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Was It Right to Forgive? A Domestic Romance



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CHAPTER I

Peter Van Hoosen was a result of Dutch Calvinism, and Dutch industry and thrift; also, of a belief in the Day of Judgment. The first motives were inherited tendencies, carefully educated; the last one, a conscious principle, going down to the depths of his nature and sharply dividing whatever was just and right from whatever was false and wrong. People whose religion was merely religiosity thought he took himself too seriously; but if they had a house to build, they wanted this man – who worked in the great Task-master's eye – to lay its foundation and raise its walls. So that, as a builder in stone, Peter Van Hoosen had a wide local celebrity.

He was a strong, loose-limbed man, with a swarthy face and straight black hair, a man of sturdy beliefs and strong prepossessions, yet not devoid of those good manners which spring naturally from a good heart. Among his fellows he was grave and silent, and his entire personality had something of the coldness and strength of the stony material with which he

worked. In his home there was a difference; there his black eyes glowed with affection, and even when a 2 young man, his wife and his little children could lead him. As he grew older, and years and experience sweetened his nature, he became large-hearted and large-minded enough to feel that beyond certain limits there was a possibly lawful freedom.

These hours of expansion were usually those spent with his daughter Adriana. He had two other daughters, and three sons, each of whom had done virtuously in their own way; but in Peter's estimation, Adriana excelled them all. She was the child after his own heart. In her presence, he felt it good to be hopeful and kind. She led him to talk of everything that was interesting humanity; she asked his opinion on all subjects. She constantly told him how wise he was! how clear-sighted! how far-seeing! She believed he ought to have been at the head of great affairs, and sometimes Peter could not help a little vague regret over the blindness of destiny. In short, Adriana always brought to the front the very best Peter Van Hoosen; she made him enjoy himself; she made him think nobly of himself; and is there any more satisfactory frame of mind? After an hour in Adriana's company, Peter was always inclined to say:

“Well, well, Yanna! In the Great Day of sifting and sorting, I know that I shall be justified. My well-limed mortar, my walls plumb and strong, my day's work of faithful service full rendered, will be accepted of my Master. And you too think so, Yanna.”

“I am sure of it, father. It is not the kind of work we do; it is

the way in which the work is done. I will risk my word, that you took as much pains with John Finane's little dairy as with Mr. MacArthur's fine mansion."

"I did, Yanna. There is not a poor stone in either," 3 and when he said the words, Adriana looked straight at him, with eyes full of admiration.

It must be explained, however, that if Adriana Van Hoosen was a remarkable girl for her position, she had had remarkable advantages. Her birth was fortunate in its time. She did not come to her parents until their struggle with poverty was long over; and before she was ten years old, four of her brothers and sisters had married and made homes for themselves. George and Theodore had gone to Florida, to plant pineapples, and were making the venture pay them. Her sister Augusta was the wife of John Van Nostrand, a man growing rich in New York, by the way of groceries and politics. Her sister Gertrude had married a cousin who was a florist; and in watching the rose houses and bunching violets, they also were doing well and putting money away. Her youngest brother, Antony, was yet unmarried, but he had been long in California, and there was no reason to suppose he would ever return to the East.

It happened thus, that Peter and his wife found themselves alone with their youngest child, and the great tide of parental love turned actively towards her. They did not cease to love the absent, but the best love delights in service, and there was now none to serve but the charming child who stood in the place of

the dear ones scattered so far apart. They began early to notice her beauty, to repeat her bright sayings, to assure themselves that they had been trusted with an extraordinary charge. The child also had the courage which accompanies a strongly affectionate nature; she did not fear to ask for all her desires; and as love gives gladly to those who trust it, she always won what she asked for. To his elder daughters, Peter had not been generous in the matter of dress, but Adriana had not only plenty of gowns, she had also all the little accessories which are so dear to a girl's heart. But whatever style or whatever color was prominent, Peter enjoyed every change. Sometimes he was tempted to tell her how pretty she was, and how proud he was of her, but he always "thought better of it"; and yet, Adriana knew right well that her father considered her the most beautiful girl in America, and that he was delighted if he met an acquaintance, rich or poor, to whom he could say, "My daughter Adriana, sir."

However, though Peter was proud enough of his girl's beauty, he was far more elated over her mental aptitudes. She excelled all others easily; she carried off every prize in her classes; she came home to him one day with the diploma of her accomplishments in her hand. He was too proud to find the words suitable for his satisfaction; for, in a certain sense, it was his own diploma also. He had studied with Adriana constantly. He had heard her lessons, and talked them over with her, until they were as familiar to him as to her. As he walked about his room that night, so happily sleepless, he examined himself in history, geography,

science and mathematics; and he gave Peter Van Hoosen the credit he honestly deserved:

“Even I have not done badly,” he said. “I am a great deal more of a man than I was four years ago. Now, Yanna and I are going to have good times. She wants to learn music. Very well, she shall learn it. And we will read and study books that are something above the general run of school books.” He sat down to the thought, let his hand fall upon his knee, and peered into the future with the proud glance of one who knows his strength, and foretells his own victory.

In the morning he had a disappointment. Adriana wanted to go to college. To learn music was not all she desired. There were other things just as important – repose and dignity of manner, a knowledge of dress and address and of the ways and laws of society; and these things could be learned only by personal contact with the initiated. So she said, “Father, I wish to go to college.” And after a short struggle with his own hopes and longings, Peter answered, “Well, then, Yanna, you must go to college.”

She had been there but little more than two years when she received the following letter from her father: “Dear Yanna. I took your mother into New York yesterday. We went to see a famous doctor, and he told her that she must die; not perhaps for weeks, or even months, but sentence of death has been passed.” Peter did not add a word to this information. He would not tell Adriana to come home; he wished her to have the honor of giving herself a

command ennobled by so much self-denial. And as he expected, Adriana answered his letter in person. Thenceforward, father and daughter walked with the mother to the outermost shoal of life – yes, till her wide-open eyes, looking into their eyes at the moment of parting, suddenly became soulless; and they knew she was no longer with them.

After a few days Peter said, “Yanna, you must go back to college.” But she shook her head resolutely, and answered, “I am all you have. I will not leave you, father. We can read and study together.”

“That would make me very happy, Yanna. And you can have a good music teacher.”

“I do not want a music teacher, father. I used to think I was an unrecognized Patti; now I know that I have only an ordinary parlor voice. I measured myself at college by a great many girls; and I found out I had been thinking too highly of Adriana Van Hoosen. My friend Rose Filmer – and twenty others beside her – can sing pieces I have not even the notes for. Rose plays much better than I do. She is cleverer with her pencil. She always does everything just properly, and I scarcely ever miss making a blunder. If I were only like Rose Filmer!”

“Come, come! that is a girl out of a book.”

“No; Rose is a girl out of New York. I am a girl out of Woodsome village. There have always been a city and a country mouse, father. And they are both good in their own way. But I could not be Rose Filmer unless I had been rocked in Rose’s

cradle.”

The name “Filmer” was a familiar one to Peter; for the Filmers were Van Hoosens on one side of their house; and he wondered if this clever Rose Filmer was not the descendant of the old Dominie Filmer who had preached in Woodsome when he was a boy. Certainly his father had built a stone wall and a dairy for a Dominie Filmer who was connected with the Van Hoosens on the mother’s side. He thought of this coincidence in names for a few moments, and then dismissed the subject. In the morning, however, it was revived in a double manner. Adriana had a long letter from Rose Filmer, and Peter one from Mr. Filmer, asking an estimate for building a stone house from enclosed plans. Thus the conversation of the preceding day set the door open for the Filmers to enter the Van Hoosen home.

Rose’s letter was full of their intention to build a 7 summer residence “so delightfully near to Adriana.” She professed to think it a special providence in her behalf, and to care only for the movement because it brought her back to “her dear Adriana.” “I who adore the ocean,” she continued, “who feel my soul throb to its immensity, am content to dwell on the placid river bank, if, by so doing, I may have the joy of my dear Adriana’s presence.”

It was a charming thing that Adriana believed fully in this feminine affection, and that even Rose deceived herself as completely. Girls adore one another until they find lovers to adore; and there is a certain sincerity in their affection. All the following year, as the great stone house progressed to its

completion, Rose wrote just such letters to her beloved Yanna as she might easily have written to the most exacting and devoted lover; and neither of the girls imagined that they were in a great measure the overflow of a life restrained on every other side. To the world, Rose made every effort to be the very flower and perfume of serenity and self-poise, and thus to set herself free to her friend was like drawing a good full breath after some restraint had been taken away.

There had been a possibility of a break in this union of souls, just when Peter accepted the contract to build the Filmer mansion. Adriana thought it best to speak of her father's work on the new house; and she did this with the simplicity of one who states a fact that may or may not have been understood. Rose was at first a little indignant. She went to her mother with Adriana's letter in her hand.

"She is the daughter of a builder, of a common stone-mason," she cried, "and she never told me until she was obliged to. Mamma, I am disillusioned. I can never trust any one again. In her place, I should have felt it a point of honor not to hide my low birth. Really, mamma, you must excuse me if I weep a little. I am so disappointed – so wronged – so humiliated in Yanna's treachery."

"Nonsense, Rose!" answered Mrs. Filmer. "The girl behaved in the most natural manner. Society would be very disagreeable if people were required to go up and down telling who and what their fathers and grandfathers were. Did you ever ask her the

question?”

“It was not my place to do so, mamma. I told her all about you, and Harry, and even papa. She was always talking about her father. She said he was such a noble old man – that he studied with her – and so on. Could I imagine a man laying stones all day, and reading Faraday and Parkman with his daughter at night? Could I, mamma?”

“I should not trouble myself about the girl’s father, if I liked the girl. You see, Rose, it is always foolish to make acquaintances upon unknown ground. The Hamilton and Lawson girls were in your classes, and you knew all about them. Friendship with their families would have been prudent, and I advised you to make it.”

“I could not, mamma. The Hamiltons declined to be at all familiar with me. As for the Lawsons, they are purse-proud and dangerous. Jemima Lawson has a tongue like a stiletto. She is slangy, too. She called her allowance her ‘working expenses’; and she had dreadful private names for the girls she disliked. Miss Lawson you simply could not be civil to; if you were, she immediately began to wonder ‘what you wanted from her?’”

“What dreadful creatures!”

“Now, Adriana Van Hoosen had a good name, she dressed well enough, and she really loved me. How could I imagine she was lowly born?”

“Does it matter, Rose?”

“Yes, for she lives quite near to our new house. In fact, her father is building it; and I have asked her so often to come and

stay with me in New York, that I cannot, without a quarrel, ignore her in the country.”

“In the country, one does not need to be particular. It is rather nice to have a friend in the village who can bring the news. The long summer days would be insupportable without the follies and misfortunes of our neighbors to discuss. Then, if she is pretty and presentable, she will be useful in lawn and tennis parties. I would not mind about Miss Van Hoosen’s father. Fathers are not much, anyway; and fortunately she has no mother to annoy us. That makes a great difference. A vulgar mother would be an insurmountable objection. Is Miss Van Hoosen pretty?”

“Yanna is lovely. And she has a fine manner. Our art professor once said to me, ‘Your friend Miss Van Hoosen is a gentlewoman with a great deal of background.’ I do not know what he meant, but I am sure he intended a great compliment.”

“Oh! he meant intellect, emotions, and such things. I am not so sure of Miss Van Hoosen now. There is Harry to be considered. He might fall in love with her. That would be inexpedient – in fact, ruinous.”

