his life upon the battlefield. Warwick's wife was of good family, and in a more settled condition of society it would not have been easy for a young man of no visible antecedents to win her hand. A year or two later, he had taken the oath of allegiance, and had been admitted to the South Carolina bar. Rich in his wife's right, he had been able to practice his profession upon a high plane, without the worry of sordid cares, and with marked success for one of his age.

"I suppose," he concluded, "that I have got along at the bar, as elsewhere, owing to the lack of better men. Many of the good lawyers were killed in the war, and most of the remainder were disqualified; while I had the advantage of being alive, and of never having been in arms against the government. People had to have lawyers, and they gave me their business in preference to the carpet-baggers. Fortune, you know, favors the available man."

His mother drank in with parted lips and glistening eyes the story of his adventures and the record of his successes. As Rena listened, the narrow walls that hemmed her in seemed to draw closer and closer, as though they must crush her. Her brother watched her keenly. He had been talking not only to inform the women, but with a deeper purpose, conceived since his morning walk, and deepened as he had followed, during his narrative, the changing expression of Rena's face and noted her intense interest in his story, her pride in his successes, and the occasional wistful look that indexed her self-pity so completely.

"An' I s'pose you're happy, John?" asked his mother.

"Well, mother, happiness is a relative term, and depends, I imagine, upon how nearly we think we get what we think we want. I have had my chance and haven't thrown it away, and I suppose I ought to be happy. But then, I have lost my wife, whom I loved very dearly, and who loved me just as much, and I'm troubled about my child."

"Why?" they demanded. "Is there anything the matter with him?"

"No, not exactly. He's well enough, as babies go, and has a good enough nurse, as nurses go. But the nurse is ignorant, and not always careful. A child needs some woman of its own blood to love it and look after it intelligently."

Mis' Molly's eyes were filled with tearful yearning. She would have given all the world to warm her son's child upon her bosom; but she knew this could not be.

"Did your wife leave any kin?" she asked with an effort.

"No near kin; she was an only child."

"You'll be gettin' married again," suggested his mother.

"No," he replied; "I think not."

Warwick was still reading his sister's face, and saw the spark of hope that gleamed in her expressive eye.

"If I had some relation of my own that I could take into the house with me," he said reflectively, "the child might be healthier and happier, and I should be much more at ease about him."

The mother looked from son to daughter with a dawning apprehension and a sudden pallor. When she saw the yearning in Rena's eyes, she threw herself at her son's feet.

"Oh, John," she cried despairingly, "don't take her away from me! Don't take her, John, darlin', for it'd break my heart to lose her!"

Rena's arms were round her mother's neck, and Rena's voice was sounding in her ears. "There, there, mamma! Never mind! I won't leave you, mamma—dear old mamma! Your Rena'll stay with you always, and never, never leave you."

John smoothed his mother's hair with a comforting touch, patted her withered cheek soothingly, lifted her tenderly to her place by his side, and put his arm about her.

"You love your children, mother?"

"They're all I've got," she sobbed, "an' they cos' me all I had. When the las' one's gone, I'll want to go too, for I'll be all alone in the world. Don't take Rena, John; for if you do, I'll never see her again, an' I can't bear to think of it. How would you like to lose yo'r one child?"

"Well, well, mother, we'll say no more about it. And now tell me all about yourself, and about the neighbors, and how you got through the war, and who's dead and who's married—and everything."

The change of subject restored in some degree Mis' Molly's equanimity, and with returning calmness came a sense of other responsibilities.

"Good gracious, Rena!" she exclaimed. "John 's be'n in the house an hour, and ain't had nothin' to eat yet! Go in the kitchen an' spread a clean tablecloth, an' git out that 'tater pone, an' a pitcher o' that las' kag o' persimmon beer, an' let John take a bite an' a sip."

Warwick smiled at the mention of these homely dainties. "I thought of your sweet-potato pone at the hotel to-day, when I was at dinner, and wondered if you'd have some in the house. There was never any like yours; and I've forgotten the taste of persimmon beer entirely."

Rena left the room to carry out her hospitable commission. Warwick, taking advantage of her absence, returned after a while to the former subject.

"Of course, mother," he said calmly, "I wouldn't think of taking Rena away against your wishes. A mother's claim upon her child is a high and holy one. Of course she will have no chance here, where our story is known. The war has wrought great changes, has put the bottom rail on top, and all that—but it hasn't wiped THAT out. Nothing but death can remove that stain, if it does not follow us even beyond the grave. Here she must forever be—nobody! With me she might have got out into the world; with her beauty she might have made a good marriage; and, if I mistake not, she has sense as well as beauty."

"Yes," sighed the mother, "she's got good sense. She ain't as quick as you was, an' don't read as many books, but she's keerful an' painstakin', an' always tries to do what's right. She's be'n thinkin' about goin' away somewhere an' tryin' to git a school to teach, er somethin', sence the Yankees have started 'em everywhere for po' white folks an' niggers too. But I don't like fer her to go too fur."

"With such beauty and brains," continued Warwick, "she could leave this town and make a place for herself. The place is already made. She has only to step into my carriage—after perhaps a little preparation—and ride up the hill which I have had to climb so painfully. It would be a great pleasure to me to see her at the top. But of course it is impossible—a mere idle dream. YOUR claim comes first; her duty chains her here."

"It would be so lonely without her," murmured the mother weakly, "an' I love her so—my las' one!"

"No doubt—no doubt," returned Warwick, with a sympathetic sigh; "of course you love her. It's not to be thought of for a moment. It's a pity that she couldn't have a chance here—but how could she! I had thought she might marry a gentleman, but I dare say she'll do as well as the rest of her friends—as well as Mary B., for instance, who married—Homer Pettifoot, did you say? Or maybe Billy Oxendine might do for her. As long as she has never known any better, she'll probably be as well satisfied as though she married a rich man, and lived in a fine house, and kept a carriage and servants, and moved with the best in the land."

The tortured mother could endure no more. The one thing she desired above all others was her daughter's happiness. Her own life had not been governed by the highest standards, but about her love for her beautiful daughter there was no taint of selfishness. The life her son had described had been to her always the ideal but unattainable life. Circumstances, some beyond her control, and others for which she was herself in a measure responsible, had put it forever and inconceivably beyond her reach. It had been conquered by her son. It beckoned to her daughter. The comparison of this free and noble life with the sordid existence of those around her broke down the last barrier of opposition.

"O Lord!" she moaned, "what shall I do with out her? It'll be lonely, John—so lonely!"