“Harry fall in love! How absurd! Have not the prettiest girls in our set swung incense before him for five years? Harry glories in his ability to resist temptation. He knows that Eve never could have ‘got round’ him.”

“She ruined Adam in about twenty-four hours. It would have taken Eve about one minute to ‘get round’ Harry. The boy is really very impressionable.”

“Mamma! What a huge joke! Harry impressionable!”

“He is, I assure you, Rose. I presume I know my own son.”

“Well, at any rate, he is not worse than the rest. Young men nowadays neither love nor hate. Their love is iced on prudence, and their hatreds have not a particle of courage. I wish I had been born one hundred years ago. I have the heart for a real man.”

“You flatter yourself, Rose. You are the very triumph of respectable commonplace. And as for one hundred years ago, the follies of that date were just as innumerable as our own.”

“You think I am respectably commonplace, mamma. Then let me tell you, I must be a consummate actress. I do not think you know Rose Filmer. I do not think I know her myself. I hope I have some individuality.”

“Individuality! There is nothing more vulgar. I hear Parry with the carriage; will you drive with me?”

“No; I shall answer Adriana’s letter, and get the subject off my mind. It is so much easier to know what you dislike to do than to be sure of what you like. Where are you going?”

“To McCreery’s. I want some lace.”

“Do buy the real article then. It is the chic thing now, to wear real lace, and it does look supreme, among the miles of imitation that are used.”

Then Rose went to the library to answer Adriana’s letter. It pleased her to think it an important decision, and she sat some time with the pen in her hand, and a judicial air on her beautiful countenance. For 11 she was undeniably a very attractive girl, as

she sat in the sunshine that morning, deliberating on Adriana's "deception"; there being to a practiced observer many alluring contradictions in her face and manner. Her hair was the color of ripe wheat, her eyes almond-shaped, blue and limpid; her cheeks and chin dimpled; her mouth rosy and full; her figure supple; her feet small, finely dressed, and quite in view; her whole appearance that of a lovely innocent girl, on the threshold of life. But this exquisite seeming contained possibilities of evil, as well as good. Her dress was full of studied effects, her manners of attitudes and languors; and her charming way of dropping her blue eyes, and then suddenly flashing them open, was a conscious, and not a natural, grace. Even her sweet credulousness had in it an equal capacity for seductive wilfulness and petulance. Nor was she unconscious of this double nature within her; for she had often said to Adriana, "I feel as if there were twenty different girls in me – and the majority of them bad."

Social life, however, so far, had had a salutary effect on her. She had become more equable, more dependent on the approval of others, and less liable to unconventional self-assertions. Nothing, indeed, could have been better for Rose Filmer than the tight social rein of a set which conscientiously tried to be both religious and fashionable. She was compelled to honor *les convenances*, and to obey them; compelled to suppress her spontaneity – which was seldom a pleasant one – and to consider the feelings of others, as well as the wishes of her own heart. At college she had been remarkable for her self-willed personality;

one season in society had taught her a decent self-restraint. 12 Consequently, she deliberated well the answer to her friend's letter.

“If I want to break with her, I have now an excellent excuse,” she thought. “I could tell her that, though I have a soul above noticing the accident of birth, my whole nature declares against deception. There are a dozen moralities in the position, and I could retire wounded and innocent, and leave her altogether in the wrong. But do I want to break with Yanna? Would it be to my advantage? I think not. The girls in our set do not like me. Julia Mills the other day called me ‘a little hypocrite’ to my face. She did it with a laugh, but all the other girls laughed too, and it was not pleasant. Yanna believes in me. Then next summer we shall be at Woodsome, and mamma is right about the long, tiresome summer days. Yanna was born in the village; she knows every one, gentle and simple, and what is the use of neighbors if you cannot gossip about them?”

“Besides,” she continued, “I have now three lovers, and I have not one girl friend with whom I can talk them over – all the girls in our set are so jealous of me – and Yanna would like to see my love letters, I have no doubt. I wonder if she has a lover yet! I suppose not, poor girl! Then there will be fun in watching Harry. Whether he be utterly heartless, or, as mamma thinks, ‘very impressionable,’ he cannot meet Yanna day after day without some consequences. I think, upon the whole, it will be best to keep friends with Yanna.” And having come to this

decision, she raised herself from the reflective attitude into which she had fallen, and going to a table wrote as follows:

“My Beloved Yanna: Did you really think that your lowly birth could change my love for you? No, no! 13 Whether my Yanna be princess or pauper, is no matter to me. I only long for our new house to be finished, that I may have you more constantly near me.” Then she hesitated. She was on the point of saying she had long known of Adriana’s low birth; but she felt sure Adriana would ask her the “how” and “when” of her information; and there was absolutely no good to accrue from the falsity. But though she wrote eight pages of gushing affection, she was not satisfied; she had not been able to choose her words with precision, and far less able to prevent an *aura* of patronage which Adriana was as quick to feel as a barometer to answer the atmospheric changes.

“I will not take any patronage from Rose Filmer,” she muttered; and then she flung Rose’s letter into the fire; “I want nothing from her. Oh! I must answer this letter at once; I could not eat my dinner if I were so much in debt to my self-respect.” So Adriana laid away her sewing, and wrote:

“Dear Rose: Thank you for your overflowing letter. It is very kind of you to overlook what you call the ‘accident’ of my birth. But I cannot let you entertain the idea that I think it an ‘accident.’ On the contrary, I regard my birth as the well-considered ordination of Almighty God. I was not an ‘accident’ to my good father and mother. I was placed in

their care, because the All-Wise considered the Van Hoosen home the best possible place for my highest development. I think it is time people stopped talking about the 'accident' of birth; and I am sure, as soon as you regard birth in its proper light, you will do so. Your love for me has led you likewise into a very stupid assertion about 'loving Yanna the same whether she was princess 14 or pauper.' My dear, there is no question of either. I am as far removed from pauperism as we both are from royalty. Our mutual liking has stood a number of little shocks, and I have no fear it will go to pieces on my father's trade. He is building you a handsome house in the most honorable manner. He was pleased to have the contract to do so, and Mr. Filmer was equally pleased to secure his work. That is the position, as I understand it. Suppose we say no more on the subject; it will be so much nicer to write about your balls, and fairs, and parties. From what you say, I think charity must be the gayest of all the virtues; certainly it cuts the most considerable figure of any during the New York season. I am sure you enjoyed the private theatricals; for we all like occasionally to play a part not our own. And so you are going to the seaside this summer? Will you bathe? That is one of the things vanity would forbid me to do, except in private. It is true, Venus rose beautiful from the sea; but no mere mortal woman can do so. Do you not think, that for a distinctly levelling process, sea bathing is supreme? Life is very even and quiet here; when Woodsome Hall is finished, we all hope it will make a difference. Is it to be 'Woodsome' or 'Filmer' Hall? Mr. Filmer had not decided when he was here last. Dear

Rose, do not let us have any more misunderstandings, and send me a real nice letter soon.

“Yours lovingly,

“Adriana Van Hoosen.”

This letter did not please Rose any better than her own effusion had pleased Adriana; and for a little while there was a coolness between the girls. They wrote to each other with accustomed regularity, but 15 their letters were set to a wrong key, Adriana's being specially independent in tone, as if her self-esteem was perpetually on the defensive. But life is not an exact science, something is always happening to change its circumstances, and feelings change with them. The following spring the new Filmer house was finished and ready for occupancy; and the village newspaper was busily blowing little fanfaronades of congratulation to Woodsome; and of welcome to the coming Filmers; and by that time Adriana and Rose were also eager to see each other again.

“I wonder if I ought to call on Rose,” said Adriana to her father, as she laid down the paper announcing the long heralded arrivals. “I believe it would only be good form to do so.”

“Under the circumstances, I would not call first, Yanna. Keep your place, until you are asked out of it.”

“I am quite willing to do so. My own home is a very good place, father.”

“Home is a blessed freedom, Yanna. At your own fireside, you can be a law unto yourself. You can speak the thing you like,

from morning to night.”

“The papers say the Filmers are Woodsome people. Do you remember them?”

“I never saw the present Mr. Filmer until I made my contract with him. I can just recollect his father, old Dominie Filmer, in his flowered dressing-gown, and his velvet cap. We did not sit in his church; but Adam Kors talks a great deal about him. He says he preached sermons hard to understand, and full of sharp words. I dare say he was a good man, for Adam tells of him being puzzled and troubled at living longer than the orthodox Scriptural three-score-years-and-ten. But he died at last – pretty well off.”

“Most ministers die poorly off.”

“Dominie Filmer was wise in his generation. He not only looked for mansions in the sky, he had also a reasonable respect for the land around Woodsome – and for shares in the railways, and things of that kind. But no one in his day could speak ill of him; and his children and grandchildren speak very well of him. And this friend of yours, Rose Filmer, will be his granddaughter.”

“Yes. I hope she will call soon. If she delays too long, it will be no kindness. If she does not call at all, I think I shall hate her.”

“No, Yanna. Anger and hate are not for you to bother with. They are such a dreadful waste of life. Why should you let a person whom you dislike, or despise, take possession of you, and of your mind, and occupy your thoughts, and run your precious time to their idea? That is a poor business, Yanna.”

Here the conversation ceased, but the next morning Adriana was on the watch for her friend. And about noon Rose came. She was driving herself in a pretty dog-cart, for she had determined as she dressed for her visit, to take no servant. She did not know what kind of a house Adriana lived in, or in what situation she might find her. For Rose's experience of life had not given her any precedent by which she could judge of the social environments of a stone-builder; and she said softly as she pinned on her hat: "Yes, I shall go alone. It will be kinder to Yanna. Servants will talk. They might even wonder if she is not one of our relations; these Woodsome people have made such a stir about our being 'native.'"

She drove well, and was charmed and excited by her rapid movement down the hills, and through the 17 wooded lanes. Entering the village, she asked for Mr. Van Hoosen's house, and it was readily pointed out. She was a little astonished. It was a roomy, colonial dwelling, surrounded by well-kept grounds. Horse-chestnuts arched the wide avenues, and the house stood in a grove of flowering fruit trees. A boy who was rolling turf took her horse's head, and she stepped to the spotless door stone, with a decided access of affection. Adriana came running down the stairs to meet her. They kissed each other, and buried in the kiss all their small differences and offences.

"What a charming old house, Yanna!" cried Rose.

"What a perfect costume you have on, Rose!" cried Adriana.

"I knew you would like it. Put on your hat, Yanna. I want

you all day, and all day to-morrow, and every other day you can spare.”

“I must tell father. I shall be delighted to go with you, Rose; but I cannot do so without his knowledge.”

“Certainly. I saw an old gentleman tacking up vines, as I drove through the garden.”

“That was father.”

“You can find him in two minutes and a half, I know.”

In very little more, Adriana came back with the old gentleman. He looked so kindly at Rose that she could not help being pleased, and she set herself to win the old Dutchman. She made him talk about his flowers, and she listened with that air of being charmed and instructed which even when it is merely a cultivated grace is an irresistible one. She praised Yanna. She said with a frank enthusiasm, “I love Yanna dearly,” and while entreating for her company she acknowledged “it was a great favor to ask.”

Peter said “it was.” He assured Rose that Yanna “was the sunshine of his life, but that to make them both happy, he would gladly give up his own pleasure.” She thanked him with many pretty speeches, and when Adriana came down ready for her visit, Peter helped the girls into their seats, and put the reins into Rose’s hands. Then he watched them out of sight, with a face beaming with satisfaction.

From this excited and exalted tone, it was impossible to fall at once. Rose gave herself up to it. She patted Yanna’s hands; and as they went through the woods kissed her many times.

Then the new house was to be gone through, and exclamations and adjectives were the only possible speech, so that everything naturally enough conduced to an emotional condition. At last Rose said, "I have not shown you my apartments yet, Yanna. They are a picture in pinks;" and she led her into a suite that was lovely with peach-bloom papers and hangings, with snow-white willow chairs cushioned with pink silk, and pink silk draperies trimmed with white lace. "I have chosen for you the room just across the hall," she added, "so we shall be very near to each other. Listen! that is the lunch-bell. Come and see mamma. In the afternoon we can talk over things."

Mrs. Filmer was very pleasant and good-natured. She chatted with the girls, and ate a salad, and then went away with her housekeeper: "Only a part of the house is in order yet," she explained to Adriana; "and neither workmen nor servants seem able to do without me. What will you girls talk about until seven o'clock?"

"Oh!" cried Rose, "we shall have a long, delightful afternoon." And probably to Rose it was delightful, for she told Yanna the tale of ball-rooms, in which Rose Filmer had been chief among a thousand beauties; she showed the photographs of many youths, who were her adorers; and she read specially eloquent sentences from her many love letters. Indeed, after a long session of this kind, Rose said heartily, "I declare, I have not had such a sweet time since you left me at college. But really we must rest an hour before dinner. I always do. Come, I will take you to your room."

Adriana was glad to rest, and the soft, dim light of the carefully-shaded room tempted her to complete physical relaxation; but her mind was actively curious and alert. She had been hearing of a life entirely new to her, “a pretty lute-string kind of a life, quite within the verge of the Ten Commandments,” she thought; “yet I do not believe it would please me long. Its feverish unrest, its small anxieties and petty aims have told already on Rose. Her mind has sunk to the level of what engages it. She no longer plans for study and self-improvement; she talks of her duties to society instead, and of its claims upon her. After all” – she thought a few moments, and then added emphatically – “*after all, I am satisfied with my lot!* Even upon the testimony of so prejudiced a witness as Rose, fashionable life is not a lofty thing. Its two principal standards appear to be money and smartness; and I do believe the world has a far higher ideal. It is only a very small minority who worship the great goddess Fashion, and the image which the Parisian Jupiter sends over here; the true *élite* of the world have always been those whose greatness was in themselves. There’s father! In any kind of clothes, or in any company, he would always be one of the *élite*. 20 I never could be ashamed of him. But I might be, if I saw him haunting the gay places of the world, criticising ballet girls, and shuffling cards.” She indulged this train of thought, and lived over again the fantasy of life Rose had shaped in her imagination.

A knock at the door roused her from it. A maid was there with some flowers, and an offer of her services, if Miss Van Hoosen

wished them. The flowers were welcome, but the service would have been an embarrassment. Adriana knew her good points, and was quite able to do them justice. In her case, it was not the modiste that made the woman.

When she was dressed she went to the drawing-room. It was full of flowers and bric-a-brac, but there was not a book to be seen. No one was in the room; no one was apparently downstairs; she was evidently early, which at least was better than being late. So she walked about, looking at this and that, and speculating as to where the *curios* came from, and what queer histories they might have. Opposite one entrance to the parlor, there was a large mirror, and before this mirror a small gilded table. As Adriana passed it, she noticed that it held a portfolio; and the ribbons which fastened it being untied, she threw back the cover, and saw that it was full of photographs. Some faces were young and pretty; others, middle-aged and old, graven all over with the sharp tools of worldly strife, sorrow, thought, and experience of various kinds. The aged faces pleased her most; they were not merely calendars of so many years old, they had most of them a story to tell.

Presently she came to the pictured face of a young man which was very attractive. The countenance was full of force, and though the personality was at a 21 stand-still, "pulled up" for the second in which it was taken, it was both an expressive and an impressive personality. For the bit of prepared paper had caught something of that *fiery particle*, that "little more" which in the

real man was doubtless a power going from him and drawing others to him, in spite of their own resolves and inclinations.

She held the photograph in her hand, and looked earnestly at it. As she did so, Harry Filmer stepped between the folds of pale blue plush which shielded the doorway. He stood motionless and watched Adriana. The mirror showed him at a glance beauty of a high and unusual kind. He took rapid note of every element of it – the thick dark hair drawn backward from the broad white brow – the white drooping eyelids, heavily fringed – the richly-colored oval face – the bow-shaped lips – the rounded chin – the straight white throat – the tall figure robed in soft, white silk, with purple pansies at the bosom and belt – and most of all, the air of freshness and of grave harmonious loveliness which environed her. He could have gazed his heart away; but in a few moments Adriana felt the unseen influence and turned. The presentment was still in her hand; the living man stood before her.

She put the picture back into the portfolio, and advanced a step or two. Harry bowed, and was at her side in a moment.

“I am sure you are Miss Van Hoosen,” he said, with a pleasant smile; “mother told me about you. And Rose has told me a great deal about you. So, you see, we are old acquaintances. Is it not a most perfect day? Have you been riding, or walking? Or has Rose kept you all day ‘talking over things’?”

He was really nervous under Adriana’s smiling eyes, and he felt it easier to go on talking than to take the next step. Fortunately Rose entered at the proper moment, and put every

one conventionally at ease. And if people eating a good dinner together cannot get agreeably familiar, then there is something radically wrong with one-half the company, and perhaps also with the other.

Now, women are undoubtedly different beings in the presence of men. Adriana was a new Adriana to Rose. She was more mentally alert, more assured and dignified in manner, and she even contradicted Harry in many things. But then she had an agreeable way of dealing with those from whom she disagreed; and Harry was only stimulated by her opposition to his views. The dinner went delightfully to the chatter of tongues and the light clash of crystal and china, and when it was over, Harry exclaimed:

“What a charming meal we have had! I had almost forgotten how very pleasant it is to eat with one’s own family!”

“Quite as pleasant as to dine at a club, I should think, Harry,” said Rose.

“Talking of clubs, it is the ladies who run clubs nowadays, Miss Van Hoosen. Has Rose told you how many she belongs to? Most of the married men I know have had to resign their memberships; the candle cannot be burned at both ends, and, of course, the ladies’ end must not be put out.”

“Clubs are a new-fangled notion to women yet, Harry. They will soon tire of their own company. You may be sure of that,” said Mrs. Filmer.

“Not so very ‘new-fangled,’ mother,” continued Harry.

“Women’s clubs have existed for centuries in Persia and Turkey. They call them ‘The Bath,’ but 23 the ‘bath’ is only an excuse for getting together to talk gossip, and eat sweetmeats, and drink coffee. And if you like, I will lend you Aristophanes, mother, and you may read what came of women imitating such masculine ideas among those clever old Greeks.”

“I have no time to read such ancient books. And they would have to be very clever Greeks indeed to write anything the New York women of to-day would care to read. My dear Harry, they are a few thousand years behind the time.”

“Harry forgets,” said Rose, softly, “that if one of a family have to retire from Club pleasures, justice decides against the man. It is not a matter of courtesy at all; men have had their day. I assure you, Woman is the Coming Man.”

“Oh! I think we may claim club privileges on much higher grounds,” said Adriana. “Every woman’s club has before it the realization of some high purpose, or the redressing of some wrong. I never heard of a woman’s club in New York on the oriental plan of tattle and gossip and eating sweetmeats.”

“Two of the clubs to which I belong,” continued Rose, “have very important subjects under discussion. One is the *Domestic Symposium*, and we consider topics relating to Household Economy. At present, we are trying to solve the Servant Girl Question.”

“Oh!” cried Harry, with a hearty laugh, “if you indeed solve that problem, Rose, men will give you the suffrage, and leave the

currency, and the tariff, and all such small financial and political questions to you.”

“Thanks, Harry! It is likely we may voluntarily take them into consideration. This is an age of majorities. If we accomplish the suffrage, women will have a majority on all questions; and the reduction of man 24 becomes a mere matter of time. I was going to remark, that another of my clubs occupies itself with the criticism of the highest poets of the age.”

“Who are they?” asked Adriana.

“That is the point we have been arguing all last winter. We have had difficulties. Mrs. Johnstone Miller raised objections to the consideration of any but American poets; and it took two months’ sittings to settle that question. You would be astonished at the strength of some people’s prejudices!” ejaculated Rose, holding up her pretty hands to emphasize her own astonishment.

“Not at all,” answered Harry. “They call their prejudices ‘principles,’ and then, of course, they cannot be decently relinquished.”

“Mrs. Johnstone Miller is a very superior woman. It is a great thing to hear her criticise Longfellow, Whittier, Eugene Field, Will Carlton, and the rest. I am sure she believes that she could easily excel each in their own department, if she were not prevented by her high-bred exclusiveness.”

“Not unlikely, Rose; there is no impertinence like the impertinence of mediocrity.”

“*Mediocrity!* Why, Harry, Mrs. Johnstone Miller is worth all

of three million dollars, and it is very good of her to interest herself about literature at all." And with these words Mrs. Filmer rose, and Harry gave her his arm, and the little party strolled slowly round the piazzas, and so through the blue *portières* into the drawing-room. And as Adriana did so, she had a vivid memory of Harry Filmer as she first saw him, standing between the pale draperies. They had emphasized his black hair and eyes and garments very distinctly; for the young man was physically "dark," 25 even the vivid coloring of his face being laid upon a skin more brown than white.

Mrs. Filmer made herself comfortable in the easiest of easy chairs, and began mechanically to turn and change the many rings upon her fingers; the act being evidently a habit, conducive to reflection or rest. She told Harry to "go away and smoke his cigar"; but the young man said he "was saving the pleasure until the moon rose; and in the meantime," he added, "he should expect the ladies to amuse him. Rose was talking of the greatest poets of the age," he said, "but I am wondering what possible use we can have for poetry. Our age is so distinctively material and epicurean."

Then Adriana asserted that it was precisely in such conditions poetry became an absolute necessity. Poetry only could refine views that would become gross without it; and give a tinge of romance to manners ready to become heartless and artificial. The discussion was kept up with much spirit and cleverness, though diverging continually to all kinds of "asides," and Mrs. Filmer,

with half-closed eyes, watched and listened, and occupied her mind with far different speculations.

Then there was some music; Rose played in her faultlessly brilliant manner; and Harry sang *The Standard Bearer*, and Adriana sang a couple of ballads. And by this time the moon had risen, and Harry brought woolen wraps, and the two girls walked with him, while he smoked more than one cigar. At first, the promenade was to a quickstep of chatter and laughter; but as the glorious moonshine turned earth into heaven, their steps became slower, their laughter died away, feeling grew apace, speech did not seem necessary, and a divine silence that felt even motion to be a wrong was just beginning to enthrall each young, impressible heart.

At that moment Mrs. Filmer broke the dangerous charm by an imperative assertion that "it was high time the house was locked up for the night. She had been asleep and forgotten herself," she said, and there was a tone of hurry and worry in her voice. So emotion, and romance, and young love's dreaming were locked out in the moonshine; and there was a commonplace saying of "good-nights." At their bedroom doors, Rose and Adriana kissed each other, and Rose said:

"I have been thinking of poor Dick Duval. Poor Dick! He loves me so much!"