"You'll have your home, mother," said Warwick tenderly, accepting the implied surrender. "You'll have your friends and relatives, and the knowledge that your children are happy. I'll let you hear from us often, and no doubt you can see Rena now and then. But you must let her go, mother, —it would be a sin against her to refuse."

"She may go," replied the mother brokenly. "I'll not stand in her way—I've got sins enough to answer for already."

Warwick watched her pityingly. He had stirred her feelings to unwonted depths, and his sympathy went out to her. If she had sinned, she had been more sinned against than sinning, and

it was not his part to judge her. He had yielded to a sentimental weakness in deciding upon this trip to Patesville. A matter of business had brought him within a day's journey of the town, and an over-mastering impulse had compelled him to seek the mother who had given him birth and the old town where he had spent the earlier years of his life. No one would have acknowledged sooner than he the folly of this visit. Men who have elected to govern their lives by principles of abstract right and reason, which happen, perhaps, to be at variance with what society considers equally right and reasonable, should, for fear of complications, be careful about descending from the lofty heights of logic to the common level of impulse and affection. Many years before, Warwick, when a lad of eighteen, had shaken the dust of the town from his feet, and with it, he fondly thought, the blight of his inheritance, and had achieved elsewhere a worthy career. But during all these years of absence he had cherished a tender feeling for his mother, and now again found himself in her house, amid the familiar surroundings of his childhood. His visit had brought joy to his mother's heart, and was now to bring its shrouded companion, sorrow. His mother had lived her life, for good or ill. A wider door was open to his sister—her mother must not bar the entrance.

"She may go," the mother repeated sadly, drying her tears. "I'll give her up for her good."

"The table 's ready, mamma," said Rena, coming to the door.

The lunch was spread in the kitchen, a large unplastered room at the rear, with a wide fireplace at one end. Only yesterday, it seemed to Warwick, he had sprawled upon the hearth, turning sweet potatoes before the fire, or roasting groundpeas in the ashes; or, more often, reading, by the light of a blazing pine-knot or lump of resin, some volume from the bookcase in the hall. From Bulwer's novel, he had read the story of Warwick the Kingmaker, and upon leaving home had chosen it for his own. He was a new man, but he had the blood of an old race, and he would select for his own one of its worthy names. Overhead loomed the same smoky beams, decorated with what might have been, from all appearances, the same bunches of dried herbs, the same strings of onions and red peppers. Over in the same corner stood the same spinning-wheel, and through the open door of an adjoining room he saw the old loom, where in childhood he had more than once thrown the shuttle. The kitchen was different from the stately dining-room of the old colonial mansion where he now lived; but it was homelike, and it was familiar. The sight of it moved his heart, and he felt for the moment a sort of a blind anger against the fate which made it necessary that he should visit the home of his childhood, if at all, like a thief in the night. But he realized, after a moment, that the thought was pure sentiment, and that one who had gained so much ought not to complain if he must give up a little. He who would climb the heights of life must leave even the pleasantest valleys behind.

"Rena," asked her mother, "how'd you like to go an' pay yo'r brother John a visit? I guess I might spare you for a little while."

The girl's eyes lighted up. She would not have gone if her mother had wished her to stay, but she would always have regarded this as the lost opportunity of her life.

"Are you sure you don't care, mamma?" she asked, hoping and yet doubting.

"Oh, I'll manage to git along somehow or other. You can go an' stay till you git homesick, an' then John'll let you come back home."

But Mis' Molly believed that she would never come back, except, like her brother, under cover of the night. She must lose her daughter as well as her son, and this should be the penance for her sin. That her children must expiate as well the sins of their fathers, who had sinned so lightly, after the manner of men, neither she nor they could foresee, since they could not read the future.

The next boat by which Warwick could take his sister away left early in the morning of the next day but one. He went back to his hotel with the understanding that the morrow should be devoted to getting Rena ready for her departure, and that Warwick would visit the household again the following evening; for, as has been intimated, there were several reasons why there should be no open relations between the fine gentleman at the hotel and the women in the house behind the cedars, who, while superior in blood and breeding to the people of the neighborhood in which they lived, were yet under

the shadow of some cloud which clearly shut them out from the better society of the town. Almost any resident could have given one or more of these reasons, of which any one would have been sufficient to most of them; and to some of them Warwick's mere presence in the town would have seemed a bold and daring thing.

# III
# THE OLD JUDGE

On the morning following the visit to his mother, Warwick visited the old judge's office. The judge was not in, but the door stood open, and Warwick entered to await his return. There had been fewer changes in the office, where he had spent many, many hours, than in the town itself. The dust was a little thicker, the papers in the pigeon-holes of the walnut desk were a little yellower, the cobwebs in the corners a little more aggressive. The flies droned as drowsily and the murmur of the brook below was just as audible. Warwick stood at the rear window and looked out over a familiar view. Directly across the creek, on the low ground beyond, might be seen the dilapidated stone foundation of the house where once had lived Flora Macdonald, the Jacobite refugee, the most romantic character of North Carolina history. Old Judge Straight had had a tree cut away from the creek-side opposite his window, so that this historic ruin might be visible from his office; for the judge could trace the ties of blood that connected him collaterally with this famous personage. His pamphlet on Flora Macdonald, printed for private circulation, was highly prized by those of his friends who were fortunate enough to obtain a copy. To the left of the window a placid mill-pond spread its wide expanse, and to the right the creek disappeared under a canopy of overhanging trees.

A footstep sounded in the doorway, and Warwick, turning, faced the old judge. Time had left greater marks upon the lawyer than upon his office. His hair was whiter, his stoop more pronounced; when he spoke to Warwick, his voice had some of the shrillness of old age; and in his hand, upon which the veins stood out prominently, a decided tremor was perceptible.

"Good-morning, Judge Straight," said the young man, removing his hat with the graceful Southern deference of the young for the old.

"Good-morning, sir," replied the judge with equal courtesy.

"You don't remember me, I imagine," suggested Warwick.

"Your face seems familiar," returned the judge cautiously, "but I cannot for the moment recall your name. I shall be glad to have you refresh my memory."

"I was John Walden, sir, when you knew me."

The judge's face still gave no answering light of recognition.

"Your old office-boy," continued the younger man.

"Ah, indeed, so you were!" rejoined the judge warmly, extending his hand with great cordiality, and inspecting Warwick more closely through his spectacles. "Let me see—you went away a few years before the war, wasn't it?"

"Yes, sir, to South Carolina."

"Yes, yes, I remember now! I had been thinking it was to the North. So many things have happened since then, that it taxes an old man's memory to keep track of them all. Well, well! and how have you been getting along?"

Warwick told his story in outline, much as he had given it to his mother and sister, and the judge seemed very much interested.

"And you married into a good family?" he asked.