"Then love him in return, Rose."

"Impossible! He is poor."

With a sad smile, and a deep sigh, Rose shut her door. It

was characteristic of her, that she had not thought of Adriana and Harry. But Harry could not sleep for thought – for a sweet, pervading, drifting thought, that had no definite character, and would indeed have been less sweet if it had been more definite. He could only tell himself that he had found a new kind of woman; that her beauty filled his heart; and that her voice – whether she spoke or sang – set him vibrating from head to feet.

As for Adriana she was serious, almost sorrowful, and she wondered at the mood, finding it nevertheless quite beyond her control. Had she been wiser in love lore she would have feared it; for there is a gloom in the beginnings of a great love, as there is gloom in deep water; a silence which suspends expression; an attitude shy and almost reverent, it being the nature of true love to purify the temple in which it burns.

CHAPTER II

The next morning Harry went to New York. Mrs. Filmer, Rose, and Adriana stood on the piazza and watched him leap into the dog-cart, gather up the reins, and drive away at a rate supposed to be necessary in order to “catch the train.” He looked very handsome and resolute, and the house felt empty without his predominating presence.

“Harry promises to be home again at five o’clock; then, if we are ready, he will drive with us,” said Rose; and towards this hour all the day’s hopes and happiness verged. For already Harry stole sweetly into Adriana’s imaginations, and to Rose his return was interesting, because he was to bring back with him his friend Neil Gordon. Neil was not Rose’s ideal lover; but he was unconquered, and therefore provoking and supposable; and as environment has much to do with love, Rose hoped that the heart, hard as flint to her charms in the city, might become submissive and tender among the roses and syringas.

Harry was on time, but he was alone. “Neil did not keep his engagement,” he explained, “and as I wished to keep mine, I did not wait for him. I think we can do without Neil Gordon.” Rose said he was not at all necessary; but she suddenly lost her spirits and grumbled at the sunshine and the dust, and did not appear to enjoy her drive in the least. They went twice through the village, and passed Adriana’s home 28 each time. Peter was in his garden,

and he saw them, and straightened himself that he might lift his hat to Harry's salute, and to the kiss his handsome daughter sent him from her finger tips. The event pleased him, but he was not unnaturally or unadvisedly proud of it. He considered the circumstance as a result of giving his girl a fine education, and he hoped some of the rich, miserly men of the village would see and understand the object lesson. In the evening he walked down to the post-office. He expected his neighbors to notice the affair, and he had a few wise, modest words ready on the duty of parents to educate their daughters for refined society. He intended to say "it was natural for girls to look for the best, and that they ought to be fitted for the best;" and so on, as far as he was led or supported.

But no one spoke of Adriana, and people generally seemed inclined to avoid Peter; even his intimates only gave him a passing "good-night" as they went rapidly onward. At length, Peter began to understand. "I believe they are dumb with envy," he thought, and his thoughts had a touch of anger. "Of course, it is better to be envied than pitied; but I wish they did not feel in that way. It is disappointing. Bless my little Yanna! There are many who would not mind her being behindhand with God; who cannot bear her to be beforehand with the world. It is queer, and it is mean; but I'll say nothing about it; a man can't wrangle with his neighbors, and be at peace with his God at the same time – and it is only a little cloud – it will soon blow over."

He had scarcely come to this conclusion when he was accosted by an impertinent busybody, who said some sharp things about

Mr. Harry Filmer's reputation, 29 and the imprudence of Adriana Van Hoosen being seen driving with the young man.

"Go up to the Filmers' house, and say to them what you have said to me," answered Peter, and his face was black with anger.

"I was not thinking of the Filmers, Peter. I was thinking of your daughter."

"You have daughters of your own, William Bogart. Look after them. I will take care of my Adriana. She was driving with Miss Filmer, and not with Mr. Filmer; but that does not make a mite of difference. Miss or Mister, I can trust Adriana Van Hoosen. She is a good girl, thank God!"

Then still sharper words passed; for the accuser was a peevish, ill-natured man; and his shrugs, and sneering mouth, as well as his suspicious words, roused the Old Adam in Peter, and he felt him firing his tongue and twitching his fingers. Bogart was a younger man than himself; but Peter knew that he could throttle him like a cur; or fling him, with one movement of his arm, into the dust of the highway. Fortunately, however, Bogart's prolixity of evil words gave Peter pause enough for reflection; and when he spoke again, he had himself well in hand, though his eyes were flashing and his voice was stern.

"Bogart," he said, "you are a member of the Dutch Reformed Church; and you have doubtless a Bible somewhere in your house. Go home and read, '*With the froward, Thou wilt show Thyself forward.*' That is a dreadful Scripture for an ill-tongued man, Bogart. As for me, I will not answer you. He shall speak for

me, and mine.” And with this sense of an omnipotent advocate on his side, Peter walked majestically away.

At first he thought he would go to Filmer Hall in the morning, and bring home his child. But a little reflection showed him how unnecessary and unwise such a movement would be. “I will leave God to order events, which are his work, not mine,” he thought, “and if Yanna pleases God, and pleases herself, she will not displease me.”

Adriana, knowing nothing of this petty tumult of envy, was very happy. Harry did not go to New York the following day. He only talked of the city, and wondered why he wanted to stay away from it. “It is my native air,” he said, as he struck a match swiftly and lit his cigar, “and usually I am homesick, the moment I leave it. I wonder what there is in Filmer Hall to make me forget Broadway; I do not understand!” – but he understood before he began to speak.

“The place itself is enchanting,” said Adriana.

“We are living in Paradise,” added Rose.

“Paradise!” cried Mrs. Filmer. “And we have to keep ten servants! Paradise! Impossible! This morning the laundress was also homesick for New York; and she has gone back there. I could have better spared any two other servants; for she was clever enough to deserve the laundress’s vision of St. Joseph – ‘with a lovely shining hat, and a shirt buzzom that was never starched in this world.’ Harry, why do people like to go to New York, even in the summer time?”

“Well, mother, if people have to work for their living, New York gives them a money-making impression. I always catch an itching palm as soon as I touch its pavements.”

“I did not think you were so mercenary, Harry.”

“We are nothing, if we are not mercenary. What a 31 gulf of yawns there is between us and the age that listened to the ‘large utterance of the early gods!’”

“I do not complain of the ‘gulf,’ Harry; *au contraire*; – here comes the mail! and the commonplaces of our acquaintances may be quite as agreeable as the ‘what?’ of the early gods!” Mrs. Filmer was unlocking the bag as she spoke, and distributing the letters. Rose had several, and she went to her room to read and answer them, leaving Adriana and Harry to amuse themselves. They went first to the piano, and, when tired of singing, strolled into the woods to talk; and as the day grew warm, they came back with hands full of mountain laurel and wild-flowers. Then Harry began to teach Adriana to play chess; and she learned something more than the ways of kings and queens, knights and bishops. Unconsciously, also, she taught as well as learned; for a young lovable woman, be she coquette or *ingénue*, can teach a man all the romances; this is indeed her nature, her genius, the song flowing from her and returning never again.

After lunch Rose took Adriana away, with an air of mystery. “I have had a most important letter,” she said, with a sigh, “from poor Dick – Dick Duval! He is simply broken-hearted. And Dick has quite a temper, he does not like suffering so much. I feel that

I really ought to see him.”

“When is he coming, Rose?”

“He can *never* come here. All my family are against Dick. Harry quarrelled openly with him at the club; and papa – who hardly ever interferes in anything – met him in the hall one night, and opened the front door for him.”

“What does Mrs. Filmer say?”

“Mamma says Dick is a physical gentleman and a 32 moral scamp; and she forbids me to speak or write to him. That is the whole situation, Yanna.”

“It is a very plain one, Rose. There is nothing to discuss in it. You ought not to answer his letter at all.”

“Dick says he will blow his brains out, if I do not see him.”

“How absurd!”

“You do not know what love is, Yanna.”

“Do you, Rose?”

“Not unless I am in love with Dick.”

“I am sure you are not in love with Dick. You are far too conscientious, far too morally beautiful yourself, to be in love with a moral scamp. I know that you would not do anything deliberately wrong, Rose.”

“Do not swear by me, Yanna. I cannot swear by myself. I have actually told Dick that I will meet him next Monday – at your house.”

“Indeed, Rose, you must destroy that letter.”

“It is a beautiful letter. I spent two hours over it.”

“Tear it into fifty pieces.”

“But Dick can call at your house, and I will just ‘happen in.’ There is no harm in that. You can be present all the time, if you wish.”

“I will ask father. Of course, I must tell him the circumstances.”

“And of course, he will go into a passion about his honor, and his honor to Mr. Filmer, and all the other moralities. You are real mean, Yanna.”

“I am real kind, Rose. Please give me the letter. You know that you are going to do a wicked and foolish thing. Rose, I have always thought you a very angel of purity and propriety. I cannot imagine a man like this touching the hem of your garment. 33 Give me the letter, Rose. Positively, it must not go to him.”

“I want to do right, Yanna.”

“I know you do.”

“But Dick is suffering; and I am sorry for him.”

“We have no right to be sorry for the wicked. The wicked ought to suffer; sympathy for them, or with them, is not blessed. I am so glad to see you crying, Rose. If you sent that letter, it would trouble your soul, as a mote in your eye would torture your sight. In both cases, the trouble would be to wash out with tears. Give me the letter, and I will destroy it.”

Then Rose laid it upon the table, and buried her face in her pillow, sobbing bitterly, “I do like Dick! Right or wrong, I want to see him.”

“I may tear up the letter, Rose? It must be done. Shall I do it?”

“Could you not let Dick call at your house once? Only once?”

“It is not my house. I should have to ask father.”

“Only once, Yanna!”

“Things that are permissible ‘only once’ ought never to be done at all. Do you remember how often Miss Mitchell told us that?”

“Miss Mitchell never had a lover in her life. People always do see lovers ‘once more.’”

“Then ask Mrs. Filmer if you cannot do so.”

“Certainly, she could not be more cruel than you are. Oh, Yanna! I am so disappointed in you!”

Then Yanna began to cry, and the girls mingled their tears; and when they had swept away their disappointment in each other, the letter was torn into little shreds as a peace offering; and they bathed their faces, and lay down for an hour. Yanna was sure she had conquered; but it was but a temporary victory; for as soon as she was alone, Rose began to blame herself.

“I always was under that girl,” she thought, “and I quite forgot about her father being only a stone mason. Poor Dick! I must send him half-a-dozen lines; and suppose I tell him that I walk in the mornings, by the little lake in the woods called ‘Laurel Water’? If he finds me out there, he will deserve to see me; and if not – there is no harm done.”

Yet this second letter, though written and sent, was not conceived with any satisfaction. Rose was conscience-hurt all the time she penned it; and very restless and unhappy after it had

passed beyond her control. For she was in general obedient to the voice within her; expediency and propriety had both told her at the first, "You had better not write," and she had not heeded them in the least; but she did find it very difficult to silence the imperative, "*Thou shalt not!*" of conscience. Still, it was done. Then she reflected that Dick would get her letter on Saturday morning, and might possibly come to Woodsome on Sunday. It would, therefore, be expedient to let Yanna return to her own home the next day; and also to find some excuse for remaining from church on Sabbath morning.

"One little fault breeds another little fault," she thought, "but it is only for once." And she did not perceive that she had called disobedience to parents, and premeditated absence from the service of God, "a little fault"; far less did she calculate what great faults might obtain tolerance if measured from such a false standard.

However, the hours went by, as apparently happy and innocent as if there were no contemplated sin 35 beneath them; conversation and music made interchanging melodies; and again the beautiful moonshine brought silence, and beaming eyes, and all the sweet and indefinable interpreters of love. And this night Harry, also, felt some of that strange sadness which is far more enthralling than laughter, song and dance, to those who can understand its speech. Rose did not. "How stupid we all are!" she exclaimed; and Harry glanced down into Yanna's eyes, and pressed her arm closer to his side, and knew that words were

unnecessary.

In the morning, Mr. Filmer came from town. He was a small, slender man, with an imperturbable manner, and that mystical type of face often seen in old portraits: a man whom Adriana rightly judged to be made up of opposite qualities, his most obvious side being that of suave, indifferent complaisance. He was exceedingly kind to Adriana, and spoke with real warmth of feeling about her father. "I count it a good thing to have come in contact with him," he said, "for I think better of all men for his sake. It is his religion," he added. "What a Calvinist he is! We had some talks I never shall forget."

He appeared to take no interest in the household affairs, and Mrs. Filmer did not trouble him about its details. He was, in fact, bookishly selfish; his only enquiry being one concerning the library and some boxes of books which he had sent. If the garden, the stables, the horses or servants were alluded to, he was miles away; for he had long ago explained to Mrs. Filmer that these things were not necessary to his happiness; and that, therefore, if she insisted upon being troubled with them, she must bear the worries and annoyances they were sure to bring.

He really lost little by this arrangement; for Mr. Filmer's cleverness and deep learning was the family superstition. Rose said she "felt as if a clergyman were present all the time papa was at home," and Mrs. Filmer and Harry spoke with mysterious respect of the great work which occupied Mr. Filmer's thoughts and time. Harry told Adriana that "it was a

'History of Civilization' rather on Mr. Buckle's lines, but much more philosophical." And it was evident Harry firmly believed in his father; which might not have been the case if the two men had been busy together, looking after other people's money, or telling smart, scandalous stories in the club windows.

In fact, if Mr. Filmer had deliberately selected a rôle which would bring him the least trouble and the most honor, he could not have done better unto himself. As it was, whenever he came out of his retirement, and condescendingly put himself on a level with the family dinner-table, he was the guest of honor; for usually his little delicacies were carried with elaborate nicety into the small private room adjoining the library. Every one tried to make him understand how great was the favor of his presence; and Adriana, though she knew nothing of his peculiarities, was able to perceive even in the passing conversation of the hour, a different influence. Harry generally set the key at that light tone which touches society in those moods when it chases gaiety till out of breath. There was always a deeper meaning in his father's opinions and reflections; and the family were apt to look admiringly at one another when their profundity was greater than usual.

In the middle of the meal, there fell upon the company one of those infectious silences which the "folk" 37 explain by saying "an angel passes"; but which Harry broke by a question:

"Why this silence?" he asked.

"Why this recollection?" Mr. Filmer immediately substituted.

“What are you all remembering? Speak, my dear,” he said to Mrs. Filmer.

“I was recalling the fact that I had not written a line in my diary for a month.”

“I congratulate you, Emma! People who are happy do not write down their happiness. And you, Miss Van Hoosen?”

“I was remembering some boys that Mr. Filmer and I met in the wood this morning. They were rifling a thrush’s nest. I begged them not to do it; but then, boys will be boys.”

“That is the trouble. If they could only be dogs, or any other reasonable, useful, or inoffensive creature! But alas! a good boy is an unnatural boy. Now, Rose, where did your memory stray?”

“To Letitia Landon’s wedding. She married Mr. Landon because he was rich, and I was remembering her old lover, Horace Key, standing in the aisle, watching the wedding. There were three at that wedding, I think.”

“And in such cases, two is matrimony, and three divorce. As to your memories, Harry? Are they repeatable?”

“I was thinking of the insane pace and frivolities of the past season; and if I had not spoken, I should have got as far as a reflection on the bliss of a quiet country life, like the present.”

“You must remember, Harry, that the ‘frivolity’ of the multitude is never frivolous – it portends too much.”

“And pray, sir, in what direction went your memory?”

“No further than the ferry boat. It gave me, this morning, an opportunity of studying human nature, in its betting aspect.”

“What did you think of it, sir?”

“I thought instantly of Disraeli’s definition of the Turf: – ‘this institution for national demoralization.’”

“Is it worse than politics?”

“Yes. Loyalty to one’s country is fed upon sentiment, or self-interest. Americans are a sentimental race – whether they know it or not – and Americans do not, as a general rule, want their country to pay them for loving her. Do you, Harry?”

“No, indeed, sir!”

“There are tens of thousands just as loyal as you are.”

“When women get the suffrage,” said Rose, “politics will be better and purer.”

“Oh, Rosie! are there not politicians enough in America, without women increasing the awful sum?”

“We feel compelled to increase it, papa. *Noblesse oblige*, if you will read sex for rank. I intend to be a Socialist.”

“Then you must become very rich, or very poor. Socialism is only permitted to the very great, or the very small.”

“What of Republicanism, sir?”

“It is highly respectable, Harry. Men who would be gentlemen cannot afford to be anything else; and I have noticed they are more Republican than Harrison himself.”

“Are you a Democrat now, sir?”

“I love Democracy, Harry; but I do not love Democrats.”

“Do let us change the subject,” said Mrs. Filmer, fretfully. “In a month or two, the election influenza will be raging. Let us

forget politics among the June roses.”

“Suppose we talk of love, then. Love is quite at the other end of the pole of feeling. What do you think of love in these days, father?”

Harry spoke in his lightest manner, but Mr. Filmer’s serious face reproved it. “Love is a kind of religion, Harry,” he answered. “We will not joke about it, as fools do. And it is the same divine thing to-day as it was in its exquisite beginnings in Paradise. Love is either the greatest bliss or the profoundest misery the soul of man can know.” And quite inadvertently, his eyes fell upon Rose, and she trembled and resolved to take her letter to Dick Duval out of the mail bag.

But when she went for it the bag had been sent to the post-office, and she whispered to herself dramatically, “The die is cast!” and then she sat down and played a “Romanza,” and wove into it her memories of poor Horace Key, watching his old love plight her broken faith to a rich husband. Swiftly Horace Key became Dick Duval, and she played herself into tears, thinking of his black, velvety eyes, and his love-darting glances.

Early in the morning Adriana’s little visit was over. She had made no preparations for a longer one, and after all, the old rule with regard to visits is one that fits most occasions – a day to come, a day to stay, and a day to go away. She had also a singular feeling of necessity in her return home, as if she were needed there; and she was glad that Harry had to go to New 40 York, and that their adieu was public and conventional. “We shall

meet again very soon," he said, as he touched Yanna's hand; and then he lifted the reins, and the dog-cart went spinning down the avenue, as if he had only one desire – that of escaping from her.

In another hour Adriana was at home, going through her own sweet, spotless rooms, with that new, delightful sense of possession that makes home-coming worth going from home to experience. There was only one servant in Peter's house – a middle-aged woman, whose husband had been killed in Peter's quarry; but she had the Dutch passion for cleanliness, and the very atmosphere of the house was fresh as a rose – the windows all open to the sunshine, the white draperies blowing gently in the south breeze, and every article of furniture polished to its highest point. Yanna ran up and down stairs with a sweet satisfaction. This dwelling, so simple, so spotless, so void of pretenses, was the proper home for a man like Peter Van Hoosen; she could not imagine him in a gilded saloon, with painted flowers and heathen goddesses around him.

They talked a little while, and then Peter went into his garden; and Yanna took out a white muslin dress which required some re-trimming, and sat down with her ribbons and laces, to make it pretty. She was tying bows of blue ribbons into coquettish shapes, singing as she did so, when she heard a quick footstep on the gravel. She drew aside the fluttering curtain and looked out. A stranger was at the doorstep – was coming through the hall – was actually opening the parlor door as she rose from her chair with the ribbons in her hand. He did not wait for her to speak. He took

her in his arms, and said:

“Oh, Yanna! Yanna! Where is father?”

Then she knew him. “Antony! My brother Antony!” she cried. “Oh, how glad I am to see you! Oh, how glad father will be to see you! Come, let us go to him. He is in the garden.”

This unexpected visit threw the Van Hoosen household into a state of the most joyful excitement; for around this youngest of his sons, Peter had woven all the poetry that is sure to be somewhere hidden in a truly pious heart. He was very proud of Antony, for he had accomplished the precise thing which would have been impossible to Peter. Antony’s life had been one of constant peril, and his father was accustomed to think of him as heavily armed, and fleetly mounted, and riding for his life. The glamour of western skies, the romance and mystery of the Great Plains, the hand to hand bravery of defending forts from Indians – these, and many other daring elements, had woven themselves about the young man’s struggle for wealth, and invested him with an unusual interest.

So unusual that Peter thought it no sin, on this “eve of the Sabbath,” to break his general custom of private meditation, and listen to the tale of life his son had to tell him. For it was full of strange providences, and Peter was not slow to point them out. And though Antony was reticent on spiritual experiences that were purely personal, his father understood that in those vast lonely places he had heard *a Voice*, that never again leaves the heart that hears it.

There was a fine sincerity, a sincerity like that of light, in Antony's nature; his moral sense was definite, his words were truthful; he was another Peter Van Hoosen transplanted into larger atmospheres, and nourished in tropical warmth. Speaking physically, 42 he was not handsome; speaking morally, he was very attractive. His fine soul erected his long spare form, gave the head its confident poise, made the face luminous, and the step firm and elastic. It was like breathing in a high atmosphere to be with him; for he shared himself with his fellows, and poured his life freely into other lives. Was it, then, any wonder that Peter and Yanna gave themselves entirely, that first happy day of reunion, to a son and a brother, so lovable and so attracting?

There was no wonder, either, that in the cool of the evening, Yanna – with a conscious pride in her brother's appearance – asked him to walk to the post-office with her. She wished to experience some of that pleasant surprise which his reappearance in his native village was likely to make. But the girls she hoped to meet thought Antony was "one of the Yorkers from Filmer's place," and they kept on the other side of the street. Not always do our ships go by in the night; sometimes we see them pass in the daytime, and are too proud, or too careless, to hail them. One of these girls had been a dream in Antony's heart for years; he had really thought of wooing her for his wife. But she was envious of Yanna, and passed on the other side, and fortune did not follow, nor yet meet her, ever again.

Because the next day was the Sabbath, there was no visiting

nor receiving of visits in Peter's house; though the young man was recognized at church, and welcomed by many of his old acquaintances. And early Monday morning Yanna began to expect Rose. She looked forward to her visit, and kept Antony by her side on many pretenses, until the day became too warm to hope longer. Then she wrote to Rose a 43 letter, and, in the cool of the afternoon, Antony went with her to post it. They were walking slowly down the locust-shaded street, and talking of the girl whom Antony had thoughts of wooing, when Harry, driving Rose, turned into the street a hundred yards behind them. Instantly, both were aware of Yanna and her strange escort.

"Do you see that?" asked Rose, with a wondering intensity. "Now, who can he be?"

"How should I know?" answered Harry – and he drew the reins, and made the horses keep the distance. He had himself received a severe check; he did not know whether he wished to proceed or to turn back.

"Yanna never told me about him."

"Girls never do tell *all*. Will you now call on Miss Van Hoosen?"

"Why not?"

"You might be the one not necessary."