"Yes, sir."

"And have children?"

"One."

"And you are visiting your mother?"

"Not exactly. I have seen her, but I am stopping at a hotel."

"H'm! Are you staying long?"

"I leave to-morrow."

"It's well enough. I wouldn't stay too long. The people of a small town are inquisitive about strangers, and some of them have long memories. I remember we went over the law, which was in your favor; but custom is stronger than law—in these matters custom IS law. It was a great pity that your father did not make a will. Well, my boy, I wish you continued good luck; I imagined you would make your way."

Warwick went away, and the old judge sat for a moment absorbed in reflection. "Right and wrong," he mused, "must be eternal verities, but our standards for measuring them vary with our latitude and our epoch. We make our customs lightly; once made, like our sins, they grip us in bands of steel; we become the creatures of our creations. By one standard my old office-boy should never have been born. Yet he is a son of Adam, and came into existence in the way ordained by God from the beginning of the world. In equity he would seem to be entitled to his chance in life; it might have been wiser, though, for him to seek it farther afield than South Carolina. It was too near home, even though the laws were with him."

# IV
# DOWN THE RIVER

Neither mother nor daughter slept a great deal during the night of Warwick's first visit. Mis' Molly anointed her sacrifice with tears and cried herself to sleep. Rena's emotions were more conflicting; she was sorry to leave her mother, but glad to go with her brother. The mere journey she was about to make was a great event for the two women to contemplate, to say nothing of the golden vision that lay beyond, for neither of them had ever been out of the town or its vicinity.

The next day was devoted to preparations for the journey. Rena's slender wardrobe was made ready and packed in a large valise. Towards sunset, Mis' Molly took off her apron, put on her slat-bonnet,—she was ever the pink of neatness,—picked her way across the street, which was muddy from a rain during the day, traversed the foot-bridge that spanned the ditch in front of the cooper shop, and spoke first to the elder of the two men working there.

"Good-evenin', Peter."

"Good-evenin', ma'm," responded the man briefly, and not relaxing at all the energy with which he was trimming a barrel-stave.

Mis' Molly then accosted the younger workman, a dark-brown young man, small in stature, but with a well-shaped head, an expressive forehead, and features indicative of kindness, intelligence, humor, and imagination. "Frank," she asked, "can I git you to do somethin' fer me soon in the mo'nin'?"

"Yas 'm, I reckon so," replied the young man, resting his hatchet on the chopping-block. "W'at is it, Mis' Molly?"

"My daughter 's goin' away on the boat, an' I 'lowed you would n' min' totin' her kyarpet-bag down to the w'arf, onless you'd ruther haul it down on yo'r kyart. It ain't very heavy. Of co'se I'll pay you fer yo'r trouble."

"Thank y', ma'm," he replied. He knew that she would not pay him, for the simple reason that he would not accept pay for such a service. "Is she gwine fur?" he asked, with a sorrowful look, which he could not entirely disguise.

"As fur as Wilmin'ton an' beyon'. She'll be visitin' her brother John, who lives in—another State, an' wants her to come an' see him."

"Yas 'm, I'll come. I won' need de kyart—I'll tote de bag. 'Bout w'at time shill I come over?"

"Well, 'long 'bout seven o'clock or half pas'. She's goin' on the Old North State, an' it leaves at eight."

Frank stood looking after Mis' Molly as she picked her way across the street, until he was recalled to his duty by a sharp word from his father.

"'Ten' ter yo' wuk, boy, 'ten' ter yo' wuk. You 're wastin' yo' time—wastin' yo' time!"

Yes, he was wasting his time. The beautiful young girl across the street could never be anything to him. But he had saved her life once, and had dreamed that he might render her again some signal service that might win her friendship, and convince her of his humble devotion. For Frank was not proud. A smile, which Peter would have regarded as condescending to a free man, who, since the war, was as good as anybody else; a kind word, which Peter would have considered offensively patronizing; a piece of Mis' Molly's famous potato pone from Rena's hands,—a bone to a dog, Peter called it once; —were ample rewards for the thousand and one small services Frank had rendered the two women who lived in the house behind the cedars.

Frank went over in the morning a little ahead of the appointed time, and waited on the back piazza until his services were required.

"You ain't gwine ter be gone long, is you, Miss Rena?" he inquired, when Rena came out dressed for the journey in her best frock, with broad white collar and cuffs.

Rena did not know. She had been asking herself the same question. All sorts of vague dreams had floated through her mind during the last few hours, as to what the future might bring forth. But she detected the anxious note in Frank's voice, and had no wish to give this faithful friend of the family unnecessary pain.

"Oh, no, Frank, I reckon not. I'm supposed to be just going on a short visit. My brother has lost his wife, and wishes me to come and stay with him awhile, and look after his little boy."

"I'm feared you'll lack it better dere, Miss Rena," replied Frank sorrowfully, dropping his mask of unconcern, "an' den you won't come back, an' none er yo' frien's won't never see you no mo'."

"You don't think, Frank," asked Rena severely, "that I would leave my mother and my home and all my friends, and NEVER come back again?"

"Why, no 'ndeed," interposed Mis' Molly wistfully, as she hovered around her daughter, giving her hair or her gown a touch here and there; "she'll be so homesick in a month that she'll be willin' to walk home."

"You would n' never hafter do dat, Miss Rena," returned Frank, with a disconsolate smile. "Ef you ever wanter come home, an' can't git back no other way, jes' let ME know, an' I'll take my mule an' my kyart an' fetch you back, ef it's from de een' er de worl'."

"Thank you, Frank, I believe you would," said the girl kindly. "You're a true friend, Frank, and I'll not forget you while I'm gone."

The idea of her beautiful daughter riding home from the end of the world with Frank, in a cart, behind a one-eyed mule, struck Mis' Molly as the height of the ridiculous—she was in a state of excitement where tears or laughter would have come with equal ease—and she turned away to hide her merriment. Her daughter was going to live in a fine house, and marry a rich man, and ride in her carriage. Of course a negro would drive the carriage, but that was different from riding with one in a cart.

When it was time to go, Mis' Molly and Rena set out on foot for the river, which was only a short distance away. Frank followed with the valise. There was no gathering of friends to see Rena off, as might have been the case under different circumstances. Her departure had some of the characteristics of a secret flight; it was as important that her destination should not be known, as it had been that her brother should conceal his presence in the town.

Mis' Molly and Rena remained on the bank until the steamer announced, with a raucous whistle, its readiness to depart. Warwick was seen for a moment on the upper deck, from which he greeted them with a smile and a slight nod. He had bidden his mother an affectionate farewell the evening before. Rena gave her hand to Frank.