"Indeed, I shall call. I told Yanna I would see her to-day. I shall not break my word, for any man. I dare say he is one of her father's builders, or architects, or – some one of that kind. I do wonder if Yanna is deceitful!"

“All girls are deceitful.”

“They walk humbly after the men, in that rôle, Harry. Drive a mile up the road; then, as we return, we can pass Mr. Van Hoosen’s house. If Yanna is at home, I shall see it, or know it, or feel it; and that fellow will doubtless have been left outside somewhere.”

“That fellow,” however, with Yanna at his side, was on the doorstep to welcome Harry and Rose. He lifted Rose like a feather-weight from the dog-cart, 44 and he was ready with outstretched hand, when Yanna said, “This is my brother Antony.” The “brotherhood” was such a relief to Harry that it made him most unusually friendly and gay-tempered; and Rose readily adopted the same tone. They sat down on the piazza, behind the flowering honeysuckles, and amid broken little laughs and exclamations, grew sweetly, and yet a little proudly, familiar. After a short time, however, Rose said she “wanted to speak to Yanna very particularly.” Then the girls went into the parlor; and the two young men lit their cigars, and walked through the garden to smoke, and to find Peter; but both, moved by the same impulse, made the same involuntary pause before the open window at which Rose and Yanna sat. Their faces were eager and serious, their hands dropped, their attitudes had the perfect grace of nature; they were beautiful, and the more so because they were unconscious of it. Rose was just saying to Yanna, as Harry and Antony glanced at them:

“Dick has written again to me, Yanna. I had a letter from him

this morning.”

“Is he not impertinent?”

“He is anxious and miserable. I fear I shall have to see him.”

“If you fear it, you certainly ought not to see him.”

“He says he is coming to Woodsome. Yanna, why did you never tell me about this wonderful brother of yours?”

“I have not seen him since I was a little girl. I did not expect ever to see him again. His coming was a perfect surprise.”

“He is strikingly handsome.”

“He is not handsome at all, Rose.”

“He is handsome. I have never seen any one more handsome. He is like an antique man.”

“Quite the contrary, he is the very incarnation of the New World. His loose garments, his easy swing, his air of liberty, all speak of the vast unplanted plains beyond civilization.”

“*Pshaw!* I look deeper than you do. He is a man that could love a woman unto death. Is that not antique? He has a heart that would never fail her in any hour. You might tell him a secret, and know that fire could not burn it out of him. If you were at death’s door, he would die for you. I have a great mind to fall in love with him.”

“Not so, Rose. He is not of your world; and you would be wretched in his world. He is thinking of a girl in the village. You have described an ideal Antony. How, indeed, could you find out so much in twenty or thirty minutes?”

“The soul sees straight and swift.”

“But you do not see with your soul, Rose.”

“Yes, I do. What I have said is true. I don’t know how I know it is true; but it is true. Father was saying last night that some people have a sixth sense, and that by it they see things invisible – he was referring to George Fox and Swedenborg – and then he began to wonder if we had not once possessed seven senses; he thought there was inborn assurance of it, because people quite unconsciously swear by their seven senses. But five, or six, or seven, I am inclined to fall in love with Antony Van Hoosen, with the whole of them.”

“And Dick?”

“I had forgotten. Would you see him if you were me? or even write to him?”

“*Have* you written to him?”

Rose became scarlet and nervous. She could not tell a lie with that bland innocence of aspect which some women acquire; she had even a feeling of moral degradation, when she uttered the little word, “No.”

“Then I would not write on any account. I feel sure your love for Dick is only sentiment.”

“Do you know anything about love or sentiment, Yanna? You did not care whether Harry admired you or not. Harry felt your coldness; he thinks nice women ought to be sentimental, and I can tell you, he is accustomed to being thoroughly appreciated.”

By this time it was growing dusk, and the three men were seen coming together towards the house. They were walking slowly

and talking earnestly, and Yanna said:

“I wonder what subject interests them so much?”

“Politics or religion, I suppose; but whichever it is, they will utter nonsense as soon as we are within hearing. Here comes Harry with a laugh and a platitude!”

“Pardon us, Miss Van Hoosen; we quite forgot that time moved. Have you been very impatient, Rose?”

“We have both felt hurt. If you had been talking to Yanna and me, you would have been worrying about the horses, and about the steep roads, and the night miasma, and lots of other things; in fact, you would have had a bad, bad cough, by this time, Harry.”

“I know it, Rose; and I beg you a thousand pardons. You must blame my hosts. I never enjoyed talking so much before.” Then he gave his hand to Antony with a frankness that had something very confiding in it. “Shall I call for you to-morrow?” he asked. “We can get a good boat at the river side.”

“Thank you,” answered Antony, “I will go.”

“Cannot we go also?” enquired Rose.

Then Harry hesitated. He wanted Yanna to say something, and she said nothing. That decided the question. “It is quite impossible, Rose,” he answered. “We are going on the river to fish – a little dirty boat, and the blazing sun beating on the river – what pleasure could you have?”

“What pleasure can you have? I do not believe you are going a-fishing at all. You are going a-talking, and we could help you;” then, turning to Yanna, she asked: “When are you coming to

Filmer again? Not for a week? That will never do. I shall go against your brother if he parts us for so long.”

The last words were lost in the clatter of the horse's hoofs; and then there was a sudden silence. For the mere idea of departing stops the gayest conversation, makes the quietest person fidgety, the slowest, in a hurry; and introduces something of melancholy, whether we will or not. Perhaps, indeed, there is in every parting some dim foreshadowing of the Great Parting, and the involuntary sigh, with which we turn inward from a departing guest, is a sign from that language below the threshold we so seldom try to understand.

The acquaintance thus pleasantly begun grew rapidly to something more personal and familiar. Harry and Antony were constantly together; and the young man from the west exercised that peculiar influence over the city-bred man that a radical change in circumstances might have done. Antony was a new kind of experience. Out on the river, or wandering over the hills together, they had such confidences as drew them closer than brothers. And this intimacy naturally strengthened those tenderer intimacies from which, indeed, their own friendship received its charm and crown.

For Harry soon fell into the habit of calling at Peter Van Hoosen's house for Antony; and in such visits he saw Adriana constantly, under the most charming and variable household aspects. It was early morning, and she was training the vines, or dusting the room, or creaming butter for a cake; but he

thought her in every occupation more beautiful than in the last one. Or the young men were returning at night-fall from a day's outing, weary and hungry; and she made them tea, and cut their bread and butter and cold beef; and such occasions – no matter how frequently they occurred – were all separate and distinct in Harry's memory.

This familiarity also on her father's hearth invested Adriana with an atmosphere that a wrong or a trifling thought could not enter. Walking with her in the moonshine on the Filmer piazzas, he had ventured to say, and to look more love than was possible in the sanctity of her home and in the presence of her adoring father and brother. In fact, confidence in his own position left him; he began to have all the despondencies, and doubts, and sweet uncertainties, that lovers must endure, if they would not miss the complementary joys of dawning hopes, of looks and half-understood words, and of that happy "perhaps" that lifts a man from despairing into the seventh heaven of love's possible blessedness. This, indeed, is the best heart education a man can possibly receive. In it, if he be a man, he gets that straightness of soul in which he loses "I" and then finds it again in that other one for whom his soul longs.

Unconsciously as a tree grows, Harry grew in the school of love; and Adriana was also much benefited by this change of base in Harry's wooing. She had been learning too fast. It takes but a moment to drop the flower-seed into the ground; and it takes but a glance of the eye for love's wondrous prepossession to be

accomplished; but seed and passion alike, if they would reach a noble fruition, must germinate; must put forth the tender little leaves that lie asleep at the root and the heart; must spread upward to the sunshine, before they blossom like the rose in beauty and in perfume. And for these processes time is absolutely necessary.

An experience similar in kind was in progress between Antony and Rose, but the elements were more diverse. Rose had had many admirers; and she had permitted herself a sentimental affection for Dick Duval, the most unworthy of them all. She knew that she was morally weak, and that the only way to prevent herself from committing imprudences was to keep to the roadway of conventional proprieties; and in the main she was wise enough to follow this course. Her feelings about Antony were conflicting; she did not consider him a conventionally proper lover. He was the son of a working man; he lived a life beyond social restraints; she supposed him to be rather poor than rich; he did not dress as the men she knew dressed; his conversation was provocative of discussion, it compelled a person to think, or to answer like a fool – a startling vulgarity in itself – and he was so obtrusively truthful.

In a lover, as yet unaccepted, she felt this last quality to be embarrassing. It made him incapable of comprehending those fine shades of flirtation by which 50 a clever woman indicates “she will, and she will not,” by which she hesitates a liking, and provokes the admiration she can either refuse or accept. If she looked at Antony, with a sweet, long gaze, and then sighed,

and cast her eyes down, Antony was moved to the depths of his soul, and he would frankly tell her so; which at that stage of proceedings was very inconvenient. If she permitted him to hold her hand, and walk with her in silent bliss under the stars, she was compelled at their next meeting to set him back with a cruel determination he could neither gainsay nor complain of. He was happy, and he was wretched. Often he determined to return westward forever, and then in some of the occult ways known to womanhood, Rose tied him to her side by another knot, more invisible and more invincible than the rest.

She loved him. She was resolved to marry him – sometime. “But I want one more season in society,” she said to herself, one day, as she reviewed the position in her luxurious solitude – “though for the matter of that, it is the young married women now who have all the beaux, and all the fun. And if I were married, I should be safe from Dick; and I am afraid of Dick. Dick isn’t good; on the contrary, he is very bad. I like good men. I like Antony Van Hoosen. I will let him propose to me. If I were engaged, or supposed to be engaged, all the young men would immediately fancy I was the only girl in the universe – but I never can find another lover like Antony Van Hoosen! The man would die for me.”

She talked of him continually to Adriana, and hoped that Adriana would say to Antony the things she did not herself wish to say. She gave Adriana hopes that Adriana might give them to Antony. And then 51 Adriana was so provokingly honorable as

to regard the confidence as inviolable. And, indeed, Antony was that kind of a lover who thinks it a kind of sacrilege to babble about his mistress, or to speculate concerning her feelings, even with his sister. His love, with all of joy and sorrow it caused him, was a subject sacred as his own soul to him.

Of course, Mrs. Filmer was not blind to events so closely within her observation; she was far too shrewdly alive to all of life's possibilities to ignore them. But she did not fear her own daughter. She made allowances for her youth, and therefore for her sentimentalities, which she thought were as much a part of it as her flexible figure or her fine complexion. "This primitive gentleman from the plains has had it all his own way," she thought. "If we had more company, he would have been less remarkable. But company would have interfered with Henry's great work, and it has been hard enough to keep the necessary quiet for his writing, as it is. However, we shall go to New York soon; and then *adieu!* Mr. Van Hoosen. He sings a song about the 'Maids of California.' I shall tell him it will be proper at his age to make a selection very soon from them."

Under circumstances like these, the summer and the autumn passed away like a vivid dream. Adriana was much at Filmer Hall; and Rose very frequently spent the day with Adriana in her home. Mrs. Filmer was too wise to oppose the constant companionship. She regarded it merely as a contingent of country life; and she quieted any irritable thoughts by the reflection that her daughter would marry early, and have other

interests, and then put away her girlish, immature predilections of every kind. And in the meantime, 52 she was rather glad that Rose should have an “interest,” for Rose could make herself very tiresome if she was without one.

At length the chrysanthemums were beginning to bloom, and Mrs. Filmer spoke decidedly of a return to the city. Mr. Filmer had written a whole chapter of his book, and felt the need of change and mental rest; and Mrs. Filmer reminded Rose that her costumes for the coming season were all to buy; and the house was not yet put in order for the winter’s entertaining. Harry said they were leaving the country just when it was most charming; but even Harry was not averse to an entire reconstruction of his life. He was still deeply in love with Adriana, and strongly attached to Antony, but he was a little tired of walking, and driving, and boating. The idea of his club, of the opera, and the theatres, of dinners and dances, came pleasantly into his imagination.

Then arrived the time of displaced furniture, and of days sad with the unrest of packing and the uncertainties of parting. Harry began to think; and Antony thought more positively than he had ever before done. Adriana was silent and full of vague regrets; she had dreamed such a happy dream all summer; would the winter days carry it away? Rose was also quiet and a little mournful; but her regrets were flashed with hopes. She was looking forward to new conquests; and yet she was strangely averse to resign the one great heart that had been her worshipper through the happy

summer months.

All alike were waiting for an opportunity. And the days went by, and it did not come, because it was watched for. But suddenly Mrs. Filmer resolved to give a "Good-bye Ball," and then, when everybody's thoughts were on the trivialities of flowers and ribbons, destiny, one morning, called them to account for the love she had given. She wanted to know what harvest of joy or sorrow had been grown upon the slopes of the sunny summer days, and whether the love that had brightened them was to be homed forever in faithful hearts; or cast out wounded and forlorn, to perish and be forgotten on the hard highways of selfish and mercenary life!

CHAPTER III

It was the morning before “the Ball,” and Mrs. Filmer was busy about the packing of some valuable bric-a-brac, which was to be taken with them to the city. She went into Harry’s room, to see if the pieces adorning it had been attended to properly; and, glancing carefully around, her eyes fell upon a book of expensive illustrations. She determined to lock it away, and lifted it for that purpose. A letter fell from its pages, and she read it. As she did so, her eyes flashed, and her face grew passionately sombre.

“The idea!” she muttered. “The very idea of such a thing!”

She did not replace the letter, but taking it in her hand, went in search of Harry; and as she could not find him, she proceeded to Mr. Filmer’s study. He looked up with fidgety annoyance, and she said crossly:

“Henry, I am sorry to disturb you; but I suppose your son is of more importance than your book.”

“Is there anything amiss with Harry?”

“Harry is on the point of making a dreadful *mésalliance*.”

“With whom?”

“That Van Hoosen girl.”

“How do you know?”

“I found a letter in his room – a perfectly dreadful letter.”

“Dreadful!”

“You know what I mean – a letter asking her to be his wife.”

“It might be worse than that. If Harry loves her, I am glad he loves her honorably.”

“Honorably! Such a marriage is impossible; and for once, you must take Harry in hand, and tell him so.”

“Harry is of age. He is independent of me, in so far that he makes his own living, and has his own income. I can advise, but if you have your usual wisdom, Emma, you will not attempt to coerce him. I am sure the furnace needs attending to. This room is cold, and you know, when I am writing, I always do have cold feet.” He was turning the leaves of his book with impatience, and a total withdrawal of interest from the subject of conversation. Mrs. Filmer left him with a look of contempt.

“The man has lost all natural feeling,” she sighed. “He gets his very passions out of a bookcase. There is no use in expecting help from him.”

She put the letter in her pocket, and tried to go on with the domestic affairs interesting her; but she found the effort impossible. A fierce jealousy of her son swallowed up every smaller feeling; she had a nausea when she thought he might at that very moment be “making an irredeemable fool of himself.” But she took into consideration what Mr. Filmer had said, and acknowledged that, careless as he seemed about the matter, he had touched its vital point at once. Harry would not bear coercion. Her tactics would have to be straightforward and persuasive.

She sat motionless, with eyes cast down, considering them;

and schooling herself into such control of her passion as would compel Harry to respect her objections. She resolved also to say nothing of her plans to 56 Rose. Rose had a romantic fancy for the girl's brother; and she was quite capable of justifying her own penchant behind Harry's. As she pondered these things, she heard the carpenters from the village preparing the ball-room. They were tacking up bunting and wreaths of autumn leaves, but though the designs were her own, and she had been much interested in them, everything about the entertainment had suddenly become a weariness. She felt that until she had an understanding with Harry, she could do nothing; no, nor even care for what others were doing.

Fortunately, as she stood at the window, gloomily looking into a future her own sick fancy conjured, she saw Harry coming slowly up the avenue. He had the air of a man in suspense or anxiety, and she whispered, "There! I know he has done something awful! He looks like it. It is a shame that a strange girl should come into my home and make so much trouble. It is, really!"

Her intense recognition of Harry caused him to look up, and she made a motion which he hastened to answer. For here it must be admitted that Harry had a certain fear of his mother – a fear all compact of love – a fear of wounding or offending her – a fear of seeing her weeping or troubled – a tender fear, which was partly the habit of years, and very much the result of a generous estimate of her many excellences, and of his own indebtedness

to them. And from the beginning of time, men have desired to worship a woman; some men take naturally to the worship of the Blessed Virgin; others turn their religion of woman to motherhood, and find that among the millions of earth-mothers, there is no mother like the mother that bore them. Harry was one of these disciples.

He had been insensible so long to the charms of maidenhood, because he gave all the tenderness of his nature to his mother; and even his love for Rose was not so much on the ground that she was his sister as that she was his mother's daughter. And undoubtedly, this mother love had been hitherto the salt of his life. It had preserved him from all excesses that would grieve her, it had sanctified the idea of home in his heart; and if it had in a measure narrowed his nature, it had kept him from those gross vices men do not go from a mother's side to practice.

He came into the room with a conscious alertness, blaming himself for not taking more interest in the coming entertainment. Yet he had felt it hard to do so; in the first place, Yanna would not be present, her father having positive convictions about the folly – perhaps the sin – of dancing. In the second place, he had really written to Yanna; the letter in the possession of Mrs. Filmer being a mild draft of the one actually sent; so that the air of anxiety was a very natural one. He perceived at once that his mother was much annoyed, and his face was instantly sympathetic.

“I knew this thing was going to be too much for you, dear mother,” he said, with an air of reproach. “I am so sorry you

undertook it. It will be a bore altogether.”

“Harry, it is not the ball – it is you! Oh, Harry! Harry! Look at this letter. I found it in your room. Naturally, I read it; and, of course, having done so, I think it honorable to talk with you about it.”

Harry was fingering the letter his mother handed him, as she spoke, and when she ceased, he folded the paper and put it in his pocket. “Well, mother,” he said, “you have discovered what I intended to tell you 58 as soon as this miserable ball was over. I love Yanna. I intend to marry her – if she will marry me.”

“No fear of that. The girl has been doing her best to secure you all summer long.”

“You are mistaken, mother.”

“Oh, Harry, such a marriage is impossible! You know how I adore you! You are my life! I cannot give you up to this strange girl. Besides, dear Harry, you have taught me to rely upon you, to trust to you, in all my cares and troubles. You have been my right hand, ever since you were a little lad. You have enabled Rose to take her proper place in society. Without you, everything must go to destruction.”

“Dear mother, I do not see any reason for such calamity. You give me too much credit.”

“I do not give you enough. Look at your father. He is wonderfully clever, but has he ever been of any use in business? You have had everything to attend to. If I had had the remotest idea you would marry, I should never have permitted the building

of this house. We have sunk a deal of money in it. Without your income, we shall be quite unable to keep it up. Then just imagine how we shall be laughed at by the Giffords and all our set! It makes me shivering sick.”

“You knew, mother, that I would be likely to marry sometime.”

“Oh, yes! but not just at this time. You could not have chosen a more cruel time. How am I to manage with two houses on my hands, and no one to help me? Then, there is your little sister Rose! I hoped to give her a fair chance this season, to let her entertain, to let her realize her ideas in dress. She has been promised these pleasures; how can I tell her you are going to leave us to fight the world alone! You know, Harry – yes, 59 you do know – that Rose gets a great many invitations for your sake. If your engagement becomes known – and such things sift through the air – farewell to the Lennox dinners and dances! farewell to the Manns, and the Storeys, and the Wolseys, and a great many others! In fact, there is no use in opening the New York house at all. We had better stay here. Thank goodness! we can make your father’s book the excuse.”

Mrs. Filmer’s eyes were brim full of tears, but she bravely held them back; and this bit of self-restraint touched Harry far more than if she had flown to pieces in hysteria. He looked much troubled, and sitting down at her side, he took her hand and said:

“Do you think I will desert you if I marry, mother? You have been the best half of my life. I could not live without you.”

“You think so, Harry. But I know better. When a man gets a wife, he leaves father and mother for her. But do not leave me just yet, Harry! Do not leave me, dear boy, while I have so much to do, and to worry about! If I deserve any love or gratitude from you, do not leave me just yet! Oh, Harry! Harry!”

“I will not, mother. If Yanna loves me, she will wait for me.”

“If she loves you, she will be glad to wait for you.”

“You do not object to Yanna herself, do you, mother? Love her, for my sake, dear mother! Let me tell her you will. Is she not all you could wish for me? Is she not good and lovely, beyond comparison?”

“Indeed, I think she is very unworthy of you. I cannot love her yet, Harry. If you were thinking of May Hervey, or Sarah Holles, I could bear the loss of you better. Either of these girls would marry you for 60 a word. May is worth all of a million and a half, and Sarah nearly a million. In these days, matrimony ought to mean money. My dear son, do not leave your mother just yet! And if you must engage yourself to a girl so unworthy your position, at any rate keep it a profound secret. Even Rose must not be told. Rose is subject to sentimental confidences, and she is a little conceited, and will not believe me, if I tell her she is asked out for your sake, and not for her own. Harry, I love you so much! Will you help me a little longer, my dear?”

She was trembling with emotion, she was weeping very quietly; but Harry could see the tears dropping upon her clasped hands. But she did not for a moment let her feelings overstep her

faculties; she knew right well that a woman ever so little beyond herself is a fool. She knew also that the modern gentleman is wounded in his self-esteem by a scene, and is not to be tenderly moved by any signs of mere pathological distress.

Her self-restraint inspired Harry with respect; and he felt it impossible to throw off the habit of consideration for "mother above all others." It had the growth of nearly thirty years; while his affection for Yanna was comparatively a thing of yesterday. He promised not to marry while his marriage would be injurious to his family; and he promised to keep his engagement a secret, if Yanna accepted him. Nor did he anticipate any difficulty in fulfilling these promises; while he told himself that, after all, it was only a little bit of self-denial, which would be amply repaid by his mother's and sister's happiness and welfare.

He did not think of Yanna, nor of how a secret engagement and a delayed marriage might affect her; 61 but he was annoyed because these conditions had not been alluded to in his letter to her. Yanna might suppose that he had purposely ignored them until her consent was gained; and such a supposition would not place him in a very honorable light.

The interview terminated in a decided victory for Mrs. Filmer, and there was something very like a tear in Harry's eyes when he left his mother with a straight assurance of his continued help and sympathy. At the door he turned back and kissed her again; and then she went with him as far as the room which was being prepared for dancing. But she did not ask him to stay with her;

she knew better than to push an advantage too far, and was wise enough to know that when necessary words have been spoken and accepted further exhortation is a kind of affront.