"Good-by, Frank," she said, with a kind smile; "I hope you and mamma will be good friends while I'm gone."

The whistle blew a second warning blast, and the deck hands prepared to draw in the gang-plank. Rena flew into her mother's arms, and then, breaking away, hurried on board and retired to her state-room, from which she did not emerge during the journey. The window-blinds were closed, darkening the room, and the stewardess who came to ask if she should bring her some dinner could not see her face distinctly, but perceived enough to make her surmise that the young lady had been weeping.

"Po' chile," murmured the sympathetic colored woman, "I reckon some er her folks is dead, er her sweetheart 's gone back on her, er e'se she's had some kin' er bad luck er 'nuther. W'ite folks has deir troubles jes' ez well ez black folks, an' sometimes feels 'em mo', 'cause dey ain't ez use' ter 'em."

Mis' Molly went back in sadness to the lonely house behind the cedars, henceforth to be peopled for her with only the memory of those she had loved. She had paid with her heart's blood another

installment on the Shylock's bond exacted by society for her own happiness of the past and her children's prospects for the future.

The journey down the sluggish river to the seaboard in the flat-bottomed, stern-wheel steamer lasted all day and most of the night. During the first half-day, the boat grounded now and then upon a sand-bank, and the half-naked negro deck-hands toiled with ropes and poles to release it. Several times before Rena fell asleep that night, the steamer would tie up at a landing, and by the light of huge pine torches she watched the boat hands send the yellow turpentine barrels down the steep bank in a long string, or pass cord-wood on board from hand to hand. The excited negroes, their white teeth and eyeballs glistening in the surrounding darkness to which their faces formed no relief; the white officers in brown linen, shouting, swearing, and gesticulating; the yellow, flickering torchlight over all,—made up a scene of which the weird interest would have appealed to a more blase traveler than this girl upon her first journey.

During the day, Warwick had taken his meals in the dining-room, with the captain and the other cabin passengers. It was learned that he was a South Carolina lawyer, and not a carpet-bagger. Such credentials were unimpeachable, and the passengers found him a very agreeable traveling companion. Apparently sound on the subject of negroes, Yankees, and the righteousness of the lost cause, he yet discussed these themes in a lofty and impersonal manner that gave his words greater weight than if he had seemed warped by a personal grievance. His attitude, in fact, piqued the curiosity of one or two of the passengers.

"Did your people lose any niggers?" asked one of them.

"My father owned a hundred," he replied grandly.

Their respect for his views was doubled. It is easy to moralize about the misfortunes of others, and to find good in the evil that they suffer;—only a true philosopher could speak thus lightly of his own losses.

When the steamer tied up at the wharf at Wilmington, in the early morning, the young lawyer and a veiled lady passenger drove in the same carriage to a hotel. After they had breakfasted in a private room, Warwick explained to his sister the plan he had formed for her future. Henceforth she must be known as Miss Warwick, dropping the old name with the old life. He would place her for a year in a boarding-school at Charleston, after which she would take her place as the mistress of his house. Having imparted this information, he took his sister for a drive through the town. There for the first time Rena saw great ships, which, her brother told her, sailed across the mighty ocean to distant lands, whose flags he pointed out drooping lazily at the mast-heads. The business portion of the town had "an ancient and fishlike smell," and most of the trade seemed to be in cotton and naval stores and products of the sea. The wharves were piled high with cotton bales, and there were acres of barrels of resin and pitch and tar and spirits of turpentine. The market, a long, low, wooden structure, in the middle of the principal street, was filled with a mass of people of all shades, from blue-black to Saxon blonde, gabbling and gesticulating over piles of oysters and clams and freshly caught fish of varied hue. By ten o'clock the sun was beating down so fiercely that the glitter of the white, sandy streets dazzled and pained the eyes unaccustomed to it, and Rena was glad to be driven back to the hotel. The travelers left together on an early afternoon train.

Thus for the time being was severed the last tie that bound Rena to her narrow past, and for some time to come the places and the people who had known her once were to know her no more.

Some few weeks later, Mis' Molly called upon old Judge Straight with reference to the taxes on her property.

"Your son came in to see me the other day," he remarked. "He seems to have got along."

"Oh, yes, judge, he's done fine, John has; an' he's took his sister away with him."

"Ah!" exclaimed the judge. Then after a pause he added, "I hope she may do as well."

"Thank you, sir," she said, with a curtsy, as she rose to go. "We've always knowed that you were our friend and wished us well."

The judge looked after her as she walked away. Her bearing had a touch of timidity, a shade of affectation, and yet a certain pathetic dignity.

"It is a pity," he murmured, with a sigh, "that men cannot select their mothers. My young friend John has builded, whether wisely or not, very well; but he has come back into the old life and carried away a part of it, and I fear that this addition will weaken the structure."

# V
# THE TOURNAMENT

The annual tournament of the Clarence Social Club was about to begin. The county fairground, where all was in readiness, sparkled with the youth and beauty of the town, standing here and there under the trees in animated groups, or moving toward the seats from which the pageant might be witnessed. A quarter of a mile of the race track, to right and left of the judges' stand, had been laid off for the lists. Opposite the grand stand, which occupied a considerable part of this distance, a dozen uprights had been erected at measured intervals. Projecting several feet over the track from each of these uprights was an iron crossbar, from which an iron hook depended. Between the uprights stout posts were planted, of such a height that their tops could be easily reached by a swinging sword-cut from a mounted rider passing upon the track. The influence of Walter Scott was strong upon the old South. The South before the war was essentially feudal, and Scott's novels of chivalry appealed forcefully to the feudal heart. During the month preceding the Clarence tournament, the local bookseller had closed out his entire stock of "Ivanhoe," consisting of five copies, and had taken orders for seven copies more. The tournament scene in this popular novel furnished the model after which these bloodless imitations of the ancient passages-at-arms were conducted, with such variations as were required to adapt them to a different age and civilization.

The best people gradually filled the grand stand, while the poorer white and colored folks found seats outside, upon what would now be known as the "bleachers," or stood alongside the lists. The knights, masquerading in fanciful costumes, in which bright-colored garments, gilt paper, and cardboard took the place of knightly harness, were mounted on spirited horses. Most of them were gathered at one end of the lists, while others practiced their steeds upon the unoccupied portion of the race track.

The judges entered the grand stand, and one of them, after looking at his watch, gave a signal. Immediately a herald, wearing a bright yellow sash, blew a loud blast upon a bugle, and, big with the importance of his office, galloped wildly down the lists. An attendant on horseback busied himself hanging upon each of the pendent hooks an iron ring, of some two inches in diameter, while another, on foot, placed on top of each of the shorter posts a wooden ball some four inches through.

"It's my first tournament," observed a lady near the front of the grand stand, leaning over and addressing John Warwick, who was seated in the second row, in company with a very handsome girl. "It is somewhat different from Ashby-de-la-Zouch."

"It is the renaissance of chivalry, Mrs. Newberry," replied the young lawyer, "and, like any other renaissance, it must adapt itself to new times and circumstances. For instance, when we build a Greek portico, having no Pentelic marble near at hand, we use a pine-tree, one of nature's columns, which Grecian art at its best could only copy and idealize. Our knights are not weighted down with heavy armor, but much more appropriately attired, for a day like this, in costumes that recall the picturesqueness, without the discomfort, of the old knightly harness. For an iron-headed lance we use a wooden substitute, with which we transfix rings instead of hearts; while our trusty blades hew their way through wooden blocks instead of through flesh and blood. It is a South Carolina renaissance which has points of advantage over the tournaments of the olden time."

"I'm afraid, Mr. Warwick," said the lady, "that you're the least bit heretical about our chivalry —or else you're a little too deep for me."

"The last would be impossible, Mrs. Newberry; and I'm sure our chivalry has proved its valor on many a hard-fought field. The spirit of a thing, after all, is what counts; and what is lacking here? We have the lists, the knights, the prancing steeds, the trial of strength and skill. If our knights do not run the physical risks of Ashby-de-la-Zouch, they have all the mental stimulus. Wounded vanity

will take the place of wounded limbs, and there will be broken hopes in lieu of broken heads. How many hearts in yonder group of gallant horsemen beat high with hope! How many possible Queens of Love and Beauty are in this group of fair faces that surround us!"

The lady was about to reply, when the bugle sounded again, and the herald dashed swiftly back upon his prancing steed to the waiting group of riders. The horsemen formed three abreast, and rode down the lists in orderly array. As they passed the grand stand, each was conscious of the battery of bright eyes turned upon him, and each gave by his bearing some idea of his ability to stand fire from such weapons. One horse pranced proudly, another caracoled with grace. One rider fidgeted nervously, another trembled and looked the other way. Each horseman carried in his hand a long wooden lance and wore at his side a cavalry sabre, of which there were plenty to be had since the war, at small expense. Several left the ranks and drew up momentarily beside the grand stand, where they took from fair hands a glove or a flower, which was pinned upon the rider's breast or fastened upon his hat—a ribbon or a veil, which was tied about the lance like a pennon, but far enough from the point not to interfere with the usefulness of the weapon.

As the troop passed the lower end of the grand stand, a horse, excited by the crowd, became somewhat unmanageable, and in the effort to curb him, the rider dropped his lance. The prancing animal reared, brought one of his hoofs down upon the fallen lance with considerable force, and sent a broken piece of it flying over the railing opposite the grand stand, into the middle of a group of spectators standing there. The flying fragment was dodged by those who saw it coming, but brought up with a resounding thwack against the head of a colored man in the second row, who stood watching the grand stand with an eager and curious gaze. He rubbed his head ruefully, and made a good-natured response to the chaffing of his neighbors, who, seeing no great harm done, made witty and original remarks about the advantage of being black upon occasions where one's skull was exposed to danger. Finding that the blow had drawn blood, the young man took out a red bandana handkerchief and tied it around his head, meantime letting his eye roam over the faces in the grand stand, as though in search of some one that he expected or hoped to find there.

The knights, having reached the end of the lists, now turned and rode back in open order, with such skillful horsemanship as to evoke a storm of applause from the spectators. The ladies in the grand stand waved their handkerchiefs vigorously, and the men clapped their hands. The beautiful girl seated by Warwick's side accidentally let a little square of white lace-trimmed linen slip from her hand. It fluttered lightly over the railing, and, buoyed up by the air, settled slowly toward the lists. A young rider in the approaching rear rank saw the handkerchief fall, and darting swiftly forward, caught it on the point of his lance ere it touched the ground. He drew up his horse and made a movement as though to extend the handkerchief toward the lady, who was blushing profusely at the attention she had attracted by her carelessness. The rider hesitated a moment, glanced interrogatively at Warwick, and receiving a smile in return, tied the handkerchief around the middle of his lance and quickly rejoined his comrades at the head of the lists.

The young man with the bandage round his head, on the benches across the lists, had forced his way to the front row and was leaning against the railing. His restless eye was attracted by the falling handkerchief, and his face, hitherto anxious, suddenly lit up with animation.

"Yas, suh, yas, suh, it's her!" he muttered softly. "It's Miss Rena, sho's you bawn. She looked lack a' angel befo', but now, up dere 'mongs' all dem rich, fine folks, she looks lack a whole flock er angels. Dey ain' one er dem ladies w'at could hol' a candle ter her. I wonder w'at dat man's gwine ter do wid her handkercher? I s'pose he's her gent'eman now. I wonder ef she'd know me er speak ter me ef she seed me? I reckon she would, spite er her gittin' up so in de worl'; fer she wuz alluz good ter ev'ybody, an' dat let even ME in," he concluded with a sigh.

"Who is the lady, Tryon?" asked one of the young men, addressing the knight who had taken the handkerchief.

"A Miss Warwick," replied the knight pleasantly, "Miss Rowena Warwick, the lawyer's sister."

"I didn't know he had a sister," rejoined the first speaker. "I envy you your lady. There are six Rebeccas and eight Rowenas of my own acquaintance in the grand stand, but she throws them all into the shade. She hasn't been here long, surely; I haven't seen her before."

"She has been away at school; she came only last night," returned the knight of the crimson sash, briefly. He was already beginning to feel a proprietary interest in the lady whose token he wore, and did not care to discuss her with a casual acquaintance.

The herald sounded the charge. A rider darted out from the group and galloped over the course. As he passed under each ring, he tried to catch it on the point of his lance,—a feat which made the management of the horse with the left hand necessary, and required a true eye and a steady arm. The rider captured three of the twelve rings, knocked three others off the hooks, and left six undisturbed. Turning at the end of the lists, he took the lance with the reins in the left hand and drew his sword with the right. He then rode back over the course, cutting at the wooden balls upon the posts. Of these he clove one in twain, to use the parlance of chivalry, and knocked two others off their supports. His performance was greeted with a liberal measure of applause, for which he bowed in smiling acknowledgment as he took his place among the riders.

Again the herald's call sounded, and the tourney went forward. Rider after rider, with varying skill, essayed his fortune with lance and sword. Some took a liberal proportion of the rings; others merely knocked them over the boundaries, where they were collected by agile little negro boys and handed back to the attendants. A balking horse caused the spectators much amusement and his rider no little chagrin.