At lunch time the subject was totally ignored. Mr. Filmer came out of his study, apparently for the very purpose of being excessively pleasant to Harry, and of giving his wife anxious warnings about exhausting herself, and overdoing hospitality, "which, by-the-by," he added, "is as bad a thing as underdoing it. Two days hence, you will not be able to forgive Emma Filmer for the trouble she has taken," he said.

"I hope we have not annoyed you much, Henry."

"I have calmly borne the upset, because I know this entertainment will be the first and the last of the series."

He spoke to hearts already conscious; and Rose said petulantly, "The ball will, of course, be a failure; we have bespoken failure by anticipating it."

"I never really wanted it, Rose," said Harry.

"That is understandable," she retorted. "Yanna does not dance; neither does she approve of dancing. 62 But all the sensible people are not Puritans, thank heaven! What are such ideas doing in an enlightened age? They ought to be buried with all other fossils of dead thought; and –"

"You are going too fast, Rose," corrected Mr. Filmer. "You may scoff at Puritanism, but it is the highest form of life ever yet assumed by the world. Emma, my dear, if that tap, tap, tapping could be arrested this afternoon I should be grateful." Then he

bowed to his family, and went back to the Middle Ages.

They watched his exit silently, and with admiration, and after it Rose sought the dressmaker, who in some upper chamber was composing a gown she meant to be astonishing and decisive; one that it would be impossible to imitate, or to criticise. Mrs. Filmer, knowing the value of that little sleep which ought to divide the morning from the afternoon, went into seclusion to accept it. Harry wandered about the piazzas smoking, but shivering and anxious, and longing for the hour at which he had told Yanna he would call for her answer.

The day, pleasantly chill in the morning, had become damp and gray, and full of the promise of rain. And as he drove through the fallen leaves of the bare woods, and felt the depressing drizzle, he thought of the many lovely days and glorious nights he had let slip; though the question asked at the end of them was precisely the question he wished to ask at the beginning. He wondered if he had missed his hour. He wondered if he had misunderstood Yanna's smiles and attitudes. He lost heart so far that he drove twice past the house ere he felt brave enough to take manfully the possible "No" Yanna might give him. "Men understand so little about women," he thought, "and all her pleasantness may have been mere friendship."

For the first time in all his acquaintance with the Van Hoosen family, the front door was shut. Usually it stood open wide, and he had been accustomed to walk forward to the sitting-room, and tap there with his riding whip, if it was empty; or to enter with

a gay greeting, if Antony or Yanna was there to answer it. To be sure, the day was miserably damp and chill, but oh! why had he waited all the long summer for this uncomfortable sense of a closed door in his face?

He drove to the stable, and when he went back to the house Peter was on the threshold to receive him. "Come in, Mr. Filmer," he said. "Antony has gone to New York. I believe in my heart, he has gone for fineries for your ball; though he called it 'business.'"

"I am glad Antony is coming, although I fully respect Miss Van Hoosen's scruples with regard to dancing."

"Yes, yes! On a road full of danger it is good to have scruples. They are like a pebble in the shoe, you cannot walk on it without a constant painful reminder; and if you lift the foot, then, you do not walk on it at all. Yanna has had no fight to make, no life and death issues to meet every day; and to those who live ordinary lives, a creed, and a straight creed, is necessary, yes, as much so as a wall is to a wheat field. Without external rules, and strong bonds, very few would remain religious. But with Antony it is different. He was churchless for ten years; but on many a battle field and in many a desert camp God met and blessed him. Such men have larger liberty than even I durst claim."

"I have talked much with Antony on religious subjects; I think it impossible to shake his faith."

"Antony's principles stand as firm as a Gothic wall. Duty, Faithfulness, Honor, and Honesty, are qualities independent of

creed. You see, I am no bigot.”

“You read too much, and too widely, for that character, sir.”

“If I read nothing but the Bible, I should read a book that is at once the most learned and the most popular of all books. But at present you find me reading politics.”

“To be sure! The elections are coming on, and they will do, and cause to be done, all kinds of disagreeable things. I generally keep my eyes shut to their approach.” He had disliked to break in two a religious conversation with a personal question, but he had no such scruple about politics; and he added hurriedly, lest Peter should pursue the subject, “Where is Miss Van Hoosen? I hope she is well.”

“She is in the dining-room. Once every year my cousin, Alida Van Hoosen, pays us a visit; and she came this morning, without any warning.” As he spoke, a buggy was driven to the door, and there was a stir of some one departing through the front hall. Then Peter rose quickly, and said:

“Now you must excuse me, Mr. Filmer. Cousin always expects me to see her safely to the train. Yanna will be with you in a few minutes.”

As Peter went out of the room, Harry rose. He could no longer sit still. His heart leaped to the light, quick steps of Yanna; and when she entered, smiling and rosy, her eyes dancing with the excitement of her visitor, her whole body swaying to the music of love in her heart, he met her in the middle of the room 65 with outstretched hands. She put her own hands in them, and her

eyes met his, in a frank, sweet gaze, which he understood better than words.

Who can translate the broken, kiss-divided sentences, in which two happy souls try to explain the joy of their meeting? All through the summer days, this love had been growing; and suddenly, in a moment, it had burst forth into blossom. The dull skies and the chill gray atmosphere did not touch a flower, whose roots were in celestial warmth and glory. They forgot all about such mere accidentals. There was a new sun, and a new moon; there was a new world, and new hopes, and a new life before them.

They walked up and down the large room, telling each other when, and how, they first began to love – excusing their misapprehensions, chiding sweetly their doubts, and explaining the little cross-purposes, which had given them so many sleepless nights and miserable days. All their troubles were now over. They were to trust each other through everything. They were to help each other to grow nobler and better, and more worthy of this wonderful love; which both alike felt to be more wonderful, more true, more sweet, than any other love ever bestowed upon mortal man and woman.

It was a little let-down to this exalted condition that it had to come within the social bonds of their common every-day lives. Harry said he “must speak to Mr. Van Hoosen,” and Yanna answered, “Yes, Harry, and at once. I cannot be perfectly happy until my father knows how happy I am.”

The first ecstasy of their condition had demanded motion; but when Harry spoke of the necessary formalities of their engagement, they sat down.

“Your father has a right to ask me some questions, dear Yanna, which I think I can answer to his satisfaction. There are only two things I fear.” She looked at him with an assuring smile, and he went on, “First, I cannot marry for a year at any rate, perhaps longer.”

“Father will not count that against you. Nor do I. He will miss me every hour of his life, when I leave him. He will be thankful to put off the separation – and he has done so much for me, and we have been so much to each other, that I think I ought to give him a little more of my life.”

Harry knit his brows. It already hurt him to think of Yanna giving thought and love to others, when he wanted every thought for himself. He drew her close to him, and with kisses and tender words vowed, “though it was dreadfully selfish, he should be wretched until he had taken her absolutely away from every other tie.” Perhaps she felt a moment’s pleasure in this singleness of her lover’s desire, but it was only momentary.

“That is wrong, Harry,” she answered. “It is a poor heart that has room for only one love. My love for father can never wrong you. He is the first memory I have. Before I was three years old, I remember him, carrying me in his arms every night until I fell asleep. When I was a school-girl he helped me with my lessons. He taught me how to skate, and to drive, and to row. We were

always together. My mother did not care much for books and embroidery and drawing, but father watched my stitches and my pencil, and wondered all the time at his little girl's cleverness. I knew he made too much of his little girl's cleverness; but then, we love people who make 67 much of us in any way. And it is past believing how happy we have been since I left college! Oh, I love father so much, I never could love him less! Are your father and mother any less dear to you for loving me?"

This was a question Harry could not answer fairly. He remembered his mother's appeal but a few hours previously. He knew that under it he had been unfaithful to Adriana – knew that he had been willing to sacrifice her happiness to gratify a mere social exigency – knew that he had put Rose's interests before Adriana's interests – knew that he had been absolutely considerate of the old ties, and that he was now seeking the new one, not as the first and the last, the be-all, and the end-all, of his existence; but as some fresh, delicious element to be lost in the old element, some quick and piquant spice, with which to make keener and sweeter the old tedious, monotonous experience, which, after all, he was not willing to lose in the joyousness of the new one. He answered Yanna's question therefore guardedly; he had even a feeling that she ought not to have asked it.

"Of course, I love my family, Yanna, just the same as I ever did. My love for you is quite independent of that love. I have been practically the head of the house for many years, and to lose me is, therefore, like losing the head of the house."

“Hardly so, Harry. I think Mr. Filmer is quite able to take care of his family’s interests, if it should be necessary for him to do so. Father said he never met a man at once so cautious and so honorable in business.”

“In a matter of buying and selling, father is more than equal to his circumstances. I am speaking of our social life. In society, he is a perfect child; in fact, we continually have to shield his mistakes behind his 68 learning. It is for this reason, my own sweet Yanna, that mother thinks we ought to keep our engagement secret.”

“Our engagement secret! Your mother thinks it! Did you ask Mrs. Filmer’s permission to offer yourself to me?” As she spoke, she gently withdrew from his embrace and looked with a steady countenance at him. Harry was like a man between two fires; his face burned, he felt almost irritable. Why couldn’t Yanna take what he had to offer, and be content?

“Mother lifted a book in my room,” he said, “and a copy of the letter I sent you fell out of it.”

“And she read one of your letters? I am glad you have told me. I certainly shall *not* write to you, Harry. I withdraw my promise.”

“Oh, nonsense, Yanna! It fell out of the book, and she looked at it; after that, any woman would have gone on looking at it.”

“Very few women would have gone on looking at it.”

“Mothers, I mean. Mothers feel they have a right, you know. I ought not to have left it there. It was my fault; but the whole house has been in such a miserable confusion, with the packing

and the ball; and it has been Harry here, and Harry there, and the truth is, mother called me while I was writing, and she was in a great hurry, and I slipped the letter into the book, and when I got back I had forgotten where I put it. I looked everywhere, and as there was a fire burning on the hearth, I concluded that I had burnt it.”

“Which you ought to have done.”

“Yes; but then, Yanna, mother had to know.”

“I wish I had known first. What did she say?”

“She thought we ought, for Rose’s sake, to put off our marriage and keep our engagement secret.”

“Yes. Why for Rose’s sake?”

“It sounds egotistical to tell you, Yanna; but mother says that Rose is asked out a great deal more for my sake than for her own, and as she has made expensive preparations for the season, she wants Rose to have the full benefit of them; that is only natural. However, she thinks it impossible, if it is known that I am engaged.”

“The whole affair is humiliating, Harry; but I hear father coming, and you had better speak to him. He will know what I ought to do under the circumstances.”

“I would rather see him to-morrow. I want to talk to my mother again – to collect my thoughts – to explain myself better to you, dearest.”

But Peter entered as he was speaking, and Yanna for a moment made no attempt to alter the significant position of Harry towards

herself; for he was holding her hand, while his whole attitude was that of an imploring lover.

Yanna rose and left the room, as her father came forward. “Well, sir?” said Peter, not unkindly, but with an interrogative emphasis Harry could not pretend to ignore. He rose and offered his hand to Peter. “I have been telling Yanna that I love her,” he said, “and she has promised to be my wife.” The young man’s hand lay in Peter’s hand as he made this confession, and Peter led him to the fireside.

“Sit down, sir. I have something to say to you; and as you see, I am very wet. The storm was driving in my face.” Then Harry looked outward, and saw the empty lawn blinded with rain, and the gray hills and the gray clouds meeting.

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