The lady who had dropped the handkerchief kept her eye upon the knight who had bound it round his lance. "Who is he, John?" she asked the gentleman beside her.

"That, my dear Rowena, is my good friend and client, George Tryon, of North Carolina. If he had been a stranger, I should have said that he took a liberty; but as things stand, we ought to regard it as a compliment. The incident is quite in accord with the customs of chivalry. If George were but masked and you were veiled, we should have a romantic situation,—you the mysterious damsel in distress, he the unknown champion. The parallel, my dear, might not be so hard to draw, even as things are. But look, it is his turn now; I'll wager that he makes a good run."

"I'll take you up on that, Mr. Warwick," said Mrs. Newberry from behind, who seemed to have a very keen ear for whatever Warwick said.

Rena's eyes were fastened on her knight, so that she might lose no single one of his movements. As he rode down the lists, more than one woman found him pleasant to look upon. He was a tall, fair young man, with gray eyes, and a frank, open face. He wore a slight mustache, and when he smiled, showed a set of white and even teeth. He was mounted on a very handsome and spirited bay mare, was clad in a picturesque costume, of which velvet knee-breeches and a crimson scarf were the most conspicuous features, and displayed a marked skill in horsemanship. At the blast of the bugle his horse started forward, and, after the first few rods, settled into an even gallop. Tryon's lance, held truly and at the right angle, captured the first ring, then the second and third. His coolness and steadiness seemed not at all disturbed by the applause which followed, and one by one the remaining rings slipped over the point of his lance, until at the end he had taken every one of the twelve. Holding the lance with its booty of captured rings in his left hand, together with the bridle rein, he drew his sabre with the right and rode back over the course. His horse moved like clockwork, his eye was true and his hand steady. Three of the wooden balls fell from the posts, split fairly in the middle, while from the fourth he sliced off a goodly piece and left the remainder standing in its place.

This performance, by far the best up to this point, and barely escaping perfection, elicited a storm of applause. The rider was not so well known to the townspeople as some of the other participants, and his name passed from mouth to mouth in answer to numerous inquiries. The girl whose token he had worn also became an object of renewed interest, because of the result to her in case the knight should prove victor in the contest, of which there could now scarcely be a doubt;

for but three riders remained, and it was very improbable that any one of them would excel the last. Wagers for the remainder of the tourney stood anywhere from five, and even from ten to one, in favor of the knight of the crimson sash, and when the last course had been run, his backers were jubilant. No one of those following him had displayed anything like equal skill.

The herald now blew his bugle and declared the tournament closed. The judges put their heads together for a moment. The bugle sounded again, and the herald announced in a loud voice that Sir George Tryon, having taken the greatest number of rings and split the largest number of balls, was proclaimed victor in the tournament and entitled to the flowery chaplet of victory.

Tryon, having bowed repeatedly in response to the liberal applause, advanced to the judges' stand and received the trophy from the hands of the chief judge, who exhorted him to wear the garland worthily, and to yield it only to a better man.

"It will be your privilege, Sir George," announced the judge, "as the chief reward of your valor, to select from the assembled beauty of Clarence the lady whom you wish to honor, to whom we will all do homage as the Queen of Love and Beauty."

Tryon took the wreath and bowed his thanks. Then placing the trophy on the point of his lance, he spoke earnestly for a moment to the herald, and rode past the grand stand, from which there was another outburst of applause. Returning upon his tracks, the knight of the crimson sash paused before the group where Warwick and his sister sat, and lowered the wreath thrice before the lady whose token he had won.

"Oyez! Oyez!" cried the herald; "Sir George Tryon, the victor in the tournament, has chosen Miss Rowena Warwick as the Queen of Love and Beauty, and she will be crowned at the feast to-night and receive the devoirs of all true knights."

The fair-ground was soon covered with scattered groups of the spectators of the tournament. In one group a vanquished knight explained in elaborate detail why it was that he had failed to win the wreath. More than one young woman wondered why some one of the home young men could not have taken the honors, or, if the stranger must win them, why he could not have selected some belle of the town as Queen of Love and Beauty instead of this upstart girl who had blown into the town over night, as one might say.

Warwick and his sister, standing under a spreading elm, held a little court of their own. A dozen gentlemen and several ladies had sought an introduction before Tryon came up.

"I suppose John would have a right to call me out, Miss Warwick," said Tryon, when he had been formally introduced and had shaken hands with Warwick's sister, "for taking liberties with the property and name of a lady to whom I had not had an introduction; but I know John so well that you seemed like an old acquaintance; and when I saw you, and recalled your name, which your brother had mentioned more than once, I felt instinctively that you ought to be the queen. I entered my name only yesterday, merely to swell the number and make the occasion more interesting. These fellows have been practicing for a month, and I had no hope of winning. I should have been satisfied, indeed, if I hadn't made myself ridiculous; but when you dropped your handkerchief, I felt a sudden inspiration; and as soon as I had tied it upon my lance, victory perched upon my saddle-bow, guided my lance and sword, and rings and balls went down before me like chaff before the wind. Oh, it was a great inspiration, Miss Warwick!"

Rena, for it was our Patesville acquaintance fresh from boarding-school, colored deeply at this frank and fervid flattery, and could only murmur an inarticulate reply. Her year of instruction, while distinctly improving her mind and manners, had scarcely prepared her for so sudden an elevation into a grade of society to which she had hitherto been a stranger. She was not without a certain courage, however, and her brother, who remained at her side, helped her over the most difficult situations.

"We'll forgive you, George," replied Warwick, "if you'll come home to luncheon with us."

"I'm mighty sorry—awfully sorry," returned Tryon, with evident regret, "but I have another engagement, which I can scarcely break, even by the command of royalty. At what time shall I call for

Miss Warwick this evening? I believe that privilege is mine, along with the other honors and rewards of victory,—unless she is bound to some one else."

"She is entirely free," replied Warwick. "Come as early as you like, and I'll talk to you until she's ready."

Tryon bowed himself away, and after a number of gentlemen and a few ladies had paid their respects to the Queen of Love and Beauty, and received an introduction to her, Warwick signaled to the servant who had his carriage in charge, and was soon driving homeward with his sister. No one of the party noticed a young negro, with a handkerchief bound around his head, who followed them until the carriage turned into the gate and swept up the wide drive that led to Warwick's doorstep.

"Well, Rena," said Warwick, when they found themselves alone, "you have arrived. Your debut into society is a little more spectacular than I should have wished, but we must rise to the occasion and make the most of it. You are winning the first fruits of your opportunity. You are the most envied woman in Clarence at this particular moment, and, unless I am mistaken, will be the most admired at the ball to-night."

# VI
# THE QUEEN OF LOVE AND BEAUTY

Shortly after luncheon, Rena had a visitor in the person of Mrs. Newberry, a vivacious young widow of the town, who proffered her services to instruct Rena in the etiquette of the annual ball.

"Now, my dear," said Mrs. Newberry, "the first thing to do is to get your coronation robe ready. It simply means a gown with a long train. You have a lovely white waist. Get right into my buggy, and we'll go down town to get the cloth, take it over to Mrs. Marshall's, and have her run you up a skirt this afternoon."

Rena placed herself unreservedly in the hands of Mrs. Newberry, who introduced her to the best dressmaker of the town, a woman of much experience in such affairs, who improvised during the afternoon a gown suited to the occasion. Mrs. Marshall had made more than a dozen ball dresses during the preceding month; being a wise woman and understanding her business thoroughly, she had made each one of them so that with a few additional touches it might serve for the Queen of Love and Beauty. This was her first direct order for the specific garment.

Tryon escorted Rena to the ball, which was held in the principal public hall of the town, and attended by all the best people. The champion still wore the costume of the morning, in place of evening dress, save that long stockings and dancing-pumps had taken the place of riding-boots. Rena went through the ordeal very creditably. Her shyness was palpable, but it was saved from awkwardness by her native grace and good sense. She made up in modesty what she lacked in aplomb. Her months in school had not eradicated a certain self-consciousness born of her secret. The brain-cells never lose the impressions of youth, and Rena's Patesville life was not far enough removed to have lost its distinctness of outline. Of the two, the present was more of a dream, the past was the more vivid reality. At school she had learned something from books and not a little from observation. She had been able to compare herself with other girls, and to see wherein she excelled or fell short of them. With a sincere desire for improvement, and a wish to please her brother and do him credit, she had sought to make the most of her opportunities. Building upon a foundation of innate taste and intelligence, she had acquired much of the self-possession which comes from a knowledge of correct standards of deportment. She had moreover learned without difficulty, for it suited her disposition, to keep silence when she could not speak to advantage. A certain necessary reticence about the past added strength to a natural reserve. Thus equipped, she held her own very well in the somewhat trying ordeal of the ball, at which the fiction of queenship and the attendant ceremonies, which were pretty and graceful, made her the most conspicuous figure. Few of those who watched her move with easy grace through the measures of the dance could have guessed how nearly her heart was in her mouth during much of the time.

"You're doing splendidly, my dear," said Mrs. Newberry, who had constituted herself Rena's chaperone.

"I trust your Gracious Majesty is pleased with the homage of your devoted subjects," said Tryon, who spent much of his time by her side and kept up the character of knight in his speech and manner.

"Very much," replied the Queen of Love and Beauty, with a somewhat tired smile. It was pleasant, but she would be glad, she thought, when it was all over.

"Keep up your courage," whispered her brother. "You are not only queen, but the belle of the ball. I am proud of you. A dozen women here would give a year off the latter end of life to be in your shoes to-night."

Rena felt immensely relieved when the hour arrived at which she could take her departure, which was to be the signal for the breaking-up of the ball. She was driven home in Tryon's carriage, her brother accompanying them. The night was warm, and the drive homeward under the starlight, in

the open carriage, had a soothing effect upon Rena's excited nerves. The calm restfulness of the night, the cool blue depths of the unclouded sky, the solemn croaking of the frogs in a distant swamp, were much more in harmony with her nature than the crowded brilliancy of the ball-room. She closed her eyes, and, leaning back in the carriage, thought of her mother, who she wished might have seen her daughter this night. A momentary pang of homesickness pierced her tender heart, and she furtively wiped away the tears that came into her eyes.

"Good-night, fair Queen!" exclaimed Tryon, breaking into her reverie as the carriage rolled up to the doorstep, "and let your loyal subject kiss your hand in token of his fealty. May your Majesty never abdicate her throne, and may she ever count me her humble servant and devoted knight."

"And now, sister," said Warwick, when Tryon had been driven away, "now that the masquerade is over, let us to sleep, and to-morrow take up the serious business of life. Your day has been a glorious success!"

He put his arm around her and gave her a kiss and a brotherly hug.

"It is a dream," she murmured sleepily, "only a dream. I am Cinderella before the clock has struck. Good-night, dear John."

"Good-night, Rowena."

# VII
# 'MID NEW SURROUNDINGS

Warwick's residence was situated in the outskirts of the town. It was a fine old plantation house, built in colonial times, with a stately colonnade, wide verandas, and long windows with Venetian blinds. It was painted white, and stood back several rods from the street, in a charming setting of palmettoes, magnolias, and flowering shrubs. Rena had always thought her mother's house large, but now it seemed cramped and narrow, in comparison with this roomy mansion. The furniture was old-fashioned and massive. The great brass andirons on the wide hearth stood like sentinels proclaiming and guarding the dignity of the family. The spreading antlers on the wall testified to a mighty hunter in some past generation. The portraits of Warwick's wife's ancestors—high featured, proud men and women, dressed in the fashions of a bygone age—looked down from tarnished gilt frames. It was all very novel to her, and very impressive. When she ate off china, with silver knives and forks that had come down as heirlooms, escaping somehow the ravages and exigencies of the war time,—Warwick told her afterwards how he had buried them out of reach of friend or foe,—she thought that her brother must be wealthy, and she felt very proud of him and of her opportunity. The servants, of whom there were several in the house, treated her with a deference to which her eight months in school had only partly accustomed her. At school she had been one of many to be served, and had herself been held to obedience. Here, for the first time in her life, she was mistress, and tasted the sweets of power.

The household consisted of her brother and herself, a cook, a coachman, a nurse, and her brother's little son Albert. The child, with a fine instinct, had put out his puny arms to Rena at first sight, and she had clasped the little man to her bosom with a motherly caress. She had always loved weak creatures. Kittens and puppies had ever found a welcome and a meal at Rena's hands, only to be chased away by Mis' Molly, who had had a wider experience. No shiftless poor white, no half-witted or hungry negro, had ever gone unfed from Mis' Molly's kitchen door if Rena were there to hear his plaint. Little Albert was pale and sickly when she came, but soon bloomed again in the sunshine of her care, and was happy only in her presence. Warwick found pleasure in their growing love for each other, and was glad to perceive that the child formed a living link to connect her with his home.

"Dat chile sutt'nly do lub Miss Rena, an' dat's a fac', sho 's you bawn," remarked 'Lissa the cook to Mimy the nurse one day. "You'll get yo' nose put out er j'int, ef you don't min'."

"I ain't frettin', honey," laughed the nurse good-naturedly. She was not at all jealous. She had the same wages as before, and her labors were materially lightened by the aunt's attention to the child. This gave Mimy much more time to flirt with Tom the coachman.

It was a source of much gratification to Warwick that his sister seemed to adapt herself so easily to the new conditions. Her graceful movements, the quiet elegance with which she wore even the simplest gown, the easy authoritativeness with which she directed the servants, were to him proofs of superior quality, and he felt correspondingly proud of her. His feeling for her was something more than brotherly love,—he was quite conscious that there were degrees in brotherly love, and that if she had been homely or stupid, he would never have disturbed her in the stagnant life of the house behind the cedars. There had come to him from some source, down the stream of time, a rill of the Greek sense of proportion, of fitness, of beauty, which is indeed but proportion embodied, the perfect adaptation of means to ends. He had perceived, more clearly than she could have appreciated it at that time, the undeveloped elements of discord between Rena and her former life. He had imagined her lending grace and charm to his own household. Still another motive, a purely psychological one, had more or less consciously influenced him. He had no fear that the family secret would ever be discovered,—he had taken his precautions too thoroughly, he thought, for that; and yet he could not

but feel, at times, that if peradventure—it was a conceivable hypothesis—it should become known, his fine social position would collapse like a house of cards. Because of this knowledge, which the world around him did not possess, he had felt now and then a certain sense of loneliness; and there was a measure of relief in having about him one who knew his past, and yet whose knowledge, because of their common interest, would not interfere with his present or jeopardize his future. For he had always been, in a figurative sense, a naturalized foreigner in the world of wide opportunity, and Rena was one of his old compatriots, whom he was glad to welcome into the populous loneliness of his adopted country.

# VIII
# THE COURTSHIP

In a few weeks the echoes of the tournament died away, and Rena's life settled down into a pleasant routine, which she found much more comfortable than her recent spectacular prominence. Her queenship, while not entirely forgiven by the ladies of the town, had gained for her a temporary social prominence. Among her own sex, Mrs. Newberry proved a warm and enthusiastic friend. Rumor whispered that the lively young widow would not be unwilling to console Warwick in the loneliness of the old colonial mansion, to which his sister was a most excellent medium of approach. Whether this was true or not it is unnecessary to inquire, for it is no part of this story, except as perhaps indicating why Mrs. Newberry played the part of the female friend, without whom no woman is ever launched successfully in a small and conservative society. Her brother's standing gave her the right of social entry; the tournament opened wide the door, and Mrs. Newberry performed the ceremony of introduction. Rena had many visitors during the month following the tournament, and might have made her choice from among a dozen suitors; but among them all, her knight of the handkerchief found most favor.

George Tryon had come to Clarence a few months before upon business connected with the settlement of his grandfather's estate. A rather complicated litigation had grown up around the affair, various phases of which had kept Tryon almost constantly in the town. He had placed matters in Warwick's hands, and had formed a decided friendship for his attorney, for whom he felt a frank admiration. Tryon was only twenty-three, and his friend's additional five years, supplemented by a certain professional gravity, commanded a great deal of respect from the younger man. When Tryon had known Warwick for a week, he had been ready to swear by him. Indeed, Warwick was a man for whom most people formed a liking at first sight. To this power of attraction he owed most of his success—first with Judge Straight, of Patesville, then with the lawyer whose office he had entered at Clarence, with the woman who became his wife, and with the clients for whom he transacted business. Tryon would have maintained against all comers that Warwick was the finest fellow in the world. When he met Warwick's sister, the foundation for admiration had already been laid. If Rena had proved to be a maiden lady of uncertain age and doubtful personal attractiveness, Tryon would probably have found in her a most excellent lady, worthy of all respect and esteem, and would have treated her with profound deference and sedulous courtesy. When she proved to be a young and handsome woman, of the type that he admired most, he was capable of any degree of infatuation. His mother had for a long time wanted him to marry the orphan daughter of an old friend, a vivacious blonde, who worshiped him. He had felt friendly towards her, but had shrunk from matrimony. He did not want her badly enough to give up his freedom. The war had interfered with his education, and though fairly well instructed, he had never attended college. In his own opinion, he ought to see something of the world, and have his youthful fling. Later on, when he got ready to settle down, if Blanche were still in the humor, they might marry, and sink to the humdrum level of other old married people. The fact that Blanche Leary was visiting his mother during his unexpectedly long absence had not operated at all to hasten his return to North Carolina. He had been having a very good time at Clarence, and, at the distance of several hundred miles, was safe for the time being from any immediate danger of marriage.

With Rena's advent, however, he had seen life through different glasses. His heart had thrilled at first sight of this tall girl, with the ivory complexion, the rippling brown hair, and the inscrutable eyes. When he became better acquainted with her, he liked to think that her thoughts centred mainly in himself; and in this he was not far wrong. He discovered that she had a short upper lip, and what seemed to him an eminently kissable mouth. After he had dined twice at Warwick's, subsequently

to the tournament,—his lucky choice of Rena had put him at once upon a household footing with the family,—his views of marriage changed entirely. It now seemed to him the duty, as well as the high and holy privilege of a young man, to marry and manfully to pay his debt to society. When in Rena's presence, he could not imagine how he had ever contemplated the possibility of marriage with Blanche Leary,—she was utterly, entirely, and hopelessly unsuited to him. For a fair man of vivacious temperament, this stately dark girl was the ideal mate. Even his mother would admit this, if she could only see Rena. To win this beautiful girl for his wife would be a worthy task. He had crowned her Queen of Love and Beauty; since then she had ascended the throne of his heart. He would make her queen of his home and mistress of his life.

To Rena this brief month's courtship came as a new education. Not only had this fair young man crowned her queen, and honored her above all the ladies in town; but since then he had waited assiduously upon her, had spoken softly to her, had looked at her with shining eyes, and had sought to be alone with her. The time soon came when to touch his hand in greeting sent a thrill through her frame,—a time when she listened for his footstep and was happy in his presence. He had been bold enough at the tournament; he had since become somewhat bashful and constrained. He must be in love, she thought, and wondered how soon he would speak. If it were so sweet to walk with him in the garden, or along the shaded streets, to sit with him, to feel the touch of his hand, what happiness would it not be to hear him say that he loved her—to bear his name, to live with him always. To be thus loved and honored by this handsome young man,—she could hardly believe it possible. He would never speak—he would discover her secret and withdraw. She turned pale at the thought,—ah, God! something would happen,—it was too good to be true. The Prince would never try on the glass slipper.

# Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.